

HARVARD UNIVERSITY CHOIR



CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK

ALCESTE

OCT. 20, 2018 • 7:30 PM

ALCESTE

Tragédie-opéra en trois actes, Wq. 44 (1776)

Music by Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787)

Libretto by François-Louis Gand Le Bland Du Roullet (1716–1786)
after Ranieri de' Calzabigi (1714–1795)



Hailey Fuqua, *soprano*, Alceste (Alcestis)

Jonas Budris '06, *tenor*, Admète (Admetus)

Sumner Thompson, *baritone*, Grand-Prête and Hercule (High Priest and Hercules)

Christopher Talbot, *bass-baritone*, Thanatos and Apollon (Apollo)



Grand Harmonie



Harvard University Choir



Edward Elwyn Jones, *conductor*

Each act will be followed by a ten-minute interval.

WELCOME to the Memorial Church at Harvard University and to this evening's concert performance of Christoph Willibald Gluck's 1776 opera, *Alceste*. This rarely-heard masterpiece centers around the theme of personal sacrifice, a topic that resonates throughout this building as we observe the centenary of the end of World War I, to which it is dedicated. *Alceste* features an abundance of lyrical solo writing, inventive orchestration, and dramatic choruses, and was to prove highly influential on generations of operatic composers. It has been a true pleasure to explore this fascinating work with such wonderful soloists, the fine players of the period ensemble Grand Harmonie, and the excellent students of the Harvard University Choir.

It continues to be my very great privilege to serve in this church and to lead a choir of students whose love of singing brings so much joy to the community. Our work would not be possible without the support of so many benefactors, and I would like to thank all of our patrons for their ongoing generosity. This is indeed an exciting time for music and ministry in the Memorial Church, and I encourage you to join our email list by visiting our website, memorialchurch.harvard.edu, where you can also make a contribution to the music program.

My sincere thanks go to my colleagues in the church, and in particular to Professor Jonathan Walton, Tom Sheehan, and Carson Cooman, whose friendship and encouragement I cherish. To the Harvard University Choir secretaries, Theodora Mautz and May Wang, I give my endless gratitude for all they do to ensure the group's smooth-running. Finally, I thank you, the audience, for your support of this evening's concert, and for your continued enthusiasm for the music program here in the Memorial Church.

ABOUT THE OPERA

Christoph Willibald Gluck's name appears more frequently in musical textbooks than in concert programs today; though performances of his better-known works (*Orfeo*, both *Iphigénies*, and this evening's offering) do occur periodically, they are by no means standards of the operatic stage. *Alceste* (based on the *Alcestis* of Euripides) was premiered (in Italian) at Vienna's Burgtheater on December 26, 1767; when the score was published in 1769, Gluck added a preface penned by the librettist Calzabigi and signed by the composer himself: it is a searing attack on contemporary Italian *Opera seria* (which was thought to have sacrificed everything—text, drama, realism—to the altar of vocal pyrotechnics) and a manifesto of reform. A simple, mainly syllabic setting of text would henceforth prevail: vocal elaboration (and even the *da capo* aria form itself) would be reduced to a minimum—likewise text repetition—and accompanied recitative would replace *secco* recitative. A greater theatrical urgency was paramount: organic musical scenes would be favored over delineated individual numbers, and the chorus would feature prominently. When Gluck moved to Paris—under the patronage of his former pupil Marie-Antoinette—he heavily revised *Alceste*, with a new French libretto by Leblanc Du Roullet, which was premiered at the Paris Opera on April 23, 1776: this French-language reworking has become the standard version, and the one we present this evening (save for the—very lengthy—ballet music).

Gluck's aim for a type of melody that is "noble, expressive, and natural, and declaimed exactly according to the prosody of the language" is the key to the composer's conception of theater: a direct, immediate vocal style propels the drama, vividly bringing these human, timeless emotions to life. Alceste's notable arias are simple and direct: the regal "Grands Dieux! Du destin qui m'accable;" the authoritative "Divinités du Styx;" the exquisite "Ah, Divinités implacables;" and the heartbreakingly poignant "Vis pour garder le souvenir." But it is surely in the accompanied recits that we see Gluck's true genius in portraying emotion: Alceste's torn personality is progressing rapidly towards Gluck's ultimate study of human psychology, *Iphigénie en Tauride*.

One of the devices that Gluck uses to portray conflicting emotions is the orchestra, which becomes a major player in the drama. While the singer recites in calm and poised tones, a syncopated rhythmic figure will often nag away in the orchestra, suggesting that all is not as it seems on the surface. We are so used to listening to opera orchestras behave in this way that one forgets how novel such devices were to Gluck's audience. While the underworld gods in Act Three chant on a monotone, Gluck leaves it to the orchestra to paint their terrible words. In addition, the orchestration is richly inventive, utilizing a wide palette of colors alongside an array of inventive orchestral effects. (Berlioz would cite from *Alceste* at length in his famous *Treatise on Instrumentation*.)

The chorus, too, plays a key dramatic role in *Alceste*: Gluck expands both the import of the chorus and also its range of emotions. As with the great Athenian Tragedians—Aeschylus in the *Agamemnon* would reserve some of his most exotic, lyrical, and horrifying poetry for the chorus—Gluck explores the whole gamut of human emotions through the chorus, whose tones are at once deliciously sweet and monstrous-ly ugly.

Gluck's shadow looms large over subsequent music drama. Leopold Mozart was none too impressed with *Alceste*, but the work made a major impression on his eleven-year-old son: *Idomeneo* is unimaginable without *Alceste*; *Don Giovanni* quotes directly from it; and even *Magic Flute* contains an array of sonic references to it. Berlioz was obsessed with the work, and his prose writings wax lyrical about it; indeed, *Les Troyens* might be the ultimate homage to *Alceste* and Gluckian musical drama. Weber and Wagner, too, are unthinkable without Gluck's influence, and the penetrating psychological insight of Richard Strauss—particularly in his Classical female protagonists Elektra, Ariadne, Daphne, and Helen—owes much to Gluck's precedents (it is worth remembering that both Wagner and Strauss conducted Gluck's works).

Perhaps Gluck's greatest achievement is his ability to portray timeless human emotions through music, painting deep and often conflicted characters that are as relevant today as they were two hundred years ago. Berlioz's words provide a perfect summation: "When listening to Beethoven, one feels it is Beethoven singing; when listening to Gluck, one feels that it is the characters themselves."

—Edward E. Jones

SYNOPSIS OF THE OPERA

Act 1: *Before the palace of King Admetus in the city of Pheræ in Thessaly:* A herald announces to the assembled people, who fear for the life of their king, that no human help can be expected for the dying Admetus. Alcestis appears with her two children. She expresses her deep despair and leads the people to the temple of Apollo in order to make a sacrifice and pray for the life of the king. During the ceremony in the temple, the earth trembles, and the oracle of Apollo announces that the king shall die if nobody else sacrifices himself for him. Horrified, the people flee. Alcestis remains behind alone and makes the decision to die for her husband. The high priest appears and informs her that her prayer has been heard and that this very day the king will recover and she shall die. Alone again, Alcestis turns to the gods of the underworld and confirms her decision to sacrifice herself, freely and without fear, for her beloved.

Act 2: *In the king's palace:* The people celebrate the miraculous recovery of their king. When Admetus asks how he was saved, Evander tells of the oracle's pronouncement and explains that a hero sacrificed himself for the king. Admetus is shocked. It also does not escape his attention that Alcestis is oppressed by a secret anguish. He asks for the reason, and at his insistence she confesses her secret: It is she who is to die for the king. Admetus refuses to accept this sacrifice and wants to kill himself in order to break Alcestis's vow. The people grieve for the queen, who in sorrow and despair bids farewell to life.

Act 3: *In the forecourt of the palace:* The people mourn the horrible fate of the royal couple. Hercules, after a long journey, stops off to visit his friend Admetus. When he learns of Alcestis's destiny, he decides to save the queen.

Entrance to the underworld: Resigned to her fate, Alcestis approaches the altar of death, ready to go into the underworld, but is turned away by the gods of death until the evening. Admetus appears and is determined to die in her place. Both bewail their fate and fight for the privilege to sacrifice him/herself for the other. As Alcestis makes her last step into death, Hercules appears and, in the struggle with the gods of the underworld, wrests their victim from them. Apollo descends and announces, in praise of Hercules, the rescue of the royal couple.

Forecourt of the palace: Apollo invites the assembled Thessalians to praise the king. Alcestis and Admetus thank the merciful god, who again ascends into the heavens. Admetus presents Alcestis to the people and identifies Hercules as her rescuer. All celebrate the reunited couple and the happy end of the events.

Ouverture

Acte premier

Devant le palais d'Admète.

Le peuple en agitation

Scène première

Chœur

Dieux, rendez-nous notre roi, notre père!

