

WIGMORE HALL

Friday 22 October 2021 7.30pm

The English Concert

Kristian Bezuidenhout director, harpsichord

Anna Dennis soprano

Miriam Allan soprano

James Hall countertenor

David de Winter tenor

Matthew Brook bass

Ashley Riches bass

Julia Kuhn violin

Ruiqi Ren violin

Alice Evans violin

Guy Button violin

Jordan Bowron viola

Jonathan Byers violoncello

Zaynab Martin violone

Sergio Bucheli theorbo

Katharina Spreckelsen oboe

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Concerto Grosso in D minor Op. 6 No. 10 (1739)

I. Overture • II. Allegro • III. Air. Lento •

IV. Allegro • V. Allegro • VI. Allegro moderato

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

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

Z343 (1685)

Interval

Henry Purcell

Overture from *The Gordian Knot Unty'd* Z597 (1690)

Hornpipe from *King Arthur* Z628 (1691)

Slow Air from *The Old Bachelor* Z607 (1693)

First Act Tune from *The Virtuous Wife, or Good Luck at Last* Z611 (?1695)

How blest are Shepherds from *King Arthur* Z628

Curtain Tune from *Timon of Athens* Z632 (1695)

George Frideric Handel

Chandos Anthem No. 7 'My song shall be alway' HWV252 (1717-18)

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • Wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG

Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Political division and resentments stoked by religious bigotry rattled England during the 1680s. Much of the turmoil was generated at the court of Charles II and his successor James II, a Catholic convert whose support for his co-religionists led to his deposition and the transformation of the kingdom's constitution. **Henry Purcell**, who served both monarchs as a gentleman and organist of the Chapel Royal, earned his reputation with sacred music, odes and welcome songs for the king and his court. Like many of his contemporaries, the Westminster-born composer supplemented his income by writing incidental music for the London stage, starting in 1680 with nine songs for Nathaniel Lee's play *Theodosius*. Seven years later, with James II at loggerheads with Parliament and the Anglican Church, Purcell looked to the theatre for fresh opportunities and no doubt a break from the fractious in-fighting at court. He went on to create some of the finest theatre music ever written by an English composer and helped set the foundations on which **Handel** built his works for the stage.

The English Concert's programme reflects the influence of Purcell on Handel and, above all, their music's inventive brilliance. Although the instrumental concertos of Arcangelo Corelli served as models for Handel's *12 Grand Concertos*, the independent spirit of Purcell surfaces in the diversity of musical styles they contain. The Concerto Grosso in D minor Op. 6 No. 10, for example, is cast in the form of a Baroque dance suite prefaced by a French overture and includes movements based on the sarabande, allemande, courante and gavotte. Handel, who began inserting concertos into his oratorios in the mid-1730s, wrote most of what were later published as his Concerti Grossi Op. 6 for performance during his 1739-40 season of oratorios and masques at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, site of the playhouse where an elaborated version of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* had been staged in 1700.

Above supplying royalty with everything from intimate devotional songs to grand ceremonial anthems, Purcell's chief duty was to compose pieces in honour of the king or members of the royal family. *Why, why are all the muses mute?* is the first of a series of pieces written to welcome James II's annual return to London from his summer holiday, which he and his retinue usually spent at Windsor. It was probably performed for the first time on 14 October 1685, within months of the king's coronation and the brutal suppression of the Protestant Duke of Monmouth's armed rebellion against him.

The welcome ode's anonymous author marks the downfall of 'the many-headed beast', Monmouth and his paltry forces, in verse set as an aria for solo tenor. James is elevated here and throughout the work to the status of Caesar, an accolade unlikely to ease the fears of parliamentarians and prelates about the king's attempted

imposition of tolerance for Catholics and dissenters on his Protestant subjects. Purcell's majestic music gives life to a piece of royal and political propaganda. *Why, why are all the muses mute?* opens not with an overture but with a solo tenor who rouses the chorus before summoning a consort of strings to play a 'Symphony'. The composer draws consummate eloquence from the ground-bass alto aria 'Britain thou now art great' (more wishful thinking than a statement of geopolitical reality), while his innate feeling for drama – and the drama of the times – courses through the bass solo and duet that follows. Purcell crowns the work with a solo salute to the monarch and valedictory chorus of rare tenderness and grace.

