

# *Dido and Aeneas*

*Angela Henckel  
Stephen Hogg  
Jonathan Saunders*

*Musical Director  
Roy Rashbrook*

11 November 2006  
Royal Grammar School  
Guildford



Next Concert

Saturday 3 March 2007  
7.30 pm  
St Nicolas Church  
Guildford

*Faure Requiem*

*Vaughan Williams  
Five Mystical Songs*

*Angela Henckel* - Soprano (*Dido*)  
*Jonathan Saunders* - Bass (*Aeneas*)  
*Stephen Hogg* - Countertenor  
(*Sorceress & Spirit*)  
*Claire Rennison* - Soprano (*Belinda*)  
*Elizabeth Fulleylove* - Soprano  
(*2nd Lady & 1st Witch*)  
*Jill Wheeler* - Soprano (*1st Witch*)  
*Geoff Disley* - Tenor (*Sailor*)

*The Chantry Singers  
and Consort*

*Richard Sweeney* -  
Theorbo & Guitar  
*John Marston* -  
Harpsichord & Organ

*Roy Rashbrook* - Conductor

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Programme

*Henry Purcell*  
*Passacaglia*  
*How Happy the Lover*  
from *King Arthur*

*Henry Purcell*  
*Music for a while*

*Henry Purcell*  
*Ode to St Cecilia*  
*Welcome to all the Pleasures*

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*Interval - 20 minutes*  
*during which refreshments*  
*will be served*

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*Henry Purcell*  
*Dido and Aeneas*

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## *Passacaglia from King Arthur*

The words to *King Arthur* were written by John Dryden in 1684 as a piece of political propaganda in support of Charles II. It was not set to music, though, until the revolution of 1688 had brought William and Mary to the throne. The text was somewhat altered and the opera was first performed in 1691 to great acclaim.

In this sequence, King Arthur has been brought to an enchanted forest to rescue the fair Emmeline from the clutches of the evil Darth Vader, no, wait a minute, from Osmond, who is the magician in charge of all bad things, in the service of Oswald, the Saxon King. Once in the enchanted forest, he is bewitched by spirits who attempt to seduce and prevent him from penetrating Oswald's castle. They sing of the pleasures of love.

Eventually, it all ends happily, Emmeline is rescued, the dark side of the force is thwarted, the ring is returned to the Nibelungs, Hobbits triumph over Goblins, Harry gets straight "A"s and goes to Universe City, and Aslan is declared the true Lion King, going on to star in a series of Disney sequels... (stop this, it's silly, Ed.)

Seriously, though, the accompanimental textures, rhythms and form Purcell employs in this passacaglia best illustrate the degree to which he was influenced by French composers such as Lully.

## *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day - Welcome to all the Pleasures*

In 1683 a group of gentlemen amateurs and professional musicians started a musical society in London to celebrate the "Festival of St. Cecilia, a great patroness of music" – a Festival which any music-lover may still celebrate. They asked Henry Purcell, then only 24, to be the first to write an Ode for their festivals; it is this Ode, Welcome to All the Pleasures, which we perform tonight.

From 1608 until 1703 it was the custom in London for 'Gentlemen Lovers of Music' to celebrate St Cecilia's day (November 22nd) at Stationer's Hall with a 'performance of Music by the best voices and hands in Town... This feast is one of the genteelst in the world'. The festivities normally included an ode addressed to Cecilia, taking as its theme the power of music to move the emotions. Fishburn's poem *Welcome to all the Pleasures* gave Purcell an opportunity for gentle word-setting, especially in the alto solo *Here the deities approve*, the trio *The power shall divert us a pleasanter way* and the melancholy tenor solo *Beauty thou scene of love*. Unusually the piece ends quietly, with the choral *Iô Cecilia* fading away to leave just the bass instruments and singers to conclude.

A plain, easy and grossly oversimplified introduction to musical life in 17th century London.

