

CARMINA

BARBARA

**A resource for singers
and listeners**

**Wit, sarcasm, romance,
and raciness--it's all
there in the lyrics.**

Debi Simons

Also by Deborah Simons:

Intentional Happiness: Choosing Your Emotional Life

CARMINA BURANA: A resource for singers and listeners. Wit, sarcasm, romance, and raciness--it's all there in the lyrics.

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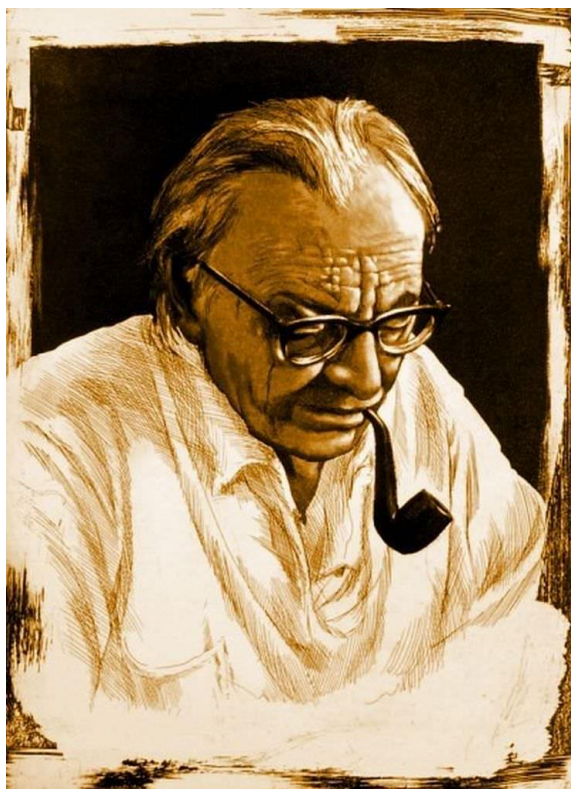
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Cover illustration: Jongleurs and troubadours performing for the German emperor, manuscript illumination from the Manessa Codex, c. 1300, public domain.

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Introduction to *Carmina Burana*



Carl Orff. Image by Jens Ruschs

So you've never sung Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, you say? Never attended a performance? And yet when you hear the opening notes of that first section, "O Fortuna," it sounds strangely familiar. Maybe it conjures up an image of a car, or aftershave, or a movie about the Greek gods. I will go out on a limb here and say that those opening notes are outdone in familiarity only by the ones of Beethoven's Fifth. It's a shame, in a way, because it's hard to hear the transcendence of the music itself when it's inextricably linked in your software to

something else. Hey, maybe there should be a permanent ban on all use of public domain music for any commercial use whatsoever! That ruling would at least give some up-and-coming composers of today a fighting chance at employment.

But that isn't going to happen. We're stuck with the world as it is. So I would encourage you to do your best to revel in the music itself, and especially to give all of the sections an equal chance. Most of them are very unfamiliar and therefore don't have the pop culture baggage of the first (and last) one. They cover a huge range of emotions and situations, from the first blush of love in the spring to the plight of gamblers who've lost everything to the cries of a roast swan. You're in for a real treat! (Even though you don't get to eat the swan.) I'm going to discuss the origin of the text and then move on to a little information about the composer of the music, Carl Orff. Each section of *Carmina* will then get its own separate commentary. I hope that, whether you're singing or listening, you'll be better primed to appreciate the music itself after you've read this material.

So on to the texts. What does the title mean? "Carmina" simply means "songs." "Burana" means "of Beuern" or (if you want the whole big German word) "of Benediktbeuern," a monastery in Bavaria. So, "songs of a monastery." Doesn't sound too exciting, does it? Are we going to be listening to a bunch of Gregorian chants? (Very beautiful in their way, but . . .) Actually, a common description of *Carmina* is something along the lines of "a bunch of partying, profane monks sing about love, lust and gambling." Part of the scandalous reputation of *Carmina* (which I would say is pretty much undeserved) comes from that very disconnect, or supposed disconnect, between the subject matter and the authors. I find it rather ridiculous that these pieces have been branded as extremely licentious; even

the leading conductor Marin Alsop said in a 2006 interview: “When things are in Latin, the X-rated element almost gets elevated to a new level.” (Read or listen to the entire interview at [“The Lasting Appeal of Orff’s *Carmina Burana*.””\) Folks, I hate to burst your bubble here, but there aren’t any X-rated elements at all. What on earth is she talking about? Beats me. I’ll be pointing out various and sundry references to various and sundry strong emotions, shall we say, but I can promise you that there’s nothing in *Carmina* that you wouldn’t find in a Shakespearean play.](#)

To add insult to injury, or something like that, the monks didn’t write these texts in the first place. The manuscript was discovered at the Beuren monastery in the mid-1800’s, but scholars now think that the songs themselves were written elsewhere, probably by a wide variety of people. Some of the pieces (out of over 250 in all) are 1,000 years old. Interestingly, Orff actually wrote *Carmina* as one of three cantatas with the overall title of *Trionfi*, but the other two works have not been anywhere near as popular. I’ve tracked down some performances on YouTube and found them to be charming. It would be quite an evening to have all of them performed, but perhaps a bit long. And I’m afraid that the other two on their own might not be much of a draw. So we’ll just be content with the popular one.

Now on to Carl Orff himself. He was born in 1895 in Munich and showed his musical prowess early, learning to play several different instruments while still a child. At some point he decided that he’d rather compose his own music than play that of others; while he was a teenager he started writing songs. Since he’d had no formal training in composition his mother helped him write down the music properly, and he eventually learned to write music on his own by studying classical works.

He was also quite interested in the teaching of the arts to children, and until the success of *Carmina* he was primarily known for his efforts in that field. Up until 1937, the year of *Carmina*'s premier, he had worked in opera houses, taught in a music school (where he stayed on the faculty until his death), written works of striking originality but little commercial success, and edited some seventeenth-century operas. None of these ventures made him much money. I have the picture of a man trying very hard to get ahead in life, going this way and that, hoping for success but not finding it.

In 1934 Orff came across the 1847 edition of the 250-plus poems that had been found at the monastery. He was apparently friends at the time with a young lawyer, Michael Hofman, who is described as a "Latin and Greek enthusiast." Did they live across the street from each other? Did they meet in the library and did Hofman notice *Carmina* in Orff's stack of checkouts? Or was Hofman the one who introduced Orff to the collection? Who knows? It would be so fascinating to find out, wouldn't it? But unless a diary comes to light somewhere with all this information we'll just have to be content with what we know. However it happened, Hofman helped Orff pick out 24 of the poems and organize them into a whole. Orff of course wrote the music, and he had additional ideas about how the text and music should be performed. He wanted there to be a visual as well as a musical component, with dancing and other staging used, and would probably be somewhat disappointed with most modern performances, in which the piece is performed basically as a cantata. In order to give it the full Orff treatment *Carmina* has to be performed as an opera, and there would be very few organizations other than actual opera companies with the ability to pull that off. Right now, even with the limited way *Carmina* is usually performed, there needs to be an

orchestra, a *big* chorus, some extraordinarily-gifted soloists, and a boys' choir. That's a pretty major set of requirements even without all the frills Orff wanted. But he did get to do it his way at the premiere, which took place at the Frankfurt Opera House in 1937 and had professionally-designed staging, sets and costumes. It was such a huge success that Orff famously wrote to his publisher afterward:

"Everything I have written to date, and which you have, unfortunately, printed, can be destroyed. With *Carmina Burana*, my collected works begin."

There's one more aspect of the man Orff that needs to be at least touched on here since it comes up in any serious discussion about him, and that is his association with the Nazi regime, which came to power in 1933. The Nazi party felt that they had to make some kind of statement about this incredibly popular piece of German music. The basic idea seems to be that there was some "nervousness" in the party about the erotic nature of some of the poems (the X factor, again). It may seem strange to us that a regime known for its monstrous crimes would concern itself with any kind of morality, but we have to remember how the Nazis branded themselves in their climb to power. They were the ones who would restore Germany to its greatness, to its roots. Their propaganda posters showed beautiful, happy families in idyllic surroundings. The first review of *Carmina* by a Nazi-party musicologist was a stinging critique which included the words "primitive" and "foreign." But Orff had some contacts within the party; he had ingratiated himself by writing some music for school use that was very much in line with the Hitler Youth philosophy. So this connection, along with the music's immense popularity, swayed party opinion over to a more favorable position. Indeed, *Carmina* came to be seen as exhibiting "the

indestructible and always re-emerging power of the ways of the common people.” It’s a fascinating instance of projecting modern ideas backwards onto literature. In this particular case the projection is particularly ironic, as the overall theme of *Carmina* has to do with the unpredictable turning of Fortune’s wheel. Within eight years of the premiere Hitler had been defeated, and Orff successfully managed to disassociate himself from the Nazi regime. In the years after the war he pushed the idea that *Carmina* was covertly anti-Nazi.

In actuality, of course, the piece stands on its own. It’s helpful to know that some of the selections have satirical elements, mostly against the Roman Catholic Church, and there are cultural and historical references that help clarify some places. I will be pointing out these ideas as we go along. For each section I will include the original text and translation. I am often tickled and/or intrigued by Latin words and how their original meanings are echoed in modern English words that have Latin roots. I’ll try, however, to rein myself in and not go on at too much length about such issues. For some of the pieces I include the original “teaser” questions that I used as introductions in my posts written for the Cherry Creek Chorale in Denver, CO. In the end, if you switch over from singing or listening just to syllables and start to discover and delight in the actual meaning of the words, I will consider myself to have succeeded.

O Fortuna/Oh Fortune



Image from the Burana Codex, public domain

Note the words at the four points around the wheel, starting on the left side:

"Regnabo, Regno, Regnavi, Sum sine regno" (I shall reign, I reign, I have reigned, I am without a realm)

Part I: “Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi”—“Fortune, Empress of the World”

Carl Orff begins his masterpiece with two pieces that center on the idea of Fate, or “Fortune.” Both complain about this force, which is addressed as a woman.

