

Linden ⌘ *Baroque* ⌘ *Orchestra*



Hits of the London Opera stage
in the late 17th century:

Director Steven Devine

Kate Semmens soprano Giles Davies baritone

Seb Harris alto Greg Tassell tenor

March 2nd 2008 St Alfege, Greenwich

Henry Purcell	The Fairy Queen	1 st Musick: Prelude & Hornpipe, Second Musick: Aire, Rondeau, Act 1 Overture, Come come, let us leave the town, See even night herself, Hush no more, Act 4 Symphony If Music be the food of love (soprano & Harpsichord)
Louis Grabu	Albion and Albanus	Prelude, Ritornel, Ayre, Prelude, Ayre for the Devils, Chorus, Second Ayre for the Devils, Prelude, Ayre for the God of the Waters, See the God of the Seas, Chacon
<i>- Interval -</i>		
John Blow	Venus and Adonis	Overture, Act Tune, Lovers' sequence, The second Act Tune, The Graces' Dance, Gavatt, Sarabrand for the Graces, A Ground
Henry Purcell	King Arthur	First Music: Overture, Second Music: Aire, Overture to Act 1, Fairest Isle, Ye blust'ring bretheren, Symphony
	The Fairy Queen	Entry of Phoebus and Chorus

Welcome to this early evening of excerpts from the opera stage of Restoration London.

The Restoration to the throne of Charles II from his long exile in 1660 brought royal patronage back to music in court and chapel. He had acquired French tastes and tried unsuccessfully to lure Lully to London. He had to make do with Grabu though he also sent some London musicians such as Pelham Humphrey to study in France. He aped King Louis' 'Les Violins du Roi' with the creation of his 'Twenty-Four Violins' and hastened the demise in fashionable society of viol consort music to be replaced by violin dance music. Charles's return also allowed the theatres to reopen and England, with no experience of opera, made do with masques to satisfy the public demand for entertainment until the importation of operas from Italy and France.

Henry Purcell (1658 – 1695) In 1661 Purcell's father (also a Henry, like many of the male Purcells) and his uncle took part, as members of the Chapel Royal, in Charles II's coronation service at Westminster Abbey and our Henry followed into Royal service as a choirboy around the age of 9. When his voice broke he took up a position of "keeper,

maker, mender, repairer and tuner of the regalls, organs, virginals, flutes and recorders and all other kinds of instruments whatsoever, in ordinary, without fee, to his Majesty". At the age of eighteen he succeeded Mathew Locke as composer for the King's Violins. He became foremost of the official composers, writing grand occasional music for Westminster Abbey where he succeeded John Blow as organist and for the court he produced many fine, sycophantic celebratory odes and allegorical welcome songs as well as liturgical pieces. He also wrote a great deal of chamber music and songs. With the accession of William and Mary in 1689, music became considerably less important at court and Purcell turned towards compositions for the stage to earn his crust. His four large-scale semi-operas were hugely successful. These dramas include *King Arthur* (1691) and *The Faerie Queen* (1692) and were performed by actor-singers involving sections of spoken dialogue which carried the action interspersed between musical scenes in the form of masques and involved much elaborate stage machinery and special effects. As an art form it was an unsatisfactory amalgam and didn't survive. When Purcell died at the tragically young age of 36, England lost one of her finest and most original composers.

The story of **King Arthur** doesn't stick to the traditional legend: Arthur has captured most of England from the Saxons except for Kent which is held by Oswald. Both leaders want to marry Emmeline, the blind daughter of the Duke of Cornwall. There are many fairies, spirits, elves and both leaders have a pet magician, Oswald, Osmund and Arthur, Merlin, so there are many magical events played out in the masques which allow Purcell the chance to write some wonderfully varied and colourful music. Oswald and his magician end up in opposition as rivals for Emmeline. After a series of unlikely twists and turns involving much sorcery, Arthur defeats Oswald in a duel, frees him magnanimously and is united with Emmeline. Britannia rises from the waves and a series of patriotic choruses praising aspects of the British life including its splendid food and beer is followed by the gorgeous song 'Fairest Isle' and a love duet ends the weirdly chaotic proceedings.

The Fairy Queen is based on Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' though none of the text is actually set by Purcell. The play, though modernised to the time, was recited largely to the original text by the actors and again, the music appears in the masques, which illustrate and comment on the action of the play. Flattering references to Charles II's successor, King William and his consort Mary, are woven into the masques and there is other satirical material, such as the drunken poet's song, the original subject of which is lost to us. The remaining music comprises the 'First' and 'Second music' played whilst the audience were finding their seats and movements played between each act.

If Music be the Food of Love is a setting from 1692 of a poem by Colonel Henry Heveningham inspired by 'Twelfth Night', though only the first line is Shakespeare's.

