

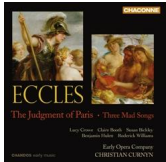
## John Eccles - The Judgment of Paris – Three Mad Songs (2009)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 05 June 2013 16:25 -

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## John Eccles - The Judgment of Paris – Three Mad Songs (2009)



Symphony for Mercury 1 [Part 1] - 1:21 2 [Part 2] - 2:17 3 Slow - 1:46 4 Brisk 0:56 5  
Mercury: 'From high Olympus, and the Realms above' 3:26 6 Paris: 'O Ravishing Delight!'  
2:37 7 Mercury: 'Fear not, Mortal: none shall harm thee' 1:28 8 Mercury: 'Happy thou of  
Human Race' 1:51 9 Symphony for Juno - 3:45 Juno: 'Saturnia,  
Wife of Thundring Jove, am I'  
10 Symphony for Pallas - 2:27  
Pallas: 'This way, Mortal, bend thy Eyes'  
11 Symphony for Venus - 4:07  
Venus: 'Hither turn thee, gentle Swain'  
12 Venus, Pallas, Juno: 'Hither turn thee, gentle Swain' 1:52 13 Paris: 'Distracted I turn, but I  
cannot decide' 2:28 14 Symphony - 3:31  
Juno: 'Let Ambition fite thy Mind' 3:31  
15 Pallas: 'Awake, awake, they Spirits raise' 1:13 16 Pallas: 'Hark, hark! the glorious Voice of  
War' 1:16 17 Pallas: 'Oh what Joys does Conquest yield!' 1:05 18 Chorus: 'O how glorius 'tis  
to see' 1:10 19 Symphony 1:17 20 Venus: 'Stay, lovely Youth, delay thy Choice' 2:59 21  
Venus: 'Nature fram'd thee sure for Loving' 3:48 22 Paris: 'I yield, I yield, O take the Prize'  
1:10 23 Grand Chorus: 'Hither all ye Graces, all ye Loves' 1:43  
Three Mad Songs 12:23 from A Collection of Songs published by John Walsh and John  
Hare (1704)  
24 'Restless in Thought disturb'd in Mind' 4:12 25 'Love's but the frailty of the Mind' 4:34 26 'I  
Burn, I burn, my Brain consumes to Ashes' 3:26  
Roderick Williams baritone - Mercury Benjamin Hulett tenor - Paris Susan Bickley  
mezzo-soprano - Juno Claire Booth soprano - Pallas Lucy Crowe soprano - Venus Chorus of  
Early Opera Company Lucy Crowe soprano (24) Claire Booth soprano (25) Susan Bickley  
mezzo-soprano (26) Early Opera Company Christian Curnyn – director

England was really slow to embrace operas that had singing from start to finish; some attendees were mostly interested in seeing the plays and not too crazy about the opera part. In order to help stimulate acceptance of a theatrical form that was all the rage in continental

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Europe, a competition was held in 1700 for the best opera on the subject of The Judgment of Paris, with a libretto by no less than the great playwright who coined the very term "Music has charms to soothe a savage breast" in his play The Mourning Bride, William Congreve. Four composers responded to the challenge -- Daniel Purcell, Gottfried Finger, John Weldon, and John Eccles -- whose entry this Chandos recording, Eccles: The Judgment of Paris, represents. It is given by the Early Opera Company under Christian Curnyn and features a cast led by baritone Roderick Williams.

Eccles, then serving as the King's Master of Musick, did not win the big prize, Weldon's sing-songy effort did, which is more a referendum on the taste of London theatergoers in 1700 rather than the relative quality of the music in these operas. Although the Finger setting has not survived, the other three were revived under Anthony Rooley in 2001 and Eccles' The Judgment of Paris was adjudged the winner. There are many reasons why it is the obvious choice; it is a dramatically very clear, harmonically bewitching, and melodious opera. Eccles anticipated the expectations of his audience in producing something relatively direct but did not dumb down his style, which had been refined during a time of close association with Henry Purcell, dead five years by the time the competition was held. The Chandos recording, which is the first complete one of Eccles' work, is superb, fast moving, eminently listenable, and makes for a great tool for the English-speaking novice to get a grip on the appeal of Baroque opera. It is such a good recording that one is tempted to say it has more value than Chandos' entire "Opera in English" series combined, except that would be an unfair slam against what was a worthwhile endeavor. Nevertheless, Chandos' Eccles: The Judgment of Paris enters the field in its own category in regard to its importance to the operatic catalog overall and by virtue of its exceptionally fine recording. To sweeten the deal, three of Eccles' "mad songs" from other works are added to the end of the disc, including his iconic, almost "punk" song "I Burn, My Brain Consumes to Ashes" from The Comical History of Don Quixote (1694). ---Uncle Dave Lewis, Rovi

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