

Fitchburg State University

*Canti e Cantici: Songs and Arias on  
Timeless Italian Poetry*

Thursday November 21, 2013, 7:30 PM Kent Recital Hall

**Maria Ferrante, soprano**

**Daniela Tosic, mezzo-soprano**

**Sean Lair, tenor**

**James Demler, baritone**

**with**

**Pei-yeh Tsai, piano**

**and**

**The Assisi ensemble:**

**Klaudia Szlachta, violin, Monica Duncan,  
clarinet, and Hyun-ji Kwon, violoncello**

*Fiori Francescani* Michele Caniato  
Ms. Ferrante, Ms. Tosic, Mr. Lair, Mr. Demler  
and the Assisi Ensemble

*Me voglio fa 'na casa* (Canzone Napoletana) Gaetano Donizetti  
Ms. Ferrante

*Deh! Vieni, non tardar* from *Le Nozze di Figaro*  
Ms. Ferrante

*Vieni Ruggiero* from *Serate Musicali* Gioacchino Rossini  
Ms. Ferrante

*Donde lieta* from *La Boheme* Giacomo Puccini  
Ms. Ferrante

*Parigi, o caro, noi lasceremo* from *La Traviata* Giuseppe Verdi  
Ms. Ferrante, Mr. Lair



Soprano **Maria Ferrante** maintains a full schedule of performances on both the local and international stage. Her name has become familiar to audiences world over. A winner of the Mario Lanza Voice Competition, she has been acclaimed by the Washington Post and the Boston Phoenix. Richard Dyer of The Boston Globe has called her “a true singing actress... Maria Ferrante broke my heart last night.” Maria's performances have delighted audiences from New York to the Virgin Islands, Prague, Japan and London as well as in local venues like Jordan Hall and Sanders Theater. Some of her many operatic roles include Cio-Cio-San ('Madama Butterfly'), Desdemona ('Otello'), Liu ('Turandot'), Violetta ('La Traviata'), Despina ('Cosi Fan Tutte'), Barbarina ('Marriage of Figaro'), Pamina ('Die Zauberflöte'), and Gretel ('Hänsel und Gretel').

Maria appeared live on WGBH-TV in May 2003 as Sacerdotessa in Verdi's *Aida*. She was invited to commemorate The Goethe Institute of Boston's 250 Gala Celebration with Xavier de Maistre, solo harpist with the Vienna Philharmonic.

Ms. Ferrante has recorded for Naxos, Albany, Navona Records and AFKA labels and also has four solo CDs to her credit, including *Christmas Memories*, *Best Kept Secrets* and *Sea Tides and Time*, which received rave review from the Boston Herald: [*Ms. Ferrante*] *known for her lilting soprano voice and probing mind...brings a supple and colorful approach to a broad variety of repertoire.*” The Boston Globe said: “*Superb*”.

Maria was heard last season with Max Hobart singing Mahler's *Fourth Symphony*, with the Newton Choral Society singing Haydn's *St. Nikolai Mass* & Mozart's *Vesperae de Domenica* as well as Golijov's *How Slow the Wind* & *Lúa Descolorida* and Dvorak's *Rusalka's Aria* with the Worcester Chamber Music Society. This season Maria will be singing with The Cape Cod Symphony and in recital at Merkin Hall (NYC) and at The Historical Piano Concerts from the Frederick Piano Collection. In October she was seen live world-wide YouTube from Sanders Theatre with The IG-Nobel Prize Award Ceremony at Harvard University and she will also appear with The Boston Civic Symphony, the Worcester Chamber Music Society and the Nantucket Arts Council.

She is a vivid and active recitalist, working locally with numerous ensembles both in Massachusetts and nationally. For example, she has performed locally with The Mohawk Trial Concerts, the Boston Ballet and the New England String Ensemble. On a national level, she has appeared with The Ensemble for the Romantic Century (NYC), The Charleston Orchestra, The Delaware Symphony Orchestra, The Enid Symphony Orchestra (Oklahoma), The Florida Northwest Symphony, The Concert Society Chamber Orchestra (Connecticut), Great Waters Music Festival (New Hampshire), The Shakespeare Concerts (Boston/Prague) and The National Museum of Women in The Arts (Washington DC).

An engaging, enthusiastic teacher and coach, Maria has taught Vocal Master Classes throughout and New England and New York and offers unique and personalized strategies for her students.



