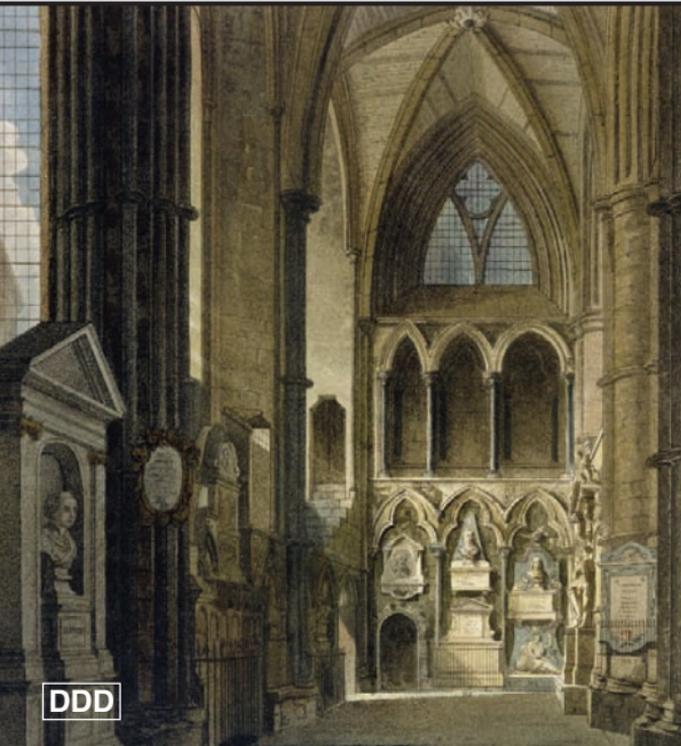




The Best of PURCELL



DDD

Dido and Aeneas

Jubilate Deo

Music on the Death
of Queen Mary

Trumpet Tune

Amphitryon

Chacony

Ode for
St Cecilia's Day

8.556839

The Best of HENRY PURCELL

(1659-1695)

- 1** The Indian Queen, Z. 630: Trumpet Overture (Track 19 from 8.554262)
Norman Engel (trumpet), Aradia Baroque Ensemble, Kevin Mallon **03:23**
- 2** Jubilate Deo in D major (Track 8 from 8.553444)
Jeni Bern, Susan Bisatt (sopranos), William Purefoy, Christopher Robson (counter-tenors), Ian Honeyman (tenor), Thomas Guthrie (bass), Choir and Orchestra of the Golden Age, Robert Glenton **08:19**
- Dido and Aeneas, Z. 626
Kym Amps, The Scholars Baroque Ensemble
- 3** Overture (Track 1 from 8.553108) **01:56**
- 4** Act III: 1st Sailor and Chorus: Come away, fellow sailors
(Track 31 from 8.553108) **01:32**
- 5** Act III: The Sailor's Dance
(Track 32 from 8.553108) **00:48**
- 6** Act III: Dido's Lament: When I am laid in earth
(Track 40 from 8.553108) **03:41**
- 7** Four-Part Fantazias: VII. Fantazia in C minor, Z. 738
(Track 5 from 8.553957)
The Rose Consort of Viols **04:08**
- 8** Amphitryon, Z. 572, "The 2 Sosias": A Pastoral Dialogue Betwixt
Thyrsis and Iris (Track 9 from 8.570149)
Giles Tomkins (bass), Nicole Bower (soprano), Aradia Ensemble, Kevin Mallon **05:15**

- 9** The Fairy Queen, Z. 629: Act IV: Symphony
(Track 1 from Disc 2 of 8.550660-61)
Scholars Baroque Ensemble **06:24**
- 10** Blow up the trumpet in Sion, Z. 10 (Track 11 from 8.553129)
Laurence Cummings (organ), Oxford Camerata, Jeremy Summery **06:21**
- 11** Chacony, Z. 730 (Track 17 from 8.554262)
Aradia Baroque Ensemble, Kevin Mallon **04:32**
- Music on the Death of Queen Mary (Funeral Sentences / The Queen's Epicedium)
Laurence Cummings (organ), Oxford Camerata, Jeremy Summery
- 12** March, Z. 860A (Track 13 from 8.553129) **01:25**
- 13** Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts, Z. 58B (Track 16 from 8.553129) **03:19**
- 14** Suite No. 2 in G minor, Z. 661: III. Corant (Track 8 from 8.553982)
Terence R. Charlston (harpsichord) **01:43**
- 15** An Evening Hymn to the Ground, "Now that the sun hath veiled his light"
(Track 3 from 8.557129)
Oliver Lepage-Dean (treble), Christopher Whitton (organ) **03:46**
- 16** The Indian Queen, Z. 630: Trumpet Tune (Track 16 from Disc 1 of 8.557246-47)
Gyorgy Geiger (trumpet), Bertalan Hock (organ) **01:20**
- 17** Ode for St. Cecilia's Day (Track 7 from 8.553444)
Jeni Bern, Susan Bisatt (sopranos), William Purefoy, Christopher Robson (counter-tenors), Ian Honeyman (tenor), Thomas Guthrie (bass), Choir and Orchestra of the Golden Age, Robert Glenton **17:20**

