

YST VOICE SENIOR RECITAL

The Time of Our Lives

30th Apr 2021

YST Concert Hall, 6.30pm

(Livestreamed)

KESTER TAY, VOICE

VIVIEN CHONG, PIANO



FINZI

FROM 'EARTH AND AIR AND RAIN', OP.15

'The Clock of the Years'

'In a Churchyard'



BRAHMS

'VIER ERNSTE GESÄNGE', OP. 121

- I. *'Denn es geht dem Menschen wie dem Vieh'*
- II. *'Ich wandte mich und sahe an alle'*
- III. *'O Tod, wie bitter bist du'*
- IV. *'Wenn ich mit Menschen und mit Engelszungen redete'*

VERDI

ARIA FROM 'SIMON BOCCANEGRÀ'

'A te l'estremo addio... Il lacerato spirito'

L'ESULE - A SCENE FOR BASS



IBERT

'CHANSONS DE DON QUICHOTTE'

I. 'Chanson du départ'

II. 'Chanson à Dulcinée'

III. 'Chanson du Duc'

IV. 'Chanson de la mort'



SAINT-SAËNS

DANSE MACABRE

FOREWORD

Good evening to one and all!

In recent times, I have been pondering these thoughts:

“What does it mean to truly appreciate what we have?”

“Can we really fully appreciate something, without having experienced its absence?”

Borne from these emotions, tonight’s programme will explore philosophical themes of the transience of time and life, the joys of living and loving, and the myriad of meanings we can derive from death, loss and acceptance.

In each of the songs tonight, an enigmatic emotion that is difficult to describe is woven into the meaning of the music and words. As we journey through life, we experience these emotions as a shared human experience, and I find that these songs embody those experiences fittingly.

These songs resonate deeply with my present reality and life experiences, and I hope that you will enjoy discovering the beautiful music and poetry of these artists that have endured through time!

GERALD FINZI

Gerald Finzi (1901–1956) was a British composer acclaimed for his vocal works. In *Earth and Air and Rain* (1936), Finzi's careful attention to textual shifts in tone and declamation elegantly complements Hardy's philosophically introspective writing style.

We begin this evening's program with '**The Clock of the Years**' – a dramatic story of a man who meets a spirit and desperately makes a Faustian deal to turn back the hands of Time, in order to bring his beloved back from the dead.

In the unfolding drama, conveyed through Finzi's masterful through-composition, he experiences the bitter and tragic consequences of altering the preordained course of nature.

'**In a Churchyard**' reflects words spoken by a yew tree to a living person, an allegorical conversation between the dead and the living. The yew tree, commonly found in graveyards in England, symbolises perpetuity, immortality and rebirth, as they age for thousands of years.

In this peculiar conversation, the yew sighs that the living do not truly understand their lot in life, fearing death and grieving it.

However, the yew enlightens the person with a new perspective: if the living could understand how inexplicable their beauty seemed, from the perspective of the resting dead – no one would weep for their deaths, and no God would call for the dead to rise.

THE CLOCK OF THE YEARS

‘A spirit passed before my face: the hair of my flesh stood up.’

And the spirit said,
‘I can make the clock of the years go backward,
But am loth to stop it where you will.’

And I cried, ‘Agreed
To that. Proceed:
It’s better than dead!’

He answered, ‘Peace;
And called her up—as last before me;
Then younger, younger she grew, to the year
I first had known
Her women-grown
And I cried, ‘Cease!—
‘Thus far is good—
It is enough—let her stay thus always!’

But alas for me—He shook his head:
No stop was there;
And she waned child-fair,
And to babyhood.

Still less in mien
To my great sorrow became she slowly,
And smalled till she was nought at all
In his checkless griff;
And it was as if
She had never been.

‘Better,’ I plained,
‘She were dead as before! The memory of her
Had lived in me; but it cannot now!’
And coldly his voice:
‘It was your choice
To mar the ordained.’

IN A CHURCHYARD

“It is sad that so many of worth,
Still in the flesh,” soughed the yew,
“Misjudge their lot whom kindly earth
Secludes from view.

“They ride their diurnal round
Each day-span’s sum of hours
In peerless ease, without jolt or bound
Or ache like ours.

“If the living could but hear
What is heard by my roots as they creep
Round the restful flock, and the things said there,
No one would weep.”

“Now set among the wise,”
They say: “Enlarged in scope,
That no God trumpet us to rise
We truly hope.”