First, some history (boring bit). The last thirty or so years leading up to the composition of Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* in 1689 was a tumultuous period in the history of Great Britain and of London in particular. Oliver Cromwell's death in 1658 brought an end to a period of austerity within the church and at court. Although

Last year saw his debut at London's Wigmore Hall in a recital of Monteverdi's sacred music with The King's Consort. More recently, he appeared alongside Sir Willard White in a performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Bath Philharmonia Orchestra and sang the rôle of *The Sailor* in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* under Trevor Pinnock. Future plans include tours to Spain, Germany and Switzerland, performances in London of Dvorak's *Stabat Mater* and Kodály's *Te deum*, a concert of Handel arias at St Paul's Cathedral and the rôle of the evangelist in Bach's *St John Passion*.

*The Chantry Singers* is a chamber choir based in Guildford which regularly performs three concerts a year. The choir was formed in 1983 by Tim Venvell, then deputy music director at the Royal Grammar School Guildford, who went on to conduct it for the next ten years. His successors Peter Coulson, Andrew Wilson and Sarah Baldock carried forward his policy of alternating the unaccompanied repertoire with performances of major works. Throughout, the accent has been on a variety of musical styles from a variety of musical ages. Away from home the choir has sung services in several cathedrals, notably Rochester, Salisbury and St. George's Chapel Windsor.

Joanna Marsh was guest conductor for the choir's concert in December 2002 and directed the choir until the summer of 2004.

We were delighted to welcome Roy Rashbrook as our musical director in September 2004.

### **Sopranos**

Beryl Disley  
Claire Rennison  
Sue Trumble  
Pat Turner  
Jill Wheeler  
Elisabeth Willis

### **Altos**

Michelle Bowles  
Mary-Rose Brennan  
Judy Davies  
Jean Matthews  
Shirley Neish  
Catherine Nunn  
Chris Reddin  
Julia Slater

### **Basses**

Steve Gandy  
John Hart  
Mike Lodge  
Tony Morden  
James Tickle  
Mike Trumble

### **Tenors**

Geoff Disley  
Tony Kemp  
Roger Smy

Jonathan is also a member of Exaudi, recently performing at the Purcell Room, the Aldeburgh Festival and the Huddersfield International Contemporary Music Festival.

**Stephen Hogg** was born in Glasgow. He currently studies with Raymond Connell, and has worked with Mary King and Rufus Norris on “The Knack” – a performance course run by English National Opera - which culminated in his taking the lead role in a newly composed opera by Julian Grant. He is a member of the professional choir of St Mary’s, Bourne Street, London and sings regularly with the choir of St Paul’s Cathedral, as well as occasionally with the choirs of several London churches, a number of Cathedrals and the odd Abbey.

He has sung in South Africa, the United States, Canada, Germany and Bermuda (although that last tour did involve mainly sitting on beaches). Solo work has included the Requiems of Mozart and Michael Haydn, Bernstein’s Chichester Psalms, Pergolesi’s Stabat Mater, Purcell Odes, Handel’s Messiah, Solomon, and Birthday Ode for Queen Anne, Vivaldi solo cantatas and Zelenka’s Lamentations. Ever versatile, not only has he regularly performed the countertenor repertoire, but has taken the tenor role in Orff’s Carmina Burana, the Sorceress in Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas (staged at Burleigh House) and the mezzo soprano solo in Durufle’s Requiem to critical acclaim at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Stephen is delighted to be returning to the role of the Sorceress this evening.

**Claire Rennison** has sung in choirs ever since her first public performance aged eight, singing carols on Blue Peter! She has sung with several local choirs including the Guildford Philharmonic, the Minerva Singers and the Chantry Singers, for whom she has featured as a soloist on several occasions. She is also a member of Ex Collegio, an occasional choir that sings cathedral services.

Claire trained as a primary school music teacher and currently teaches Kodaly-based music kindergarten classes in Fleet.

**Roy Rashbrook** read music at Goldsmith’s College, London, before going on to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama to study singing under Alexander Oliver, William McAlpine and Rudolf Piernay. Since then he has performed as a tenor soloist with some of Britain’s leading orchestras and choirs including The King’s Consort, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the City of London Sinfonia, the London Mozart Players and the London Philharmonic Choir. He has appeared on many CD recordings, film soundtracks and radio and television broadcasts, both at home and abroad.

