

Oxford Girls' Choir and Oxford Baroque Ensemble

musica per le FIGLIE DI CORO con strumenti originali



Antonio Vivaldi

Sonata a tre 'La Folia' (RV63)
Concerto op. 3/11 (RV565)
Lauda Jerusalem (RV609)
Nulla in mundo pax (RV630)
Laetatus sum (RV607)

Giovanni Gabrieli

Sonata con tre violini

Antonio Pampani

Confitebor tibi (1756)

OXFORD BAROQUE ENSEMBLE

(Marshall Marcus, violino e direttore)

OXFORD GIRLS' CHOIR

(Richard Vendome, maestro del coro)

Chiesa della Pietà, Riva degli Schiavoni
tel. 041.522.2171 (Linee Actv 1-52 - S. Zaccaria)

domenica 1 settembre, ore 21.00 - ingresso libero

DIDO & AENEAS

opera di Henry Purcell

con strumenti, costumi e balletti originali



Oxford Girls' Choir

(Richard Vendome, maestro del coro)

Oxford Baroque Ensemble

(Marshall Marcus - violino e direttore)

Catherine Young (*Dido*)
Alastair Merry (*Enea*)

Victoria Couper - regia
Alice Armitage - coreografia

MADONNA DELL'ORTO

Sala dei Mercanti

Cannaregio

(Linee Actv 41-2 - Orto)

venerdì 30 agosto, ore 20.30
Ingresso libero

Informazioni Chorus - Associazione
Chiese di Venezia, tel. 041.275.04.62

www.oxfordgirlschoir.com

Oxford Baroque Ensemble

violin 1	Marshall Marcus (leader), Simon Kodurand
violin 2	Jim O'Toole, Giovanna del Perugia
viola	Ruth Player
cello	Jenny Bullock
horn	Kate Goldsmith, Alistair Croft
bass	Alix Scott
continuo	Richard Vendome

La Pietà, Venice - 1 September, 2100

Giovanni Gabrieli	<i>Sonata per 3 violini</i>
Antonio Vivaldi	<i>'La Folia' Op. 1 No. 12 (RV 63)</i>
Antonio Vivaldi	<i>Lauda Jerusalem (RV 609)</i>
Antonio Vivaldi	<i>Concerto Op. 3, No. 11 (RV 565)</i>
Antonio Vivaldi	<i>Nulla in mundo pax sincera (RV 630)</i>
Antonio Vivaldi	<i>Laetatus sum (RV 607)</i>
Antonio Pampani	<i>Confitebor tibi (1756)</i>

The aim of tonight's concert is to present the music of Vivaldi as it was heard in his day. In fact "heard" is the operative word. The way Vivaldi's music is performed today is very far removed from how it was performed in his day. I speak of the music he wrote for the *Pietà*. To have a fuller and more appreciative understanding of tonight's music, one must first understand what the *Pietà* was, and in what context Vivaldi wrote his music for this institution.

In the 18th century there were four *Ospedale*, each with a different function, the *Mendicanti*, housed the poor, specially the nobles who had fallen on hard times, the homeless, beggars, war wounded, etc. The *Ospedaletto*, for orphans, the *Incurabili*, for those with incurable diseases, and the *Pietà*. The *Ospedale della Pietà* was for abandoned and unwanted babies, and not as is often wrongly described as a school for girls, a convent or an orphanage. These babies were brought for various reasons, some were found by the roadside, or floating in the canals, families too poor to bring them up, the mother who had no milk, but by far the most common reason were children born through prostitution. The children were placed in foster homes for the first six years, in Venice and in the country, and then returned to the *Pietà*. The boys were given training in stone cutting, weaving, and shoe making, so at the age of 16, when ready to leave, had a skill, for the future. The girls had three options: they married, or became nuns, or stayed at the *Pietà* for the rest of their lives.

There were two groups, the *Figlie di Comun* and the *Figlie di Coro*. The non musicians and musicians. Vivaldi started as *Maestro di Violin*, in September 1703, aged 25, six months after being ordained a priest. His duty was to teach the girls the violin, the cello and a year later the *Viola all'Inglese*. It was up to him, where necessary, to acquire new instruments, bows and strings.

1714 was the turning point for Vivaldi, and indeed for the history of music; the *Maestro di Choro*, Francesco Gasparini asked the Governors for six months leave of absence, but never returned. Finding themselves without a replacement, the Governors asked Vivaldi to fill the post, but Vivaldi refused, as he was not a man to be confined, however a compromise was reached, and a short time later, Vivaldi was given the position as *Maestro dei Concerti*, a post unique only to him in the history of the *Pietà*. It was during this period that Vivaldi as "acting" *Maestro di Coro* composed his first period of Sacred Music, as was his duty to do so, for the Sacred rites of the Church.

