

SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY

Lord Byron

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

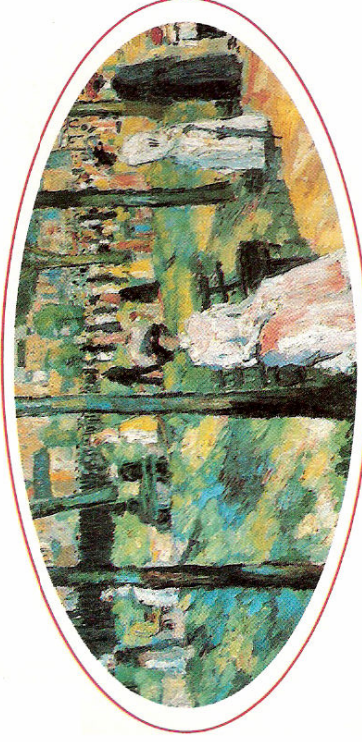
One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

MUSIC OF

Nicolas
FLAGELLO

SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY
CAPRICCIO FOR CELLO AND ORCHESTRA
LAUTREC (BALLET SUITE) • REMEMBRANCE
CONTEMPLAZIONI DI MICHELANGELO



ORCHESTRA SINFONICA DI ROMA
CONDUCTED BY NICOLAS FLAGELLO

The Music Of Nicolas Flagello

The history books tell us that the romantic ethos in music came to an end with World War I, notwithstanding the notable contradictory evidence provided by such composers as Rachmaninoff, Puccini, and Richard Strauss. Recent research has shown these three composers to be only the most prominent members of a large group of exponents of traditional romanticism in the 20th century. Leading American figures in this movement have included Howard Hanson, Vittorio Giannini, and Samuel Barber. From today's perspective, Nicolas Flagello appears to be one of the last representatives of this distinguished lineage.

Flagello was born in New York City in 1928, to a family in which music has played a central role for several generations. (His grandfather, composer-conductor Domenico Castiello, was a student of Verdi, while his brother Ezio Flagello is a well known bass-baritone.) Deeply immersed in the late-Romantic European musical heritage from birth, he became a child prodigy, performing publicly as a pianist in Italy, before the age of ten. During this time young Nicolas began an intensive apprenticeship with Vittorio Giannini, who further imbued him with the enduring values and principles of the grand European tradition. After receiving a Master's Degree from Manhattan School of Music, Flagello won a Fulbright Fellowship to study in Rome, where he earned the *Diploma di Studi Superiori* in 1956 from the Academy of Santa Cecilia, under the tutelage of Ildebrando Pizzetti.

Flagello rejected the academic formalism that dominated musical composition for several decades after World War II, although this defiance in the face of prevailing dogmas prevented him from winning acceptance from the reigning arbiters of taste for many years. Nevertheless, despite such pressure, he has preferred to trust his intuition and let his work speak for itself. Today Flagello's music is finding a growing number of admirers, as more and more musicians discover his catalogue of some 75 works, including six operas, two symphonies, eight concertos, and numerous orchestral, choral, chamber, and vocal works.

According to *The New Grove*, Flagello's music is:

... marked by brooding despair and violent agitation, which find release in massive climaxes of shattering impact. Despite its emotional effusiveness, the music is closely argued and remarkably skillful and imaginative in its handling of subtle instrumental colors. Flagello's later compositions (post 1958), are highly chromatic and dissonant, while retaining the earlier propensity for heartfelt melody and harmonic richness, and showing a clear anchoring in tonality at structural peaks.

In addition to composing, Flagello has concertized widely as a pianist and has appeared as guest conductor of many of the world's leading orchestras and opera companies. He has also held teaching positions at both the Curtis Institute of Music and the Manhattan School of Music.

