

Musica Sacra Concert Series 2005

Robert Oliver writes

Our first programme for this year's series brings together music written in the same decade, by composers of two nations, side by side geographically, but with very different styles. To some extent their differences highlight the national differences as well. Aside from the music itself, which is more interesting than any discussion about it, these differences bring an extra dimension to this concert.

Of the two, Purcell's music has been far more familiar for much longer. The Purcell Society's "Complete Works" was begun in the 19th Century, and his liturgical music has never dropped out of the repertoire. The anniversary of his death in 1995 led to a new understanding among the listening public of his outstanding genius. Charpentier, on the other hand, has had to wait until the last 20 years for his music to be heard again. Almost nothing is known of his life, his birth date of 1645 has been only recently established, and he himself died regretting that his music had not brought him glory; friends among the cognoscenti, yes, but little renown beyond that narrow circle. He left behind his carefully compiled 28-volume manuscript collection of his music. Very little was published in his lifetime, and such fame as he had garnered dissipated quickly after his death.

The beautifully-written scores present no problems to the modern transcriber. They are currently held in the *Bibliothèque National* in Paris, and available here in published facsimile. Modern editions are available of only a very small proportion of this large output, but recordings over the last 20 years or so have made his music familiar to modern listeners.

He spent many years in the protection of the Duchesse de Guise, writing music to be performed in her private chapel, by musicians in her employ, who are named in the manuscripts, and tonight's Psalm has all the names of the singers for whom it was written. He was Director of Music at *Sainte Chapelle*, and in the service of the Jesuits, but his most longed-for recognition by the court, in the form of an official position never came, even though the King recognised his talent, and Lully, whose antagonism had kept him on the sidelines for so long, had died in 1687. He was undoubtedly the victim of the acrimonious dispute between the champions of the Italian and French styles. All the more ironic to modern beholders is that Lully, an Italian by birth, was the hero of the adherents to the French style, while Charpentier, a Frenchman, was dismissed in scathing terms, for his "Italiante" music. Lecerf de la Viéville wrote in his *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique française* in 1704, the year of Charpentier's death: "What is the fate of our masters who zealously admired and ardently imitated the Italian manner of composing? Where did it lead them? To write pieces that the public and posterity pronounced dreadful. What did the learned Charpentier leave to secure his memory? *Medée*, *Saül*, and *Jonathas*. He might better have left nothing."

Lecerf wasn't the only critic to be roundly contradicted by history, but rarely has an artist as great as Charpentier had to lie in the shadows of obscurity for so long. That Lecerf's was a cruel libel at the time is emphasised by Catherine Cessac, author of the authoritative biography, who quotes many contemporary admirers. It has been an important function of the Early Music movement to perform these works, which have been preserved like buried treasure, so that the music itself can refute such absurdities, and bring some long-delayed justice to his reputation.

The Psalm setting is one of uniformly positive mood – reflecting the rejoicing in the text. Written for the private music of a great lady, it is domestic music, and originally scored for

treble viols rather than violins. However, the idiom is identical to much of his music in which violins are specified, and we make no apologies for using violins. Similarly, his *Concert*, which has the subtitle *pour parties de violes* we also present on violins. Catherine Cessac considers that it was written in 1680 – 81, which makes it an exact contemporary with Purcell's fantasias for four-part viols. It is, however, a completely different work, set out as a suite with a prelude followed by dance movements. But it has in common with its English companions a love of polyphony.

Purcell's output for instruments is far greater than Charpentier's. He wrote and published a considerable amount of chamber music, but the Fantasias for viols were never published. Indeed, his most recent biographer, Peter Holman, considers they might never have been performed in his own time by a consort of viols at any rate. They are remarkable pieces, all composed in the early 1680's. The *Fantasia on one note* is in five parts, with one of the tenors (here the only viol) playing a middle C throughout: a challenge perhaps suggested to Purcell by the "In nomine" tradition of writing complex polyphony around a simple melody in long notes. Fantasy no. 6 in 4 parts follows the pattern of many of the others. A contrapuntal opening section leads to "slow"- "quick" - "slow" sections, reminiscent of the Italian "quilt" canzonas of, for example, Frescobaldi, but firmly in the tradition of John Jenkins and William Lawes. What is remarkable is the intensity of musical thought generated in just a few minutes. The *Chacony* was written for violins, very much in the French style, although its original function is not known.

Alastair Carey writes

If machinations against Charpentier prevented him from gaining his rightful place in French artistic society, then the exact opposite can be said of Purcell. His genius is undoubted, but he also had the uncanny knack of being in exactly the right place at the right time to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded him. In particular, he was perfectly placed to take full advantage of the restoration of the English monarchy. Charles II ascended to the throne in 1660 and it was directly as a result of his personal tastes – distinctly continental, formed during his long exile in France – that a new golden age of artistic creativity was born in England. Not only did Charles immediately seek to establish his own group of string musicians at court, emulating the innovations at the French court, but he also sought to re-establish the Chapel Royal, disbanded decades earlier by the Parliamentarians. While many of the previous Gentlemen were reinstated new boys had to be found for the treble line. Purcell was one such, joining the Chapel Royal at the age of seven. His rise to prominence was meteoric by any standard. His first works were composed before he was ten and Charles, sensing greatness, actively nurtured the precocious youngster. (Purcell's earliest surviving composition, dated 1670, is an Ode to the King on Charles' birthday.)

