

**HENRY PURCELL**

# ONE CHARMING NIGHT

**DAVID HANSEN, COUNTERTENOR  
OSLO CIRCLES**



**SIMAX**  
*classics*

# HENRY PURCELL

(1659 – 1695)

## **Abdelazer Z 570**

- 1 Rondeau 01:41
- 2 Air 01:15
- 3 Minuet 00:58
- 4 Hornpipe 00:40
- 5 Jig 00:30

## **Oedipus, King Of Thebes, Z 583/2**

- 6 Music for a while 03:35

## **The Fairy Queen, Z 629**

- 7 One Charming Night 02:53
- 8 Dance for the fairies 01:00
- 9 Hornpipe 00:56
- 10 Rondeau 01:37
- 11 Jigg 00:59
- 12 Song Tune 02:00
- 13 Chaconne: Dance of the Chinese man and woman 03:05

## **King Arthur, or The British Worthy, Z 628**

- 14 What power art thou? 04:39

## **Pausanias, the Betrayer of his Country, Z 585/1**

- 15 Sweeter than roses 03:41

**Come, ye sons of art, away (Birthday Ode for Queen Mary), Z 323/5**

16 Strike the viol 04:13

**17 If music be the food of love, Z 379 02:10**

**Timon of Athens, Z 632**

18 Love in their little veins inspires 01:43

19 Come all, come all to me 01:09

**The Indian Queen, Z 630**

20 Aire I & II 02:25

21 Hornpipe I & II 02:44

**Dido and Aeneas, Z 626**

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Mari Giske, baroque viola · Mime Brinkmann, baroque cello

Caroline Eidsten Dahl, recorder · Ingeborg Christophersen, recorder

Jonas Bonde, percussion · Karl Nyhlin, archlute and baroque guitar

Mariangiola Martello, harpsichord

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BY BRYAN WHITE

Henry Purcell was undoubtedly a man of the theatre. At the age of twenty-one he wrote his first music for a play, Nathaniel Lee's *Theodosius*. Though his theatre career built gradually at first, by the final five years of his life it had almost taken over his compositional work. His output covers the full range of music required in the Restoration theatre, from one solo song for Richard Norton's *Pausanias* to over two hours of solo, instrumental and choral music for the dramatic opera *The Fairy Queen*.

∴ In the Restoration period all plays  
∴ required music to some degree or  
∴ another. At minimum each required act  
∴ music, tunes played between each of five  
∴ acts. The instrumental music for  
∴ *Abdelazer*, probably written for a revival  
∴ in 1695, served this purpose. For the most  
∴ part, Purcell, like his contemporaries, did  
∴ not attempt to match tunes to the  
∴ subject matter of the play; there is little in  
∴ the music for *Abdelazer* to suggest that it  
∴ is a tragedy. The music is preserved in  
∴ *Ayres for the Theatre*, published two

years after the composer's death. In this collection, which contains thirteen suites that Purcell composed for plays between 1690 and 1695, the order of the tunes was rearranged to suit concert performance. The printing of *Ayres for the Theatre* suggests that audiences of the day were very happy to consume this sparkling music outside of its theatrical setting.

One of the most important uses of music on the Restoration stage was for supernatural scenes. The justly famous air 'Music for a while' was written for a revival of *Oedipus* in 1692. It is the centrepiece of a conjuring scene in which the blind seer Tiresias and accompanying priests raise the ghost of King Laius in order that he name his murderer. The song is constructed over a constantly recurring bass line – a ground bass – a compositional process of which Purcell was a great master. In the song music is called upon to soothe the dead and charm the Fury, Alecto. The bass lulls in its constant repetitions, but its chromatic character is eerily unsettling, providing an ideal partner for the vocal line, which among several vivid images, depicts the snakes falling from Alecto's head.

The most musically sumptuous theatrical works of the Restoration period were known as 'dramatic' or 'semi' operas. These were usually old plays subjected to significant cuts to make room for music

and dancing, graced with elaborate scenic effects and costumes. Starting in 1690 Purcell provided music for a series of dramatic operas, the grandest of which was *The Fairy Queen* (1692), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Midsummer's Night Dream*. Ironically, Purcell did not set any of Shakespeare's lines to music, since it was a characteristic of dramatic operas that the actors did not sing, and the singers did not speak; all the words for musical insertions were newly written.