Mezzo-soprano **Daniela Tosic**, a native of Belgrade, Yugoslavia, is a soloist and chamber musician who specializes in early, contemporary, and world music repertoires. She has performed in concerts throughout the U.S., Europe, and South America. Ms. Tosic is a founding member of the internationally renowned vocal ensemble Tapestry, winners of the Echo Klassik and Chamber Music America Recording of the Year. She is also a founding member of the medieval-world fusion ensemble HourGlass. Ms. Tosic has premiered numerous new works and

performed Steve Reich's *Tehillim* with the Colorado Symphony and Cabrillo Festival Orchestra conducted by Marin Alsop. Recent appearances include the role of Story Woman in Steven Jobe's opera *Melusine*, the role of Yangchen in Sheila Silver's *The White Rooster* (a dramatic cantata for Tibetan singing bowls, percussion, and four treble voices), and Humilitas in Capella Clausura's production of Hildegard's *Ordo Virtutum*. Ms. Tosic has recorded for Telarc, MDG, and several independent labels. In the Boston area she performs with Blue Heron, La Donna Musicale and Clash of Civilizations.



**Sean Lair** has most recently been seen with Boston Modern Orchestra Project in their concert performance of *Four Saints in Three Acts*, Boston Midsummer Opera singing the role of Slender in their production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Juventas New Music Ensemble singing Prince Yelisey in the world premiere performance of *The Magic Mirror*, with Intermezzo in their production of Britten's *The Prodigal Son*, and performing the role of Evangelist in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Freisinger Chamber Orchestra. He has in recent past sung the roles of Dance Master in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, First Armed Man in *The Magic Flute*, a Tragedian in the world premiere of Herschel Garfein's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, and Tamino in an outreach production of *The Magic Flute*. He has performed Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, Finzi's *A Farewell to Arms*—as winner of the New England Conservatory Concerto Competition, and Saint-Saëns *Oratorio de Noël* with the NEC Chamber and Symphony Orchestras in Jordan Hall, and has twice sung *Messiah* with the Boston Masterworks Chorale. He is a recent graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music where he was a student of Mark St. Laurent and studied previously at Miami University in Ohio, where he twice placed second in the Undergraduate Artist Competition and was named a Presser Scholar. His future engagements and further information can be found at [sean-lair.com](http://sean-lair.com).



Baritone James Demler is known for his versatile range of repertory, spanning the operatic, oratorio, concert, and popular music genres.

2011-2012 season engagements included a debut with Boston Lyric Opera in Verdi's *Macbeth*, and a return as soloist with the Boston Pops, where he sang *The Boston Baseball Cantata*, with Keith Lockhart, conductor. Mr. Demler also sang the role of Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* with the Tuscia Opera Festival in Viterbo, Italy, and sang the role of Ramphis in *Aida* in a concert version with the Berkshire Choral Festival. In addition, he made his film debut as Noah in Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom*, which opened the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, and was also a guest Public Address Announcer for the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park in June 2012.

Mr. Demler first gained international attention at Houston Grand Opera, where he appeared as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* and Peter in *Hansel and Gretel*, and as soloist with the Houston Symphony, where he sang the role of Maestro in a concert version of Salieri's rarely performed opera *Prima la musica, poi le parole*. James Demler made his Carnegie Hall debut with the Opera Orchestra of New York as Dikson in Boieldieu's *La Dame Blanche*, and has returned to that venue as a soloist in Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*, Faure's *Requiem*, and Mozart's *Coronation Mass*.

He made his Canadian operatic debut as Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with Edmonton Opera, a role he has also sung with Anchorage Opera and P.O.R.T. of Portland, Maine. A favorite in Anchorage, he has also appeared there as Marcello in *La Boheme*, Valentin in *Faust*, a role which he debuted with the West Virginia Symphony, and Peter in *Hansel and Gretel*, which he has also sung with the Pine Mountain Music Festival of Michigan. With Chautauqua Opera he appeared as Pish-Tush in *The Mikado*, while with Palm Beach Opera he sang Danilo in *The Merry Widow*, and with Chattanooga Opera as Silvio in *I Pagliacci*. He also made debuts with Long Beach Opera as Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas* and Bartley in *Riders to the Sea*.

