

WIGMORE HALL

Friday 7 March 2025
1.00pm

Battle Cry: she speaks

Helen Charlston mezzo-soprano
Toby Carr lute

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)	O lead me to some peaceful gloom from <i>Bonduca, or The British Heroine</i> Z574
Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677)	L'Eraclito amoroso
Robert de Visée (c.1655-1732)	Prélude in E minor
John Eccles (1668-1735)	Restless in thought
Owain Park (b.1993)	Battle Cry (2021) <i>I. Boudicca • II. Philomela in the forest • III. A singer's ode to Sappho • IV. Marietta</i>
Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger (c.1580-1651)	Preludio Quinto
Barbara Strozzi	La Travagliata Op. 2
Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)	Lamento d'Arianna: Lasciatemi morire SV22 (1607)
Robert de Visée	Sarabande in D
Henry Purcell	Now that the sun hath veiled his light (An Evening Hymn on a Ground) Z193 (pub. 1688)



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The programme for this concert was slightly changed since these notes were written.

The battle cry presented here is the lament of anguish after conflict and the yearning plea for resolution rather than the death-or-glory yell of thundering cavalry. Charge! In the gender war it is the wail of the abandoned, betrayed, rejected and abused, the battle cry, in a sense, which she, not he, speaks. The story is as old as humankind itself and the lamenting females represented here - Boudicca, Ariadne, Philomela, Sappho and anonymous – cover the centuries.

Bonduca or The British Heroine is Boudicca. **Henry Purcell** wrote incidental music for it in 1695, the last year of his short life, but the text itself by John Fletcher dates from 1613. Fletcher was Shakespeare's successor as playwright for The King's Men. The play was published only in 1647 during the English Civil War when it had political resonance. Boudicca rebelled against the Roman occupation in the 1st century AD just as Parliament was fighting the Roman Catholic leaning Charles I. A similar situation pertained for Purcell: Parliament had obliged James II to go into exile because of his determination to rule as a Catholic. The singer longs for 'peaceful gloom', the sort of place where lovers meet and no martial trumpets sound but 'one eternal hush goes round'. She longs to soothe her pain and 'never think of war again'.

Boudicca is also the first of four movements in the titular work *Battle Cry*, settings of contemporary lyrics by poet Georgia Way to music written for the present performers by **Owain Park** and premièred in the Great Hall of St Bartholomew's Hospital in 2021. The singer ponders the fire of battle and her own divided personality in the variants of her name – Boadicea, Boudicca, Bonduca even Bonvica.

The second movement is Philomel, a woman in Greek myth whose brother-in-law King Tereus rapes and silences her by ripping out her tongue to prevent her reporting his crime. She resorts to a forest and lives among peasants. Park tells her story through a rustic folk melody and a voiceless whisper. Her sister the queen kills her own son and serves him in a pie to Tereus, avenging Philomel who is transformed into a nightingale, a bird famous for its beautiful song.

Sappho was a Greek poetess of the 7th century BC who lived on the island of Lesbos with a following of female admirers. According to some, she loved the local boatman Phaon unrequitedly and committed suicide after his rejection. Her being was in her poetic voice and Park has her pleading unaccompanied: 'make my voice your love'.

The Venetian baroque composer **Barbara Strozzi** wrote from the heart of woman's trials in her Opus 2 collection of *Cantate Arietti e Duetti*, published in her home city in 1651 and dedicated to the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinando III of Austria whose wedding the volume celebrates. Works from it are included here, each concerning aspects of

female unhappiness. 'Udite, amanti!' – listen, lovers! – begins the unidentified female of *L'Eraclito Amoros* ('Amorous Heraclitus') as she proceeds to explain her tearful sorrow over a grinding four-note repeated bassline or ground. Her misery is caused by her abandonment at the hands of a lover who may or may not be the melancholy Greek philosopher Heraclitus himself, circa 500 BC, who believed nothing in the world was permanent. 'Soccorete!' (help or succour) implores the vocalist of *La Travagliata*, the anguished woman, who declares over three verses how she might be saved by two simple words or even a kiss. What could be cheaper? Her mood swings are evident in frequent tempo changes between *adagio* and *presto*. Strozzi was a celebrity in 17th-century Venice, daughter of the poet Giulio Strozzi, whose lyrics she set.

