

Slaying the Dragon: Songs of Faith, Hope, and Love
Anna O'Connell, Soprano
DMA Recital

La mort de Didon

Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667-1737)

Addi Liu, Violin

Rosemary Heredos, Flute

Sarah Coffman, Cello

Peter Bennett, Harpsichord

Canzonetta spirituale sopra alla nanna

Tarquino Merula (1595-1665)

Anna O'Connell, Soprano and Triple Harp

Scene from of *Die schöne und getreue Ariadne* (Act 2, Scene 9)

Johann Georg Conradi (1645-1699)

Ariadne: Anna O'Connell, Soprano

Evanthes: Madelaine Matej, Soprano

Theseus: Mark Laseter, Tenor

Alan Choo, Violin

Guillermo Salas-Suárez, Violin

Jonathan Goya, Viola

Jane Leggiero, Cello Solo

Sarah Coffman, Cello

Peter Bennett, Harpsichord

~ brief pause to reset the stage~

“Flow My Tears”

“All the Day”

“Time Stands Still”

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Anna O'Connell, Soprano and Triple Harp

“Paraninfos celestes...Rompa de la batalla”

Ignacio de Jerusalem (1707-1769)

Guillermo Salas-Suárez, Violin

Alan Choo, Violin

Sarah Coffman, Cello

Peter Bennett, Harpsichord

Slaying the Dragon: Songs of Faith, Hope, and Love

In this recital, we meet a series of larger-than-life characters: a spurned Queen, a lovesick princess, a patient friend, a minotaur, a dragon, and a triumphant infant Jesus. As I planned this recital in the midst of a pandemic, I found that I had collected a series of songs about women to whom I could relate. First, there's Dido, the Queen of Carthage, who is left lovesick and alone on her island: how many of us felt marooned at some point in the last year? Then there's the Virgin Mary, who, while rocking a crying infant Jesus to sleep, looks on him with wonder and awe, but also a growing sense of horror as she experiences premonitions of the events leading up to his crucifixion, turning between intimate moments of joy, and anger, pain, and fear. This conflicted flurry of emotions seems to be an unending storm, but it ultimately gives out to hope, which we also find in Ariadne, the star of Conradi's opera *Die schöne und getreue Ariadne*. She sends her beloved Theseus off to fight the minotaur, which causes her to panic, but ultimately, she finds comfort in her truest friend, Evanthes. And like Ariadne, I have found great comfort and hope in the friends and family members who have sustained me along the way, and I am especially grateful to and proud of those who have wrestled with the minotaurs and dragons of disease, hardship, and loss this past year. In *Ariadne*, Evanthes reminds the princess that, "Providence wishes you to bear things patiently," (patience being the virtue needed as vaccines are slowly rolled out this Spring!) and unbeknownst to Ariadne, her choice to live in hope, rather than despair is ultimately rewarded. And so, I leave the program on less muted notes of hope, in Jerusalem's *Paraninfos celestes*, a piece inviting the celestial choirs to herald one who would drive the dragons of despair away.

The program opens with *La mort de Didon*, a French cantata by Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667-1737) and dating to around 1709. The story of "Dido and Aeneas" is perhaps most famously told in Purcell opera of that name, however it continued to capture the imagination of French composers throughout the eighteenth century. In Montéclair's capable hands, the narration begins with Aeneas already sailing off into the distance, leaving a confused, angry, and insulted Dido. In the opening recit, she's torn between feelings of incredulousness that Aeneas could actually betray her, and also deep sadness at his departure. Musically, the piece begins with violin and continuo in heaving surges of grief and anger, spurting out between Dido's growing complaints. The first Air features a more tender instrument; accompanied by highly floral flute writing, Dido expostulates to Venus, asking how she could possibly be the goddess of love and pleasures, when her own dastardly son, Aeneas, is such an ingrateful and false love. Dido, reminding herself that Aeneas's own brother is *L'Amour*, or Cupid, finally works into a rage, calling forth the Tyrants of the sea to growl and waves and winds to swallow Aeneas's ship, and drown him in the bosom of Thetis, a goddess of the sea. But Dido halts this raging storm. Once the winds die down, she asks for the gods to take pity on her beloved. Since her love lives on in her heart, she, with a gift of a little dagger given to her by Aeneas, will pierce him there. Our story ends with Dido falling upon the pyre of her own making, and a few cautionary words: if love isn't very pleasant, why love at all? Is it best to avoid the danger altogether?

