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**Purcell**

**The Fairy Queen**

Ann Murray
Lorna Anderson
Gillian Fisher
Michael Chance
John Mark Ainsley
Ian Partridge
Richard Suart
Michael George

**The Sixteen**

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

Gramophone magazine said of The Sixteen’s recordings

“This is what recording should be about... excellent performances and recorded sound... beautiful and moving.”

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Ever since I was a boy, I have had a passion for the music of Henry Purcell but there was one particular period of my life that made me aware of his real greatness.

Soon after I left university, I was lucky enough to become a member of English Music Theatre, successor to the disbanded English Opera Group, which was the brainchild of conductor, Steuart Bedford and producer, Colin Graham under the presidency of Benjamin Britten. It was to prove an exciting existence and one production, in particular, that delighted audiences all over the world was Purcell’s Fairy Queen. I knew then that one day I wanted to perform this opera myself.

Purcell’s use of the English language is second to none but it is the magic, wit and sensuality of his music that captured my imagination. And so we spent the happiest week of our recording life in St Bartholomew’s Orford (a church often used by Britten on his beloved Suffolk coast), resulting in this recording of Purcell’s Fairy Queen. For everyone concerned with this project, fond memories abound.

Conductor
Harry Christophers
Soprano 1
Gillian Fisher
Soprano 2
Lorna Anderson
Soprano 3
Ann Murray
Alto
Michael Chance
Tenor 1
John Mark Ainsley
Tenor 2
Ian Partridge
Bass 1
Richard Suart
Bass 2
Michael George
Solo violins
David Woodcock, William Thorp
Cello & bass viol continuo
Mark Caudle
Theorbo & baroque guitar
Robin Jeffrey
Harpischord continuo
Paul Nicholson
Soprano
Fiona Clarke, Libby Crabtree, Ruth Dean, Sally Dunkley, Lynne Hirst, Carys Lane

Alto
Robin Barda, Michael Lees, Philip Newton, Christopher Royall
Tenor
Simon Berridge, Peter Burrows, Philip Daggett, Duncan MacKenzie
Bass
Simon Birchall, Robert Evans, Timothy Jones, Simon Preece
Violin
David Woodcock (Leader), William Thorp, Theresa Caudle, Marc Ashley Cooper, James Ellis, Stefanie Heichelheim, Jean Paterson, Pauline Smith
Viola
Jane Norman, David Brooker
Cello & bass viol
Mark Caudle, Katherine Sharman
Recorder
Marion Scott, Barnaby Robson
Oboe
Catherine Latham, Cherry Baker
Bassoon
Michael Brain
Harpischord
Paul Nicholson
Trumpet
Crispian Steele-Perkins, David Blackadder
Timpani
Benedict Hoffnung

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CD1

**First Musick**

1. **Prelude**
2. **Hornpipe**
3. **Air**
4. **Rondeau**
5. **Overture**

**Second Musick**

**ACT ONE**

The opera begins in the palace of the Duke. Egeus enters dragging in his daughter Hermia, and Lysander who is in love with her, to be judged before the Duke. It emerges that Egeus wants to marry Hermia to a young man called Demetrius, but Hermia who requires Lysander’s love refuses to obey him. An ancient law decrees that a daughter must marry the man her father chooses or end her days in a nunnery. Egeus requests the Duke to enforce the law and oblige Hermia to marry Demetrius. In fact, Demetrius has already been betrothed to Helena, a friend of Hermia’s but has forsaken her declaring that he no longer loves Helena but Hermia.

Lysander pleads his love for Hermia before the Duke but the latter decrees that he must yield to the law: Hermia must either marry Demetrius the next day, according to her father’s will, or enter a convent. Left alone, Lysander and Hermia resolve to flee the city. Lysander knows of a place outside Athenian jurisdiction where they can be married. They decide to meet after nightfall and leave together. As they are parting to prepare for their flight, they meet Helena and tell her of their plan.

When they have left Helena decides to tell Demetrius the next day, according to her father’s will, or enter a convent. Left alone, Lysander and Hermia resolve to flee the city. Lysander knows of a place outside Athenian jurisdiction where they can be married. They decide to meet after nightfall and leave together. As they are parting to prepare for their flight, they meet Helena and tell her of their plan. When they have left Helena decides to tell Demetrius of their flight, thinking that she will thereby persuade him to resign himself to the situation and win back his love.