Purcell's music for *The Fairy Queen* is wonderfully varied and evocative. 'One charming night' is taken from the scene in which Titania is sung to sleep by her retinue of fairies. Both the text and music create a sense of eroticism that prefigures the amorous encounter that will result from the application of a magic love potion to her sleeping eyes. This scene closes with the mysterious 'Dance of the Fairies'. It is a double canon: four musical lines grouped in pairs in which each pair is composed of the same music with one part entering after the other like a round. The uncanny harmonies that arise from this strict musical process illustrate perfectly the supernatural world of the fairies.

Just like conventional spoken plays, dramatic operas required act tunes, which often employed the popular dance

forms of the day, like the lively jig and hornpipe. Dancing was an important feature of dramatic operas, especially in large-scale 'masques', which always appear at the end of the final act. In *The Fairy Queen*, the final masque is an exotic confection featuring Chinese men and women, the marriage god, Hymen, and six dancing monkeys. The 'Grand Dance ... of Twenty Four Persons', which brings the masque to a close, is a Chaconne, a piece like a ground bass, in which different melodic and rhythmic patterns are presented over a constantly recurring chord progression. *King Arthur* (1691), Purcell's collaboration with the former poet laureate, John Dryden, also includes a Chaconne, though the sources are not clear on where in the work it appeared.

*King Arthur* was the only one of Purcell's dramatic operas that was conceived of from the beginning as a dramatic opera. This circumstance resulted in a greater than usual integration of musical and spoken portions of the work. Amongst its most famous passages is the 'Frost Scene', a masque conjured by the evil sorcerer Osmund to thaw the heart of Emmeline, the captured lover of King Arthur. 'What power art thou?' is sung by the Cold Genius, raised from his chilly sleep by Cupid, who will later warm him with love, just as Osmund (in vain) hopes to warm the heart of Emmeline. The fifth act masque of *King Arthur* is a paean to

Britain, crowned by the ravishingly simple continuo song 'Fairest Isle', in which Britain is named the seat of Love, Venus's dwelling and Cupid's favourite nation.

In the final year of his life, Purcell worked tirelessly at theatrical commissions. One of his last compositions was 'Sweeter than roses', a highly-charged love song that in its original position in *Pausanias* was sung at the assignation of the courtesan Pandora and Argilius, who she intends to seduce. A duet is also extant for this play, but it seems to have been composed by Henry's relative Daniel, presumably because the former did not live to complete the commission. Daniel also contributed the final masque to the dramatic opera *The Indian Queen*, most of the music to which Henry managed to complete before his death in November 1695. Earlier in the same year Purcell composed the 'Masque of Cupid and Bacchus' for a revival of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*. Cupid and Bacchus contest in song the merits of love and wine before joining in a duet where they agree 'there are pleasures divine in love and in wine'.

Though the pressures of Purcell's theatrical career all but crowded out other work in his final years, he continued to provide birthday odes for Queen Mary until her death at the end of December 1694. 'Strike the viol' comes from the final

ode he composed for her, *Come, ye Sons of Art*. This superb song develops over a vigorous bass line, the recurring rhythmic pattern of which resembles a ground bass. Purcell also found time to write a large number of songs in the 1690s, including three settings of Henry Hevingham's poem 'If music be the food of love'.

In his own lifetime Purcell's theatrical fame rested on the music for his dramatic operas, but today it is *Dido and Aeneas* that is his best-known work for the theatre. Though this opera is filled with splendid music, Dido's Lament is the undoubted musical and dramatic highpoint. Purcell crafted an aria of intense emotion, spun over a chromatically descending ground bass. As heartbreak silences Dido's voice, the strings take over to offer a poignant outpouring of grief for the dying Queen of Carthage.

### **Music for a while**

*from Oedipus, King of Thebes,  
Z 583/2 (1692)*

Music for a while,  
Shall all your Cares beguile,  
Wond'ring how your Pains were eas'd,  
And disdain'g to be pleas'd,  
Till Alecto free the Dead,  
From their Eternal Band;  
Till the Snakes drop from her Head;  
and the Whip from out her Hand.

### **One charming night**

*from The Fairy Queen, Z 629 (1692)*

One charming night  
Gives more delight  
Than a hundred lucky days:  
Night and I improve the taste,  
Make the pleasure longer last  
A thousand, thousand several ways.