Next, we turn to the *Canzonetta spirituale sopra alla nanna* by Tarquinio Merula (1595-1665) published in 1638 in Venice, which takes the nonsense words of a lullaby, “ninna nanna,” and incorporates them into a poignant meditation. This piece follows the internal struggle of the Virgin Mary as she rocks a crying infant Jesus to sleep. Perhaps due to her own sleeplessness, premonitions of the road to Calvary interrupt her adulation of his ruddy cheeks and playful expressions. The refrain lullaby disappears as the visions become almost unbearable, as they more deeply depict the trials leading to the Crucifixion. Merula crafts this as a hugely unusual piece, in that it is built off of a ground of two notes, a half-step apart, rocking back and forth. This lends to the feeling of part mad-song, part lullaby. Ultimately, the baby Jesus falls asleep, and Mary is gifted a salvific vision instead, of meeting her child, once more whole and hale, in Paradise.

Johann Georg Conradi (1645-1699) is one of the few composers of opera in German during the seventeenth century. Produced at the *Oper am Gänsemarkt* in Hamburg *Die schöne und getreue Ariadne* (1691) is one of the operas surviving from this time. According to lutenist Paul O’Dette, early German operas underwent a smear campaign by nineteenth-century tastemakers; historians are only now slowly unfolding the curious mix of Italian and French styles mixed with German rhetorical practices happening at the end of the seventeenth century. In this scene, Princess Ariadne’s beloved, Prince Theseus, is condemned by her parents to die at the hand of the Minotaur. He needs to vanquish not just the fearsome Minotaur, but the tortuous labyrinth that threatens to capture him forever. Ariadne, in defiance of her parents, who wish her to marry the steadfast Prince Evanthes, has declared that she will enter the labyrinth with Theseus, rather than live while Theseus might perish. Both Evanthes, who secretly loves Ariadne, and Theseus, who secretly loves Ariadne’s sister Phaedra, knows that Ariadne holds the key to escaping the labyrinth, and so they work together to get the answer from her, assuming that Theseus will survive to claim Phaedra, as his bride. Ariadne, simply in love with the false Theseus, relents, and the rest of the scene, she is torn between fear of Theseus’s death, and the promise of his triumph. Evanthes, biding his time until he may reveal his true feelings, simply encourages Ariadne to hold fast to patient hope.

Special thanks to the BEMF production staff for allowing me to use the score and translation from the 2003 performance at the Boston Early Music Festival.

John Dowland (1563-1626) is undoubtedly the most famous author of lute songs. While known for his many sad and depressing songs, I have chosen to temper the shame, exile, and despair of *Flow My Tears* with the cheek of *All the Day*, and the steadfast beauty of *Time Stands Still*. While we have fairly strong indications of the interchangeability of instruments for song accompaniments in Italy during Dowland’s life, this English composer has quite clearly written these pieces for the lute. However, *Flow My Tears*, first as a lute solo, and later with words, was a great hit in Dowland’s lifetime, and was transcribed for other string instruments as well. Being a harpist and not a lutenist, I wanted to take on the challenge of learning and interpreting Dowland’s instrumental writing alongside my vocal performance and focus on the art of self-accompaniment. *All the Day* has the familiar melody of “Come again, sweet love,” yet uses what Ellen Hargis suggests to be an alternate text to the piece. In the piece, an unrequited lover, steadfast through the hours of the day to his beloved who wants nothing to do with

them, makes his or her complaint. In *Time Stands Still*, thought to be an Elizabethan ode, the speaker extols, not only his own faithfulness, but the virtue of his Queen: “all other things shall change, but she remains the same.”