The fashion for laments in the 17th Century was inspired by **Claudio Monteverdi** whose *Lamento d'Arianna* was a hit during his life but is now all that survives of his second opera *Arianna*, the story of Ariadne, written for the 1608 wedding of his employer's, the Duke of Mantua's, heir. The poet is Ottavio Rinuccini who, with the words 'Lasciate mi morire' ('let me die'), expresses Ariadne's betrayal by Theseus, who has dumped her on a barren island in the Aegean Sea after she has rescued the ungrateful so-and-so from the Minotaur. Monteverdi moulds the repeated plea 'O Teseo' ('Oh Theseus') into a plea, and *gridando aita* ('begging for aid'), to a rising chromatic wail. He hammers repeatedly the betrayed bride's rhetorical questions 'dove? dove?' ('why? why?') and wrenches the chord-changes at *che vaneggio* ('am I mad') with the abruptness of a disturbed mind. The opera was fuelled by real grief for Monteverdi who endured the death of his wife and his leading soprano during composition. Observers recall the wedding guests in tears at the first performance. The lament was so successful that Monteverdi published it separately – which saved it when the rest of the opera, which existed only in manuscript, was lost.

Ariadne was the pseudonym of the otherwise unknown author of a 1695 play *She Ventures, He Wins*. Its incidental music includes the passionate song 'Restless in thought', with much descriptive word-painting, by the theatre composer **John Eccles**, a colleague of Henry Purcell. The latter composed 'The Evening Hymn, Now that the sun hath veiled his light', the opening number of a miscellaneous collection of religious songs, *Harmonia Sacra*, all of which, despite the Latin title, are in English in defiance perhaps of King James II whose Catholicism cost him the throne. Purcell's singer yearns for repose and an end to conflict over a five-bar ground bass. The concluding sequence of 'hallelujahs' (a Hebrew word – not Latin) has a restful mesmeric quality, swaying like a gentle lullaby – appropriate for the end of the day or the end of the concert.

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Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

O lead me to some peaceful gloom from *Bonduca, or The British Heroine Z574*

John Fletcher

O lead me to some peaceful
gloom,
Where none but sighing
lovers come,
Where the shrill trumpets
never sound,
But one eternal hush goes
round.
There let me soothe my
pleasing pain,
And never think of war
again.
What glory can a lover have,
To conquer, yet be still a
slave?

Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677)

L'Eraclito amoroso

Udite amanti la cagione, oh Dio, Ch'a lagrimar mi porta: Nell'adorato e bello idolo mio, Che si fido credei, la fede è morta.	Listen you lovers, to the cause, oh God, of my weeping: in my handsome and adored idol, whom I believed to be faithful, faith is dead.
Vaghezza ho sol di piangere, Mi pasco sol di lagrime, Il duolo è mia delizia E son miei gioie i gemiti.	I have pleasure only in weeping, I nourish myself only with tears. Grief is my delight and moans are my joys.
Ogni martie aggradami, Ogni dolor diletta mi, I singulti mi sanano, I sospir mi consolano.	Every anguish gives me pleasure, every pain delights me, sobs heal me, sighs console me.
Ma se la fede negami Quell'incostante e perfido, Almen fede serbatemi Sino alla morte, o lagrime!	But if that inconstant traitor denys me constancy, at least let my devotion serve me until death, o tears.

Ogni tristezza assalgami, Ogni cordoglio eternisi, Tanto ogni male affliggami Che m'uccida e sotterrimi.	Every sadness soothes me, every sorrow sustains itself, every ill afflicts me so much that it slays and buries me.
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Robert de Visée (c.1655-1732)

Prélude in E minor

John Eccles (1668-1735)

Restless in thought

Restless in thought,
disturbed in mind,
Short sleeps, deep sighs, ah!
much I fear
The inevitable time assigned
by fate
To love's approaching near.

When the dear object
present is,
My fluttering soul is all on
fire,
His sight's a heaven of
happiness
And, if he stays, no, no, I
can't retire.

Tell me, someone in love
well read,
If these be symptoms of that
pain;
Alas, I fear my heart is fled,
Enslaved to love, and love in
vain.

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

Owain Park (b.1993)

Battle Cry (2021)

© Georgia Way

I. Boudicca

Among the foundations near
here
a story of fire and battle
has escaped like fragrance.

Her teeth are fired in the
ashes of London.
Romans displace her. Fine
oils and wines
bathe her fragile neck. The
Thames delivers her.

Lost names seep away into
stolen lands.
Her life is in shards. The
Iceni Queen
knows a woman cannot
speak out and live.

