Castle Grim

A Two Act Comic Opera

The Music by George Benjamin Allen
The Text by Robert Reece, Junior

Transcription by Perri Gellman

This libretto is a transcription from the manuscript submitted to the Examiner held in the British Library (Add MS 53042 M). Spellings are as in the manuscript and include such words as "favorite" for "favourite". **{xxa}** marks the numbers of the leading page of the manuscript and {**xxb**} the other side.

The writing looks hurried and sometimes careless. (…?) marks a word unable to be deciphered. …(?) marks a word where there is some uncertainty. Punctuation has sometimes been changed or added to help clarity.

The dialogue is in two columns with the speaker in the left-hand column. Vocal items are in the centre of the page with the singer towards the left.

See http://englishromanticopera.org/operas/Castle Grim.htm for more details on the opera.

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R Burdekin, March 2026
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Dramatis Personae

Charles Ravenwood (Tenor) – A young man of gloomy temperament and metaphysical tendency

David Death (Bass) – His personal attendant

Mrs Tombs (Contralto) – His housekeeper

Flora Skipley (Soprano) – His cousin and ward

Chorus of men, misanthropes who have joined Ravenswood as servants

Time, the present

Scene – A chamber in Castle Grim

Castle Grim
Act 1

Overture

{2a}

Scene – *A chamber in Castle Grim, dark and rusty in appearance. Moonlight streaming in thro' broken shutters upon antique paintings and tapestry. Right in flat a sliding panel. At back chemical apparatus etc. In front (left) a table with books, paper etc. Ravenwood discovered writing at table.*

Recitative and aria - *Ravenswood*

Toil As I Will

Toil as I will no further I attain,
Inflexible the figures yet remain!
From X and Y no progress can I learn
In stubborn guise the same results return.
In vain the speculative path I've sought,
All still is blank! The vision fades to nought!
(*looking round and rising*) Gloom clings around this ivy shadow'd pile,
Grey ruins lighten'd not by sun or smile,
Solemn and grand its mantled turrets rise,
Shrouded in moss, and in sepulchral guise!
{2b} Thro' the long vistas of its corridors,
In dismal wail the stormy night wind roars,
Its cold, stark columns, to the eye dismay'd,
Gleam white and ghastly thro' the moonstreak'd shade
And its sad arches, ivy clad and lone,
Hear but the wind and echo to its moan.

Air

In solemn garb and gloom profound,
Within this castle grey,
Where never enters joyous sound,
Whence smiles are chas'd away,
My court I hold
Mid ruins old,
No courtiers brave
Attend my state,
But vassals grave,
With looks sedate
With lengthen'd face and sombre pace,
And glances cold!
In murk and drear
{3a} I ever hold my gloomy cheer.

When night comes down with frowning eye,
And heav'n is overcast,

And tempest from the vault on high
Rides "havock" on the blast!
When lightnings glare
And blaze in air,
When thunders peal
And turrets reel,
When night-birds shriek
And casements creak,
And blood runs cold 'tis then I hold
The carnival of Fear!
And in horror murk and drear
Love to keep my gloomy cheer.

Ravens And a congenial spot is it for my calculations, a noble crucible for my formulae of justifiable suicides; if I can only perfect this system what a **{3b}** boon to society. A man is obnoxious will say bring the light of this formula to bear upon him if the test applies. The law will provide a warrant for his suicide. How precious would be this discovery, how inestimable the results!

(*a section of dialogue was crossed out*)

By the bye, there's my regiment of misanthropes, who having like myself weighed the pleasures of this world in the balance and found them wanting have enrolled themselves amongst my retinue as the protectors of the solitude of my retreat. First, let me summon my valet. He **{4a}**has a fine sonorous name – Death. Ah! (*tolls the bell*) here he is. – (*Enter Death who bows*) Send those men up to me here. I have a wish to inspect them. (*Exit Death*) A nice ragamuffin crew they are too like Falstaff's regiment – but thus (?) there is one unanimity of sentiment about them – a gloominess – a tendency to suicide which gives me hopes of showing some practice to support my new theory. (*Exit*).

(*Enter chorus*)

Male Quartet and Chorus

Hush! Don't Let a Sound Re-echo [1]

Male Quartet (MQ)

Hush! Don't let a sound re-echo
Through the castle's vaulted hall.
Hush! will have to keep a check, oh!
On our voices and sing small.

MQ and male and female chorus

Hush! Don't let a sound re-echo
Through the castle's vaulted hall.
Hush! will have to keep a check, oh!
On your voices and sing small.

Male Quartet

Nought above a whisper, Hush!
Or we shall be overheard!

[1] Allen expanded Reece's simple male chorus by setting some lines as a male quartet and adding a female chorus who sang some of the same lines but also had their own verse which was not included in the manuscript.

MQ and male and female chorus

'Twould be fatal to us, Hush!
Not a sound, not a word.

MQ and male chorus
Gloomy band of disappointed!
Self devoted to the death!
{4b}Hollow-eyed and rusty jointed,
Sing we grimly under breath
Brothers in misfortune, hush!
Stand we in unequal line
We must make up our own minds up. Hush!
In whisper if we must repine.

(*Female chorus*
And woe to man, the vile deceiver!
Faithless monster! Made to vex!
Loving woman but to leave her,
Shall he triumph o'er our weakly sex? Yes!)

MQ and both choruses

(*Repeat*) Don't let a sound….

