

2025  
**YORK**  
EARLY  
MUSIC  
FESTIVAL

**Helen Charlston** *mezzo soprano*

**Toby Carr** *theorbo*

*Heaven*

*& Hell*

**Merchant Adventurers' Hall**

**Wednesday 9 July 6.30pm**

**Helen Charlston** *mezzo soprano*

**Toby Carr** *theorbo*

## ***Heaven & Hell***

### **HEAVEN ....**

#### **The Garden of Eden**

Come All ye songsters of the sky  
(from *The Fairy Queen*, Z.629)

**Henry Purcell** 1659-95

Begl'Occh', Bel Seno, Bei Crini, e Bella Bocca,  
op. 2 no. 2

**Barbara Strozzi** 1619-77

Sweeter than Roses (from *Pausanias*, Z.585)

**Purcell**

#### **On Angels' Wings**

O Maria, op. 5 no. 7

**Strozzi**

Blessed Virgin's Expostulation, Z.196

**Purcell**

#### **The Fall**

Song of the Olive Garden

**Elliot Park** b. 1994

Lord, what is man? Z.192

**Purcell**

#### **Love's Radiant Light**

Ah! Laissez-moi rêver, H.441

**Marc-Antoine Charpentier** 1643-1704

Le doux silence de nos bois

**Honoré D'Ambruys** fl. late 17<sup>th</sup> century

### ***Interval***

### **.... OR HELL?**

#### **Fate's tempting hand**

Objets Agreeable from *Médée*, H.491

**Charpentier**

In the black dismal dungeon of despair, Z.190

**Purcell**

Celle qui fait tout mon tourment, H.450

**Charpentier**

Purgatory: A Waiting Room  
*World Premiere* \*

**Anna Disley-Simpson** b. 1996

**Fallen Angels**

Toccata XI  
from *libro quarto d'intavolatura di chitarone*

**Giovanni Geronimo Kapsberger**  
c.1580-1651

Lucifer, Caelestis olim

**Giacomo Carissimi** 1605-74

Voglio di vita uscir, SV 337

**Claudio Monteverdi** 1567-1643

**I fear no more**

A Hymne to the God and Father

**Pelham Humfrey** 1647/48-1674

Sans frayeur dans ce bois, H.467

**Charpentier**

\* *Commissioned by York Early Music Festival for Helen Charlston & Toby Carr with support from the Hinrichsen Foundation and an Anonymous Donor*



**Queens Hotel**  
**York**

*We are grateful to the Queens Hotel for supporting this concert*

**This concert is being recorded by BBC Radio 3 for broadcast on 27 July and 3 August.**

**We would be grateful if you could silence mobile phones and any electronic devices, and avoid coughing whilst the musicians are performing – thank you!**

When I had made man at my will,  
I gave him wits himself to wis,  
And Paradise I put him till,  
And bade him hold it all as his.  
But of the tree of good and ill  
I said, 'What time thou eats of this,  
Man, thou speeds thyself to spill—  
Thou art brought out of all thy bliss'.

### **The Last Judgement : York Mystery Plays**

Tonight's concert is a collision of place, purpose and performance. The Merchant Adventurers were vital sponsors of the York Mystery Plays in their medieval heyday, dramatizing biblical stories in a series of pageants across the city. They sponsored the final play: The Last Judgement, so tonight's exploration of the age-old battle between good and evil feels perfect for their Hall. The human obsession with what happens to our soul beyond our earthly life provides endless vivid possibilities of poetry and music and has been a wonderful musical exploration for us in programming, but it is even more thrilling for us to perform these songs as part of that ancient tradition of storytelling.

We begin in Paradise, or more specifically the luscious Shakespearean dream world of Purcell's *Fairy Queen*. **Come all ye songsters of the sky** is our first invocation for goodness over all other things, and a reminder in the healing possibility of the beautiful world around us, keeping us from harm.

