

Rated R for Rat

A Chamber Opera in Three Scenes, an Interlude and a Postlude
For Singers, an Actor, Chorus and Chamber Orchestra

A Libretto

by
Wang Jie

Wang Jie Music © 2017
All Right Reserved

Contact:
Wang Jie
209 West 109th Street #5E
New York NY 10025
(212) 380-1483

MAIN CHARACTERS

LARK	High Lyric Soprano	Young court singer and announcer. She possesses heavenly voice that pleases the Zodiac Gods, She is about to find out that her singing heals humans' ailments. Despite her potential music power, she serves the Rat's court, in a cheerleader uniform, repeating mindless athletic repertoires centuries in centuries out.
PEASANT WOMAN	Mezzo-Soprano	Peasant Woman: A disease ridden human on earth who sings soulful music full of longing.
RAT	Basso Profundo/Bass-Baritone	Rat: CEO of the Zodiac Kingdom, the head of the Zodiac operation. Together with his fellow Zodiac gods, the twelve Zodiacs install personalities in human babies in exchange for their placenta. All of them are placenta addicts.

NON-SINGING

THE ROOSTER/GRIM REAPER	Male voice/actor	One of the Zodiac gods, the Rat's sidekick. Comical and loyal, he talks with a stutter and repeats everything the Rat says. The Grim Reaper A.K.A. Death, is an immortal who speaks the human language.
-------------------------	------------------	--

SECONDARY CHARACTERS

THE REMAINING TEN ZODIAC GODS, HUMANS ON EARTH.	SATB Chorus of minimum 16 voices	Varies characters in their costumes
Children ages 6 to 8	Child actors	One of them accidentally kills the Lark with a slingshot

DURATION

Appr. 80 minutes

ORCHESTRA

Fl, Cl, Bsn, Hn, Tpt, Trbn, Tba, Timp, 2 Perc, Keyboard soloist:
Hpsd(amplified)/Cel/Pno, Strings.

SETTINGS

The Heaven beyond the sky. A conference room in the Zodiac
Palace.

The Earth, spooky and barren. Outdoor.

The Earth, green and lavish. Outside of a fairy-tale hut.

CURTAIN DOWN

PRELUDE

0:00 – 2:00 Adagio misterioso

THE EARTH. THE ZODIAC ALTAR. PRESENT DAY.

In front of the curtain, the stage sets an enormous jug bearing the Rat's crest. Unusable chairs litter the altar. A diseased new mother kneels in front of the jug with her baby in arms.

PEASANT WOMAN

MOST RIGHTEOUS RAT:

LORD OF LIGHT AND NIGHT

I BRING YOU MY MOST PRECIOUS AFTER-BIRTH.

MAY MY CHILD BE GRANTED WEALTH AND WIT.
AND MODESTY.

A WINSOME FACE.

MAY HE BE GRACED WITH HIS LATE FATHER'S
GOOD TASTE IN WOMEN.

MAY HE BE WISE AND FAIR.
BRAVE, STRONG.
HEALTHY.

OH RIGHTEOUS RAT:

THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE.

WITH THIS, MY PRECIOUS TETHER
I BESEECH YOU.

While Peasant's prayer continues, a pre-recorded (with massive reverb) Rooster voice with megaphone distortion effects interjects.

"A public service message for all expectant parents:

Please submit your request to the Zodiac Gods for a face and a soul for your newborn immediately after the day of your Blessed Event. The Zodiacs (in their divine wisdom) will consider the details of your request, and for the price of the placenta (please add shipping and

handling) will bestow your newborn with a personality you will cherish forever.

Act now because no one wants to be born without a face."

The Peasant Woman continues her prayer. She attaches a big envelop to the side of the jug as it slowly begins to ascend. A loud baby cry ends the scene.

CURTAIN UP

SCENE I

2:00 – 15:00

THE HEAVEN. CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE ZODIAC PALACE. PRESENT DAY.