### **What power art thou?**

*from King Arthur or The British  
Worthy, Z 628 (1691)*

What power art thou, who from below  
Hast made me rise unwillingly and slow  
From beds of everlasting snow?  
See'st thou not how stiff and wondrous old  
Far unfit to bear the bitter cold,  
I can scarcely move or draw my breath?  
Let me, let me freeze again to death.

### **Sweeter than Roses**

Sweeter than roses, or cool evening breeze  
On a warm flowery shore, was the dear kiss,  
First trembling made me freeze,  
Then shot like fire all o'er.  
What magic has victorious love!  
For all I touch or see since that dear kiss,  
I hourly prove, all is love to me.

### **Strike the viol**

*Birthday Ode for Queen Mary,  
Z. 323/5*

Strike the Viol, touch the Lute;  
Wake the Harp, inspire the Flute  
Strike the Viol, touch the Lute;  
Wake the Harp, inspire the Flute:

Sing your Patronesse's Praise,  
Sing, in cheerful and harmonious Lays.

### **If music be the food of love**

If music be the food of love,  
Sing on till I am fill'd with joy;  
For then my list'ning soul you move  
To pleasures that can never cloy.  
Your eyes, your mien, your tongue declare  
That you are music ev'rywhere.

Pleasures invade both eye and ear,  
So fierce the transports are, they wound,  
And all my senses feasted are,  
Tho' yet the treat is only sound,  
Sure I must perish by your charms,  
Unless you save me in your arms.



**Love in their little veins inspires**

*from Timon of Athens, Z 632 (1695)*

Love in their little veins inspires  
their cheerful notes, their soft desires.  
While heat makes buds and blossoms spring,  
those pretty couples love and sing.  
But winter puts out their desire,  
and half the year they want love's fire.

**Come all to me**

*from Timon of Athens  
Z 632 (1695)*

Come all, come all to me, make haste,  
The sweets of mutual passion taste:  
Come all to me and wear my chains,  
The joys of love without its pains.

**When I am laid in earth**

*Dido's lament from Dido & Aeneas  
Z 626 (1689)*

When I am laid in earth,  
May my wrongs create  
No trouble in thy breast;  
Remember me, but ah! forget my fate.

**Fairest isle**

*from King Arthur or The British  
Worthy Z 628 (1691)*

Fairest isle, all isles excelling,  
Seat of pleasure and of love  
Venus here will choose her dwelling,  
And forsake her Cyprian grove.  
Cupid from his fav'rite nation  
Care and envy will remove;  
Jealousy, that poisons passion,  
And despair, that dies for love.

Gentle murmurs, sweet complaining,  
Sighs that blow the fire of love  
Soft repulses, kind disdain,ing,  
Shall be all the pains you prove.  
Ev'ry swain shall pay his duty,  
Grateful ev'ry nymph shall prove;  
And as these excel in beauty,  
Those shall be renown'd for love.



Photo: Lars Bryngelsson

**Oslo Circles** was founded in Oslo in 2015, and consists of some of the most established musicians in Scandinavia within the world of baroque music. The members of the group regularly play in orchestras such as Concerto Copenhagen, Barokksolistene, B'Rock, Barokkanerne, Academia Montis Regalis, Les Talens Lyriques and Finnish Baroque Orchestra. The baroque violinist Astrid Kirschner has gathered a “musical circle”, where all the members bring to the group their unique talent and musical experience, adding their personal input of different styles, nationalities and backgrounds. The group has a passion for showing how modern baroque music can be – through playfulness and freedom in the moment of performing.

Oslo Circles works in close collaboration with David Hansen (countertenor), Marianne Beate Kielland (mezzo soprano), Berit Nordbakken Solset (soprano), Halvor F. Melien (bass baritone), Ann-Beth Solvang (mezzo soprano), and has also explored instrumental baroque music, such as the program *Seicento Italiano* – a journey through the rhythm and dynamics of 17th century Italian music, *The Secret Diary of Samuel Pepys* – a collaboration with the Norwegian film actor Anders Baasmo Christiansen, the Passion project *The Virgin's Tears*, and many more. Oslo Circles has played numerous concerts in Norway, and played at music festivals like in *Froville* (France), *Baroque & Beyond* (Sweden), *Wunderkammer* (Italy) and *Spazio e Musica* (Italy) and *Varazdin Baroque Nights* (Croatia), where they received the prize for the best musical interpretation of the festival. In 2018 Oslo Circles started its own concert series, named *1685*, at the baroque church Akershus Slottskirke in the heart of Oslo.

