

**THE NEW LIFE: A CANTATA
BASED ON DANTE'S TEXT; FOR
BARITONE, SOPRANO, CHORUS,
ORCHESTRA, ORGAN AND
PIANO, OP. 9**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649514601

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Organ and Piano, Op. 9 by E. Wolf-Ferrari

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E. WOLF-FERRARI

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BARITONE, SOPRANO, CHORUS,
ORCHESTRA, ORGAN
AND PIANO, OP. 9**

To my late Father-in-law **FRIEDRICH KICIAN**
in Memory of his great friendship.

THE NEW LIFE

A Cantata based on Dantes Text

for

Baritone, Soprano, Chorus,
Orchestra, Organ and Piano

The Music by

E. WOLF-FERRARI

Op. 9

The English Version by **PERCY PINKERTON**

Vocal Score

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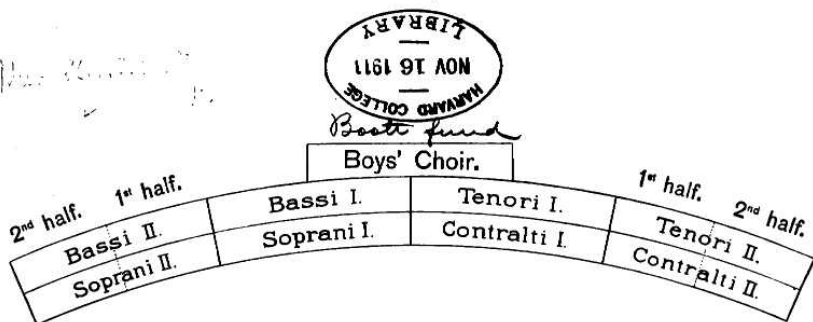
D. RAHTER, LEIPZIG



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22 & 23 WEST ST.



Soloists.

Baritone, Soprano.

Chorus.

The chorus is divided into two parts, the first choir and the second choir. The latter serves to strengthen the former, and is not used as a contrast to it. Thus the two choirs are not separated, but massed together.

The second chorus is divided into two halves arranged as the diagram shews above. The boys are placed in the centre above the men, forming a separate choir, themselves. At the commencement of each number the chorus, that sings, is indicated either choir I, or choir II, as the case may be.

Orchestra.

As many strings as possible: 3 flutes (or a piccolo and two flutes), 2 oboes (or 1 English horn and 1 oboe), 2 English horns, 2 clarinets, 2 fagotti, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 bass tuba, 2 harps, 1 pianoforte, 7 tympani (2 performers), 1 organ, big drum, tam-tam, 2 bells in C-G.

The metronomic-marks are more to indicate the general relation of the various **tempo** to each other than to fix the absolute rate at which any special passage is taken. They only characterise these generally, or shew at the outset the time-value. As the piece progresses, various changes of rhythm and **tempo** occur, notably as regards **accelerando** passages, the quickening of the time being demanded by the emotional character of the music; so that, for the most part, negative modulations have been marked; such as: **rall**, **rit**, and the like.

Introduction to the Composition.

WOLF-FERRARI divides the whole work into two parts. The first is preceded by a prologue. Between the two parts there is an Intermezzo. Next to the Chorus, the Solo Baritone representing the person of the poet, is placed by the composer in the fore-ground, while naturally the Sopranosolo of Beatrice stands back. Only in the prologue does it play a more prominent part, after which it disappears, not to return until the close, where it has but a few words to sing. The orchestra is no longer used as an accompaniment. In some parts the composer works out the feelings and ideas created in him by the words into short, independent passages for the orchestra: such are the *Angels' Song*, the *Preludio*, the *Intermezzo* and the Instrumental Melodrama "*Beatrice's Death*."

The **Prologue**, glorifying Love as the Conqueror of Death, leads us on, as it were, through mighty portals (Soli, double chorus, boys' voices, organ and orchestra) to the **first Part**, which describes Love in relation to Life in still more worldly strains, indulging even in pure joy of life and delight in the glories and beauties of Nature; till at the close, the music bursts into strains transcending Earth and all that is earthly. It treats of the Canzone which tells of Angels pleading to the Almighty Father to take Beatrice's soul, whose glory shines unto Heavenly heights. The answer of God is sung by the full chorus in Palaestrian strains, in which plain language it conveys the idea of that "All-pervading, All-embracing" Power. An **Intermezzo**,



E. Wolf-Ferrari

which then follows casts the first shadows of Death over the poem. It is the transfigured, sombre glorification of Sorrow and is founded upon the two sonnets which owe their origin to the death of Beatrice's father.

The **second part** (in which the Angel of Death is represented in sombre harmonies (strings), and Beatrice by the solo-violin), in a thrilling scene, describes the death of Beatrice. A part sung by the chorus is followed by a baritone solo (quasi recitativo) of thrilling effect, depicting the poet a martyr to his sorrow, his eyes red with weeping; the piano-accompaniment with its colourless tone producing an almost supernatural effect.