<i>O Fortuna, velut luna statu variabilis semper crescis, aut decrescis; vita detestabilis nunc obdurat, et tunc curat ludo mentis aciem,</i>	O Fate, you are changeable like the moon, Always waxing and waning. Life is hateful, Now hard, then caring, as your mind plays pointed, sharp games
<i>Egestatem, potestatem, dissolvit ut glaciem. Sors immanis, et inanis, rota tu volubilis, Status malus, vana salus, semper dissolubilis,</i>	Whether it's poverty or power, you melt both like ice. You are savage, brutal and meaningless, a twisting wheel. Whether one's state is evil or good, it is vain and always changing.
<i>Obumbratam, et velatam, michi quoque niteris;</i>	You operate in the shadows and are veiled, so even when I am in a good state
<i>Nunc per ludum, dorsum nudum, fero tui sceleris.</i>	Now by chance I will have to lay bare my back to your ferocious calamity!
<i>Sors salutis, et virtutis, michi nunc contraria, Est affectus, et defectus, semper in angaria. Hac in hora, sine mora, corde pulsus tangite; Quod per sortem, sternit fortem, mecum omnes plangite!</i>	Fate, even in health and virtue, is against me. I'm driven, weighted down, always enslaved by her. So, everyone, play sad music and weep with me, Since Fate strikes down even the strong!

(full chorus, Latin)

Here's the first "teaser" question from my original posts, with some additional notes:

What TV show's title is referenced in "O Fortuna"?

And the answer is, "Wheel of Fortune." Whether the producers of that show realized it or not, they named it after a very popular idea from ancient times.

Our first *Carmina* selection is addressed to a mythical person named "Fortuna." Today we'd use the word "fate." If you know your Latin grammar you will notice that Fortuna is the feminine form of the word. Ever heard of "Lady Luck"? That's who this is, giving out both the good and the bad. The author of our selection seems to think that this lady has treated him pretty badly. Boy! Kind of depressing, isn't it? The words and music go hand in hand, as it's very ominous and written in a minor key.

Let's take a further look at the character of Fortuna. She's often portrayed as holding a wheel, because it turns. The Romans popularized this image, and if you think about it, it makes perfect sense: as the wheel turns, the top part rotates down and the bottom rotates up. So whoever's on the top of Fortune's wheel had better watch out. The line "rota tu volubilis" literally means "the wheel (towards) you is changeable, rolling, revolving." You may have looked at the word "volubilis" and thought of the word "voluble," meaning talkative or loquacious, and you would have been correct in doing so. To say that someone is voluble is to say that the words roll easily and fluently from him. The word also means "having a fluid or

undulating motion” or “twisting and turning like a vine.” Take a look at the clever wording that comes right before the “*rota*” phrase: “*immanis, et inanis.*” We use the word “immanent” to mean “about to happen,” as in “the hurricane is *immanent*,” but the Latin root word also means “monstrous, inhuman, savage,” which clearly applies here. And we use the word “inane” to mean exactly what our translation says” “empty.” Immanent and inane—that’s Fate. I can’t resist also pointing out “*tangite*” and “*plangite*,” the rhyming words at the ends of the last two lines. *Tangite* means “touch, pluck,” and *plangite* means “bewail, mourn.” Can you see our modern words “tangible” and “plaintive”?

If you go even further back in history, you will find an earlier form of the revolving character of Fate, this time from the signs of the zodiac. The ancient Babylonians were the first to recognize that some of the stars seemed to form patterns and that they moved across the sky with the seasons of the year; they called this rotation the “wheel of fortune.” Then, at some point, the metaphor shifted to actual physical wheels. It’s a very rich image, as the goddess Fortuna, perhaps blindfolded, spins the wheel at random and shifts everyone around. The whole process is random and meaningless, as our speaker laments. Even in the midst of a run of good luck he’s always “weighted down” by the thought of coming misfortune. All good fortune is vain and always goes away. If he’s having a bad time, that’s horrible, and if he’s having a good time it’s not going to last—so that’s horrible too!

Fortune Plango Vulnera/
I Bemoan the Wounds of Fortune



Woodcut of Hecuba by Guillaume Rouillé, 1553, public domain, ©

*Fortune plango vulnera,
stillantibus ocellis,
Quod sua michi munera,
subtrahit rebellis.*

*Verum est, quod legitur, fronte
capillata,
Sed plerumque sequitur,
occasio calvata.*

I bewail the wounds of Fate,
my eyes dripping (with tears)
Who has given me munificent
gifts but now rebels and takes
them away.

It has been truly written that
while having a hairy forehead
For the most part it is logical
to say that
Opportunity is bald behind.

<i>In Fortune solio sederam elatus, Prosperitatis vario, flore coronatus; Quicquid enim florui, felix et beatus, Nunc a summo corruui, gloria privatus. Fortune rota volvitur: descendo minoratus; Alter in altum tollitur; nimis exaltatus, Rex sedet in vertice - caveat ruinam! Nam sub axe legimus Hecubam reginam.</i>	I was lifted up, seated on Fortune's throne, Crowned with the variable flower of prosperity, But although I flourished, happy and blessed, Now I have fallen from the summit, deprived of glory. The wheel of Fortune rotates and I descend, diminished, While another is raised up, exalted on high. Let the king raised up to the heights beware of ruin! For underneath the axis (of Fortune's wheel) is written the name of Hecuba
---	--

(full chorus, Latin)

Orff continues with his theme of Fortune's unpredictability in this selection. Here's a teaser question about two of its striking images:

How do hair and Hecuba tie in with the wounds of Fortune?

Selection #2 continues the theme of Fortune's fitfulness and capriciousness. In selection #1 the speaker talked about his "bare back" ("*dorsum nudum*") being exposed to Fortune's villainy, implying that Fortune has whipped or flogged him... This selection begins with a mention of the "wounds" of Fortune, thus echoing that idea. (I will just remind you here that Orff picked out and arranged these poems, so these two

selections were probably not written by the same person and might also be widely separated in time. We don't have authorship and dates for the vast majority of the original poems.) Note that the Latin for "wounds" is "*vulnera*," and that today we use the word "vulnerable" to mean able to *be* wounded, not to refer to the wounds themselves. And "*plango*" is used today in our word "plangent," which means plaintive or melancholy. We use the word as an adjective, not a verb: we don't say, "He planged about his misfortune."

Now the speaker shifts to another image: Fortune has a forehead ("*fronte*") that is hairy ("*capillata*"), but it generally follows that Occasion or Opportunity ("*Occasio*") is bald. Huh? The statement makes more sense when you know that the poet is somewhat mingling two figures: Fortune and her son or lover (depending on the story), Occasio, the personification of opportunity, luck, and favorable moments. Occasio is usually shown as having only one lock of hair falling over his forehead. So, if the right opportunity comes your way, you have to grab onto that hair right away, because if you miss your chance then there's nothing to hang onto, as the back of Occasio's head is bald. Have you even heard the saying "Take time by the forelock"? Same idea here. (I can't resist quoting here from *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. Amy, the youngest of the four girls featured in the novel, is always trying to be impressive with her use of big words but often gets them wrong. So she says, "In future I will try to take time by the fetlock." A fetlock is the ankle of a horse. Just so you know!) Some translations convey the meaning of this image as "he who has the most hair goes bald the soonest," another version of "the bigger they are, the harder they fall," which makes sense in the context of the passage but isn't the actual meaning.

The poet used to be seated on Fortune's throne, crowned with flowers and lifted up, happy and blessed, but now the wheel of fortune has turned and another is raised up while he is demeaned. Yet let that king at the summit beware! His fall is coming. And as a reminder of that coming fall, the author says, "Under the axis (axle) is written Queen Hecuba." So, who's Hecuba?

She's a fascinating figure from mythical history, Queen ("*reginam*") Hecuba of Troy. When her son, Paris, kidnapped Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, he set off the Trojan War—because Helen was, somewhat inconveniently, already married, and to a king of Greece at that. So Hecuba the Queen's name is found written underneath the axle of Fortune's wheel ("*sub axe legimus*") because she's such a perfect example of the changes brought about by its turning, starting out as a queen and ending up as a slave, her family killed and her city destroyed. At the end of the Greek play *The Trojan Women*, Hecuba and the few women who have survived the battle are being led off to the Greek ships to begin their tragic new lives. She laments her fate, "Forth to where the new long day dawneth to slavery!"

Veris leta facies/The Merry Face of Spring



*Flora, Roman Goddess of Spring,
from a fresco in the National Museum of Naples.*

Part II: “*Primo Vere*”—“In Spring”

With selection #3 we move into the second section of *Carmina* (#3-#5) celebrating the joys of spring.

<i>Veris leta facies mundo propinatur, Hiemalis acies victa iam fugatur, In vestitu vario Flora principatur, Nemorum dulcisono que cantu celebratur. Flore fusus gremio Phoebus novo more risum dat, Hoc vario iam stipate flore.</i>	Spring's happy face offers a pledge to the world. Sharp winter is evicted and flees. The goddess Flora, in her variegated robes, rules As the woods sweetly celebrate her in song. Spread out in the lap of Flora, Phoebus smiles once again, Where many-colored flowers are heaped upon him.
<i>Zephyrus nectareo spirans in odore; Certatim pro bravio curramus in amore. Cytharizat cantico dulcis Philomena, Flore rident vario prata iam serena, Salit cetus avium silve per amena, Chorus promit virginum iam gaudia millena. Ah!</i>	Zephyr breathes out sweet- smelling nectars. Let us hasten to wrestle for love's prize, Like a lute sings the sweet nightingale, Smiling with flowers are the serene meadows, Flocks of birds rise up through the forest, And the chorus of maidens promises a thousand joys. Ah!

(small choir, Latin)

I myself am a gardener, and one of the events I look forward to every year here in Colorado is the emergence of my perennials. All winter they've slept beneath the ground and the snow, but when those first shoots start appearing it's very joyful. I love

walking around the yard and peering at the ground. ‘Look!’ I think. ‘That one made it through the winter!’ Gradually the weather becomes consistently warm; that pile of dirty snow on the sidewalk finally disappears. Even city dwellers with no patch of earth at all to call their own respond to the appearance of spring. Suddenly you don’t have to wear that heavy coat any more; there’s no longer a huge drop in temperature as you step outdoors. The air feels totally different.

Many cultures have personified the seasons, and medieval Germany was no exception. First we see spring with her “happy face.” As she turns that face to the world “sharp winter” flees, vanquished; winter is often portrayed in mythology as an old man. As the poem moves on, spring’s various personas are mentioned:

Flora, the Roman goddess of spring, rules over the entire scene. She is decked out in various colors, or variegated garments (“*in vestitu vario*”), and all the sweet harmony of the woods praises her in song.

Phoebus, who is lying in Flora’s lap, is actually Apollo; he’s often called by both names at once. Apollo is a very complicated pagan deity, but “Phoebus” refers directly to his position as the god of the sun. So the strengthening sunlight is “spread out in the lap of Flora” (“*Flora fusus gremio*”), covered with flowers. Meanwhile, the soft, scented breeze blows. Oh wait! “Zephyr” is also a god, the personification of the west wind. (I got a little sidetracked here when I was writing this. Is the “west wind” blowing in a westerly direction, so actually coming from the east, or is it *from* the west, and therefore blowing east? And why is the west wind seen as soft and gentle, whatever direction it may have come from? Ever

wondered about that? That's what you get in these commentaries, answers to questions you'd never think to ask. After a dive into Wikipedia I can say that the four winds are named for the direction they come *from*, so the west wind would have been blowing over the warm Mediterranean Sea.)

