Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2015-2016 Mellon Grand Classics Season

April 1, 2 and 3, 2016

MANFRED MARIA HONECK, CONDUCTOR
EMANUEL AX, PIANO
/ , BOY SOLOIST
/ , SOPRANO
/ , BASS
THE ALL UNIVERSITY CHOIR
CHRISTINE HESTWOOD AND ROBERT PAGE, DIRECTORS
/ CHILDREN'S CHORUS
/ , DIRECTOR

JOHANNES BRAHMS — Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 83
I. Allegro non troppo
II. Allegro appassionato
III. Andante
IV. Allegretto grazioso
Mr. Ax

Intermission

CARL ORFF — "Fortuna imperatrix mundi" from *Carmina Burana* for Chorus and Orchestra

LEONARD BERNSTEIN — *Chichester Psalms* for Chorus, Boy Soloist and Orchestra
I. Psalm 108, vs. 2 (Maestoso ma energico) —
Psalm 100 (Allegro molto)
II. Psalm 23 (Andante con moto, ma tranquillo) —
Psalm 2, vs. 1-4 (Allegro feroce) —
Meno come prima
III. Prelude (Sostenuto molto) —
Psalm 131 (Peacefully flowing) —
Psalm 133, vs. 1 (Lento possibile)
boy soloist

GIUSEPPE VERDI — Overture to *La forza del destino*

GIUSEPPE VERDI — "Te Deum" (No. 4) from *Quattro Pezzi Sacri*

for Chorus and Orchestra
soprano soloist

ARRIGO BOITO — Prologue to *Mefistofele* for Bass Solo, Chorus, Children's Chorus and Orchestra
bass soloist

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born 7 May 1833 in Hamburg, Germany; died 3 April 1897 in Vienna, Austria

Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 83 (1878, 1881)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Budapest, 9 November 1881; Redoutensaal; Orchestra of the National Theater; Alexander Erkel, conductor; Johannes Brahms, soloist
PSO PREMIERE: 15 January 1909; Carnegie Music Hall; Emil Paur, conductor and soloist
APPROXIMATE DURATION: 50 minutes
INSTRUMENTATION: woodwinds in pairs plus piccolo, four horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings

In April 1878, Brahms journeyed to Goethe's "land where the lemon trees bloom" with two friends, the Viennese surgeon Theodor Billroth and the composer Carl Goldmark. Though he found the music of Italy ghastly (he complained of hearing one opera that consisted wholly of final cadences), he loved the cathedrals, the sculptures, the artworks and, especially, the countryside. Spring was just turning into summer during his visit, and he wrote to his dear friend Clara Schumann, "You can have no conception of how beautiful it is here." Still under the spell of the beneficent Italian climate, Brahms sketched themes for his Second Piano Concerto on his return to Austria on the eve of his 45th birthday. Other matters pressed, however, and the Concerto was put aside. Three years later, during the spring of 1881, Brahms returned to Italy and he was inspired by this second trip to resume composition on the Concerto. The score was completed by July. Whether or not the halcyon influence of Italy can be detected in the wondrous music of the B-flat Concerto is for each listener to decide. This work is certainly much more mellow than the stormy First Concerto, introduced over twenty years earlier, but whether this quality is the result of Brahms' trips to the sunny south, or of a decade of imbibing Viennese *Gemütlichkeit*, or simply of greater maturity remains a matter for speculation.

The Concerto opens with a sylvan horn call answered by sweeping arpeggios from the piano. These initial gestures are introductory to the sonata form proper, which begins with the robust entry of the full orchestra. A number of themes are presented in the exposition; most are lyrical, but one is vigorously rhythmic. The development uses all of the thematic material, with one section welded almost seamlessly to the next, a characteristic of all Brahms' greatest works. The recapitulation is ushered in by the solo horn, here given a richer orchestral accompaniment than on its earlier appearance.

It is rare for a concerto to have more than three movements. The second movement, a scherzo, was added by Brahms to expand the structure of this Concerto to a symphonic four movements. The composer's biographer Max Kalbeck thought that the movement had originally been intended for the Violin Concerto but that Brahms, on the advice of Joseph Joachim, for whom the piece was written, had eliminated it from that work. In key and mood, it differs from the other movements of the Concerto to provide a welcome contrast in the overall architecture of the composition.

