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# Dragonsong

By

ANNE McCAFFREY

Adapted for the stage by

IRENE ELLIOT

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

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Based upon the novel DRAGONSONG

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*Dragonsong* was first produced at Adventure Theatre in Glen Echo, Md., October – November, 1980, with the following cast and crew:

Cast:

YANUS.....Eric Metzger  
ALEMI.....Geoff Glick  
MENOLLY.....Melanie Metzger  
CHILDREN OF THE SEAHOLD..... John L. Gimon, Kara Kelly,  
Kit Noonan, Elizabeth Hoge,  
Sydney Johnson, Lisa Schwalb,  
Rachel Luttwak, Amy Klamberg,  
Juliana A. Duffy  
TIROLT..... Brian Price  
MAVI..... Josephine Hoge  
T’GELLAN..... Tom Banks  
MANORA.....Patricia Ann Kratzer  
MIRRIM.....Katya Lezin  
MASTER HARPER ROBINTON.....Michael Hartford, Al Noerling  
PUPPETEERS.....Paul Haley, David Schlegel,  
Karen Horton, Chris Hoge,  
Doritt Lee Kushner  
MEN AND WOMEN OF PERN.....Doritt Lee Kushner,  
Lucinda C. Brown, Tony Guida,  
Michael Duffy, John Elliott.  
HARPERS..... Bruce Gatti, Dennis Murphy,  
Valerie Donovan, Dawn Snouffer, David Scalzi

Crew:

Director..... Irene Elliott  
Producer..... Jill Metzger  
Puppet Master..... Allen Stevens  
Technical Director..... David Worley  
Set Design..... Terry Snyder  
Light Design.....Margaret McGrath  
Sound Design.....E. Pen Stephens  
Costumer..... Karen Horton  
Stage manager.....Lisa Schultz  
Make-up..... Melanie Metzger,  
Doritt Lee Kushner  
Properties and Artwork..... David Scalzi  
Magic..... Doc Dougherty  
Technicians..... David Hsu

Assistants: Carl Zwanzig, Geoff Yates, Tom Banks, Tia Worley, Larry Rockwell, Alice Mendel, Chris Hoge, Duane Bowers, John Elliott, Josephine Hoge, Doritt Lee Kushner, Paul Haley, Nancy Fees, Cheryl Major, Carol Noonan, Evelyn Dobbins, Patricia Kratzer, Lucinda C. Brown, Marcia Berrien.

*Dragonsong* was subsequently produced by the Spartanburg Youth Theatre of Spartanburg, S.C., April 7–12, 1986, director: Mary Nicholson; by Adventure Theatre, in Glen Echo, Md., January 17–February 22, 1987, director: Jill Metzger; and by Theatre Tulsa of Tulsa, Okla., March 6–15, 1987, director: Cyndi Vetter.

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. Sea Song .....	X
1a. Menolloy’s Musing .....	X
2. Children’s Game .....	X
3. Menolloy’s Song .....	X
4. Teaching Song .....	X
5. Fire Lizard Song .....	X
6. White Winged Craft .....	X



# Dragonsong

## CHARACTERS

**YANUS.** Sea Holder, head of Half Circle Seahold. About 40–50, very tradition-bound, strict, efficient, narrow-minded.

**ALEMI.** Yanus's son. About 16–20. Hard-working but with a sense of fun.

**MENOLLY.** Yanus's daughter. About 14–18, A very talented natural musician.

**CASSA.** A seahold girl of 8–10.

**MARENE.** A seahold girl of 10–12.

**MILON.** A seahold boy of 8–10.

**KELDIR.** A seahold boy of 10–12, a bully.

**TIROLT.** A seahold boy of 11–13, fascinated by dragons.

**MAVI.** Yanus's wife, Menolly and Alemi's mother. About 40–50. Rather shrewish and tough, but also with a latent streak of motherliness.

**T'GELLAN.** Bronze dragonrider. About 30–50. Friendly, hard-working, conscientious, carries responsibility well.

**MANORA.** The headwoman at Benden Weyr. About 30–50. Efficient, kindly, responsible, a healer.

**MIRRIM.** A girl of Benden. About 12–18. Bossy but goodhearted, a little vain.

**MASTER HARPER ROBINTON.** The master musician of Pern. About 35–55. Wise, wily, deeply understanding, with a voice of liquid gold.

