

WIGMORE HALL 125

Sunday 14 December 2025
7.30pm

Günther Groissböck bass
Julius Drake piano

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

4 Serious Songs Op. 121 (1896)

*Denn es gehet dem Menschen
Ich wandte mich und sahe an alle
O Tod, o Tod, wie bitter bist du
Wenn ich mit Menschen und mit Engelszungen redete*

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Liederkreis Op. 39 (1840)

*In der Fremde • Intermezzo • Waldesgespräch •
Die Stille • Mondnacht • Schöne Fremde •
Auf einer Burg • In der Fremde • Wehmut •
Zwielicht • Im Walde • Frühlingsnacht*

Interval

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Suite on Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti Op. 145 (1974)

*I. Truth • II. Morning • III. Love • IV. Separation •
V. Anger • VI. Dante • VII. To the exile •
VIII. Creativity • IX. Night • X. Death • XI. Immortality*



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Themes of death, life, love, and human nature occupy Johannes Brahms's set of four *Serious Songs* (1896) and Dmitri Shostakovich's 11-song *Suite of Michelangelo* settings (1974). Robert Schumann's *Liederkreis* Op. 39 (1840) has quite a different tone, its gentle probing of the human condition filtered through by the fantastical, folk-Romantic imagination of Joseph von Eichendorff. However, the light and dark latent in Schumann's cycle can be tugged in unexpected directions by performers' interpretations and in the context of the works with which it is programmed.

Brahms completed his 4 *Serious Songs* in May 1896, shortly before the death of Clara Schumann, with whom he had been good friends for over 40 years. The composer was also suffering from his own terminal illness, so mortality was almost certainly on his mind as he penned these sombre songs to texts from the Luther Bible. Brahms felt the words to be 'momentous, heavy with meaning', but the composer was not religious – he carefully selected non-dogmatic passages which aren't overtly Christian but rather provide an inclusive set of existential ruminations on humanity, life and death. The first three texts are from the Old Testament, and comment on the transience of life, the equality of all beings in death, and suffering on Earth. The first song roots itself firmly in the home minor key with a preponderance of weighty triads and stepwise scalic motion; a more anguished central section sets off a swift sequence of musical metamorphoses. The second and third songs provide masterclasses in motivic development and metrical ingenuity – Schoenberg was so taken with them that they formed the basis of his famous essay 'Brahms the Progressive'. The final song presents a marked shift towards optimism, starkly apparent from its boldly bright opening and its subsequent heartfelt setting of a New Testament passage extolling the virtues of faith, hope and charity.

Back in 1840, the young Clara Schumann was finally able to marry Robert following lengthy objections from her father. **Robert Schumann** composed prolifically that year, and many of the dozens of songs written throughout his so-called *Liederjahr* were either dedicated to or inspired by Clara. In May, he wrote to his future wife that his Op. 39 *Liederkreis* was his 'most romantic music, with much of you in it'; as was common for the collaboratively creative couple, Clara had in fact selected and copied out the Eichendorff poems that Robert would set. There is no obvious sequential narrative through the 12 songs, rather a series of images, states of mind, and motifs that recur and collide as if in a kaleidoscope. The poetic world is fantastical: rustling forests and murmuring brooks speak to the protagonist, as do birds, stars, the moon. The mythological Lorelei is evoked in 'Waldesgespräch', while every carefully-placed note of 'Auf einer Burg' – which tells the tale of a knight in his

castle, turned to stone – resounds with the expanse of folk history. The dangers of the enchanting landscape and of the night are never far from the surface: in 'Zwielicht', the pianist's fingers spin creeping tendrils of dusk, while darkness enshrouds the end of 'Im Walde' with a quiver of fear. But the spring night of the final song ('Frühlingsnacht') provides another optimistic ending: the nocturnal cast of moon, stars, forest and nightingale come together to celebrate the protagonist's romantic triumph.

Shostakovich's *Suite on Verses by Michelangelo Buonarroti* was completed in July 1974 following a period of creative drought – he had written earlier in the year that he felt like a 'spring has broken in my brain'. Shostakovich had been unwell since 1966, when he suffered the first of two heart attacks, and he had been diagnosed with lung cancer in 1973. Like Brahms's songs, Shostakovich's are preoccupied with the weightiest of topics; both composers died the year after these works were completed.

