

A CHILD OF OUR TIME

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PART I

Chorus

The world turns on its dark side.
It is winter.

The Argument

Alto

Man has measured the heavens with a telescope, driven the gods from their thrones.

But the soul, watching the chaotic mirror, knows that the gods return.

Truly, the living god consumes within and turns the flesh to cancer!

Interludium

Scene

Chorus

Is evil then good?
Is reason untrue?

Alto

Reason is true to itself;
But pity breaks open the heart.

Chorus

We are lost.
We are as seed before the wind.
We are carried to a great slaughter.

The Narrator (Bass)

Now in each nation there were some cast out by authority and tormented, made to suffer for the general wrong.
Pogroms in the east, lynching in the west;
Europe brooding on a war of starvation.
And a great cry went up from the people.

Chorus of the Oppressed

When shall the usurers' city cease? And famine depart from the fruitful land?

Tenor

I have no money for my bread; I have no gift for my love.
I am caught between my desires and their frustration as between the hammer and the anvil.
How can I grow to a man's stature?

Soprano

How can I cherish my man in such days, or become a mother in a world of destruction?

How shall I feed my children on so small a wage?

How can I comfort them when I am dead?

A Spiritual Chorus & Soli

Steal away steal away, steal away to Jesus;
Steal away steal away home
I han't got long to stay here.

My Lord, He calls me. He calls me by the thunder,

The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,
I han't got long to stay here.

Green trees a-bending, poor sinner stands a-trembling.

The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,
I han't got long to stay here.

Steal away steal away, steal away to Jesus;
Steal away steal away home - I han't got long to stay here.

PART II

Chorus

A Star rises in mid-winter.
Behold the man! The scapegoat!
The child of our time.

The Narrator (Bass)

And a time came when in the continual persecution one race stood for all.

Double Chorus of Persecutors and Persecuted

Away with them!
Curse them! Kill them!
They infect the state.
Where? How? Why?
We have no refuge.

The Narrator (Bass)

Where they could, they fled from the terror.

And among them a boy escaped secretly,
and was kept in hiding in a great city.

Chorus of the Self-righteous

We cannot have them in our Empire.
They shall not work, nor draw a dole.
Let them starve in No-Man's-Land!

The Narrator (Bass)

And the boy's mother wrote a letter,
saying:

Scene

Solo Quartet

Mother (Soprano)

O my son! In the dread terror they have brought me near to death.

Boy (Tenor)

Mother! Mother!
Though men hunt me like an animal,
I will defy the world to reach you.

Aunt (Alto)

Have patience.
Throw not your life away in futile sacrifice.

Uncle (Bass)

You are as one against all.
Accept the impotence of your humanity.

Boy (Tenor)

No! I must save her.

A Spiritual Chorus & Soli

Nobody knows the trouble I see. Lord,
Nobody knows like Jesus.

O brothers, pray for me,

O brothers, pray for me.

And help me to drive

Old Satan away.

O mothers, pray for me,

O mothers, pray for me.

And help me to drive Old Satan away.

Nobody knows the trouble I see. Lord,

Nobody knows like Jesus.

Scene

Narrator (Bass)

The boy becomes desperate in his agony.

Aunt (Alto)

A curse is born. The dark forces threaten him.

The Narrator (Bass)

He goes to authority.
He is met with hostility.

Aunt (Alto)

His other self rises in him, demonic and destructive.

Narrator (Bass)

He shoots the official.

Aunt (Alto)

But he shoots only his dark brother -
And see - he is dead.

The Narrator (Bass)

They took a terrible vengeance.

A Spiritual**Chorus & Soprano**

O, by and by, by and by,
I'm going to lay down my heavy load.
I know my robe's going to fit me well,
I tried it on at the gates of hell.
O, hell is deep and a dark despair,
O, stop, poor sinner, and don't go there!
O, by and by, by and by.
I'm going to lay down my heavy load.
When Israel was in Egypt's land.
Let my people go.
Oppressed so hard they could not stand.
Let my people go.
'Thus spake the Lord,' bold Moses said.
Let my people go.
'If not, I'll smite your first-born dead,'
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, 'way down in Egypt land;
Tell old Pharaoh, to let my people go.

The boy sings in his Prison**Boy (Tenor)**

My dreams are all shattered in a ghastly
reality.
The wild beating of my heart is stilled: day
by day.
Earth and sky are not for those in prison.
Mother! Mother!

The Mother (Soprano)

What have I done to you, my son?
What will become of us now?
The springs of hope are dried up.
My heart aches in unending pain.

Aunt (Alto)

The dark forces rise like a flood.
Men's hearts are heavy: they cry for peace.

The Terror**Chorus**

Burn down their houses!
Beat in their heads!
Break them in pieces on the wheel!

The Narrator (Bass)

Men were ashamed of what was done.
There was bitterness and horror.

A Spiritual of Anger**Chorus & Bass**

Go down, Moses, 'way down in Egypt land;
Tell old Pharaoh, to let my people go.

PART III**Chorus**

The cold deepens.
The world descends into the icy waters
where lies the jewel of great price.

Alto

The soul of man is impassioned like a
woman.
She is old as the earth, beyond good and
evil, the sensual garments.
Her face will be illuminated like the sun.
Then is the time of his deliverance.

Scene**Bass**

The words of wisdom are these:
Winter cold means inner warmth, the
secret nursery of the seed.

Chorus

How shall we have patience for the con-
summation of the mystery?
Who will comfort us in the going through?

Bass

Patience is born in the tension of loneli-
ness.
The garden lies beyond the desert.

Chorus

Is the man of destiny master of us all?
Shall those cast out be unavenged?

Bass

The man of destiny is cut off from fellow-
ship.
Healing springs from the womb of time.
The simple-hearted shall exult in the end.

Chorus

What of the boy, then? What of him?

Bass

He, too, is outcast, his manhood broken in
the clash of powers.
God overpowered him - the child of our
time.

Praeludium**General Ensemble****Tenor**

I would know my shadow and my light,
so shall I at last be whole.

Bass

Then courage, brother, dare the grave
passage.

Soprano

Here is no final grieving, but an abiding
hope.

Alto

The moving waters renew the earth. It is
spring.

Chorus repeats the words of the soloists.**A Spiritual****Chorus & Soli**

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,
Deep river. Lord,
I want to cross over into camp-ground.
Chillun! Don't you want to go
To that gospel feast,
That promised land,
That land where all is peace?
Walk into heaven, and take my seat.
And cast down my crown at Jesus' feet.
Deep river, my home is over Jordan,
I want to cross over into camp-ground,
Lord!