Laetatus sum was sung during the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, on the 26th December, and the first of the year, as was also the *Lauda Jerusalem*, including the feast of Corpus Christi. They were sung in the choir lofts by the *Figlie di Coro*, who also sang the tenor and bass parts. Vivaldi used three cellos, to help the girl tenors and basses. They were concealed from view, behind the grills, which are in the choir lofts, so the music was "heard", and not seen. *Lauda Jerusalem*, was composed for the *Pietà*, and has the names of the soloists written on the manuscript by Vivaldi, as was the rule. It was written for double choir and double orchestra, and would have been performed in the two choir lofts, with the small orchestra and large choir in one loft, and large orchestra and small choir in the opposite loft, as Vivaldi intended, but with the difference, that it would have been part of Vespers. The *Laetatus sum*, will be performed in view of the audience, but in Vivaldi's time would have been sung in the choir lofts. The motet *Nulla in mundo pax* was also written for the *Pietà*,

between 1714-1717, his "first period" of sacred music.

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Antonio Pampani's exuberant setting of *Confitebor tibi* (Psalm 110, or 111 in the Authorized Version) was written for the neighbouring *Ospedale dell' Ospedaletto* in 1756. It is scored for soloists, SSAA chorus, strings, horns and continuo, and has been edited by Richard Vendome from a photocopy of the original MS provided by the late Jane Berdes, a research student who first introduced the Oxford Girls' Choir to this fascinating and neglected female musical tradition. Pampani (1705-75) composed many oratorios, solo motets and operas, and worked at the *Academico Filarmonico* as well as the *Ospedaletto*.

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Scuola Elementare di Santa Maria Revine Lago - 28 August, 2030
Madonna dell'Orto (Sala dei Mercanti), Venice - 30 August, 2030

Dido & Æneas (with reconstruction of Prologue)

producer Victoria Couper
dance director Alice Armitage
musical director Richard Vendome

choreography reconstructed after Priest by Nancy Walker and Ian Brener

prologue music reconstructed after Purcell by Richard Vendome

cast in order of appearance

Phoebus	Miranda Jewess
1st Nereid	Elena Marcus
2nd Nereid	Gaia Marcus
Venus	Charlotte Roberts/Katie Birtill
Spring	Sasha Brown
1st Shepherdess	Louisa Nye
2nd Shepherdess	Clare McQuitty
Dido	Catherine Young
Belinda	Charlotte Roberts/Clare McQuitty
2nd woman	Hannah Nye/Alice Armitage
Æneas	Alastair Merry
Sorceress	Victoria Couper
1st witch	Sasha Brown/Hannah Nye
2nd witch	Katie Birtill/Louisa Nye
Spirit of Mercury	Gaia Marcus
Sailor	Sophie Kent/Daisy Venables

courtiers

Laura Addison, Lucinda Allen, Alice Armitage, Katie Birtill, Sasha Brown, Catherine Crosse, Caz Henshaw, Clare McQuitty, Gaia Marcus, Emily Moughton, Hannah Nye, Louisa Nye, Rita Oldenbourg, Charlotte Roberts, Alik Salter

witches and furies

Eleanor Armitage, Elizabeth Barrett, Melissa Bori, Iryna Boubriak, Julia Callaway, Nicola Cutts, Marusa Dudareva, Anna Glockner, Rebecca Glockner, Nyamoi Fall-Taylor, Anna Fries, Miranda Jewess, Lucy Kroll, Elena Marcus, Tamara Smith, Magda Walczak

sailors/Æneas' attendants

Sophie Kent, Daisy Venables

male chorus

Alan Armitage, Roger Cutts, Adrian Inscocoe, Peter Kent, Allan Walker

synopsis of the plot

Prologue, Scene 1 - the sea

Phœbus and the Nereids (sea-nymphs) arise from the sea, and are later joined by Venus. (Phœbus and Venus here represent the new monarchs William and Mary). The scene ends with a dance.

Prologue, Scene 2 - the grove

Venus sings in praise of Spring and her nymphs, Spring sings in praise of Nature. Shepherdesses sing of love and there is a country dance.

Act I - the palace

Dido enters her apartment. She is troubled by her feelings for the Trojan prince Æneas, but is reassured by Belinda. The courtiers are anxious that the thrones of Carthage and Troy should be united, and rejoice at the prospect. Æneas and his attendants arrive, and Dido's courtiers continue their encouragement. The act ends with a Triumphant Chorus and Dance.

Act II, Scene 1 - the cavern

The Sorceress appears. She summons the witches, and together they plot Æneas' departure, Dido's ruin, and the consequent destruction of Carthage. The hunt as an image of courtship begins as the Sorceress sees the queen and the prince in chase. In contrast to the stately minuet at the end of Act I, the scene ends with an Echo Chorus and Dance of the Furies (evil spirits).

