

What's wrong with the Bridal Chorus?

by Rev Richard Jordan

The Bridal Chorus, comes from the opera Lohengrin by Wagner, and tells a tragic tale of love. And that hardly seems fitting, and it gets worse, as the story unfolds we watch as suspicion triumphs over love, and the marriage celebrated ends before it begins. I don't know anyone who would wish that this be an expression of their future life together. Read the synopsis and decide for yourself. It is a tragic story that does not honor marriage or give glory to God. The words of the chorus, while quite beautiful are such strong irony that they begin to sound bitter and sarcastic.

The Words from the Bridal Chorus [Act III scene I]

Faithful and true, we lead ye forth, where love triumphant shall crown you with joy!

Star of renown, flow'r of the earth, blest be ye both far from all life's annoy.

Champion victorious go thou before! Maid bright and glorious, go thou before!

Mirth's noisy revel ye've forsaken, tender delights for you now awaken!

Fragrant abode enshrine ye in bliss, splendor and state in joy yet dismiss.

Faithful and true, we lead ye forth, where love triumphant shall crown you with joy!

Star of renown, flow'r of the earth, blest be ye both far from all life's annoy. Be ye Happy!

ACT I.-Henry "the Fowler", King of Germany, has come to Antwerp to summon his lieges against the Hungarians, who threaten the eastern frontier ; he finds the chiefs divided and without a leader-Gottfried, the young son of the late Duke, having mysteriously disappeared, and Frederick Telramund, in virtue of his wife's royal descent, claiming the sovereignty of Brabant. Telramund openly accuses Elsa (Gottfried's sister) of having murdered her brother to win the crown for herself ; Elsa is summoned to appear and answer the charge ; the King decrees that her cause shall be submitted to ordeal of battle between Telramund and any champion Elsa may choose to defend her. She describes a Knight whom she has seen in a vision, and conjures him to fight for her. After repeated appeals, a skiff, drawn by a swan, is seen to approach the shore ; in it is Lohengrin, Elsa's chosen Knight, who accepts Telramund's challenge. Before they fight, Lohengrin betroths himself to Elsa, first claiming her solemn promise never to question him as to his name or race, nor whence he came to her ; Telramund is overcome in the combat, and stripped of lands and honors.

ACT II.-Telramund and Ortrud (his wife) are watching outside the Palace, which resounds with mirth and revelry ; they are determined yet to accomplish the ruin of Elsa and Lohengrin, and be reinstated in their former rank. Elsa appears on the balcony, and to her Ortrud makes a piteous appeal, which so effectually moves Elsa to compassion, that she promises to obtain the reprieve of Telramund's sentence. She offers to shelter Ortrud for the night, who, amid false protestations of gratitude, affects concern for the uncertainty of Elsa's future happiness, and contrives to insinuate the first germs of suspicion in Elsa's mind. They enter the abode of Elsa. The retainers and vassals assemble to form the bridal procession. Ortrud appears in the train of Elsa's ladies ; arrived at the steps of the Minster, she cannot restrain her haughty temper, and disputes Elsa's right of precedence ; in the midst of the ensuing commotion the King and Lohengrin enter. Lohengrin reproves his bride for holding converse with the evil-minded woman ; they are proceeding to the church when Telramund interposes and accuses Lohengrin of sorcery, alleging the strange manner of his coming amongst them, and the mystery in which his name and rank are shrouded, in support of the declaration. The faith of the King and his Knights in Lohengrin, however, remains unshaken ; doubts for a moment overwhelm Elsa, but she casts them aside ; the train finally enters the church, and they are united.

ACT III.-Elsa and Lohengrin are conducted to the bridal chamber by a train of Knights and Ladies, and for the first time are alone ; doubt and suspicion by this time having taken complete possession of Elsa's mind, she questions her husband with growing vehemence, unmindful of his warnings that her doubts must end their happiness, for, if she insist, to *her* he must reveal his secret. When their altercation is at its height a murderous attempt is made on Lohengrin's life by Telramund and four of his followers. Elsa, quick to perceive their intent, hands Lohengrin his sword, who strikes Telramund dead with a single blow. He then places Elsa in the care of her Ladies, charging them to lead her into the presence of the King. Before the King he meets her once more and reveals himself to be the son of Percival, and a Knight of the Holy Grail ; being known, he is now bound to return to its mysterious guardianship. As he speaks, the swan, drawing the skiff, appears again on the river, and to Elsa's unspeakable grief, he bids her an eternal farewell. Before he steps into the skiff he disenchant's the swan, who is no other than Gottfried, transformed by Ortrud's sorcery, and who now takes rightful possession of his Dukedom.

THE SCENE PASSES IN ANTWERP PERIOD, THE FIRST HALF OF THE 10th CENTURY.

LOHENGRIN, Knight of the Holy Grail Tenor.
HENRY I., King of Germany..... Bass.
FREDERICK TELRAMUND, a Noble of Brabant..... Baritone.
GOTTFRIED, Elsa's brother, mute personage.
ELSA OF BRABANT Soprano.
ORTRUD, wife of Telramund..... Mezzo-soprano.

Does this express your hope and dreams about what your wedding will be? If not, find something more appropriate.