As for me, I cannot even
utter her name:
Boudicca, Boadicea? Two
fragments of her
passed down to me

as if she were never whole.
Empty halves
cradling versions of history
she never chose.

II. Philomela in the forest

The falcon sings to me all
day.
His feathers are limp and
brown.
Turn tail, little falcon, fly far
away,
and leave me on my own.

You'll be hooded, silenced!
In this place
I was wounded, like bark
drained
for its sap, then bound
in poison ivy.

Unspeakable! I cannot even
cry out
for my mother.
There in the canopy:
are those her hands
enfolding me?

The falcon sings to me all
day.
His feathers are limp and
brown.
Turn tail, little falcon, fly far
away,
and leave me on my own.

The falcon sings to me all
day.
His feathers are limp and
brown.
Turn tail, little falcon, fly far
away,
and leave me on my own.

III. A singer's ode to Sappho

Oh Sappho! My voice
Is hoarse tonight,
Like torn papyrus.

It maims the words
Gathering in the temple
To your name.

Are you there, Sappho?
Hear my voice when I call.
I pray, dwell in me:

Make my voice your lyre,
Take my cries.
In the honeyed night,

Your face, Lady,
Will I seek: singing until,
In gilded sandals,

The dawn steps into
birdsong.

IV. Marietta

*Glück, das mir verblieb,
Rück zu mir, mein treues
Lieb.*

Your eye catches beyond
me,
betraying bliss seared,

charred with lament.
A dried flower joyed in the
summer,
and now the seasons,
resenting, succeed:
the wild fires sorrow, follow
the same snow again.

How frightened you are!
You drift away as your
fingers float to my neck,
feeling smooth skin, the
memento of another.
Understand that
resemblance is nothing.
I resemble her only as a
woman resembles a
woman;
when we are irrevocable,
as unlike as tears.

But this is only a song to
you.
A heightened story that
means more than it is.

I am a woman – of course I
know this song.
Women do not reside in the
world.
Death's whorl is her dwelling
place.
To descend is her debt,
the song the net,
capturing warm grief to
settle on your cold flesh
and prove what you feel is
true.

In the world we inhabit
the true love is not doomed
to die.
How unkind
and how final
this mournful melody which
makes no
promise of the future for
either the dead or the
living.

The dead breathe stale air to
sing.
Jealous? Why would I be
jealous of the dead?

Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger

(c.1580-1651)

Preludio Quinto

Barbara Strozzi

La Travagliata Op. 2

Soccorrete, luci avare,
un che muore di dolore;
con un vostro sguardo
almeno!
Si può fare del guardare
carità che costi meno?

Proferite, labra care,
sole sole due
parole
a chi muor cortesi almeno!
Si può fare del
parlare
cortesia che importi
meno?

Sodisfate, se vi
pare,
un costante fido
amante
con un vostro bacio almeno!
Si può dare del baciare
guiderdon che vaglia meno?

The Tormented Woman

Help, you greedy eyes,
one who is dying of grief,
with just one glance of
yours!
Is there any act of charity
which costs less?

Utter, dear lips,
just two little courteous
words
to one who is dying!
Is there any token of
caring
that costs less than two
words?

Satisfy, if you would be so
kind,
a constant and faithful
lover
with just one kiss!
Is there any recompense
which costs less?

Claudio Monteverdi

Lamento d'Arianna: Lasciatemi morire

SV22 (1607)

Ottavio Rinuccini

Lasciatemi morire.
E chi volete
voi
che mi conforte
in così dura sorte,
in così gran martire?
Lasciatemi morire.

Arianna's Lament: Let me die

Let me die;
And who do you think
could
console me
in so hard a fate,
in so great a torment?
Let me die.

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

O Teseo, o Teseo
mio,
si che mio ti vo' dir
che mio pur sei,
benchè t'involi, ahi
crudo,
a gl'occhi miei.
Volgiti Teseo mio,
volgiti Teseo, o
Dio,
volgiti indietro a rimirar
colei
che lasciato ha per te la
Patria e 'l regno,
e in queste arene
ancora,
cibo di fere dispietate e
crude
lascierà l'ossa
ignude.
O Teseo, o Teseo
mio,
se tu sapessi, o Dio,
se tu sapessi, oimè,
come s'affanna
la povera Arianna;
Forse, forse
pentito
rivolgeresti ancor
la prora al
lito.
Ma con l'aure
serene
tu te ne vai felice, ed io qui
piango.
A te prepara Atene
liete pompe superbe, ed io
rimango,
cibo di fere in solitarie arene.
Te l'uno e l'altro tuo vecchio
parente
stringeran lieti, ed io
più non
vedrovvi,
o Madre, o Padre mio.

