



Libretto - Leyli and Majnun
Mugham Opera in Five Acts (1908)
by Uzeyir Hajibeyov and Jeyhun Hajibeyli

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Characters:

Geys (Majnun)—Lyrical Tenor
Leyli—Lyrical Soprano
Geys' father—Tenor
Geys' mother—Mezzo-soprano
Ibn Salam—Tenor
Nofal—Baritone
Zeyd—Tenor
First Arab—Tenor
Second Arab—Tenor

Matchmakers, messengers, guests, schoolboys and girls

Prologue

Chorus: My soul burns from separation;
I cry bloody tears.
The people are awakened by my moaning.
Will my bad luck reverse itself?

Bloody tears pour from my eyes
Because I want to see your beautiful face.
Darling, it's spring, the season of flowers,
Won't the floating waters blur?

Act 1

The curtain goes up. At a meadow near the school, Majnun is waiting for Leyli to arrive. (Based on the mugham Mahur-Hindi)

Majnun: My soul is burning because of separation, I want to join with my beloved's soul.
I'm miserable because I'm alone, I want the remedy of seeing my beloved.
I'm a nightingale that moans, and my moaning is not for nothing.
I'm in a cage lamenting, I want a flower garden.

Leyli: I've been groaning since love overtook me.
What kind of trouble is this that has overtaken me?
I don't have the power to explain to anybody the sorrow of my heart.
I've become sick because of separation.

(Based on the mugham Shikasteyi-Fars. Majnun moves closer to Leyli.)

Majnun: I saw your face—as beautiful as the sun—and had no power left.
I didn't have the power to stay in one place like a shadow.
My only aim was to perish in the world of love.
Thank God, I have reached my goal and have no anxiety left.

Leyli: My beloved thinks my heart is groaning, I know it.
He knows what's in my sad heart, I know he knows.
There's no need to explain the grief of my heart to him,
He knows my every step and the sorrow of my heart, I know this.

Leyli and Majnun: I sigh for your flirtatious walk,
I cry for your smile that looks like a bud.
I'm an idler because your hair smells like perfume,
My craziness is because of your tousled hair.

(Based on the mugham Mubarrige)

Majnun: I became captivated when I saw your tousled hair.
I became speechless when I saw your lips shining like a ruby.
My soul began burning like a candle when I looked at your face.
I crucified my heart when I saw your flirtatious walk.

Leyli: My heart rejoices when I see your tousled hair.
I become speechless when I see your smiling face.
Bloody tears well up in my eyes when I look at you,
My heart breaks into pieces when I see your eyebrows that look like an arrow.

Majnun: I knew that the way of love was dangerous, but
I won't leave this path, even if it leads to death.
I'm stunned before your stature, and I can't bend to your feet.

I've found a grief that has no end.

Leyli: Whatever I say about you is equal to religion!
I repeat the signs of your face instead of saying my prayers!
When I see you, I lose power,
I can't even express the grief caused by love!

Boys and girls sing, moving closer to Leyli and Majnun:
Ah, look at what the unbridled do, skipping class!
Your fathers don't know anything, what will you do if they find out and punish you?
Does skipping class suit you?
Does falling in love while skipping class suit you?

Boys: This is a lover who fell in love with his sweetheart.
It's a lover with grief, a sad lover.

(The girls take Leyli away. Majnun sits gloomily and is left alone. Majnun's father comes. Based on the mugham Chahargah.)

Majnun's father: You, the nightingale of a soundless flower garden,
I'm not happy with what's happening to you.
Explain the situation of your heart to me,
Tell me your hidden secrets.
Who took your power away from you?
Who has upset your life?
What are you looking for? What do you want?
Why do you moan so much?
If there is a pearl of your wishes in the sea,
Just tell me, I'll get it for you.

Majnun: You unhappy, pale old man,
Don't complain to God because of me.
Don't ask what these adventures are.
My troubles have come from you.
I didn't know what the world of sorrow was,
I didn't know the worries of the earth and sky.
I was happy in a state of ignorance.
I had no dream of beauty or love.

