

LOUIS
ANDRIESEN
La Commedia



La Commedia

a film opera in five parts

Music by Louis Andriessen

Electronic music by
Anke Brouwer

Texts by Dante, Vondel,
and others,
and from the Old Testament

Dutch National Opera

Asko | Schönberg
Reinbert de Leeuw, *conductor*

BEATRICE
Claron McFadden, *soprano*

DANTE
Cristina Zavalloni, *voice*

LUCIFER/CACCIAGUIDA
Jeroen Willems, *voice*

CASELLA
Marcel Beekman, *tenor*

DISC ONE

1. **Part I: THE CITY OF DIS, OR THE SHIP OF FOOLS** 20:16
2. **Part II: RACCONTO DALL'INFERNO** 19:25
3. **Part III: LUCIFER** 23:49

DISC TWO

1. **Part IV: THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS** 16:45
2. **Part V: LUCE ETTERNA** 23:30



PART I: THE CITY OF DIS, OR THE SHIP OF FOOLS

The work opens with a Latin text from the first pages of *Das Narrenschiff* (*The Ship of Fools*), followed by the 16th-century recruitment text for the Guild of the Blue Barge. Beatrice appears and tells of her request to Virgil to assist Dante on his path through eternity. Two men in a boat are on their way to Dis, the city of flames in hell. They see screaming furies on the roofs of the flaming towers and someone walks over the water. Dante decides “I was certain that she was sent from heaven.”

PART II: RACCONTO DALL’ INFERNO

Dante relates a comic tale about one of the senior devils who is showing him the way. This Malacoda gives Dante an escort of ten fearsome evils. A peculiar march is heard as they plod along through hell.

PART III: LUCIFER

A long instrumental introduction brings us amongst the deepest horrors of hell. The chorus describes Lucifer, who himself appears as they finish. He is jealous because God had created humanity in His own image and likeness. He cries forth his desire for revenge and rejoices.

PART IV: THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Dante meets his deceased friend Casella, a musician, who sings one of Dante’s splendid sonnets. Dante sings a song about a terrifying serpent that is hunted by enormous birds, after which Dante is helped to cross the river Lethe and sees an impressive procession of great beauty. Dante is hit by a car and dies. The chorus sings a text from the Song of Songs dedicated to the Bride of Lebanon.

PART V: LUCE ETERNA

A light that is music develops from an imperceptible beginning; it is interrupted by an impudent children’s chorus singing a text from the Requiem. Beatrice states that the light is the light of love. The sound of a starry firmament connects the two female soloists. Dante hymns the heavenly bodies and the music of the spheres, only to be interrupted by Cacciaguida, who complains about the people of Florence. The chorus and Beatrice sing of the light of eternity that conquers all sorrow.

—Mirjam Zegers and Louis Andriessen
Translated by Peter Lockwood





LOUIS ANDRIESSEN initially found notoriety as something of a provocateur, a composer whose noisy, audacious juggernauts combined minimalism, leftist politics, and his characteristic “terrifying twenty-first century orchestra.” *La Commedia* is his fourth “opera,” really a cycle of five mini-cantatas—not exactly an adaptation of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, but a wide-ranging setting of parts of it. But what happens when Andriessen—at 75, still something of an iconoclast—decides to tackle one of the monuments of Western thought? And is he doing so with a straight face, or being a bit of a prankster?

The first tableau, “The City of Dis or: The Ship of Fools,” opens with a busy surround-sound collage: car horns, bicycle bells, jackhammers, sirens, and motorcycles blend with lightly unpredictable minimalist urbanity. It sounds familiar, appears nonthreatening—the soundscape is of Andriessen’s native Amsterdam—but the city’s earthly appearance masks what truly happens in Dis. Its world mirrors our own, but not everything is as it seems. Though it resembles a typical city, with its frenzy of activity and profusion of architectural styles (including Jewish and Islamic ones—heretical, after all), Dis is essentially a huge, hot torture chamber. A rowdy men’s chorus sings a passage from the Blue Barge, a common Renaissance version of the ship of fools allegory; crewed by variously inept and sinful characters, the barge is a symbol of the unknowing and uncaring damned. In fact, we are already deep inside the pit of Dante’s Hell. Dis (a name given to the Devil as well as a city he sometimes occupies) encompasses the sixth through ninth circles of “Nether Hell,” and it is here that the most malicious criminals are punished.

Though *La Commedia* calls for a mish-mash of vocal styles, the default Louis Andriessen affect is close to that of early music singing. Much of the exposition of the piece is in dense Bach-ian chorale, but notes and words remain intelligible thanks to minimal use of vibrato. Falling, melting gestures characterize much of the vocal writing of the first three parts of *La Commedia*, denoting both physical downward motion and keening lamentation. Chords take on an overwhelming gravity; normal major and minor triads have been larded with tritones and seconds, and can do nothing but descend.

Of course, there is nothing particularly unique about word-painting or “madrigalism,” a device which has been used in text setting since at least the 16th century; what makes

Andriessen's use notable is its integrity within his style. Perhaps because there is something cartoonish, or Pop Art, in his music already, he is able to make choices which in another composer's work would come off as overly literal, out of place. Alluring and distancing at the same time, these musical quotation-marks frame *La Commedia* with a cool objectivity even in its most impassioned moments. It's a canny way to take a massive work like the *Divine Comedy* and capture it in a series of emblematic portraits.

"Racconto dall'Inferno" is introduced by those same chorale chords from "Dis," heard in stark, percussive unison. An agonizing descent introduces the body of the piece, which tells of Dante's descent into the tar pit (György Ligeti's *Devil's Staircase* étude, perhaps, borne down by heavy goo?) and of the demons and devils he encounters there. Bass clarinets and pianos scurry unpredictably in and out of muddy orchestral timbres; the music describes hideous creatures, half-human, half-reptile, torturing sinners and each other. Dante's narration is sung by a contralto, in lilting, disconnected chant-like bits—the 14th-century Italian lowering himself into an ageless, culture-less pit.

