1687

A SONG FOR ST. CECILIA’S DAY

John Dryden
Dryden, John (1631-1700) - English poet and dramatist who was perhaps the greatest literary figure during the Restoration. Dryden is recognized in many respects as being the creator of both modern verse and modern prose. A Song For St. Cecilia's Day (1687) - One of Dryden's best-known lyrics. Opening lines:

From Harmony, from heav'nly Harmony / This universal Frame began: ...
A SONG FOR ST. CECILIA’S DAY

From Harmony, from heav’nly Harmony
This universal Frame began:
When Nature underneath a heap
Of jarring Atomes lay,
And cou’d not heave her Head,
The tuneful Voice was heard from high:
A rise, ye more than dead.
Then cold and hot and moist and dry
In order to their Stations leap,

And MUSICK’S pow’r obey.
From Harmony, from heavenly Harmony
This universal Frame began:
From Harmony to Harmony
Through all the Compass of the Notes it ran,
The Diapason closing full in Man.
What passion cannot MUSICK raise and quell?
When Jubal struck the corded Shell,
His listening Brethren stood around,
And, wond’ring, on their Faces fell
To worship that Celestial Sound.
Less than a God they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that Shell
That spoke so sweetly, and so well.
What passion cannot MUSICK raise and quell?

The TRUMPETS loud Clangor
Excites us to Arms
With shrill Notes of Anger
And mortal Alarms.
The double double double beat
Of the thund’ring DRUM Cryes, heark the Foes come;
Charge, Charge, ’tis too late to retreat.
The soft complaining FLUTE
In dying Notes discovers
The Woes of hopeless Lovers,
Whose Dirge is whispered by the warbling LUTE.
Sharp VIOLINS proclaim
Their jealous Pangs and Desperation,
Fury, frantick Indignation,
Depth of Pains and height of Passion,
For the fair, disdainful Dame.

But O! what Art can teach
What human Voice can reach
The sacred ORGANS praise?
Notes inspiring holy Love,
Notes that wing their heav’nly
Ways To mend the Choires above.

Orpheus cou’d lead the savage race,
And Trees unrooted left their place,
Sequacious of the Lyre;
But bright CECILIA rais’d the wonder high’r:
When to her Organ vocal Breath was given,
An Angel heard, and straight appear’d,
Mistaking Earth for Heav’n.

GRAND CHORUS

As from the Pow’r of Sacred Lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator’s Praise
To all the bless’d above;
So, when the last and dreadful Hour
This crumbling Pageant shall devour,
The TRUMPET shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And MUSICK shall untune the Sky.

THE END