



William Boyce

(1711 - 1779)

Solomon

Serenata en trois parties, sur un texte d'Edward Moore (1712 – 1757). Le livret est inspiré du Cantique des Cantiques, mais se présente comme un dialogue amoureux entre deux voix, une masculine et une féminine.

Les deux personnages principaux ne sont pas nommés directement comme “Salomon” et “Reine de Saba”, mais simplement appelés “He” (Lui) et “She” (Elle).

La première exécution eut lieu à l'Apollo Academy, durant l'hiver 1742/43, puis en public le 22 août 1743, à Ruckholt House dans l'Essex.

L'ouverture de Salomon a été publiée du vivant du compositeur sous le titre Symphonie n° 6 en fa majeur.

Rôles

He , Salomon	(ténor)
She , la Reine de Saba	(soprano)

Argument

La Serenata de Boyce, sous l'apparence d'un dialogue amoureux, est une allégorie de la sagesse et de la beauté en accord parfait.

He et She incarnent autant le roi sage et l'âme aimante que le principe masculin et féminin, unis dans une vision d'ordre divin et de paix terrestre.

C'est une œuvre où l'amour devient métaphore de l'harmonie universelle.

Partie I – L'éveil de l'amour et de la lumière

La première partie s'ouvre sur une atmosphère de pureté et de sérénité.

He contemple She comme une vision de beauté céleste : elle incarne la perfection naturelle, la lumière du matin, la douceur d'une fleur fraîchement éclosée.

Son chant est celui de la louange – il célèbre, admire, élève.

She, en retour, répond avec une voix empreinte de modestie et de grâce : elle ne se place pas comme reine ou déesse, mais comme être aimant et aimée.

Leur échange tisse une harmonie première, comme une genèse de l'amour où tout est équilibre, mesure et clarté.

Partie II – Le dialogue de l'union spirituelle

La seconde partie approfondit la relation entre He et She.

Ce n'est plus la simple admiration, mais une communion des âmes.

Le ton devient plus intime : leurs voix se répondent comme deux instruments d'un même souffle.

L'amour n'est plus terrestre, mais spirituel, presque mystique : il transcende le désir charnel pour devenir symbole d'harmonie divine.

On y sent la trace du Cantique des Cantiques : l'amour humain comme image de l'amour entre Dieu et l'âme fidèle.

Leur union devient un modèle d'équilibre entre passion et vertu, entre chair et esprit.

Partie III – L'apothéose de l'amour et de la sagesse

La dernière partie s'élève vers la lumière triomphante.

L'amour de He et She n'est plus seulement un sentiment individuel : il devient principe d'ordre universel, source de paix et de félicité.

Les chœurs glorifient cette union comme la victoire de la sagesse et de la vertu sur les passions désordonnées.

L'œuvre s'achève dans une élévation morale et symbolique : l'amour pur, inspiré par Dieu, apporte la paix du cœur et la prospérité du monde.

Livret

PART I.

CHORUS.

Behold Jerusalem! thy king,
Whose praises all the nations sing.
To Solomon the Lord has giv'n
All arts and wisdom under heav'n:
For him the tuneful virgin throng
Of Zion's daughters swell the song,
While young and old their voices raise,
And wake the echoes with his praise.

RECITATIVE.

SHE.

From the mountains lo! he comes,
Breathing from his lips perfumes,
While zephirs on his garments play,
And sweets thro' all the air convey.

AIR.

SHE.

Tell me, lovely Shepherd! where
Thou feed'st at noon thy fleecy care?
Direct me to the sweet retreat
That guards thee from the mid-day heat,
Lest by the flocks I lonely stray
Without a guide and lose my way:
Where rest at noon thy bleating care,
Gentle Shepherd! tell me where?

AIR.

HE.

Fairest of the virgin throng!
Dost thou seek thy swain's abode?
See yon' fertile vale along
The new-worn path the flocks have trod;
Pursue the prints their feet have made
And they shall guide thee to the shade.

RECITATIVE.

SHE.

As the rich apple, on whose boughs
Ripe fruit with streaky beauty glows,
Excels the trees that shade the grove,
So shines among his sex my love.

AIR.

Beneath his ample shade I lay
Defended from the sultry day,
His cooling fruit my thirst assuag'd,
And quench'd the fires that in me rag'd,
Till satiated with the luscious taste
I rose and blest the sweet repast.

RECITATIVE.

HE.

Who quits the lily's fleecy white
To fix on meaner flow'rs the sight?
Or leaves the rose's stem untorn
To crop the blossom from the thorn?
Unrival'd thus thy beauties are;
So shines my love among the fair.

AIR.

Balmy sweetness ever flowing
From her dropping lips distils,
Flowers on her cheeks are blowing,
And her voice with musick thrills.
Zephyrs o'er the spices flying,
Wasting sweets from ev'ry tree,
Sick'ning sense with odours cloying,
Breath not half so sweet as she.

RECITATIVE.

SHE.

Let not my prince his slave despise,
Or pass me with unheeding eyes,
Because the sun's discolouring rays
Have chas'd the lily from my face:
My envious sisters saw my bloom
And drove me from my mother's home;
Unshelter'd all the scorching day
They made me in their vineyard stay.

AIR.

Ah simple me! my own more dear,
My own alas! was not my care;
Invading Love the senses broke
And tore the clusters from the stock,

With eager grasp the fruit destroy'd,
Nor rested till the ravage cloy'd.

AIR.

HE.