Lastly, we present the music of Ignacio de Jerusalem (1707-1769), an Italian composer who lived first in Spain, then made his livelihood as a chapel master in Mexico City, Mexico. Displacing earlier Spanish idioms performed in the Mexico City chapel, his music reflected the galant style popular in Italy during the eighteenth century. Similar in theme and style to the Christmas section of Handel’s *Messiah* (compare *Rejoice greatly* or the sequence of soprano recitatives about shepherds and angels) in *Paraninfos celestes*, we have a proclamation calling the heavenly hosts together to worship at the cradle of the newly born Jesus. The ebullient joy of this Christmas text is captured in the da capo aria, depicting the battle in which the name of the infant triumphs over the devil in the form of a “fearsome dragon.” Scored for two violins and basso continuo, the texture hardly ceases from war-like repeating sixteenth notes, except to poignantly express the thought that everything the Lord provides returns back to the Lord.

~

I am grateful to everyone who helped me shape this recital into today’s performance! Thank you to my voice teachers Ellen Hargis, Dina Kuznetsova and harp teacher Maxine Eilander. Thank you to Peter Bennett and Sarah Coffman for lending so much of your time to be such an excellent continuo team.

Slaying the Dragon: Songs of Faith, Hope, and Love

Anna O'Connell, Soprano

La Mort de Didon

Je ne verrai donc plus Enée!
Sècria tristement Didon abandonee,
Il est donc vrai qu'il part?
Il fuit loin de ces bords,
Dieux que j'étois credule!
Ô Dieux qu'il est perfide!
L'inconstant plus leger
Que le vent qui le guide
Me quite sans regret,
Me trahit sans remords.

O Toi Déesse de Cithère!
Tendre Venus es tu la mere
De l'ingrat qui m'a su charmer.
Non non, il ne sait pas aimer
Helas pourquoi sait-il trop plaire.

Infidele pourquoi quittez vous ce rivage?
Les plaisirs et les jeux y voloient sur vos pas,
Pourquoi vouloir regner dans de lointains climats
Quand ma main vous ofroit le Sèptre de Carthage.

Perfide amant, funeste jour!
Faut-il que je trouve un volage
Dans le frre du tendre amour.
Tirans de l'empire de l'onde
Grondez, volez vents furieux.

The Death of Dido

I shall never see Aeneas again!
Sadly cries abandoned Dido.
Is it true then that he leaves?
He flees far from these borders,
Ye gods! I was so gullible,
O gods, he is treacherous!
That unfaithful man, more fickle
Than the wind that guides him
Leaves me without regret,
Betrays me without remorse.

O you, goddess of Cythera,
Gentle Venus, are you the mother
Of this ingrate who knew how to charm me?
No, no, he does not know how to love;
Alas, he know only too well how to please.

Traitor, why do you leave this shore?
Pleasures and amusements here follow your Steps;
Why do you wish to reign in foreign lands
When my hand offers you the Scepter of Carthage?

Treacherous lover, disastrous day!
Did I have to find an unfaithful one
In the brother of tender love?
Tyrants of the Empire of the waves,
Growl, let fly your furious winds.

Elevez les flots jusqu'aux cieux
Que tout l'Univers se confonde.
Tenez vengez mes feux trahis
Justes Dieux vengez mon injure
Tenez embrasez un perjure
Dans le sein même de Thétis.

Non, aretez,
Grands Dieux gardez vous d'exaucer
Mon couroux legitime
Laissez moi choisir ma victime
Enée est dans mon cœur
Et je vais l'y percer.
Sur un bucher fatal téatre de sa rage
Didon en ce moment se livre à la fureur
Un fer, triste present que lui laisse un volage,
Un fer cruel lui perce enfin le cœur.
Mourante elle tombe et son ame
Chèrit encore l'Ingrat qu'elle n'a pu toucher.
Elle expire sur le bucher
Le flambeau de l'Amour en alume la flame.

Qu'il est dangereux
De se rendre aux vœux
D'un objet volage.
Un sensible cœur
Risque son Bonheur
Le jour qu'il s'engage.
Que les seuls plaisirs
Fixent nos desires
Evitons les peines
Amour si les Jeux

Raise the waves to the heavens,
That all the Universe might be confounded.
Thunder, avenge my betrayed passion,
Just gods, avenge my injury,
Thunder, burn a perjurer
In the very bosom of Thetis.

