

CONCERT.

COMMENT. *London Gazette*, No 2654, 16-20 April 1691: The Consort of Vocal and Instrumental Musick in Charles-street, Covent Garden, by Their Majesties Authority, will be perform'd on Thursday next the 23d instant, and to continue every Thursday, by Command.

Thursday 23
BG

Wednesday 29
A FAST DAY

May 1691

KING ARTHUR; or, The British Worthy. [By John Dryden.] Edition of 1691: King Arthur – Betterton; Oswald, King of Kent – Williams; Conon – Hodgson; Merlin – Kynaston; Osmond – Sandford; Aurelius – Alexander [Verbruggen]; Albanact – Bowen; Guillamar – Harris; Emmeline – Mrs Bracegirdle; Matilda – Mrs Richardson; Philidel – Mrs Butler; Grimbald – Bowman. Prologue to the Opera, Spoken by Mr Betterton. The Epilogue, Spoken by Mrs Bracegirdle.

DG

COMMENT. The United Company. The date of the first performance is not known, but it very probably occurred not later than May 1691, as the play was advertised in the *London Gazette*, 4-8 June 1691. For discussions of it, see E. W. White, "Early Performances of Purcell's Operas," *Theatre Notebook*, XIII (1958-59), 44-45, and R. E. Moore, *Henry Purcell and the Restoration Theatre*, Chapter III.

Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 42: *King Arthur* an Opera, wrote by Mr Dryden: it was Excellently Adorn'd with Scenes and Machines: The Musical Part set by Famous Mr Henry Purcel; and Dances made by Mr Jo. Priest: The Play and Musick pleas'd the Court and City, and being well perform'd, twas very Gainful to the Company.

Roger North: I remember in Purcell's excellent opera of *King Arthur*, when Mrs Butler, in the person of Cupid, was to call up Genius, she had the liberty to turne her face to the scean, and her back to the theater. She was in no concerne for her face, but sang a recitativo of calling towards the place where Genius was to rise, and performed it admirably, even beyond any thing I ever heard upon the English stage. . . . And I could ascribe it to nothing so much as the liberty she had of concealing her face, which she could not endure should be so contorted as is necessary to sound well, before her gallants, or at least her envious sex. There was so much of admirable musick in that opera, that it's no wonder it's lost; for the English have no care of what's good, and therefore deserve it not (*Roger North on Music*, ed. John Wilson [London, 1959], p. 217-18).

Wednesday 20
A PUBLIC FAST

June 1691

COMMENT. On this date the Queen granted permission for the company to act at Oxford from 10 July 1691 for twelve days. See CSPD, 1690-91, p. 430; Sybil Rosenfeld, "Some Notes on the Players in Oxford, 1661-1713," pp. 370-71; and *A Long Prologue to a Short Play, Spoken by a Woman at Oxford Drest like a Sea Officer*, in *Poems on the Affairs of State*, Part III, 1698, p. 581.

Tuesday 30
Oxford