



King Arthur

RESOURCE PACK

KEY STAGE 2
SCHOOLS-CONCERT

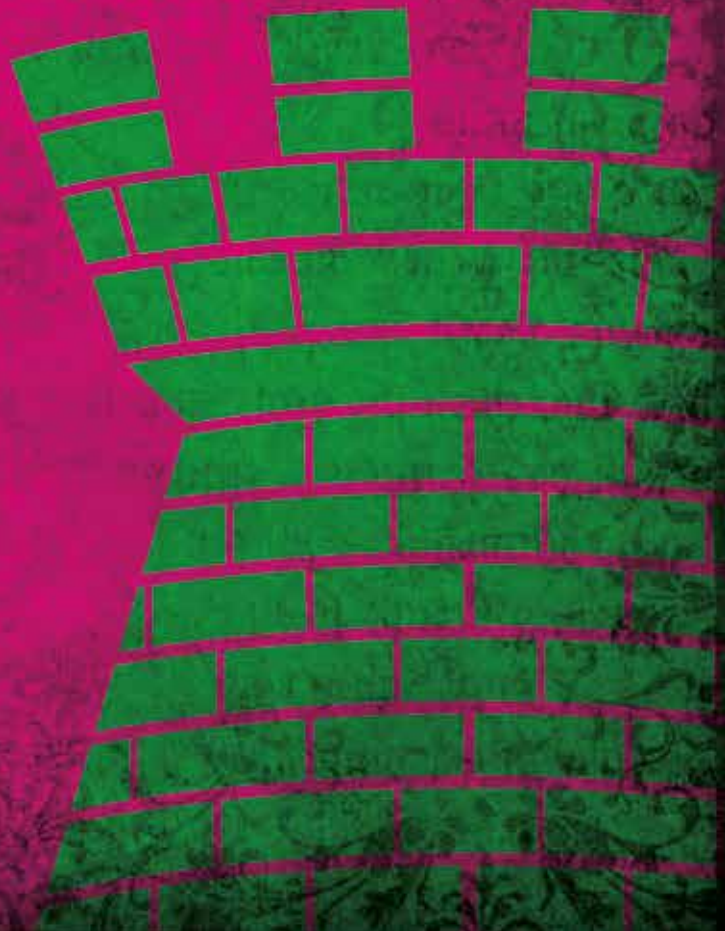
THURSDAY 12 FEBRUARY
11AM - 12 NOON

About the concert

King Arthur is a one-hour interactive concert for Key Stage 2 pupils and their teachers. The concert will be presented and narrated by workshop leader Isabelle Adams. Isabelle will be joined onstage by instrumentalists and singers from the Early Opera Company.

In the concert you will hear a performance of Henry Purcell's opera, *King Arthur*. The opera was first performed in 1691, which is 324 years ago! The full piece has five acts and lasts well over two hours, so you will be seeing an abridged version of the opera. We will need the help of the audience to tell our story. Everyone will be invited to warm up their voices and sing some of Purcell's music to cheer King Arthur on his way!

This pack contains some background information about *King Arthur* and the music you will be hearing alongside some suggested activities and two songs to prepare in advance of the concert.



Early Opera Company



The musicians you will hear in the concert are from the Early Opera Company, one of the leading ensembles in the country specialising in the performance of 'early music'. Now, early music isn't music that gets played early in the morning... rather, it's music that was written a long time ago – often 300 or 400 years ago. Back then, musical instruments were different to the common orchestral instruments of today. For example, the piano hadn't been invented but instead they had a beautiful instrument called a harpsichord which was often used to accompany singers. While the early violins and cellos look quite similar to the instruments of today, the strings are made from a different material. Modern instruments have strings made from metal, but the instruments you will see played in the concert have gut strings. As the name suggests, these strings are made from the intestines of sheep or goats.



