

# Henry purcell essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

There is no exact date of birth and baptism of the famous composer Henry Purcell. According to one historical source, he was born in 1658, and the other determines this date as the year 1659. His famous father Henry Purcell died in 1664, and his uncle Thomas Purcell began to educate the young composer. The artist joined the choir of Chapel Royal in 1667. In 1676, he began to work as a copyist in Westminster Abbey. Purcell succeeded Dr. Blow after his resignation on the position as Organist of Westminster Abbey in 1680. The set of Sonatas in 1683 was the first Purcell's publication. The music which Henry Purcell created for the funeral of Queen Mary in March, 1695 was played on his own funeral in November, 1695.

Henry Purcell was born in Ann's Lane, Old Pye Street, in Westminster area of London. He spent almost his entire professional life passed in the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey.

Henry Purcell was educated in the Chapel Royal. It was the best musical educational establishment for a young boy in England at that period of time.

A Westminster Abbey organist, Dr. John Blow, taught the young composer to play the organ. Purcell also played the harpsichord at the court of James II.

Keyon (1995) stated the following: " Purcell understood the pangs of love, the glory of ceremony and the tumult of war. Able to turn his skills to the court, the church or the tavern, he was a genius." He incorporated French and Italian stylistic elements into his music skillfully but devised an exclusive English style of Baroque music. Henry Purcell was the founder of the English musical school. The value of Purcell's heritage in the history of English music is not only due to the brilliant talent of the composer and the novelty of his

ideas. He managed to achieve the synthesis of the more sophisticated continental European culture and still underdeveloped expressive means of the English musical speech. Its flexible and clear way to use intonational features of the native language is still unsurpassed. Purcell was the last Englishman who developed a purely national musical tradition. In the next century it was almost entirely supplanted by European fashion trends.

The first Purcell's works were written in the style of William Byrd and Orlando Gibbons, the Old English Style. Later he fell under the influence of the French musical school. As well as Jean Batiste Lully, Purcell's style of writing was vertical. In this style, every melody note was supported by a chord. Besides, Henry Purcell skillfully used a rhythmic figure grounded on the succession of eighth dotted notes which were followed by sixteenths. He did this in order to emphasize the emotional parts of a work. The pupils of Chapel Royal often used the slow 3/2 bar movements. Purcell was also keen on this rhythm. In addition, Purcell was an expert in word-setting; he emphasized the construction of the music phrase using keys in a very consistent way. For instance, he used F minor to depict horror, G minor for death, F major for pastoral scenes. Purcell used C minor for seriousness, melancholy, and feeling of awe or mystery; E was used to convey hate. The master often used the keys C and D major the master for ceremonies to render the triumph.

No information found.

Henry Purcell initiated a new era in English music. He did more than any other English composer did during the Restoration period, which was a

particularly significant period in English history for the theater, the church and chamber music. Henry Purcell was the first English composer who used the English language in his works. In the crucible of his feverish personality, the most diverse and contradictory influences were fused. He respected English artists of the past, but at the same time he was open to the new French and Italian trends. He borrowed the art of the overture, the idea of theatrical ensembles and the chaconne from the French. From the Italian style Henry Purcell borrowed the use of chromatics, the trio sonata, the concertato style. His own style is full of power, grace and poetry and contains elements of French, Italian and traditional folk music.

Henry Purcell was a singer when he was a child, but he had to give up singing because his voice was broken in 1673. Henry Purcell was called the “Orpheus Britannicus”. One more intriguing fact is that he was in love with Queen Mary II. Perhaps it was not a pure accident that one of his odes in honor of Queen Mary was written in G minor, the key of love. As well as his birth, the death of Henry Purcell is a mystery. There are three independent versions which explain why the famous composer died in his prime.

According to the first one, he died because of tuberculosis; according to another one, he died most likely from the pneumonia. Some researches claim that the famous composer died of chocolate poisoning, but it can be “pure fiction”. (Runciman, 1909)

There is no reliable information about Henry Purcell`s interactions with other composers. The researchers only know that composers Christopher Gibbons and Matthew Lock were the teachers of young Purcell. Also, it is known that

the composer borrowed some musical elements from Jean Batiste Lully. Bach and Handel were among his contemporaries.

In accordance with Westrup (n. d.), “ the artistic legacy of Henry Purcell is difficult to enumerate. He composed music covering a wide field: the church, the stage, the court, and private entertainment.” Only one work can be defined as an opera, Dido and Aeneas. Many other works can be called semi-operas. King Arthur, the Fairy Queen and The Tempest are the major ones. Besides, Purcell provided songs, incidental music and dances for numerous plays. His artistic heritage numbers many interludes, overtures, ballets, dances, whereas it allows scope for choruses, duets, recitatives, vocal airs. He also wrote few odes and oodles anthems in honor of English governors. It is hard to find a genre of music to which Purcell did not contribute something new.

Bridge (1920) pointed out that “ the first appointment Purcell held was that of copyist to Westminster Abbey (1676), a post which his father had held before him.” ( p. 125) Almost entire life Henry Purcell was a court organist with salary 10 pounds sterling a year . Later he worked as a court composer, making gala odes for the monarchs. According to Tuppen (2006), “ during the 1680s, Purcell was frequently called upon to compose a large-scale ode or ‘ welcome song’ to mark a special event in the royal calendar.”

There is little piece information about Purcell`s family. The researchers know that his wife`s name was Francis; she survived her famous husband by 12 years. They had six children and four of them died in infancy. One of the

versions of the composer`s death tells that his wife did not let him enter into the house at night, and Purcell caught cold and died of pneumonia.

One of the most famous works of Henry Purcell is opera Dido and Aeneas. It is the oldest opera of England which was performed for the first time at a girls' school in Chelsea, London, in 1689. Purcell borrowed the plot from Virgil's Aeneid. Dido, the Queen of Carthage falls in love with Aeneas who comes to Carthage after the defeat in Troy, but the witches remind Aeneas that his destiny is to establish the Roman Empire. Aeneas leaves Dido and the poor woman kills herself. The story is unusual for the Purcell`s time. As a rule, in his operas hero`s life could be threatened, but he survived. Another Purcell's major work is King Arthur which is played in five acts. According to Tommasini (2008), " King Arthur," first presented in London in 1691, is only marginally an opera. Its subtitle is " A Dramatick Opera," or semi-opera to use the historical term." The plot is based on the fight between the Saxons and King Arthur's Britons. It was performed for the first time at the Queen's Theatre in London`s Dorset Garden, in June 1691. The Fairy-Queen, another famous semi-opera by Henry Purcell, was performed for the first time in May 1692 at the Queen's Theatre in London. As a basis for his semi-opera Henry Purcell took the Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare. However, it was a little modernized in the 17th century.