(*Enter Ravenswood*). *Comic business of inspection of Ravenwood's misanthropic regiment. They are wretched ragged looking fellows - awkward and ungainly - and while he puts them through their evolutions - Death is convulsed with laughter but striving to hide his mirth etc. at the end.)*

Ravens *(Aloud)* Enough of this. They may be excellent as misanthropes but they are incorrigible as guards. There you may go except all but Death. *(Aside)* I would almost swear he smiled. I'm certain I saw a smile. This cannot be overlooked. *(Touches Death on shoulder)* You smiled!

{5a}
Death I smile! Never!

Duo - *Ravenswood and Death*

Come, No Deceiving

Ravenswood Come no deceiving!

Death To beguile
Is not my habit!

Ravenswood Did you smile?

Death Smile! I only made a face.

Ravenswood Take care you do not lose your place.
Pray observe me!

Death Now to nerve me! *(makes a long face)*

Ravenswood What new freak, sir, are you after?

Death ‘Tis no freak sir! If I speak sir!
You must twit me straight with laughter!

Ravenswood Nay! I cannot but suspect!
Last week, too, you’ll recollect
After you’d been over quaffing
You forgot yourself in laughing!

Death Laughing Sir? I only groaned
Rather loudly – and bemoaned
Life’s misfortunes in the gloom
{5b} Of the wine and spirit room!

Death Tears alone are in my style
No! Sir! No! I never smile

Ravenswd Knowing laughter’s not my style
You should study not to smile!

Ravenswood (Solo Tenor) When all around you plainly see
Preserve profound solemnity
I expect sir, you’ll reflect, sir
I must have no gaiety!
There your face sir! In your place sir!
You should study to be pale!
But instead sir, it is red, sir
I attribute that to ale!

Death Truly sir, I do not think
You should cavil at my drink.
Recollect ‘tis that alone
Keeps me thus all skin and bone!

Death But for that sir, I’d be fat sir
Only that my woe’ll beguile
I’m a slave sir to be grave sir!
Ensemble **{6a}‘**Tis thro’ that I never smile

Ravenswd As to that sir, were you fat sir
You should quit this domicile
But take warning sir this morning
That I bid you never smile!
(*Exit Ravenswood*)

Death Never smile! Eh? Why ‘tis as much as I can do, when I give my best attention to it, to keep the corners of my mouth down. Their natural inclination is upwards! Ah! When I was ostler at the Jolly Sandboys I used to indulge my native cheerfulness and laugh when, where and as long as I chose. Why my very name is a jolly one! Grinsby! It was a bold stroke to answer that advertisement and take such a name upon me! Only the high premium worked that miracle in me. Fancy being

called "Death" and to live in this murdering[2](?) old castle with Mrs. Tombs. It was enterprising certainly. The housekeeper keeps her eyes on me **{6b}**by master's orders – and now if I want to smile I must shut myself into some room! I shook my room so last week in a fit of silent laughter that Mrs. Tombs overheard and asked what was the matter! I replied it was the ague. I fear she suspected this. *(Looking about)* The remembrance of that affair makes me – eh -let's see – no one in the passage – all clear – Then really I must –

(Comes forward and grins tremendously.)

Song – *Death*

Let Lovers Prize Their Maidens' Eyes

Death Let lovers prize their maidens' eyes!
Let topers praise their bowl!
Let those who will or have the skill
In riches roll!
I heed not love! Wine false may prove!
I value wealth no pin!
Let me but have the joy I crave
A good broad grin!
(Symphony) Ha! Ha!
A good broad grin!

{7a} When gloom profound has fall'n around
And Fortune dares to frown,
The sprightly cup makes near look up
When luck is down!
'Tis not the time, I do opine,
'Tis cheerfulness within
For sadness flies whene'er it spies
A good broad grin!
(Symphony) Ha! Ha!
A good broad grin!

(*While the last symphony is being played Mrs. Tombs appears at centre door in flat and regards Death with a smile. She assumes a grave demeanour when she speaks to him)*

Death Well! I'm better now – and so I'll go for the lunch! (*sees Mrs. Tombs*) Good gracious! (It's all over with me!) Who would have expected to see you up here Mrs. Tombs? Are you not tired with the winding steps? (Oh she's taking measure of me at this **{7b}** time). Ah!! Life's long flight of winding steps Mrs. Tombs! Which leads (?) alternating to a winding sheet! - Ah – *(groans)*

Mrs.Tombs Death!

Death Yes, Mrs. Tombs *(alarmed)*

Mrs.Tombs Hasn't Mr. Ravenswood strictly enjoined you to –

[2] The word in the manuscript is not clear. Maundering might make more sense

Death Yes, I know, I was only –

Mrs.Tombs Not to call me Mrs. Tombs remember! Single names only! "Death" and "Tombs"

Death Oh, ladies first!

Mrs.Tombs That may be the order of the sexes in society, but in event, Death first, Tombs afterwards!

Death Oh, pray don't talk so! I feel cold water running down my back – *(shuddering)*

Mrs.Tombs Didn't I hear you saying here a minute ago? There? Don't add to your faults by denial. I heard you.

Death It's all over with me.

Mrs.Tombs If I was to do what is undeniably my duty, I should acquaint Mr. Ravenswood with your offence against his orders – but in consideration –

{8a}

Death Oh! yes! Of course, – in consideration – *(aside)* I think she likes me!

Mrs.Tombs Be silent!

Death I will! As the very tombs! *(smothering a laugh)*

Mrs.Tombs In consideration of the annoyance which I am sure awaits my master –

Death How? What? Which?