Though intensely referential, *La Commedia* is far from reverential. This is typical of Andriessen's music, which has codified awkward juxtapositions into a style of surprising power. Chunks that sound wildly different from each other are mashed together haphazardly, or adulterated; the sacred becomes profane. Debussy and Ravel make appearances in cartoonish form, as visitors from the "easy listening" Classical bin. Granitic chunks of music allude to the ceremonial modularity of Stravinsky, Messiaen, and Bach. And especially in the second half of the piece, popular styles pervade, ranging from Florentine folk music to bebop, rock, and musical theater, often swerving recklessly from one to the next in the span of a few minutes.

It is perhaps not music at all, but the spirit of Hieronymus Bosch which most strongly pervades *La Commedia*—particularly his triptych *Garden of Earthly Delights*. Like Bosch, Andriessen crams a huge amount of detail into what is essentially a flat plane; one has the sense that the work could very well expand ad infinitum in either musical time or visual space. Bosch gives us a bird's-eye sliver of enormous worlds, and Andriessen only emblematic moments of Dante. Both revel in the bizarre, the obscene, and the grotesque (it's no coincidence that both Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* and Andriessen's "Racconto dall'Inferno" include somebody making "a trumpet out of his ass"). Andriessen's music is something of a Boschian creature itself, its own peculiar form assembled from the "wrong" parts of other music.

Most vividly pictorial is Andriessen's portrait of the Devil himself in "Lucifer." This is truly beastly, physical music. A long introductory section broods and thrashes around in the depths of the orchestra, chewing on the same material for eight minutes, as if unable to look

away, before any voices enter. The orchestration here is willfully dense; thick, repeated chords in snarling winds and cimbalom, attack after down-bow attack in the strings, and an electronic borborygmus of crackling embers and thunder. Andriessen's famously stubborn brand of repetition becomes programmatic here; neither musical nor political statement, it is instead telling a story of obsessive, unending destruction: Lucifer's planned revenge on God and Humans. Male chorus narrates this story over an ostinato of bass guitar, cimbalom, and drumset, sounding like nothing so much as Andriessen-ized death metal—which makes perfect sense, given that genre's preoccupation with all things Hellish.

"The Garden of Earthly Delights" is the most fragmentary movement, containing passages that are both uproariously funny and surprisingly heartfelt. Stylistic pluralism reigns here; the musicians are instructed to swing eighth notes, like an old-fashioned jazz band. The music never quite coheres, though, before moving on to the next thing. Andriessen, like Bosch, encourages the eye (or the ear) to wander. There is such a lot to take in, so much beautiful absurdity, it seems to say—unthinkable to linger in any one place for too long. The jazz licks turn a sharp corner into Italianate folk ballad—actually a poem from Dante's *Convivio*, sung here by his friend Casella, and harmonized with a Stravinskian tang; next, a banal fanfare bursting out of nowhere, trumpets and strings gleefully out of sync.

In the center of the "Garden," Dante sees two angels swoop down to attack a snake ("the same perhaps that offered Eve the bitter fruit"). Sinuous, chromatic lines depict the serpent as literally as any Renaissance madrigal; when the angels drive it off, the music turns leering, burlesque, decidedly secular—some pageantry put on for the benefit of our tourist-hero, perhaps. The movement closes with an excerpt from the Song of Songs, set to rich harmonies straight from a Nino Rota film score—a swooningly Romantic convergence of text and music in relief from the mostly Apollonian canvas. The moment passes quickly, though, and "The Garden of Earthly Delights" ends equivocally with a series of softly clashing octatonic chords.

The final tableau of *La Commedia* may be the only *Lux Aeterna* ever written in irony. Harp and children's choir (winking clichés) introduce the movement in archaic-sounding Dorian mode. But the angelic timbres are soon undermined by quietly dissonant tutti chords—the same that accompanied our journey through Hell—alongside echoes of Dante's narrative chants from "Racconto." Even though we are now in Heaven, the music is colored by Dante's experience in Hell; as bard and historian, it's his duty to remember these things, Andriessen's music seems to say, by rote.

Though *La Commedia* is mostly not an explicitly political work, Andriessen and Dante align politically in the perversely contrasting middle section of "Luce Eterna." Here is an extended encounter with Dante's great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguidda, bitterly lamenting the degradation of Florentine society and the corruption of its nobility. But rather than

Dante's Italian, Andriessen uses a contemporary Dutch translation, and treats the entire passage as a kind of extended rap verse—spoken over insistent percussion. Andriessen himself invites us to read into this musical decision in his program note for *De Staat* (The Republic), a seminal work of 1970s minimalist agitprop:

How you arrange your musical material, the techniques you use and the instruments you score for, are largely determined by your own social circumstances and listening experience...the moment the musical material is ordered it becomes culture and hence a social entity.

Cacciaguida's speech is lifted from 1100s Florence into Andriessen's contemporary Europe. But both the speech and the setting articulate the same thing—an opposition to the conspicuously "high culture," and a longing for a more democratic society. By referencing a musical style that has wide popularity yet little acceptance from the gatekeepers of the "high art" orchestral world, Andriessen uses Cacciaguida's monologue to subtly jab modern-day elitism.

A brief finale serves as something like a punch line to the entire drama. The opening harps of "Luce Eterna" are recast as one of Andriessen's ragged fanfares, over which, in sing-song Dutch, the children's choir recites an impudent moral:

These are all my notes for you,
and if you do not get it,
you won't get the Last Judgement
you will never get it, ever.

In Dante's *Paradiso*, this passage is a solemn warning spoken by a divine eagle. Andriessen transforms it into a kind of self-referential gag. After close to two hours of dense, eventful music, a bunch of unruly kids break down the fourth wall, teasing the audience: if that was too much for you, well, you're beyond help. It's just a comedy, they seem to be saying—there's nothing particularly divine about it.

