

Carl Orff Carmina Burana

London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus
Richard Hickox

alto



Carl Orff: *Carmina Burana*

Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi

1	"O Fortuna"	2:48
2	"Fortune plango vulnere"	2:50

I. Primo vere -

3	"Veris leta facies"	4:17
4	"Omnia Sol temperat"	2:13
5	"Ecce gratum"	2:54

I (con'd). Uf dem Anger

6	Dance	1:44
7	"Floret silva nobilis"	3:44
8	"Chramer, gip die varwe mir"	3:24
9	"Swaz hie gat umbe" - "Chume, chum geselle min"	4:49
A	"Were diu werlt alle min"	0:56

II. In Taberna

B	"Estuans interius"	2:17
C	"Olim lacus colueram"	3:47
D	"Ego sum abbas"	1:28
E	"In taberna quando sumus"	3:11

III. Cour d'amours

F	"Amor volat undique"	3:52
G	"Dies, nox et omnia"	2:22
H	"Stetit puella"	2:10
I	"Circa mea pectora"	2:14
J	"Si puer cum puellula"	1:00
K	"Veni, veni, venias"	1:02
L	"In trutina"	2:15
M	"Tempus est iocundum"	2:26
N	"Dulcissime"	0:36

Blanziflor et Helena

O	"Ave formosissima"	2:16
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Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi

P	"O Fortuna"	2:56
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Penelope Walmsley-Clark, soprano

John Graham-Hall, tenor

Donald Maxwell, baritone

London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra

Richard Hickox, conductor

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The Bavarian composer Carl Orff (1895-1982) studied in Munich with Hermann Zilcher. Before attending the Akademie der Tonkunst he had already had songs published and had written a gigantic work inspired by Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. This juvenilia shows the influence of Debussy initially, followed by Schoenberg and then Richard Strauss although by 1914 he was also displaying an interest (which remained) in music of the 16th and 17th centuries, in particular that of Lassus, Gabrieli and Monteverdi. Whilst at school, Orff had discovered a passion for Greek, Latin and Old German texts, a passion retained throughout his long life. As a child he wrote children's stories and puppet plays for which he also composed music, scored for any available instrument (usually piano, violin, zither, glockenspiel and home-made percussion). These various interests coalesced as Orff developed into the composer of *Der Mond, Die Kluge, Trionfi*, *Passion Plays* and the Greek tragedies.

During the First World War Orff worked as répétiteur in a Munich theatre and composed incidental music for plays. He gave this up in 1919 but maintained a keen interest in Shakespeare and Expressionist theatre thereafter. During the 1920s he co-founded the Günther-Schule Dance Studio with Dorothea Günther and began work on the Schulwerk, an educational tool (still in use) designed to stimulate children's interest in movement and music. He also composed realisations of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, *Lamento d'Arianna* and *Ballo dell'Ingrate*. In 1930 he made his first visit to Italy, visiting Sirmione on the shores of Lake Garda, and Verona, and upon his return he composed his first version of *Catulli Carmina* (much survived into the final work in 1943). In 1931, having accepted a post with the Munich Bach Society he raised eyebrows by staging the spurious *St Luke Passion* as a Bavarian passion play. Together with his near contemporary Werner Egk, he conducted extensive research into Bavarian folklore (whence came two

of the most popular and delightful German works of the decade: *Der Mond* and Egk's *Die Zaubergeige*).

In 1935 Orff began composing *Carmina Burana*, a work he later considered to be his Opus 1. The title means 'Songs from Benediktbeuern', a monastery located in the Bavarian Alps. In 1803 about 200 of these songs were discovered by a Munich librarian Christoph Freiherr von Aretin and were published in 1847 entitled *Carmina Burana* by Johann Schmeller. These songs, dating from the 13th century are a collection of poems in medieval Latin, middle high German and medieval French, in which these languages are sometimes used macaronically. Their subject matters vary greatly, some give satirical views of church, state and society in general; others discuss courtly and physical love; yet others describe the joys of spring; or drinking and feasting.

Orff split the texts into three sections entitled *Primo vere und Uf dem Ange* (In Springtime and on the Green); *In Taberna* (In The Tavern) and *Cour d'amour* (The Court Of Love). At either end comes the famous *O Fortuna velut luna* chorus, entitled *Fortuna imperatrix mundi* (Fortune, Goddess of the World) and before the final repeat of this chorus comes a brief but spectacular hymn to Venus *Ave formosissima* (Hail To The Loveliest) entitled *Blanziflor et Helena*.

