

CONCERT PROGRAM

Friday, February 24, 2017 at 8:00PM

Saturday, February 25, 2017 at 8:00PM

Sir Andrew Davis, conductor

John Relyea, bass

St. Louis Symphony Chorus

Amy Kaiser, director

NICOLAI *Overture to *The Merry Wives of Windsor**
(1810–1849) *(Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor)* (1849)

ELGAR *Falstaff, Symphonic Study in C minor, op. 68* (1913)
(1857–1934) Falstaff and Prince Henry –
Eastcheap – Gadshill – The Boar's Head, revelry and sleep
Dream Interlude: Jack Falstaff, now Sir John, a boy, and page to
Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk –
Falstaff's march – The return through Gloucestershire –
Interlude: Gloucestershire. Shallow's orchard –
The new king – The hurried ride to London –
King Henry V's progress – The repudiation of Falstaff,
and his death

INTERMISSION

WALTON *Belshazzar's Feast* (1931)
(1902–1983) Thus spake Isaiah
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem –
Babylon was a great city
In Babylon Belshazzar the King made a great feast –
Praise ye, the God of Gold –
Thus in Babylon, the mighty city –
And in that same hour –
Then sing aloud to God our strength
The trumpeters and pipers
Then sing aloud to God our strength

John Relyea, bass

St. Louis Symphony Chorus

Amy Kaiser, director

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These concerts are part of the Wells Fargo Advisors Orchestral Series.

Sir Andrew Davis is the Felix and Eleanor Slatkin Guest Artist.

The concert of Friday, February 24, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Linda and Paul Lee.

Pre-Concert Conversations are sponsored by Washington University Physicians.

Large print program notes are available through the generosity of The Delmar Gardens Family, and are located at the Customer Service table in the foyer.

CONCERT CALENDAR

For tickets call 314-534-1700, visit stlsymphony.org, or use the free STL Symphony mobile app available for iOS and Android.

FRANÇOIS RIVERO



Bernard Labadie

ALL-BACH

**Fri, Mar 3, 10:30am | Sat, Mar 4, 8:00pm
Sun, Mar 5, 3:00pm**

Bernard Labadie, conductor; Mark Sparks, flute

BACH Orchestral Suite No. 1
BACH Orchestral Suite No. 2
BACH Orchestral Suite No. 3
BACH Orchestral Suite No. 4

J. HENRY FAIR



Stéphane Denève

ALPINE SYMPHONY

Fri, Mar 10, 8:00pm | Sat, Mar 11, 8:00pm

Stéphane Denève, conductor; Steven Osborne, piano

BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 1
STRAUSS *Eine Alpensinfonie (An Alpine Symphony)*

Presented by The Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation

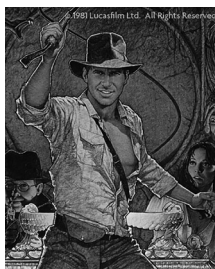


STL SYMPHONY + SAINT LOUIS ZOO SYMPHONIC SEASONS Sun, Mar 12, 3:00pm

The STL Symphony rejoins forces with the Saint Louis Zoo to take you on a musical journey through the four seasons!

Sponsored by Caleres

Presented in partnership with the Saint Louis Zoo



RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

**Fri, Mar 17, 7:00pm | Sat, Mar 18, 7:00pm
Sun, Mar 19, 2:00pm**

Scott Terrell, conductor

The film that gave the world one of its greatest movie heroes, archeologist Indiana Jones, is back and better than ever before! Filled with epic twists and legendary adventures, relive the excitement of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* on the big screen with the STL Symphony performing John Williams' epic score live!

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LITERARY ENGAGEMENTS

BY RENÉ SPENCER SALLER

TIMELINKS

1849

NICOLAI

Overture to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Harriet Tubman escapes slavery in Maryland.

1913

ELGAR

Falstaff, Symphonic Study in C minor, op. 68
Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* is premiered in Paris.

1931

WALTON

Belshazzar's Feast

Al Capone is convicted of tax evasion and sentenced to prison.