—Timo Andres, November 2013





Asko | Schönberg

flute

Jeannette Landré
Ingrid Geerlings
Mirjam Teepe
Janneke Groesz

oboe

Marieke Schut
Evert Weidner

clarinet

Pierre Woudenberg
Gea Plantinga

bass clarinet/alto saxophone

David Kweksilber

contrabass clarinet

Carlos Galvez Taroncher

double bassoon

Remko Edelaar

horn

Wim Timmermans
Fokke van Heel
Serguei Dovgaliouk
Laurens Woudenberg

trumpet

Hendrik Jan Lindhout
Willem van der Vliet

trombone

Toon van Ulsen
Brandt Attema

tuba

Tjeerd Oostendorp

violin

Jan Erik van Regteren
Altena
Heleen Hulst
Marijke van Kooten
Wim de Jong

Monica Germino
Susanne van Els
Maaïke Aarts

cello

Doris Hochscheid
Hans Woudenberg
Örs Köszeghy
Lucia Swarts
Marjolein Meijer
Eduard van Regteren
Altena
Rares Mihailescu

double bass

Pieter Smithuijsen
Quirijn van Regteren
Altena

guitar

Paul van Utrecht

bass guitar

Patricio Wang

piano

René Eckhardt
Pauline Post

harp

Ernestine Stoop

percussion

Ger de Zeeuw
Wim Vos
Steeff Gerritse

cimbalom

Michiel Weidner

Cacciaguida's

Monologue (Part V)

alto saxophone

David Kweksilber

horn

Fokke van Heel

Jose Luis Sogorb
Pieter Hunfeld
Laurens Woudenberg

tuba

David Kutz

cimbalom

Jan Rokyta

marimba

Joey Marijs

drums

Hans van der Meer

piano

René Eckhardt

electric bass guitar

Sjeng Schupp

Synergy Vocals

director

Micaela Haslam

sopranos

Micaela Haslam
Amanda Morrison

altos

Rachel Weston
Heather Cairncross

tenors

Andrew Busher
Gerard O'Beirne

basses

Gabriel Gottlieb
Paul Charrier

Children's Chorus de Kickers
of Music School Waterland

conductor: Jan Maarten
Koeman

Louis Andriessen

La Commedia

Part I DE STAD VAN DIS OF: HET NARRENSCHIP

CHOIR:

Psalm 107

Hic sunt qui descendunt mare in navibus
Facientes occupationem in aquis multis.
Ascendunt ad caelos et descendunt ad abyssos
Anima eorum in malis tabescebat,
Turbati sunt et moti sunt sicut ebrius,
Et omnis sapientia eorum devorata est.

*From 'The Guild
of the Blue Barge'*

Ende alle ghesellen van wilde manieren
Ontbieden wi gruete ende saluut,
Te comen in die Blauwe Scuit
Ende in der Blauwer Scuten ghilde.

Dat sijn onse verloren kinderen
Ende die gheringhe sijn ter hant
Te slaen voer hoeft of mont of tant,
Ende die dor dobbelen of drincken,
Singhen, springhen ende clincken,
Ende die ghaerne belleren met sconen vrouwen,
Die sullen dat ghilde ophouwen.
Ende in rechter caritaet:
Hiermede is 't dat men die Scuit laed.

BEATRICE:

Inferno 2/70

Inferno 2/72

I' son Beatrice che ti faccio andare;
Amor mi mosse, che mi fa parlare.
Quando sarò dinanzi al signor mio,
Di te mi loderò sovente a lui.

CHOIR:

(DANTE):

Inferno 8/10

Across the dirty waves
You can already see what we expected,
If the reeking swamp does not obscure it.

Inferno 8/15

I saw a little boat
Coming towards us on the water
With a single boatsman steering
My guide descended down into the boat

Inferno 8/25

(MARIA):

Inferno 2/98

Or ha bisogno il tuo fedele di te.

(MARIA + LUCIA):

Ahi! Ahi!

(DANTE):

Inferno 8/31

And while we sailed the dead canal,
Before me rose a shadow, thick with mud, saying:
'Who are you, who come before your time?'
My master quickly pushed him back, saying:
'Get away with the other dogs!'
But in my ears pounded a sound so loud
That I strained my eyes to see ahead.

Inferno 8/41

Inferno 8/65

(VERGILIUS):

Inferno 8/67

My son, the city with the name of Dis is drawing near,
coi gravi cittadin, col grande stuolo.

(DANTE):

Inferno 8/70

Maestro, già le sue meschite
là entro certe ne la valle cerno,
vermiglie come se di foco uscite
fossero.

(VERGILIUS):

Inferno 8/73

Il foco eterno
ch'entro l'affoca le dimostra rosse,
come tu vedi in questo basso inferno.

Inferno 8/76

Then we arrived in those deep waters
that circled all around that disconsolate land
whose walls, it seemed, were made of iron.

