

# Dido and Aeneas

**Start time:** 7.30pm

**Approximate end time:** 9.30pm, including a 20-minute interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

## Programme

**Giacomo Carissimi** *Jephte*

**Henry Purcell** *Dido and Aeneas*

**Maxim Emelyanychev leads Il Pomo d'Oro and a stellar cast in two Baroque tragedies – Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Carissimi's *Jephte* – that share tales of love and sacrifice, searingly brought to life with their masterly music.**

Giacomo Carissimi (1605–74) was one of the most respected composers of the 17th century, but today his music is relatively rarely performed. From the age of 24 until the end of his life he worked as director of music at the German College in Rome, an influential and well-resourced training centre for Jesuit priests, and it was in this position that he became the most important early composer of oratorios – narrative dramatic works on sacred subjects intended for performance in church. Along with his large output of Italian secular cantatas, these became widely circulated abroad, including in England; Purcell certainly knew and admired Carissimi's music.

The purpose of an oratorio, very much in line with Jesuit thinking, was to bring Bible stories to life, and they could therefore be sometimes quite operatic in flavour. In *Historia di Jephthe*, composed around 1650, the Old Testament story of the Israelite commander who, having sworn to God that in return for victory in battle he will sacrifice the first person he meets on his return home, only to find that person is his own daughter, is presented by a narrator (a part sometimes sung by more than one voice) and a mixture of solo voices and ensembles who enact dialogue or comment on the action. That the oratorio is in Latin rather than Italian suggests it was one of the several works Carissimi composed for the connoisseur audience at the Oratory of the Most Holy Crucifix in Rome, using a musical language derived from Monteverdi in which solo declamation is mixed with madrigal-like writing for chorus that draws great expressive potency from a telling use of dissonance. Both reach searing apogees in the Daughter's lament and the final chorus 'Plorate filii Israel' – then as now the composer's single most celebrated passage of music.

*Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell (1659–95) is his most famous work. Familiar to audiences long before the rehabilitation in recent decades of Monteverdi and Handel, it is also the best-known opera to have been composed before Mozart. And for good measure it is probably the world's favourite opera in English. Yet in many ways it is an enigma.

For a long time it was accepted that the premiere took place in 1689 at a girls' boarding school in Chelsea, and that this essentially amateur production, performed by teenagers, was the only one in Purcell's lifetime. This could account for the work's brevity, its small role for Aeneas, and possibly many aspects of the treatment of the story as well. But in recent decades the possibility has been mooted that *Dido* is older than that and may have been performed privately at the court of Charles II in the early 1680s, in which case the version we know today could well be an adaptation of a lost original.

Whatever the difficulties of establishing the opera's provenance, it is far easier to determine where it comes from in stylistic terms. For one thing, even though the favoured form of musical drama in England at the end of the 17th century mixed singing with spoken dialogue (exemplified by Purcell's 'semi-operas' *King Arthur* and *The Fairy Queen*), the all-sung *Dido and Aeneas* was not the only work of its type at this time. In the early 1680s *Venus and Adonis*, a through-composed masque by Purcell's teacher John Blow, had been performed before the court, and the parallels between it and *Dido* are striking. And in 1685 *Albion and Albanus*, an opera by Louis Grabu, was performed in London, introducing English audiences to the musical manners of French tragic opera which, with its flexible and expressive mode of vocal declamation, cannot have failed to make an impression on a composer as sensitive to word-setting as Purcell.

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The story, adapted and much streamlined from Virgil's *Aeneid*, tells of the love between the Trojan hero Aeneas and the recently widowed Carthaginian queen Dido, and of her subsequent suicide after he is tricked into leaving to fulfil his destiny as founder of Rome. Although it has been criticised for the mediocre quality of its verse, its structure is clear and concise, but of course it is Purcell's music that gives the work its true dignity. The final scene – from Dido's stricken recitative ('Thy hand Belinda'), through the famous lament spun memorably over a resigned, repeatedly falling bassline, to the final heartbroken chorus – is distinguished by music whose power to move never fails.