The three works on this program all derive from literary sources. Otto Nicolai's overture to his opera *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor* is based on William Shakespeare's comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, specifically its leading man, the oafish Falstaff. Edward Elgar's tone poem *Falstaff* is based on the same fictional character, but from a different source: Shakespeare's history plays *Henry IV*, parts I and II, and *Henry V*. Elgar had loved Shakespeare since adolescence, when a carpenter who worked at his father's music shop introduced him to several of the Bard's soliloquies. Decades later, the middle-aged composer set out to convey all the psychological depth and nuanced pathos in Shakespeare's beloved fool.

Finally, in the cantata *Belshazzar's Feast*, William Walton recounts the Biblical story of the Jews, exiled in Babylon, who regain their freedom after Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, is struck dead for his impious use of their sacred vessels. The libretto was compiled by Walton's friend and benefactor Osbert Sitwell, who drew from various passages in the Old Testament, primarily the Book of Daniel and Psalms 81 and 137, as well as snippets from the New Testament's Book of Revelation. Walton took his source material very seriously, spending nearly eight full months just to set the word "gold."

OTTO NICOLAI

Overture to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*
(*Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*)

FOOLING THE FOOL

Born in Königsberg, Germany, in 1810, Otto Nicolai had a brief but eventful life in music. After his father's unsuccessful efforts to market him as a prodigy, Nicolai ran away from home at 16 and continued his education in Berlin, with help from a generous benefactor. At age 23, he became an organist at the chapel of the German embassy in Rome, where he tried, unsuccessfully, to establish himself as an opera composer. In 1837, he accepted the position of Kappellmeister at the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna, but his contract was not renewed after his first year. He returned to Italy, where he composed and staged four operas in three years. In 1841, he returned to Vienna, where he was appointed principal conductor of the Vienna Court Opera, which became the Vienna Philharmonic during his tenure. (He is credited as the founder and honored every year with the "Nicolai Concert.") His last position was as Kappellmeister at the Berlin Court Opera, where he was employed until he suffered a fatal stroke at 39.

Today Nicolai is known mostly for his sole German-language opera, *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*, which was premiered at the Berlin Court Opera House on March 9, 1849, just two months and two days before he died. The libretto, by S.H. Mosenthal, is based on Shakespeare's famous comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The music of the overture is derived from the opera, with a particular emphasis on the midnight scene in Windsor Park, wherein the hapless hero is fooled into believing that a gaggle of local children—disguised by the merry wives of the title—are actually fairies. The overture opens softly, in an enchanted, nocturnal atmosphere. Before long, the tempo picks up speed, and the main theme emerges, a dramatic motive that represents Falstaff's encounter with the fairies, who pinch and burn him. The lyrical contrasting theme, marked "sweetly, with spirit," represents Anne Page, the nubile daughter of one of the merry wives. The overture ends with a march-like



Born

June 9, 1810, Königsberg,
Germany

Died

May 11, 1849, Berlin, Germany

First Performance

March 9, 1849, Berlin,
Nicolai conducting

STL Symphony Premiere

November 19, 1961, Edward
Murphy conducting

Most Recent STL Symphony Performance

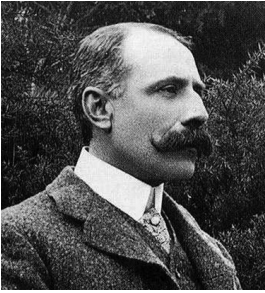
July 27, 1980, Laumeier Park,
Gerhardt Zimmermann
conducting

Scoring

2 flutes
piccolo
2 oboes
2 clarinets
2 bassoons
4 horns
2 trumpets
3 trombones
timpani
percussion
strings

Performance Time

approximately 8 minutes

**Born**

June 2, 1857, Broadheath,
United Kingdom

Died

February 23, 1934, Worcester,
United Kingdom

First Performance

October 1, 1913, Leeds, United
Kingdom, Elgar conducting

STL Symphony Premiere

March 15, 1979, Sir Charles
Mackerras conducting

**Most Recent STL Symphony
Performance**

September 27, 1986 Raymond
Leppard conducting

Scoring

2 flutes
piccolo
2 oboes
English horn
2 clarinets
bass clarinet
2 bassoons
contrabassoon
4 horns
3 trumpets
3 trombones
tuba
timpani
percussion
2 harps
strings

Performance Time

approximately 35 minutes

melody taken from the final scene of the opera, when the chorus delivers the closing adage: “He who tries to deceive other people oft himself is caught in his net.”

