**Northwick Baroque**

**St Mary's Ross on Wye 4th November 2026**

# *An Ancient Academy*

## *Commemorating the 300th anniversary of the original Academy of Ancient Music*




*Kate Oakley – soprano*
*Kenneth Roles - bass*
*Jane Warren and Ruth Churn – recorders*
*Michael Oakley - harpsichord*
*Jill Davies – viola da gamba*

*Welcome as the Dawn of Day (Solomon)* Georg Frideric Handel (1685-1756)

We begin with a vocal duet from Handel's 1748 oratorio *Solomon* in which the King and his new bride, most probably an Egyptian princess, though she is not named, sing charmingly of their love for each other. Although Handel was never formally a member, perhaps because his style was considered modern at the time, his music was both studied and performed by the Academy.

*By Purling Streams* William Croft (1678-1727)

Like many other secular cantatas in the pastoral tradition, this one, for soprano, recorder and continuo is all about unrequited love. A poor chap called Celadon, is pining for love of the lady Iris. It's not doing his health any good: his love sickness is so literal, so bad, he is left for dead on the banks of a river with his sighs echoing round the valley, until the river itself takes pity and shows Iris what a real torrent of tears looks like. Fortunately, Iris relents and rescues Celadon from the brink of death with her smile.

*Grave and Allegro*
from Trio Sonata in F major G B Sammartini (1667-1752)

Sammartini was one of a number of continental composers who worked in London orchestras during the first half of the C18th. Here he taps into a vogue for recorder trio sonatas at the start of the C18th.

Scherzo *Lagrime Dolorose* Agostino Steffani (1654-1728)

Steffani, first president of the Academy of Ancient Music, was a polymath with a varied career as a bishop, diplomat, singer and composer of operas. He does misery brilliantly: listen to the way sobbing accompaniment mimics the falling of bitter tears, and then to how he takes the bass to the very bottom of his voice – this really is the depths of a lover's grief.

Chloris's Song Michael Festing (1705-1752)

This song published in 1747 depicts in contrasting sections the way a lover feels when he hears his lady sing: it's a sound so lovely, his soul is utterly transported, as if to heaven.

*Largo and Vivace* from solo sonata in D minor Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747)

Fun fact about this composer: he was one of four Bononcinis, three of whom were called Giovanni. Our composer here is the only one of the clan whose middle names do not include Maria.

*When Love's soft Passion* Johann Christian Pepusch (1667-1752)

Pepusch was a leading light of the ancient Academy of Ancient Music. He was much in demand as a composer of theatrical masques at Drury Lane Theatre, and also wrote the music for the Beggar's Opera. This is one of a number of his chamber cantatas in English for soprano and obbligato recorder with two recitatives and two arias. The subject is a young man having trouble getting his lady, the rather haughty Celia, to return his feelings. He appeals to Cupid, the God of love, and gets some sensible advice: don't let her hurt you, she's not worth it.

*Largo and Allegro* from trio sonata in G minor John Loeillet of London (1680-1730)

Two movements from another recorder trio sonata. Listen for the clever imitative writing for paired instruments and matching continuo pairing, as tunes get passed from player to player.

*They that go Down to the Sea in Ships (opening solo)*
*Prelude/For Love Every Creature* Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Purcell's verse anthem *They That Go Down to the Sea in Ships* sets words from Psalm 107 vividly depicting the perils of seventeenth century seafaring, with mariners relying on God for protection. Notice how it is full of up and down movement, mimicking the rising, falling and rolling of a ship in a rough sea, causing the sailors to lurch about like drunks. We follow this with the instrumental prelude to *If Love's a Sweet Passion* followed by a duet for bass and soprano taken from Purcell's semi-opera King Arthur, in the same key and metre. Listen to the way the continuo parts mimic a beating heart.

Reference: H. Diack Johnstone (2020), The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802) in *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, Vol. 51, pp. 1-13, www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48759153

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