<i>Inferno</i> 8/79	But not before we'd sailed a long bend we arrived at a place where our boatsman shouted:		che 'nviscava la ripa d'ogne parte. I' vedea lei, ma non vedëa in essa mai che le bolle che 'l bollor levava, e gonfiar tutta, e riseder compressa.
<i>Inferno</i> 8/81	'Usciteci, qui è l'intrata.'	<i>Inferno</i> 21/20	
(DANTE):			
	Io vidi più di mille in su le porte da ciel piovuti, che stizzosamente dicean: 'Chi è costui che senza morte va per lo regno de la morta gente?'	<i>Inferno</i> 21/29	e vidi dietro a noi un diavol nero correndo su per lo scoglio venire. Ahi quant' elli era ne l'aspetto fero! e quanto mi pareva ne l'atto acerbo, con l'ali aperte e sovra i piè leggero!
<i>Inferno</i> 8/84		<i>Inferno</i> 21/32	
<i>Inferno</i> 9/37	in un punto furon dritte ratto tre furie infernal di sangue tinte, che membra feminine avieno e atto, e con idre verdissime eran cinte; serpentelli e ceraste avien per crine, onde le fiere tempie erano avvinte.	<i>Inferno</i> 21/76	'Vada Malacoda!'
<i>Inferno</i> 9/40	With their nails the three tore their breasts, Beating themselves with their palms, and screamed so loud that I pressed myself against my poet.	<i>Inferno</i> 21/97	I' m'accostai con tutta la persona lungo 'l mio duca, e non torceva li occhi da la sembianza lor ch'era non buona. Ei chinavan li raffi e 'Vuò' che 'l tocchi, diceva l'un con l'altro, 'in sul groppone?' E rispondien: 'Sì, fa che gliel' accocchi!'
<i>Inferno</i> 9/49		<i>Inferno</i> 21/100	
<i>Inferno</i> 9/51			
<i>Inferno</i> 9/64	And then, over the turbid waves there came a terrifying noise, because of which both shores began to tremble;	<i>Inferno</i> 21/106	Poi disse a noi: 'Piu oltre andar per questo iscoglio non si può, però che giace tutto spezzato al fondo l'arco sesto. E se l'andare avante pur vi piace, andatevene su per questa grotta; presso è un altro scoglio che via face.
<i>Inferno</i> 9/79	I saw more than a thousand ruined souls, fleeing before a figure who was walking on the Styx, his feet dry on the water.	<i>Inferno</i> 21/109	
<i>Inferno</i> 9/85	I was certain that she was sent from heaven.	<i>Inferno</i> 21/115	lo mando verso là di questi miei a riguardar s'alcun se ne sciorina; gite con lor, che non saranno rei.'
		<i>Inferno</i> 21/118	'Tra'ti avante, Alichino, e Calcabrina, ...e tu, Cagnazzo; e Barbariccia guidi la decina. Libicocco vegn' oltre e Draghignazzo, Ciriatto sannuto e Graffiacane e Farfarello e Rubicante pazzo. Cercate 'ntorno le boglienti pane;
	Part II RACCONTO DALL'INFERNO		
DANTE: <i>Catechism</i>	discesa all'inferno	<i>Inferno</i> 21/121	
<i>Inferno</i> 21/17	bollià là giuso una pegola spessa,	<i>Inferno</i> 21/124	

Inferno 21/136
costor sian salvi infino a l'altro scheggio
che tutto intero va sovra le tane.'

Inferno 21/139
Per l'argine sinistro volta diennò;
ma prima avea ciascun la lingua stretta
coi denti, verso lor duca, per cenno;
ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta.

Inferno 22/7
quando con trombe, e quando con campane,
con tamburi e con cenni di castella,
e con cose nostrali e con istrane;

Inferno 22/13
Noi andavam con li diece demoni.
Ahi! fiera compagna! ma ne la chiesa
coi santi, e in taverna coi ghiottoni.

Inferno 21/18
...de la gente ch'entro v'era incesa.

Part III LUCIFER

From: Vondel Lucifer

CHOIR:
r. 754
Toen wij op Gabriëls bazuinen,
ontvonkten en een nieuwe wijs
aanhieven, ...
r. 761
... scheen de Nijld
van onder in te sluipen.
Een groot getal der geesten stom,
en bleek en doods, ging, drom bij drom,
misnoegend henedruipen.
De wenkbrauw hing verslenst op 't oog.
Het gladde voorhoofd zette een rimpel.

r. 774
Deez' smet ontstelt het oog van 't licht.

De Hel 34/20
De Hel 34/28

De Hel 34/37

De Hel 34/46

De Hel 34/49

De Hel 34/53

1. De Wraak
From: Vondel Lucifer

LUCIFER:
r. 2036

r. 2043

r. 2046

r. 2054

r. 2061

Ziedaar nu Dis.
... de keizer van het rijk der smarten
vanaf de helft der borst het ijs ontstegen;
... een reus!
Welk een groot mirakel!
drie facies aan zijn hoofd!
onder elk gelaat twee grote vlerken,
zoals 't ook paste bij zulk een monstervogel,
onbevêerd als vleermuisvleugels,
en die vlerken sloegen zo geweldig,
dat drie orkanen door het luchtruim gierden.
Hij weende met zes ogen, en drie kinnen
bedroop een bloedig kwijl, vermengd met tranen.

Gij machten,
nu is het tijd om wraak
te nemen van ons leed en listig en verbolgen
met onverzoenbren wrok den hemel te vervolgen
in zijn verkoren beeld en 't menselijk geslacht
te smoren in zijn wieg.
Mijn wit is Adam en zijn afkomst te bederven.
Ik weet ...
... dat hij, naar lijf en ziel, met zijn nakomelingen
vergiftigd, nimmer zal ten zetel innedringen
waaruit men ons verstiet.
Natuur zal, van dien slag geteisterd, schier verteren.

Ik wil de tyrannie verheffen
en u, mijn zoons,
in kerken, zonder tal, tot aan de lucht gebouwd,
en al wat Adam teelt in eeuwigheid verdoemen,
door gruwelstuk op stuk.

2. Adams Val

From: Adam in Ballingschap

LUCIFER:

r. 31

Zo wordt het helse rijk van Lucifer gebouwd,
dat eeuwig duren zal. Geen aanslag is te stout
voor mij, die niet ontzag den hemel aan te randen.
Zo neemt mijn wraakzucht al de wereld op haar tanden
en rukt dit groot heelal al uit zijn voegen,
dat 's hemels as nog eens van mijne heirkracht kraak.

r. 63

't Waar tijd om, zonder schroom,
of Adam, of zijn gade, in hunnen eersten droom
te wekken met den slag, of, door een helsen wasem
en smook van pekstok hun het leven en den asem
Te nemen.
Zo zal de lusthof hem gedijen tot een graf,
en ik, om de lijken heen, met pek- en zwavelkransen,
hier onder 's levens boom, in 't rond triomfe dansen
en brullen dat het aarde en hemel overklonk.

3. Lucifers Triomf

From: Adam in Ballingschap, 5e bedrieff

LUCIFER:

r. 1460

r. 1472

Zo wordt mijn wraak verzaad. Nu triomfeert de hel.
Ik schuif nu glimpelijk en vals
den oorsprong van het kwaad van mij op 's vijands hals.
Laat al de wereld vrij van Adams erven krielen:

r. 1477

r. 1484

Zo veel vermag de lust, een mondvul appelsap.
De Beeldenvormer (God) zag 't wanschepsel aan, en riep:
'Helaas, nu rouwt het Mij dat Ik ooit mensen schiep.'