A lover's eyes are the doors to paradise in **Begl' Occhi, Bel Seno, Bei Crini, e Bella Bocca**. Although best known for her elongated cantata form, Strozzi was also extremely adept at writing strophic settings, and this is wonderful example of her incisive style. *Bacci* (kisses) from this *bella bocca* (beautiful mouth) linger in **Sweeter than Roses**, Purcell's ode to the transformative power of love. As we follow his florid melismas and triumphant triple time dance, there is no doubt we have found Heaven on Earth.

Of the eight surviving books of Strozzi's music, just one is dedicated to sacred music. **O Maria** is a cantata of devotion to the Virgin Mary. The melismatic refrain *O Maria quam pulchra es* (how beautiful you are) is heard three times in total until the joy of devotion takes over and the final chorus morphs into an effervescent Alleluia.

**Lord, what is man?** and **The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation** were both published in volume 2 of *Harmonia Sacra*. Similar in style, both open with an

extended passage of recitative with twisting harmonic diversions mirroring the endless questions posed in the texts. In **The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation**, Mary is caught between faith and doubt as she tries whole heartedly to live out her trust in God despite the terror she feels. William Fuller's **Lord, what is man?** is an musical portrayal of the disparity between 'poor tormented man', so often stuck in the bottom of the vocal register, and the rising glory of the Son of God.

Written in 2021 for Toby Carr as part of the Theorbo Today project, **Song of the Olive Garden** is a meditation for solo theorbo after a poem by Harry Cochrane. The text depicts the Agony of Christ from the sympathetic but detached view of a nearby olive tree. The plainsong hymn *In monte olivis consito* is used as a cantus firmus in the bass throughout.

To finish the first half, we return to our pastoral idyll in the seventeenth-century world of French *airs de cour* (courtly song). **Ah! Laissez-moi rêver** brings a moment to dream of fidelity and **Le doux silence de nos bois** brings a truly rose-tinted tale of love. In paradise, nothing can break the enchantment of the one who fulfils our hearts desire. 'Let us not lose a moment of these beautiful days: a time for pleasure and for tender love.'

There is no doubt that we have fallen very low in **In the black dismal dungeon of despair**. Purcell's musical freedom makes the physical agony and mental confusion of Fuller's doom-laden text inescapable. The soul chastises itself for resisting help from God, for neglecting Love and choosing a life of guilt. Yet we soon realise it is hope that is inescapable not doom. In the final section, the singer's cries of 'Jesu', calm previous anguish and pain.

Whilst we started this evening by cherishing Heaven in the eyes, lips and love of a lover, Charpentier now reminds us there is Hell on Earth too. In **Celle qui fait tout mon tourment** love only brings loss and madness. The singer gets stuck time and time again on the same refrain, looking for new answers but there is no chance of breaking free.

**Purgatory: A Waiting Room** explores our journey through the afterlife with elements of playfulness, introspection, and an unexpected twist: the power of choice. Through a character confronting her audience with the ultimate decision – eternal bliss or damnation – it delves into themes of grief, acceptance, and the paradox of free will.

Kapsperger was influential in the development of lute music in the early seventeenth century as well as a composer of sacred and secular vocal music. His **Toccata XI** is exploratory in every sense of the word and the perfect introduction

to the world of Italianate virtuosity of Carissimi's dramatic motet **Lucifer Caelestis olim**. This is the ultimate battle between Good and Evil, boastful, foolish Lucifer meets his final punishment: God's eternal condemnation.

Despite the darkness of its text, Monteverdi sets **Voglio di vita uscir** in a playful, breathless way. The rhythmic excitement of this chaconne alludes to the danger and madness that we have encountered throughout this second half, revelling in the ravings of unrequited love. In the slower closing section, the chaconne disappears, and the lyricism of the singer comes to the forefront. There is no doubt that the finality of death will win, and we too will shed a tear in the sight of such suffering. And yet, throughout these songs there has always been the possibility of hope. Each loss has been balanced by the possibility that the sun will shine, and love can win. The power of forgiveness is perfectly expressed in Pelham Humphrey's setting of John Donne's **Hymne to the God and Father**. This song pivots beautifully between man's unworthiness and humble gratitude to accept forgiveness. Fear has no power here, nor in our final chaconne **Sans frayer dans ce bois**.