(Prélude de trompette)

Héraut *(sur le balcon)*

Peuples, écoutez! Et redoublez vos pleurs.
Vous allez éprouver le plus grand des malheurs.
Admète touche à son heure dernière;
l'impitoyable mort est prête à le saisir,
et nul secours humain ne peut plus
le ravir à sa main meurtrière.

Évandre et chœur

Ô Dieux! Qu'allons-nous devenir?

Non, jamais le courroux céleste,
sur des mortels qu'il veut punir,
ne frappa de coup plus funeste.

Évandre

Suspendez vos gémissements; le palais s'ouvre.

Chœur

Ah! Je frémis, je tremble!

Évandre

La reine vient à vous, vous voyez ses enfants.
Dieux! Que d'infortunés
ce lieu fatal rassemble!

Scène deuxième

La reine Alceste avec ses enfants

Chœur

Ô malheureux Admète! Ô malheureuse Alceste!
Ô trop cruel destin! Ô sort vraiment funeste!
Objets si tendrement chéris!
Enfants infortunés!
Faible espoir qui nous reste!
Nous ses sujets, ou plutôt ses amis,
pour qui cent fois il exposa sa vie.
Malheureuse patrie!

Overture

Act One

Outside the palace of Admetus.

The people in great agitation

Scene 1

Chorus

O gods, give us back our king and father!

(A Herald, with trumpeters)

Herald *(on the balcony)*

People, hear me, and prepare to shed more tears.
You are about to suffer the greatest of all woes.
Admetus soon will live his final hour;
unmerciful death now lies in wait;
no human power
can save him from that lethal hand.

Evander and Chorus

O Gods! What will be our fate now?

No, never did the heavens in fury,
against mortals avenging,
deal a more terrible blow.

Evander

Cease your lamentations; the palace door opens.

Chorus

Ah! I tremble with fear!

Evander

Behold the queen who comes, behold her children.
O Gods! How many unfortunate people
are assembled in this fatal place!

Scene 2

Alcestis enters, with children and attendants

Chorus

Unfortunate Admetus! Unfortunate Alcestis!
O cruel destiny! O truly woeful fate!
O dear ones, so tenderly loved!
Unfortunate children!
Fragile hope that remains to us!
We his subjects, or rather, friends,
for whom countless times he endangered his life.
Unhappy land!

Alceste

Sujets du roi le plus aimé,
vous répandez des pleurs, hélas! trop légitimes.
Par son amour pour vous, par ses vertus sublimes,
il faisait le bonheur de son peuple charmé;
il faisait le bonheur d'une épouse chérie,
qui ne saurait vivre sans lui.
Faibles enfants, sans espoir, sans appui,
les yeux à peine ouverts au néant de la vie.
Ô Dieux, qu'allons-nous devenir?

Hélas! Dans ce malheur extrême, nous n'avons
plus d'espoir qu'en leur bonté suprême;
eux seuls peuvent nous secourir.

Grands Dieux! Du destin qui m'accable
suspendez du moins la rigueur.
Et sur l'excès de mon malheur
jetez un regard pitoyable!
Rien n'égale mon désespoir,
mes tourments, ma douleur amère:
si l'on n'est pas épouse et mère,
on ne saurait les concevoir.

(aux enfants)

Ô vous, dont les tendres appas
sont l'image à mes yeux si chère
de mon époux, de votre père,
venez, jetez-vous dans mes bras!
Quand je vous presse sur mon sein,
mes chers fils, mon cœur se déchire,
je sens augmenter mon martyre,
en pensant à votre destin.

Suivez-moi dans le temple,
allons offrir aux Dieux
nos sacrifices et nos vœux.

Au pied de leurs autels arrosés de mes larmes,
ils verront une épouse en pleurs,
des enfants menacés du plus grand des malheurs,
tout un peuple accablé des plus vives alarmes;
peut-être à cet aspect touchant,
ces Dieux, notre unique espérance,
par la pitié, par la clémence,
laisseront-ils fléchir leur courroux menaçant.

Alcestis

People of a most beloved king,
reason you have, indeed, to shed tears and lament!
His devotion to you, his exalted virtues,
gave happiness to an admiring nation,
gave joy and bliss to his beloved wife,
who could not live without him.
Helpless children, without hope and comfort,
whose eyes are rarely open to life's emptiness.
O Gods, what will now be our fate?

Alas! In this extreme sorrow, our only hope
lies with the gods and their great mercy;
they alone can come to our aid.

O Gods! May you soften the blows of the fate
that is crushing me.
And cast a pitying look
upon my great misfortune!
My despair cannot be measured,
nor my grief and bitter pain:
only the heart of wife or mother
could comprehend my suffering.

(to her children)

O you, whose gentle charms
recall to me another's image—
of my loved one, your father—
come, let me hold you in my arms!
Now, as I hold you so against my breast,
my children, my heart is breaking,
now, greater still my suffering,
as I think of your destiny.

Follow me into the temple,
we will make sacrifices to the Gods
and offer our prayers.
Before their altars, bathed by my tears,
they shall see a wife, weeping,
and children doomed to dire misfortune,
and shall see these people overwhelmed with fears;
perhaps at this touching sight,
the Gods, our only hope,
moved by pity, moved by mercy,
may subdue their anger and relent.

Scène troisième

Le theatre représente le temple d'Apollon, la statue colossale de ce dieu paraît au milieu du temple.

Grand-Prêtre et Chœur

Dieu puissant, écarte du trône
de la mort le glaive effrayant.
Perce d'un rayon éclatant
le voile affreux qui l'environne.

Grand-Prêtre

Ressouviens-toi que sur ce bord fertile,
banni des Cieux, dans ta course incertain,
Admète t'offrit un asile
contre les rigueurs du destin.

Dispensateur de la lumière.
Toi, qui fais l'ornement des Cieux,
toi, qui, de ton char radieux,
répands dans ta vaste carrière
autant de bienfaits que de feux,
d'un peuple gémissant daigne écouter les vœux;
rends-lui son roi, son protecteur, son père.
Rends-lui le plus grand des bienfaits
dont le Ciel ait jamais favorisé la terre:
un roi, l'ami de ses sujets.

Scène quatrième

Alceste et les précédents

Alceste

Immortel Apollon! toi, dont l'œil pénétrant
des replis de nos cœurs perce la nuit obscure;
si dans le mien, à ton culte constant,
tu n'aperçus jamais qu'une piété pure,
un chaste amour, des désirs innocents,
daigne prendre pitié du tourment qui m'accable,
et jette un regard favorable
sur cette offrande et ces présents!

Alceste fait un sacrifice à Apollon.

Grand-Prêtre

Apollon est sensible à nos gémissements,
et des signes certains m'en donnent l'assurance.
Plein de l'esprit divin qu'inspire sa présence,
je me sens élever au-dessus d'un mortel.
Quelle lumière éclatante entoure la statue
et brille sur l'autel!

Scene 3

Within the Temple of Apollo, the colossal statue of the god standing in the middle.

High Priest and Chorus

O great Apollo, turn the terrible sword of death
away from the throne.
Pierce with a dazzling ray of light
the darkness surrounding the throne!

High Priest

Recall how, on these fertile shores,
banished from Heaven, in your uncertain course,
Admetus received you and shielded you
from the tyranny of fate!

Giver of light,
you who are the adornment of the Heavens,
who, from your chariot
scatters, in your long journey
both blessings and fire,
hear the people's lamentations and prayers;
restore to them their king, their father and protector.
Restore to them the greatest blessing
that Heaven can bestow upon the earth:
a king who is a friend of his people!

Scene 4

Alcestis and her attendants

Alcestis

Immortal Apollo! whose penetrating eye
sees into the remote corners of our hearts;
if you know my unfaltering faith,
if you see nothing but pure devotion,
chaste love, and innocent desires,
then, deign to pity me and ease
the burden of my torment;
favorably receive these offerings and gifts!
Alcestis offers her gifts to Apollo.

High Priest

Apollo has heard our lamentations,
I am assured, by unmistakable signs.
Filled with the divine spirit, inspired by his presence,
I am as if transported above all mortals.
A dazzling light surrounds the statue
and burns on the altar!

Tout m'annonce du Dieu la présence suprême,
ce Dieu sur nos destins veut s'expliquer lui-même;
l'horreur d'une sainte épouvante
se répand autour de moi;
la terre sous mes pas fuit et se précipite;
le marbre est animé;
le saint trépied s'agite,
tout se remplit d'un juste effroi: il va parler!
Saisi de crainte et de respect,
peuple, observe un profond silence!
Reine, dépose à son aspect
le vain orgueil de la puissance, tremble.

Oracle

Le roi doit mourir aujourd'hui,
si quelqu'autre au trépas ne se livre pour lui.

