



KelticDead Music

Stories, Tunes and Songs in the Traditions of our Celtic Dead

To the Four Ayrts to Guide Us, and
For the Four Winds to Get Us There!

The mission of the **KelticDead Music** initiative is to find tunes and songs from around the world that have Celtic, Folk, World, Americana, and Seafaring origins, and arrange them into simple sheet music formats for folk musicians to use and share. In addition, the KDM initiative provides the in-depth stories with possible lyrics that follow the video-based, **KDM Broadside**s for a more complete music-education experience.



KelticDead Music Broadside

*All the selections and sheet music content provided in the **KelticDead Music** initiative are from traditional, made-public, made-public with credits, or cited credits where applicable. This material content is the personal interpretations of the subject and provided by **Patrick O-Shaun Young, KelticDead Music**.*

Salley Gardens



Made public photograph of William Butler Yeats (1865-1939).

Sally Gardens is a short ballad written by one of the 20th Century's greatest poets, **William Butler Yeats** (1865-1939). Yeats composed this ballad/poem based upon an Irish folk song of "The Rambling Boys of Pleasure," and he published it 1889 under the title of "An Old Song Re-Sung." It was later changed to "Down by the Salley Gardens" in 1895.

Since the publication of the ballad/poem, it has been set into a melody by several composers including Herbert Hughes, who used the traditional Irish melody of "The Maids of Mourne Shore." As a note, many folk mistakenly play "The Maids of the Mourne Shore" in total, for the short ballad created by Yeats. However, while the melody still works for the poem, I've selected an arrangement based upon "The Rambling Boys of Pleasure."

W.B. Yeats lived in a time where there was still a lot of division between the Irish and the English due to the Penal Laws enacted during the 16th Century. Yeats belonged to the Protestant, Anglo-Irish minority, where many of whom considered themselves to English who happened to be born in Ireland. However, Yeats firmly affirmed his Irish nationality and featured his cultural roots with Irish legends in his poems.

Salley Gardens

Yeats was born in Sandymount, Dublin and spent his childhood in County Sligo. At fifteen and eighteen, he lived at the Balscadden House in Howth, where he wrote his first works. His family moved to London in 1886 while in his twenties he wrote many of his poems and plays, but he also had a summer home at Thoor Ballylee near Gort in County Galway.

It was in London that he met with Maud Gonne who was tall and beautiful, and passionately devoted to Irish nationalism. He courted her for over three decades, though he learned later that she had already borne two children from a long affair.

KDM arrangement of Yeats' original poem to fit the KDM music arrangement shown on the next page.

**(It was) down by the salley gardens
my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens
with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy,
as () leaves grow on the trees;
But I, being young and foolish,
with her would not agree.**

**(It was) in a field by the river
my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder
she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy,
as () grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish,
and now (I) am full of tears.**

In his poem, "Down by the Salley Gardens" it is a reflection of a man's past relationships and the regret that comes with decisions made in youthful folly. The setting of the man's reflection is in a willow garden where lovers often meet.

The tone of the ballad is in the past tense, where he remembers that his love had advised him to take love and life easy. She compared it to the natural growth of leaves on a tree or to the grass growing on the weirs.

However, the speaker refused to listen to his love's wisdom which ultimately fails, and it left him full of regret and sorrow. This theme of regret in the passage of time from youthful mistakes is central to the poem's meaning.

As mentioned, the name of the poem was changed in 1895, and in Irish Gaelic, the name "Salley Gardens" is "**Gort na Salein**," (garden of willows). The long hanging willow leaves were often used to thatch the straw used in making roof tops on many of the houses in Ireland, even into the early 20th Century.

The song is also named "**Down by the Sally Garden**," or just "**Sally Garden**."

A "weir" is a low-lying, dam head frequently with a bridge used to control waterways and to catch fish. Tall grasses usually grow along these waterways.



Salley Gardens

Sally Gardens

Arrangement by KelticDead Music
Play Moderate and thoughtful.

Traditional short ballad by William Butler Yeats in 1889



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yinamSgCdUU>

As mentioned, there are several variants of the melody taken from “The Maids of the Mourne Shore” which was written in D major. Many folk will play the “Mourne Shore” tune with the poem/ballad written by W.B. Yeats. The original arrangement that Yeats followed in 1889 to create the ballad/poem was taken from another tune, “The Rambling Boys of Pleasure” which has a slightly different feel. I followed that original version in creating the arrangement shown above.



**Shaun,
That KelticDead Guy
Patrick O. Young**

KelticDead Music Initiative

is a private, on-line music-education initiative. All the music projects are recorded with live, acoustic instruments and performed in accordance with simplified sheet music arranged in eight bar formats (whenever possible) in accordance with the guidelines that are within the Celtic music traditions. For more music videos and stories visit ...

<https://KelticDeadMusic.org>