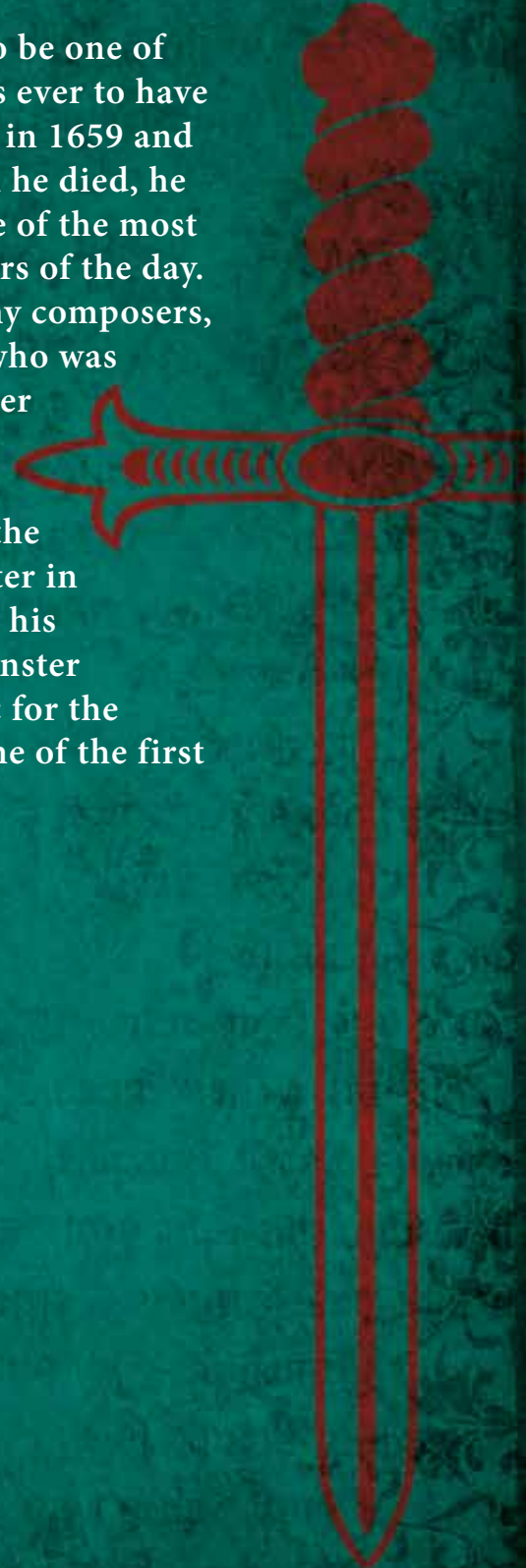

King Arthur

Henry Purcell



Henry Purcell is considered to be one of the greatest British composers ever to have lived. He was born in London in 1659 and although he was only 36 when he died, he had established himself as one of the most talented and prolific composers of the day. His music has influenced many composers, including Benjamin Britten, who was composing some 300 years after Purcell's death.

Purcell started composing at the age of 9 while he was a chorister in His Majesty's Chapel. Later in his life he was organist at Westminster Cathedral and he wrote music for the church, for theatre and was one of the first composers of English opera.



Opera: a brand new style of entertainment

Imagine you lived in 1691. There was no TV, cinema, computers or mobile phones. If you wanted some entertainment you had to go out to the theatres to find it. The newest, most fashionable form of entertainment in 1691 was to go to the opera. Opera had only just been invented earlier that century by an Italian composer called Monteverdi. It was a way of telling a story through music and song. The Italians went mad for it and soon the craze was spreading across Europe.

When it came to England, Purcell developed his very own style of opera which was half-sung and half-spoken. This 'semi-opera' combined spoken dialogue with elaborate costumes, scenery, special effects, dancing and music. No wonder the audiences loved it.

Lead roles were often taken by actors, while the singing was done by less important characters who sang songs to entertain the lead characters. Purcell's *King Arthur* had a big cast of 10 actors (playing the roles of Arthur and Oswald and Emmeline etc) and 22 singers who took the roles of shepherds, nymphs, gods and priests. In addition to that there was a choir of singers.

King Arthur: fact or fiction?



King Arthur was a legendary British leader who was said to have lived 1,500 years ago and was famed for defending Britain against Saxon invaders. Now, 1,500 years is a very long time and whether he actually existed or not is a matter hotly debated and disputed by historians.

The problem is that most of the trusted historical documents from the time don't mention Arthur at all. One of the main sources of the Arthurian legend is a book called *The History of the Kings of Britain* written by a man called Geoffrey of Monmouth in 1132. Geoffrey wasn't interested in writing an accurate historical document, but rather something really exciting which had his readers gripped.

Arthur crops up in lots of other folk stories and legends by different writers, each one adding a slightly different twist or some new characters. These tales developed over time and overseas. French writers made up their own versions, and with each re-telling the stories became ever more fantastic and popular with their audience.

The Arthurian legend became a basis for writers and storytellers to invent the bravest heroes, the most wicked enemies, tell of ferocious battles, powerful magicians and noble Queens.



King Arthur: fact or fiction?

Using the following list of characters and places, why don't you have a go at creating your own version of the story?