The poet's early vision is changed to reality—has become an event—a description of the earthquake (with the plain triad in c-minor) and forms the culminating point of this part, which contains dramatic elements bearing us up to mystic heights, and terminating with the words: "She lives in Light," pointing to the glorious union of thoughts on Eternity and Love.

The introduction of the **piano-forte** is a novelty; the instrument being used in solo-parts and as an orchestral instrument. Once, in the *Angels' Song*, it is introduced together with two harps, the strings and seven kettledrums, which the basses in the movement, repeat in natural pitch. A "*Litmotif*" appears at the close of each part, and in the prologue the boys' voices introduce the Love-greeting with the words: "We gladly hail her Lord, whose name is Love!"

WOLF-FERRARI, German by the father's side, Italian by the mother's side, was born in Venice on 12th January, 1876. In the sunny south, his mother's native home, he educated himself, up to his 17th year, studying the master-works of Bach and Beethoven, so that German thought and sentiment became the first and the fundamental basis of his tonal works. In the following years, W.-F. continued his studies in Germany under Rheinberger at the Munich Academy of Music; but he was unable to endure that rigid disciplinarian's manner. And in spite of his devout admiration for that master of counterpoint, a strong individuality compelled him to strike out for himself, and to master the art and foster his talent through himself by self-effort and energy. Not until his return to Italy in 1895 did he acquire a thorough knowledge of the works of the Italian composers from Palaestrina to our day. He associated with Verdi and many other famous contemporaries, which infused the Italian element into his German way of thinking and composing.

His choral work *Sulamith*, performed in Italy in 1899, met with great success; the same must be said of the opera *Cinderella* produced at Bremen in 1902, and of his chamber-music played in Munich. At Easter 1903 W.-F. was appointed Director of the Conservatory Benedetto-Marcello, in Venice, his native city, where henceforth he will spend the greater part of the year; but during the vacations he will take up his residence in Munich. This honourable appointment was the immediate result of the magnificent '*première*' of "*La Vita Nuova*" in Munich on 21st March performed in the "Kaim"-Hall by the Porges Choral Union. In more than 40 reports of unanimous praise this performance was pronounced a musical event of the highest order and celebrated as such. Since then the "*Vita Nuova*" has begun its triumphant march through Germany and Holland. It has now been performed 30 times. The present English translation was made, in response to the wishes expressed by several Choral Societies in England and America.

Introduction to the English Version of Dante's Work.

"LA VITA NUOVA" is the title of a curious little volume which we have reason to suppose was written by Dante somewhere about the year 1292, and in which he recounts the story of his boyhood's love. As such, it forms a commentary in prose to a number of poems written during the ten preceding years. In the opening lines of the work, the poet himself explains the title:

"In that part of the Book of my reminiscences, before which but little is to be read, there is a superscription '*incipit vita nova*'" (here begins a new life).

Dante intended to write the book in Latin, but at the urgent request of his friend Guido Calvacanti, he decided in favor of Italian. He tells us how, at the age of nine, he fell in love with a girl one year younger than himself, in Florence in 1274, and he goes on to describe the bliss and the sorrows of that love to its earthly end, *i. e.* until the beloved one died on the 9th July 1290, scarcely 24 years old.

Who that maiden was we are not told. In the beginning of his work, Dante calls her "the divine mistress of my spirit, who was called BEATRICE by many that knew not what name to give her." (Beatrice means: the bestoweress of bliss). The work written to glorify her led to the conception, and the writing, of the "Divina Commedia,"* in which she sends the shadow of Virgil to guide the erring Dante; she herself is seated in the innermost circles next to the Trinity: where the Virgin Mary is enthroned as the first, Eve as the second, Rahel as the third and Beatrice as the fourth.

Dr. Karl Federn, from whose edition of the *Vita Nuova* these statements are taken, says, in speaking of the book: "It is truly written in the spirit of pure rejoicing as on a festive day, in plain words that appeal to the soul. It is psychologically true to life, and so perfect that probably only those who have felt the same, and suffered the same, in their earliest youth, are capable of completely entering into the spirit of the work. It is the most delicious work produced by the middle-ages. All is softness, tenderness, silent longing, pious sentiment, a tenderness which but few are now capable of feeling. Nowhere do we find the slightest indication of that energy and harshness, that concise brevity, that abrupt style, that graphic description, characteristic of his later writings. A world of events had to pass before him, ere the author of "La Vita Nuova" became transformed into the poet who conceived and wrote "La Divina Commedia."

