



### **Keep pace – by Martina Lauretta**

Hello, good morning, welcome!

I am the Garden of Villa Melzi. Actually, to be more precise, my real name would be “The Gardens of Villa Melzi d’Eri!”, but there is no need to be so formal.

Since your stories and mine have come together today, please allow me to introduce myself. It would only be natural to begin with the year I was born, although I have heard that it is not proper to ask a lady about her age.

Well, suffice it to say, I have lived on this branch of Lake Como for a few centuries now.

To tell you more about myself, I could speak of the people I’ve met: architects, countesses, artists – or I could even quote the words Stendhal used to describe my beauty, but you would deem me too vain.

To introduce myself

I could begin with the concert

Of the beguiling wind among the maples

Violets like violins

While the water plays an air

The bugs a pleasant band

And birds a-wing on woodwinds

Conducting the orchestra

Is the *maestro*

Season.

Today, instead,

To introduce myself

I’ll tell you of the other

Half of life

The bass drum which beats

Beneath your feet

The dark earth rich

With roots

Reverberating with water

Enveloping light

Protecting life.

You see some camellias

A perfect bush

Thanks no doubt to the gardeners

Though also to the unabating babble of roots and bulbs

A chemical buzzing  
A message passing  
From plant to plant  
Bouncing  
As from  
Neuron to neuron,  
The length of the row:  
Warning, alerting, protecting  
From every insect presenting  
A potential peril.  
To attract the bees, instead  
The azaleas have called a council  
Carefully choosing the best colours to lure them in to pollinate.  
The golden wattle, one shy flower,  
Doesn't join in with the garden chatter it has learnt not to trust the temperatures  
That nowadays change  
With every puff of wind;  
It patiently awaits its moment: when the light  
Will shine for hours  
Under the sun's watchful eye  
Whose colour it will wear and flower  
Confidently announcing a new spring.  
Listen  
In the language of the earth to seeds opening up to life long-winded roots  
Anthills like factories. Listen  
To the transparent sound  
Of the drop gushing the water rumbling. Listen  
To the magnolia searching for it stretching  
To grasp it  
And feed majestic trunks  
And white flowers  
And fleshy leaves.  
The pace of the earth  
Leans on the age-old breath  
Of oaks and sequoias  
Which know no haste  
But watch the bees and ducks cross the paths for a passing moment  
Men and women  
Carp and butterflies.  
Time  
Breathes  
Among tree roots and it is with this secret melody that  
I introduce myself today.