



(LEMS 8024)

HENRY PURCELL (1659-1695)

AIRS & DUETS

Jeffrey Dooley, countertenor

Howard Crook, tenor

With Artists:

Countertenor - Jeffrey Dooley

Tenor - Howard Crook

Violin - Louise Shulman, Daniel Reed Recorder - David Carp

Viola da Gamba - Mary Springfels Recorder & Bassoon - Dennis Godburn

Harpsichord - Edward Brewer

INTRODUCTION

Henry Purcell, the son of a professional musician in the royal service, sang as a choirboy in the Chapel Royal at a time when English music was just recovering from the setbacks it had suffered under Cromwell. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 (the year Charles II returned to England from his residence in France), music was once again accorded a privileged position; but the twelve years since the outbreak of the Second Civil War had seen one of the finest musical establishments in Europe dwindle and disperse to the point where there was little for native musicians to build on.

Although the circumstances of musical life during Purcell's formative years were not optimal, in one respect the young genius stood to benefit from them: the shortage of skilled musicians throughout the realm assured an artist of his talent a rapid rise to positions of responsibility. Upon leaving the choir of the Chapel Royal in 1673 when his voice changed, Purcell was made an assistant "keeper", maker, mender, repairer, and tuner of regals, organs, virginals, flutes and recorders and all other kinds of wind instruments whatsoever, in ordinary, without fee, to His Majesty". Within a year, he was tuning the organ at Westminster Abbey and copying out organ parts. In 1677, upon the death of Matthew Locke, the 18-year-old Purcell was made composer-in-ordinary for the king's chamber orchestra-the "four-and -twenty fiddlers". By this time he had five songs in print and that year had heard and anthem and two chamber works performed in public. Two years later he succeeded John Blow as organist at Westminster Abbey.

Like many of the other eleven choirboys in the Chapel Royal, Purcell had begun composing at an early age, not merely for his own amusement but to supply the service with new music in the native tongue. The new compositions originating in the reconstituted Chapel Royal at this time all bore the imprint of Captain Henry Cooke, the choirmaster, whom Pepys considered to have "the best manner of singing in the world", and to be the best singer "after the Italian manner" in England. Italian musicians and musical fashions, indeed, seem to have been much in favor under Charles II, even if his 24-man string orchestra was modeled after the Vingt-quatre violins du roi at Versailles.

Helping to rebuild the royal musical establishment was undoubtedly difficult, but it was stimulating as well. Since the ties with the great era of Elizabeth and Jacobean composers had been greatly weakened, the time was ripe for a new wave of Italian ideas to flood over English musical life. The stile rappresentativo, which the impassioned human speech could be effectively conveyed in music-quickly, conquered English taste. England's new generation of composers, seeing that English madrigals and music for viol consort held no interest for the monarch, turned to "recitative music", with its polarity of melody and bass line and its concern for the dramatic declamation of the words. Purcell's contemporary Roger North, in taking note of the earliest native attempt in this style, Nicholas Lanier's *Hero and Leander*, had called it "the first of the recitativo kind that ever graced the English language...it shews the value of bold notes, for they are frequent and freely used".

Purcell was magnetized by the Italian innovations. If he retained a fondness for cross relations and other "bold note" of a characteristically English flavor, he could not resist the attraction of the style of the South, with its ground basses, melodic sequences, and the dramatic possibilities opened up by the new harmonically dominated idiom in instrumental composition. He was a willing student in learning to devise dramatic musical gestures; he also explored with relish the world of ornamentation and florid, rhetorical style.

If one can point to an increasing concern in his later works for the musical as opposed to literary effect, the fact remains that Purcell was the heir to a long line of English composers who have been called "the most literate musicians who ever lived". From John

Dowland to Henry and William Lawes, they spoke and wrote a style of English utterance of rare color and vividness. Purcell was so intuitively sensitive to the accents and rhythms of his native tongue that has been cited by contemporaries and historians alike as the greatest composer for the English language the world has seen. In his lifetime he was nicknamed Orpheus Britannicus and in 1706 William Pearson, in the foreword to the second edition of Playford's publication by that name (which was devoted to Purcell's vocal compositions) stated:

The First Edition of this Work having been so well received, and the real Value of each Piece carries along with it, has Encouraged the Reprinting of this our British Orpheus, which I may venture to say, does Excell any Collection of Vocal Music yet Extant in the English Tongue, and may Vie with the best Italian compositions.

