

Francis: An Oratorio in Nine Scenes

WORLD PREMIERE

Saturday, October 10, 2026, 7:30pm

Sunday, October 11, 2026, 2:30pm

Kleinhans Music Hall

Richard Danielpour, composer

Sr. Margaret Carney, librettist

JoAnn Falletta, conductor

Claudia Christian, narrator (*Angel*)

Anna Schubert, soprano (*St. Clare*)

Edward Nelson, baritone (*Francis*)

Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus

Fredonia Chamber Choir

Vernon Huff, chorus director

*Inspired by the life of St. Francis of Assisi,
marking the 800th Jubilee Year of his death*



Libretto by Margaret Carney, OSF
FRANCIS

SCENE I
(Voce Mea!)

CHORUS:

Voce mea ad Domine clamavit *With my voice, I cried out to the Lord,*

Voce mea ad Dominum deprecatus sum *With my voice, I pleaded with the Lord.*

Effendi in conspectu eius orationem
meam *In God's sight, I poured out my prayer,*

Ed tribulationem meam ante ipsum
pronuntio, *before God of the story of my troubles*

Periit fuga a me *There is no escape,*
Er non est qui requirat animam meam. *no one cares for my life.*
Voce mea, voce mea. *Call me, call me.*

NARRATOR (ANGEL):

Who is this young man languishing in prison, you ask?

It is Francis, son of a wealthy merchant.

Icon of fashion and frivolity.

He begs for deliverance. He was once a soldier,
seeking knighthood.

Now he sits in the solitude of his cell.

ARIOSO:

FRANCIS:

How long, O Lord, will You turn Your face from me?

How long shall I bear this conflict within my soul?

Pain in my heart wounds me throughout the day.

Look upon me and hear me, O Lord, my God.

CHORUS:

Kyrie eleison *Lord, have mercy*
Christe eleison *Christ, have mercy*
Kyrie eleison *Lord, have mercy*

End of Scene I

SCENE II

(The Answer...)

NARRATOR (ANGEL):

The answer comes...
Find your health,
Go where no one dares,
Be a prince among paupers and lepers...
The love you long for is waiting.
Show them mercy, give witness to this suffering
And prepare your soul—the hour is near.

DUET [FRANCIS AND CHORUS]:

FRANCIS:

Who are you, my God?
And who am I?
I pray for light, I beg for love above all things, but where are you, my God?
And who are you, my God?

CHORUS:

Amor Sum	<i>I am Love</i>
Summum bonum sum	<i>I am the Fullness of All Good</i>
Venia et pax tua sum.	<i>I am your Pardon and your Peace.</i>

FRANCIS:

Are you truly a God of mercy?
Are you truly a God of peace?
Enlighten the darkness of my heart
Illuminate the path I must take.
Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening.

CHORUS:

Amor Sum	<i>I am Love</i>
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End of Scene II

SCENE III
(Is he Insane?)

CHORUS:

Pazzo! Idiota! Demente! Matto!
He breaks his mother's heart and earns
his father's curses!

Crazy! Idiot! Demented! Mad!

He gives away his hard earned wealth,
and then he begs from us!

Pazzo! Idiota! Matto!

Crazy! Idiot! Demented! Mad!

CLARE:

Basta—Per favore—Firma!

Enough—Please—Stop!

CHORUS: Is he insane, or have we taken leave of our senses?

CLARE: Speak, Francis! Is your madness demonic or divine?

FRANCIS: My Lady, have you not heard? Blessed are the poor in spirit,

CLARE: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

FRANCIS: Blessed are the merciful,

CLARE: For they shall obtain mercy.

FRANCIS: Blessed are the pure in heart,

CLARE: For they shall see God.

FRANCIS AND CLARE (DUET):

Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength. And love your neighbor as yourself.

End of Scene III

SCENE IV (Sanctus)

CHORUS:

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth,
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.

*Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord, God of Hosts,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Hosanna in excelsis.

Hosanna in the highest.