The third movement is a touching nocturne based on the song of the solo cello heard immediately at the beginning. (Brahms later fitted this same melody with words as the song *Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer* ["*My Sleep Grows Ever More Peaceful*"].) An agitated central section gives way to long, magical phrases for the clarinets which lead to a return of the solo cello's lovely theme.

The finale fuses rondo and sonata elements in a style strongly reminiscent of Hungarian Gypsy music. The jaunty rondo theme is presented without introduction. It is carefully and thoroughly examined before two lyrical motives are presented. As a study in the way in which small musical fragments may be woven into an exquisite whole, this rousing movement is unexcelled.

CARL ORFF

Born 10 July 1895 in Munich, Germany; died 29 March 1982 in Munich

"Fortuna imperatrix mundi" ("Fortune, Empress of the World") from *Carmina Burana* (1935-1936)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Frankfurt, 8 December 1937; Frankfurt Opera House; Bertil Wetzelberger, conductor
PSO PREMIERE: 11 November 1955; Syria Mosque; William Steinberg, conductor
APPROXIMATE DURATION: 3 minutes
INSTRUMENTATION: three flutes, three oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, three clarinets, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, two pianos and strings

Thirty miles south of Munich, in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps, is the abbey of Benediktbeuren. In 1803, a 13th-century codex was discovered among its holdings that contains some 200 secular poems which give a vivid, earthy portrait of Medieval life. Many of these poems, attacking the defects of the Church, satirizing contemporary manners and morals, criticizing the omnipotence of money, and praising the sensual joys of food, drink and physical love, were written by an amorphous band known as "Goliards." These wandering scholars and ecclesiastics, who were often esteemed teachers and recipients of courtly patronage, filled their worldly verses with images of self-indulgence that were probably as much literary convention as biographical fact. The language they used was a heady mixture of Latin, old German and old French. Some paleographic musical notation appended to a few of the poems indicates that they were sung, but it is today so obscure as to be indecipherable. This manuscript was published in 1847 by Johann Andreas Schmeller under the title *Carmina Burana* ("*Songs of Beuren*"), "carmina" being the plural of the Latin word for song, "carmen."

Carl Orff encountered these lusty lyrics for the first time in the 1930s, and he was immediately struck by their theatrical potential. He chose 24 poems from the *Carmina Burana* to include in a new work. Since the 13th-century music for them was unknown, all of their settings are original with him. Orff's *Carmina Burana* is disposed in three large sections with prologue and epilogue. Its movements sing the libidinous songs of youth, joy and love. However, the prologue and epilogue (using the same verses and music) that frame these pleasurable accounts warn against unbridled enjoyment. "The wheel of fortune turns; dishonored I fall from grace and another is raised on high," caution the words of *Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi* ("*Fortune, Empress of the World*"), the chorus that stands like pillars of eternal verity at the entrance and exit of this Medieval world. They are the ancient poet's reminder that mortality is the human lot, that the turning of the same Wheel of Fortune that brings sensual pleasure may also grind that joy to dust.

O fortuna,
velut luna
statu variabilis,
semper crescis
aut decrescis;
vita detestabilis
nunc obdurat
et tunc curat
ludo mentis aciem,
egestatem,
potestatem
dissolvit ut glaciem.

O fortune!
Like the moon
everchanging,
rising first
then declining;
hateful life
treats us badly
then with kindness,
making sport with our desires,
causing power
and poverty alike
to melt like ice.

Sors immanis
et inanis,
rota tu volubilis,
status malus,
vana salus
semper dissolubilis,
obumbrata
et velata
michi quoque niteris;
nunc per ludum
dorsum nudum
fero tui sceleris.

Dread destiny
and empty fate,
an ever turning wheel,
who make adversity
and fickle health
alike turn to nothing,
in the dark
and secretly
you work against me;
how through your trickery
my naked back
is turned to you unarmed.

Sors salutis	Good fortune
et virtutis	and strength
michi nunc contraria,	now are turned from me,
est affectus	Affection
et defectus	and defeat
semper in angaria.	are always on duty.
Hac in hora	Come now,
sine mora	pluck the strings
corde pulsum tangite;	without delay;
quod per sortem	and since by fate
sternit fortem,	the strong are overthrown,
mecum omnes plangite!	weep ye all with me.

