

# WIGMORE HALL 125

Tuesday 16 September 2025  
7.30pm

## Songs of Passion

Lea Desandre mezzo-soprano

Jupiter Ensemble

Louise Ayrton violin

Ruiqi Ren violin

Jérôme Van Waerbeke viola

Josh Cheatham viola da gamba

Ismael Campanero Nieto double bass

Arnaud de Pasquale harpsichord, organ

Thomas Dunford director, lute

John Dowland (1563-1626)    Come again, sweet love doth now invite (1597)  
Semper Dowland semper dolens (1604)  
Go, crystal tears (1597)  
The Frog Galliard (1597)  
Now, O now I needs must part (1597)  
Lachrimae Antiquae (1604)  
Sorrow, stay, lend true repentant tears (1600)  
The Earl of Essex Galliard (1604)  
Flow, my tears (1600)  
The King of Denmark's Galliard (1604)  
Can she excuse my wrongs (1597)

*Interval*

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)    If Love's a sweet passion from *The Fairy Queen* Z629 (1692)  
Strike the viol, touch the lute from *Come, ye sons of art, away* Z323 (1694)  
O solitude, my sweetest choice Z406 (1684-5)  
Now that the sun hath veiled his light (An Evening Hymn on a Ground) Z193 (pub. 1688)  
From *The Fairy Queen* Z629 (1692)  
Chaconne • O let me weep • Now the night is chas'd away  
From *Dido and Aeneas* Z626 (1688)  
Ouverture • Ah, Belinda • Echo dance of the furies • Thanks to these lonesome vales • The Witche's dance • When I am laid in earth



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## Songs of Passion

Weeping, pitying, pleading, mourning, sorrowing and triumphing are some of the passions set to music in song form by the composers John Dowland and Henry Purcell in either half of both the 17th Century and this programme. Their worlds were split by a rift in society that saw the end of the monarchy, plague and the destruction of London. The interval will represent this schism tonight.

**John Dowland** was born in the fifth year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, probably in London although Dublin claims him too on spurious evidence. He flirted with Roman Catholicism in Paris during a period of service to the English ambassador and believed this to be the reason for his failure to procure a job as lutenist to the Queen. Instead he became a peripatetic musician around the courts of Europe with a precarious income, so, for security, published a series of song albums in London which his wife looked after and drew the housekeeping from. One might reasonably conclude that the songs exist only because of Dowland's rejected applications. In the 1600s he was employed by the King of Denmark who danced his Galliard at Elsinore, setting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Dowland's songs were hugely popular from the outset. Each book contains about 20 numbers to lute accompaniment preferably with viol emphasising the bass line. The *First Book of Ayres*, as it was presumptuously called (there was as yet no Second), came out in 1597 and was re-issued in 1600, 1603, 1606 and 1613, such was the demand. Its contents, from the pantingly erotic 'Come again' to the bitterly lovesick 'Go, crystal tears', must have been known to every household in the capital. Most of the lyrics are anonymous but not 'Can she excuse my wrongs' which was written by the Earl of Essex Robert Devereux, the Queen's favourite courtier. This notwithstanding, she had him executed for treason, so the answer to his question was no.

The song is set to music which also exists in instrumental form as *The Earl of Essex Galliard*. This is the case with several other songs here. 'Now, O now I needs must part' is also *The Frog Galliard* and associated with the Queen's French (get it?) suitor the Duc d'Alencon. One imagines the courtiers' relief when the duke did indeed part. 'Flow, my tears' (from Book 2 in 1600) is also *Lachrimae*, a tune which was even better known around Europe than the composer, who was wont to announce himself as 'John Dowland of Lachrimae'.

Dowland died in 1626 (next year is his 400th) and **Purcell** was born 33 years later. In the interval, Charles I argued with Parliament and shut it down, bringing Civil War on the nation which ended with his beheading. After a bleak ten years of Puritanism with everything from dancing to Christmas banned, the king returned to the sick, tinder-box city in the person

of his exiled son Charles II The Merry Monarch and brought with him from France sweet violins to replace the dry viols, women on the stage for the first time, and a taste for lavish entertainment.

