

HEXHAM ORPHEUS CHOIR

Conductor: Glenn Davis



Vivaldi ~ Gloria Purcell Dido & Aeneas

**Saturday 1st December, 2001
7.30pm**

**St Aidans United Reform Church
HEXHAM**

PROGRAMME 50p

Hexham Orpheus Choir

Glenn Davis ~ Conductor
with

Julia Watson ~ Soprano

Hilary Ions ~ Soprano

Susan Davis ~ Alto

Robert Seaton ~ Bass

and an invited orchestra, led by Julia Boulton

Rehearsal Accompanist ~ Margaret Huntingdon

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Cogito Books
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The Hexham Orpheus Choir always welcomes new members

We rehearse each Wednesday night during term time at
St Joseph's Middle School, Hightford Lane, Hexham from 7.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.
If you are interested in joining please come along to one of our rehearsals
or telephone 01434 633637

Future Performances

Friday 21st December
MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS

Corbridge Methodist Church

Saturday 18th May 2002
Mendelssohn's Elijah

A Joint Concert with the Priory Singers
at The King's School, Tynemouth

For further information visit our website at:
www.hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk



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Programme

Gloria in D, R.V. 589

1. Gloria in excelsis (Choir)
2. Et in terra pax (Choir)
3. Laudamus te (Duet for two Sopranos)
4. Gratias agimus tibi (Choir)
5. Domine Deus (Soprano solo)
6. Domine Fili unigenite (Choir)
7. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei (Alto solo and choir)
8. Qui tollis (Choir)
9. Qui sedes (Alto solo)
10. Quoniam tu solus sanctus (Choir)
11. Cum sancto spiritu (Choir)

Antonio Vivaldi

Whether "Dido and Aeneas" was written for a girls' school or not, (see below), Vivaldi's well-known Gloria certainly was. He was employed as a Violin teacher at the *Pieta*, a girls' orphanage in Venice. When the regular *Maestro di coro* was granted leave in 1713, Vivaldi was asked to fill the post, with evident success as the governors of the school awarded him an annual bonus, "to stimulate him to make further contributions and to perfect still more the performing abilities of the girls of this our *coro*". The Gloria we are performing tonight was almost certainly written to celebrate a now-forgotten victory against Venice's age-old enemy, the Turks, in 1716.

Everyone now seems to agree that the girls of the *Pieta* performed everything – the orchestral parts and the Tenor and Bass parts in the choir as well as Soprano and Alto, whether at written pitch or an octave higher remains unclear! (Many "girls" stayed on at the school as late as their 40's, so Vivaldi had, in practice, an accomplished team of skilled performers to draw on). His method of composition is to divide the text into clear sections which are treated separately, rather than the one-movement form that came from the Renaissance. Contrast is in fact the main feature of the work, with each movement using different forces, scoring, tempo, style, or key, from its predecessor.

Two excerpts from "The Indian Queen"

Henry Purcell

1. Bass solo: "Ye twice ten hundred Deities."
2. Trumpet Overture

INTERVAL

Dido and Aeneas

An Opera

The words made by Mr Nahum Tate

The Music composed by Mr Henry Purcell

The Plot

Act One: The Palace at Carthage

The French-style overture begins with expressive, passionate harmony that perhaps foreshadows the human passion on stage. Dido, already attracted to Aeneas (a refugee from the fall of Troy), is consumed by torment "not to be confessed." Whether it is purely her feelings for Aeneas or a sense of guilt (she is but recently widowed) is not made clear. Belinda and the whole court urge marriage to satisfy both Dido's yearnings and to strengthen the Carthaginian state. Dido finally gives way, moved by the wooing of Aeneas himself, and the whole court make ready for a royal hunt in celebration.

Act Two: Scene One. The Cave

Dido's downfall is plotted by a malevolent sorceress, for reasons that again remain unclear (except for her hatred of "all in prosp'rous state.") She, with attendant witches, almost represents a black parody of Dido and her court. Her plot is simple – Aeneas is to be tempted to abandon Dido by a spurious messenger from the gods, after the royal hunt has been wrecked by a storm specially conjured for the purpose.

