

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 gehet 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 BOCCANEGRA'

*'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.’

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### **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 Gesänge* ('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 gehet 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.

**I: Denn es gehet dem Menschen**

**For it goes with Man**

Denn es gehet 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 frölich 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 taten, waren zu mächtig,  
daß sie keinen Tröster haben konnten.

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

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

## **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.

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

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.

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## **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 tust du dem Dürftigen,  
der da schwach und alt ist,  
er in allen Sorgen steckt,  
und nichts Bessers 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!

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• NEW TESTAMENT (1 CORINTHIANS) •

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**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 Angesichte.  
Jetzt erkenne ich's stückweise,  
dann aber werd' ich's erkennen,  
gleichwie ich erkannt bin.

Nun aber bleibet 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.

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

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

A te l'estremo addio,  
Palagio altero,  
Freddo sepolcro dell'angiolo mio!  
Nè a proteggerti valsi!  
Oh maledetto! Oh vile seduttore!  
E tu, Vergin, soffristi  
Rapita a lei la verginal corona?  
Ah! che dissi? Deliro!  
Ah, mi perdona!

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**Aria: 'Il lacerato spirito...'**

Il lacerato spirito del mesto genitore  
Era serbato a strazio d'infamia e di dolore.

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

Resa al fulgor degli angeli,

Prega, Maria, per me..

**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!

**'The torn soul...**

The torn spirit of the grieving parent  
It was preserved in the agony of infamy and pain.

Heaven has given her the merciful wreath  
of martyrs...

May she surrender to the radiance of the angels:

Pray, Maria, for me.

**'L'Esule'**

Vedi! la bianca luna  
Splende sui colli;  
La notturna brezza  
Scorre leggera ad incresparsi il vago  
Grembo del quieto 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'anima ai primi gaudi tornerà.

Oh, che allor le patrie sponde  
Non saranno a me vietate;  
Fra quell'aure, su quell'onde  
Nudo spirito 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  
Throbbled 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 at 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.



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

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**I. 'Chanson du départ'**

**Song of Departure**

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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## II. 'Chanson à Dulcinée'

## Song to Dulcinea

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## III. 'Chanson du Duc'

## Song of the Duke

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.

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 deceit,  
The rose fades beside her cheek.

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.

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

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

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.

#### 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

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# 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'asseyait 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!