DUNEDIN CONSORT

Through the Night with Henry Purcell

Enjoy a night out in 1690s London with music by Henry Purcell and friends

Nicholas Mulroy director
Dunedin Consort Strings



5 - 9 February 2025
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PROGRAMME

Henry Purcell	Fantazia Upon One Note, Z.745	*3 mins*
Henry Purcell	An Evening Hymn, Z.193	*5 mins*
Henry Purcell	'See, even Night is here', *The Fairy-Queen,* Z.629	*4 mins*
Henry Purcell	O solitude, my sweetest choice, Z.406	*6 mins*
Georg Muffat	Sonata II, Armonico Tributo	*14 mins*
Henry Purcell	The Plaint, *The Fairy-Queen* Z.629	*8 mins*
Henry Purcell	'So when the glitt'ring Queen of Night', *Of old, when heroes thought it base*, Z.333	*4 mins*

interval

Henry Purcell	Fantazia V in 4 parts	*4 mins*
Henry Purcell	'Be Welcome then, Great Sir', *Fly, bold rebellion,* Z.324	*3 mins*
Henry Purcell	'The sparrow and gentle dove', *From hardy Climes and dangerous Toils of War*, Z.325	*5 mins*
Giovani Battista Draghi	Sinfonia, *From harmony, from heav'nly harmony*	*5 mins*
Henry Purcell	Beauty thou scene of love, *Welcome to all the pleasures*, Z.339	*3 mins*
Henry Purcell	Curtain Tune on a ground, *Timon of Athens*, Z.632	*2 mins*
Henry Purcell	'By beauteous softness', *Now does the glorious day appear*, Z.332	*4 mins*
Georg Muffat	Sonata I, Armonico Tributo	*14 mins*
Henry Purcell	'Now the Night is chased away', The Fairy-Queen	*2 mins*

Nicholas Mulroy director

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Programme Note

Nights can be many things. Sometimes lonely, sometimes intimate. Sometimes full of waking, sometimes full of sleeping. There's a witchiness to the night, whether that magic spooks or charms us. Tonight's programme explores all these competing possibilities. Nicholas Mulroy has chosen songs by **Henry Purcell (1659–1695)** to keep the watch through one long night.

Our night begins with Henry's ***Fantazia Upon One Note***. As the title suggests, there is an etymological link to fantasies, dreams, and the imagination. The 'one note' is a repeated C played by the second viola throughout, as the other players wind their harmonies around this constant.

From this music that anticipates dreams, we turn to ***An Evening Hymn***, a beautifully prayerful meditation on going to bed and the almost ecstatic confidence the author places in God as they sleep. Next comes the first of several excerpts from Purcell's music for ***The Fairy-Queen***, a 1692 adaptation of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: ***See, even Night is here*** details the power of Night to calm and invite 'pleasing Dreams'.

O Solitude, a setting of Katherine Philip's translation of Antoine Girard de Saint-Amant's (1594–1661) 'La solitude', revels in the opportunity that night, along with other remote and quiet places, gives for visionary contemplation. Purcell's extraordinary setting of the text is one of many tonight that uses what's called a 'ground bass'. The technique repeats a bass line of several bars hypnotically and—especially in Purcell's hands—often imperceptibly throughout a piece, even as the rest of music plays on around it. In *O Solitude*, we hear the ground twenty-eight times, but the effect is far subtler than that count suggests.

Next, we come to the first music not by Henry Purcell in tonight's concert. **Georg Muffat (1653–1704)** was of Scottish descent—his family were once Moffats—but he was a quintessentially continental composer, born in Savoy, studying in Paris, later working in Germany, and then traveling on to Italy. These experiences came together in the five sonatas of ***Armonico Tributo*** in which he attempted to reconcile the distinct musical idioms of Germany, France and Italy in a single work. Heard in tonight's programme, the double violas and French styling highlight what crossed the Channel to Purcell and the rest of London in the seventeenth-century.

