Voices of Light

An Oratorio Inspired by Carl Dreyer's Film
The Passion of Joan of Arc

LIBRETTO

Richard Einhorn
Voices of Light is an opera/oratorio for voices and amplified instrumental ensemble in celebration of Joan of Arc. It may be performed during a screening of Carl Dreyer's great silent film, The Passion of Joan of Arc, or with other staging, or as a concert work.

The libretto for Voices of Light is a patchwork of visions, fantasies, and reflections assembled from various ancient sources, notably the writings of medieval female mystics. The texts may be thought of as representing the spiritual, political and metaphorical womb in which Joan was conceived.

Voices of Light was first performed at the Academy of Music in Northampton, Massachusetts on February 12 and 13, 1994 by The Arcadia Players and the Da Camera Singers, Margaret Irwin Brandon conducting. The performances were produced by the Northampton Arts Council, Bob Cilman, director.

Voices of Light was released on CD by Sony Classical on October 22, 1995 performed by Anonymous 4, Radio Netherlands Philharmonic and Choir, Susan Narucki, and other musicians, conducted by Steven Mercurio.
[Exclamavit autem voce magna...] «Deus aeterne, qui absconditorum es cognitor, qui nosti omnia antequam fiant, tu scis quoniam falsum testimonium tulerunt contra me; et ecce morior, cum nihil horum fecerim quae isti malitiose composuerunt adversum me.»

[She cried out in a loud voice] "Everlasting God, who knows things hidden and all things before they happen, you know they have borne false witness against me; and see! I die, although I am innocent of everything their malice has invented against me."

Daniel 13:42

Thronus...flammæ ignis,
Rotae eius ignis accensus.
Fluvius igneus rapidusque
grediebatur a facie eius;
Millia millium ministrabant...
Et decies millies centena millia assistebant...
Iudicium sedit,
et libri aperti sunt.

[His] throne..was ablaze with flames,
His wheels were a burning fire.
A swift river of fire
came forth from his countenance
A thousand thousand waited upon him
Ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood by.
The court sat,
and the books were opened.

Daniel 7:9

* All words sung by Joan of Arc are in italics.
VICTORY AT ORLEANS

(LETTER FROM JOAN OF ARC)

Jehanne...la Pucelle vous fait savoir des nouvelles de par decha que en VIII jours elle a cachée les Anglois hors de toutez les places qu'ils tenoient sur le revire de Loire par assaut et autrement ou il en eu mains morts et prins et lez a desconfis en bataille...le frère du conte de Suffort et Glasias mort.

Je vous promet et certifie...en toultes les villes qu'y doibvent estre du saint royaume...qu'y que vyenne contre.

Car Dieu, le Roy du ciel, le veult, et cela est révélé par la Pucelle...

Jehanne...the Maid sends you news from these parts: that in one week she has chased the English out of all the places that they held along the Loire river, either by assault or otherwise, in which encounters many English were killed and captured and she has routed them in a pitched battle. A brother of the Earl of Suffolk's and Glasdale were killed.

I promise and assure you [that we will take possession] of all the cities that must belong to [our] holy realm ... in spite of all opposition!

So God King of Heaven, wills it; and so it has been revealed by the Maid...
HOMASSE!

Hee! quel honneur au femenin
Sexe!...
Par qui tout le regne ert desert,
Par femme est sours et recouvert.

Virtutem...mysterium secretarum et
admirandarum visionum a puellari
aetate...essem usque ad praesens tempus
mirabili modo in me senseram ...

HOMASSE!

Une fillete...
A qui armes ne sont pesans...
Et devant elle vont fuyant
Les ennemis, ne nul n’y dure.

«Velis aut nolis haec erit tuum. Ego scio
quid elegi»

Ex nemore canuto puella eliminabitur ut
medelae curam adhibeat.

Non induetur
mulier veste virili,
nec vir utetur
veste feminea:
abominabilis enim
apud Deum
est qui facit haec.

Masculine Woman!

(Medieval slur directed at women)

Oh! What an honor for the feminine sex!...
This entire realm, once lost by [wretched
men], restored and saved by a woman again
Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc by Christine de
Pizan, 1429, one of the earliest known
feminist writers.

