

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA  
FACULTY  
CONCERT SERIES

*A Britten Celebration*

*Music by Benjamin Britten (1913–1976),  
commemorating the centenary of his birth.*

ALEXANDER DUNN guitar

WITH

KATHYRN WHITNEY mezzo-soprano

ROGER BUKSA & ANNA CAL piano duo

GUYONNE LE LOUARN viola

ANNE GRIMM soprano

ROBERT HOLLISTON piano

PAULA KIFFNER cello

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**Saturday, November 23, 2013, 8:00 p.m.**

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

MacLaurin Building, University of Victoria

Adults: \$17.50 / Students & seniors: \$13.50

# Program

## Orpheus Britannicus (ca. 1700)

*Fairest Isle*  
*Mad Bess*  
*Sweeter than Roses*

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)  
arranged by Britten ca. 1947

## Nocturnal after John Dowland, Op. 70 (1963)

<i>Musingly</i>	<i>Dreaming</i>
<i>Very agitated</i>	<i>Gently rocking</i>
<i>Restless</i>	<i>Passacaglia</i>
<i>Uneasy</i>	<i>Slow and quiet</i>
<i>March-like</i>	

## Introduction and Rondo Burlesca, Op. 23, No. 1 (1941)

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### Intermission

(Beverages and snacks available at the  
concession located in the lounge)

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## Lachrymae, reflections on a song of Dowland, Op. 48 (1950)

<i>Lento</i>	<i>Appassionato</i>
<i>Allegretto, andante molto</i>	<i>Alla valse moderato</i>
<i>Animato</i>	<i>Allegro marcia</i>
<i>Tranquillo</i>	<i>Lento</i>
<i>Allegro con moto</i>	<i>L'istesso tempo</i>
<i>Largamente</i>	

## Songs from the Chinese, Op. 58 (1957)

*The Big Chariot*  
*The Old Lute*  
*The Autumn Wind*  
*The Herd-Boy*  
*Depression*  
*Dance Song*

## Sonata for Cello and Piano in C, Op. 65 (1961)

*Dialogo*  
*Scherzo - pizzicato*  
*Elegia:*  
*Marcia*  
*Moto perpetuo*

## PROGRAM NOTES

Benjamin Britten's centenary (November 22, 1913–2013) is coincidentally conjoined with two of Britain's greatest composers: Henry Purcell (1659-1695), who died one day 300 years before Britten was born, and the 450th anniversary of Elizabethan master lutenist and composer John Dowland (1563–1626). The works on tonight's program reflect aspects of Britten persona: the dream world, a fascination with music of the past, and heady instrumental virtuosity. Britten's instrumental music traverses a wide range of emotion, and his expert vocal writing explores text painting and colors with a unique compositional voice – certainly one of England's and the early twentieth centuries most important composers.

## SONG TEXTS

### Orpheus Britannicus

#### 1. Fairest Isle John Dryden (1631-1700)

Fairest isle, all isles excelling,  
Seat of pleasure and of love  
Venus here will choose her dwelling,  
And forsake her Cyprian grove.  
Cupid from his fav'rite nation  
Care and envy will remove;  
Jealousy, that poisons passion,  
And despair, that dies for love.

Gentle murmurs, sweet complaining,  
Sighs that blow the fire of love  
Soft repulses, kind disdainings,  
Shall be all the pains you prove.  
Ev'ry swain shall pay his duty,  
Grateful ev'ry nymph shall prove;  
And as these excel in beauty,  
Those shall be renown'd for love.

#### 2. Mad Bess (authorship unknown)

From silent shades and the Elysian groves  
Where sad departed spirits mourn their loves  
From crystal streams and from that country where  
Jove crowns the fields with flowers all the year,  
Poor senseless Bess, cloth'd in her rags and folly,  
Is come to cure her lovesick melancholy.

“Bright Cynthia kept her revels late  
While Mab, the Fairy Queen, did dance,  
And Oberon did sit in state  
When Mars at Venus ran his lance.

In yonder cowslip lies my dear;  
Entomb'd in liquid gems of dew;  
Each day I'll water it with a tear;  
Its fading blossom to renew.

For since my love is dead and all my joys are gone,  
Poor Bess for his sake  
A garland will make,  
My music shall be a groan.

