

Bach Collegium San Diego presents its First-Ever Staged Opera: Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*

June 11 and 12, 2011, at Brand-New Rancho Santa Fe Performing Arts Center

Media Contact: Stephanie Thompson Public Relations, 618-840-7353

Bach Collegium San Diego (BCSD), San Diego's only early music performance ensemble, closes its eighth season with its first-ever staged production of a complete opera, Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, on June 11 and 12, 2011, at the brand-new, 400-seat Rancho Santa Fe Performing Arts Center.

Performances are Saturday, June 11, at 7:30pm, and Sunday, June 12 at 3:00pm. Tickets are \$30-\$50 (\$20 for seniors and students) and may be purchased at <http://www.bachcollegiumsd.org>.

Featuring 16 singers and an orchestra of 16 players using authentic historical instruments, *Dido and Aeneas* will be staged by the award-winning Hungarian stage director [Gábor Tompa](#), the Head of Directing at [UCSD's Theatre and Dance Department](#).

This production represents many firsts for Bach Collegium San Diego: the company's first staged opera production and its first time performing in Rancho Santa Fe. These performances be among the first professional presentations at the brand-new performing arts center, located on the campus of R. Roger Rowe Middle School, 5927 La Granada St. in Rancho Santa Fe.

"*Dido and Aeneas* is a standby of baroque opera, the first opera written by an English composer, and the only opera ever written by Purcell," said Music Director Ruben Valenzuela. "It's a bona fide hit, and a great entry point for newcomers to baroque opera, because it's only about an hour long and includes a lot of beautiful music and even a famous aria, Dido's Lament. It lends itself to a contemporary setting such as the one we are doing.

"The genre of baroque opera is so rich and includes many great composers," added Valenzuela. "We definitely see this production as a the start of a move by our company toward producing more complete operas in the future."

The award-winning stage and film director **Gábor Tompa**, currently the head of Directing and a teacher of both graduate and undergraduate classes at UCSD, is no stranger to directing operas. He plans to stage *Dido and Aeneas* in a contemporary setting, with few sets and props, making use of projections and visual elements. Tompa has directed more than 80 productions worldwide, including plays by Shakespeare, Moliere, Chekhov, Beckett, Bulgokhov, Camus, and Ionesco. Four times Best Director of the Year, he received the Best Performance of the Year Award in 2009 for *Three Sisters*

and his production of *Born for Never* was voted top Critics' Choice at the 2009 Festival of Avignon. He recently directed *Don Giovanni* at the National Opera of Romania.

As always, the cast will consist of a combination of the best local early music performers and talented artists coming to San Diego to perform with Bach Collegium. Artists include Kathryn Mueller (Soprano); Janelle DeStefano (Mezzo Soprano); Angela Young Smucker (Alto); and Scott Mello (Tenor). The musicians will perform on original musical instruments from the 17th century. The production will also feature music by Matthew Locke and additional music by Purcell.

All dates, times and artists may be subject to change.

ABOUT THE OPERA

Dido and Aeneas is an opera in a prologue and three acts by the English Baroque composer Henry Purcell, to a libretto by Nahum Tate, first performed in London in the summer of 1688. The story is based on Book IV of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and tells the love story of Dido, Queen of Carthage, and the Trojan war hero Aeneas, and her despair at his abandonment of her. A monumental work in Baroque opera, *Dido and Aeneas* was Purcell's first (and only) all-sung opera and is considered the earliest English opera.

The most famous aria of the opera is "When I am laid in earth," popularly known as Dido's Lament. It has been performed or recorded by numerous artists, even some unrelated to opera, such as Klaus Nomi, Ane Brun, Alison Moyet, and Jeff Buckley. It has also been transcribed or used in many scores, including the soundtrack to the HBO miniseries *Band of Brothers* (renamed Nixon's Walk). It is played on November 11, Remembrance Day, each year by a military band at the Cenotaph remembrance ceremony in London's Whitehall.

Although *Dido and Aeneas* was only performed once during Purcell's lifetime and fell out of the popular repertoire for centuries, with the recent revival of interest in Baroque music, the number of its productions has steadily increased. It is now vastly more popular, more than 300 years after its premiere, than it ever was when its composer was alive.

SYNOPSIS

Dido, the widowed Queen of Carthage, entertains the Trojan prince Aeneas, shipwrecked on his way to Italy, where he will found a new Troy. They fall in love, but witches plot Dido's destruction, and the Sorceress conjures a storm to break out when the royal couple is hunting. When the storm breaks, the courtiers hasten back to town, while one of the witches, impersonating the god Mercury, tells Aeneas he must leave Dido and sail for Italy. Aeneas and his sailors prepare to leave, to the delight of the witches. Aeneas parts from Dido, who kills herself once he has gone, her death lamented by mourning cupids.

VENUE

Dido and Aeneas will be one of the first professional productions at the newly completed 400-seat Rancho Santa Fe Performing Arts Center, on the campus of R. Roger Rowe Middle School, 5927 La Granada St. in Rancho Santa Fe.

DETAILS AND TICKETS

Tickets are \$30 or \$50, \$20 for seniors or students \$20. For more information and to purchase tickets please visit the [BCSD website](#).

ABOUT BCSD

The Bach Collegium San Diego was founded in 2003 by Ruben Valenzuela with the purpose of enriching San Diego's music community with historically informed performances of the Renaissance, Baroque, and in particular the vocal works of J.S. Bach. Its members bring longstanding experience from such ensembles as the Academy of Ancient Music (UK), American Bach Soloists, Festival Ensemble Stuttgart, and the Philharmonia Chorale. During its first seven seasons, the ensemble has earned an impressive reputation, captivating diverse audiences with its unique style and highly expressive and provocative approach to the Renaissance and Baroque repertoire and beyond. The ensemble regularly participates in an international tour to Mexico City with performances at the Festival Internacional del Órgano Barroco. BCSD has brought many historically informed first performances to San Diego for the first time. Such works include Handel's Theodora and Messiah, Bach's St. John Passion and B minor Mass, and Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers.

For detailed bios and a list of ensemble performers please [visit the website](#).

[Bach Collegium San Diego](#)

Ruben Valenzuela, Music Director

Pierre Joubert, Associate Director

P.O. BOX 33754

San Diego CA 92163 USA

619-341-1726

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