Spring is seen as the season of love and delight. The birds are singing, the meadows are happy, the forests are pleasant. So, in the midst of all this beauty, all this warmth and comfort after the blasts of winter, the speaker says, "Let us rush to compete for love's prize." The "chorus of maidens" already promises a thousand joys. All he can do is sigh: "Ah"

In C. S. Lewis's novel *That Hideous Strength* there is a scene very reminiscent of our poem here, in which the goddess Flora appears in a vision to the central female character, Jane. She is wearing a flame-colored robe and carrying a torch:

Jane noticed that what was curling up from everything the torch had touched was not flame after all, but vegetation. Ivy and honeysuckle were growing up the legs of the bed; red roses were sprouting from the caps of the little men, and from every direction huge lilies rose to her knees and waist, shooting out their yellow tongues at her.

And so Jane goes into the house to reunite with her husband Mark. That's where the book ends. And, fittingly, where this poem ends, with the joys of love promised.

Omnia Sol temperat/
All Things Are Tempered by the Sun



*"The Present," oil painting by Thomas Cole, 1838,
in the Mead Art Museum, Amherst, MA, public domain, ©*

*Omnia Sol temperat purus et
subtilis,*

*Novo mundo reserat facies
Aprilis,*

*Ad Amorem properat animus
herilis, et iocundis imperat
deus puerilis.*

*Rerum tanta novitas in solemnibus
vere et veris auctoritas iubet
nos gaudere;*

*Vias prebet solitas, et in tuo
vere fides est et probitas tuam
retinere.*

The sun, pure and gentle,
tempers everything,

And the face of April is newly
revealed to the world.

Towards love the soul, its heir,
is propelled, and over its joys
rules the boy-god.

In this rebirth and the
solemnities of spring, we are
all ordered to rejoice!

Solitary ways appear; in your
springtime it is true and right
to keep your own.

<p><i>Ama me fideliter! fidem meam nota: de corde totaliter et ex mente tota sum presentialiter absens in remota. quisquis amat taliter, volvitur in rota.</i></p>	<p>Love me faithfully! See how I am faithful with all my heart and mind, I am present with you even when absent. Whoever loves like this turns on the wheel.</p>
<p>(baritone, Latin)</p>	

Selection #4 continues the spring theme. The sun is gentle, not hot, and reveals the face of April. That month's name goes back to the ancient Roman calendar and is taken from a word that means "to open"—"*aperio*." It makes sense that the name for the month of spring would reference this idea. As a listing of Roman festivals said: "fruits and flowers and animals and seas and lands do open."

Once again Spring is seen as the season of romance: "Toward love the soul is propelled." And who is in control? It is "the boy-god." At first I thought this was another reference to Apollo, who is usually portrayed as a handsome young man. I was being kind of dense, though. Who else could this be but Cupid? (Note the Latin here: "*puerilis*." Today we use the word "*puerile*" in a negative sense, to mean childish, silly and trivial. Obviously that's not the meaning here, and indeed the word in Latin simply means "child" or "boy.")

The poem now turns specifically to human love. Man's soul is propelled ("*properat*") toward love, which is his inheritance. Indeed, there is an order given to rejoice. But then there's a puzzling phrase. Most translations don't render the literal meaning of the line "*vias prebet solitas*." It's often given as something along the lines of: "It [Spring] shows us paths we know well." But the words actually mean "way or road," "is

offered,” and “solitude.” So, in the midst of all this rejoicing, there’s a mention of being alone, in solitude. How does that idea fit in? The next lines give the answer: The speaker is staying faithful to his one true love, with all his heart and soul, even if he is far away from her. The poem has taken a darker turn, as the speaker doesn’t seem at all sure that his loved one will stay true to him, even though he is true to her. He begs her to love him faithfully, thus implying that maybe he’s afraid she isn’t going to do that. He is “present with her” even when he is far away. But what is the result? Among all this joy, all this merriment, our speaker, as one who “loves like this” is right back on the wheel. Only this time, I would guess, it’s not so much the wheel of fortune as the wheel of execution, a horrible device that was used in classical times up until at least the 1700’s. (I’ll spare you the details.) The pains of possibly unrequited love and loneliness are felt even more deeply when all around the sufferer there is rejoicing. I would guess that Orff was intrigued by how this poem ends with the wheel image once again and that was at least in part why he picked it. Without the dark turn in the middle, this poem would be pretty saccharine. But now we have been reminded that even the joys of love are fleeting and unpredictable.

Ecce Gratum/Behold the Pleasant



“Venus and Cupid with Flower Garlands”

by Gaspar Peeter Verbruggen the Younger, 1730, public domain ©

*Ecce gratum et optatum Ver
reducit gaudia,*

*Purpuratum floret pratum, Sol
serenat omnia,*

*Iamiam cedant tristia!
Estas redit, nunc recedit
Hyemis sevitia.*

*Iam liquescit et decrescit
grando, nix et cetera,
Bruma fugit, et iam sugit, Ver*

Behold the pleasant and
gracious Spring that brings
back joys.

With purple-flowered
meadows, the Sun serenely
shining on all.

Let everyone flee sadness!
Summer returns, and now
Winter recedes.

Now is melted and disappears
snow, ice, et cetera.

Winter cold flees, and now

<i>Estatís ubera;</i>	Spring sucks at Summer's breast;
<i>Illí mens est mísera, qui nec vivit, nec lascívit sub Estatís dextera.</i>	A man is truly miserable who does not lust under Summer's decrees.
<i>Gloríantur et letántur in melle dulcedínis qui conántur, ut utántur premio Cupídínis;</i>	They glory and rejoice in honeyed sweetness who strive for Cupid's prize,
<i>Simus jússu Cyprídís gloriántes et letántes pares esse Parídís.</i>	Under the rule of Venus they may have the same glory and joy as Paris.
(full chorus, Latin)	

Yet a third selection about spring, but don't worry. There are new ideas to be found in this one. We start out with the same image as before, with the ending of winter and the coming of longed-for spring and bright sunshine. Purple flowers fill the meadows. I took some time tracking down possible symbolism of specifically purple flowers. For what it's worth, violets, which appear early in spring, are associated with the Greek myth of Venus and Adonis (and an even earlier, Near Eastern myth). Venus, the goddess of love, falls in love with a handsome young man named Adonis. (Have you ever heard anyone described as "a real Adonis"? Well, maybe that expression isn't used much any more.) He ends up getting gored by a boar and dying, and where his blood falls to the ground violets spring up. Later, in Christian symbolism, violets stood for the virtue of humility. (Thus the phrase "shrinking violet.") Hyacinths are another purple, spring-blooming flower, also associated with the death of a young man, this time . . . Hyacinthus. He's a companion or lover of Apollo, and one day they're passing the time by throwing the discus. In one version of the story Hyacinthus is trying to impress Apollo and, in

running after the flying, heavy platter, is struck by it on the head and dies. In another version the discus is directed by Zephyr, the west wind (remember him from selection #4?), who is jealous of the love between the god and the young man. Either way, Hyacinthus' blood soaks into the ground and up springs the purple hyacinth, although there is some confusion about just exactly which flower the myth refers to. (The adjective "hyacinthine" is sometimes used to refer to someone's hair; in that case it means "reddish gold." Don't ask me why!)

Having said all that, I will have to admit that the purple color of the flowers in this selection may not have a thing to do with the above but instead may have been used simply because of the sound of the word. This selection is fun to sing because of its music and also because of its wordplay, one aspect of which is the rhyming of four words ending with "um"—"*gratum*" (pleasing), "*optatum*" (wished for, desired), "*purpuratum*" (which actually means "clothed in purple," as in high office), and "*pratium*" (meadow).

Not only spring but also summer is mentioned this time. Specific rigors of winter are withdrawing: ice, snow, and the rest. The progression of the seasons is symbolized by the image of Spring "sucking at" ("*sugit*") Summer, with the word "*ubera*" referring to the breasts of Summer or, more metaphorically, the richness and fruitfulness of Summer.

Back to the humans. He is a wretched soul who doesn't participate in all this lusty enjoyment of summer's bounty and of the joys of love, which are described as "honeyed sweetness." The use of "honey" as a description of a loved one has a long history; in the Old Testament book "The Song of

Solomon” the man says of his bride: “Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb” (4:11 NIV) . “Lips sweeter than honey” is a common phrase in country-western music, and of course, what is a popular nickname for a loved one? “Honey.”

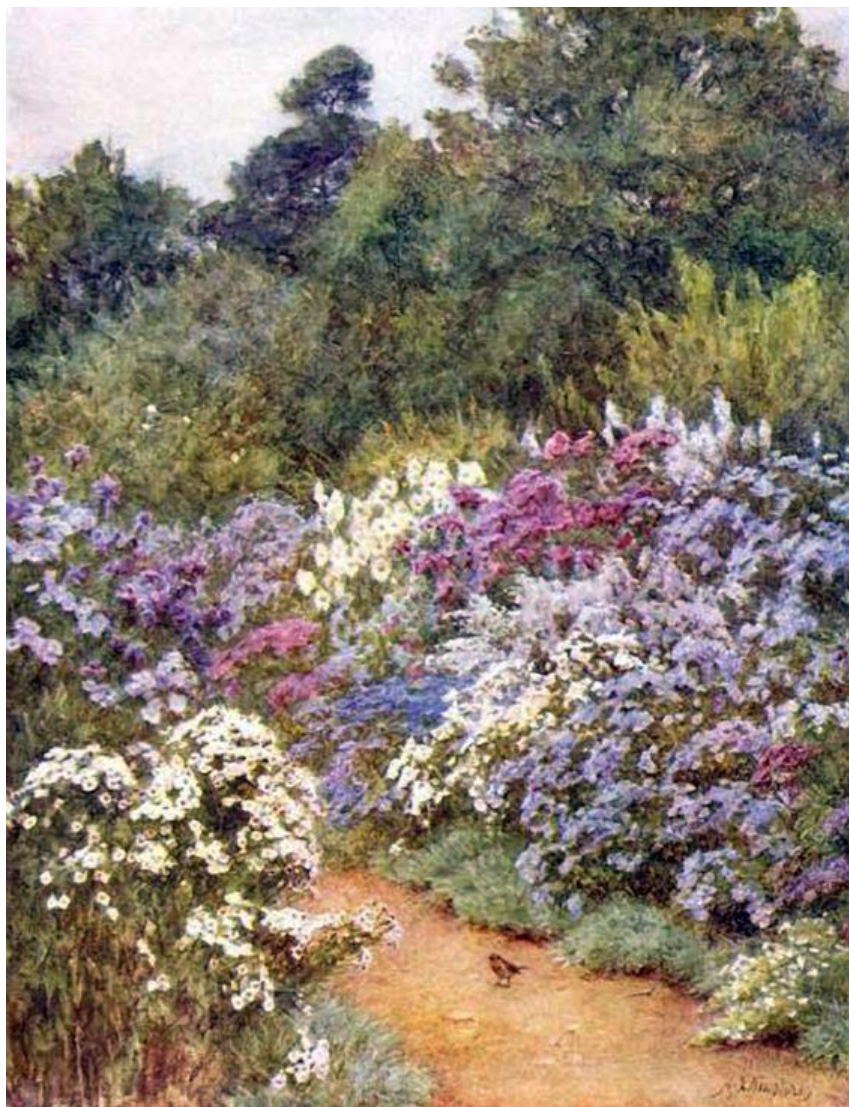
As the selection closes there are three characters mentioned by name:

Cupidinis—the little god of love with his arrows shows up again, this time by name. He is the one who gives the prize of love.