Concert engagements have included a 2009 solo debut with the Boston Pops in the previously mentioned *Boston Baseball Cantata*, and he was immediately re-engaged there as Narrator and soloist in the World Premiere of British composer Philip Lane's *The Christmas Story*. Mr. Demler has sung Raphael in Haydn's *Creation*, and the title role of Elijah in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in Boston's Symphony Hall in an International Webcast with the Boston University Symphony and Chorus. For Ned Rorem's 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration he was asked to sing the composer's *Santa Fe Songs* with the Houston Symphony, and in 2007 made a debut in Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood, singing as baritone soloist in Earl Kim's *Scenes from a Movie, Part 26*. In the 2008 season he made a debut with Boston Baroque in Monteverdi's *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* with Martin Pearlman conducting, and also sang debuts with the Boston based Back Bay Chorale and Coro Allegro, where he was re-engaged to sing as baritone soloist in Patricia Van Ness' *Requiem*. In recent seasons he has also been the Bass soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the National Arts Centre Orchestra of Ottawa, Canada, the Hartford Symphony and the New England Philharmonic.

James Demler has appeared in solo recital at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, at Princeton University, Pepperdine University, and at Boston University's Tsai Center. He holds voice degrees from The University of New Mexico, the University of Arizona, and the Eastman School of Music. He completed his training as a member of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, and has been a full-time member of the voice faculty of Boston University since 2005.



Pianist Pei-yeh Tsai received her Doctoral degree in piano performance from Boston University. She is the founding member of the piano trio 'Trio Lumiere' and the computer music group-"Bleep-Blop". Ms. Tsai studied at the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University with Boris Slutsky; subsequently she received a Master's degree.

Pianist Pei-yeh Tsai received her Doctoral degree in piano performance from Boston University. She is the founding member of the piano trio 'Trio Lumiere' and the computer music group-"Bleep-Blop". Ms. Tsai studied at the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University with Boris Slutsky; subsequently she received a Master's degree in Piano Performance from the Juilliard School under the tutelage of Jerome Lowenthal.

Ms. Tsai's recent engagements included a premiere of Ketty Nez's Piano concerto 'Thresholds' with David Martins conducting the Boston University Wind Ensemble; concerts with the Atlantic

Symphony Chamber Players as well as performances of the Rachmaninoff Second Piano Concerto and Beethoven Fourth Piano Concerto with the Boston University Orchestra. Last year, she appeared as part of the Fringe Festival playing the Concerto for Two Pianos, Percussion and Winds by Paul Bowels. This year Ms. Tsai was interviewed by BBC Radio 4, in a program called 'Soul Music' where she talked about the important role Rachmaninoff plays in her life and music.

Ms. Tsai received first prize in the Aaron Richmond International Piano Competition, New England Chamber Music Ensemble Competition with the Clara Piano Quartet, Baltimore Music Club Piano Competition, The fourth prize in Iowa International Piano Competition, and The Viardo Prize at The Viardo International Piano Competition. Ms. Tsai is also the recipient of numerous awards including two Piano Departmental Awards given by Boston University, the Marie Miller Award from the Women's Guild in Boston, the Sergio Fiorentino Memorial Award, the Rose Marie Milholland Award and a Career Development Grant from the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore. Last year she was a judge in the Granite State Piano Competition in New Hampshire. In her leisure time, she embraces nature, enjoys rock climbing and photography.



Klaudia Szlachta

Award winning violinist Ms. Szlachta has performed and taught internationally. After obtaining her Doctorate of Musical Arts, Ms. Szlachta was invited to the Institute and Festival of Contemporary Performance in New York, to perform Luciano Berio's *Sequenza* and Elliott Carter's *Triple Duo*. A Polish national, Ms. Szlachta won numerous prizes and honors in Poland, including the First Prize and Grand Prix at the National Violin Competition in Elblag, as well as three special prizes for the best performance of the Brahms Violin Concerto. Ms. Szlachta recently recorded music for a film entered in the Irish Film Institute's Movie

Festival, appeared in the prestigious Ashmont Hill Chamber concert series, and in venues such as Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center and Boston Symphony Hall. As the Concerto Competition Winner at Boston University's College of Fine Arts, Ms. Szlachta performed the Szymanowski Violin Concerto under the baton of David Hoose. She also collaborated on stage with Menahem Pressler and worked with the Tokyo and Vermeer String Quartets. Currently Ms. Szlachta is a part of the New England String Quartet preparing for performances and recordings at Brandeis University and Providence College.



