

## ASO CHORUS ANNOUNCEMENTS - June 9, 2009

### ORFF'S POETS

The some 300 anonymous 13<sup>th</sup> century poems that comprise the collection called *Carmina burana*, were actually, as the title suggests, songs. When Orff undertook to set a few of these poems for his cantata, he did not know the original melodies (and didn't even know they existed) – it wasn't until the 1950s, decades after the successful premiere of Orff's setting, that the original melodies were transcribed, performed and recorded. For Orff it was the earthy, desperate and often irreverent texts that inspired him.

The most irreverent (and amusing) are to be found in the "Tavern" section, where monastic life is parodied with turns on parts of the familiar Requiem text: In Nr. 11 a vagrant monk sings not about care for his final hour (*gere curam mei finis*), but "dead in soul, I care only for the flesh" (*mortuus in anima, curam gero cutis*). The men of the drinking song that ends Part II issue no prayer for hope to be counted with the just (*cum vix iustus*), but instead proudly take their place in the *Liber scriptus* of all wrongdoing, proclaiming (loudly) that "those who scold us be damned and with the just not listed" (*Qui nos rodunt confundantur et cum iustis non scribantur*).

But perhaps the best is the gamboling monk of Nr. 13 (who has obviously partaken of more than just roasted swan), proclaiming himself "Abbot" of Cockaigne – Orff here supplies a drunken Gregorian chant, complete with musical hiccups! Michael Steinberg in his *Choral Masterworks* book writes: "Cockaigne is that medieval utopia where, in the words of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 'life was a round of luxuriant idleness... The rivers were of wine, the houses were built of cake and barley sugar, the streets were paved with pastry and the shops supplied goods for nothing. Roast geese and fowls wandered about inviting folks to eat them, and buttered larks fell from the sky like manna.'"

### ASOC MEN MISPRINT

Gentlemen: a misprint may be found in your scores in Part III, page 17. In #18 ("Circa mea pectora"), three measures before Figure [119b], the first word should be spelled "Vel-let," with two "L's." It affects the pronunciation: Because of the double L, the e-vowel is OPEN (like the "e" in the English word "get").

-Translation:

"May God will, may the gods will  
what my mind proposes...  
that I unlock the chains of her virginity."

### BLAST FROM THE PAST

In closing, an excerpt from a 1980 Robert Shaw letter to the ASOC, concerning Orff's *Carmina* and home-practice (before an Internet and the convenience of a Chorus website!):

...Fortunately – both text and tempo are responsive to home study. –Balances are impossible to cure at home; and problems of pitch and intonation are difficult for some of us; -but text and rhythm and tempo can be practiced by anyone – even while jogging, or riding a bus.

Similarly, the rehearsal and performance problems of *Carmina burana* are primarily text-related... this work calls for a Latin unlike any we've performed or any tradition most of us have been exposed to. It will be... considerably less Italianate than has been our wont (or occasional *will*)...

...Each of us, however, is obliged to deal personally and alone with those textual problems occasioned and aggravated by *SPEED*. *Carmina burana* is a "fun" piece. It affords none of the satisfactions of a *St. Matthew Passion* – or a crucifixion. (-Remember Oscar Wilde's fairy tale? "...all things that this man has done have I done also ...and yet they have not crucified me.") Its delights are delights of Broadway – or the satisfactions of running a 200-meter high hurdles around one curve in 13.9" – backwards.

-Onwards, upwards and prepareds.

-See you all Monday (and ALL on time, please!),

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