PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

The final abridged version of the first three acts intended for performance as an ‘Oratorio’ in February 2011 immediately after a similar performance in Greek of an abridged version of Prometheus Bound

ACT 1

SCENE: A RAVINE OF ICY ROCKS IN THE INDIAN CAUCASUS.

PROMETHEUS IS DISCOVERED BOUND TO THE PRECIPICE. PANTHEA AND IONE ARE SEATED AT HIS FEET.

TIME, NIGHT.
DURING THE SCENE MORNING SLOWLY BREAKS

PROMETHEUS:
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!
   The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals; the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind.
   And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar-frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
Their wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
Shall drag thee, cruel King, O Mighty God!
From thine unenvied throne, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
   Disdain! Ah, no! I pity thee. I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall.
(…)
If then my words had power —
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate — let them not lose it now!
   What was that curse? (…)

Mother, Know ye not me,
The Titan?
(…)
   Oh, rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams,
Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
To commune with me? me alone, who checked
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme.
Why answer ye not, still? Brethren!

EARTH:
They dare not.

PROMETHEUS:
Who dares? for I would hear that curse again.
Speak, Spirit! How cursed I him?

EARTH:
 How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead?

PROMETHEUS:
Thou art a living spirit; speak as they.
EARTH:
I dare not speak like life. Earnestly hearken now.

PROMETHEUS:
Obscurely through my brain, like shadows dim,
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

EARTH:
No, thou canst not hear:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die.

PROMETHEUS:
And what art thou,
O, melancholy Voice?

EARTH:
I am the Earth,
Thy mother; she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy!
[But when] our almighty Tyrant chained thee here,
my wan breast was dry
With grief; and the thin air, my breath, was stained
With the contagion of a mother's hate
Breathed on her child's destroyer; ay, I heard
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
And the inarticulate people of the dead,
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
But dare not speak them.

PROMETHEUS:
Mine own words, I pray, deny me not.
EARTH:
They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
   For know there are two worlds of life and death:
One that which thou beholdest; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang; all the gods
Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds;
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom;
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter.
Ask, and they must reply: so the revenge
Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades,
As rainy wind through the abandoned gate / Of a fallen palace.

PROMETHEUS:
   Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.
   Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear!

IONE:
My wings are folded o'er mine ears:
My wings are crossèd o'er mine eyes:
Yet through their silver shade appears,
And through their lulling plumes arise,
A Shape, a throng of sounds;
May it be no ill to thee
O thou of many wounds!
Near whom, for our sweet sister's sake,
Ever thus we watch and wake.

PANTHEA:
The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven;
The shape is awful like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
A sceptre of pale gold
To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud
His veinèd hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.
PHANTASM OF JUPITER:
Why have the secret powers of this strange world
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
On direst storms?
   And, proud sufferer, who art thou?

PROMETHEUS:
Tremendous Image, as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

PHANTASM OF JUPITER:
A spirit seizes me and speaks within:
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

PROMETHEUS:
I see the curse on gestures proud and cold,
Written as on a scroll: yet speak! Oh, speak!

PHANTASM OF JUPITER
(speaking Prometheus' forgotten curse):

Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Humankind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,

Ay, do thy worst.
Let thy malignant spirit move
In darkness over those I love:
On me and mine I imprecate
The utmost torture of thy hate;
And thus devote to sleepless agony
This undeclinching head, while thou must reign on high.
   But thou, who art the God and Lord: O, thou,
Who fill'st with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
In fear and worship: all-prevailing foe!
I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;
Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony,  
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,  
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.  
An awful image of calm power  
Though now thou sittest, let the hour  
Come, when thou must appear to be  
That which thou art internally;  
And after many a false and fruitless crime  
Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless  
[space and time.  

PROMETHEUS:  
Were these my words, O Parent?

EARTH:  
They were thine.

PROMETHEUS:  
It doth repent me: words are quick and vain;  
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.  
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

EARTH:  
Misery, Oh misery to me,  
That Jove at length should vanquish thee.