Unknown to everyone, several tradesmen of the town plan to bring themselves into favour by putting on a play for Hermia’s wedding.

Their choice falls upon “The Tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe”, hardly the most appropriate piece for the occasion, but in the hands of the ignorant clowns the dramatic tale of the two lovers driven to suicide becomes a hilarious comedy. They meet at the house of Quince, the carpenter, to decide on the parts each will play. Bottom, the weaver, is the most overbearing of them all and so eager to be the star that he wants to play all the parts himself. He is given the part of Pyramus but is vexed when he learns that Pyramus is a lover: he would have preferred him to be a hero or a tyrant. On hearing that Thisbe is a female part he wants to play her too, and demonstrates in a falsetto voice that he is capable of expressing tender passion. But the others will not have it and Flute, the bellowsmender, will play Thisbe. Later on Bottom finds out that there is a lion in the play and terrifies his companions with his roars. Horrified, they all try to convince him to play Pyramus. After endless palavering they finally make up their minds to divide the parts.

Meanwhile, Titania, the Fairy Queen, arrives. She has come to this very wood fleeing from her husband Oberon. The King of the Fairies is in a jealous rage because Titania intends keeping a young orphaned Indian boy whose mother had been one of her ladies.

Enter Fairies leading in three Drunken Poets. One of them is blindfolded.

**Scene of the Drunken Poet**

**Blindfolded Poet** (Richard Suart), **Fairies** (Gillian Fisher, Lorna Anderson)

Blindfolded Poet

Fill up the bowl, then, fill up the bowl, then …

**First Fairy and Chorus**

Trip it, trip it in a ring, Around this mortal dance and sing

**Poet**

Come, come, come let us leave the town, And in some lonely place Where crowds and noise were never known Resolve to spend our days. In pleasant shades upon the grass At night ourselves we’ll lay; Our days in harmless sport shall pass, Thus time shall slide away.

Enter Fairies leading in three Drunken Poets. One of them is blindfolded.

7 **SCENE OF THE DRUNKEN POET**

**Blindfolded Poet** (Richard Suart), **Fairies** (Gillian Fisher, Lorna Anderson)

**Blindfolded Poet**

Fill up the bowl, then, fill up the bowl, then …

**First Fairy and Chorus**

Trip it, trip it in a ring, Around this mortal dance and sing
If you will know it,
FAIRIES
I'm drunk, as I live, boys, drunk.
What, what?
FAIRIES
I do confess.
What, what?
FAIRIES
Hold, you damned tormenting punk,
POET
Pinch till he confess his crimes.
Pinch him forty, forty times,
About him go, so, so,
SECOND FAIRY AND CHORUS
I am a scurvy poet.

FAIRIES
Hold, you damned tormenting punk,
POET
Pinch the wretch from top to toe;
SECOND FAIRY AND CHORUS
I'll write a sonnet in thy praise.
And as I hope to wear the boys
Good dear Devil, let me go;
Nay prithee do not pinch me so,
I confess I'm very poor,
POET
Confess more, more!

FAIRIES
Hold! Oh! oh! oh!
POET
His nonsense and his dogrel rhymes.
CHORUS
Now join your warbling voices all.

ACT TWO
Puck encounters one of Titania's fairies in the wood and learns that the Fairy Queen will keep her revels there tonight. Knowing that Oberon too intends coming to the forest, Puck warns the fairy to dissuade the Queen. But hardly has he finished speaking than both Titania and Oberon enter and find themselves face to face. Titania accuses Oberon of infidelity and taunts him with having come to Athens only to amuse himself at Hermia's wedding. Oberon reports that she is really in love with the young Indian boy, but promises to mend his ways if she will give him the boy. Titania disdainfully refuses and leaves Oberon to mend his ways if she will give him the boy. Love with the young Indian boy, but promises

POET
I confess I'm very poor,
Nay prithee do not pinch me so,
And as I hope to wear the boys
I'll write a sonnet in thy praise.

FAIRIES
Confess more, more!

POET
Hold! Oh! oh! oh!
FAIRIES
What, what?
POET
I'm drunk, as I live, boys, drunk.
FAIRIES
What art thou, speak?
POET
If you will know it,
I am a scurvy poet.