I'll lay me down and die within some hollow tree,  
The rav'n and cat,  
The owl and bat  
Shall warble forth my elegy.

Did you not see my love as he pass'd by you?  
His two flaming eyes, if he comes nigh you,  
They will scorch up your hearts: Ladies beware ye,  
Les he should dart a glance that may ensnare ye!

Hark! Hark! I hear old Charon bawl,  
His boat he will no longer stay,  
And furies lash their whips and call:  
Come, come away, come, come away.

Poor Bess will return to the place whence she came,  
Since the world is so mad she can hope for no cure.  
For love's grown a bubble, a shadow, a name,  
Which fools do admire and wise men endure.

Cold and hungry am I grown.  
Ambrosia will I feed upon,  
Drink Nectar still and sing.”  
Who is content,  
Does all sorrow prevent?  
And Bess in her straw,  
Whilst free from the law,  
In her thoughts is as great, great as a king.

### 3. Sweeter than Roses (authorship unknown)

Sweeter than roses, or cool evening breeze  
On a warm flowery shore, was the dear kiss,  
First trembling made me freeze,  
Then shot like fire all o'er.  
What magic has victorious love!  
For all I touch or see since that dear kiss,  
I hourly prove, all is love to me.

## Songs From the Chinese

### 1. The Big Chariot (The Book of Songs)

Don't help on the big chariot  
You will only make yourself dusty  
Don't think about the sorrows of the world  
You will only make yourself wretched.

Don't help on the big chariot  
You won't be able to see for dust.  
Don't think about the sorrows of the world  
Or you will never escape from your despair.

Don't help on the big chariot  
You'll be stifled with dust, be stifled with dust  
Don't think about the sorrows of the world  
You will only load yourself with care

### 2. The Old Lute (Po-Chu-i)

Of cord and cassia- wood is the lute compounded  
Within lie extremely ancient melodies  
Ancient melodies weak and savourless,  
Not appealing to present men's taste

Light and colour are faded from its jade stops  
Dust has covered its rose-red strings  
Decay and ruin came to it long ago  
But the sound that is left is still cold and clear

I do not refuse to play  
If you want me to  
But even if I play  
people will not listen

How did it come to be neglected so?  
Because of the Ch'iang flute and the zithern of Ch'in

### 3. The Autumn Wind (Wu-ti)

Autumn wind rises  
White clouds fly  
Grass and trees wither;  
Geese go south...  
Orchids all in bloom,  
Chrysanthemums smell sweet...  
I think of my lovely lady  
I never can forget

Floating pagoda boat  
Crosses Fen River  
Across the midstream  
White waves rise

Flute and drum keep time  
To sound of rowers' song  
Amidst revel and feasting  
Sad thoughts come

Youth's years how few,  
Age, how sure!  
Age, how sure,  
Age, how... sure!

#### 4. The Herd-Boy (Lu Yu)

In the southern village,  
the boy who minds the ox,  
With his naked feet  
stands on the ox's back

Through the hole in his coat  
The river wind blows  
Through his broken hat  
The mountain rain pours  
On the long dyke  
He seemed to be far away,  
In the narrow lane  
Suddenly we were face to face

The boy is home  
And the ox is back in its stall,  
And a dark smoke oozes  
Through the thatched roof

#### 5. Depression (Po Chu-i)

Turned to jade  
Are the boy's rosy cheeks  
To his sick temples  
The frost of winter clings  
Do not wonder  
That my body sinks to decay  
Though my limbs are old,  
My heart is older,  
Older, yet

#### 6. Dance Song (The Book of Songs)

The unicorn's hoofs!  
The duke's sons throng  
Alas for the unicorn!

The unicorn's brow!  
The duke's kingsmen throng  
Alas for the unicorn!

The unicorn's horn!  
The duke's clansmen throng  
Alas for the unicorn!  
Alas!