I listened to his strange tale
In the mood that stillness brings,
And I grew to accept as the day wore pale
That view of things.

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) was a prominent German composer of the Romantic period. In the last 7 years of his' life, news of multiple deaths of his close friends reached him. He was in his mid-70s at that point, and was certainly aware of his own impending mortality, as well as that of his lifelong companion Clara Schumann.

In 1896, a year before his own death, Brahms completed his penultimate opus: the *Vier Ernste Gesange* ('Four Serious Songs'), using texts from the Lutheran Bible. Each of the four songs carry deeply philosophical messages about humanistic empathy, inequality, the transience of life and coming to terms with death.

At cursory glance, the work appears sombre, perhaps even pessimistic – but when viewed as a whole, they convey a deep respect for life, embodying optimism, love for others, and a profoundly humanist stance on life and living. Though the selected texts are biblical in origin, no mention of God is to be found – perhaps this reflects Brahms' emphasis on the universality of the themes in the work, lending possibility to a secular interpretation of the song cycle.

‘Denn es geht dem Menschen wie dem Vieh’ ('For it goes with Man as with beasts') is set to the pace of a solemn funeral march, questioning Man's arrogance in assuming superiority over other living things.

With the chaotic energy of a 'dust storm' in the piano, the text clamours that all things are made of dust and will eventually return to dust – therefore, all souls bear equal weight, and we should cherish our portions in life.

'Ich wandte mich und sahe an alle' ('I turned, and saw all') embodies a plaintive empathy for the oppressed.

Full of pleading gestures, the music weaves a melodic line full of empathy, recognising the evils of the world exacted on the oppressed – a consolation for the suffering of those whose terrible realities of injustice are fates far worse than death.

In **'O Tod, wie bitter bist du'** ('O Death, how bitter you are'), we reach the dramatic climax of the song cycle.

It carries two contrasting perspectives of Death: terrible, crashing chords accompany the first declamation of text, bemoaning that Death is bitter to those who have lived good lives.

However, in the exalting transfiguration of the next section, consolation and salvation is given to the needy and struggling – for Death is sweet to those who have suffered.

In **'Wenn ich mit Menschen und mit Engelzungen redete'** ('If I spoke with tongues of men and angels') marks the turning point of the cycle.

While the first three sombre texts are chosen from the old Testament, the final text is selected from an optimistic passage from the New Testament. The piano opens with a glorious and exalting gesture, and the vocal line is suffused with an encompassing, yet simple message: to have universal love for others.

• OLD TESTAMENT (ECCLESIASTES & ECCLESIASTICUS) •

I: Denn es geht dem Meschen

For it goes with Man

Denn es geht dem Menschen wie dem Vieh,
wie dies stirbt, so stirbt er auch;
und haben alle einerlei Odem;
und der Mensch hat nichts mehr den das Vieh;
den es ist alles eitel.

For it goes with Man as with beasts,
one dies just as the other does;
and they have all one same breath;
and the man is not above the beast;
for all is vanity.

Es fährt alles an einen Ort;
es ist alles von Staub gemacht,
und wird wieder zu Staub.

All goes to one place;
all are made of dust,
and will return to dust again.

Wer weiß, ob der Geist des Menschen
aufwärts fahre,
und der Odem des Viehes unterwärts
unter die Erde fahre?

Who knows if the spirit of man,
goes upward,
and the spirit of the beast
goes downward under the earth?

Darum sahe ich, daß nichts besser's ist,
den daß der Mensch fröhlich sei in seiner Arbeit;
den das ist sein Teil.

Denn wer will ihn dahin bringen,
daß er sehe, was nach ihm geschehen wird?

Therefore I see that there is nothing better
than for man to rejoice in his work;
for that is his portion:
for who can bring him
to see what will be after him?

.

II: Ich wandte mich und sahe an alle

Ich wandte mich und sahe an alle,
die Unrecht leiden unter der Sonne;
und sehe, da waren Tränen derer,
die Unrecht litten und hatten keinen Tröster,
und die ihnen Unrecht täten, waren zu mächtig,
daß sie keinen Tröster haben konnten.

I turned, and saw all

I returned and saw all
the injustice and suffering under the sun:
and beheld the tears of those who
were oppressed, who had no comforter; and
those who did them injustice were too powerful,
that they could have no comforter.

Da lobte ich die Toten,
die schon gestorben waren,
mehr also die Lebendigen,
die noch das Leben Hatten;

Therefore I praised the dead
who had already died
more so than the living
who still had life;

Und der noch nicht ist,
ist besser also alle beide,
und des Bösen nicht inne wird,
das unter der Sonne geschieht.