In addition to restoring the grandeur of the music at court, Charles also encouraged the performance of secular music for public consumption. It gradually became increasingly common for the court instrumentalists and Chapel Royal singers to participate in public concerts at taverns and playhouses. So it is natural that Purcell's early compositions focused on the secular and profane – bawdy solo songs, clever instrumental fantasias and symphonies, and semi-theatrical works for voices and strings. But his musical focus was soon to change. In 1680, Purcell succeeded his teacher John Blow as the Organist at Westminster Abbey – he was just 22 at the time – and two years later he was appointed Organist at the Chapel Royal. Purcell's output naturally began to shift towards the sacred.

Purcell's sacred output displays the same inventiveness and continental influences as his secular works while uniquely exercising the drama inherent in the beautiful poetry of the English Book of Common Prayer. The bulk of Purcell's sacred output is verse anthems; that is, anthems written primarily for soloists, with the full choir interjecting and providing support at key emotional moments. The verse anthem style had been developed a generation

earlier at the Chapel Royal under Orlando Gibbons and his contemporaries Thomas Tomkins and Thomas Weelkes; the standard of choral singing had dropped precipitously across England during the late 16th century, and so the verse anthem, entrusting most of its music to the secure hands of a skilled few, developed more out of musical necessity than for any aesthetic reason. The verse anthem retained its prominence after Charles II restored the splendour of the Chapel Royal in the 1660s. The reinstated choir was as fine as any in Europe, and Purcell and his contemporaries were free to extend the verse anthem beyond what Gibbons could have dared imagine, developing it into a truly virtuosic and symphonic art form. In the English baroque verse anthem the solo verses rival the complexity of any secular solo line, the chorus parts are as dramatic as those of any secular theatrical work, and the instrumental parts are as deft and intricate as any of the secular instrumental works played by the musicians of Charles' court. Purcell's verse anthems are the logical extension of the same innovations that he had developed a decade earlier in his secular and instrumental music.

The solo voices Purcell had at his disposal at the Chapel were the finest in England; particular mention must be made of John Gostling, a *basso profundo* of truly exceptional abilities who moved to London in 1683 specifically to work with Purcell. The two verse anthems we perform his evening include extended verse sections written specifically for Gostling.

Both anthems were composed while Purcell was in his twenties. *I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord* is clearly the earlier work. Composed in 1685, it is overflowing with ideas, exuberant in its youthful enthusiasm. *O sing unto the Lord* (1688) is a more introspective, self-assured piece in which Purcell is more comfortable to take time over each piece of text; the style is more formal, more ornate, contrasting with the florid brashness of *I will give thanks*.

Programme

Verse anthem	I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord (Psalm 138) Z20	Purcell
	<i>SSATB soloists; SSATB choir; 4-part strings and continuo</i>	
	<i>Symphony</i>	
<i>Verse 5 voc</i>	I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, ev'n before the gods will I sing praise unto Thee.	
	<i>Ritornello</i>	
<i>Verse 1st Treble</i>	I will worship tow'rds Thy holy temple, and praise Thy name, because of Thy loving kindness and truth;	
<i>verse à 5</i>	For Thou hast magnified Thy name and Thy word above all things. When I called upon Thee, Thou heard'st me, and endu'dst my soul with much strength.	
	<i>Ritornello</i>	
<i>Chorus</i>	I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, ev'n before the gods will I sing praise unto Thee.	
	<i>Symphony</i>	
<i>verse A & T</i>	All the kings of the earth shall praise Thee, O Lord:	

verse à 5 for they have heard the words of Thy mouth,
Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord
that great is the glory of the Lord.

Ritornello

verse Bass For though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly.
As for the proud He beholdeth them afar off.
Yea though I walk in the midst of trouble, yet shalt Thou refresh me:
Thou shalt stretch forth Thine hand upon the furiousness of
mine enemies, and Thy right hand shall save me.

verse à 5 The Lord shall make good his loving kindness tow'rds me:
Chorus The Lord shall make good his loving kindness tow'rds me:
Yea, thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever.