The songs were originally written for voice and piano, but their expansive vision was further explored in a subsequent orchestration, as Op. 145a. In orchestral guise, the work's genre status slides towards the symphonic: his Symphony No. 14, of 1969, also comprises 11 death-preoccupied songs, and Shostakovich is said to have told his son Maxim that he considered the orchestral Michelangelo songs a 16th Symphony in all but name. In both voice-piano and voice-orchestra versions, the music bears clear traces of the composer's affection for Musorgsky (especially the *Songs and Dances of Death* and scenes from *Boris Godunov*) and Mahler, in the sparse textures and existential statements of the song-symphonic *Das Lied von der Erde*.

As may be expected from the Italian Renaissance's master sculptor, themes of art and creativity recur throughout Michelangelo's poems, to which Shostakovich turned, in Russian translation, a year before the artist's 500th anniversary. This dimension seems to have appealed to Shostakovich, whose selection of 11 poems includes many nods to the ups and downs of an artist's working life, including two that directly address Michelangelo's specialty of carving stone ('Creativity' and 'Night', in the titles that Shostakovich added). While Shostakovich preferred the term 'Suite', his songs provide an idiosyncratic essay in the 150-year-old genre of the song cycle, replete with motivic and thematic recurrences, elements of narrativity, and a large-scale reprise of the first song's material ('Truth') in the tenth ('Death'). The final song, 'Immortality', is a striking appendage, with its unnervingly light, childlike piano figure quoting from a piece Shostakovich wrote when he was nine.

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Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

4 Serious Songs Op. 121 (1896)

Biblical text

Denn es gehet dem Menschen

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
Denn das Vieh; denn es ist Alles eitel.

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

Wer weiss, ob der Geist des Menschen aufwärts fahre, Und der Odem des Viehes Unterwärts unter die Erde fahre?

Darum sahe ich, dass nichts Bessers ist, denn dass der Mensch fröhlich sei in seiner Arbeit; denn das ist sein Teil. Denn wer will ihn dahin bringen, Dass er sehe, was nach ihm Geschehen wird?

Ich wandte mich und sahe an alle

Ich wandte mich, und sahe an Alle, die Unrecht leiden unter Der Sonne; und siehe, 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.

For that which befalleth the sons of men

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts;
as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity.

All go unto one place; all are of dust, and all turn to dust again.

Who knoweth the spirit of man goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his portion. For who shall bring him to see what shall happen after him?

So I returned and considered all the impressions

So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.

Da lobte ich die Toten, die Schon gestorben waren, mehr Als die Lebendigen, die noch Das Leben hatten. Und der noch nicht ist, ist Besser als alle beide, und des Bösen nicht inne wird, das unter Der Sonne geschieht.

O Tod, 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, der in allen Sorgen steckt, und nichts Bessers zu hoffen, noch zu Erwarten hat!

Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

O death, how bitter is the remembrance

O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, unto the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things; yea, unto him that is yet able to receive meat! O death, acceptable is thy sentence unto the needy and unto him whose strength faileth, that is now in the last age, and is vexed with all things, and to him that despaireth, and hath lost patience!

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Wenn ich mit Menschen und mit Engelszungen redete

Wenn ich mit Menschen- und
Mit Engelszungen 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
Mirs nichts nütze.

Wir sehen jetzt durch einen
Spiegel in einem dunkeln
Worte, dann aber von
Angesicht
Zu Angesichte. Jetzt erkenne
Ichs stückweise, dann aber
Werd ichs erkennen, gleichwie
Ich erkennet bin.

Nun aber bleibet Glaube,
Hoffnung, Liebe, diese drei;
Aber die Liebe ist die grösseste
Unter ihnen.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels

Though I speak with the
tongues of men and of
angels,
and have not charity, I am
become as sounding brass
or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift
of
prophecy, and
understand all
mysteries, and all
knowledge;
and though I have all
faith, so that
I could remove
mountains, and
have not charity, I am
nothing.

And though I bestow all
my goods to feed the poor,
and though I give my body
to be burned, it profiteth
me nothing ...

