

# LIBRETTO

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## *Hymn of Thanks and Friendship*

### PART I

#### 1. Chorus

O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good:  
for His mercy endureth for ever. *(Psalm 107:1)*

#### 2. Accompanied Recitative

You Only One,  
to whom the eyes of all creation are directed,  
Almighty One,  
of whom they beg nourishment,  
Lord of the worlds,  
who is never praised enough  
by millions of tongues each day  
as long as the heavenly host shines;  
for like you this praise is unlimited!  
The seraph tunes his harp for song,  
the highest pitch of devotion begins;  
but soon his cheek blushes,  
he is silent, feeling himself too weak, and wonders:

#### 3. Aria

How can earth and ash, for which  
every breath is a comfort, thank you?  
They praise you but they feel dizzy,  
whenever daring to imagine what you are like.  
Trembling they call your name,  
"Jehovah," and they sink to dust  
stammering in a somber mood  
when hearing your seraph's hymn: "Amen!"

#### 4. Recitative

But you, Lord Sabaoth,  
so inscrutably great,  
that the bosom of heaven  
cannot embrace you,  
you are our God,

you our Father, in whom we trust,  
you are full of affection for us, filled with paternal  
understanding;  
it is your one concern  
to oversee this world from above and bless it.  
You Holy One, you Pure One, you even accept  
incense of busy hands  
on your altar of thanksgiving!  
You incline your ear unto our prayer;  
your eye looks around to seek our good  
and to avert danger.  
Led, O Lord, by your hands,  
cared for by your paternal love,  
preserved by your power, which wind  
and sea obey,  
we follow our path in a world  
where no sparrow falls  
but on your command,  
where no green sprout  
fades unless you command it to fade  
and wisely and mercifully make it fade.  
Therefore, the whole creation full of joy  
sings you thanks.

#### 5. Aria

The bird is singing it to the breezes:  
How wise, how merciful is He!  
The flock tells it to the pastures:  
How gentle is our Lord!  
In the desert, the lion's thanks  
are roaring back to Him from the rocks,  
and young ravens are crying  
and thanking Him for the good fortune of their lives.

#### 6. Recitative

Yes, but sing,  
you creation, the honor of your creator,  
you air, you forest, and you fields!

I will join your choirs  
and thank the One, who has made me,  
who has brought me into the light,  
who took my hand from the first step  
of my pilgrimage on  
and whose grace provided new pleasures  
with every single step.  
When I was surrounded by clouds of heavy weather,  
He threatened and they retreated grumbling.  
He turned the tears of fear  
into joyous smiles of happiness.  
Whatever I am  
is a gift of His love,  
and if nothing was left for me but one single breath  
I would sing it to His praise.

### 7. Aria

O Father, at these thoughts,  
how moved by love is your breast!  
How it beats, how it exceeds all bounds  
with most blessed, most intimate joy!  
The heart is stilled by comprehending  
the Lord of the world, Jehovah, Sabaoth!  
O what a union,  
whose child I am, and God is my father.

### 8. Recitative

Yet when I look back on the path  
on which I have been treading, how slippery it often was,  
how many a thorn injured my feet,  
how many threatening dangers  
plunged the pilgrim's heart in fear. —  
When I see how my path is nearing its homeland,  
where there is eternal spring and no thorns grow  
and where surrounded by your grace  
nothing but joy moves the heart,  
then I rejoice that I have covered this long distance.

### 9. Aria

From far away, golden battlements are already  
shimmering through grayish fogs, they are shining  
like stars  
in the rosy light of eternity.

The west wind fragrance of paradise  
is already blowing toward me gently whispering and fills  
the air  
with a presentiment of bliss.

I am already hearing the jubilation of the blessed choirs,  
the hymns of devotion, I am hearing  
the pure sound of the harps of heaven.

The "Holy" of the angels and the brethren  
resounds loudly, the heavens again echo with the sound  
of cymbals;  
down in hell this song reverberates like thunder.

### 10. Chorus: Heilig

*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.  
The whole earth is full of his glory.* (Isaiah 6:3)

### 11. Recitative

Let the rest of my pilgrimage  
be led, O Father,  
by your mercy, I trust in you.  
My confidence has never, never yet been disappointed.  
What you have chosen for me  
was always best for me.  
Therefore, give me now what your mercy has discerned,  
and if earth and heaven will flee from me,  
as long as I have you, I will always be cheerful,  
whatever your wisdom decrees.

### 12. Aria

I will not leave your right side,  
if world and sin fight against me,  
if my conscience speaks and threatens:  
I will not leave.

If you will lead me through rough paths,  
if I shall lose all my fortune  
and walk without comfort and joy:  
I will not leave.

If my grave will swallow me  
and if I will still struggle with dark doubts  
although my dying eye grows dim:  
I will not leave.

If worldly flames will surround me  
and terrible trumpets will sound:  
"You men, stand before the judgment!" —  
I will not leave.

