ANCIENT FRAGMENTS

11:30 AM
SUNDAY 12 OCTOBER 2025
ST JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

PORT FAIRY SPRING MUSIC FESTIVAL

Henry PURCELL (1659–1695)
'Tis Nature's Voice

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Nicholas LANIER (1588–1666)
Love's Constancy

Robert JOHNSON (c. 1583–1633)
Where the bee sucks

Thomas MORLEY (c. 1557–1602)
It was a lover and his lass

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Henry PURCELL (1659–1695)
O Solitude

John DOWLAND (c. 1563–1626)
O Sweet Woods

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Traditional (arr. Benjamin Britten)
I will give my love an apple

Traditional
I will give my love an apple

William BYRD (c. 1540–1623)
Pavana 'The Earle of Salisbury'

Traditional
Down by the Salley Gardens

Rebecca CLARKE (1886–1979)
Down by the Salley Gardens

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(continued)

Henry PURCELL (1659–1695)

Suite No. 5 in C major, Z.666: 2
(arr. for Baroque triple harp by Hannah Lane)
1. Prelude
2. Almand
3. Courant
4. Saraband

She loves and she confesses too, Z.413

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Benjamin BRITTEN (1913–1976)
Greensleeves

Anonymous (17th century)
Greensleeves to a Ground

Henry PURCELL (1659–1695)
Evening Hymn

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Louis Hurley, *Tenor*
Hannah Lane, *Baroque Triple Harp*

Ancient Fragments traces four centuries of English song, from the Elizabethan lute song and madrigal to twentieth-century art song. What unites these works is their enduring engagement with nature — its presence, its absence, and the emotions these evoke. Woods, rivers, gardens, and seasonal cycles become metaphors for solace, longing, or lost love, while folk melodies and poetic fragments travel across generations, reshaped by composers who listened deeply to tradition.

The pairing of harp and voice is among the most ancient in music: a singer with a plucked string instrument has long been the archetypal way to tell stories, carry memory, and weave poetry with melody. In the myth of Orpheus, the singer whose lyre could charm gods and nature alike, this union of words and strings becomes the symbol of music's power. The baroque harp belongs to that lineage, prized in the seventeenth-century for its resonance, subtlety, and versatility in accompanying singers; it was central to courtly music-making in Stuart England. Its plucked voice can suggest pastoral simplicity — the shepherd's song, the rustle of leaves, the echo of wind in the woods — yet also offer refined artistry, an instrument of gods and kings.

The programme opens with Henry Purcell, one of the greatest composers of the Baroque era, despite his tragically short life. His songs marry theatrical intensity with an almost speech-like sensitivity to English text, so much so that he was posthumously celebrated as *Orpheus Britannicus* — the English Orpheus. *'Tis Nature's Voice* brims with expressive declamation and word-painting that dramatise the very forces of creation. His radiant *Evening Hymn* closes the program, built on a noble ground bass that lends serenity to its devotional text. Between them comes a playful gem: *She loves and she confesses too*. In this song, a lover exults in his triumph as his beloved admits her feelings, only to be confronted by the meddling figure of Honour, whom he vows to outwit in order to claim his prize.

Another facet of Purcell appears in *O Solitude (my sweetest choice)*, a translation by Katherine Philips of a poem by the French writer Saint-Amant. The narrator seeks refuge from "tumult and from noise" in a landscape of venerable trees, seemingly unchanged since "the nativity of time". Purcell's sumptuous ostinato gives the sense of circling inward, a meditation on the cost and comfort of withdrawal from the world. This inward gaze finds a companion in John Dowland's *O Sweet Woods*, which imagines the forest as both "nursery and tomb". England's most celebrated lutenist and master of melancholy, Dowland saw in nature a mirror for human solitude and sorrow.

Purcell's predecessors also colour this mosaic. Nicholas Lanier, the first Master of the King's Music, introduced Italian monody to England, while Robert Johnson, lutenist to James I, wrote songs for Shakespeare's theatre, including *Where the bee sucks*. Thomas Morley epitomised Elizabethan wit in his madrigals; *It was a lover and his lass* sets a song from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* with pastoral brightness, full of blossoms, bees, and lovers at play.