Arthur - king, hero, warrior

Guinevere - queen, married to Arthur

Uther Pendragon - Arthur's Dad, also a king

Merlin - wizard and Arthur's advisor

Lancelot - Arthur's bravest knight

Excalibur - Arthur's sword which has magical powers

The Lady of the Lake - magician who learns her magic from Merlin and gives Arthur his sword Excalibur

The Round Table - where Arthur and his knights sat to discuss business

Camelot - the castle home of Arthur

Kiugharrah - a dragon who defended Merlin

Purcell's King Arthur

Purcell's opera King Arthur was first performed in a theatre in London in 1691. Purcell composed the music but the words were written by his friend, John Dryden. Dryden's version of the King Arthur story focuses on Arthur's battles with the Saxons. Arthur is defending the Britons from the Saxons who are led by King Oswald. Oswald kidnaps Arthur's bride-to-be, Guinevere (called Emmeline by Dryden) and Arthur goes on a mission to rescue her. Dryden's version also includes several characters who are not normally mentioned in the traditional Arthur stories: Cupid the god of love has a starring role, as does Saint George, and various other spirits and shepherds have their role to play along the way. As I said before, you really can make up your own version of this story...


King Arthur

Singing is brilliant! You should have a go!

*“The only thing better than singing
is more singing”* Ella Fitzgerald

Singing is one of the most universal forms of human communication and expression that crosses cultures, language barriers and generations. From night-time lullabies to football chants, songs of worship to concert hall recitals, singing has the capacity to convey meaning beyond what is possible through speech alone. Humankind has been singing from the beginning of our existence: our very earliest ancestors used song to develop language.

Research shows that regular singing can help to improve our physical, psychological and emotional well-being...

Physically

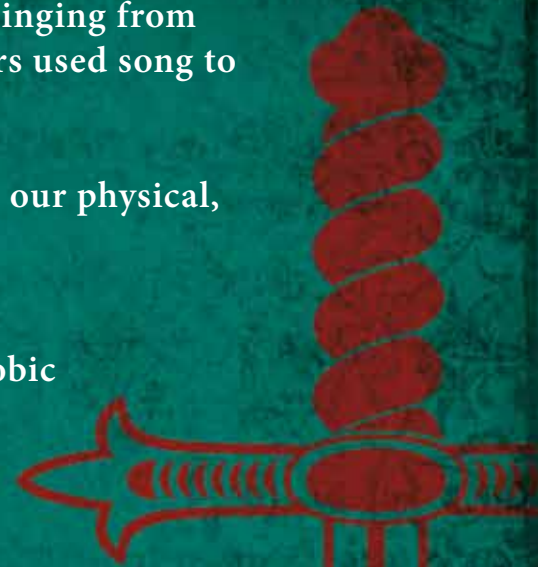
Singing exercises muscles in the upper body. It is an aerobic activity which helps our blood flow and breathing. Increased oxygen in our blood flow makes our brain more alert.

Psychologically

As we take deeper breaths during singing we become more relaxed and less stressed. The less stressed we are, the more likely we will have better overall health.

Emotionally

Singing generates the ‘feel-good factor’. When we sing the body releases endorphins, a natural chemical, which makes us feel positive. When we sing with other people this positive feeling transfers to our perception of the group which aids social cohesion and the forming of positive group identity.



Warming up

Singing uses your whole body as well as your voice so it's important to warm up before singing. Warm-up activities get the group focusing and listening. It can also help the group to relax and release inhibitions before singing.

ENERGIZE: 8-4-2-1

- Standing in a circle, lead the whole group in a unison countdown
- Pat your head 8 times, whilst counting out loud to 8
- Without missing a beat, do the same on your shoulders...
- And knees...
- And feet
- Without missing a beat, repeat the whole sequence but only counting to 4
- Next time, only count to 2
- Last time, only count to 1

Phew! Relax, have a laugh and shake out your limbs!

- Repeat the whole thing several times getting faster
- Shout the number 1 and whisper all the other numbers
- Move the group closer together. Get them to pat their neighbour's shoulders instead of their own.

Warming up

POSTURE

- Stand with your feet comfortably apart, arms relaxed
- Bring your head downwards towards your chest
- Slowly bend down, letting your arms hang loosely in front of you; bend your knees slightly
- Keep your neck relaxed and head floppy. Shake your head and shoulders gently to make sure they are relaxed.
- Slowly uncurl upwards, straightening each vertebra one by one and finally bringing up your head
- Give your shoulders a roll backwards. Imagine there is a string from the back of the top of your head being pulled higher, gently stretching your back and neck.