© Helen Charlston

### **Purcell: Come all ye songsters of the sky**

Come all ye songsters of the sky,  
Wake and assemble in this wood;  
But no ill-boding bird be nigh,  
No, none but the harmless, and the good.

### **Strozzi: Begl'Occhi, Bel Seno, Bei Crini, e Bella Bocca**

Voi pur, begl'occhi, sete  
porte d'un paradiso,  
voi tra le scherzo e 'l riso  
in ciel m'introducete  
Ma tanto il cor m'ardete  
che dal mio foco eterno  
per le porte del ciel corro  
all'inferno.

Sì, bel seno, che tu sei  
una neve animata,  
sì che tua giogia grata  
consola gl'ardor miei.  
Ma tanto alfin godei  
che grande a poco a poco  
fra le falde di gel provo il mio foco.

Beautiful eyes, you are indeed  
doors to paradise:  
with a tease and a laugh  
you take me to heaven.  
But my heart burns so fiercely  
that my everlasting flame causes me to run,  
from the doors of heaven to hell.

Beautiful breast, you are  
living snow.  
O how your graceful throat  
feeds my passionate fire.  
Yet so sublime is my delight,  
that as it grows, little by little,  
my fire burns amidst the snow.

Voi pur, bei crini, adoro,  
cari dolci legami,  
voi, preziosi stami  
del mio ricco tesoro.  
Ma della selva d'oro  
se non mi fate un dono,  
fra le miniere d'or povero io sono.

No, no, pomi e rubini,  
che voi non paregiate  
di quelle labbra amate  
i coralli divini.  
Ma non mai ne' giardini  
di quella bella bocca  
coglier quanti vorrei baci mi tocca

I adore you, beautiful hair,  
dear sweet bindings,  
precious threads  
of my rich treasure.  
But if you won't give me  
some of that golden tangle,  
I'm impoverished amid these goldmines.

No, no, apples and rubies,  
you don't compare with  
the divine corals  
within those beloved lips.  
Yet never, in the garden  
of that beautiful mouth, could I  
gather enough kisses to satisfy my  
yearning.

(Translated by Richard Kolb)

### **Purcell: 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.

(Richard Norton)

### **Strozzi: O Maria**

O Maria, quam pulchra es,  
quam suavis, quam decora.  
Tegit terram sicut nebula,  
lumen ortum indeficiens,  
flamma ignis, Arca federis,  
inter spinas ortum lilium,  
tronum [S]ion in Altissimis  
in columna nubis positum.

O Maria..

Ante sæcula creata  
giram cœli circuivit sola,  
profundum abissi penetravit.  
Et in fluctibus maris ambulavit,

O Mary, how beautiful you are,  
how sweet, how comely.  
She enfolds earth as a cloud,  
a light risen that never fails,  
a flame, a fire, the Ark of the Covenant,  
a lily grown among the thorns,  
the throne of Zion placed on high  
in a pillar of cloud.

O Maria...

Before the creation of the ages  
she circled the borders of heaven,  
and penetrated the depths of the abyss.  
And she walked on the waves of the sea,

omnium corda virtute calcavit,  
et in hereditate Domini morata est.  
Tegit terram...

O Maria...

Alleluia.

virtuously tread on the hearts of all,  
and abided in the inheritance of the Lord.  
She enfolds earth as a cloud...

O Maria...

Alleluia.

(Translated by David Larrick with revisions by  
Richard Kolb [www.barbarastrozzi.com](http://www.barbarastrozzi.com))

### **Purcell: The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation**

Tell me, some pitying angel, quickly say,  
Where does my soul's sweet darling stray,  
In tiger's, or more cruel Herod's way?  
Ah! rather let his little footsteps press  
Unregarded through the wilderness,  
Where milder savages resort:

The desert's safer than a tyrant's court.  
Why, fairest object of my love,  
Why dost thou from my longing eyes remove?  
Was it a waking dream that did foretell  
Thy wondrous birth? no vision from above?  
Where's Gabriel now that visited my cell?  
I call; he comes not; flatt'ring hopes, farewell.

