


# TERRA NOSTRA

ORATORIO BY STACY GARROP

LIBRETTO

A close-up photograph of several green grass blades. Several clear water droplets of varying sizes are clinging to the blades, some at the tips and others further up. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a field of grass.

## PART I: CREATION OF THE WORLD

### 1 In the Beginning

King James Bible; creation myths from  
India, North America, and Egypt

#### **CHORUS**

In the beginning, in the beginning  
The earth was without form, and void;  
God said, Let there be light: and there  
was light.

God saw the light, that it was good.  
God divided the light from the darkness.  
God called the light Day, and the  
darkness he called Night.  
In the beginning, in the beginning

#### **SOPRANO SOLOIST**

This universe existed in the shape of  
Darkness.  
Then the divine Svayambhu appeared,  
dispelling the darkness.  
With a thought, he created the waters,  
and placed his seed in them.  
The seed became a golden egg, in that  
egg he was born as Brahmán,  
the progenitor of the world.

*Note: printed texts represent what is sung; words and lines from the original texts are sometimes omitted.*

### **CHORUS**

In the beginning, in the beginning

### **MEZZO-SOPRANO SOLOIST**

All the earth was flooded with water.  
Inkonmi sent animals to dive for dirt at  
the bottom of the sea.  
No animal was able to get any.  
At last he sent the Muskrat.  
It came up dead, but with dirt in its  
claws.  
Inkonmi took the dirt, and made the  
earth out of it.

### **CHORUS**

In the beginning, in the beginning

### **TENOR SOLOIST**

I am he who was formed as Khepri.  
When I had formed, only I existed.  
Everything was formed after me.  
Numerous are the forms that came  
from my mouth.

What I ejected was Shu,  
What I spat out was Tefnut.  
They separated from me,  
And my eye followed them through  
the ages.  
They brought me back my eye that  
had followed them. I wept.  
The origin of men was formed from my  
tears, which came from my eye.

### **CHORUS**

In the beginning, in the beginning  
God said  
God made  
God called  
God created  
In the beginning, in the beginning  
God created the earth.

## 2 God's World

Edna St. Vincent Millay

### **CHORUS**

O world, I cannot hold thee close  
enough!

Thy winds, thy wide grey skies!

Thy mists, that roll and rise!

Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache  
and sag

And all but cry with colour! That gaunt  
crag

To crush! To lift the lean of that black  
bluff!

World, World, I cannot get thee close  
enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all,

But never knew I this;

Here such a passion is

As stretcheth me apart, — Lord, I do fear

Thou'st made the world too beautiful  
this year;

My soul is all but out of me, — let fall

No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.

## 3 On thine own child

Percy Bysshe Shelley

### **CHILDREN**

Sacred Goddess, Mother Earth,

Thou from whose immortal bosom

Gods and men and beasts have birth,

Leaf and blade, and bud and blossom,

Breathe thine influence most divine

On thine own child.

If with mists of evening dew

Thou dost nourish these young flowers

Till they grow in scent and hue

Fairest children of the Hours,

Breathe thine influence most divine

On thine own child.

#### 4 Smile O voluptuous cool-breathed earth!

Walt Whitman

##### **BARITONE SOLOIST**

Smile O voluptuous cool-breathed earth!  
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!  
Earth of departed sunsets — earth of the  
mountains misty-topt!  
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon!  
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide  
of the river!  
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds  
brighter and clearer for my sake!  
Far-swooping elbowed earth — rich  
apple-blossomed earth!  
Smile, for your lover comes.  
Prodigal, you have given me love —  
therefore I to you give love.  
O unspeakable passionate love!

#### 5 A Blade of Grass

Walt Whitman

##### **CHORUS AND CHILDREN**

A blade of grass is the journeywork  
of the stars.  
Long and long has the grass been  
growing,  
Long and long has the rain been falling,  
Long has the globe been rolling round.

PART II:  
THE RISE OF  
HUMANITY



## 6 Locksley Hall

Lord Alfred Tennyson

### **TENOR SOLOIST**

For I dipt into the future, far as human  
eye could see,  
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the  
wonder that would be;  
Saw the heavens fill with commerce,  
argosies of magic sails,  
Pilots of the purple twilight dropping  
down with costly bales;

### **CHORUS**

Forward, forward let us range,  
Let the great world spin for ever down  
the ringing grooves of change.

### **TENOR SOLOIST**

Mother-Age help me as when life begun:  
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the  
lightnings, weigh the Sun.  
O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit  
hath not set.  
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all  
my fancy yet.

### **CHORUS**

Forward, forward let us range,  
Let the great world spin for ever down  
the ringing grooves of change.

## 7 Railways 1846

Charles Mackay

### **MEN OF THE CHORUS**

Blessings on Science, and her handmaid  
Steam!

They make Utopia only half a dream;  
And show the fervent, of capacious souls,  
Who watch the ball of Progress as it rolls,  
That all as yet completed, or begun,  
Is but the dawning that precedes the sun.

Lay down your rails, ye nations, near and  
far —

Yoke your full trains to Steam's triumphal  
car;

Link town to town; unite in iron bands  
The long-estranged and oft-embattled  
lands.

Peace, mild-eyed seraph — light divine,  
Shall send their messengers by every line.

## 8 A Song of Speed

William Ernest Henley

### **BARITONE SOLOIST AND THE CHORUS:**

In the Eye of the Lord,  
By the Will of the Lord,  
In the Hand of the Lord,  
Speed!

Hence the Mercedes!  
Look at her. Shapeless?  
Unhandsome? Unpaintable?  
Yes; but the strength of seventy-five  
horses  
Is contained in her pipes and her  
cylinders.

