



Classics Concert Insights Lecture

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CARMINA BURANA (1937)



CARL ORFF

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CARMINA: Plural of *Carmen*, Latin for *song*.

BURANA: Latin for, from *Bayern, Bavaria*.

CANTATA VERSUS ORATORIO:

- Cantata: A sacred or secular work for chorus and orchestra.
- Oratorio: An opera without scenery or costumes.

THE MUSIC:

- A collection of 24 songs, most in Latin, some in Middle High German, with a few French words.

THE SPECTACLE:

- Seventy piece orchestra.
- Large chorus of men, women and boys and girls.
- Three soloists: tenor, baritone and soprano.

THE POETRY:

- The Medieval Latin poetry of Carmina Burana is in a style called Saturnian that dates back to 200 B.C. It was accented and stressed, used by soldiers on the march, tavern patrons and children at play. Later used by early Christians.
- While the poems are secular, some are hymn-like. Orff's arrangements highlight this.
- The poems were composed by 13th century Goliards, Medieval itinerant street poets who lived by their wits, going from town to town, entertaining people for a few coins. Many were ex monks or university drop-outs.
- Common Goliard themes include disaffection with society, mockery of the church, carnal desire and love.
- Benedictine monks in a Bavarian monastery, founded in 733 in Beuern, in the Alps south of Munich, collected these Goliardic poems.
- After the dissolution of the monastery in 1803, some two hundred of these poems were published in 1847 by Andreas Schmeller, a dialect scholar, in an anthology that he labeled *Carmina Burana*.
- Orff discovered these in 1935 and, with the help of the poet Michael Hoffman, organized twenty-four poems from the collection into a libretto by the same name.

CARL ORFF (1895-1982):

- A prodigy, he taught himself how to compose in his teenage years.
- Took formal music studies before and after World War I in which he served.
- Major influences included Richard Strauss and Igor Stravinsky.
- In 1924 Orff founded a music academy where he taught for the rest of his life, becoming a noted music educator. His *Orff Schulwerk* teaching techniques remain influential.
- *Carmina Burana*, first staged by the Frankfurt Opera June 8, 1937, is his best known composition.
- *Carmina Burana* is also the most famous piece of music to come out of Nazi Germany.
- Orff's association with the Nazi regime remains a matter of controversy.
- He subsequently composed many opera-like works based on classical themes.

OVERALL STRUCTURE OF *CARMINA BURANA*:

- Three major sections flanked at each end by the massive pillars of *O Fortuna*.
- *Primo Vere, In The Springtime* with a subsection *Uf dem Anger, On The Green*.
- *In Taberna, In The Tavern*.
- *Cours D'Amour, In The Court of Love*,

KEY TO THE CHARACTERS:

- BARITONE: Voice of male desire.
- SOPRANO: Voice of female desire.
- TENOR: The cooked swan.
- CHORUS: A Greek chorus, serving different dramatic functions.
- BOYS CHORUS: Cupid (not explicitly stated).

FORTUNA IMPERATRIX MUNDI

This is an introductory section with two dramatic, hymn-like carmina that lament the vagaries of fortune.

CARMEN 1: O FORTUNA (D minor)

- Part 1: Entire chorus sings *O Fortuna, velut luna, statu variabilis, O Fortune, like the moon changeable in state*, as a loud hymn, with dramatic tympani beats and climaxing in *statu variabilis* with a cymbal crash.
- Part 2: Quiet melody, a full chorus recitative, pianissimo in dramatic contrast to what preceded it, describes the characteristics of fortune, through the remainder of the verse and the next full verse. The musical accompaniment is a see-sawing, pianissimo ostinato base and pulsating orchestral beats.

- Part 3: Melody dramatically rises at start of the third verse: *Sors salutis, Fate of health*, with orchestral accents on the beginning of each line, further emphasized by cymbal clashes beginning at *hoc in hora, at this hour*, and highlighting each subsequent line. Music rises to another climax at the end of the stanza with *mecum omnes plangite, let all lament with me*, the chorus extending the first syllable of *omnes* in a melisma.
- Part 4: Loud, breathless, orchestral codetta with chorus holding the last syllable of *plangite*.

COMMENTS:

- This first poem of the *Carmina Burana* collection was powerfully appealing to Orff.
- The mysterious, waxing and waning, often cruel nature of fortune is a concept that holds universal appeal. The despair expressed in *O Fortuna*, a solemn, minor key introduction to the work, was well understood by Medieval men and women.
- Orff rightfully assigns fortune the label *Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi, Fortune Empress of the World*.
- *O Fortuna* is one of two main themes in the work, the other being Venus, another empress, whose appeal and glory will be explored in *Primo Vere* and *Cours D'Amour*.
- *O Fortuna* is presented as a massive hymn, in a style that sounds like plainchant.
- Divorced from its context within *Carmina Burana*, *O Fortuna* has become a staple of popular culture, used in various commercials and movies. "The most overused piece of music in film history." (Jeff Bond)

CARMEN 2: FORTUNE PLANGO VULNERA

MUSIC:

- A personal lament about the reversals of fortune in three stanzas, each ending with an orchestral codetta, each featuring the same music.
- Each stanza begins quietly and ends in a rousing climax, and has three sections.
- First section: Male Chorus presents the first half of the stanza as a quiet plainchant. Orchestral accompaniment is a pianissimo drone with accented beats on the poem.
- Second section: Male chorus presents the second half of the stanza faster, more restless, staccato. Orchestral accompaniment louder, with accents on the poem with a turn-of-phrase melody at the end of each line.
- Third section: Dramatic rise in dynamics as the full chorus repeats the second half of the stanza with dramatic, lightning like accents from orchestra.
- Orchestral Codetta: A *fortissimo*, fast climax, with tympani beats and cymbal clashes.

