

Beauteous Softness Tim Mead

LA NUOVA MUSICA • DAVID BATES





BEAUTEOUS SOFTNESS

	Henry Purcell (1659-1695)	
1	If music be the food of love, Z. 379a	2. 45
	John Blow (1649-1708)	
2	Lovely Selina	3. 01
	Henry Purcell	
3	The pale and purple rose (from <i>The Yorkshire feast song</i> , 'Of old, when heroes thought it base'), Z. 333	3. 19
	Pelham Humfrey (c. 1647-1674)	
4	A Hymn to God the Father ('Wilt Thou forgive that sin')	2. 38
	John Blow	
5	Overture from <i>Venus and Adonis</i>	2. 42
	Henry Purcell	
6	In the black dismal dungeon of despair, Z. 190	4. 33
7	Be welcome then, great Sir (from <i>Fly, bold rebellion</i> , Welcome song for Charles II, 1683), Z. 324	3. 34
	William Webb (c. 1600-1657)	
8	Powerful Morpheus	3. 50
	Henry Purcell	
9	Arise, my muse (from <i>Arise, my muse</i> , Birthday ode for Queen Mary, 1690), Z. 320	2. 13
10	So when the glitt'ring Queen of Night (from <i>The Yorkshire feast song</i> , 'Of old, when heroes thought it base'), Z. 333	4. 43

John Blow

11	So ceas'd the rival crew when Purcell came (from <i>An ode on the death of Mr Henry Purcell</i>)	3. 06
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Henry Purcell

12	Vouchsafe, O Lord (from <i>Te Deum and Jubilate</i>), Z. 232	3. 45
13	Chaconne – First Music from <i>King Arthur</i>	3. 09
14	O let me weep (The Plaint from <i>The Fairy Queen</i>), Z. 629	8. 28
15	By beauteous softness (from <i>Now does the glorious day appear</i> , Z. 332, Ode for Queen Mary's birthday, 1689)	3. 46

John Blow

16	Poor Celadon, he sighs in vain (Loving above himself)	4. 02
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Henry Purcell

17	Crown the altar (from <i>Celebrate this festival</i> , Z. 321, Ode for Queen Mary's birthday, 1693),	2. 16
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Pelham Humfrey

18	Sleep, downy sleep, come close mine eyes (Anthem for the evening)	2. 44
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Henry Purcell

19	Evening hymn ('Now that the sun hath veiled his light'), Z. 193	5. 17
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Total playing time: 70. 00

Tim Mead, counter-tenor

La Nuova Musica

David Bates, artistic director & organ

La Nuova Musica — David Bates

Violin 1	Matthew Truscott
Violin 2	Jane Gordon
Viola	Julia Black, Joanna Patrick
Bass violin	Jonathan Rees (tracks 1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19) Jonathan Manson (tracks 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14)
Bass viol	Jonathan Manson
Double bass	Judith Evans
Oboe	Leo Duarte
Oboe & recorder	Oonagh Lee
Theorbo	Sergio Bucheli, Toby Carr
Harp	Aileen Henry
Trumpet	Paul Sharp
Harpsichord	Joseph McHardy
Organ	David Bates

General Manager: Lucy Bending

Producer: Megan Russell

Grants Manager: Harriet Lawrence

Tim Mead
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Beauteous Softness

In an elaborate Baroque landscape of ornament and flamboyance, the songs of Henry Purcell are often models of restraint. This isn't music that shouts to make itself heard or uses tricks to impress, yet still profoundly impacts its listener. This subtlety has always drawn me to this repertoire.

It seems as if all emotion has been distilled into perfectly crafted gestures in which music and text are as one. A slight turn of phrase or small harmonic detail can be heavy with meaning. It is in this rich vein of material that the rewarding interpretive work in this repertoire really lies. The title *Beauteous Softness* (taken from a solo verse from the ode *Now does the glorious day appear*) seems to perfectly encapsulate these glorious subtleties.

While the world was still in lockdown, David Bates and La Nuova Musica invited me to collaborate on their Purcell video series. It was the perfect music with which to collectively emerge from the silence. Inspired by these sessions we committed to exploring further songs together, as well as the best work from Purcell's contemporaries: John Blow, Pelham Humfrey and William Webb. The resulting collection contains old favourites alongside the less familiar and fulfils a long held dream to follow in Alfred Deller's hallowed footsteps and record the astonishing *Plaint* from Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*.

