

**THE SCHOOL OF S.HELEN & S.KATHARINE  
ABINGDON**

*presents*

# DIDO & AENEAS

by

**HENRY PURCELL**

**FRIDAY JULY 8th 1994 at 7.30pm.**

**&**

**SATURDAY JULY 9th 1994 at 7.00pm**

## DIDO AND AENEAS

There is no doubt that Purcell's death in 1695, at the tragically early age of 36, robbed English Music of one its greatest luminaries, who worked in every musical genre of the period. Despite its relative brevity, *Dido and Aeneas* bears ample witness to Purcell's musical creativity and sense of the theatre.

The opera, with libretto by Nahum Tate, was written for a School for Young Gentlewomen in Chelsea. For its first performance at the school in 1689, it is probable that, with the exception of Aeneas, all of the solo roles were sung by girls at the school. (The prominence of female solo roles makes this an ideal first opera for S.Helen's!) The school was run by one Josias Priest, a dancing master closely connected with the professional stage. It is not surprising therefore that Purcell should have given plenty of opportunity for dance within the opera, though this would also have been very much in keeping with the French tradition of incorporating ballet within opera. The overture also is in French style, with its slow chordal first section and faster fugato second section.

The plot, taken from Virgil's *Aeneid*, is simple. Aeneas sailing from Troy to Italy is ship-wrecked on the North-African coast, where he meets and falls in love with Dido.

During Act I, Dido is urged by Belinda and the Court to seek happiness with the providentially arrived hero. In contrast to the agony of mind which Dido expresses at the opening - 'peace and I are strangers grown', a Triumphant Dance ends the first act.

Act II opens with the Sorceress and Witches scheming for the downfall of Dido by bringing about Aeneas's desertion. Tension is relieved in the second scene by the spectacle of the Court at rest and play in a pleasant grove, until a storm forces the party to run for shelter. A Spirit appears bearing a message from Jove that Aeneas should leave Carthage and set about restoring ruined Troy - 'waste no more these precious hours in love's delights'.

Act III opens with jollity as sailors prepare for departure, but the Sorceress and Witches then gather, delighted at the prospect of their scheming succeeding. Dido is unconsolable at the unfaithfulness of Aeneas, and refusing to accept any change of heart on his part, dismisses him. The chorus sings of the 'great minds' that 'shun the cure they most desire', and Dido dies in one of the most famous arias in all opera - 'When I am laid in earth, remember me'. The chorus calls for Cupids to 'come with drooping wings and scatter roses on her tomb'.

The opera is performed without an interval, and without breaks between each act.

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We acknowledge, with much gratitude, the major contributions made to this production by the enthusiastic involvement of Alexander Massey, a teacher and professional singer from Oxford, in the role of Aeneas, and also the men from the Cherwell Singers.

## **CAST (in order of appearance)**

BELINDA, Dido's Sister	Eleanor Tillett
DIDO, Queen of Carthage	Claire Bessent
SECOND WOMAN	Isobel Ash
AENEAS, a Trojan Prince	Alexander Massey
SORCERESS	Katie Scott
FIRST WITCH	Kellie Walters
SECOND WITCH	Rajni Shah
SPIRIT	Emily Read
A SAILOR	John Tucker

## **CHORUS OF COURTIER, WITCHES & SAILORS**

Victoria Barbary, Rosemary Blackie, Sophie Cash, Caroline Dawson, Heather Dawson, Ruth Edwards, Hannah Emanuel, Laura Howard, Philippa Jackson, Victoria Jefferis, Lucy Matheson, Rachel Milnes-Smith, Genevieve Pearson, Katy Rogers, Cathy Simmons, Joanne Simmons, Joanna Stovel, Esme Tarasewicz, Caroline Thomas

*with men from the Cherwell Singers (Director: Alasdair Jamieson)*

Peter Brandon-Jones, Richard Coleridge, Derek Fowler, Christopher Franks, Bill Johnston, Guy Peskett, John Tucker

## **DANCERS**

Sheena Aggarwal, Deborah Bough, Alicia Hardy, Kathryn Hoddinott, Faye Samuels, Gemma Scott

## **CUPIDS**

Nicole Adams, Annabelle Pearson, Sally Pelling, Esther Williams, Isla Wright

## **ORCHESTRA**

leader: Natalie Stopps

VIOLIN 1:	Laura Clayton, Vanessa Pickford, Natalie Stopps
VIOLIN 2:	Emma Gibbins, Madeleine Reeves, Alison Williams
VIOLA:	Kirsty Demie, Alison Twitchett
CELLO:	Ruth Beedham, Claire Lawrence
CELLO CONTINUO:	Patricia Saxon
HARPSICHORD:	Alasdair Jamieson

**CONDUCTOR - ANDREW TILLET**

**PRODUCER - JOANNA MURPHY**

## **PRODUCTION TEAM**

**STAGE MANAGER:** Philippa Aldridge  
**STAGE CREW:** Emily Bell, Emma Campbell, Sarah Colebrook, Catriona Duff, Ruth Gibbins, Sarah Jones, Anthea Livingstone, Alexandra Smith, Helen Wheatley and helpers  
**MAKE-UP:** Eugenie King, Tamasin Greenough  
**LIGHTING DESIGN:** Clare Eccles, Helen Wheatley  
**LIGHTING ASSISTANTS:** Philippa Aldridge, Helen Bell, Julie Evans, Eugenie King, Rachel Lashford, Anthea Livingstone, Rajni Shah, Frances Smethurst, Joanna Stovel  
**PROPERTIES:** Isobel Ash, Eugenie King, Hannah Megaw, Rajni Shah, Eleanor Thomas  
**SET:**

Special thanks are due to the following:

Abingdon School for the loan of lighting equipment

Christopher Bowman of Abingdon School for advice and considerable assistance in lighting the production

Ash Verjee of Abingdon School for help in set construction

Pauline Reay and The Parents' Association for organising Front of House, Drinks and the Gala Dinner

Eric and Tony of the Maintenance Staff for help in many ways

Thanks are also due to the following members of staff for their valued support:

Sue Colebrook as Wardrobe Mistress

Jane Dunwoody for choreographing the dances

Tess Hammond for general support and advice, and guiding the GCSE Drama & Theatre Arts group making masks

Kieran Stiles for the backdrop design