No, stop,
Great gods, refrain from hearing
My legitmate demand,
Let me choose my victim;
Aeneas is in my heart,
And there I shall stab him.
On a fatal pyre, theater for her rage,
Dido now gives herself over to her passion.
A knife, sad gift left by him who proved fickle,
A cruel knife at last stabs her heart.
Dying, she falls, and her soul
Still cherishes the ingrate whom she could not touch.
She expires on the pyre,
The torch of Love lights the flames.

How dangerous it is
To give in to the desires
Of a fickle lover.
A sensitive heart
Risks it's happiness
The day it gets involved.
May only pleasures
Occupy our desires
Let's avoid pains;
Love, if your knots

N'en forment les nœuds
Je brise mes chaînes

Are not made of pleasant games,
I break my chains.

Translation by Ellen Hargis

Canzonetta spirituale sopra la nanna

Hor ch'è tempo di dormire, dormi mi figlio e non vagire,
perche tempo ancor verrà, che vagir bisognerà.
Deh ben mio, deh cor mio fa, fa la ninna ninna na.

Chiudi quei lumi divini, come fan gl'altri bambini,
perché tosto oscuro velo priverà di lume il chielo.
Deh ben mio, deh cor mio fa, fa la ninna ninna na.

O ver prendi questo latte dalle mie mammelle intatte,
perche ministro crudele ti prepara aceto e fiele,
Deh ben mio, deh cor mio fa, fa la ninna ninna na.

Amor mio, sia questo petto hor per te morbido letto,
pria che rendi ad alta voce l'alma al Padre su la croce.
Deh ben mio, deh cor mio fa, fa la ninna ninna na.

Posa hor queste membra belle vezzosette e tenerelle,
perche poi feri e catene gli daran acerbe pene.
Deh ben mio, deh cor mio fa, fa la ninna ninna na.

Queste mani e questi piedi ch'or con gusto e gaudio vedi,
Ahime, com'in varii modi passeran acuti chiodi

Spiritual Song on the Lullabye "ninna nanna."

Now that it is time to sleep, sleep my son and do not cry,
For the time will come soon enough, when crying is needed.
And so, my dearest heart: Lullaby and sleep.

Close those divine eyes as other babies do,
For soon a thick veil Will deprive the sky of light.
And so, my dearest heart: Lullaby and sleep.

Or take this milk from my immaculate breasts,
For a cruel magistrate is preparing vinegar and gall for you.
And so, my dearest heart: Lullaby and sleep.

My love, let this breast be a soft bed for you
Before, you raise your voice and give your soul to the Father.
And so, my dearest heart: Lullaby and sleep.

Rest now your beautiful limbs, so charming and tender,
For later irons and chains will cause them bitter pains.
And so, my dearest heart: Lullaby and sleep.

Those hands and those feet which you now see with zest and
joy,
Alas, in how many ways will sharp nails pierce them.

Questa faccia graziosa rubiconda, hor più che rosa
Sputi e schiaffi sporcheranno con tormento e grand'afanno

Ah con quanto tuo dolore, sola speme del mio core,
questo capo e questi crini passeran acuti spini

Ah ch'in questo divin petto, amor mio dolce diletto,
vi farà piaga mortale, empia lancia e di sleale.
Dormi dunque, figliol mio, dormi pur, redentor mio,
perchè poi con lieto viso ci vedrem in Paradiso.

Hor che dorme la mia vita, del mio cor gioia compita,
taccia ognun con puro zelo, taccian sin la terra e'l cielo.

E fra tanto, io che farò? Il mio ben contemplerò,
ne starò col capo chino fin che dorme il mio bambino.

Scene from *Die Schöne und Getreue Ariadne*

Ariadne

Ich wil und muß mit Theseus gehn,
Zum Leben oder sterben.

Evanthes

Wann er dann wird nach Ihren Augen sehn,
So möcht ihn leicht das Ungeheur verderben.

This graceful face, ruddier than a rose:
Spit and slaps will defile it, with great torture and great suffering.

Ah, with how much pain for you, only hope of my heart,
This head and this brow will be pierced by sharp thorns.

Ah, for in this divine breast, love of mine, sweet and dear,
An impious, traitorous spear will make a mortal wound.
Sleep then my son, sleep then, my savior,
For later, with joyful faces, we will see each other in Paradise.

Now that you are sleeping, my life, complete joy of my heart,
Let us all with pure zeal, be silent: even the earth and Heaven.