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

Born 25 August 1918 in Lawrence, Massachusetts; died 14 October 1990 in New York City

Chichester Psalms for Mixed Choir, Boy Soloist and Orchestra (1965)

PREMIERE OF WORK: New York City, 15 July 1965; Philharmonic Hall, New York Philharmonic; Leonard Bernstein, conductor
PSO PREMIERE: 21 May 1967; Civic Arena; William Steinberg, conductor
APPROXIMATE DURATION: 18 minutes
INSTRUMENTATION: three trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion, two harps and strings

The *Chichester Psalms* was commissioned by the Very Rev. Walter Hussey, Dean of Chichester Cathedral for the 1965 Southern Cathedrals Festival, in which the musicians of Chichester have participated with those of the neighboring cathedrals of Salisbury and Winchester since 1959. The musical traditions of these great cathedrals extend far back into history, to at least the time when the eminent early-17th-century keyboard virtuoso and composer Thomas Weelkes occupied the organ bench at Chichester. The mood of the *Chichester Psalms* is humble and serene, unlike the powerful but despairing nature of Bernstein's "Kaddish" Symphony of 1963, composed shortly before this work. Both use traditional texts sung in Hebrew, but the message of the *Psalms* is one of man's closeness to God rather than the one of frustration and anger and shaken faith engendered by God's inexplicable acts as portrayed by the "Kaddish." It is indicative that the composer chose the 23rd Psalm ("The Lord is my Shepherd") for the second movement, the heart of the *Chichester Psalms*.

The first movement opens with a broad chorale ("Awake, psaltery and harp!") that serves as the structural buttress for the entire composition. It is transformed, in quick tempo, to open and close the dance-like main body of this movement (in 7/4 meter), and it reappears at the beginning and end of the finale in majestic settings. The bounding, sprung rhythms and exuberant energy of the fast music of the first movement are a perfect embodiment of the text, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands."

The touching simplicity of the second movement recalls the pastoral song of David, the young shepherd. The sopranos take over the melody from the soloist, and carry it forward in gentle but strict imitation. Suddenly, threatening music is hurled forth by the men's voices punctuated by slashing chords from the orchestra. They challenge the serene strains of peace with the harsh question, "Why do the nations rage?" The quiet song, temporarily banished, reappears in the high voices, like calming oil on troubled waters. The hard tones subside, and once again the shepherd sings and strums upon his harp. As a coda, the mechanistic sounds of conflict, soft but worrisome, enter once again, as if blown on an ill wind from some distant land.

The finale begins with an instrumental prelude based on the stern chorale that opened the work. The muted solo trumpet and the harp recall a phrase from the shepherd's song to mark the central point of this introductory strain. The chorus intones a gently swaying theme on the text, "Lord, Lord, My heart is not haughty." The *Chichester Psalms* concludes with yet another adaptation of the recurring chorale, here given new words and a deeper meaning. This closing sentiment is not only the central message of the work, and the linchpin of its composer's philosophy of life, but also is a thought which all must hold dear in troubled times:

Behold how good,
And how pleasant it is,
For brethren to dwell
Together in unity.

I.

Psalm 108, verse 2:

Urah, hanevel, v'chinor!	Awake, psaltery and harp!
A-irah shahar!	I will rouse the dawn!

Psalm 100, entire:

Hariu l'Adonai kol haarets.	Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands.
Iv'du et Adonai b'simcha.	Serve the Lord with gladness.
Bo-u l'fanav bir'nanah.	Come before His presence with singing.
D'u ki Adonai Hu Elohim.	Know ye that the Lord, He is God.
Hu asanu, v'lo anahnu.	It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.
Amo v'tson mar'ito.	We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
Bo-u sh'arav b'todah,	Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
Hatseirotav bit'hilah,	And into His courts with praise,
Hodu lo, bar'chu sh'mo.	Be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.
Ki tov Adonai, l'olam has'do,	For the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting,
V'ad dor vador emunato.	And His truth endureth to all generations.

II.

Psalm 23, entire:

Adonai ro-i, lo ehsar.	The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
Bin'ot deshe yarbitseini,	He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,
Al mei m'nuhot y'nahaleini,	He leadeth me beside the still waters,
Naf'shi y'shovev,	He restoreth my soul,
Yan'heini b'ma'aglei tsedek,	He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness,
L'ma'an sh'mo.	For His name's sake.
Gam ki eilech	Yea, though I walk
B'gei tsalmavet,	Through the valley of the shadow of death,
Lo ira ra,	I will fear no evil,
Ki Atah imadi.	For Thou art with me.
Shiv't'cha umishan'techa	Thy rod and Thy staff
Heimah y'nahamuni.	They comfort me.
Ta'aroch l'fanai shulchan.	Thou preparest a table before me.
Neged tsor'rai,	In the presence of mine enemies,
Dishanta vashemen roshi	Thou annointest my head with oil,
Cosi r'vayah.	My cup runneth over.
Ach tov vahesed	Surely goodness and mercy
Yird'funi kol y'mei hayai,	Shall follow me all the days of my life,
V'shav'ti b'veit Adonai	And I will dwell in the house of the Lord
L'orech yamim.	Forever.

