

*Estat aí en greu
cossírier*

For mezzo-soprano and bass

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Estat aí en greu cossírier (2009)

Text: La Comtessa de Dia (c. 1160)

A music theatre piece for mezzo-soprano (La Comtessa de Dia) and bass (a scribe).

Premiered by Bright Cecilia at the York Late Music Festival, 2010.

Duration c. 10 minutes

Text:

Canso - La Comtessa de Dia (c. 1160)

I. Estat ai en greu cossirier
per un cavallier q'ai agut,
e vuoil sia totz temps subut
cum eu l'ai amat a sobrier.
Ara vei q'ieu sui trahida
car eu non li donei m'amor
don ai estat en gran error
en lieig e qand sui vestida.

II. Ben volria mon cavallier
tener un ser en mos bratz nut,
q'el s'en tengra per ereubut
sol q'a lui fezes cosseillier;
car plus m'en sui abellida
no fetz Floris de Blanchaflor;
eu l'autrei mon cor e m'amor,
mon sen, mos huoills e ma vida.

III. Bels amics, avinens e bos,
cora.us tenrai en mon poder,
e que iagues ab vos un ser,
e qe.us des un bais amoros?
Sapchatz gram talan n'auria
qe.us tengues en luoc del marit
ab so que m'aguessetz plevit
de far tot so qu'eu volria.

I. I have been sorely troubled
for a knight that I had
and I want it known for all time
how exceedingly I loved him.
Now I see myself betrayed
because I didn't grant my love to him
whereupon I have suffered much distress
in bed and when I am clothed.

I would like my knight
to hold one night, in my arms - naked,
for he would be overjoyed
were I only serving as his pillow
for he makes me more radiant
than Floris of Blanchaflor;
I grant him my heart, my love,
my mind, my eyes and my life.

III. Fair friend, charming and good,
when will I hold you in my power,
lie beside you one evening,
and give you loving kisses?
Know that I'd strongly desire...
to have you in my husband's place
provided you pledged to do
everything that I desire.¹

Notes:

'Estat ai...' is a light-hearted music theatre piece for two or three performers. Preferably, the performer playing the part of the scribe will learn to sing the part whilst writing the words notated in the score within the given rhythmic durations. A camera should be placed on the scribe's desk - concealed by piles of books etc. - and linked by a live feed to a large projector screen behind the performance space. If the camera is positioned above the paper on which the scribe writes, the words will be projected onto the screen, thus providing the audience with an English translation.

¹ Original text taken from Bruckner, Shepard and White, *Songs of the Women Troubadours*: 10.
English translation by Robin Bier.

It is also possible to perform this piece with a third, offstage performer, who writes the notated words while the scribe pretends to write on stage. The third performer's writing hand is projected onto the screen, so that it appears to belong to the scribe.

Theatrical directions are shown in boxed text in the score.

Pronunciation of phonetic symbols:

Explanations are in Received Pronunciation English unless otherwise stated.

[a]: 'â' as in the French 'pâtes'

[ɑ]: 'a' as in 'father'

[ɛ]: 'e' as in 'bed'

[e]: 'é' as in French *santé*

[o]: 'o' as in American English 'bode'

[m]: 'm' as in 'man'

[l]: 'l' as in 'light'

[s]: 's' as in 'see'

Estat ai en greu cossirier

La Comtesa de Dia (c. 1160)

Stef Conner

The Comtesa de Dia is onstage, reclining on a long seat with an expression of aristocratic affliction. She summons her scribe, who enters and sits at a desk in front of her, facing the audience. The Comtesa begins to dictate a letter...

♩ = 100

languid and lugubrious, as if yawning

La Comtesa de Dia

mp

E - stat ai en greu cos - si - rier

Scribe (writing)

with conscientious concentration

I have been sorely troubled

fondly, with a little more energy

subtly provocative

warm and earnest

Comt.

10 *mf*

Per un ca - val - lier q 'ai a - gut e vuoil

Scr. (w.)

for a knight that I had

The scribe looks up on hearing the word 'agut', bemused, then continues writing...

The Comtesa gradually straightens up from her reclined position.

Comt.

