

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 2 January 2022 7.30pm

The English Concert

Harry Bicket director, harpsichord

Chiara Skerath soprano

Jonathan McGovern baritone

Nadja Zwiener violin

Alice Evans violin

Julia Kuhn violin

Elizabeth MacCarthy violin

Sijie Chen violin

Alfonso Leal del Ojo viola

Joseph Crouch cello

Jonathan Byers cello

Carina Cosgrave bass

Sergio Bucheli theorbo

Lisa Beznosiuk flute

Katharina Spreckelsen oboe

Hannah McLaughlin oboe

Katrin Lazar bassoon

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Concerto Grosso in D Op. 6 No. 5 HWV323 (1739)

I. Larghetto e staccato • II. Allegro • III. Presto •

IV. Largo • V. Allegro • VI. Menuet. Un poco larghetto

Silente venti HWV242 (c.1723-5)

Interval

Apollo e Dafne HWV122 (by 1710)

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Handel's cantatas have long been relatively unexplored: they were the only genre this clever self-promoter wrote but never published, and they are almost entirely the product of his early Italian period, though he also wrote a few while working for private patrons in his early years in England. Because public record of their performance is lacking, little was known about when or why Handel's 80+ cantatas were written until 1967, when Ursula Kirkendale's archival research demonstrated that many of these pieces were composed for important Roman patrons. During the period 1706–10, the young Handel relied particularly on aristocratic support, from the Medici court to the Roman aristocracy – cardinals Benedetto Pamphili, Carlo Colonna, and (probably) Pietro Ottoboni, and the Marquis (later Prince) Ruspoli, who hosted the Arcadian Academy in his palace – and then the Hanoverian elector. After his 1710 arrival in London, too, Handel initially relied on the generosity of patrons, with the Earl of Burlington and James Brydges at Cannons hosting him during that first decade. Only in 1723 did Handel move into the house in Brook Street that was to be his home for the rest of his life – and essentially stop composing these courtly domestic pieces.

Aside from a change in personal circumstances, his shift in focus to opera (the most prestigious genre for any 18th-century composer) would have nullified the need to write cantatas. They were, after all, miniature dramatic works, alternating recitative and aria to depict an emotionally charged 'scene' for a single character or pair of characters. Indeed, as opera was routinely banned in Rome by the Pope (and certainly while Handel was there), Rome's many princes satisfied their longing for musical drama with cantatas, serenatas and oratorios given privately (and often lavishly) in their palaces. Handel wrote two three-voice works in this dramatic vein, with full orchestral accompaniment: *Clori, Tirsi e Fileno* and *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo*.

Although it may have been written for Hanover or Düsseldorf, rather than Rome, *Apollo e Dafne* (*La terra è liberata*) seems to fit into this latter group, with a strong focus on characterisation of a boastful (and then remorseful) Apollo and a defiantly chaste Dafne. The cantata begins with Apollo boasting of his defeat of Python and liberation of Delphi, which has freed the earth of terror. He claims that his bow is more powerful than Cupid's in the muscularly virtuosic 'Spezza l'arco e getta l'armi', but pride inevitably czzzomes before a fall – in this case for Dafne, who arrives in a lilting, pastoral siciliana singing of her happiness in liberty, 'Felicissima quest'alma, ch'ama sol la libertà'. She rebuffs his advances in the duet, 'Una guerra ho dentro il seno', which has something of comic opera in its pattering, quick-fire vocal exchanges. Apollo's maladroit courtship continues in 'Come rosa in su la spina', where he compares Dafne to a rose in order to suggest that she might as well give in before she loses her

beauty. Dafne's magisterial, long-breathed aria on the supremacy of reason over love ('Come in ciel benigna stella') is an appropriately haughty riposte. Apollo's unctuous lyricism continues in the following multi-section 'duet', as he stalks Dafne while she flees him with increasing desperation. Apollo returns to vicious form in 'Mie piante correte', and Dafne's desperate transformation into a laurel is narrated solely by him. He shows magnanimity in his final aria, 'Cara pianta, co' miei pianti', claiming to water her roots with his tears, while nonetheless stealing her branches for his brow.

