

## *Goblin Market* Plot Summary

Two grown sisters, Laura and Lizzie, return to their family home for a funeral. While exploring their former nursery, they are reminded of a childhood experience with mysterious goblin fruit merchants whom they met in a nearby glen. Though Lizzie is reluctant to listen to, or even look at the goblins, Laura is irresistibly drawn to their call, and buys some of their fruit with a lock of her golden hair. The fruit is intoxicatingly delicious, and she returns eagerly to the glen the next evening, anxious to buy more. But upon their return, only Lizzie can hear and see the goblins.

Without the goblin fruit to sustain her, Laura slowly wastes away, until Lizzie, unable to watch Laura's decline, ventures back to the glen to buy the fruit she hopes might revive her sister. She offers a silver penny as payment, but when the goblins realize the Lizzie is unwilling to feast on the fruit herself, they become angry, attacking her and pelting her with fruits in an effort to force her to imbibe. Undaunted, Lizzie stands strong, and the goblins eventually give up on her.

Bruised but triumphant, Lizzie returns home and offers the remains of the goblins' fruit to her sister. Though the fruit is now distasteful to Laura, it does indeed provide the antidote she needs, and she soon returns to her former self. Thanks to Lizzie's intervention, both girls live to share the tale with their own children, and to rejoice in the value of sisterhood. Back in the present, the two sisters leave the nursery together, reunited by this memory.

### **Director's Note:**

If you've heard of *Goblin Market*, chances are good that your familiarity is primarily, if not exclusively, with its source material. Perhaps oddly, I first encountered Christina Rossetti's narrative poem by way of this piece, so my own experience with Laura and Lizzie's story has always been inextricable from Polly Pen's lovely, unusual score. In fact, I once hoped that I might perform *Goblin Market* with my sister, Katie, with whom I shared a relationship as close and as (sometimes) complicated as that between Laura and Lizzie. And it is undoubtedly my own relationship with my sister that most influences my interpretation of both Rossetti's poem and Polly Pen and Peggy Harmon's adaptation.

While *Goblin Market* has, since its publication, been dissected as a religious allegory, an exploration of Victorian sexuality, or even an addiction narrative, the aspect of the poem I've always been most interested in is its portrayal of Laura and Lizzie's devotion to each other, both as sisters and as young women taking care of each other in an era when women and women's lives were largely marginalized. Whether their experience with the goblins is real, metaphorical, or entirely imagined, the result is a deepening of the sisters' love for each other and their recognition of its value in their lives.

It is this reading of the poem that has inspired our production, and this has only been enhanced by our young actresses' close, real-life friendship with each other. Meagan and Anna, themselves, are the heart of this production, and they bring a sincerity and authenticity to the piece that is wholly theirs. I feel privileged to be able to turn this piece (and all my own dreams for it) over to their care. I hope they have learned to love it as I have, and that you will, too!

- Melinda Beasi, Director