POEM:

- First stanza, *Fortune plango vulnera, wounds of fortune*, laments what is taken away with a metaphor of a hairy head rendered bald.

- Second stanza, *In Fortune solio sederam elatus, On the throne of fortune I was sat exalted*, describes fall from grace, riches and glory.
- Third stanza, *Fortune rota volvitur, Fortune's wheel spins*, refers to the fall of one king and rise of another, warning each that Hecuba is lurking in the background. Hecuba was wife of Priam, king of Troy who became a slave to Ulysses.
- The music accents the rhythm of the poem.

PRIMO VERE (IN SPRINGTIME):

CARMEN 3: VERIS LETA FACIES

MUSIC:

- Music begins with three loud chimes and a quieter, slower double church bell.
- The church bell impression is created by two simple notes, G to A.
- Small chorus intones the three stanzas of the poem as a plainchant, each line delineated by the church bell, with a sparse drone accompaniment.
- A brief wind chorale separates the stanzas.
- Movement ends with the wind chorale followed by the church bells, in an open cadence.

THE POEM:

- The re-awakening of life as winter gives way to spring is celebrated in all its sensual delights, visual, aural and olfactory, both literally and allegorically with references to *Flora*, *Phoebus* and *Zephyrus*, common Medieval mythological references to springtime.
- *Flora* is the Roman goddess of flowers and spring, married to *Zephyrus* the wind god. In May Day, Romans celebrated the festival of *Floralia*.
- *Phoebus* is Apollo, personification of the sun in Greek mythology.
- *Zephyrus* is the Greek god of the west wind, a fructifying wind and messenger of spring.
- The end of the second stanza, *Certatim pro bravio curramus in amore, to compete for the prize of love let us hasten*, refers to the promise of courtship that spring offers young Medieval couples after the indoor seclusion of winter.
- The last stanza begins with *Cytharizat cantico dulcis Philomena, Striking up in song sweet Philomela*, invoking the music of nature in springtime.
- *Philomela* (aka *Philomina*) was a Thracian princess in Greek mythology, who, according to Ovid, was raped by a brutal king who had her tongue removed so she would not bear witness to the crime; in the end, after the king was punished, *Philomela* was turned into a nightingale.

COMMENTS:

- Carmen 3 is a hymn-like introduction to the delights of spring which will be depicted more energetically in songs to come.

- The quiet solemnity of the music is in keeping with the dawn like awakening described by the poem, the chimes in the beginning akin to a wake-up bell.
- The static quality imparted into the music by the drone harmonies add to this early pre-dawn aura.

CARMEN 4: OMNIA SOL TEMPERAT

MUSIC:

- Another hymn-like song, with three stanzas, in a minor key.
- Solo baritone sings quietly, introduced by four bells. These bells also mark the ends of each stanza.
- The accompaniment is a quiet pedal, the music therefore static, much like Carmen 3.
- Each stanza ends with an open cadence; so does the movement.
- Ends with the bells, followed by a concluding note on brass.

POEM:

- Baritone makes his first entrance in Carmen 4, depicting the male prospect for love brought on by spring time, enunciated in the first stanza that ends with *deus puerilis, boyish god*, a thinly veiled reference to Cupid that rules over the sunny scenery.
- The next two stanzas express concern over fidelity, on which are based the joys of spring.
- The singer directly addresses his love in the last stanza asking for and offering fidelity.
- The last line, *quisquis amat taliter, volvitur in rota*, *Whoever loves like that is revolved on the wheel*, can have an ambiguous interpretation, but it is most likely the wheel of fortune.

COMMENTS:

- The coupling of carmina 3 & 4 have a parallel to 1 & 2, each presenting a general description in the first carmen, followed by a more personal viewpoint in the second.
- The open cadences in all stanzas of carmina 3 & 4 are allegorical for unfulfilled desire.

CARMEN 5: ECCE GRATUM

MUSIC:

- For the first time the music breaks out of the hymn-like, minor key solemnity of the earlier movements and into a celebratory music in a major key.
- Full chorus sings three stanzas, each starting quietly, then progressively rising and more celebratory, transitioning from hymn to dance.
- Each stanza begins with the first line presented as an antecedent, then repeated.
- The second line is the consequence, stated once.

