

CARMINA BURANA

CARL ORFF

LATIN TEXT
WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION,
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY
RICHARD GOSLING

Foreword.

After the dissolution of Benediktbeuern Monastery, Upper Bavaria, a C13th anthology of Medieval Latin poems was transferred to the Hof-Bibliothek, Munich, but never catalogued. In 1803 it was rediscovered and found to contain the world's largest collection of Medieval Latin secular poetry. 43 are marked to be sung. The first modern edition was by Schmeller in 1847, but in 1931 the first volume of Hilka and Schuman's authoritative edition was published. Carl Orff's musical selection is dated 1937.

Meanwhile, in 1926, a young PhD named Helen Waddell published a highly romanticised account of 'The Wandering Scholars', which became a best-selling Penguin paperback. I cannot decide whether she was exceptionally naive or exceptionally cunning, but all the great authorities from Germany seem to have written to her to tell her how wrong she was. Usually the PhDs do all the work and the professors take all the credit, but in this case Helen Waddell was able to thank them all prettily in her 6th edition of 1932. So Carl Orff's musical setting of this obscure Latin poetry came to a ready-made English audience.

Reading *The Carmina Burana* may be compared to a stroll along the sea-shore: the beautiful wet pebbles which may turn out to be dull and uninteresting when you take them home; the exquisite little wild flowers which could never win a modern flower show; curiously-shaped driftwood which might once have graced a sailing-ship; patterned spirals of shells which lack the living bodies. We admire them only as *objets Trouves* - but what a wonderful experience, nonetheless! We may miss some of the rare examples an expert would find, but we have the more exhilarating experience of being an explorer in unfamiliar territory.

In Carl Orff *The Carmina Burana* found its rightful arranger/composer: traditional, modern, eclectic and appropriately over-the-top. I hope you will find the same pleasure that I have found in this work.

The poems and songs are grouped in a cycle, or rather three interlocking cycles: 1) The cycle of the Church year, represented by Shrove Tuesday, Easter, Whitsun and Christmas; 2) The cycle of the seasons as shown by the flowers of Spring, usually about Easter and the greening of the woods (traditionally May Day); and 3) The cycle of human life represented by Summer courtship, Christmas parties which lead to betrothals and complete the cycle with an Easter marriage. But all these are *Icantonies profanae*, songs outside the church, for they are the holiday celebrations which are associated with the great Church occasions of Passiontide, Pentecost and Advent.

My translations are mainly intended to be literally accurate, but I could not resist the doggerel verse of No.14, 'In Taberna Quando Sumus.'

Acknowledgements.

Like most English writers in this field I acknowledge an enormous debt to Helen Waddell ['Wandering Scholars' and 'Medieval Latin Lyrics']; to G.S.Lewis ['The Allegory of Love']; and to Peter Dronke ['The Medieval Love Lyric' and 'Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric']. However, my emphasis on pagan and Christian festivals comes from my Classical education and Sir James George Frazer ['The Golden Bough']

That is all you need to know, but if you are interested to explore further, please read on.....

Notes.

EXORDIUM.

O Fortuna. The cycle of the seasons, the cycle of man's life, the cycle of man's fortunes and the cycle of the Church year are all intermingled in this opening and closing number. Gambling was, of course, frowned on by the Church, but on special occasions there was licence: these occasions were usually Christmas (the Saturnalia), and the summer festival (Jupiter's festival was July 7th, but Churches had their own Saint's Day or their traditional 'Wakes Week'). Dicing had the extra stigma of pagan names for each throw, so the wheel of Fortune was less objectionable.

Fortune plango. Another wheel of fortune song. If Hecuba is a euphemism for Hecate, queen of Halloween, the king would be the May King.

I PRIMO VERE.

Spring does not arrive at the same time in Southern Italy as in Northern Britain, Easter is a movable feast, some years are later than others, and by the C12th the Julian Calendar was about nine days out of phase; so it is not surprising that there are various different Invocations to Spring in the Carmina Burana, three of which are set here. The main outlines, however, follow the pattern of Virgil's poem, The Georgics (Book II, 323-345).