EDWARD ELGAR

Falstaff, Symphonic Study in C minor, op. 68

THE WHOLE HUMAN LIFE

Edward Elgar’s *Falstaff* is not the comical buffoon of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* but the more complex and tragic figure of Shakespeare’s history plays *Henry IV*, parts I and II, and *Henry V*. Subtitled *Symphonic Study*, the tone poem *Falstaff* was commissioned by the Leeds Festival in 1912 and, under Elgar’s baton, first performed on October 1, 1913. Before the premiere, the 56-year-old composer expressed his optimism to a reporter: “I have, I think, enjoyed writing it more than any other music I have composed and perhaps for that reason it may prove to be among my better efforts.”

In a letter to the critic Ernest Newman, dated a few days before the work’s premiere, Elgar explained that “*Falstaff*... is the name but Shakespeare—the whole of human life—is the theme ... I have made a larger canvas, and over it all runs—even in the tavern—the undercurrent of our failings and sorrows.”

A CLOSER LISTEN

In a lengthy analysis published before the premiere, Elgar explained that the work comprises “four principal divisions which run without break.” (There are actually six if the two musical interludes are counted separately.) The first section introduces Falstaff’s theme, limned in cellos, bass clarinet, and bassoons. The protagonist is, in Elgar’s words, “in a green old age, mellow, frank, gay, easy, corpulent, loose, unprincipled and luxurious.” By contrast, the future Henry V—or Hal, as his boisterous comrades call him—is represented by a “courtly and genial” theme sung by the cellos.

In the second section, Prince Hal visits Falstaff and his rowdy associates at the Boar’s Head tavern in Eastcheap. The lively atmosphere

is depicted in “short, brisk phrases” that “chatter, blaze, glitter, and coruscate.” After taking leave of the prince, Falstaff and his cronies rob a coach, but Hal shows up to steal their spoils. The fat old knight returns to the tavern, drunk and incoherent (listen for the bumbling solo bassoon). He falls into a deep, snoring sleep, and the subsequent interlude, scored for solo violin, strings, harp, and woodwinds, depicts his pleasant dreams of youth, when “he was page to the Duke of Norfolk.”

Falstaff awakens to a brass fanfare, which opens the third section. He marches off to fight in the Midlands and acquires a rabble of misfit soldiers along the way. A second interlude, also scored for a smaller ensemble, evokes “sadly merry pipe and tabour music.” While tromping through rural Gloucestershire, the “scarecrow army” learns that the fourth King Henry has died, leaving Prince Hal as his successor. Falstaff hurries back to London, expecting to become “fortune’s steward.”

In the final section, Falstaff and his uncouth entourage attend the coronation of Henry V in Westminster. Hal’s theme, now resplendent, evokes his newfound majesty. When his old friend excitedly greets him, Henry is cold: “How ill white hairs become a fool and jester—I banish thee on pain of death.” Devastated, Falstaff withdraws and eventually dies to the strains of a mournful clarinet and a gentle C major chord voiced by the brass. *Falstaff* ends with King Henry’s theme in ascendance. As Elgar wrote, “the man of stern reality has triumphed.”

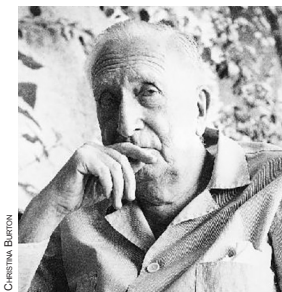
WILLIAM WALTON

Belshazzar’s Feast

A FEARSOME FEAST

In 1929 the BBC asked the 27-year-old William Walton to compose a small choral work for radio broadcast. Osbert Sitwell, the composer’s friend and longtime housemate, suggested a cantata based on the Biblical story of the Babylonian tyrant Belshazzar, whose impious use of the exiled Jews’ sacred vessel led to his death and the Jews’ liberation. Sitwell assembled the text from Biblical passages, and Walton got to work on the music. Progress was slow and painstaking. “I got landed on the word *gold*,” Walton later recalled. “I was there from May to December, perched, unable to move either right or left or up or down.” Although the BBC had requested a work requiring no more than 15 instruments, Walton kept expanding his sonic forces.