And those who are not yet born,
are better off than the both of them,
for they are unaware of the evil
that is done under the sun.

III: O Tod, wie bitter bist du

O Tod, wie bitter bist du,
wenn an dich gedenket ein Mensch,
der gute Tage und genug hat
und ohne Sorge lebet;
und dem es wohl geht in allen Dingen
und noch wohl essen mag!

O Tod, wie wohl tutst du dem Dürftigen,
der da schwach und alt ist,
er in allen Sorgen steckt,
und nichts Besser's zu hoffen,
noch zu erwarten hat!

O Death, how bitter you are

O Death, how bitter you are,
to a man who thinks of you,
who has good days and has enough
and lives without worry;
and all things go well,
and still has plenty to eat!

O Death, how good you are to the needy,
who is weak and old,
who is full of worries and dependence,
and has nothing better to hope for,
nor to expect!

• NEW TESTAMENT (1 CORINTHIANS) •

IV: Wenn ich mit Menschen

Wenn ich mit Menschen
und mit Engelzungen redete,
und Hätte der Liebe nicht,
so wär ich ein tönend Erz,
oder eine klingende Schelle.

Und wenn ich weissagen könnte
und wüßte alle Geheimnisse
und alle Erkenntnis,
und hätte allen Glauben, also,
daß ich Berge versetzte;
und hätte der Liebe nicht,
so wäre ich nichts.

Und wenn ich alle meine Habe
den Armen gäbe,
und ließe meinen Leib Brennen;
und hätte der Liebe nicht,
so wäre mir's nichts nütze.

Wir sehen jetzt durch einen Spiegel
in einem dunkeln Worte,
dann aber von Angesicht zu Angesicht.
Jetzt erkenne ich's stückweise,
dann aber werd' ich's erkennen,
gleichwie ich erkennet bin.

Nun aber bleibt Glaube,
Hoffnung, Liebe, diese drei;
aber die Liebe ist die größte unter ihnen.

If I speak with the tongues of men

If I speak with the tongues
of men and angels,
but don't have love,
I would merely be clanging brass
or an echoing bell.

And if I can prophesy
and know all mysteries
and all knowledge;
and if I have all faith, so that
I can move even mountains,
and did not have love,
I am nothing.

And if I gave away all my possessions
to the poor,
and let my body be burnt,
but don't have love,
it would be of no use to me.

For now we see through a mirror,
in a dark word,
but then face to face.
Now I know (the meaning) in parts,
but then I will understand it fully,
just as I am known.

But now remains Faith,
Hope, and Love, these three:
but the greatest among them is Love.

GIUSEPPE VERDI

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) was a prolific Italian opera composer of the late 19th century, having written over 25 operas in his lifetime. Being the most recent of the four bel canto composers, Verdi transformed the style of his predecessors (Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini) in form and drama, shifting the focus from vocal virtuosity to the main dramatic focus of the plot. His music narrated stories that would endure in popularity through time.

His operas are often political in nature, questioning themes of power in society, organised religion, and freedom. Verdi was also no stranger to tragedy, having lost his first two children to infancy and his first wife at her tender age of 26; themes of parental love and familial struggles often found their way into his works. *Simon Boccanegra* is no exception – an opera rife with tumultuous political struggle and tragic drama.

'Il lacerato spirito' ('The torn spirit'), the opening aria of the opera, is set in the gloomy piazza in front of the Fieschi palace in Genoa. The aristocrat Jacopo Fiesco emerges grief-stricken from the palace, announcing the death of his beloved daughter Maria Fiesco. He curses the proletarian Simon Boccanegra for causing her death, and in his despair, even accuses the Virgin Mary. Grieving, he prays for Maria's passage into Heaven, and for respite for his own soul.

'L'esule' ('The Exile') is a dramatic scene about one who is exiled from their homeland. In the opening, a serene piano introduction paints the scene of a lonely character in front of a quiet lake, reflecting on homesickness. In reminiscence, the music bursts forth with glorious, joyful rhythms, as they recall the joys of their native land.

In desperate longing, the character invites death to come – for only then can they be reunited with their homeland in memory.

• LIBRETTO BY FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE (1810–1876) •

Recitative: 'A te l'estremo addio...'

A te l'estremo addio,

Palagio altero,

Freddo sepolcro dell'angioletto mio!

