

  
**EDINBURGH  
INTERNATIONAL  
FESTIVAL**

# DIDO'S GHOST

A new opera incorporating  
Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*

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**Dunedin Consort**

20–22 Aug 7.30pm

EDINBURGH ACADEMY JUNIOR SCHOOL

The performance lasts approx. 1hr 45mins with no interval.

*Sung in English with supertitles*

Co-commissioned by Edinburgh International Festival, Dunedin Consort  
and Mahogany Opera, the Barbican Centre, Buxton International Festival  
and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale

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# DIDO'S GHOST

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## Dunedin Consort

<b>John Butt</b>	Conductor
<b>Frederic Wake-Walker</b>	Director
<b>April Koyejo-Audiger</b>	Assistant Director
<b>Wesley Stace</b>	Libretto
<b>Errollyn Wallen</b>	Composer

## Cast

<b>Golda Schultz</b>	Dido / Anna
<b>Matthew Brook</b>	Aeneas
<b>Nardus Williams</b>	Belinda
<b>Allison Cook</b>	Lavinia
<b>Henry Waddington</b>	Sorcerer

# SYNOPSIS



Eighteen months after Aeneas's arrival in Italy.

# OVERTURE

A storm.

Aeneas meets Dido in the underworld. He beckons her but she turns away without a word.

# ACT I

## The Shore, Troia Nova

Aeneas and his son Ascanius are walking by the sea where they find a woman who has narrowly escaped from drowning. Aeneas mistakes her for Dido, but it is Dido's sister Anna, who explains how she has come to be washed up on their shore, a refugee.

Aeneas offers her the comfort of his palace and sends Ascanius ahead with news of their imminent arrival.

# ACT II

## The Palace, Lavinium

The court welcomes Anna. The chorus sings of the founding of a new kingdom in Italy and introduces Lavinia, Aeneas's wife. Aeneas asks his queen to welcome Anna as a sister, but Lavinia is wary, knowing Dido's hold on her husband's heart.

At the banquet, talk turns to the past. Aeneas tells of the mythic world to which he and Anna belonged. His was a divine mission; now the gods are silent and there is nothing left for him.

Lavinia is disquieted. As rumour flies round the table, Juno possesses her with jealousy as Anna tells the true story of Dido's death. Lavinia presents an entertainment: a performance of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* that soon exercises a supernatural hold over its audience.

Belinda (the Spirit of the Theatre) beckons Anna on stage to assume the role of 'Dido'. When Aeneas becomes 'Aeneas', they act out their love story, a manifestation of Lavinia's greatest fears, which she is condemned to watch from the audience. As her thoughts turn murderous, she plots with Elymas, her spy.

Encouraged by the Sorceress, who directs his performance exclusively to Lavinia, goading her on, the Queen herself steps into the drama as the Spirit of the Sorceress to give Aeneas his instructions to leave Dido. Aeneas is left alone on stage as performance and real life melt into each other. The sailors enter to bring him back to his senses and persuade him to leave on his mission.

As Anna sleeps, the Sorceress, the Spirit and witches revel in her destruction and leave triumphantly. Anna wakes with a start: she dreamt that her sister's ghost commanded her to flee or face death at the hands of Lavinia. She takes flight.

Dido's Ghost appears to a terrified Aeneas, who assumes she is there for revenge on him. But the Ghost tells Aeneas she is there only to save her sister, who has run to the River Numicus. If he assures Anna's safe passage, she will lift her curse on the Trojan race. Aeneas begs the Ghost to stay, but she leaves him. He has one final mission.

There is a disturbance: Lavinia and her henchmen discover that Anna has fled. Guards leave to hunt her down, but Aeneas breaks Lavinia's spell, explaining that she has been possessed by jealousy just as Dido was once possessed by love.

The chase is on.

# ACT III

## The River Numicus

Anna's footprints disappear by the river. Has she drowned? Aeneas assumes she has tried to swim across and, commanding the guards to return to the palace, prays for a sign to reveal her fate.

At this, the river stops flowing. Anna, reunited with Dido, rises from its depths. The River Numicus has offered them safe haven in its sacred stream. They are gods now, eternally entwined as one, immortal.

Aeneas is left alone. The curse on the Trojan race is lifted, but this reckoning with the past has cost him everything.

© **Wesley Stace**

# PROGRAMME NOTES

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## The creation of *Dido's Ghost*

The idea of an opera to complement *Dido and Aeneas* was an ambition of Dunedin Consort, even when I first joined the group in 2003–4. Of the two founding artistic directors, Ben Parry, as a conductor of new music and a composer in his own right, had pushed for many new commissions, and it was Susan Hamilton who developed the specific project of commissioning a companion-piece for *Dido and Aeneas*. Although time and finances never seemed to be on our side, I introduced my old friend Errollyn Wallen to the group a few years later, and she provided us with an exquisite chamber piece based on the Song of Songs. When we mentioned our *Dido* idea she leapt at it immediately – she had been obsessed with Dido's lament for years – and it was she who then went to Wesley Stace.