BREATHING

- Take slow, deep breaths with your hands on the side of your ribcage
- As you breathe in your belly gets fatter
- As you breathe out your belly contracts
- Check that your shoulders are relaxed
- Make the sound of the sea together: say a long 'shhh' and push your arms out in front of you to show the waves coming up the beach
- Say a long 'ssss' and pull your arms back in as the waves fall back
- Repeat and keep the sea sounds slow

Warming up

PITCH: Follow your finger

- Trace a line in the air with your finger and follow the line with your voice, going up and down. Everyone makes this sound together.
- Touch the finger of the person next to you to pass on the magic finger. If their finger moves up and down, so should the pitch; if their finger stays in a horizontal line, then the pitch should stay on one note.
- Keep passing it on
- Try drawing a zig-zag and make your voice do a vocal zig-zag!

TONGUE TWISTER

- Say together: 'Whether the weather be cold, or whether the weather be hot, we'll weather the weather whatever the weather, whether we like it or not!'
- Say it slowly at first, in a strong, regular rhythm
- Try speeding it up
- Repeat it using different voices e.g. loud, soft, witch voice, baby voice
- Try singing it to the tune of *The Grand Old Duke of York*

You're now ready to sing! In the concert, the audience will be taught two songs from the opera. They will be easy and everyone will be able to learn them the day. However, if you want to prepare your class in advance, or continue singing it

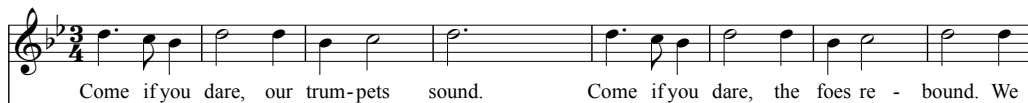
Audience songs

Dryden

Come if you dare

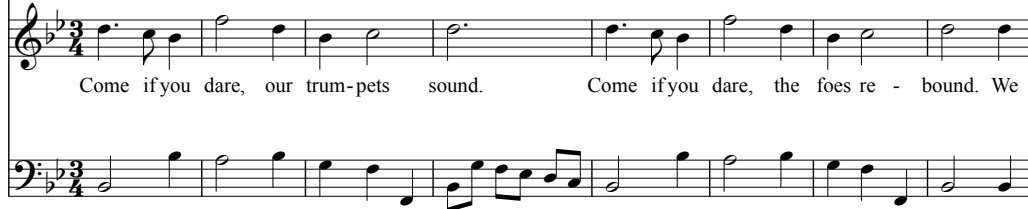
Purcell

Version to learn for the concert




Come if you dare, our trum-pets sound. Come if you dare, the foes re - bound. We

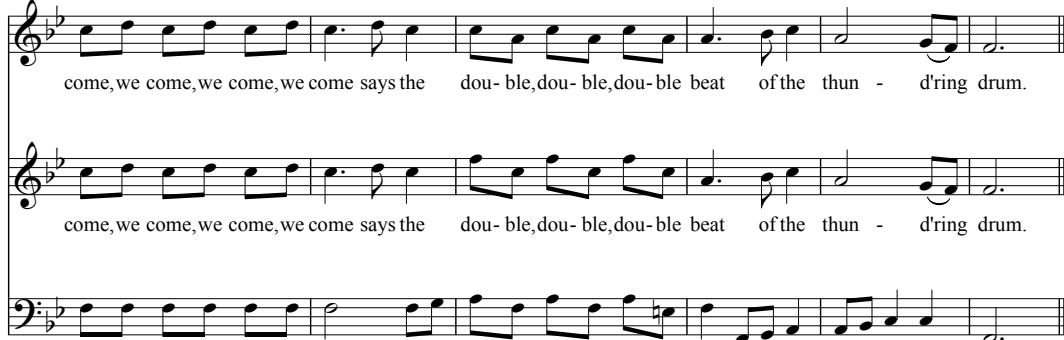
Purcell's original melody for high voices




Come if you dare, our trum-pets sound. Come if you dare, the foes re - bound. We



9



come, we come, we come, we come says the dou-ble, dou-ble, dou-ble beat of the thun - d'ring drum.



The second line of music is the original melody written by Purcell, but as it has several high notes, I have altered it very slightly to create the more manageable line which you will see is written on top. Please look at this top line of music with your class.

If you have confident, high singers, please feel free to teach them the second line down. Both lines can be sung together to make some impressive harmonies!

Audience songs

I. Adams

Arthur's King!