Nè a proteggerti valsi!

Oh maledetto! Oh vile seduttore!

E tu, Vergin, soffristi

Rapita a lei la verginal corona?

Ah! che dissì? Deliro!

Ah, mi perdonai!

To you, a final farewell...

To you, a final farewell,

Haughty palace,

Cold sepulchre of my little angel!

Nor did I protect you!

Oh damned man! You vile seducer!

And did you suffer, Virgin Mary,

When the virgin crown was stolen from Maria?

Ah! What am I saying? Delusions!

Ah, forgive me!

Aria: 'Il lacerato spirto...'

'The torn soul...'

Il lacerato spirto del mesto genitore

The torn spirit of the grieving parent

Era serbato a strazio d'infamia e di dolore. It was preserved in the agony of infamy and pain.

Il serto a lei de'martir pietoso il cielo diè...

Heaven has given her the merciful wreath

of martyrs...

Resa al fulgor degli angeli,

May she surrender to the radiance of the angels:

Prega, Maria, per me..

Pray, Maria, for me.

'L'Esule'

Vedi! la bianca luna
Splende sui colli;
La notturna brezza
Scorre leggera ad increspare il vago
Grembo del queto lago.
Perché, perché sol io
Nell'ora più tranquilla e più soave
Muto e pensoso mi starò?

Qui tutto È gioia; il ciel, la terra
Di natura sorridono all'incanto.
L'esule solo è condannato al pianto.

Ed io pure fra l'aure native
Palpitava d'ignoto piacer.
Oh, del tempo felice ancor vive
La memoria nel caldo pensier.
Corsi lande, deserti, foreste,
Vidi luoghi olezzanti di fior;
M'aggirai fra le danze e le feste,
Ma compagno ebbi sempre il dolor.

Or che mi resta? Togliere alla vita
Quella forza che misero mi fa.
Deh, vieni, vieni, o morte, a chi t'invita
E l'alma ai primi gaudi tornerà.

Oh, che allor le patrie sponde
Non saranno a me vietate;
Fra quell'aure, su quell'onde
Nudo spirto volerò;
Bacerò le guance amate
Della cara genitrice
Ed il pianto all'infelice
Non veduto tergerò.

'The Exile'

See! the white moon
Shines on the hills;
The night breeze
Flows lightly to ripple the wandering
Womb of the quiet lake.
Why, why only I
In the quietest and sweetest hour
Remain mute and pensive?

Here everything is joy; the sky, the earth
All nature smiles at its enchantment.
Only the exiled are condemned to weep.

And I too, amidst native air
Throbb'd with a hidden pleasure.
Oh, the happy times still live,
In the memory of my warm thoughts.
Heathlands, deserts, forests,
I saw places smelling of flowers;
I will wander among the dances and parties,
But my friend, I always carried pain.

Now what remains? Strip away from my life
This force that makes me miserable.
Oh, come, come, O death, whom I invite
And my soul will return to its first delight.

Oh, then the shores of my homeland
They will not be forbidden to me;
Between that light breeze, on that wave
I will fly with my bare spirit;
I will kiss your beloved cheeks
Of my dear parents
And my miserable tears
Will never be seen wiped again!

JACQUES IBERT

Jacques Ibert (1890–1962) composed the *Four Songs of Don Quixote* in 1931 for the first film adaptation of the original novel by Miguel de Cervantes in 1602. The novel has endured through the ages as a founding work of European literature, telling the tale of a Spanish noble who grows disillusioned with society's values. Obsessed with books of chivalrous tales, he casts away his old identity, taking on the persona of 'Don Quixote' – a knight-errant who travels Spain with his squire, Sancho Panza, in search of grand adventure, glory, and love. He forgoes his comforts for a peasant woman, whom he envisions as a princess in his delusion.

'Chanson du départ' (Song of departure') begins the scene with an elegant piano introduction, suffused with influences from Spanish dances. In flowing recitative, Don Quixote muses the discovery of a 'new castle', adorned richly with marble and porphyry. He proclaims this castle a bastion against evil and vice, and a place of refuge for the virtuous maiden; an allegory for his newfound chivalry and departure on a new journey.

'Chanson à Dulcinée' ('Song to Dulcinea') paints Don Quixote's restless yearning for Dulcinea, with a piano introduction that suggests a journey on horseback. He pines that 'a day lasts a year' to him, if he does not see his Dulcinea.