Returning to ***The Fairy-Queen***, we next hear ***The Plaint***, one of its most performed and extended extracts. A distraught young woman laments her departed lover and declares she'll weep through the night for him for ever more. We end the half with the first piece taken from one of Purcell's many odes for state and civic occasions. It's fair to say that these commissions often presented Purcell with poetry to set

that was less than first class. That combination of slightly suspect verse and their intensely topical references means that performances of those odes complete present something of a challenge. Nonetheless, they contain some astonishing music and ***So when the glitt'ring Queen of Night***, in praise of the Moon from *The Yorkshire Feast Song*, weaves together the solo voice and strings with a fittingly radiant gleam.

The second half begins with another ***Fantazia***, this time in four parts. His *Fantazias* come from early in his career and hark back to preceding generations of English musicmaking and composition. It was an actively old-fashioned choice to write for a consort of viols rather than the more up-to-date combination of violins, violas, and cello.

The second half is filled with more excerpts from Purcell's Odes, a roll call of some of his most spectacularly imaginative and beautiful writing. All are variants on his trusted pattern of an extended passage for solo voice, supported tonight by cello and theorbo, that then melts into a string ritornello that fills out and develops that same musical material. This might make them sound all the same, but somehow Purcell's gift is to vary the various elements just enough to make each a gem in its own right.

They're broken up first by music from **Giovanni Batista Draghi (1640 – 1708)**. He was one of the great number of continental musicians who made London their home, drawn by the prospect of earning a living at the intersection of court and church life. The ***Sinfonia*** we hear tonight comes from '*From harmony, from heav'nly harmony*', his 1684 Ode for St Cecilia's Day. Celebrating the patron saint of music, this opening movement conjures a sense of order rising from a sort of primaeval as music creates meaning at the very start of creation.

Purcell's chromatic and pulsating ***Curtain Tune on a Ground*** comes from yet another Shakespearean connection, a contemporary revival of *Timon of Athens*, in which the Bard's poetry was fairly butchered by Thomas Shadwell. The agitation of this adrenalin hit is soothed by one final extract from an ode, ***By beauteous softness***, which in its original context celebrated the birthday of Queen Mary in 1689.

Sonata I from Muffat's Armonico Tributo brings a dawn-like perkiness to proceedings, in contrast with the haar-like uncertainty of the sonata we heard in the first half. We draw to a close with a final piece from *The Fairy-Queen*, ***Now the Night is chased away*** bringing in the morning light and a jubilant end to night's reign.

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Texts

Henry Purcell *An Evening Hymn* Z.193
texts **Bishop William Fuller** (1608 – 1675)

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.
Halleluia.

Henry Purcell *See, even Night is here*, Z.629

See, even Night herself is here,
To favour your design;
And all her peaceful train is near,
That men to sleep incline.
Let noise and care,
Doubt and despair,
Envy and spite
(the fiends' delight)
Be ever banish'd hence.
Let soft repose,
Her eyelids close;
And murmuring streams,
Bring pleasing dreams;
Let nothing stay to give offence.

Henry Purcell *O solitude, my sweetest choice*, Z.406
texts **Katherine Philips** (1631 – 1664)

O solitude, my sweetest choice!
Places devoted to the night,
Remote from tumult and from noise.
How ye my restless thoughts delight,
O solitude, my sweetest choice!

O heav'ns! What content is mine
To see these trees ,which have appear'd
From the nativity of time,
And which all ages have rever'd
To look today as fresh and green
As when their beauties first were seen.

O, how agreeable a sight
These hanging mountains do appear,
Which th' unhappy would invite
To finish all their sorrows here,
When their hard fate makes them endure
Such woes as only death can cure.

O, how I solitude adore!
That element of noblest wit,
Where I have learnt Apollo's lore,
Without the pains to study it.
For thy sake I in love am grown,
With what thy fancy doth pursue;
But when I think upon my own,
I hate it for that reason too,
Because it needs must hinder me
From seeing and from serving thee.
O solitude, O how I solitude adore!

Henry Purcell The Plaint, ex Z.629

O let me weep, forever 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 *So when the glitt'ring Queen of Night,* Z.333
texts **Thomas D'Urfey** (1653 – 1723)

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.