Tim Mead

The contents of this album presents primarily the music of the greatest restoration composer Henry Purcell (1659-1695). A prodigy, Purcell is said to have been composing at a young age, with his first accredited work from around 1670. By that stage, his voice was about to break; when it did, he left the Chapel Royal where he had been a chorister under Pelham Humfrey (1647 or 1648-1674). He then went on to attend Westminster School and became a copyist at Westminster Abbey in 1676. There followed anthems, songs, odes, and music for the theatre, including incidental music to a number of plays. Probably during this period, and certainly before 1689, he completed the masque which we now know as the opera *Dido and Aeneas*, one of the first all-sung operas in English. In 1682, Purcell became organist of the Chapel Royal, and throughout the 1680s was much occupied with producing music for the Chapel and ceremonial music for the Court, some of which appears on this album.

But in these years, Purcell's career also intersected with that of John Blow (1649-1708), as colleagues, master and teacher, and probably friends. Blow was the older composer; he left the Chapel Royal in 1664 before Purcell entered it as a treble but was not sworn in as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal until 1674, succeeding Humfrey as Master of the Children. Purcell by this time had departed, his voice having broken early, and he had become the apprentice of composer, organist, and viol player John Hingston (1612-1683). It seems that during this period, Purcell was taking lessons from Blow, and in 1679, the older composer passed the post of organist of Westminster Abbey to him, a post which he resumed after Purcell's death in 1695. Blow was said to be not without vanity, but this action suggests that he knew talent when he saw it. There was, however, a final twist of hubris, when Blow published a collection of his music in imitation of Purcell's great 1698 collection *Orpheus Britannicus*, thought

vain glorious by many, but in fact, given Blow's personality, probably did so with a genuine desire to be thought the equal of the younger man. The collection, *Amphion Anglicanus*, appeared in 1700 and its contents encompass music from both from Blow's sacred and secular outputs; 'Poor Celadon, he sighs in vain', included on the present album, comes from this collection.

The music here first entices us to a musical feast with *If music be the food of love* (Z. 379). The text by Henry Heveningham (1651-1700) uses the well-known line from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* as its opening but then moves away from the original text to produce a call to love, with the second stanza leading to the 'dying' of sexual ecstasy. The song, which appears in three different versions, may well have been intended for the drinking club 'The Knights of the Toast' of which Heveningham, a soldier and politician, was a member.

From some of Purcell's more formal works comes a selection music from his odes. Purcell wrote these works, together with a series of welcome songs, as occasional pieces to mark events of all kinds: St Cecilia's Day, the Queen's birthday, and Princess Anne's wedding to the Prince of Denmark provided just three of those occasions. Both musically and texturally, the odes are often related to the events they marked, so for one of the early odes, *Fly, bold rebellion* (Z. 324) composed in 1683 and of which the song 'Be welcome then, great Sir' is included here, it is generally thought that its composition marks the foiling of the Rye House Plot, in which both the King and his brother were to be assassinated.

Less dramatically comes 'By beauteous softness' (Z. 332 7/a) from *Now does the glorious day appear* performed probably on 30 April 1689, 'Arise, my muse' (Z. 320 2/a) from *Arise, my muse* performed on 30 April 1690, and 'Crown the altar' (Z. 321/7)

from *Celebrate this festival* performed on 30 April 1693. All three odes were written to celebrate the birthday of Queen Mary. The last two numbers from the odes — 'The pale and purple rose' (Z. 333 6/b) and 'So when the glittering Queen of Night' (Z. 333 11/b) — come from *Of old when heroes thought it base*, a text by Thomas D'Urfey (1653-1723). The work, also known as *The Yorkshire feast song*, was first performed on 27 March 1690 at the annual London dinner of Yorkshire Society. The song 'The pale and purple rose', glorifying the Wars of the Roses, is regarded as one of the best in the piece, with its music evoking a battle underway.

The output of Restoration composers also includes music for contemplation. Purcell's 'In the black dismal dungeon of despair' (Z. 190) from 1688, is a work with words attributed to William Fuller, by then the late Lord Bishop of Lincoln. Humfrey, who had become in January 1667 a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, and

in 1672 succeeded Cooke Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal, produced 'Sleep! Downy sleep! Come, close mine eyes', with words by Thomas Flatman. First published 1672 and titled *Anthem for the evening*, it is one of a set of five devotional songs which, unlike much of Humfrey's output, eschews any indications of dance characteristics. With similar restraint comes Humfrey's setting of John Donne's 'Hymn to God the Father', or 'To Christ', a work published posthumously in the first book of *Harmonia Sacra* in 1688.