(Majnun's mother arrives. Based on the mugham Mukhalif)

Majnun's mother: You, the comfort of my soul, the apple of my eye!
My only child, the best child!
If you want a sweetheart, you will find one.
What are we if you grieve?
There are thousands of tribes in this region,
And there are thousands of beautiful girls in every family.
We'll show them to you one by one.

Let the plan that we have come true.
Follow the advice we give you!
Don't disappoint us anymore!

Majnun: You, my soul, my spirit, my father and mother,
You're my heart, my mother and father,
I thought that this would suit me
And I fell in love with Leyli.
Then I became aware of it,
But what could I say, what could I do, ah!
I don't have control over this,
I'm completely distracted and my power leaves me!
My brain became weaker; it has been defeated by love.
My heart is in trouble after being attracted by her beauty.
I have only one idol to worship
Until the very end of my life.

(Based on the mugham Mansuriyye.)

Majnun's father: Don't give your soul to love—love is the enemy of the soul.
It's known all over the world that love is trouble for the soul.
Moonlike faces look beautiful, I agree,
But if you look at them for a long time, the result will be unfortunate for you.
I know there's agony in love,
Because all a lover does is moan.

Trio of Majnun's father, Majnun's mother and Majnun:

Majnun's father: Let's go home, my Geys! [Majnun's real name]

Majnun: Father, Mother, love will make me "majnun." [mad, insane]

Majnun's father: I'll go and ask for Leyli for you.

Majnun: Father, Mother, love will make me "majnun."

Act 2

At Leyli's home, a group of girls are addressing Leyli's mother.

Girls' Chorus: Don't let Leyli go to school,
Leyli is soiling her good name.
Leyli is disgracing you among the people.
Do something, don't let Leyli fall in love,
Don't let Leyli go to school.
Leyli is soiling her good name.
Leyli is disgracing you among the people.

(The girls leave. Based on the mugham Simayi-Shams.)

Leyli's mother: This news has made me sad.
Can a person tolerate disgrace?
So this is my child?
I wish I had a stone instead of Leyli.
She who always hides her daughter will be happy.
Girls always have to be hidden.

(Leyli comes back from school. Based on the mugham Simayi-Shams.)

Leyli's mother: Hey daughter, what is this talk?
People are condemning you.
Why do you harm yourself?
Why do you soil your good name?

Leyli: Dear mother, you have taken care of me my whole life,
You are everything to me!
You say words that I have no idea of,
I don't understand what you mean.

(Based on the mugham Hijaz.)

Leyli's mother: They say that you have fallen in love with a stranger.
Where are you, where is this love?
Where are you, where are these thoughts about a lover?
Even boys are not allowed to be in love,
Let alone girls.

(Based on the mugham Simayi-Shams.)

Leyli: You say that I'm in love,
But I'm an innocent child with a clean conscience.
I don't know what you're talking about.
Now tell me, how can I not be upset?

(Based on the mugham Hijaz.)

Leyli's mother: What will you do if your father finds out?
What if he gets angry and gives you commands?
From now on, leave school and stay home.
Instead of learning letters,
Learn about your family and origins.
Have self-control and don't exchange it for the love of a mad boy.
You're a girl, don't be cheap, respect yourself.

(Based on the mugham Saranj.)

Leyli: I wasn't the one who decided I should go to school,
I haven't done anything that was contrary to your opinion.
I swear this was my intention.
Can't a child be happy at school?
Don't speak these words anymore,
Have mercy and don't make me sad!

Leyli and her mother exit. Leyli's father enters the scene with a few Arabs. (Based on the mugham Shur)

First Arab: Abul-Geys is coming here.
Abul-Geys will ask you.
People upbraid him.
Your daughter doesn't deserve a "Majnun" [a mad person].

Second Arab: Don't be fooled by his nice words,
Don't give Leyli to a mad boy.

Chorus of Arabs: Don't give her, don't give Leyli to Abul-Geys' son.
If he wants Leyli, don't give her, don't!

(They upbraid him, calling him "majnun.")

