



## Dido & Aeneazz

1	Overture	5. 18
2	Peace and I are strangers grown	6. 44
3	Fear no danger; Cupid has thrown the dart	1. 30
4	A splendid time together	5. 53
5	The triumphs of love	3. 00
6	Love dance	6. 22
7	The witches	3. 57
8	Ritornel	5. 48
9	The sailors	5. 07
10	Horizon	4. 50
11	Sailors & witches	9. 13
12	Triumphant witches	5. 13
13	Crazy witches	6. 42
14	Great minds against themselves conspire	0. 54
15	Dido's lament	6. 21
16	With drooping wings	4. 11

Total playing time: 81.11

Recomposed by Raaf Hekkema, after Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*.

Tracks 4, 6, 10, 11 and 13 composed and arranged by Eric Vloeimans, instrumentation by Raaf Hekkema.

### CALEFAX

**Oliver Boekhoorn** Oboe, Cor Anglais, C. Mollenhauer Oboe (track 12)

**Ivar Berix** Clarinet

**Raaf Hekkema** Alto Saxophone

**Jelte Althuis** Bass Clarinet & Contrabass Clarinet

**Alban Wesly** Bassoon

**Eric Vloeimans** Trumpet

**Jasper van Hulten** Drums

**Gulli Gudmundsson** Double Bass

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Well-known arrangements from the past are in fact often 'recompositions'. Bach's arrangement of Vivaldi's concerto for four violins, Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, Webern's meticulous orchestral dissection of Bach's *Ricercar*, Ravel's sumptuous orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*: these master composers took music they admired and moulded it according to their own taste, placed it in their own world, and turned it into something new.

Looking back at my own arrangements over the past three decades, I too have gradually progressed from 'arranging' to 'recomposing'. For instance, in recent years I have created new music based on the notes of Monteverdi, Dowland and Bach, taking liberties and applying a variety of techniques. These methods have in turn affected my more traditional, classical manner of arranging, which also has become freer.

Where is the boundary between arranging and (re-)composing? I find it a hard line to draw. How much tinkering can the notes take until an existing piece of music has been fundamentally transformed? And then, who is the 'author', or what is the relationship between composer and arranger? On the other hand, can an original composition—simply, one in which the melody and harmony did not exist before—in fact have been created by a single brain, and thus claim to be 'original'? Certainly in times when we

are bombarded with music (which is also becoming steadily more diverse), it is difficult to determine where the source of the musical idea lies. I like being in the space enclosed by these questions.

The basic values of classical music have changed since I followed my professional studies in the 1990s. In the steadily informalized music practice of our time, the musician is no longer beholden to the once-almighty composer—firstly because he (seldom 'she') is already dead (and the fact that we still mostly play music by dead composers has not changed). Nowadays, flexibility is essential, in nearly every aspect: the performance, the staging, the presentation, the venue, and therefore also the once-untouchable score. As a result, the music is even more diverse, and even more personal: the performer is more important. The music, either original or in an altered form, now serves the performer on stage.

A decisive experience for me in this respect was becoming acquainted with the radical arrangements that Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn made together, in the 1960s, of the music of Grieg and Tchaikovsky. With respect for the original, but at the same time without any scruples, they composed personal and incomparable big band versions of the *Peer Gynt Suite*, and—even more successfully—the *Nutcracker Suite*. Another notable example from jazz is the collaboration between Gil Evans and Miles Davis: unconventional reworkings of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* for trumpet and big band. It is not surprising that jazz was the pioneer for this kind of free arrangement of classical music. In pop and jazz, playing 'covers' or 'standards' is everyday practice, and often intended as a tribute to a certain composer. It is a tradition that in classical music only started to die out after Romanticism, precisely because of exaggerated deference: one must not tamper with a perfect composition.