In the opening choruses the inexorable motion of Fortune's wheel is depicted by the repetitive bass. *Veris iata facies* describes the gradual awakening of flora as winter gives way to spring and the following baritone song *Omnia sol temperat* describes the gradual warmth of man towards his fellow creatures. The full chorus sing joyfully of blooming spring's triumph over sterile winter (and all entailed). A rustic dance moves the 'action' on to the village green where in *Floret silva nobilis* a maypole dance is on. Orff's accompaniment of the words 'hinc equitavit' and 'der ist geretten hinnen' depict the lover riding off into the distance (these words are also quoted by the drinkers in *Der Mond*). In *Chramer, gip die varwe mir*, the

girls apply make-up to attract the menfolk and in the following round dance *Swaz hie gat umbe* with its quiet middle section *Chume, geselle min* both sexes continue to tantalize their partners provocatively. A ribald rhyme concerning England's queen punctuated by brass fanfares, completes this section.

The dotted rhythms of *Estuans interius* propel one fiercely into the section '*In Taberna*'. This drinker is happy to take life as it comes. The tenor now sings the grotesque lament of the roasting swan: *Olim lacus colueram*. Accompanied by a bizarre combination of instruments (bassoon in its highest register, flute, E flat clarinet, trumpet and trombone using flutter tonguing) the music follows the swan's journey from the lake to the spit until it is finally eaten. A drunken monk demonstrates in *Ego sum abbas Cucaniensis* that he is no better than the drinkers he is trying to 'save'. Finally the motor-rhythmic *In taberna quando sumus* catalogues the many types of drinker found in the tavern.

The third section takes us into the realms of courtly love in which the music may be more refined but the sentiments are more explicit than those expressed previously. A boys' choir sing of the universal nature of the love, how every man and woman are having sex *Amor volat undique*. Not quite 'every man' however, for the baritone solo is feeling left out in *Dies, nox et omnia*: his melismatic lament in the extreme top of his range heightens his anxiety. Orff continues the use of extreme registers in the scoring of his next song *Stetit puella* in which the soprano describes a young maid in a red shift awaiting her lover as cello and double bass in their highest register are paired with low flutes and violins. In *Circa mea pectora* the male impatiently awaits his lover, who it seems is a virgin. But she clearly does not remain so, as six male soloists utter lewd asides in *Si puer cum puellula*. There follows a double chorus with syncopated piano full of nervous anticipation *Veni, veni, venias* as men and women court each other with increasing vigour. During an interlude of exquisite calm the soprano

soloist wavers between desire for her partner and modest refusal *In tru tina*. The following dance-chorus *Tempus est iocundum* sees a return to the courtship ritual as the baritone and then the soprano with the boys' choir struggle to contain their desire. At its height the soprano, with a melismatic passage that rises to high D, submits herself to her lover *Dulcissime*. *Ave formosissima* is an ecstatic hymn to the Goddess of Love, the entire orchestra imitating a peal of bells. Its final cadence leads naturally into a deafening repeat of the opening *O fortuna* chorus.

Carmina Burana was an instant success in 1937 and remains one of the most popular twentieth century works. Orff later composed two other choral works (*Catulli Carmina* premiered in 1943 and *Trionfo di Afrodite* 1953) which form a triptych on the subject of Love entitled *Trionfi*. Two short operas based upon tales by the brothers Grimm followed *Carmina Burana*: *Der Mond* pre-miered in 1939 and *Die Kluge* (1943), and both of these works follow a similar musical idiom to *Carmina Burana*. Later works include a play with music, the astonishingly powerful *Die Bernauerin* (1947), a setting of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1952), a Greek trilogy *Antigone* (1949) and *Oedipus der Tyrann* (1959) both using Holderlin's translation of Sophocles: and *Prometheus*, in which the original Greek of Aeschylus is retained (1968), There are also Bavarian Passion plays surrounding the Christmas and Easter stories. Orff's final work of note *De temporum fine comoedia* (A play of the end of time) was staged at the 1973 Salzburg Festival under Karajan. Both Munich and Salzburg (he had a home in Salzburg now owned by the Mozarteum Academy) perform his works regularly but due perhaps to the impossibility of translating his works into the vernacular, pieces other than *Carmina Burana* and *Catulli Carmina* have only had limited success outside German-speaking countries. Orff died in Munich in 1982.

NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

This performance of *Carmina Burana* under **Richard Hickox** (1948-2008) has long been recognised as one of the finest available, with its 'menacing chorus'. **Penelope Walmsley-Clark** is something of a modern music specialist, having recorded Ligeti's *Le grand macabre* and pieces by George Benjamin. **John Graham Hall** achieved phenomenal success playing Britten's *Albert Herring* in 1985 at Glyndebourne shortly after graduating from the Royal Academy of Music. He has a successful international career and has performed with all the major British companies; **Donald Maxwell**, an established favourite of the British opera and concert scene, performs most regularly with Welsh National. Among his many successes there was the astonishing Iago in Peter Stein's classic production of Verdi's *Otello*. Richard Hickox was one of the most prolific and wide-ranging conductors of recent era, having countless prize-winning recordings of both familiar and rare works under his belt, especially choral works.

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