- The third and fourth lines are sung as a fast, loud dance, with lively percussion in accompaniment, some phrases repeated.
- The music rises to a rousing climax with the chorus singing *aaah* and the orchestra fortissimo with drumrolls.
- The music “aurally creates a visual picture of a frozen world becoming warm and alive.” (Sebesta)

POEM:

- This poem once again celebrates the arrival of spring, describing the changing world and anticipating it as a harbinger of love.
- The last stanza makes references to Cupid, Venus and Paris, introducing the second major theme of *Carmina Burana*.
- Note in particular, *gloriantes et letantes pares esse Paridis, glory and rejoice to be Paris's equals*.
- Paris was the prince of Troy whose illicit love affair with Helen, Queen of Sparta sparked the Trojan War. By taking Paris, who obeyed the call of Venus, as their model for a lover, the Goliards who wrote this poem are in conflict with the Church.
- Note also a distinction between carmina 4 and 5. The poet of carmen 4 was concerned with fidelity, that of carmen 5 urges love as dictated by individual whimsy.

COMMENT:

- The poems of carmina 3,4 & 5 celebrate the arrival of spring, linking it with anticipation of love through mythological allegory.
- They are significantly different than what is to come in *Uf Dem Anger*.

UF DEM ANGER (ON THE GREEN)

This is the second section of *Primo Vere, Springtime*. The music changes from hymns and chants to dance, the subject matter no longer lofty with mythological allegory, but rather belonging to the common man, the peasant.

CARMEN 6: TANZ (DANCE)

- This is a brief instrumental introduction to this section, setting the mood.
- Loud, three note rising idea and drumroll introduces the dance.
- Fast dance melody in strings, features frequent meter changes and syncopations, Stravinsky-like.
- Interlude with quiet counter-melody in strings interrupts the dance.
- Dance returns.
- Much longer interlude, a pastoral tune in solo flute to the accompaniment of tympani beats.

- Dance returns, faster and dramatically louder, with loud percussion beats accenting it.
- Three note rising idea, faster and syncopated, closes the movement.

CARMEN 7: FLORET SILVA NOBILIS

MUSIC AND POEM:

FIRST SECTION:

- Male chorus loudly announces, *Floret silva nobilis, The noble forest blossoms.*
- Female chorus finishes the line with, *floribus et foliis, with flowers and leaves.*
- Brief orchestral codetta and pause.
- Female chorus asks, *Ubi est antiquus meus amicus? Where is my old lover? flirtatiously.* Then ends with a yearning, *aah!*
- Brief orchestral interlude with a rollicking rhythm foreshadows answer from male chorus: *Hinc equitavit, he has ridden hence.*
- Note the tone painting on *Hinc equitavit*, with echoes that mimic a horseback rider passing into the distance.
- Female chorus longingly asks, *eia, quis me amabit? Alas, who will love me?*
- Orchestral interlude, fading like the rider of *Hinc equitavit*, is followed by another yearning, *aaah!*

SECOND SECTION:

- Male chorus states, *Floret silva undique, The forest blossoms everywhere.*
- **NOTE:** From hereon, the language switches to **German**.
- Female chorus answers, *nah mime gesellen ist mir we, I long for my lover.*
- Orchestral codetta and pause.
- Female chorus asks, *Gruonet der walt allenthalben, was ist min geselle alselange? If the wood is everywhere green, why is my lover away so long?*
- Rollicking orchestral interlude and drumroll.
- Male chorus answers, *Der ist geriten hinnen, He has ridden away from here,* tone painted with fading echoes as with *Hinc equitavit*.
- Female chorus asks, *Owi, wer sol mich minnen? Alas, who will love me?*
- Fading orchestral interlude and a final, longing, *aaah!* ends the movement.

COMMENTS:

- This carmen, is a teasing and flirtatious conversation between the male and female.
- *Floret Silva* is the first expression of female desire in the work. It complements the male desire expressed in *Omnia Sol Temperat* (Carmen 4).

- Note that while male desire was expressed by a solo male, female desire is expressed by a chorus. This is a recurring pattern in *Primo Vere*. It will change in *Cours D'Amours*, in which female desire is expressed by the soprano.
- Dancing in Medieval churches was common despite prohibitions issued by the Pope. Clerics usually participated, singing in Latin, while women and girls sang in German.

CARMEN 8: CHRAMER, GIP DIE VARVE MIR

MUSIC:

- Female chorus presents a rustic dance, flirtatiously asking for cosmetics, followed by an orchestral interlude, repeated twice.
- Female chorus sings refrain: *Seth mich an, jungen man! Lat mich iu gevallen, look at me, young men! Let me please you!* in a livelier dance, followed by the orchestral interlude.
- Two more verses follow each with a refrain, all in the same sequence.

POEM:

- Entirely in German.
- Each stanza is in two parts, the first a different poem in each, the second a refrain.
- In *Charmer, gip die varve mir*, the first stanza, the female chorus asks a hawker for cosmetics so she can look pretty.
- In *Minnet, tugentliche man*, the second stanza, the females beckon men to make love.
- In the *Wol dir verlt*, the third stanza, the female chorus rejoices in the prospect of love.

COMMENTS:

- This carmen comes from a passion play and was originally sung by Mary Magdalene.
- The woman of this carmen is generally confident of her beauty and power to attract men, in contrast with that of *Floret Silva* (Carmen 7), who is longing for her vanished lover.
- The music, dance like, suffused with bells and chimes that peasant women may have worn as they danced, is pastoral and cheerful.

CARMEN 9: REIE

MUSIC:

- Begins with a lengthy, slow orchestral introduction, a stately dance in three phrases.
- Lively dance introduces full chorus in *Swaz hie gat umbe, daz sint alles megede, Here they go round, they who are all maidens*, music loud and boisterous, female chorus echoing the male lines.
- The dance climaxes on *die wellent an man allen disen summer gan! They want a man all this summer long!*, the music rising higher and higher on repetitions of the word *allen*.