Meanwhile, what shall I do? I will watch my dear,
Remaining with my head bowed, for as long as my child sleeps.

Translation Anna O'Connell with a great deal of assistance
from Ellen Hargis.

Scene from the *Lovely and True Ariadne*

Ariadne

I Insist, I must go with Theseus
Into life or death.

Evanthes

But if he is looking into your eyes,
The monster might easily kill him.

Ariadne
So sol mein Blut den Ruhm erwerben,
Daß es zugleich mit Theseus Blut vergossen.

Theseus
Ich wil, mein Engell unverdrossen
Erbleichen, wenn ich nur ihr Bild
Darff meinen Geist einpregen,
Und sie die Treu wird im Gedächtniß hegen,
Mit der ich sterb.

Ariadne
O Himmel kan ich leben,
Wann Theseus, der mir mehr als alles gilt,
Die Seele will aufgeben.

Theseus
Ich hoffe sieghafft wieder umbzukehren,
Wenn sie mich will den Weg des Irrgangs lehren,
Und schicken mir geneigte Wünsche zu.

Evanthes
Princessin! dieses kan in Ruh
Sie und alle setzen.

Ariadne
Wolan! so sol dich aus des Irgangs Netzen,
Hier dieser Faden ziehn
Knüpf' an die Pfort ihn an und gehe kühn
Dem Minotaurus zu. Wird er erliegen,
So folge nur gemacht,
Dem Faden wieder nach,

Ariadne
Then my blood will earn the glory
Of being shed along with that of Theseus.

Theseus
My angel, I will die without regret
As long as your image
is engraved into my spirit
And you will remember the faithfulness
With which I die.

Ariadne
O Heaven! Can I live
If Theseus, who means more to me than everything,
should give up his life?

Theseus
I hope to return victorious
If you will teach me the way through the labyrinth
and send me your tenderest wishes.

Evanthes
Princess! That may bring peace
To you and to us all.

Ariadne
Very well then, from the tangle of the labyrinth
This thread shall pull you.
Tie it to the doorway and go boldly
To the minotaur. Once he's vanquished
Then just follow
The thread out again,

So wirstu mit Vergnügen
Den Irrgang, wie das Ungeheur besiegen.

Theseus
O wehrter Rath! Mit dem wil ich es wagen,
Den Cerberus der Höllen zu erschlagen.

Aria
Theseus
Schönstes Seelchen fahre wol,
Bis auff Wiedersehen.
Muß ich scheiden,
Wil ichs leiden,
Wann nur mein Gedachtniß sol
Feste bey dir stehen.
Schönstes seelchen fahre wol,
Bis auff wiedersehen.

[Theseus gehet in den Labirinth.]

Ritornello

Ariadne
So gehsdu dann, mein Sonnen-licht dahin!

Evanthes
Sie zwingt nur Princessin ihren Sinn,
Er wird bald wieder bey uns seyn,
Und uns mit seinem Sieg beglücken.

Ariadne
Lass ew'ge Nacht der Sonnen Schein

And you will happily vanquish
The labyrinth as well as the monster.

Theseus
Oh worthy advice! With this plan I would dare
To kill Cerberus in Hell!

Aria
Theseus
Loveliest soul, fare thee well
Till at last again we meet,
While I part,
It breaks my heart
For I under memory's spell
Stand at your side, my sweet.
Loveliest soul, fare thee well
Till at last again we meet.

[Theseus enters the labyrinth.]

Ritornello

Ariadne
So then you are going, my sunlight!

Evanthes
Princess, calm your mind,
He will be with us again soon
And delight us with his victory.

Ariadne
May eternal night the light of the sun

In Tritons Fluthen unterdrücken,
Wann mich nur wird sein schönes Aug' anblicken.

Aria

Ihr Augen die der Himmel zieret,
Seid aber dennoch Martern vol,
Wer hat euch mir entfuhrer?
Ja, ja, Ich weiß es wol,
Mehr Flammen oder sternem zu bekommen
Hat Orcus oder Jupiter
Euch in sein Reich genommen.

Evanthes

Sie spare doch Vortrefflichste das Klagen,
Mein Sinn der sagt mir, Theseus sey schon nah.