After the accession of William and Mary, Purcell's career took a new direction. Most English composers wrote for the theatre, as demonstrated by William Webb (c. 1600-1657), whose stage song 'Powerful Morpheus, let thy charms' is included here and which survives in one of the most famous Restoration manuscripts New York, MS Drexel 4257. Webb was both a tenor and a teacher of singing, but also had experience on the

Court stage, appearing in *The triumph of peace*, James Shirley's masque of 1634 in which he not only sang but played the lute. He also appeared in the band for William Davenant's 1656 opera, *The siege of Rhodes*. His career also included his role as a wait from 1637 in the City of London, and a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal from 1640. Purcell himself had worked in the theatre from a young age; some of the first music he composed for the stage was that for Nathaniel Lee's *Theodosius*. Blow worked in the theatre too, and also set texts for works by Lee, including that of 'Lovely Selina' included here. Written between 1680 and 1683, it was sung in his *Princess of Cleve*. While Court duties dominated his life, Purcell's contribution to the stage was small, but under the new monarchs, the musical activity at Court continued on a much-reduced scale, and the composer turned his attention downstream towards the commercial theatre. His output then included songs, dances, act tunes, and

songs, all for plays and dramattick operas. And it was for the operas — expensive, elaborate spectaculars — that Purcell produced some of his greatest and most memorable music, settings for *Dioclesian*, *King Arthur*, *The Fairy Queen*, and *The Indian Queen*. From *King Arthur* comes the chaconne (Z. 628 1/b), an elaborate dance of the grandest kind, one which makes several appearances in the composer's work, including the great chaconne from *The Fairy Queen*. Similarly consequential is 'The Plaint' from *The Fairy Queen* (Z. 629/40ab), a slow, consequential number on a ground.

Purcell died in 1695, an event which was regarded by the worlds of music and theatre as a catastrophe, particularly for the history of English opera. There were many responses to the composer's loss, but it was Blow who set one of the most important texts, John Dryden's *Ode on the death of Mr Henry Purcell* 'Mark how the lark and linnet sing', from which the

song 'So Ceas'd the rival crew when Purcell came' is taken. Throughout the text of the ode, one can feel Dryden and Blow mourning not only the loss of a friend and colleague, but of his short life from which he 'Alas! Too soon retir'd'.

The last two works by Purcell, 'Vouchsafe O Lord', from *Te Deum and Jubilate* (Z. 232 1/k) and *Evening Hymn* (Z. 193) offer us contrasting perspectives on Purcell's music. Purcell's *Te Deum and Jubilate* was written in 1694 for that year's St Cecilia's Day, has been described as 'essentially a new kind of church music', a *Te Deum* is a large work, designed to impress the public and to make the case for the importance of such concerted works in the face of King William's Puritan austerity. 'Vouchsafe, O Lord', however, is an intimate moment in the otherwise slightly bombastic work. *Evening Hymn* of 1688, with a text by William Fuller, Bishop of Lincoln, is probably Purcell's best known and most loved song. It is a touching piece

of great calmness with a mesmerising ground bass, and forms a touching and elegiac end to a musical journey.

Michael Burden



David Bates (left) and La Nuova Musica
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Song texts

Henry Purcell

If music be the food of love

(text by Henry Heveningham)

If music be the food of love,
Sing on till I am fill'd with joy;
For then my list'ning soul you move
With 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.

John Blow

Lovely Selina

(text by Nathaniel Lee)

Lovely Selina, innocent and free
From all the dangerous arts of love,
Thus in a melancholy grove
Enjoy'd the sweetness of her privacy.
Till envious gods, designing to undo her,
Despatch'd the swain not unlike them to woo
her.

It was not long e'er the design did take:
A gentle youth, born to persuade,
Deceiv'd the too, too easy maid.
Her scrip and garland soon she did forsake,
And rashly told the secrets of her heart,
Which the fond man would ever more impart.

False Florimel, joy of my heart, said she,
'Tis hard to love, and love in vain;
To love, and not be lov'd again.
And why should love and prudence disagree?
Pity ye pow'rs, that sit at ease above,
If e'er you know what 'tis to be in love!