Flagello had always been fond of Lord Byron's poem *She Walks in Beauty*, and saw in it the perfect opportunity for an uninhibited and totally romantic setting. Composed in 1957 as a birthday gift for his teacher and good friend Vittorio Giannini, the song reveals Flagello's gift — a gift shared by his mentor — for generating a warmly gratifying lyricism.

The *Capriccio* for Cello and Orchestra was composed in 1962. Despite the frivolous connotations of its title, the work is accurately characterized by the first sentences of the *Grove* quote cited above. A haunted, gloomy — almost nightmarish atmosphere prevails, with the solo cello serving as a tortured protagonist, bearing witness against the backdrop of an evocatively scored orchestral accompaniment. The title *Capriccio* is explained by the work's externally loose, rhapsodic formal, although virtually every note derives from the three-note motif introduced by the cello at the outset. The work is challenging to the soloist, but virtuosic elements are fully subsumed by its overwhelming expressive power. In selecting this work for its "Classical Hall of Fame," *Fanfare* characterized it as "a work of great gravity, with an unerring unity of mood, structure, and style."

While not as deeply personal as most of Flagello's music, *Lautrec* is probably his most popular work. In 1958, Flagello composed a suite for piano, entitled *Symphonic Waltzes*, intended as an evocation of Paris at the turn of the 20th century. Although its original title implied orchestral treatment, not until 1965 did the composer conceive the idea of reshaping the work into a suite unified by the character of the painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Shortly after it was completed, a choreographed version was undertaken by the Alabama Ballet, who performed it successfully on tour.

CONTEMPLAZIONI DI MICHELANGELO

In its final form, *Lautrec* comprises four orchestral movements, each suggesting an image associated with the painter and his work. "Paris — La Belle Epoque" is a musical portrait of the milieu that was not only Lautrec's home but also the social and psychological backdrop for his work. It is a world in which gaudy, transitory pleasures provide escape from an inner emptiness of the spirit. "L'Histoires Naturelles," composed afresh for the orchestral suite, is Flagello's musical depiction of the menagerie that inhabited Lautrec's paintings — a slightly grotesque yet endearing circus, appearing helter-skelter in kaleidoscopic orchestral dress. "Elles" evokes the *demi-monde*, the sad nocturnal world of lost souls, the outcasts who emerge while the city is asleep. It was among the creatures of the *demi-monde*, especially its women, that Lautrec felt most at home. *Moulin Rouge* returns to the public scene: the glittering world of Parisian night-life — the raucous dance halls and their forced gaiety. Lautrec observed this life, capturing it in his paintings and posters, and immortalizing it for future generations.

In 1971 Flagello composed his setting of Emily Brontë's *Remembrance*, one of her last poems, and generally regarded as one of her greatest. The musical treatment is a deeply poignant reflection of the poem's theme: resigned acceptance of profound loss recollected years later. The work was originally scored for soprano, flute, and string quartet, although an alternate expansion for string orchestra is heard on this recording.

Flagello composed his *Contemplazioni di Michelangelo* in 1964, the selection of Michelangelo's sonnets suggesting a sequence of commentaries on life and love, from youth to old age. It is this work that inspired Enos Shupp of *The New Records* to write, "If this is not great music, we will gladly turn in our typewriter and quit," while Peru's *El Comercio* commented, "Flagello has created inspired pages, with a grand spirit, solid formal structure, and an elaborate and interesting harmonic fabric."

The first setting, "Come puo esser?," conveys the drama, volatility, and playfulness of young love. The second, "Ben doverrieno," is the most extensive and deeply expressive portion of the work, with a scope that is truly operatic in its tragic grandeur. "Ben fu" stands in stark contrast — a light and exuberant piece with a sense of brilliant color that calls Respighi to mind. The final sonnet, "Dj piu cose," expresses the poet's faith in God as the source of spiritual redemption in the face of earthly misery. The mood of the music is gloomy and somber, building to a towering climax.