Britten's realizations of the accompaniment for **Orpheus Britannicus** (1698-1702) of Purcell make the collection available for different voice ranges with piano accompaniment, as well as function as a vehicle for Britten to apply coloristic and word painting ideas to Purcell's fine songs. One of Britten's lesser-known works, **Songs From the Chinese** (1957) is nevertheless an outstanding addition to the repertory of songs for voice and guitar. It seems to reflect changes in Britten's life, especially his realization that, at nearly 45, he had become middle-aged. He and tenor Peter Pears had traveled around the world recently, especially enjoying various East Asian cultures. Britten had not written any music involving tenor solo since 1954, and his next big stage work for the Aldeburgh Festival, Noye's Fludde, would be the only Britten opera without a tenor part. Pears had recently begun a recital partnership with a brilliant young guitarist, Julian Bream. Thus, it was natural for Britten to choose the guitar to accompany the tenor. Pears and Bream premiered *Songs From the Chinese* at the 1958 Aldeburgh Festival.

The song cycle is comprised of six songs with texts from Arthur Waley's translations of classic verses published in 1946, under the title *Chinese Poems*. The writing is remarkably condensed and terse, with the sparseness of the texture of the guitar writing seeming to reflect something of the spirit of Chinese lute or koto aesthetic. Nevertheless, there are no overt orientalisms in the music.

The songs all can be interpreted as reflecting aspects of Britten's own life, as if he were using them to ponder his middle age. "The Big Chariot," the first song, is metaphor for acquisition of fame, which will "only make yourself dusty." It also admonishes the listener not to take on the sorrows of the world, but at the end Britten repeats that line, reminding the listener that he could never manage to do that. The second song, "The Old Lute," reflects on the fickle changing of public taste; the lute has been superseded by flute and zither. "The Autumn Wind" is an obvious image of encroaching age. Then the music turns lilting for "The Herd-Boy." The tenderness of the setting reflects Britten's feelings, which are especially awakened by the fact that the boy is exploited, ill-clothed, and unshod, living in poverty. "Depression" features spooky glissandi on the guitar as the words ponder the body's decay. The deceptively named "Dance Song" is about a hunt for a unicorn by the retainers of a duke. Britten seems reminded that a unicorn traditionally represents chastity. The capture of the unicorn causes Britten to dwell on the word "Alas!" ending the work with his recurrent theme of destruction of innocence. [Joseph Stevenson]

In 1949, while Britten was on tour in the United States, he met the outstanding viola virtuoso William Primrose, who agreed to come to the 1950 edition of Britten's own Aldeburgh Festival, which, after two successful editions in 1948 and 1949, was already established as one of England's major summer musical events. As the Festival approached, he composed the **Lachrymae** - a major set of variations on a theme by late Renaissance English composer John Dowland for Primrose, "to reward him for coming to the Festival." Primrose played it in the 1950 Festival in a recital in which Britten himself accompanied at the keyboard.

Dowland (1563 - 1626) was one of the great composers of lute songs. Although contemporary accounts show that socially he was engaging and positive in mood and outlook, his music is known for its sadness, particularly for sadness at rejection or inconstancy by a lovely lady. Perhaps joking at his own image, he punned on his name by writing "Semper Dowland, Semper Dolens" (Always Dowland, Always Sorrowful"). Britten's title for this composition reflects the general classical listening audience's image of Dowland by its title, which means "Tears."

Among musicians, however, Dowland has been particularly admired for his subtle command of harmony. It is this aspect of the work with which Britten primarily concerns himself in constructing this set of ten variations. The work begins to quote the song "If my complaints could passion move" in a mood-setting slow introduction, with Dowland's melody in the low part of the accompaniment. However, Dowland's original theme breaks off at the end of its first part, as the harmonies of the song begin to generate Britten's variations. Fragments of the melody are also heard, though Britten's concern with the harmonies leads him to recreate something like Dowland's sensitivity to harmonic progression and devices in twentieth-century terms.

The first five variations are marked *Allegretto*, *andante molto*; *Animato*; *Tranquillo*; *Allegro con moto*; and *Largamente*. Britten's variations throughout the piece tend to be concise: only the opening and closing sections of the composition and the *Animato* and *Tranquillo* movements are more than a minute long.

