

To the trustees of Angel Early Music,

First and foremost, thank you so much for awarding Toby Carr and I a grant to fund our recent recording project. The CD, 'Battle Cry: She Speaks' was released on Delphian Records on 27th May 2022 (DCD34283) and has met with great critical acclaim in the months following the release. There is no doubt that without your help we would not have been able to record this CD, so thank you for making our plan a reality.

As stipulated in our grant application, I now write to follow up the completion of our project and to share with the Trust what we achieved with the money you so kindly gave.

The Recording

We spent three days recording in Crichton Church near Edinburgh (29th - 31st Oct 2021) with Delphian Records producer, Paul Baxter. We were also joined for one day by Will Coates-Gibson, Foxbrush Films photographer and videographer, who worked with us to film a video to go alongside the opening track of the CD, and take candid rehearsal photos as well as the more formal photo that forms the cover of the CD.

You can see the video here: <https://youtu.be/DenqHeMivhs>

The programme remained as planned in the application:

Henry Purcell: Bonduca's Song 'Oh lead me to some peaceful gloom' (3)

Barbara Strozzi: L'eraclito Amoroso (6)

Robert de Vissee: Prelude (2)

John Eccles: Restless in thought, disturbed in mind (4.5)

Henry Purcell: Dido's Lament (4)

Owain Park: Battle Cry (17)

Boudicca

Philomela in the forest

A singer's ode to Sappho

Marietta

Giovanni Kapsberger: Preludio Quinto (1)

Barbara Strozzi: La Travagliata (5)

Claudio Monteverdi: Lamento d'Arianna (9)

Robert de Vissee: Sarabande (2)

Purcell: An Evening Hymn (4)





The Release

Following the editing process, the CD was released in line with Delphian's schedule on 27th May 2022.

To coincide with the release of the CD, Toby and I were also able to give performances of the programme (and sell copies!) at both the London Festival for Baroque Music, and the Norfolk & Norwich Festival, the later of which was recorded and broadcast by BBC, giving further publicity for the CD.

To date the album has had 1.7 million streams on online platforms, and physical copies have been sold in the UK, across Europe and as far as Japan & USA.

Critical response

'Characters come alive in Charlston's flexible mezzo, **surely one of the most exciting voices in the new generation of British singers.** The **intelligence of the programming** is matched in that of her delivery – legatos always reaching beyond the individual phrase for the horizon, articulation that pulls us up short, swift shifts of tone and colour that catch the mercurial play of musical light through Strozzi's monologues or the battling emotions of Monteverdi's Arianna... Throughout, **Carr's theorbo is an expressive partner** for Charlston – a graceful foil in solos by Kapsberger and de Visée, a springboard and conspirator in the songs. It's **an instinctive partnership**, one to follow in the future. **You get the strong sense from this superb recording that they're only just getting started**'. (*Alexandra Coghlan, Gramophone Music Magazine, chosen as JUNE Editor's Choice*)

'The grave beauty of **Charlston's inky mezzo is a joy in itself**, and the fierce directness of her delivery makes a formidable impact in this programme of laments by Eccles, Purcell, Strozzi et al, with a **terrific new commission** by Owain Park (which feels perfectly integrated into the framework of the recital) also making its mark; **Carr, always completely attuned to his singer's imagination, conjures some magical colours from his theorbo throughout**' (*Katherine Cooper, Presto Music, chosen as MAY Presto Editor's Choice*)

'Carr's theorbo playing is **sensuous and vivid**, and works especially well in the sonic explorations of the four songs by Park. Charlston's distinctive, expressive lower register, and the clarity of every word, contribute to **an outstanding disc.**' (*Fiona Maddocks, The Guardian*)

‘Helen Charlston and Toby Carr focus on the close relationship between voice and theorbo in their recital, scaling down several works to create the intimacy of a duet. Charlston's mezzo is as dark and full bodied as a good claret, and she offers **highly expressive** readings of the texts, plumbing their depths with glass-cut diction and a glorious range of colours ... She’s adeptly supported by Toby Carr, who coaxes **soft and sonorous sounds** from his theorbo.’ (*Kate Bolton-Porciatti, BBC Music Magazine, also awarded AUGUST Choral & Song Choice*)

‘Charlston’s voice is distinctively bright-edged and clear, her words so finely projected and ‘felt’ that the booklet texts are hardly necessary to follow the drama of each item... Fine booklet notes by Jeremy Summerly, informed by quotes from the performers and Park, guide the listener through the programme, and the recording and presentation from Delphian Records do handsome justice to the performances themselves. **In a year of many fine vocal recordings, this is one of the most outstanding we’ve yet heard.**’ (*Europadisc Classical*)

Looking forward

It is clear that this CD has made a significant impact. We are so pleased to see the positive critical response, and to hear from our audiences who continue to be fascinated by the programme we have brought together. In the coming year we will perform *Battle Cry*, or some iteration of the programme, at three of the UKs biggest Baroque Music festivals, and will take it to two song festivals. We are particularly excited that both Oxford Lieder and Ludlow English Song Festival have wanted to present this programme. Going into this project, I felt strongly that I wanted this CD to demonstrate the timelessness of the 17th century soundworld I love so much and that it is not just a world of song for those who love and know early music! I am particularly excited to see what the audiences at both these festivals make of our programme.

Thank you again for making this recording a reality. Your support has been instrumental in helping us both further our creative output, and to firmly put ourselves on the map as emerging performers in a crowded musical world. Thank you for your trust in our musicianship and what we knew we could achieve.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Charlston