

Henry Purcell reacted to and reflected politics and political history perhaps more than any other Baroque composer. In 1649 the running battle between Parliament and Monarchy for legislative supremacy had come to a head, resulting in the public execution of King Charles I. For ten years thereafter the country suffered the uncertainties, instability and indignity of Cromwell's military republic and near-dictatorship. In the words of contemporary diarist Samuel Pepys "either the fanatics must now be undone or the gentry and citizens throughout England will fall."

Henry Purcell was born in 1659, the year before George Monck, who had been Cromwell's Commander in Chief in Scotland, restored Parliament and recalled from exile King Charles' son who now became Charles II. With the Restoration and renewal of musical activities both in and out of Court, music was to flourish again, and Purcell was able to participate to the full in this period of renewed growth. As the son of a musician at Court, a chorister at the Chapel Royal, and the holder of continuing Royal appointments until his death, Purcell worked in Westminster for three different Kings over twenty-five years.

In the Chapel Royal young Purcell studied with Dr. John Blow. Dr. Burney, the eighteenth century historian, is amusingly skeptical on this point: "..... he had a few lessons from Dr. Blow, which were sufficient to cancel all the instructions he had received from other masters, and to occasion the boast inscribed on the tomb-stone of Blow, that he had been 'Master to the famous Mr. Henry Purcell.'" Legend has it that when, in 1679, Purcell succeeded Dr. Blow as Organist of Westminster Abbey, the elder musician stepped aside in recognition of the greater genius, and it is true that on Purcell's death in 1695 Blow returned to the post, and would write a noble Ode on the Death of Purcell.

**Rejoice in the Lord Always**, also known as *The Bell Anthem* for its downward peals of bells, was composed in the early 1680's and reflects the taste of Charles II. Thomas Tudway, a musician and commentator of the time, wrote that the King "was soon tired with the grave and solemn ways" of the music inherited from Tallis and Byrd. His Majesty, a "bright and airy prince", "ordered the composers of his chapel to add symphonies, etc. with instruments to their Anthems." Such changes suited Purcell, and *Rejoice in The Lord Always* shows the extrovert spirit, dignity, and splendor of Restoration church music.

Also composed in the early 1680's was the anthem, **My Beloved Spake**, which is a setting of verses from the Song of Solomon (ii, 10-13, 16). This quiet yet beautiful work is almost program-music, in that the music reflects the short verses of the text – making it important for the listener to follow the text during performance.

In addition to his royal duties Purcell also devoted much of his talent to writing operas, or rather musical dramas, and incidental stage music. He also became involved with the growing London public concert scene. In 1683 a group of gentlemen amateurs and professional musicians started a "Musical Society" in London to celebrate the "Festival of St. Cecilia, a great patroness of music" – a Festival which any music-lover so desirous may still celebrate yearly on November 22nd. They asked Henry Purcell, then only 24, to be the first to write an Ode for their festivals; it is this Ode, **Welcome to All the Pleasures**, which opens our program. Purcell was to compose two more such Odes for the Society.

Meanwhile at Court the situation was not quite as stable as England's good citizens had hoped. King Charles II had indeed the sense to acknowledge the new position of the monarchy and acquiesce to the wishes of Parliament. However, he died in 1685 and his brother James II who succeeded him once again opposed Parliament. In 1688 Parliament invited James' daughter Mary and her Dutch husband William of Orange to land in England and save the country's liberties. This they did accompanied by a large army, immediately drawing wide popular support in England. James fled the country, and William and Mary were invited to accept a specially drawn up Declaration of Rights which stipulated in precise detail the new relationship between Monarchy and Parliament and the limitations on royal power. This was the true Restoration; here was a much-loved and respected Queen, ruling (unusually for England) jointly with her husband William, acknowledging the religion and the constitutional traditions of her country, a Queen who would bring true peace and stability to England once again.

Starting in 1689 and reflecting England's love of their Queen Mary, Purcell had written a Birthday Ode for her each year. **Come Ye Sons of Art**, is one of the most beautiful examples of Purcell's art at its most mature. Performed on April 30, 1694, it was the greatest, and sadly, the last of the series. The following year Purcell composed funeral music for the Queen, and soon after Purcell himself died at the age of only 36.