- Music quiets down, and women sings two stanzas: *Chume cum, geselle min, come, come my mistress* and *Suzer rosenvarwer munt, sweet rosy mouth*. This is a slow round dance with rustic accompaniment. A brief woodwind interlude follows each stanza.
- Loud *Swaz hie gat umbe* returns in male chorus and is reprised to a climax.

POEM:

- Another teasing dialogue between men and women in German.
- One can imagine the women dancing in the round and men observing them.
- *Swaz hie gat umbe* energetically expresses male desire at the sight of the women.
- The two stanzas sung by the women, *come my mistress I implore you to soar* and *sweet rosy mouth, come and make me well*, both express female desire.

COMMENT:

- Orff's musical treatment of this carmen is remarkable for its dramatic contrast between the slow, subdued, demure music for the women and the unabashed energy of the males.

CARMEN 10: WERE DIU WERLT ALLE MIN

MUSIC:

- This is the last carmen of the *Springtime* section.
- It is brief, only about 45 seconds.
- It begins with loud brass fanfares that announce a regal melody in horns.
- Loud, full chorus then sings single stanza wishing to lie with the queen of England.
- Music climaxes on the fanfares, loud drumrolls and a loud *hey!* from chorus.

COMMENTS:

- *Uf dem Anger, On the Green* began with a quiet instrumental dance; it ends with much fanfare and energy.
- The loud, celebratory, regal nature of the music is in keeping with the theme of the poem.
- The queen of England mentioned in the fantasy may have been Eleanor of Provence, wife of Henry III or Eleanor of Aquitaine.

IN TABERNA

The next four carmina take us to the tavern, an exclusively male domain, featuring defiant songs about drinking, gambling and sinning, with much mockery of the church. One remarkable carmen expresses the fate of a cooking swan in its own words. The overall theme of the section is closely related to *Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi*.

CARMEN 11: ESTUANS INTERIUS

MUSIC:

- For solo baritone and orchestra; five verses, fast, in recitative style.
- Begins with an energetic introductory tune in orchestra, with a galloping rhythm.
- The first two verses deal with his anger and foolishness. They are delivered swiftly, with galloping rhythm and orchestral accents marking the end of each line.
- After a loud fanfare, the last three verses are delivered in a question-answer style, the former a rising, slow musical line, answers delivered fast and rollicking.
- Section ends with a brief, loud reprise of the introductory music.

POEM:

- “*To judge from this poem, the archpoet seems to have experienced the vulnera fortune (carmen 2)*” (Sebesta)
- In the first verse, *Estuans interius, ira vehementi, Burning inside with violent anger* the poet expresses anger, a common Goliardic theme. He then states he is made of ash and is like a leaf blown hither and dither in the wind, both veiled anti-Christian references.
- In the second verse, a reference to building a foundation upon rock refers to a Christian parable as well as St. Peter and the church. The poet however is *stultus, a fool*, and is unstable like a gliding river. He has rejected the church.
- In the fourth verse, the reference to Venus, *quidquid Venus imperat, whatever Venus commands*, reflects a common Goliardic theme, one that runs through the work.
- In the fifth verse, he describes his vices, and finishes with a statement that he is *mortuus in anima, dead in the soul*.
- The final line, *curam gero cutis, I take care of my skin*, is a parody of the *Dies Irae* which prays Christ to *Gere curam mei finis, help me in my last condition*.

COMMENTS:

- *Estuas interius* is the best Goliardic poem in the anthology, both for its exemplary rhythm and rhyme, and for the metaphor and parody with which the thoughts are expressed.
- Orff’s music highlights the expressions of the poet, his impetuosity, anger and rebellion expressed energetically, yet certain key ideas highlighted by slower, widened melodic lines that pose musical questions, e.g. *quidquid Venus imperat, whatever Venus demands*, or *mortuus in anima, dead in soul*.

CARMEN 12: OLIM LACUS COLUERAM

MUSIC:

- Lament of the roasting swan, in three verses with a male chorus refrain after each.
- The swan is sung by a tenor in his only appearance in the work.

- Orff selects eerie music to demonstrate the swan's misfortune.
- Opens with a bassoon introduction, an awkward, angular melody with irregular staccato beats in accompaniment. Melody slows and falls, mimicking that of the bird, with a comic, dissonant low note before the ax falls in a loud, dissonant thump.
- The swan sings the same melody to each verse. It is a slow, rising idea sung almost entirely in falsetto by the tenor to indicate its sad state.
- Orchestral accompaniment includes tone painting of chattering teeth after each line.
- The chorus responds with a loud, fast refrain, a Greek chorus commiserating with the lamentation of the condemned bird, the music climaxing at the end of each refrain.
- Refrains end with a loud orchestral thump and more chattering teeth; they await the swan.
- The last verse is more emphatic, *Nunc in scutella iaceo, et volitare nequeo, dentes fredentes video, Now I lie on the salver, and I cannot fly, I see gnashing teeth.*
- Music ends after the last refrain with beats that fade.

