



Saturday 21 October, 1pm  
St Nicholas Church

## **BATTLE CRY: SHE SPEAKS**

**Helen Charlston** *mezzo-soprano*

**Toby Carr** *theorbo*

Henry Purcell 1659–1695

Barbara Strozzi 1619–1677

Robert de Visée 1650–1725

John Eccles 1668–1735

Owain Park b. 1993

Giovanni Kapsberger 1580–1651  
Strozzi

Claudio Monteverdi 1567–1643

de Visée  
Purcell

Oh, lead me to some peaceful gloom  
(Bonduca's song)

L'eraclito Amoroso

Prelude

Restless in Thought

Battle Cry

i. Boudicca

ii. Philomela in the Forest

iii. A Singer's Ode to Sappho

iv. Marietta

Preludio Quinto

La Travagliata

Lamento d'Arianna

Sarabande

An Evening Hymn



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## Battle Cry: She Speaks

Stories of women such as Dido and Ariadne have been re-told throughout history, as ancient tales dealt with the reality of war on the women 'left behind' by male dominated storytelling. Is abandonment really helplessness, or is that just where a new adventure begins?

Purcell's adaptation of John Fletcher's play *Bonduca* (dating from a month before the composer's death) deftly contrasts the pull of glory and tragedy. In 'Oh, Lead me to some peaceful gloom', Bonduca looks to love as an escape from her inevitable demise, a shelter from the trumpets and tumults of war and a place to soothe her 'pleasing pain'.

Loss is the turning point in 'L'eraclito Amoroso'. Silence and lament become joy and delight, and ultimately Heraclitus is revitalised by the pleasing pain of abandonment. Written in five sections that oscillate between the heightened speech-like recitative, and a slow melodic ground built on four repeating chords, this is a brilliant example of Strozzi's distinctive cantata style.

'Restless in Thought, disturb'd in mind' was written as incidental music to appear in *She Ventures, He Wins*, a comedy published by a 'Young Woman under the pseudonym of Ariadne' telling the story of two young women intent on marrying someone who loves them for their minds and not their money. They test their suitors in a confusion of disguises and mistaken identities.

The long neck with extended bass strings is undoubtedly the most eye-catching feature of the theorbo, an innovation claimed by Piccinini. He applied the new style of dramatic composition championed by Monteverdi to the lute and theorbo. His Toccata features quick changes of mood, and techniques that push the boundaries of what is possible on these newly transformed instruments.

Written in 2020–2021, Battle Cry is a homage to the vivid musical and poetic language of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. We meet Boudicca, Philomela, Sappho and Marietta, asking who they were, and what they might say to us today. These songs of legacy examine Boudicca's name, a name that we have little concept of how to pronounce, and commemorate Philomela, who lost her voice when her tongue was cut out. 'A Singer's Ode to Sappho' centres the voice as a solo instrument, and 'Marietta' asks questions of the women involved, and us as an audience.

An echo of the ancient Greek *kithara*, the theorbo was originally designed for the accompaniment of this dramatic *seconda prattica* music as well as a solo instrument. Kapsberger's Preludio Quinto is from a versatile set of short solos in various keys, that serve as something of a palate cleanser whilst bringing us back into this vibrant 17<sup>th</sup>-century world.

'La Travagliata' showcases a simpler, strophic incarnation of Barbara Strozzi's musical language. Sung by a suffering lover stuck in the world of unrequited love, each verse is a request to the lover asking simply for first a look, then a word and finally a kiss.

Monteverdi's 'Lamento d'Arianna' is the only surviving music of his lost opera. Whilst there is futility, despair and misery; you never doubt Arianna's regal qualities. She remains an open-hearted and caring being, all-consumed by and resigned to the power of love, but Monteverdi's musical twists and turns mean the darkness is never far away. As the lament winds to an end, Arianna sees the faces of her parents, her home, friends and all she left behind for the one she loved, perhaps, *too* much?

After much anguish, we end with a prayer of solace, to put all the stories we have heard this evening to rest. The closing Hallelujah of 'An Evening Hymn' can be heard in many ways, but here we hope it becomes an answer to some of the questions we have been asking.

Helen and Toby's debut album, *Battle Cry*, was released on Delphian Records in 2022 to great acclaim and won the 2023 BBC Music Magazine Vocal Award.