Mrs.Tombs Death! You are always cutting people short!

Death *(aside)* Good again!

Mrs.Tombs The annoyance which awaits my master in this letter! *(shows letter)*

Death Oh! Goodness a letter – where did it come from?

Mrs.Tombs I know no more than yourself! It looks like a law letter!

Death Then it's only the beginning of sorrows! Misfortunes never come single. Let me see it! So it is, a legal letter I declare. I wonder what is in it! If we could only find out now!

(Ravenswood enter here, center door in flat, and watches them.)

Trio – Death, Mrs. Tombs, Ravenswood (*at back*)

What Can All This Be?

{8b}

Death What can all this be I wonder?

Ravens (at back) What is that I see? A letter?

Mr. Tombs It must be some postal blunder!

Death Hold it up, you'll see it better

Mrs. Tombs Is it fastened?
Death Yes securely,
Would it be a mortal sin –
Mrs. Tombs What to break?
Death Oh no! but surely
'Tis no harm to peep within!

Mrs. Tombs Shake it, p'rhaps there's money in it!

Death Really a noise this minute
Did I hear (…?) as you shook
Did you notice –
Mrs. Tombs Let me look!

Ravens (This is pleasant all this prying
Into business only mine!)

Death Goodness gracious how I'm dying
Of the news to get some sign!

Mrs. Tombs Here's a postmark!
Death **{9a}** Let me see it!
Mrs. Tombs Only "London"
Death What a bore!

Ravens (at back) London letter? What can it be?
This suspense I'll stand no more!
(Comes between them suddenly. They shriek and separate.)

MsT&Death Gracious Powers!

Ravens You're detected!
Let me never see you more!

MsT&Death Had we only but suspected
You were near us!

Ravens There's the door!

MsT &Death
Oh sir, pray let us stay, sir,
Oh! Turn us not away, sir!
Let us but this once remain,
We'll ne'er do the like again!
Pray believe, sir, to do deceive sir,
Never once occurred to me!
It was only being lonely,
{9b} Edged our curiosity!

Ravens
As you pray then, you may stay then,
If you'll ne'er offend again.
This will cure you I assure you
Ensemble
So this once you may remain.

MsT &Death
Oh dear sir! We thank you greatly
For this kindness unexpected
And by living more sedately
Strive to be no more detected!
(Repeat)

Ravens Take warning by this both of you and now hasten lunch, another such offence – and nothing – not even your names shall save you from instant dismissal – go!

Both Oh sir, thank you sir!

Ravens Not a word – retire!

Both What an escape! *(Exit Mrs. Tombs and Death*)

Ravens Now those prying idiots are gone, I must see to this letter - a legal hand certainly. Some malicious **{10a}** person has left me money perhaps! Here is Chancery Lane in every dotting of the "i"s and crossing of the "t"s. Yes! And there is not a stop anywhere. Oh, it's Chancery all over. *(Sits at table and reads.)*

> Post Obit Chambers, Chancery Lane,
> Wednesday
>
> Sir,
> As solicitors to the late Thomas Skipley[3] of Heartschen(?) Lodge Esq during his lifetime, it devolves upon us to inform you of his demise at 7 o'clock on Saturday last, and further that by this will which with other muniments[4] is in our custody he has devised (?) to you all his real and personal property (I said so – I knew how malicious he was!) upon certain trusts (Hallo! What's this?) for the benefit of his niece Flora Skipley, now an orphan and a minor aged 17 years, of whom he also appoints you guardian. We enclose a letter which the

[3] The libretto also uses Skiply and Skipely but the cast list and the press have Skipley
[4] Legal documents, such as title deeds

deceased upon occasion of such appointment wrote and desired us (…?) **{10b}** forward to you upon his demise.

We are, sir, your oft servants
(Fide, Docket and Sharp)

I am staggered – Sole guardian – Flora Skipley! Minor – 17 years – Heaven protect me! I am going distracted – My brain swims. *(letter drops)* Another letter – the Enclosure!

(reads) My dear nephew,
As at last attempt to wean you from your folly of losing your youth and health in retirement and spleen (?) – I leave you under document a precious trust in my dear great niece Flora Skipley – whose temperament and disposition may favourably influence your habits of you personally. As is my dying wish, devote yourself to carrying out my instructions in her interest. It has been my earnest wish that you should marry her – and should you do so you will find provisions in my will to both your interests. I only saw my niece twice in my life but her congenial **{11a}** disposition endeared her to me at once. I commit her to your charge as a solemn legacy.

Farewell!
Your loving uncle, Thomas Skipley

Marry her! I would as soon marry the Monkey House in the Zoological gardens! It is preposterous, scandalous! I cannot and will not hear it. *(another letter drops)* What's this? Another and another – growing like Hydras' heads – will my brain endure this?

(reads) Dear Guardy, (Heaven's what a commencement.)
That dear good old great uncle of mine whom I don't recollect a bit (and so can't be expected to cry about, tho' of course I'm sorry and all that!) has died and left me to you as ward, not re<u>ward</u> I'm sure, for so I hear you're awfully grumpy! I hear you have a respectable housekeeper with you. I've given Miss Green notice (She's our schoolmistress) and you may expect me soon after you get this letter. The law people said they'd enclose this note to you and I shall follow it directly.

{11b} Ever your affect (That's if you're nice)
Flora

This is too much, my brains red! I shall go mad!

