

WIGMORE HALL 125

Tuesday 18 November 2025
7.30pm

Jessica Cale soprano
Samuel Boden tenor
Chris Webb bass
Nicholas Mulroy director, tenor
Dunedin Consort

Matthew Truscott violin I

Huw Daniel violin II

Thomas Kettle viola

Jonathan Manson cello, viola da gamba

László Rózsa recorder

Olwen Foulkes recorder II

Toby Carr theorbo

Stephen Farr organ

Henry Purcell (1659-1695) Welcome to all the pleasures (Ode for St Cecilia's Day) Z339 (1683)

John Blow (1649-1708) Chaconne in G (c.1680)

Giovanni Draghi (c.1640-1708) Trio sonata in G minor
*I. Adagio • II. Canzona • III. Adagio •
IV. Minuet • V. Vivace – Adagio*

Henry Purcell Overture in D minor Z771 (c.1682)

Henry Hall (c.1656-1707) Yes, my Aminta, 'tis too true (1696)

Interval

Henry Purcell Overture in G minor Z772 (c.1682)

John Blow An Ode on the Death of Mr Henry Purcell (1696)

William Croft (1678-1727) Sonata in F (1704)

Henry Purcell Raise, raise the voice Z334 (c.1685)



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This programme is – even more than usual – about music and musicians, celebrating St Cecilia, Henry Purcell, and the whole musical ecosystem of London in the last decades of the 17th Century. Much as there is something strikingly deterministic about Benjamin Britten's birth on St Cecilia's Day (22 November), so Henry Purcell's death on the eve of the feast in 1695 seems particularly resonant.

Henry Purcell (1659-95) came from a musical family, raised as a chorister of the Chapel Royal under the direction of John Blow, and whose talents were evident from a very early age. His impact on the musical trajectory of London – and Britain – is hard to overstate and his sudden death at just 36 hit his colleagues hard. Music and poetry in his memory appeared in incredibly short order and on an unprecedented scale.

One such piece came from **Henry Hall** (c.1656-1707). A chorister alongside Purcell, he was later organist of Hereford Cathedral. His text, likely of his own creation, introduces two shepherds discussing the death of Purcell – or Daphnis, as he's called in this pastoral scene. Hall leans heavily into the tropes of pastoral poetry, a genre used since Greek and Roman authors as a home for elegy and lament, particularly of poetic and artistic colleagues. The two shepherds frame him as the wellspring of musical inspiration, observing that that the musical water courses have now run dry in his absence.

There is, of course, a certain irony in writing a new piece of music that despairs that music has been cancelled. **John Blow** (1649-1708) and his librettist, the Poet Laureate John Dryden, play with a related theme, that Purcell's genius was such that it intimidated all others to silence – the lark and the linnet warbled happily until Philomel, a poetic name for the nightingale, arrived on the scene. While this has a hyperbolic flourish, Blow was very well placed to express such feelings authentically: he had stepped aside from his job at Westminster Abbey in favour of Purcell and returned to his post after Henry's death. As in Hall's lament, Blow deploys a pair of recorders, a combination often used by Purcell in emotionally charged and intimate moments.

We also hear one of Blow's pieces for strings and continuo, a Chaconne in four parts. A splendidly engaging piece, it builds up a head of steam with increasingly intricate interplay between the parts before releasing the pressure in the course of a more chromatic closing phase. Four-part string writing of this kind – for violins rather than viols – was comparatively rare, outside of odes or cantatas that invited viola parts to match a four- or five-part vocal ensemble. As a result, the two Overtures of Henry Purcell are also comparative rarities in modern performance for all their trademark Purcellian charm and drive, lacking that subsequent material set by the overture.

Giovanni Batista Draghi (1640-1708) was one of the great number of continental musicians who made London their home, drawn by the prospect of earning a living at the intersection of court and church life. He brought with him a unique musical style and approach to instrumentation that seems to have piqued Henry Purcell's interest – *From harmony, from heav'nly harmony*, his 1684 Ode for St Cecilia's Day, very much paved the way for Henry's 1692 iteration, the now far more famous *Hail Bright Cecilia*. The trio sonata we hear in this programme is remarkable from its first moments, as chromatic tendrils seek the light. Over the course of five varied movements, we hear the full range of Draghi's invention as he pairs and plays off both violins and the continuo team by turns.

