

O Solitude

An exploration of distance and isolation in 17th and 18th century vocal music

HELEN CHARLSTON (Mezzo-soprano)

The Sweetest Choice

Henry Purcell (1659 – 1695)
O Solitude, my sweetest choice, Z406

The Ultimate Betrayal

Barbara Strozzi (1619 – 1677)
L'eraclito Amoroso, Op.2

A Religious Calling

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)
Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust, BWV 170

A Need to Disappear

Claudio Monteverdi (1567 – 1643)
Voglio di vita uscir, SV337

The Hero's Motivation

George Frederic Handel (1685 – 1759)
'Al lampo dell'armi' from *Giulio Cesare*, HWV 17



Acclaimed for her musical interpretation, presence and “warmly distinctive tone” (The Telegraph), **Helen Charlston** won first prize in the 2018 Handel Singing Competition and a finalist in the Grange Opera International Singing Competition. She was a Rising Star of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment 2017-2019 and is a 2018 City Music Foundation Artist.

This season Helen debuts with Academy of Ancient Music, Cambridge Handel Opera Company, Il Gardellino, Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra and Queensland Symphony Orchestra, as well as joining Fretwork and Ensemble Marsyas for solo recitals at Wigmore Hall. She will premiere the role of Anna in the new opera *Blue Electric* (Tom Smail) and will continue her commissioning project of lute songs.

Recent concert highlights include Handel *Messiah* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; Mendelssohn *Lobgesang* with Royal Northern Sinfonia and Paul McCreesh; her debut at the Palau de la Musica in Barcelona; recitals as part of Barbican Sound Unbound 2019, York Early Music Festival, London Handel Festival, Händel-festspiele Halle, Korčula Baroque Festival, Leicester International Music Festival and Fitzrovia Festival.

Helen began singing as chorister and head chorister of the St Albans Abbey Girls Choir. She then studied music at Trinity College, Cambridge where she held a choral scholarship for four years and was a scholar on the Pembroke College Lieder Scheme, led by Joseph Middleton.

O Solitude!

O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell,
Let it not be among the jumbled heap
Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep,—
Nature's observatory—whence the dell,
Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell,
May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep
'Mongst boughs pavillion'd, where the deer's swift leap
Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell.
But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,
Whose words are images of thoughts refin'd,
Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be
Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,
When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

JOHN KEATS (1795-1821)