Delphica Gaedhlica
for Mixed Voices and Two Fiddles

Dan Trueman
2014/2020
"Delphica Gaedhlica" is a macaronic setting of the third of the _Prophetiae Sibyllarum_, and is inspired in part by Orlando di Lassus’s wonderful set of motets. The setting is primarily in Irish, using a translation by Iarla Ó Lionáird made for this piece, though parts of the Latin and English versions also find their way into the piece.

Non tarde veniet, tacita sed mente tenendum
Hoc opus. hoc memori semper qui corde reponet,
Huius pertentant cur gaudia magna prophetae
Eximii, qui virginea conceptus ab alvo
Prodibit, sine contactu maris. omnia vincit
Hoc naturae opera: at fecit, qui cuncta gubernat.


He shall not come slowly (but this work must be held with quiet thought), he who will ever store this in a mindful heart, why his prophets may announce great joys of this exalted one, who shall come forth conceived from the virginal womb without taint of man. This conquers all the works of nature: yet he has done this who governs all things.

— Translation from the Latin by Peter Bergquist (ibid)

Ni mall a thiocfaidh sé ach is i gcúin mhacnaimh
gur coir an saothar seo a chaomhú. An té a choineoidh go deo é seo ina chroi intinne
Árdoigh a shaoithibh lúcháir an té is airde;
A thiocfaidh chugainn ó bhroíonn na maighdean
gan locht ár gcinne. Sáraíonn sé seo oibreacha uile dúla an domhain,
ach fós féin is eisen a riallaionn thar an uile ni a rinne é.

— Translation by Iarla Ó Lionáird

I can provide recordings of Ó Lionáird (a native Irish speaker) reading this text to assist with translation, as needed.
About the Accidentals, Instruments, and Tuning

I use the Helmholtz-Ellis Just Intonation notation system; these sites offer resources for learning about it:

http://www.marcsabat.com/pdfs/notation.pdf
https://www.plainsound.org/HEJI/

This is NOT a quarter-tone system, so don’t interpret the up and down arrows in that way. Rather, it indicates how particular notes can be tuned to one another, aspiring to acoustically pure frequency ratios; the just major-3rd, for instance, targets a 5/4 frequency ratio, which is slightly but audibly smaller than the equal-tempered major-3rd, and quite easy to tune by ear. Examples to follow…

To begin with, the singers can simply ignore the funny symbols; if you see a G-flat with some kind of arrow or other symbol, interpret it as a G-flat. Later, the symbols may prove useful as the group tries to tune more precisely.

The string players, however, should attend to these symbols carefully, beginning with how their instruments are tuned. The piece was composed with a Hardanger fiddle in mind for one of the instruments (left tuning below), for its sound, and also because it can be tuned up higher than a regular fiddle. The second fiddle is a 5-string Hardanger d’Amore (right tuning below), though it could be played on a regular fiddle with some slight modifications to moments where the low string is needed. The instruments are tuned as follows:

Tune the C-strings to a tuner, so they show as close to 0 cents offset as possible; this is the reference pitch, and of course the fiddles should make sure their C-strings are in tune with each other. All the other strings should be tuned by ear starting from the C-strings, and NONE of them will show 0-cent offset on a digital tuner. The E-strings should come close to 14-cents flat (hence the down arrow) on a tuner, and should sound open, “pure,” with audible difference tones and minimal beats when played with adjacent open strings. The fifths and fourths should similarly
sound open, “pure,” with minimal beating (the G’s will show up as slightly sharp on a tuner, the F slightly flat; but don’t worry about what the tuner says, trust your ears).

These open strings will be key tuning references throughout the piece, both for the fiddlers and the singers. Once the fiddlers have gotten comfortable with tuning their sonorities throughout the piece, the singers will likely simply be able to hear that and adjust naturally, by ear. The arrows will provide clues for how to adjust.