Me Judah's daughters once caress'd,  
Call'd me of mothers the most bless'd.

Now fatal change: of mothers most distress'd.

How shall my soul its motions guide?  
How shall I stem the various tide,  
Whilst faith and doubt my lab'ring soul divide?

For whilst of thy dear sight beguil'd,  
I trust the God, but oh! I fear the child.

(Nahum Tate)

### **Purcell: Lord, what is Man?**

Lord, what is man, lost man,  
That Thou shouldst be so mindful of him?  
That the Son of God forsook his glory, His abode,  
To become a poor, tormented man!  
The Deity was shrunk into a span,  
And that for me, O wound'rous love, for me.  
Reveal, ye glorious spirits, when ye knew  
The way the Son of God took to renew lost man,  
Your vacant places to supply;



Blest spirits tell,  
Which did excel,  
Which was more prevalent,  
Your joy or your astonishment,  
That man should be assum'd into the Deity,  
That for a worm a God should die.

Oh! for a quill, drawn from your wing  
To write the praises of th'Eternal Love;  
Oh! for a voice like yours to sing  
That anthem here, which once you sung above.

Hallelujah!

Bishop William Fuller

### **Charpentier: Ah Laissez-moi rêver**

Ah! Laissez-moi rêver dans cette  
solitude,  
Laissez calmer l'excès de mon  
inquiétude  
Par le cher souvenir de mon fidèle  
amant.

Hélas! Hélas! Je ne vois plus ce berger  
si charmant,  
Du moins pour soulager une peine si  
rude.  
Ah! Laissez-moi rêver dans cette  
solitude

Ah! Let me dream in this solitude,  
may the excess of my sorrow be  
calmed  
by the dear memories of my faithful  
lover.

Alas! Alas! No longer do I see that  
shepherd so charming,  
at least for a moment to relieve a  
sorrow so sore,  
Ah! Let me dream in this solitude.

### **D'Ambruys: Le doux silence de nos bois**

Le doux silence de nos bois  
N'est plus troublé que de la voix  
Des oiseaux que l'amour assemble.  
Bergère qui fais mes désirs  
Voici le mois charmant des fleurs et  
des zéphyrs  
Et la saison qui te ressemble  
Ne perdons pas un moment des beaux  
jours  
C'est le temps des plaisirs et des  
tendres amours;

The soft silence of our woods  
is now broken only by the songs  
of the birds that Love gathers here.  
Shepherdess, my heart's desire,  
behold the fair month of flowers and  
zephyrs,  
and the season that resembles you.  
Let's lose not a moment of these fine  
days,  
'tis the time for tender loves and  
pleasures;

Songons en voyant le printemps  
Qu'il en est un dans nos beaux ans  
Qu'on n'a qu'une fois en sa vie  
Mais c'est peu que d'y songer  
Il faut belle Philis le ménager.  
Cette saison nous y convie  
Ne perdons pas un moment des beaux  
jours  
C'est le temps des plaisirs et des  
tendres amours.

Let's dream as we watch the spring  
that there is one such season in our  
youth,  
that we have but one such time in our  
lives.  
But dreaming of this is not enough,  
we must, fair Phyllis, make it so.  
The season does thus invite us.  
Let's lose not a moment of these fine  
days,  
'tis the time for tender loves and  
pleasures.

### **Charpentier: Objets agréables**

Objets agréables,  
Fantômes aimables,  
Apaisez les fureurs  
De ces farouches cœurs.

Pleasant objects,  
Beautiful Phantoms,  
Pacify the fury  
Of these savage hearts.

### **Purcell: In the black dismal dungeon of despair**

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;

O Jesu! 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.