Oslo Circles receives support from the Norwegian Arts Council, Fund for Performing Artists (Norway), Music Norway, The Aksel Bye's foundation and Oslo district.

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**Mariangiola Martello**, harpsichord





Photo: Jitka Brendlová

## **David Hansen, countertenor**

David Hansen was born in Sydney, Australia. He studied singing with Andrew Dalton at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and furthered his studies with James Bowman and David Harper.

In 2004, David made his European début for the Aix-en-Provence Festival in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. Shortly thereafter, he made his UK début in concerts with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Emmanuelle Haïm, as well as performing the title-role in Handel's *Fernando* with Il Complesso Barocco under Alan Curtis for the Spoleto Festival, Italy.

Forthcoming engagements for the 19/20 season include the modern day world premiere of Broschi's *Merope* under Alessandro De Marchi for the Innsbruck Festival of Early Music, Sesto in Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito* under Stefan Gottfried for Theater an der Wien, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* under Jurowski for Den Norske Opera, the title-role in Handel's *Serse* under George Petrou for the Händel-Festspiele Karlsruhe, the title-role in Handel's *Solomon* at the Wiener Musikverein and the title-role in Handel's *Ariodante* under Andrea Marcon for Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, Valencia.

Recent highlights include Ruggiero in Handel's *Alcina* under Marcon for the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, under Gottfried for Theater an der Wien and under Andreas Spering for the Händel-Festspiele Karlsruhe, Telemaco in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* under De Marchi for both Den Norske Opera and the Innsbruck Festival of Early Music, the title-role in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* under De Marchi for Semperoper Dresden, the title-role in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* under Rinaldo Alessandrini for Den Norske Opera, Nerone in Handel's *Agrippina* with Boston Baroque, Nerone in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* under Ottavio Dantone for Opernhaus Zürich and for the Boston Early Music Festival, Farnace in Mozart's *Mitridate, Re di Ponto* under Christophe Rousset for Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, the title-role in Handel's *Serse* under Jean-Christophe Spinosi, and Handel's *Parnasso in Festa* at the Royal Concertgebouw under Marcon.

Concert highlights include Handel's *Saul* under Nikolaus Harnoncourt at the Wiener Musikverein, *Carmina Burana* with the Berliner Philharmoniker under Sir Simon Rattle, the title-role in Handel's *Solomon* with René Jacobs and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Bach's *Johannes-Passion* with Les Musiciens du Louvre Grenoble under Marc Minkowski and Handel's *Messiah* under Fabio Biondi.

Operatic engagements include the American premiere of Thomas Adès' *The Tempest* (Alan Gilbert/Santa Fe Opera), Bertarido in Handel's *Rodelinda* under Curtis, Handel's *Giulio Cesare* (Jacobs/Theater an der Wien; Alessandrini/Den Norske Opera; Sperring/Teatro de la Maestranza de Sevilla), Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (Jacobs/Deutsche Staatsoper-Berlin), Handel's *Semele* (Rousset/Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie), Prince Go Go in Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* for both Opernhaus Zürich and Den Norske Opera, Jüri Reinvere's *Peer Gynt* for Den Norske Opera, the title-role in Bontempi's *Il Paride* (Christina Pluhar/Innsbruck Festival of Early Music) and Cherubino in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (Teatro Verdi di Sassari). He has worked with directors including Stefan Herheim, Jonathan Kent, Barrie Kosky, Calixto Bieito and Christof Loy.

David's debut solo recording for Sony/dhm, *Rivals - Arias for Farinelli & Co.*, with Academia Montis Regalis and Alessandro De Marchi was released in 2013 to critical acclaim. His other recordings include *Purcell: Music For Queen Mary*, with the Academy of Ancient Music and the choir of King's College Cambridge, available on EMI Classics, Cavalli's *Giasone* and Vivaldi's *Griselda*, both recorded for Pinchgut Opera Live, Bach's *Johannes-Passion* with Les Musiciens du Louvre Grenoble under Minkowski for Warner/Erato and Handel's *Parnasso in Festa* under Marcon for Pentatone.

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