

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, Highford 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](http://www.hexham-orpheus-choir.org.uk)



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# Programme

## Gloria in D, R.V. 589

Antonio Vivaldi

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)

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  
Adele 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 Guthrie  
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 Guthrie

## ***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