

TO SUMMER MUSIC

OPENING NIGHT: THE FAIRY QUEEN

Thursday, July 11
7:30pm
Koerner Hall

Henry Purcell:
The Fairy Queen, Z. 629

Libretto:
Anonymous, based on
A Midsummer Night's Dream
by W. Shakespeare

11th Edition of Le Jardin
des Voix, the Academy
of Flourishing Arts for
Young Singers



LES ARTS FLORISSANTS

Musical Direction:

William Christie

Co-Directors of L'Académie du Jardin des Voix:

William Christie and Paul Agnew

Stage Direction and Choreography:

Mourad Merzouki

Assistant Choreographer:

Rémi Autechaud

Costumes:

Claire Schirck

Lighting:

Fabrice Sarcy

Language Advisor:

Sophie Daneman

Soloists of Le Jardin des Voix 2023

Paulina Francisco, soprano

Georgia Burashko, mezzo-soprano

Rebecca Leggett, mezzo-soprano

Juliette Mey, mezzo-soprano

Ilja Aksionov, tenor

Rodrigo Carreto, tenor

Hugo Herman-Wilson, baritone

Benjamin Schilperoort, bass-baritone

Dancers

Baptiste Coppin

(Compagnie Käfig)

Ian Debono (Juilliard School)

Samuel Florimond

(Compagnie Käfig)

Anahi Passi (Compagnie Käfig)

Alary-Youra Ravin

(Compagnie Käfig)

Daniel Saad (Compagnie Käfig)

Timothée Zig (Compagnie Käfig)

L'Orchestre des Arts Florissants

Violin 1

Emmanuel Resche-Caserta*,
concertmaster
Catherine Girard
Augusta McKay Lodge*
Christophe Robert

Violin 2

Tami Troman
Jeffrey Girton*
Michèle Sauvé

Viola

Lucia Peralta
Simon Heyerick

Viola da gamba

Nicholas Milne (*basso continuo*)

Cello

Félix Knecht (*basso continuo*)
Elena Andreyev
Magdalena Probe**

Double bass

Joseph Carver (*basso continuo*)

Recorder

Sébastien Marq
Nathalie Petibon

Oboe

Yanina Yacubsohn
Nathalie Petibon

Bassoon

Josep Casadella Cunillera

Trumpet

Tobias Krieger
Aline Théry

Lute, Guitar

Sergio Bucheli (*basso continuo*)

Timpani

Marie-Ange Petit

Harpichord, Organ

Florian Carré (*basso continuo*)

*Alumni from the Juilliard School **Former Arts Flo Junior member

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The Societe Generale Corporate Foundation is a Major Sponsor of Le Jardin des Voix.



A MESSAGE FROM THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR

The Fairy Queen is a work that is very dear to Les Arts Florissants. We have already performed it many times, both in concert and in staged versions, as excerpts or in its entirety.

It is one of Henry Purcell's finest compositions; he himself considered it to be a major work in his output. When we began performing it with Les Arts Florissants in the 1980s, we were keen to restore its vigour by highlighting an aspect that had been somewhat forgotten by other early music ensembles until then. I'm talking about a certain vision of Purcell, not just as an artist marvelously setting Shakespeare's language to music, but also as a great European baroque composer strongly influenced by French music. This cosmopolitan conception of *The Fairy Queen* has, I think, added enormously to the allure of the work.

For this production, we have assembled a team of young baroque singers selected from all over the world: the winners of L'Académie du Jardin des Voix. These "new voices," we might say, have been specially chosen to perform *The Fairy Queen* because of their timbre, their virtuosity, and, of course, their dramatic qualities. These qualities will be put to good use in the staging by the great choreographer Mourad Merzouki, who is directing an opera with L'Académie du Jardin des Voix for the first time and knows how to bring out the dialogue between the different arts.

The Fairy Queen, whose cosmopolitan nature we have worked so hard to demonstrate with Les Arts Florissants, takes on a very special meaning with such collaborators. This is fully in keeping with the history of Les Arts Florissants and our desire to pass on this music.

- William Christie, Musical Director & Co-Director
of L'Académie du Jardin des Voix

PROGRAM NOTES

It is difficult to qualify the contribution to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that Purcell's *Fairy Queen* represents. None of the music reflects directly on the play, and the texts are related only metaphorically. Purcell does not set any words of Shakespeare, and the play in no way needs the music in order to be understood. It is easier to see the different masques that each musical act represents, as *divertissements* in the French baroque opera sense; they stop the action in order to entertain. They have no dramatic role, do not advance the plot, and contain no specific characters. It is because of this that reconstructions of the music within the play tend to be frustrating. The modern audience does not want to be paused for entertainment and has difficulty relating the music to the forward thrust of the play, and in practical terms, the music prolongs an already long evening in the theatre.

It is for these reasons that I would like our *Fairy Queen* to be a celebration of the genius of Purcell rather than Shakespeare, and while the play should remain as a constant shadow throughout the evening, it is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that will become the divertissement to Purcell's wonderful music.

In order to do this, we will give the different acts of Purcell's music different localities and different atmospheres to suit the contents of each musical interlude.

Act I is clearly without magic, or rather, before the magic commences. It is still light, and it is in our own temporal space. The duet "Come Let Us Leave the Town" prepares us for the journey into the enchantment of the night, and the Drunken Poet is the evening revelry after the day's work.

In Act II, the night descends, the magic commences, and the allegorical figures of Secrecy and Mystery introduce us to a dream world before Night herself descends. "One charming night has more delight than a thousand lucky days," sings the tenor, before the bass's "Hush no more" lulls us to sleep.

Act III is about love, the currency of night. The ensemble asks "If love's a sweet passion, why does it torment?" and the swans glide and the fairies dance. But love is not reserved for gentle people, so Corydon and Mopsa (in drag) celebrate a more rustic union with the haymakers.

Act IV is a celebration of nature, from the tenor's "cruel long winter" to the soprano's "ever grateful spring." Here, Summer, sprightly and gay, is followed by the haute-contre singing of Autumn's "many coloured fields," until finally, the bass announces, "Now winter comes slowly."

And finally, Act V celebrates the dawn. The "night is chased away" and "the gloomy world begins to shine." This is not simply a dawn but a rebirth of the beauty of the physical and the metaphysical. We conclude that "They shall be happy as they're fair, Love shall fill all the places of care."

Shakespeare's play should be present throughout, but not *raison d'être* of the evening. Resonant moments from the play can be heard or seen projected to remind us of his very particular world and to complement and frame the music and dance...

"I hear strange music, warbling in the air.
It is fairy music, sent by me,
To cure your incredulity."

"Away, my elves; prepare a fairy masque
To entertain my love; and change this place
To my enchanted lake."

- Paul Agnew, Co-Director of L'Académie du Jardin des Voix