

Illustration 9

Act II beginning (excerpt)

Sinfonia

ORPHEUS

See now, I return to you,
dear woods and beloved hills,
made blessed by that sun
through whom alone my darkness is lightened.

Ritornello

FIRST SHEPHERD

Look, Orpheus, how the shade
of those beech trees invites us,
now that Phoebus darts
burning rays from heaven.

Ritornello

SECOND SHEPHERD

On these grassy banks
let us rest, and let each
in his own way let loose his voice
to the murmur of the waters.

Ritornello

FIRST & SECOND SHEPHERDS

In this flowery meadow
every sylvan deity
is often wont
to linger for his pleasure.

Ritornello

Here Pan, the shepherds' god,
has sometimes been heard lamenting,
sweetly recalling
his unrequited loves.

Ritornello

Here the charming dryads,
a company always decked with flowers,
have been seen gathering roses
with white fingers.

Ritornello

CHORUS of NYMPHS & SHEPHERDS

Therefore, Orpheus, make worthy
of the sound of your lyre
these fields, where there blows
a breeze with the perfumes of Araby.

Ritornello

ORPHEUS

Do you recall, O shady woods,
my long, bitter torments,
when the rocks, their hearts softened,
replied to my laments?

Say, did I not then seem to you
more wretched than any other?
Now Fortune has changed her tune
and turned my woes into rejoicing.

Once I lived in sadness and sorrow;
now I rejoice, and those anxieties
that I have suffered for so many years
make my present happy state more dear.

Through you alone, lovely Eurydice,
I bless my torments;
after sorrow, one is all the more content,
after woe, one is all the happier.

FIRST SHEPHERD

See, O see, Orpheus, how all around
the woods and the meadow smile.
Then continue, with your golden plectrum,
to sweeten the air on so blessed a day.