

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 19 June 2022 7.30pm

Welcome Song and Coronation music for King James II

The Sixteen

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| Katy Hill soprano | Sarah Sexton violin I, leader | Marina Ascherson viola |
| Alexandra Kidgell soprano | Sarah Moffatt violin I | Sarah McMahon cello |
| Daniel Collins alto | Ellen O'Dell violin I | Imogen Seth-Smith cello |
| Mark Dobell tenor | Daniel Edgar violin II | Gavin Kibble cello |
| Nicholas Mulroy tenor | Jean Paterson violin II | Eligio Quinteiro theorbo |
| George Pooley tenor | Nia Lewis violin II | Joy Smith harp |
| Eamonn Dougan bass | Martin Kelly viola | Alastair Ross organ, harpsichord |
| Stuart Young bass | Jane Norman viola | |

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Overture from *The Tempest* Z631 (1695)

If pray'rs and tears (On the death of Charles II) Z380 (1685)

I was glad when they said unto me Z19 (1682-3)

If ever I more riches did desire Z544 (c.1687)

My heart is inditing Z30 (1685)

Interval

Hark, how the wild musicians sing Z542 (1683)

While Thirsis, wrapt in downy sleep (A Pastoral Coronation Song) Z437 (pub. 1685)

How have I stray'd, my God Z188 (pub. 1688)

Full bags, a brisk bottle Z249 (1685)

Why, why are all the muses mute? (Welcome song for King James II) Z343 (1685)

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Henry Purcell was born just as England's 18-year experiment with republicanism fizzled out. He grew up in the service of King Charles II, whose job from 1660 on was to front a 'Restoration' project putting all the machinery of monarchy back together again. That process was far from complete when Charles died 25 years later, leaving his younger brother James to continue the mission.

Understandably, in light of his father Charles I's trial and execution, Charles II was determined to re-assert his and his descendants' divine right to rule. Legitimate children would have been groomed for office, had Charles and his queen produced any; but as time went by and they failed to appear James seemed more and more likely to inherit. His openly professed Roman Catholicism provoked a constitutional crisis. Parliament debated legislation that would have excluded James from the succession, creating space that Charles's oldest illegitimate son might have hoped to fill, but Charles opposed the plan on sacred principle. He prevented the Exclusion Bill's passage into law by dissolving parliament, and for the last four years of his life ruled by personal decree.

King James II, once in post, exceeded his political and religious opponents' worst expectations. Under old rules Catholics had been barred from holding any form of public office. James relaxed that hiring ban, and clearly intended to lift it altogether. Loyal Anglicans in parliament faced a dilemma: whether to stand by and watch as James led the country back to Roman Catholic perdition, or whether to resist. Duty to the Church of England prevailed: a group of them made contact with William of Orange, a Dutch protestant prince married to James's Anglican older daughter Mary, urging him to intervene. So in 1688 James was driven from the country by a secretly invited army of invasion under Dutch command. William had agreed to reign along with Mary in James's thoroughly discredited stead.

Purcell witnessed this revolution - mythologised as 'Glorious' in retrospect, fraught with danger at the time - and had to negotiate it professionally. He composed music to mourn Charles II's death, celebrate James II's accession and mark high points during James's reign, and then moved swiftly on to William and Mary without betraying any apparent regret about the fate meted out to his former employer.

The *Tempest* overture is a stray not securely attachable to any particular Purcell piece. It was, or more probably introduced, the now-lost Prologue music in *Dido and Aeneas*, which may in turn have been planned for court performance in 1683 or 1684. A great deal of scholarly controversy surrounds *Dido and Aeneas*. But the *Tempest* overture does sound like an early career work, wherever Purcell meant it to go originally.

'If pray'rs and tears' sets an anonymous text predicting 'holy war' if James used his position to settle religious scores. "'Lord save the [new] King" was never said with greater fervency than now'. He needed saving chiefly from himself.