Louis Grabu (Unknown – 1694) a Catalan by birth, trained in Paris probably under Lully and came to London around 1660, following the growing popularity of French music under Charles II's influence. He became Master of the Kings Music in 1666, following the death of John Lainier (who is buried in Greenwich). He received much royal favour, leading the King's Twenty-Four Violins and later the Twelve Violins and earning the colossal sum of £200 a year. However, Pelham Humphrey, a fellow court composer, when asked 'does Grabu grab you?', replied, "He understands nothing, nor can play on any instrument and so cannot compose". Pepys thought him a good organiser and trainer of the bands but lacking as a composer, criticizing "the manner of setting the words and repeating them out of order and that with a number of voices, makes me sick, the whole design of vocall music being lost by it". His setting of Dryden's *Albion and Albanius* of 1685, though lavishly staged, received a poor reception at the Dorset Gardens Theatre and ran for only 6 nights, not helped by the death of Charles II. Grabu suffered much sharp satirising and his stock fell. Dryden chose Purcell for setting its successor, *King Arthur*. The opera remained, however, the only one written in English actually published in the seventeenth century.

The opera presents a complex allegory of the reign of Charles II. Albion (Charles II) and his brother Albanius (James) are restored after the usurpers, Democracy and Zeal, are sent to sleep by Archon, aided by Mercury. In Hell, Democracy, Zeal, Pluto and Alecto plot to overthrow Albion, and celebrate their scheme with a masque involving much devilery. Albanius is sent into exile to forestall the plot and his sea journey is celebrated with another

masque. Albion's enemies attempt to waylay him, but are thwarted by a magic fire. The gods take Albion into the heavens, leaving Albanus to reign on earth. Got it?

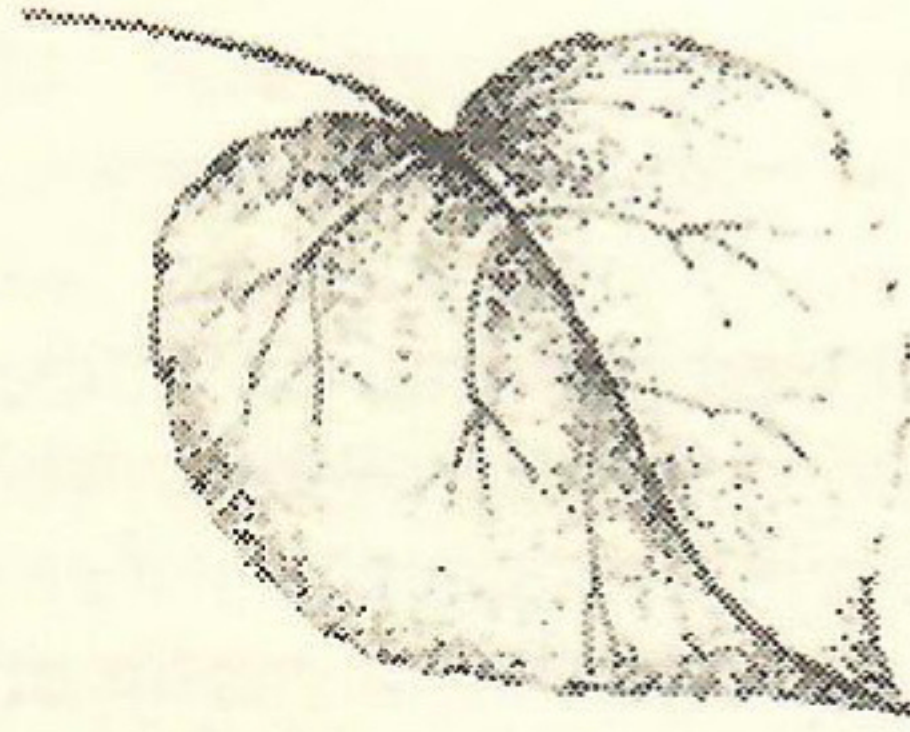
John Blow (1649 – 1708) was the first Composer of the Chapel Royal and was organist of St Paul's Cathedral then Westminster Abbey aged only 19, before making way for his illustrious pupil, Purcell, regaining the position on Purcell's death. He held several other official posts at court. Blow composed prolifically in many styles and genres and is best known for his only theatre piece, the miniature opera **Venus and Adonis**. Written in 1682 for the entertainment of Charles II, it was a very domestic event: Venus was played by the King's ex-mistress Moll Davies and their daughter Mary played Cupid. The children of the court frolicked around as a troupe of little cupids being schooled in spelling and the various arts of cupidology.

The piece is French in feel and form, well suited to Charles's taste but is remarkable for the period in being through-composed without set-piece arias, the plot development being carried by recitative. It became the model for Purcell's 'Dido and Aeneas'.

Venus's son Cupid, accidentally pierces his mother with one of his arrows. The handsome youth Adonis is the first person Venus sees and she immediately falls in love. He is a hunter, and in Blow's version, he wants to relinquish hunting in order to spend more time at home with his new lover. She wishes to freshen him up ('absence kindles new desires') and encourages him to hunt but it all ends in tears. After some entertainments from the cupids, Venus is found lamenting Adonis's fatal goring by a wild boar.

