

2024
YORK
EARLY
MUSIC
FESTIVAL
6 – 13 JULY

Helen Charlston *mezzo-soprano*

Toby Carr *lute*

Dowland: Lend ears and tears

Undercroft, Merchant Adventurers' Hall

Wednesday 10 July 9.30pm

Helen Charlston *mezzo-soprano*

Toby Carr *lute*

Dowland: Lend ears and tears

Prelude*	Ben Rowarth b.1992
Sorrow, sorrow stay	John Dowland 1563-1626
Dream *	Rowarth
If that a sinner's sighs	Dowland
Preludium	Dowland
I saw my lady weep	Dowland
Can doleful notes to measured accents set? *	Anna Semple b.1997
Weep you no more, sad fountains	Dowland
Interlude *	Rowarth & Semple
Time, cruel Time	John Danyel 1564-1626
Prelude *	Semple
The lowest trees have tops	Dowland
In darkness let me dwell	Dowland
Echo *	Rowarth
Now, o now I needs must part	Dowland
Postlude *	Semple

* *first performance*

'and though the title dost promise teares, unfit guests in these joyfull times, yet no doubt pleasant are the teares which Musicke weepes, neither are teares shed alwayes in sorrow, but sometime in joy and gladnesse.'

Dedication to *Lachrymae or Seaven Teares* (1604)

There is no doubt that **John Dowland** was the greatest English composer of lute songs. He defined the genre, combining elements from ballads, dance music, consort songs and madrigals with the Elizabethan fashion for melancholy. There is a performative, even competitive element to these melancholy songs, a feeling of 'my sadness is more profound than yours', mirrored in the depth of musical expression. Tonight's programme is a celebration of that extraordinary collision of music and emotion: with seemingly simple forces these songs have a unique directness which beguiles audience and performers alike.

Tonight, we take songs from three of the four of Dowland's published books of songs. Simple songs built on instrumental structures from his first book, such as ***Now, o now I needs must part***; dramatic scenes with heightened declamatory gestures echoing changes in Elizabethan theatre at the time, ***In darkness let me dwell***; dense contrapuntal weaving of ***If that a sinners sighs*** from his last book 'The Pilgrims Solace'.

We also meet **John Danyel**. An exact contemporary of Dowland, there is nothing known of Danyel's musical activity until 1603 when he was awarded a degree from Oxford University. By 1606, when his only book of songs was printed, he was employed as household musician and tutor to the Greene family in Milton, Oxfordshire, and it appears that many of his songs and lute solos were written for his pupil Anne. Danyel's music is characterized by imaginative harmonic writing and beautiful vivid poetry, often setting sonnets written by himself or his brother Samuel, as in ***Time, Cruel Time***.

Throughout Dowland's life, and beyond, his songs so captivated listening ears that they found themselves transformed (or parodied) in many ways. Dowland began this himself: many of his famous galliards written as lute solos recall his own songs: ***Frog Galliard*** is one such, using the same tune as *Now, o now I needs must part*. His lyrics continually found their way into contemporary stage plays, and several of his songs entered the ballad repertoire. Translated versions of songs exist in Dutch and Italian sources, and one of the songs from his first publication morphed into a famous English country dance song that was heard in New York as late as 1767.

A fascination with Dowland's output and the potential for its metamorphosis continues to the modern day. The twentieth century brought arrangements by Percy Grainger, and Benjamin Britten's *Nocturnal, after John Dowland* written for guitarist Julian Bream uses one of his songs in theme and variation. In homage to this history of recreation we commissioned Ben Rowarth and Anna Semple to write new songs that use Dowland's existing music as a launchpad to their own experimentation with this special combination of voice and lute.

In commissioning these new songs, we encouraged both composers to draw on the old songs we had chosen in as many ways as they could imagine, resulting in an extraordinary illumination of the special qualities of the older music. Dowland's wealth of solo lute music is mirrored in **Prelude** written for solo lute, and turned on its head in **Postlude** when the lute drops out leaving the singer alone in the final song of the evening. **Echo** and **Interlude** both grow out of the final phrases of the Dowland settings precede them, and play with the material and our ears throughout so that we lose clarity over where the sixteenth century stopped and the twenty-first century began.

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Prelude

[Come to me] in the silence of the night;
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
[Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright]
As sunlight [on a stream];
Come back in tears,
O memory, hope, [love of finished years].
(from *Echo* by Christina Rossetti)

Sorrow, sorrow stay

Sorrow sorrow stay, lend true repentant teares,
to a woefull wretched wight,
hence, dispaire with thy tormenting feares:
O doe not my poore heart affright,
pitty, help now or never,
mark me not to endlesse paine,
alas I am condempned ever,
no hope, no help ther doth remaine,
but downe, down, down I fall,
and arise I never shall.

Dream

Oh dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
(from *Echo* by Christina Rossetti)

If that a sinner's sighes, bee Angels food

If that a sinners sighes, bee Angels food,
or that repentaunt teares bee Angels wine,
accept O Lord in this most pensive moode,
these hartie sighes and faithfull teares of mine:
That went with Peter forth most sinfullie,
but not with Peter wept most bitterlie.

I saw my lady weep

I saw my lady weep,
And Sorrow proud to be advanced so,
In those fair eyes where all perfections keep,
Her face was full of woe;
But such a woe (believe me) as wins more hearts,
Than Mirth can do with her enticing parts.

Sorrow was there made fair,
And Passion wise, tears a delightful thing,
Silence beyond all speech a wisdom rare,
She made her sighs to sing,
And all things with so sweet a sadness move,
As made my heart at once both grieve and love.

Can doleful notes to measured accents set?