SECOND FAIRY AND CHORUS
About him go, so, so,
Pinch the wretch from top to toe;
Pinch him forty, forty times,
Pinch till he confess his crimes.

POET
Hold, you damned tormenting punk,
I do confess.

FAIRIES
What, what?

POET
Confess more, more!

FAIRIES
Pinch him, pinch him for his crimes,
His nonsense and his dogrel rhymes.

CHORUS
Drive'em hence away, away;
Let'em sleep till break of day.

The Indian boy is asleep in Titania's arms when a fairy enters to tell her that Oberon has sent Puck to watch over the boy. Titania thereupon hides him in an underground cavern and furiously leaves to confront Oberon.

CHORUS
Repeat each note, each note, each note.

The sacred Nine to bear a part;
And the blessed heavenly choir
May the god of Wit inspire
While Echo shall in sounds remote
None but the harmless and the good.

CHORAL TRIO
Come all ye songsters of the sky,
Wake, and assemble in this wood;
But no ill-boding bird be nigh,
Repeat each note, each note, each note.

Echo
Now join your warbling voices all.
SOPRANO SOLO (Lorna Anderson)

**Chorus**
Sing while we trip it upon the green;
But no ill vapours rise or fall,
Nothing offend our fairy Queen.

**Dance of Fairies**
Titania lies down and orders them to sing
to make her to sleep.

Enter Night, Mystery, Secrecy and Sleep
and their Attendants.

**Mystery** (Ann Murray)
I am come to lock all fast,
Love without me cannot last;
Love, like counsels of the wise,
Must be hid from vulgar eyes.
’Tis holy, and we must conceal it;
They profane it who reveal it.

**Secrecy** (Michael Chance)
One charming night
Gives more delight
Than a hundred lucky days.
Night and I improve the taste,
Make the pleasure longer last
A thousand, thousand several ways.

**Sleep** (Michael George)
Chorus
Hush, no more, be silent all;
Sweet repose has closed her eyes,
Soft as feathered snow does fall!
Softly, softly steal from hence.
No noise disturb her sleeping sense.

**Dance for the Followers of Night**
Titania falls asleep and the fairies and elves vanish.
Oberon steals into the glade and finds the sleeping Queen.
He squeezes the juice of the flower on her eyelids, foreseeing that she will open them upon some vile creature and fall in love with it.
After his departure
Lysander and Hermia Enter. They have lost their way wandering through the wood and are so tired that they promptly fall asleep on the turf.
Puck, still looking for Demetrius, comes upon them.
He recognizes Lysander’s clothes as those described by Oberon.
So, taking Lysander for Demetrius, he pours the love-philtre into his eyes.

**Second Act Tune: Air**
He awakens. She has had a fearful nightmare in which a serpent was eating her heart away.
She suddenly realises that she is alone and that Lysander has gone.

Helena has lost track of Demetrius and wanders forlornly into the glade where she sees the sleeping Hermia and Lysander.

Fearing that they are dead, she awakens Lysander.
Puck’s love-philtre instantly takes effect and he falls madly in love with her.
When he rapturously declares his passion, poor Helena is utterly dumbfounded.

She thinks he is making fun of her and rushes away from him.
But Lysander, leaving Hermia asleep, goes after her, calling out his love.

Hermia awakes. She has had a fearful nightmare in which a serpent was eating her heart away.
She suddenly realizes that she is alone and that Lysander has gone.

The tradesmen now take possession of the clearing to begin their rehearsal.