Air - Ravenswood

Was Ever Such A Trouble Known

Ravens Was ever such a trouble known!
Farewell solitude and quiet!
Life has now to hateful grown,
With prospective noise and riot!

(cantabile) Ye towers grey and dreary,
Which once in sombre fate
Knew only grave romancing,
And solemn courtly state!
How will your ancient arches
And ivy covered stones
Which echoed once to slow discourse
And reverential tones!
Now ring with fancies, song and dances
Laughter shrill, and woman's will!
Urged in overbearing tones! *(bell tolls)*
Was ever such a trouble known,
All my dreams of peace are flown **{12a}**
Farewell solitude and quiet
In prospective noise and riot.

(Ravens exits hurriedly c[5] door.
Enter by sliding panel Mrs. Tombs and Flora, cautiously.)[6]

Mrs. Tombs Goodness me, miss! It's as much as my place is worth – I daren't do it – if Mr. Ravenswood

Flora Is he so dreadful then? Poor fellow! *(laughing)* and you are actually afraid of him, dear me! I'm not afraid of anybody! There you may leave me now. I'll pounce upon him here – beard this lion in his den! Ha! Ha!

Mrs. Tombs But my dear miss

Flora What now?

Mrs. Tombs Why, you see he's so strange! Hadn't you better let me announce you – gradually, you know?

Flora What? Break the dreadful tidings to him slowly, eh? I'll do that in half a minute – wait 'til he hears me sing!

Mrs. Tombs Sing – good gracious heavens miss – you'll never sing <u>here</u>!

Flora Why not?

Mrs. Tombs This is his own particular place of retirement!
{12b}
Flora Never mind – you shall stand acquitted – you only leave <u>me</u> to work the oracle!

Mrs. Tombs Well! Miss! I'll leave you! But I dread the consequences. *(Exit)*

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[5] Centre? door

[6] The vocal score has a duet between Flora and Mrs Tombs, No. 8 - "Goodness Miss". It clearly would go in this section but there is no trace of it in the manuscript

Flora Alone then! And in the monster's den – I wonder if he is a monster- he's only twenty-six. Surely his habits haven't fossilized him altogether! If I can't do something with this dangerous recluse – why I haven't a high C in my voice, that's all.

Rondo – Flora

The Joys of Mirth

Ah! The gentle joys of mirth
Gilding all the ills of earth
Bidding hope revive again
Like a rainbow after rain!
Let surly faces
Keep their places
Gloomy thoughts and scenes among
We can spare them,
But we dare them
Rob us of our joys when young!

{13a} Ah! The welcome joys of mirth!
Blessing of primaeval birth,
Lighting up our smiles again,
Like the sunshine after rain! (*Tral la introduced*)[7]

Who shall bid us cease
From our mirthful strain
In those days of peace
Which may not come again?
'Tis when youth is strong
That mirth inspires our song
And joyfulness our hearts can bless
And bid us love her reign!

Then mirth we own thy sovereign power
And dedicate to this youth's hour
E'er the frosts of age o'er take us
And our pleasures all forsake us!
What is the message joy doth bring
Pillowed in her downy wing?
'Tis the bidding "Youth shall sing!"
Youth can ne'er return again

Oh the welcome joys of mirth and etc.
la, la!

[7] A string of la la s introduced here. The four lines are repeated after each verse

Flora **{13b}** Well – not unkennelled (?) yet – I suppose these horrid old tapestries cloak the sound – so I must go and find him out in person. Won't he be delighted to see me especially if I come on him suddenly. I'll go and toll that wretched old bell – and announce myself. He must be hiding somewhere about. Now for hide and seek thro' the vines – Delightful! *(Exit thro' sliding panel singing).*

(As she exits Ravenswood enters door R i. (…?) *and encounters Death and Mrs. Tombs who are entering thro' centre door in flat. He overturn(s) the lunch and paces distracted up and down the chamber. Bell tolls outside. Hurry music*[8] *working up to Quartetto Finale)*

Quartetto (Finale Act I)

What's The Matter?

Mrs. Tombs & Death — What's the matter? What's the matter?
All the lunch has come to grief
What a precious noise and clatter!
Even this is some relief!

Mrs. Tombs **{14a}** Pick the pieces up, good gracious!

Ravens This would provoke a Saint!

Death What has made him so rampacious[9]?

Ravens Oh! With anger I could faint!

Mrs. Tombs Here's the letter – we had better
See what's happened –

Ravens 'Tis too bad!

MsT &Death — Sure some sudden disappointment
Must have driven master mad!

Ravens Oh this sudden disappointment
I am sure will drive me mad!

Mrs. Tombs Save us, all powers protecting!
Here's a pretty state of things!
'Tis Miss Flora he's expecting! *(Bell tolls again)*

Ravens …Go! And see who 'tis that rings!
All my dreams of peace are past
Yes my torments come at last!

[8] "Hurry music" in the Victorian era refers to specific, fast-paced incidental music to heighten tension, signal danger, or indicate the rapid passage of time.

[9] Describes someone or something that is wild, boisterous, high-spirited, or acting in a violent, destructive, and uncontrollable manner.

Carriage rolling,
Bell a tolling
{14b} Oh this is by far too bad!
Girls! Romancing!
Dancing! Prancing!
Evenings noisy! Chassez! Croissez!
Oh! I'm sure I shall go mad!