Aeneas is a sketchy figure in comparison to Dido, but his chastened anticipation of the queen's reaction to his departure, and his subsequent shamefaced appearance before her, are among the most theatrically effective passages in the opera. Yet *Dido and Aeneas* would not enjoy the popularity it does if it did not also appeal in its tunefulness, evocative power and harmonic richness. Short it may be, but it encompasses enough – courtly rejoicing, rumbustious hornpipes, humorously grotesque witches – to make it one of the most tightly packed hours of opera ever composed.

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## Performers

**Maxim Emelyanychev** harpsichord and conductor

**Andrew Staples** Jephte and Aeneas

**Carlotta Colombo** Figlia and Second Woman

**Joyce DiDonato** Dido

**Fatma Said** Belinda

**Beth Taylor** Sorceress

**Hugh Cutting** Spirit

**Massimo Altieri** Sailor

**Alena Dantcheva** First Enchantress

**Anna Piroli** Second Enchantress

## Il Pomo d'Oro

### Jephte

violin

**Zefira Valova** *leader*

**Jesus Merino**

**Nick Robinson**

viola da gamba

**Natalia Timofeeva**

**Riccardo Coelati**

cello

**Ludovico Minasi**

violone

**Ismael Campanero**

theorbo

**Miguel Rincon**

**Juan Jose Francione**

organ

**Maria Shabashova**

### Dido and Aeneas

violin I

**Zefira Valova** *leader*

**Nick Robinson**

**Edson Scheid**

**Laura Andriani**

**Veronica Böhm**

violin II

**Lucia Giraudo**

**Jesus Merino**

**Naomi Dumas**

**Ruiqi Ren**

viola

**Giulio d'Alessio**

**Archimede De Martini**

**Elena Abbati**

cello

**Ludovico Minasi**

**Kristina Chalmovska**

viola da gamba

**Natalia Timofeeva**

violone

**Riccardo Coelati**

**Ismael Campanero Nieto**

theorbo

**Miguel Rincon**

**Juan Jose Francione**

organ

**Maria Shabashova**

percussion

**Koen Plaetinck**

tour management

**Askonas Holt**

## Il Pomo d'Oro Choir

### Jephte

soprano I

**Rossana Bertini**  
**Anna Piroli**  
**Lorenza Donadini**

soprano II

**Alena Dantcheva \***  
**Francesca Cassinari \***  
**Marta Redaelli**

soprano III

**Giulia Beatini \***  
**Elena Carzaniga \***  
**Elena Biscuola**

alto

**Annalisa Mazzoni**  
**Hugh Cutting**  
**Giuseppe Maletto**

tenor

**Gianluca Ferrarini \***  
**Massimo Altieri \***  
**Alessandro Baudino**

bass

**Matteo Bellotto \***  
**Gabriele Lombardi \***  
**Marco Scavazza**

\* soloists in *Jephte*

### Dido and Aeneas

soprano I

**Rossana Bertini**  
**Anna Piroli**  
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soprano II

**Alena Dantcheva**  
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bass

**Matteo Bellotto**  
**Gabriele Lombardi**  
**Marco Scavazza**

## Jephte

### 1. Narrator

Cum vocasset in proelium filios  
Israel rex filiorum Ammon  
et verbis Jephte acquiescere noluisset,  
factus est super Jephte Spiritus Domini  
et progressus ad filios Ammon  
votum vovit Domini dicens:

### 2. Jephte

Si tradiderit Dominus filios Ammon  
in manus meas, quicumque primus  
de domo mea occurrerit mihi,  
offeram illum Domino in holocaustum.

### 3. Narrator

Transiit ergo Jephte ad filios Ammon,  
ut in spiritu forti et virtute Domini  
pugnaret contra eos.

### 4.

Et clangebant tubae et personabant tympana  
et proelium commissum est adversus Ammon.