The motet *Silete venti*, composed c.1723–5, also looked to both public and private spheres, with connections to the theatre (material being re-used in *Esther* in 1732) and to Handel's private patronage at Cannons (material derived from a Chandos Anthem). It has a similar recitative-aria-recitative-aria structure to most cantatas, with the addition of an overture and concluding 'Alleluia'. It also has something of an operatic cast, with its typical French overture opening and the passion of the soprano soloist's yearning for Christ. The intended soloist was presumably an opera singer: the arresting interruption of the sinfonia, in which the singer commands the 'winds' illustrated by the string figuration to 'be silent', requires dramatic presence. The following aria, 'Dulcis amor', is redolent of operatic ardour in its call for Christ to pierce the soul with blows that feel like caresses. After a second recitative, the second aria, 'Date sarta, date flores', demanding garlands, again summons the winds in its volatile B section; like the concluding 'Alleluia', it requires significant vocal virtuosity. It may even have been written for performance on a return visit to Italy in 1729.

While Handel's compositional career was particularly focussed around singers, he also worked closely with instrumentalists, relying on their professionalism as the bedrock of his demanding contrapuntal style. Increasingly, Handel also found that instrumental music was commercially valuable, allowing him access to Britain's thriving amateur concert scene. Britons were particularly avid admirers of Arcangelo Corelli and his *Concerti grossi* Op. 6. The young Handel had worked with Corelli in Rome, and some 30 years later, in September and October 1739, he wrote his own 'opus 6' 'grand concertos', in emulation of Corelli (and, he hoped, of Corelli's success). Unlike the earlier 'opus 3' concerti (the cobbled-together concoction of publisher John Walsh), Handel designed opus 6 as a set, scoring them as Corelli had for a concertino group of two violins and cello and four-part ripieno strings and continuo (later adding oboe parts to some concerti), though every concerto had its own structure and sequence of movements.

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George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Concerto Grosso in D Op. 6 No. 5 HWV323 (1739)

I. *Larghetto e staccato*

II. *Allegro*

III. *Presto*

IV. *Largo*

V. *Allegro*

VI. *Menuet. Un poco larghetto*

Silete venti HWV242

(c.1723-5)

Anonymous

Sinfonia

Recitativo

Silete venti,
Nolite murmurare frondes,
Quia anima mea dulcedine
Requiescit.

Aria

Dulcis amor, Jesu care,
Quis non cupit te amare;
Veni, transfige me.
Si tu feris non sunt clades:
Tuae plagae sunt suaves, quia
totus
Vivo in te.

Accompagnato

O fortunata anima,
O iucundissimus triumphus,
O felicissima laetitia

Aria

Date certa, date flores;
Me coronent vestri honores;
Date palmas nobiles.
Surgent venti et beatæ spirent
Almae
Fortunate auras caeli fulgidas.

Presto

Alleluia.

Be silent, winds

Sinfonia

Recitativo

Be silent, winds,
do not murmur, leaves,
because my soul rests in sweet
bliss.

Aria

Sweet love, dear Jesus,
who does not wish to love you?
Come, transfix me.
If you strike me, there is no injury:
your blows are sweet, as I live
totally in
you.

Accompagnato

O blessed soul,
O most joyful triumph,
O happiest joy!

Aria

Bring garlands, bring flowers;
may your honours crown me;
Bring noble palms.
Let the winds blow and let blessed
spirits
breathe heaven's radiant air.

Presto

Alleluia.

Apollo e Dafne HWV122

(by 1710)

Nicola Giuvo

Recitativo

Apollo:

La terra è liberata, la Grecia e
vendicata!
Apollo ha vinto!
Dopo tanti terrori e tante stragi
che desolano
E spopolano i regni giace
Piton
Per la mia mano estinto.
Apollo ha trionfato, Apollo ha
vinto!

Aria

Apollo:

Pende il ben
dell'universo
Da quest'arco salutar.
Di mie lodi il suon
rimbombe
Ed appresti l'ecatombe
Al mio braccio
tutelar.

Recitativo

Apollo:

Ch'il superbetto Amore
Delle saette mie ceda a la
forza;
Ch'omai più non si vanti
Della punta fatal d'aurato
strale.
Un sol Piton più vale
Che mille accesi e saettati
amanti.

Aria

Apollo:

Spezza l'arco e getta
l'armi,
Dio dell'ozio e del piacer.
Come mai puoi tu piagarmi,
Nume ignudo e cieco arcier?

Aria

Dafne:

Felicissima quest'alma,
Ch'ama sol la libertà.
Non v'è pace, non v'è calma
Per chi sciolto il cor non
ha.