None of us had heard of Ovid's addition to the story, which Wesley knew well, and it was clear that this was something of a gift for any production involving Purcell's original. It rapidly became obvious that Purcell's opera could function as a court drama within the new opera rather than as a separate piece, and that

it could also function as a flashback – a brilliant idea. Wesley’s language and themes interact superbly with the original text and help define the characters with a sense of their own past.

It was over ten years before we finally had the opportunity to go ahead with this project, and it was gratifying to gain so many other distinguished commissioners along the way, which seemed to confirm the attractiveness of the concept. To me, we hear the characters expressing their past in Purcell’s language while existing in their present in Errollyn’s music. Interestingly, both musical languages are composites of their age (in Purcell’s case referring to French court drama, Italian song, English polyphony, ‘high’ and ‘low’ popular cultures). Errollyn’s language is a remarkable synthesis of contemporary musical styles, which (particularly through the eerie recurrences throughout the opera) not only represents the present of the older Aeneas, Anna and Lavinia but also our own time. We can hear the Purcell as part of our past but also something still familiar in our present. In this way we are wonderfully, uncannily, wound into a sense of our broad cultural roots and history, reminded that the past lives on in many ways, and – if we dismiss it too readily – is likely to repeat itself in disturbing ways.

**John Butt**, Music Director, Dunedin Consort

## Writing the libretto

Errollyn Wallen approached me with the idea of collaborating on an opera that either contained or involved Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*; it is a very short masterpiece by any stretch of the imagination, and is often paired with another piece to make an evening-long entertainment.

In fact, and by coincidence, I had been doing research for a novel of which the central theme was the development of the Dido myth through the ages. Most people know the story from Virgil's *Aeneid* or indeed from Purcell, but the key discovery for me was in Ovid's *Fasti*: it is quite a dry work, rather like a calendar with a deity's story for each day of the year, in which the Ides of March, the 15th, is celebrated as the day of Anna Parenna, Dido's sister (called Belinda in Purcell's opera).

Anna's story is economically told by Ovid in just 50 or so lines of *Fasti*: she is shipwrecked, having fled after Dido's death, and washed up on Aeneas's shore, where he finds her (like the girl from *Doctor No*, was my initial thought). She reminds him of his former love, her sister. He takes Anna back to the palace where his wife Lavinia becomes jealous and wants to kill her. Dido's ghost appears, warning Anna to flee. She is saved by becoming a river.

My novel was never written, except in as much as ten years later that story became the basis for *Dido's Ghost*. And I think my original suggestion was that we could take Ovid's Anna narrative and insert a court performance of Purcell's opera in the middle: that was our starting point. As these ideas developed, and as the psychological implications of this journey-into-the-past became more explicit, Frederic Wake-Walker, the director, suggested we entwine the Purcell opera more subtly so that the new story, the psychology and the new score bleed seamlessly in and out of the Purcell; so we have a musically entwined version of Purcell's original within a new Wallen.

Stylistically, I found I was increasingly choosing language consonant with Nahum Tate's libretto for *Dido and Aeneas*, because it is a very beautiful text. All art requires a little suspension of disbelief, but I did not want anything linguistically jarring. I did this with rhyme – not end-rhyme, as I might do in writing a song, but with internal rhymes and assonance. I did not want it to sound too martial, as translations of Greek and Roman texts often can, and of course I also had to make it singable. But that was fun because I love Errollyn's music, so I could imagine what she needed, and I am used to doing that with lyrics anyway.

Everybody thinks of the story as Anna's, and of course it is Anna's story primarily, but it is also Dido's story: the title is *Dido's Ghost*, and I always imagined the tagline would be 'Remember Her!', like a modern horror movie. But in a practical sense the story also concludes the *Aeneid*. Since Aeneas fulfilled his Italian destiny, the 'modern' world has continued without gods, leaving Aeneas to pine for a distant, mythical past. With the materialization of Anna, the gods and the ghosts return too, forcing a reckoning between the present and the past that has many political implications. Aeneas – a little like Tennyson's Ulysses – is given one more chance, knowing his divine mission will be complete only after Dido's original curse on the Trojan race is lifted.

Writing the libretto was a beautiful way to consider Dido once more, because the Dido story flows like a river through time, and this was our chance to swim in it for a while: to bring Dido back, even her ghost after her manifestation in Hades.