Psalm 2, verses 1-4:

Lamah rag'shu goyim	Why do the nations rage,
Ul'umim yeh'gu rik?	And the people imagine a vain thing?
Yit'yats'vu malchei erets,	The kings of the earth set themselves,
V'roznim nos'du yahad,	And the rulers take counsel together

Al Adonai v'al m'shiho.	Against the Lord and against His annointed.
N'natkah et mos'roteimo,	Saying, let us break their bonds asunder,
V'nashlichah mimenu avoteimo.	And cast away their cords from us.
Yoshev bashamayim	He that sitteth in the heavens
Yis'hak, Adonai	Shall laugh, and the Lord
Yil'ag lamo!	Shall have them in derision!

III.

Psalm 131, entire:

Adonai, Adonai,	Lord, Lord,
Lo gavah libi,	My heart is not haughty,
V'lo ramu einai,	Nor mine eyes lofty,
V'lo hilachti	Neither do I exercise myself
Big'dolot uv'niflaot	In great matters or in things
Mimeni.	Too wonderful for me.
Im lo shiviti	Surely I have calmed
V'domam'ti,	And quieted myself,
Naf'shi k'gamul alei imo,	As a child that is weaned of his mother,
Kagamul alai naf'shi.	My soul is even as a weaned child.
Yahel Yis'rael el Adonai	Let Israel hope in the Lord
Me'atah v'ad olam.	From henceforth and forever.

Psalm 133, verse 1:

Hineh mah tov,	Behold how good,
Umah nayim,	And how pleasant it is,
Shevet ahim	For brethren to dwell
Gam yahad.	Together in unity.

GIUSEPPE VERDI

Born 10 October 1813 in Le Roncole, near Busseto; died 27 January 1901 in Milan

Overture to *La Forza del Destino* ("*The Force of Destiny*") (1861-1862)

PREMIERE OF WORK: St. Petersburg, 17 November 1862; Imperial Theater; Edoardo Bauer, conductor
PSO PREMIERE: 25 March 1955; Syria Mosque; Karl Kritz, conductor
APPROXIMATE DURATION: 8 minutes
INSTRUMENTATION: woodwinds in pairs plus piccolo, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps and strings

La forza del destino is set in 18th-century Spain. Alvaro has accidentally killed the father of his beloved, Leonora, during the lovers' attempted elopement. Separately, they flee. Leonora's brother, Carlo, swears vengeance on both her and their father's murderer. Leonora first seeks refuge at a convent, and then goes to live as a hermit in a cave. Carlo and Alvaro meet during a military encounter, and Carlo discovers the true identity of his adversary just after Alvaro is carried away, wounded. Alvaro joins the Church as a monk, but he is followed by Carlo who enrages Alvaro to the point of a duel. They fight near Leonora's cave, interrupting her prayers, and she goes to see what is causing the commotion. As she emerges from her cave, the lovers recognize each other, and Alvaro cries that he has spilled the blood of yet another of her family. She rushes off to help her fatally wounded brother, but Carlo, with his last bit of strength, stabs Leonora, and she dies in Alvaro's arms. The Overture, which utilizes several themes from the opera, reflects the strong emotions of the work, though it does not follow the progress of the story.

GIUSEPPE VERDI

"Te Deum" (No. 4) from *Quattro Pezzi Sacri* ("*Four Sacred Pieces*") for Chorus and Orchestra (1895)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Paris, 26 May 1898; Paris Conservatoire; Paul Taffanel, conductor
PSO PREMIERE: 2 March 1956; Syria Mosque; William Steinberg, conductor
APPROXIMATE DURATION: 15 minutes
INSTRUMENTATION: three flutes, three oboes, English horn, three clarinets, bass clarinet, four bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion and strings