Death Will his anger ne'er be done? [10]

Mrs. Tombs I must go –

Ravens You villain run!
All my solitude is o'er
Now for tumult and uproar!
(Flora sings Oh the welcome joys of mirth outside)
Hark! Hark! Hark!
My ears deceive me or I hear
Thro' the hall her singing clear
Such a note from her throat
Oh! This day will cost me dear!

Flora Here I am! *(Enter Flora & Mrs. T.)*

Mrs. Tombs The pretty lamb!

Flora Not a sound of welcome surely!
Surely this is very ungallant! *(Ravenswood bows)*
Why you greet me as demurely,
{15a} As if no cousin – but an aunt!
Pray you, Guardian, shake hands!
He shall yield to my commands

Ravens Oh she's very, very pretty
And she's very, very young.

Flora Yes! He's handsome! What a pity
He so loves to hold his tongue!
Surely you must be delighted

Ravens *(bowing gravely)* Oh! You do me too much honor

Ms T &Death Dear me – how he seems affrighted
Not a smile he casts upon her

Flora What a bear! But I shall tame him!

[10] The vocal score has Mrs Tombs singing this line and Death singing the next, which makes more sense.

Ravens What a beauty! I must see
How to chill her.

Flora I can't blame him
If he falls in love with me!

Ravens Show the lady to her room

Mrs. Tombs Surely Miss you must be tired!

{15b}

Death This way!

Flora What thro' all that gloom!
Thank you! There's some change required
Ere I venture here to sleep
(pointing to tapestry) I must have those hangings down
Quite a shudder seems to creep
Over me – pray why that frown?
(coaxingly) Surely you will ne'er refuse me
In so simple a desire
I shall cry if thus you use me!

Ravens What the lady may require
See you that 'tis carried out – *(he turns away)*

Flora *(aside)* Ah! I've gained a step I see
If I mind what I'm about
He'll be soon in love with me[11]

Flora **What a change I shall create**
What a perfect revolution!
Turn to joy what's now sedate!
And bring to order all confusion!

Ravens, MsT Trio &Death **What a change she will create!**
What a perfect revolution!
Mirth instead of speech sedate
All our systems in confusion!

(Repeat boldface as quartet)

{16a}

End of Act I

[11] Vocal score has "very soon we'll altered be"

{17a}

Castle Grim

Act II

Three days are supposed to have elapsed

{18a} Scene *as before – with its aspect changed. Flowers arranged about the room, looking glass at back – order restored – chemical apparatus removed – general air of neatness. Mrs. Tombs discovered snipping the leaves of rose plants. She is gaily dressed and of cheerful demeanour. She moves about arranging things.*

Recitative and aria – Mrs. Tombs

Well What Changes!

Mrs. Tombs Well what changes – actually flowers
Wonders! Marvels! in a few short hours!
(at the looking glass) How this dress becomes me. I feel quite young
At least much younger – why I've even sung!
I feel as light as air – Oh I should greatly
Like to dance now – but is it comme il faut?
(dances) Oh! 'tis in vain this struggle to be stately
Why feign a pace so solemn and so slow!

Air

Why blush since things are gone so far
{18b} To make the plain confession
That cheerful spirits in this house
Have changed our whole expression!
By youth and mirth each heart's besieged;
E'en he who's always rating
At love's wild folly will, I fear,
Be soon capitulating.

And I who am by vows unbound[12]
Why should I wait to question
And not at once propose to yield
To mirth's & love's suggestion?
In person and in face I think,
There's nothing counteracting
For tho' a little past My bloom
I'm still not unattracting!

Pray what are sighs and ardent looks
Love's precepts but to teach meant?
And if I judge by someone's eyes
{19a} He owns the soft impeachment!

Then love's defiance now to gloom

[12] This middle verse was not included in the vocal score

I on sad maxims trample,
And mean to follow in the steps
Of such a good example!

(Symphony) – Enter Death, he is in bright colors – has discarded all attempts at solemnity and looks attractive. He is struck with Mrs. Tombs' appearance, as she is with his. They admire each other during the andante movement which preludes the…

Duetto (Bouffe) – Mrs. Tombs & Death

Pray Let Me Compliment You

Mrs. Tombs Pray let me compliment you
On your changed appearance

Death Of those frowning lines I see
You have made a clearance!

Mrs. Tombs Such a wonderful improvement
I can scarce believe my eyes!

Death Ah! 'tis in this lively movement
All the secret lies

Death **{19b}** Oh! Mrs. Tombs! How colors do become you!

Mrs. Tombs Oh! Mr. Death! You're quite another creature!
Now how you chatter!

Death Once so very glum you!
Liveliness lurks in each expressive feature!

Mrs. Tombs *(aside)* Strange! Such a feeling! Quite a flustration[13]
Sentiments are stealing with a soft sensation!

Death *(aside)* Can it be that this is she, who once used to chill me?

Mrs. Tombs *(aside)* Ah! I see for Mr. D. tender thoughts now fill me!

Death *(aside)* Say! Can a dress work such a charm?

Mrs. Tombs *(aside)* How he's changed who once was frightful!

Death *(aside)* She's an angel – *(aloud)* Take my arm!

Mrs. Tombs How I blush!

[13] State of being agitated, confused, emotional

Death This is delightful!

Death (in admiration)
What can I say to prove my admiration?
All this long time how blind I have been surely!
Not to have noticed so much fascination
Sinking beneath the garb she wore demurely!

Mrs. Tombs
Now that to smile and jest is not forbidden,
I may, of course in confidence, explain
{20a} Natural mirth judiciously was hidden,
Under a mask – and much against the grain!