CLARE:

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord.*

CHORUS:

Benedictus qui venit in nomine
Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

NARRATOR (ANGEL):

Here in Umbria, what do we see?
Seraphic Fires of love and beauty
Surround the grove where Clare and Francis speak.
A wrinkle in Time and Space,
For those with eyes to see and ears to hear.
Earth glows with the promise of beatitude,
Veiled in cloud by day and fire by night.
And in this place, our God seems very near.

ARISOSO:

FRANCIS:

Be brothers and sisters, each to each.
Guard and protect your Mother Earth
She is the source that holds all life.
Love one another,
And abandon all war.

CHORUS:

Amen, Amen, Amen.

End of Scene IV

ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE (PRELUDE TO SCENE V)

SCENE V

(Francis and the Sultan)

NARRATOR (ANGEL):

From Rome the trumpets call to war

“God wills it,” the Pope decrees, and all must heed the battle cry.

Crusaders throng the highways,

sailing to the defense of sanctuaries and creed.

Alone stands Francis!

Torn between the Gospel’s word

and pontiff’s raising legions to

bring the Muslims low—

He acts, pushing through the gate of his time and place.

Crossing, unarmed, into the Sultan’s camp,

and near the throne of that great Prince,

he hears the daily chants of worship

to the One Most High.

DUET [FRANCIS AND THE SULTAN’S COURT (MALE CHORUS)]:

MALE CHORUS (THE SULTAN’S COURT):

Christian, why are you here?

You carry no sword or crossbow.

Do you forfeit your life before Al-Kamil?

FRANCIS:

I am the Herald of the Great King

In Whose will is our Peace.

MALE CHORUS (THE SULTAN’S COURT):

All I know of your God is

His hunter for war.

FRANCIS:

I bring no mandate from Rome

Only our Lord’s plea that

Calls us to faith and mercy.

MALE CHORUS (THE SULTAN'S COURT):
Then we must beg Allah to show us the Way.

FRANCIS:
Together, let us call upon His Name.

MALE CHORUS (THE SULTAN'S COURT):
You are holy, merciful, and all seeing.

FRANCIS:
You are beauty, meekness, and security.

MALE CHORUS (THE SULTAN'S COURT):
You are our guide, provider, and Creator.

FRANCIS:
You are wisdom, humility, and patience.

FRANCIS AND MALE CHORUS (THE SULTAN'S COURT):
You are the Love that permeates all life and Creation!

End of Scene V

SCENE VI

(Creation – Bethlehem)

CHORUS (SATB):

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus
tecum.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with
thee*

Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

*Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus.*

Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
ora pronobis peccatoribus, nunc,
et in hora mortis nostrae.

*Holy Mary, Mother of God
pray for us sinners, now,
and at the hour of our death.*

NARRATOR (ANGEL):

From out of the Godhead's womb
A creation beyond imagining is born,
Divine abundance pulses in every atom and every cell,
This is the secret Francis understood.
The Truth, a holy flame.
The Earth is the Lord's, but it is ours as well.
Home to the Messiah who bears
The Name above all names.
Home to every sister and brother who
Works His will in the name of Love.

ARIA:

CLARE:

Remember that dear young Mother
Who placed her Child in a manger,
With beasts, and birds, and bleating sheep.
From His first breath the tiny Prince
Was wed to the fabric of this world.
All belongs in this sacred web.
All of us enrolled from birth in
A circle of eternal Life.
Sacred is the Earth, this planet, that is home to this blessed Child.

CHORUS: Alleluia

End of Scene VI

SCENE VII (Dark Angels)

CHORUS:

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,

Miserere nobis.

Have mercy on us.

FRANCIS:

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,

Miserere nobis.

Have mercy on us.

FRANCIS AND CHORUS:

Miserere nobis.

Have mercy on us.

NARRATOR (ANGEL):

Leaving warring worlds behind,
Francis carries his pain to Tuscan wilds.
There he battles dark angels;
Voices of the night that taunt him.

CHORUS:

What is the meaning of all this, Francis?
Why are you doing this to yourself?
What is the meaning of all your trials?

NARRATOR (ANGEL):

There is only one meaning:
To sing the story of a Love
That brought our God to Earth.
The Babe whose birth-tale warmed our hearts
Became the sacrificed Son,
Killed in blood and shame as the deepest darkness
Covered the Holy City,
Until a rising sun revealed the empty tomb.