For now we see through
a glass, darkly; but
then face to
face:
now I know in part,
but then shall I know
even as also I am
known.

And now abideth faith,
hope, charity, these three;
but the greatest of these
is charity.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Liederkreis Op. 39 (1840)

*Joseph Freiherr von
Eichendorff*

Song Cycle

In der Fremde

Aus der Heimat hinter den
Blitzen rot
Da kommen die Wolken her,
Aber Vater und Mutter sind
lange tot,
Es kennt mich dort keiner
mehr.

Wie bald, ach wie bald
kommt die stille Zeit,
Da ruhe ich auch, und über mir
Rauscht die schöne
Waldeinsamkeit,
Und keiner kennt mich mehr
hier.

In a foreign land

From my homeland, beyond
the red lightning,
the clouds come drifting in,
but father and mother
have long been dead,
now no one knows me
there.

How soon, ah! how soon
till that quiet time
when I too shall rest
beneath the sweet murmur
of lonely woods,
forgotten here as
well.

Intermezzo

Dein Bildnis wunderselig
Hab' ich im Herzensgrund,
Das sieht so frisch und fröhlich
Mich an zu jeder Stund'.

Mein Herz still in sich singet
Ein altes, schönes Lied,
Das in die Luft sich schwinget
Und zu dir eilig
zieht.

I bear your beautiful likeness
deep within my heart,
it gazes at me every hour
so freshly and happily.

My heart sings softly to itself
an old and beautiful song
that soars into the sky
and swiftly wings its way
to you.

Waldesgespräch

Es ist schon spät, es ist
schon kalt,
Was reit'st du einsam durch
den Wald?
Der Wald ist lang, du bist
allein,
Du schöne Braut! Ich führ
dich heim!

'Gross ist der Männer Trug
und List,
Vor Schmerz mein Herz
gebrochen ist,
Wohl irrt das Waldhorn her
und hin,
O flieh! Du weisst nicht, wer
ich bin.'

So reich geschmückt ist
Ross und Weib,
So wunderschön der junge
Leib,
Jetzt kenn ich dich – Gott
steh mir bei!
Du bist die Hexe
Loreley.

'Du kennst mich wohl – von
hohem Stein
Schaut still mein Schloss tief
in den Rhein.
Es ist schon spät, es ist
schon kalt
Kommst nimmermehr aus
diesem Wald!'

Die Stille

Es weiss und rät es doch
Keiner,
Wie mir so wohl ist, so wohl!
Ach, wüsst' es nur Einer, nur
Einer,
Kein Mensch es sonst
wissen soll!

So still ist's nicht draussen
im Schnee,
So stumm und
verschwiegen sind
Die Sterne nicht in der Höh',
Als meine Gedanken sind.

Ich wünscht', ich wär' ein
Vöglein
Und zöge über das Meer,
Wohl über das Meer und
weiter,
Bis dass ich im Himmel wär'!

A forest dialogue

It is already late, already
cold,
why ride lonely through
the forest?
The forest is long, you are
alone,
you lovely bride! I'll lead
you home!

'Great is the deceit and
cunning of men,
my heart is broken with
grief,
the hunting horn echoes
here and there,
O flee! You do not know
who I am.'

So richly adorned are
steed and lady,
so wondrous fair her
youthful form,
now I know you – may
God protect me!
You are the enchantress
Lorelei.

'You know me well – from
its towering rock
my castle looks deep and
silent down into the Rhine.
It is already late, already
cold,
you shall never leave this
forest again!'

Silence

No one knows and no one
can guess
how happy I am, how happy!
If only one, just one man
knew,
no one else ever
should!

The snow outside is not
so silent,
nor are the stars on
high
so still and silent
as my own thoughts.

I wish I were a little
bird,
and could fly across the sea,
across the sea and
further,
until I were in heaven!

Mondnacht

Es war, als hätt' der Himmel
Die Erde still geküsst,
Dass sie im
Blütenschimmer
Von ihm nur träumen müsst'.

Die Luft ging durch die
Felder,
Die Ähren wogten
sacht,
Es rauschten leis die Wälder,
So sternklar war die
Nacht.