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Henry Purcell, one of the greatest English composers, before English music was overwhelmed by the activities of Handel in the next century, was born in 1659, the son of a musician, Thomas Purcell, and nephew of Henry Purcell, both of whom served as gentlemen of the Chapel Royal after the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660. At the age of ten the younger Henry Purcell became a chorister of the Chapel Royal under Captain Henry Cooke, who had been charged with the task of reviving the royal musical establishment after the years of Commonwealth under Cromwell. In 1672 Cooke died and was succeeded as Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal by Pelham Humfrey, who had been sent to study abroad in France and Italy after great success as a boy chorister and composer. Purcell took lessons from Humfrey, and two years later, after the latter's early death, from John Blow, the new Master of the Children. The same year brought the appointment of Purcell, whose voice had by now broken, as organ-tuner at Westminster Abbey, where he became organist five years later, in 1679. His position as a composer had already been acknowledged by appointment in 1677 as Composer in Ordinary for the Twenty-Four Violins of the King, the group of musicians established by Charles II in imitation of the practice of the French court.

Purcell's career went on as it had begun, with continuing royal favour under Charles II, allowing the composition of a series of Welcome Songs and Odes for the celebration of royal occasions and appointment to the King's private music under James II and William III, in addition to appointment as organist at the Chapel Royal. Under the joint monarchy of William and Mary he provided notable music for the Queen's birthdays, as he did for her death, which took place in late December 1694. Eleven months later Purcell himself was dead, having caught cold, it was later rumoured, from being locked out by his wife, tired of his late hours.

As a composer Purcell had written a large amount of music, sacred and secular. In addition to the Odes and Welcome Songs were anthems, service settings, hymns, psalms and sacred songs. His secular songs included catches, three-part songs, duets, and solo songs with continuo accompaniment of keyboard and bass viol or cello. Instrumental music by Purcell ranges from the relatively conservative compositions for groups of string instruments to sets of trio sonatas that acknowledge a debt to Italy, and suites for harpsichord. Over a period of some fifteen years he wrote music for the theatre, providing music for plays from Nathaniel Lee's tragedy *Theodosius* in 1680 to the stuttering poet Thomas D'Urfey's *Comical History of Don Quixote* in 1695. He enjoyed a particularly close association with the United Companies, formed from the Dorset Gardens and Drury Lane companies, during the last seven years of his life.

Opera, an art that had developed in Italy throughout the seventeenth century and in France with Lully had reached a high degree of dramatic sophistication, had found no proper permanent place in London, and was not to do so until Handel settled there as a composer of Italian opera. Purcell himself contributed to the hybrid English form now generally known as semi-opera, in which drama and music were combined. He wrote, however, one short English opera, *Dido and Aeneas*, its first recorded performance in 1689 at a boarding-school for young

ladies run by the dancing-master Josias Priest in Chelsea. It has been suggested that the work had originally been designed as a court entertainment, its plot perhaps concealing a political allegory.

With a libretto by Nahum Tate, based on Book IV of Vergil's *Aeneid*, *Dido and Aeneas* deals with the fated love of the Trojan hero Aeneas for Dido, Queen of Carthage. Ship-wrecked on the coast of Carthage, as he and his companions make their escape from Troy, sacked by the Greeks, Aeneas is entertained by Dido, with whom he falls in love, their romance engineered in this seventeenth-century English version of the narrative, by witches, led by a Sorceress, who conjure a storm, during which Aeneas and Dido, out hunting, take refuge in a cave. Aeneas is urged by a minion of the Sorceress, posing as the god Mercury, to continue with his divine mission to found a new Troy, the city that will be Rome, and deserts Dido, who kills herself, the flames of her funeral pyre seen by Aeneas as he sails away. Purcell's opera starts with a French *Overture* ③, its introduction in slow, dotted rhythm followed by a quicker fugal section. In the third act a sailor urges his companions to prepare to leave ④ and there is a *Sailor's Dance* ⑤. The best known part of the opera is the final scene in which Dido, preparing for death, sings her famous lament '*When I am laid in earth*' ⑥, set over a ground bass and following a musical convention of earlier Italian origin.

It was particularly after the exile of James II and the accession to the throne in 1689 of his daughter Queen Mary and her Dutch husband, William III, that Purcell turned his principal attention to the theatre. The King preferred, as far as possible, to nurture his health at Hampton Court, and the court itself was no longer the centre of musical life, as it had been under the previous kings. The comedy *Amphitryon, or the Two Sosias* was by Dryden and was first performed at Drury Lane in October 1690. It includes a diversion in the fourth act in the form of a *Pastoral Dialogue Betwixt Thyrsis and Iris* ⑧, in which the shepherd Thyrsis, in love, begs for and is finally granted his wish.