The Author's extraordinary Tallent in all sorts of music, is sufficiently known; but he was particularly admir'd for his Vocal, having a peculiar Genius to Express the Energy of English Words, whereby he mov'd the Passions as well as caus'd Admiration in all his Auditors.

Nevertheless, it is the power of purely musical rhetoric that is felt ever more strongly in Purcell's later works, for his dramatic rests and expressive articulations, his soaring melismas and affective work repetitions, his flourishes and embellishment, all work to heighten the musical impact at the expense of the integrity of the poem. The latter, while serving as a springboard for the composer's imagination, has become so obscured in some instances, and its prosody so inflated, that the music may fairly be said to have eclipsed it altogether.

The airs and duets heard here represent a cross section of Purcell's output toward the latter part of his short life; *Lovely Albina's Come Ashore*, indeed is inscribed as "the last song that Mr. Henry Purcell sett before he dy'd". *Fly, Bold Rebellion* is one of five welcome songs that Purcell wrote for Charles II and *Welcome to All the Pleasures* is the earliest of Purcell's four odes celebrating St. Cecilia's Day. Both date from 1683, when the composer was first finding his own sure voice. From ca.1686 comes *If Ever I More Riches Did Desire*, a cantata for several voices containing the striking ground-bass air *Here Let My Life* for tenor and obbligato violin; the first publication of the unaccompanied duet *Saccharissa's Grown Old*, with its clever two-part counterpoint, also dates from that year. *Arise, My Muse* of 1690, one of six birthday odes Purcell wrote for Queen Mary, is as sister work to two other odes for that occasion represented here: *Love's Goddess Sure* of 1692 and *Come Ye Sons of Art* of 1694 (the last and perhaps the finest of the six). The *Fairy Queen* of 1692- a succession of masques loosely based on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the countertenor air, *One Charming Night*, is especially notable for its pizzicato-like writing for the recorders and its fanciful vocal line.

Hail, Bright Cecilia, the St. Cecilia ode Purcell wrote for the Gentlemen of the Musical Society in 1692, holds particular interest for its duet *In Vain the Am'rous Flute*, which features two vocal lines of almost identical range, one marked "alto" the other "tenor".

That Purcell sought her the specific timbral distinction between a countertenor and a tenor can be surmised from the report that another alto air from his ode, *Tis Nature's Voice*, was sung at the first performance by Purcell himself with "incredible graces". (The notice of this performance is almost the only surviving indication that Purcell was a countertenor as well as a bass.) The text of *If Music Be the Food of Love* was clearly dear to the composer's heart, for the version heard here, dated 1693, is his third setting of it. Also from 1693 comes *Lord, What Is man?*, which reveals by its extraordinary melodic and harmonic treatment that this text, too, struck a vital resonance within him. Even for this most original of composers, the vocal line is unusual in its leaps, its sudden turns, and the many brilliant fioriture. Achieving here his full power of expression in the recitativo style, Purcell continually adjusts the pacing and mood of the music to every nuance of the text, projecting with rare intensity his feelings of praise for the Creator.

Alexander Blachly

Was Henry Purcell a Countertenor?

It has long been generally accepted that Henry Purcell was himself a countertenor. This is principally owing to a quotation from *Gentlemen's Journal* (London), November 1692, by one Peter Motteux referring to the performances of Purcell's ode for St. Cecilia's day, *Hail, Bright Cecilia*:

The following ode was admirably set to music by Mr. Henry Purcell and performed twice with universal applause, particularly the second stanza (*Tis Nature's Voice*) which was sung with incredible graces by Mr. Henry Purcell himself.

The phrase "sung with incredible graces by Mr. Purcell himself", seems contradictory in view of the fact that the movement is marked "Mr. Pate" in the score. Also, inasmuch as it was unusual for composers to write out elaborate and specific ornamentation, the fact that Purcell chose to do so was noteworthy to Motteux. Consequently, if we read the phrase as, "sung with incredible graces composed by Mr. Purcell himself", an entirely different interpretation is presented.

As a countertenor myself I prudently ask: Was Purcell a countertenor? Perhaps the answer will remain elusive, requiring more solid investigation than a speculative discussion of syntax.