Some examples, from the piece. First, starting with the Hardanger d’Amore in the first measure (treble clefs):

The top staff indicates what pitches we should hear, the bottom staff indicates how it would be fingered, to facilitate reading. To tune this, the top B can be tuned by ear against the open G-string below, and then the C can be tuned against the open C-string below; then the two notes can be played together and should be beautifully in tune. The down-arrow indicates that the B is lower than expected (long story there, which I won’t get into here!), and the -12 indicates that it should be 12 cents flat to equal temperament, approximately what you should see when using a digital tuner if your C string is tuned to be 0-cents off.

Now, in the Hardanger fiddle, a few measures later (again, treble clefs):

Here, the D-flat can be tuned directly against the top open F-string, and will be slightly sharp to what we’d expect, as indicated by the up arrow and the +12 cents.

The opening measures in the fiddles, then, have ALL of the notes that the singers will be singing in the first 35 measures.

The vast majority of the piece is tuned this way, with just-tuned thirds and sixths; the accidentals provide clear and concise clues as to how to tune particular notes relative to other notes.
There is, however, one chord that recurs a number of times that extends beyond that, starting at letter A. The key note here is the B-flat, which is tuned according to the overtone series of C, as the 7th partial, with a ratio of 7/4, sounding 31 cents flat to equal temperament. The fiddles can do this relatively easily, by ear, against the open string (here, the open C-string over this B-flat is an 8/7 ratio).

The E is as it has been (and the open E-strings should be a constant point of reference), the A-natural should be a perfect, beat-free fourth above the E (note that they both have down arrows, which indicates that they are part of the same cycle of 5ths or 4ths), and should also be a just-tuned major-6th above the C (or just-tuned minor-3rd below the C; the fiddler should hear an F difference tone when this minor-3rd is in tune).

The subsequent A-flat is then a just-tuned major-third below the C, and slightly high (14 cents)

The weird looking G-flat should similarly be a just-tuned major-6th above the flat B-flat. For the fiddler, you will know this is in tune if you can hear and A-flat difference tone; while this note is not in the fiddler’s part, it is presented as an ossia so it can be used in rehearsal.

In rehearsal, the fiddles can generate all of these notes, and I suggest spending some time just playing/singing with various combinations of dyads, getting used to their sounds and relationships.

The sonority buzzes beautifully and takes on a completely new character when tuned this way; it is essential that every effort be made to learn how to sing and play this sonority and to not revert to something more tempered (I can provide example recordings and software tools for practice, as needed: manyarrowsmusic@gmail.com).

However, it is also important not to become bogged down in absolute precision; this can be something of an aspirational sonority, one that represents a kind of “other” that is perhaps not perfectly attainable. Tuning like this is not about being correct, but is rather a state of mind, a process, and intention. And, of course, at some point everyone should just stop thinking about tuning and focus on singing/playing together in the most engaged way possible, without the often dispiriting worry about whether you are “in tune” or not; just sing, listen, and don’t forget about everything else that goes into music!
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Irish translation by Iarla Ó Lionáird

Dan Trueman

after Lassus

\[
\begin{align*}
&= 50 \\
&\text{as}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Soprano 1} &:\quad \text{pp} \quad \text{mf} \\
&\text{non vib.} \\
&\text{Slow}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Soprano 2} &:\quad \text{pp} \quad \text{mf} \\
&\text{non vib.} \\
&\text{Ni} \\
&\text{ly}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mezzo-soprano} &:\quad \text{pp} \\
&\text{non vib.} \\
&\text{mall}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tenor 1} &:\quad \text{pp} \\
&\text{non vib.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tenor 2} &:\quad \text{pp} \\
&\text{non vib.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Bass} &:\quad \text{pp} \\
&\text{non vib.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hardanger Fiddle} &:\quad \text{pp} \quad \text{mf} \\
&\text{as fingered} \\
&\text{Non vib. legato}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hardanger d'Amore} &:\quad \text{pp} \quad \text{mf} \\
&\text{as fingered} \\
&\text{Non vib. legato}
\end{align*}
\]

Do not try to match vowels from different words. Rather, do them naturally—I am interested in the timbral variation that the rotation and layering of the vowels should create.