Unlike Purcell's earlier anthems, in which the orchestra consists of the "King's Violins," in *Come Ye Sons of Art*, brass and woodwinds add a festive note. And unlike his earlier free-flowing fantasia style, Purcell here writes more in the multi-movement form of the high Baroque. One can never tire of this Ode, it is so full of joy and memorable melodies from its opening Symphony, later rearranged by Purcell for the stage play, *The Indian Queen*, through to the joyous last movement, "See Nature rejoicing," of which Westrup writes, "the whole world seems to be singing."

To provide variety, and indeed some relief between the powerful choral works on our disc, we have interspersed some of Purcell's Instrumental Music, not the outgoing Incidental Theater Music to be heard on our disc BMC 10, nor even the more mature Trio

Sonatas on BMC 9, but music harking back to an earlier style. The beginnings of English chamber music are to be sought in the Elizabethan "fancy," or "fantasia" for a chest of viols, most easily described as the instrumental counterpart of the madrigal. It was this form that Purcell inherited, and he made his own significant contribution to the literature with his sets of fantasies in three and four parts (1680). These are believed to be the last of their kind composed in England, and they are certainly among the finest. They are full of ingenuity and contrapuntal skill, utilizing all the devices known to the learned music of their day.

## WELCOME TO ALL THE PLEASURES

Welcome to all the pleasure that delight,  
Of every sense the grateful appetite.  
Hail, great assembly of Apollo's race.  
Hail to this happy place,  
This musical assembly, that seems to be  
The Ark of universal harmony.

Here the Deities approve,  
The God of Music and of Love,  
All the talents they have lent you,  
All the blessings they have sent you;  
Pleased to see what they bestow  
Live and thrive so well below.

While joys celestial their bright souls invade  
To find what great improvements you have made.  
Then lift up your voices, those organs of nature,  
Those charms to the troubled and amorous creature;

The pow'r shall divert us a pleasanter way  
Those charms to the troubled and amorous creature;  
The pow'r shall divert us a pleasanter way,  
For sorrow and grief  
Find from music relief,  
And love its soft charms must obey.  
Then lift up your voices (etc.).

Beauty, thou scene of Love,  
And virtue, thou innocent fire,  
Made by the powers above  
To temper the heat of desire:  
Music, that Fancy employs  
In raptures of innocent flame  
We offer with lute and with voice  
To Cecilia, Cecilia's bright name.

In a consort of voices, while instruments play,  
With music we celebrate this holy day.  
Cecilia.

**REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS** *Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice. Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice. Be careful for nothing; but in ev'rything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice*

**MY BELOVED SPAKE** *My beloved spake, and said unto me: Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; The time of the singing of birds is come, And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land: The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give off a good smell. Arise my love, my fair one, come away. My Beloved is mine and I am his: He feedeth among the lilies.*

## COME YE SONS OF ART

*Come ye Sons of Art, come away*

**Tune all your voices and instruments play**

*To celebrate this triumphant day.*

**Sound the trumpet, till around**

*You make the list'ning shores rebound*

*On the sprightly hautboy play*

**All the instruments of joy**

*That skillful numbers can employ*

*To celebrate the glories of this day.*

**Strike the viol, touch the lute,**

*Wake the harp, inspire the flute.*

*Sing your patronesses praise.*

*Sing in full harmonious lays*

*The day that such a blessing gave*

*No common festival should be.*

*What it justly seems to crave,*

*Grant, O grant, and let it have*

*The honour of a jubilee.*

**Bid the Virtues, bid the Graces,**

*To the sacred shrine repair,*

*Round the altar take their places*

*Blessing with returns of pray'r*

*Their great defender's care,*

*While Maria's royal zeal*

*Best instructs you how to pray,*

*Hourly from her own Conversing with the Eternal throne.*

**These are the sacred charms** *that shield Her daring hero in the field.*

*Thus she supports his righteous cause, To his aid immortal pow'r she draws.*

**See Nature rejoicing,** *has shown us the way, With innocent revels to welcome the day.*

*The tuneful grove and talking rill,*

*The laughing vale, replying hill,*

*With charming harmony unite.*

*The happy season to invite.*

**Thus Nature rejoicing** *has shown us the way With innocent revels to welcome the day.*

*What the Graces require, and the Muses inspire, is at once our delight and our duty to pay.*