Roy is a member of the choir of Saint Paul’s Cathedral, combining their schedule with his work as a soloist, teacher and conductor. He has conducted several choirs and ensembles, including the Goldsmiths’ Chorus, The University of London Union Chorus, The Hanover Singers, Hart Voices (Fleet), The Chantry Singers (Guildford) and Candlelight Opera (Windsor), with whom he has performed at the Bath festival and at Hever Castle.

Cromwell himself had actually been privately passionate about music - even religious music - its use in church had been banned by Parliament, in common with other puritanical movements across Europe. However, it is interesting to note that the Commonwealth offered no opposition to the performance of the first English Opera in 1656. Perhaps this was due to the perception at that time of opera as serious, having an improving effect on mind and soul. In any case the arrival in 1660 of King Charles II from his exile in France brought with it a stylistic invasion from across the water, although unfortunately there was to be no great flowering of English composition. The only English composer of world rank from this time until the late nineteenth century was Henry Purcell.

Something now about music in London (slightly less boring bit). Purcell was heavily influenced by the new styles and instruments that were to be heard in London. Charles II had not only brought with him a liking for French dance rhythms, but was also responsible for the replacement at court of the more ancient sackbuts and cornets with the newer violins – an instrument hitherto more associated with the tavern than the church. He formed a band of twenty-four violins on the same pattern as the Vingt-quatre violons of the French king. Charles then established a long tradition of inviting musicians from abroad to direct English musical establishments with the appointment first of a German, and later of a Frenchman to oversee royal musical performances.

With the political upheaval that followed Charles II’s death in 1685, not to mention the earlier minor inconvenience of the fire of London, musical life was hard when compared with that of other major European cities. It was another invited foreign invasion that brought music to the fore once again, this time of William of Orange and his extremely cultured and devoted wife, Mary II, daughter of James II. Mary made a conscious effort to make up for what the King lacked in humour “... by great vivacity and cheerfulness ...”. This included a renewed interest in and support for music.

So at the beginning of William and Mary’s reign, many people involved in the arts were keen to push themselves to the fore and ingratiate themselves with the new Queen. To this end, Purcell teamed up with Josias Priest, Thomas D’Urfey and Nahum Tate to produce *Dido and Aeneas*, complete with a prologue presenting Venus as an allegory for Mary and Phoebus as William of Orange, (Phoebus - god of the sun - orange - geddit?). Both the prologue and the main opera had obvious parallels with William and Mary, even going as far as presenting the hero relinquishing his love in favour of his duty on foreign shores, just as William spent most of his reign embroiled in continental battles against Catholicism. The opera was presented at Josias Priest’s boarding school for girls in Chelsea in 1689 and was a great success. Priest’s school continued to flourish and his two sons became boys of the chapel royal, Nahum Tate received the poet laureateship and D’Urfey began a series of commissions in partnership with the newly confirmed musician to the royalty, Henry Purcell.

# *Dido and Aeneas*

## *Synopsis*

### **Overture**

After the Trojan wars, Aeneas has set sail for Italy where he is destined to refound the city of Troy on the banks of the Tiber. Having been blown off course by storms to the north coast of Africa, he has arrived at Carthage and fallen in love with Dido.

### **Act I - Dido's Palace at Carthage**

Belinda, seconded by the chorus, attempts to "shake the cloud" of depression from Dido, who by turn sings of how she is "oppressed with torment". They explain how Aeneas has fallen in love with her and are hopeful of a possible union to strengthen Carthage and cheer up Dido. Aeneas enters, declares his love and promises to defy fate and extend his stay indefinitely. Dido is unconvinced but eventually relents to great rejoicing.

### **Act II- The Witches' Cave**

The Sorceress, Dido's bitter enemy, and his gaggle of "wayward sisters" decide to ruin the above rather cosy situation, first by creating a storm to spoil Aeneas' boar hunt (an early example of hunt saboteurs?) and then by sending a false spirit to remind him of his duty to refound Troy.