Part IV DE TUIN DER LUSTEN

Dante, wandelend door het Vagevuur, ziet in de verte Casella met zijn luit. Casella zingt een lied op een tekst van Dante.

CASELLA:

Convivio III, 2

Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona
de la mia donna disiosamente,
move cose di lei meco sovente,
che lo 'ntelletto sovr'esse disvia.
Lo suo parlar sì dolcemente sona,
che l'anima ch'ascolta e che lo sente
dice: "Oh me lassa! ch'io non son possente
di dir quel ch'odo de la donna mia!"

DANTE:

Purgatorio 8/25

e vidi uscir de l'alto e scender giùe
due angeli con due spade affocate,
tronche e private de le punte sue.

Purgatorio 8/28

Verdi come fogliette pur mo nate
erano in veste, che da verdi penne
percosse traean dietro e ventilate

Purgatorio 8/95

Purgatorio 8/98

'Vedi là il nostro avversaro'
... era una biscia,
forse qual diede ad Eva il cibo amaro.

Purgatorio 8/101

Tra l'erba e ' fior venia la mala striscia,
volgendo ad ora ad or la testa, e 'l dosso
leccando come bestia che si liscia.

Purgatorio 8/103

Io non vidi, e però dicer non posso,
come mosser li astor celestiali;
ma vidi bene e l'uno e l'altro mosso.

Purgatorio 8/106

Sentendo fender l'aere a le verdi ali,
fuggì 'l serpente, e li angeli dier volta,
suso a le poste rivolando iguali.

CHOIR:

Purgatorio 30/11

Song of Songs, 4/9

Vieni, vieni, o sposa, vieni con me dal Libano!
Tu mi hai rapito 'l cuore

con un solo tuo sguardo,
con una perla sola della tua collana!

DANTE:
Song of Songs, 4/10

Quanto sono soavi le tue carezze,
sorella mia, sposa,

CHOIR:
Song of Songs, 4/11

quanto più deliziose del vino le tue carezze, sposa.
L'odore dei tuoi profumi sorpassa tutti gli aromi.
Le tue labbra stillano miele vergine, o sposa,
c'è miele e latte sotto la tua lingua
e il profumo del tuo corpo è come il profumo del Libano.

Part V LUCE ETERNA

CHILDREN'S CHOIR:
Ezra 34, 35

Requiem aeternitatis dabit vobis,
quoniam in proximo est ille,
Parati estote ad praemia regni,
quia lux perpétua lucébit vobis
per aeternitatem temporis

BEATRICE:
Paradiso 5/1

Paradiso 5/4

Paradiso 5/7

Paradiso 5/10

S'io ti fiammeggio nel caldo d'amore
di là del modo che'n terra si vede
sì che del viso tuo vinco il valore,
non ti maravigliar, ché ciò procede
da perfetto veder, che, come apprende,
così nel bene appreso move il piede.
Io veggio ben sì come già resplende
ne l'intelletto tuo l'eterna luce,
che, vista, sola e sempre amore accende;
e s'altra cosa vostro amor seduce,
non è se non di quella alcun vestigio,
mal conosciuto, che quivi traluce.

DANTE:
Paradiso 12/1

Paradiso 12/4

Paradiso 12/7

CACCIAGUIDA:
Paradiso 15/92-99

Paradiso 15/100-102

Paradiso 15/109-111

Paradiso 16/52-57

Paradiso 16/67-72

Paradiso 16/88-108

No sooner had the blessed flame
begun to speak its final word,
the holy millstone began revolving, once again;

could not complete its round
before another circle was enclosing:
motion with motion and song with song;

song that surpassed all our Muses
and sirens with this sweet trumpets,
as first shining blinds what it reflects.

... Nou heb ik het over honderd jaar terug. Florence was toen
nog vredig, sober, kuis.
Je had nog geen gouden armbanden en halskettingen, geen
dure kroontjes, geen ceinturen die meer opvielen dan de
mensen die ze droegen.
Florence had Rome al bijna overtroffen in weelde, maar zal
even snel weer in verval raken.
Het zou veel beter zijn als de mensen over wie ik het heb niet
in de stad zouden wonen, maar ergens daarbuiten, zodat we
geen last hadden van de stank van die proleet van een
Aguglione en die andere uit Signa, met zijn scherpe oog, altijd
open voor oplichterspraktijken!
Het mixen van bevolkingsgroepen is altijd het begin geweest
van geestelijk verval, zoals je ziek wordt als je je volvrete met
allerlei soorten voedsel; een blinde stier struikelt eerder dan
een blind schaapje: één stiletto snijdt sneller dan vijf messen.

Ik heb gezien hoe de Ughi's en de Catellini's, de Filippi,
de Ormani, illustere families, totaal zijn weggezakt. Maar ik
heb ook nog de Soldanieri's gekend, de Ardinghi's en de
Bostichi's, en niet te vergeten de families della Sanella en
dell'Arca, toen ze nog de absolute macht bezaten, al vele jaren.

Paradiso 16/115-123

In de buurt van de poort, waar het nu een ongelooflijke rotzo
oi is, criminaliteit alom, kortom een zinkend schip, daar
woonden indertijd de Ravignani's, waar 'Count' Guido van
afstamt, en niet te vergeten al diegenen die de naam van
de Great Bellincione aannamen.

De Della Pressa's wisten al hoe je macht moest gebruiken;
en Galigáio: die had al tafelzilver ingelegd met diamanten.

Groot waren ook de Pigli's, met hun hoge koninklijke
onderscheiding: de Sachetti's, de Giuóchi's, de Fifánti's,
de Barucci's en anderen, die écht grote zaken deden.

Dan die familie van de Calfucci-dynastie, de Arrigucci's,
de Sizi's, allemaal hoge banen op de ministeries!