Several aspects of the story worry them.
In the first place, Pyramus and Thisbe, whose meetings must be kept secret from their families, whisper their words of love through a chink in a wall. Another problem is that the lovers meet by moonlight. After deliberation, they decide to disguise Starveling, the tailor, as the wall, and Snout, the tinker, will represent Moonshine, with a dog, a bush of thorns and a lantern. As they are about to begin their rehearsal, Puck enters and decides to be an auditor. After the prologue, spoken by
Quince, in which the audience is told that the actors mean only to please, Pyramus (Bottom) and Thisbe (Flute) enter and whisper their love through Starveling’s outstretched fingers that represent the cranny in the wall. They swear eternal love and try to kiss, but can only kiss the hole in the wall. Pyramus then suggests that they meet by night at Ninus’s tomb where they may kiss to their hearts’ delight. The lovers then go off. In the next scene Snout comes and tries to kiss, but can only kiss the hole in the wall. Pyramus then suggests that they swear eternal love and try to kiss, but can only kiss the hole in the wall. They whisper their love through Starveling’s arched body, through which two swans drag a bridge over the water with their arched bodies, through which two swans are seen on the stream in the distance. Two rows of bushes stand on the banks of the stream, their tops forming an arch. Two large dragons form a bridge over the water with their arched bodies, through which two swans are seen on the stream in the distance. The scene is a large forest. On either side is a long row of trees with a stream in the middle. Meanwhile Titania has reached her secret bower and starts to caress her beloved Bottom, blind to his ass’s head. What neither dares name. As when you lull the god of Love asleep. Soft, as her sighs and sweet as pearly dew. Prepare, and join your tender voices here. While the symphony is played the two swans come closer, swimming through the arches, and approach the bank. They are about to come alongside when they turn towards the fairies and dance with them. At this moment the bridge vanishes and the arched bushes stand upright. Four wild men enter and frighten the fairies away. They, too, now execute a dance before running off. Ye gentle spirits of the air, appear! Prepare, and join your tender voices here. Catch and repeat the trembling sounds anew. Soft, as her sighs and sweet as pearly dew. Run new divisions, and such measure keep As when you lull the god of Love asleep. Enter a couple of haymakers, Corden and Mopsa.

strut about the glade, braying loudly. The noise rouses the Fairy Queen from her slumber and, as Puck had intended, she forthwith falls in love with the ass. Her passion for the hideous beast is so strong that, murmuring sweet words of love, she resolves to lead him to her bower. After their departure Oberon appears. Puck tells him what has happened and he rejoices at the success of his trick. At this moment Helena and Lysander run across the clearing and Oberon realizes that Puck has mistook his man. He commands him to put matters right as soon as possible. Meanwhile Titania has reached her secret bower and starts to caress her beloved Bottom, blind to his ass’s head.

The scene is a large forest. On either side is a long row of trees with a stream in the middle. Two rows of bushes stand on the banks of the stream, their tops forming an arch. Two large dragons form a bridge over the water with their arched bodies, through which two swans are seen on the stream in the distance.

SOPRANO SOLO (Ann Murray)
If love’s a sweet passion, why does it torment? If a bitter, oh tell me whence comes my content? Since I suffer with pleasure, why should I complain, Or grieve at my fate when I know ‘tis in vain? Yet so pleasing the pain is, so soft is the dart That at once it both wounds me And tickles my heart. CHORUS
I press her hand gently, look languishing down, And by passionate silence I make my love known But oh! How I’m blest when so kind she does prove By some willing mistake to discover her love, When in striving to hide, she reveals all her flame, And our eyes tell each other What neither dares name.

SYMPHONY WHILE THE SWANS COME FORWARD

DANCE FOR THE FAIRIES

DANCE FOR THE GREEN MEN

SOPRANO SOLO (Ann Murray)
DIALOGUE BETWEEN
CORIZON AND MOPSAA
(Michael George, Michael Chance)

CORIZON
Now the maids and the men are making
of hay,
We’ve left the dull fools and are stolen away.
Then Mopsa, no more
Be coy as before,
But let’s merrily, merrily play
And kiss and kiss the sweet time away.

MOPSAA
Why, how now Sir Clown, what makes
you so bold?
I’d have ye to know I’m not made of
that mold.
I tell you again, again and again:
Maids must never kiss no men.
No, no, no, no, no,; no kissing at all;
I’ll not kiss til I kiss you for good and all.

CORIZON
Not kiss you at all?

MOPSAA
Why no, no, no, no, no.

CORIZON
Why no, no, no, no, no?

MOPSAA
I’ll not kiss, til I kiss you for good and all.

CORIZON
Should you give me a score
’Twould not lessen your store,
Then bid me cheerfully kiss
And take my fill of your bliss.

MOPSAA
I’ll not trust you so far, I know you too well;
Should I give you an inch you’d soon take
an ell.
Then lordlike you rule, and laugh at the fool.