She can stop in a foot's length;  
She steers as it were  
With a hair you might pluck  
From your Mistress's nape;  
Thus the Mercedes  
This amazing Mercedes,  
Comes, O, she comes,  
With Speed —  
Speed — Speed!

## 9 High Flight

John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

### **CHORUS**

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of  
Earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-  
silvered wings;  
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the  
tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds, — and done a  
hundred things  
You have not dreamed of — wheeled  
and soared and swung  
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,  
I've chased the shouting wind along, and  
flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of  
air. . . .  
Up, up the long, delirious burning blue  
I've topped the wind-swept heights with  
easy grace  
Where never lark, or ever eagle flew —  
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod  
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand, and touched the face  
of God.

## 10 Binsey Poplars

Gerard Manley Hopkins

### **SOPRANO AND MEZZO-SOPRANO SOLOISTS**

My aspens dear, whose airy cages  
quelled,  
Quelled or quenched in leaves the  
leaping sun,  
All felled, felled, are all felled;  
Of a fresh and folded rank  
Not spared, not one  
That swam or sank  
On meadow and river and wind-  
wandering bank.

O if we but knew what we do  
When we delve or hew —  
Hack and rack the growing green!  
Even where we mean  
To mend her we end her,  
When we hew or delve:  
After-comers cannot guess the beauty  
been.  
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve  
Strokes of havoc unselfe  
The sweet especial scene,  
Rural scene, a rural scene,  
Sweet especial rural scene.



## 11 A Dirge

Percy Bysshe Shelley

### ***ALL SOLOISTS AND CHORUS***

Rough wind, that moanest loud  
Grief too sad for song;  
Wild wind, when sullen cloud  
Knells all the night long;  
Sad storm whose tears are vain,  
Bare woods, whose branches strain,  
Deep caves and dreary main, —  
Wail, for the world's wrong!

PART III:  
SEARCHING  
FOR BALANCE

12 Darkness

Lord Byron

**MEZZO-SOPRANO SOLOIST AND  
THE WOMEN OF THE CHORUS**

I had a dream, which was not all a  
dream.

The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the  
stars

Did wander darkling in the eternal space,  
Rayless, and pathless, the icy earth  
Swung blind and blackening in the  
moonless air;

Morn came and went — and came, and  
brought no day,

And men forgot their passions in the dread  
Of this their desolation; and all hearts  
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:  
And they did live by watchfires — and the  
thrones,

The palaces of crowned kings —  
Were burnt for beacons; cities were  
consum'd,

And men were gather'd round  
To look once more into each other's face;  
A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;  
Forests were set on fire — but hour by hour  
They fell and faded — and the crackling  
trunks

Extinguish'd with a crash — and all was  
black.

### 13 Earth Screaming

Esther Iverem

#### **TENOR AND BARITONE SOLOISTS**

This still mountain night is not still.  
It rings loud and shaking like maracas.  
Night bugs — locusts, cicadas — are  
screaming.

There has been no water here.  
Falls trickle pitifully down rocks.  
Even at night, on this cool, Pennsylvania  
mountain,  
it is too hot.

With the upper atmospheres disappearing,  
stars so close,  
the unknown so near, coming so direct,  
settling on my head to crush my body,  
my foolish species.

Night bugs sound electric  
clicking a morse code about omega.  
An ancient rain chant rises from the trees.

You must come here.  
Come out of the city's human hum,  
to really hear  
the earth screaming.

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### 14 The World Is Too Much With Us

William Wordsworth

#### **ALL SOLOISTS AND CHORUS**

The world is too much with us; late and  
soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our  
powers; —

Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid  
boon!

This Sea that bares her bosom to the  
moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all  
hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping  
flowers;

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not. Great God!

## 15 The Want of Peace

Wendell Berry

### CHORUS

All goes back to the earth,  
and so I do not desire  
pride of excess or power,  
but the contentments made  
by men who have had little:  
the fisherman's silence  
receiving the river's grace,  
the gardener's musing on rows.

I lack the peace of simple things.  
I am never wholly in place.  
I find no peace or grace.  
We sell the world to buy fire,  
our way lighted by burning men,  
and that has bent my mind  
and made me think of darkness  
and wish for the dumb life of roots.

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## 16 A Child said, What is the grass?

Walt Whitman

### SOPRANO SOLOIST

A child said, What is the grass? Fetching it  
to me with full hands;  
How could I answer the child? I do not  
know what it is, any more than he.  
I guess it must be the flag of my  
disposition, out of hopeful green  
stuff woven.  
Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the  
Lord.  
A scented gift and remembrance,  
designedly dropt,  
Bearing the owner's name in the corners,  
that we may see and say Whose?  
Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the  
produced babe of the vegetation.

## 17 There was a child went forth every day

Walt Whitman

### CHILDREN

There was a child went forth every day;  
And the first object he look'd upon, that  
object he became;  
The early lilacs, and grass, and white  
and red morning-glories,  
and white and red clover, and the song  
of the phoebe-bird,  
And the Third-month lambs, and the  
sow's pink-faint litter,  
and the mare's foal, and the cow's calf,  
. . . all became part of him.

Men and women crowding fast in the  
streets,  
The streets themselves, and the facades  
of houses, and goods in the windows,  
Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd  
wharves,  
The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-  
broken crests,  
The strata of clouds, the horizon's edge,  
These became part of that child who  
went forth every day,  
and who now goes, and will always go  
forth every day.

## 18 A Blade of Grass/I bequeath myself

Walt Whitman

### **CHORUS AND CHILDREN**

A blade of grass is the journeywork of the  
stars.

Long and long has the grass been growing,  
Long and long has the rain been falling,  
Long has the globe been rolling round.

### **ALL SOLOISTS**

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from  
the grass I love,

If you want me again look for me under  
your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I  
mean,

But I shall be good health to you,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you: