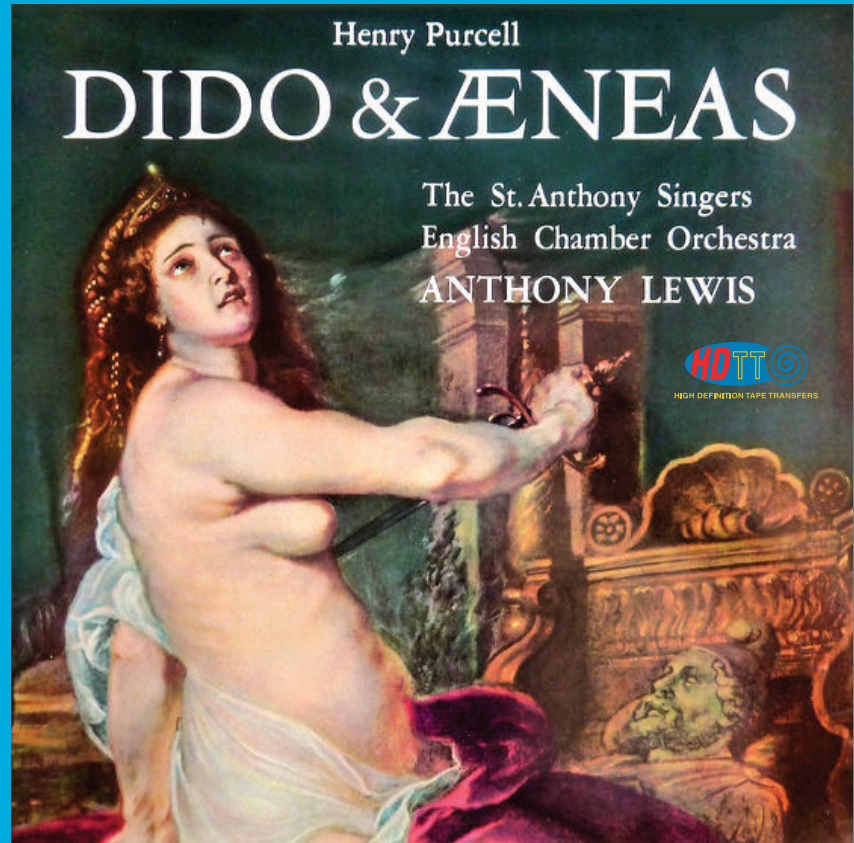


The French overture that opens the work is reminiscent of Lully, as is the homophonic chorus in minuet rhythm, "Fear no danger." More akin to the music of Purcell's English contemporaries are "Purse thy conquest, Love" and "Come away, fellow sailors" (which boasts a metrically irregular melody). Most interesting are the recitatives, which are in neither the quick, Italian recitativo secco style nor the more rhythmically regular French fashion. Instead, Purcell tailored his writing to the particular accents and cadence of the English language, creating an entirely new declamatory style.

Three of the arias in Dido and Aeneas are of the ground bass variety. The most famous of these, "When I am laid in Earth," is the last in the opera and is often referred to as "Dido's Lament." In the aria, we hear a chromatic bass line that descends through a fourth, then closing an octave below where it starts. This ground bass is repeated nine times, supporting a vocal line filled with expressive dissonance. The opera close with the chorus, "With drooping wings," in which descending minor scales suggest the text of the title.



Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* was commissioned by and first performed at Josias Priest's School for Young Ladies in Chelsea. The libretto is by Nahum Tate, who extracted the story of Queen Dido and the sailor, Aeneas, from Virgil's *Aeneid*. Into Virgil's story Tate introduced some of the more popular elements of Baroque opera, including a sorceress, a hunt, and a storm. The first performance took place in 1689, probably in mid-May.

The story concerns Aeneas, who is shipwrecked at Carthage, where the Carthaginian Queen, Dido, falls in love with him. Aeneas returns her love, but knows he must leave eventually -- it is his destiny to found Rome. After their final parting, Dido realizes she cannot live without him and looks forward to her death.

Dido and Aeneas is considered to be the only true opera that Purcell composed; its continuous music and purpose-written libretto set it apart from his other dramatic works, which are more properly considered semi-operas or, in the case of

Timon of Athens, a masque. Although brief, *Dido and Aeneas* nevertheless embraces a wide range of emotional content, and achieves a dramatic lyricism that was then unprecedented in England.

Purcell deftly tailored the score to the performing forces available at Josias Priest's school. There are only four principal roles and the orchestra consists of just strings and continuo; together, the opera's three acts last only about one hour. However, *Dido* is not a work for amateurs: the vocal writing demands highly skilled singers, and the presence of male voices in the score (not least of which is Aeneas himself, a tenor) indicate that some professional performers were most likely imported for the first production. Dances in the piece, such as the "Dance of Triumph" for Dido's court and another for the witches, were most likely written at the suggestion of Priest, who was a dance instructor.

Purcell Dido And Aeneas

English Chamber Orchestra

Anthony Lewis conductor

Chorus – The St. Anthony Singers
Chorus Master – John McCarthy
Harpsichord [Continuo]
Violoncello [Continuo] – Terence Weil
Vocals [Aeneas] – Raimund Herinx
Vocals [Belinda] – Patricia Clark
Vocals [Dido] – Janet Baker
Vocals [First Sailor] – John Mitchinson
Vocals [First Witch] – Rhianon Jones
Vocals [Second Witch] – Catherine Wilson
Vocals [Second Woman] – Eileen Poulter
Vocals [Sorceress] – Monica Sinclair
Vocals [Spirit] – Dorothy Dorow

Engineer – Kenneth Wilkinson Producer – Ray Minshall

Recorded 20-21 Oct 1961 at Walthamstow Assembly Hall by Decca (L'Oiseau-Lyre)

- 1 Overture 2:14
- Act One, Scene One
- 2 Shake The Cloud From Off Your Brow 1:03
- 3 Ah! Belinda, I Am Prest 4:41
- 4 Whence Could So Much Virtue Spring? 2:00
- 5 Fear No Danger To Ensur 1:33
- 6 See, Your Royal Guest Appears 4:46
- Act One, Scene Two
- 7 Wayward Sisters 3:05
- 8 Ruin'd Ere The Set Of Sun? 4:55
- Act Two
- 9 Ritornelle 3:26
- 10 Oft She Visits This Lov'd Mountain 2:23
- 11 Behold, Upon My Bended Spear 1:21
- 12 Stay, Prince 2:39
- Act Three
- 13 Come Away, Fellow Sailors 2:24
- 14 See The Flags And Streamers Curling 3:24
- 15 Your Counsel All Is Urg'd In Vain 3:26
- 16 But Death, Alas!... When I Am Laid To Earth 6:28
- 17 With Drooping Wings Ye Cupids Come 2:41



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www.highdeftapetransfers.com