In 1895, as "an act of thanksgiving not for myself but for the public which is free after so many years of the necessity of listening to any more of my operas," he turned in 1895 to the fifth-century hymn *Te Deum*, which legend says was spontaneously improvised by the two holy men in alternating verses when St. Ambrose baptized St. Augustine. Verdi wrote, "I know some old settings of the *Te Deum*, and I have heard quite a lot of modern ones, but to me no realization of this hymn has ever been convincing, quite aside from their musical value." Verdi really meant that he found the expression of earlier *Te Deum* settings insufficient to portray the dramatic qualities of the text. To embody his vision for these words, Verdi called for a large orchestra to accompany the mixed chorus, and he emphasized the text's prayer for deliverance from the wrath to come and avowal of trust in God's mercy above its more usual setting as a piece of ceremonial music for public rejoicing. The *Te Deum* was completed in February 1896 and included as the final of the *Four Sacred Pieces*, the last music he completed. The *Te Deum* apparently pleased Verdi greatly, since he once asked that a copy of it be buried with him.

Te Deum laudamus, te Dominum confitemur. Te aeternum Patrem omnis terra veneratur. Tibi omnes Angeli, tibi caeli, et universae Potestates, tibi Cherubim et Seraphim incessabili voce proclamant: Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt caeli et terra majestatis gloriae tuae.	We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. Thee, the Father everlasting, all the earth doth worship. To Thee all the angels, to Thee the heavens, and all the powers, to Thee the cherubim and seraphim cry out without ceasing: Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts. Full are the heavens and the earth of the majesty of Thy glory.
Te gloriosus Apostolorum chorus, te Prophetarum laudabilis numerus, te Martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus. Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur Ecclesia, Patrem immensae majestatis; venerandum tuum verum et unicum Filium; Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum.	Thee, the glorious choir of the apostles, Thee, the admirable company of the prophets, Thee, the white-robed army of martyrs doth praise. Thee, the holy Church throughout the world doth confess: The Father of incomprehensible majesty; Thine adorable, true, and only Son, and the Holy Ghost the Paraclete.
Tu rex gloriae, Christe. Tu Patris sempiternus es Filius. Tu, ad liberandum suscepturus hominem, non horruisti Virginis uterum. Tu, devicto mortis aculeo, aperuisti credentibus regna caelorum. Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes in gloria Patris. Judex crederis esse venturus.	Thou, o Christ, art the King of glory. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. Thou, having taken upon Thee to deliver man, didst not disdain the Virgin's womb. Thou, having overcome the sting of death, hast opened to believers the kingdom of heaven. Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father. Thou, we believe, art the Judge to come.

Te ergo quaesumus, famulis tuis subveni,	We beseech Thee, therefore, to help Thy servants,
quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.	whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood.
Aeterna fac cum Sanctis tuis in gloria numerari.	Make them to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting.
Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine, et benedic hereditati tuae. Et rege eos et extolle illos usque in aeternum. Per singulos dies benedicimus te. Et laudamus nomen tuum in saeculum et in saeculum saeculi. Dignare, Domine, die isto sine peccato nos custodire. Miserere nostri, Domine, miserere nostri! Fiat misencordia tua, Domine, super nos, quemadmodum speravimus in te. In te speravi: non confundar in aeternum.	O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance. And govern them, and exalt them for ever. Day by day we bless Thee. And we praise Thy name for ever; yea, for ever and ever. Vouchsafe, O Lord, this day to keep us without sin. Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us! Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have trusted in Thee. In Thee have I trusted: let me not be confounded for ever.
In, Domine, te speravi.	In Thee, Lord, have I trusted.

ARRIGO BOITO

Born 24 February 1842 in Padua, Italy; died 10 June 1918 in Milan

Prologue to *Mefistofele* ("*Mephistopheles*") for Bass Solo, Choruses, Children's Chorus and Orchestra (1862-1868, revised 1875 and 1876)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Milan, 5 March 1868; La Scala; Arrigo Boito, conductor
THESE PERFORMANCES MARK THE PSO PREMIERE
APPROXIMATE DURATION: 24 minutes
INSTRUMENTATION: piccolo, three flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, organ, off-stage brass and strings

