

Text for *The Disguised God*

The Disguised God (*Förklädd gud*), Op. 24, 1940
by Lars-Erik Larsson (1908-1986)
Original Swedish text by Hjalmar Gullberg (1898-1961)
English version by John Hearne

Music Prelude

Recitation

Not for the strong in the world but for the feeble.
Not for the warlike, but for the humble
who till the soil without a grumble
a god plays on a flute.
It is a Grecian fable.

I. Recitation

2. Choir

Who plays upon a pipe
as the dawn awakes the land?
From heaven comes a message
No one may understand.
Who put the secret password
into the hidden flute?
Who plays for the earth,
for the flesh and fruit?

Who is that goodly shepherd
who leads his flock through here
so they may graze in peace,
hearing tunes so crystal clear?
Who wanders through the meadows
in summer's shining day
and sleeps in the shadows
on fragrant hay?

II. Recitation

Apollo stays in a Thessalonian steading
He wears no wreath around his golden hair;
He's sent to earth at high Olympia's bidding,
Doomed to forswear his state for one long year.
So lives a god in a Thessalonian steading.

Among the serving-folk he goes disguised
And at the lowliest place he sets his bowl.
His bed among the beasts is not despised.
He has no stock of earthly goods, nor gold.
A shepherd's cloak conceals this "god disguised."

III. Recitation

3. Baritone solo and Choir

Among the fire in autumn
he gathers the shivering herd
and tends them with skilful hands
and a comforting word.

His true home is a story,
his soul a song and a verse.
Yet he without complaint
bears his burden on earth.

IV. Recitation

4. Choir

Well-being will follow
the path of a god.
A cloak may be covering
his golden hair,
but flowers will mark where he trod.

He plays for the creatures
that follow his voice,
for sun and for shower
in new-ploughed earth,
where death is no longer a force.

V. Recitation

So let us praise this husbandman,
Thessalonica's shepherd-lord.
When at cock-crow he rises up,
he walks a sacred road.

He then who dwelt among the beasts
and shared their humble fares,
is brother to the sun and moon,
and comrade of the stars.

VI. Recitation

5. Soprano solo and Choir

What shimmers in the forest
with silver glance
while pipers' wedding-tunes
make the animals dance?

What means it for the land
that he leaves behind,
he that's only on loan
to be with man-kind?

Will he recall the prison
of field and shore,
a world that now is vanished,
that sings no more?

Will he renew the music
of virgin choirs,
the life of holy rapture
that never tires?

VII. Recitation

So gods are wandering yet upon the earth.
One of them sits, perhaps, beside your hearth.

Think not that any god can ever die,
He walks beside you, but you shield your eye.

He bears no spear, nor wears a purple gown.
But by his deeds a god might be made known.

It is a rule unbroken, be advised:
when gods are on the earth, they go disguised!

VIII and IX. Recitation

6. Baritone solo, Soprano solo and Choir

VIII.

Think you that sheep would
ever graze in the glowing morn,
or grass-clad hills would flourish,
if never gods came down?

Think you that spring would
ever grace with a flowering crown
the graves of all who perish,
if never gods came down?

IX.

When with a beck'ning glance
we are welcomed to love's feast
and answer, cold and careless,
the very least;

when comes a heav'n-sent healing
for souls in deep distress,
and when, free from all reck'ning,
a hand will bless:

then comes a light to spread
such joy to a soul surprised –
that seated by our side
was A GOD DISGUISED.