Two other examples of theatre music are included here. *The Fairy Queen*, a semi-opera, was first staged at Dorset Garden Theatre in London in May 1692 and revised for further performance the following February. The piece was an adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, possibly by the actor Thomas Betterton. The production was particularly lavish and brought the theatre a considerable loss. The additions to the original play provide the excuse for music, heard here in the fourth act introductory *Symphony* ⑨. Oberon wakes Titania and Bottom from their enchantment and asks the Fairy Queen for music. A symphony welcomes the rising sun, followed by the entry of the Four Seasons, in celebrating what turns out to be Oberon's birthday.

The Indian Queen, by Dryden and his brother-in-law Sir Robert Howard, was first given as a play in 1664. Transformed, after various cuts, it was mounted at Drury Lane with music by Purcell, either in April 1695, when theatres re-opened after three months mourning for the death of Queen Mary, or, it has been suggested, much later in the year, perhaps after Purcell's death. The second date is supported by the fact that the music was completed by Purcell's brother Daniel, who provided a final masque. The third act *Trumpet Overture* ⑩ banishes sorrow, as Aerial Spirits appear, bringing comfort to the disconsolate Mexican queen Zempoalla, who has had recourse to magic in her amorous pursuit of Montezuma. The *Trumpet Tune* ⑪, here played by trumpet and organ, is also taken from *The Indian Queen*.

From childhood Purcell had been involved with the music of the Anglican liturgy, to which he made a considerable contribution with anthems and service settings. An early example of his church music is the remarkable setting of *Blow up the trumpet in Sion* 10, written for the Chapel Royal in 1678 or 1679 and scored for seven soloists and full choir, its ten-part writing illustrating references in the text.

Celebrations of the Feast of St Cecilia, patron saint of music, seem to have been established in London only in 1683, when Purcell provided his first composition for what was to continue for some years as an annual occasion. This *Ode to St Cecilia's Day* 17 is for five solo singers and four-part choir, with strings and continuo. In 1694 there was a particularly elaborate festival to celebrate St Cecilia's Day, for which Purcell wrote fine new settings of the *Te Deum* and the *Jubilate Deo* 2. The occasion brought together the choirs of the Chapel Royal, Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral, with an orchestra of strings, two trumpets, and organ. The two canticles were performed on St Cecilia's Day at St Bride's in Fleet Street and repeated before the King and Queen in the Chapel Royal two weeks later.

Unlike her somewhat dour husband, Queen Mary had shared her own family's interest in music and Purcell was able to provide compositions to celebrate her birthday, which he finally did in 1694. At the Queen's death in December 1694 Purcell offered settings of the Funeral Sentences, from which *Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts* 13 is here included, an anthem newly composed and sung in Westminster Abbey, where it seemed 'four flatt trumpets', a form of the instrument akin to the trombone, added to the moving solemnity of the occasion for which Purcell also provided a funeral *March* 12.

Purcell wrote a number of songs, both sacred and secular. Among the former is his *Evening Hymn* 15, a setting of verse by William Fuller, Bishop of Lincoln, and published in Henry Playford's *Harmonia Sacra: or Divine Hymns and Dialogues* in 1688. A particularly moving song, it has a melody above a ground bass.

Instrumental music by Purcell is here exemplified by his *Chacony* (Chaconne) 11 in G minor, dating from about 1680, a treatment of the dance variation form, unwinding over a ground bass. Harpsichord suites of dances, of which the *Corant* (Courant) 14 is an example, were dedicated posthumously to Princess Anne, by the composer's widow. Purcell's *Fantazias*, contrapuntal compositions for viols, look back to an earlier age, both in form and instrumentation. The consort of viols had flourished under Queen Elizabeth and King James I, but by Purcell's time the viol family was giving way to the violin, viola and cello. The *Fantazia in C minor* 7, in four parts, dates from about 1680.

Keith Anderson

Entrance into Poet's Corner, plate 26 from 'Westminster Abbey',
engraved by J. Bluck (fl.1791-1831)
pub. by Rudolph Ackermann (1764-1834) 1811

Recognised during his lifetime as a genius, Henry Purcell subsequently influenced countless classical composers from Handel to Britten. This delightful assortment of his best-known works includes the beautiful yet melancholy 'Dido's Lament' from his perennially popular opera *Dido and Aeneas* and the joyful *Jubilate Deo* for choir and orchestra, as well as some of his instrumental works; the elegant *Fantazia in C minor* is a particularly exquisite example of the English composer's mastery.

The Best of
HENRY PURCELL
 (1659-1695)

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| Dido and Aeneas, Z. 626 | | |
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Cartoon of Purcell by John Minnion. Booklet notes: Keith Anderson

Cover Photo: Entrance into Poet's Corner, plate 26 from 'Westminster Abbey' (Bridgeman Art Library)




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