Chorus:
Why does Leyli need to marry a "majnun?"

(Majnun's father and Majnun enter the scene with the matchmakers. Leyli's father invites them to sit down. Based on the mugham Shur.)

Majnun's father: Hey, head of the tribe!
You fulfill everyone's wishes,
You know my origins,
My word is a command for thousands of houses.
I'm famous among the tribes for my generosity.
God gave me a precious pearl
That I wish I could join with a ruby.
I hear you have a ruby.
Please honor me and
Let the pearl join the ruby.
I think that my son deserves your precious daughter.
So please be merciful, and let them join in happiness.

Leyli's father: You are a wise man in the tribe!
I know you've been taken up by the trouble your son is causing you.
What you ask for is very difficult.
I don't know how to answer you.
I know that it would be an honor to me to be relatives with you,
But your son is really strange.

People laugh at him and call him “majnun”.
My daughter doesn’t deserve a “Majnun”.

Chorus of Majnun’s matchmakers:

Hey, Arab, don’t disappoint us,
Give Leyli to Geys.
He has more goods, more money and a richer soul than anybody else.
You should know this.

Leyli’s father: I won’t give her, I won’t, I won’t,
A mad boy doesn’t suit Leyli.

(Based on the mugham Kurd-Shahnaz.)

Majnun: Dear God! Make me friends with troubled love.
Don’t separate me from the trouble of love.
Have mercy on the people who grieve.
I mean, give me more troubles!
Don’t take away these troubles from me as long as I exist.
I want my troubles, because troubles want me.

(Majnun and the matchmakers go away. Based on the mugham Shur.)

Leyli’s father: A person is always remembered if he has a good family,
Everything is created in this world according to a rule.
A child is the meaning of one’s soul,
Your child will determine your name in life.
He who is proud of his son is happy,
You’re happy if your son is skillful.
But it’s bad if he is stupid,
Acts badly or has a bad character.
And when he becomes a target for people’s scolding,
Then his parents will get tired of him.

(Leyli’s father leaves. Leyli arrives. Based on the mugham Zamin-Khare.)

Leyli: God has separated me from the meaning of my life.
Doesn’t my naïve crying prevent him from doing it?
My secret sorrow is killing me.
This is the sorrow
That my sweetheart is unaware of.

(Leyli leaves. Leyli’s father and Ibn Salam’s matchmakers enter the scene.)

Chorus of Ibn Salam’s matchmakers:

We’ve come to visit you, knowing your greatness,
And to reveal something to you and get its solution from you.

Leyli's father: Welcome,
It's an honor for me.
I'm ready to fulfill
Any order, if it's possible.

Matchmakers:

This boy here is Ibn Salam.
He has a great deal of wealth.
But it's a pity that
He has nobody to share his happiness and grief with.
He found out that you have a beautiful and honest daughter
And he wants to be relatives and friends with you.

Leyli's father: Noble people, I'm happy with this proposal.
In the name of God, I give Leyli
To Ibn Salam.
Oh God! Let Ibn Salam make her happy.

Ibn Salam: Now you are even dearer to me than my parents.
If God wills, I'll be a substitute son for you as well.

Chorus: Let's go now and begin preparations for the wedding.

(Everyone leaves. Leyli enters. Based on the mugham Gatar.)

Leyli: God, I didn't want it, you did it against my will.
I wanted a flower, but you stuck me with a thorn.

Act 3

Introduction

(Ibn Salam's home is on one side of the stage; the other side is a street. Zeyd and Majnun are sitting in the street as the wedding is held inside the room. Based on the mugham Rast.)

Zeyd: Yesterday the star of your luck found darkness,
Life tortured poor you.
Your sweetheart became Ibn Salam's,
And this caused you burning sorrow.
Leyli became the sweetheart of an enemy.
Now you find consolation only in the fact that she exists.

Chorus of guests: Be happy, Ibn Salam, we hope your dreams come true,
We hope you spend happy days.
We hope you have a child. Congratulations on your wedding!

(Dance. The same chorus again. Based on the mugham Tarkib.)