IONE:  
Fear not: 'tis but some passing spasm;  
The Titan is unvanquished still.
But see, where through the azure chasm
Of yon forked and snowy hill
Trampling the slant winds on high / With golden-sandalled feet,
A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.

PANTHEA:
'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury.

MERCURY:
Awful Sufferer!
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.

Even now thy Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here,
and leave them to their task.

Be it not so! there is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme:
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart:
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.

MERCURY:
I must obey his words and thine: alas!
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart!

PANTHEA:
See where the child of Heaven, with winged feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

PROMETHEUS:
Ah woe!
Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, for ever!
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumèd mind,
Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave.
The grave hides all things beautiful and good:
I am a God and cannot find it there.
PANTHEA:  
Alas! what sawest thou more?

PROMETHEUS:  
There are two woes:  
To speak, and to behold; thou spare me one.  
Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords, they  
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry;  
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,  
As with one voice, Truth, Liberty, and Love!  
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven  
Among them: there was Strife, Deceit, and Fear:  
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.  
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

EARTH:  
I felt thy torture, son; with such mixed joy  
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state  
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,  
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,  
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,  
Its world-surrounding aether: they behold  
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,  
The future: may they speak comfort to thee!

PANTHEA:  
Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,  
Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,  
Thronging in the blue air!

IONE:  
And see! more come,  
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,  
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.  
And, hark! is it the music of the pines?  
Is it the lake? Is it the waterfall?

PANTHEA:  
'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS:  
From unremembered ages we  
Gentle guides and guardians be  
Of heaven-oppressed mortality;  
And we breathe, and sicken not,  
The atmosphere of human thought.

IONE:
More yet come, one by one: the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

FIRST SPIRIT:
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering 'round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—
Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!
Till they faded through the sky;
And one sound, above, around,
One sound beneath, around, above,
Was moving; 'twas the soul of Love;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

SECOND SPIRIT:
On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aereal kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernes
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun ilume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!
One of these awakened me,
And I sped to succour thee.

PROMETHEUS:
How fair these airborn shapes! and yet I feel
Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far,
Asia! who, when my being overflowed,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still: alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart.

I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things:
There is no agony, and no solace left;  
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.

PANTHEA:
Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee  
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when  
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?  
   The eastern star looks white,  
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale,  
The scene of her sad exile; ruggèd once  
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;  
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,  
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow  
Among the woods and waters, from the aether  
Of her transforming presence, which would fade  
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!
SCENE ONE

MORNING.
A LOVELY VALE IN THE INDIAN CAUCASUS.
ASIA, ALONE

ASIA:
O Spring! O child of many winds.
This is the season, this the day, the hour;
At sunrise thou shouldest come, sweet sister mine,
Too long desired, too long delaying, come!
The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains: through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it: now it wanes: it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air:
'Tis lost! and through yon peaks of cloud-like snow
The roseate sunlight quivers.

[PANTHEA ENTERS]:
I feel, I see
Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,
Like stars half quenched in mists of silver dew.
Beloved and most beautiful,
How late thou art!

PANTHEA:
Pardon, great Sister! but my wings were faint
With the delight of a remembered dream,
As are the noontide plumes of summer winds
Satiate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm
Before the sacred Titan's fall and thy
Unhappy love, had made, through use and pity,
Both love and woe familiar to my heart;
[And] not as now, since I am made the wind
Which fails beneath the music that I bear,
Too full of care and pain.
ASIA:
Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream.

PANTHEA:
With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.
Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy.
    I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle through my blood
Till it became his life, and his grew mine.
    And as the rays
Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
Like footsteps of far melody: thy name
Among the many sounds alone I heard
Of what might be articulate; though still
I listened through the night when sound was none.
    I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
But fled to thee.

ASIA:
    Thou speakest, but thy words
Are as the air: I feel them not: Oh, lift
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul!

PANTHEA:
I lift them though they droop beneath the load
Of that they would express: what canst thou see
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there?

