

Mozart: A Fantasy

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WHEN the winds of the morning were first loosed by God, they leaped like hounds from the leash, harking through the spaces between the worlds in search of the Things That Are. In their adventurings they came upon All Things, stars that were blue as forged steel, those red as blood, the ringed worlds, the crimson and the yellow suns in their solitudes, scintillant seas of star dust, the reservoirs of man's knowledge; the amazing chaos of the Things That Were Yet to Be.

Also they came upon the place of the Birth of Waters; and a very strange place of great dimness, where was only the Silence of Nothingness. There, huddling in the chill was a lair of monstrous creatures, Discords, waiting for the chiding of human beings that they might find a medium for their voices. They writhed there, through the ¾ons, torn and tortured for lack of outcry.

A comet's journey from this place, drifting in long shafts from the centremost sun, were other creatures, very wonderful and of potential loveliness, known to all the stars as Harmonies. They, likewise, waited for the lifting of the stillness. They watched with holy eagerness for souls to voice that which broke from them against the Walls of Silence in impetuous waves.

Not a spirit hurried from the Place of Souls through the white Vast toward the habitations of men, but all the band set on it, struggling for the mastery. The Harmonies went with the swiftness of light; but the Discords had within them the strength of the Powers of Darkness, and only once in a full round of time did a Harmony break through their black band and merge into Life. The victory was with the Discord for a time and times.

So it came about that soul after soul sped to the body which was to house it, hectoring with a dinning Discord which clung to it as tentacled creatures of the nether deep cling to drowned men. The spirits in this abject case were doomed to the deliberate and cruel sins, to quarrelings, to narrowness of vision, to greed and doubt; their faces grew craven, their eyes were accursed with the evasive glance.

When, by the chance of a chance, a Harmony gained the mastery, it made life lovely for the being it inhabited, and men found fair names by which to denominate such a one, poet, or liberator, or maker of songs.

The winds learned all this in their excursions, they learned all things, and they came in time to take their part in this mystic war. The black winds of destruction and of night leagued themselves with the Discords; the blossom-bursting winds, the white and perfumed servitors of the dawn, the gallant winds from mountains and from mesas, enlisted with the Harmonies.

A century and half a century of yesterdays, a swift soul, dropping between the spheres toward Earth, was set upon by these contending spirits. In the Vast, among the stellar solitudes they fought, and in the scorching nebula of a yet unrounded star the conflict reached its height. Then came a great white wind from the farthest chamber of the East and smote the Discords, till they mingled with that molten world; and from the confusion of the warring creatures the gentle soul went on its way tremblingly toward Earth.

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Seven Harmonies swept after it, seven Harmonies, wild with impatience for utterance. One Harmony was for song and one for reeds, one for horns, one for instruments of the drawn strings, and one for keys of ivory on resonant boards of brass; one for harmony of thought; and one, serene, past man's divinest dreams, for harmony of life. All these swung downward with the gentle soul, and made such sweetness in their going that men, a-toiling on the Earth, listened, amazed, thinking that after years of yearning they heard the spheres.

The seven Harmonies, the gentle soul, and a delicate fresh-born body became as one, a vibrating entity, a man-child with a mystic power, a lyric babe, smiling at unheard melodies.

"This little child," the old nurse said, "seems to be in the company of angels. It cannot be that he has long to live."

The Harmonies within him were too eager for articulation to wait in patience for his body to grow. Five years of dreams made him a master of the instruments. But if he was spared the need of study, he was refused the meed of rest. He was scourged with beauty; the thongs of his spirit goaded him day and night. He was the servitor of the creatures that had come from the shafts of the central sun; and they, knowing that in the brief term of a man's life there was not a tithe of the time required to express their intent; knowing, too, that it might be cycles before they would again have domination over a willing soul, clamored as with the sonorous clamoring of many high-swung bells for the use of his hands, his eyes, his voice, his brain and heart.

"I have such a sense of religion," he wrote, "that I shall never do anything I would not do before the whole world."

Poverty was with him, if he had noticed it. Love was his, for his sanctifying. Riches he passed by, absently smiling. Loyalty was his, because he was without cognizance of treason.

By reason that the Harmonies loved order, sequence, and technique as much as ecstasy, it was a part of his toil to develop the science as well as the emotion of his art. Praise, happiness, concord, these he knew for forms of law, which he formulated into a code. To express and illustrate it, he worked when others slept, when others danced. He forgot the material necessities of the body. He sung out his soul in masses; he whispered of love in lyrics; he expressed the storm and stress of his spirit in operas, sonatas, symphonies. He had no choice but to write as if each line were to be dedicated to the Most High. Always, the fair Harmony of beautiful living kept him unspotted from the world.

He was a monarch, with no need for sceptre or for crown. Lesser kings were forgotten when his name was mentioned. Others enriched themselves by means of his genius; but as for him, he often went from his bare lodgings to pawn for bread the jewels which had been flung at him in idle appreciation. It was not permitted him to take thought of wealth, or place, or peace. He was an instrument, fashioned for the playing; he was the vehicle of holy passions; he bent his will and did not question.

Whatever is most exquisite is most sad. It is the law of nature that rapture, vibrating round its perfect circle, shall meet with pain. Love, at its best, melts in tears; tears at their bitterest find God's pure joy. Thus it came about that the Harmonies, ever striving through this body for their ultimate utterance, reached at the climax the great moan called Mozart's Requiem Mass.

It is the processional to which souls, cassocked for Death, march forth into the Presence. It is a ladder of song by which the sorrowful may climb from the grief of the grave to the peace of it.

One night came a stranger, knocking, and commanded:

"Write me a mass for the dead."

"Surely my hour is almost come," said the musician. "I must write."

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And again came the stranger in the night and asked:

"Is the mass for the dead ready for the playing?"

The tension of toil was tightened. The Harmonies, filled with such rapture as only immortal spirits know, did their utmost. The musician lay dead, with the Requiem Mass in his hand.

The next night came the stranger querying:

"Is the mass for the dead complete?"

In the wonder and majesty of the stars the seven Harmonies went their way. Their flight left a quiver of light like that a burning meteor streaks across the affrighted sky. The soul of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart winged back to the Place of Souls, and the body was tumbled in a pauper's grave, a grave in which two others rested, very humble and much worn with toil. No stone marks the spot. The place has been forgotten.

But the labors of the Harmonies are among the deathless things. And whenever a man can fittingly reproduce them, all discord dies in the air and in the soul, and those who listen are as little children lifted into a world where sin and greed are not, and where Harmony is perfect, the Harmony which includes all things.