Grand-Prêtre

Tout se tait!
Qui de vous à la mort veut s'offrir?
Personne ne répond, votre roi va mourir!

Chœur

Quel oracle funeste, nul espoir ne nous reste!
Fuyons! Admète, du destin tu vas subir les coups.

Scène cinquième

Alceste (*seule*)

Où suis-je? Ô malheureuse Alceste!
Voilà donc le secours que j'attendais de vous,
Dieux puissants!
Cher époux, tu vas perdre la vie,
sans espoir elle t'est ravie,
si quelqu'autre pour toi ne se livre à la mort.
Il n'est plus pour moi d'espérance;
tout fuit, tout m'abandonne à mon funeste sort.
De l'amitié, de la reconnaissance
j'espérerais en vain un si pénible effort.
Ah! L'amour seul en est capable!
Cher époux! Tu vivras, tu me devras le jour;
ce jour dont te privait la Parque impitoyable,
te sera rendu par l'amour.
Non, ce n'est point un sacrifice!
Eh! Pourrais-je vivre, sans toi?
Sans toi, cher Admète!
Ah! Pour moi la vie est un affreux supplice.
Effort cruel! Ô désespoir!

Everything portends the supreme presence of the God
who will pronounce upon our destinies himself.
Terror and holy awe
surround me;
the earth quakes beneath my feet;
the marble statue comes to life;
the sacred tripod trembles,
everything is rightly filled with awe; he will speak!
Gripped by fear and awe,
people, observe a respectful silence!
Queen, renounce, before his presence
vain pride of power, tremble.

Oracle

The king is doomed to die today,
unless someone offers to die in his place.

High Priest

No one speaks!
Who will offer themselves to death?
No one will respond, then your king perishes!

Chorus

O deadly oracle, no hope remains for us!
Let us flee! Admetus, you must bear the blows of fate.

Scene 5

Alcestis (*alone*)

Where am I? O miserable Alcestis!
So this is the help, mighty Gods,
that I hoped to expect from you!
Beloved husband, your life is doomed,
snatched away without hope,
unless someone else dies in your place.
I have no further hope;
all flee and abandon me to my dreadful fate.
In vain could I have expected such a terrible sacrifice
out of friendship or gratitude.
Ah! Only love is capable!
Dear husband! You shall live and will owe me your life;
this life, which merciless Fate was taking away
shall be restored to you by love.
This is no real sacrifice!
Ah! Could I live without you?
Without you, dear Admetus!
Ah! Life would be a dreadful torment.
Cruel effort! Oh despair!

Il faut donc renoncer, cher objet de ma flamme,
renoncer pour jamais à régner dans ton âme,
au plaisir de t'aimer,
au bonheur de te voir.

Ô mes enfants! Ô regrets superflus!
Objets si chers à ma tendresse extrême,
images d'un époux que j'adore, qui m'aime,
ô mes chers fils, je ne vous verrai plus!

Arbitres du sort des humains, terribles Dées, qui tenez dans vos mains nos fragiles destinées, j'invoke vos serments, ne les trahissez pas!
Tranchez le fil de mes années,
pour mon époux je me livre au trépas.

Scène sixième

Alceste et le grand-prêtre

Grand-Prêtre

Tes destins sont remplis. Déjà la mort s'apprête
à dévorer sa proie et plane sur ta tête,
et ton époux respire aux dépens de tes jours.
Dès que l'astre brillant aura fini son cours
et que le jour fera place aux ténèbres,
du Dieu des morts les ministres funèbres
viendront t'attendre aux portes de l'enfer.

Alceste

J'y volerai remplir un devoir qui m'est cher.

Scène septième

Alceste

Divinités du Styx, ministres de la mort!
Je n'invoquerai point votre pitié cruelle.
J'enlève un tendre époux à son funeste sort;
mais je vous abandonne une épouse fidèle.
Mourir pour ce qu'on aime
est un trop doux effort, une vertu si naturelle,
mon cœur est animé du plus noble transport.
Je sens une force nouvelle,
je vais où mon amour m'appelle.

I must then renounce, dear object of my love,
renounce forever my place in your heart,
the pleasure of loving you,
the happiness of seeing you.

But oh, my children!
So dear to me, so tenderly loved,
made in the image of him whom I adore,
my children, I won't ever see you again!

Arbiters of human destiny, terrible Deities,
who hold in your hands our fragile destinies,
I invoke your vows, betray them not!
Cut the thread of my years,
for him I love, I surrender myself to death.

Scene 6

Alcestis and the High Priest

High Priest

You prayer is granted. Already death prepares
to devour his prey, and hovers above your head,
and your husband lives, your life has paid the price.
When the sun shall have ended its course,
at the time when light fades into darkness,
the dismal ministers of the God of death
will wait for you at the gates of hell.

Alcestis

I go most gladly to fulfill my duty.

Scene 7

Alcestis

O Gods of the Styx, death's cruel ministers!
I do not call upon your harsh pity.
I rescue from death my cherished husband;
but deliver to you a faithful wife.
To die for one you love,
that is an easy task, a very natural virtue;
I am filled with exaltation.
I feel a new strength,
I go where love calls me.

Ten-minute interval

Acte deuxième

La scène représente un vaste salon du palais d'Admète.

Scène première

Évandre et le peuple

Chœur

Que les plus doux transports succèdent aux alarmes!
Le Ciel vient de tarir la source de nos larmes.
Vive Admète! Vive à jamais,
l'amour et la gloire de ses sujets!
Et quel bienfait les dieux sur nous ont répandu!
Le plus aimé des rois à nos vœux est rendu!
Des mains de la mort implacable
les Dieux ont arraché le glaive redoutable,
sur lui, sur tout son peuple à la fois suspendu.

Scène deuxième

Admète et les précédents.

Une voix

Ô mon roi!

Une autre voix

Notre appui!

Évandre

Notre père!

Une autre voix

Ô mon maître!

Une autre voix

Ô roi le plus chéri!

Une autre voix

Le plus digne de l'être!

Admète

Ô mes enfants! Ô mes amis!

Vous pénétrez mon cœur de la plus douce ivresse;
je verse dans vos bras des larmes de tendresse.

Vous m'aimez, mes vœux sont remplis.
Mais par quel art nouveau, par quel heureux miracle,
des portes du trépas ramené parmi vous,
goutai-je des plaisirs si sensibles, si doux?

Évandre

Sur vos destins s'est expliqué l'oracle;
vos jours allaient finir si quelqu'autre à la mort
ne s'offrait pour victime.

Act Two

A hall in the palace of Admetus.

Scene 1

Evander and the people

Chorus

Rejoice and be glad, our fears are past!
Heaven has dried up our tears.
Long live Admetus! May he live forever,
the joy and glory of his people!
And what a blessing the gods have given us!
The best loved of kings is restored by our prayers!
From the hands of implacable death
the Gods have snatched the deadly sword,
that hung over him and his people.

Scene 2

Admetus and his attendants

One voice

O my king!

Another voice

Our support!

Evander

Our father!

Another voice

O my master!

Another voice

O most loved king!

Another voice

O most worthy king!

Admetus

O my children! My friends!

You fill my heart with the sweetest exaltation;
I shed in your arms my loving tears!

You love me and my wishes are fulfilled.
But what miraculous artifice allows me
to escape death and return to you,
to enjoy tender and sweet pleasures?

Evander

The oracle pronounced upon your destiny;
you had been doomed to die, unless another
offered himself up as a victim.

Un héros inconnu, par un effort sublime,
a satisfait pour vous à la rigueur du sort.

Admète

Oracle affreux! Ô rigueur inouïe!
De vos faveurs, grands Dieux, sont celà les effets?
Croyez-vous qu'à ce prix je puisse aimer la vie?
Moi, je consentirais qu'elle me fût ravie
pour le dernier de mes sujets!

Chœur

Vivez, aimez des jours dignes d'envie,
jouissez du bonheur de combler tous les vœux
de l'épouse la plus chérie,
de rendre tout un peuple heureux.
Ah! Quelque soit cet ami généreux
qui pour son roi se sacrifie,
mourant pour vous, pour la patrie,
son sort est assez glorieux.

Admète

Alceste, chère Alceste! Ah! Qu'il m'est doux de vivre,
pour adorer encor vos vertus, vos appas!
Mais pourquoi ne vient-elle pas
partager les transports
où tout mon cœur se livre?

Évandre

C'est à ses cris, c'est à ses pleurs puissants,
que les Dieux en courroux ont calmé leur colère.
À ces Dieux adoucis sa touchante prière
adresse en ce moment ses vœux reconnaissants.

Scène troisième

Alceste et les précédents

Admète

Alceste!

Alceste

Cher époux!

Admète et Alceste

Ô moment fortuné!

Admète

Je te revois!

Alceste

Tu vis! Les Dieux m'ont exaucée.