Steven Devine received his early musical training at Chetham's School of Music, Manchester and read music at Oxford University. He is now in demand across the world and is at home in the fields of opera, large-scale concerts, chamber music and solo performances. He made his London conducting debut in 2002 at the Royal Albert Hall and is now a regular performer there. He has conducted the Mozart Festival Orchestra in every major concert hall in the UK and also across Switzerland. Future plans with them include another tour of Switzerland and also Germany. In opera, Steven worked at the Comische Oper in Berlin and alongside Paul McCreesh throughout France. Associate Music Director of Opera Restor'd, he has conducted at Wigmore Hall in London, at the Warwick, Lake District, Stour Norwich and English Haydn Festivals. Steven works regularly with New Chamber Opera in Oxford and with them has conducted performances of Purcell's Dido and Aeneas, Mozart's La Finta Semplice, Stradella's Il Trespolo Tutore and Rossini's Il Comte Ory and for the Dartington Festival Opera Handel's Orlando. Steven is the Co-Principal keyboard player with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and will be appearing as a director with them later in 2007 on tour with Ian Bostridge. He is also the principal keyboard player for I Fagiolini, Apollo and Pan, The Classical Opera Company and performs regularly with many other groups around Europe. He has recorded over thirty discs with other artists and ensembles and made three solo recordings. Steven is now Director of Education at Finchcocks Collection of historic keyboard instruments and was appointed Professor of Fortepiano at Trinity College of Music in 2003

Kate Semmens, soprano, appears regularly as a soloist with many leading groups and opera companies, and sings with some of the UK's leading choirs. Operatic performances have included Cupid (*Venus and Adonis*) for Peter Holman and Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Mycene (Lully's *Isis*) for Jeffrey Skidmore. She has appeared as a soloist on numerous occasions with New Chamber Opera, including *Ciro* in their production of Stradella's *Il Trespolo Tutore*, for which Opera magazine wrote "*the clarity and charm of Kate Semmens' soprano was disarming*". In the Suffolk Villages Festival Kate sang the title role in the first modern performance of John Stanley's *Teraminta* for Opera Restor'd, and the Soprano solos for Purcell's *Fairy Queen* conducted by Peter Holman. For the Brabant ensemble, recent engagements have included a recording and radio broadcasts in Leuven. She joined the Monteverdi Choir on their Christmas tour of Europe and is returning to sing with them in Spain, France and Italy. Her teacher is Richard Smart.



L I N D E N B A R O Q U E O R C H E S T R A

Oboes	Simon Galton, Lysander Tennant	Bassoon	Maggie Bruce
Trumpets	Hilmar Hauer, Lucy Leleu	Timpani	Donna Maria Landowski
Violin 1	Ilana Cravitz (leader) , Kate Eden, Clive Letchford (& Vla), Barbara Grant, Alan Selwyn, Raquel Bataosso		
Violin 2	Michael Jenner, Diane Wyatt, Simon Hill (& Vla), Linda McDonald		
Viola	Michael Blee, John Sutherland		
Bass Violin	Louise Jameson	Cello:	Amelie Addison
Harpsichord	Steven Devine	Violone:	Andrew Kerr

Linden Baroque was formed in late 1984 by a group of early music enthusiasts in the front room of a house in Linden Gardens, Chiswick. Unusually - and uniquely anywhere at that time - it combines the talents of young professionals, students and others and many members have moved on to have prominent careers in the early music field. From the beginning, the musical director was the well-known baroque oboist Paul Goodwin. Now pursuing a busy international conducting career, Paul is Honorary President and Steven Devine, following Walter Reiter, is Musical Director. The orchestra has played at venues from Norfolk to Rome (where it gave the first performances there of Purcell's King Arthur). The instruments are either 18th century originals or modern copies - some made by the players themselves and we play at "baroque pitch" of 415Hz. The instruments are at a lower tension than modern concert pitch and their design and set-up means they sound much softer and rather more subtle than today's steel-strung and multiple-keyed successors, allowing the music to be heard closer to the way it was when it was composed.

Together with the Linden Baroque Choir they have given first modern performances of music by Jean Gilles and J F Fasch. Their first CD, issued in 2002 on the Meridian label of music by Fasch, was well received and was played on Radio 3.



Copies are available for sale tonight at £10
They make excellent Christmas presents - you only have 299 shopping days remaining!

The next Linden Baroque concert in this church is July 13th. This will feature music from the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens directed by Peter Holman. We return to St Alfege in **October** with instrumental music celebrating J F Fasch's 300th birthday and music of his contemporaries.

If you happen to be in Peterborough on **Friday March 14th** we are performing Bach's St John Passion with Oakham School Choir in the Cathedral.

If you wish to be kept in touch with Linden Baroque, please add your name to our free mailing-list - fill in your details on the form and leave them on the table on the way out.

Linden Baroque is a registered Charity (No 1014921) and, apart from receiving a National Lottery grant in 1999, is entirely self-supporting. We eagerly await sponsorship for individual events or series!

www.lindenbaroque.com