Though Arrigo Boito is remembered primarily for the masterful librettos he created for Verdi's last two operas (*Otello* and *Falstaff*), he was a man of wide accomplishment. In addition to writing opera librettos for Catalani, Ponchielli and Bottesini, he was also a critic of repute, a poet and a champion of such younger composers as Puccini. His only musical works of importance are his two operas — *Mefistofele* and the unfinished *Nerone* ("Nero"). Boito first considered Goethe's *Faust* for operatic setting in the early 1860s, and he worked on the score until 1868, when it was staged at La Scala in Milan. The premiere was a failure due to the inadequate performance under the direction of the composer (Boito's talents apparently did not extend to conducting), vocal deficiencies in the cast, and the score's six-hour length. Boito undertook extensive revisions of the libretto and music, and *Mefistofele* enjoyed great success when it was re-staged, in Bologna in 1875. His grand vision, in which he tried to encompass Goethe's characters and philosophy, is nowhere better seen than in the thrilling *Prologue in Heaven*, one of the most imposing scenes in all of Italian opera.

Prologue in Heaven

The cloudy regions of space. Flourish of trumpets. Thunder.
The Celestial Host invisible behind the screens of clouds.
Mystic Chorus, Cherubims, Penitents. Then Mephistopheles, alone, in the shadows.

FIRST CELESTIAL HOST

Ave, Signor degli angeli e dei santi
E delle sfere erranti
E dei volanti — cherubini d'ôr.
Dall'eterna armonia dell'Universo
Nel glauco spazio immerso
Emana un verso — di supremo amor:
E s'erge a Te per l'aure azzurre e cave

In suon soave.

Hail, Lord of angels and saints,
And of the errant spheres
And of the flying, golden cherubim.
From the eternal harmony of the universe,
Immersed in the vastness of space,
Springs a strain of supreme love.
And rises to Thee through the azure
and hollow air
In a sweet swell of sound.

ECHOES

Ave!

Hail!

MEPHISTOPHELES
(*appearing, self-assuredly*)

Ave, Signor, perdona se il mio gergo
Sia lascia un po' da tergo
Le superne teodie del paradiso;
Perdona se il mio viso
Non porta il raggio che inghirlanda i crini

Degli alti cherubini:
Perdona se dicendo io corro rischio
Di buscar qualche fischio.
Il Dio piccin della piccina terra
Ognor traligna ed erra
E, al par di grillo saltellante, a caso
Spinge fra gli astri il naso.
Poi con tenace fatuità superba
Fa il suo trillo nell'erba.
Boriosa polve! tracotato atòmo!
Fantasima dell'uomo!
E tale il fa quell'ebra illusïone
Ch'egli chiama Ragione.
Sì, Maestro divino, in buio fondo
Crolla il padron del mondo.
E non mi dà più il cuor, tant'è fiaccato,
Di tentarlo al mal.

Hail, Lord, pardon me if my jargon
Falls a mite behind
The divine anthems of paradise;
Forgive me if my countenance
Does not wear the halo which wreathes
the locks
Of the elect cherubim;
Pardon me if, by speaking frankly, I run the risk
Of getting a hiss or two.
The tiny God of the tiny earth
Degenerates steadily and strays
And, hopping like a cricket, by chance
Pokes his nose among the stars,
Then with arrogant and tenacious fatuity
Chirps away again in the grass.
Conceited dust! Haughty atom!
Phantom of man!
And he is made so by that drunken illusion
Which he calls — Reason.
Yes, divine Master, in pitch dark
The lord of the world is crumbling.
And I no longer have the heart, so worn out is it,
To tempt him to evil.

MYSTIC CHORUS

T'è noto Faust?

Is Faust known to you?

MEPHISTOPHELES

Il più bizzarro pazzo
Ch'io mi conosca, in cruïosa forma
Ei ti serve da senno. Inassopita
Bramosia di saper il fa tapino
Ed anelante; egli vorrebbe quasi
Trasumanar e nulla scienza al cupo
Suo delirio è confine. Io mi sobbarco
Ad aescarlo per modo ch'ei si trovi

The most fantastic madman
I know; in his own curious way
He serves you in earnest. An insatiable
Lust for knowledge makes him a poor
Panting wretch; he would wish to be almost
Superhuman and no learning can satisfy his
Somber mania. I am preparing
To lure him and ensnare him

Nelle mie reti; or vuoi farne scommessa?

In my toils; now will you wager on it?

MYSTIC CHORUS

E sia.

So be it.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Sia! vecchio Padre, a un rude gioco
T'avventurasti. Ei morderà nel dolce
Pomo de' vizi e sovra il Re del ciel
Avrò vittoria!

Amen! Aged Father, you have
Ventured into a rough game. He will bite
The sweet apple of sin and I shall triumph
Over the King of Heaven!