(Bishop William Fuller)

### **Charpentier: Celle qui fait tout mon tourment**

Celle qui fait tout mon tourment,  
Je l'aime à la folie;  
Depuis longtemps je suis amant  
De l'aimable Sylvie,  
La voir et l'aimer seulement,  
C'est toute mon envie.  
Celle qui fait...  
La voir et l'aimer seulement  
C'est toute mon envie;  
Je n'ai point passé de moment  
Sans l'avoir bien servie:  
Celle qui fait...  
Je n'ai point passé de moment  
Sans l'avoir bien servie;  
Les maux que je souffre en l'aimant  
Me coûteront la vie:  
Celle qui fait...  
Les maux que je souffre en l'aimant  
Me coûteront la vie;  
Dès que je la vois, cependant  
Mon âme en est ravie:  
Celle qui fait...

She, who is responsible for all of my  
suffering  
I love to the point of madness;  
For a long time I have been the lover  
Of charming Sylvie  
To see her and love her only  
Is all my desire.  
She, who is responsible... etc.  
To see her and love her only  
Is all my desire.  
I have not spent a moment  
Without serving her faithfully:  
She, who is responsible... etc.  
I have not spent a moment  
Without serving her faithfully:  
The pains I suffer in loving her  
Will cost me my life:  
She, who is responsible... etc.  
The pains I suffer in loving her  
Will cost me my life:  
And meanwhile, every time I see her  
It ravishes my soul:  
She, who is responsible... etc.

### **Anna Disley-Simpson: Purgatory: a waiting room**

Welcome, traveller.  
Welcome to this quiet place,  
Between the shadows and radiant grace.  
We've been expecting you.

Take a seat. This won't take long.  
Of course, I know all about you.  
Me, I go by many names.

I am the keeper of the keys.  
I am the steward of the in-between.  
Your story's here.  
Every choice you ever made.  
Ready to be judged. Ready to be weighed.

*I hold the scales, (metaphorically),  
But you can decide which it's to be.  
You've done your time, you've paid your dues.  
Heaven or hell — it's **yours** to choose.*

Everyone's always so surprised  
that they make the choice.  
But people are funny.  
Other than the noble few -  
nuns, popes, what-have-you -  
and the *real* baddies who we send straight down  
Most others could go either way.  
You hesitate.  
Let me assist.  
Beach or snow? Joy or woe?  
Peace or party? Sparse or hearty?  
Fire or ice? Naughty or nice?

*I hold the scales, (metaphorically)... etc*

Ah. I'm afraid I can't say  
who you'll find above and below.  
Data protection is hell, you know.  
(Pardon the pun.)  
Heaven's not all it's cracked up to be.  
It's pretty beige. Lots of rules.  
It's very... virtuous. If that's your thing.  
No alcohol. Lots of worshipping.  
But of course, hell is a fiery inferno  
Of sulphur and flaming peat.  
Not ideal if you're bad with heat.

My dear. The thing is,  
We all die alone.  
And we want it to have a meaning  
but it is not so.

There is no punishment.  
No reward.  
No second chance,  
no misty-eyed embraces.

There is no one here but you  
and you must weigh your own life.

We want it to have a meaning  
but it is not so.

You must weigh your own life.

The paths you took,  
the love you made,  
the love you took,  
the paths you made.

Eternity is so long  
and so lonely.

*I hold the scales, (metaphorically)... etc*

No — don't tell me —

let's leave it a surprise.

I've got to get my kicks somehow.

A pleasure to meet you.

No need to shut the gate.

Oh — and send the next person in!

Welcome, traveller!

Come on in!

### **Carrissimi: Lucifer Caelestis olim**

Lucifer, Caelestis olim Hierarchiae Princeps

Praeclarissimus, superbe minimum, fatue elatus, aequalem Deo.

His se jactabat vocibus:

O me felicem, O me beatum, Caelesti Gloria decoratum.

