

To see, to hear, to kiss, to die...

Ensemble Floridante

Iris Oja – mezzo-soprano
Saale Fischer – harpsichord
Villu Vihermäe – viola da gamba
Andrew Lawrence-King – baroque triple harp

The First Book of Songs (1597)

Come again, sweet love doth now invite
All ye, whom Love or Fortune hath betray'd
Can she excuse my wrongs

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Pavan & Galliard

Lacrime Pavan
Galliards: Sir John Souch - Mr Nicholas Gryffith - Dowland
The King of Denmark – The Earl of Essex

Cavalier Songs

Gather your rosebuds while ye may
Wake my Adonis, do not die!
Lay that fallen garland

William Lawes (1602-1645)
Charles Colman (1605-1664)
John Taylor (c1605-c1655)

A Choice Collection of Lessons

Prelude - Almand - Corant - [Saraband]

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Orpheus Britannicus

Be welcome then, great Sir (Fly bold rebellion, 1683) Purcell
'Tis nature's voice (Ode to St Cecilia, 1692)
Fairest isle (King Arthur, 1691)

Musick's Hand-Maid

A new ground
Passacaglia
Round-O

Purcell

An Evening Hymn

O solitude
Sweeter than roses
An Evening Hymn

Purcell

Around the year 1600, when in Italy Caccini was singing such 'new music' as *Amarilli, mia bella*, and Cavalieri and Peri were composing the first operas, England enjoyed a cultural golden age in the reign of Elizabeth I. Caccini defined music as 'text and rhythm', and music of the generations from Dowland to Purcell is similarly crafted from poetical rhetoric and dance-rhythms. The rhetorical device of *parison* – a chain of similar-sounding phrases – was praised in Elizabethan poet John Hoskins' *Speech & Style* (c1599) as 'an even gait of sentences answering each other in measures'. *Parison* in poetry could create a rhetorical *crescendo* - 'to see, to hear, to touch, to kiss, to die' – towards metaphorical 'death' in the act of love; or *diminuendo* – 'I sit, I sigh, I weep, I faint, I die' for one who dies from unrequited love.

With his motto, *semper Dowland, semper dolens* [forever Dowland, forever sad], John Dowland identified himself with artistic Melancholy: not only sadness, but also fantastical invention, and the profound introspection embodied by Shakespeare's Hamlet. Spoken drama, songs, choruses, dancing and spectacle were united in courtly Masques, which commenced with elegant performance of some mythical scene, continued with rowdy comedy and ended as a dance-party for the noble audience.

In his First Book of Songs (1595), Dowland shows his mastery of many styles. *Come again* sounds like a fashionable masque-song, a theatrical invitation in which the singer's bold declamation is accompanied by simple chords much like Italian *basso continuo*. The conservative style of Tudor polyphony is heard in *All ye*, with the instrumental accompaniment representing the lower three strands of a four-voice consort. Sorrowful suspensions, sighing breaths, chromatic shifts and poignant dissonances express the poetic image of 'the silver swan', that sang beautifully, but only once, 'as death approached'. *Can she excuse* alludes to the love-affair between Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex, with a bitterly ironic text set to the powerful rhythms of the Galliard dance. In the final strain, the singer recites on one note, whilst the accompaniment quotes the ballad-tune *Shall I go walk the woods so wild?*, a sharp reference to the rejected lover's exile from court.

Dowland's vocal and instrumental compositions are closely related. *Lacrime*, his most famous work, survives in many settings, for instruments or voices, in consort or solo. The associated text is Melancholy - *Flow my tears... since hope is gone... happy they, that in hell feel not the world's despite* - and the rich polyphony moves to the solemn tread of a Pavan dance. The five-step Galliard was a leaping dance, with three small jumps, a high jump and then landing: one two three FOUR and five. Whilst maintaining this rhythmic pattern, Dowland creates contrasting moods: gentle hopefulness, lively syncopations, a musical battle and another visit to the wild woods of Essex.

Civil War and rule by Puritan Parliament brought most cultural activity to a halt for some eleven years. William Lawes, honoured by King Charles I as the 'Father of Musick', was killed fighting for the royalist Cavaliers. Songs from these 'distracted times' are witty, experimental, even fragmentary: music serves the poetic text and suggests rhetorical Ethos, casting the singer in the role of a libertine, a goddess, or a cynic.

With the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the Chapel Royal had a crucial role in re-establishing musical traditions, educating and subsequently employing such composers as John Blow and Henry Purcell, amongst many others. Purcell's teenage job as music copyist at Westminster Abbey allowed him to study by writing out the music of older English composers, as well as Italian and French works that became the models for Restoration music-making. Music for instruments alone followed the international fashion for suites of French dances. Charles himself would listen to these, 'playing the Monsieur' and waving his hand to the rhythm of stately Almans, royal Corants, or speedy Sarabands.