17

si - a totz temps sau - but cum e - u lai a - mat a so -

And I want it known for all time how ex -

The Comtessa's tone is suddenly more urgent. She sings imploringly to the scribe, who struggles to keep up (with his dictation)...

23 *emphatic* *suddenly agitated*

Comt. *f* *mf*
 brier cum e-u lai a - mat a so - brier [a] A - ra

The scribe repeats the Comtessa's words affirmingly, with some sympathy.

Scribe *mf* *f* *mf*
 Cum e-u lai a - mat a so - brier A - - ra [a]

Scr. (w.) *ceedingly I loved him*
N - o - w I

31 *mf* *mf* *3*

Comt. *mf*
 a ve - i q'ie-u su-i tra - hi - da Car e-u non li don - ei m'a -

Scribe *mf* *mp*
 [a] [ε] ve - i q'ie - u su-i tra - hi - da [a] [e]

Scr. (w.) *s-e-e my s-e-l - f b-e - trayed because I didn't*

The Comtessa turns towards the audience and begins to stand.

39 *pleading; tormented* *f*

Comt. *f*
 more Car e - u non li don - ei m'a-more don ai e - stat en gran er -

Scribe *sympathetic*
 [o] Car e - u non li don - ei m'a-more

Scr. (w.) *grant my l-o-v - e t - o him I have suffered*

The Comtessa walks towards the scribe, stopping when she is close enough to make him uncomfortable. She almost whispers the words 'en lieig' into his ear.

molto rit. ← ♩ = ♩ → (♩ = 66)

47

Comt. *pp*
ror en lieig e qand su-i ve -

ord.
f
Scribe Don ai__ e - stat en__ gran__ e - ror

Scr. (w.)
take your time
m-u-c-h d-i-s-tress i-n b - e-d

The Comtessa reads over the scribe's shoulder.

♩ = 100

55

Comt. *mf*
sti - da E - stat ai en gre-u

The scribe appears slightly reassured, but still uncomfortable.

Scribe *mf*
E - stat ai en gre-u

Scr. (w.)
and when I am clothed

63

Comt. *mp* *pp* *mf*
cos - si - rier per un ca-val - lier q'ai a - gut e

Scribe *mp* *mf*
cos - si - rier per un ca val - lier q'ai e

The Comtessa's attention wanders from the scribe and his writing. She moves towards a different part of the stage.

71 *mf*

Comt. *mf*

vuoil si - a totz temps sau - but cum e-u l'ai_ a - mat a so brier

Scribe *mf*

vuoil si - a sau - but cum e-u l'ai_ a - mat a so brier

sweetly, in an amorous reverie

79 *pp* *mf* *f*

Comt. *pp* *mf* *f*

Ben vol - ri - a mon ca-val - lier Ben vol - ri - a mon ca-val -

Scribe *f* *mf*

Ben vol - ri - a Ben vol - ri - a mon ca-val -

Scr. (w.)

I would like m - y

indelicate: spoiling the mood!

Seemingly oblivious to the scribe's discomfort, the Comtessa allows her physical gestures to become increasingly sexual and provocative. She steps closer to him with each word, noting his reactions mischievously.

87 *f* *p* *ppp* (high squeak)

Comt. *f* *p* *ppp*

lier te - ner un ser en mos bratz nut. nut!

Scribe *p* *mp*

lier [m] nut?

Scr. (w.)

knight to hold one night in my arms naked

salacious *poco rit.*

dubious *p* *mp* *3*

A Tempo (♩ = 100)

poco rit.

intense and earnest; less playful than before

smiling

94 *mf*

Comt. *mf*

q'el s'en ten-gra per e-re-u - but per e-re-u - but

The scribe is more at ease when he can concentrate intently on writing.

Scribe *mp* *mf* *mp*

q'el s'en ten-gra per e - re-u but

Scr. (w.) for he'd be overjoyed

The Comtessa takes the scribe's face in her hands. She sings to him with fervent emotion and he fidgets awkwardly.

A Tempo (♩ = 100)

impassioned

The Comtessa releases the scribe's face and he quickly resumes writing, embarrassed.