Interleaved are melodies from oral tradition — *I Will Give My Love an Apple*, *Down by the Salley Gardens*, *Greensleeves* — given fresh colour in twentieth-century hands. Benjamin Britten preserves the simplicity of these tunes while refracting them through modern harmonies, drawing inspiration from Purcell's expressive marriage of text and music. Rebecca Clarke's setting of Yeats's *Down by the Salley Gardens* gives the riverside willow poignant weight, an echo of Dowland's art of melancholy in song.

The Baroque harp takes much of its solo repertoire from the lute and harpsichord. William Byrd's *Pavana "The Earle of Salisbury"*, from the first collection of keyboard music printed in England, offers an instrumental meditation — ordered, serene, and reflective, like wandering in a cultivated garden. Purcell's Suite No. 5 in C major (originally for harpsichord and here arranged for Baroque triple harp) captures the vitality and grace of Restoration dance forms.

Across the centuries, English composers returned to folk song, poetry, and nature's imagery as sources of renewal. In *Ancient Fragments*, we hear this continuity: a tradition where harp and voice carry fragments of memory, where woods and rivers become metaphors for love and loss, and where solitude itself becomes music. Like Orpheus, these composers remind us that song has the power to charm, console, and endure.

ANCIENT FRAGMENTS – LYRICS

Henry PURCELL (1659–1695)
'Tis Nature's Voice
Text by Nicholas Brady (1659–1726)

'Tis Nature's Voice; thro' all the moving Wood
Of Creatures understood:
The Universal Tongue to none
Of all her num'rous Race unknown.
From her it learnt the mighty Art
To court the Ear or strike the Heart;
At once the Passions to express and move;
We hear, and stright we grieve or hate, rejoice or love;
In unseen Chains it does the Fancy bind;
At once it charms the Sense and capivates the Mind.

Nicholas LANIER (1588–1666)
Love's Constancy
Text by Thomas Carew (c. 1694–1740)

No more shall meads be deck'd with flow'rs,
Nor sweetness live in rosy bow'rs,
Nor greenest buds on branches spring,
Nor warbling birds delight to sing,
Nor April violets paint the grove,
When once I leave my Celia's love.

The fish shall in the ocean burn,
And fountains sweet shall bitter turn;
The humble vale no floods shall know,
When floods shall highest hills o'erflow:
Black Lethe shall oblivion leave,
Before my Celia I deceive.

Love shall his bow and shafts lay by,
And Venus' doves want wings to fly:
The sun refuse to show his light,
And day shall then be turned to night;
And in that night no star appear,
Whene'er I leave my Celia dear.

Love shall no more inhabit Earth,
Nor lovers more shall love for worth;
Nor joy above in Heaven dwell,
Nor pain torment poor souls in hell:
Grim Death no more shall horrid prove,
Whene'er I leave bright Celia's love.

Robert JOHNSON (c. 1583–1633)
Where the bee sucks

Text by William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Where the bee sucks there suck I:
In a cow-slip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On a bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily,
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

Thomas MORLEY (c. 1557–1602)
It was a lover and his lass
Text by William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
That o'er the green cornfield did pass,
In springtime, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
Those pretty country folks would lie,
In springtime, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

This carol they began that hour,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
How that a life was but a flower
In springtime, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

And therefore take the present time,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
For love is crownèd with the prime
In springtime, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Henry PURCELL (1659–1695)
O Solitude
Text (French) by Antoine Girard de Saint-Amant (1594–1661)
English translation by Katherine Philips (1631–1664)

O solitude, my sweetest choice,
Places devoted to the night,
Remote from tumult and from noise,
How ye my restless thoughts delight!

O heav'ns! what content is mine
To see those trees, which have appear'd
From the nativity of time,
And which all ages have rever'd,

To look today as fresh and green
As when their beauties first were seen.

Oh, how agreeable a sight
These hanging mountains do appear,
Which th' unhappy would invite
To finish all their sorrows here,
When their hard fate makes them endure
Such woes as only death can cure.