ASIA:
Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
Contracted to two circles underneath
Their long, fine lashes; dark, far, measureless,
Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.

PANTHEA:
Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed?

ASIA:
There is a change: beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape: 'tis He, arrayed
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.
Prometheus, it is thou! depart not yet!
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build o'er the waste world?

    The dream is told.
    What shape is that between us? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air.

PANTHEA:
It is mine other dream.

ASIA: It disappears.

PANTHEA: It passes now into my mind. Methought
As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond tree,
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost:
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,
O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

ASIA: As you speak, your words
Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among these lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young gray dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind;
[And] on the shadows of the morning clouds,
Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
FOLLOW, O, FOLLOW! as they vanished by;
And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
The like was stamped, as with a withering fire;
A wind arose among the pines; it shook
The clinging music from their boughs, and then
Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
Were heard: O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME!
And then I said, 'Panthea, look on me.'
But in the depth of those belovèd eyes
Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

ECHO: Follow, follow!

PANTHEA: The crags, this clear spring morning, mock our voices
As they were spirit-tongued.

ASIA: It is some being
Around the crags. What fine clear sounds! O, list!

ECHOES, UNSEEN: Echoes we: listen!
We cannot stay:
As dew-stars glisten
Then fade away--
Child of Ocean!

Oh, follow, follow,
As our voice recedeth
Through the caverns hollow,
Where the forest spreadeth;
Oh, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew,
Through the noontide darkness deep,
By the odour-breathing sleep
Of faint night-flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves,
While our music, wild and sweet,
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean!

In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken;
Child of Ocean!

ASIA:
How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind!
(…)
Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE TWO**
A PINNACLE OF ROCK AMONG MOUNTAINS.
ASIA AND PANTHEA

PANTHEA:
Hither the sound has borne us — to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy —,
The voice which is contagion to the world.
ASIA:
Fit throne for such a Power! Magnificent!
How glorious art thou, Earth! Wonderful!
Look, sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain:
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist.
Behold it, rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray,
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.
Hark! the rushing snow!
The sun-awakened avalanche! whose mass,
Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

PANTHEA:
Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
In crimson foam, even at our feet!

ASIA:
The fragments of the cloud are scattered up;
The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair;
Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes; my brain
Grows dizzy; I see thin shapes within the mist.

PANTHEA:
A countenance with beckoning smiles: there burns
An azure fire within its golden locks!
Another and another: hark! they speak!

SONG OF SPIRITS:
To the deep, to the deep,
Down, down!
Through the shade of sleep,
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and of Life;
Through the veil and the bar
Of things which seem and are
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
Down, down!

We have bound thee, we guide thee;
Down, down!
With the bright form beside thee;
Resist not the weakness,
Such strength is in meekness
That the Eternal, the Immortal,
Must unloose through life's portal
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne
By that alone.

SCENE THREE**

THE CAVE OF DEMOGORGON.
ASIA AND PANTHEA
PANTHEA:
What veilèd form sits on that ebon throne?

ASIA:
The veil has fallen.

PANTHEA: 
I see a mighty darkness
Filling the seat of power,
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.

DEMOGORGON:
Ask what thou wouldst know.

ASIA:
What canst thou tell?

DEMOGORGON:
All things thou dar'st demand.

ASIA:
Who made the living world?

DEMOGORGON:
God.

ASIA:
Who made all
That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?

DEMOGORGON:
God: Almighty God.

ASIA:
Who made that sense which, when the winds of Spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one belovèd heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?

DEMOGORGON:
Merciful God.

ASIA:
And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?
DEMOGORGON: He reigns.

ASIA:
Utter his name: a world pining in pain
Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down.

DEMOGORGON: He reigns.

ASIA:
I feel, I know it: who?

DEMOGORGON: He reigns.

ASIA:
Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow; such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them.

But he refused them
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, 'Let man be free,'
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.

To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;
And Jove now reigned: for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before.

Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
And he tamed fire.

He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook, but fell not.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars.