Majnun: Why did you fall in love with a stranger?
Who do you enjoy your time and share your feelings with?
Is it honest of you to break your promise?
You made promises to me, but now what has happened, cruel girl?

Leyli and Ibn Salam's duet:

Ibn Salam: Leyli, this sad voice is Majnun's,
I recognize it.
But hasn't this mad boy left you alone yet, Leyli?
Leyli, tell me, tell me the truth, are you in love with him, too?
Do you nurse love in your heart?
Do you want Majnun to be your lover?

Leyli: Ibn Salam, let me tell you the truth,
I've been in love with Majnun since childhood.
We swore to love each other forever.
Now you tell me, you tell yourself, can I break my promise? Can I put out the fire of love?
It's burning my heart.
Be patient for some time, let the fire of love cool down in my heart.

Ibn Salam: I think Leyli wants to try me out.
I know what she wants.

Leyli: Ibn Salam, be patient,
Maybe Majnun will leave me alone, too.

Ibn Salam: Leyli, I'm ready to wait,
I want you to know that I'm ready to suffer for you.

(Majnun goes up to the house where the wedding is held. Based on the mugham Tarkib.)

Majnun: What did I do to make you get tired of me?
I grieved for you, but you chose a stranger to share your grief and happiness with.
Is this a tradition at your place, is this called love?
You cruel person, did you forget about our vows?

Chorus: Majnun, Majnun, let's go, this is the house of your rival.
They scold you, don't disgrace yourself.

Leyli: God, what kind of torture, what kind of oppression is this?
I was on fire with love, I discovered the torture of separation.

Majnun: So this is your loyalty?
Can an unfaithful person be a lover?

Chorus: Majnun, let's go home,

Pity your father,
Have mercy on your mother.
God has mercilessly separated Leyli from you,
So you should throw love out of your head, too.

Act 4

(In a forest, a little before morning. A mountain is nearby. Based on the mugham Bayati-Shiraz)
Majnun appears, barefoot and bareheaded.)

Majnun: I lost my mind because I discovered love
Wise man, don't blame me when you see my disgrace,
Don't blame me for tearing my garments,
I'm excused!
I am free from harm and bare of clothes.
I'm a savage in the wild world, I don't settle down for a healthy life,
I can't be a hostage of the dark, because what I want is light.

(Based on the mugham Bayati-Kurd.)

Majnun begins singing, addressing the mountain:

Hey, you honest hermit,
Now you know about my burning heart.
You're a true friend to me
A mountain is always a friend to a lover.
Let's cry about this adventure,
Let's cry together for some time.

Girls' Chorus: The girl who's coming looks like his sweetheart, her hair is as tender as the snow,
Hey girl, hey girl, look here for a moment!
She has two moles on her face and long, falling hair,
She has flirtatious eyes that steal souls.
Come, Leyli, let's go and take a walk in this garden.
The flowers have blossomed, the nightingales sing.

(Based on the mugham Panjgah. Majnun's father comes. He looks for Majnun and finds him.)

Majnun's father: You, the meaning of my life,
You, the apple of my eye,
Why do you fall into these adventures?
Why do you cause such shameful gossip?
I wanted you to be my protection!
My pride, my honor, my hope,
Why are you joining the savages?
Aren't you happy to be living with people?
Have mercy on me, for my dreams didn't come true,
Don't leave me with this difficult trouble!

(Based on the mugham Rast.)

Majnun: Tell me, you who gives me advice,
Who are you and what is this conversation?
What are these useless, vain words?
Go away, you're not the solution of my trouble!
You're indifferent, you're not a friend!
I won't listen to such words,
Either tell me a word from Leyli or be silent!

Several Arabs pity Majnun, seeing him in this condition, and ask his father:

Tell us, Arab, why is this boy sick?
Maybe we have the remedy for his misfortune.
We are experienced people.
We cure the sick.
You should know what happened to this person.

Majnun's father: God's creatures, this is my child,
His misfortune is love, he's in love with a girl,
He's in love with Leyli.
I've taken him to so many places
To find a remedy for him.
They gave him a thousand kinds of remedies, but none helped.