Oh, how I solitude adore!
That element of noblest wit,
Where I have learned Apollo's lore,
Without the pains to study it.

For thy sake I in love am grown
With what thy fancy does pursue;
But when I think upon my own,
I hate it for that reason too,
Because it needs must hinder me
From seeing and from serving thee.

O solitude, oh, how I solitude adore!

John DOWLAND (c. 1563–1626)
O Sweet Woods
Text by Philip Sidney (1554–1586)

O sweet woods! The delight of solitariness!
O how much do I love your solitariness!

From Fame's desire, from Love's delight retired,
In these sad groves an hermit's life I lead:
And those false pleasures, which I once admired,
With sad remembrance of my fall, I dread.
To birds, to trees, to earth, impart I this;
For she less secret, and as senseless is.
O sweet woods! the delight of solitariness!
O how much do I love your solitariness!

Experience which repentance only brings,
Doth bid me, now, my heart from Love estrange!
Love is disdained when it doth look at Kings;
And Love low placèd base and apt to change.
There Power doth take from him his liberty,
Here Want of Worth makes him in cradle die.
O sweet woods! the delight of solitariness!
O how much do I love your solitariness!

You men that give false worship unto Love,
And seek that which you never shall obtain;
The endless work of Sisyphus you prove,
Whose end is this, to know you strive in vain.
Hope and Desire, which now your idols be,
You needs must lose, and feel Despair with me.
O sweet woods! the delight of solitariness!
O how much do I love your solitariness!

You woods, in you the fairest Nymphs have walked:
Nymphs at whose sights all hearts did yield to love.
You woods, in whom dear lovers oft have talked,
How do you now a place of mourning prove?
Wanstead! my Mistress saith this is the doom.
Thou art love's child-bed, nursery, and tomb.
O sweet woods! the delight of solitariness!
O how much do I love your solitariness!

Traditional / Benjamin BRITTEN (1913–1976)
I will give my love an apple

I will give my love an apple without e'er a core,
I will give my love a house without e'er a door,
I will give my love a palace wherein she may be,
And she may unlock it without any key.

My head is the apple without e'er a core,
My mind is the house without e'er a door,
My heart is the palace wherein she may be,
And she may unlock it without any key.

Traditional / Rebecca CLARKE (1886–1979)
Down by the Salley Gardens
Text by William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)

Down by the Salley Gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the Salley Gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take life easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

Henry PURCELL (1659–1695)
She loves and she confesses too
Text by Abraham Cowley (1618–1667)

She loves and she confesses too,
There's then at last no more to do;
The happy work's entirely done,
Enter the town which thou hast won;
The fruits of conquest now begin,
Io, triumph, enter in.

What's this, ye Gods! What can it be?
Remains there still an enemy?
Bold Honour stands up in the gate,
And would yet capitulate.
Have I o'ercome all real foes,
And shall this phantom me oppose?

Noisy nothing, stalking shade,
By what witchcraft wert thou made,
Thou empty cause of solid harms?
But I shall find out counter charms,
Thy airy devilship to remove
From this circle here of love.

Sure I shall rid myself of thee
By the night's obscurity,
And obscurer secrecy;
Unlike to ev'ry other spright
Thou attempt'st not men to affright
Nor appear'st but in the light.

Traditional / Benjamin BRITTEN (1913–1976)
Greensleeves

Alas, my love, you do me wrong,
To cast me off discourteously;
And I have loved you so long,
Rejoicing in your company.
Greensleeves was all my joy,
Greensleeves was my delight,
Greensleeves was my heart of gold,
And who but my lady Greensleeves?

I have been ready at your hand,
To grant whatever you did crave;
And I have waged both life and land,
Your love and good-will for to gain.

Henry PURCELL (1659–1695)
Evening Hymn
Text by Bishop William Fuller (1608–1675)

Now that the sun hath veil'd his light,
And bid the world goodnight;
To the soft bed my body I dispose,
But where shall my soul repose?
Dear God, even in thy arms,
And can there be any so sweet security!
Then to thy rest, O my soul!
And singing, praise the mercy
That prolongs thy days.