Death
Ensemble
Mrs T
Yes, 'tis plain our cases are the same,
Mirth is stamped upon our every feature!
Joy's in our hearts, and gloom but in one name.
Who would have thought {her/him} such a lively creature?
Ah! 'tis mirth has worked this potent charm ma'am/sir
Bright seem things that once were dull and frightful
Now we may chat and smile without alarm sir/ma'am
This new change is certainly delightful!
(repeat)

Death Upon my word, my dear Mrs. Tombs! This is the most agreeable surprise! Do you know I was under the impression that you were the most inflexibly severe woman that ever existed.

Mrs. Tombs Well! I'm not so very exuberant of spirits as yourself, Mr. Death, but I can tell you I've often found it difficult to keep my countenance when watching your supernatural efforts to restrain your constitutional cheerfulness!

{20b}

Death You laugh! How delicious! Do laugh again!

Mrs. Tombs Nonsense

Death I say! Mr. Ravenswood's worse than ever! Miss Flora has so pestered and distracted him that he is unapproachable. She pursues him from one room to the other – first with laughing, then with singing! Go where he will, she is at his side, striving to bend his spirit into something like natural cheerfulness.

Mrs. Tombs And she will succeed. He must yield at length; if not to her fascinations, at least to her importunity! She is determined to cure him and she will not leave him till he is…

Death *(with obvious admiration)* Killed or cured! Eh! Well! Well! A young girl's fascinations are too obtruse[14] to suit my taste. Now those solid and intrinsic charms which are seen (?) to advantage only in more matured women *(approaching her)*, and to perfection only in…

{21a}

[14] Variant of abstruse

Mrs. Tombs Oh! Mr. Death! You flatter too highly – really – you –

Death Not a bit! Not a bit! If you only knew what is now passing through my mind – if I say you would only consent –

{22a}

Mrs. Tombs *(blushingly)* Oh! Mr. Death!

Death To change that lugubrious name of Tombs to my more convivial –

Mrs. Tombs Oh! – Why – surely Death is –

Death I must confess that to enjoy the advantages of high wages, I assumed a name not my own. Pardon me! but my own name – which you will take – dear Mrs. Tombs!

Mrs. Tombs Oh! Death! And – *(sinks on his shoulder)*
(Enter Ravenswood and Flora)

Death The Devil! (*sees Ravenswood*)

Flora Ha! Ha! Ha!

Mrs Tombs Good gracious. What can I say!

Death Fear nothing!

Ravens What does all this mean? Is the house gone mad?

Flora No! Only just recovered its senses!

Ravens How can you answer to this new offence? Is my room a place for these scenes? Is this spot to be profaned! Mrs. Tombs too, whom I always considered as the person most interested in preserving the character of this place – at your age too madam!

{22b}

Mrs Tombs Sir!

Death Sir!

Ravens I say at your time of life –

Quartetto – Mrs. Tombs, Death, Ravens, Flora

Sir! I Do Not Understand You!

Mrs. Tombs Sir! I do not understand you!
Do you dare attack my years!

Ravens Silence woman I command you!

Flora What a pretty pair of dears!
Ha! Ha! Ha!

Ravens What were you doing?

Death Merely billing, Sir, and cooing!

Flora Like two well-conditioned doves!

Death 'Twas too abrupt to interrupt
Such a passage in our loves!

Ravens Loves! Oh patience! Such relations
Do you venture to assume?
Pray what say you, when I keep you
To sustain a part of gloom?

Death 'Tis no use sir

Mrs.Tombs Your abuse Sir,
{23a}
Both Ne'er can turn us from our aim!

Death Mrs. Tombs, Sir, she assumes, Sir,
Your obedient servant's name!

Ensemble {This is distracting / Right we're acting} counteracting
All {my/his} orders one by one!
Who shall say what happen may!
E're the setting of the sun!
(Repeat)

Ravens No more of this. You are dismissed. You will now receive the usual notice – and I must request that I am as little annoyed by your presence as is consistent with the necessary attendance I require – Go!

Flora *(aside to Mrs. Tombs)* Fear nothing – submit for the time – I will see all arranged to your interests.

Death I take your notice, Sir, and glad I can resume once more my own natural habits and "smile as I would want to smile" As the song says.

Ravens I suspected this, you villain. I might have spared myself all this, had I been more **{23b}** determined – more just to myself.

Death Well sir, since we are to part, I should like to confess.

Ravens What new disappointment is this? What new rascality?

Death Merely that "Death" is not exactly my name after all.

Mrs. Tombs Isn't that delightful. Miss?

Flora I was sure of it – I congratulate you!

Ravens What then is your name?

Death Mr. Grinsby, at your service, Sir!

Flora & Mrs. T Ha! Ha! Grinsby, capital

Ravens *(in a rage)* Serve me scoundrel! Take your hated face and name away from me! Be off! *(driving him)*

Mrs. Tombs Oh! Grinsby! *(following him)*

(He runs out followed by Mrs. Tombs.)

Flora What a treat!

Ravens Duped, deceived, derided. This is too much! I can bear no more. That villain too!

Death *(reentering suddenly by center door)* Grinsby Ha! Ha! *(Exit hurriedly)*

(Ravenswood makes at him as he disappears)

Ravens What is to become of me? *(sinks into chair)*

Flora My dear guardian! Why will you still oppose me? **{24a}** Surely you can't imagine that I should yield to an example so incongruous with my life and ignorance of worldly trials – but at least I can sympathize with you. I won't chatter – indeed I won't. I'll only listen quietly – what early trial made you foreswear society and cheerfulness and busy yourself here? Surely it was something very serious and full of disappointment. Tell me about it, do! I'm sure I feel for you in anticipation.