Dat nieuwe, onbeschofte geslacht, die clan, die een draak
wordt voor wie de stad ontvlucht, maar een lammetje voor
wie hem zijn tanden, of beter zijn geld laat zien, was al in
opkomst, hoewel nog van lage komaf, zo laag, dat Ubertain
Donato niet erg in zijn schik was toen hij aan een van die
dochters werd uitgehuwelijkt.

Rond die tijd waren de Caponsacchi's vanuit Fiesole al naar
het marktplaatsplein afgedaald; de Guidi's en de Infangati's werden
wat je noemt: 'goede burgers'.

Paradiso 17/97-99

Maar: haat je naaste niet, want jouw leven zal zich veel verder
in de toekomst uitstrekken dan de straf voor hun kwaadaardigheid.

Paradiso 17/127 en 129

Paradiso 17/124-127

Vermijd de leugen en laat ze krabben aan hun eigen schurft.
Iedereen die een slecht geweten heeft of in zijn broek schijft,
zal schrikken van wat je te zeggen hebt.

Paradiso 16/133-142

Jouw schreeuwen zal woeden als een storm die het hevigst
slaat op de hoogste toppen en dat zal je niet weinig roem
bezorgen.

Hier, op de Berg, en in het diepe dal van de Hel, zijn je alleen
bekende mensen getoond, want het publiek is niet geïnteres-
seerd in het duistere en het onbekende.

CHOIR AND BEATRICE:

CHOIR:

Paradiso 33/124

... luce eterna che sola in te sidi,
sola t'intendi, e da te intelletta

Paradiso 30/42

BEATRICE:

Paradiso 30/38

Paradiso 30/39

e intendente te ami e arridi!

...ogne dolzore

... siamo usciti ...

... al ciel ch'è pura luce:

luce intellettual, piena d'amore;

amor di vero ben, pien di letizia;

letizia che trascende ogne dolzore.

Paradiso 30/42

CHILDREN'S CHOIR:

Paradiso 19/97

Zo zijn onze noten voor jou, en als je

ze niet snapt, dan snap je het Laatste Oordeel niet,

dan snap je het nooit.



Louis Andriessen

La Commedia

Part I THE CITY OF DIS OR: THE SHIP OF FOOLS

CHOIR:

Psalm 107

Here are those that go down to the sea in ships,
that do business in great waters.
They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths:
their soul is melted because of trouble.
They reel to and fro, and stagger like drunkards,
and are at their wit's end.

*From "The Guild
of the Blue Barge"*

And all you companions of rowdy manners
we bid you with greetings and salutations
come along to the Blue Barge
and to the guild of the Blue Barge.

These are our prodigal children
who are also quick to strike
at head or mouth or tooth,
and who throw dice and drink prodigiously,
sing and leap and clink their glasses,
and who like to caper with pretty women –
They will maintain that guild
and in true charity:
with such folk the Barge is loaded.

BEATRICE:

Inferno 2/70

Inferno 2/72

I am Beatrice, who bids you to go.
Love moved me, which compelled me to speak.
When I shall be in presence of my Lord,
full often I will praise you unto him.

CHOIR:

(DANTE):

Inferno 8/10

Across the dirty waves
You can already see what we expected,
If the reeking swamp does not obscure it.

Inferno 8/15

I saw a little boat
Coming towards us on the water
With a single boatsman steering
My guide descended down into the boat

Inferno 8/25

(MARIA):

Inferno 2/98

Your faithful servant needs you.

(MARIA + LUCIA):

Ah! Ah!

(DANTE):

Inferno 8/31

And while we sailed the dead canal,
Before me rose a shadow, thick with mud, saying:
"Who are you, who come before your time?"
My master quickly pushed him back, saying:
"Get away with the other dogs!"
But in my ears pounded a sound so loud
That I strained my eyes to see ahead.

Inferno 8/41

Inferno 8/65

(VIRGIL):

Inferno 8/67

My son, the city with the name of Dis is drawing near,
With the grave citizens, with the great throng.

(DANTE):

INFERNO 8/70

Master, I see its mosques already,
clearly in the valley,
vermilion, as if issuing from the fire,
they were.

(VIRGIL):

Inferno 8/73

The fire eternal
that kindles them within makes them look red,
like you see in this nether Hell.

Inferno 8/76

Then we arrived in those deep waters
that circled all around that disconsolate land
whose walls, it seemed, were made of iron.

<i>Inferno</i> 8/79	But not before we'd sailed a long bend		that covered either side with stickiness.
<i>Inferno</i> 8/81	we arrived at a place where our boatsman shouted: "Debark, here is the entrance."	<i>Inferno</i> 21/20	I saw it, but could see nothing in it except the bubbles rising in the boiling, swelling, and then compressing back.
(DANTE):			
<i>Inferno</i> 8/84	More than a thousand at the gates I saw out of the Heavens rained down, who angrily were saying, "Who is this that without death goes through the kingdom of the dead people?"	<i>Inferno</i> 21/29	and I saw behind us a black devil running as he came up the ridge. Ah, how fierce his appearance and how ferocious his acts, with his wings open and his flying feet!
<i>Inferno</i> 9/37	Where in a moment I saw swift uprisen three infernal Furies stained with blood, who had the limbs of women and their mien, and with the greenest hydras were begirt; small serpents and cerastes were their tresses, wherewith their horrid temples were entwined.	<i>Inferno</i> 21/32	
<i>Inferno</i> 9/40	With their nails the three tore their breasts, Beating themselves with their palms, and screamed so loud that I pressed myself against my poet.	<i>Inferno</i> 21/76	Let Malacoda go!
<i>Inferno</i> 9/49		<i>Inferno</i> 21/97	I huddled against the body of my leader, and never took my eyes off their faces which were not good. They readied their hooks and Should I nick him, one said to another, on the rump? and they replied: Yes, let him have it.
<i>Inferno</i> 9/51		<i>Inferno</i> 21/100	
(LUCIFER):			
<i>Inferno</i> 9/64	And then, over the turbid waves there came a terrifying noise, because of which both shores began to tremble;	<i>Inferno</i> 21/106	Then he said to us: There is little use in going further down this ridge, for at the bottom broken in pieces lies the sixth arch. If you want to advance, come up along this rocky ledge; nearby another ridge will make a way.
<i>Inferno</i> 9/79	I saw more than a thousand ruined souls, fleeing before a figure who was walking on the Styx, his feet dry on the water.	<i>Inferno</i> 21/109	
<i>Inferno</i> 9/85	I was certain that she was sent from heaven.	<i>Inferno</i> 21/115	I am sending some of my men out there to see if anyone is taking the air; go with them, who will not harm you.
		<i>Inferno</i> 21/118	Step forward, Alichino, and Calcabrina, ... and you, Cagnazzo; and Barbariccia may lead the ten. Libicocco goes also and Draghignazzo, Ciriatto with tusks and Graffiacane and Farfarello and crazy Rubicante. Search all around the boiling glue;
	Part II RACCONTO DALL'INFERNO		
DANTE: <i>Catechism</i>	(she) descended into hell	<i>Inferno</i> 21/121	
<i>Inferno</i> 21/17	below there boiled a thick pot of pitch	<i>Inferno</i> 21/124	