From my girlhood to the present time, in a
wondrous fashion I have felt in myself the
power and mystery of secret and
wonderful visions...
St. Hildegard of Bingen, mystic, poet,
and composer from the early 12th Century.

"Whether or not you wish it, this will be
yours. I know what I have chosen."
Na Prous Boneta, 14th Century French
heretic who was burned at the stake.

Out of an oak forest a girl will be sent forth
to bring healing.
Ancient prophecy of Merlin thought to
refer to Joan of Arc's mission.

A woman shall not wear
the clothes of a man
Nor a man
the clothes of a woman.
For abominable
in the eyes of God
0are those who do so.
Deuteronomy 22:5
THE JAILERS

When it comes to women, men, hold your tongue!

When it comes to women, men, hold your tongue!

A woman's heart is just not able
To chart a course that's firm or stable

Now she's wild, now she's demure;
Now wants peace, then starts a war;

The schemes she quickly engineers
Can drown a countryside in tears

Who loves and trusts mad womankind
Damns soul and body, wastes his time.

Now that I've told you of womankind,
Let's flee and leave them far behind!

Now that I've told you of womankind,
Let's flee and leave them far behind!

When it comes to women, men, hold your tongue!

Now that I've told you of womankind,
Let's flee and leave them far behind!

The Vices of Women
late 13th Century misogynist poem
PATER NOSTER

Pater Noster, qui es in caelis,
Sanctificetur nomen tuum.
Adveniat regnum tuum.
Fiat voluntas tua,
Sicut in caelo
et in terra.

Our Father, who art in Heaven
Hallowed be Thy Name
Thy Kingdom Come
Thy will be done
In Earth as it is
in Heaven.

Matthew 6:9-6:10

"Filia mea dulcis michi; filia mea, delectum meum, templum meum; filia delectum meum, ama me: quia tu es multum amata a me, multum plus quam tu ames me.

"And after I have laid myself in you, now lay yourself in me."

"This is my creature."

Blessed Angela of Foligno
13th Century mystic and penitent

et sentiebam dulcedinem divinam ineffabilem.

"And I felt an ineffable divine sweetness.

"And after I have laid myself in you, now lay yourself in me.

"This is my creature."

"My daughter, sweet to me; my daughter, my beloved, my temple; my daughter, my beloved, love me, since you have been much loved by me, much more than you love me.

"And after I have laid myself in you, now lay yourself in me.

"This is my creature."

Blessed Angela of Foligno
THE JAILERS RETURN

Tant y a feme scet bon taire! When it comes to women, men, hold your tongue!
Tant y a feme scet bon taire!

Femme est dehors religiouse, On the outside she's religious,
Dedanz poignaunt e venimose; On the inside keen and venomous;

A soy sera d'aucun complainte, She will not tolerate complaint,
Ir se fait moult juste et moult sainte. She's lady justice and a saint.

Femme engendre bataille e guere, Woman fosters strife and wars,
Exile gent de gaste tere; And exiles men from ruined shores;

Femme ard chasteus e prent citez Castles she burns, cities defeats
Enfudre tours e fermetez. Destroys the towers and the keeps.

Ore vous ai dit de lur vies, Now that I've told you of womankind,
Fououms de lur cumaignies! Let's flee and leave them far behind!
Ore vous ai dit de lur vies, Now that I've told you of womankind,
Fououms de lur cumaignies. Let's flee and leave them far behind!

The Vices of Women
Late 13th Century misogynist poem
TORTURE

Glorioses playes...

Et desiderabam videre vel saltem illud parum de carne Christi quod portaverant clavi in ligno.

Glorious wounds...

And I longed to see at least that little bit of Christ's flesh that the nails had fixed to the wood.

Blessed Angela of Foligno

Glorioses playes...

...ostendit cor suum perforatum quasi ad modum portulae unius parvae laternae... quod ex ipso corde exiverunt radii solares. Imo solaribus radiis clariores...

Glorious wounds...

He showed [her] his heart, perforated like the openings in a small lantern...From his very heart issued forth rays of the sun --no --- brighter than the sun's rays...

Na Prous Boneta

Glorioses playes...