After his death, Purcell's widow Frances oversaw the publication of an anthology of her husband's theatre pieces. *A collection of ayres compos'd for the theatre, and upon other occasions by the late Mr. Henry Purcell*, the first collection devoted exclusively to instrumental music for the London stage, introduced works composed between 1690 and 1695 to the growing audience for public concerts and domestic music-making. The English Concert and Kristian Bezuidenhout offer a representative sample of works from *A collection of ayres*, including the 'first music' originally intended to warn audiences that the show was about to begin, the overture or 'curtain tune' that would have followed it, and a sprightly hornpipe from Purcell's semi-opera *King Arthur*.

The 11 *Chandos Anthems*, or 'Anthems for Cannons' as Handel scholars prefer, were written between August 1717 and the summer of the following year for services at St Lawrence, near the Middlesex mansion of James Brydges, Earl of Carnarvon and later Duke of Chandos. Handel here combines elements of the German cantata and the psalm settings he made during his apprentice years in Italy with traces of the verse anthems of Purcell and John Blow to create a hybrid form of considerable vigour. The seventh *Chandos Anthem*, 'My song shall be alway', opens with a Sonata that the publisher John Walsh later recycled as part of Handel's Concerto grosso in G major Op. 3 No. 3. Handel reused music from his *Brockes Passion*, Dixit Dominus and Purcellian Te Deum of 1714, respectively in the anthem's instrumental introduction, the choral setting of 'The heav'ns shall praise thy wondrous works', and the tenor's opening recitative, the soprano solo 'Blessed is the people' and the final chorus.

© Andrew Stewart 2021

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Concerto Grosso in D minor Op. 6 No. 10 (1739)

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| I. Overture | II. Allegro |
| III. Air. Lento | IV. Allegro |
| V. Allegro | VI. Allegro moderato |

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

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.

Interval

Henry Purcell

Overture from *The Gordian Knot Unty'd* Z597 (1690)

Hornpipe from *King Arthur* Z628 (1691)

Slow Air from *The Old Bachelor* Z607 (1693)

First Act Tune from *The Virtuous Wife, or Good Luck at Last* Z611 (?1695)

How blest are Shepherds from *King Arthur* Z628

John Dryden

How blest are shepherds, how happy their lasses,
While drums and trumpets are sounding alarms!
Over our lowly sheds all the storm passes,
And when we die 'tis in each other's arms,
All the day on our herds and flocks employing,
All the night on our flutes and in enjoying.

Bright nymphs of Britain with graces attended,
Let not your days without pleasure expire.
Honour's but empty, and when youth is ended,
All men will praise you but none will desire.
Let not youth fly away without contenting;
Age will come time enough for your repenting.

Curtain Tune from *Timon of Athens* Z632 (1695)

George Frideric Handel

Chandos Anthem No. 7 'My song shall be alway'

HWV252 (1717-18)

Liturgical text

Sonata

Soprano

My song shall be alway of the loving-kindness of the Lord:
With my mouth will I ever be shewing thy truth from one
generation to another.
The heav'ns shall praise thy wondrous works,
And thy truth in the congregation of the saints.

Tenor

For who is he among the clouds: that shall be compared unto the
Lord?
And what is he among the gods: that shall be like unto the Lord?

Tenor

God is very greatly to be feared in the council of the saints:
And to be had in reverence of all that are round about him.
O Lord, God of hosts, who is like unto thee?
Thy truth, most mighty Lord, is on ev'ry side.

Duet

The heav'ns are thine, the earth also is thine;
Thou hast laid the foundation of the round world.

Chorus

Righteousness and equity are the habitation of thy seat:
Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

Soprano

Blessed is the people, O Lord, that can rejoice in thee:
They shall walk in the light of thy countenance.

Chorus

Thou art the glory of their strength.
Alleluia.