Fair and comely is my love,
And softer than the blueey'd dove;
Down her neck the wanton locks
Bound like the kids on Gilead's rocks;
Her teeth like flocks in beauty seem
New shorn, and dropping from the stream;
Her glowing lips by far outvie
The plaited threads of scarlet dye;
Whene'er she speaks the accents wound,
And musick floats upon the sound.

RECITATIVE.

SHE.

Forbear, O charming Swain! forbear,
Thy voice enchants my list'ning ear,
And while I gaze my bosom glows,
My flutt'ring heart with love o'erflows,
The shades of night hang o'er my eyes,
And ev'ry sense within me dies.

AIR.

O fill with cooling juice the bowl,
Assuage the fever in my soul!
With copious draughts my thirst remove,
And sooth the heart that's sick of love.

PART II.

RECITATIVE.

HE.

The cheerful spring begins to-day,
Arise my Fair One! come away.

RECITATIVE.

SHE.

Sweet musick steals along the air—
Hark!—my beloved's voice I hear.

AIR.

HE.

Arise my Fair! and come away,
The cheerful spring begins to-day;
Bleak Winter's gone with all his train
Of chilling frosts and dropping rain:
Amidst the verdure of the mead
The primrose lifts her velvet head,
The warbling birds the woods among
Salute the season with a song,
The cooing turtle in the grove
Renews his tender tale of love,
The vines their infant tendrils shoot,
The figtree bends with early fruit;
All welcome in the genial ray:
Arise my Fair! and come away.

CHORUS.

All welcome in the genial ray:
Arise O Fair One! come away.

DUET.

Together let us range the fields
Impearled with the morning dew,
Or view the fruits the vineyard yields,
Or the apple's clust'ring bough;
There in close-embower'd shades,
Impervious to the noontide ray,
By tinkling rills on rosy beds
We 'll love the sultry hours away.

RECITATIVE.

HE.

How lovely art thou to the sight,
For pleasure form'd and sweet delight!
Tall as the palmtree is thy shape,
Thy breasts are like the clust'ring grape.

AIR.

Let me, Love! thy bole ascending,
On the swelling clusters feed,
With my grasp the vinetree bending
In my close embrace shall bleed.
Stay me with delicious kisses
From thy honey-dropping mouth,
Sweeter than the summer breezes
Blowing from the genial South.

RECITATIVE.

SHE.

O that a sister's specious name
Conceal'd from prying eyes my flame!
Uncensur'd then I 'd own my love,
And chastest virgins should approve;
Then fearless to my mother's bed
My seeming brother would I lead,
Soft transports should the hours employ,
And the deceit should crown the joy.

AIR.

Soft! I adjure you by the fawns
That bound across the flow'ry lawns,
Ye Virgins! that ye lightly move,
Nor with your whispers wake my love.

RECITATIVE.

HE.

My fair 's a garden of delight
Enclos'd and hid from vulgar sight,
Where streams from bubbling fountains stray

And roses deck the verdant way.

AIR.

Softly arise, O Southern Breeze!
And kindly fan the blooming trees,

Upon my spicy garden blow,
That sweets from ev'ry part may flow.

CHORUS.

Ye Southern Breezes! gently blow,
That sweets from ev'ry part may flow.

PART III.

AIR.

HE.

ARISE my Fair! the doors unfold,
Receive me shiv'ring with the cold.

RECITATIVE.

SHE.

My heart amidst my slumbers wakes
And tells me my beloved speaks.

AIR.

HE.

Arise my Fair! the doors unfold,
Receive me shiv'ring with the cold;
The chill drops hang upon my head,
And night's cold dews my cheeks o'erspread:
Receive me dropping to thy breast,
And lull me in thy arms to rest.

RECITATIVE.

SHE.

Obedient to thy voice I hie,
The willing doors wide open fly.

AIR.

Ah! whither, whither art thou gone?
Where is my lovely wand'rer flown?
Ye blooming Virgins! as you rove
If chance you meet my straying love
I charge you tell him how I mourn
And pant and die for his return.

CHORUS OF VIRGINS.

Who is thy love O charming Maid!
That from thy arms so late has stray'd?
Say what distinguish'd charms adorn
And finish out his radiant form?

AIR.

SHE.

On his face the vernal rose
Blended with the lily glows;
His locks are as the raven black,
In ringlets waving down his back;
His eyes with milder beauties beam
Than billing doves beside the stream;
His youthful cheeks are beds of flow'rs
Enripen'd by refreshing show'rs;
His lips are of the rose's hue,
Dropping with a fragrant dew;

Tall as the cedar he appears,
And as erect his form he bears.
This, O ye Virgins! is the swain
Whose absence causes all my pain.

RECITATIVE.

HE.

Sweet Nymph! whom ruddier charms adorn
Than open with the rosy morn,
Fair as the moon's unclouded light,
And as the sun in splendour bright,
Thy beauties dazzle from afar
Like glitt'ring arms that gild the war.

RECITATIVE.

SHE.

O take me, stamp me on thy breast,
Deep let the image be imprest!
For Love like armed Death is strong,
Rudely he drags his slaves along:
If once to jealousy he turns
With never-dying rage he burns.

DUET.

Thou soft invader of the soul,
O Love! who shall thy pow'r control?
To quench thy fires whole rivers drain
Thy burning heat shall still remain.
In vain we trace the globe to try
If pow'rful gold thy joys can buy:
The treasures of the world will prove
Too poor a bribe to purchase Love.

CHORUS.

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