Ravens Leave me – you are worse than the rest –

Flora Oh! Don't say that. I didn't think I should make you hate me. I meant merely to win you back to pleasant life, and its enjoyments. I had no wish to annoy or tease you. Pray don't be angry with me. *(puts her handkerchief to her eyes)*

Ravens *(aside)* What's to be done? She knows no better perhaps, poor girl.

Flora Are you very angry with me Mr Ravenswood?

Ravens N-n-o. Not exactly angry – but you are full of levity; and my habits and tastes **{24b}**do not coincide with yours!

Flora But you have not yet told me how it is that you have severed yourself from all creatures and inured yourself in this dungeon! *(draws a stool to his side and sits)*

Ravens Dungeon! Miss Skipley!

Flora Well! "Castle" then but call me Flora, won't you?

Ravens I believe you have no sister.

Flora No- none. I am an orphan, and alone.

Ravens Then you are, by right, Miss Skipley.

Flora How hard you are! But now I am anxious to hear – what was your early disappointment! What silent! Call you any?

Ravens It is my taste to shun society - merely my choice.

Flora Have you done anything to –

Ravens *(haughtily)* Miss Skipley you forget yourself.

Flora Nonsense! If you have no reason except whim and caprice for this hermit's life. I cannot even sympathise with you, for your retirement is no longer a misfortune but a fault and a sin against yourself and the world! (*rises*)

{25a}

Ravens This is unbearable

Flora Why! You only deserve to be laughed at! And I was ready to cry for you.

Ravens Confusion

Air – Ravenswood[15]

Ravens

Pray thee leave me! Mirth is hateful
Laughter jars upon my soul!
Spite of smiles I cannot yield me
To a wayward girl's control!

Fresh thy brow and all unclouded
Not a weary thought is there
But my heart is dull and shrouded
In the mists of early care.

Then pray thee leave me, mirth is hateful
Laughter jars upon my soul!
All thy smiling will not win me
In a wayward girl's control.

Flora But you haven't given any reason why you should not quit this oppressively gloomy spot, and live as other sensible people. **{25b}**

[15] According to the *Bayswater Chronicle* (June 3, 1865) this was included in the first performance but was, presumably changed for the revival as the vocal score has a completely different song for Ravenswood here.

Ravens I cannot give up the habits I have induced. I have no common feeling with society – I prefer my solitude.

Flora What then is to become of me?

Ravens You will have to understand how hollow the world's pleasures are – how vain all pursuits after happiness.

Flora Well! If I am to learn all this lesson it must be gained in the world. I must have experience of course. You as a philosopher would not have me receive a great and weighty statement upon mere heresay (*sic*).

Ravens Mere heresay! They are truths of my own experience!

Flora Indeed! Where did you pick up these experiences? You are young – rich – your own master – You can name no trial which might have stood as some excuse for your retirement. I tell you, you are wrong. I (whose opinion you will deride because I do not understand or care a pin about your insane philosophy) tell you that I can **{26a}** teach you a lesson – not to waste your life in inglorious solitude, churlish habits, and selfish tastes – not to live uncared for and useless in life, and doomed to be unlamented when you die.

Ravens *(interested)* You speak strangely for so young a girl.

Flora A child of five years old would upset your philosophy *(aside with joy* - "I see symptoms of yielding"*)* For myself I have no intention of consigning my youth and spirits to a living grave as you do, and since you refuse to unbend, I must seek some friendly home where innocence is not considered a curse against philosophy or mirthfulness another name for ignorant levity.

Ravens *(aside)* She surprises me – so young, and yet so thoughtful – so independent. *(aloud)* What would you have? *(aside)* I cannot understand this new influence that is creeping over me – I must be firm!

Flora I would wean you from your present life – I would have you be cheerful as your youth suggests.

{26b}

Ravens I fear it is impossible now.

Duo – Ravenswood & Flora

How Shouldst Thou Move A Man

Ravens
How shouldst thou move a man
Who since his days began
Ever has used to scan
Nature apart!
And with long silence fraught
Making all joys of nought
Nourishes solemn thought

Deep in his heart.

Flora Yes! I would change a man
Tho' since his days began
Ever he's used to scan
Nature apart!
Though with long silence fraught
Treats he all joys as nought
Still should bright mirth be brought
Into his heart!

Flora Though fancies weird and strange
Roam thro' thy spirits range
These cannot hope to change
{27a} Nature beneath!
And tho' thy brow many lower
Mirth will assert her power
Twining a merry flower
In thy sad wreath!

Ensemble How shouldst thou move a man, etc
Yes I would move a man, etc.

Ravens I fear your efforts would be vain. I am wedded to retirement!

Flora So hope I never to be – I should prefer a young man of cheerful temper who would share all my happiness. Would double my pleasures and divide my trials – such only will ever win my heart. *(aside)* I wonder how he likes that!

Ravens *(uneasily)* There are many such in the world! *(sighs)*

Flora Yes! But I should like a husband who was clever, full of high sentiments and noble **{27b}** aspirations. I shouldn't grumble if he gave up some portion of his time to study – useful study – mind, I don't want to marry a man who could only laugh or whose cheerfulness was his only qualification! *(aside)* Will he take the hint?