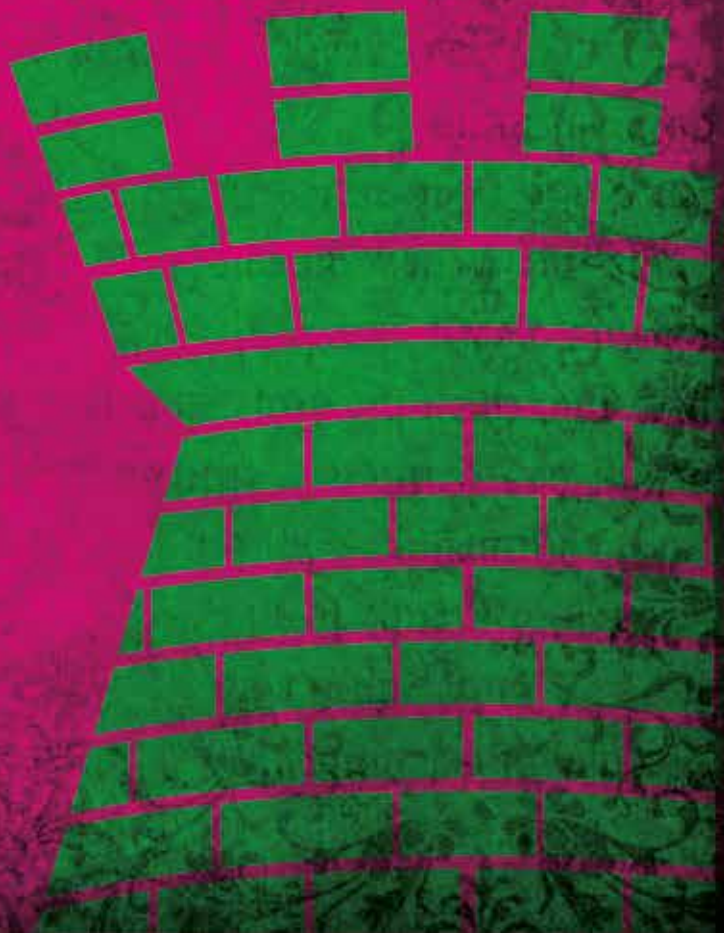
Purcell

Ar - thur's King! So we sing hoo - ray for our coun - try and

The first system of musical notation consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains the vocal line with lyrics: "Ar - thur's King! So we sing hoo - ray for our coun - try and". The bass staff contains the accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb) and the time signature is 6/8.

no - ble King! Hoo - ray for our coun - try and no - ble King!

The second system of musical notation starts with a measure rest of 4 measures, indicated by a '4' above the staff. It continues with the treble and bass staves. The treble staff contains the vocal line with lyrics: "no - ble King! Hoo - ray for our coun - try and no - ble King!". The bass staff contains the accompaniment. The key signature and time signature remain the same as in the first system.



Does your school have Artsmark status or run Arts Award?

Did you know that taking part in projects, concerts and workshops can contribute towards both?

Artsmark is Arts Council England's flagship programme to enable schools and other organisations to evaluate, strengthen and celebrate their arts and cultural provision.

For more information including how to apply for Artsmark status visit www.artsmark.org.uk.

Arts Award supports young people to deepen their engagement with the arts, to build creative and leadership skills, and to achieve a national qualification.

For more information on how your students might take part and how to become an Arts Award centre visit www.artsaward.org.uk.

Wigmore Hall Learning is a proud supporter of Artsmark and Arts Award. If taking part in a project, workshop or concert with us has contributed to your Artsmark status or your students' Arts Award please tell us! You can contact us on 020 7258 8240 or by emailing us at learning@wigmore-hall.org.uk.



About Wigmore Hall



Europe's leading venue for chamber music and song, Wigmore Hall currently presents over 400 concerts a year in addition to 250 education events. Many of the Hall's concerts are recorded for broadcast on BBC Radio 3, including a live broadcast every Monday lunchtime.

Wigmore Hall is renowned for its excellent acoustics and intimate atmosphere. It has just 550 seats compared with nearly 6,000 at the Royal Albert Hall. The size of the Hall makes it ideal for singers and small groups of players. These are ensembles that would have originally been heard in people's living rooms!

Wigmore Hall was built in 1901 and is a beautiful example of Renaissance-style architecture and many original characteristics remain - gas lights are still lit for every concert. Wigmore Hall's auditorium features a cupola above the stage with a beautiful mural depicting the 'Soul of Music'.

Wigmore Hall Learning provides access to chamber music and song through innovative creative programmes, online resources and events. We invite a broad audience to get involved in music-making of the highest standard, particularly focusing on those who may be excluded from regular arts provision. We make connections through projects and partnerships, using music to inspire people, to explore opportunities and to enhance learning and development.

For further details about Wigmore Hall Learning contact us:
020 7258 8247 learning@wigmore-hall.org.uk www.wigmore-hall.org.uk/learning

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