Chorus: Wise old man, his misfortune has only one remedy,
You have to take him to Kaba. Maybe if he sees "hajar" [the holy stone],
He'll be cured of his misfortune.
We're also experienced; let the boy bow to Kaba,
And you face the house of God as well,
Pray and ask for a cure.

(Based on the mugham Arag.)

Majnun: Hey, those of you who cure, the misfortune of love doesn't have a remedy.
It's not easy to separate the body from the soul.
I wouldn't call a lover the one who complains about the meaning of his life,
When you're drunk with love, you don't know the quality of life.
Only a sweetheart can separate the soul from the body,
The soul that is aware of the body isn't going to join his sweetheart.

(Nofal's scene with the choir.)

Nofal: Hey, you sick man, what is this torment you're going through?
Why do you waste a precious boy in these ruins?
What can a savage know about your grief?
You're a person, so ask people to help you.
You're a person, so ask for help so that you can recover.

Chorus: This boy is in love with a beautiful girl called Leyli.
But he isn't happy, the girl's father won't give his approval.
And he has become mad because of his love for the girl.
He has abandoned the world and run away from his parents.
He has abandoned the world and become "majnun".

Nofal: Hey young boy, I see that your grief is your misfortune,
But don't lose hope, God is merciful.
I'll try to get Leyli for you.
If they want gold, I'll give it to them.
Otherwise, I'll get her with the power of my sword.

(Nofal writes a letter and sends it. Based on the mugham Kabili)

Majnun: I know that you're very kind, but
Many have tried to help me out of this grief.
Unfortunately, it's no use, as I have no luck.
I know my luck is bad.

Chorus: Hey, Nofal, it's known that you're very brave,
But Majnun doesn't have luck or fate.

Majnun: I don't have luck or fate.
I'm Majnun.

Arabs: Majnun's only help is God,
Only God can help him.

Nofal: Don't grieve, because if I take care of you,
Even a stranger will be a sweetheart to you.
Don't lose hope! Try hard so that your sweetheart will want you, too.
Because if she does, it will be easier.

Chorus of messengers: This letter is for the Emir called Nofal,
It's from the Emir called Abu-Leila,
And he's here himself waiting for an answer.
Write the answer quickly so that we can take it to him.
Maybe then this rivalry will end.

Nofal: Tell Abu-Leila to come to my place quickly.
Go and tell him to come into my presence!
Give orders to the troops to be ready for war.
I think this won't end without a war.

(Leyli's father enters the scene with armed Arabs.)

Nofal sings, addressing them:

Hey, chief of a respected tribe, you were indifferent to my friend.
Give Leyli to Majnun. If you do,
I'll make you wealthy and give you gold.
But if you don't do as I say, you'll become victims of my sword.

Leyli's father:

Hey, brave man, he is crazy. We don't have a daughter for a crazy boy.
We don't want your gold, we refuse it,
And we're not afraid of your sword, do whatever you wish!
Come on, don't brag about your sword
Because we have swords, too.

(Fight scene. Both sides take out their swords and begin fighting. Majnun takes a sword and attacks Nofal's people.)

Nofal takes him away and says:

What are you doing crazy boy? Are you helping the enemy?
We're dying for you,
And why do you kill us?
Throw the sword away! I'm trying to defeat the enemy
And get Leyli for you.

(Based on the mugham Kabili.)

Majnun: Hey, Nofal, I'd sacrifice myself for my sweetheart,
I hope to join her.
I'll be happy if the victory
Is on my sweetheart's side.
If a friend takes out a sword to kill me,
I'll only be happy.
If I die, I will reach a union with my beloved!

(Right then, Leyli's father and Ibn Salam throw their swords on the ground near Nofal's feet. Leyli's father sings, addressing Nofal.)

Leyli's father: Hey, brave man, you won, have mercy on us!
Don't kill these people in vain,
I've given Leyli to a different person,
Leyli is married to Ibn Salam,
Now don't let the girl have two husbands,
Wouldn't this be something that affects our honor?