**MEN & WOMEN OF PERN.** Seahold dwellers, partygoers and singers at Benden.

**MONARTH, GAELETH, BEAUTY, ROCKY, DIVER, MIMIC, LAZY-BONES, BROWNIE, AUNTIE ONE, AUNTIE TWO & UNCLE:** Puppets. Monarth is a large bronze dragon, Gaeleth is a newly hatched bronze dragon. The rest are fire lizards, about the size of cats with wings.



# Dragonsong

*(The house lights dim and the following announcement is heard over the speakers.)*

CAPTAIN. Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. We are about to land on the planet of Pern. Please make sure your seat belts are securely fastened and your anti-gravity force field is turned to the positive position. You will notice the two escape hatches on either side of the cabin, marked with the old-fashioned word “exit.” If there is an emergency landing of any kind, please proceed calmly to the exit hatch nearest you and descend to the ground outside the spaceship. We are now ready for maneuvers. Please stand by ...

*(There is a whoosh of a spaceship as the lights dim to full out.)*

## SCENE 1

*(The spaceship noise fades into sea and dock noises with seagulls calling. The curtain opens and the lights come up on the scene of a fishing settlement’s docking area. There is something cavern-like about the place, though we can see a sea wall and ocean beyond. The vegetation, architecture and clothing tell us immediately that this is no place on Earth—we are on the planet Pern. It is bright daylight of a spring afternoon. There is a young girl [MENOLLY] sitting in one of the crevasses in the rocks, dreaming, and holding a guitar and some reed pipes. After the curtain opens, we hear a sea song, which the girl accompanies on pipes or guitar.)*

### (#1: “Sea Song”)

SEAMEN.

THE FICKLE WIND’S MY FOE,  
WITH TIDE HIS KEEN ALLY.  
THEY’RE JEALOUS OF MY SEA’S LOVE  
AND ROUSE HER WITH THEIR LIE.  
OH SWEET SEA, OH DEAR SEA,  
HEED NOT THEIR STORMY WILE  
BUT BEAR ME SAFELY TO MY HOLD  
AND FROM THEIR WATERY TRIAL.

*(During the song, several CHILDREN run on from L, one by one, hiding themselves among the rocks. As the song ends, MENOLLY begins to sing, accompanying herself on the guitar.)*

**(#1a: “Menolloy’s Musing”)**

MENOLLY.

MY LIFE IS HERE IN A FISHING COVE,  
BUT MUSIC, NOT FISH, IS WHAT I LOVE.  
HOW CAN I BE WHAT I FEEL I MUST,  
WHEN CHANCE IS GONE AND HOPE IS DUST?

*(A rugged seaman, YANUS, enters.)*

YANUS *(calling to an incoming boat, either seen or unseen)*. Throw that line over, fisherman! Who taught you your business? You’re off balance! Get over!

*(As he talks, another child enters and looks for the others. As he finds them, he chases and touches them. They shriek and giggle. Other seamen come by and join in tasks of lifting, loading, etc. YANUS checks his hide-written lists, sometimes writing on them with a stylus. He glances at the children disapprovingly. He seems to have a lot on his mind, and is annoyed with minor considerations.)*

YANUS *(cont’d)*. No, over there, that way. Pay attention, men.

*(The girls go to MENOLLY and ask her a question. MENOLLY agrees and the girls gather while the boys form a circle. MENOLLY plays while they sing and play a circle catching game, illustrating the words of the song with appropriate gestures.)*

**(#2: “Children’s Game”)**

CHILDREN.

THREAD IS FALLING FROM THE SKY  
AND DRAGONMEN ARE SENT TO FLY.  
THEY FIGHT THE THREAD WITH DRAGON FLAME  
SO WE CAN LIVE TO PLAY OUR GAME.  
BENDEN, BENDEN IS OUR WEYR,  
AND WE DO NOT HAVE THREAD TO FEAR.