By the time *Belshazzar’s Feast* was completed, in 1931, it was a monumental oratorio: brief, at approximately 35 minutes, yet scored for a gigantic orchestra, a large chorus, and a baritone soloist, who serves as narrator. Because the BBC orchestra lacked the resources for such a huge undertaking, *Belshazzar’s Feast* was transferred to the Leeds Festival, which was preparing to mount Hector Berlioz’s similarly enormous *Requiem*. Seventeen years after Malcolm Sargent conducted the first performance in Leeds, Walton revised *Belshazzar’s Feast*. Sargent presented the revised version two years later at the Royal Albert Hall.



CHRISTINA BURTON

Born

March 29, 1902, Oldham,
United Kingdom

Died

March 8, 1983, Ischia, Italy

First Performance

October 8, 1931, Dennis
Noble was the soloist and
Malcolm Sargent conducted

STL Symphony Premiere

March 5, 1937, Vladimir
Golschmann conducting

Most Recent STL Symphony Performance

March 6, 2004, Richard
Hickox conducting

Scoring

solo bass
chorus
2 flutes
piccolo
2 oboes
3 clarinets
bass clarinet
E-flat clarinet
alto saxophone
2 bassoons
contrabassoon
4 horns
3 trumpets
3 trombones
tuba
timpani
percussion
2 harps
organ
strings

Performance Time

approximately 36 minutes

FORM AND STRUCTURE

Walton considered *Belshazzar's Feast* to be a three-movement choral symphony rather than a strict oratorio or cantata. Although it is cast as a single long movement, performed without interruption, it comprises ten distinct sections. The first, "Thus spake Isaiah," serves as solemn exposition. Next, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem" finds the chorus and soloist reminiscing about the Jewish homeland, Zion, and bitterly lamenting their captivity in Babylon. The next four sections describe, in vivid tonal colors, the decadent savagery of life under Belshazzar's rule. The final four numbers cover the climax and dénouement, from the spooky apparition of the mysterious hand that writes a prophecy of the king's doom—"Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting!"—to the king's death ("slain!" the chorus exults), the fall of Babylon, and the enslaved Jews' euphoric deliverance.

A LAVISH MUSICAL BANQUET

Belshazzar's Feast presents the choristers with many daunting challenges. The altos sometimes sing higher than the sopranos, and there are numerous shifts in time signature. The singers must make rapid transitions from loud to soft, and the harmonies often flirt with dissonance. The rhythms are jazzy, with tricky syncopation and unpredictable, speech-like cadences.

Walton's orchestration is equally complex. A high E-flat clarinet and an alto saxophone impart unusual brilliance, as do the many percussion instruments, which include woodblock, gong, tambourine, whip, and anvil. Traces of big band jazz abound, from the wildly exuberant rhythms to the pungent harmonies. In the eerie lead-up to "the writing on the wall" passage, Walton brings to mind Richard Strauss's opulent orchestration for *Salome*. Such heathen touches might explain why the Church of England banned its performance in cathedrals until 1957 and why Walton's biographer Michael Kennedy called it "a human drama, not a religious experience."

FROM THE STAGE

Daniel Brodsky on Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*:

“The central portion of *Belshazzar's Feast*—the most mesmerizing part: the story of the brazen ruler commanding his followers to drink from the sacred vessels from the sacred temple of the Jews—is taken from Chapter 5 of the biblical Book of Daniel. You should read the King James version—it is basically the libretto that Osbert Sitwell used for *Belshazzar*. Anyway, we all know the story now: Belshazzar defiantly hosts the glorious feast in his court, and in the middle of the revelry, a man's hand mysteriously appears and writes on the wall those famous words ‘Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.’ And then Belshazzar is slain (‘SLAIN!’) and his kingdom is divided. It's a great story, and it inspired many artists. On the cover of our scores is Rembrandt's take on the story.”

Daniel Brodsky is a member of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus.



Belshazzar's Feast by Rembrandt, c. 1635

JOHN RELYEA



John Relyea

John Relyea continues to distinguish himself as one of today's finest basses. He has appeared in many of the world's most celebrated opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Paris Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, Vienna State Opera, Theater an der Wien, and the Mariinsky Theater.

He is in high demand throughout the concert world where he appears regularly with orchestras such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, and the Berlin Philharmonic.