Nofal: It's true. Hey, troops, enough of fighting,
Enough of war.
If you had said this earlier, I wouldn't have shed this much blood.
I would have asked for sense for Majnun from God.

(Everybody sings together, raising their hands to the sky.)

Chorus: Dear God! Forgive your creatures this sin. Rescue Majnun from this love!

Act 5

Ibn Salam's home. Leyli's room. Leyli is sick. (Based on the mugham Arazbari)

(Based on the mugham Osmani.)

Ibn Salam: I was sad, but you never asked why,
I found misfortune because I grieved for you, but you didn't give me a remedy.
What do you say, shall my life be like this forever, my darling?
My soul, my dear, my beloved one, my wealthy sultan, the apple of my eye!
I haven't seen loyalty from you since I became a permanent slave of your love,
I've never been able to share my feelings with you.
My soul, my dear, my beloved one, my wealthy sultan, the apple of my eye!

Leyli and Ibn Salam's duet:

Leyli: You take care of me, don't you see how I feel?
Don't you see my troubled body, my burning soul?
Don't you see that I'm always grieving?

Ibn Salam: You, the apple of my eye, you didn't follow my advice,
You fell in love with a crazy boy,
You made yourself sick.

Leyli: Tell me, Ibn Salam, if you are a true lover,
Is it possible to stop loving if you're in love?
Is it possible to turn off the fire of love that's burning in your heart?

(Ibn Salam leaves. Majnun enters.)

Majnun (complaining):
Leyli, unfaithful Leyli,
You fell in love with another,
You drove me crazy.
You made the people talk about me everywhere, cruel girl.
My soul broke down because of your love,
Mountains trembled because of my sigh.
But then, you unfaithful girl, you
Became disloyal to me, you cruel person.
As long as I'm alive,
I will be burning in the fire of love.
I'll moan
And burn the mountains, cruel girl!

(Based on the mugham Segah.)

Leyli: Come, Majnun, I'm Leyli, take my soul away,
I've been unfaithful, I swear, shed my blood.

(Majnun backs up when he sees Leyli. Based on the mugham Kharij Segah.)

Majnun: You're not Leyli, beautiful lady,
Go away, don't make my heart bloody!
Don't deceive me, run away from me calling me crazy,
Go away, you remind me of Leyli with your beautiful face.

(Majnun leaves.)

Leyli (alone):
I'm happy as long as my beloved one torments me,
If only people wouldn't call me unfaithful.
I've become an idler in this world of separation from you,
Only the hope of joining with you keeps me alive.
Don't leave me powerless in this bed of sadness,
Hey moon, heal me with the wine of joining.

(Leyli dies.)

(Graveyard. Leyli's grave is seen. Based on the mugham Bayati-Kurd.)

Majnun: Fate drew me into hopelessness through its oppression, help!
Heavens turned my flowers into fall, help!
Hey life, what have I done to you? I don't know.
My bloody tears have created a sea, help!

Zeyd: Hey, unfortunate lover,
It's a pity that your effort turned out to be nothing!
Leyli gave you her life,
She has left this world, left you alone!
The beautiful lady you were ready to sacrifice yourself to
Sacrificed herself to you!
That beautiful lady flew to the heavens,
She reached paradise.

Majnun: Why did you put an end to my life?
My heart can't do anything because of you!
You made me powerless,
You set my soul on fire with torment!
Take me to the place where my beloved is,
Make me a candle on my sweetheart's grave!

(At Leyli's grave. Based on the mugham Tarkib.)

Majnun: Only the one who is willing to sacrifice his life for his sweetheart can be a lover.
He who wouldn't give his life for his sweetheart shouldn't be called a lover.
A lover's aim is to give his life to his beloved one,
The soul that hasn't been given to a sweetheart is wasted.

(Majnun dies. Arabs enter the scene.)

Chorus: Incurable, loyal lover Majnun!
A hundred times pity
That your moaning went for nothing.
Love's moaning is misfortune.
The one who loves gets himself into trouble.

Curtain