*(A child is caught and sits out as the game begins again, quietly. Two seamen go to YANUS.)*

YANUS. Quickly now, men. We've a good breeze rising and the fish are biting after three days of storm. Get that net mended and back in place—the fish don't wait for lazy fisher folk to catch them.

*(The two men climb the ladder leading up to the puppet bridge and disappear from view. Another seaman, ALEMI, comes by.)*

YANUS *(cont'd)*. Alemi, the sloop "Fire Queen" is coming, about half an hour out. Get that unloading crew over to the far dock in 20 minutes, and make sure they have plenty of salt.

ALEMI. Yes, sir. *(Goes.)*

YANUS. Menolly, what are you doing with old Petiron's gitar? *(The music stops abruptly.)* Did you think you could have it now? Give it to me, I'll put it away safe for the Harper Hall.

MENOLLY. I was just practicing.

YANUS. For what? You've already sung the funeral song.

MENOLLY. I still have to keep practicing.

YANUS. You're moping, that's what you're doing. Ever since the old harper died, you been mooning about feeling sorry for yourself.

MENOLLY. I miss him. He let me play his gitar.

YANUS. Not any more.

MENOLLY. And he liked my music.

YANUS. Now listen to me! I let you sing the one time in honor of old Petiron since there was no one else who could do it, but don't be getting the idea you are needed to do harper's tasks. We'll soon have a new harper to sing and play and teach the children. Now get along. There's a dragonrider coming and I have to prepare.

*(ALEMI returns.)*

MENOLLY. Didn't I do well?

YANUS. Well enough, for a girl.

*(YANUS gives the guitar to ALEMI, along with some instruction. ALEMI runs off with it. MENOLLY slowly gathers herself together. CASSA approaches YANUS.)*

CASSA. Sir, is there really a dragon coming?

YANUS. Yes, there is a dragon and a dragonrider coming, but that's no reason for anyone to neglect his work. You children will all be needed to gut and pack fish as soon as the "Fire Queen" is unloaded.

CASSA. Will we ever get to see the dragon?

YANUS. I suppose you will if he comes soon enough. Though you ought to be at your lessons. I intend to speak with the dragonman about sending a new harper right away. What he'll think of you idle children, I don't know. Children should be at their lessons.

CASSA. Yes, sir.

OTHER CHILDREN. Yes, sir.

*(The CHILDREN move away from YANUS as he continues with his work.)*

CASSA. I've never seen a dragon before. Up close.

MILON. Neither have I.

MARENE. I saw one once far away in the sky, fighting thread.

MILON. Fighting thread! What were you doing out of the cavern? Weren't you afraid the thread would kill you?

MARENE. Of course not! I'm not afraid of thread. *(But she really is.)*

CASSA. I don't like to think about thread. It scares me.

MARENE. Anyway, it was very far away. Then they closed the cavern gates and told me to get inside before the thread could come in. *(Indicating YANUS.)* The Sea Holder gave me extra work duties for a week.

*(ALEMI enters and goes to YANUS.)*

ALEMI. The men are ready, sir. I've taken extra salt from the far cavern this time.

YANUS. Good work. Keep it up.

CASSA *(goes to MENOLLY)*. Menolly, how will we know when the dragonrider is coming?

MENOLLY. We won't. He'll just appear in the sky. Dragons can go anywhere in the wink of an eye. They disappear from one place and then just a heartbeat later they reappear someplace else, even if it's hundreds of miles away. *(Hides CASSA behind her, moves her to another place, then steps away and reveals her.)*

TIROLT. Why is he coming here? Dragonriders never come to a little fishing village like this.

YANUS *(turning his attention to them before they are aware)*. You children ask too many questions. Why he comes is his and my business and not your concern.

*(The CHILDREN recoil a little from this rebuff and move away from YANUS, who returns to business. MENOLLY pulls TIROLT to one side.)*

MENOLLY. Half Circle Sea Hold supplies all the fish to Benden Weyr. Perhaps he's coming to see about that.

TIROLT. Dragonmen are the most important people on the whole planet of Pern. Imagine—white thread spores drifting down, ready to burn and burrow, then suddenly, pfft, a dragon pops into the sky, spouting flame, burning away the thread. (*Illustrates with gestures.*)

MILON. We'd all die if they didn't fight threads for us, wouldn't we Menolly?