An unknown hero, by a sublime gesture,
has satisfied, for you, cruel fate.

Admetus

O frightful oracle! What harshness!
Is this your clemency, O Gods?
Could I, at such a price, love life?
I would willingly have offered to die
in place of the humblest of my subjects.

Chorus

Long may you live, be loved and envied,
delight in satisfying all the wishes
of your beloved wife,
and in making an entire nation happy.
Ah! Whoever that generous friend is
who sacrifices himself for his king,
dying in your place, for his country,
his fate is indeed glorious.

Admetus

Alcestis, dear Alcestis! Ah! How sweet it is to live,
and to again adore your virtues and charms!
But why is she not come
to share in the joy
to which my heart abandons itself?

Evander

It was her cries and mighty tears
that appeased the wrath of the angry Gods.
now she offers her touching prayer to them
to show her gratitude.

Scene 3

Alcestis and her attendants

Admetus

Alcestis!

Alcestis

Dear husband!

Admetus and Alcestis

Oh happy moment!

Admetus

I see you again!

Alcestis

You are alive! The Gods heard me.

Admète et Alceste

Je ne crains plus du sort le courroux obstiné,
et ma douleur est effacée.

Chœur

Livrons-nous à l'allégresse, plus de maux,
plus de tristesse, ô moment plein de douceur!
Admète va faire encore de son peuple qui l'adore
et la gloire et le bonheur.

Alceste

Ces chants me déchirent le cœur!

Admète

Transports flatteurs que tout mon cœur partage,
qu'il sent bien tout le prix
d'un aussi tendre hommage!
Ah! du courroux du Ciel je ne suis plus d'objet.
Mon bonheur désormais, grands Dieux,
sera parfait!

Cœur

Parez vos fronts de fleurs nouvelles,
tendres amants, heureux époux;
que l'Hymen et l'Amour de leurs mains immortelles
s'empressent d'en cueillir pour vous.

Puissent vos belles destinées
se prolonger au gré de vos désirs!
Puissent la gloire et les plaisirs
compter seuls les instants
de vos longues années.

Heureuse épouse, tendre Alceste,
jouissez dans cet heureux jour
de tous les dons de la faveur céleste
et des bienfaits que vous offre l'Amour.

Alceste

O Dieux! Soutenez mon courage!
Je ne puis plus cacher l'excès de mes douleurs.
Ah! Malgré moi des pleurs s'échappent de mes yeux,
et baignent mon visage.

Admète

Ô moment délicieux!
Alceste, cher objet de toute ma tendresse.
C'est toi, c'est ton amour,
qui me les rend précieux!
Mais que vois-je?

Admetus and Alcestis

I do not fear any longer the persistent wrath of fate,
and my grief has vanished.

Chorus

Let us rejoice, gone is sorrow,
gone is sadness; oh moment full of sweetness!
Admetus will again bring glory and happiness
to his people who adore him.

Alcestis

These songs are breaking my heart!

Admetus

My heart shares in these flattering sentiments,
for it feels the worth
of such a tender homage!
Ah, I am no longer the object of heaven's wrath.
My happiness from now on, great Gods,
will be untroubled!

Chorus

Wreathe your brows with new flowers,
tender lovers, happy spouses;
which Hymen and Cupid with their immortal hands
hasten to gather for you.

May your lovely destinies
continue as long with your desires!
May glory and pleasures alone
measure the passage
of your long years.

Happy wife, tender Alcestis,
enjoy on this happy day
all the gifts of heaven's favor
and the blessings which love bestows.

Alcestis

O gods! Sustain my courage!
I can no longer hide my extreme sorrow.
Ah! In spite of myself I cannot contain my sadness,
and my face is bathed in tears.

Admetus

Oh delightful moment!
Alcestis, cherished object of my tenderness.
It is you and your love
that makes those moments precious!
But what do I behold?

Et pourquoi la plus sombre tristesse
se peint-elle encore dans tes yeux?

Alceste

Hélas!

Admète

Bannis la crainte et les alarmes,
que le plaisir succède à la douleur;
c'est à lui de sécher nos larmes,
c'est par toi qu'il plaît à mon cœur.
Ma vie est un bienfait de la bonté céleste;
mais ce qui me la fait chérir,
mais tout le charme d'en jouir,
c'est un don de l'amour d'Alceste.

Alceste

Ciel!

Admète

Tu pleures? Je tremble...! À de nouveaux malheurs
serions-nous réservés encore?
Mes enfants!... Où sont-ils?... Dissipe mes frayeurs!

Alceste

Le Ciel n'a point sur eux étendu ses rigueurs.

Admète

Ils respirent, je vis, tu sais que je t'adore,
pourquoi donc verses-tu des pleurs?
Tu ne me réponds point...

Alceste

Dieux, que puis-je lui dire?

Admète

Je cherche tes regards, tu détournes les yeux!
Ton cœur me fuit, je l'entends qui soupire.

Alceste

Ô douleur! Ô tourment affreux!

Admète

Ce cœur pour ton époux
n'est-il donc plus le même?
Il versait dans le mien ses peines, ses plaisirs.

Alceste

Les Dieux ont entendu mes vœux et mes soupirs,
ils savent, ces Dieux, si je t'aime.

And why is that somber sadness
still in your eyes?

Alcestis

Alas!

Admetus

Banish all fear and foreboding,
let pleasure consume our sorrow;
it is up to pleasure to dry our tears,
it is you whom my heart desires.
I owe my life to the kindness of heaven;
but it is Alcestis's love
that allows me
to enjoy and cherish it.

Alcestis

Heaven!

Admetus

You weep? I tremble...! Are we destined
to have new misfortunes befall us?
Where are my children?... Calm my fears!

Alcestis

Heaven's severity has not yet touched them.

Admetus

They breathe, I live, you know that I adore you,
why then are you shedding tears?
You give me no answer at all...

Alcestis

O Gods, what can I say to him?

Admetus

I search for your gaze, but you turn away your eyes!
You hide your heart, but I hear its loud beating.

Alcestis

Oh sorrow! Oh dreadful torment!

Admetus

Does your heart no longer feel the same
towards your husband?
It used to confide in mine its sorrows and pleasures.

Alcestis

The Gods have hearkened to my prayers and my sighs;
the Gods know how much I love you.

Je n'ai jamais chéri la vie
que pour te prouver mon amour.
Ah! Pour te conserver le jour,
qu'elle me soit cent fois ravie!
Je t'aimerai jusqu'au trépas,
jusque dans la nuit éternelle;
et de ma tendresse fidèle,
la mort ne triomphera pas.

Admète

Tu m'aimes, je t'adore,
et tu remplis mon cœur des plus vives alarmes.

Alceste

Ah! Cher époux, pardonne à ma douleur;
je n'ai pu le cacher mes larmes.

Admète

Et qui les fait couler?

Alceste

On t'a dit à quel prix les Dieux ont consenti
de calmer leur colère et t'ont rendu
des jours si tendrement chéris.

Admète

Connais-tu cet ami, victime volontaire?

Alceste

Il n'aurait pu survivre à ton trépas.

Admète

Nomme-moi ce héros!

Alceste

Ne m'interroge pas!

Admète

Réponds-moi!

Alceste

Je ne puis!

Admète

Tu ne peux?

Alceste

Quel martyr!

Admète

Explique-toi!

Alceste

Tout mon cœur se déchire.

I never loved life

but to love you.

Ah! And to prolong your life,

let my own be taken from me a hundred times over!

I will love you unto death,

unto the eternal night;

and death shall not conquer

my true love for you.

Admetus

You love me, I adore you,

yet you fill my heart with wild anxiety.

Alcestis

Ah! Dear husband, forgive my sorrow;

I couldn't hide my tears from you.

Admetus

And why do they flow?

Alcestis

You have been told at what price the Gods consented
to appease their wrath, and you have been given back
your most cherished life.

Admetus

Do you know this friend, this self-elected victim?

Alcestis

It is someone who could not live without you.

Admetus

Tell me this hero's name!

Alcestis

Don't ask me!

Admetus

Answer me!

Alcestis

I cannot!

Admetus

You cannot?

Alcestis

What torture!

Admetus

Tell me what you mean!

Alcestis

My heart is breaking.

Admète

Alceste!

Alceste

Je frémis!

Admète

Alceste, au nom des Dieux,
au nom de cet amour si tendre, si fidèle,
qui fait tout mon bonheur,
qui comble tous mes vœux:
romps ce silence odieux,
dissipe ma frayeur mortelle!

Alceste

Mon cher Admète, hélas!

Admète

Tu me glaces d'effroi; parle!
Quel est celui dont la pitié cruelle l'entraîne
à s'immoler pour moi?

Alceste

Peux-tu le demander?

Admète

Ô silence funeste! Parle enfin, je l'exige!

Alceste

Eh! Quelle autre qu'Alceste devait mourir pour toi?