Apollo and Daphne

Recitativo

Apollo:

The earth is liberated, Greece is
avenged,
Apollo has conquered!
After so many terrors and so
much suffering,
that ravaged and emptied the
kingdoms,
Python lies dead by my hand.
Apollo has triumphed, Apollo
has conquered!

Aria

Apollo:

The well-being of the universe
hangs
upon the virtue of this bow.
The ground resounds with my
praises
and even the catacombs
are taught to value my strength
of arms.

Recitativo

Apollo:

Even that proud Cupid
must yield to the power of my
arrows;
from now on he cannot boast
of wounding me with his golden
dart;
a single Python is worth more
than a thousand burning and
pierced lovers.

Aria

Apollo:

Shatter the bow and toss away
your weapons,
God of laziness and pleasure!
How will you ever wound me,
naked deity and blind archer?

Aria

Daphne:

That soul is the happiest
which loves its liberty alone.
There is no peace or calm
for those who do not have an
unattached heart.

Interval

<i>Recitativo</i>	<i>Recitative</i>
<i>Apollo:</i> Che voce! Che beltà! Questo suon, questa vista il cor trapassa; Ninfa!	<i>Apollo:</i> What a voice! What beauty! This sound, this vision has struck my heart; Nymph!
<i>Dafne:</i> Che veggo? ahi lassa: E che sarà costui, chi mi sorprese?	<i>Daphne:</i> What do I see? Alas: And who is this, who comes on me unawares?
<i>Apollo:</i> Io son un Dio, ch'il tuo bel volto accese.	<i>Apollo:</i> I am a God, whom your lovely face has set on fire.
<i>Dafne:</i> Non conosco altri Dei fra queste selve Che la sola Diana; Non t'accostar divinità profana.	<i>Daphne:</i> I know no other Gods in these woods save only Diana; do not dare to profane her divinity!
<i>Apollo:</i> Di Cinta io son fratel; S'ami la suora abbi, o bella, pietà di chi t'adora.	<i>Apollo:</i> I am the brother of Cynthia: if you love my sister, O fair one, then have pity on him who adores you.
<i>Aria</i> <i>Dafne:</i> Ardi adori e preghi in vano; Solo a Cintia io son fedel. Alle fiamme del germano Cintia vuol ch'io sia crudel.	<i>Aria</i> <i>Daphne:</i> You burn, worship, and plead in vain; I am loyal to Cynthia alone. To her brother's passion Cynthia desires that I be cruel.
<i>Recitativo</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Che crudel!	<i>Recitative</i> <i>Apollo:</i> What cruelty!
<i>Dafne:</i> Ch'importuno!	<i>Daphne:</i> What insistence!
<i>Apollo:</i> Cerco il fin de' miei mali.	<i>Apollo:</i> I seek the end of my woes.
<i>Dafne:</i> Ed' io lo scampo.	<i>Daphne:</i> And I the avoidance of them.
<i>Apollo:</i> Io mi struggo d'amor.	<i>Apollo:</i> I am dying of love!
<i>Dafne:</i> Io d'ira avvampo.	<i>Daphne:</i> I am afire with rage.
<i>Duetto</i> <i>Apollo, Dafne:</i>	<i>Duet</i> <i>Apollo, Daphne:</i>