KELDIR. The whole planet of Pern would die.

*(The CHILDREN are momentarily awed.)*

TIROLT. I'd like to be a dragon rider.

KELDIR. Ho! Ho! What dragon would ever choose you? You're just a hold boy, and all you know how to do is catch fish. No dragon would be interested in you.

MARENE. Hold boys can't be dragonmen, can they?

MILON (*going to YANUS and ALEMI*). You have to live in Benden Weyr to be a dragonrider, don't you?

YANUS. Dragonriders are boys who grow up in the weyr and know their proper business.

MENOLLY. Once in a while the dragonmen look for other boys.

YANUS. No one has ever looked here—no one will. No dragon is likely to choose one of our lads, and just as well, I say.

*(MENOLLY goes to TIROLT.)*

MENOLLY. Nobody knows exactly why a dragon chooses a certain boy, Tirolt. One might pick you ...

KELDIR. Ha. No dragon would pick Tirolt. My father says you have to be special to impress a dragon. And how would he get to Benden Weyr? He can't sail and he'd be too scared to ride between on a dragon!

TIROLT. I wouldn't!

KELDIR. Anyway, he's not old enough.

TIROLT. I am!

YANUS. Stop bothering about it. No seahold boy will ever be a dragonman, and that's that.

*(MAVI comes in to talk to YANUS, ALEMI goes and the CHILDREN move to another area.)*

MENOLLY. If you can't have a dragon—maybe you could find a fire lizard.

They're like small dragons.

TIROLT. Menolly, there's no such thing. I've been looking for years.

There aren't any. No one's ever seen a fire lizard.

KELDIR. That old auntie's tale! My father says that fire lizards are sun-dreams!

MARENE. There aren't any such things. It's just a story.

MENOLLY. Nobody has ever seen one or caught one. But that doesn't mean there aren't any.

CASSA. I think there are.

MILON. Me too.

MARENE. Well, if there are, I'll catch one!

OTHER CHILDREN. Me too!

KELDIR. There aren't any such things. Come on, let's play again.

*(They start another game. MAVI calls to MENOLLY and MENOLLY goes to her.)*

MAVI. Menolly! It's time you stopped playing these games, girl. Filling the children's heads with nonsense and frivolity.

MENOLLY. I was only practicing my music.

MAVI. And that's another thing. Fooling around with your music, music, always, while there are chores to be done. It's time you gave up these childish ideas of yours and settled yourself. *(Gives MENOLLY the end of a tablecloth to help fold.)*

MENOLLY. Oh, mother, I couldn't give up my music! I love it.

MAVI. Well one of these days you'll have to. Adults can't go around making up tunes all the time. You leave that to the harpers whose job it is. You're getting too old for playing with the children. *(Puts the folded cloth down.)*

MENOLLY. I've only been with them because there's no one else since Petiron died. *(Would cry if she weren't too old for that sort of thing.)*

MAVI. Now, now. I know you're grieving for the old harper. And I must say you were very good with him, caring for him. I won't say he was wasting his time teaching you so much music, because it did seem to please him, but now that he's gone, it's high time you stopped brooding and got busy with tasks more fitting. *(Hands MENOLLY the second cloth to help fold.)*

MENOLLY. When the new harper comes, there'll be new songs for me to learn.

MAVI. When the new harper comes you'll not disgrace us by playing.  
Girls can't be harpers.

MENOLLY. Why not?

MAVI. Who'd listen to a silly girl? Harpers teach the children their ballads, and instruct everyone about Pern's customs and rules. You leave it to the men, and don't think to be playing in front of a real harper. Why, you'd be a disgrace to our seahold, and I'm ashamed of you for even thinking of it. Now come along and help in the kitchen. There's a dragonrider coming and a feast to prepare.

*(They start to go, but TIROLT cries out, stopping the game and causing everyone to look up in excitement. He points to the sky, out L.)*

TIROLT. Look! There he is!

OTHER CHILDREN. Oh, look! Look! The dragonrider!