Clarinetist Monica Duncan freelances throughout the Greater Boston area, and has performed with the Cape Ann, Lexington, and Greater Lansing Symphonies, Symphony by the Sea, North Shore Music Theater, Hillyer Festival Orchestra, Chalumeau Chamber Ensemble, and Arlington Street Chamber Players. Duncan has performed in Japan and Canada, and has premiered many works, including at the SCI National Conference. She can be heard on the CDs *Awaiting the Sun*, *Fleeting Visions*, *Metamorphosis* and *Ghosts* through Beauport Classical, and *Basically British* with Philharmonia a Vént.

Duncan holds a Masters degree from Indiana University where she studied with James

Campbell and a Bachelors degree from Michigan State University. In addition to her role as performer, Duncan teaches clarinet and saxophone through the Foundation Music Lesson Program at Fitchburg State University, from her private studio, and in the Hamilton-Wenham School District. She is also a chamber music coach with the Northeast Massachusetts Youth Orchestra.



Cellist **Hyun-ji Kwon**, a native of Korea, is an active performer as a soloist and a chamber musician. She has performed in numerous concerts, festivals, and master classes in USA, Korea, Japan, and Europe.

She earned her Bachelor's degree from Ewha Woman's University in 2005. In the following year, she came to Boston, USA and studied at the New England Conservatory and earned a Master degree in 2008 as well as a Graduate Diploma in 2009. She has completed studies with Sang-min Park, Sung-won Yang, William Bai, and Natasha Brofsky. She has also performed in master classes for renowned cellists such as Natalia Gutman and Anner Bylsma, and earned her Doctoral Degree from Boston University under the guidance of Rhonda Rider.

She was a winner of several competitions held in Korea including the Seoul Symphony Orchestra competition and Seoul Youth Chamber competition. She also won the school concerto competition twice, and performed as a soloist in 2003 and 2004 with the Ewha orchestra where she was also the principal cellist and recipient of an honor scholarship.

As a dedicated chamber musician, she has collaborated with various musicians and performed in venues including Jordan Hall and Tsai Performance Center. Ms.Kwon joined the cello faculty at Boston University Tanglewood Institute in summer 2013.



Michele Caniato received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in composition from Boston University. He has studied composition with Richard Cornell, Lukas Foss, William Thomas McKinley, Marjorie Merryman, and Charles Fussell, and conducting with Frank Battisti and Kenneth Kiesler.

Among Dr. Caniato's grants and awards are the Massachusetts Cultural Council Artist Grant in 2007, the Amelia Gallucci-Cirio Endowment Grant for study abroad (renaissance music), Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation Grant (for conducting), and the Massachusetts Cultural Council Professional Development Grant. He was also a finalist in the BMI Foundation/Charlie Parker Composition Competition in New York (2007).

His works have been performed in Boston (Harvard University, Northeastern University, New England Conservatory, Tsai Performance Center, Berklee Performance Center), at Merkin Hall and Christ and St. Stephens Church in New York City, across the United States, Canada, Finland, on National Italian Radio, and at festivals in Vittorio Veneto, Montecrosaro, and Venice (Italy), by the Red Stick Saxophone Quartet, harpists Franziska Huhn and Alessandra Trentin, Public Works New Music, and the BMI New York Jazz Orchestra. He recently was a Fulbright scholar at Metropolia

University in Helsinki, Finland, and has been a composer in residence with the Weston High School in Weston, MA, and an artist-in-residence at the Adria Conservatory in Italy.

Dr. Caniato is a published theorist and educator and Associate Professor of Music at Fitchburg State University in Massachusetts.

## Program Notes for Fiori Francescani

I feel grateful and honored to have been enabled to work on a new piece for this year's wonderful *Canti e Cantici* celebration of Italian music and poetry sponsored by the Center for Italian Culture and Fitchburg State University. After paying a homage to Leopardi last year, I'm happy to have had the great opportunity to connect with the author of the earliest text in Italian vernacular: Francesco Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone, known as Saint Francis of Assisi (1182- 1226).

