PROGRAM NOTES

*by Linda Russell*

Carmina Burana Carl Orff (1895-1982)

Johann Andreas Schmeller gave the title *Carmina Burana*—literally “songs of Beuren”—to his 1847 edition of poems contained in an early 13th century German manuscript. The collection of poems originated in *Benediktbeuern*, a Bavarian Benedictine abbey south of Munich. The manuscript, containing approximately 250 poems, is perhaps the most important source for medieval Latin and Middle High German secular poetry of the 12th century repertory of a group of poets known as goliards. Goliards—defrocked monks, minor clerics and minstrels—were

Better known for their rioting, gambling and intemperance than for their scholarship. Whatever their social status, their artistic and technical skill seems to place them among the clerical and academic elite of the age. . . The poems include the freshness of medieval love lyrics, the exuberance of the drinking song, the zest of the sinner’s “confessions,” the wild humour of the hymns to gambling and gluttony, a stoic litany to Lady Luck. Sex is also a dominant theme in many of the songs. (Cave)

Carl Orff, music educator and composer, composed his secular cantata, *Carmina Burana,* based on poems from this manuscript. The Frankfurt Opera premiered the work in Frankfurt am Main in 1937 in a performance where music, dance, singing, words, and movement worked together to produce a “total theatre” experience.

Orff modeled his work on two cultural traditions: classical Greek tragedy and Italian Baroque musical theater. The work is in three sections: In Spring/On the Green, In the Tavern, and The Court of Love/Blanziflor and Helen. The chorus *Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi* frames the piece with an opening prologue and finale. Orff combined tunefulness with a percussive style marked by driving rhythms. The chorus plays an important role in the unfolding drama. The large and colorful orchestra, with emphasis on the percussion section, underlines the highly accented choral rhythms. The simple harmonies and driving rhythms produce music of powerful pagan sensuality, wild abandon, and direct physical excitement.

Leopold Stokowski believed that:

Orff’s genius—combining as it does so magnificently all the resources of traditional occidental music with vigorous new conceptions of lyricism, romantic intensity, gigantic architectonics, rhythmic audacity, an extraordinarily personal blending of pagan and modern feeling, and the mature simplicity achieved only aby a master—will be recognized by future generations as a major departure in the development of the art of music.

O Fortuna

Fortune Empress of the World

Fortune—like the moon

a constant changeling,

you're always waxing and waning;

A life that's a curse

first blunts and then beguiles

my brains with games;

destitution or power—

it breaks them up like melting ice.

Fate: a vast monster, yet empty

ever a whirling wheel of no good standing, an idle salvation

it will always come apart.

Covered in shadow and veiled,

you work your wiles against me, too;

now, all through the fun

and games of your villainy,

my back's laid bare.

The fate of the saved man

and the brave man

is turned against me now;

there is passion and there is emptiness

always in my slavery.

At this very hour, don't delay—

pluck and play my pulse;

as it's Fate who slays the brave,

weep one and all with me!

Fortune plango vulnera

I Bewail the Wounds of Fortune

I bewail the wounds of Fortune

with flooding eyes, for her gifts to me

she's filched away, the traitor.

What's said is true—

Fortune's a long-haired girl in front.

But when she's passed by,

Chance is bald and old.

On Fortune's throne I once sat on high,

crowned with the riotous

flowers of prosperity;

Oh, yes, those were the salad days

for a blessed and happy man!

But now like an avalanche

I plummet stripped of all glory.

The wheel of Fortune spins; I sink,

made less; another man's raised up;

all too high up sits the King at the peak—

let him fear his fall!

For, down here in the depths,

we've heard of Hecuba the Queen.

# Veris leta facies

The Merry Face of Spring

The merry face of Spring's

the toast of all the world;

Winter's burnished hordes

now flee in vanquished rout.

All dressed up in dappled garb

Flora is our queen;

In song that echoes sweet and true

the woodlands sing her praise. Ah!

Limp upon his Flora's lap

Phoebus smiles anew;

press upon them all around

blooms of many a hue.

A gentle western breeze

wafts a honeyed scent;

Let's run, competing wildly in

the quest of love's fair prize. Ah!

Sweetly sings Philómena,

playing on her lyre;

tranquil meadows laugh aloud,

their flowers a riot of color;

a flock of birds, aroused, starts up

through the forest's peace;

a troop of maidens brings to view

a thousand thousand joys. Ah!

Omnia Sol temperat

The Sun Ends Extremes

The Sun, pure and fine,

ends extremes for everything;

April opens up her face

to a world made new.

The noble spirit hurries on to Love,

and that boyish god

commands the light of heart.

A fresh newness in nature

in the majesty of Spring

and the compelling power of Spring

bid us show our joy;

Spring shows long-familiar paths

and, in the spring of youth,

there is honor and respectability

to hold fast to the one who's yours.