Jeffrey Dooley, 1996

THE TRACKS AND TIMES:

1. Let the Fifes and the Clarions.....1:21 (from *The Fairy Queen*) countertenor, tenor, viol, harpsichord
2. Hark! The Ech'ing Air.....2:23 (from *The Fairy Queen*) countertenor, viol, harpsichord

3. Beauty, Thou Scene of Love.....1:46 (from Welcome to All the Pleasures) tenor,
viol, harpsichord

4. In Vain the Am'rous Flute.....5:22
(from Hail, Bright Cecilia) countertenor tenor, 2 recorders, viol, harpsichord

5. Saccharissa's Grown Old.....0:46 (from Pleasant Musical Companion,
Book III) countertenor, tenor

6. Sound the Trumpet.....2:34 (from Come Ye Sons of Art)
countertenor ,tenor, viol, harpsichord

7. Lord, What is Man!.....5:46
(A Divine Hymn) countertenor, viol, harpsichord

8. Sweetness of Nature.....3:36 (from Love's Goddess Sure) countertenor,
viol, harpsichord

9. Be Welcome, Then, Great Sir.....3:39 (from Fly, Bold Rebellion) countertenor,
viol, harpsichord

10. Lovely Albina's Come Ashore.....2:11 (from Thesaurus Musicus, Book V) tenor,
viol, harpsichord

11. One Charming Night.....1:55 (from The Fairy Queen) countertenor, 2
recorders, viol, harpsichord

12. Here Let My Life.....3:15 (from If Ever I More Riches Did Desire)
tenor, violin, viol, harpsichord

13. Many, Many Such Days.....2:20 (from Love's Goddess Sure) countertenor,
tenor, viol, harpsichord

14. If Music Be the Food of Love.....3:44 (from Deliciae Musicae, Book II) tenor,
viol, harpsichord

15. Me, O Ye Gods.....3:44
(from If Ever I More Riches Did Desire) countertenor, tenor, viol, harpsichord

16. Hail, Gracious Glorianna, Hail!.....2:14 (from Arise, My Muse) countertenor, tenor,
2 recorders, 2 violins, viol, bassoon, harpsichord

TOTAL TIME 46: 48

LYRICS TO SONGS:

1. Let the Fifes and the Clarions
(from The Fairy Queen, 1692)

Let the fifes, and the clarions, and shrill trumpets sound,
And the arch of high heav'n the clangor resound.
-adapted from Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream

by Elkanah Settle(?)

2. Hark! The Ech'ng Air
(from The Fairy Queen)

Hark! The ech'ng air a triumph sings,
And all around pleas'd cupids clap their wings.

-Elkanah Settle (?)

3. Beauty, Thou Scene of Love
(from Welcome to All the Pleasures, 1683)

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 rapture of innocent flame,
We offer with lute and with voice to Cecilia's bright name.

-Christopher Fishburn

4. In Vain the Am'rous Flute
(from Hail, Bright Cecilia, 1692)

In vain the am'rous flute and soft guitar,
Jointly labor to inspire
Wanton heat and loose desir;
Whilst thy chaste airs doe gently move
Seraphic flames and heav'nly love.

-Nicholas Brady

5. Saccharissa's Grown Old
(from Pleasant Musical Companion, Book III, 1686)
Saccharissa's grown old, and almost past sport
She to her physician at last does resort;
Him kindly she greets, and his counsel intreats,
How best, with her health, she may taste of love's sweets?
Why, Madam (quoth he), if my judgement be right

In the morning 'tis physick, a banquet at night;
She smiling reply'd, I'll take each in its turn,
For my pleasure at night, and for health in the morn.

-Anonymous

6. Sound the Trumpet
(from Come Ye Sons of Art, 1694)

Sound the trumpet, till around
You make the list'ning shores rebound
On the sprightly hautboy play
All the instruments of joy
That skillful numbers can employ,
To celebrate the glories of this day.

-Anonymous

7. Lord, What Is Man!
(A Divine Hymn, 1693)

Lord, what is man, lost man, that thou should'st be
So mindful of him, that the Son of God
Forsook his glory, his abode
To become a poor, tormented man?
The Deity was shrunk into a span,
And that for me, O wondrous love, for me,
Reveal, ye glorious spirits, when ye knew
The way the Son of God took to renew (1683)

Lost man, your vacant places to supply,
Bless spirits, tell
Which did excel,
Which was more prevalent,
Your joy or your astonishment,
That man should be assum'd into the Deity,
That for a worm a God should die?
Oh! For a quill drawn from your wing
To write the praises of eternal love;
Oh! For a voice like yours to sing
That anthem here which once you sung above.
Hallelujah!