He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure ether shone.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain. But who rains down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which drives [man] on,
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone?
Not Jove: while yet his frown shook Heaven ay, when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

DEMEOGORGON:
All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

ASIA:
Whom calledst thou God?

DEMEOGORGON:
I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

ASIA:
Who is the master of the slave?

DEMEOGORGON:
If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets... But a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.

ASIA:
So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand; and do thou answer me
As my own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?
DEMEOGORGON:
Behold!
ASIA:
The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.

DEMOGORGON:
These are the immortal Hours,
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

PANTHEA:
See, near the verge, a chariot stays;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery; the young spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope.

SPIRIT OF THE HOUR:
My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream.
Ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE FOUR**

THE CAR PAUSES WITHIN A CLOUD ON THE TOP OF A SNOWY MOUNTAIN.

ASIA, PANTHEA, AND THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUR

PANTHEA:
Oh Spirit! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills this cloud? the sun is yet unrisen.

SPIRIT [OF THE HOUR]:
The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aereal hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.

PANTHEA:
Yes, I feel –

ASIA:
What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale.

PANTHEA:
How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled.

The Nereids tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thine uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veinèd shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
Among the Aegean isles, and by the shores
Which bear thy name; love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
And all that dwells within them; till grief cast
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came:
Such art thou now; nor is it I alone,
Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.

ASIA:
Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are; yet all love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God:
They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now; but those who feel it most
Are happier still, after long sufferings,
As I shall soon become.

PANTHEA:
List! Spirits speak.

VOICE IN THE AIR, SINGING:
Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!
ASIA:
My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside the helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound.
Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.]
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven;
  Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnace glided,
The boat of my desire is guided:
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

ACT 3

SCENE ONE

HEAVEN.

JUPITER ON HIS THRONE; THETIS AND THE OTHER DEITIES ASSEMBLED

JUPITER:
Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent.
  All else has been subdued to me; alone
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, aspiring, unrepressed —
Yet soon to fall!

  Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal child, the terror of the Earth,
Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeknown,
To redescend, and trample out the spark.
Thetis, bright image of eternity,
Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
Of the desire which makes thee one with me.
   When thou didst cry, 'Insufferable might!
God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
The penetrating presence', even then
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
 Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
Between us floats — felt, although unbeknown —
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Griding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
   Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O world,
The Earthquake of his chariot thundering up / Olympus?

[THE CAR OF THE HOUR ARRIVES. DEMOGORGON DESCENDS,
   AND MOVES TOWARDS THE THRONE OF JUPITER.]

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!

DEMOGORGON:
Eternity. Demand no direr name.
Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness.

JUPITER:
Detested prodigy! Mercy! mercy!
No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,
That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge,
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? What then art thou?
No refuge! no appeal!
Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated.
Ai, Ai!
The elements obey me not. I sink
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!
SCENE TWO**
CAUCASUS.

PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, EARTH, SPIRITS, ASIA, 
AND PANTHEA, BORNE IN THE CAR WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

HERCULES UNBINDS PROMETHEUS, WHO DESCENDS

HERCULES:
Most glorious among Spirits, thus doth strength
Minister like a slave
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
And thee, who art the form they animate.

PROMETHEUS:
Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
And long delayed.

Asia, thou light of life,
Shadow of beauty unbeheld: and ye,
Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
Sweet to remember, through your love and care:
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability?

And hither come, sped on the charmèd winds,
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free;
And lovely apparitions – dim at first, then radiant –
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.

POSTLUDE: THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUR
ASIA:
Listen; look! It is the Spirit of the Hour.

[THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUR ENTERS.]

PROMETHEUS:
We feel what thou hast heard and seen: yet speak.

SPIRIT OF THE HOUR:
Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe.

Dizzy as with delight I floated down to the Earth:
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be. I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
'All hope abandon, ye who enter here,'

Thrones, altars, judgement-seats, and prisons,
The tools and emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
Man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed,
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree;
King over himself; just, gentle, wise;
Free from guilt or pain,
[Yet not] exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

FINIS