UF DEM ANGER.

The greening of the woods was an old pagan festival, connected with the Green Man, and leading to May Day, where dancing round the Maypole is thought to be the relic of an old fertility ritual. This collection has both invocations to the woods, and courtship dancing. 'Ring dancing', where the girls and boys dance in separate circles, tease and taunt each other, and finally pair up, still occurs in a few places in Europe. The Queen of England in poem 10 is thought to be Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152, when she made a Royal progress through France to become Queen of England's Henry II (who was responsible for the martyrdom of Thomas Becket.) Presumably the original version was in Latin; the rhythm of this German fragment is not unlike 'Here we go round the mulberry bush' and so fits into this section of dancing.

II IN TABERNA.

'**Estuans Interius**' This poem, called 'The Archpoet's Confession', was originally dedicated to Reginald von Dassel, Barbarossa's Chancellor, while he was Archbishop-elect of Cologne, somewhere between 1160 and 1165, but it was regarded as one of the greatest poems of Medieval Latin and has found its way into various collections, including Carmina Burana in the next century. Although we do not know the name of this Archpoet, we may hazard a guess as to the man who first performed it: at the end, the disreputable figure of the monk [expelled from his monastery for bad behaviour], would have thrown back his hood to reveal a leading Church figure, perhaps the canon of the Archbishop-elect himself; for this is a poem for Topsy-turvy Day, when a young nobody would be made Master of the Feast. In England this day was traditionally Christmas Eve, when the Lord of Misrule might preside at the festivities, and it derives from a similar custom in the Saturnalia of Ancient Rome, [itself the relic of a grim custom in Pre-historic times of appointing a slave or criminal as King for one day and then making him a human sacrifice as a substitute for the real king]. However, the Saturnalia,

festival of the old and dying Sun, was mirrored in mid Summer by the festival of Jupiter, the Sun in its glory, and we know that Reginald held a great festival in Vienne one Summer, so - who knows? - it is just possible that we shall hear this song in Wiesbaden on the exact 835th anniversary of its first performance.

The joke, of course, is that at the end of the 'confession' the Archpoet is the only man present who has made confession and is shriven, so he would no doubt call upon the rest to make their confessions too before midnight Mass. The parallels between Reginald von Dassel and Thomas Becket are striking, and not accidental. Although the King or Emperor had the right to appoint an Archbishop, the archbishop then had enormous influence, independence and (in medieval times) secular control over Church lands and people. It was this conflict which led to the martyrdom of Thomas Becket. Becket was appointed Chancellor of Henry II in 1155, Archbishop in 1162 and from 1163 to 1169 was on the continent appealing to the Pope, before his martyrdom on 29th December, 1170. It is not surprising, therefore, that Barbarossa kept Reginald von Dassel in Italy under his own eye for several years before his appointment as Archbishop of Cologne was ratified. We know that Hugh Primas, canon of the Archbishop of Cologne, performed the same song in Cologne some 50 years later. In England the same song is dedicated to the Bishop of Coventry.

Olim lacus colueram. In England, swans were royal birds and only those with royal permission could feast on them, so this song was presumably first performed at a great banquet.

Ego Sum Abbas. I presume that this is a pantomime figure. This may be another Christmastime production, but in parts of Southern Europe it was customary to have insulting parodies on Shrove Tuesday (which explains the caricature figures of Mardi Gras), relic of an old pagan festival of Liber, a name of Bacchus, the god of wine. **In taberna quando sumus.** Another drinking song for Shrovetide or holiday festivities. [See my footnote to the translation for more details.] The famous English drinking song 'I cannot eat but little meat', is ascribed to John of Salisbury, a distinguished Churchman and scholar, who witnessed the death of Thomas Becket, was prebend of Durham and died about 1180 as Bishop of Chartres; so these songs were not intended to give offence.