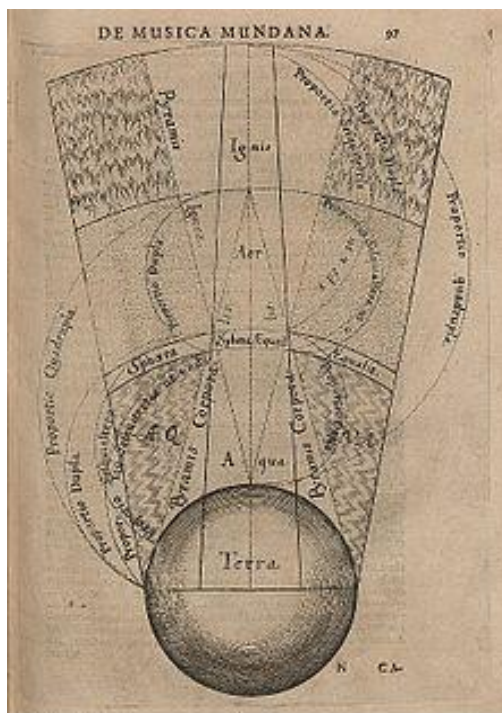
There are a few themes that I feel deeply about in the *Cantico delle Creature* (Canticle of Creation): joy and gratitude for life in all its expressions, including its challenging ones, appreciation for aesthetic beauty, and humility.

Living in 2013 it is hard to escape discussions about the fragility of the environment and our need as humans to make constructive, respectful choices in the way we live with the natural world. Animals are also treated more humanely and not made to needlessly suffer and, yes, some of us can't deny that we talk with them, as Francis did. The list of elements that Francis so passionately praises is pretty comprehensive (sun, moon, wind, fire etc.) and there isn't much that can be added to it today, despite the fact that we are able to see pictures of the earth from space. His message of forgiveness, love, and humility remains an inspiration for many to this day. In addition to his love for life and visual esthetics, Francis was also known to sing, eat the food and drink the wines of the fertile Umbrian soil.

To begin feeling my way into hearing a possible musical setting I began to rearrange the text in a way that made sense to me. Because of time constraints it was necessary to select only certain passages, though I do have a possible "Part II" continuation that deals with ailments and death outlined.

I was taken by the order in which Francis lists the elements, vento, acqua, fuoco, terra (wind, water, fire, earth) and only inverted acqua and fuoco. Hinduism adds a fifth element of aether (the material that fills the universe beyond the terrestrial sphere). Most religions organize them from the most ethereal to the most "heavy" or "earthy": I tried to reflect this pull towards gravity in the music that is at its most sparse and otherworldly when Maria and Daniela sing "o Signore" and proceeds to get denser and more grounded as each singer praises one element in turn, building to "coloriti fiori et herba" (colorful flowers and grass), the culmination of earth's description.





Quelle Deutsche Forstet.

I was also familiar with the *Preghiera semplice* (Simple Prayer) that, while not written by St. Francis, was adopted by the Vatican and thought to reflect closely his message and spirit.

As many prayers it has a repetitive, mantra-like quality that can be used for meditation. It lists antithetic feelings such as *odio/ amore* (hate/ love), and concepts as *fede/dubbio* (faith/doubt). I interspersed some lines within the parts of the *Cantico* where the elements are praised. The prayer portion ends with the singers asking “*dov’e`?*” (where is..?) now a question rather than an affirmation, and “*che io porti*” (may I bring), a truncated statement followed by a murmur of many possibilities, spoken freely.

What about the Sun and Moon? Well, I feel they are part of the piece because they were there throughout the summer: the sun shining gloriously on the flowers and grass while I took my lunch breaks, and the moon coming up when I exited the studio, continuing to preside over my composing between June and August.