Ariadne

Kommt er nicht bald so ist mein Grab schon da.

Evanthes

Die Schickung wil gedultiges Ertragen.

Ariadne

Ach lange Furcht bringt endliches Verzagen.

[Sie stehet elwas in Gedanken.]

Aria

Doch ich wil in Hofnung bleiben,
Weil auch oft der Sturm kan treiben,
An den long verlangten Port,
Laß den Todt mein Urtheil schreiben,

In Triton's waves extinguish,
As long as his beautiful eyes look on me again.

Aria

Your eyes, by Heaven adorned,
Are torture to me, even so.
Who was it stole you from me?
Indeed, the answer well I know.
To have more stars and flames on hand
Orcus or Jupiter
Takes you off into their land.

Evanthes

Please, most splendid one, save your complaints.
My mind tells me that Theseus is already near.

Ariadne

If he doesnt come soon, this shall be my grave.

Evanthes

Providence wishes you to bear things patiently.

Ariadne

Lengthy fear causes endless despair.

[She stands a moment, lost in thought.]

Aria

Still shall I in hope remain
Since the storm oft from the main
To the long desired port may drive.
lot Death pronounce my sentence in vain,

Wil ich doch in Hoffnung bleiben
Hoffnung ach! du süßes Wort.

Flow, my tears, fall from your springs!
Exiled forever, let me mourn;
Where night's black bird her sad infamy sings,
There let me live forlorn.

Down vain lights, shine you no more!
No nights are dark enough for those
That in despair their lost fortunes deplore.
Light doth but shame disclose.

Never may my woes be relieved,
Since pity is fled;
And tears and sighs and groans my weary days
Of all joys have deprived.

From the highest spire of contentment
My fortune is thrown;
And fear and grief and pain for my deserts
Are my hopes, since hope is gone.

Hark! you shadows that in darkness dwell,
Learn to condemn light
Happy, happy they that in hell
Feel not the world's despite.

For still in hope I shall remain
Hope! You sweet word, live and thrive!

Text from the original libretto and translation kindly
provided by the Boston Early Music Festival.

All the day
That sun that lends me shine
By frowns doth cause me pine
And feeds me with delay:
Her smiles, my springs that make my joys to grow,
Her frowns, the winters of my woe.

All the night
My sleep is 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 to me assigned,

Out, alas,
My faith is ever true,
Yet will she never rue,
Nor yield me any grace;
Her eyes of fire, her heart of flint is made,
Whom tears nor truth may once invade.

Gentle Love,
Draw forth thy wounding dart,
Thou canst not pierce her heart,
For I that to approve,
By sighs and tears more hot than are thy shafts,
Did tempt, while she for triumph laughs.

Time stands still with gazing on her face,
stand still and gaze for minutes, houres and yeares, to her give place:
All other things shall change, but shee remaines the same,
till heavens changed have their course & time hath lost his name.
Cupid doth hover up and downe blinded with her faire eyes,
and fortune captive at her feete contem'd and conquerd lies.

When fortune, love, and time attend on
Her with my fortunes, love, and time, I honour will alone,
If bloudlesse envie say, dutie hath no desert.
Dutie replies that envie knowes her selfe his faithfull heart,
My setled vowes and spotlesse faith no fortune can remove,
Courage shall shew my inward faith, and faith shall trie my love.

Recitative:

Paraninfos celestes, de la esfera
Al portal de Belén venid festivos,
A admirar la humildad de un niño amante
Que siendo Dios omnipotente
Quisp que su grandeza se admirase
Con nacer entre pajas reclinado.

Aria

Rompa de la batalla el nombre infante
Valiente infante contra el dragon, el fiero dragon.
O dueño mio, padre amoroso
Que aun destello de tu luz
Rendido luego.

Recitative:

Celestial heralds, come happily
From heaven to the gate of Bethlehem
To admire the humility of a loving child
Who, being all-powerful God,
Wanted his grandeur to be admired
By being born lying in straw.

Aria

The (holy) name breaks away from the battle,
A brave prince against the infernal dragon.
Oh, my keeper, loving Father,
May but a shimmer of your light
Make it yet defeated.

Translation by Ellen Hargis.