CORIZON
So small a request,
You must not, you cannot,
you shall not deny,
Nor will I admit of another reply.

MOPSAA
Nay, what do you mean? Oh, fie, fie, fie, fie!

CORIZON
You must not, you cannot,
you shall not deny.
CD2

ACT FOUR

Oberon and Puck have found Demetrius asleep in the wood. Oberon pours the philtre on his eyelids in order that he should fall in love again with Helena. She enters the glade, still pursued by the love-sick Lysander. Helena is exasperated by his behaviour and while they are arguing Demetrius awakes. Naturally he immediately falls in love with Helena, to whom the situation has now become even more unbearable. Hermia enters, discovers that Lysander has forsaken her for Helena and accuses the young lovers. Hermia realizes that Lysander has taken her to task for the mischief she has wrought and, invisible to them, leads the four young people astray in the forest until they are exhausted and fall asleep. In the meantime, Oberon has decided to release Titania from the love-philtre’s spell. He has recovered the young Indian boy he covets and when he awakens the queen she is reconciled with him. She remembers the events of the night as no more than a dream, but is appalled at the idea that she had been in love with an ass. Puck restores Bottom to his human shape and while he, like the four young lovers, is still asleep, the fairies celebrate the break of day.

The scene changes to a garden of fountains. A symphony is played as the sun rises. At first it is a red-dish glow through the mist and as it rises it dispels the vapours and finally shines out in full splendour. The bright light reveals the gilded fountains ornamented with statues. A row of cypresses leads to a leafy bower. In front of the fountains there are marble columns and staircases with statues on pedestals. From the top of the stage large quantities of water cascade down the hill and fill the fountains on either side of the front of the stage. In the centre is a large fountain with a waterspout twelve feet high.

SYMPHONY

Enter the four Seasons and their Attendants.

AN ATTENDANT (Gillian Fisher)

CHORUS

Now the night is chased away,
All salute the rising sun;
’Tis that happy, happy day,
The birthday of King Oberon.

DUET (Simon Berridge, Philip Daggett)

Let the fifes and the clarions and shrill trumpets sound,
And the arch of high heaven the clangour resound.

ENTRY OF PHOEBUS

PHOEBUS (Ian Partridge)

When a cruel long winter has frozen the earth,
And Nature imprison’d seeks in vain to be free,
I dart forth my beams to give all things a birth,
Making spring for the plants, every flower and each tree.

CHORUS

Hail! Great parent of us all,
Light and comfort of the earth;
Before your shrine the Seasons fall,
Thou who giv’st all Nature birth.

SPRING (Lorna Anderson)

Thus – the ever grateful Spring
Does her yearly tribute bring;
All your sweets before him lay,
Then round his altar sing and play.

SUMMER (Michael Chance)

Here’s the Summer, sprightly, gay,
Smiling, wanton, fresh and fair,
Adorned with all the flowers of May,
Whose various sweets perfume the air.

AUTUMN (Ian Partridge)

See my many coloured fields,
And loaded trees my will obey;
All the fruit that Autumn yields,
I offer to the God of Day.
WINTER (Michael George)
Next Winter comes slowly, pale, meager and old,
First trembling with age, and then quivering with cold;
Benumbed with hard frosts, and with snow covered o’er,
Prays the sun to restore him, and sings as before:

Covered o’er, benumbed with hard frosts, and with snow with cold;
First trembling with age, and then quivering meager and old,
Next Winter comes slowly, pale,
Shall be well.”

Hermia will have been re-kindled, and “all sleeping Lysander: when he wakes, his love for another magic philtre to the eyelids of the still sleeping Hermia will have been re-kindled, and “all shall be well”.

ACT FIVE
Day has broken and the Duke and Egeus are hunting in the forest. To their astonishment they come upon Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius and Helena lying asleep on the ground. They awaken them and ask them how they come to be there together. The young lovers describe what has befallen them during the night and Lysander and Hermia confess that they have fled from Athens. Demetrius now admits that his love for Hermia has vanished and he loves Helena as he did before. The Duke overrides Egeus’s protests and pronounces the betrothal of Lysander and Hermia and of Demetrius and Helena. They then hasten away to Athens to celebrate the marriages. When they have left Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout and Starveling have awoken Bottom who, upon seeing his disappearance. However, the hunting-horns have wakened Bottom who, upon seeing his friends, promptly wants to tell them of a dream he has had. But they interrupt him and tell him that the lovers are already at the temple about to be married, and they all hurry away to give their play during the nuptial festivities. The Duke can hardly believe the nocturnal adventures recounted by the lovers. Whereupon all the fairies appear to convince him.