In Caelum conscendam, et super Astra Dei exaltabo solium meum;

Sedebo in monte Testamenti, in lateribus aquilonis,

Super altitudinem Nubium, similis ero altissimo.

Haec Audiens summus omnium Creator Deus, accitis Angelis suis ait;

Ite Angeli, Angeli mei, ite, ite, ite fortissimo,

Coelistis Aula emilites; superbientem exterminate Luciferum.

Ite pugnate, fugate rebelles:

Damnate superbos ad flammam Averni;

Tartarei vadant ad limina fundi, et stygii cadant in lyma profundi;

His addite poenas, in inferi portis parate catenas, et vincula mortis;

Moerentes, dolentes, in Igne locate.

Lucifer, who was once the most noble prince of the heavenly hosts,

With exceeding pride and foolishness boasted that he was equal to God,

In these words:

Oh How happy I am, blessed and adorned with the glory of Heaven!  
I will ascend to Heaven, and I will raise my throne above the stars of God;  
I will sit upon the Covenant, alongside the North Winds,  
Above the height of the clouds, I will be like God the most High.

Hearing this, God, supreme creator of all things, called his angels, and said:

Go, ye angels, my angels; go, strongest hosts of the heavenly court:  
Slay the proud Lucifer.

Go, fight, cause the rebels to fly with flight;  
Condemn the proud ones to the flames of Avernus;

See that they go to the bottom of deep Tatarus, and fall into the deepest depths of the Styx.

And add these punishments too: at hell's gate prepare the chains and fetters of death;

Cast them grieving into the flames, just as they deserve.

### **Monteverdi: Voglio di vita uscir**

Voglio di vita uscir, voglio che cadano  
Quest'ossa in polve e queste membra  
in cenere,  
E che i singulti miei tra l'ombre vadano,  
Già che quel piè ch'ingemma l'erbe  
tenere  
Sempre fugge da me, ne lo trattengono  
I lacci, ohimè, del bel fanciul di Venere.

I want to depart this life, I want my  
bones  
to fall into dust, and my limbs into ashes,  
and my sobs to disappear among the  
shadows,  
since those feet, which adorn the  
tender grasses,  
are always fleeing from me; nor are  
they restrained,  
alas, by the bonds of the lovely son of  
Venus.

Vo che gl'abissi il mio cordoglio  
vedano,  
E l'aspro mio martir le furie piangano,  
E che i dannati al mio tormento  
cedano.  
A Dio crudel, gli orgogli tuoi  
rimangano  
In crudelir con altri. A te rinuncio,  
Né vo' più che mie speme in te si  
frangano.  
S'apre la tomba, il mio morir  
t'annuncio.

I want the depths of hell to see my  
sorrow,  
and the Furies to weep for my harsh  
agony,  
and the damned to acknowledge my  
torment.  
Farewell, cruel one, let your pride  
remain  
to torture others; I renounce you!  
I no longer want you to dash my hopes  
to pieces.  
The tomb opens: my death is at hand.

Una lagrima spargi, et alfin donami  
Di tua tarda pietade un solo nuncio,  
E s'amando t'offesi, homai perdonami.

Shed but one tear, and at the last give  
me  
a single sign of your pity (now too  
late);  
and if my love has offended you, forgive  
me now.

### **Pelham Humfrey: Hymne to the God and Father**

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,  
Which was my sin, though it were done before?  
Wilt thou forgive that sin, 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 sin 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 have 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.

### **Charpentier: Sans frayeur dans ce bois**

Sans frayeur dans ce bois, seule je suis  
venue.

J'y vois Tircis sans être émue.

Ah! N'ai-je rien à ménager?

Qu'un jeune coeur insensible est à  
plaindre!

Je ne cherche point le danger,  
mais du moins, je voudrais le craindre

Without fear into these woods alone I  
came,

There I see Thyrsis, and was not  
stirred.

Ah, can I bring nothing to bear?

For a young heart without feeling is to  
be lamented.

While I do not seek danger in the  
least,  
I would at least like to fear it.

