Delphica Gaedhlica

for Mixed Voices

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.

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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.

—from the Latin by Peter Bergquist (ibid)

Ni mall a thiocfaidh sé ach is i gcíún mhasnaimh  
gur coir an saothar seo a chaomhnú. An té a choinneoidh go deo é seo ina chroi intinne  
Árdoigh a shaoithibh lúcháir an té is airde;  
A thiocfaidh chugainn ó bhroin na maighdean  
gan locht ár gcinne. Sáraionn sé seo oibreacha uile dútra an domhain,  
ach fós féin is eisean a riallaionn thar an uile ni a rinne é.

—from Iarla Ó Lionáird

I can provide recordings of Ó Lionáird (a native Irish speaker) reading this text to assist with translation, as needed. I have created some basic phonetic spelling guidelines within the score.
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, 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 if/when the group tries to tune more precisely.

I have created a short set of tuning exercises (at the end of this score) that should serve to make the symbols clear, and provide a way of approaching the tuning in the actual piece in a natural, intuitive way. I recommend working through those slowly, attending closely to the tuning, so it just becomes part of the sound of the piece, and not something you have to constantly think about while singing.

The most challenging sonority recurs a number of times and first appears at letter A; it represents a kind of “other,” something unknown, new, aspirational, something that might have been… prophesied. The sonority buzzes beautifully and takes on a completely new character when tuned as indicated; 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, even if the tuning itself is aspirational to a degree (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!
Delphica Gaedhlica

*after Lassus*

Irish translation by Iarla Ó Lionáird

Dan Trueman

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.
Delphica Gaedhlica

S. 1

_always remember_ this a thoefsaidh chu - gainn ó bhroinn
ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

S. 2

_always remember_ this a thoefsaidh chu - gainn ó bhroinn
ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

M.S.

_always remember_ this a thoefsaidh chu - gainn ó bhroinn
ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

T. 1

_always remember_ this a thoefsaidh chu - gainn ó bhroinn
ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

T. 2

_always remember_ this a thoefsaidh chu - gainn ó bhroinn
ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

B.

_always remember_ this a thoefsaidh chu - gainn ó bhroinn
ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

S. 1

na maigh - de - an a thoef saidh chu - gainn vir - gin ó bhroinn
nah my duh nuh ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

S. 2

na maigh - de - an a thoef saidh chu - gainn vir - gin ó bhroinn
nah my duh nuh ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

M.S.

na maigh - de - an a thoef saidh chu - gainn vir - gin ó bhroinn
nah my duh nuh ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

T. 1

na maigh - de - an a thoef saidh chu - gainn vir - gin ó bhroinn
nah my duh nuh ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

T. 2

na maigh - de - an a thoef saidh chu - gainn vir - gin ó bhroinn
nah my duh nuh ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn

B.

na maigh - de - an a thoef saidh chu - gainn vir - gin ó bhroinn
nah my duh nuh ah hook ick hoo ing oh crinn
Delphica Gaedhlica

with morni

S. 1
he rules all he rules all sé seo oibrecha uil

S. 2
all he rules all he rules all sé seo oibrecha uil

M.S.
all he rules all he rules all sé seo oibrecha uil

T. 1
omn nature works nature works sé seo oibrecha uil

T. 2
omn nature works nature works sé seo oibrecha uil

B. omn omnia omnia sé seo oibrecha uil

S. 1
le düll ra an domhain ach fós fein a rial lai

S. 2
le düll ra an domhain is eis-ean ach fós fein

M.S.
le düll ra an domhain is eis-ean a rial lai

T. 1
le düll ra an domhain ach fós fein ach

T. 2
le düll ra an domhain is eis-ean ach fós

B. le düll ra an domhain ach fós fein ach fós fein
2. Tuning Exercises

These first two set up the opening of the piece. The lowered E indicates a Just M3 (5/4) over the E; it's lower than an equal-tempered or Pythagorean M3, hence the down arrow, and should sound super pure and open.

The Db is tuned as a Just M3 under the F. Then, they come together, giving a sense of how these thirds sound when layered.

the small integers indicate you would expect to see in a tuner, as cents off to equal temperament; of course, these will fluctuate!

Try these in multiple octaves, and different voice combinations.

Then, the following four (C through F) setup the most complex sonority in the piece (first encountered at letter A). We begin by isolating the sounds of the M6 and m6 over the bass, and see how the E and A should be a perfect, beat-free fourth, when tuned properly; in HEJI, accidentals with the same number of down/up arrows (or none at all) will be related by perfectly tuned 5ths and 4ths.

In D, we introduce the Overtone (or Septimal) 7th. This whole-step feels big, and it is awesome. The E to Gb in the soprano should result in a Just m6 to the bass.

We put these all together in exercises E/F.
This last one sets up a recurring sonority, most prominent after letter F. Here, the E is lowered, because it comes in the context of a C.

In order for the G# to be Just relative to the lowered E, in needs to be lowered (hence the two down arrows; a "double-down"). The D# is then also a double-down, to be P5 to the G# and the A# is similarly double-down, to be P4 to the D#. The soprano 1 A# is single-down, to be P4 to the soprano 2 E#.