Raven (aside) I wish she had never come here! I don't know what to say when she looks so at me. I suppose being so young – well! I am not very old myself – really! *(aloud)* – Ah! I am not constituted for merriment – I should not help you to much mirth – I mean -

Flora (aside) He's getting confused. *(aloud)* Guardian! You do not do yourself justice! I believe if you entered into more of life's pleasures you would improve immensely!

Ravens *(phased)*[16] Do you think so?

[16] Presumably Reece intended "Fazed" meaning disconcerted

Flora You know that flowers and ribbons lose their natural colors when they are shut up from the light! Listen! And I'll teach you a lesson in a fable.

{28a}

Ballad – Flora

The Rose Said To The Lily

Flora

The rose said to the lily
That lurked within a vale
"Why hide those sickly petals
And pray thee why so pale?
Come forth into the sunshine
And greet the loving rays
Nor waste in sad retirement
Your uneventful days!

Although your form be graceful
And tho' your flowers be sweet
No color shines upon you
The longing eyes to greet!
In sadness and in solitude
No beauty can be won!
Those flowers will have no color
That hide them from the sun!

Ravens (aside) How sweetly she pleads – I suppose I must appear to yield! Perhaps when she's older – no! **{28b}** Her temperament is happy by nature. She will be a perpetual fountain of laughing water – a perpetual sunbeam! Perhaps already someone has her heart – Oh, the thought is torture and yet, how should I –

Flora *(aside)*I wonder what he's so silent for!

Ravens *(aside)*Why should she take all this trouble to win me to cheerfulness? I must know the worst. *(aloud)* Flora!

Flora *(curtseying to him)* "Miss Skipley" if you please, by your own desire and definition.

Ravens No! Flora – dear Flora!

Flora Bless me – Who is it that speaks?

Ravens I am a fool – a visionary!

Flora Bravo – confession is the first step to amendment!

Ravens I <u>will</u> amend! I will try - tho' against the grain.

Flora Thank you – no constrained merriment if you please.

Ravens Well! Then - with all my heart! Does that please you?

{29a}

Flora Very much indeed! You're improved already!

Ravens With your help! Flora – will you let me be your pupil?

Flora Ha! Ha! Go to school to a girl who has just left her academy! (*aside*) When these sort of men begin to give way, they rush down like a cataract!

Ravens Flora! Will you teach me?

Flora What more do you want to know?

Ravens Dearest Flora! Will you let me be a perpetual pupil? Let me ever hear those precepts which you sing so sweetly? Let me know whether in my changed aspect I am not indifferent to you. Let me win you – wear you in my heart which you have lightened and brought to life and happiness. Speak, Flora!

Flora Were you very silly and visionary?

Ravens Very!

Flora Will you be a better boy?

Ravens Yes! Yes!

Flora Will you beg your mistress's pardon?

Ravens On my knees in true humility – never to rise**{29b}** unless you bid me claim you.

Flora Stay a minute! On pain of receiving a negative - remain as you are. *(rings bell)*

(Enter Mrs. Tombs & Death)

Mrs. Tombs Gracious goodness! Mr. Ravenswood!

Death Goodness gracious! On his knees!

Flora There! Mr. Ravenswood

Ravens "Charles" – Flora

Flora Well! Charles! After this trial of your obedience I bid you rise and claim the forfeit you prefer.

Ravens *(rising and seizing Floras' hand)* It is here! (*...?*)

Death Well, this is the most marvellous change I ever witnessed!

I told you so. Now for our business. Mr. Ravenswood you dismissed us this
Mrs. Tombs morning – indeed not many minutes ago – but you were in a different aspect then, may we hope that our offence…

Which you have copied! Ha! Ha! (What a treat to laugh before his very face).
Death

{30a} …may be overlooked – or taken into merciful consideration!
Mrs. Tombs

My good friends! You were right (except that trifle about the letter! Eh?) and
Ravens I was wrong! Forgive me! Mrs. Tombs, pardon my ungallant remark about –

You needn't refer to it again , Sir!
Mrs. Tombs

True! Death!
Ravens

Grinsby! Please sir! With your permission –
Death

Certainly! Grin as much as you like, and if an addition of ten pounds to your
Ravens wages be conducive to that laughter – consider it yours – and laugh at…

The incapacity of man to resist a woman's persuasion, and the weakness and
Flora absurdity of indulging a selfish taste for retirement.

Gloominess!
Ravens

And "Castle Grim"!
Flor

Quartetto – Finale

Oh! The Changes Of A Day

Ensemble Oh! The changes of a day!
Wonders hurry to surround us
{30b} From gloom to joy, from grave to gay,
All conspire to astound us!

Death Thoughts will come and thoughts will go,
Fickle we shall ever find them,
As the ripples ebb and flow,
Leaving not a trace behind them.

Mrs. Tombs Morning dawns the heavens are shrouded
Threatening mists obscure the sky
Evening sees the arch unclouded
E're the rosy sunset die.

Ravens Though we see the buds declining
When the winter frosts appear,
They will waken in the shining
Of the springtime of the year!

Ensemble

Mirth at length has vanquished sadness!
Vainly gloom for conquest strove!
Joy alone and living gladness,
Wait upon the court of love!
Oh the changes of a day, etc.
(Repeat)

{31a}

(*with the ensemble*)[17]

All our speculations crushed!
All our plans of suiciding!
We may sing without being hushed!
Tramp and shout without a chiding!

Curtain

End of Operetta

[17] According to the vocal score, the chorus of malcontents was meant to join in here