### **The Grove**

Dido and Aeneas are being entertained by Belinda's and the second lady's singing accompanied by the chorus ("Thanks to these lonesome vales"). Aeneas begins to rejoice in the day's hunting when the storm clouds gather and the entire court, at Belinda's request, make "haste to town" to find some shelter. Aeneas, however, is called by the false spirit, who tells him that Jove himself has commanded him to "waste no more in love's delights" and continue on his journey. Aeneas, it must be said, puts up about as much fight as a boxer with a very large cheque in his dressing room.

### **Act III - The Quay side**

The sailors are preparing to leave, bidding their "nymphs" farewell, despite still being rather "boozy" from the night before. The witches look on, amused that their "plot has took".

### **The Palace**

At their last meeting, Dido despises Aeneas more for his cowardly dealings with her than for his secret resolve to depart. Despite his last minute (and rather half hearted) change of mind, she urges him to leave. Immediately afterwards, though, in true operatic style, she realises that she cannot live without him, and so dies. Cupids appear from the clouds to scatter roses on her tomb.

*Angela Henckel* studied at the Royal College of Music with Dr Neil Mackie. Since leaving college Angela has enjoyed a remarkably varied career. Her work has ranged from singing Gregorian Plainchant to Musical Theatre and from Baroque Recitals to contemporary rock opera.

Last year Angela made her Wigmore Hall debut in *Love's Labyrinth*; she performed the title role in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and sang *Messiah* for The London Handel Festival. She has recently performed the title role in *Zaide* and has sung the title roles in Boyce's *Peleus and Thetis* and Lampe's *Pyramus and Thisbe* for Opera Restor'd.

Angela has performed all of the mainstream oratorio repertoire at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, St. John's Smith Square, St. James' Piccadilly, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and the Symphony Hall in Birmingham and at other venues throughout the UK. In Japan she has given performances of *Dido and Aeneas* with the Purcell Quartet and has performed the title role in Colin Hodggets' puppet opera *The She-Fox of Shinoda*. She has toured Canada with Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, Israel with the Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra and has appeared throughout Europe with The English Concert, The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Florilegium.

Performances on the operatic stage include works by Monteverdi, Mozart, Britten and Hindemith for which she has gained critical acclaim. She is a company principal with Opera Restor'd and has sung Susanna, Despina and Blonde for Handmade Opera. Angela has recorded *Jubilee* by Cole Porter for BBC Radio 4 and has appeared on BBC Radio 3, Capital Radio and Carlton Television. She has given a recital at The Queen Elizabeth Hall and has recorded two solo CDs, one with the Choir of St. George's Hanover Square and the other with Paul Nicholson.

Plans include Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Handmade Opera, *C Minor Mass* for Crowborough Choral Society and *Season Songs* for The Hartland Festival.

*Jonathan Saunders* has worked across the UK in opera and oratorio, with roles including Figaro (*The Marriage of Figaro*) with Hampstead Garden Opera, Sciarone (*Tosca*) with London Opera Players, Publius (*La Clemenza di Tito*), Aeneas (*Dido and Aeneas*), Ben (*The Telephone*) and the baritone lead in the world premier performance of Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *Broken Lines*. He has performed in concert with ensembles including the Britten Sinfonia (*Matthäus-Passion*, Ely Cathedral), the Hanover Band (*Johannes-Passion*, Jesus College Cambridge) and Charivari Agréable (Monteverdi *Vespers*) under Timothy Byram-Wigfield, Worcester Festival Choral Society (*Messiah*, Worcester Cathedral) under Adrian Lucas, English Arts Chorale (*B-minor Mass*, *Christmas Oratorio*, Mozart *Requiem*, Fauré *Requiem*) under Lesley Olive, EC4 Music (*Durufé Requiem*, Mozart *Mass in C Minor*, St Bride's Fleet St) under Tim Crosley, Lavenham Sinfonia (Mozart *Requiem*), the New Cambridge Singers (*Matthäus-Passion*), the City Philharmonic Choral Society (*Nelson Mass*) and Putney Choral Society (*Alexander's Feast*). In recent years he has studied at the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh with Anthony Rolfe Johnson, and taken part in masterclasses at the National Opera Studio given by Jenny Miller.