

A SONG FOR ST. CECILIA'S DAY, 1687

JOHN DRYDEN

Table of Contents

<u>A SONG FOR ST. CECILIA'S DAY, 1687</u>	1
<u>JOHN DRYDEN</u>	2
<u>Stanza 1</u>	3
<u>Stanza 2</u>	4
<u>Stanza 3</u>	5
<u>Stanza 4</u>	6
<u>Stanza 5</u>	7
<u>Stanza 6</u>	8
<u>Stanza 7</u>	9
<u>GRAND CHORUS</u>	10

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- Stanza 1
- Stanza 2
- Stanza 3
- Stanza 4
- Stanza 5
- Stanza 6
- Stanza 7
- GRAND CHORUS

Stanza 1

From harmony, from Heav'nly harmony
 This universal frame began.
When Nature underneath a heap
 Of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
 Arise ye more than dead.
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
 In order to their stations leap,
And music's pow'r obey.
From harmony, from Heav'nly harmony
 This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.

Stanza 2

What passion cannot music raise and quell!

 When Jubal struck the corded shell,

 His list'ning brethren stood around

 And wond'ring, on their faces fell

 To worship that celestial sound:

Less than a god they thought there could not dwell

 Within the hollow of that shell

 That spoke so sweetly and so well.

What passion cannot music raise and quell!

Stanza 3

The trumpet's loud clangor
Excites us to arms
With shrill notes of anger
And mortal alarms.
The double double double beat
Of the thund'ring drum
Cries, hark the foes come;
Charge, charge, 'tis too late to retreat.

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Stanza 4

The soft complaining flute
In dying notes discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers,
Whose dirge is whisper'd by the warbling lute.

Stanza 5

Sharp violins proclaim
Their jealous pangs, and desperation,
Fury, frantic indignation,
Depth of pains and height of passion,
For the fair, disdainful dame.

Stanza 6

But oh! what art can teach
 What human voice can reach
The sacred organ's praise?
Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their Heav'nly ways
 To mend the choirs above.

Stanza 7

Orpheus could lead the savage race;
And trees unrooted left their place;
 Sequacious of the lyre:
But bright Cecilia rais'd the wonder high'r;
 When to her organ, vocal breath was giv'n,
An angel heard, and straight appear'd
 Mistaking earth for Heav'n.

GRAND CHORUS

As from the pow'r of sacred lays
 The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
 To all the bless'd above;
So when the last and dreadful hour
 This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
 The dead shall live, the living die,
 And music shall untune the sky.