Act Two: Scene Two. The Grove

Later that afternoon the court rests after the hunt. The fateful tragedy of Diana and Actaeon is recalled by Belinda. Then Aeneas only has time to boast of his prowess when the storm breaks. The gullible warrior resolves to obey the false message and abandon Dido. The Sorceress and witches reappear to celebrate with a dance (in music taken from other works by Purcell).

Act Three: The Ships

Tempted by the witches, the sailors prepare for the Trojans' departure in a sea-shanty and dance. The Sorceress and her witches celebrate the triumph of their scheme, planning to "storm" Aeneas' fleet at sea and destroy Carthage by fire. Aeneas' attempt to explain his sudden departure is rejected by Dido, who now accepts the prospect of death. She sings her farewell lament ("When I am laid in earth") and the court conclude the opera with a moving chorus: "With drooping wings ye Cupids come, to scatter roses on her tomb."

Almost everything connected with Dido and Aeneas is somewhat curious. No autograph score survives (the earliest dates from earlier than 1750) and the libretto includes text at the end of Act II for which no music survives. The plot is extraordinarily compressed: we are left to guess at the reason for the Sorceress's malevolence and even the manner of Dido's death at the end. Recent research has undermined the usual notion that it was first performed at a Chelsea girls' boarding school in 1689 – this performance may have been a revival of one originally given at court perhaps five years earlier.

It remained the only opera Purcell wrote without spoken dialogue and failed to create any native operatic tradition (Londoners seem to have regarded Italian opera as over-emotional and too highly spiced for "plain Englishmen.") What is therefore remarkable is the way Purcell's music achieves such a profound impact in a piece lasting a little less than an hour. Most writers believe that this comes from the composer's key structure. Though Purcell never went as far as a contemporary who argued that each key consciously induced a specific emotion (E minor for grief, A minor for sleep!), Curtis Price in "Henry Purcell and the London Stage" argues that the opera is organised as follows.

Act One: C minor for melancholy and seriousness, leading to C major (pomp and ceremony)

Act Two, scene one: F minor (horror) leading to F major

Act Two, scene two: Alternates between D minor ("linked with sexual ardour" – the royal pair are out hunting) and D major (royal ceremonial)

Act Three: B flat major for pastoral open scenes (in this case, the ships) to G minor (death – it is fitting that G was the **lowest** note in classical theory.)

The Hexham Orpheus Choir

Sopranos:

Sarah Barker
Pip Bland
Evelyn Blenkinsop
Dorothy Booker
Ruth Brownlee
Jane Tait
Janet Davies
Anne Firth
Dot Gibson
Frances Hughes
Adèle Kinsella
Ann Reed
Elaine Rigg
Nuala Rose
Veronica Yarwood
Laura Read

Altos:

Margaret Bainbridge
Marie Bridges
Pat Crompton
Sheila Dance
Elizabeth Dixon
Val Hooker
Bronya Read
Pat Rose
Jean Southwell
Catherine Stott
Jean Wilks
Anita Jefferies
Roz Woodward
Davina Dwyer
Sheila Adams
Karen Dooley
Janet Storrie

Tenors:

John Barker
Tim Grew
Malcolm Chainey
Tom Frost
Alistair Gutherie
Geoff Morgan

Basses:

Robert Firth
Owen McArdle
Tony May
Peter Stott
Graeme Helliwell
John Kent

Additional parts in Dido and Aeneas are performed by the following choir members

1st Witch
2nd Witch

Pip Bland
Val Hooker

2nd Woman
Sailor

Adele Kinsella
Alistair Gutherie

The Orchestra

Violins

Julian Boulton **(leader)**

Rachel Boyfield

Emma Davis

Ruth Turner

Helen West

Karen Wigham

Violas

Anne Greaves

John Pearce

Cello

Nigel Chandler

Bass

Alan Johnson

Oboe

Judith Rousseau

Trumpet

Alan Docherty

Harpsicord

Margaret Huntington

Due illness Hillary Ions is unable to perform this evening and we are grateful to Shirley Wilkinson for standing in at such short notice