In **'Chanson du Duc'** ('Song of the Duke'), Don Quixote proclaims of Dulcinea's beauteous virtues with a rousing energy. The music is buoyant and energetic, enthused with his desire to sing her praises. He declares that he has vanquished evils, compelled the universe to pay her homage, and desires to defend her against any foolish knight.

'Chanson de la mort' ('Song of death') depicts the death scene of Don Quixote, where he comforts Sancho not to weep for him, for he will find his final rest in a place of purity and virtue. He assures Sancho that his death will not be in vain, for his chivalry will live on in Sancho.

• TEXT BY PIERRE DE RONSARD (1524–1585) •

I. ‘Chanson du départ’

Ce château neuf, ce nouvel édifice,
Tout enrichi de marbre et de porphyre,
Qu’amour bâtit chateau de son empire,
Où tout le ciel a mis son artifice

Est un rempart, un fort contre le vice,
Où la vertu maîtresse se retire,
Que l’oeil regarde, et que l’esprit admire,
Forçant les coeur à lui faire service.

C’est un château, fait de telle sorte
Que nul ne peut approcher de la porte
Si des grands Rois il n’a sauvé sa race

Victorieux, vaillant et amoureux.
Nul chevalier, tant soit aventureux
Sans être tel ne peut gagner la place.

Song of Departure

This new castle, this new edifice,
Enriched with marble and porphyry,
That love built for his empire,
And to which all heaven lent its skill.

It is a rampart, a fortress against vice,
In which the virtuous maiden takes refuge,
Whom the eye beholds and the spirit admires,
Forcing hearts to do her service.

It is a castle, built in such a way
That none can approach its gate
Unless he has saved his people from tyrants

Victorious, valiant, and amorous.
No knight, however bold,
Without such traits, can enter this place.

• TEXT BY ALEXANDRE ARNOUX (1884–1973) •

II. 'Chanson à Dulcinée'

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

Mais, Amour a peint son visage,
Afin d'adoucir ma langueur,
Dans la fontaine et le nuage,
Dans chaque aurore et chaque fleur.

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

Toujour proche et toujour lointaine,
Étoile de mes longs chemins.
Le vent m'apporte son haleine
Quand il passe sur les jasmins.

Song to Dulcinea

The day lasts a year to me,
If I do not see my Dulcinea.

But love has painted her visage,
To ease my longing,
In the fountains and the clouds,
In each dawn and each flower.

The day lasts a year to me,
If I do not see my Dulcinea.

Always near and always far,
Star of my long path,
The wind brings me her breath
When it passes through the jasmines.

III. 'Chanson du Duc'

Je veux chanter ici la Dame de mes songes
Qui m'exalte au dessus de ce siècle de boue.
Son coeur de diamant est vierge de mensonges,
La rose s'obscurcit au regard de sa joue.

Pour elle j'ai tenté les hautes aventures:
Mon bras a délivré la princesse en servage,
J'ai vaincu l'enchanteur, confondu les parjures
Et ployé l'univers à lui rendre l'hommage.

Dame par qui je vais seul dessus cette terre,
Qui ne soit prisonier de la fausse apparence,
Je soutiens contre tout Chevalier téméraire
Votre éclat non pareil et votre précellence.

Song of the Duke

I want to sing now of the lady of my dreams,
Who lifts me above this century of squalor.
Her heart of diamond is untainted by deceipt,
The rose fades beside her cheek.

For her I have undertaken high advenutres:
My arm to deliver the princess from servitude,
I have vanquished enchanters, confounded perjurors
And compelled the universe to pay her homage.

Lady, for whom I go alone across the earth,
Who is not prisoner of false appearances,
I defend against any temerarious knight
Your unparalleled brilliance and your pre-eminence.

• TEXT BY ALEXANDRE ARNOUX (1884–1973) •

IV. ‘Chanson de la mort’

Ne pleure pas Sancho,
Ne pleure pas, mon bon.
Ton maître n'est pas mort.
Il n'est pas loin de toi.
Il vit dans une île heureuse
Où tout est pur et sans mensonges,

Dans l'île enfin trouvée
Où tu viendras un jour,
Dans l'île désirée,
O mon ami Sancho.

Les livres sont brûlés
Et font un tas de cendres.
Si tout le livre m'ont tué,
Il suffit d'un pour que je vive;

Fantôme dans la vie
Et réel dans la mort—
Tel est l'étrange sort
Du pauvre Don Quichotte

Song of Death

Do not weep Sancho,
Do not weep, my friend.
Your master is not yet dead.
He is not far from you,
He lives on a happy isle,
Where all is pure and without deceit,

On the isle finally found,
Where you will come one day.
On the isle you hoped for,
O my friend Sancho.