Und meine Seele spannte
Weit ihre Flügel aus,
Flog durch die stillen Lande,
Als flöge sie nach Haus.

Schöne Fremde

Es rauschen die Wipfel und
schauern,
Als machten zu dieser Stund'
Um die halb versunkenen
Mauern
Die alten Götter die Rund'.

Hier hinter den
Myrtenbäumen
In heimlich dämmernder
Pracht,
Was sprichst du wirr, wie in
Träumen,
Zu mir, phantastische Nacht?

Es funkeln auf mich alle
Sterne
Mit glühendem Liebesblick,
Es redet trunken die
Ferne
Wie von künftigem grossen
Glück!

Moonlit night

It was as though Heaven
had softly kissed the Earth,
so that she in a gleam of
blossom
had now to dream of him.

The breeze passed
through the fields,
the corn swayed gently to
and fro,
the forests murmured softly,
the night was so clear
with stars.

And my soul spread
its wings out wide,
flew across the silent land,
as though flying home.

A beautiful foreign land

The tree-tops rustle and
shudder
as if at this very hour
the ancient gods were
pacing
these half-sunken walls.

Here beyond the myrtle
trees
in secret twilit
splendour,
what are you telling me,
fantastic night,
obscurely, as in a dream?

The glittering stars gaze
down on me,
fierily and full of love,
the distant horizon
speaks with rapture
of some great happiness
to come!

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its
accompaniment have ended.*

Auf einer Burg

Eingeschlafen auf der Lauer
Oben ist der alte
Ritter;
Drüber gehen
Regenschauer,
Und der Wald rauscht durch
das Gitter.

Eingewachsen Bart und
Haare,
Und versteinert Brust und
Krause,
Sitzt er viele hundert
Jahre
Oben in der stillen Klausen.

Draussen ist es still und
friedlich,
Alle sind in's Tal
gezogen,
Waldevögel einsam
singen
In den leeren
Fensterbogen.

Eine Hochzeit fährt da
unten
Auf dem Rhein im
Sonnenscheine,
Musikanten spielen munter,
Und die schöne Braut, die
weinet.

In der Fremde

Ich hör' die Bächlein
rauschen
Im Walde her und
hin,
Im Walde, in dem
Rauschen
Ich weiss nicht, wo ich bin.

Die Nachtigallen schlagen
Hier in der Einsamkeit,
Als wollten sie was sagen
Von der alten, schönen Zeit.

Die Mondesschimmer fliege
Als sah' ich unter mir
Das Schloss im Tale liegen,
Und ist doch so weit von hier!

Als müsste in dem Garten
Voll Rosen weiss und rot,
Meine Liebste auf mich
warten,
Und ist doch so lange tot.

In a castle

Up there at his look-out
the old knight has fallen
asleep;
rain-storms pass
overhead,
and the wood stirs
through the portcullis.

Beard and hair matted
together,
ruff and breast turned to
stone,
for centuries he's sat up
there
in his silent cell.

Outside it's quiet and
peaceful,
all have gone down to the
valley,
forest birds sing lonely
songs
in the empty window-
arches.

Down there on the sunlit
Rhine
a wedding-party's sailing
by,
musicians strike up merrily,
and the lovely bride –
weeps.

In a foreign land

I hear the brooklets
murmuring
through the forest, here
and there,
in the forest, in the
murmuring
I do not know where I am.

Nightingales are singing
here in the solitude,
as though they wished to tell
of lovely days now past.

The moonlight flickers,
as though I saw below me
the castle in the valley,
yet it lies so far from here!

As though in the garden,
full of roses, white and red,
my love were waiting for
me,
yet she died so long ago.

Wehmut

Ich kann wohl manchmal
singen,
Als ob ich fröhlich sei,
Doch heimlich Tränen dringen,
Da wird das Herz mir frei.

Es lassen Nachtigallen,
Spielt draussen Frühlingsluft,
Der Sehnsucht Lied erschallen
Aus ihres Kerkers Gruft.

Da lauschen alle Herzen,
Und alles ist erfreut,
Doch keiner fühlt die
Schmerzen,
Im Lied das tiefe Leid.