Cypridis—Venus, goddess of love. She's being referred to as “the one from Cyprus” because according to mythology that island was said to be her birthplace. The famous painting by Botticelli, “The Birth of Venus,” portrays this legend, showing Venus on a seashell, clad only in her hair, wafting ashore. It is at her command that mankind should glory and rejoice in being the equal of . . .

Paridis—You may have thought, as I did at first, that this word refers to Paradise, but it doesn't. Instead, this is Paris, not the city but the young man mentioned in selection #2's commentary as the kidnapper of Helen. So we're not being told that we'll go to some kind of heaven if we follow Venus but that we'll be equal to Paris, who (at least for awhile) was blessed with love.

*Tanz & Floret Silva/
Dance & The Woods Are Burgeoning*



*"Michaelmas Daisies" by Helen Allingham, 1846-1926,
public domain ©*

Part III: “Uf dem Anger”/”On the Green”

<i>Floret silva nobilis floribus et foliis.</i>	The noble woods are burgeoning, with flowers and leaves,
<i>Ubi est antiquus meus amicus? Ah!</i>	Where is my lover of the past? Ah!
<i>hinc equitavit, eia, quis me amabit?</i>	He has ridden off on his horse, and now who will love me?
<i>Floret silva undique, nah mime gesellen ist mir wê.</i>	The woods are flowering all over, but I am pining for my lover who is not here.
<i>Gruonet der walt allenthalben, wâ ist min geselle also lange? Der ist geriten hinnen, owî, wer soll mich minnen?</i>	The woods are turning green, but why is he away so long? He has ridden away, and who will love me now?

(full chorus/Latin-Middle High German)

Selection #6 is a dance tune, usually just played by the orchestra without any staging. (Orff’s original production would have had dancers performing here.) As noted above, this piece marks the start of a new section of *Carmina* which goes through selection #10. For some strange reason, though, the name of this section is sometimes translated as “In the Forest,” which isn’t what “anger” means. Most of the songs concern activities that would take place in a village, thus the “green,” or, more accurately, the “village green.”

Selection #7 is titled “The Woods Are Burgeoning,” but the action doesn’t necessarily take place *in* the woods. The speaker in the poem is probably a woman, and as she looks at the beautiful spring forest with its flowers and leaves her words

show the contrast between what is in nature and what is in her heart. She says that her lover has ridden off, leaving her bereft. “Who will love me?” she asks. “I am pining for my lover. Why is he away so long?” The woods in winter would match her mood better than what she sees all around her. But instead they are “burgeoning,” the translation given for the word “floret,” and there’s a definite connotation of fertility and abundance. Everything else is flourishing, abounding, even frothing, with joy, delight, and fruitfulness. Only she is left alone, and the contrast makes her situation all the more painful. Again Orff has chosen a poem that describes the pangs and sadness of love even in the midst of the lushness of spring.

Interesting note on the use of language in this selection: it’s actually starting to veer away from Latin and into German, showing that it was perhaps written later than the poems in more classical Latin. The word “*gesellen*,” for example, is German for “companion.” But other words are clearly Latin: “*antiquus*” (of old, former) and “*equitavit*” (horseman). It’s quite a mixture, and it shows what a mixture the *Carmina* poems are as a whole.

***Chramer, gip die varwe mir/
Shopkeeper, give me face paint***



“Lady at her Toilet,” Anonymous, from the Luttrell Psalter, 1325-1335, public domain, ©

*Chramer, gip die varwe mir,
die min wengel roete,*

*Damit ich die jungen man an ir
dank der minnenliebe noete.*

Shopkeeper, give me face
paint so that I can make my
cheeks red.

So that I can make the young
men love me in spite of
hardships.

<i>Seht mich an, jungen man! lat mich iu gevallen!</i>	Look at me, young men! Let me please you!
<i>Minnet, tugentliche man, minnecliche frouwen!</i>	Good men, love women worthy of love!
<i>Minne tuot iu hoch gemuot unde lat iuch in hohen eren schouwen.</i>	Love ennobles your spirit and gives you honor.
<i>Seht mich an...</i>	Look at me . . .
<i>Wol dir werlt, das du bist also freudenriche!</i>	Hail to you, world! You are a rich source of joy!
<i>Ich will dir sin undertan durch din liebe immer sicherliche.</i>	I will follow your rules because of the pleasures you afford
<i>Seht mich an...</i>	Look at me . . .

(small and large chorus/Middle High German)

What item of makeup is being purchased at the beginning of Selection #8, “Chramer, gip die varwe mir”?

The item is rouge, “varwe.” It actually means “color” or “paint.” “Chramer” means “shopkeeper” or “merchant.” So the woman or women are saying, “I want to buy some rouge to make my cheeks red (*roete*) so that I can make the young men love me.” Wording varies depending on which translation you follow, but the overall idea is that, on the one hand, the speaker “must” make the young men notice her, and on the other hand, she will force them to notice her “against their will.” You’ll note above that I’ve used the word “hardships” in my version above, which seems to be the literal meaning of “*noete*.” One translation says, “Do not my eyes, my lips attract, all your minds and thoughts distract—to me?” (from [David Parlett’s version](#)) Doesn’t this sound like a very young teenager who is just discovering that she can attract the opposite sex? She keeps saying, “Look at me, young men!” There doesn’t seem to be

any one in particular whom she wants; it's all the same to her. As is true with the rest of the *Carmina* texts, we don't have a date for it, but that doesn't really matter. Some things never change.

The second stanza has our speaker giving a slightly more dignified appeal to the young men around her. Now she says that love is an honorable prize to be won and that only a few attain it. Good men should love women who are worthy of it. It's interesting that the speaker uses this reasoning, since there's a long tradition of branding women who use makeup as "fast." (As I was browsing the web today about something entirely different I ran across an article saying that the singer Alicia Keys has started a no-makeup movement; that she is going to quit "covering up." So it would be interesting to hear her reaction to these lyrics.) Our speaker is trying to have it both ways, it seems she wants to attract men with her attractiveness, artificial or not, but also be valued for herself.

The third verse puts love into the larger context of the world as a whole, a source of pleasure and delight. I find the wording interesting here: "Hail, World! I will follow your rules because of the pleasures you afford." So the speaker is saying she will play the game of love so that she'll win the prize because there is so much pleasure to be had from it. If that means being a little deceptive with her rouged cheeks, so be it! But always, always she comes back to the chorus: "Look at me, young men! Let me please you!" Or, in another translation, "Don't you find me charming?"

When I was writing this material I was suddenly reminded of a scene from *Gone With the Wind*. Scarlet O'Hara, the main female character of the book/movie, is struggling to keep Tara,

the family's plantation, afloat, both during and after the Civil War. She's managed to keep everyone fed, has repaired some of the damages from the Yankee occupation, and is hopeful that Tara can again become a profitable enterprise. Suddenly she finds out that she's going to have to pay property taxes, and all her efforts to improve Tara are now going to result in a higher assessment. So, in one of the most famous scenes, she makes herself a new dress from some green velvet curtains hanging in the parlor and goes to town to get herself a husband, finally settling on her sister's fiancé. But she realizes that she looks wan and haggard after her struggles. She asks Mammy, the freed slave who is still part of Tara's household, to go get her some rouge. "What's that?" Mammy asks, suspiciously. "Never you mind!" says Scarlett. But Mammy refuses to agree to buy something if she doesn't know what it is. So Scarlett finally tells her, "Well, it's paint, if you're so curious! Face paint. Don't stand there and swell up like a toad! Go on." And Scarlett's pink cheeks and cobbled-together dress do indeed net her a husband and, more importantly, the \$300 for the taxes.

Did the speaker of the poem ever attract a lover? We don't know. All we have is her longing to be loved, to be noticed.

Reie & Swaz hie gat umbe/
Round Dance & Those who here go around



*Photograph of first performance of Carmina Burana, June 8, 1937,
Frankfurt Opera House. No attribution available.*

*Swaz hie gat umbe, daz sint
allez megede,
Die wellent an man alle disen
sumer gan.*

*Chume, chum, geselle min, ih
enbite harte din.*

*Suzer rosenvarwer munt, chum
unde mache mich gesunt.*

Those who go around and
around are all maidens,
They will go without a man
all summer long.

Come, come, my love, my
heart longs for you.

With your sweet rose-red
mouth, come and make me
better.

(full and small chorus/Middle High German)

There is an orchestral section and a sung one within this piece. (Wouldn't it be great if there were a video of that original performance? The best I've been able to come up with is the above photograph which is from the original 1937 performance in Frankfurt, Germany. I would love to be able to say which part they're doing, but I have no information on that. You can see, though, that the staging is very elaborate.)

Within the sung lyrics there are two very different emotions expressed, leading me to wonder if Orff put two original texts together. I haven't actually visited the monastery in Germany and seen the original manuscript, as you may be surprised to hear. My reading on the website of [David Parlett](#), a CB fan who actually *has* seen it, has not given me any clues. I'd love to know whether Orff put these contrasting lines together himself or they were in the same poem to begin with. Anyway, the two lines that begin and end the selection say that there are young maidens dancing in a circle who have decided that they will go without men all summer long. Life is simpler without romantic entanglements, isn't it? The music is boisterous and joyful.