**Wesley Stace**, Librettist, *Dido's Ghost*

## A composer's perspective

Ideas for operas drop into my email inbox on a weekly basis, and I am always dreaming about possibilities for all kinds of dramatic setting. It is one thing to have a great idea, but quite another to realize that idea to its full potential. Some notions seem captivating initially but in the cold light of investigation they simply wither away. As anyone who has ever created any aspect of any opera knows, it is a life-shortening exercise – and a task that is never quite over. At each reading, listening, rehearsal and production there is much more to discover, much more to adapt for the performer or performing situation. Yet opera is an addictive art form, not least for the illuminations that collaboration offers.

In December 2019 Paul Keene, Classical Music Programmer at the Barbican, gave us the green light to turn a ten-year-old hunch into reality. Wesley Stace (in Philadelphia) and I (in the Scottish Highlands) have spent the past 18 months hungrily walking backwards and forwards in time, with Virgil, Ovid, Purcell, Tate and Ursula LeGuin by our sides, shaking awake the dead until they revealed their secrets. As a composer I am used to interrogating composers long gone (for me that is the essence of writing music), but these particular encounters with the past have led us to understand anew the stories that endure across cultures and eras.

There has been no better group of people to work with than the team who have brought *Dido's Ghost* to life: of all the previous (19) operas I have composed I never knew it could be this good. To have had the imagination, support and patience of such remarkable people has opened a door to new possibilities. Together, Wesley Stace, John Butt, Frederic Wake-Walker and I have made a little bit of history.

You will hear echoes and pre-echoes in the libretto, music and instrumentation that blur the demarcation between antiquity, 18th- and 21st-century sensibilities. You will witness the wildest combination of musical styles and performance practice from different cultures. You will hear and feel blistering emotion alongside icy detachment. You will apprehend the work of two pairs of librettists and composers with three centuries between them. But all you really have to remember is this: four creators have toiled in the service of commemorating what it is to be human – and what it is to love.

**Errollyn Wallen**, Composer, *Dido's Ghost*

# JOHN BUTT

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John Butt is Gardiner Professor of Music at the University of Glasgow and director of Edinburgh's Dunedin Consort. He has recently also been appointed as a Principal Artist with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Following posts at the University of Aberdeen and Magdalene College Cambridge, he joined the faculty at UC Berkeley in 1989 as University Organist and Professor of Music. In 1997 he returned to Cambridge as a University Lecturer and Fellow of King's College, and in 2001 he took up his current post at Glasgow.

His books include *Bach Interpretation* (1990), the handbook *Bach's Mass in B minor* (1991), *Music Education and the Art of Performance in the German Baroque* (1994), *Playing with History* (2002) and *Bach's Dialogue with Modernity* (2010). He is also editor or joint editor of both the Cambridge and Oxford Companions to Bach and of the *Cambridge History of Seventeenth Century Music* (2005).

Butt's conducting engagements with the Dunedin Consort (2003–) have included major Baroque repertory and several commissions. He has made 12 recordings of the group for Linn Records.

His recording of the first version of *Messiah* (Dublin, 1742) received the ClassicFM/*Gramophone* award in the Baroque vocal category in 2007; then, in 2014, his reconstruction of the first performance of Mozart's Requiem earned a second *Gramophone* award (choral category) and a Grammy nomination. Four further recordings have been nominated for *Gramophone* awards. Dunedin's recording of Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers was released in 2017 to celebrate Monteverdi's anniversary year. Butt has been guest conductor with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Hallé, among others. He is also active as a solo organist and harpsichordist.

In 2003 Butt was elected to Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and received the Dent Medal of the Royal Musical Association; he was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 2006. In 2013 he was awarded the medal of the Royal College of Organists and an OBE in the UK New Year's Honours list.

# FREDERIC WAKE-WALKER

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Frederic Wake-Walker is a director and producer of opera, music theatre and multi-discipline performance. He is Artistic Director of Mahogany Opera, with which he has created a number of new works performed at various venues such as Barbican London, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, High Tide Festival Aldeburgh, and Sound Festival Aberdeen.

A major part of his work with Mahogany involves working with children. He has recently created ten new Snappy Operas (ten-minute operas for children aged 8–11) with composers including Errollyn Wallen, Philip Venables, Gwyneth Herbert, Kerry Andrew and Stephen Deazley.

He is also one of the team behind Mica Moca, with which he has curated and directed various large-scale multi-disciplinary performances such as *Mica Moca – project Berlin* 2011, *Nature au Galop* – Paris 2016, *Tempelhofer Wald* 2019 and worked with many artists including dancers Ahmed Soura, Minako Seki, Rosabel Huguet, video designer Sylwek Luszak and jazz musicians Sofia Jernberg, Johannes Lauer and Richard Koch.