PRELUDE
Juno appears in a chariot drawn by peacocks. While the Prelude is played they move forward, spreading their tails, which fill the middle of the stage.

JUNO (Gillian Fisher)
Thrice happy lovers, may you be for ever, ever free
From that tormenting devil, Jealousy;
From all that anxious care and strife
That attends a married life.
Be to one another true,
Kind to her as she to you,
And since the errors of this night are past,
May he be ever constant, she be ever chaste.

(Oberon commands the singing of the plaint which the nymph Laura once sang for her lost lover.)

THE PLAINT (Ann Murray)
O let me ever, ever weep,
My eyes no more shall welcome sleep;
I’ll hide me from the sight of day
And sigh and sigh my soul away.
He’s gone, he’s gone, his loss deplore,
And I shall never see him more.

(Oberon now orders Puck to summon up the shades of night, in readiness for the coming nuptial revelry.)

As the stage slowly darkens a dance is presented. Then a symphony is heard and the stage suddenly lights up, discovering a Chinese garden. The architecture, trees, plans, fruits, birds and animals are quite unlike those we know in our part of the world. There is a large arch through which can be seen other arches with close-set trees and an arbour. Above, a hanging garden rises in terraces surrounded by pleasant bowers, with a variety of trees and numerous strange birds circling about. From the topmost platform the water from a spurting fountain falls into a large pool.

Enter Chinese men and women.

ENTRY DANCE

SYMPHONY

A CHINESE MAN
(John Mark Ainsley)

Thus the gloomy world At first began to shine, And from the power divine A glory round it hurled, Which made it bright And gave it birth in light.

Then were all minds as pure As those ethereal streams, In innocence secure, Not subject to extremes. There was no room for empty fame, No cause for pride, ambition wanted aim.
20  A CHINESE WOMAN (Ann Murray)
   Thus happy and free,
   Thus treated are we
   With Nature's chiefest delights;
   We never cloy,
   But renew our joy,
   And one bliss another invites.

CHORUS
   Thus wildly we live,
   Thus freely we give
   What Heaven as freely bestows.
   We were not made
   For labour and trade,
   Which fools on each other impose.

20  A CHINESE MAN
   (John Mark Ainsley)
   Yes, Xansi, in your looks I find
   The charms by which my heart's betrayed;
   My torch indeed will from such brightness shine;
   And catching flames will on thy torch appear.
   Enter Hymen

MONKEYS' DANCE

22  A CHINESE WOMAN (Gillian Fisher)
   Hark! How all things with one sound rejoice,
   And the world seems to have one voice.

23  A CHINESE WOMAN
   (Lorna Anderson)
   Hark! The echoing air a triumph sings,
   and all around pleased cupids clap their wings.

CHORUS
   Hark! Hark!

24  TWO CHINESE WOMEN
   (Gillian Fisher, Lorna Anderson)
   Sure the dull God of Marriage does not hear;
   We'll rouse him with a charm.
   Hymen, appear!

HYMEN
   My torch indeed will from such brightness shine;
   Love ne'er had yet such altars so divine.

24  TWO CHINESE WOMEN
   (Ann Murray)
   How all things with one sound rejoice,
   And the world seems to have one voice.

25  PRELUDE

26  HYMEN (Richard Suart)
   See, see I obey.
   My torch has long been out. I hate
   On loose dissembled vows to wait,
   Where hardly love outlives the wedding night;
   False flames, love's meteors, yield my torch no light.

Six China orange trees, growing in large porcelain vases and laden with glowing fruit, rise from under the stage.

TWO CHINESE WOMEN
   Turn then thine eyes upon those glories there,
   And catching flames will on thy torch appear.

HYMEN

CHORUS

28  CHACONNE

29  CHORUS
   They shall be as happy …

END

29  CHORUS

29  HYMEN

CHORUS

29  HYMEN

CHORUS

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