In the sixth variation, marked *Appassionato*, Britten quotes another well-known Dowland song, "Flow my Tears." Then he continues working with the opening strain of the main Dowland song, in variations marked *Alla valse moderato*; *Allegro Marcia*; and *Lento*. For the final variation, Britten remains in *Lento tempo* and, in an expansive ending, quotes the entire Dowland song from beginning to end, for the first time in this composition, with Dowland's original harmonies, although spaced differently for piano and viola. The text of Dowland's "If My Complaints":

*If my complaints could passions move,  
Or make Love see wherein I suffer wrong:  
My passions were enough to prove,  
That my despairs had governed me too long.  
O Love, I live and die in thee,  
Thy grief in my deep sighs still speaks:  
Thy wounds do freshly bleed in me,  
My heart for thy unkindness breaks:  
Yet thou dost hope when I despair,  
And when I hope, thou mak'st me hope in vain.  
Thou say'st thou canst my harms repair,  
Yet for redress, thou let'st me still complain.*

No. 4, Firste Booke of Songes, 1597

Britten wrote the **Nocturnal, after John Dowland** for guitarist Julian Bream, who had received high praise for his collaborations with tenor Peter Pears in the songs of John Dowland. The *Nocturnal* consists of nine movements, with a theme taken from Dowland's song, "Come heavy sleep," presented in the opening panel, titled "Musingly," followed by eight variants. The first movement is dreamy and ethereal, having that typically Britten-esque fantasy-like character. The two succeeding panels, titled "Very agitated" and "Restless," respectively, are lively and tense, with the latter less energetic, less driven, but more ominous and threatening. The fourth movement, "Uneasy," maintains the nervous, dark mood with ponderous music that lurches ahead at times and stalls at others. The middle panel, "March-like," despite its title, also brims with tension, but Britten adds a touch of humor in the quirky pacing and oafish character of the melodic material. Dreaming ensues, for once seeming to offer a break from the agitated manner of the previous variants. But it, too, gradually divulges a restless spirit, despite its slow pacing and ethereal character.

The seventh movement, "Gently rocking," brims with energy in descending repeating notes that seem nervously in search of something. The ensuing *Passacaglia*, at nearly five minutes, is the longest movement. It is also, not surprisingly, the most multifaceted, but again the sense of restiveness dominates. The closing panel, "Slow and quiet," continues without pause and at last presents a serene and tranquil mood. Here the spirit of Dowland is most evident in the simpler writing and songful character of the music. The variations, presented in reverse order, range through a series of dream states before the tortured *Passacaglia*, finally quoting the Dowland song - an invitation to the dream world. The first quatrain of Dowland's song:

*Come, heavy sleep, the image of true death;  
And close up these my weary weeping eyes:  
Whose spring of tears doth stop my vital breath,  
And tears my heart with sorrow's sigh-swoll'n cries:  
Come and possess my tired thoughtworn soul  
That living dies, till thou on me be stole.*

No. 20, Firste Booke of Songes, 1597

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, November 24, 1:00 p.m. (Admission by donation)

## PIANO CLASS RECITAL

Students from the studio of May Ling Kwok  
Phillip T.Young Recital Hall

Sunday, November 24, 8:00 p.m. (Admission by donation)

## VOCAL JAZZ FALL SHOWCASE

*Fall Back*

Wendell Clanton, director

In early November clocks "fall back." The time shift can catch us slightly off guard. Join for an evening of switch hits that might cause the audience to fall forward out of sheer joy.

Phillip T.Young Recital Hall

Sunday, November 24, 2:30 p.m. (\$30)

Jewish Arts 2013 presents

## Grand Finale celebration of Congregation Emanu-El's 150th anniversary LAFAYETTE STRING QUARTET

With **Arthur Rowe**, piano & **Benjamin Butterfield**, tenor

Performing works by Britten, Vaughan Williams, Schubert and others.

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Visit [lafayettestringquartet.ca](http://lafayettestringquartet.ca) for more details.

Congregation Emanu-El Synagogue

(1461 Blanshard Street, corner of Pandora and Blanshard)

Monday, November 25, 8:00 p.m. (\$17.50 & \$13.50)

## FACULTY CONCERT SERIES

**Michelle Mares**, piano

Performing the complete sets of Chopin Études Op.10 and Op. 25  
Phillip T.Young Recital Hall

Wednesday, November 27, 12:30 p.m. (Admission by donation)

## TROMBONE CLASS RECITAL

Students from the studio of Scott MacInnes  
Phillip T.Young Recital Hall

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Tickets available at the UVic Ticket Centre (250-721-8480),  
online ([www.tickets.uvic.ca](http://www.tickets.uvic.ca)) and at the door.

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