In recital, he has been presented at Weill Hall and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the Wigmore Hall in London, the University Musical Society in Ann Arbor, and the University of Chicago Presents series.

His recordings include the Verdi Requiem, *Idomeneo* with Sir Charles Mackerras and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with Sir Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and the Metropolitan Opera's DVD presentations of *Don Giovanni*, *I Puritani*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and *Macbeth*.

This season, he returns to the Metropolitan Opera to perform the role of Gessler in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, and debuts at the Opera di Roma in the role of König Marke in *Tristan und Isolde*. He appeared in the inaugural week of the Elbphilharmonie, performing Haydn's Creation with the NDR, and performs his signature role of Bluebeard at the Philharmonie de Paris, Philadelphia Orchestra, and at the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico.

SIR ANDREW DAVIS

FELIX AND ELEANOR SLATKIN GUEST ARTIST

Sir Andrew Davis has served as music director and principal conductor of Lyric Opera of Chicago since 2000. He began his tenure as chief conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in January 2013. Through his recordings, his many international tours, and guest appearances and relationships with several of the finest orchestras and opera companies in Europe, North America, and Australia, he is one of today's most recognized and acclaimed conductors.

This season Davis conducts three operas at the Lyric: Wagner's *Das Rheingold* in a new production of the Ring cycle which will be presented in installments over the next four seasons, Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, and Massenet's *Don Quichotte*. Guest engagements this season include the Cleveland Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and the Edinburgh International Festival, alongside his regular appearances with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Bergen Philharmonic in Norway.

Davis's career spans over forty years in which he has been the artistic leader at several of the world's most distinguished opera and symphonic institutions, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. In addition to those ensembles, he has appeared with virtually every other internationally prominent orchestra, including the Berlin Philharmonic, the Royal Concertgebouw, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, and all the major British orchestras.

Born in 1944 in Hertfordshire, England, Davis studied at King's College, Cambridge, where he was an organ scholar before taking up conducting. In 1992, he was created a Commander of the British Empire, and in 1999 he was designated a Knight Bachelor in the New Year Honours List. He has been awarded an honorary doctorate by Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois.



Sir Andrew Davis

AMY KAISER

AT&T FOUNDATION CHAIR



Photo: © Michael O'Connell

Amy Kaiser

Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus since 1995, Amy Kaiser is one of the country's leading choral directors. She has conducted the St. Louis Symphony in Handel's *Messiah*, Schubert's Mass in E-flat, Vivaldi's Gloria, and sacred works by Haydn and Mozart as well as Young People's Concerts. A regular guest conductor for the Berkshire Choral Festival in Sheffield, Massachusetts; in Santa Fe; and at Canterbury Cathedral; as well as Music Director of the Desoff Choirs in New York for 12 seasons, she has led many performances of major works at Lincoln Center. Other conducting engagements include concerts at Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival and more than fifty performances with the Metropolitan Opera Guild. Principal Conductor of the New York Chamber Symphony's School Concert Series for seven seasons, Kaiser also led many programs for the 92nd Street Y's acclaimed *Schubertiade*. She has conducted more than twenty-five operas, including eight contemporary premieres.

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY CHORUS 2016-2017

Amy Kaiser <i>Director</i>	Amy Telford Garcés Amy Gatschenberger Lara B. Gerassi Allison Glass Megan E. Glass Susan Goris Tyler Green Philip Greenwood Tevia Grimenstein Susan H. Hagen Carlea B. Halverson Sue Harrington Nancy Helmich Ellen Henschen Jeffrey Heyl Lori Hoffman Heather Humphrey Kerry Jenkins Edina Kiss Patricia Kofron Elena Korpalski Adam Kosberg Christina Kruger Paul Kunnath Debby Lennon Gregory C. Lundberg Gina Malone Alicia Matkovich Patrick Mattia Elizabeth McKinney Celia R. McManus Scott Meidroth Katherine Menke Jei Mitchell Brian Mulder Duane L. Olson Malachi Owens, Jr. Susan D. Patterson Matt Pentecost Brian Pezza Shelly Ragan Pickard David Pierce Clay Pulsipher Sarah Price Valerie Christy Reichert	Kate Reimann Jonathan Richey Patti Ruff Riggle Greg J. Riddle Stephanie Robertson Michelle Rose Terree Rowbottom Nathan Tulloch Ruggles Paul N. Runnion Mark Saunders Leann Schuering Janice Simmons-Johnson Charles G. Smith Nick Spector Adam Stefo Clark Sturdevant Jasper K. Sussman Maureen Taylor Michelle Taylor Nora Teipen Byron E. Thornton Natanja Tomich Diane Toomey Philip Touchette DeWayne Trainer Pamela Triplett David R. Truman Greg Upchurch Samantha Wagner Nancy Maxwell Walther Keith Wehmeier Nicole Weiss Alexander Weymann Paul A. Williams Mary Murphy Wissinger Ruth Wood-Steed Susan Donahue Yates Carl Scott Zimmerman Daniel Zipperer
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BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

