**Program Notes**

In William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* music is called the “food of love,” and indeed music played a vital part in his plays. Fanfares heralded performances. Sweet ayres and songs filled with innuendo, sung by servants and clowns, commented on the actions of their betters. And a merry jig would conclude the day’s drama, be it a comedy, tragedy, or romance. In Shakespeare's “wooden O” the musicians' loft was as essential as the unworthy scaffold on which your imaginary forces worked.

Little of the music presented in the Globe during Shakespeare tenure survives. The doomed Desdemona likely sang this folk melody to the “Willow Song” in Othello. “Full fathom five” by Robert Johnson, lutenist to Shakespeare’s King’s Men theatrical troupe, was probably performed in the premiere of *The Tempest*. Two of the offerings in this concert were set long after Shakespeare’s death. Maurice Greene’s “Orpheus with his lute” is a florid and descriptive setting of lyrics from the rarely performed *Henry VIII*, nearly a century after its premiere. Thomas Arne composed a numerous songs for Shakespearean productions during the Georgian period, his “Blow thou winter blow” from *As You Like It* being a particularly sprightly delight.

Since songs in Shakespeare’s plays were typically relegated to comical and magical characters, his witty and mystical romance *The Tempest* was an ideal vehicle for musical invention. Poet and playwright Sir William Davenant’s presentation of the play in 1667 had the greatest impact during the Restoration. Also known as *The Enchanted Isle*, it was reworked by future poet laureate John Dryden, altering to a startling degree much of Shakespeare’s text. (Both Miranda and Caliban acquire sisters and Ariel cavorts with a lover!) It was an enormously successful mélange of fantastical machinery and French-influenced musical interludes, and was frequently revived. In its 1674 restaging, under another poet laureate, Thomas Shadwell, an even more extensive score was added. It utilized an impressive array of composers such as Matthew Locke, who provided the instrumental numbers, with various songs by John Banister, Pietro Reggio, and the brilliant but tragically short-lived Pelham Humfrey. A revival in 1704 once again sported a new score first attributed to Henry Purcell but now considered to be by his student John Weldon.

Purcell’s own contribution to Shakespearean music drama is his 1692 semi-opera, *The Fairy Queen*. Purcell had already composed an impressive body of incidental music for plays by Shadwell, Dryden, and William Congreve. (This includes the celebrated "Music for a while" from Dryden’s *Oedipus.*) His one “pure opera” is the miraculous miniature, *Dido and Aeneas*. Yet it is his semi-operas where Purcell’s most accomplished scores for the theatre are to be found. His preceding efforts in the genre, *Dioclesian* and *King Arthur*, were enormous successes and the music of *The Fairy Queen* exceeds them both in length, complexity, and dramatic scope. It is a very loose adaptation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but Purcell did not set any of Shakespeare’s text. The musical frame is a series of masques – with texts attributed to Davenant’s apprentice Thomas Betterton – interpolated into the acts of the play.

After a charming Prelude and set of instrumental dance pieces settle the audience in for the performance, the masques in Acts I & II deal with the quarrel between Oberon and Titania over the disputed Indian boy. Fairy dances and a song, “See, even Night,” help soothe the queen to sleep. The Act III masque shows Titania being enamored of the ass-headed Bottom while a nymph sings of love’s torment and bickering haymakers entertain with a rustic dance. The final masques resolve all conflicts with a grand wedding for lovers and a vision of a Chinese Eden (!) where love is triumphant. While a complete performance of the combined Purcell semi-opera and Shakespeare play would run about 5 hours, recent productions of *The Fairy Queen* by itself show it to be an inspired theatrical entertainment in its own right.

–Theodore Deacon
Soirée
WITH JORDI SAVALL AND CARLOS NÚÑEZ
INTERVIEWED BY MELINDA BARGREEN

FRI. 4 MAY 2018 // 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM
Individual $150 // Table of 8 $1,000
ACT Theatre - The Bullitt Cabaret
700 Union Street
Seattle, WA 98101

Join us for an evening of inspiring conversation, music, wine, and fine food hosted by our Board of Directors, benefiting the artistic and education programs of Early Music Seattle.

Arts critic Melinda Bargreen will conduct a talk show-style interview with Mr. Savall and Mr Núñez, and offer you an opportunity to pose your questions to our esteemed guest artists!

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