The idea that Henry Purcell's mini-opera *Dido and Aeneas* would lend itself for this approach took root about ten years ago, and stems in part from my conviction that a traditional basso continuo accompaniment (a harpsichord and viola da gamba, for instance) does not, in fact, differ fundamentally from a jazz rhythm section (bass and drums). At the time, we were touring the Netherlands and several countries in the Middle and Far East with the jazz trio Jungle Boldie. The project was based on another Ellington/Strayhorn masterpiece: the *Far East Suite*. I had passed out parts to the *Overture from Dido & Aeneas* during one of the rehearsals, just to try it out, and then forgot about it. Only two years ago I revisited my old handiwork, and during a beach stroll with my wife Simone Noortman, I lamented never having worked out this fantastic idea, and still did not know what form the final project should take. 'Do it with Eric Vloeimans!'

she spontaneously suggested, and at once I realized that to make Eric the tragic heroine Dido would be a stroke of genius: his lyrical-longing, well-nigh vocal trumpet sound in iconic arias like *Peace and I* and *Dido's lament!* Calefax had already established a rapport with Eric in an earlier project entitled *On The Spot*, in which we explored the boundaries of composed and improvised music in new and extremely old music. This project led to the album *On The Spot* (Buzz, ZZ76106).

### Working method

Anyone joining forces with Eric Vloeimans will, of course, want to hear him playing his own music as well. And the nature of this project meant that it had to be newly-composed work. Luckily, Eric at once took to both the opera's theme and his appointed role. Since he first gave the music plenty of time to sink in, his contribution to *Dido & Aeneas* is not only personal, but connects in a very individual way to the original.

For me, recomposing existing music has become a familiar working method. My approach varied per movement, and in nearly every case I adapted the form. Sometimes I nudged the music in the direction of jazz, for instance in the *Overture* and *Ritornel*, where the original Baroque idiom combines with a jazz groove. In *The Sailors*, I felt that an upbeat Caribbean feel was appropriate, with a constant alternation between 3/4 and 6/8 time signatures. Some movements I only gave a light harmonic adjustment, along with my own introduction and ending, as in the overpopular arias *Peace and I* and *Dido's lament*. To certain other movements I wanted to give a completely new character: *Fear no danger*, *The triumphs of love*, and both 'witches' sections, whose original will for some listeners hardly be recognizable.

Eric and I set up and worked out the form of the project, we then influenced each other in long, intense sessions, sharing what we had produced up until then. We converged





in the places we are at our strongest, and vigorously defended our expertise. In doing so, we delved more deeply into each other's world than in *On The Spot*, and I am convinced that this led to a worthwhile synthesis of our music with Purcell's. I thank Eric for the inspiring collaboration.

### **The music and the story**

The *Overture* hurls us at once into the drama, followed by *Peace and I are strangers grown*, in which Dido, the tough queen of Carthage, somewhat adolescently bemoans being in love with the Trojan hero Aeneas. Dido's friend Belinda and the other attendants reassure her in *Fear no danger; Cupid has thrown the dart* that Aeneas is also lovestruck. *A splendid time together* describes the arousing and blissful time that awaits them once they have professed their mutual love, time the lovers will spend together in the open nature. New love, however, is always accompanied by insecurity and awkwardness; after all, you hardly know one another. What does he

like to eat, how does she kiss (wet or dry), how do you touch one another, what kind of family does he come from, what is her relationship with her mother like? I have tried to put this awkwardness into music in *The triumphs of love*, that of course must end in a wild and grandiose coupling. And then settles back down in the post-coital *Love dance*.

