

Henry  
**PURCELL**

**KING ARTHUR**

A Semi-Opera in Five Acts

for Soli, Chorus and Orchestra  
with English text

VOCAL SCORE

K 09562



# PREFACE.

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“**KING ARTHUR**” is not an opera according to the modern acceptation of that term, but is really a Drama in blank verse, relieved by lyrical numbers specially devised for music. Purcell had, in 1675, composed a true opera, “**Dido and Æneas**,” which is the wonder and admiration of all musicians, being without a parallel in the period in which it was written ; but “**Dido**” was too much in advance of the times to meet with acceptance and recognition at the hands of the dramatists.

In 1691 John Dryden published “**King Arthur, or the British Worthy. A Dramatick Opera. Perform'd at the Queen's Theatre by their Majesties' servants.**” Dryden prefixed to the opera a letter he addressed to the Marquis of Halifax, in which he stated that “the poem was the last piece of service which I had the honour to do for my gracious master, King Charles the Second.” The letter is a fulsome apology for the frailties of that king, who died before the opera was publicly performed. In “**King Arthur**” Dryden had the advantage of the co-operation of Henry Purcell, whose skill he acknowledged in the following terms : “There is nothing better than what I intended but the music, which has since arrived to a greater perfection in England than ever formerly, especially passing through the artful hands of Mr. Purcell, who has composed it with so great a genius that he has nothing to fear but an ignorant ill-judging audience.”

We learn from Downes, in his “**Roscius Anglicanus**” (1708), that the result was favourable : “**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.”

Notwithstanding the success which attended the performance above referred to, none of the music of “**King Arthur**” was printed in Purcell's lifetime. He died in 1695. Three years afterwards five numbers from the opera appeared in the “**Orpheus Britannicus**,” published by the composer's widow, and in a subsequent edition six more were included. A complete score of the work has never been discovered. The original copy, probably retained at the Queen's Theatre, was certainly lost before 1728. Every effort has been made to collect and collate the various manuscript fragments of the opera which still exist, and the few missing numbers may ultimately be found. In the meantime, I have been able to make this edition of Purcell's “**King Arthur**” more complete than any previous publication of the opera.

August, 1897.

WILLIAM H. CUMMINGS.

# DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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KING ARTHUR.

OSWALD (King of Kent).

CONON, DUKE OF CORNWALL (tributary to  
*Arthur*).

MERLIN (an Enchanter).

OSMOND (a Magician).

EMMELINE (daughter of *Conon*).

## CHARACTERS WHO SING.

PHILIDEL (*Soprano*).

CUPID (*Soprano*).

HONOUR (*Soprano*).

COMUS (*Soprano*).

NEREID (*Soprano*).

VENUS (*Soprano*).

NYMPH (*Soprano*).

BRITISH WARRIOR (*Tenor*).

GRIMBALD (*Bass*).

COLD GENIUS (*Bass*).

ÆOLUS (*Bass*).

PAN (*Bass*).

SYLVAN (*Bass*).

PRIESTS, PRIESTESSES, SYRENS, ATTENDANTS, SHEPHERDS, PEASANTS, &c.

## ARGUMENT.

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The subject-matter of the opera of "King Arthur" is a contest between the Britons, under the leadership of King Arthur, and the Saxon invaders who had settled in Kent, under Oswald. The first scene of Act I. represents the British camp, where preparations are being made to attack the foe. *Arthur*, betrothed to *Emmeline*, the blind daughter of the Duke of Cornwall, bids her farewell. The next scene shows us the Saxon camp, with the army and their leaders sacrificing to the gods Woden, Thor, and Freya. (Here Purcell's vocal music commences.) A battle ensues, in which the British prevail and sing their song of victory, "Come, if you dare." In Act II. the Saxons employ a magician and his attendant sprites to harass the Britons and lead them astray into bogs and pitfalls. *Philidel*, one of the attendants, repents, and is persuaded by *Merlin*, a British magician, to transfer her arts to the aid of *Arthur* and the Britons. The blind *Emmeline* having been captured by *Oswald*, the Saxon king, her place of captivity is discovered by *Merlin*, who sends *Philidel* to her with a magic liquid which restores her sight. In the meantime *Osmond*, the Saxon magician, who has imprisoned *King Oswald*, becomes enamoured of *Emmeline*, and, by the exercise of his magic power, displays to her the force and power of love in the "Frost scene" of Act III.

*Arthur*, marching to destroy *Osmond's* enchanted grove, is waylaid by syrens, nymphs, sylvans, and an evil spirit disguised as *Emmeline*, but, protected by *Philidel*, he successfully resists their arts. The failure of *Osmond's* magic spells induces him to release *Oswald*, who challenges *Arthur*, but is defeated and disarmed, and on promising to return to his native land is permitted to depart with his followers. *Emmeline* is rescued and restored, the magician *Osmond* imprisoned; and *Merlin* foretells the future greatness of Britain in a series of pictures or scenes descriptive of the wealth, the loves, the glories of our Isle, and the future noble Order of St. George and the Garter.

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# KING ARTHUR.

JOHN DRYDEN

## OVERTURE.

HENRY PURCELL

*Maestoso.*

PIANO.

The musical score consists of five systems of piano accompaniment. Each system is written for two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The tempo is marked *Maestoso.* and the instrument is labeled **PIANO.** The score includes dynamic markings of *f* (forte) and *p* (piano) throughout. A crescendo marking *cres.* is present in the fifth system. A first ending bracket is shown at the end of the fifth system. A small asterisk is placed above the first measure of the first system.

\* This time is marked C in the manuscript.