

Programme

Nicholas Clapton (countertenor)
David J Smith (harpsichord and piano)

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Sweeter than roses
Fairest isle
If music be the food of love
What shall I do?
An Evening Hymn

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Cantata: Lungi da voi, che siete poli del mio pensier

INTERVAL (fifteen minutes)

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

She never told her love
O tuneful voice
Piercing eyes
The spirit's song
Fidelity

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847)

Nachtlied
Erster Verlust
Lieblingsplätzchen
Wartend
Neue Liebe

The year 2009 is one rich in anniversaries of so-called 'great' composers, whose music contributes to the canon of western art music. Tonight's concert is a celebration of the music of four of them: Henry Purcell (1659-1695), George Frideric Handel (1685-1759), Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) and Felix Mendelssohn (1809 -1847). In the first half of the recital, we hear from two composers renowned for their vocal writing, both of whom lived and worked in England. Whereas Purcell was a native-born Englishman, Handel settled in London in 1712, becoming a naturalized Englishman in 1727. Before arriving in England, Handel travelled in Italy where he absorbed the latest Italian styles: the cantata we hear this evening is a reworking for alto of one originally written for soprano when Handel was in Rome in 1708.

Mendelssohn was born in the year that Haydn died. Both composers visited the British Isles. Haydn composed some settings of English texts while he was here which, unlike his London symphonies, tend to be overlooked. Mendelssohn is better known for his songs without words for solo piano, yet the Lieder included in tonight's programme stand comparison with those by Schubert, demonstrating that he was just as successful at writing songs with words.