## **The performers**

"Surely one of the most exciting voices in the new generation of British singers" (Gramophone Magazine 2022)

**Helen Charlston** first appeared at BREMF in the 2017 production of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. Since then, she has crafted a place for herself at the forefront of the classical musical scene in the UK and abroad. A founder participant of the Rising Star of the Enlightenment, she regularly works alongside the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, appearing in their film version of Dido's Lament inspired by Coldplay's iconic video of 'The Scientist'. She is a BBC New Generation Artist (2021-23), was a member of Le Jardin des Voix academy with Les Arts Florissants in 2021-22, and recently won both a Gramophone Award for best Concept Album and BBC Music Magazine Vocal Award for her album 'Battle Cry' that forms today's programme.

An avid recitalist, Helen has given solo recitals at Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, and the Leeds Lieder, Oxford Song and Cheltenham Festivals. She is an advocate for contemporary music, particularly that performed on period instruments, and regularly commissions new composers. Beyond her performing life, Helen is an artistic advisor for York Early Music Festival and a Vice President for the Rodolfus Foundation.

[helencharlston.com](http://helencharlston.com)

Lutenist and guitarist **Toby Carr** is known as a versatile and engaging artist, working with some of the finest musicians in the business. While studying the classical guitar at Trinity Laban he was introduced to historical plucked instruments, an interest he pursued during a postgraduate degree at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, graduating in 2016 and welcomed back as a professor in 2021. Now in demand as a soloist, chamber musician and continuo player, his playing has been described as 'sensuous and vivid' (The Guardian), 'Eloquent' (BBC Music Magazine) and 'Mesmerising' (Opera Today).

Toby has performed with most of the principal period instrument ensembles in the UK and beyond, as well as with many symphony orchestras, opera companies and ballet companies. He collaborates with singers such as Nicholas Mulroy, Alexander Chance and Helen Charlston. Notable recordings include 'Battle Cry' with Helen Charlston for Delphian and 'Drop not, mine eyes' with Alexander Chance for Linn.

Settled in Greenwich, south-east London with his wife and collaborator, harpist Aileen Henry, Toby's interests outside of music include reading, cooking and travelling, though when not working he generally tries to do as little as possible.

[tobycarr.co.uk](http://tobycarr.co.uk)

## The texts

### L'eraclito amoroso

Translation © Richard Kolb

Udite amanti la cagione, oh Dio,  
ch'a. lagrimar mi porta:  
nell'adorato e bello idolo mio,  
che sì fido credei, la fede è morta.

Listen you lovers, to the cause, oh God,  
of my weeping:  
in my handsome and adored idol,  
whom I believed to be faithful, faith is dead.

Vaghezza ho sol di piangere,  
mi pasco sol di lagrime,  
il duolo è mia delizia  
e son miei gioie i gemiti.  
Ogni martie aggradami,  
ogni dolor diletta mi,  
i singulti mi sanano,  
i sospir mi consolano.

I have pleasure only in weeping,  
I nourish myself only with tears.  
Grief is my delight  
and moans are my joys.  
Every anguish gives me pleasure,  
every pain delights me,  
sobs heal me,  
sighs console me.

Ma se la fede negami  
quell'incostante e perfido,  
almen fede serbatemi  
sino alla morte, o lagrime!  
Ogni tristezza assalgami,  
ogni cordoglio eternisi,  
tanto ogni male affliggami  
che m'uccida e sotterrimi.

But if that inconstant traitor  
denies me constancy,  
at least let my devotion serve me  
until death, O tears.  
Every sadness soothes me,  
every sorrow sustains itself,  
every ill afflicts me so much  
that it slays and buries me.

## **O Lead Me to Some Peaceful Gloom**

Text: John Fletcher

O lead me to some peaceful gloom,  
Where none but sighing lovers come,  
Where the shrill trumpets never sound,  
But one eternal hush goes round.  
There let me soothe my pleasing pain,  
And never think of war again.  
What glory can a lover have,  
To conquer, yet be still a slave?

## **Battle Cry**

Texts: Georgia Way

### **i. Boudicca**

Among the foundations near here  
a story of fire and battle  
has escaped like fragrance.