III COUR D'AMOURS.

As the Romance languages developed, more people learned Latin for the Law, the Church and Philosophy, but fewer people spoke it as a normal language. University towns and Cathedral cities thus became a repository for Latin poems, some unsuited to an abbey, to say the least. Monasteries often had a Charter to hold market fairs at their summer festivals, and this was the source of a good deal of income, as well as bringing in foreign luxuries such as pottery, silk and spices. But with it came a 'circus' of hangers-on, ranging from distinguished troubadours to thieves and vagabonds.

The love songs in this section are generally secular, but the bawdiest one, **19 'Si puer cum puellula'** is probably a wedding song, as the words *felix coniunctio*, 'happy union' imply. Medieval customs include singing bawdy songs under the honeymoon couple's window, and even throwing the bloodstained sheets out of the window to the cheering crowd, in proof that the marriage was consummated and that the girl had been married as a virgin. Though indecorous, this was highly moral - the Church did not object to sex, just sex outside marriage.

By contrast, the song **16 'Dies, nox'**, though its words are more refined, is probably suggesting adultery. (Then again, it is half French...)

I think that the sound of the words **20 Veni, veni, venias** reminded some medieval troubadour of a songthrush, and so he added the otherwise mysterious refrain *Hyrca, nazaza, trillirivos*. I hope to find a Latin expert romantic enough (or credulous enough) to agree that the thrush originally sang *Hicce, mea gaza, trilyricos* ["Here I am, my treasure, the one who sings you love songs thrice over."]

Fortunately, the *Carmina Burana*, which has about a hundred love poems not otherwise known, was handed over intact to the library of Munich, whereas a similar collection at Canterbury was censored by some well-meaning Churchman before it was handed over to Cambridge University.

In trutina [In the Balance] appears to be the last verse of a courtship song ending in a betrothal. In classical Latin verse the 'iugum' is a double yoke and the 'conjuges' are likened to a team of oxen ploughing together. In Medieval tradition the maiden submits her neck to the yoke of marriage and the husband submits his neck to the yoke of God "His yoke is easy, his burden is light" [Matthew xi.28-30].

Blanziflor et Helena.

The virgin bride is escorted with her groom to the marriage chamber with a bridal song. These seemingly simple lines from a longer poem have all the mysticism and allegory beloved by the medieval mind. In accordance with Platonic division of body, mind and soul, the bride is compared with the most beautiful women in history, Helen and Blanchefflor, the most beautiful female form one can think of, Venus, and the most beautiful female soul imaginable, the Blessed Virgin Mary. But, allegorically speaking, Mary is both Blanchefflor, white flower, and Rosa Mundi, rose of the world. The symbolism is explained in the English carol 'The Holly and the Ivy': The holly bears a blossom as white as the lily flower and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ for to be our sweet saviour..... The holly bears a berry as red as any blood, and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ for to do poor sinners good.[redemption by blood.] A medieval poem in Middle English describes how a virgin Christian princess Blanchefflor was abducted by the Saracens.

In a well-meant but ultimately disastrous attempt to square the philosophy of Aristotle with Christian doctrine, theologians had thought up a mystical version of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a Holy Trinity of Mary, Wisdom from the Book of Wisdom and The Beloved from the Song of Solomon. As we see in this poem, the idea was intended to be innocent and beautiful, but as it led to the conclusions that Mary was a manifestation of God, not a real human being, and that having sex was more important than chastity, it was pronounced a heresy in 1277AD. By that time the Carmina Burana collection had probably been completed.

These notes and my new translation are dedicated to the Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society and the Lutherkirche Choir of Wiesbaden for the occasion of the twin-town performance of Carmina Burana on June 12th, 1999. I give my grateful thanks to those who have helped to publish it.

Malcolm Beresford (computer generated proof)
Ruth Gray & Hildegard Baker (German Translation)
Muriel Thatcher & Bennett Memorial School (Printing)

Richard Gosling, February, 1999.

