



Cecilian Odes

...with Rapture of Delight...

*Hail! Bright Cecilia, Hail! fill ev'ry Heart!
With Love of thee and thy Celestial Art...*

- Pre-concert: Winds chamber music in foyer
- First half: **Purcell:** *Welcome to all the Pleasures* (1685)
William Croft: *The Heav'nly Warlike Goddess now Disarm'd* (1697)
- Interval: Keyboard suite in the auditorium, String chamber music in foyer
- Second half: **Purcell:** *Raise, Raise the Voice!* (1683)
Purcell: *Te Deum* and *Jubilate*
- Post-concert: Lute songs in foyer

St Cecilia underwent an apparently gruesome martyrdom in the 3rd century, and has been honoured as patron saint of music – for no obvious reason other than she began to be depicted by Italian painters holding various musical instruments. By the second half of the 16th century substantial festivals and celebrations were being held across Europe in her and music's honor – on her saints' day November 22nd. The first English festivity for which record exists took place in London in 1683. From that year until well into the 18th century the day's programme comprised a thanksgiving church service followed by a celebratory feast and "entertainment", an important part of which was an ode, written and composed specially for the occasion.

Most of the leading poets and composers of the period turned their hand to Cecilia: Dryden, Shadwell, D'Urfey, Congreve, Pope and Brady for the text, and Purcell, Croft, Handel and Boyce for the setting, amongst others. The resulting productions are often a sublime combination of musically inspiring poetry and appropriately inspired music: Purcell's 1692 *Hail, Bright Cecilia!* is widely acknowledged to be one of his very best works, and the zenith of the 17th-century ode form; Handel's two large-scale odes, both on texts by Dryden, colourfully display the full range of his operatic and choral powers; and the more small-scale works by Croft and Purcell are gems of intimate composition on a heartfelt theme – one by its very nature a stimulant to musical fancy.

12-part choir, 4 strings, 5 winds, 2 continuo