As poet John Dryden explains, English music was 'learning Italian, which is its best Master, and studying a little of the French air, to give it somewhat more of Gayety and Fashion.' The characteristically English sound created by Purcell, 'Orpheus Britannicus', is actually a complex amalgam of Italian counterpoint, post-Tudor chromaticism and performance 'all a la mode de France'.

The jewels in the crown of Purcell's oeuvre are his Grounds, in which he weaves mind-boggling melodic variations and heart-breaking re-harmonisations over a repeating sequence in the bass: Dido's Lament is probably the best-known example. *Be welcome* is constructed on such an 'Italian Ground'. A recitative sung 'with incredible graces' by Purcell himself in the (1692) *Ode to St Cecilia* (patron saint of music) imitates rhetorical speech to present a summary of 17th-century philosophy. Music is *Nature's Voice*, a comprehensible language that charms the ear and 'captivates the mind'. These are the three modes of Rhetoric: to teach, to delight and to move the passions. In the masque of Britannia, the final scene of Purcell's (1691) *King Arthur*, the praise of England, *Fairest Isle*, is sung to the gracious measure of a French Minuet.

Like Dowland, Purcell wrote instrumental music closely related to vocal and dance forms. The (1683) *Ode to St Cecilia* associates the New Ground with a text celebrating 'the gods of Music and of Love'. In the guise of a French *Passacaille* is hidden another Ground, sung to the words 'remember me!'. Some of Purcell's finest compositions were written as incidental music to spoken plays that are rarely seen in today's theatres. One such *Round-O* takes the form of a French *rondeau*, and the rollicking rhythms of an English sailor's Hornpipe.

For our finale, we present three of Purcell's best-loved songs. In *Solitude*, the singer muses philosophically over a minor-mode Ground. The 'magic of victorious love' is introduced with an enigmatic recitative: what could possibly be *Sweeter than roses or a cool evening breeze on a flowery shore?* French baroque operas and Purcell's music-dramas end with a grand Chaconne, simultaneously a dance and a Ground. Our Chaconne is set to the beautiful words of William Fuller's *Evening Hymn*.

Andrew Lawrence-King

Come again: sweet Love doth now invite

Come again: sweet Love doth now invite
Thy graces that refrain
To do me due delight
To see, to hear, to touch, to kiss, to die
With thee again in sweetest sympathy.

Come again, that I may cease to mourn
Through thy unkind disdain,
For now left and forlorn
I sit, I sigh, I weep, I faint, I die
In deadly pain, and endless misery.

Out alas! My faith is ever true,
Yet will she never rue
Nor yield me any grace.
Her eyes of fire, her heart of flint is made,
Whom tears nor truth may once invade.

Gentle Love, draw forth thy wounding dart,
Thou canst not pierce her heart,
For I that to approve
By sighs and tears more hot than are thy shafts
Did tempt, while she for triumph laughs.

All ye whom love or fortune hath betrayed

All ye whom love or fortune hath betrayed,
All ye that dream of bliss, but live in grief,
All ye whose hopes are evermore delayed,
All ye whose sighs or sickness wants relief:
Lend ears and tears to me, most hapless man,
That sings my sorrows like the dying Swan.

Care that consumes the heart with inward pain,
Pain that presents sad care in outward view,
Both tyrant-like enforce me to complain,
But still in vain, for none my plaints will rue.
Tears, sighs, and ceaseless cries alone I spend,
My woe wants comfort, and my sorrow end.

Can she excuse my wrongs with virtue's cloak?

Can she excuse my wrongs with virtue's cloak?
Shall I call her good, when she proves unkind?
Are those clear fires, which vanish into smoke?
Must I praise the leaves, where no fruit I find?

No, no, where shadows do for bodies stand,
Thou mayst be abused if thy sight be dim.
Cold love is like to words written on sand,
Or to bubbles which on the water swim.

Wilt thou be thus abused still,
Seeing that she will right thee never?
If thou canst not overcome her will,
Thy love will be thus fruitless ever.

Was I so base, that I might not aspire
Unto those high joys which she holds from me?
As they are high, so high is my desire,
If she this deny, what can granted be?

If she will yield to that which reason is,
It is reason's will that love should be just.
Dear, make me happy still by granting this,
Or cut off delays, if that die I must.

Better a thousand times to die,
Than for to live thus still tormented.
Dear, but remember it was I
For for thy sake did die contented.

To the Virgins, to make much of Time

Robert Herrick

Gather your Rosebuds while you may,
Old Time is still a-flying,
And that same Flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious Lamp of Heaven, the Sun,
The higher he is getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting.