keep these two safe up to the next ridge
that intact crosses all the dens.

Inferno 21/136

Along the left bank they set off;
but first they blew their tongues through
their teeth, as a sign to their leader;
and he made a trumpet of his ass.

Inferno 21/139

Inferno 22/7

sometimes with trumpets, and sometimes with bells,
with drums and with signals from the castle,
and with native things and with foreign;

Inferno 22/13

We went ahead with the ten demons.
Ah, fierce company! But in church
with saints, and in taverns with gluttons.

Inferno 21/18

...of the people stewing within it.

Part III LUCIFER

From: Vondel Lucifer

CHOIR:

r. 754

r. 761

When we, by Gabriel's trombones
aroused, poured forth with fresh acclaim,
It seems that envy's ill
from down below seeped through,
and many Spirits, silent, cowed
and deathly pale – a motley crowd –
in discontent withdrew.
Their eyelids drooping in dismay,
smooth foreheads wrinkled in disgust.

r. 774

Disgrace impairs the eye from light.

De Hel 34/20

De Hel 34/28

Behold Dis,
the Emperor of the kingdom dolorous

De Hel 34/37

De Hel 34/46

De Hel 34/49

De Hel 34/53

1. The Revenge

From: Vondel Lucifer

LUCIFER:

r. 2036

r. 2043

r. 2046

r. 2054

r. 2061

2. Adam's Fall

From: Adam in Exile

from his mid-breast forth issued from the ice;
... a giant!

O, what a marvel it appeared to me,
when I beheld three faces on his head
underneath each came forth two mighty wings,
such as befitting were so great a bird;
No feathers had they, but as of a bat
their fashion was; and he was waving them,
so that three winds proceeded forth therefrom.
With six eyes did he weep, and down three chins
trickled the tear-drops and the bloody drivel.

You Powers,
it's time revenge we gained
for all we've suffered! Heaven, let's persecute
with hate implacable and wiles astute ...
God's chosen creature and the human clan
we'll smother in the crib
My aim is - Adam and his offspring to destroy!
I'll plant in Adam and his progeny,
so poisoning them, that they will never be
admitted in our stead to Heaven's court
from where we were cast off.
Nature shall quake, thrown out of balance,
harmony destroyed,

Ever more bold, I'll spread my rule of fear ...
Henceforth, my sons, idols we shall revere,
From temple-altars in the sky extolled
Mankind entire, condemned for evermore,
God's Name with deeds atrocious to besmear ...

LUCIFER:

r. 31

Thus there shall be built the hellish kingdom of Lucifer
that shall endure forever. No onslaught is too bold
for me, who did not eschew an assault even upon heaven.
Thus my revenge seizes the whole world in its teeth
and tears this universe quite out of joint,
making heaven's axis crack beneath my army's power.

r. 63

The time has come, without scruple
to waken either Adam or his wife from their first dream
with a crash, or with a hellish cloud of vapour
and fire and brimstone rob them of life and breath.
So Eden's garden will become their grave,
and I, around their corpses, wreathed in pitch and sulphur,
beneath the Tree of Life, will dance round here triumphant,
so that all earth and heaven will echo with my roars.

3. Lucifer's Triumph

From: Adam in Exile

LUCIFER:

r. 1460

r. 1472

Thus my revenge is sated, and hell is now triumphant.
Now glibly and perfidiously I shall shift
the origin of evil from my own shoulders onto my enemy's.
Even though all the world shall crawl with Adam's heirs...

r. 1477

r. 1484

Such is the work of lust, a sip of apple juice.
The Maker beheld the monstrous being and cried:
Alas, I now repent that ever I created Man.

Part IV DE TUIN DER LUSTEN

Dante, walking through Purgatory, sees in the distance Casella with his lute.

Casella sings a song with a text by Dante.

CASELLA:

Convivio III, 2

Love that converses with me in my mind
about my lady so desiringly
often about her moves new things in me

DANTE:

Purgatorio 8/25

whereby my intellect is swayed and stirred.
So is the sound of all her speaking kind
that my soul, heedful of his melody,
can only sigh, Oh, never shall I be
able to praise my lady as I've heard.

Purgatorio 8/28

I saw sweep from above and then fly down
two angels with two flaming swords that were
broken short and snapped off at their points.

Purgatorio 8/95

Purgatorio 8/98

Green as tender leaves in bud, their robes
billowed out behind them in the breeze
which their green wings beat and fanned about them.

Look there! Our adversary!
It was a snake, the same
perhaps that offered Eve the bitter fruit.

Purgatorio 8/101

Amid the grass and flowers slid the streak
of sin, turning its head from time to time,
and licking its back like a preening beast.

Purgatorio 8/103

I did not see and so I cannot say
Just how the hawks of heaven set to move,
But I saw clearly both of them in motion.

Purgatorio 8/106

Hearing the green wings slicing through the air,
The snake crawled off; the angels wheeled around
In parallel flights back up to their two posts.

