

Dawn Upshaw & Brentano Quartet

Dido Reimagined / Dido Réimaginé

NOVEMBER 1 NOVEMBRE 2022 19:00

Oh let me weep, from The Fairy Queen, Z629

HENRY PURCELL, ARR. MARK STEINBERG

Fantasia No. 5 for Four Viols in B-flat Major, Z736

HENRY PURCELL

Suite No. 2 for Four Viols in D Minor/Major: Fantasia

MATTHEW LOCKE

Come again, sweet love doth now invite

JOHN DOWLAND, ARR. STEPHEN PRUTSMAN

Suite No. 2: Courante

MATTHEW LOCKE

Can she excuse my wrongs

JOHN DOWLAND, ARR. STEPHEN PRUTSMAN

Suite No. 2: Ayre

MATTHEW LOCKE

Weep you no more, sad fountains

JOHN DOWLAND, ARR. STEPHEN PRUTSMAN

Suite No. 2: Saraband

MATTHEW LOCKE

Alman

THOMAS TOMKINS

“Dido Reimagined” is a new performance project sparked by the famous “Dido’s Lament” from Purcell’s opera Dido and Aeneas. Brentano Quartet invited composer Melinda Wagner and librettist Stephanie Fleischmann to respond to this aria, and more broadly to the story of Queen Dido, with a large-scale work performed with soprano Dawn Upshaw, together with Purcell’s aria and other selections from Baroque opera.

La légendaire soprano Dawn Upshaw se joint au Brentano Quartet pour leur nouveau projet, Dido Réimaginé, inspiré par le célèbre «Dido’s Lament» (« la lamentation de Dido ») de l’opéra Dido et Aeneas de Purcell. Le programme présente une réponse à la lamentation et un éventail d’autres sélections de l’opéra baroque pour voix solo et quatuor à cordes.

Dawn Upshaw

soprano / soprano

BRENTANO QUARTET:

Serena Canin

violin / violon

Mark Steinberg

violin / violon

Misha Amory

viola / alto

Nina Lee

cello / violoncelle

Though Amaryllis dance in green

WILLIAM BYRD

The Witty Wanton

ROBERT JOHNSON

Fantasia No. 7 for Four Viols in C Minor, Z738

HENRY PURCELL

When I am laid in earth (Dido's Lament) from Dido and
Aeneas, Z626

HENRY PURCELL

Intermission / Entracte

Dido Reimagined – a response to Purcell's "Lament"

MELINDA WAGNER

Oh let me weep, from The Fairy Queen, Z629

HENRY PURCELL, ARR. MARK STEINBERG

O let me forever weep!
My Eyes no more shall welcome sleep:

I'll hide me from the sight of Day,
and sigh my Soul away.

He's gone, his loss deplore;
and I shall never see him more.

O let me weep! forever weep!

Come again, sweet love doth now invite

JOHN DOWLAND, ARR. STEPHEN PRUTSMAN

SELECTED VERSES

Come again!
Sweet love doth now invite
Thy graces that refrain
To do me due delight,
To see, to hear, to touch, to kiss, to die,
With thee again in sweetest sympathy.

All the night
My sleeps are full of dreams,
My eyes are full of streams.
My heart takes no delight
To see the fruits and joys that some do find
And mark the storms are me assign'd.

Come again!
That I may cease to mourn
Through thy unkind disdain;
For now left and forlorn
I sit, I sigh, I weep, I faint, I die
In deadly pain and endless misery

Can she excuse my wrongs

JOHN DOWLAND, ARR. STEPHEN PRUTSMAN

Can she excuse my wrongs with virtue's cloak?
shall I call her good when she proves unkind?
Are those clear fires which vanish into smoke?
must I praise the leaves where no fruit I find?

No, no: where shadows do for bodies stand,
thou may'st be abused if thy sight be dim.
Cold love is like to words written on sand,
or to bubbles which on the water swim.

Wilt thou be thus abused still,
seeing that she will right thee never?
if thou canst not overcome her will,
thy love will be thus fruitless ever.