Then there's a complete shift in tone and meaning, as the words and music become plaintive and pleading, speaking of love's longing. Interestingly, the whole chorus sings both parts. It would make more sense, logically, for the women to sing the section about the maidens and the men to sing about their longing for love from said maidens, but Orff didn't do it that way. So everyone sings about the standoffish maidens, and everyone sings about the longing lover. Perhaps an attempt to make the poem(s) apply to everyone. Sometimes you just don't want to get involved in a relationship, and sometimes you do. That's life!

*Were diu werlt alle min/
Were the Whole World Mine*



*“The Accolade” by Edmund Blair Leighton, 1901, public domain
(We can safely assume that Leighton had no idea what Eleanor of
Aquitaine actually looked like.)*

*Were diu werlt alle min von
dem mere unze an den Rin,
Des wolt ih mih darben, daz
diu chüinegin von Engellant
lege an minen armen.
Hei!*

Were the whole world mine
from the sea to the Rhine,
I would gladly be deprived of
it all if I could have the Queen
of England lie in my arms.
Hail!

(full chorus/Middle High German)

This very short selection has the speaker saying that even if all the world were his, “From the sea to the Rhine,” he would give it all up to have the Queen of England lie in his arms. So, one has to ask, why her specifically? Why not the Queen of Bavaria, for example, or some other place in Europe, since that’s where these poems were written? I had a hunch that I knew the answer and it turned out that I was correct: these words almost certainly refer to Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was Queen of England in the 1100’s and known for her beauty and her scandalous life. (But she was born in Aquitaine, a part of modern-day France.) She was fabulously wealthy, founded the French cult of courtly love which the troubadours sang about, and divorced one husband (the rather dull Louis VII of France) to marry another, younger man (Henry, Duke of Normandy). She became Queen of England when her husband became King Henry II. Her later life showed her at the bottom of Fortune’s wheel: she was imprisoned by Henry for 16 years because she supported a revolt against him. She wasn’t released until Henry’s death and then, nothing daunted, became Queen Regent while her son, Richard the Lion-Hearted, went off on the Crusades. She even lived into the reign of the notorious King John, he who was forced to sign the Magna Carta, and outlived all of her eight children by Henry except for the two youngest. No one should outlive her children, so the saying

goes, but she did that in spades. So it's fair to say that she went through several revolutions of the wheel.

This selection is more of a proverb or saying than it is an actual poem. I can almost imagine it as being a motto embroidered on a knight's cloak as he rode out into a tournament. Eleanor did, after all, found the cult of courtly love, in which nobles swore undying love to highborn women whom they might never even touch. We'll hope that all this adoration comforted Eleanor as she sat in her prison!

Note: I am puzzled as to why this piece is included here, at the end of the "On the Green" section, instead of in the "Courts of Love" section, which will follow the upcoming "In the Tavern" section. Eleanor, as mentioned above, actually came up with the whole idea of courtly love. I wonder if, at some point, this piece got moved by mistake.

Estuans interius ira/
Burning Inside with Vehement Anger



Albrecht Dürer, "Melancholia"
[Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Part IV: "In Taberna"/"In the Tavern"

With this selection Orff moves into four pieces that deal with drinking, gambling and feasting, along with their sometimes-deleterious effects.

<p><i>Estuans interius ira vehementi in amaritudine loquor mee menti: factus de materia, cinis elementi similis sum folio, de quo ludunt venti. Cum sit enim proprium viro sapienti supra petram ponere sedem fundamenti, Stultus ego comparor fluvio labenti, sub eodem tramite nunquam permanenti. Fero ego veluti sine nauta navis, ut per vias aeris vaga fertur avis;</i></p>	<p>Burning inside with vehement anger, in bitterness I speak my mind, Made of matter, ashes of elements, like a leaf played with by the wind. Since it is true that a wise man builds his foundations on stone, A foolish one in comparison is flowing like a river, never making anything permanent. I am carried along like a ship without a steersman, and in the paths of the air like a light, hovering bird;</p>
<p><i>Non me tenent vincula, non me tenet clavis, Quero mihi similes et adiungor pravis. Mihi cordis gravitas res videtur gravis; Locus est amabilis dulciorque favis; Quicquid Venus imperat, labor est suavis, que nunquam in cordibus habitat ignavis.</i></p>	<p>Chains cannot hold me, keys cannot imprison me, I look for people like me and join the wretches. The heaviness of my heart seems a burden to me; It is pleasant to joke and sweeter than honeycomb; Whatever Venus commands is a sweet duty, She never dwells in a lazy heart.</p>

*Via lata gradior more
iuventutis,
Implicor et vitiis immemor
virtutis, voluptatis
avidus magis quam salutis,*

I travel the broad path as is the
way of youth,
I give myself to vice,
unmindful of virtue,
I am eager for the pleasures of
the flesh more than for
salvation.

*Mortuus in anima curam gero
cutis.*

My soul is dead, so I shall look
after the flesh.

(baritone/Latin)

Not a terribly happy selection to start out the celebration of tavern life, is it? Yet another interesting mis-translation tends to occur in it, as the usual meaning given to the line “*stultus ego comparor fluvia labenti, sub eodem tramite nunquam permanenti*” is something along the lines of “then I am a fool, like a flowing stream, which in its course never changes.” Huh? That makes no sense at all. The contrast is supposed to be between the stable, wise person who builds on stone and the changeable one who is like a river. So the meaning must be something along the lines of my version above. It’s not that the river never changes; it’s that it’s never permanent.

Anyway, let’s get down to business. Who is speaking in this poem? It’s sung by a baritone soloist, but there are no clues in the words themselves as to who he is or what position he holds. Because of *Carmina*’s reputation as being produced by sacrilegious monks, the assumption would be that this is a closet atheist, as it were, perhaps sneaking out of the monastery to go partying after the last prayer bell. But we know that probably no monks were involved in the writing of these poems, don’t we? If this were a poem of the 19th century perhaps we’d label it as rather nihilistic and Nietzschean, and

actually that's exactly what it is. If there were ever a description of the inner landscape of a person who has forsaken any idea of spirituality or morals and dedicated his life purely to pleasure, this is it. And he's perfectly clear about his wretchedness. At some point he's decided that there's no hope for him spiritually, so at least he can try to lose himself in fleshly pleasures. But he doesn't sound too happy about that prospect, does he? While Venus's commands are a "sweet duty," they're still a duty. I catch a note of desperation in the statement, "I am eager for the pleasures of the flesh more than for salvation." And don't miss the despair of the phrase, "My soul is dead."

Olim lacus colueram/
Once I Swam on Lakes



(Image source: British Library medieval manuscript illumination)

*Olim lacus colueram, olim
pulcher extiteram, dum cignus
ego fueram.*

*Miser, miser! modo niger et
ustus fortiter!*

*Girat, regirat garcifer; me
rogus urit fortiter:*

Once I lived on lakes, once I
looked beautiful when I was a
swan.

Misery me! Now black and
roasting fiercely!

I am turning on the spit; I am
burning fiercely on the pyre;

<i>Propinat me nunc dapifer,</i>	And now the steward serves me up.
<i>Miser, miser! modo niger et ustus fortiter!</i>	Misery me! Now black and roasting fiercely!
<i>Nunc in scutella iaceo, et volitare nequeo, dentes frendentes video:</i>	Now I lie on a plate, and cannot fly anymore, I see bared teeth:
<i>Miser, miser! modo niger et ustus fortiter!</i>	Misery me! Now black and roasting fiercely!

(tenor and male choir, Latin)

Why on earth are they eating a swan in this selection?

I once wrote a paper in graduate school on depictions of feasting in medieval literature, so I find this song to be quite interesting. Swans and peacocks were prized as feast items not because they were all that good to eat (apparently their meat is very dry and tough) but because they were beautiful and expensive. There was a tradition of carefully skinning the swan to keep the skin and feathers intact, roasting the bird, and then re-assembling it so that the swan looked alive as it was carried in on a platter. This presentation would only have lasted as long as it took to begin carving the bird, of course, at which point the skin would have had to be taken back off. Before you make too much fun of such a weird practice, remember that most Americans roast a turkey on Thanksgiving and make a point of bringing the whole bird to the table so that everyone can see it in all its glory before it gets hacked up. (Carl Orff is the one who put this poem in the “In Taberna” section; in reality, a swan would only have been served at noble or royal banquets.)

The author of the poem has anthropomorphized the bird, having it speak even as it's being roasted. Was the author an animal rights activist of the Middle Ages? Perhaps someone who loathed the excesses of the rich and their use of the beautiful bird as a display of their wealth? Or did he just have a very active imagination? Who knows? Perhaps all three.

Watch the very entertaining performance of the conductor of the Cherry Creek Chorale in Denver, Colorado (the group for which these posts were originally written), Brian Patrick Leatherman, as he puts down his baton and becomes a soloist for this selection:

<https://youtu.be/iSOTjbr2qSw>

Ego sum Abbas/I Am the Abbot



*Illumination from a copy of Li livres dou santé
by Aldobrandino of Siena.*

*Ego sum abbas Cucaniensis et
consilium meum est cum*

*Et in secta Decii voluntas mea
est,*

I am the abbot of Cockaigne
and my assembly is one of
drinkers,

And I wish to be in the order
of Decius.

<i>Et qui mane me bibulis,</i>	Whoever searches me out at
<i>quesierit in taberna,</i>	the tavern in the morning.
<i>Post vesperam nudus</i>	After Vespers he will leave
<i>egredietur, et sic denudatus</i>	naked, and thus stripped he
<i>veste clamabit</i>	will call out:
<i>Wafna, wafna! quid fecisti sors</i>	Woe! Woe! what have you
<i>turpissima?</i>	done, vilest Fate?
<i>Nostre vite gaudia abstulisti</i>	The joys of my life you have
<i>omnia!</i>	taken all away!
<i>Haha!</i>	Haha!

(baritone and male choir, Latin)

First, a few definitions:

Cucaniensis is “an imaginary place of extreme luxury and ease where physical comforts and pleasures are always immediately at hand and where the harshness of medieval peasant life does not exist.” (Wikipedia) So this poem doesn’t reference an actual abbot at all; instead, the speaker is saying that he rules over a land of plenty; he is a follower of pleasure, not of any literal place.

Decius is the name of the god of dice, an invented name used to fit into this and other poems celebrating gambling and drinking. (Decius was also the name of a Roman emperor. Was he known for his gambling? Hard to know.) An ”order,” by the way, refers to a specific type of monastic rule, such as the “Benedictine order,” so that’s another small joke at the expense of the Church.

Vespers (*Vesperam*) is one of the canonical hours of a monastery, occurring around 6:00 PM. Since most people didn’t have clocks at the time these poems were written, and

since the monastery/church bells were rung to mark the hours, lay people would also commonly use these names.

