

A Kalmus Classic Edition

Henry

PURCELL

FIFTEEN SONGS AND ARIAS

FOR SOPRANO OR TENOR

K 06851



NOTES

The opera of Purcell's day was, by the modern interpretation of the word, no opera at all, but drama with incidental music. Into the spoken play were introduced masques, spectacular or comic scenes, songs, dances, and so forth; but as a general rule these musical interludes, however long and elaborate, did nothing to carry on the dramatic action. The actors were seldom called upon to sing; sometimes, however, a soliloquy was sung behind the scenes while the actor stood still on the stage. "What shall I do to show how much I love her?" sings the voice, while Maximinian "stands gazing at the Princess all the time of the song."

It is in this sense that the words "opera" and "operatic" are used in the following notes.

Nos. 1 and 2: THE FAIRY QUEEN

This adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is by an unknown hand. None of Shakespeare's lyrics is used in the musical setting.

(1.) Before retiring to sleep—the sleep from which she wakes to dote on Bottom—Titania changes the scene to "a prospect of grottoes, arbours, and delightful walks." She calls for revelry, and the birds are summoned to make music for her.

(2.) After the revels Titania is lulled to sleep by a typically suggestive masque of Night, Mystery, Secrecy, and Sleep.

Nos. 3 and 4: DIOCLESIAN

The Prophetess, or The History of Dioclesian, is a version by Betterton of a play with the same title by Beaumont and Fletcher. Downes in his *Roscius Anglicanus* describes the first performance in 1690: "*The Prophetess, or Dioclesian*, an opera wrote by Mr. Betterton, being set out with costly scenes, machines, and clothes, the vocal and instrumental musick done by Mr. Purcell, and dances by Mr. Priest; it gratified the expectation of Court and City, and got the author great reputation."

(3.) In the course of this complicated story of war and intrigue Maximinian, nephew of the victorious Diocles, falls in love with the princess Aurelia, who is betrothed to Diocles. This song, sung by a hidden singer behind the scenes, expresses Maximinian's unuttered thoughts while he stands gazing at the Princess.

(4.) This is not in either the original score or libretto, and appears to have been added for a later revival in 1692 or 1693. It is stated to have been sung in the last act, and was probably introduced into the masque, where the name of Astraea occurs.

No. 5: THE TEMPEST

As usual the final scene of this Shakespearean adaptation is a masque. Neptune and Amphitrite rise from the sea to speed the departing mortals.

(5.) At Neptune's command Aeolus summons the winds to carry them home.

No. 6: TIMON OF ATHENS

Shadwell's alteration of *Timon of Athens* ("This scion grafted upon Shakespeare's stock," as he called it) was typical of its age. It seems probable that Purcell's music was written not for the original production in 1677-78, but for a later revival. It consists of an overture, a set of act tunes, and a masque in Act I. "Love quickly is pall'd" is sung by a Bacchanal in the masque.

No. 7: AURENG-ZEBE

(7.) This song appears to have been sung by Mrs. Ayliff in Dryden's tragedy, *Aureng-Zebe*, but it is not in the printed edition of the play (1676), and was probably introduced in a later revival. It is not even certain that it was written for the play.

No. 8: THE MOCK MARRIAGE

These famous lines by John Motteux were set by Purcell and sung by Miss Cross in *The Mock Marriage* by Thomas Scott, an unsuccessful play by an obscure dramatist. The song has nothing to do with the action of the play.

No. 9: OEDIPUS

This tragedy by Dryden and Lee was first produced in 1678, but it is almost certain that Purcell's music was written for a later revival, probably that of 1692.

(9) In Act III there is a big incantation scene which includes this air.

No. 10: THE RIVAL SISTERS

(10.) One of the songs in a tragedy by Robert Gould. It was sung by the famous bass Leveridge.

No. 11: THEODOSIUS

Theodosius, or *The Force of Love*, a tragedy by Nat Lee, requires a good deal of music in the course of its action. This was supplied by Purcell, and was his first composition for the stage.

From the meagreness of the scoring (only two flutes and bass), it seems likely that no orchestra was available, which would account for the fact that Purcell composed songs with harpsichord accompaniment to be sung between the acts. "Hail to the myrtle shade" was sung after the third act.

No. 12 : AN ODE ON ST. CECILIA'S DAY

In 1683 a body called the Musical Society inaugurated the custom of celebrating St. Cecilia's Day (Nov. 22) by the performance of an ode in praise of music, specially composed for the occasion. The first of these was written by Purcell to a text by Christopher Fishburn ("Welcome to all the Pleasures"), but nine years later he provided for the same occasion another and much more elaborate work, "Hail, bright Cecilia."

(12.) The second stanza (" 'Tis Nature's Voice "), to quote *The Gentleman's Journal*, "was sung with incredible graces by Mr. Purcell himself."

No. 13 : THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER'S BIRTHDAY ODE

William, Duke of Gloucester, born in 1689, was the only son of Princess, afterwards Queen, Anne's children to survive infancy. He was, however, a sickly boy, and died at the age of eleven. Purcell's Ode was written in 1695 for the celebration of the Prince's sixth birthday.

No. 14 : Welcome Ode, FROM THOSE SERENE AND RAPTUROUS JOYS

In 1677 Purcell succeeded Matthew Locke as Composer in Ordinary to the King. One of his duties was the composition of complimentary odes for state occasions. "From those serene and rapturous joys" celebrates the King's return to Whitehall after his Summer's progress, 1684. The text is by Thomas Flatman.

No. 15 : Ode, IF EVER I MORE RICHES DID DESIRE

The text of this ode is taken from Abraham Cowley's *Essays in Verse and Prose*. It begins with six lines from the sixth Essay ("Of Greatness") and goes on to a translation of one of the choruses from Seneca's *Thyestes*, which Cowley tacks on to the end of the third Essay ("Of Obscurity"). The musical setting is for soloists, three-part chorus, two violins, and bass.

(15.) This solo occurs in the second part of the Ode.

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COME, ALL YE SONGSTERS OF THE SKY

FROM

THE FAIRY QUEEN

Original Key C

Moderato (♩ = 92)

mf

cresc.

f

ORIGINAL ACCOMPANIMENT: strings (in the prelude only) and figured bass