Was I so base, that I might not aspire
Unto those high joys which she holds from me?
As they are high, so high is my desire:
If she this deny what can granted be?

If she will yield to that which reason is,
It is reasons will that love should be just.
Dear make me happy still by granting this,
Or cut off delays if that I die must.

Better a thousand times to die,
then for to live thus still tormented:
Dear but remember it was I
Who for thy sake did die contented.

Weep you no more, sad fountains

JOHN DOWLAND, ARR. STEPHEN PRUTSMAN

Weep you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heaven's sun doth gently waste.
But my sun's heavenly eyes
View not your weeping,
That now lie sleeping
Softly, now softly lies
Sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that peace begets.
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at even he sets?
Rest you then, rest, sad eyes,
Melt not in weeping
While she lies sleeping
Softly, now softly lies
Sleeping.

Though Amaryllis dance in green

WILLIAM BYRD

SELECTED VERSES

Though Amaryllis dance in green
Like Fairy Queen,
And sing full clear;
Corinna can, with smiling cheer.
Yet since their eyes make heart so sore,
Hey ho! chil love no more.

My sheep are lost for want of food
And I so wood
That all the day
I sit and watch a herd-maid gay;
Who laughs to see me sigh so sore,
Hey ho! chil love no more.

**When I am laid in earth (Dido's Lament) from
Dido and Aeneas, Z626**

HENRY PURCELL

When I am laid in earth,
May my wrongs create
No trouble in thy breast;
Remember me, but ah! forget my fate.

**Dido Reimagined – a response to Purcell’s
“Lament”**

MELINDA WAGNER

EPIGRAPHS

He sought her. He sought her everywhere. Through the
nakednesses
of his imagination. In sorrow. In foxholes. As deer flicker
way off in a wood in late
winter.

...
This wind at Night carrying it all over the Sky like Quartets
or Dido surviving between Lightning Sets.
—Anne Carson, *The Beauty of the Husband*

For to wish to forget how much you loved someone—and
then, to actually forget—can feel, at times, like the slaughter
of a beautiful bird who chose, by nothing short of grace, to
make a habitat of your heart. I have heard that this pain
can be converted, as it were, by accepting “the fundamental
impermanence of all things.” this acceptance bewilders me:
sometimes it seems an act of will; at others, of surrender.
Often I feel myself to be rocking between them
(seasickness).

—Maggie Nelson, *Bluets*

Some lovers do not commit suicide.
—Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*

While rivers run into the sea and the shadows
still sweep the mountain slopes and stars still pasture
upon the sky, your name and praise and honor
shall last, whatever be the lands that call me.
—Virgil, *Dido & Aeneas*, Book 1
translated by Allen Mandelbaum

LIBRETTO

1. end of summer

DIDO
I am not dead.
I did not die.
Overcome, I did not throw myself
on the funeral pyre—
or off the roof,
nine stories high.
I did not thrust myself over the balcony railing,
or fill a bath, lock the door,
and bleed myself to death
like a good, honorable Roman.

I am not dead.
I hijacked a lobster boat instead—
Ursa, the bear—
ordered her skipper to take me north;
motored eight hours up the coast
against the wind,
whitecaps scarring obsidian sea,
detritus of a parade of distant storms—
hurricane season—
charting our course.

On the way, I saw:
a humpbacked whale,
dolphins circling the prow,
osprey, plovers, bluefish, bass,
an army of undulating jellyfish.
These were not Portuguese Men of war—
they were pink—
but they stung all the same.
I dove in. I wanted to be stung.
I wanted to feel the unbearable pain
scoring, piercing my shoulder blades.
I wanted one stinging pain to erase the other.

No, I am not dead.
I did not hijack a boat.
I stole a car
so my passage would not be traced,

on the run,
throttling past
I can't breathe, can't sleep, can't eat, I can't go on.

Or, I if I did not steal a car,
I took the bus,
paying my fare in cash,
riding beside
a grey-skinned, gravel-voiced
husk of a woman,
her allotment of hope
ransacked decades ago,
all the way from Port Authority,
its purgatorio,
to Sea Stone Harbor.