Chœur

Ô Dieux!

Admète

Toi? Ciel! Alceste!

Chœur

Ô malheureux Admète,
que poursuit le sort en courroux!
Ô généreux effort d'une vertu parfaite!
Alceste meurt pour son époux.

Admète

Ô coup affreux!

Alceste

Admète!

Admète

Ah! Laisse-moi, cruelle!

Alceste

Cher époux!...

Admetus

Alcestis!

Alcestis

I tremble!

Admetus

Alcestis, in the name of the Gods,
by the tender, faithful love,
which creates my happiness
and fulfills my wishes:
break this hateful silence,
dispel my mortal terror!

Alcestis

My dear Admetus, alas!

Admetus

I am chilled with fear; speak!
Who is it that cruel pity will drag off
to sacrifice in my place?

Alcestis

How can you ask me?

Admetus

Oh fatal silence! Speak, once and for all, I demand it!

Alcestis

Ah! Who else but Alcestis should die for you?

Chorus

O Gods!

Admetus

You? Heavens! Alcestis!

Chorus

O sorrowful Admetus,
whom fate pursued in its fury!
Oh noble gesture of perfect virtue!
Alcestis dies for her husband.

Admetus

Oh mortal blow!

Alcestis

Admetus!

Admetus

Ah! Leave me, cruel one!

Alcestis

Dear husband!...

Admète

Non, laisse-moi mourir!

Laisse-moi succomber à ma douleur mortelle,
à des tourments que je ne puis souffrir.

Alceste

Calme cette douleur, ce désespoir extrême.
Vis! Conserve des jours si cher à mon amour.

Admète

Tu veux mourir,
tu veux me quitter sans retour?
Et tu veux que je vive?
Et tu dis que tu m'aimes!
Qui t'a donné le droit de disposer de toi?
Les serments de l'Amour et ceux de l'Hyménée
ne te tiennent-ils pas à mes loix enchaînée?
Tes jours, tous tes moments ne sont-ils pas à moi?
Peux-tu me les ravir, sans être criminelle?
Peux-tu vouloir mourir, cruelle,
sans trahir tes serments,
ton époux et ta foi?
Et les Dieux souffriraient cet affreux sacrifice?

Alceste

Ils ont été sensibles à mes pleurs.

Admète

D'un amour insensé leur barbare caprice
approuverait-il les fureurs?
Non, je cours réclamer leur suprême justice:
ils tourneront sur moi leurs coups!
Ils reprendront leur première victime,
ou ma main, ne suivant qu'un transport légitime,
satisfera doublement leur courroux.

Alceste

Arrête, ô Ciel! Ah, cher époux!

Admète

Barbare!

Non, sans toi je ne puis vivre; tu le sais,
tu n'en doutes pas. Et pour sauver mes jours,
ta tendresse me livre à des maux
plus cruels cent fois que le trépas.
La mort est le seul bien qui me reste à prétendre,
elle est mon seul recours dans mes tourments affreux,
et l'unique faveur que j'ose encore attendre
de l'équité des Dieux.

Admetus

No, let me die!

Let me succumb to my mortal pain,
to torments that I cannot bear.

Alcestis

Calm this pain, this extreme despair.
Live! Preserve that life so dear to my love.

Admetus

You want to die,
you want to leave me without ever returning?
And you want me to live?
And you say that you love me!
Who has given you the right to dispose of your life?
Do not the oaths of love and marriage
keep you bound to my laws?
Doesn't every moment of your life belong to me?
It would be a violation of those vows to leave me!
Can you wish to die, cruel one,
without betraying your oaths,
your husband, and your faith?
And the Gods tolerated this terrible sacrifice?

Alcestis

They have been moved by my tears.

Admetus

Could the Gods' cruel whim
approve the frenzy of a demented love?
If they refuse to accept me as their victim:
then I'll die by my own hand,
following my righteous impulse
and satisfying their anger
with their original victim!

Alcestis

Stop, O Heaven! Ah, dear husband!

Admetus

Cruel woman!

No, without you I cannot live; you know it,
you do not doubt it. And, in saving my life,
your tenderness delivers me
to misfortunes a hundred times worse than death.
Death is the only blessing left for me to long for,
it is my sole recourse in my dreadful suffering,
and the only favor that I dare to hope for
from the justice of the Gods.

Scène quatrième

Alceste et le peuple

Alceste

Grands Dieux! Pour mon époux j'implore vos secours.
Opposez à ses vœux un invincible obstacle,
calmez son désespoir et conservez ses jours!
C'est à moi seule à remplir votre oracle.

Chœur

Tant de grâces, tant de beauté, son amour, sa fidélité;
tant de vertus de si doux charmes!
Nos vœux, nos prières, nos larmes, grands Dieux,
ne peuvent vous fléchir! Et vous allez nous la
ravir.

Alceste

Dérobez-moi vos pleurs, cessez de m'attendrir!

Ah, malgré moi mon faible cœur
partage vos tendres pleurs, vos regrets si touchants;
et je sens bien en ces cruels instants
que j'ai besoin du plus ferme courage.
Voyez quelle est la rigueur de mon sort,
épouse, mère et reine si chérie...
rien ne manquait au bonheur de ma vie;
et je n'ai plus d'autre espoir que la mort.
Ô Ciel! Quel supplice, quelle douleur!
Il faut quitter tout ce que j'aime.
Cet effort, ce tourment extrême
et me déchire et m'arrache le cœur.

Chœur

Oh, que le songe de la vie avec rapidité s'enfuit!
Comme la fleur épanouie que le souffle du vent flétrit.
Alceste, si jeune, si belle,
meurt au plus brillant de ses jours;
et la Parque injuste et cruelle
de son bonheur tranche le cours.

Scene 4

Alcestis and the people

Alcestis

All-powerful Gods! I implore your aid for my husband.
Place an immovable obstacle in the way of his wishes,
calm his despair and preserve his life!
It is for me alone to fulfill your oracle.

Chorus

So much grace, such beauty, her love, her faithfulness,
such virtues, such sweet charms!
Our vows, our prayers, our tears, all-powerful
Gods,
cannot move you! And you will take her from us.

Alcestis

Hide from me your tears, cease to weaken my resolve!

Ah, in spite of myself my feeble heart shares
your tender tears, your touching regrets;
and I feel truly at this cruel time
that I have need of firmer courage.
See how harsh my fate is,
adored as wife, mother, and queen...
nothing was lacking for happiness in my life;
and now I have no other hope but death.
O Heaven! What torture, what grief!
I must abandon everything that I love.
This action of mine, this extreme torment
both tears apart and rips away my heart.

Chorus

Oh, how the dream of life so quickly vanishes!
Like a fading flower withering under a gust of wind.
Alcestis, so young, so beautiful,
dies in the flower of her youthful life;
and Fate, so unjust and cruel,
cuts short the days of her happiness.

Ten-minute interval

Acte troisième

La scène représente une avant-cour de palais d'Admète. Les enfants d'Admète paraissent au milieu, entourés des officiers du palais et des femmes d'Alceste. Le peuple remplit la scène.

Scène première

Évandre

Nous ne pouvons trop répandre des larmes,
Alceste touche au moment du trépas.
Son époux ne survivra pas
à la perte de tant de charmes.

Chœur

Ô peuple infortuné!

Évandre

Quel funeste avenir!

Chœur

Pleure, ô patrie! Ô Thessalie!
Alceste va mourir.

Scène deuxième

Les précédents, Hercule

Hercule

Après de longs travaux entrepris pour la gloire,
l'implacable Junon me laisse respirer.

Chœur

Hercule!

Hercule

À l'amitié je puis donc me livrer
et jouir un moment du fruit de la victoire.
Mais que vois-je?
Pourquoi répandez-vous des larmes?

Évandre

Ami d'Admète, apprenez nos malheurs.
Alceste... Admète...

Hercule

Admète?

Évandre

Hélas!

Chœur

À l'autel de la Mort elle a porté ses pas;

Act 3

A courtyard before the palace of Admetus. Admetus's children appear in the center, surround by officers of the palace and the women of Alcestis's retinue. The people fill the courtyard.

Scene 1

Evander

It is impossible to shed too many tears,
Alceste approaches the moment of her death.
And her husband cannot live
without his beautiful and charming wife.

Chorus

O unfortunate people!

Evander

What an ominous future!

Chorus

Weep, O homeland! O Thessaly!
Alcestis is going to die.

Scene 2

Hercules enters with his followers.

Hercules

After long labors undertaken for glory,
the implacable Juno allows me to breathe.

Chorus

Hercules!

Hercules

Now I can devote myself to friendship
and enjoy for a moment the fruits of victory.
But what do I see?
What is the cause of these tears?

Evander

Friend of Admetus, learn of our sorrows.
Alcestis... Admetus...