### 5. Narrator

Fugite, cedite, impii, perite gentes,  
occumbite in gladio. Dominus exercituum  
in proelium surrexit et pugnat contra vos.

When the King of the children of Ammon  
declared war on the children of Israel  
refusing to concede to Jephthah's message  
the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah  
And he advanced towards the Ammonites  
solemnly vowing to the Lord, saying:

Lord, if you deliver the Ammonites  
into my hands, whoever should first  
run from my house to meet me, I shall offer up  
to the Lord as a burnt sacrifice.

So Jephthah crossed to the Ammonites,  
strong in spirit by the power of the Lord,  
to fight against them.

Trumpets blared and drums thundered,  
and battle was waged against Ammon

Flee, surrender, evildoers, perish, fall under  
the sword. The Lord has roused an army into  
battle and fights against you.

## 6. Narrator

Fugite, cedite, impii, corruite,  
et in furore gladii dissipamini.

## 7. Narrator

Et percussit Jephthae viginti civitates Ammon  
plaga magna nimis.

## 8. Narrator

Et ululantes filii Ammon, facti sunt  
coram filiis Israel humiliati.

## 9. Narrator

Cum autem victor Jephthae in domum suam  
reverteretur, occurrens ei unigenita filia sua  
cum tympanis et choris praecinebat:

## 10. Daughter

Incipite in tympanis, et psallite in cymbalis.  
Hymnum cantemus Domino, et modulemur canticum.  
Laudemus regem coelitum,  
laudemus belli principem,  
qui filiorum Israel victorem ducem reddidit.

## 11.

Hymnum cantemus Domino, et modulemur canticum,  
qui dedit nobis gloriam et Israel victoriam.

## 12. Daughter

Cantate mecum Domino, cantate omnes populi,  
laudate belli principem,  
qui dedit nobis gloriam et Israel victoriam.

## 13.

Cantemus omnes Domino,  
laudemus belli principem,  
qui dedit nobis gloriam et Israel victoriam.

## 14. Narrator

Cum vidisset Jephthae, qui votum Domino voverat,  
filiam suam venientem in occursum, in dolore  
et lachrimis scidit vestimenta sua et ait:

## 15. Jephthae and Daughter

Heu mihi! Filia mea,  
heu decepisti me, filia unigenita,  
et tu pariter,  
heu filia mea, decepta es.

Cur ergo te pater, decipi,  
et cur ergo ego  
filia tua unigenita decepta sum?

Aperui os meum ad Dominum  
ut quicumque primus de domo mea  
occurreret mihi, offeram illum Domino  
in holocaustum. Heu mihi!  
Filia mea, heu decepisti me,  
filia unigenita, et tu pariter,  
heu filia mea, decepta es.

Flee, surrender, evildoers, fall, and be  
scattered under the fury of the sword.

And Jephthah struck twenty cities of Ammon  
with an almighty blow.

And wailing, the children of Ammon  
were humbled before the children of Israel.

But when Jephthah returned  
victorious to his home, his only daughter ran  
to him with timbrel and song, and said:

Strike up the drums, dance to the cymbals  
Virgins, let us sing a hymn and make a song.  
Let us praise the King of heaven,  
let us praise the prince of war,  
The leader who brought victory to the children of Israel

Let us sing a hymn to the Lord, and make a song  
to him who gave glory to us and victory to Israel

All the people, sing to the Lord with me  
Praise the prince of war  
who gave glory to us and victory to Israel.

Let us all sing to the Lord,  
let us praise the prince of war  
who gave glory to us and victory to Israel.

When Jephthah who pledged a vow  
to the Lord, saw his daughter run to meet him,  
in grief and tears he tore his clothes and said:

Alas for me, my daughter,  
you have undone me, my only daughter,  
and you equally, alas,  
my daughter, you are undone.

Why, father, have I undone you?  
And why am I,  
your only daughter, undone?