### 13. Recitative

I will not leave and I will always praise you  
and I will enjoy your mercy.

Here beneath and there above  
only your praise shall be heard from my mouth.  
I will never forget  
what your mercy has done for me.  
No, as long as I shall live, I will pray in admiration  
for this mercy that is so great and so unlimited.

#### 14. Closing Chorus

CHORUS

Praise God in His sanctuary:  
praise Him in the firmament of His power.  
*(Psalm 150:1)*

SOLO

I praise you with my entire soul,  
with heaven, earth, and sea.  
All creation delights in you,  
O Almighty One.

CHORUS

Praise Him for His mighty acts:  
praise Him according to his excellent greatness.  
*(Psalm 150:2)*

QUARTET

You show the sun his path  
and the sea her shore,  
you plow the field for the seed  
and bring rain for it.

CHORUS

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet:  
praise Him with the psaltery and harp.  
*(Psalm 150:3)*

SOLO

All that lives, sees,  
none of them will be overlooked by you.  
You listen to the seraph's song  
as well as the supplication of the tiniest worm.

CHORUS

Praise Him with the timbrel and dance:  
praise Him with stringed instruments and organs.  
*(Psalm 150:4)*

DUET

You give men bread and wine,  
you fill their barn and barrel,  
and also the deer in the wilderness  
will never lack their fodder.

CHORUS

Praise Him upon the loud cymbals:  
praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals.  
*(Psalm 150:5)*

QUARTET

You look after the lives of men,  
your hand leads them  
to their homeland  
through every threatening danger.

CHORUS

Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord.  
Praise ye the Lord.  
*(Psalm 150:6)*

DUET

You are full of paternal understanding and mercy,  
you give joy and help so willingly.  
Let every thing that hath breath  
praise you, their Lord.

CHORUS

With earth and heaven, from morning until night,  
worship Him, o my soul!  
Extol the Lord, and do not forget  
what He has done for you.

## PART II

### 15. Chorus

A cloud of incense billows  
around friendship's altar of thanksgiving.  
Its joyful hymn sounds  
to him who eternally is and was.

### 16. Aria

Beautiful Friendship is standing here,  
heaven in her gaze,  
A joyous tumult in her breast,  
she offers up her Alleluia.

At her friend's feast of joy  
her heart beats with delight.  
Her prayer and her incense rise  
on the wings of smooth western winds.

### 17. Accompanied Recitative

You noble man,  
you, whose heart is never fickle toward friends,  
hear her jubilation.

See how she heartily thanks God above for you,  
how warmly she entreats on your behalf  
for life, welfare, and prosperity  
and for all that enriches life's fortune,  
so that you can enjoy with satisfaction the world of God.

### 18. Aria

The word "Let there be" transformed  
barren wilderness into Eden.  
O worthy is our Lord's earth  
to be enjoyed!

You see no dark weather gathers  
without the sun shining upon it;  
no thorn grows  
without a rose blooming beside it.

### 19. Chorus

Verse 1 Do we not have many pleasures  
under the moon,  
does not bliss  
spring even from suffering?  
Does not more merriment  
cross our path  
than pains bred  
of melancholy?

Verse 2 If even spring seems unsuited,  
and you see nothing but the grave,  
only wipe the tears  
from your eyes,  
because the sin of melancholy  
knows no bounds  
and even feigns fog  
where the sun is shining.

Verse 3 If one joy withers  
on its tender stalk,  
behold, many others blossom  
around you and for you.  
Come, you need only choose,  
that your hand may pluck them.  
Will you count only the one  
but not the thousands remaining?

Verse 4 If even one bloom falls  
without being enjoyed,  
how do wisdom and mercy together  
not reign this world?  
Can you believe this?

Why so grief-stricken?  
No one could steal it  
were it not to your good.

Verse 5 Did you not learn  
many kinds of joy  
dancing and playing  
during the years of your youth?  
The field gave you flowers  
as a toy for you, the boy;  
the tree bore fruit so richly  
to refresh you when you were weary.

Verse 6 Even if the number of joys decreased,  
once childhood flew,  
did your breast later not prove  
healthier and happy?  
You were wishing for more  
when you were longing for love,  
and young passionate beauties  
were blossoming around you.

Verse 7 Did the man lose  
companion, glory and possessions,  
beloved children  
and lively blood,  
friends, faithful and honest  
and worthy to his heart?  
Also by the fortune of his brethren,  
his own fortune is increased.

Verse 8 If the old man is lacking joy,  
can't he look upon his grandchildren  
to be pleased  
and enjoy his strength?  
The juice of the grape is simmering  
to refresh him;  
he acquires new power  
drinking the juice of the vine.

Verse 9 Indeed, God's earth bears  
many a joy,  
wine and the spring sunshine  
and the music of stringed instruments.  
Friendship, marital affection,  
glory, goods, and money  
and all inclinations toward virtue:  
God's world is beautiful!

*Translation © 2013 by Ulrich Leisinger*