NOTE:

- Swans were regularly eaten in those days.
- "After Tchaikovsky and Petipa, Saint-Saens and Pavlova, many of us would find it distinctly odd, not to say repellent, to eat swan." (Steinberg)

POEM:

- "This is quite literally a "swan song!" (Sebesta)
- Is this movement a sick joke or does it have a deeper meaning?
- If viewed with *Estuans Interius* (carmen 11) in mind, in which the poet boasted he takes care of his skin and parodied the *Dies Irae*, *Olim Lacus* (carmen 12) presents the consequences this attitude.
- In the first verse the swan recalls its former, lovely life. In the second it describes being cooked, *me rugus urit fortiter, my funeral pyre burns me vigorously*. In the third it lies cooked and ready to eat, awaiting gnashing teeth.
- The refrain of the chorus, *Miser, miser! Modo niger, et ustus fortiter, Wretched, wretched! Now black and roasting vigorously!* is a commiseration but also an emphasis of the ultimate fate that awaits the sinful poet.
- The roasting swan is a metaphor for hell, the diners with their chattering teeth, the Devil.

CARMEN 13: EGO SUM ABBAS

MUSIC:

- A mock sermon, by a drunk baritone, with periodic exclamations from Male Chorus.
- Begins with an acapella statement *Ego sum abbas Cucaniensis, I am the Abbot of Cockaigne*, with repetitions of *Ego* and *sum abbas* that give the announcement a mock self-importance. The line ends with an explosion of percussion.

- The remainder of the verse is delivered in a drunken slur. The abbot, announcing his deliberation to be among drunks, proclaims whoever seeks him will be stripped naked of their clothes. Note emphasis on *sic denudatus, thus stripped*.
- The fake abbot is a hardened gambler.
- The abbot then exclaims *Wafna*, a Medieval expression, its meaning nowadays unknown, with the Chorus echoing it.
- He then goes on to exclaim *quid fecisti sors turpissima?, Vilest fate, what have you done?*
- The last line *Nostre vite gaudia, abstulisti Omnia! The joys of my life you have stolen them all away*, is delivered in lament with a descending, dissonant melody.
- The chorus utters three loud *Wafna*'s.
- A dissonant note in tuba and one more *Wafna* gives the carmen a comic finish.

COMMENTS:

- This poem begins as a mockery of the church. The abbot, rather than freeing his flock of their sins, frees them of their clothes.
- *Cockaigne* was a Medieval utopia, full of easy food and wine.
- The drunken delivery is in keeping with the overall *In Taberna* theme.
- In the second verse however, the mock boastfulness of the poet is deflated and replaced with a lamentation against the curse of fate, thus returning the carmen to the earlier themes of *O Fortuna* and *Fortuna Plango Vulnera*.

CARMEN 14: IN TABERNA QUANDO SUMUS

MUSIC:

- Energetic finale to *In Taberna*. The drinkers in the tavern, singing a seven verse anthem to drinking, gambling and other earthly pleasures.
- The first two verses that deal with gambling are sung quietly, fast and pressured, in a Stravinskian melody, with frequent metric shift and syncopation.. The last line of each verse is repeated and emphasized, faster, louder.
- In the next verse the whole world joins in the drinking. It begins with *On Primo pro nummata vini, First for the buyer of the wine*, a new, rising melody highlighting the line. The middle of the verse is delivered fast, syncopated and nearly acapella until the last two lines where the verse concludes in dramatic rises.
- A recitation of the world of drinkers continues in the next verse, its first line *Octies pro fratribus perversis, Eight times for the errant brothers*, sung low and acappella.
- The last line of this verse, *Tam pro papa quam pro rege bibunt omnes sine lege, for the Pope the same as for the king, everyone drinks without license*, is the most defiant proclamation of the carmen, its music rising louder than the prior verse.
- A orchestral interlude, loud with horns and percussion, introduces a new melody that ushers a yet faster recitation of all who drink in the next two verses.

- These verses have a consistent rhythm each line divided in half, *Bibit hera, bibit herus, The mistress drinks, the master drinks*, and continuing in the same vein for sixteen lines. The music, quiet in the first verse, emphasizes this rhythm. It rises in the second verse in preparation for the climax that will come next.
- At *Parum sexcente nummate, Six hundred coins are too few*, the beginning of the last verse, the music reaches a climax, the first two lines delivered loud, with an orchestral climax in accompaniment. The rest of the verse is delivered in a recitative style.
- The chorus then climaxes again, shouting “*ia, ia!*” A brief pause is followed by a crescendo drumroll and the carmen ends with one last, dramatic “*ia!*”

COMMENTS:

- In the last of the defiant tavern songs, the Goliard expresses devotion to carnal pleasures.
- Unlike most other carmina in the anthology, this one is not strophic. The rhythms, melodies and tone of the music vary from verse to verse and within verses, in concert with the frenzied insanity of the aimless drinking.
- This carmen can be viewed as a metaphor of the religious Mass where, instead of praying for souls, they are toasted, including the Pope and king.
- The rousing, frenzied climax of this carmen will sharply contrast with a peaceful introduction to the court of love that will follow.