CARMINA BURANA
EXORDIUM-FORTUNA IMPERATRIX MUNDI

1.0 Fortuna

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

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.

Sors salutis
et virtutis
michi nunc contraria
est affectus
et defectus
semper in angaria.
Hac in hora, sine mora,
corde pulsum tangite;
quod per sortem sternit fortem,
mecum omnes plangite!

2. Fortune plango vulnera

Fortune plango vulnera stillantibus ocellis,
quod sua michi munera subtrahit rebellis.
verum est, quod legitur, fronte capillata,
sed plerumque sequitur Occasio calvata.

In Fortune solio sederam elatus,
prosperitatis vario flore coronatus;
quicquid enim florui felix et beatus,
nunc a summo corruui gloria privatus.

Fortune rota volvitur: descendo minoratus;
alter in altum tollitur; nimis exaltatus.
rex sedet in vertice - caveat ruinam!
nam sub axe legimus
Hecubam reginam.

(Poems from the C13th collection of
Benediktbeuern monastery, Bavaria.)

CHORUS

O Fortune,
Just like the moon,
Variable in disposition,
Forever you wax and wane:
A hateful life.
Fortune now is obdurate
and then cares for the card-player's acuity.
Destitution or wealth She dissolves like ice.

Horrible, vain Fate,
You turning wheel of evil disposition.
Empty certainty,
Always likely to fail;
Shadowy, veiled -
Now you trouble me too.
Now through gambling I've lost my shirt;
It's all your fault.

The chance of health and virtue
Is now against me -
Ill, failing,
Always in crisis.
At this crucial time
Without delay
Touch the beat of my heart.
All bemoan with me
What lays the strong man low
By chance.

I bewail the wounds of Fortune with brimming eyes,
Because the traitress is stealing away my due rewards.
It is true what they say: "Take Time by the forelock"
The head behind is mostly bald!

I had taken my seat high on Fortune's throne,
Garlanded with the various flowers of prosperity;
But for all that I flourished when fortunate and happy,
Now I have fallen from on high, dishonoured.

The wheel of Fortune turns: I go down defeated;
Another is raised on high - too high for his own good.
The king sits at the top; let him beware his downfall!
For we read of Queen Hecuba under Fortune's wheel.

I PRIMO VERE. In early Spring

3. Veris leta facies.

Veris leta facies
mundo propinatur,
hiemalis acies
victa iam fugatur,
in vestitu vario
Phebus principatur,
memorum dulcisono
qui cantu celebratur.

Flore fusus gremio
Phebus novo more
risum dat, hoc vario
iam stipatur flore.
Zephyrus nectareo
spirans it odore.
Certatim pro bravio
curramus in amore.

Cytharizat cantico
dulcis Philomena,
flore rident vario
prata iam serena,
salit cetus avium
silve per amena,
chorus promit virginum
iam gaudia millena.

CHORUS

The happy face of Spring
Is welcomed by the world;
Winter's forces are defeated
And put to flight.
Flora reigns
In multi-coloured clothing,
And is honoured
By the woodlands' sweet-voiced song.

Pouring down on Flora's lap,
Phoebus smiles anew,
Now he is thronged
With this variety of flowers.
Zephyrus goes forth,
Breathing his honeyed breath.
Let us run bravely
In the race for love.

The sweet nightingale,
Performs her song;
The happy fields now smile
With varied flowers;
Flocks of birds
Rise through the welcoming woods;
And choirs of maidens now
Offer up joys in thousands.

4. Omnia Sol temperat

Omnia Sol temperat
purus et subtilis,
novo mundo reserat
faciem Aprilis,
ad amorem properat
animus herilis
et iocundis imperat
deus puerilis.

Rerum tanta novitas
in solemnibus vere
et veris auctoritas
iubet nos gaudere;
vias prebet solitas,
et in tuo vere
fides est et probitas,
tuum retinere.