In my usual way of research, that is to say, bopping around aimlessly on the Web, I ran into a Wikipedia article explaining that this piece is actually something associated with a “Drinkers Mass” or a “Gamblers Mass,” both of these being parodies of an actual church Mass. The poem is referenced as being the first known example of this genre. The so-called abbot holds court in the tavern, ruling over an assembly of drunkards, and if anyone comes and seeks him out in the morning to gamble with him, by evening that person will have lost everything and be stripped naked. And what is the abbot’s reaction? A heartless “Haha!”

The accompaniment to this selection is very striking, consisting solely of percussion and brass.

In Taberna/In the Tavern



“In the Tavern” by David Teniers the Younger, 1610-1690,
from The National Gallery of Art, public domain

*In taberna quando sumus, non
curamus quid sit humus,*

*Sed ad ludum properamus, cui
semper insudamus.*

*Quid agatur in taberna, ubi
nummus est pincerna,
Hoc est opus ut queratur, sic
quid loquar, audiatur.*

*Quidam ludunt, quidam bibunt,
quidam indiscrete vivunt.*

When we are in the tavern, we
do not care that we are but
dust.

But we hurry to our gambling,
which always makes us sweat.
What takes place in the tavern,
where money is lost,
Here is the question to be
asked, so then I will talk and
you can listen.

Some gamble, some drink,
some behave indiscreetly.

<i>Sed in ludo qui morantur, ex his quidam denudantur,</i>	But of those who linger in their gambling, they may come out of it naked.
<i>Quidam ibi vestiuntur, quidam saccis induuntur.</i>	One comes out well clothed, one wrapped in sackcloth.
<i>Ibi nullus timet mortem, sed pro Baccho mittunt sortem:</i>	No one is afraid of death, but throws the dice in Bacchus' name.
<i>Primo pro nummata vini ex hac bibunt libertini:</i>	First it is to the wine sellers that the libertines drink,
<i>Semel bibunt pro captivis, post hec bibunt ter pro vivis,</i>	Then they drink to the captive, then they drink to the living,
<i>Quater pro Christianis cunctis, quinquies pro fidelibus defunctis</i>	Fourth to the Christians, fifth to the faithful dead,
<i>Sexies pro sororibus vanis, septies pro militibus silvanis.</i>	Sixth to the loose sisters, seventh to the soldiers in the woods.
<i>Octies pro fratribus perversis, nonies pro monachis dispersis,</i>	Eighth to the perverse brethren, ninth for the dispersed monks,
<i>Decies pro navigantibus, undecies pro discordantibus, Duodecies pro penitentibus, tredecies pro iter angentibus.</i>	Tenth for the sailors, eleventh for the discordant ones, Twelfth for the penitents, thirteenth for the wanderers.
<i>Tam pro papa quam pro rege bibunt omnes sine lege.</i>	As for the Pope, so for the king, everyone drinks without limit.
<i>Bibit hera, bibit herus</i>	The mistress drinks, the master drinks,
<i>bibit miles, bibit clerus,</i>	the soldier drinks, the priest drinks,
<i>Bibit ille, bibit illa,</i>	This one drinks, that one

<i>bibit servus cum ancilla,</i>	drinks, the servant drinks with the maid.
<i>Bibit velox, bibit piger,</i>	The swift man drinks, the lazy man drinks,
<i>bibit albus, bibit niger,</i>	The white man drinks, the black man drinks.
<i>Bibit constans, bibit vagus,</i>	The constant man drinks, the vague man drinks,
<i>bibit rudis, bibit magus.</i>	The stupid man drinks, the wise man drinks.
<i>Bibit pauper et egrotus,</i>	The poor man drinks, the sick man drinks
<i>bibit exul et ignotus,</i>	The exile drinks, the unknown drinks,
<i>Bibit puer, bibit canus,</i>	The young man drinks, the old man drinks,
<i>bibit presul et decanus,</i>	the priest and the deacon drink,
<i>Bibit soror, bibit frater,</i>	the sister drinks, the brother drinks,
<i>bibit anus, bibit mater,</i>	the old lady drinks, the mother drinks.
<i>Bibit iste, bibit ille,</i>	This one drinks, that one drinks,
<i>bibunt centum, bibunt mille.</i>	A hundred drink, a thousand drink.
<i>Parum sexcente nummate durant cum immoderate bibunt omnes sine meta,</i>	Six hundred pieces of money will hardly suffice if everyone drinks immoderately without measure,
<i>Quamvis bibant mente leta,</i>	All who drink with a merry mind.

Qui nos rodunt confundantur et cum iustis non scribantur. Those who condemn us should not be written in the book of justice.

Io, io, io! ... Heigh-ho!
(male choir, Latin)

This selection is a favorite with the audience but perhaps not so much with the chorus, as it should be sung with lightning speed and is full of tongue-twisting Latin puns and rhymes.

Following are a couple of the “teaser” questions that were included in the original posts about this selection, and then some additional ideas.

What gardening term is used at the beginning of Selection #14?

“Humus,” the word we use today to denote rich, black earth with lots of decayed organic matter. This word is typically translated as “dust” for this song, so that the line reads, “When we are in the tavern, we do not care that we are but dust,” referring to the Biblical idea that God made man out of the dust of the ground: “For dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.” Since we tend to think of dust as dry and powdery, we don’t get the actual image that’s being used. Looking at the individual words in the text will often show clever meanings that don’t show up in a translation. The men in the tavern forget when they are drinking that one day they will have to die, and that their bodies will decay, not to put too fine of a point on it.

What betting game are they playing in Selection #14 that would be instantly recognizable to modern gamblers?

And the answer is: strip poker. Well, sort of. We are told, “But of those who linger in their gambling, they may come out of it bare. One comes out well clothed, one wrapped in sackcloth.”

Betting on clothing items almost certainly didn't have the same sexual overtones as it would today, though. Cloth was very expensive since it was all handwoven, and clothing was often passed down in wills. So these guys are gambling with their clothes because that's all they have. They've probably lost all their money but still want to play. We still use this type of imagery when we say that someone "lost his shirt" in a business venture.

There are two sections in this piece that use enumeration for effect. First, the numbers one through thirteen are used to name groups that the drinkers can drink to. There are varying interpretations/translations of these different group names, but in general they seem to go back and forth between respectable and disreputable. You can imagine a rowdy group in the bar saying, "And now let's drink to the lusty nuns!" (One way of translating "sororibus vanis.") And everyone chimes in, "Yeah, the lusty nuns!" and tilts his mug. The list goes on, with everyone getting progressively drunker. (But it's pretty hard to get a high-grade choral group to sound very drunk and still stay in tune and on time.) Second, there's a list of pairs who drink; depending on how you count the items, you can say that this list also totals thirteen. Some of the pairs are contrasting: old vs. young, swift vs. lazy; others are typically joined: master and mistress, priest and deacon, sister and brother. The conclusion? Everyone without exception drinks, and if you don't like it, well, may your name be erased from the book of the just!

Amor volat undique/Love Flies Everywhere



“Cupid with Wheel of Fortune” by Titian,
National Gallery of Art, public domain ©*

Part V: “*Cour d’Amours*”/“The Courts of Love”

Selections on this theme make up the rest of *Carmina* except for the reprise at the end of “*O Fortuna*.”

Boys' chorus:

Amor volat undique, captus est libidine.
Iuvenes, iuencule coniunguntur merito.

Cupid flies everywhere,
capturing the lustful,
young men and young women
are conjoined, and rightly so.

Soprano:

Siqua sine socio, caret omni gaudio,
tenet noctis infima sub intimo cordis in custodia:

She who is without a partner
has lost all joy,
Holding lowest night in
custody within her most
intimate heart.

Boys' chorus:

fit res amarissima.

It is a bitter thing!
(boys' choir & soprano solo/Latin)

Interesting question: Why did Orff voice this selection as he did, with young boys and a soprano? I can't say for sure, of course, but perhaps he found it to be a provocative choice to have pre-pubescent boys sing of the power of sexual love, something they haven't yet experienced. But just right up the age ladder, to the male and female juveniles, it is "*merito*" for them to be conjoined. Then the soprano joins in, and she laments what it's like *not* to be conjoined. Such a one has no joy and her heart is full of darkness. The boys echo her: "It is a bitter thing!" This short selection covers a range of emotions and styles and is truly charming.

*I chose this image for the selection because, even though Cupid isn't flying in the picture, he's linked with the Wheel of Fortune, the image that weaves its way through *Carmina* and is particularly relevant here.

Dies, nox et omnia/
Day, Night and Everything



"Dante Weeping for Beatrice,"
Marcel Rieder, Musée de Mulhous, public domain

<i>Dies, nox et omnia michi sunt</i>	Day, night and everything are
<i>contraria,</i>	against me,
<i>Virginum colloquia me fay</i>	The chattering of maidens
<i>planszer,</i>	makes me weep,
<i>Oy suvenz suspirer, plu me fay</i>	And makes me sigh, and even
<i>temer.</i>	makes me afraid.
<i>O sodales, ludite, vos qui scitis</i>	O friends, you jest at me in
<i>dicite,</i>	sport when you should tell me
	what you know.
<i>Michi mesto parcite, grand ey</i>	Spare my drooping spirits, so
<i>dolur,</i>	greatly sad,

CARMINA BURANA

<i>Attamen consulite per voster honor.</i>	And instead give me your honorable counsel.
<i>Tua pulchra facies, me fey planszer milies,</i>	Your beautiful face gives me a thousand pleasures.
<i>Pectus habens glacies,</i>	[But] your heart is of ice.
<i>A remender statim vivus fierem per un baser.</i>	To remedy my state, bring me back to life with a kiss.

(baritone soloist/ Latin & Old French)

The meaning of the lyrics is pretty self-evident, familiar to anyone who has ever attended junior high. The male speaker is terribly afflicted by unrequited love. Everything in the world is against him. Even hearing girls chatter is a curse to him; I wonder if they make him afraid because he thinks they're laughing at him? Certainly his friends are making fun of him; can't you just hear the chant of "So-and-so's got a crush on So-and-so!" He pleads with his friends to give him some advice to help him out. But then the lyrics switch to the real focus of the song: the beloved. She's beautiful, but her heart is hard and cold, like ice. And so the song ends with a plea: Just give me a kiss!

Stetit puella/A Girl Stood



*Photo credit: [SlavMedievalShop](#) on Etsy,
used by permission from the owner.*

<i>Stetit puella rufa tunica;</i>	A girl stood in a red dress,
<i>Si quis eam tetigit, tunica</i>	And whoever touched her, the
<i>crepuit.</i>	tunic rustled.
<i>Eia.</i>	Oh!
<i>Stetit puella, tamquam rosula;</i>	A girl stood, like a rose,
<i>Facie splenduit, os eius floruit.</i>	With radiant face and a
	blooming mouth.
<i>Eia.</i>	Oh!