Love me with such honor!

Mark that I keep my word!

With all my heart, mind, and soul

I am altogether here, yet altogether far off, in another place.

Whosoever loves like this

is turned upon the wheel.

Ecce gratum

Behold! Welcome Spring!

Behold! Welcome Spring!

Behold! Welcome, much longed-for

Spring brings back a host of joys;

The meadow flowers, aglow in purple;

the Sun soothes all.

All at once, so long to sadness!

Summer is returning, the savagery

of Winter is withdrawing! Ah!

Watch it melting!

Watch as ice, snow, and all else

melt and dwindle away.

Winter mists flee, and

Spring nurses at Summer's teat.

Find yourself in misery

unless you live and frolic

beneath Summer's kind blessing; Ah!

Rejoice! They revel and rejoice

in honeyed sweetness all who try to avail

themselves of Cupid's prize.

Let's become, then, at Venus' command,

Revelers and rejoicers

rivals of Paris himself! Ah!

Tanz

On the Common (Dance)

Floret silva

The Forest is Aflower

Aflower, aflower,

aflower is the noble forest,

all flowers and leaves.

Where is my boyfriend,

of bygone days? Ah!

Off he's ridden! Woe, woe, woe,

Who will love me? Ah!

Aflower, aflower,

aflower is the forest all around;

but my beloved has left me.

Chramer! Gip die varwe mir!

Shopkeeper! Give me rouge!

Shopkeeper! Give me rouge

to redden my cheeks

so I can make the young men

love me—whether they want to or not.

Look at me, young men!

Let me make you love me!

Look at me, young men!

Let me make you love me!

Give your love, you daring men,

to women who are worthy.

Love gives you noble spirit

and makes you shine with high honor.

Look at me, young men!

Let me make you love me!

Look at me, young men!

Let me make you love me!

Oh, World, you are so great

a treasure-trove of pleasure,

I'll surely be your servant-girl

for the love you give me.

Look at me, young men!

Let me make you love me!

Look at me, young men!

Let me make you love me!

# Reie

Round Dance: Round and Round the

Young Girls Go

Round and round the young girls go

circling, circling to and fro;

their only wish all summer through

with young men... not a thing to do!

Ah! SLA!

Come, come now, my sweet,

to be hard-hearted is not meet.

Sweet, rosy-colored kiss,

come, cool the fever of my bliss,

sweet, rosy-colored kiss.

# Were diu werlt alle min

If the Whole WorId Were Mine

If the whole world were mine,

from the sea up to the Rhine,

I'd give the world and all its charms.

to wrap England's fair queen

up in my arms! Hey!

Olim lacus colueram

Once on Lakes was I Wont to Dwell

Once, on lakes was I wont to dwell,

once, a big star, a handsome swell,

proud swan was I—before Death's knell.

(*refrain*) Oh, woe! Poor swan, my dear,

all black, you're toasted sere!

Spitted and spun on the barbecue,

On the fire, I'm done; what shall I do?

The maitre d' toasts me with a glass or two— (*refrain*)

Upon the platter do I now lie,

however I want to, I can't fly,

teeth set to grinding are all I spy...

(*refrain*)

# Ego sum abbas

The Abbot of Cockaigne

I am the abbot of the land of Cockaigne;

my Privy Council is the company of

drunks; and all I care about is

my dicing and drinking.

And anybody who comes early,

looking for my services in the tavern,

After dark he'll leave buck-naked

and broke, and fleeced, completely fleeced,

he'll cry something like this:

*Wafna! Wafna! Wafna! Wafna!*

What have you done, oh Fate most foul?

You've stripped me of every last joy in my life! *Ha ha!*

In taberna quando sumus

In a Bar is Where You'll Find Us

In a bar is where you'll find us—

Our souls' *post mortem* doesn't bind us!

But gambling, gaming makes us hurry,

that's the thing that makes us worry.

What goes on here, should you query,

where with two bits you'll wind up beery?

Every dog should have his day,

and boy, I've got a lot to say!

Some folks gamble, some get boozy,

some folks hang out with their floozy;

but those you find at the gambling table—

some lose their shirt; but some who're able

walk away with piles of dough.

Losers we give sackcloth, though.

No one here's afraid of dying.

Bum rolls, though, will start us crying.

First, the dice decide who pays—

his noble name we low-lifes praise!

Next, a toast to all in jail.

Third, we toast all well and hale.

Fourth, to Christians, one and all.

Fifth, all who await their final call.

Sixth, all nuns who aren't quite good.

Seventh, the Merry Men of Robin Hood!