Interval

Henry Purcell *Be Welcome then, Great Sir*, Z.324

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

Henry Purcell *The sparrow and gentle Dove*, Z.325

The Sparrow and the gentle Dove
(Sacrifices fit for love)
Roses sweet and Myrtle bring,
Beauties of the blooming Spring,
Into sacred Garlands twine
To offer up to Venus' shrine,
That the pleasures they possess
May still increase and still be fresh,
And by a more exalted love
Each happy hour to come improve

Henry Purcell *Beauty thou scene of love* Z.339
texts **Christopher Fishburn** (1683 – 1683)

Beauty, thou scene of love,
And virtue thou innocent fire,
Made by the powers above
To temper the heat of desire,
Music that fancy employs
In rapture of innocent flame,
We offer with lute and with voice
To Cecilia, Cecilia's bright name.

Henry Purcell By beauteous softness, ex Z.332
texts **Thomas Shadwell** (1642 - 1692)

By beauteous softness mixt 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:

Henry Purcell Now the night is chas'd away, ex Z.629

Now the night is chas'd away,
All salute the rising sun;
'Tis that happy, happy day,
The birthday of King Oberon.

Biographies



Nicholas Mulroy

Born in Liverpool, Nicholas read Modern Languages at Cambridge and studied voice at London's Royal Academy of Music. As a tenor, he has sung at Carnegie Hall, the Sydney Opera House, the Paris Opéra, and Boston Symphony Hall. He has sung Bach's Evangelist, in both the John and Matthew Passions, with many of the leading conductors of the day, including Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Marc Minkowski, Richard Tognetti, Hans-Christoph Rademann and Laurence Cummings. He has been a frequent guest at Wigmore Hall, singing repertoire from Schubert to Stephen Hough, and from Purcell to Fauré. Nicholas has sung at opera houses including Glyndebourne, Paris' Opéra Comique, Copenhagen, Toulouse. His discography encompasses music across seven centuries, including Handel's Messiah and Acis and Galatea, Monteverdi Vespers, and Astor Piazzolla's unique masterpiece María de Buenos Aires.

Alongside his singing career, over the last ten years Nicholas has developed his work as a director. He was Director of Chapel Music at Girton College, Cambridge (where he is now a Musician in Residence), and is Associate Director of the Cambridge University Chamber Choir, whom he has led in a wide repertoire, and his work as a guest conductor has taken him to the USA, Malta, Poland, and Spain. As a singer-director, he has performed Bach's Passions, Purcell odes, Handel oratorios, and is devoted to the collaborative energy and artistic autonomy that this approach, at its best, brings. He has led Dunedin Consort in several programmes, and is delighted to be the group's Associate Director, thereby extending a connection with the group that stretches back almost twenty years.



Dunedin Consort

Dunedin Consort is one of the world's leading Baroque ensembles, recognised for its vivid and insightful performances and recordings. Formed in 1995 and named after Din Eidyn, the ancient Celtic name for Edinburgh Castle, Dunedin Consort's ambition is to allow listeners to hear early music afresh, and to couple an inquisitive approach to historical performance with a commitment to commissioning and performing new music. Under the direction of John Butt, the ensemble has earned two coveted Gramophone Awards, a BBC Music Magazine Award, and a Grammy nomination. In 2021 it was the recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society Ensemble Award.

Dunedin Consort performs regularly at major festivals and venues across the UK and abroad, and enjoys close associations with the BBC Proms, Wigmore Hall, Edinburgh International Festival and Lammermuir Festival. Alongside its performance and recording work, Dunedin Consort is committed to a wide-ranging education programme both in schools and in the wider community. In inspiring and encouraging musical participation, developing vocal skills and fostering a love of classical music, historical performance and new music, Dunedin Consort aims to develop and nurture its potential audience and to encourage the performers of the future.

Dunedin Consort is an enthusiastic champion and commissioner of contemporary music, and in recent years has premiered a new set of orchestral dances at the BBC Proms, a new opera by Errollyn Wallen at the Barbican Centre, and new choral music for its a cappella consort. In 2024 it premiered a new guitar concerto by Cassandra Miller for Sean Shibe, the first instalment of a 3-year co-commissioning series which will see further new music by David Fennessy and Tansy Davies.

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