Ama me fideliter,
fidem meam nota;
de corde totaliter
et ex mente tota,
sum presentialiter
absens in remota,
quisquis amat taliter,
volvitur in rota.

5. Ecce gratum

Ecce gratum et optatum
Ver reducit gaudia,
purpuratum, floret pratum,
Sol serenat omnia.
iam iam cedant tristitia!
Estas redit, nunc recedit
Hyemis sevitia.

Iam liquescet et descrescit
grando, nix et cetera;
bruma fugit, et iam sugit,
Ver Estatis ubera;
illi mens est misera,
qui nec vivit, nec lascivit
sub estatis dextera.

Gloriantur et letantur,
in melle dulcedinis,
qui conantur, ut utantur
premio Cupidinis;
simus jussu Cypridis
gloriantes et letantes
pares esse Paradis.

BARITONE

The pure, fine Sun
Warms everything,
As April reveals her face
To this new world.
The master's mind
Speeds towards Love,
And the Boy God
Rules his happy subjects.

So great is the renewal
In this yearly Spring;
And Spring's rule
Commands us to rejoice.
She offers us the well-known ways
And in your Spring it is loyal
And right to keep your own boyfriend.

Love me faithfully,
See my own faithfulness;
With all my heart,
With all my mind I am with you
Though I am far away.
Anyone who loves like me
Is turned on the wheel.

CHORUS

See the welcome, longed-for Spring
Brings back joys.
In royal colours flower the fields,
And the Sun smiles on everything.
Now, now let sadness depart!
Summer returns; cruel Winter retreats.

Now the hail, snow etc.
Thaw and shrink;
Winter's chill flees,
And now Spring suckles
At the breasts of Summer.
Only a wretched mind
Does not feel lively and sportive
Under the right hand of Summer.

They rejoice and are glad
In honey-sweetness
Who try to make use of
The prize of Cupid.
Let us, under Venus' orders,
Rejoice and be glad
To be like Paris with the most
Beautiful girl in the world.

6. UF DEM ANGER - On the Green

Tanz.....Orchestra.

7.Floret silva

Floret silva nobilis
floribus et foliis.

Ubi est antiquus
meus amicus?
Hinc equitavit
eia,quis me amabit?

Floret silva undique,
nah mime gesellen ist mir we.

Gruonet der walt allenthalben,
wa ist min geselle also lange?
Der ist geriten, hinnen,
o wi, wer soll mich minnen?

8.Chramer, gip die varwe mir

Chramer, gip die varwe mir,
die min wengel roete,
damit ich die jungen man
an ir dank der minnenliebe noete.

Seht mich an jungen man!
lat mich iu gefallen !

Minnet,tugentliche man,
minnecliche vrouwen.
minne tuot iu hoch gemuot
unde lat iuch in hohen eren schouwen.

Seht mich an jungen man !
lat mich iu gefallen.

Wol dir,Wert, daz du bist
also freudenriche !
ich will dir sin undertan
durch din liebe immer sicherliche.

Seht mich an jungen man !
lat mich iu gefallen!

Dance.

CHORUS

The noble forest flourishes
With flowers and foliage.

SEMI CHORUS

Where is my old boyfriend?
He has ridden off.
Alas, who will love me now?

CHORUS

The Forest.flourishes everywhere
For my boyfriend I despair.

SEMI CHORUS

The forest greens up everywhere
Where is my boyfriend all this while?
He has ridden off.
Alas, who will love me now?

SEMICHORUS

Merchant, give me the rouge
To redder my cheeks,
So that I can ensnare the young men,even
despite themselves to love me.

(Refrain:)

Look at me, young men!
Let me delight you!

Manly men make love
To lovely ladies!
Love gives you high spirits
and leaves you highly honoured.

(Refrain)

Look at me, young men!
Let me delight you!

I salute you, world
So rich in joys.
I will be your servant,
Always safe in your love.

(Refrain)

Look at me, young men!
Let me delight you!