Previous engagements include *Adriana Lecouvreur* for the Maggio Musical Fiorentino, various film projects with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, *Lazarus* for the Winteroper Potsdam, *La Finta giardiniera* (La Scala, Milan), *Peter Grimes* (Oper Köln), *Messiah* (Berlin Philharmonie with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin), *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Cleveland Orchestra and La Scala, Milan) with conductors such as Trevor Pinnock, Franz Welser-Möst, Diego Fasolis, Robin Ticciati and Nicholas Collon. Future projects include *Fidelio* at Glyndebourne and *L'Elisir d'amore* in Bergamo.

Wake-Walker was awarded the best director award the inaugural Oper! Awards in 2019.

# WESLEY STACE

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Wesley Stace was born in Hastings in 1965. Since 1988, he has released many albums under the name John Wesley Harding (his most recent is 2018's *Wesley Stace's John Wesley Harding* with the Jayhawks as his backing band) and he has also recorded duets with, among others, Bruce Springsteen, Lou Reed and Rosanne Cash. His next album, *Late Style*, is released by Omnivore in September 2021.

Stace has published four novels, including the international bestseller *Misfortune* and recently co-wrote Mark Morris's memoir *Out Loud*. He also created *Cabinet of Wonders*, a monthly show that plays at New York City's City Winery, and which the *New Yorker* called 'one of the finest nights of entertainment this city has to offer'. He has taught at Princeton, Swarthmore and Fairleigh-Dickinson, and writes regularly for the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Wall Street Journal*. He lives in Philadelphia.

# ERROLLYN WALLEN

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Errollyn Wallen CBE is a multi-award-winning Belize-born British composer whose output includes 21 operas and a large catalogue of works that are performed internationally. Her latest opera, the acclaimed *Dido's Ghost*, was recently premiered at London's Barbican Centre and toured to Buxton before coming to the Edinburgh International Festival. Her most recent orchestral work, a re-imagining of Parry's *Jerusalem* titled *Jerusalem – our clouded hills*, for soprano and orchestra, was performed at last year's Last Night of the Proms and broadcast around the world from the Royal Albert Hall.

Wallen's albums include *The Girl in My Alphabet* and *Meet Me at Harold Moores*. They have travelled 7.84 million kilometres in space, completing 186 orbits around the Earth on NASA's STS115 mission. Her most recent EP is *Peace on Earth*, performed by the Choir of King's College, Cambridge.

Wallen is a co-curator of Spitalfields Music Festival in 2020 and 2021, and among other commissions is currently composing a new opera, *Quamino's Map*, for Chicago Opera Theatre as well as writing

a book (to be published by Faber) on composition.  
She is the latest recipient of the ISM Distinguished  
Musician Award, one of the highest honours within  
the music industry, for services to music.

# DUNEDIN CONSORT

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Dunedin Consort is one of the world's leading Baroque ensembles, recognised for its vivid and insightful performances and recordings. Formed in 1995 and named after Din Eidyn, the ancient Celtic name for Edinburgh Castle, Dunedin Consort's ambition is to make early music relevant to the present day. Under the direction of John Butt, the ensemble has earned two coveted *Gramophone* awards – for the 2007 recording of Handel's *Messiah* and the 2014 recording of Mozart's *Requiem* – and a Grammy nomination. In 2018, it was shortlisted for a Royal Philharmonic Society ensemble award.

Dunedin Consort performs regularly at major festivals and venues across the UK, giving its BBC Proms debut in 2017 with a performance of Bach's *St John Passion*. In the same year, Dunedin Consort announced its first residency at London's Wigmore Hall, complementing its regular series of events at home in Scotland, as well as throughout Europe and beyond. It enjoys close associations with the Edinburgh International Festival and Lammermuir Festival, and broadcasts frequently on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM and BBC Scotland.

The group's growing discography on Linn Records includes Handel's *Acis and Galatea* and Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, both nominated for *Gramophone* awards. Other Bach recordings include Mass in B minor, violin concertos, *Magnificat*, *Christmas Oratorio*, *Matthew Passion* and *St John Passion*, which was nominated for a recording of the year award in both *Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine*. A new recording of Handel's *Ode for St Cecilia's Day*, with soloists Carolyn Sampson and Ian Bostridge, was released in 2018. A recording of Handel's *Samson*, in its first version of 1743, was released in 2019.

While Dunedin Consort is committed to performing repertoire from the Baroque and early Classical periods, and to researching specific historical performance projects, it remains an enthusiastic champion of contemporary music. The ensemble has commissioned and premiered new music by William Sweeney, Errollyn Wallen, Peter Nelson and Sally Beamish, and in 2019 premiered four new co-commissions with the BBC Proms.

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