

A close-up portrait of Henry Purcell, a young man with light brown hair, looking slightly to the left. He is wearing a white ruffled shirt. The background is dark and textured.

'Fairest Isle'

*A concert of
choral masterworks by*

Henry Purcell

1659 - 1695

Sung by

Viva la Musica

Chamber Choir

with

'Quinque Musici'
Chamber Ensemble

Conducted by

Simon Lumby

Saturday 24th
June 2023

All Saints Parish Church,
Loughborough

Programme - £1



Viva la Musica was formed in 2002 by its first Music Director, David Necklen, as a group of singers who enjoy singing together and welcome the challenges and experiences that being part of a small ensemble brings. It sings a wide range of music from early to modern, sacred to secular, largely in the a capella style.

As well as performing locally, the choir has travelled further afield, with concert weekends in Haworth in 2013, Tideswell in 2015, Worcester in 2016 and Wadebridge in 2018. Viva's next out-of-area-engagement is its residency at Ripon Cathedral during the first weekend of September 2023. Our winter concert is advertised on the last page of this programme.

soprano: Sue Elliot, Ellie Stell, Gail Stiven, Jeni Beasley
Sue Cooke, Patti Garlick, Jenny Kemp, Jeanne Simpson

alto: Eleri Bristow, Clare Ward-Campbell, Philippa England, Lis Muller

tenor: Richard Thomas, Neil Waddell, Alex Jasper, Simon Nicholls

bass: Simon Collins, John Thawley, Kevin Norman, James Ward-Campbell



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Programme

My Beloved Spake written 1677

Words: Song of Solomon 2 vv. 10–13, 16

This is one of Purcell's earliest compositions, dating from before 1678. Understandably it betrays the influence two of his teachers, Pelham Humfrey and John Blow, but it moves far beyond this in the freshness, energy and originality of the string writing, some bravura solo passages, the extraordinary word-painting, and remarkable harmonic shifts which convey powerfully the sensual text from the Song of Solomon. Apart from three short choruses, the anthem is sung by four soloists.

My beloved spake, and said unto me,
Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear upon the earth;
And the time of the singing of birds is come.
Hallelujah!

And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,
And the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.
Rise, my love, my fair one, and come away.
My beloved is mine, and I am his.
Hallelujah!

Hear my prayer O Lord written 1682

Words - Psalm 102: 1

Purcell composed this around 1682, at the beginning of his tenure as Organist of Westminster Abbey. Blank pages at the end of the manuscript have suggested to some that this is the opening of a longer, more ambitious but unfinished work, though it stands perfectly well in its own right. The mood is solemn and pleading, as Purcell brings in the eight voices in succession, building a tension and power which is only finally released at the end.

Hear my prayer, O Lord,
and let my crying come unto thee.

My heart is inditing written 1685 (for the coronation of James II)

Words: Psalms 45: 11, 9, 13-15, 10, 16; 47: 12; Isaiah 49: 23

This anthem was written for the Coronation of James II on 23rd April 1685, specifically for the crowning of the Queen Consort, Mary of Modena. After a majestic Symphony, the eight voices are brought in gradually to reach a grand climax. There follows a joyful, dancing section ('at his right hand') and a calmer moment as the Queen is presented to the King. A repetition of the Symphony signals a complete change of mood as Purcell explores the Queen's mingled happiness and sadness as she leaves her father's court and goes to live in a foreign land with her new husband. However, the celebratory, ceremonial atmosphere returns as suddenly as it had disappeared, and the anthem finishes with a suitably dignified Alleluia and Amen.

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.

Full Fathom Five written c1695

Words – William Shakespeare

*Many of Shakespeare's plays were rewritten and revived for the Restoration stage. Dryden and Davenant's version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was first staged as a play (1667) then an opera (1674), and all but displaced Shakespeare's original from the stage for the next two hundred years. Twenty years later, in 1695, Purcell wrote songs for Ariel, including 'Full Fathom Five', and other music for the play, though some attribute this music to John Weldon. In Shakespeare's version, the invisible spirit Ariel sings 'Full Fathom Five' to the grieving Ferdinand, who believes his father to have drowned in the recent tempest. His words paint a picture of death as mystical, rich, solemn and transformational.*

Full fathom five thy father lies, of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes: nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell: Ding-dong
Hark! now I hear them, ding-dong bell.

Welcome to all the Pleasures written 1683 (for the festival of St. Cecilia)

Words: Christopher Fishburn

In 1682, 'The Musical Society', a group of musicians and amateurs including the publisher John Playford, initiated a specifically British annual celebration of St Cecilia's Day on 22nd November, making use of singers from Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's and the Chapel Royal, along with musicians from the King's band and the London theatres. The following year, they commissioned this large-scale ode from Purcell, already recognised as the leading composer of his times. Laid out on a grand scale, 'Welcome to all the Pleasures' is a work of great freshness, notable for the string ritornelli with which Purcell concludes many of the vocal sections, and for a beautiful alto solo, 'Here the Deities approve'. Fishburn's text gives the composer an opportunity for gentle word-setting at 'Beauty, thou scene of love', and he obliged with a movement given first to a solo tenor and then taken up by the string ensemble. Unusually, he ends the work quietly, with the texture of the last line of music, 'lô Cecilia', fading away to leave just the bass instruments and singers to conclude the Ode.