Zwielicht

Dämmerung will die Flügel
spreiten,
Schaurig rühren sich die
Bäume,
Wolken ziehn wie schwere
Träume –
Was will dieses Graun
bedeuten?

Hast ein Reh du lieb vor
ändern,
Lass es nicht alleine grasen,
Jäger ziehn im Wald und
blasen,
Stimmen hin und wieder
wandern.

Hast du einen Freund
hienieden,
Trau ihm nicht zu dieser
Stunde,
Freundlich wohl mit Aug'
und Munde,
Sinnt er Krieg im tück'schen
Frieden.

Was heut gehet müde
unter,
Hebt sich morgen
neugeboren.
Manches geht in Nacht
verloren –
Hüte dich, sei wach und
munter!

Sadness

True, I can sometimes
sing
as though I were content;
but secretly tears well up,
and my heart is set free.

Nightingales, when spring
breezes play outside, sing
their song of longing
from their dungeon cell.

Then all hearts listen
and everyone rejoices,
yet no one feels the
pain,
the deep sorrow in the song.

Twilight

Dusk is about to spread
its wings,
the trees now shudder
and stir,
clouds drift by like
oppressive dreams –
what can this dusk and
dread imply?

If you have a fawn you
favour,
do not let her graze alone,
hunters sound their horns
through the forest,
voices wander to and
fro.

If here on earth you have
a friend,
do not trust him at this
hour,
though his eyes and lips
be smiling,
in treacherous peace he's
scheming war.

That which wearily sets
today,
will rise tomorrow, newly
born.
Much can go lost in the
night –
be wary, watchful, on your
guard!

Im Walde

Es zog eine Hochzeit
den Berg
entlang,
Ich hörte die Vögel
schlagen,
Da blitzten viel Reiter, das
Waldhorn klang,
Das war ein lustiges Jagen!

Und eh' ich's gedacht, war
alles verhallt,
Die Nacht bedeckt die Runde;
Nur von den Bergen noch
rauscht der Wald
Und mich schauert's im
Herzensgrunde.

Frühlingsnacht

Überm Garten durch die
Lüfte
Hört' ich Wandervögel
zieh'n,
Das bedeutet
Frühlingsdüfte,
Unten fängt's schon an zu
blüh'n.

Jauchzen möcht' ich,
möchte weinen,
Ist mir's doch, als könnt's
nicht sein!
Alte Wunder wieder
scheinen
Mit dem Mondesglanz
herein.

Und der Mond, die Sterne
sagen's,
Und im Traume rauscht's
der Hain
Und die Nachtigallen
schlagen's:
Sie ist Deine, sie ist Dein!

In the forest

A wedding procession
wound across the
mountain,
I heard the warbling of
birds,
riders flashed by, hunting
horns blared,
that was a merry chase!

And before I knew, all had
faded,
darkness covers the land;
only the forest still sighs
from the mountain,
and deep in my heart I
quiver with fear.

Spring night

Over the garden, through
the air
I heard birds of passage
fly,
a sign that spring is in the
air,
flowers already bloom
below.

I could shout for joy,
could weep,
for it seems to me it
cannot be!
All the old wonders come
flooding back,
gleaming in the
moonlight.

And the moon and stars
say it,
and the dreaming forest
whispers it,
and the nightingales sing
it:
She is yours, is yours!

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Suite on Verses of Michelangelo

Buonarroti Op. 145 (1974)

Michelangelo Buonarroti trans. Abram Efros

I. Istina

Yest istiny v rechenyakh
stariny,
I vot odna: kto mozhet, tot
ne khochet;
Ty vnyal, Sinyor, tomu, chto
lozh strekochet,
I boltuny toboy
nagrazhdeny;

Ya zh tvoy sluga: moi trudy
dany
Tebe, kak solntsu luch, khot
i porochit
Tvoy gnev vsyo to, chto pyl
moy sdelat prochit,
I vse moi stradaniya ne
nuzhny.

Ya dumal, chto
vozmyot tvoyo
veliche
Menya k sebe ne ekhom
dlya palat,
A lezviyem suda i girey
gneva;

No yest k zemnym zaslugam
bezrazliche
Na nebesakh, i zhdet ot nikh
nagrad –
Chto ozhidat plodov s
sukhogo dreva.