Not dead,
not wholly alive,
I hijacked a boat, stole a car, rode the bus,
rowed a dinghy across the sound,
mooring it here,
this island, overrun
with wild chamomile, asters, rosehips, goldenrod,
ancient spreading oak—
taking root in an old stone house,
salt air fading the patterns
papering the walls,
grazing meadows in the distance
littered with the sun-bleached bones of fallen sheep,
wild irises growing like gold
at the edges of ponds,
and the sea,
everywhere I turn.

I came here, to this island,
and I stayed.
Away.
Apart from the pith of the world
but in it.
To reflect on what I'd lost.
To wrest myself from it.
To remember—
deeper in,

farther back—
turn that remembering
inside out,
exhume yesterday,
resurrect tomorrow,
shed my skin,
shake it off,
sand between toes,
salt grasses underfoot,
trampled by the horses
that make this place their home.

2. autumn

DIDO
As a child, Dido summered here,
running wild, free,
riding the length of the island,
chasing flights of plovers, swallows,
traversing inlet and marsh,
glade and hollow,
tasting first love
before she wed,
before she was widowed—still young—
and turned her back on this place.

Left to her own devices,
she built an empire of her own,
filling the space her widowing had left
with a flourishing.
Steady. Measured. Kind.
Generous.
She had known love.
She didn't need more of it.
And yet she was loved.
Her world was full.

Until she fell.

3. winter

DIDO

You look up.

You see a man.

You see beauty

in the eyes of the other.

Red glow of glimmering hearth
on cold mornings in an old house—
the fire is lit.

You are undone.

Sleepless,

beset,

welter of racing heart

and melt of skin.

You will do anything

for those eyes,

undo all you have made—

stave off sense and care.

The you you thought you knew,

boxed up,

stashed safely away

from the long-ago throes of longing,

has betrayed you.

Jupiter raped Calisto.

Juno turned her into a bear.

Jupiter, who wanted to possess

the broken bear of a girl,

tossed Juno's Ursa to the night sky,

a constellation to navigate by:

Ursa major,

the Wagon,

the Big Dipper,

pointing north,

towards

Ursa Minor,

the pole star,

by which Ursula and her eleven-thousand martyred virgins

made their way—

tangle of femurs, pelvises, rib bones, eleven-hundred-year-

old skulls—

resting in a reliquary in Cologne.

You are not dead.

You hijacked a lobster boat instead—

Ursa, the bear—

4. spring

DIDO

Cove, silt, ash, peat,

common tern's blazing beak,

blue heron standing by.

I am old. Weathered.

Winter on this island,

a thing to behold.

Lone inhabitant.

Mail boat bringing supplies

every odd week—

olive oil, oranges, kerosene,

envelopes,

post-marked the world over,

Dido scrawled in the blurry

hand of the beloved.

I toss the letters, unopened,

into the smoldering flame

and set out,

across upland pasture,

through sepia woods,

past silent stones,

blind-siding lament

as I gather barnacles from tidal pools, moon stones on silver

beach,

a riot of rosa rugosa heralding

yet another spring—

cove, silt, ash, peat,

common tern's blazing beak,

blue heron standing by

5. summer

DIDO

Dido dissolves into the sea.

Dido disappears.

Elides with the horizon line.

Dido rises with the sun.

Rose light of dawn.

Clean, new air of day.

Dido doles out mist and squalls,
north winds,
sweet, still, surrendering
summer afternoons.

Dido descends with the dark.
Silver moon washing the island.
Inky, starry sky.

But Dido doesn't die.

Dido remains.

Keeps coming back
each turning day.

In the crash of the waves
against the bow of the skiff,
the striped bass flocking the bay,
the bells sounding across the reach.

In the tall grass.

And the lichen-cragged stones,
the water-logged marsh,
the cormorant's cry,
the waiting heron,
the swallow's crossing,
the beech trees' stirring,
the big dipper
splayed across the night.

Dido wonders:

Is this what it is to die?

But no. Dead or alive, Dido knows:

She is love.

She is love.