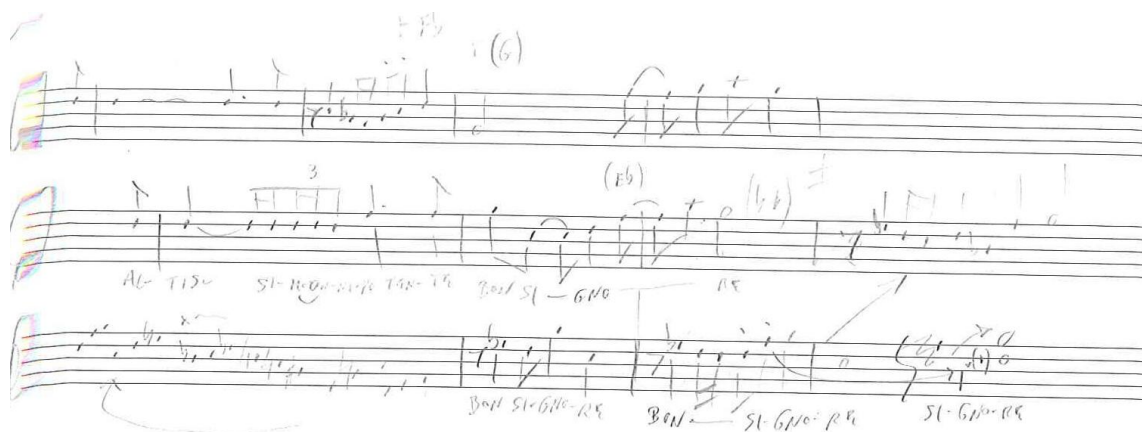
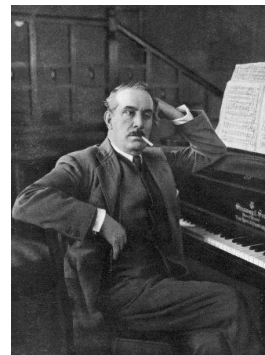
After the rearrangement of the text, I worked on the vocal parts first, then on a short score, followed by the orchestration. Then I posted the score on the internet so Maria, Pei, and I could start assembling the fabulous cast you are about to hear. Notes on page are not brought to life until the performers turn them into sounds infused by their own artistry. In the process of rehearsal there were tweaks, edits, and additions amounting perhaps to 10% of the piece.

The audience brings the process full circle: musicians generally do not want to face an audience without feeling at least “as ready as they can be.” So a premiere is always a special moment, in which the product of a collective process, started in this case six months ago, is shared for the first time outside of the rehearsal environment. Whatever the destiny of the piece or its future metamorphosis, the audience ushers it through this crucial step.

I hope you will enjoy what the performers are presenting tonight and help them “praise and give thanks” and serve the music and St. Francis “with great humility.”

Michele Caniato

<p>Altissimo, onnipotente bon Signore, Tue so le laude, la gloria e l'onore et onne benedizione.</p>	<p>Most high, almighty, good Lord, Yours are praise, glory, honor, and all blessings</p>
<p>Ad Te solo, Altissimo, se konfano, et nullu homo ène dignu te mentovare.</p>	<p>To You, alone, Most High, do they belong, and no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.</p>
<p>Laudate et benedicete mi Signore et ringraziate e serviateli cum grande humiltate.</p>	<p>Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks, and serve him with great humility.</p>
<p><i>O Signore, fa di me uno strumento della tua pace: dov'è odio che io porti l'amore</i></p>	<p><i>Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, may I bring love</i></p>
<p>Laudato si', mi Signore, per frate vento per lo quale a le Tue creature dàì sustentamento.</p>	<p>Be praised, my Lord, through brother wind, through which you give Your creatures sustenance.</p>
<p>Laudato si', mi Signore, per frate focu, ed ello è bello et iocundo et robustoso et forte.</p>	<p>Be praised, my Lord, through brother fire, he is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.</p>
<p><i>dov'è offesa che io porti il perdono</i> <i>O Signore, fa di me uno strumento della tua pace:</i></p>	<p><i>where there is injury, may I bring pardon</i> <i>Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:</i></p>
<p>Laudato si', mi Signore, per sora acqua, la quale è multo utile et humile et preziosa et casta.</p>	<p>Be praised, my Lord, through sister water, who is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.</p>
<p><i>dov'e`... che io porti... speranza...verità... luce... perdono...</i> <i>pace...amore...fede...gioia...dubbio...</i></p>	<p><i>where is...may I bring...hope...truth...light...forgiveness... peace...love...faith...joy...doubt...</i></p>
<p>Laudato si' per sora nostra madre Terra la quale ne sustenta et governa, et produce diversi fructi con coloriti fiori et herba.</p>	<p>Be praised, my Lord, through our sister mother Earth, who feeds us and rules us, and produces various fruits with colored flowers and grass.</p>
<p>Laudato si', mi Signore cum tucte le Tue creature, Tue so le laude, la gloria e l'onore et onne benedizione.</p>	<p>Be praised, my Lord, with all Your creatures, Yours are praise, glory, honor, and all blessings.</p>



Many thanks to Mary Chapin Durling, Anna Clementi, Center for Italian Culture at Fitchburg State University, Alex Thibeault, Pam Boudreau, Carolyn Garrahan, Kristy Collins, Rick McCluskey, Dave Clark, Prof. Rala Diakite, Prof. Peter Laytin, Penny Bitzas.

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