The epitome of this is semi-opera which includes ballet and a play as well as opera and might last several hours. Purcell's *Fairy Queen* was such a work. It was written for a Queen – Mary II, niece of Charles II – to celebrate her wedding anniversary in 1692 to William of Orange. It was performed at the Dorset Garden Theatre on the Thames west of Blackfriars, home of an earl in the new theatre district (to be known as the West End), the Shakespearean theatres in Southwark having been demolished by the Puritans. The repertoire remained and *The Fairy Queen* incorporates almost an entire performance of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* along with numerous dances like the Chaconne which revolves around a repeating bassline and harmonic sequence.

The lute retained its place but added bass strings and became the theorbo, suitable for accompanying operatic recitative with its free rhythm and improvised chords. On the page the music appears as two lines, treble and bass, with the middle parts, the harmony, extemporised and indicated by numbers. This emphasis on the bottom line produced the ground bass, a riff in today's parlance, of which Purcell was the undisputed master. His 'O let me weep', or *The Plaint*, mourns over a seven-bar melody descending chromatically and is the stand-out number from *The Fairy Queen*.

Purcell came into a world starved of music. He provided scores for the Restoration theatre, chamber music, songs and, as organist of Westminster Abbey, choral and organ works. Over a ground bass he set lyrics by Bishop William Fuller in the *Evening Hymn* and by Katherine Phillips, 'The Matchless Orinda', in *O, solitude*. He was a favourite of Queen Mary and set odes to celebrate her birthday. 'Strike the viol' was for her 32nd and last in 1694 (she died of smallpox that year) with words by Nahum Tate who also wrote the libretto for Purcell's tragic opera *Dido and Aeneas* (after a brief, passionate affair, the Queen of Carthage is dumped by an ungrateful Trojan), performed by a girls' school in Chelsea in 1689. All but one of the soloists are female. Dances are included, but where extravagant semi-opera had specialists to perform the ballet, the more compact form of opera required the girls to be trained in all the various theatrical skills, singing, dancing and acting. The climax is the great, ground bass aria 'When I am laid' which Dido sings at her suicide after her abandonment by the useless Aeneas, a signing perhaps from the local boys' grammar. The opera surely entertained the girls with warnings of love's perils ahead.

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## John Dowland (1563-1626)

### Come again, sweet love doth now invite (1597)

*Anonymous*

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.

All the day the sun that lends me shine  
By frowns do cause me pine,  
And feeds me with delay;  
Her smiles my springs that makes my joys to grow;  
Her frowns the winters of my woe.

All the night my sleeps are full of dreams,  
My eyes are full of streams;  
My heart takes no delight  
To see the fruits and joys that some do find,  
And mark the storms are me assigned.

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 mighty triumph laughs.

### Semper Dowland semper dolens (1604)

### Go, crystal tears (1597)

*Anonymous*

Go, crystal tears, like to the morning showers,  
And sweetly weep into thy lady's breast,  
And as the dews revive the drooping flowers,  
So let your drops of pity be addressed,  
To quicken up the thoughts of my desert,  
Which sleeps too sound whilst I from her depart.

Haste, restless sighs, and let your burning breath  
Dissolve the ice of her indurate heart,  
Whose frozen rigour like forgetful Death,  
Feels never any touch of my desert:  
Yet sighs and tears to her sacrifice,  
Both from a spotless heart and patient eyes.

## The Frog Galliard (1597)

### Now, O now I needs must part (1597)

*Anonymous*

Now, O now, I needs must part,  
Parting though I absent mourn.  
Absence can no joy impart:  
Joy, once fled cannot returne.

While I live I needs must love,  
Love lives not when hope is gone.  
Now at last despaire doth prove,  
Love divided loveth none.

*Sad despair doth drive me hence,  
This despaire unkindnes sends.  
If that parting be offence,  
It is shee which then offends.*

Deare, when I from thee am gone,  
Gone are all my joyes at once.  
I loved thee and thee alone,  
In whose love I joyed once.

And although your sight I leave,  
Sight where in my joyes do lie.  
Till that death doth sence bereave,  
Never shall affection die.

*Sad despair doth drive me hence ...*

Deare, if I do not returne,  
Love and I shall die together.  
For my absence never mourne,  
Whom you might have joyed ever.

Part we must though now I die,  
Die I do to part with you.  
Him despaire doth cause to lie,  
Who both lived and dieth true.