Hercules

Admetus?

Evander

Alas!

Chorus

Towards the altar of Death she has taken her steps;

malgré nos pleurs, nos cris,
Admète l'a suivie.

Hercule

Au pouvoir de la mort je saurai la ravir.
Reposez-vous sur un ami sensible,
reposez-vous sur ce bras invincible!

C'est en vain que l'enfer compte sur sa victime.
Non, vous ne perdrez pas l'objet de votre amour.
Je descendrai plutôt aux ténébreux abîmes:
j'en jure par le Dieu qui me donna le jour.

Scène troisième

L'entrée du Hadès. Alceste et les Dieux des enfers (invisibles).

Alceste

Grands Dieux! Soutenez mon courage! Avançons!
Je frémis...! Consommons notre ouvrage!
Ah, quel séjour affreux!
Que vois-je, justes Dieux?
Tous mes sens sont saisis d'une terreur soudaine.
Tout de la mort dans ces horribles lieux
reconnaît la loi souveraine.
Ces arbres desséchés, ces rochers menaçants,
la terre dépouillée, aride et sans verdure,
le bruit lugubre et sourd
de l'onde qui murmure,
des oiseaux de la nuit les funèbres accents.
Cet antre, cet autel, ces spectres effrayants,
cette pâle clarté dont la lumière obscure
répand sur ces objets une nouvelle horreur,
tout de mon cœur glacé redouble la terreur.
Dieux, que mon entreprise est pénible et cruelle!
La terre se refuse à mes pas chancelants,
et mes genoux tremblants s'affaissent sous le poids
de ma frayeur mortelle.
Ah, l'amour me redonne une force nouvelle!
À l'autel de la Mort lui-même me conduit,
et des antres profonds de l'éternelle nuit
j'entends sa voix qui m'appelle.

Chœur des Dieux Infernaux

Malheureuse, où vas-tu? Attends!
Pour tenter de descendre aux rivages funèbres,
que le jour qui te fuit
fasse place aux ténèbres,
tu n'attendras pas longtemps.

in spite of our tears and our cries,
Admetus has followed her.

Hercules

I know how to snatch her from the power of death.
Trust me, your loving friend,
put your trust in this invincible arm!

It is in vain that hell counts on its victim.
No, you shall not lose the object of your love.
I will descend instead into the dark abysses:
I swear it by the God who gave me my life.

Scene 3

The entrance to Hades. Alcestis and the unseen infernal Gods.

Alcestis

Great Gods! Sustain my courage! Onward I go!
I tremble...! Let me complete my task!
Ah, what a frightening place!
What do I see, righteous Gods?
All my senses are seized with sudden terror.
Everything in this horrible place
acknowledges the sovereign law of death.
These withered trees, these threatening rocks,
the bare earth, arid and without greenery,
the lugubrious and muted sound
of the murmuring river,
the dread cries of the night birds.
That cave, that altar, those frightening specters,
that pale gleam whose ghastly light
casts upon these sights a new horror,
it all redoubles the terror in my frozen heart.
O Gods, how this deed is painful and cruel!
The earth gives way under my uncertain steps,
and my trembling knees fail under the weight
of my mortal terror.
Ah, love inspires me with renewed strength!
Love itself leads me to the altar of Death,
and from the deep caves of eternal night
I hear its summoning voice.

Chorus of Infernal Deities

Wretched one, where are you going?
Wait to try to descend to the underworld's shores,
until the daylight that is leaving you
gives way to darkness,
you shall not have to wait long.

Alceste

Ah, Divinités implacables!
Ne craignez pas que par mes pleurs
je veuille fléchir les rigueurs
de vos cœurs impitoyables.
La mort a pour moi trop d'appas,
elle est mon unique espérance.
Ce n'est pas vous faire une offense
que de vous conjurer de hâter mon trépas.

Scène quatrième

Les précédents, Admète.

Alceste

Ciel! Admète! Ô moment terrible!

Admète

Que vois-je? Alceste, justes Dieux!
Aux portes des enfers!

Alceste

Ah, malheureux! Et que viens-tu chercher
dans ce séjour horrible!

Admète

La mort est tout ce que je veux.
Les Dieux cruels ont rejeté mes vœux.

Alceste

Que dis-tu? Ciel! Admète!
Ô désespoir affreux!
Tes sujets, nos enfants,
n'es-tu donc plus leur père?

Vis pour garder le souvenir
d'une épouse qui te fut chère,
qui ne vivait que pour te plaire
et qui pour toi voulut mourir.

Admète

Vivre sans toi! Moi! Vivre sans Alceste?
Vivre pour abhorrer la lumière céleste
et ces barbares Dieux, auteurs de tous nos maux!
Sans cesse déchiré par des tourments nouveaux...
j'irais traîner des jours que je déteste?
Je pourrais...? Ciel! Alceste!

Alceste, au nom des Dieux!
Sois sensible au sort qui m'accable!

Alcestis

Ah, implacable Divinities!
Think not that by my tears
I may wish to soften the harshness
of your pitiless hearts.
Death has too many charms for me,
it is my only hope.
It is with no wish to offend you
that I beg you to hasten my end.

Scene 4

Admetus appears.

Alcestis

Heavens! Admetus! Oh terrible moment!

Admetus

What do I see? Alceste, just Gods!
At the gates of hell!

Alcestis

Ah, wretched man! And what are you seeking
in this horrible place?

Admetus

Death is all that I want.
The cruel Gods have rejected my prayers.

Alcestis

What did you say? Heavens! Admetus!
Oh frightful despair!
Your subjects, our children,
are you then no longer their father?

Live to preserve the memory
of a wife who was dear to you,
who only lived to please you
and who wished to die in your place.

Admetus

Live without you! I! Live without Alcestis?
Live to hate the light of heaven
and those barbarous Gods, authors of all our woes!
Endlessly torn apart by new torments...
I should drag on my life, which I detest?
How could I...? Heavens! Alcestis!

Alcestis, in the name of the Gods!
Be understanding of my overwhelming fate!

Ah, prends pitié d'un époux misérable
et ne le livre point à ces tourments affreux!
Errant dans ce palais,
qu'embellissaient tes charmes,
je chercherais en vain la trace de tes pas;
en proie à la douleur, les yeux baignés de larmes,
je pousserais des cris
que tu n'entendrais pas!
Pour adoucir l'excès de ma misère,
j'irais embrasser mes enfants,
j'entendrais leurs plaintifs accents.
Je les verrais frémir à l'aspect de leur père,
me reprocher ta mort,
me demander leur mère.

Alceste

Je les sens, cher époux, tout mon cœur les partage,
ces tourments que ma mort va te faire souffrir,
mais pour qu'Admète vive Alceste doit mourir.
Rien ne saurait ébranler mon courage.

Admète

Ô vous, du Dieu des morts ministres redoutables,
ce n'est qu'à vous que j'ai recours.
Montrez-vous moins cruels et moins inexorables,
soyez plus équitables que ces Dieux
dont en vain j'implorais le secours.
C'est moi que le destin vous marqua pour victime.
Exercez vos droits souverains: frappez!
Ne souffrez pas que ces Dieux inhumains
usurpent des enfers le pouvoir légitime.

Alceste

Non, de son désespoir n'écoutez point les vœux!
C'est moi qui suis votre victime!
Exécutez la volonté des Dieux!

Aux cris de la douleur devenez accessibles!
Soyez attendris par mes pleurs!

Admète

Aux cris du désespoir serez-vous insensibles?
Soyez touchés de mes malheurs!

Alceste et Admète

Des décrets du destin ministres inflexibles,
ne rejetez point ma prière
et des enfers ouvrez-moi la barrière
et terminez l'excès de mes tourments!

Ah, take pity on a wretched husband
and don't abandon him to these dreadful torments!
Wandering through this palace,
which was graced by your charms,
I would search in vain for the trace of your footsteps;
a prey to sorrow, my eyes bathed in tears,
I would utter cries
which you would not be able to hear!
To soothe the excess of my suffering,
I would go to embrace my children,
I would hear their plaintive voices,
I would see them trembling at the sight of their father,
reproaching me for your death,
asking me for their mother.

Alcestis

I feel them, dear husband, all my heart shares in
these torments you will suffer when I die,
but for Admetus to live, Alcestis must die.
Nothing would be able to shake my courage.

Admetus

Hear me, fearsome ministers of the God of death,
I can turn only to you.
Be less cruel and less inexorable,
be more fair than those Gods
to whom I prayed for help.
Destiny marked me to be your victim.
Exercise your sovereign rights: strike!
Do not allow those inhuman Gods
to usurp the rightful power of hell!

Alcestis

No, do not listen to his prayers of despair!
It is I who is your victim!
Carry out the will of the Gods!

Give heed to our cries of grief!
Be moved to pity by my tears!

