

Why do any of us travel? Like the artists, writers, and musicians of this Grand Tour exhibit, we seek novelty, stimulation of the senses, broadening of the mind, and greater understanding. The composers represented here were undoubtedly influenced by their exposure to other cultures. However, like Gilbert and Sullivan's very British "gentlemen of Japan," they also emerged sounding very much like themselves. It is a paradoxical quality of travel that it serves both to broaden and distill the essential nature of the traveler.

This little collection of pieces echoes many of the same themes as the Grand Tour art exhibit: 18th century Rome, ancient or classical themes and characters, picturesque shepherds and landscapes, and British impressions of the Far East. Other themes also came to mind as we assembled this musical exploration: Roman Catholic devotion, the influential Prix de Rome, and even the special qualities of Italian sunshine!

J.S. Bach, *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3*

J.S. Bach never traveled much at all, but he engaged in a sort of virtual, intellectual Grand Tour by copying innumerable of concertos by the Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi. This very famous piece reflects the influence of the Italian style in its motoric propulsion and harmonic clarity.

W.A. Mozart, *Voyager's Chorus from Idomeneo*,

Janice Bagwell, soprano

We begin our journey with placid seas and beautiful sunshine, as these travelers eagerly embark on an adventure. Mozart was a great composer of Italian opera, and *Idomeneo* is based on a story from classical literature.

Translation:

The sea is calm, let us embark. All bodes well for our journey. Quickly, quickly, let us go! Happy will be our ventures.

May only gentle breezes carry you, may all cold north wind grow calm before you. May kindly winds surround you, and may love be strewn along the way of each of you.

G. F. Handel, *Chorus of the Enchanted Islanders from Alcina*

This chorus extols the sensual pleasures of an enchanted island. The story of *Alcina* is taken from Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, an epic poem set in the time of Charlemagne. Handel moved from Germany to London (stopping en route to visit Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici) when his boss, George, Elector of Hanover, became George I of Great Britain. *Alcina* was composed for his first opera season at Covent Garden .

Translation: This is the heaven of contentments, the wellspring of bliss, Elysium of the living, where all is formed for pleasure.

G. F. Handel, *Donna che in ciel*, Final movement

Maria Izzo Walker, soprano

From the intoxicating pleasures of the senses, we turn to a more spiritual sort of quest. This sacred cantata was composed during a period when the Pope had banned

opera for five years in gratitude to God for sparing Rome from the destruction wrought by a series of powerful earthquakes. Handel, who spent some time in Rome during this period, made use of the florid operatic Italian singing style.

Translation by Elizabeth Elmi:

Maria, health and hope of the tormented world and of the languishing mortal.
For you, may the quivering fury extinguish its passion in a sea of blood.
And peace and joy, may peace and joy be to us down here as Maria is in heaven.

W.A. Mozart, O Isis und Osiris from *The Magic Flute*

Mozart and his librettist Schikaneder infused this traditional German form, the *Singspiel*, with exotic characters, scenes of temples and pyramids, and in this chorus, an appeal to ancient Egyptian gods to guide the protagonists in virtue.

Translation: O Isis and Osiris, what delight! The gloomy night yields to the splendor of the sun! Soon the noble youth will feel new life; soon he will dedicate himself wholly to our mission. His spirit is bold, his heart is pure. Soon, soon, he will be worthy.

Franz Liszt, “Ave Maria”

Having traveled throughout Europe as an A-list celebrity virtuoso, Franz Liszt moved to Rome and became an Abbé of the Roman Catholic Church.

Translation: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Felix Mendelssohn, “Hirtenlied”

From these lofty spiritual heights, we move to more literal, picturesque heights in Mendelssohn’s depiction of a shepherd’s love story.

Translation by Marie Deer:

O Winter, awful Winter, the world's now oh so small!
You squeeze us into the valleys, between the narrow huts' walls.
And even if I pass in front of where my dearest stays,
The little window hides her head - she barely shows her face.

O Summer, lovely Summer, how wide, now, is the world!
The higher we climb on the mountains, the wider it's unfurled.
And if I have you in my arms on the open mountain heights
We look out over wide country and yet we are out of sight.

Antonin Dvorak, “Songs My Mother Taught Me,” from Gypsy Songs, Op. 55, arr. Ron Kean

Dvorak was often inspired by vernacular models. Here he turns a song attributed to the gypsy folk tradition into a sophisticated art song.

Debussy, “Chanson No. 1”

Debussy is one of three Prix de Rome winners featured here, having won the prize at the age of 19. He stayed only two of the four awarded years at the Villa Medici, however, complaining in letters home about the bad food, boorish company, and abominable accommodations. Perhaps more importantly for Western music was his fascination with the shimmering, rhythmically-complex Javanese gamelan music he encountered at the 1889 World Fair in Paris. Always a rebel against pedantry, Debussy wrote that, “Javanese rhapsodies, instead of confining themselves in a traditional form, develop according to the fantasy of countless arabesques.”

Translation: God! How you have made her beautiful to look at! How gracious, good and lovely; to each great thing that's found within her, one gratefully gives praise. Always her beauty is renewed. God, she is beautiful! Not from sea, nor land, nowhere is there a woman who shows such pure, gracious virtue; it is a dream to think of her. God! how beautiful she is!

Gounod, “Sérénade”

Gounod also won the Prix de Rome, and we hear echoes of the Italian singing style here in this setting of a Victor Hugo poem. Gounod is most famous for his opera *Faust*, which was considered by Germans to be a sacrilegious bastardization of Goethe's classic rendering of the ancient story; however, it remains a favorite of the repertory because of Gounod's charming music.

Translation by Deborah Piston-Hatlen:

When you sing, cradled in my arms in the evening,
do you hear my thoughts responding softly?
Your sweet song recalls to me the most beautiful of my days.
Sing, sing, my love. Sing, sing forever...

Lili Boulanger, “Hymne au Soleil”

Susan Sullivan, mezzo soprano

It has been said that Lili Boulanger's cantata *Faust et Helene* is the best piece ever to have won the Prix de Rome. Here we offer her *Hymn to the Sun*, orchestrated from the original 4-hand piano accompaniment by Oliver Korte.

Translation by Jane May:

Let us bless the rebirth of the sun and its power.
Let us celebrate now as our eyes look above.
Like a glorious crown
Let its radiance tower!
The awakening of nature is a hymn of our love.
Seven steeds ride across the sky in fiery splendor,
Inflaming all the sky with every breath they render.
O most gracious sun, now appear!
With all its fields in bloom, its woods and mountains green,
And the wide ocean reflecting irradiance,

All the world is young once again,
In the mist of morn iridescent and rosy.
The rebirth of the sun is a marvelous power.

W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, *The Mikado* Opening Chorus and Act II Finale

W.S. Gilbert was inspired by a Japanese exhibition to write a story that takes place in Japan. However, as G.K. Chesterton said about the piece, “I doubt if there is a single joke in the whole play that fits the Japanese. But all the jokes in the play fit the English.”

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