Thus spake Isaiah:

Thy sons that thou shalt beget
They shall be taken away,
And be eunuchs
In the palace of the King of Babylon
Howl ye, howl ye, therefore:
For the day of the Lord is at hand!

By the waters of Babylon,
There we sat down: yea, we wept
And hanged our harps upon the willows.

For they that wasted us
Required of us mirth;
They that carried us away captive
Required of us a song.
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

How shall we sing the Lord's song
In a strange land?

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning.
If I do not remember thee,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.
Yea, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

By the waters of Babylon
There we sat down: yea, we wept.

O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed,
Happy shall he be that taketh thy children
And dasheth them against a stone,
For with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down
And shall be found no more at all.

Babylon was a great city,
Her merchandise was of gold and silver,
Of precious stones, of pearls, of fine linen,
Of purple, silk and scarlet,
All manner vessels of ivory,
All manner vessels of most precious wood,
Of brass, iron and marble,
Cinnamon, odours and ointments,
Of frankincense, wine and oil,
Fine flour, wheat and beasts,
Sheep, horses, chariots, slaves
And the souls of men.

In Babylon Belshazzar the King made a great feast,
Made a feast to a thousand of his lords,
And drank wine before the thousand.

Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine,
Commanded us to bring the gold and silver vessels:
Yea! the golden vessels, which his father, Nebuchadnezzar,
Had taken out of the temple that was in Jerusalem.

He commanded us to bring the golden vessels
Of the temple of the house of God,
That the King, his Princes, his wives
And his concubines might drink therein.

Then the King commanded us:
Bring ye the cornet, flute, sackbut, psaltery
And all kinds of music: they drank wine again,
Yea, drank from the sacred vessels,
And then spake the King:

Praise ye
 The God of Gold!
Praise ye
 The God of Silver!
Praise ye
 The God of Iron!
Praise ye
 The God of Wood!
Praise ye
 The God of Stone!
Praise ye
 The God of Brass!
Praise ye the Gods!

Thus in Babylon, the mighty city,
Belshazzar the King made a great feast,
Made a feast to a thousand of his lords
And drank wine before the thousand.

Belshazzar whiles he tasted the wine
Commanded us to bring the gold and silver vessels
That his Princes, his wives and his concubines
Might rejoice and drink therein.

After they had praised their strange gods,
The idols and the devils,
False gods who can neither see nor hear,
Called they for the timbrel and the pleasant harp
To extol the glory of the King.
Then they pledged the King before the people,
Crying, Thou, O King, art King of Kings:
O King, live for ever...

And in that same hour, as they feasted
Came forth fingers of a man's hand
And the King saw
The part of the hand that wrote.

And this was the writing that was written:
"MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN"
"THOU ART WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE
AND FOUND WANTING."
In that night was Belshazzar the King slain
And his Kingdom divided.

Then sing aloud to God our strength:
Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.
Take a psalm, bring hither the timbrel,
Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
Blow up the trumpet in Zion
For Babylon the Great is fallen, fallen.
Alleluia!

Then sing aloud to God our strength:
Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob,
While the Kings of the Earth lament
And the merchants of the Earth
Weep, wail and rend their raiment.
They cry, Alas, Alas, that great city,
In one hour is her judgement come.

The trumpeters and pipers are silent,
And the harpers have ceased to harp,
And the light of a candle shall shine no more.

Then sing aloud to God our strength.
Make a joyful noise to the God of Jacob.
For Babylon the Great is fallen.
Alleluia!

*Selection and arrangement of text from the Bible by Osbert Sitwell (1892-1969)
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