That Age is best that is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer,
Expect not the last and worst,
Time still succeeds the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while you may, go marry,
For having once but lost your prime,
You may forever tarry.

Venus Lamenting her lost Adonis

Wake, my Adonis, do not die!
One life's enough for thee and I.
Where are thy looks, thy fears, thy frowns, thy smiles?
Alas! In vain I call,
One death hath snatched them all,
Yet death's not deadly in that face,
Death in those looks itself hath grace.

'Twas this, 'twas this I feared
When thy pale Ghost appeared,
This I presaged, when thundering Jove
Tore the best myrtle in my grove,
When my sick rosebuds lost their smell
And from my temples untouched fell,
And 'twas for some such thing
My Dove first hung her wing.

Whither art thou, my Deity gone?
Venus in Venus there is none:
In vain a goddess now am I,
Only to grieve and not to die:
But I will love my grief:
Make tears my tears' relief,
And sorrow shall to me
A new Adonis be:

And this the fates shan't rob me of, whilst I
A goddess am, to grieve, and not to die.

Lay that sullen Garland by thee

Henry Bold

Lay that sullen Garland by thee,
Keep it for the Elysium Shades,
Take my wreath of lusty Ivy,
Not of that faint Mirtle made.
When I see thy soul descending
To that cold unfertile plain
Of sad fools, the lake attending,
Thou shalt wear this Crown again.
 Now drink wine, and know the odds
 'Twixt that Lethe and the Gods.

Rouse thy dull and drowsy spirits!
Here's the soul-reviving streams.
The stupid Lover's brain inherits
Nought but vain and empty dreams.
Think not then these dismal trances
Which our raptures can content.
The Lad that laughs, sings and dances
Shall come soonest to his end.
 Sadness may some pity move,
 Mirth and courage conquers love!

Fy then on that cloudy forehead,
Open thou vainly-crossed arms;
Thou mayst as well call back the buried,
As raise love by suchlike charms.
Sacrifice a glass of Claret
To each letter of her name;
Gods have oft descended for it,
Mortals must do more the same.
 If she comes not at that flood,
 Sleep will come, and that's as good!

Be welcome then, Great Sir!

Be welcome then, Great Sir, to constant vows
Of loyalty, never to vary more.
Welcome to all that obedience owes,
To a Prince so mild and gentle in power.

Tis Nature's Voice

Nicholas Brady

'Tis Nature's voice, through all the moving wood
Of creatures understood,
The universal tongue
To none of all her numerous race unknown.
From her it learnt the mighty art
To court the ear, or strike the heart,
At once the passions to express and move.
We hear, and straight we grieve or hate, rejoice or love.
In unseen chains it does the fancy bind,
At once it charms the sense and captivates the mind.

Fairest Isle

John Dryden

Fairest isle, all isles excelling,
Seat of pleasure and of love
Venus here will choose her dwelling,
And forsake her Cyprian grove.
Cupid from his favourite nation
Care and envy will remove;
Jealousy, that poisons passion,
And despair, that dies for love.

Gentle murmurs, sweet complaining,
Sighs that blow the fire of love
Soft repulses, kind disdainings,
Shall be all the pains you prove.
Every swain shall pay his duty,
Grateful every nymph shall prove;
And as these excel in beauty,
Those shall be renown'd for love.

O Solitude

Katherine Philips

O Solitude, my sweetest choice,
Places devoted to the night,
Remote from tumult and from noise,
How ye my restless thoughts delight!
O Solitude...

O heavens, what content is mine,
To see those trees which have appeared
From the nativity of time
And which all ages have revered
To look today as fresh and green
As when their beauties first were seen.

O, how agreeable a sight
These hanging mountains do appear,
Which the unhappy would invite
To finish all their sorrows here,
Where their hard fate makes them endure
Such woes as only death can cure.

O, how I solitude adore!
That element of noblest wit,
Where I have learnt Apollo's lore
Without the pains to study it.
For thy sake I in love am grown
With what thy fancy does pursue;
But when I think upon my own,
I hate it, for that reason too,
Because it needs must hinder me
From seeing and from serving thee.
O Solitude...

Sweeter than roses

Sweeter than roses or cool evening breeze
Was the dear kiss; first trembling made me freeze;
Then shot like fire all over!

What magic has victorious love!
For all I touch or see
Since that dear kiss, I hourly prove
All is love to me!

An Evening Hymn William Fuller

Now that the sun hath veiled his light
And bid the world goodnight,
To the soft bed my body I dispose:
But where shall my soul repose?
Dear God, even in thy arms, and can there be
Any so sweet security?

Then to thy rest, O my soul! And singing, praise
The mercy that prolongs thy days.