We open with the first of Henry's odes for Cecilia, *Welcome to all the pleasures*. Commissioned by 'The Musical Society' in 1683 with a libretto from Christopher Fishburn, the 24-year-old Purcell delivers an opening symphony full of the kind of anticipation that would serve so well in his music for the theatre. The piece has all the characteristics that would become hallmarks of a Purcellian ode, including a beautiful aria over a repeated ground bass, expansive ritornelli, and richly inventive changes of texture and voicing. Particularly striking is the ode's quiet end, a fade out as though Purcell is staging the revellers moving on to their next party.

William Croft (1678-1727) was yet another chorister off the Chapel Royal production line, younger than Henry Purcell but again taught by John Blow, and ultimately Blow's successor at Westminster Abbey in 1707. His Sonata in F is the only piece of the programme that uses both violins and recorders, setting them as opposing pairs in a playful opening *Allegro*. The following *Adagio* is full of pining suspensions as the pairs weave sinuously round each other, before the final *Allegro* returns to a perky ebullience.

We draw this programme to a close with the Cecilian ode that gives us our title. *Raise the voice* might be pared back in terms of its forces but its music is some of Henry Purcell's most remarkable. Combining just solo soprano, tenor, and bass singers with two violins and continuo, he weaves a rich and daring paean to Cecilia that reaches its peak in an extraordinary aria for the soprano. Over a fizzing ground bass, the soprano unfurls an outrageously seductive and chromatic line, somehow outdone in the following ritornello by the two violins. Seemingly intoxicated by music's possibilities, the full chorus bubbles happily over into a final number that has more than a touch of the tavern.

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Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Welcome to all the pleasures (Ode for St Cecilia's Day) Z339 (1683)

Christopher Fishburn

Symphony

Welcome to all the Pleasures that delight,
Of ev'ry Sense, the grateful Appetite.
Hail great Assembly of Apollo's Race,
Hail to this happy place, this Musical Assembly,
That seems to be the Ark of Universal Harmony.

Here the Deities approve,
The God of Music, and of Love;
All the Talents they have lent you,
All the Blessings they have sent you;
Pleas'd to see what they bestow,
Live and thrive so well below.

While Joys Celestial their bright Souls invade
To find what great improvement you have made.

Then lift up your Voices, ye Organs of Nature,
Those Charms to the troubled and amorous Creature.
The Pow'r shall divert us a pleasanter way,
For sorrow and grief find from Music relief,
And Love its soft Charms must obey.

Beauty thou Scene of Love,
And Virtue, thou innocent Fire,
Made by the Powers above
To temper the heat of Desire,
Music that Fancy employs
In Raptures of innocent Flame,
We offer with Lute and with Voice
To Cecilia, Cecilia's bright Name.

In a Consort of Voices while Instruments play,
With Music we celebrate this Holy day;
Îô Cecilia, Cecilia,
In a Consort of Voices we'll sing.

John Blow (1649-1708)

Chaconne in G (c.1680)

Giovanni Draghi (c.1640-1708)

Trio sonata in G minor

I. Adagio

II. Canzona

III. Adagio

IV. Minuet

V. Vivace – Adagio

Henry Purcell

Overture in D minor Z771 (c.1682)

Henry Hall (c.1656-1707)

Yes, my Aminta, 'tis too true (1696)

Henry Hall

Shepherd

Yes, my Aminta, 'tis too true:
Daphnis has bid the world adieu.
Silent is now that charming tongue
That once so soft and sweetly sung.
Those artful hands, that oft so high
With tuneful numbers raised our joy,
Deep as our grief now buried lie.
Hark! how they mourn him o'er the plains
In his own blest harmonious strains.

Shepherdess

No sullen cloud obscured the sun,
Nor threatened storms a-coming on.
Yet birds, which here were wont to sing,
Grew mute, and all with heavy wing
The flocks to thicker covert fled;
And I, I know not why, grew sad.
Then from my pipe I sought relief,
But it, alas, confirmed my grief.
It too was mute but did express
More than I wished by speaking less.