The stage sets a conference room in meticulous condition. The same jug from Prelude, is situated near the conference table, heavily guarded by the servants. At the center of the conference table is a large bamboo vase filled with Kau Cim, i.e. Japanese prayer sticks. Chorus members: Eleven Zodiac Gods (minus Rat) dressed in pristine suits and tie labeled with high-end brand names, ten of them lined up in front of the jug, dinner plates in hand. Rooster holds a megaphone towards a pipe coming up from the floor. At the other side of the stage, a billboard sized graph alarming the plummeted human birth rate. One servant is stuated at the graph board with a pointing stick.

LARK calls the morning council from off stage. She knocks on the door but is ignored.

LARK
(off stage, yodel)
YO! IT'S THE MORNING!

Knocking continues, but the the door of the conference room remains shut. Music continues as Snake presents a new graph titled: Bail Out Plan.

CHORUS (GODS ONLY)
HEAVEN IS UNDER A CURSE.
PARADISE TURNS FOR THE WORSE.
WORST DEFICIT!
ROOSTER, AGAIN!

Rooster points the
megaphone into the pipe.

ROOSTER
A public service
message for all
expectant parents:
Please submit your
request to the Zodiac
Gods for a face and a
soul for your newborn
immediately after the
day of your Blessed
Event... (interrupted by
the Lark barging in)

LARK
(off stage, yodel)
YO! IT'S A BRAND NEW
DAY!

CHORUS (GODS ONLY)
WARNING, WARNING!
BLEAK FORECAST FOR THE WORST MORNING!

As music continues, Lark
kicks the door open and
barges into the conference
room, all sexy and chipper,
as if her presence is
desired.

LARK
(on stage, yodel)
Yoo-Hoo!
GOOD MORNING TO THE BEST MORNING!

DRAGON wolf-whistles
sarcastically.

LARK (CONT'D)
OX, TIGER, ROOSTER;
RABBIT, SNAKE, PIG, LOTS OF FACES!

(mechanically)
SIXTY-FIVE DEGREES, SUNNY AS ALWAYS.
WELCOME TO THE PALACE IN THE SKY.
THIS IS THE PLACE
FOR ZODIAC MAGIC TO TAKE PLACE.

CHORUS

DIVIDE!
ONE BITE AT A TIME!
MINE, MINE, MINE!

LARK

FIVE THOUSAND FORTY-SEVEN YEARS,
SIX MONTHS AND TWENTY-TWO DAYS,
THE ALMIGHTY TWELVE HONOR YOUR FACE,
THIS IS YOUR "PAYMENT" HARD AT WORK.
FOR A MEMORY TIME CANNOT ERASE.

CHORUS (GODS ONLY MINUS PIG)

(to Pig)
IT'S YOUR TURN TO BREAK THE NEWS.
(Pig solo to Snake)
WHAT? IT'S YOUR TURN!

The chorus members take
turns pointing fingers at
each other.

CHORUS (CONT'D)

YOUR TURN, YOUR TURN,
YOUR TURN..
NO IT'S YOUR TURN!

LARK

FIVE THOUSAND FORTY-
SEVEN YEARS SIX MONTHS
AND TWENTY-TWO DAYS,
THIS IS YOUR "PAYMENT"
HARD AT WORK.
FOR A MEMORY TIME CANNOT
ERASE.

CHORUS (CONT'D)

WAIT A MINUTE!
(beat, to Rooster)
IT'S YOUR TURN!

ROOSTER

Nah nah nah nah...
I only report positivity.
If you don't have pleasant things to say,
just come sit right by me.

LARK

WELCOME TO HEAVEN!
THIS IS THE PLACE
WHERE HOPES AND DREAMS COME TO DIE.
THESE ARE YOUR GODS,
MASTERS OF A FISHING ROD.