99 *mf* *f*

Comt. *mf* *f*

sol q'a lui fe-zes cos-seil-lier Car

nervous

Scribe *mp*

sol q'a lui fe-zes cos seil-lier

Scr. (w.) were I only serving as his

106 *p* *mp*

Comt. *p* *mp*

plus men sui a-bel-li-da

Scribe *mp* *p* *mp*

Car plus men sui a-bel-li-da

Scr. (w.) pillow f-o-r h-e makes me more radiant

molto rit. ♩ = 76

camp

serious and impassioned

115 *f* *mp*

Comt. no fetz Flo-ris de Bla - cha - flor e-u l'aut-rei mon

The scribe nods with smug, scholarly satisfaction at the mention of a familiar literary reference.

Scribe *f* *p*

Flo - ris Bla - cha - flor m -

Scr. (w.)

than Floris of Blancha - flor I grant

The Comtessa places her hand on her heart, with solemn sincerity.

The scribe stands; he shows the Comtessa his paper. They read together.

♩ = 100

123 *mf* *p*

Comt. cor e m'a-mor mon sen, mos huoills e ma vi-da [m]

Scribe on cor m'a - mor [m]

Scr. (w.) him my heart... my love... my mind, my eyes and my life

With a flourish, the Comtessa abandons the read-through and begins the next section of text. This goes un-noticed by the scribe who is absorbed with a self-congratulatory examination of his work...

132 *mf*

Comt. [m] [m] Bels

Scribe [m] [m] [a]

← ♩ = ♩ →

The Comtessa continues, detached and giddy...

A little faster (♩ = c. 250)

140 *f*

Comt. *f*
 a - mics a - vi - nense bos Be e a - mics a - a - vi - nense bo - s cor -

The scribe realises with a start that he has been left behind.
 He tries frantically to follow what Comtessa is saying.

Scribe *f* *falsetto*
 [a] [e] [els] [a] [a] [o]

Scr. (w.) *fair* friend,

147 *mf* *f* *f*

Comt. *serious; intense*
 a - a - us ten - rai en mon po - der en mon po -

Scribe *impressed* *f*
 [a] ten - rai mon po -

Scr. (w.) *c-h - a - r-m - i - n-g a - nd g - o - o - d, w - h - e - n*

The Comtessa absentmindedly strokes the scribes hair.
 He appears guilty and embarrassed, as he tries to conceal his pleasure.

154 *mp* *tender* *pp*

Comt. *tender*
 der e que ia - gues ab vos un ser e

Scribe *tender*
 - der que vos un ser

Scr. (w.) *will I hold you in my power beside you one evening*
l - i - e

The Comtessa continues to tease the scribe with suggestive gestures. She remains in his personal space, touching him and singing in his ear. He appears as if his defenses are beginning to break down.

poco rit. . . . ♩ = 100
longingly

161

Comt. *mf*
qe.us des un bais a-mor- os? Sap - chatz gran ta-lan_

The scribe is overcome with sympathy for the comtessa's heartfelt passion. He sighs audibly.

Scribe *mf*
[a] gran ta-lan_

Scr. (w.)
and give you loving kisses
k - n-o-w t - h-a-t I-'-d

170

Comt. *f* bold
n'au - ri - a Qe. - us ten - gues en_ luoc del ma -

Scribe *f*
n'au - ri - a Qe. - us del ma -

Scr. (w.)
strongly desire to h-a-v-e y-o-u

The Comtessa focuses her gaze directly at a small part of the audience and sings with passionate intensity.

177

Comt. *f* *p*
- rit ab so que m'a - gues-setz ple - vit de far tot so

The scribe raises an eyebrow, in mild disapproval.

Scribe *f* *pp*
rit! ab so que [m]

Scr. (w.)
in my husband's place
pro - vided y-o-u pledged

The scribe appears confused and shocked by the Comtessa's final words. He is frozen with indecision for a moment, so the Comtessa gently takes the pen from his hand and write the words 'I desire'.

184

Comt. *lustful* *mf* *rall.*

qu'e-u__ vol - ri - a de__ far_ tot_ so_ qu'e-u__ vol - ri - a

Scribe

Scr. (w.) to do everything I desire.