

MELODIES OF DESIRE, DESPAIR AND DEVOTION

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

FRIDAY 26 JUNE 2026, 1PM
ANGELA BURGESS RECITAL HALL

TRANSLATIONS FROM ITALIAN BY OLIVER DOYLE
TRANSLATIONS FROM FRENCH BY THEO NISBETT



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Zephyro spira e 'l bel tempo rimena

Amor promette gaudio a gli animali
 L'ampia campagna de bei fiori e piena
 Ogni cor si prepara ai dolci strali
 Progne scordata de l'antica pena
 Verso il nostro orizzonte spiega l'ali.
 Ognun vive contento i(o) me lamento
 Ch'amor m'ha fatto albergo di tormento

Zephyro spira e gli arbori di fronde
 Adornano soi densi e sparsi rami,
 A satiri tra boschi ecco risponde
 s'avien che alcun l'amata ninfa chiami.
 Scorreno fiumi rei con veloce onde
 Tanto che sazian le sue antique arame.
 Altrui possiede 'l ciel ed io l'inferno,
 ch'Amor crudel fatto ha 'l mio male eterno.

Sotto un verde e alto cupresso

Un bel sguardo el cor mi tolse,
 Se io restai for di me stesso
 Amor fu che così volse;
 Né per questo el cor si dolse
 Anzi canta a tutte l'hore.
 E d'un bel matin d'amore
 E d'amore che me levava,
 Meti la selle al vostro bon roncin
 E doi sola gran zoglea traditora.

L'honorato et lustro crine
 Che adombrava il sacro volto
 Cum le guanze alme et divine
 Me han dal primo amor disolto:
 Però canto, perché avolto
 Mi ritrovo in ben maiore.
 E d'un bel matin d'amore...

Quelle labia, unde io me avivo,
 Che movean sì dolce canto
 Me han sforziato haver a schivo
 Di natura ogni altro vanto
 Talché ognhor ardendo canto,
 Poi che spento e il vechio ardore.
 E d'un bel matin d'amore...

Zephyrus breathes, and Spring returns

Love promises joy to all things.
 The fields with beautiful flowers fill,
 Every heart readies for love's sweet arrows.
 Procne, forgetting her ancient sorrow,
 For the horizon spreads her wings.
 Everyone lives happily but I lament,
 For love has made me a stay of torment.

Zephyrus breathes and the trees with leaves
 Adorn their dense and once sparse branches.
 To the Satyrs of the wood Echo replies
 As to their beloved nymphs they call.
 The rivers run with quickened waves
 Such that they flood their ancient banks.
 All others are I Heaven, and I in Hell,
 For cruel Love has made my suffering eternal.

Under a green and tall cypress

One fair glance stole my heart,
 If I lost my senses
 Love it was who so wished it;
 Nor for this did my heart lament
 But rather sings, ever:
 On one fine morning of love
 It was love that woke me:
 Put a saddle on your favourite horse
 And ride to great joy, traitor.

The honoured and lustrous locks
 Which adorn that sacred face
 With cheeks blessed and divine
 Have made me forget my first love:
 But I sing, for overwhelmed
 I find myself in greater pleasure.
 On one fine morning of love...

Those lips, where I have life,
 Which form so sweet a song
 Have made me loathe
 Nature's every treasure
 Such that every hour I ardently sing,
 And spent is my old ardour.
 On one fine morning of love...

Mort et fortune, pourquoi m'avez-vous laissé
 Seul en ce monde despourveu de liesse?
 Pourquoi si tôt hors du monde gette
 Celle par qui je languis en tristesse?
 Hélas m'amie!
 Puisque la mort m'y presse,
 Et que ne puis mettre à fin mes douleurs,
 Reprends la vie, ou mort prendre me laisse.

Fini le bien, le mal soudain commence.
 Témoins en sont nos malheurs qu'on peut voir;
 Car tout le bien trouvé par espérance
 Le mal nous l'a remis en son pouvoir.
 O tant d'ennui qui as voulu pourvoir
 De varier la fermeté aimée.
 Il aurait bien qui savait son savoir.
 Douce mémoire, en plaisir consommée.

Vecchie letrose non valetate niente
 Se non a far l'aguaito per la chiazza
 Tira, tira, tira, tira tir'alla mazza
 Vecchie letrose, scannarose e pazzel!

Ostinato vo' seguire
 la magnanima mia impresa;
 Fame, Amor, qual voi offesa,
 s'io dovesse ben morire.
 Ostinato...

Fame, Ciel, fame, Fortuna,
 bene o mal come a te piace:
 né piacer né ingiuria alcuna
 per avilirmi o far più audace.
 Che de l'un non son capace,
 l'altro più non po' fuggire.
 Ostinato...

Vinca o perda, io non l'attendo
 de mia impresa altro che onore:
 sopra il ciel beato ascendo
 s'io ne resto vincitore.
 S'io la perdo, al fin gran core
 Mostrara l'alto desire
 Ostinato...

Death and fate, why have you left me
 Alone in this world, deprived of joy?
 Why have you snatched so soon from this world
 She for whom I languish in sadness?
 Alas, my love,
 Since Death does so press me
 And since I cannot put an end to my grief,
 Take back my life, or I shall let Death take me

Finished is all good, misfortune begins.
 As witnesses stand our sorrows, as we see them;
 For all good, uncovered in hope,
 Evil has taken back from us in its power.
 O such grief which has willed
 To shake all loving constancy.
 There would be good, if wisdom were known.
 Sweet remembrance, fulfilled in perfect joy.

Sour old hags are good for nothing
 But slinging insults
 Drive them away with a club
 Sour old hags, cut-throat and crazed!

Stubbornly I'll follow
 My noble venture
 Do to me, Love, what you will,
 If 'tis that I should die.
 Stubbornly...

Do to me, Heaven, do to me, Fortune,
 Good or ill as you please:
 No pleasure nor injury
 Will scorn or further embolden me.
 For of one I'm incapable
 And the other I cannot escape.
 Stubbornly...

To win or lose, I take no heed
 In my endeavour, but of honour:
 Above the heavens, blessed I'll ascend
 If I'm the victor.
 If I lose her, in the end my heart
 Will show its noble desire.
 Stubbornly...