Truth

There are truths in old
proverbs, and here is one:
whoever has power to do
something, doesn't do it.
My lord, you have
believed tellers of lies
and rewarded spreaders
of gossip.

I have been your servant,
my works for you
are as rays to your sun.
But your scorn
means that all the ardour
devoted to you,
all my suffering, has been
in vain.

I thought that your
greatness would
reward me
and raise me up, not as a
hollow echo
but as a sword of justice
and a charge of wrath.

But heaven's servants on
earth are indifferent,
and to expect any reward
from them
is like hoping for fruit
from a barren tree.

Interval

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its
accompaniment have ended.*

II. Utro

Net radostney vesyologo
zanyatya:
Po zlatu kos tsvetam
napereboy
Soprikasatsa s miloy
golovoy
I Inut lobzanyem vsyudu bez
izyatya!

I skolko naslazhdeniya dlya
platya
Szhimat ey stan i nispadat
volnoy,
I kak otradno setke
zolotoy
Eyo lanity zaklyuchat v
obyatya!

Yeshchy nezhney
naryadnoy lenty vyaz,
Blestya uzornoy vyshivkoy
svoeyu,
Smykaetsa vkrug persey
molodykh.

A chistyy poyas, laskovo
viyas,
Kak budto shepchet: 'ne
rasstanus s neyu ...'
O, skolko dela zdes dlya ruk
moikh!

III. Lyubov

Skazhi, Lyubov, voistinu li
vzoru
Zhelannaya predstala
krasota,
Il to moya tvoryashchaya
mechta
Sluchaynyy lik vzyala sebe v
oporu?

Tebe I ne znat? Ved s nim po
ugovoru
Ty sna menya lishila. Pust!
Usta
Leleyut kazhdyy vzdokh, i
zalita
Dusha ognym, ne
znayushchim otporu.

Ty istinnuyu vidish
krasotu,
No blesk yeyo gorit, vsyo
razrastayas,
Kogda skvoz vzor k dushe
voskhodit on;

Tam obretaet bozhuyu
chistotu,

Morning

What delightful pleasure
there is
for that garland in her
golden hair,
each flower eagerly
pressing forward,
as though to be first to
kiss her dear head!

And what enjoyment for the
dress
that both clings and flows
around her,
and for the golden braid
that so eagerly
touches her cheeks and
her neck!

Still more delight for the
elegant sash
of brightly-patterned
embroidery
that enfolds her young
breasts.

And that pure girdle,
lovingly clasping her
as though whispering 'I
shall never leave you ...'
Oh, how much there is
here for my hands!

Love

'Tell me, love, do my eyes
truly see
the beauty I so much
desire,
or is it some creation of
my dreams,
brought to life by a
chance image?

You should know, for this
beauty
has deprived me of all
sleep. So be it.
My lips cherish each sigh
and my soul
is flooded with an
unquenchable fire.'

'You see this beauty truly
indeed,
for its brightness burns
and increases
as it rises through your
eyes to the soul.

There it acquires a divine
purity

Bessmertnomu tvortsu
upodoblyayas,
Vot pochemu tvoj vzglyad
zavorozhyon.

IV. Razluka

Derznu I, sokrovishche
moyo,
Sushchestvovat bez vas,
sebe na muku,
Raz glukhi vy k molbam
smyagchit razluku?
Unlym serdtsem bolshe ne
tayu
Ni vozglasov, ni vzdokhov, ni
rydaniy,
Chtob vam yavit, madonna,
gnyot stradaniy
I smert uzh nedalyokuyu
moyu;
No daby rok potom moyo
sluzhenye
Izgnat iz vashey pamyati ne
mog,
Ya ostavlyayu serdtse vam v
zalog.

V. Gnev

Zdes delayut iz chash mechi
i shlemy
I krov Khristovu prodayut na
ves;
Na shchit zdes tern, na
kopyu krest ischez,
Usta zh Khristovy terpelivo
nemy.

Pust On ne skhodit v nashi
Vifleyemy
Il snova bryznet krovyu do
nebes,
Zatem, chto dushegubam
Rim – chto les,
I miloserdye derzhim na
zamke my.