With my own mouth I said to the Lord  
that the first person to meet me from my house  
I would offer to the Lord  
as a burnt sacrifice. Alas for me!  
My daughter, you have undone me,  
my only daughter, and you equally, alas,  
my daughter, you are undone.

Pater mi, si vovisti votum Domino,  
reversus victor ab hostibus,  
ecce ego filia tua unigenita,  
offer me in holocaustum victoriae tuae,  
hoc solum pater mi praesta  
filiae tuae unigenitae antequam moriar.

Quid poterit animam tuam, quid poterit te,  
moritura filia, consolari?

Dimitte me, ut duobus mensibus  
circumeam montes, et cum  
sodalibus meis plangam virginitatem meam.

Vade, filia mea unigenita,  
et plange virginitatem tuam.

Abiit ergo in montes filia Jephthae,  
et plorabat cum sodalibus virginitatem suam, dicens:  
Plorate colles, dolete montes,  
et in afflictione cordis mei ululate!  
Ululate!

Ecce moriar virgo et non potero  
morte mea meis filiis consolari,  
ingemiscite silvae, fontes et flumina,  
in interitu virginis lachrimate!  
Lachrimate!

Heu me dolentem in laetitia populi,  
in victoria Israel et gloria.  
Patris mei, ego, sine filiis virgo,  
ego filia unigenita moriar et non vivam.  
Exhorrescite rupes,  
obstupescite colles, valles  
et cavernae  
in sonitu horribili resonate!  
Resonate!

Plorate filii Israel,  
plorate virginitatem meam,  
et Jephthae filiam unigenitam  
in carmine doloris lamentamini.

Plorate filii Israel,  
plorate omnes virgines,  
et filiam Jephthae unigenitam  
in carmine doloris lamentamini.

From the Old Testament Book of Judges

Father, if you pledged a vow to the Lord  
when you returned victorious from the enemy,  
see, I, your only daughter,  
offer myself as a sacrifice to your victory,  
This one thing, father,  
grant your only daughter before I die.

My daughter, about to die,  
what can comfort your soul?

Send me away that I may  
roam the mountains for two months  
And that I may weep over my virginity with my friends.

Go, my daughter, my only daughter,  
And weep over your virginity.

So Jephthah's daughter set off for the mountains  
and with her friends she wept over her virginity, saying:  
Weep, hills, grieve, mountains,  
And at my heart's torment, wail!  
Wail!

See, I shall now die a virgin and I shall not be able to find  
consolation in my children at my death,  
cry with anguish, forests, springs and rivers,  
weep over the death of a virgin!  
Weep!

Alas, I grieve while a people rejoices  
in Israel's victory and my father's glory.  
I, a childless virgin, an only daughter,  
shall die, and not live.  
Tremble, rocks,  
be stunned, hills,  
valleys and caves,  
with a dreadful noise, resound!  
Resound!

Weep, children of Israel,  
weep over my virginity,  
and lament for Jephthah's only daughter  
in a song of sorrow.

Weep, children of Israel,  
all weep over a virgin,  
and Jephthah's only daughter  
Lament in a song of sorrow.

Translation © Kenneth Chalmers

## **Dido and Aeneas**

### **ACT the First**

*Scene the Palace*

#### **Belinda**

Shake the cloud from off your brow,  
Fate your wishes does allow.  
Empire growing,  
Pleasures flowing,  
Fortune smiles and so should you.

#### **Chorus**

Banish sorrow, banish care.  
Grief should ne'er approach the fair.

#### **Dido**

Ah! Belinda, I am pressed  
With torment not to be confessed.  
Peace and I are strangers grown.  
I languish till my grief is known,  
Yet would not have it guessed.

#### **Belinda**

Grief increases by concealing.

#### **Dido**

Mine admits of no revealing.

#### **Belinda**

Then let me speak, the Trojan guest  
Into your tender thoughts has pressed.

#### **Two Women**

The greatest blessing Fate can give,  
our Carthage to secure, and Troy revive.