ARIA:

FRANCIS:

Who can know the holy madness,
That led You to be pierced,
Your heart, and hands, and feet?
With You I will lift the bloody Cross,
Walk Dolorosa's tear-blessed street.
Enfold my heart in Yours,
I'll drink Your cup, where bitter taste
Becomes a love-scape sweet.

NARRATOR:

There on Mount La Verna
He will embrace the fate
Of the wounds and tortures devised by hate.
His prayer is enveloped in Seraphic Light
As his very body becomes Christ's mirror.

CHORUS:

Agnus Dei,...

Lamb of God,...

CLARE:

We fail to see and serve the poor

CHORUS:

...qui tollis...

...you take away...

CLARE:

We scorch and spoil our Mother Earth

CHORUS:

...peccata mundi,
Dona nobis pacem

*...the sins of the world,
Grant us peace*

CLARE:

We wed ourselves to eternal war.

CHORUS:

Dona nobis pacem

Grant us peace

End of Scene VII

SCENE VIII

(The Death of Francis)

CHORUS:

Voce mea ad Domine clamavit *With my voice, I cried out to the Lord,*

Voce mea ad Dominum deprecatus sum *With my voice, I pleaded with the Lord.*

ARIOSO:

FRANCIS:

With a loud voice, I cry out to the Lord,
Rescue me from this earthly prison,
And I will bless Your Name once more...

ARIA:

FRANCIS:

Our Father, Who art in heaven
Hallowed be Thy Name
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done
On earth, as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.

CHORUS:

Where is your God now, Francis? Who can save you in your wretched state?

FRANCIS:

Lead my soul away from this earthly prison, and I will bless your Name once more.

NARRATOR (ANGEL):

Brought low in torment, his body wracked in pain
Francis welcomes Sister Death...
She opens the portals of light to his blind eyes.
The larks lift his final breath aloft,
In the star-strewn night of the Umbrian sky.

End of Scene VIII

SCENE IX
(Epilogue: Canticle of the Sun)
by Francis of Assisi

CHORUS:

Altissimu onnipotente bon signore

Most high, all-powerful, good Lord,

tue so' le laude la gloria e l'honore
et onne benedizione

*Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor,
and all blessing*

Ad te solo, altissimo, se konfane
e nullu homo ène dighu
te mentovare.

*To you alone, Most High, do they belong
and no human is worthy
to mention your name.*

Laudato si', mi' signore,
cum tutte le tue creature,
spezialmente messor lo frate sole,
lo qual è iorno,
et allumini noi per lui.
Et ellu è bellu e radiante
cum grande splendore,
de te, Altissimo, porta significazion.

*Praised be You, my Lord,
with all your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
who is the day
and through whom you give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant
with great splendor;
of you, Most High, he bears significance.*

(Laudato si', mi' signore,
per sora lunae le stelle
in celu l'ai formate clarite
e preiose e belle.)

*(Praised be you, my Lord,
through Sister Moon and the stars
in heaven You formed them clear
and precious and beautiful.)*

Laudato si', mi' signore,
per frate vento
e per aere e nubilo e sereno
et onne tempo,
per lo quale a le tue creature dà
sustentamento.

*Praised be you, my Lord,
through Brother Wind,
and through air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather,
through which you give sustenance to your
creatures.*

Laudato si', mi' signore,
per sor'acqua
la quale è multo utile et humile
e preziosa e casta.

*Praised be you, my Lord,
through Sister Water
which is very useful and humble
and precious and chaste.*

Laudato si', mi' signore,
per frate focu,
per lo quale ennallumini la notte,
ed ello è bello e iocundo
e robustoso e forte.

*Praised be you, my Lord,
through Brother Fire
through whom you light the night
and he is beautiful and playful
and robust and strong.*

Laudato si', mi' signore,
per sora nostra matre terra,
la quale ne sustenta e governa,

*Praised be you, my Lord,
through our Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us,*

CLARE:
Laudate et benedicte mi' signore,
e reingraziate
e serviateli cum grande humilitate.

*Praise and bless my Lord,
and give him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.*

CHORUS:
Amen, Amen, Amen.

END OF ORATORIO