(soprano soloist/Latin)

For some reason Orff included only the initial verse of this poem, which is sung in *Carmina* by a soprano. The “eia” is repeated several times in the actual performance and makes up at least half of the total performance time of the piece. According to one source, this syllable can express “awestruck admiration.” Today it might be rendered “Wow!”

I thought it would be helpful in the understanding of this piece to include the rest of the lyrics that Orff left out. You’ll notice how very Germanic these last lines are; it’s almost as if they were added later. I don’t have access to the originals, alas. These additional verses were garnered from the website of the [Carmina enthusiast David Parlett](#), who *has* seen the originals. He includes no commentary on the shift in language, though.

<i>Stetit puella bi einem boume</i>	A girl stood by a tree
<i>Scriptis amorem an eime loube.</i>	And wrote her love’s name on
	a leaf.
<i>Da chom Uenus also fram</i>	Right away Venus came by.
<i>caritatem magnam,</i>	Great charity
<i>Hohe minne bot si ir manne.</i>	And high courtly love are
	what she gave to her man.

These additional lines include a combination of ideas on love that are not usual, as “charity,” the Christian virtue of selflessness, and “high courtly love,” the formalized rituals of which were not tied in any way to daily life and especially not to marriage, were seen as opposites. Indeed, in most Christian teaching of the time erotic love, symbolized by Venus, was seen as evil. But “her man” can also be translated as “her husband.” The poet wanted to bring together all the different kinds of love that scholars would say had to be kept separate. (from *Forms and Imaginings: From Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century*, Peter Dronke.)

Since Orff didn’t include the final lines, however, that deeper meaning is lost. Instead, we are left with just the striking image of the girl in the red dress with the red mouth. That must have been all he wanted in this short but beautiful piece.

Circa mea pectora/In my Heart



Master of La Manta, Three women from the “Male and Female Worthies” fresco, public domain

Baritone solo:

*Circa mea pectora multa sunt
suspiria de tua pulchritudine,
que me ledunt misere. Ah!*

In my heart there are many
sighs because of your beauty.
So that I am miserable. Ah!

Women’s chorus:

*Manda liet, manda liet,
min geselle chumet niet.*

Say the word, say the word,
my lover is not coming.

Baritone:

*Tui lucent oculi sicut solis radii,
sicut splendor fulguris
lucem donat tenebris. Ah!*

Your eyes shine like the rays
of the sun,
with the splendor of lightning,
Giving light to the darkness.
Ah!

Women's chorus:

Mandaliet, etc.

Say the word, etc.

Baritone:

*Vellet deus, vellent dii, quod
mente proposui:*

May the one God, may the
many gods, give me what I
have in mind,

*ut eius virginea reserassem
vincula. Ah!*

That I may unlock the chains
of her virginity.

Women's Chorus:

Mandaliet, etc

Say the word, etc.

(baritone soloist & women's choir/Latin & High Middle German)

I find this section of *Carmina* to be rather puzzling. We have a back and forth between the baritone (who needs a powerful set of lungs to hold out that “ah!” over the women's chorus singing underneath) proclaiming his unrequited love and a group of women lamenting the loss of a lover. Again, as I've said before in these notes, I don't have access to the original manuscript and might not gain any insight if I did, as the real issue is probably the question of what was going on in Carl Orff's mind as he pieced together words and music. So I'm going to tell you what makes the most sense to me.

It's not the words themselves but their combination that's unclear. Do the women represent the beautiful one for whom the baritone pines? But if so, why do they keep saying that “my lover is not coming”? He's perfectly eager to meet up with her if she'd just say the word. Oh, and speaking of “say the word,” which is the best translation I can come up with for “*manda liet*”—usually these two words aren't translated at all. They just show up as “*manda liet*” in the English as well as the Latin, as if we're supposed to know what that means! By dint of great effort I was able to come up with this translation, which makes

at least a certain amount of sense. In other words, “Let it be known, I am telling everyone that my lover has deserted me.”

At one point I wondered if the women were simply echoing the man’s sentiments and thus represented *his* attitude, but “*gesellen*” is definitely male. So . . . is there some colossal mixup going on, with the man pining for the woman but thinking that she’s cold towards him and the woman thinking that he’s not interested in her? Well, maybe I’m overthinking the whole thing. But we do know what this kind of situation happens all the time. The more I’ve thought about it, the more sense it makes. In fact, there may be a verbal joke going on here. You could, for instance, read the final male/female exchange this way:

Him: “May I unlock the chains of her virginity.” Her: “Say the word!”

Whaddaya think?

Sie Puer cum Puellula/If a Boy with a Girl



*Abaelardus and Heloise Surprised By Master Fulbert,”
by Jean Vignaud (1819), public domain*

*Sie puer cum puellula
moraretur in cellula,
felix coniunctio.*

*Amore sucrescente, pariter e
medio propulso procul tedio,*

*fit ludus ineffabilis membris,
lacertis, labiis.*

If a boy with a girl lingers in a
little room,

How happy is their meeting!

Their passions rise, and
between them modesty is
banished.

In the ineffable game of
limbs, arms, and lips.

(small men's choir)

This selection is extremely demanding both musically and verbally. Here are a couple of teaser questions about it:

What clever wordplay is found in Selection #19, “Si puer cum puellula”?

“Si puer cum puellula moraretur in cellula”—“puer” means “boy” and “puellula” means “girl,” but the “puellula” gets paired with “cellula,” which means “little cell.” Our translations, again, often give the overall sense of the text without necessarily conveying the flavor of the words themselves. The poet could have used “iuvene” for the young man and “virgine” for the young woman, and maybe “camera” or “cubiculum” for the room, but then the internal rhyme would have been lost. Maybe a way to express this wordplay in English would be something like “if a lad and a lass linger in a little lair.” Then again, maybe not!

What cat’s name and what grammatical term are included in Selection #19?

The cat’s name is, of course, “Felix.” (You do remember Felix the Cat cartoons, don’t you? “Felix the cat, the wonderful, wonderful cat. Whenever he gets in a fix, he reaches into his bag of tricks.”) Felix used to be a much more common given name for humans than it is now, though. Its actual meaning in Latin is “happy,” and the word even shows up in the theological term “felix culpa” usually translated as “fortunate Fall,” an idea conceived by a number of ancient and medieval theologians, among them Augustine, saying that the Fall of Man was ultimately a good thing since it gave God an opportunity to bring salvation to man. In the Christian New Testament there is a Felix who is the governor of Judea. His name doesn’t seem to have been his destiny, as he was known for his cruelty, sexual immorality, and susceptibility to bribes.

The Apostle Paul appears before him in the book of Acts, and Felix leaves him in prison even though he knows that Paul has done nothing deserving of punishment. However, “at the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.” All very interesting! But here, of course, we can let go of all those associations and just concentrate on the literal meaning of the word.

The grammatical term is “coniunctio”—conjunction. Its meaning in Latin also encompasses “combination” and “association.” So “felix coniunctio” means “happy union or meeting.”

Veni, veni, venias/Come, Come, O Come



“Tristan and Isolde” by John Duncan, 1912, public domain ©

*Veni, veni, venias, ne me mori
facias,
Hyrca, hyrce, nazaza,
trillirivos!
Pulchra tibi facies, oculorum
acies,*

Come, come, o come, do not
let me die.
Nanny goat, Billy goat, with
braided manes, trillirivos!
Beautiful is your face, piercing
are your eyes,

<i>Capillorum series, o quam clara species!</i>	Your ordered hair, oh what a bright creature!
<i>Rosa rubicundior, lilio candidior,</i>	Redder than a rose, fairer than a lily,
<i>Omnibus formosior, semper in te glorior!</i>	More beautiful than everything, I will always glory in you!

(double choir/Latin)

With the exception discussed below, this is a pretty standard love song. Many are the lovesick pleas from man or woman swearing that if the beloved will not give in that he/she will die. The uniqueness of this selection comes from the musical arrangement itself, from the ecstatic wording, and from the insertion of the second line which contains some very puzzling words, leading to this teaser:

What's with these weird nonsense words in Selection #20, "Veni, veni, venias"?

When I first worked on the translation for this lyric I became mildly obsessed with finding meanings for the words *hyrca/hyrce*, *nazaza* and *trillirivos*, but there didn't seem to be any actual definitions. Every source I consulted said that these were simply exclamations of emotion. Have you ever exclaimed, "Oh, *nazaza!*" when you've stubbed your toe? Me neither. As I thought about this type of language, though, I was reminded of a number of words in English lyrics that can't be translated and are also expressions of emotion. I defy you to come up with definitions for these:

“Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-ay”

“Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ra, Too-ra-loo-ra-li”

“Heidi-heidi-heidi-ho”

“Heigh ho!”

“Hey nonny nonny”

And, for you golden oldies fans, or those of us who remember The Mamas and the Papas when they weren’t golden oldies, “La la la la la la.”

Also, in about a million rock songs, old and new, “Na na na na na na na na na na na na na na na na.”

So I figured that was that. My husband, however, managed to find a meaning for “*hyrca, hyrce*”—apparently it’s referring to male and female goats, perhaps a reference to goats’ supposedly amorous natures. “*Hyrca*” can also mean “pretty,” but there’s no corresponding translation for “*hyrce*.” Although there was some idea that the “nazaza” might be the goats’ bleating (and we were told to sing it through our noses by our conductor), in the end Google translate said that it means “braided.” Since “*capillorum series*” is sometimes translated “braided hair,” I guess that would fit into the general idea. I never did find anything on “trillirivos.” If you split the word up into syllables you can find definitions for the syllables, but not for the word as a whole. One website states flatly, “No human translation has been found.”

In the end, I think we're going to have to accept that there's some joke or double *entendre* embedded in these words that is no longer accessible to us. Just enjoy it as it is!

In trutina/In the Balance



“Love or Duty” by Gabriele Castagnola, 1873, public domain

<i>In trutina mentis dubia</i>	In the balance, my doubtful mind
<i>fluctuant contraria</i>	Fluctuates contrarily between
<i>lascivus amor et pudicitia.</i>	Lascivious love and prudery.
<i>Sed eligo quod video,</i>	And I choose what I see,
<i>collum iugo prebeo;</i>	I offer my neck
<i>ad iugum tamen suave</i>	And at last pass over to the
<i>transeo.</i>	sweet yoke.