*(There are cries and shouts, and people assemble on stage. The CHILDREN jump up and down excitedly, pulling on each other and talking.)*

MARENE. He's coming right down here!

CASSA. He's so big!

MILON. Is that a bronze dragon?

KELDIR. Of course, silly. Can't you see?

MARENE. He's so beautiful. He glitters!

KELDIR. Bronze dragons are the most important.

MILON. Except for the gold ones.

TIROLT. He's landing!

MILON. I'm scared!

CASSA. He's so big!

*(There is a great gust of wind from offstage, and we hear the dragon rider reassuring his beast. Then he strides on. He is properly respectful, but bursting with strength and confidence. He is also a little amused at the timidity of the CHILDREN.)*

T'GELLAN. How do you do? This is Half Circle Seahold?

*(The CHILDREN nod yes and murmur, while backing away from the awesome spectacle.)*

T'GELLAN *(cont'd)*. I'm T'gellan, and this is my dragon Monarth. Monarth, bend down and say hello.

*(The head, neck and front foot of a forty foot dragon with brilliant eyes enter from the wings. The bulk of his body pushes against the curtain. The children scatter.)*

T'GELLAN. Don't be afraid, he's quite friendly. *(Pauses to listen to the dragon.)*

TIROLT. Can you really talk to him?

T'GELLAN. I hear him in my head, like a thought.

*(TIROLT approaches at the head of the group of CHILDREN. KELDIR is towards the back. TIROLT comes close enough to touch the dragon.)*

T'GELLAN *(cont'd)*. He likes people to scratch above his eyelids.

*(TIROLT does so.)*

TIROLT. How do you do, Monarth?

*(MONARTH nods and turns to T'GELLAN. T'GELLAN listens.)*

T'GELLAN. He asks me to convey his greetings to you.

TIROLT. We are very honored by your visit, Monarth.

T'GELLAN. Yes, he likes that.

*(The dragon winks at MENOLLY and she reacts in astonishment and uncertainty. YANUS goes to T'GELLAN.)*

YANUS. Now, now children, away with you. I don't tolerate idleness. You should be at your lessons. What will the dragonrider think of a seahold with lazy children?

*(The CHILDREN leave reluctantly, MONARTH goes off, TIROLT stops to talk to MAVI and MENOLLY. YANUS turns to T'GELLAN.)*

YANUS *(cont'd)*. Greetings, bronze rider. I am Yanus, Half Circle Sea Holder.

*(They greet each other in formal Pernese fashion.)*

T'GELLAN. Holder Yanus, Benden Weyr joins you in mourning the death of Harper Petiron.

YANUS. He was a good man, a good harper, and knew his duty to hold and weyr. We miss him.

T'GELLAN. I'm sure you do.

YANUS (*a little querulous*). The children miss him. They run wild as herd-beasts and lose the habit of study and discipline. Can you not inform the Harper Hall how badly we need a new harper? (*Goes to T'GELLAN.*)

T'GELLAN. That's one of my reasons for coming, Holder Yanus. It will be several months before the new harper arrives, though Master Harper Robinton has already started instructing a journeyman for the particular needs of Half Circle Sea Hold.

(*YANUS turns away.*)

YANUS. Oh, has he? That's very good of Master Robinton. We're a small hold ...

(*T'GELLAN moves toward YANUS.*)

T'GELLAN. But an important one, Holder Yanus, and you'll have a proper harper as soon as he's trained for you.

YANUS. Knowing man, Master Harper Robinton! Fine man!

T'GELLAN (*sits*). He has also asked me to find out, if I could, about a young lad here, an apprentice to your old harper. Petiron wrote about the boy and sent some songs the boy had written. They're very good songs, being used all over Pern already, so you see the harpers are most anxious to find the boy and get him to the Harper Hall to learn the trade.

(*YANUS looks at him a little guiltily.*)

YANUS. I know of no such boy. He must be from another hold.

T'GELLAN. It was someone Harper Petiron had been teaching.

(*YANUS looks away.*)

YANUS. Perhaps it was one of the lads from Tillek Hold who went home several weeks ago.

