

**Lewes Festival 2001**  
**Early Music One**  
**Wednesday 2 May at 9.00pm St John Sub Castro**

# **DIDO AND AENEAS**

## **Henry Purcell**

Dido – Emma Kirkby  
Aeneas – Andrew Foster-Williams  
Belinda – Helen Parker  
Second Woman/Spirit/Sailor – Carys Lane

Sorceress – Maria Birch  
First Witch – Tess Powderham  
Second Witch – Michelle Lefevre

**With the Lewes Festival Baroque Players  
and the Esterházy Chamber Choir  
Directed by Nicholas Houghton**

AN OPERA IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE ACTS PERFORMED WITHOUT INTERVAL

MADE POSSIBLE BY A DONATION FROM DESIGN INITIATIVE

*Dido and Aeneas*, an opera in a prologue and three acts with music by Henry Purcell and text by Nahum Tate, was premiered at Mr Josias Priest's Boarding School for Girls in Chelsea in 1689. It was revived by the Royal College of Music under Stanford at the Lyceum Theatre in London in 1895 and at the Hotel Plaza, New York in 1923. Performances followed in Europe in the 1940s and the 1951 Festival of Britain saw no less than three productions in London. During the second half of the twentieth century the opera entered the general repertory, particularly with the growing movement towards authentic performances.

*Dido and Aeneas* is the only true opera of Purcell's many works for the stage. His flair for dramatic expression displayed in this piece emphasises what might have been, had he lived longer than his thirty-seven years.

## **ACT ONE – The Royal Palace in Carthage**

*Dido (or Elissa, Queen of Carthage) is in her palace. She is tormented by her feelings for the Trojan guest, but refuses to reveal them. Belinda, her lady-in-waiting, guesses the reason for Dido's unhappiness. She tries to dispel Dido's fears. Apart from being a true love match, this union will bring further political stability to their prosperous state. The crowd outside is waiting, watching for the latest developments and anxious for the future of their country and their Queen.*

*Aeneas arrives, enthusiastically welcomed by the people. But Dido firmly turns down his advances. Yet, supported by everybody, Aeneas pursues his suit, until the Queen finally yields. The celebrations of the night ensue.*

### **Song**

*Belinda:* Shake the cloud from off your brow, fate your wishes doth allow, empire growing, pleasures flowing, fortune smiles and so should you.

*Chorus:* Banish sorrow, banish care, never approach the fair.

### **Song**

*Dido:* Ah! Belinda, I am prest with torment not to be contest; peace and I are strangers grown; I languish till my grief is know, yet would not have it guess'd.

### **Recitative**

*Belinda:* Grief increases by concealing

*Dido:* Mine admits of no revealing

*Belinda:* The let me speak – the Trojan guest into your tender thoughts have pressed the greatest blessing Gate can give, our Carthage to secure and Troy revive.

*Chorus:* When monarchs unite, how happy their state; they triumph at once over their foes and their fate!

### **Recitative**

*Dido:* Whence could so much virtue spring? What storms, what battles did he sing!

Anchises' valour mixed with Venus' charms. How soft in peace, and yet how fierce in arms!

*Belinda:* A tale so strong, so full of woe, might melt the rocks as well as you; what stubborn heart, unmoved, could see such distress, such pity!

*Dido:* Mine, with storms of care oppress'd, is taught to pity the distress'd, mean wretches' grief can touch – so soft, so sensible my breast – but ah! I fear I pity him too much.

### **Duet**

*Belinda, Second Woman and Chorus:* Fear no danger to ensure, the hero loves as well as you: ever gentle, ever smiling, and the cares of life beguiling, Cupid strew your path with flowers gather'd from Elysian bowers.

*Aeneas enters with his train.*

### **Recitative**

*Belinda:* See! Your royal guest appears – how godlike is the form he bears!

*Aeneas:* When, royal fair, shall I be blest with cares of love and state distress?

*Dido:* Fate forbids what you pursue.

*Aeneas:* Aeneas has no Fate but you; let Dido smile, and I'll defy the feeble stroke of destiny.

### **Chorus**

Cupid only throws the dart that's dreadful to a warrior's heart, and he that wounds can only cure the smart.

**Recitative**

*Aeneas:* if not for mine, for empire's sake, some pity on your lover take; ah! make not, in a hopeless fire, a hero fall, and Troy once more expire.