(soprano solo/Latin)

This lovely, brief piece, sung by a soprano, is typically seen as a description of a young woman's decision to reject the idea of chastity and embrace love, entering into the "sweet yoke" ("*iugum . . . suave*").

So simple, right? And this meaning would fit in with the overall theme of this section of *Carmina*. I figured that was that, and it may well be. However, never willing to let well enough alone, I did my usual googling of some of the main phrases and found that there is at least a little disagreement over what decision the speaker in the poem finally makes. The ambiguous line is "*Sed eligo quod video,*" translated above as "I choose what I see" but which could also be "I choose *now that* I see," or indeed other wordings, depending on how the very versatile Latin word "*quod*" is translated. The question is, What does she see? What does "what" refer to?

The "sweet yoke" wording was often used to mean marriage in medieval times, so it would seem that she chooses to marry. *But*—you know there was a "but"—nuns went through a marriage ceremony in which they were veiled like a bride, received a wedding ring, and were considered to be "married" to Christ. Indeed, the Christian New Testament often refers to

the Church as a whole (that is, all followers of Christ) as the “Bride of Christ.” So maybe she decides to become a nun. It’s left (watch for it) in the balance.

I used the strongest words above: “lascivious” and “prudery,” instead of other, less polarizing ones: “Venus vs. chastity” is one such. But it’s fair to point out that the original Latin words didn’t necessarily have the same connotations that the English translations have today. “Lasciviousness” has the same basic meaning as “lust,” but that word can just mean “desire.” And I don’t know that anyone went around in the Middle Ages saying, “Don’t be such a prude!”

Well, the speaker probably chose love and marriage. I will say, however, that one of the most gorgeous pieces of music ever written, the “Meditation” from the French opera *Thais*, occurs when the courtesan Thais decides to reject earthly love and convert to Christianity. So who knows? This is a pretty gorgeous piece, too.

Tempus est iocundum/
Now Is the Joyful Time



Illustration from the “*Roman de la Rose*,” by The Master of the Prayer Books, ca. 1500, British Library, public domain

Tempus est iocundum, o
virgines,
modo congaudete vos iuvenes.

Now the time is joyful, oh
maidens,
Rejoice with them, oh young

<i>Oh, oh, oh! totus floreo,</i>	men!
<i>iam amore virginali totus ardeo!</i>	Oh, oh, oh! Everything is bursting into flower!
<i>novus, novus novus amor est, quo pereo!</i>	My first love is making me totally ardent!
<i>Mea me confortat promissio, mea me deportant negatio.</i>	This new, new, new love is making me perish!
<i>Oh, oh, oh! etc.</i>	Your promises comfort me, Your refusals cast me down.
<i>Tempore brumali vir patiens,</i>	Oh, oh, oh! etc.
<i>animo vernali lasciviens.</i>	In the time of winter, man is patient.
<i>Oh, oh, oh! Etc.</i>	The breath of spring makes him lust.
<i>Mea mecum ludit virginitas,</i>	Oh, oh, oh! Etc.
<i>mea me detrudit simplicitas.</i>	My virginity makes me sportive,
<i>Oh, oh, oh! etc.</i>	My ignorance makes me shy.
<i>Veni domicella, cum gaudio, veni, veni, pulchra, iam pereo.</i>	Oh, oh, oh! etc.
<i>Oh, oh, oh! etc.</i>	Come, lady, come with joy!
<i>Dulcissime, Ah! totam tibi subdo me!</i>	Come, beautiful one, you are making me perish with love!
	Oh, oh, oh! etc.
	Oh sweetest one! I give myself totally to you!

(baritone and soprano soloists, boys' choir/Latin)

Love, love, love this selection! In fact, if someone asked me which piece in *Carmina* exemplifies its spirit, I think I'd pick this one, just because it's so joyous, so innocently sexy, so full of life. Also, it's so funny that Carl Orff had a boys' choir for part of it. (See the commentary on "Love Flies Everywhere," in which he also uses young boys to sing about love.)

Because of all the repetition of syllables, it's a good idea to read the lyrics carefully so you can follow the train of thought--if it can be called that. I have gone ahead and included Selection #23 with this, because it's so short and because it seems to be an answer to the ardent young man in #22. I guess he didn't perish after all!

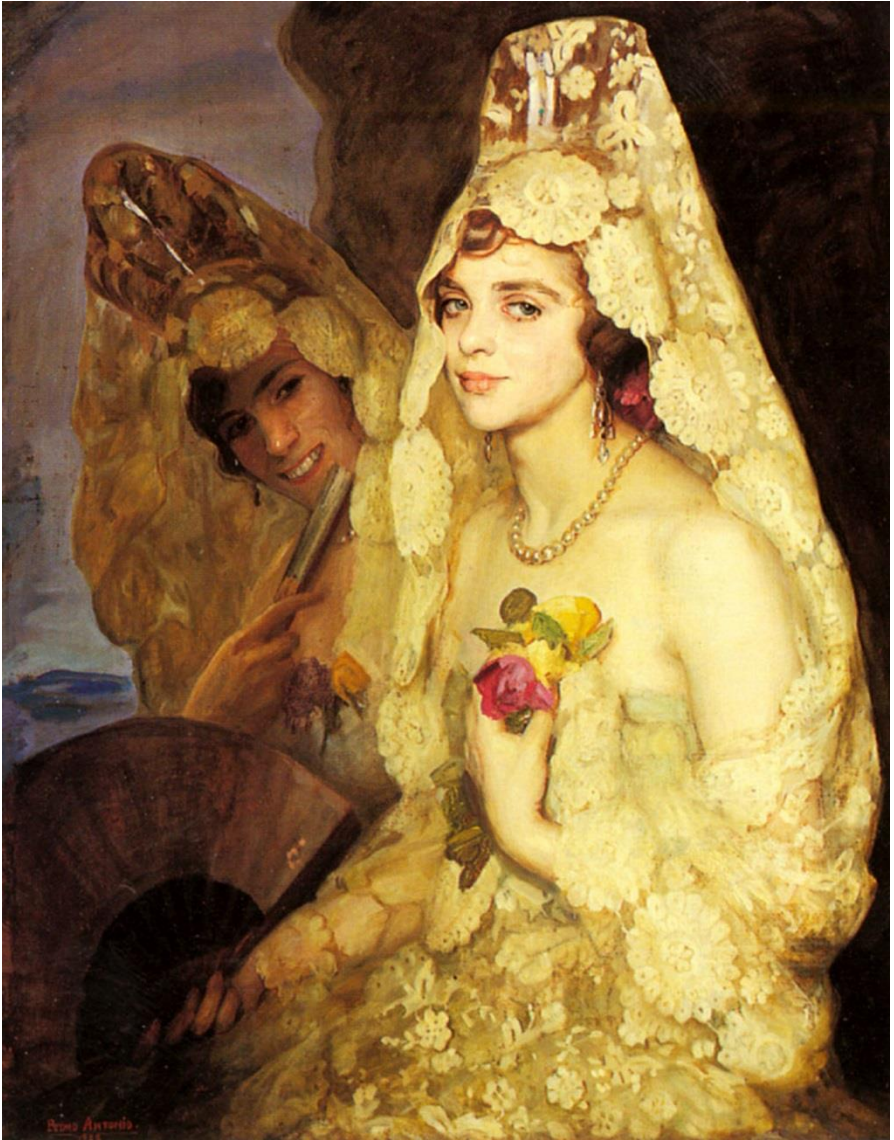
Here's a teaser I wrote about one of the words in this selection:

What word in Selection #22 now has a negative connotation that it didn't have at the time the song was written?

The word is "gaudio," which is obviously related to the word "gaudy," a term we use today to mean "bright, showy, tasteless, vulgar." Its original Latin meaning, though, is "joy or delight," emotions much more worthwhile than we might think as modern readers. So the text "veni domicella cum gaudio" means "Come, lady, come with joy."

(The greatest novel of the 20th century IMHO, *Gaudy Night* by Dorothy Sayers, refers to yet another meaning of the word. In that book, a "gaudy" is a special celebration or feast held at some British universities, referring to an obsolete meaning of the word as "merry and festive." So Harriet Vane comes back to her old college at Oxford to celebrate a gaudy and gets drawn into an investigation of mischief and mayhem occurring there. She also finally accepts Lord Peter Wimsey's marriage proposal, so that's at least a tenuous connection to our selection. But perhaps that's TMI! If you don't think so, be sure to read the book.)

Ave formosissima/Hail, Most Fair One



*“Two Elegant Ladies Holding Fans”
y Raimundo de Madrazo y Garretta, 1841-1920, public domain*

<i>Ave formosissima, gemma pretiosa,</i>	Hail, most fair one! Precious jewel!
<i>Ave decus virginum, virgo gloriosa,</i>	Hail, bright maiden! Glorious young woman!
<i>Ave mundi luminar, ave mundi rosa,</i>	Hail, light of the world! Hail, rose of the world!
<i>Blanziflor et Helena, Venus generosa!</i>	White Flower and Helena, kind and noble Venus!

(choir/Latin)

Who are Blanziflor and Helena?

This sounds as if it should be a couple, doesn't it? "The great love story of Blanziflor and Helena." But actually these are simply two names for beautiful women. Helena is of course Helen of Troy, whom we've met before in this music.

Blanziflor means "white flower," and there are several women of that name (also spelled "Blanchefleur") in medieval romances. This selection is structured like a hymn to the Virgin Mary, with references that would fit her as well: "gemma pretiosa" or "precious gem," "mundi rosa" or "rose of the world," and "virgo gloriosa" or "virgin (or young woman) most glorious or transcendent." But instead of ending with the most revered woman in Christian theology, this hymn ends with a glorification of Venus, the goddess of love. Small wonder that the Roman Catholic Church did finally crack down on this type of verse and those who wrote it.

O Fortuna/Oh Fortune



*"Blindfolded Lady Fortune Turning Her Wheel,"
1502 Manuscript, Bibliotheque Nationale de France.*

Carmina Burana ends where it began, with the great chorus “O Fortuna.” So, as a parting gift, here are a couple of final thoughts:

What astronomical and gambling terms show up in "O Fortuna"?

"*Velut luna statu variabilis*" refers to the moon with its waxing and waning. "*Ludo mentis aciem*" refers to Fortune's playing with mankind. One translation has it as "shifts us like pawns in its play." However, the word "*ludo*" specifically refers to gambling. "Ludomania" is a psychological term used for those with a gambling addiction, and "ludo" was used in medieval times to mean any game of chance. There's a board game you can play today called "Ludo" which is closely related to Parcheesi and which is played with dice.

Fortune rolls the dice, and man pays the price. And that's where Carl Orff decided to leave us.

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