'I was glad when they said unto me' and 'My heart is inditing' are the two anthems written by Purcell for James II's coronation on 23 April 1685. He was the youngest of six court composers to whom musical arrangements were entrusted, and made every effort to impress. 'I was glad' is a mainly homophonic piece - helpfully so when it had to be sung in procession - bursting into exuberant counterpoint near the end. Purcell could take a chance with fireworks once choir members had reached their gallery destination and were standing still. 'My heart is inditing' followed the coronation of the queen, as she settled on her throne next to James's (he of course had been crowned ahead of her). It brought the whole ceremony to a memorable 'Whole Consort' close.

'If ever I more riches did desire', dating from 1686 or 1687, is a symphony song setting words by Abraham Cowley, suggesting that a life of 'plebeian' ordinariness may well be the happiest on offer.

'Hark, how the wild musicians sing', another symphony song, dates from the closing years of Charles II's reign. The wild musicians are birds chirruping madly at the start of spring, to attract mates. A nameless swain cites their example while trying to lure Dorinda into bed.

'While Thirsis, wrapt in downy sleep', published as 'A Pastoral Coronation Song' in 1685, plays with the familiar Sun King metaphor. Thirsis, soon-to-be king in a pastoral paradise obviously representing Britain, will 'shine upon the longing plain' once his nymph and swain subjects have woken him up and crowned him with laurel.

'How have I stray'd, my God' is one of several Purcell settings of devotional texts by William Fuller, Bishop of Lincoln. It did not reflect intentionally on strays of the sort foreshadowed in 'If pray'rs and tears' (Fuller died in 1675), but would have stirred feelings of guilt when published and performed in 1688. 'Full bags, a brisk bottle' - a three-voice catch published in 1686 - surely had the opposite effect, taking minds off religion, politics and most other stone-cold-sober concerns while the drink flowed.

'Why, why are all the muses mute?', last tonight, was the first in what Purcell hoped would be a long series of welcome songs celebrating James's return to London after time away. It starts daringly, not with the expected symphony but with a solo voice then a chorus wondering why none of the band had reported for duty. This rouses them to action: a symphony strikes up, and the rest of the ode unfolds predictably. 'His fame shall endure till all things decay, / His fame and the world together shall die, / Shall vanish together away': Purcell's un-triumphant setting of the last few (anonymous) lines deflates conventional hyperbole - almost as if he knew where James might be heading.

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Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Overture from *The Tempest* Z631 (1695)

If pray'rs and tears (On the death of Charles II)

Z380 (1685)

Anonymous

If pray'rs and tears,
The shields the Church of England only bears,
In some great exigence of State,
Could those have warded off the blows of Fate,
We had not fall'n, we had not sunk so low
Under the grievous heavy weight,
The pressures of this day's sad overthrow.
Oh! how the first amazing blow
Bow'd down each loyal head!
And as we trembling stood,
Fix'd like a standing water all our blood,
In ever'y face you might such sorrows read;
That what the prophet wish'd but could not show,
Was in our mournful land made good;
All eyes, as rivers, swell'd, did strangely overflow,
Our weepings seem'd increas'd into another flood.
Thus universal was our grief,
And in those agonies of our souls we lay,
Till the kind heav'ns roll'd the cloud away,
And gave us some faint glimm'rings of relief.
The waters then abated for a while,
And welcome joys hung hov'ring o'er our drooping Isle.
Oh! then what pious groans, what pious sighs
The Church sent up beyond the yielding skies.
'Lord save our King!' ev'ry good subject cries,
Whilst ev'ry broken heart's altar and sacrifice.
'Lord save the King!' was never said with greater fervency than
now,
Not in the chapel only, but the streets;
No sort of people could you meet but did devoutly bow,
And as devoutly pray'd;
And yet no pharisaic hypocrites
In corners, with well-guided zeal, their orisons were made.
Albion is now become a holy land,
And wages holy war to stay the threat'ning hand;
Oh! that we might prevail!
Such well appointed numbers never us'd to fail.
Numbers of old, by a wise prelate led,
With arms stretch'd tow'rds heav'n took the field,
No other weapons did those champions wield,
But leafy boughs (and pray'rs, no doubt) we read,
To those a mighty conqueror did yield,
Alas! we'd conquer'd too, but for our former crimes,
Treasons, rebellions, perjuries,
With all the iniquities of the times;
Whole legions do against us rise,
These be the powers that strike the kingdom dead,
And now the crown is fall'n from our Josiah's head.