Dove, dov'è la fede
che tanto mi
guiravi?
Così nell'alta fede
tu mi ripon
degli'Avi?
Son queste le corone
onde m'adorn'il
crine?
Questi gli scettri sono,
queste le gemme e
gl'ori?
Lasciarmi in abbandono

O Theseus, o my
Theseus,
yes, I will call you mine,
who are mine,
even if you fly, o cruel
one,
from my sight.
Turn back, Theseus mine
turn back Theseus, o
God,
turn back to look once
more upon her
who for your sake left
home and kingdom,
and now on these sandy
shores,
they prey of pitiless and
cruel wild beasts,
will leave but fleshless
bones behind.
O Theseus, o my
Theseus,
if you but knew, o god,
if you but knew, alas,
the anguish
of poor Ariadne;
Perchance, perchance,
repenting
you would turn back your
prow towards the
shore.
But before serene
breezes
you sail happily away, and
I weep here;
For you Athens prepares
joyful, proud parades, and
I languish,
the prey of wild beasts on
lonely strands;
Your aged parents one by
one
will happily embrace you,
and I will never see you
again,
o mother, o father.

Where, where is the faith
that you so often swore
me?
Is this how you raise me
to the high throne of my
forefathers?
Are these the crowns
with which you adorn my
tresses?
Are these the sceptres,
these the jewels, and the
gold:
leaving me abandoned

a fera che mi
strazi e mi
divori?
Ah Teseo, ah Teseo
mio,
lascierai tu morire
invan piangendo, invan
gridando aita
la misera Arianna
ch'a te fidossi e ti diè
gloria e
vita?

Ahi, che non pur
rispondi,
Ahi, che più d'aspe è sordo a'
miei lamenti!
O nembri, O turbi, O
venti,
Sommergetelo voi dentr'a
quell'onde!
Correte, orche e
balene,
E delle membra immonde
Empiete le voragini
profonde!
Che parlo, ahi, che
vaneggio?
Misera, oimè, che
chiaggio?
O Teseo, O Teseo
mio,
non son, non son quell'io,
non son quell'io che i feri
detti sciolse;
parlò l'affanno
mio
parlò il dolore,
parlò la lingua, sì,
ma non già il
core.

Misera! Ancor dò
loco
a la tradita speme?
e non si spegne,
fra tanto scherno
ancor, d'amor
il foco.
Spegni tu morte, omai, le
fiamme indegne!
O Madre, O Padre,
o dell'antico Regno superbi
alberghi,
ov'ebbi d'or la
cuna.
O servi, O fidi
amici -
ahi fato indegno! -
Mirate ove m'ha
scort'empia
fortuna,

for the wild beasts to rend
to pieces and
devour?
Ah, Theseus, ah my
Theseus,
will you leave to die,
weeping in vain, crying in
vain for help,
unhappy Ariadne,
who entrusted herself to
you and gave you fame
and life?

Alas, he does not even
answer!
Alas, he is deafer than an
asp to my laments!
O clouds, o whirlwinds, o
gales,
submerge him beneath
the waves,
hurry sea ogres and
whales,
and with your foul bodies
fill the deep
abyss!
What am I saying, alas,
what raving!
Unhappy one, ah me,
what am I asking for?
O Theseus, o my
Theseus,
it is not I
who spoke those wild
words;
it was my anguish that
spoke,
my torment,
it was the tongue that
spoke, yes, but not the
heart.

Unhappy me, do I still
give room
to betrayed hopes,
and not even
amidst so much scorn will
the fire of love be
extinguished?
Death, put out at last the
unworthy flames.
O Mother, O Father,
O proud palaces of my
former kingdom,
where stood my golden
cradle.
O servants, O faithful
friends -
alas, undeserved fate! -
behold to what pass my
pitiless fate has
brought me!

mirate di che duol m'ha fatto herede	Behold to what woe
L'amor mio, la mia fede, e l'altrui inganno,	my love, my faith and another's deceitfulness have made me heir.
Così va chi tropp'ama e troppo crede.	Such is the fate of him who loves and trusts too much.

Robert de Visée

Sarabande in D

Henry Purcell

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

(pub. 1688)

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!

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