-William Fuller

8. Sweetness of Nature
(from Love's Goddess Sure, 1692)

Sweetness of nature and true wit,
High pow'r with equal goodness join'd,
In this fair paradise are met
The joy and wonder of mankind.

-Charles Sedley

9. Be Welcome, Then, Great Sir
(from Fly, Bold Rebellion, 1683)

Be welcome then, great sir, to constant vows
Of loyalty never to vary more, no never.
Welcome to all that obedience owes
To a prince so mild and gentle in pow'r.

-Anonymous

10. Lovely Albina's Come Ashore
(from Thesaurus Musicus, Book V, 1696)

Lovely Albina's come ashore,
To enter her just claim
Ten times more charming than before,
To her immortal fame,
The Belgic lion, as his brave,
This beauty will relieve;
For nothing but a mean blind slave
Can live and let her grieve.

-Anonymous

11. One Charming Night
(from The Fairy Queen)

One charming night
Gives more delight
Than a hundred lucky days,
Night and I improve the taste,
Make the pleasure longer last,
A thousand thousand several ways.

-Anonymous

12. Here Let My Life
(from If Ever I More Riches Did Desire, ca. 1686)

Here, let my life with as much silence slide
As time that measures it does glide
Nor let the breath of infamy of fame
From town to town echo about my name;
Nor let my homely death embroider'd be
With scutcheon or with elegy:
An old plebian let me die;
Alas! All then are such as well as I.

-Abraham Cowley

13. Many, Many Such Days
(from Love's Goddess Sure)

Many, many such days may she behold,
Like the glad sun without decay,
May time, that tears where he lays hold,
Only salute her in his way.

-Charles Sedley

14. If Music Be the Food of Love
(from Deliciae Musicae, Book II, 1693)

If music be the food of love,
Sing on till I am fill'd with joy
For then my listening soul you move,
To pleasures that can never cloy,
Your eyes, your mien, your tongue declare
That you are music ev'rywhere.
Pleasures invade both eye ear,
So fierce the transports are, they wound,
And all my senses feasted are;
Tho' yet the treat is only sound.
Sure I must perish by your charms,
Unless you save me in your arms.

-Henry Heveningham

15. Me, O Ye Gods
(from If Ever I More Riches Did Desire)

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

-Abraham Cowley

16. Hail, Gracious Glorianna, Hail!
(from Arise, My Muse, 1690)

Hail, gracious Glorianna, hail!
May every future year
Roll on, unknown to care;
May each propitious morn arise
Bright as your virtue, and charming as your eyes,
And each succeeding hour new pleasures bring,
To make the Muses yearly sing;
All hail, all hail, gracious Glorianna, hail!

-Thomas D'Urfey

JEFFREY DOOLEY

Countertenor Jeffrey Dooley, a protégé of the renowned British countertenors Alfred and Mark Deller, enjoys a highly successful career in the countertenor repertoire spanning all styles and periods. His appearance in many concerts and festivals include Norddeutscher Rundfunk (Berlin), Paul Hill Chorale (Kennedy Center), Basically Bach at Lincoln Center, Berkeley Early Music Festival, Madeira Bach Festival (Portugal), and Stour Music Festival (England). Jeffrey Dooley can be heard in works by Bach, Schutz, and Purcell on the Classic Masters, Nonesuch, and Newport Classic labels.

HOWARD CROOK

The American-born tenor Howard Crook, received his Masters of Music at the University of Illinois. He worked in early music, mime and theatre before moving to Europe in 1979. This Purcell album was one of the fruits of that period. Howard quickly became a widely recognized specialist of Bach and the hautecontre roles of French baroque opera, which he has since performed throughout Europe. Of his vast discography, some highlights are: Bach; St. John and St. Matthew Passions with Philippe Herreweghe, John Eliot Gardiner, and Eric Ericson, The Messiah with Trevor Pinnock, and Castor et Pollux and Les Indes Galantes with William Cristie.

CREDITS

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