And yet one feature is common to both: the terrible violence of emotion. The whole book is one long confession of highly wrought emotions, the like of which many other mortals have experienced but never anything like as intensely. Nor need we be struck at the tender age: this very precocity of emotion is a frequent feature with poets: both Byron and Alfieri fell deeply in love at the age of six. But "La Vita Nuova" describes to us the life of a soul overwrought with emotion, whose intensity far exceeds that felt by ordinary mortals. Love seizes upon, and not only governs and guides, Dante's soul, but bursts

forth from him, crowds, rushes through the street, beautifies the sky and gilds the Churches of Florence: love mystically permeates the world, the creation which Dante beholds around him—he loses sight of other mortals, they lose their importance in his eyes, he is alone with his love that fills his world; and "beyond the sphere which moves in the largest circle," God and the Angels speak of her. That sweet little maiden whom he saw for the first time on that spring-day, has filled Dante's soul and taken possession of it, she has impregnated the world and transformed it; and to-day, when the dinning world with its turmoil around him, is become a dream, a shadow, to-day that world lies within him with its festive-day atmosphere, with its pure, blue, bright light, with its touching sadness. In "La Vita Nuova" we see it before us revived once more—when the maiden who called forth that world is become a universal mystery, perhaps the most glorious, most curious illustration to Goethe's words: "Eternal womanly nature draws us heavenward."

Not the external, the internal world is his object, and in the mirror of the soul what strange creations are possible! In it the image of the beloved one rises to a height, that the very heavens are full of her praise, and God speaks of her, and that after her death, Dante breaks forth in the words of Jeremiah: "How desolate lies the City before me, which is full of men! How is she become a widow, the Queen of the nations!" And having recounted that after her death he had almost become disloyal, but had again returned, to her, he goes on to speak of a last wondrous vision, and concludes with the words: "And therefore may it please Him, who is the Lord of Grace and Mercy, to allow my soul to enter in where it may behold the glory of its Lady Queen, who, transfigured, beholds the face of Him *qui est omnia secula benedictus*."

In a later work, entitled "The Repast" and in which Beatrice is mentioned cursorily, Dante himself tells us that, at the time, nothing but his studies afforded him comfort and consolation in the deep despair which her death had wrought him. But soon after, he returned to the world. He took an active part in the political struggles of his native town, in which struggles his party was subdued, he himself banished owing chiefly to the interference of Pope Bonifacius, towards whom Dante unto his death bore a deadly hatred. As an out-cast, straying from place to place, longing to return to Florence, filled with indignation towards his fellow-citizens, wandering through Italy and France, often all but driven to begging, he wrote his Divine Comedy (the last cantos of which did not become known until after his death), besides other scientific and political works.

That work which was originally intended to be nothing more than a song of praise glorifying Beatrice has become a poetic work, embracing the whole world, and which in the literature of the nations has only one equal: "Goethe's Faust." Well might he call it a "sacred Song" which Earth and Heaven had assisted him in writing. The germ, however, we already find in "La Vita Nuova": the love which he bears Beatrice is the tie in the spirit of Dante on its peregrinations, linking the last gigantic work with the first juvenile one.

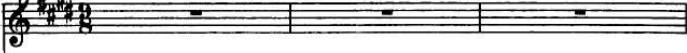
Tr. Note. *Dante modestly called his work "Commedia," the word "divina" was added much later.


PROLOGUE:*)

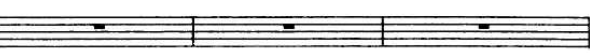
No 1. (First and second Choir)

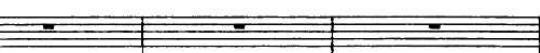
Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari, Op. 9.
(April 1901)

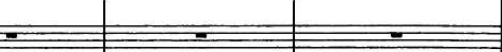
Cantando molto. ($\text{♩} = 44$)

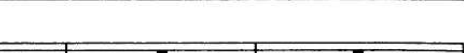
Soprano-Solo. 

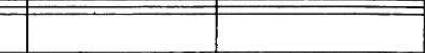
Baritone-Solo. 

Boys voices. 

Sopranos. 


Altos. 

Tenors. 

Basses. 


CHOIRS I and II.

Cantando molto. ($\text{♩} = 44$)

PIANO. 

Fl. Clar. *pp*

St. *p*



*) The poems by Dante on which the Prologue is based are included in the supplement to the Italian editions of the Vita Nuova.

cresc.
cresc. mit Corn. *f*
espr. *p* *f*
più p *Viol.* *poco riten.* *vi. a tempo* *Sr. espr.* *f* *espr.* *leggero e stacc.*
p *f*
poco rit. *rit.*

A Soprano-Solo.
a tempo

**) dolce*

9

I am an an-gel fair, from Pa - - ra - dise de -

Fl. Clar. *pp*

-scend - ing, I come to tell you of its joys un - end - ing,

pp

All the vain de - lights — this world can of - fer tran - scend -

p *p dolce*

Viol. *p dolce*

Horns *mf*

- ing!

pp

Baritone-Solo. *mf*

These are the words we may read in the vis -

Engl. H.

Cell.

**)* From a ballata that has reference to the New Life, but not included by Dante therein.