Welcome to all the pleasures that delight of ev'ry sense the grateful appetite,
Hail, great assembly of Apollo's race. Hail to this happy place, this musical
assembly that seems to be the Ark of Universal Harmony.

Here the Deities approve the God of Music and of Love;
All the talents they have lent you, all the blessings they have sent you,
Pleas'd to see what they bestow, live and thrive so well below.

While joys celestial their bright souls invade
To find what great improvement you have made.

Then lift up your voices, those organs of nature,
Those charms to the troubled and amorous creature.

The power shall divert us a pleasanter way,
For sorrow and grief find from music relief,
And love its soft charms must obey.

Then lift up your voices, those organs of nature,
Those charms to the troubled and amorous creature.

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

In a consort of voices while instruments play with music we celebrate
this holy day; lô Cecilia!

Interval

Rejoice in the Lord Alway ("The Bell Anthem") written 1684/5

Words: Philippians 4:4-7

In the glorious opening, the pealing of bells is everywhere, not only in the bass part but also in the intertwining upper voices. Eventually three solo voices break in with the eight bars they reiterate throughout the anthem, and their new tune is quickly taken up and extended by the strings. The trio repeat their eight bars and the briefest of instrumental comments closes the section. The soloists demand that 'your moderation be known unto all men' and the choir joyfully breaks in, their rejoicing interspersed with the solo trio's exhortation 'and again'. The solo bass introduces a more thoughtful tone with his instruction to prayer and supplication, and the triple time is replaced by a calmer passage of homophony for the words 'and the peace of God which passeth all understanding'. The strings develop this, but are interrupted by the return of the soloists' eight bar phrase. Repeats of both the instrumental ritornello and the chorus (complete with the soloists' cries of 'and again') bring to a close one of Purcell's most enduringly popular anthems.

Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice.
Let your moderation be known unto all men.
The Lord is at hand.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing
by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,
let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God,
which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Funeral Sentences written (for the funeral of Queen Mary II) in 1695

Words: Book of Common Prayer, Order for the Burial of the Dead

The Funeral Sentences deal with the transitory nature of earthly life, fear of divine judgment, and the hope for mercy; the words are taken from the Burial Service in the Book of Common Prayer of 1662. Early in his career, Purcell set two of the Sentences, 'In the midst of Life' and 'Thou knowest, Lord', perhaps originally for the funeral of his teacher Matthew Locke. By 1682, however, he had substantially reworked them, and added a third, 'Man that is born of a woman,' which contains some of his most melancholy and expressive music. Purcell creates particular tension in the phrase 'hath but a short time to live', and the melody rises and falls in imitation of the words 'he cometh up and is cast down like a flower'. 'In the midst of life', also cast in a minor key, employs chromaticism and dissonance, with extraordinary word painting on 'the bitter pains of eternal death'. Finally, 'Thou know'st, Lord' is one of two settings of this text by Purcell. This version was performed at Queen Mary's funeral in March 1695 and fittingly repeated at Purcell's own funeral in November 1695, only a few months after the Queen's.

Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery.
He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow,
and ne'er continueth in one stay.

In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased? Yet, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death.

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not thy merciful ears unto our prayers; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall away from thee.

Fairest Isle (from King Arthur), written 1691

Words: John Dryden (1631 - 1700)

The goddess Venus sings this near the end of Purcell's semi-opera King Arthur, or The British Worthy, first performed at the Dorset Gardens theatre in May 1691. Despite a libretto by Poet Laureate, John Dryden, the plot is improbable and unhistorical; various gods and goddesses, spirits, sirens and rustics play a part in the struggle between King Arthur, King of the Britons, and the dastardly Oswald, King of the Saxons. In the end, after ten battles, Arthur defeats Oswald, and regains his captured wife, the Edwardian-sounding Queen Emmeline. The simple beauty and directness of 'Fairest Isle' contrasts powerfully with the clumsy jingoism at the end of the opera, and it became instantly popular in its own right. Fifty years after its first performance, Charles Wesley wrote the hymn 'Love Divine' to fit the song's melody.

Fairest isle, all isles excelling, seat of pleasures and of loves,
Venus here will choose her dwelling, and forsake her Cyprian groves.
Cupid from his fav'rite nation, care and envy will remove;
Jealousy, that poisons passion and despair that dies for love.