Admetus

Will you be insensitive to my cries of despair?
Be moved by my misfortune!

Alcestis and Admetus

Inflexible ministers of destiny's decrees,
do not reject my plea,
and open for me the barrier of hell
and bring an end to my supreme torment!

Admète

Obéissez à ses commandements!

Les Dieux des enfers se montrent.

Thanatos

Caron t'appelle, entends sa voix!

De la Parque un de vous doit être le partage.

Alceste! C'est à toi de décider son choix.

Si tu révoques le vœu qui t'engage,

Admète de la mort subira seul les loix.

Alceste

Qu'il vive! Et des enfers ouvrez-moi le passage!

Admète

Arrête! Ô désespoir!

Chœur des Dieux Infernaux

Alceste! Le jour fuit, et le destin qui te poursuit
a marqué ton heure fatale.

Suis-nous dans la nuit infernale!

Alceste

Adieu, cher époux!

Admète

Arrêtez!

Alceste

C'en est fait!

Admète

Arrêtez! Barbares Dèités!

Exercez sur moi seul votre rage inhumaine,
ensevelissez-moi dans la nuit du trépas!

Chœur

L'enfer parle, obéis à sa loi souveraine!

Admète

Vous ne m'arracherez point Alceste
de mes bras, cruels!

Alceste

Un pouvoir invincible m'entraîne.

Ô Dieux!

Admète

Aux enfers je suivrai ses pas!

Admetus

Obey its commandments!

The gods of hell appear.

Thanatos

Charon is calling you, hear his voice!

One of you must be the victim of Fate.

Alcestis! It is up to you to decide.

If you renounce the vow that binds you,

Admetus alone will die, and keep the laws.

Alcestis

Let him live! And open for me the path to hell!

Admetus

Stop! Oh despair!

Chorus of Infernal Deities

Alcestis! Daylight has fled, and pursuing destiny
has signalled your fatal hour.

Follow us into the infernal night!

Alcestis

Farewell, dear husband!

Admetus

Stop!

Alcestis

It is over!

Admetus

Stop! Barbarous Deities!

Unleash on me alone your inhuman rage,
shroud me in the night of death!

Chorus

Hell has spoken, obey its sovereign law!

Admetus

You shall never tear away Alcestis
from my arms, cruel ones!

Alcestis

An invincible power is drawing me away.

O Gods!

Admetus

I shall follow her steps into hell!

Scène cinquième

Hercule, Admète et une partie des dieux des enfers

Hercule

Ami, leur rage est vaine, comptez sur ma valeur!
Cédez, troupe inhumaine,
craignez mon bras vengeur!

Admète

Que votre main barbare porte sur moi ses coups!
Frappez, Dieux du Ténare, et réunissez-nous!

Chœur des Dieux Infernaux

Notre fureur est vaine, cédonz à sa valeur!
Le fils de Jupiter de l'enfer est vainquer.

Hercule

Fuyez, troupe inhumaine!

Des mains de l'amitié reçois, mon cher Admète,
le digne objet de ton ardeur!

Admète

Ah! Ma félicité est d'autant plus parfaite,
que c'est de mon ami que je tiens mon bonheur.

Scène sixième

Hercule, Admète, Alceste, Apollon

Apollon

Poursuis, ô digne fils du souverain des cieuz!
Et l'immortalité deviendra ton partage.
Le Ciel, qui le regarde, admire ton courage
et ta place est déjà marquée
au rang des Dieux.
Vivez, heureux époux, pour servir de modèle
aux mortels que l'Hymen enchaîne sous ses loix.
Que ce séjour affreux disparaisse
à ma voix!

*La scène change et représente une avant-cour du
palais d'Admète.*

Le peuple entre en foule.

Scène septième

Apollon

Et vous, qui vous montrez à vos rois si fidèles,
peuple, venez, accourrez dans ces lieux!
Et pour des souverains, objets de tous vos vœux,
redoublez d'amour et de zèle!

Scene 5

Hercules, Admetus, and some of the infernal deities

Hercules

Friend, their rage is in vain, count on my valor!
Give way, inhuman rabble,
fear my avenging strength!

Admetus

Let your cruel hand deal its blows on me!
Strike, Gods of Tænarus, and reunite us!

Chorus of Infernal Deities

Our fury is in vain, let us yield to his valor!
The son of Jupiter has conquered hell.

Hercules

Flee, inhuman rabble!

From the hands of friendship receive, Admetus,
the worthy object of your love!

Admetus

Ah! My happiness is all the more perfect
for it is from my friend that I receive my joy!

Scene 6

Hercules, Admetus, Alcestis, Apollo

Apollo

Continue thus, O worthy son of Jupiter!
And immortality shall be your reward.
Heaven, which is watching you, admires your courage,
and your place is already assured
among the ranks of Gods.
Live, happy couple, to serve as models
to mortals whom Hymen binds under his laws.
Let this place of dread disappear
at the sound of my voice!

*The scene changes and represents a courtyard in front
of Admetus's palace.*

The people crowd in.

Scene 7

Apollo

And you who show yourselves so faithful to your Gods,
people, come, hasten to this place!
And for your sovereigns, objects of all your prayers,
renew your love and your zeal!

Scène huitième

*Admète, Alceste à Apollon qui remonte au ciel;
Hercule, peuple.*

Alceste et Admète

Reçois, Dieu bienfaisant, l'hommage de nos cœurs,
dont le bonheur surpasse l'espérance.
Par les transports de leur reconnaissance
juge du prix de tes faveurs!

Hercule

Tendres époux! C'est dans votre bonheur
que je trouve ma récompense.
Qu'il soit le prix de ma valeur.

Scène neuvième et dernière

Hercule, Admète, Alceste, peuple

Admète

Ô mes amis! Alceste m'est rendue.
Les Dieux sont adoucis.

Alceste

Ô mes enfants! Je vous revois.

Alceste et Admète

Nos malheurs sont finis!

Chœur

Ô moment fortuné, faveur inattendue!

Admète

(montrant Hercule)

C'est ce héros qui nous a réunis.

Chœur

Qu'ils vivent à jamais, ces fortunés époux!
Le Ciel les a sauvés pour le bonheur du monde;
qu'à nos vœux, qu'à nos chants tout l'univers réponde!
L'art de nous rendre heureux
fait leur soin le plus doux.

Scene 8

*Admetus and Alcestis towards Apollo, who rises to
heaven. Hercules and the people.*

Alcestis and Admetus

Beneficent God, receive our heartfelt homage,
the joy of which surpasses all expectations.
Judge the value of your blessings
by the expressions of our hearts' gratitude!

Hercules

Tender couple! It is in your bliss
that I find my recompense.
Let it be the reward for my valor.

Scene 9

Hercules, Admetus, Alcestis, the people

Admetus

O my friends! Alcestis has been restored to me.
The Gods are placated.

Alcestis

O my children! Let me see you again.

Alcestis and Admetus

Our misfortunes are over!

Chorus

Oh happy moment, unexpected delight!

Admetus

(indicating Hercules)

This is the hero who reunited us.

Chorus

May they live forever, this fortunate pair!
Heaven restored them to a happy world;
let the universe echo our wishes and songs of joy!
Their tenderest care is
to make our lives happy.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY CHOIR

Edward Elwyn Jones, Gund University Organist and Choirmaster

Thomas Sheehan, Associate University Organist and Choirmaster

Carson Cooman, Research Associate in Music and Composer in Residence

Frank Kelley and Shannon Larkin, Vocal Instructors

Theodora Mautz and May Wang, Choir Secretaries

Soprano

Marina Connelly

*Ellie Corbus**

Kath Courtemanche

Angela Eichhorst

Faith Pak

Madeleine Snow

Rebecca Stewart*

*May Wang**

Benjamin Wenzelberg*

Elizabeth Wu

Alto

Elba Alonso Monsalve

Sophie Choate

Claire Dickson

Clare Duncan

Evelynne Fulda

*Isabella Kopits**

*Katherine Lazar**

Theodora Mautz

Camille Sammeth

Tenor

Colton Carter

Jake Corvino

Ethan Craigo

Michael Giles

Andrew Jing

Adam Mombru

Samuel Rosner*

Angus Woods

Bass

Trevor Bishai

Nik Boström

Christian Carson

*Adrian Cho**

*Joseph Gauvreau**

Alexander Hunt

Freddie MacBruce

Thomas Michaels

Jasper Schoff

*Sean Telford**

Richard Tong

Italics denote members of the Choral Fellows.