## **Helen Charlston**

Helen Charlston was recently a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist (2021-23). 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*.

This season, Helen makes her debut at the Gran Teatre del Liceu as Sesto in Calixto Bieito's production of *Giulio Cesare* conducted by William Christie, and sings Handel's *Messiah* at BBC Proms with The Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Bach's *St John Passion* with the Academy of Ancient Music, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with WDR Köln under Simon Halsey, and also with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra under Václav Luks, and Bach's *Magnificat* with RIAS Kammerchor under Justin Doyle in South Korea. In recital she performs *Battle Cry* with Toby Carr at Brucknerhaus Linz, with Sholto Kynoch at the Oxford International Song Festival, a programme of Handel with the Prague Philharmonia at Lobkowitz Palace, and she returns to Wigmore Hall.

Helen has worked across the globe with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra (San Francisco), Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Warsaw Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, and Royal Northern Sinfonia. She has sung roles at Versailles Royal Opera, The Grange Festival, and covered a title role at Opéra national de Paris.

An artistic advisor for York Early Music Festival, Helen featured in a residency in 2024 performing a wide range music by Dowland and Couperin, to Schumann and Mendelssohn, and a set of new commissions for her and Toby Carr by Ben Rowarth and Anna Semple.

[helencharlston.com](http://helencharlston.com)

## **Toby Carr**

Lutenist and guitarist Toby Carr is a versatile artist, working with some of the finest musicians in the business. Having studied at Trinity Laban and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, he is 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. Notable recordings include *De Pasión Mortal* with Nicholas Mulroy and Elizabeth Kenny (Linn), *Drop not, mine eyes* with Alexander Chance (Linn)



and *Battle Cry* with Helen Charlston (Delphian), winner of both *BBC Music Magazine* and *Gramophone* awards in 2023.

Toby is a professor at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, working across the strings and historical performance departments. He is delighted to share his passion for chamber music and collaboration with the next generation of musicians. Passionate about careers in the arts being open to everyone, Toby is an Arts Emergency mentor.

[tobycarr.co.uk](http://tobycarr.co.uk)

### **Anna Disley-Simpson**

Anna Disley-Simpson is an award-winning composer and performer originally from Dorset. She studied composition at the Royal Northern College of Music before spending two years as the Graduate Musician-in-Residence at Radley College in Oxfordshire, where she taught music technology and composition, and ran a weekly popular music programme. She is now based in London.

The range of Anna's creative output extends from uplifting vocal works and catchy pop songs to fragile electronic soundscapes and experimental multimedia installation pieces. Her work has been performed by many ensembles, including the European Union Chamber Orchestra, No Dice Collective, Kantos Chamber Choir, Juice Vocal Ensemble, the ORA Singers, Hermes Experiment, Gesualdo Six, and the BBC Singers and members of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. In 2022 her string quartet *Anfang* was shortlisted for the National Centre for Early Music's Young Composers Award.

[stainer.co.uk/composer/anna-disley-simpson/](http://stainer.co.uk/composer/anna-disley-simpson/)

# YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

## Artistic Advisors

John Bryan  
Helen Charlston  
Lindsay Kemp  
Mark Seow  
Peter Seymour

## Director

Delma Tomlin MBE

York Early Music Festival is administered by the National Centre for Early Music through the York Early Music Foundation  
(charity number 1068331)

National Centre for Early Music  
St Margaret's Church, Walmgate  
York YO1 9TL

01904 632220

[www.ncem.co.uk](http://www.ncem.co.uk)



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

## York Early Music Festival 2026

Friday 3 – Saturday 11 July

Celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with guests including  
**Solomon's Knot, Les Arts Florissant, B'Rock, The Sixteen, I Fagiolini**  
Highlights include the 2026 International Young Artists Competition and  
York Mystery Plays.

To be sure of tickets, and help keep the Festival alive into the future, join  
the **Festival Friends** and **Patrons**: [ncem.co.uk/patrons-and-friends](http://ncem.co.uk/patrons-and-friends)