CHOIR:

Purgatorio 30/11

Song of Songs, 4/9

Come with me from the Lebanon, my bride
you have stolen my heart
with one glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.

DANTE:
Song of Songs, 4/10

How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride!

CHOIR:
Song of Songs, 4/11

How much more pleasing is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your perfume than any spice!
Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride;
milk and honey are under your tongue.
The fragrance of your body is like that of Lebanon.

Part V LUCE ETTERNA

CHILDREN'S CHOIR:
Ezra 34, 35

He will give you everlasting rest,
because he is close,
who will come at the end of the centuries,
be ready for the rewards of the kingdom,
because the everlasting light will shine upon you
for eternal times.

BEATRICE:
Paradiso 5/1

If I flame on you in the warmth of love
beyond the measure witnessed in the world
and so overwhelm the power of your eyes,
do not wonder, for this light proceeds
from perfect vision which, as it apprehends,
so moves its steps to apprehended good.
I plainly see how in your intellect
already shines eternal radiance
which, once seen, alone and always kindles love.
And should another good seduce your love,
it only is some vestige of this light,
misunderstood, which still shines through within.

DANTE:
Paradiso 12/1

No sooner had the blessed flame

begun to speak its final word,
the holy millstone began revolving, once again;

Paradiso 12/4

could not complete its round
before another circle was enclosing:
motion with motion and song with song;

Paradiso 12/7

song that surpassed all our Muses
and sirens with this sweet trumpets,
as first shining blinds what it reflects.

CACCIAGUIDA:
Paradiso 15/92-99

Paradiso 15/100-102

Paradiso 15/109-111

Paradiso 16/52-57

Paradiso 16/67-72

Paradiso 16/88-108

Look, I'm talking about a hundred years ago. Back then
Florence was still peaceful, sober, innocent.
There were no gold bracelets or necklaces, no pricey tiaras,
no belts a lot fancier than their wearers.
Florence had almost overtaken Rome in luxury but was to go
downhill again just as soon.
It'd be far better if the people I'm talking about didn't live in
town, but somewhere outside, so we'd be spared the stench of
that low life Aguglione and that other hood from Signa,
hawk-eyed, always looking out for a new scam!
In any society the rot always sets in when you mix up different
cultures, the same way you get sick when you stuff your face
with all kinds of junk; for all its size, a blind bull will stumble
sooner than a blind sheep: a single stiletto cuts better than
five knives.
I've seen classy families, the Ughis and the Catellinis, the
Filippis, the Ormanis, go right down the tubes. But I knew
the Soldanieris too, the Ardinghis and the Bostichis, and not
forgetting the Della Sanella and the Dell'Arca families, when
they controlled the whole show, for years.
The district near the gate, where now it's the pits and crime's
gotten out of hand, in short, where the writing's on the wall,
was once the home of the Ravignanis, from whom 'Count'
Guido is descended, and not forgetting all those who adopted
the name of the Great Bellincone.

Paradiso 16/115-123

The Della Pressas knew how to use their power; and as for Galigaio, he had tableware inlaid with diamonds.
The Piglis were bigshots too, with their friends in high places; the Sachettis, the Giuochis, the Fifantis, the Baruccis and the rest, all real big-business.

Then there was that family from the Calfucci dynasty, the Arriguicis, the Sizis, with their top government jobs! Those upstarts with attitude, that bunch who act tough with refugees from the city, but are as meek as lambs with those who stand up to them, or rather flash their wads, they were already on the way up, but they were still low-class, so low that Ubertain Donato was none too pleased when he was hitched to one of their daughters.

Around that time the Caponsacchis had worked their way down from Fiesole to the market square; the Guidis and the Infangatis became what you call solid citizens'.

Paradiso 17/97-99

But don't fume at your fellow men, because you'll have a future that outlasts the evil shit for which they took the rap.

Paradiso 17/127 en 129

Tell the truth and let them scratch their sores.

Paradiso 17/124-127

Those with bad consciences will pee their pants in terror at your words.

Paradiso 16/133-142

Your cries will be a hurricane, striking hardest on the highest peaks, and that will make your name.

Here, on the Mount, and in the deepest depths of Hell, you've only been shown the celebs, because the public is not interested in the dark and the unknown.

CHOIR AND BEATRICE:

CHOIR:

Paradiso 33/124

Everlasting Light, you dwell alone
in yourself, know yourself alone, and known
and knowing, love and smile upon yourself!
... every sweetness.

Paradiso 30/42

BEATRICE:

Paradiso 30/38

We have come to this heaven of pure light:
light of the intellect, light full of love,
love of true good, love full of joyousness,

Paradiso 30/42

joyfulness surpassing every sweetness.

CHILDREN'S CHOIR:

Paradiso 19/97

These are all my notes for you,
and if you do not get it,
you won't get the Last Judgement
you will never get it, ever.

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Part I

Psalm 107: King James Bible

Fragments from “The Guild of the Blue Barge.” Translation: Paul Vincent.

Dante, *Divina Commedia*, *Inferno*. Translation: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Louis Andriessen.

Part II

Translation: John Henken. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Part III

Joost van den Vondel, *Lucifer*. Translation © Noel Clark. Published by Oberon Books.

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Joost van den Vondel, *Adam in Ballingschap*. Translation: Paul Vincent.

Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia* – *Inferno*, canto 34. Translation: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Part IV

Dante Alighieri, *Convivio*. Translation: Joseph Tusiani, *Dante’s Lyric Poetry*, published by Legas, New York, 1999.

Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia* – *Purgatorio*, cantos 8 and 30.

Translation: James Finn Cotter; revised edition published by Forum Italicum Publishing, 2000.

Part V

Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia* – *Paradiso*, canto 5.

Translation: James Finn Cotter; revised edition published by Forum Italicum Publishing, 2000.

Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia* – *Paradiso*, cantos 12 and 19.

Translation: Louis Andriessen.

Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia* – *Paradiso*, cantos 15 and 16, Cacciaguida’s monologue.

Dutch adaptation: Louis Andriessen. English translation: Paul Vincent.

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