Henry Purcell

The pale and purple rose

(text by Thomas D'Urfey)

The pale and the purple rose,
That after cost so many blows
When English Barons fought,
A prize so dearly bought
By the fam'd worthies of that shire,
Still best by sword and shield defended were.

Pelham Humfrey

A Hymn to God the Father

(text by John Donne)

Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which is my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt Thou forgive those sins through which
I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done;
For I have more.

Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sins their door?

Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in a score?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done;
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by ThyselF that at my death Thy
Son
Shall shine as He shines now and heretofore:
And having done that, Thou hast done;
I fear no more.

Henry Purcell

In the black dismal dungeon of despair

(text by William Fuller)

In the black dismal dungeon of despair,
Pin'd with tormenting care,
Wrack'd with my fears,
Drown'd in my tears,
With dreadful expectation of my doom
And certain horrid judgement soon to come,
Lord, here I lie,
Lost to all hope of liberty,

Hence never to remove
 But by a miracle of Love,
 Which I scarce dare hope for, or expect,
 Being guilty of so long, so great neglect.
 Fool that I was, worthy a sharper rod,
 To slight thy courting, O my God!
 For thou did'st woo, intreat, and grieve,
 Did'st beg me to be happy and to live;
 But I would not; I chose to dwell
 With Death, far from thee,
 Too near to Hell.
 But is there no redemption, no relief?
 Jesu! Thou sav'd'st a Magdalen, a thief;
 Thy mercy, Lord, once more advance,
 O give me such a glance
 As Peter had; thy sweet, kind, chiding look
 Will change my heart, as it did melt that rock;
 Look on me, sweet Jesu, as thou did'st on
 him;
 'Tis more than to create, thus, to redeem.

 7

Henry Purcell

Be welcome then, great Sir

(anonymous)

Be welcome then, great Sir, to constant vows
 Of loyalty never to vary more.
 Welcome to all that obedience owes
 To a Prince so mild and gentle in pow'r.

 8

William Webb

Powerful Morpheus

(anonymous)

Powerful Morpheus, let thy charms
 Wrap the world in slumber's arms
 And Music's soft delicious strains,
 Thou that both heart and care doth change
 With thy sweet composed numbers,
 Rock each mortal into slumbers.
 So no ear or eye shall know
 Where we are or what we do.

Watching Circe, play and sing,
 Touch your sweet enchanting string
 That Phoebus may in Thetis' lap

Outsleep himself but one hour's nap;
 Let his bright all-seeing fires
 Rouse us from our wish'd desires.
 Lovers in their stol'n delight
 Wish it were perpetual night.

 9

Henry Purcell

Arise, my muse

(text by Thomas D'Urfey)

Arise, my muse, and to thy tuneful lyre
 Compose a mighty ode
 Whose charming nature may inspire
 The bosom of some listening God
 To consecrate thy bold attempting verse,
 And Gloriana's fame disperse
 O'er the wide confines of the universe.

 10

Henry Purcell

So when the glitt'ring Queen of Night

(text by Thomas D'Urfey)

So when the glitt'ring Queen of Night
 With black eclipse is shadow'd o'er
 The globe that swells with sullen pride,

Her dazzling charms to hide,
 Does but a little time abide,
 And then each ray is brighter than before.

 11

John Blow

So ceas'd the rival crew when Purcell came

(text by John Dryden)

So ceas'd the rival crew when Purcell came;
 They sung no more, or only sung his fame;
 Struck dumb, they all admir'd the matchless
 man,
 Alas too soon retir'd, as he too late began.

 12

Henry Purcell

Vouchsafe, O Lord

(Book of Common Prayer)

Vouchsafe, O Lord: to keep us this day
 without sin.
 O Lord, have mercy upon us: have mercy
 upon us.
 O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us: as our
 trust is in thee.

Henry Purcell***O let me weep***

(anonymous)

O let me weep, for ever weep,
 My eyes no more shall welcome sleep;
 I'll hide me from the sight of day,
 And sigh, and sigh my soul away.
 He's gone, he's gone, his loss deplore;
 And I shall never see him more.

Henry Purcell***By beauteous softness***

(text by Thomas Shadwell)

By beauteous softness mixed with majesty,
 An empire over every heart she gains;
 And from her awful power none could be
 free.
 She with such sweetness and such justice
 reigns.

