

Peter Hammill, Act Six

CHORUS Three endless days of bitter grief passed
and Montresor abandoned any attempt to cheer his friend.
Then came a sudden change in Usher's
demeanour, whose significance he was soon to comprehend.

Now Usher stands for hour on hour
with head inclined and eyes half-closed,
as if beneath the deep and sullen silence
a sound exists for which he listens; a sound without end.

Now Usher walks for hour on hour.
With ashen face and trembling step, he climbs each stair,
He climbs each tower; still hears it there.

CHORUS AND No. It's only the
THE VOICES beating of the heart,
OF THE HOUSE heart of the House of Usher,
beating of the heart

heart of the House of Usher.

USHER MONTRESOR

Roderick is that you?

I could not sleep

Nor I.

Listen to the storm!

Did you ever hear
such a dreadful sound?

Indeed.

Indeed I have!

But this sound you can hear;
the tempest beats upon the House
as it would beat upon a drum,
that is no sound to fear.

For the sound to fear
It beats upon the house.

walk softly when they come

The thunder seems so near

But it's only the But it's only the
beating of the heart, beating of the heart,
heart of the House of Usher. heart of the House of Usher.

USHER MONTRESOR VOICES OF THE HOUSE

Oh the lake is Beating of the heart,
in frenzy, I heart of the House

can feel the waves of Usher
beat on the walls Beating of the heart

The breaking of the heart! heart of the House

These giant stones of Usher.

are trembling Beating of the heart
the savage lashing heart of the House
of the storm of Usher.

The breaking of the heart! Beating of the heart
heart of the House

of Usher

Why is that other sound The House
not hidden by of Usher

echoes of the storm? shall stand.

The House

But understand we only of Usher
hear the House shall stand

Speaking of a storm The House

This is the storm itself! of Usher
shall stand.

The House of Usher

The House of Usher

MONTRESOR We've seen enough, I'll close the window.

The gale is chill and grows yet stronger.

These walls are shaking!

You shall play something for me;

you shall play and I shall listen.
So we will pass away this dreadful night.
USHER Yes I shall play,
yes, I shall play!
(The Haunted In the greenest of our valleys
Palace) by good angels tenanted
once a fair and stately palace -
radiant palace - reared its head.
In the monarch, Thought's dominion
like a jewel it stood there.
Never seraph spread a pinion
over fabric half so fair.
Wanderers in that happy valley
through two luminous windows saw
spirits moving musically
to a lute's well-tuned law,
round about a throne where sitting,
side by side with his fair queen,
in state his glory well befitting,
the ruler of the realm was seen.

USHER MONTRESOR

Wait!

Did you hear it?

What was it?

It's nothing.

What was that

distant sound?

I say, I heard nothing

All with pearl and ruby glowing
was the glorious palace door
through which came flowing, flowing,
flowing and sparkling evermore
a troop of echoes, whose sweet duty
night and day was but to sing
in voices of surpassing beauty
the wit and wisdom of their king.

USHER MONTRESOR

No!

There's something,

I heard it

quite clear,

a voice crying.

It's nothing

I say

but the wind!

You heard the wind,

just heard Within the House!

the wild wind crying.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow
assailed the monarch's high estate;
let us mourn for never morrow
dawn upon him, desolate;
round about his home the glory
that had always blushed and bloomed
is but a dim-remembered story
of the olden time entombed.

USHER MONTRESOR

There!

Yes, you heard it!

There is someone else -

There's nothing something else

I say, down there!

You hear nothing!

There's no-one there.

It is the storm Are we

that you hear. alone here?
Travellers now within that valley
through red-litten windows see
vast forms that move fantastically
to a discordant melody
while like a rapid, ghastly river
through the ever open door
a hideous throng rush out forever
and laugh - but smile no more!
And laugh - but smile no more!
And laugh - but smile no more!
USHER No! No! No!
Yes, I hear it! Yes, I have heard it
long, long - many minutes, many hours,
but I dared not speak:
I tell you I dared not speak.
No more cant from you,
you thick-skinned obtuse fool, damn your compassion!
For now I say you will hear the wicked truth
We put her living in the tomb!
But I dared not, I dared not speak!
Yes, have I not heard her footsteps on the stair?
Yes, do I not distinguish
the heavy and horrible beating of her heart?
Yes, she is coming.
She has woken in the darkness,
in her mindless, relentless strength.
Now she has broken from the tomb.
Now she has burst from the tomb.
Days ago I heard her first feeble movements
in the hollow coffin -
said I not that my senses were acute?
I heard the scraping, the scraping of her nails -
but I dared not, I dared not speak!
Madman! Madman!
I tell you that she now comes towards the door!
USHER MONTRESOR CHORUS VOICES OF THE HOUSE
No, what a House
Monstrous thought! We
Now the punishment breath!
is finished. The evil that House
You said is done we are!
she was dead... cannot be We
You watched undone. could not
her dying!
It's over now It's over now
What evil have let
you done? It could not
be prevented them go!
God, what a
monstrous thought!
It's over now It's over now. We
The evil that
Why must innocence is done could
be punished?
Could this have not
been prevented?
It's over now It's over now
The evil that The evil that We
is done... is done could not
could not
be prevented let
could this have could never
been prevented? be prevented
them go!

I dare not could this have it could not
I dared not speak! been prevented? be prevented!
Madman!
Madman!
I tell you
that she now stands
outside the door!
USHER MADELINE MONTRESOR CHORUS
I'm looking
Now, No,
Madeline! Madeline!
I have counted
to a hundred
with my eyes closed
and I'm coming
I am the last now to find you... Leave!
of the Usher! Depart!
my sister's death Go!
shall leave me so.
Where are you It's over now
hiding?
I am If I wasn't so
the last afraid I'd
Usher Roderick touch her Leave!
I feel where are you? It's over now Depart!
the sky I see. Go!
Now he sings
of death, the evil the evil
some things even that is done that is one
I feel madder cannot be cannot be
the sky undone undone
moan shuts himself away the evil the evil
to join shuts himself away that is come that is come
with the slime!
He shut could not could not
himself away! be prevented. be prevented.
AS THE HOUSE FALLS
THE VOICES beams buttresses plaster copings We We
OF THE corbels bressumers quoins chimney- breath are
HOUSE joists arches wainscot shafts We rise Usher
kin-posts piers stairs parapets
ridge-ribs spandrels banister pediments
struts columns cusps mansard
stanchions cornices gargoyle
king-posts eaves
End of Act Six