**Air**

*Belinda:* Pursue thy conquest, Love; her eyes confess the flame her tongue denies.

**Chorus**

To the hills and the vales, to the rocks and the mountains, to the musical groves and the cool shady fountains; Let the triumphs of Love and of Beauty be shown! Go, revel, ye Cupids, the day is your own.

**THE TRIUMPHING DANCE**

*At the end of the Dance thunder and lightning*

**Scene – The Cave**

*Enter Sorceress*

**Prelude for the Witches**

**Recitative**

*Sorceress:* Wayward sisters! You that fright, the lonely traveller by night; who, like dismal ravens crying, beat the windows of the dying, appear at my call, and share in the fame of a mischief shall make all Carthage flame! Appear! appear! appear!

*Enter Witches*

*First Witch:* Say, Beldame, say, what is thy will?

*Chorus:* Harm's our delight. And mischief our skill.

**Recitative**

*Sorceress:* The Queen of Carthage, whom we hate, as we do all in prosperous state, ere sunset shall most wretched prove, deprived of fame and life and love.

*Chorus:* Ho, ho, ho! Ho, ho, ho!

**Recitative**

*First and Second Witches:* Ruined ere the set of sun! Tell us how shall this be done?

*Sorceress:* The Trojan prince, you know, is bound by Fate to seek the Italian ground; the queen and he are now in chase.

*Hunting music at a distance*

*First witch:* Hark! The cry comes on apace.

*Sorceress:* But, when they're done, my trusty elf, in form of Mercury himself, as sent from Jove, shall chide his stay, and charge him sail tonight with all his fleet away.

*Chorus:* Ho, ho, ho! Ho, ho, ho!

**Duet**

*First and Second Witches:* But, ere we this perform, we'll conjure for a storm to mar their hunting sport and drive them back to court.

**Chorus**

In our deep vaulted cell the charm we'll prepare; too dreadful a practice for this open air.

*Echo Dance of Furies: thunder and lightning, horrid music. The Furies sink down in the cave, the rest fly up.*

**ACT TWO**

*The Sorceress joins the revellers of the night. She calls for her partners-in-mischief. Together they plot the destruction of Dido and of Carthage.*

*Dido and Aeneas are hunting. The sound of horns can be heard. The witches decide to disrupt the hunt by raising a storm. The royal party find themselves at Diana's fountain and decide to take a short break in their chase. The ladies-in-waiting tell stories about the incident that took place in this very spot: Actæon was killed by his own hounds when he invaded Diana's privacy as she was bathing in the fountain. But the lovers are oblivious of any dangers. The sounds of the approaching storm make Dido and her ladies hurry back to town. Aeneas is detained by "Mercury" (in reality, the messenger if the*

*Sorceress, not of the gods). The spirit orders Aeneas to depart from Carthage immediately. Aeneas is distraught at the thought of leaving Dido, but feels he must obey the gods' edict, which is that he should go on to Italy and fulfil his task*

**Ritornelle**

## **Scene – The Grove**

*Enter Aeneas, Dido, Belinda and their train*

**Song**

*Belinda and Chorus:* Thanks to these lonesome vales, these desert hills and dales, so fair the game, so rich the sport, Diana's self might to these woods resort.

**Song**

*Second Woman:* Oft she visits this loved mountain, oft she bathes her in this fountain; here Actæon met his fate, pursued by his own hounds; and after mortal wounds discover'd too late, here Actæon met his fate.

**Recitative**

*Aeneas:* Behold, upon my bending spear, a monster's head stands bleeding, with tushes far exceeding those that did Venus' huntsman tear!

*Dido:* The skies are clouded. *[Thunder]* Hark! how thunder rends the mountain oaks asunder!

**Song**

*Belinda and Chorus:* Haste to town! This open field no shelter from the storm can yield. Haste, Haste, Haste! The Spirit of the Sorceress descends to Aeneas in the likeness of Mercury.

**Recitative**

*Spirit:* Stay, prince, and hear great Jove's command. He summons thee this night away.

*Aeneas:* Tonight?

*Spirit:* Tonight thou must forsake this land, the angry gods will brook no longer stay – Jove commands thee waste no more in Love's delights these precious hours allow'd by the mighty powers to gain the Latain shore, and ruin'd Troy restore.