Her teeth are fired in the ashes of London.  
Romans displace her. Fine oils and wines  
bathe her fragile neck. The Thames delivers her.

Lost names seep away into stolen lands.  
Her life is in shards. The Iceni Queen  
knows a woman cannot speak out and live.

As for me, I cannot even utter her name:  
Boudicca, Boadicea? Two fragments of her  
passed down to me

as if she were never whole. Empty halves  
cradling versions of history  
she never chose.

### **ii. Philomela in the Forest**

The falcon sings to me all day.  
His feathers are limp and brown.  
Turn tail, little falcon, fly far away,  
and leave me on my own.

You'll be hooded, silenced!  
In this place  
I was wounded, like bark drained  
for its sap, then bound

in poison ivy.

Unspeakable! I cannot even cry out  
for my mother.

There in the canopy:  
are those her hands  
enfolding me?

The falcon sings to me all day.  
His feathers are limp and brown.  
Turn tail, little falcon, fly far away,  
and leave me on my own.

The falcon sings to me all day.  
His feathers are limp and brown.  
Turn tail, little falcon, fly far away,  
and leave me on my own.

### **iii. A Singer's Ode to Sappho**

Oh Sappho! My voice  
is hoarse tonight,  
like torn papyrus.

It maims the words  
gathering in the temple  
to your name.

Are you there, Sappho?  
Hear my voice when I call.  
I pray, dwell in me:

Make my voice your lyre,  
take my cries.  
In the honeyed night,

your face, Lady,  
will I seek: singing until,  
in gilded sandals,

the dawn steps into birdsong.

### **iv. Marietta**

Glück, das mir verblieb,  
Rück zu mir, mein treues Lieb.

*(You, my happiness, that remained  
Come close to me, my faithful love)*

Your eye catches beyond me,  
betraying bliss seared,  
charred with lament.  
A dried flower joyed in the summer,  
and now the seasons, resenting, succeed:  
the wild fires sorrow, follow the same snow again.

How frightened you are!  
You drift away as your fingers float to my neck,  
feeling smooth skin, the memento of another.  
Understand that resemblance is nothing.  
I resemble her only as a woman resembles a woman;  
when we are irrevocable,  
as unlike as tears.

But this is only a song to you.  
A heightened story that means more than it is.

I am a woman – of course I know this song.  
Women do not reside in the world.  
Death's whorl is her dwelling place.  
To descend is her debt,  
the song the net,  
capturing warm grief to settle on your cold flesh  
and prove what you feel is true.

In the world we inhabit  
the true love is not doomed to die.  
How unkind  
and how final  
this mournful melody which makes no  
promise of the future for either the dead or the living.

The dead breathe stale air to sing.  
Jealous? Why would I be jealous of the dead?

### **Lamento d'Arianna**

Lasciatemi morire.  
E chi volete voi  
che mi conforte  
in così dura sorte,  
in così gran martire?  
Lasciatemi morire.

O Teseo, o Teseo mio,  
si che mio ti vo' dir

Let me die.  
And who do you think  
can comfort me  
in thus harsh fate,  
in thus great suffering?  
Let me die.

Oh Theseus, oh my Theseus,  
yes, I still call you mine

che mio pur sei,  
benchè t'involi, ah! crudo,  
a gl'occhi miei.  
Volgiti Teseo mio,  
volgiti Teseo, o Dio,  
volgiti indietro a rimirar colei  
che lasciato ha per te la Patria e'l regno,  
e in queste arene ancora,  
cibo di fere dispietate e crude  
lascierà l'ossa ignude.  
O Teseo, o Teseo mio,  
se tu sapessi, o Dio,  
se tu sapessi, oimè,  
come s'affanna  
la povera Arianna;  
Forse, forse pentito  
rivolgeresti ancor la prora al lito.  
Ma con l'aure serene  
tu te ne vai felice, ed io qui piango.

A te prepara Atene  
liete pompe superbe, ed io rimango,  
cibo di fere in solitarie arene.  
Te l'uno e l'altro tuo vecchio parente  
stringeran lieti, ed io più non vedrovvi,  
o Madre, o Padre mio.