Una guerra ho dentro il seno Che soffrir più non si può.	I have a battle in my breast which I can no longer withstand.
<i>Apollo:</i> Ardo, gelo.	<i>Apollo:</i> I burn, I freeze.
<i>Dafne:</i> Temo, peno;	<i>Daphne:</i> I fear, I suffer;
<i>Apollo, Dafne:</i> S'all'ardor non metti freno Pace aver mai non potrò.	<i>Apollo, Daphne:</i> If you do not put restraints on this passion I will have peace no more.
<i>Recitativo</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Placati ai fin, o cara; La beltà che m'infiamma sempre non fiorirà, Ciò che natura di più vago formò, Passa e non dura.	<i>Recitative</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Be calm at last, my dear; the beauty that inflames me will not bloom forever, since the most lovely forms of nature pass away and do not last.
<i>Aria</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Come rosa in su la spina Presto viene e presto va, Tal con fuga repentina, Passa il fior della beltà.	<i>Aria</i> <i>Apollo:</i> As the rose upon the thorn arrives quickly and quickly goes, thus with hasty flight the flower of beauty fades.
<i>Recitativo</i> <i>Dafne:</i> Ah, ch'un Dio non dovrebbe Altro amore seguir ch'oggetti eterni; Perirà, finirà caduca polve che grata a te mi rende, Ma non già la virtù che mi difende.	<i>Recitative</i> <i>Daphne:</i> Ah! if only a God did not pursue other love than of eternal things; the fragile dust that makes me pleasing will die, will be destroyed, but not my virtue that defends me.
<i>Aria</i> <i>Dafne:</i> Come in ciel benigna stella Di Nettun placa il furor, Tal in alma onesta e bella, La ragion frena l'amor.	<i>Aria</i> <i>Daphne:</i> As a kindly star in heaven placates the wrath of Neptune, so in the honest and beautiful soul reason restrains love.
<i>Recitativo</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Odi la mia ragion!	<i>Recitative</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Listen to my reasonings!
<i>Dafne:</i> Sorda son io!	<i>Daphne:</i> I am deaf to them.
<i>Apollo:</i> Orsa e tigre tu sei!	<i>Apollo:</i> You are a bear, a tigress!

<i>Dafne:</i> Tu non sei Dio!	<i>Daphne:</i> You are no God!
<i>Apollo:</i> Cedi all'amor, o proverai la forza.	<i>Apollo:</i> Yield to my love, or you will feel my strength!
<i>Dafne:</i> Nel sangue mio questa tua fiamma amorza.	<i>Daphne:</i> In my blood your flame will be extinguished.
<i>Duetto</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Deh! lascia addolcire quell'aspro rigor,	<i>Duet</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Ah! Let this bitter cruelty be softened.
<i>Dafne:</i> Più tosto morire che perder l'onor.	<i>Daphne:</i> I would sooner die than lose my honour.
<i>Apollo:</i> Deh! cessino l'ire, o dolce mio cor!	<i>Apollo:</i> Ah! May your wrath cease, O delight of my heart!
<i>Dafne:</i> Più tosto morire che perder l'onor.	<i>Daphne:</i> To die is better than to lose my honour.
<i>Recitativo</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Sempre t'adorerò!	<i>Recitative</i> <i>Apollo:</i> I will adore you forever.
<i>Dafne:</i> Sempre t'abborrirò!	<i>Daphne:</i> I will abhor you forever.
<i>Apollo:</i> Tu non mi fuggirai!	<i>Apollo:</i> You will not escape me!
<i>Dafne:</i> Sì, che ti fuggirò!	<i>Daphne:</i> Yes, yes, I will flee you.
<i>Apollo:</i> Ti seguirò, correrò, Volerò sui passi tuoi, Più veloce del sole esser non puoi.	<i>Apollo:</i> I will follow you! I will run, I will fly in your tracks. More rapid than the sun you cannot be.
<i>Aria</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Mie piante correte; Mie braccia stringete L'ingrata beltà. La tocco, la cingo, La prendo, la stringo. Ma, qual novità? Che vidi? Che mirai? Cieli! Destino! che sarai mai!	<i>Aria</i> <i>Apollo:</i> My feet pursue, my arms embrace the ungrateful beauty. I touch her, I seize her, I grasp her, I enfold her, But, what surprse! What do I see, what do I behold? Heavens! Fate! Whatever can it be?

<i>Recitativo</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Dafne, dove sei tu? Che non ti trovo. Qual miracolo nuovo Ti rapisce, ti cangia e ti nasconde? Che non t'offenda mai del verno il gelo, Ne' il folgore dal cielo Tocchi la sacra e gloriosa fronde.	<i>Recitative</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Daphne, where are you? I cannot find you. What new miracle steals you from me, changes you and hides you? You will not be harmed by winter's ice, nor will lightning from heaven touch your sacred and glorious leaves.
<i>Aria</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Cara pianta, co' miei pianti Il tuo verde irriverò; De' tuoi rami trionfanti Sommi eroi coronerò. Se non posso averti in seno, Dafne, almeno Sovra il crin ti porterò.	<i>Aria</i> <i>Apollo:</i> Dear plant, with my tears I will water your greenness; with your triumphant branches I will crown supreme heroes. If I cannot have you upon my heart, at least, Daphne, I will wear you above my brow.

'Silete venti' translation by David Lee. 'Apollo e Dafne' by Pamela Dellal.