*Aeneas:* Jove's command shall be obey'd, tonight our anchors shall be weigh'd. But ah! what language can I try my injured Queen to pacify? No sooner she resigns her heart but from her arms I'm forced to part; how can so hard a fate be took? One night enjoy'd, the next forsook. Yours be the blame, ye Gods! For I obey your will, but with more ease could die.

## **ACT THREE**

*The harbour at Carthage. Sailors are preparing their ship for departure. The Sorceress and the witches celebrate the obvious success of their plot against Dido. They now intend to shipwreck Aeneas. Dido witnesses the preparations and fears the worst. Aeneas confirms her fears and tells her of the gods' decree. She taunts his attempt at explanation, ridicules his excuses. He changes his mind; he is prepared to defy the gods' command and stay. But she will have none of a lover who had once thought of leaving her. Left alone, she gives in to grief, knowing that death alone remains to her. The people gather to witness her farewell to life.*

**Prelude**

## **Scene – The Ships**

*Enter the Sailors*

**Song**

*Sailor and Chorus:* Come away, fellow-sailors, come away! Your anchors be weighing, time and time will admit no delaying. Take a bowsey short leave of your nymphs on the shore, and silence their mourning with vows of returning, though never intending to visit them more. Come away, fellow-sailors, come away!

**The Sailor's Dance**

*Enter Sorceress and Witches*

**Recitative**

*Sorceress:* See, the flags and streamers curling, anchors weighing, sails unfurling!

*First Witch:* Phoebe's pale deluding beams gliding o'er deceitful streams!

*Second Witch:* Our plot has took, the Queen's forsook, Elissa's ruin'd! Ho, ho, ho!

*First and Second Witches:* Our plot has took, the Queen's forsook, Elissa's ruin'd! Ho, ho, ho!

**Song**

*Sorceress:* Our next motion must be to storm her lover on the ocean. From the ruin of others our pleasures we borrow. Elissa bleeds tonight, and Carthage flames tomorrow!

**Chorus**

Destruction's our delight, delight our greatest sorrow; Elissa bleeds tonight, and Carthage flames tomorrow! Ho, ho, ho! Ho, ho, ho!

**The Witches Dance**

*Enter Dido, Belinda and train*

**Recitative**

*Dido:* Your counsel all is urged in vain, to earth and heaven I will complain; to earth and heaven why do I call? Earth and heaven conspire my fall. To fate I sue, of other beans bereft the only refuge for the wretched left.

*Belinda:* See, madam, when the prince appears; such sorry in his looks he bears as would convince you still he's true.

*Enter Aeneas*

*Aeneas:* What shall lost Aeneas do? How, royal fair, shall I impart the Gods' degree, and tell you we must part?

*Dido:* Thus, on the fatal bank of Nile, weeps the deceitful crocodile; thus, hypocrites, that murder act, make Heaven and Gods the authors of the fact.

*Aeneas:* By all that's good ....

*Dido:* By all that's good, no more! all that's good you have forswore; to your promised empire fly, and let forsaken Dido die.

*Aeneas:* In spite of Jove's command I'll stay, offend the Gods and I'll love obey.

*Dido:* No, faithless man! Thy course pursue, I'm resolved as well as you; no repentance shall reclaim the injured Dido's slighted flame; for 'tis enough, whate'er you decree, that you had once a thought of leaving me.

*Aeneas:* Let Jove say what he please, I'll stay.

*Dido:* No, no! Away, away!

*Aeneas:* I'll stay, and love obey.

*Dido:* No, no! to death I'll fly if longer you delay; away, away!

*Exit Aeneas*

But death, alas! I cannot shun, death must come where he is gone.

**Chorus**

Great minds against themselves conspire, and shun the cure they most desire.

**Recitative**

*Dido:* Thy hand, Belinda! Darkness shades me, on thy bosom let me rest; more I would, but death invades me, death is now a welcome guest. Cupids appear in the clouds over her tomb.

**Air**

*Dido:* When I am laid in earth, may my wrongs create no trouble in thy breast! Remember me – but, ah! forget my fate.

**Chorus**

With drooping wings, ye cupids, come, and scatter roses on her tomb, soft and gentle as her heart: Keep here your watch, and never, never part.

## The Lewes Festival Baroque Players

Marshall Marcus (Violin I)  
Marc Cooper (Violin II)  
Katherine McGillivray (Viola)

Sarah McMahon (Cello)  
Elegio Quinteiro (Theorbo)  
Matthew Halls (Harpichord)