#### **Chorus**

When monarchs unite how happy their state,  
They triumph at once on their foes and their fates.

#### **Dido**

Whence could so much virtue spring,  
What storms what battles did he sing?  
Anchises' valour mixed with Venus' charms,  
How soft in peace, and yet how fierce in arms.

#### **Belinda**

A tale so strong and full of woe,  
Might melt the rocks as well as you.

#### **Two Women**

What stubborn heart unmoved could see,  
Such distress, such piety?

#### **Dido**

Mine with storms of care oppressed,  
Is taught to pity the distressed.  
Mean wretches' grief can touch,  
So soft, so sensible my breast,  
But ah! I fear, I pity his too much.

#### **Belinda**

Fear no danger to ensue,  
The hero loves as well as you.

#### **Chorus**

Ever gentle, ever smiling,  
And the cares of life beguiling,  
Cupids strew your paths with flow'rs,  
Gathered from Elysian bow'rs.

#### **Belinda**

See, your royal guest appears,  
How godlike is the form he bears.

#### **Aeneas**

When, royal fair, shall I be blessed,  
With cares of love and state distressed?

#### **Dido**

Fate forbids what you pursue.

#### **Aeneas**

Aeneas has no fate but you.  
Let Dido smile and I'll defy  
The feeble stroke of destiny.

#### **Chorus**

Cupid only throws the dart,  
That's dreadful to a warrior's heart.

#### **Aeneas**

If not for mine, for empire's sake,  
Some pity on your lover take.  
Ah! make not in a hopeless fire,  
A hero fall, and Troy once more expire.

#### **Belinda**

Pursue thy conquest, Love, her eyes  
confess the flame her tongue denies.

#### **Chorus**

To the hills and the vales, to the rocks and the mountains  
To the musical groves, and the cool shady fountains.  
Let the triumph of Love and Beauty be shown,  
Go revel ye Cupids, the day is your own.

### **ACT the Second**

*Scene the Cave*

#### **Sorceress**

Wayward sisters, you that fright,  
The lonely traveller by night,  
Who like dismal ravens crying,  
Beat the windows of the dying,  
Appear, appear at my call, and share in the fame  
Of a mischief shall make all Carthage flame.

#### **Inchanteresses**

Say, Beldam, say, what's thy will?  
Harms our delight and mischief all our skill.

#### **Sorceress**

The Queen of Carthage, whom we hate,  
As we do all in prosp'rous state,  
Ere sunset shall most wretched prove,  
Deprived of fame, of life and love.

**Chorus**

Ho ho ho ho ho ho, etc.

**Inchanteresses**

Ruined ere the set of sun?  
Tell us, how shall this be done?

**Sorceress**

The Trojan prince you know is bound  
By Fate to seek Italian ground.  
The Queen and he are now in chase.  
Hark! The cry comes on apace.  
But when they've done, my trusty elf,  
In form of Mercury himself,  
As sent from Jove shall chide his stay,  
And charge him sail tonight with all his fleet away.

**Chorus**

Ho ho ho ho ho ho, etc.

**Sorceress**

But ere we this perform,  
We'll conjure for a storm.  
To mar their hunting sport,  
And drive 'em back to court.

**Chorus**

In our deep vaulted cell the charm we'll prepare,  
Too dreadful a practice for this open air.

*Scene the Grove*

**Belinda and Chorus**

Thanks to these lonesome vales,  
These desert hills and dales.  
So fair the game, so rich the sport,  
Diana's self might to these woods resort.

**Second Woman**

Oft she visits this loved mountain,  
Oft she bathes her in this fountain.  
Here Actaeon met his fate,  
Pursued by his own hounds.  
And after mortal wounds  
Discovered, discovered too late.

**Aeneas**

Behold, upon my bending spear,  
A monster's head stands bleeding,  
With tushes far exceeding  
Those did Venus' huntsmen tear.