COUR D’AMOUR (THE COURT OF LOVE)

In this section, with the largest number of carmina (ten), the work returns to the theme of love, Venus reigning supreme. Male and female desire is expressed more directly by the baritone and soprano, with rising passion, Cupid a frequent participant. The tension and intensity rises toward the union, the frenzied pace of the passion regularly interrupted by brief arias from the soprano, eventually culminating in a grand celebration of the union as a mass devoted to Venus.

CARMEN 15: AMOR VOLAT UNDIQUE

MUSIC:

- A placid proclamation from the Boys Chorus and a newly appearing soprano.
- A brief introduction of quiet orchestral chords and woodwind chorale.
- The Boys recite a single verse, *Amor volat undique, corpus est libidine, Invenes, invecule, coniunguntur merito, Love flies everywhere, seized by desire, Young men, young girls, are rightly coupled together*, as a plainchant, with the wind chorale separating each line.
- Music changes to an Oriental sounding melody with a steady, beating rhythm.
- Soprano sings acapella, *Siqua sine socio, caret omni gaudio; tenet noctis infima sub intimo, cordis in custodia, The girl without a lover lacks all pleasure; deepest night holds her innermost heart in custody.*

- *Sub intimo* is emphasized, rising and extended. Solo flute follows, echoing the melody. Soprano laments quietly with, *Cordis in custodia*.
- Boys respond with a single line, *fit res amarissima, Such a thing is most bitter*.
- Chorale melody, louder in orchestra ends the section.

COMMENTS:

- After the drunken, boisterous energy of *In Taberna*, this introductory carmen sets a new, placid mood for *Cours D'Amour* from which the passion will rise.
- The first line, *Amor volat undique, Love flies everywhere*, harkens back to *Primo Vere, Springtime* where the same theme was presented.
- The soprano makes her first appearance with a brief but powerful expression of desire, the steady beating rhythm of her song indicative of her *cordis in custodia*.

CARMEN 16: DIES, NOX ET OMNIA

MUSIC:

- Solo baritone states his own desire in three verses.
- Accompaniment is sparse, another steady heartbeat over a quiet drone.
- The fourth line of each verse is dramatically extended, rising in falsetto. These are, *me fey planzer, makes me weep; grand ey dolor, great is sorrow; A remender, To cure me*.
- The last lines of each verse, by contrast, are sung in the lowest register, particularly dramatic at the very end, *A remender, statum vivus fierem per un baser, To cure me I would at once be made alive by a kiss. A remender in falsetto, per un baser low base*.

COMMENTS:

- Still introductory, this carmen expresses male desire placidly, complementing the female.
- In the first verse the poet laments his separation from his maiden, in the second he pleads with his *sodales, friends* to stop mocking him and to give him advice. In the last verse he addresses his icy maiden and pleads for a kiss.
- The male and female of Carmina 15 and 16 are both lonely and sad, seeking each other, their jerky melodies reflecting their emotions.
- Falsettos are rare in the baritone repertoire.

CARMEN 17: STETIT PUELLA

MUSIC:

- Solo soprano sings this brief two verse carmen as an aria.
- Orchestral accompaniment is sparse, a rhythmic beat and pianissimo drone.
- Each verse, set to the same melody, ends with a long melisma on *Eia*, and by a chime.

POEM:

- The words of this poem are uttered by a man and yet sung by a woman, suggesting that the singer is Venus herself.
- Orff's choice of scant accompaniment forces attention on the libretto.
- First verse, *Stetit puella rufa tunica; si quit eam tetigit, tunica creputit*, A girl stood in a red tunic; if anyone touched it the tunic ruffled.
- Second verse, *Stetit puella tamquam rosula; facie splenduit, os eius floruit*, A girl stood like a rosebud; her face was radiant, her mouth bloomed.
- Note the prevalent red rose motif, a recurrent feature in *Carmina Burana*.

CARMEN 18: CIRCA MEA PECTORA

MUSIC:

- Baritone expresses his desire directly, in three Latin verses, chorus responding with a German refrain after each.
- The first verse, *Circa mea pectora, multa sunt suspiria*, Around my heart many are the sighs, is sung with scant accompaniment.
- Next, *de tua pulchritudine, que me me ledunt miere*, for your beauty which wounds me pitifully, the melody rises, with restless, rising music in accompaniment.
- The chorus repeats the first two lines with the baritone holding an "oooh!" note.
- Refrain is fast and pressured, *Manda liet, manda liet, min geselle chumet niet, Manda liet, manda liet*, my lover doesn't come.
- In the second verse, *Tui lucent oculi sicut solis radii*, Your eyes shine like the rays of the sun, the poet appeals to his maiden to bring light to his darkness with her love.
- In the last verse he prays to the gods that he can unchain her virginal bonds.

COMMENTS:

- This carmen follows themes already expressed in *Dies nox et Omnia* (carmen 16) but more directly and with audacity.
- In the refrain, the same *sodales*, friends of the male from whom he sought advice and assistance in *Dies Ox Et Omnia*, seem to mock him with their *Manda liet* verse.
- In the last verse, the poet ceases to plead with his maiden and prays to God. While unspecified, it is clear that this God must be Venus.

CARMEN 19: SI PUER CUM PUELLULA

- Brief, single stanza, acapella proclamation by six men and the baritone.
- *Si puer cum puellula moraretur in cellula, felix coniuncio*, If a boy and a girl tarries in a little room, happy is their mating, stated twice as a fast recitative.