In Virgil's original *Aeneid*, the main characters Dido and Aeneas are mostly the playthings of the fickle gods. In late seventeenth-century England, the ancients did not strike much of a chord with audiences, and theatres were certainly not going to strike it rich with a cast of Roman gods. So in the service of the audience, the librettist Nahum Tate brought in witches, providing him with authentic 'baddies' with appropriate theatrical behaviour. For reasons Tate left unexplained, these witches of his harboured a terrific dislike for Dido, and are determined to thwart her. First they send a storm, forcing the couple to return

to Carthage. Then they further frustrate the couple's romantic plans, calling upon an 'elf' who is capable of transforming himself into a variety of guises. Here he is Mercury, the messenger of Jupiter, and comes to remind Aeneas of his mission, assigned when he left Greek-occupied Troy: to establish a new Troy on the banks of the Tyrrhenian coast. (This would later become Rome). The well-disposed listener can hear the enchantresses' unbridled pleasure in all this in *The witches*. The *Ritornel* that follows offers a moment of repose, allowing us to ruminate on all that has happened thus far.

Aeneas orders his men to prepare to depart, and to keep their farewell to their 'nymphs on the shore' brief (Aeneas was apparently not the only one to start a romantic liaison). In *The sailors* we hear the salty sailors sing, yearning for new horizons (*Horizon*). Seamen and witches dance together in the rousing rhythm of *Sailors & witches*, which raises the question whether





of Gibraltar and accidentally reached the Caribbean on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. The witches then rejoice in their final vengeful triumph: their plan has worked, Dido must say goodbye to her new lover! *Triumphant witches* gives way to a crazed dance: *Crazy witches*.

Then comes perhaps the most appalling scene of the entire tale: Aeneas, paying a visit to his beloved queen, tells her he must obey the command of the gods and leave Carthage. Dido is grief-stricken, at which Aeneas, our Trojan hero, shows his feeblest side: no, no, he says, I'll defy the gods' orders and stay here with you. But Dido, unyielding, shows him the door. Go, fulfill your duty, leave me here. At which our stalwart warrior, mentally weakened, leaves after all. *Dido's lament* begins with the angels' sigh that "Great minds against themselves conspire". After this, the climax of the opera: Dido announces her own self-chosen death, calling on us to 'remember me!' This aria is followed by a tear-jerking

final chorale by these same angels, who this time *With drooping wings* stand at Dido's grave.

### **Raaf Hekkema**

You know, people usually think violins are really great, beautiful, melodious, and romantic, but what most people don't get is that winds are just as great, beautiful, and melodious. Certainly no less than our violin colleagues. And partly because of this, I follow my wind player's heart and try, wherever I can, to get shine the spotlight on wind music.

Nowadays, more and more terrific classical musicians dare to stray from the well-trod paths, and to create music that doesn't always know exactly where it's headed. A broader approach, one I'm glad to hear. The world's greats got where they are by expressing something unique, something personal!

After *On The Spot* Calefax invited me for a second project, which led to this recording of Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*. I got to be Dido, and could bring my musical friends from Gatecrash with me.

Raaf reworked the original opera, and then allowed me to respond by letting my writer's soul loose on it. There were no restrictions; I could just be myself. Obviously, it did not turn out to be a traditional rendering of the opera, but one with its own face, brought about by who and what we are.

A lot of writing and rehearsal hours have gone into this album. I'm very proud of it, and hope you will enjoy listening to the album as much as we did making it.

### **Eric Vloeimans**



**Calefax** is a close-knit ensemble of five reed players united by a shared passion. For more than three decades they have been acclaimed in the Netherlands and abroad for their virtuosic playing, brilliant arrangements and innovative stage presentation. They are the inventors of a completely new genre: the reed quintet. They provide inspiration to young wind players from all over the world who follow in their footsteps.

**Eric Vloeimans** is colorful, versatile, engaging, friendly...and one hell of a trumpet player. He studied in Rotterdam and New York and is regarded as one of Europe's best performers with an extraordinary talent for playing original music with outstanding quality. Performing 100 concerts annually, chamber music as well as jazz festivals, from duos to soloing with symphony orchestras.





## Acknowledgments

### PRODUCTION TEAM

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*Eric Vloeimans plays a Hub van Laar V-Flow trumpet and uses a Lefreque sound system.*

### PENTATONE TEAM

Vice President A&R **Renaud Loranger** | Director **Simon M. Eder**

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