Can doleful notes to measured accents set?
Express unmeasured griefs that time forget?
(From John Danyel *Can doleful notes*)

Weep you no more, sad fountains

Weep you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heav'n's sun doth gently waste.
But my sun's heav'nly eyes
View not your weeping
That now lies sleeping,
Softly, softly, now softly lies sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that Peace begets.
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at e'en he sets?
Rest you then, rest, sad eyes,
Melt not in weeping
while she lies sleeping,
Softly, softly, now softly lies sleeping.

Time, cruel Time

Time, cruel Time, canst thou subdue that brow
That conquers all but thee, and thee too stays,
As if she were exempt from scythe or bow,
From love and years, unsubject to decays?
Or art thou grown in league with those fair eyes,
That they might aid thee to consume our days?
Or dost thou love her for her cruelties,
Being merciless like thee that no man weighs?
Then do so still, although she makes no 'steem
Of days nor years, but lets them run in vain.
Hold still thy swift-winged hours, that wond'ring seem
To gaze on her, even to turn back again;
And do so still, although she nothing cares.
Do as I do, love her although in vain.
Hold still. Yet, O I fear, at unawares
Thou wilt beguile her though thou seem'st so kind.

The lowest trees have tops

The lowest trees have tops, the ant her gall,
The fly her spleen, the little spark his heat,
And slender hairs cast shadows though but small,
And bees have stings although they be not great.
Seas have their source, and so have shallow springs,
And love is love in beggars and in kings.

Where waters smoothest run, deep are the fords,
The dial stirs, yet none perceives it move:
The firmest faith is in the fewest words,
The turtles cannot sing, and yet they love,
True hearts have eyes and ears no tongues to speak:
They hear, and see, and sigh, and then they break.

In darkness let me dwell

In darknesse let mee dwell, the ground shall sorrow be,
The rooffe Dispaire to barr all cheerfull light from mee,
The wals of marble blacke that moistned still shall weepe,
My musicke hellish jarring sounds to banish friendly sleepe.
Thus wedded to my woes, and bedded to my Tombe,
O let me living die, till death, till death do come.

Echo

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give
 Speak low, lean low,
(From *Echo* by Christina Rossetti)

Now, o now I needs must part

Now, o now I needs must part,
Parting though I absent mourn.
Absence can no joy impart;
Joy once fled cannot return.
While I live I needs must love,
Love lives not when Hope is gone.
Now at last Despair doth prove,
Love divided loveth none.

Sad despair doth drive me hence;
This despair unkindness sends.
If that parting be offence,
It is she which then offends.

Dear when I from thee am gone,
Gone are all my joys at once,
I lov'd thee and thee alone,
In whose love I joyed once.
And although your sight I leave,

Sight wherein my joys do lie.
Till that death doth sense bereave,
Never shall affection die.
Dear, if I do not return,
Love and I shall die together.
For my absence never mourn
Whom you might have joyed ever;
Part we must though now I die,
Die I do to part with you.
Him despair doth cause to lie
Who both liv'd and dieth true.

Postlude

Silence, lock up my words
And scorn these idle sounds of air.
(from John Danyel *Eyes, Look no more*)

Toby Carr

Lutenist and guitarist Toby Carr is known as a versatile and engaging artist, working with some of the finest musicians in the business. While studying the classical guitar at Trinity Laban he was introduced to historical plucked instruments, an interest he pursued during a postgraduate degree at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, graduating in 2016 and welcomed back as a professor in 2021. Now in demand as a soloist, chamber musician and continuo player Toby has performed with most of the principal period instrument ensembles in the UK and beyond, as well as with many symphony orchestras, opera companies and ballet companies. He collaborates with singers such as Nicholas Mulroy, Alexander Chance and Helen Charlston. Notable recordings include *Battle Cry* with Helen Charlston for Delphian and *Drop not, mine eyes* with Alexander Chance for Linn. He is a member of Ceruleo, Lux Musicae London and Ensemble Augelletti, works frequently with vocal groups Fieri Consort and Ensemble Pro Victoria, and has appeared on recordings with all of these groups.

tobycarr.co.uk

Helen Charlston

Helen Charlston was recently a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist (2021-23), and a recipient of the 2021 Ferrier Loveday Song Prize. In 2023 she won a *Gramophone* Award for Best Concept Album, and collected the Vocal award at the *BBC Music Magazine Awards*, both for her second Delphian album: *Battle Cry* – the only recording that year to win at both ceremonies.

Helen was a Rising Star of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment 2017-2019, and was selected for Le Jardin des Voix academy with Les Arts Florissants in 2021. Helen's other accolades include the first prize in the 2018 Handel Singing Competition and finalist in the Grange Festival International Singing Competition. In July 2022 Helen was announced as one of Classic FM's Rising Stars (30 under 30). In the 2022/23 Season she made her debut at Versailles Royal Opera singing Dido in Purcell *Dido & Aeneas*, and at Grange Festival singing Sorceress/Spirit in the same opera. This season she covers the title role in Charpentier *Médée* at Opéra national de Paris.

On the concert platform in 2023/24, Helen premieres a new song cycle written for her as a companion piece to Schumann *Dichterliebe* by Héloïse Werner at the Oxford International Song Festival and Wigmore Hall, reunites with Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Richard Egarr to perform Bach *B minor Mass*, tours Bach's *St John Passion* with Les Arts Florissants in Asia, records Britten *Phaedra* live in concert with BBC Philharmonic, sings Handel's *Messiah* with the Warsaw Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic, and Britten Sinfonia, and Monteverdi's *Vespers* in Geneva with Ensemble I Gemelli.

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