...«non est aequum, velle solum de melle meo gustare, et non de felle: si perfecte vis mecum uniri, mente intenta recogita illusiones, opprobria, flagella, mortem, et tormenta, quae pro te sustinui.»

Glorious wounds...

..."It is not fair to wish to taste only of my honey, and not the gall. If you wish to be perfectly united with me, contemplate deeply the mockery, insults, whippings, death and torments that I endured for you."

Blessed Margarita, disciple of St. Umiltà, 14th Century.
Jehanne la Pucelle vous requiert de par le Roy du ciel,...vous puis que ne guerroiez plus ou saint Royaume de France,...et sera grant pitié de la grant bataille et du sang qui y sera respendu de ceux qui y vendront contre nous.

Jehanne the Maid begs you on behalf of the King of Heaven, make war no longer in the holy Kingdom of France, ...and a pitiful thing will be that great battle and the blood that will be shed therein by those who come there against us.
O feminea forma, O soror Sapientie, quam gloriosa es quoniam fortissima vita in te surrexit, quam mors nunquam suffocabit.

O feminine form, O sister of Wisdom How glorious you are for in you has arisen the mightiest life that death will never stifle.

St. Hildegard of Bingen

Oh maledetti! Oh grande indignazione! O cursed ones! O great indignation!

St. Umiltà of Faenza, great 14th Century Italian mystic.

Fuge, fuge speluncam antiqui perditoris et veniens veni in palatium regis.

Flee, flee the cave of the ancient destroyer and come, coming into the palace of the king.

St. Hildegard of Bingen

...car plus est adjoustee foy au mal de tant comme le bien y est plus auttentique...

...evil is rendered more believable by putting it together with good to make it more respectable...

From The Quarrel of the Rose Christine de Pizan
**ABJURATION**

Exaudi, Deus omnipotens, preces populi...Puelle agentis secundum opera que sibi dixeras

Hear, Almighty God, the prayers of your people...of the girl acting according to the works which you had spoken of to her.

Prayer commissioned by King Charles VII pleading for Joan's freedom from imprisonment, 1431.

Si quis in me non manserit, mittetur foras sicut palmes, et arescet, et colligent eum, et in ignem mittent, et ardet.

Those who do not remain in me will be discarded like branches: they will wither. So they will be gathered up, thrown on the fire, and burnt.

John 15:6, recited to Joan of Arc by Father Erard during her trial, at the confrontation in front of St. Ouen.

« Domine, istud quod facio, non facio nisi ut inveniam te. »

"Lord, that which I do, I do only to find you."

Blessed Angela of Foligno

«Depone animos.»

"Renounce your purpose."

From The Passion of St. Perpetua, a history of an early Christian martyr.

...Une femme — — simple bergiere — —
Plus preux qu'onc homes ne fut à Romme!

...a woman — — a simple shepherdess — —
More valiant even than Rome's worthiest!

Ditié

Christine de Pizan

Ne universos nos extermines.

Destroy us not all together.

St. Perpetua

Benedicite, ignis et aestus, Domino;

Fire and heat, praise the Lord!

Daniel 3:66
"Depone animos." "Renounce your purpose."
St. Perpetua

...N'y a si forte
Resistance qui à l'assault
De la Pucelle ne soit morte.

... No force is there so strong --
Try as they might to resist the attack
Of the Maid -- it dies in vain before long.

Hester, Judith, et Delbora,
Qui furent dames de grant pris,[...]

One hears of Esther, Judith and Deborah,
Who were ladies of great courage and
worth; [...]

Mains miracles en a pourpris.

Through them God performed miracles on
Earth,

Plus a fait par ceste Pucelle.

But he fulfilled even more through this
Maid.

Ditié
Christine de Pizan

"Domine, istud quod facio, non facio nisi ut inveniam te. Inveniam te postquam id perfecero! »
"Lord, that which I do, I do only to find you. May I find you after I have completed it!"
Blessed Angela of Foligno
Karitas
habundat in omnia
de imis excellentissima
super sidera
atque amantissima
in omnia
quia summo regi osculum pacis
dedit.

Love
overflowed into all things,
From out of the depths to above the
highest stars;
And so Love overflows into all best
beloved, most loving things,
Because She has given to the highest King
The Kiss of Peace.