- The chorus then sings, *Amore suscescente, Love wells up*, to which the baritone answers, *pariter e medio, and from between them both*. This pair of lines repeated quietly by both.
- The next three lines, *avulio procul tredio, fit ludus ineffabilis membris, lacertis, labiis, restraint is banished far away, an indescribable pleasure begins in their limbs, their arms, their lips*, is shared variably between chorus and baritone in a fast, agitated melody.
- Chorus restates *Si puer cum puellua, moraterur in cellula* louder, more emphatically.

COMMENT:

- This small carmen expresses a male fantasy and sets the stage for what is to come.

CARMEN 20: VENI, VENI, VENIAS

MUSIC:

- Female Chorus breathlessly proclaims *Veni, veni, venias, Come, come, do come*, with the Male Chorus echoing it, with a fast piano ostinato in accompaniment.
- *Ne me mori fascias, do not make me die*, in the next line is emphasized with rising repetitions, first in Female then in Male chorus. Pace is still fast, breathless.
- The verse climaxes on *hycra, hyrce, nazaza, trillirivos*, words without meaning.
- In the next two verses the men compliment the women with a new melody, with an energetic piano playing heartbeats and restless figurations. The Male chorus sings *Your beautiful face, the look of your eyes, the tresses of your hair, o what a glorious creature*. The female chorus responds with a loud *Nazaza* at the end of each line.
- *Redder than the rose, whiter than the lilly, more beautiful than anything, I glory in you always!* follows in the Male Chorus, with more *Nazaza* from the women.
- The carmen concludes with a huge climax in orchestra and more *Nanaza*'s.

COMMENTS:

- The man and woman who have so far been apart, join together for the first time in a rising, passionate expression of their desire for each other.
- Orff's tempo, his breathless phrasing, the female *Nazaza*'s uttered in fast, heart-beat-like regularity, highlights the passion.

CARMEN 21: IN TRUTINA

MUSIC:

- Another serene, single verse aria from solo soprano breaks the rising passion to announce the maiden's dilemma between chastity and love.
- "Orff holds the soprano to her most seductive low register," with a softly pulsating accompaniment (Steinberg).

- The soprano sings the first half of the verse, a leisurely wavering melody, with much melisma and vocal figuration. *In trutina mentis dubia fluctuant contraria lascivus amor et pudicita, In the uncertain balance of my mind opposite courses waver, wanton love and chastity.*
- A brief woodwind chorale with slow tympani beats provides a codetta.
- The soprano delivers her next line with the same melody. *Sed eligo quad video, collum iugo prebeo; ad iugum tamen suave transeo. But I choose what I see, I give my neck to the yolk; to so sweet a yoke I submit.* Another wind chorale ends the section.

COMMENT:

- Like *Stetit Puella* (Carmen 17), this is an arioso statement from the solo soprano with scant accompaniment that forces attention on the libretto.
- The hesitant maiden contemplates her choice between remaining a virgin or choosing love. Are we surprised that she describes her love as *lascivus*?
- She then chooses to submit. How do we expect the male to respond to this announcement? We will soon discover, in the next carmen.
- *In Trutina* is a brief interlude, the music catching its breath on its way to a final climax.

CARMEN 22: TEMPUS EST IOCUNDUM

MUSIC:

- A lengthy carmen of ten verses, five different ones and a refrain after each, sung by various different vocal elements.
- In the first verse, *Tempus est iocundum, This is joyful time* explodes in full chorus as a response to *In trutina*, then follows with a frenzied *o virgines, o maidens*, the phrase repeated multiple times in a rising melody. The next line *modo congaudere vos iuvenes, now rejoice together you young men*, follows the same pattern.
- The refrain is a celebratory dance first in solo baritone, *O, o, o, totus floreo, iam amore virginali totus ardeo, novus, novus amor est quo pereo, Oh, oh, oh, I bloom all over, now for the love of a girl, I burn all over, it is a new, a new love for which I die.*
- The accompaniment is a fast piano ostinato with percussive decoration on castanets.
- The tempo begins slow and picks up speed, the music reaching a brief, explosive climax on the last line, *est, quo pereo, for which I die*, the phrase *quo pereo* repeated three times.
- The women sing, *Mea me confortat promisso, mea me deportat negatio, Promising makes me allright, refusing makes me cast down*, melody and dynamics same as first verse.
- *O, o, o, totus floreo*, refrain is by the Boy's Chorus and soprano.
- The men sing, *Tempore brumali vir patiens, animo vernali lasciviens, In winter time man is patient, in the breezes of spring he is desirous.* This harkens back to *Primo Vere*.
- Solo baritone gives his second presentation of *O, o, o, totus floreo*.

- Women sing, *Mea mecum ludit virginitas, mea me detrutit simplicitas, My virginity teases me, my innocence pushes me away.* This harkens back to *In Trunitna* (Carmen 21).
- Soprano and Boys again perform *O, o, o, totus floreo.*
- Full chorus sings, *Veni, domicella, cum gaudio, veni, veni pulchra, iam pereo, Come, my mistress, with joy, come, come my beautiful one, now I am dying.* This harkens back to *Veni, veni venias* (Carmen 20).
- Baritone and men sing a loud, celebratory *O, o, o, totus floreo.*
- In the final explosion on *est, quo pereo* is repeated and ends with an open cadence, in anticipation of *Dulcissime*, the last aria of the solo soprano.