The books are burnt
And make a heap of ashes.
If all the books have led to my death,
It suffices that through one I will live;

A phantom in life
And real in death—
Such is the strange fate
Of poor Don Quixote

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

By the age of 20, Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) had already enjoyed international renown as a pianist and composer. One of his critically-acclaimed innovations include the symphonic tone-poem – a setting of music to a narrative or emotional idea, of which the **Danse Macabre** is his most performed. When Cazalis published the original poetry in 1872, Saint-Saëns promptly set it to music as a lively song for piano and voice. Recognising its potential, Saint-Saëns then used the song as the basis for the full tone-poem that is famously scored for solo violin and orchestra.

An old Medieval legend has it that on certain nights of the year, the skeletons of the dead rise from their churchyard graves at the stroke of midnight, dancing in an otherworldly frenzy until the break of dawn. Death himself leads this procession of souls onward to the afterlife in a ghastly waltz, screeching away on his badly-tuned fiddle.

The music begins with the ominous tolls of a church bell, sounding the midnight hour with the ‘Devil’s interval’ as Death tunes his violin. In a swirling waltz, Death rouses the skeletons to rise from their graves to dance, melodically invoking the ‘Dies Irae’ chant often used to reference death. The rhythmic motifs in the piano depict the sound of rattling bones.

Death describes how the linden trees moan and the ghouls leap and dance – but look now! A couple sits on the moss, flirting... in another scene, a veil falls! The dancer is naked, and her partner covers her with a hug. Death appraises a baroness with glee, as she gets steamy with the lowly wheelwright! What a dance it is for this ghastly band, where the king dances with the villain!

But – psst! Suddenly, the bell tolls, and it is dawn! The skeletons push each other and scurry away into the night as the rooster crows – oh, what a beautiful night! The evening concludes with Death’s symbolic and final cry:

‘Long live Death and Equality’!

Danse Macabre

Zig et zig et zig, la mort en cadence
Frappant une tombe avec son talon,
La mort à minuit joue un air de danse,
Zig et zig et zag, sur son violon.

Le vent d'hiver souffle, et la nuit est sombre,
Des gémissements sortent des tilleuls;
Les squelettes blancs vont à travers l'ombre
Courant et sautant sous leurs grands linceuls,

Zig et zig et zig, chacun se trémousse,
On entend claquer les os des danseurs,
Un couple lascif s'asseoit sur la mousse
Comme pour goûter d'anciennes douceurs.

Zig et zig et zag, la mort continue
De racler sans fin son aigre instrument.
Un voile est tombé! La danseuse est nue!
Son danseur la serre amoureusement.

La dame est, dit-on, marquise ou baronne.
Et le vert galant un pauvre charron -
Horreur! Et voilà qu'elle s'abandonne
Comme si le rustre était un baron!

Zig et zig et zig, quelle sarabande!
Quels cercles de morts se donnant la main!
Zig et zig et zag, on voit dans la bande
Le roi gambader auprès du vilain!

Mais psit! tout à coup on quitte la ronde,
On se pousse, on fuit, le coq a chanté
Oh! La belle nuit pour le pauvre monde!
Et vive la mort et l'égalité!

Dance of Death

Zig and zig and zig, Death rhythmically
hits a tombstone with his heel,
Death at midnight plays a dance tune,
Zig and zig and zag, on his violin.

The winter wind blows, and the night is dark,
Moans come from the linden trees;
White skeletons traverse through the shadows
Running and leaping under their great shrouds,

Zig and zig and zig, everyone wiggles,
We hear the bones of the dancers snapping,
A lustful couple sits on the moss
As if to taste old sweets.

Zig and zig and zag, Death goes on
To scrape endlessly on his sour instrument.
A veil has fallen! The dancer is naked!
Her dancer hugs her lovingly.

The lady is, they say, marquise or baroness.
And the gallant green a poor wheelwright -
Horror! And now she abandons herself
As if the boor were a baron!

Zig and zig and zig, what a sarabande!
What circles of the dead joining hands!
Zig and zig and zag, we see in the troupe
The king frolicking with the villain!

But hush! suddenly we leave the round,
We push, we run away, the rooster crows
Oh! What a beautiful night for the poor world!
And long live Death and Equality!