Mne ne grozyat
roskoshestva obuzy,
Ved dlya menya davno uzh
net zdes del;
Ya mantii strashus, kak
Mavr-Meduzu;

No yesli bednost slavoy Bog
odel,
Kakiye zh nam togda gotovit
uzy
Pod znamenem inym inoy
udel?

that likens it to its
immortal creator –
that is why your eyes are
captivated.'

Separation

How then, my joy, could I
presume
to exist without you, for
despite my anguish,
and tears you cannot
soften our separation?
My unhappy heart shall
no longer pine away
with the cries, sighs and
tears that show you,
my lady, the burden of my
suffering
and how close I am to
death.
But so that fate shall not
eclipse
my devotion from your
memory,
I leave my heart to you as
a pledge.

Anger

Here swords and helmets
are made from chalices
and Christ's blood is
freely offered for sale;
thorns are shields, the Cross
is made into lances,
and yet Christ remains
silent and patient.

Let Him never return to
our Bethlehems,
or His blood would again
spurt up to the heavens,
for Rome is a forest full of
murderers
and we keep mercy
strictly locked up.

The trappings of luxury have
never tempted me,
there has long been
nothing for me here;
the man who wears the
robe is like a Medusa.

But if poverty is honoured
by God,
what hope can we have
when it is stifled
by the banner under
which we live?

VI. Dante

Spustivshis s neba, v tlennoy
ploti, on
Uvidel ad, obitel
iskuplenya,
I zhiv predstal dlya bozhya
litsezhdenya,
I nam povedal vsyo, chem
umudryon.

Luchistaya zvezda, chim
ozaryon
Siyanyem kray, mne dannyy
dlya rozhdenya,
Yey ne ot mira zhdet
voznagrazhdenya,
No ot tebya, kem mir byl
sotvoryon.

Ya govoryu o Dante: ne
nuzhny
Ozloblennoy tolpe yego
sozdanya,
Ved dlya neyo i vysshiiy
geniy mal.

Bud ya, kak on! O, bud mne
suzhdeny
Yego dela i skorb yego
izgnanya,
Ya b luchshey doli v mire ne
zhelal!

VII. Izganniku

Kak budto chtim, a vsyo zhe
chest mala.
Yego velichye vzor nash
oslepilo.
Chto chyorn korit za nizkoye
merilo,
Kogda pusta i nasha
pokhvala!

On radi nas soshyol v obitel
zla;
Gospodne tsarstvo lik yemu
yavilo;
No dver, chto dazhe nebo ne
zakrylo,
Pred Dante otchizna zlobno
zaperla.

Neblagodarnaya! Sebe na
gore
Ty dlila muki syna
svoego;
Tak sovershenstvu nizost
mstit ot veka,

Dante

He came from heaven
clothed in mortal flesh,
he saw both hell and
purgatory,
he lived to contemplate
God
and revealed to us all that
he had learned.

This shining star, whose
rays
illuminated the city that
gave me birth,
could not expect any
reward from the world,
but only from You, his
creator.

I speak of Dante, whose
writings
are regarded with scorn
by the general mob,
for the highest genius
means nothing to them.

If only I were like him! If I
could live as he did
and even undergo the
bitterness of his exile,
I would wish for no finer
earthly life!

To the exile

We cannot honour him as
highly as we should,
for his greatness has
blinded our eyes.
Why condemn those who
wronged him
when our own praise is so
meagre?

For our sakes he explored
the depths of evil;
God's kingdom was
revealed to him;
but though heaven closed
no doors to Dante,
his homeland wickedly shut
its gates in his face.

What ingratitude! To its
disgrace,
it added to the sufferings
of its native son.
Thus baseness avenges
itself on perfection.

Odin primer iz tekhn,
kotorykh – more!
Kak net podley izgnaniya
yego,
Tak mir ne znal i vyshe
cheloveka.

VIII. Tvorchestvo

Kogda skalu moy zhostkiy
molotok
V oblichiya lyudey
preobrazhaet,
Bez mastera, kotoryy
napravlyayet
Evo udar, on delu b ne
pomog,

No bozhiy molot iz sebya
izvlyok
Razmakh, chto miru prelest
soobshchayet;
Vse moloty tot molot
predveshchayet,
I v nyom odnom – im vsem
zhivoy urok.