Shepherd

For then you could not choose but guess
When music's channels all were dry;
The spring was stopped that did the streams supply.

Shepherdess

Who now can tell Aminta's tale
In moving sounds that may prevail?
Who now can teach around the grove
The swains to sing, the nymphs to love?
Of love, when e'er the shepherd sang,
What sapphires dwell upon his tongue?
All listened to th' enchanting lyre,
And every bosom felt a fire.
Strephon's unhappy luckless tale
Could but by Daphne's song prevail.
Music did all her pride disarm
And cold Calista straight grew warm.

Work continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

Shepherd

But when he served up his theorbo to arms;
Sang battles and triumphs and mortal alarms;
When the shrill-sounding trumpet had vanquished the
flute,
And the thundering drum had quite silenced the lute,
Each shepherd for war left his flocks in the field;
A crook for a sword and a scrip for a shield.

Shepherdess

But tell me, dearest shepherd, tell:
What honours crowned his funeral?
To difference him from the other dead,
For many, while he lived, he had.

Shepherd

Though that will but my grief renew,
Yet, dearest nymph, I'll tell it you:
For Daphnis on a bier was laid;
Flowers decked his feet, and bay his head.
Two learned bards that marched before
His sacred harp between 'em bore,
And, as they softly passed along
Invoking Daphnis, thus they sung:

Both

Arcadians, now your voices raise,
To Daphnis tune your grateful lays.
He sang your loves, now sing his praise.

Chorus

Then come ye satyrs, come ye fawns;
Send hither all that crowned the lawns.
Bring your pipes, your hornpipes bring,
Sing Daphne's dirge, sweet Daphne sing.
But when the mournful dirge is o'er,
To show how much you him deplore,
Break your pipes and sing no more.

Interval

Henry Purcell

Overture in G minor Z772 (c.1682)

John Blow

An Ode on the Death of Mr Henry Purcell (1696)

John Dryden

I. Mark how the lark and linnet sing

Mark how the lark and linnet sing;
With rival notes
They strain their warbling throats
To welcome in the spring.

II. But in the close of night

But in the close of night,
When Philomel begins her heavenly lay,
They cease their mutual spite,
Drink in her music with delight,
And list'ning and silent obey.

III. So ceas'd the rival crew when Purcell came

So ceas'd the rival crew when Purcell came
They sung no more, or only sung his fame;
Struck dumb, they all admir'd the matchless man,
Alas too soon retir'd, as he too late began.

IV. We beg not hell our Orpheus to restore

We beg not hell our Orpheus to restore:
Had he been there,
Their sovereigns' fear
Had sent him back before.

V. The power of harmony too well they know

The power of harmony too well they know:
He long ere this had tun'd the jarring spheres,
And left no hell below.

VI. The heavenly choir, who heard his notes from high

The heavenly choir, who heard his notes from high,
Let down the scale of music from on high;
They handed him along,
And all the way he taught, and all the way they sung.

VII. Ye brethren of the lyre, and tuneful voice

Ye brethren of the lyre, and tuneful voice,
Lament his lot; but at your own rejoice.
Now live secure, and linger out your days:
The gods are pleas'd alone with Purcell's lays,
Nor know to mend their choice.

William Croft (1678-1727)

Sonata in F (1704)

Henry Purcell

Raise, raise the voice Z334 (c.1685)

Anonymous

Symphony

Raise, raise the voice, all Instruments obey:
Let the sweet lute its softest notes display;
For this Sacred Music's holiday.

The God himself says he'll be present here,
Dress'd in his brightest beams he will appear,
Not to the eye but to the ravish'd ear.
Crown the day with Harmony;
Hark! I hear Apollo cry;
And let every generous heart,
In the Chorus bear a part.

Mark how readily each pliant string
Prepares itself and as an offering
The tribute of some gentle sound does bring.
Then altogether in harmonious lays,
To the sublimest pitch themselves they raise,
And loudly celebrate their Master's praise.
Come raise up your voices and let us dispute
For melodious notes with the viol and lute;
Apollo's delighted with what we have done,
And clapping his hands cries 'lo! go on':
With a smile he does all our endeavours approve,
And vows he n'er heard such a Consort above.