Gentle murmurs, sweet complaining, sighs that blow the fire of love,
Soft repulses, kind disdain, shall be all the pains you prove.
Ev'ry swain shall pay his duty, grateful ev'ry nymph shall prove;
And as these excel in beauty, those shall be renown'd for love.

O Sing unto the Lord written 1688

Words: Psalm 96: 1-6, 9, 10

This is a relatively late work, noted in the Gostling Manuscript as 'Written by Mr Purcell in 1688'. It shows Purcell at his most Italianate, with vigorous antiphony between voices and instruments, and also between a prominent solo bass and the chorus. Perhaps written for a special occasion when a large string orchestra was available, it was certainly designed to showcase the vocal range of John Gostling, the outstanding bass of the Chapel Royal in the 1680s. After the string Symphony a solo bass ceremoniously opens the proceedings, followed by two lilting choral Alleluias, before we are treated to the first of a series of imaginative instrumental ritornelli. The four-part verse, 'Sing unto the Lord', leads straight into the instruction to 'Declare his honour', which then blossoms into a full chorus. The quartet 'O worship the Lord', is as magical a piece of writing as Purcell ever produced, but the antiphony of solo bass with choir and strings soon returns with the jaunty 'Tell it out among the heathen', leading into a final section of Alleluias. Purcell treats these gently, and the anthem ends in serene mood.

O sing unto the Lord a new song. Alleluia.

Sing unto the Lord, all the whole earth. Alleluia.

Sing unto the Lord and praise his name:
be telling of his salvation from day to day.

Declare his honour unto the heathen:
and his wonders unto all people.

Glory and worship are before him :
power and honour are in his sanctuary.

The Lord is great, and cannot worthily be praised:
he is more to be feared than all gods.
As for the gods of the heathen, they are but idols:
but it is the Lord that made the heavens.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness:
let the whole earth stand in awe of him.

Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is King:

And that it is He who hath made the round world
so sure that it cannot be moved;

And how that he shall judge the people righteously.

Alleluia. Amen.

Simon Lumby is a conductor, tenor, organist, and pianist of some noted versatility. In a time of ever-increasing specialisation, Simon enjoys being thought of as something of a polymath, bringing a wide range of experience and influences to his music-making.



Simon was born in Birmingham and studied organ with Andrew Fletcher before moving to study at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester having been a junior student at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

In 1993, Simon was awarded First Prize in the International Young Organist Competition, held in Plymouth, for his performance of Bach's First Trio Sonata and 'Litanies' by Jehan Alain. Organ recitals have included the Cathedrals of St Paul's London, Hereford, Leicester, Coventry, Birmingham Oratory, Salisbury, Lichfield and Liverpool, the Abbeys of Westminster and Ampleforth, St. Giles' Cripplegate, and St. Bride's Fleet Street. Other concerts of note have included the opening recital of the Harrison Organ at the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield and several Battle of the Organs with the late and great flamboyant American virtuoso, Carlo Curley. Simon has been featured on both Classic FM and Radio 3.

Simon was ordained in the Church of England and spent many happy years as Parish Priest of Saint Aidan's in Leicester during which time he recorded his first CD ('Loud Organs his glory...') which met with both popular and critical acclaim and went on to record a series of videos with Shea Lolin featuring, among other instruments, the new organ put into Saint Aidan's Church. One such video, having been seen by more than 50,000 people was considered to have 'gone viral'! Simon enjoys recording and is excited to be now able to publish these on his YouTube Channel. Current recordings include 'Beloved Bach' - a series of YouTube video releases (one per week for the whole year) of Bach organ music, recorded at the new Hauptwerk console that Simon commissioned last year.

Simon is in demand as a singer and choral conductor. Singing performances have included Bach St. John Passion (for Liverpool Cathedral), Handel Messiah at the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, Tippett A Child of our Time for Manchester Cathedral and Stainer Crucifixion for Lichfield Cathedral. Other concert appearances of note have included Mozart Mass in C minor for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Beethoven Missa Solemnis at Manchester Town Hall with the Northern Symphonia. Simon has also recently been featured in concerts with the Northern Lights Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Adam Johnson and the first performance of Martin Ellerby's Mass of the Winged Lion with internationally renowned concert pianist Benjamin Frith.

In his limited spare time Simon pursues a wide range of other interests. He is a keen traveller and has spent much time in continental Europe. His love and study of French 20th century sacred, vocal and organ music has led him to be a keen student of the French language while engaging in more study in this area.

Quinque Musici was founded to bring high quality Baroque music on contemporary instruments performed by professional musicians from the area to audiences in the East Midlands. Away from the ensemble, players regularly perform with a wide range of orchestras and chamber groups, including the CBSO, the BBC Concert Orchestra, Longborough Festival Opera, the Academy of Ancient Music and the Musical & Amicable Society.

Violins: Cathy Scott-Burt & Kirsten Scott

Viola: Kate Fawcett

Cello: Rebecca Leyton-Smith

Keyboards: Nicholas Scott-Burt



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