St. Hildegard of Bingen
ANIMA

...anima eius amore fluens et languens. ...The Spirit flowing and melting with love.

There are Seven Manners of Loving
Beatrice of Nazareth, 13th Century.

...est ceste Ame cheue d'amour en nient. ...This Soul has fallen from love into nothingness.

Marguerite Porete, 14th Century member of the Free Spirit movement who was burned at the stake.

...mens eius insane suspensa ex vehementi cupidine... ...The Spirit madly possessed by violent desire...

...per solum Amorem aeternum trahitur in aeternitatem Amoris ...Only through everlasting Love is it drawn into the eternity of Love.

...anima eius amore fluens et languens. ...The Spirit flowing and melting with love.

Beatrice of Nazareth

...est ceste Ame cheue d'amour en nient. ...This Soul has fallen from love into nothingness.

Marguerite Porete

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Beatrice of Nazareth
[Exclamavit autem voce magna...] «Deus aeterne, qui absconditorum es cognitor, qui nosti omnia antequam fiant, tu scis quoniam falsum testimonium tulerunt contra me; et ecce morior, cum nihil horum fecerim quae isti malitiose composuerunt adversum me.»

[She cried out in a loud voice] "Everlasting God, who knows things hidden and all things before they happen, you know they have borne false witness against me; and see! I die, although I am innocent of everything their malice has invented against me."

Daniel 13:42
THE BURNING

Dominus condit sibi unum ignem dicendo sic: «vides hunc ignem; qualiter totam materiam et substantiam lignorum convertit in suam naturam, eodem modo natura divinitatis convertit in se animas quas sibi vult...»

The Lord made for her a fire, saying: "You see this fire; as it changes all the matter and substance of wood into its own nature, even so, Divine Nature changes into itself the souls it wants for itself..."

Na Prous Boneta


Our king is swift to receive the blood of innocents. But over the same blood the clouds are grieving. Hence the angels sing and resound in praises Glory to the Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. Our king is swift to receive the blood of innocents. But over the same blood the clouds are grieving.

St. Hildegard of Bingen

Jehanne, Jehanne! Joan, Joan!
THE FIRE OF THE DOVE

Ah! Jehanne, Jehanne!

Oh!

...valde beatus fuisti cum Verbum Dei te in igne columbe imbuit.

(ubi tu quasi aurora illuminatus es...)

...you were greatly blessed when the Word of God steeped you in the fire of the dove.

(where you were illumined like the dawn...)

Ah! Joan, Joan!

Oh!

...valde beatus fuisti cum Verbum Dei te in igne columbe imbuit.

...you were greatly blessed when the Word of God steeped you in the fire of the dove.

St. Hildegard of Bingen
EPILOGUE

(LETTER FROM JOAN OF ARC)

*Car Dieu le Roy du ciel le veult, et cela est révélé par la Pucelle...*  
So God King of Heaven, wills it; and so it has been revealed by the Maid...
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The principal biography used for background research was Saint Joan of Arc, by Vita Sackville-West (Doubleday). In addition, Marina Warner's exceptional book-long essay, Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism (Knopf) was a major influence on the overall approach to the libretto and Joan of Arc's life. Many of the mystical texts were initially found in Medieval Women's Visionary Literature, edited by Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff (Oxford University Press) Copyright © 1986 by Oxford University Press.

Translations from the Bible, Hildegard von Bingen's Visions of St. Hildegard, The Confessions of Na Prous Boneta, The Book of Blessed Angela of Foligno, Concerning the Blessed Margarita of Faenza, Prayer of Charles VII, There are Seven Manners of Loving, copyright © 1995 by Peter K. Marshall All rights reserved. Used by permission.

The letters of Joan of Arc from which the libretto's letters were constructed, may be found in Letters of Joan of Arc, translated and edited by Claire Quintal and Daniel Rankin (Pittsburgh Diocesan Council of Catholic Women). 1969. Used by permission


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The misogynist poetry may be found in Three Medieval Views of Women, translated and edited by Gloria K. Fiero, Wendy Pfeffer, & Mathé Allain (Yale University Press) Copyright © 1989 by Yale University. Used by permission.


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