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\[ \text{accel.} \]

\[ \text{Ni, a thio cfiadh sé a thio cfiadh sé comes he} \]

\[ \text{mal, a thio cfiadh sé a thio cfiadh sé comes he} \]

\[ \text{a thio cfiadh sé a thio cfiadh sé comes he} \]

\[ \text{a thio cfiadh sé a thio cfiadh sé comes he} \]

\[ \text{a thio cfiadh sé a thio cfiadh sé comes he} \]

\[ \text{a thio cfiadh sé a thio cfiadh sé comes he} \]

\[ \text{a thio cfiadh sé a thio cfiadh sé comes he} \]

\[ \text{for S2 tuning reference} \]
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\[ \text{S. 1} \]
\[ \text{p} \]
slowly
ach is a gei-ún mhac-naimh

\[ \text{S. 2} \]
\[ \text{mp} \]
slowly
mmm
mhač-naimh

\[ \text{M.S.} \]
\[ \text{pp} \]
slowly
mmm

\[ \text{T. 1} \]
\[ \text{mp} \]
slowly
not.
mmm

\[ \text{T. 2} \]
\[ \text{mp} \]
slowly
not.
ach is a gei-ún mhac-naimh

\[ \text{B.} \]
\[ \text{p} \]
slowly
ach is a gei-ún mhac-naimh

\[ \text{HF} \]
\[ \text{pp} \]

\[ \text{HdA} \]
\[ \text{pp} \]
ach is a gei-ún_mhac-naimh reflection quiet quiet
ach is a gei-ún_mhac-naimh reflection quiet quiet
mhac-naimh geiú n geiú
mhac-naimh
ach is a gei-ún_mhac-naimh reflection quiet quiet
ach is a gei-ún_mhac-naimh reflection quiet quiet
gur coir an sao-
ach is a gci-un mha-naimh reflection mha-naimh slowly

ach is a gci-un mha-naimh mha-naimh slowly

mmaaa mha-naimh slowly

mmaaa mha-naimh slowly

ach is a gci-un mha-naimh mha-naimh slowly

ach is a gci-un mha-naimh reflection mha-naimh slowly

mmmm
comes he not an té he who
comes he not an té he who comes not an té
comes he an té he who comes not an té
comes he an té he who comes not an té
comes he an té he who
comes he an té he who
an té a choi nne-o-idh___ go deo é seo in a___ chroi in-tin-ne

an té a choi nne-o-idh___ go deo é seo in a___ chroi in-tin-ne

an té a choi nne-o-idh___ go deo é seo in a___ chroi in-tin-ne

an té a choi nne-o-idh___ go deo é seo in a___ chroi in-tin-ne

an té choi nne-o-idh___ deo chroi in-tin-ne

an té choi nne-o-idh___ deo chroi in-tin-ne

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F

S. 1

S. 2

M-S.

T. 1

T. 2

B.

HF

HdA
Ár doigh a shaoi-thibh lá cháir an té is áir de

Ár doigh a shaoi-thibh lá cháir an té is

Ár doigh a shaoi-thibh lá cháir an té

Ár doigh a shaoi-thibh lá cháir

Ár doigh a shaoi-thibh lá cháir

Ár doigh a shaoi-thibh lá cháir
dum Hoc opus hoc memori semper go deo forever always
na maigh-de-an a thioch-aidh chu-gainn virgin
ó bhroinn conceived without taint of man not
He rules all

He rules all

He rules all

He rules all

Nature works

Nature works

Nature works

Omnia

Omnia

Omnia

Nature works

Sé se oib-rea-cha

Sé se oib-rea-cha

Sé se oib-rea-cha

Sé se oib-rea-cha

Sé se oib-rea-cha

Sé se oib-rea-cha
fein at fecit ach fós fein at fecit Sáraí-
-ean a rial-lai- onn thar an a
eis-ean a rial-lai- onn thar an uile__ ni a
at fe- cit uile__ ni
ach fós fein Sá-
fós fein__ at__ fe- cit__ not Sá raí-