**Dido**

The skies are clouded, hark! how thunder  
Rends the mountain oaks asunder.

**Belinda**

Haste, haste to town, this open field  
No shelter from the storm can yield.

**Spirit**

Stay, Prince, and hear great Jove's command,  
He summons thee this night away.

**Aeneas**

Tonight?

**Spirit**

Tonight thou must forsake this land,  
The angry gods will brook no longer stay,  
Jove commands thee waste no more  
In love's delights those precious hours,  
Allowed by th'almighty powers  
To gain th'Hesperian shore,  
And ruined Troy restore.

**Aeneas**

Jove's command shall be obeyed,  
Tonight our anchors shall be weighed.  
But ah! what language can I try,  
My injured Queen to pacify?  
No sooner she resigns her heart,  
But from her arms I'm forced to part.  
How can so hard a fate be took,  
One night enjoyed, the next forsook?  
Yours be the blame, ye gods, for I  
Obey your will, but with more ease could die.

**ACT the Third**

*Scene the Ships*

**First Sailor and Chorus**

Come away, fellow sailors, your anchors be weighing,  
Time and tide will admit no delaying.  
Take a boozy short leave of your nymphs of the shore,  
And silence their mourning  
With vows of returning,  
But never intending to visit them more.

**Sorceress**

See the flags and streamers curling,  
Anchors weighing, sails unfurling.

**First and Second Witch**

Phoebe's pale deluding beams,  
Gilding o'er deceitful streams.  
Our plot has took,  
The queen's forsook, ho ho ho.  
Eliza's ruined, ho ho ho! Our next motion  
Must be to storm her lover on the ocean.  
From the ruins of others our pleasures we borrow,  
Eliza bleeds tonight, and Carthage flames tomorrow.

**Chorus**

Destruction's our delight, delight our greatest sorrow,  
Eliza dies tonight and Carthage flames tomorrow.

**Dido**

Your counsel all is urged in vain,  
To earth and heav'n I will complain.  
To earth and heav'n why do I call?  
Earth and heav'n conspire my fall.  
To Fate I sue, of other means bereft,  
The only refuge for the wretched left.

**Belinda**

See, madam, see where the Prince appears,  
Such sorrow in his look he bears,  
As would convince you still he's true.

**Aeneas**

What shall lost Aeneas do?  
How, royal fair, shall I impart  
The gods' decree, and tell you we must part?

**Dido**

Thus, on the fatal bank of Nile,  
Weeps the deceitful crocodile.  
Thus hypocrites that murder act,  
Make heav'n and gods the authors of the fact.

**Aeneas**

By all that's good ...

**Dido**

By all that's good? No more!  
All that's good you have forswore.  
To your promised empire fly,  
And let forsaken Dido die.

**Aeneas**

In spite of Jove's command I'll stay,  
Offend the gods, and Love obey.

**Dido**

No, faithless man, thy course pursue,  
I'm now resolved as well as you.  
No repentance shall reclaim,  
The injured Dido's slighted flame.  
For 'tis enough, whate'er you now decree,  
That you had once a thought of leaving me.

**Aeneas**

Let Jove say what he will! I'll stay!

**Dido**

Away, away!  
To death I'll fly if longer you delay.  
But death, alas, I cannot shun,  
Death must come when he is gone.

**Chorus**

Great minds against themselves conspire,  
And shun the cure they most desire.

**Dido**

Thy hand, Belinda, darkness shades me,  
On thy bosom let me rest,  
More I would but death invades me,  
Death is now a welcome guest.  
When I am laid in earth, may my wrongs create  
No trouble in thy breast.  
Remember me, but, ah! forget my fate!

**Chorus**

With drooping wings you Cupids come,  
To scatter roses on her tomb.  
Soft and gentle as her heart  
Keep here your watch and never part.

Adapted from *Virgil's Aeneid* by Nahum Tate  
(1652–1715)



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We also want to thank Barbican members and the many thousands who made a donation when purchasing tickets.

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