Strings **Fantasia upon One Note à 5 (Z745)** Purcell
Fantasia 6 à 4 (Z737)
Chacony in G minor (Z730)

Verse anthem **O sing unto the Lord (Psalm 96) Z44** Purcell
SATB soloists; SATB choir; 4-part strings and continuo

Symphonia

Verse: Bass O sing unto the Lord a new song
Chorus Alleluia
bass Sing unto the Lord all the whole earth
Chorus Alleluia
Verse à 4 Sing unto the Lord, and praise His name;
be telling of His salvation from day to day.
Verse: Bass Declare His honour unto the heathen,
and His wonders unto all people.
Chorus Glory and worship are before Him,
pow'r and honour are in His sanctuary.
Verse A & T The Lord is great and cannot worthily be praised.
He is more to be feared than all gods.
As for all the gods of the heathen, they are but idols;
but it is the Lord that made the heav'ns.

Ritornello

Verse à 4 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
Chorus O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
Let the whole earth stand in awe of Him.
Bass and Chorus Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is King.
And that it is He who hath made the round world so sure
That it cannot be moved.
And how that He shall judge the people righteously.
Soli and Chorus Alleluia.

~ Interval ~

Strings

Concert pour 4 parties de violes

Charpentier

*Prélude – Allemande – Sarabande en rondeau – Gigue anglaise –
Gigue française – Passecaïlle*

Grand Motet

Bonum est confiteri Domino (Psalm 91)

Charpentier

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Bonum est confiteri Domino:
et psallere nomini tuo, Altissime. | 1. It is good to give praise to the Lord: and
to sing to thy name, O most High. |
| 2. Ad annuntiandum mane misericordiam
tuam: et veritatem tuam per noctem. | 2. To shew forth thy mercy in the morning,
and thy truth in the night: |
| 3. In decachordo psalterio:
cum cantico in cithara. | 3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, upon
the psaltery: with a canticle upon the harp. |
| 4. Quia delectasti me, Domine, in factura
tua: et in operibus manuum tuarum
exsultabo. | 4. For thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight
in thy doings: and in the works of thy hands
I shall rejoice. |
| 5. Quam magnificata sunt opera tua,
Domine! nimis profundae factae sunt
cogitationes tuae. | 5. O Lord, how great are thy works! Thy
thoughts are exceeding deep. |
| 6. Vir insipiens non cognoscet: et stultus non
intelliget haec. | 6. The senseless man shall not know: nor
will the fool understand these things. |
| 7. Cum exorti fuerint peccatores sicut
foenum : et apparuerint omnes, qui
operantur iniquitatem: | 7. When the wicked shall spring up as grass:
and all the workers of iniquity shall appear: |
| 8. Ut intereant in saeculum saeculi:
Tu autem Altissimus in aeternum, Domine. | 8. That they may perish for ever and ever.
But thou O Lord, art most high for
evermore. |
| 9. Quoniam ecce inimici tui, Domine,
quoniam ecce inimici tui peribunt: et
dispergentur omnes qui operantur
iniquitatem. | 9. For behold thy enemies, O Lord, for
behold thy enemies shall perish: and all the
workers of iniquity shall be scattered. |
| 10. Et exaltabitur sicut unicornis cornu
meum: et senectus mea in misericordia uberi. | 10. But my horn shall be exalted like that of
the unicorn: and my old age in plentiful
mercy. |
| 11. Et despexit oculus meus inimicos meos :
et in insurgentibus in me malignantibus
audiet auris mea. | 11. My eye also hath looked down on my
enemies, and my ear shall hear of the
downfall of the malignant that rise up against
me. |
| 12. Justus ut palma florebit : sicut cedrus
Libani multiplicabitur. | 12. The just shall flourish like the palm-tree:
he shall grow up like the cedar of Lebanon. |
| 13. Plantati in domo Domini, in altriis
domus Dei nostri florebut. | 13. They that are planted in the house of the
Lord shall flourish in the courts of the house
of our God. |
| 14. Adhuc multiplicabuntur in senecta uberi,
et bene patientes erunt, ut annuntient: | 14. They shall still increase in a fruitful old
age: and shall be well treated, that they may
shew: |

15. Quoniam rectus Dominus Deus noster : 15. That the Lord our God is righteous, and
et non est iniquitas in eo. there is no iniquity in him.

Baroque Voices

Soprano Pepe Becker (director), Nicola Edgecombe
Alto Andrea Cochrane, Christopher Warwick
Tenor Alastair Carey
Bass David Morriss

Academia Sanctae Mariae

Violin Gregory Squire (leader), Shelley Wilkinson
Viola Fiona Haughton
Cello Katrin Eickhorst-Squire
Viol de gamba Robert Oliver (director)
Organ Douglas Mews

The Tudor Consort

Patrons Dr I. Prior, Mrs J. Beauchamp, Mr N. Kershaw

Soprano Carlie Bromley, Ondine Godtschalk, Sabrina Malcolm, Jane McKinlay, Melanie Newfield
Alto Michelle Harrison, Jenny Kempton, Svetlana Lushkott, Christopher Warwick
Tenor Alastair Carey, Peter Dyne, Brian Hesketh
Bass Simon Baskerville, Jeremy Bennett, Robert Easting, Timothy Hurd, Matthew Painter