COMMENTS:

- This carmen revisits themes presented in earlier carmina as the lovers finally unite.
- Cupid in the form of the Boys Chorus is an important element of the narrative.
- This is a double-strophic song; verses and refrain each have their own repeating melody.
- While keeping the music the same, Orff diversifies the choral elements, creating a sense of joint celebration between man, woman and Cupid as the lovers unite.

CARMEN 23: DULCISSIME

MUSIC:

- The soprano delivers a brief, highly decorated aria as she announces her submission.
- It begins with an acapella, falsetto, *Dulcissime, my sweetest one*, and follows with vocal figurations on *aaaah*, with a quiet drone accompaniment in orchestra.
- *Totam tibi subdo me, I give myself to you totally*, is delivered more subdued, acapella, the last note on *me* held quietly with the orchestral drone, fading slowly.

COMMENTS:

- This is the final aria for soprano, again allowing the music to catch its breath, and presenting the final submission of the maiden who has overcome her prior uncertainty.

BLANZIFLOR ET HELENA

This section consists of only one Carmen.

CARMEN 24: AVE FORMOSSISIMA

- A loud, glorious hymn, sung by the entire chorus, a rousing conclusion to *Carmina Burana* before a final *O Fortuna*.
- Begins with *Ave formossisima, Hail most beautiful one*, fortissimo, in a simple, rising melody, that will repeat in each line.
- Loud orchestral chords accompany the syllables, a loud tympani roll and church bells added toward the end of each line.

- The next lines, *gemma preciosa, precious jewel; ave decus virginem, hail, pride of maidens; virgo gloriosa, glorious maiden; ave mundi luminar, hail light of the world; ave mundi rosa, hail, rose of the world.*
- In a repeating pattern every other line is held longer with drumrolls and church bells, *rosa* the longest.
- The Carmen climaxes on the next two lines.
- *Blanziflor et Helena, Blanchfleur and Helen,* is a new, more excited melody, rising higher, ushered with a cymbal crash. It is repeated twice.
- The last line is *Venus generosa!, noble Venus!*. The word *Venus*, is repeated thrice, each beginning with a loud tympani beat. *Generosa* is a long, loud, rising line.
- The carmen ends with an open cadence at *generosa* and a brief anticipatory pause before dramatically segwaying into *O Fortuna*, as the mood instantly changes from glory to downcast.

COMMENTS:

- This carmen is a glorious and climactic celebration of the union between the man and woman, presented as a parody of Christian liturgy, mimicking a hymn to the Virgin Mary (without mentioning her name), and yet praying to Venus.
- Numerous clues in the poem point to Mary: the word *Ave* that begins the poem and reappears four times in other lines, as in *Ave Maria*; the phrases *decus virginum* and *lumina mundi* that usually refer to Mary, as is the title *lillium*, - the French version of the word *lily* being *Blanchefleur*.
- The red rose, already mentioned in several prior carmina symbolizes fidelity and constancy and is another symbol of the Virgin Mary. It is sung with special emphasis on the word *rosa*.
- *Blanziflor* or *Blanchefleur* was the daughter of a Christian slave sold to an emir of Babylon. A Saracen prince, Flore, who grew up with her, rescued her before she was deflowered, and brought her to Spain where they married. He then converted his people into Christianity. She is a symbol of Christian purity and loyalty.
- *Helena* is Helen of Troy, a symbol of betrayal and immorality to Christians, but a true heroine to Goliards because she submitted to Venus when she left her husband for Paris.
- *Blanziflor* and *Helena* seem like an odd couple. However they both submitted to Venus in their own way and are therefore ultimate heroines of Medieval romance for Goliards.
- The poem ends with *Venus generosa*, the final tribute to the definitive Goliard Goddess.

CARMEN 25: O FORTUNA

- A dramatic cymbal clash ushers in a return of *O Fortuna*, verbatim, in full chorus.
- In Carmen 1 it was a prologue. Here it is an epilogue.

FINAL COMMENTS:

- The narrative of *Carmina Burana* is not linear. It explores two main themes that alternate between its major segments: the vagaries and cruelty of fortune, and the supremacy of Venus as the ultimate object of worship.
- *Fortuna Impreatrix Mundi* and *In Taberna* deal with fortune. *Primo Vere* and *Cours D'Amour* deal with Venus, the other *Imperatrix Mundi*.
- In the end, the segway from *Ave Formosissima* to *O Fortuna* implies the final supremacy of the fortune that, in the mind of the Goliard, is the true ruler of the world.
- It is a downbeat ending, but most dramatic and popular.

LAST WORDS, FROM MICHAEL STEINBERG:

- The “audacious simplicities of *Carmina Burana*,” were a mid-career conversion for Carl Orff, whose compositional concerns switched to “directness of speech and of access,” from 1937 onward.
- “Musicians speak ill of *Carmina Burana*....Singers,,,,enjoy it, not least its considerable difficulties, though many a baritone must have wished that Orff had not written high G’s with such abandon...”
- As for audiences, “*Carmina Burana* is one of the few box office certainties of 20th century music.”