

“Hymn to the United Nations”

“Hymn to the United Nations,” composed by Pablo Casals with lyrics from W.H. Auden’s poem “An Ode to World Peace.” The hymn consists of three parts:

I

After a joyous fanfare, the full chorus summons all singers and musicians to gather their voices and instruments.

Eagerly, musician,
Sweep your string,
So we may sing,
Elated, optative,
Our several voices
Interblending,
Playfully contending,
Not interfering
But co-inhering,
For all within
The cincture
of the sound,
Is holy ground
Where all are brothers,
None faceless others.

II

A quick transition sets a somber mood as the male chorus calls out a warning, contrasting mere words with music.

Let mortals beware
Of words, for
With words we lie,
Can say peace
When we mean war,
Foul thought, speak fair
And promise falsely,
But song is true:
Let music for peace
Be the paradigm,
For peace means to change
At the right time,
As the world clock
Goes "tick" and "tock".

III

The third part returns to a joyous mood that prepares the audience for the hymn’s climax with more optimistic lyrics.

So may the story
Of our human city
Presently move
Like music, when
Begotten notes
New notes beget
Making the flowing
Of time a growing
Till what it could be,
At last it is,
Where even sadness
Is a form of gladness,
Where fate is freedom,
Grace and surprise.