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Lyrics To Duel Of The Fates

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Unlocking the Mystery: The Lyrics To Duel of the Fates

Few pieces of music in cinematic history are as instantly recognizable or as spine-tingling as John Williams's *Duel of the Fates*. From the moment the London Voices choir erupts with its thunderous, percussive chant, audiences are transported to the heart of a galaxy far, far away—specifically to the climactic lightsaber battle on Theed, where Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon Jinn, and Darth Maul clash in a fight that would change the course of the Skywalker saga. Yet for all its power and fame, the exact **lyrics to Duel of the Fates**have remained a source of fascination, mystery, and often debate among fans. What are the words the choir is singing? What do they mean? And why did John Williams choose an ancient Sanskrit text to underscore one of the most pivotal moments in the Star Wars prequel trilogy?

In this comprehensive guide, we will dive deep into the origins, translations, and cultural significance of the **lyrics to Duel of the Fates**. We will explore how John Williams's choice of text elevates the emotional stakes, mirrors the themes of the film, and creates a sonic landscape that feels both timeless and alien. Whether you are a lifelong Star Wars fan, a student of music, or simply curious about the words behind the iconic theme, this article will provide you with everything you need to know.

The Origins of the Chant: A Gift from Ancient India

John Williams has always been a composer who draws from a vast well of global musical traditions. For *Duel of the Fates*, he wanted something primal, ritualistic, and epic. He turned to the ancient Sanskrit language and found inspiration in a verse from the **Bhagavad Gita**, the famous Hindu scripture that is part of the Indian epic the **Mahabharata**. The specific lines that form the **lyrics to Duel of the Fates**are believed to originate from a passage that deals with the nature of duty, destiny, and the eternal conflict between good and evil.

The verse in question is often cited as:

*Karma Gy ev F†–± ras te m † ÆQæ7R ¶ A cana
M ¶ maphalahetur bh ·" Ñ te sa Ego 'stv akarma Gi*

This translates loosely to: *"You have the right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty."*

While the choir does not sing the entire verse verbatim, the repetitive, mantra-like chanting uses a shortened, phonetically adapted version that captures the essence of the original. The choir chants a phrase that sounds like *"Korah matah, korah matah, korah matah"*—a phonetic rendering that has become iconic in its own right. Many sources agree that the actual words being sung are a corruption or adaptation of *"Karma Gi ev F†–± ra te"* (You have the right to action), but due to the nature of choral performance and the need for rhythmic punch, the lyrics were adjusted.

Understanding the lyrics provides a profound lens through which to view the scene. The Jedi are performing their duty as protectors of the Republic, yet they are engaged in a battle whose outcome is uncertain. The Sith, meanwhile, are driven by desire for power and outcome. The lyrics underscore the tension between acting without attachment and the dark side's obsession with results.

The Pronunciation and Phonetic Breakdown

For those who want to sing along or simply appreciate the texture, here is a common phonetic representation of the chant as it appears in the score:

- Korah matah, korah matah, korah matah – the main repeated phrase
- Shanti, shanti – "peace, peace" (interspersed)
- Karma Gi, karma Gi – "action" or "duty"

It is important to note that the exact **lyrics to Duel of the Fates** have never been officially published in a definitive form by Lucasfilm or John Williams. The choir sang from a transliteration that prioritized the sound and rhythm over strict linguistic accuracy. This has led to multiple interpretations, but the core Sanskrit roots remain unmistakable.

Translation and Meaning: More Than Just a Battle Cry

When we dig into the meaning behind the **lyrics to Duel of the Fates**, we discover that they are not a simple battle chant, nor are they random syllables. The text directly speaks to the philosophical heart of the Star Wars universe: the conflict between fate and free will, between duty and desire.

The key concepts embedded in the lyrics include:

- Karma (Action): The idea that all beings must act, but attachment to the rewards of action leads to suffering.
- Dharma (Duty): The Jedi are often described as following their dharma—their righteous path as guardians of peace.
- Shanti (Peace): The interjection of "shanti" (peace) within the intense musical storm serves as a counterpoint, reminding the listener (and the characters) of the ideal state of harmony.
- M † ÆQæ7R „æ÷B F†R g uits): A direct warning against becoming obsessed with outcomes—a perfect thematic fit for a duel where both sides believe they are fighting for the greater good.

In a broader sense, the **lyrics to Duel of the Fates** can be interpreted as a meditation on the path of the warrior who must act without ego. This resonates powerfully with the Jedi Code, which emphasizes selflessness and detachment from personal glory. Yet the tragic irony is that even the noblest actions can lead to unforeseen consequences—such as the death of Qui-Gon Jinn and the rise of Darth Vader.

How the Lyrics Enhance the Film: A Perfect Marriage of Sound and Theme

John Williams did not simply insert a random text into the score. He carefully chose lyrics that would amplify the narrative weight of the scene. The **lyrics to Duel of the Fates** are woven into the fabric of the music in a way that directly mirrors the action on screen. Let’s break down the scene in *The Phantom Menace* where this music plays.

The duel begins when Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon confront Darth Maul. The reactor core of the Theed palace becomes the arena for a fight that will decide the fate of the young Anakin Skywalker, and ultimately the galaxy. As the three doors slide open and the fight erupts, the choir begins its relentless chant. The tempo is fast, the percussion aggressive, and the chanting almost hypnotic. The **lyrics to Duel of the Fates** provide a layer of inevitability, as though the battle is a cosmic event written in the stars.

At several key moments, the lyrics change intensity. When Qui-Gon is impaled, the music momentarily softens,

but the chant continues, reminding us that the Force's will is being carried out. When Obi-Wan finally defeats Maul, the choir crests one last time before fading into a more mournful theme. The lyrics thus serve as an emotional anchor, grounding the visual fireworks in ancient philosophical conflict.

Comparison with Other Star Wars Choral Works

Star Wars has used choral music before and after *Duel of the Fates*. For example, "Anakin's Betrayal" in *Revenge of the Sith* features a Latin choir. However, the **lyrics to Duel of the Fates**are unique because they are drawn from a non-Western tradition, giving the scene a sense of otherworldliness. The use of Sanskrit—a language most audiences cannot understand—makes the music feel universal and mysterious. It strips away any specific cultural association and turns the lyrics into pure sound-texture, while still carrying a deep semantic load for those who know the meaning.

Cultural Impact

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