T'GELLAN (*defeated*). Perhaps. I'll check. (*Getting up.*) I'm also on search Holder Yanus, for there are eggs hardening in Benden Weyr and all dragonriders are looking for likely lads to impress the new clutch. I hope you won't object.

YANUS (*very surprised*). Certainly not, but you'll find no lads here. We're all hardworking fishermen, with our minds on our work and not in foolish dreams. We keep the good ways of Pern here. (*Turns to go.*) Will you come now and take some refreshment with us?

T'GELLAN. I would be honored.

YANUS. Tirolt! Escort our guest to the hall. I will join you there. *(Starts to go, then stomps back.)* Will Monarth stay comfortable out there? Being a seahold, we've only a few beasts, but if your dragon is hungry ... ?

T'GELLAN. No, thank you, he just ate two days ago.

*(YANUS goes to MAVI and they talk quietly. TIROLT goes to T'GELLAN and escorts him off, talking as they go.)*

T'GELLAN. How do you do, Tirolt?

TIROLT. Very well, thank you sir. It's an honor to meet you.

T'GELLAN. I'm the honored one. Are you a fisherman too?

TIROLT. We're all fishermen here sir.

*(YANUS and MAVI move down.)*

YANUS. He says we'll get no new harper for months. Something will have to be done.

MAVI. Indeed it will. The children need their teachings. I don't like the notion, but it is true that Menolly knows all the ballads and sagas word perfect.

YANUS. Woman! It'd be a disgrace on us to set an inexperienced girl to do a harper's task. She's too young for the responsibility.

MAVI. She does know all the ...

YANUS. Why, before we knew, she'd have them singing her own songs, with no real harper to keep her right. Can't that lad of Forlan's take over?

MAVI. He's far too callous-handed to play any music now. And you need him with the fishing fleet. It will have to be Menolly.

YANUS. Very well. Bring her to me later. But make sure those children don't talk about it. I suppose if no one ever knows a girl taught them, it will be all right.

*(They exit after the dragonrider. The lights faded towards evening and now fade out.)*

## SCENE 2

*(When the lights come up it is night time. MENOLLY is sitting in a pool of light, composing a song on an autoharp and pausing to write it on skins with a stylus as she sings.)*

MENOLLY.

A GLOWING DRAGON BURSTS INTO THE SKY,  
SOARS DOWN TO MEET THE GROUND.  
HIS FASCINATING, COLOR-CATCHING EYE  
TO WHIRL AND GLANCE AROUND.  
DELICATE FRAGILE-LOOKING WINGS  
TO FLY HIM FAR AND FREE.  
HE BENDS HIS HEAD, AND MY HEART SINGS,  
CAN HE BE LOOKING AT ME?

MAVI (*entering in the dim light on the other side of the stage*). Menolly, where are you? (*Crosses the stage to MENOLLY.*) Tuning again. Whenever you can sneak off, dodging work, I find you making up songs. Why couldn't you stay after the feast like a proper girl?

MENOLLY. I'm sorry. But Mother, I just have to write a song when something is as wonderful as a real dragon coming to visit.

MAVI. Songs are very important things on Pern, they are used to teach the children. You can't just write anything you like. What if the children believe it?

MENOLLY. But I'm only writing what's true. I did see a dragon and he was wonderful to me.

MAVI. And who are you to tell everyone what you think? Leave that to the harpers. Why, next thing I know you'll be writing a song about fire lizards or some such foolishness, and the children will think there really are such things.

MENOLLY. Well, there could be.

MAVI. Menolly, that's enough. It's an insult to our beautiful dragons. They're magnificent beasts who keep the falling thread from burning our homes and killing us. What use would a little fire lizard be? You will not talk about such things when you are teaching. Fire lizards, hah.

MENOLLY. What do you mean, when I'm teaching?

MAVI. Never mind. Come with me. Yanus wants to see you. Now you listen carefully to him and do it right. This is a great honor for you, and you'll have to work hard to do well.

*(They cross the stage to YANUS in his record room. YANUS hands MENOLLY the guitar. She handles it reverently.)*

YANUS. Tomorrow you'll be excused from your regular morning duties to take the youngsters for their teaching. But I'll have no more of those made-up songs of yours.