*Sad despair doth drive me hence ...*

### Lachrimae Antiquae (1604)

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.*

## Sorrow, stay, lend true repentant tears (1600)

*Anonymous*

Sorrow, stay, lend true repentant tears,  
To a woeful wretched wight,  
Hence, despair with thy tormenting fears:  
O do not my poor heart affright.  
Pity, help now or never,  
Mark me not to endless pain,  
Alas I am condemned ever,  
No hope, no help there doth remain,  
But down, down, down, down I fall,  
Down and arise I never shall.

## The Earl of Essex Galliard (1604)

### Flow, my tears (1600)

*Anonymous*

Flow, my tears, fall from your springs!  
Exiled for ever, let me mourn;  
Where night's black bird her sad infamy sings,  
There let me live forlorn.

Down vain lights, shine you no more!  
No nights are dark enough for those  
That in despair their lost fortunes deplore.  
Light doth but shame disclose.

Never may my woes be relieved,  
Since pity is fled;  
And tears and sighs and groans my weary days  
Of all joys have deprived.

From the highest spire of contentment  
My fortune is thrown;  
And fear and grief and pain for my deserts  
Are my hopes, since hope is gone.

Hark! you shadows that in darkness dwell,  
Learn to contemn light.  
Happy, happy they that in hell  
Feel not the world's despite.

## The King of Denmark's Galliard (1604)

### Can she excuse my wrongs (1597)

*Anonymous*

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,  
That may'st be abus'd 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 o'ercome 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 love thus still tormented:  
Dear, but remember it was I  
Who for thy sake did die contented.

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## Interval

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## Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

### If Love's a sweet passion from *The Fairy Queen* Z629 (1692)

*Anonymous, after William Shakespeare*

If love's a sweet passion, why does it torment?  
If a bitter, oh tell me, whence comes my content?  
Since I suffer with pleasure, why should I complain,  
Or grieve at my fate, when I know 'tis in vain?  
Yet so pleasing the pain is, so soft is the dart,  
That at once it both wounds me, and tickles my heart.

I press her hand gently, look languishing down,  
And by passionate silence I make my love known.  
But oh! how I'm blest when so kind she does prove,  
By some willing mistake to discover her love.  
When in striving to hide, she reveals all her flame,  
And our eyes tell each other, what neither dares name.

### Strike the viol, touch the lute from *Come, ye sons of art, away* Z323 (1694)

*Nahum Tate*

Strike the viol, touch the lute,  
Wake the harp, inspire the flute.  
Sing your patroness's praise,  
In cheerful and harmonious lays.

## O solitude, my sweetest choice Z406 (1684-5)

*Katherine Philips after Antoine Girard de Saint-Amant*

O solitude, my sweetest choice!  
Places devoted to the night,  
Remote from tumult and from noise,  
How ye my restless thoughts delight!  
O solitude, my sweetest choice!  
O heav'ns! what content is mine,  
To see these trees, which have appear'd  
From the nativity of time,  
And which all ages have rever'd,  
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 th'unhappy would invite  
To finish all their sorrows here,  
When 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, O how I solitude adore!

## Now that the sun hath veiled his light (An Evening Hymn on a Ground) Z193 (pub. 1688)

*Bishop William Fuller*

Now that the sun hath veil'd 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.

Hallelujah!

## From *The Fairy Queen* Z629 (1692)

*Anonymous, after William Shakespeare*

### Chaconne

## O let me weep

O, let me weep, for ever weep!  
My eyes no more shall welcome sleep.  
I'll hide me from the sight of day,  
And sigh, sigh, sigh my soul away.  
He's gone, he's gone, his loss deplore  
And I shall never see him more.

## Now the night is chas'd away

Now the night is chas'd away,  
All salute the rising sun;  
'Tis that happy, happy day,  
The birthday of King Oberon.

## From *Dido and Aeneas* Z626 (1688)

*Nahum Tate*

### Overture

## Ah, Belinda

Ah! Belinda, I am press'd  
With torment not to be Confess'd,  
Peace and I are stranger grown.  
I languish till my grief is known,  
Yet would not have it guess'd.

## Echo dance of the furies

## Thanks to these lonesome vales

Thanks to these lonesome vales,  
These desert hills and dales,  
So fair the game, so rich the sport,  
Diana's self might to these woods resort.

## The Witche's dance

## When I am laid in earth

Thy hand Belinda, darkness shades me,  
On thy bosom let me rest.  
More I would but death invades me.  
Death is now a welcome guest.

When I am laid in earth may my wrongs create  
No trouble in thy breast,  
Remember me, but ah! forget my fate.