() Asterisks denote soloists from the choir.*

GRAND HARMONIE

First Violin

Emily Dahl Irons*

Nelli Jabotinsky

Julia Mckenzie

Edson Scheid

Second Violin

Julia Connor

Susannah Foster*

Emily Hale

Viola

Anna Griffiths*

Dan McCarthy

Lauren Nelson

Cello

Denise Fan

Josh Packard

Michal Shein*

Bass

Peter Ferretti*

Julianne Russell

Flute

Sarah Paysnick

Na'ama Lion

Oboe

Kristin Olson

Sarah Huebsch

Clarinet

Thomas Carroll

Elise Bonhivert

Bassoon

Allen Hamrick

Melissa Schoenack

Horn

Elisabeth Axtell

Marina Krickler

Trumpet

Christopher Belluscio

Paul Perfetti

Trombone

Liza Malamut

Bodie Pfost

Brian Kay

() Asterisks denote principal players.*

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

For over 180 years the **Harvard University Choir** has provided a unique opportunity for student singers to perform choral literature at the highest level, both in concert and during the services of the Memorial Church. Its program of daily choral services, broadcasts, tours, commissions, and recordings make it one of the premier college chapel ensembles in the United States, and each year the choir presents America's longest-running Christmas Carol Services to packed congregations. Highlights of recent seasons include concert performances of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* and *Vespers*, Haydn's *The Creation*, J. S. Bach's *St. John Passion* and *Mass in B minor*, C. P. E. Bach's *Die Israeliten in der Wüste*, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Handel's *Athalia*, *Saul*, and *Messiah*, Mozart's *Requiem* and *Mass in C minor* (in completions by Harvard Professor Robert Levin), Roxanna Panufnik's *Westminster Mass*, Alice Parker's *Melodious Accord*, Stephen Paulus's *The Three Hermits*, and Benjamin Britten's *St. Nicolas*. This season's offerings include a tour to the United Kingdom, Composer in Residence Carson Cooman's *The Acts of the Apostles*, and Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*. Committed to the presentation of new music, the choir has premiered works by today's most prominent composers, including David Conte, Tarik O'Regan, Alice Parker, Daniel Pinkham, Craig Phillips, and John Rutter.

Edward Elwyn Jones is the Gund University Organist and Choirmaster at Harvard University, a post he has held since 2003. Mr. Jones directs the music program in the Memorial Church in the midst of Harvard Yard and leads the 180-year old Harvard University Choir in its daily choral services, broadcasts, tours, commissions, and recordings. Mr. Jones is also Music Director of the Harvard Radcliffe Chorus, the Lowell House Opera (New England's longest-running opera company), and is a frequent collaborator with Yale's Schola Cantorum. As a conductor, he has guest conducted with such organizations as Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Grand Harmonie, Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Boston Camerata, Emmanuel Music (Boston), Longwood Symphony Orchestra, and the Handel and Haydn Society Orchestra. He has led opera productions with Iceland's Reykjavik Summer Opera Festival, New England's Intermezzo Opera, Lowell House Opera, and the Harvard Early Music Society. Mr. Jones has worked alongside William Christie, Christopher Hogwood, Nicholas McGegan, and Gil Rose, and has served as continuo player and Assistant Conductor to Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the English Baroque Soloists.

During his time at Harvard, Mr. Jones has overseen the publication of a new university hymnal and the installation of two new pipe organs in the Memorial Church, and has commissioned works from some of America's most prominent contemporary composers, including Daniel Pinkham, Alice Parker, and David Conte. A native of Wales, Mr. Jones studied music at Cambridge University, where he was Organ Scholar of Emmanuel College, and served as conductor of three university orchestras. He received his Master of Music degree in orchestral conducting from Mannes College of Music in New York City, where he was the recipient of the Felix Salzer Memorial Award.

Tenor **Jonas Budris** is a versatile soloist and ensemble singer, engaging new works and early music with equal passion. An alumnus of the Harvard University Choir and Choral Fellows, he has since returned to sing with the group as the tenor soloist in Haydn's *The Creation*, as Aaron in C. P. E. Bach's *Die Israeliten in der Wüste*, as Brother William in John Austin's *Heloise and Abelard*, and Tobias in Jonathan Dove's *Tobias and the Angel*. In the Boston area, he sings frequently with the Handel and Haydn Society, Boston Baroque, and Emmanuel Music as a soloist and choral singer. He also enjoys touring with such ensembles as Cut Circle, Blue Heron, Spire, Skylark, and the Thirteen. On the opera stage, he has per-

formed principal and supporting roles with numerous musical organizations, including Opera Boston, OperaHub, Guerilla Opera, and Odyssey Opera. Originally from Martha's Vineyard, Mr. Budris holds a degree in Environmental Sciences & Engineering from Harvard College.

Idaho native and dramatic coloratura soprano **Hailey Fuqua** has been hailed for her “gorgeous tone... [she] reached her high notes in her coloratura with enviable ease and precision” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), and made her debut at the Carmel Bach Festival stepping in last minute as the Queen of the Night. Noted for her “pure and ample soprano” (Boston Classical Review), she was the first soprano to sing the role of the Stage Manager in Ned Rorem’s *Our Town*. Other recent performances include the La Comtesse Adèle in Rossini’s *Le comte Ory* and Contessa in Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Hailey has appeared as a featured soloist with American Bach Soloists, Spokane Symphony, Boston Opera Collaborative, and Berkshire Choral International. Hailey received degrees from Boston Conservatory in Vocal Performance and Boston University in Historical Performance and is a staff singer at the Church of the Advent in Beacon Hill in Boston. Learn more at haileyfuqua.com

Bass-baritone **Christopher Talbot** began his career as a boy chorister at All Saints Church, Worcester, MA, where he performed around the Northeast as well as at the Three Choirs Festival in England. As an undergraduate at Drew University he pursued both vocal performance and composition, with an emphasis on early music performance. A student of Spanish, he studied opera and early music for a term at IUNA—a national conservatory in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Recently he traveled to Germany with Canto Armonico, where they recorded music of Schütz and Praetorius under the direction of Ulf Wellner. He performs actively around Boston and has sung with The Harvard Early Music Society, Boston Choral Ensemble, and the choir of First Lutheran Church, Boston.

Baritone **Sumner Thompson** has been hailed as “the real thing” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*) and praised for his “elegant style” (*Boston Globe*). He has appeared on operatic stages from Boston to Copenhagen, including the Boston Early Music Festival’s productions of Conradi’s *Ariadne* and Lully’s *Psyché* and in the title role of Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo* with Contemporary Opera Denmark. He has performed as a concert soloist with many leading ensembles, including the Handel and Haydn Society, Britten-Pears Orchestra, the National Symphony, the Boston Early Music Festival, Apollo’s Fire, Pacific Baroque Orchestra, Les Boréades de Montréal, Mercury Baroque, Les Voix Baroques, Boston Baroque, and Tafelmusik. A noted recitalist, Mr. Thompson has sung in Stuttgart, Amsterdam, Regensburg, and at London’s famed Wigmore Hall. Thompson can also be heard on the Boston Early Music Festival’s Grammy-nominated recording of Lully’s *Psyché* on the CPO label and with Les Voix Baroques on the ATMA label.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

All concerts are free and open to the public.

ORGAN RECITAL

Sunday, October 21, 4 PM

Concert organist Douglas Cleveland performs music
by J. S. Bach, Böhm, Decker, Vierne, Baker, and Briggs.

STRAVINSKY'S *THE SOLDIER'S TALE*

Sunday, November 4, 3 PM

Music for storyteller (Professor Thomas Forrest Kelly) and instrumental ensemble
Performed in commemoration of the work's 100th anniversary

UPPSALA UNIVERSITY CHAMBER ENSEMBLE CONCERT

Friday, November 9, 12 PM

Music of Swedish composers: Peterson-Berger, Wirén, Chini, Hermansson, Frumerie

ANGEL SPIRITS: MUSIC OF WORLD WAR I

Saturday, November 10, 7:30 PM

Deborah Selig, soprano; David McFerrin, baritone; Clifton J. Noble, piano

HARVARD UNIVERSITY CHOIR FALL CONCERT

Sunday, November 11, 4 PM

A concert in remembrance of the end of World War I, featuring music by C. Hubert H. Parry,
Herbert Howells, and the American premiere of Gareth Tresseder's *In Flanders Fields: War Cantata*

HARVARD BAROQUE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA CONCERT "EVERYTHING NEW IS OLD AGAIN"

Sunday, November 18, 4 PM

New compositions for Baroque orchestra paired with classic works
that inform their style and structure

108TH CHRISTMAS CAROLS SERVICES

Sunday, December 9, 5 PM

Tuesday, December 11, 8 PM

HARVARD UNIVERSITY CHOIR SPRING CONCERT: HANDEL'S *JUDAS MACCABAEUS*

Saturday, April 27, 7:30 PM

Featuring the Harvard University Choir and the Harvard Baroque Chamber Orchestra



HARVARD

The Memorial Church

The Memorial Church of Harvard University
One Harvard Yard, Cambridge, MA
617.495.5508 | memorialchurch.harvard.edu