Dove, dov' è la fede  
che tanto mi giuravi?  
Così nell' alta fede  
tu mi ripon degl' Avi?  
Son queste le corone  
onde m'adorn' il crine?  
Questi gli scettri sono,  
queste le gemme e gl'ori?  
Lasciarmi in abbandono  
a fera che mi strazi e mi divori?  
Ah Teseo, ah Teseo mio,  
lascierai tu morire  
invan piangendo, invan gridando aita  
la misera Arianna  
ch' a te fidossi e ti diè gloria e vita?

Ahi, che non pur rispondi,  
ahi, che più d'aspe è sordo a miei  
lamenti!

for mine you are,  
although you flee, cruel one,  
far from my eyes.  
Turn back, my Theseus,  
turn back, Theseus, o God,  
turn back to see again the one,  
who for you has left her fatherland and kingdom,  
and who, staying on these shores,  
a prey to cruel and pitiless beasts,  
will leave her bones denuded.  
Oh Theseus, oh my Theseus,  
if you knew, oh God,  
if you only knew  
how much poor Arianna  
is frightened,  
perhaps, overcome with remorse,  
you would return your prow shorewards again.  
But with the serene winds  
you sail on happily, while I remain here weeping.

Athens prepares to greet you  
with joyful and superb feasts and I remain,  
a prey to wild beasts on these solitary shores.  
You will be happily embraced by  
your old parents and I will not see you again,  
oh mother, oh my father.

Where is the faith you  
swore me so much?  
Is this how you place me  
on my ancestor's throne?  
Are these the crowns  
with which you adorn my hair?  
Are these the sceptres,  
the diamonds and the gold?  
To leave me abandoned  
for the beast to tear up and devour?  
Ah Theseus, ah my Theseus,  
would you let me die,  
weeping in vain, crying for aid  
the wretched Arianna,  
who trusted you and gave you glory and life?

Ah, that you do not even reply!  
Ah, that you are deaf to my laments!



O nembi, o turbi, o venti  
sommergetelo voi dentr' a quell' onde!  
Correte orche e balene,  
e delle membra immonde  
empiete le voragini profonde!  
Che parlo, ahi, che vaneggio?  
Misera, oimè, che chieggio?  
O Teseo, o Teseo mio,  
non son, non son quell' io,  
non son quell' io che i ferì detti sciolse;  
parlò l'affanno mio,  
parlò il dolore,  
parlò la lingua sì ma non già il core.

Misera, ancor dò loco  
a la tradita speme,  
e non si spegne  
fra tanto scherno ancor d'amor il foco.  
Spegni tu morte omai le fiamme  
indegne.

O Madre, o Padre,  
o de l'antico Regno superbi alberghi,  
ov' ebbi d'or la cuna.  
O servi, o fidi amici –  
ahi fato indegno! –  
mirate ove m'ha scort' empia fortuna,  
mirate di che duol m'ha fatto herede

l'amor mio, la mia fede  
e l'altrui inganno.  
Così va chi tropp' ama  
e troppo crede.

### An Evening Hymn

Now, now that the sun hath veil'd his light  
And bid the world goodnight;  
To the soft bed my body I dispose,  
But where shall my soul repose?  
Dear, dear God, even in Thy arms,  
And can there be any so sweet security!  
Then to thy rest, O my soul!  
And singing, praise the mercy  
That prolongs thy days.  
Hallelujah!

Oh clouds, oh storms, oh winds,  
submerge him in those waves.  
Fly, whales and orcs,  
and fill up the profound gulfs  
with these unworldly limbs!  
What am I saying? Ah, what am I raving about?  
Wretched that I am, what am I asking?  
Oh Theseus, oh my Theseus,  
that is, that is not I,  
that it is not I who hurled these curses,  
my anguish spoke,  
the pain spoke,  
it was my tongue but not my heart.

Wretched that I am, still I give place  
to a hope betrayed,  
and despite so much scorn  
the fire of love is not put out.  
For that put out now, death, the unworthy flames.

Oh mother, oh father,  
oh superb dwellings of the ancient kingdom,  
where my golden cradle stood!  
Oh servants, oh faithful friends –  
Ah, unjust fate! –  
See where a cruel fortune has led me,  
see what pain has been given to me as a  
heritage  
for my love, my faith  
and for his betraying me.  
That is the fate of one who loves too much  
and believes too much.