CHORUS

DIVIDE!
ONE BITE AT A TIME!
MY BITE THIS TIME!
WHAT IF THIS IS THE LAST BITE?
HAS THE REHAB UPDATED WIFI?

LARK

I AM DIFFERENT.
TODAY IS DIFFERENT.
TELL ME YOUR HOPES AND
DREAMS.
I GIVE YOU TRUTH AND
BEAUTY.

Chorus

TODAY IS A ONE-BITE
DAY.
DIVIDE!
MINE, MINE, MINE!

Chorus continues in the
background.

LARK(CONT'D)

WELCOME TO MY AUDITORIUM IN THE PALACE.
(switch to singing)
THIS IS THE PLACE
FOR THE FOOL IN A GILDED CAGE.
TO THE TWELVE REVERED I SERENADE.
ONE CERTAIN TUNE,
LIFELESS REPEATS FOR TONELESS TASTES,
(switch back to mechanical yodeling)
LABORING FIVE THOUSAND FORTY-SEVEN YEARS,
SIX MONTHS AND TWENTY-TWO DAYS.
SAD BUT TRUE.
(switch to a soft tone)
THAT SAID,
(back to yodeling)
TODAY IS MY LUCKY DAY,
BECAUSE THE TWELVE WON'T BE TWELVE FOR
LONG.

TODAY IS THE DAY,
YOURS TRULY, THE INCARNATION OF HEAVENLY

I'M AWAKE, YOU DIMWITS!
I QUIT!

RAT
WHAT? UNACCEPTABLE!

ROOSTER
Unacceptable! We can't fire you if you
quit!

LARK
I ALREADY QUIT!

ROOSTER
You can't quit! You'll lose immortality!

LARK
WATCH ME!

Lark storms off the stage.

ROOSTER
(cry)
Wah wah wah...come back! Don't make me the
only poultry in the Zodiac!

RAT
(pounds the gavel)
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!
(beat)(sigh)
Ugh, fire the fiddler!

CURTAIN DOWN

END OF SCENE III

POSTLUDE

CURTAIN UP

THE EARTH. LAVISH LANDSCAPE OF A VILLAGE. SOME YEARS LATER.

70:00 – 80:00

The earth is flourishing since Lark's descent, smog lifted, greens and flowers everywhere. The entire cast is dressed in the Gods' sense of fashion, children roaming freely playing a game of slingshot. Grim Reaper has packed a suitcase for his vacation. Peasant Woman is holding a new baby. The placenta jug is at the same position as Prelude. Lark has aged.

CHORUS, LARK AND PEASANT
EAT, DRINK, MAN, WOMAN,
SYMPHONY, SONATA, CONCERTO, OPERA!

OH, LOTS LOTS LOTS OF BABIES!

LARK AND PEASANT
WHERE ONCE WAS A DESERT,
NOW GROWS A GARDEN

A ROSE IN EVERY PLOT,
A SONG IN EVERY EAR.

WE REVEL IN REFRAINS,
GET HIGH ON HYMNS,
CHERISH OUR CHANTS,
ADORE OUR ANTHEMS,
MAKE MERRY MELODIES!

Children slingshot pebbles at each other. The aged Lark catches a pebble in the crossfire. She dies. Chorus member take over her singing part. So no one notices.

CHORUS AND PEASANT
EAT, DRINK, MAN, WOMAN,
SYMPHONY, SONATA, CONCERTO, OPERA!

OH, LOTS LOTS LOTS OF FACES!

Grim Reaper drags the dead Lark off stage. The placenta jug ascends with numerous envelopes clipped to it.

CHORUS AND PEASANT (CONT'D)
RAT! ALMIGHTY RAT!
ALL-CHIMING LORD OF MUSIC!
ALL-SEEING KING OF ALL LANDS!
WE ARE GRATEFUL CHILDREN OF YOUR EMPIRE!
LONG LIVE THE RAT!

LIGHTS OUT

CURTAIN

END OF OPERA