—Gustave Walters

I. COME PUO ESSER...

Come puo esser chi'io non sia piu mio? O Dio, o Dio, o Dio! Chi m'ha tolto a me stesso, Ch'a me fusse piu presso O piu di me potesse, che poss'io? O Dio, o Dio, o Dio? Come mi passa el core Chi non par che mi tocchi? Che cosa e questo, Amore, Ch'al core entra per gli occhi, Per poco spazio dentro par che cresca; E s'avvien che trabocchi?	How can it be I am no longer I? O my, my, my! Who robbed me of myself and thus could be Closer, of course to me Than I myself may try? O my, my, my! How can one pierce my heart Who does not touch my skin in any way? What is it then, O Love? It seems to start In the eyes, then it stirs and burns the blood. Within, the room is narrow, yet it grows: And what if it should flood?
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II. BEN DOVERRIENO...

Ben doverrieno al sospirar mio tanto Esser secche oramai le fonti e i fiumi, S'io non gli rinfrescacci col mio pianto. Cosi talvolta i nostri eterni lumi, L'un caldo e l'altro freddo me ristora, Accio che 'l mondo piu non si consumi. E similmente il cor che s'innamora, Quand'el superchio ardor troppo l'accende, L'umor degli occhi il temprà, che non mora. La morte e 'l duol, chi 'i bramo e cerco, rende Un contento avvenir, che non mi lassa Morir; che chi diletta non offende. Onde la navicella mia non passa,	For all this anguish and for all this sighing, Fountains and rivers would by now be dry, Had they not been replenished by my crying. As our two deathless splendors of the sky Give, one, heat, and the other, cold, from above So that the earth may not wear out and die; Thus, when the human heart is deep in love, And too much flame has held it for too long, The solace of these tears makes it still move. Sorrow, and death, for which alone I long, Promise a happy future, and renew My present: what delights can never wrong! And so, my little bark cannot come though,
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Com'io vorre, a vederti a quella riva
Che 'l corpo per a tempo di qua lassa.
Troppo dolor vuol, pur ch' i' campi e viva,
Qual piu ch' altri veloce andando vede,
Che dopo gli altri al fin del giorno arriva.
Crudel pietate a spietata mercede
Me lascio vivo, e te da me disciolse,
Rompendo e non mancando nostra fede;
E la memoria a me non sol non tolse,...

III. BEN FU

Ben fu, temprando il ciel tuo vivo raggio,
Solo a du' occhi, a me di pietà voto,
Allor che con veloce eterno moto
A noi dette la luce, a te 'l viaggio.
Felice uccello, che con tal vantaggio
Da noi, t'è Febo e 'l suo bel volto noto,
E piu ch' al gran veder t'è ancora arrotto
Volare al poggio, ond'io rovino e caggio!

IV. DI PIU COSE...

Di piu cose s'attristian gli occhi miei,
E 'l cor di tante quant' al mondo sono;
Se 'l tuo di te cortese e caro dono
Non fosse, della vita che farei?
Del mio tristo uso e da gli esempi rei
Fra le tenebre folte, dov'io sono,
Spero aita trovar non che perdono,
Ch' a chi ti mostri, tal prometter dei.

Emily Bronte (1818 - 1848) — REMEMBRANCE

(*R. Alcoma to J. Brenzaida*)

Cold in the earth, and the deepest snow piled above thee!
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my Only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-wearing wave?
Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains on Angora's shore;
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
That noble heart for ever, ever more?
Cold in the earth, and fifteen wild Decembers
From those brown hills have melted into spring —
Faithful indeed is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!
Sweet Love of youth, forgive if I forget thee
While the World's tide is bearing me alone:
Sternest desires and darker hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure but cannot do thee wrong.
No other Sun has lightened up my heaven;
No other Star has ever shone for me:
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given —
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.
But when the days of golden dreams had perished
And even Despair was powerless to destroy,
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened and fed without the aid of joy;
Then did I check the tears of useless passion,
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine!
And even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in Memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?