Chem vyshe vzmakh ruki
nad nakovalney,
Tem tyazheley udar: tak
zanesyon
I nado mnoy on k vysyam
podnebesnym;

Mne glyboyu kosnet
pervonachalnoy,
Poka kuznets gospoden –
tolko on! –
Ne posobit udarom
polnovesnym.

This is just one instance:
there is an ocean of them!
And as nothing was more
shameful than his exile,
so the world has never
seen a greater man.

Creativity

When my rough hammer
transfigures
stone into the shape of
human beings,
it would be powerless to
create anything
without a master to guide
its blows.

There resides in the
hammer of God
a mighty force that gives
delight to the world:
this is the hammer of all
hammers,
and from this one, all life
proceeds.

The higher the arm is
raised above the anvil
the more powerful the blow:
the hammer is now
raised above me to the
height of heaven.

I am like stone, a block of
unshaped material,
until God the craftsman –
He alone –
releases me by striking
with all his strength.

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its
accompaniment have ended.*

IX. Noch

Vot eta Noch, chto tak
spokoyno spit
Pered toboyu, Angela
sozdanye.
Ona iz kamnya, no v ney yest
dykhanye:
Lish razbudi, ona zagovorit.

Mne sladko spat, a pushche
– kamnem byt,
Kogda krugom pozor i
prestuplenye:
Ne chuvstvovat, ne videt –
oblegchenye,
Umoljni zh, drug, k chemu
menya budit?

X. Smert

Uzh chuya smert, khot i ne
znaya sroka,
Ya vizhu: zhizn vse
ubystriayet shag,
No telu yeshchyo zhalko
plotskikh blag,
Dushe zhe smert
zhelanneye poroka.

Mir – v slepote: postydno
uroka
Iz vlasti zla ne izvlekayet
zrak,
Nadezhdy net, i vsyo
obemlet mrak,
I lozh tsarit, i pravda
pryachet oko.

Kogda zh, Gospod, nastupit
to, chego
Zhdut vernyye tebe?
Oslabevayet
V otsrochkakh vera, dushu
davit gnyot;

No chto nam svet spasenya
twoego,
Raz smert bystrey i
navsegda yavlyayet
Nas v sramote, v kotoroy
zastayot?

Night

This figure of Night that
sleeps so peacefully
before your eyes was
created by an Angel.
She is sculpted from stone,
but she breathes:
wake her, and she will speak.

Sleep is sweet, even sweeter
to be made of stone,
when all around flourish
ignominy and crime.
Neither to feel nor to see
is so soothing.
Be silent, my friend. Why
awaken me?

Death

My death is certain, but
not its hour.
I know my life is
hastening to its end,
and though my body still
seeks its pleasures
my soul now yearns for
death.

The world is sunk in
blindness. Shame and evil
triumph and overwhelm
all honesty.
All hope is lost, the light is
extinguished,
falsehood reigns and
truth hides its face.

When will it come, Lord, that
day which is awaited
by those who trust in
You? Any further delay
undermines faith and
oppresses the soul.

What hope is there of the
light of Your salvation,
when death suddenly and
for ever surprises us
in the state of shame in
which we are living?

XI. Bessmertiyе

Zdes rok poslal
bezvremennyy mne son,
No ya ne myortv, khot i
opushchen v zemlyu:
Ya zhiv v tebe, chim
setovanyam vnemlyu,
Za to, chto v druge drug
otobrazhyon.

Ya slovno b myortv, no miru
v uteshenye
Ya tysyachami dush zhivu v
serdtsakh
Vsekh lyubyashchikh, i,
znachit, ya ne prakh,
I smertnoye menya ne tronet
tlenye.

Immortality

Here fate has sent me
untimely sleep,
but I am not dead, though
I lie in the earth.
I am alive in you, whose
lamentation I hear,
for lovers are the reflection
of one another.

I am as though dead, but
as a solace to the world
and its thousands of souls
I am alive in the hearts
of all who love, therefore I
am not turned to dust
nor am I touched by
mortal decay.