I was glad when they said unto me Z19 (1682-3)

Liturgical text

I was glad when they said unto me,
We will go into the house of the Lord.
For thither the tribes go up, ev'n the tribes of the Lord,
To testify unto Israel
And to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.
For there is the seat of judgement:
Ev'n the seat of the house of David.
O pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
They shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls,
And plenteousness within thy palaces.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now,
And ever shall be. World without end. Amen.

If ever I more riches did desire Z544 (c.1687)

Abraham Cowley

If ever I more riches did desire
Than cleanliness and quiet do require,
If e'er Ambition did my fancy cheat
With any wish so mean as to be great,
Continue, Heaven, still from me to remove
The humble blessings of this life I love.
Upon the slippery tops of human state,
The gilded pinnacles of fate,
Let others proudly stand, and for a while
The giddy danger to beguile,
With joy and with disdain look down on all,
Till their heads turn, and down they fall.
Me, O ye gods, on Earth, or else so near
That I no fall to Earth may fear;
And, O ye gods, at a good distance seat
From the long ruins of the great.

Here wrapt in the arms of quiet let me lie;
Quiet, companion of obscurity.
Here, let my life with as much silence slide
As time that measures it does glide.
Nor let the breath of Infamy and Fame
From town to town echo about my name;
Nor let my homely death embroidered be
With scutcheon or with elegy.
An old plebeian let me die,
Alas, all then are such as well as I.
To him, alas, to him I fear
The face of Death will terrible appear,
Who in his life flatt'ring his senseless pride
By being known to all the world beside,
Does not himself, when he is dying, know,
Nor what he is, nor whither he's to go.

My heart is inditing Z30 (1685)

Liturgical text

My heart is inditing of a good matter:

I speak of the things which I have made unto the King.
At his right hand shall stand the Queen all glorious within:
Her clothing is of wrought gold.

She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework;
The virgins that follow her shall bear her company.
With joy and gladness shall they be brought,
And shall enter into the King's palace.

Hearken, O daughter, consider, incline thine ear;
Forget also thine own people and thy father's house.
Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children
Whom thou may'st make princes in all lands.

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem: praise thy God, O Sion;
For kings shall be thy nursing fathers,
And their queens thy nursing mothers.
Alleluia. Amen.

Interval

Hark, how the wild musicians sing Z542 (1683)

Anonymous

Hark how the wild musicians sing
A welcome to the newborn spring,
And in sweet strains, untaught by art,
Unto the woods their joys impart.
Look how the fields clad in a flowery dress
Seem to forget their winter nakedness.

See, fairest, see how the budding trees
Put on their summer liveries,
And deck themselves in green array
To wait upon the youthful May.
Pleased Nature, thus dressed up in all her charms,
Smiles like a bride clasped in her lover's arms.

Then why, Dorinda, should not we
Rejoice like them and happy be?
Let's, whilst the spring of youth does last,
Strive to redeem lost minutes past.
We'll freely, freely feast love's eager appetite
With joys to which beauty and youth invite.

Though now your eyes are all divine,
Their lustre will in time decline.
If smiling youth goes off the stage
The scene will change to withered age,
When all your charms, Dorinda, will decay,
And on a sudden vanish all away.

Then let us not waste the dear minutes that Love
Has allotted for pleasure, and bids us improve.
To yonder cool shade, my Dorinda, we'll fly,
While there in each other's embraces we lie.
We shall pity dull mortals that never did know
The greatest of blessings the gods can bestow.

While Thirsis, wrapt in downy sleep (A Pastoral Coronation Song) Z437 (pub. 1685)

Anonymous

While Thirsis, wrapp'd in downy sleep,
Pleas'd with sweet fancies lay,
The Graces constant watch did keep,
And Cupids round him play;
Till crowds of nymphs and swains around
His tender ears invade,
With invitations to be crown'd
In this soft serenade.