Act II, Scene 2 - the grove

The court, out hunting in the vale, is driven back to the Palace by a thunderstorm: a symbolic end to the hunt, for Dido, having yielded to Æneas, has lost all. The spirit of the Sorceress appears, disguised as Mercury, the winged messenger, and commands Æneas to leave and continue his quest for the site for the founding of the new Troy. Æneas laments his fate in a dramatic recitative.

Act III, Scene 1 - the ships

The witches drive Æneas' men to the ships. Some light relief is provided by the Sailors' song and dance. The Sorceress and her crones rejoice at their success, and the scene ends with a Witches' Dance.

Act III, Scene 2 - [back at the palace]

Torn between his desire to remain with Dido and the "will of the gods", Æneas hesitates and resolves to stay, only to be rejected by an angry Dido. He leaves. Belinda fails to appease the grief-stricken Dido, who sings a final lament before killing herself. The opera ends with "Mourning tableau", in which the Cupids dance around Dido's body.

historical background

The libretto of *Dido and Æneas*, of which the only copy survives in the library of the Royal College of Music in London, tells us that it was

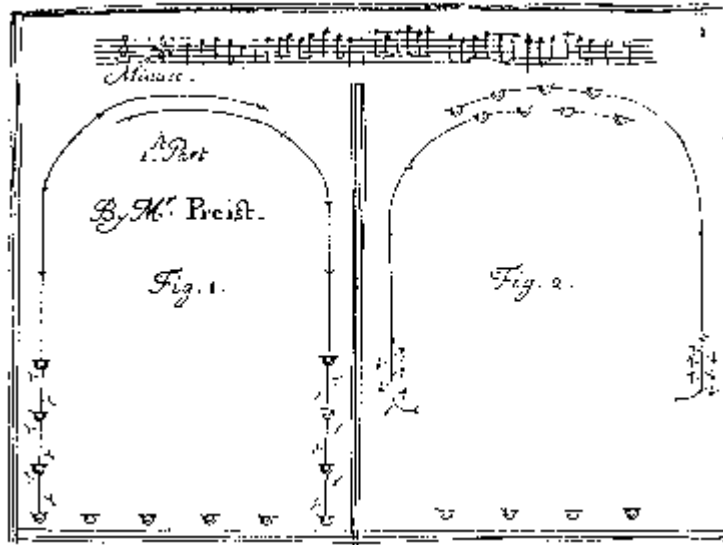
Perform'd at Mr. Josias Priest's Boarding School at Chelsey / By Young Gentlewomen. The words made by Mr. Nat. Tate / The Music Composed by Mr. Henry Purcell.

Singing, dancing and acting were part of the school curriculum for both girls and boys at this time. The year was 1689, and the event may have taken place to mark the coronation of William and Mary (21st April), or Queen Mary's birthday (30th April). This was probably not the first performance: we now think that the work dates from about 1684; the music is more typical of Purcell's earlier style, and the libretto makes several references to contemporary events, even the well-publicised exhibition of a crocodile in London at the time ("weeps the deceitful crocodile" - Act 3). The allegorical prologue, which survives in the 1689 libretto, may have been intended to honour the new Protestant monarchs.

Purcell, Priest and Tate were part of the closely-knit London theatre scene: Henry Purcell (1659-95), organist of Westminster Abbey and composer of much incidental music for the stage (this is his only opera as such); Josias Priest (1655-1734), the leading dancing master of his day, who ran a finishing school for girls; and Nahum Tate (1652-1715), of "While shepherds watched" fame and author of a book on the education of young ladies, whose play *Brutus of Alba* combined the tale of the founding of Britain by Brutus with Virgil's story. After 1689 *Dido* was probably not heard again in Purcell's lifetime; it was staged twice more in the early 1700s, in mangled versions, and the only two surviving sources of the music date from half a century later (one is now at the Bodleian Library, the other in Tokyo). The first modern performance was given at the Royal College of Music in 1895 on the 200th anniversary of Purcell's death, conducted by Stanford.

Many productions of *Dido* lack structure because the dancing is either handled in a modern, inappropriate manner, or omitted all together, ignoring the fact that the work is surely typical of the French opera-ballet tradition, each section ending with a "set piece" dance (Basque, Triumphant Dance, etc.). The art of dancing reached a zenith both artistically and scientifically in the seventeenth century. With the establishment of the Academie Royale de Danse by Louis XIV in 1661, dancing masters were given the means to classify, codify and refine their art form. The French Noble Style of Dance became popular in England following the restoration of Charles II to the throne. Dance training was considered an ideal method for a "person of quality" to improve his or her deportment, confidence and social skills. The dances from the 1689 performance have not survived, but period dance treatises and notated dances were used as basis for the choreography of our production. One notated dance by Priest does survive, however, published in Edmund Pemberton's *An Essay for the Improvement of Dancing; Being a Collection of Figure Dances... Compos'd by the most Eminent Masters* (1711); this Minuet for twelve ladies is used for "The Triumphant Dance" at the end of Act I.

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The start of Priest's minuet as given in E. Pemberton's *Essay*