THE CELESTIAL HOST

Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!

Holy! Holy! Holy!

MEPHISTOPHELES

(Di tratto in tratto m'è piacevol cosa
Vedere il Vecchio e dal guastarmi seco
Molto mi guardo: è bello udir l'Eterno
Col diavolo parlar si umanamente.)

(From time to time I find it pleasant
To see the Old Man and I take good care
Not to fall out with Him: it is great to hear
The Eternal Father talking so humanly
with the devil.)

CHERUBIM
(*behind the clouds, approaching in a flurry of stars*)

Siam nimbi — volanti — dai limbi,
Nei santi — splendori — vaganti,
Siam cori — di bimbi, — d'amori.
Siam nimbi — volanti — dai limbi,
Nei santi, *etc*.

We are clouds flying from limbo,
Roving amid holy splendors,
We are choirs of children of cupids.
We are clouds flying from limbo,
Roving amid, *etc*.

(*repeating their song, they fade away*)

MEPHISTOPHELES

È lo sciame legger degli angioletti;
Come dell'api n'ho ribrezzo e noia.

It is the nimble swarm of little angels;
Like bees they fill me with loathing
and annoyance.

(*he vanishes*)

CHERUBIM

Fratelli, teniamci per mano;
Fin l'ultimo cielo lontano
Noi sempre dobbiamo danzar:
Fratelli, le morbide penne
Non cessino il volo perenne
Che intorno al Santissimo Altar.
La danza in angelica spira
Si gira, si gira, si gira.
Siam nimbi — volanti — dai limbi,
Nei santi — splendori — vaganti,
Siam cori — di bimbi, — d'amori.
Siam nimbi — volanti — dai limbi,
Nei santi, *etc*.

Brothers, let us hold hands;
As far as the furthest heavens
We must always dance:
Brothers, let our soft wings
Never cease their eternal flight
Till we circle the Holiest altar.
The dance in an angelical spiral
Turns, spins and whirls.
We are clouds flying from limbo,
Roving amid holy splendors,
We are choirs of children of cupids.
We are clouds flying from limbo,
Roving amid, *etc*.

(*circling again and again, then disappearing*)

PENITENT WOMEN (*from Earth*)

Salve Regina! — S'innalzi un'eco
Dal mondo cieco — alla divina
Reggia del ciel.
Col nostro canto, — col nostro pianto
Domiam l'intenso — foco del senso,
Col nostro canto mite e fedel.
Odi la pia — prece serena:
Ave Maria, gratïa plena.

Hail, Queen of Heaven! Let an echo rise
From the dark world to the divine
Palace of Heaven.
With our singing, with our tears
Let us quell the fierce fire of the senses,
With our meek and faithful song.
Hear our pious, serene prayer:
Hail Mary, full of grace.

CHERUBIM

Sugli astri, sui venti, sui mondi,
Sui limpidi azzurri profondi,
Sui raggi del sol ...
La danza in angelica spira
Si gira, si gira, si gira.

On the stars, the winds, the worlds,
On the limpid blue depths,
On the rays of the sun ...
The dance in an angelical spiral
Turns, twists and whirls.

THE CELESTIAL HOST

Oriam per quelle di morienti ignave
Anime schiave.

Let us pray for those timorous,
Enslaved souls of the dying.

ECHOES

Ave!

Hail!

PENITENT WOMEN

Il pentimento — lacrime spande.
Di queste blande — turbe il lamento
Accolga il ciel.
Odi la pia — prece serena:
Ave Maria, gratia plena.

The penitent sheds his tears.
May Heaven accept the lament
Of these frail multitudes!
Hear our pious, serene prayer:
Hail Mary, full of grace.

ECHOES

Ave! Ave! Ave!

Hail! Hail! Hail!

ALL THE CELESTIAL HOST

Ave, Signor degli angeli e dei santi
E delle sfere erranti
E dei volanti — cherubini d'ôr.
Dall'eterna armonia dell'Universo
Nel glauco spazio immerso
Emana un verso — di supremo amor.
E s'erge a Te per l'aure azzurre e cave

In suon soave.

Hail, Lord of angels and saints,
And of the errant spheres
And of the flying, golden cherubim.
From the eternal harmony of the universe,
Immersed in the vastness of space
Springs a strain of supreme love.
And rises to Thee through the azure
and hollow air
In a sweet swell of sound.

ECHOES

Ave!

Hail!