John Blow***Poor Celadon, he sighs in vain***

(anonymous)

Poor Celadon, he sighs in vain;
 The fair Euginia must not love,
 Nor has a shepherd reason to complain
 When tow'ring thoughts his ruin prove.

But Celadon his stars will often blame
 With all the passion of the mind and tongue.
 Complaining words and notes increase his
 flame;
 Thy nymph won't see it, but commends the
 song.

Alas, 'tis plain what crosses still his fate;
 What, can a verse or note avail?
 Birth, fortune are as hills of greatest height;
 They overlook a lowly dale.

Henry Purcell***Crown the altar***

(text by Nahum (Nathaniel) Tate)

Crown the altar, deck the shrine,
 Behold the bright seraphic throng
 Prepar'd our harmony to join,
 The Sacred Quire attend too long.

Pelham Humfrey***Sleep, downy sleep, come close mine eyes***

(anonymous)

Sleep, downy sleep, come close mine eyes,
 Tired with beholding vanities.
 Welcome, sweet sleep that drives away
 The toils and follies of the day.

On thy soft bosom will I lie,
 Forget the world and learn to die.
 O Israel's watchful shepherd spread
 Teams of angels round thy bed.

Let not the spirits of the air
 Whilst I slumber me ensnare.
 But guard the suppliant free from harm,

Clasped in thy everlasting arms.

Clouds and thick darkness is thy throne,
 Thy wonderful pavilion.
 O dart from thence a shining ray,
 And then my midnight shall be day.

Thus when the morn in crimson dressed
 Breaks through the windows of the east.
 My hymns of thankful praises shall arise,
 Like incense of the morning sacrifice.

Henry Purcell***Evening hymn***

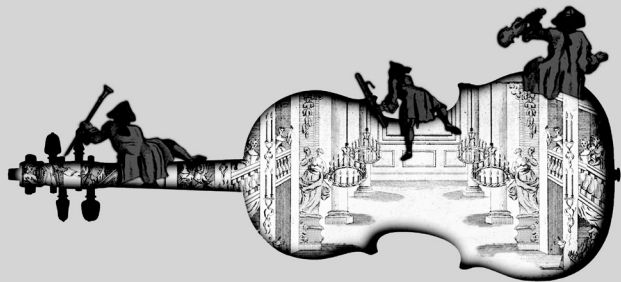
(William Fuller)

Now that the sun hath veiled his light,
 And bid the world goodnight,
 To the soft bed my body I dispose,
 But where shall my soul repose?
 Dear God, even in thy arms;
 And can there be any so sweet security?
 Then to thy rest, O my soul,
 And singing, praise the mercy
 That prolongs thy days.
 Alleluja

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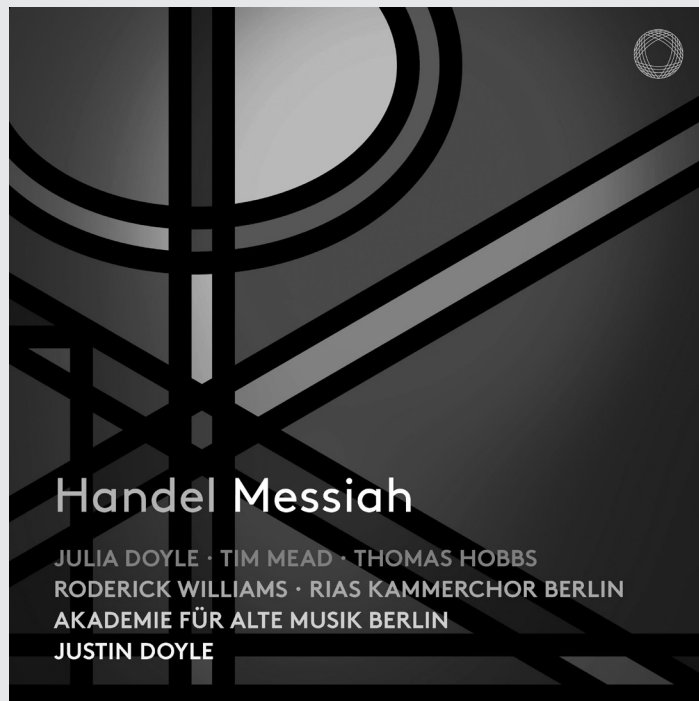
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This album was recorded at All Saints' Church, London, 22-27 March 2022.

This recording was supported by Maren Brandes.

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Song texts collated by James Halliday

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