Eighth, all friars whose morals are tattered;

Ninth, all monks whose orders have scattered;

Tenth, to the sailors afloat in their boats;

Eleventh, to all couples at each others' throats;

Twelfth, to those who repent their sins;

Thirteenth, to those knowing all the inns.

Drink to the King! Drink to the Pope!

Everyone drinks, no end, no scope.

The Lady drinks, the Lord drinks,

the soldier drinks, the priest drinks,

he drinks, she drinks,

the barkeeper drinks with the barmaid.

The Type-A drinks, the couch potato,

the white guy drinks, the black guy,

the homebody drinks, the about-town,

the hayseed and the Nobel Prizewinner!

The poor man drinks, the sick man drinks,

the exile and the nobody.

The boy drinks, the geezer drinks,

the bishop drinks, the deacon drinks,

sister drinks, brother drinks,

granny drinks, mommy drinks,

this girl drinks, that guy drinks,

a hundred drink, a thousand drink.

A zillion tankards cannot hope

to hold the beer that we can tope.

The drinking knows not bound or measure,

but does indeed bring us much pleasure.

Thus, decent folks heap us with curses,

won't stoop to fill our empty purses.

All them who jeer, may Fate destroy!

No peace among the just enjoy!

*Prost! Prost! Prost! Prost!*

## Dies, nox et omnia

Day, Night and Everything

Day, night and everything

offer me no respite—

hearing girls' conversation

makes me cry // brings me on to sigh

and makes me all the more afraid.

Go ahead, laugh, mock me, my friends;

Tell all, you who know my state!

Take pity on my wretchedness;

great is my pain—at least give me

some good advice—show your honor!

Your lovely face brings me to tears a thousand times; my heart is ice;

I know the cure—

I should live again at once

with just one true kiss.

Stetit puella

Once There Stood a Girl

Once there stood a girl in a scarlet dress;

If anyone touched it, the dress rustled.

*Eia, eia, eia, eia!*

Once there stood a girl just like a rosebud.

Radiant of face, her mouth a blossom.

*Eia, eia, eia, eia!*

# Circa mea pectora

All About My Heart

All about my heart

there is nothing but sighing—

the matter is your beauty,

which wounds me nigh to dying.

My lover does not come!

Your eyes are like the sun's

bright rays, illuminating;

like the lightning flash,

shadows dissipating.

Your eyes are like the sun's

bright rays, illuminating...

My lover does not come!

May God, may all the gods above

grant what I hold in mind:

that these entangled chains may I

from her maidenhood unbind.

# Si puer cum puellula

If a Boy Meets a Pretty Girl

If a boy should hang out

with a cute girl in a private space,

happy their close embrace!

As their love buds and swells,

hers and his, in their midst,

as their love buds and swells,

hers and his, in their midst,

what's ho-hum's cast off,

cast off and scarcely missed.

Then starts the play

in limbs, lips, and breast;

then starts the play

never by words expressed

in limbs, lips, and breast.

Veni, veni, venias

# Come, Come, Please Come!

—Come, come, come, please come!

—Come, come, come, just come!

—Don't make me die, don't make me die!

Your face so fine, the gleam in your eye,

the style of your hair, what a lovely sight!

Redder than a rose, Whiter than a lily,

Finer than them all,

Always, always will I glory in you!

In trutina

My Heart Hangs Wavering in The Balance

My heart hangs wavering in the balance;

caught in the ebb-and-flow of two tides:

Carefree Love and Modesty.

But I choose what I see.

I hold my neck out to the yoke,

but this yoke is sweet that I submit to.

# Tempus est iocundum

Now's The Time for Pleasure

Now's the time for pleasure,

oh, fair maidens! Now, share your joy,

all you fair young men!

(*refrain*): Oh, oh, oh, I am all abloom,

now with a first-time love

I am all afire— Such a strange, new love

that I'm dying of!

I am reassured... Each bit I yield!

I feel only regret... When I say no!

*(refrain)*

In winter's chill mist...

A man stills his fire!

In the passions of spring...

He's mad with desire!

*(refrain)*

To play the game...

They urge me to play the game

man and man and my maidenhood!

I am so naïve....

I don't even know the rules!

*(refrain)*

Come, my fair young lady!

Come with joy!

Come, come, my beauty!

For now I die!

*(refrain)*

Dulcissime

Dearest Heart!

Dearest heart! Ah!

I am giving my whole self to you!

Ave formosissima

Hail, Thou Fairest

Hail, thou fairest precious stone!

Hail, thou ornament among maidens

thou maid of glory!

Hail, thou beacon of Creation!

Hail, thou rose of Creation!

Blanziflor and fairest Helen!

Venus, Venus, Venus without peer!

# O Fortuna

Fortune Empress of the World

O Fortuna, as before.

*Translation © Stephen Farrand*