'Arise, thou lovely charming swain!
Uncloud those glorious eyes,
And shine upon the longing plain,
Ah! charming youth, arise!
See where thy joyful subjects stand,
Each nymph a wreath has made;
Each swain has laurels in his hand
To crown thy lofty head.'

In haste the wond'rous shepherd rose,
No dawning morn so fair,
No blooming flow'r did e'er disclose
A show or scent so rare.
Th' adoring throng with eager pace
Their welcome sov'reign meet,
And on his head their garlands place,
Themselves beneath his feet.

How have I stray'd, my God Z188 (pub. 1688)

Bishop William Fuller

How have I stray'd, my God, where have I been
Since first I wander'd in the maze of sin?
Lord, I have been I know not where,
So intricate youth's follies are;
And age hath its lab'rins too,
Yet neither hath a wise returning clue.
Thy look, thy call to me
Shall my far better Ariadne be,
O most sweet, dear Jesu.
Hark, I hear my shepherd call away
And in a doleful accent say:
Why does my lamb thus stray?
O, blessed voice,
That prompts me to new choice,
And fain, dear shepherd, would I come,

But I can find no track
To lead me back,
And if I still go on
I am undone!
'Tis thou, O Lord, must bring me home,
Or show the way,
For poor souls have thousand ways to stray,
Yet to return but only one.

Full bags, a brisk bottle Z249 (1685)

Cob. Allistree

Full Bags, a brisk bottle, and a beautiful face,
Are the three greatest blessings poor mortals embrace,

But alas, we grow muckworms if bags do but fill,
And a bonny gay dame often ends in a pill:

Then hey for brisk claret, whose pleasures ne'er waste,
By a bumper we're rich, and by two we are chaste.

**Why, why are all the muses mute? (Welcome song
for King James II) Z343** (1685)

Anonymous

Tenor

Why, why are all the Muses mute?
Why sleeps the viol and the lute?
Why hangs untun'd the idle lyre?
Awake, 'tis Caesar does inspire
And animates the vocal choir.

Tenor

When should each soul exalted be
To all the heights of harmony?
When, when should just excess of joy
In their delightful task employ
The nimble hand, and cheerful voice
But when for Caesar's welcome we prepare?
Caesar, Earth's greatest good!
Caesar, Heav'n's chiefest care!

Alto

Britain, thou now art great, art great indeed!
Arise, and proud of Caesar's godlike sway,
Above the neighbour nations lift thy head.
Command the world, while Caesar you obey.

Trio

Look up, and to our Isle returning see
The days of triumph and of victory.
Great Caesar's reign with conquest did begin,
And with triumphant shouts was ushered in.

Bass

Accurs'd rebellion reared his head,
And his proud banners vainly spread,
Back'd by all the Powers of Hell,
Pride, Ambition, Rage and Zeal.
But when Caesar from on high
Let his avenging thunder fly,
How soon the threatening monster fell
Down, down from whence it rose to Hell.

Duet

So Jove, scarce settled in his sky,
The impious sons of Earth defy,
But all their rage served only to convince
The subject world of his omnipotence.

Duet

Caesar for milder virtues honour'd more,
More for his goodness lov'd than dreaded for his pow'r,
Secured by his victorious arms
And safe from any new alarms,
Is now at leisure to dispense
His universal influence
And let unenvied blessings flow
On his obedient world below.

Tenor

The many-headed beast is quelled at home,
And from abroad obsequious nations come
From Caesar to receive their doom.

Duet

In the equal balance laid
Europe's fate by him is weighed.
This or that nation must prevail
As he thinks fit to turn the scale.

Tenor

O how blest is the Isle to which Caesar is given,
The glory of earth and the darling of Heaven!
His name shall the Muses in triumph rehearse,
As long as there's number or music in verse.
His fame shall endure till all things decay,
His fame and the world together shall die,
Shall vanish together away.