# Colin's Kisses

Concerto Caledonia

# Colin's Kisses

The music of James Oswald

Catherine Bott, soprano Iain Paton, tenor

Concerto Caledonia

directed by David McGuinness

1	Ballance a Straw	CB 1 8
The Thistle		1 2 4 6 8
(Airs for the Seasons - Summer, 2nd set)		
2	Pastorale - Andantino	
3	Brilliante - Amoroso - Brilliante	
Colin's Kisses		
4	The Tutor	IP 2 4 8
5	The Secret Kiss	CB IP 1 4 5 8
6	The Borrow'd Kiss	CB IP 2 4 5 8
7	The Rapture	IP 4 5
The Almond 12468		
(Airs for the Seasons – Winter, 2nd set)		
8	Plaintive - Affettuoso	
9	Allegro	
Colin's Kisses		
10	The Stolen Kiss	CB 1 4 6 8
11	The Kiss Repaid	CB IP 2 4 6 8
12	The Parting Kiss	CB IP 1 4 5 8
A Sonata of Scots Tunes 1234568		
13 Largo - O Mother what shall I do		
14	Adagio - Ettrick Banks	
15	Andante - She rose and let me in	
16	Largo - Cromlit's Lilt	
17	Andante - Polwart on the Green	
Thumbo I diffut di uio Giodi		
18	The Dancing Master	IP 2 4 6 8

Lucy Russell, Johnathan Sparey, violins (2,3) Alison McGillivray, cello (4) Paula Chateauneuf, archlute (5), guitar (6), English guittar (7) David McGuinness, harpsichord (8) Divertimento no. 4 7 (Twelve Divertimentis for the Guittar) Affettuoso - Largo 20 Gavotta - Moderato 21 Aria - Andante 22 Con spirito - moderato The Dust Cart, a favourite Cantata CB IP 1 2 4 5 8 Recit - As Tink'ring Tom the Streets his Trade did cry 23 Aria - Oh Silvia! while you drive your Carts 24 Recit - Silvia advanc'd above the Rabble Rout Aria - Shall I who ride above the rest Serenata no. 4 (12 Serenatas) 2348 Languido - Largo 25 Allegro - Con Spirito 26 Moderato - Cantabli 27 28 Pastorale - Con Spirito Colin's Kisses IP 2 4 5 8 The Feast 30 The Meeting Kiss The Narcissus 1234568 (Airs for the Seasons - Spring, 1st set) 31 Air - Pastorale Andante 32 Giga - Vivace Colin's Kisses The Imaginary Kiss 33 IP 1 2 4 5 8

Chris Norman, flute (1)

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- love and kisses, DMcG



# **JAMES OSWALD 1710-1769**

James Oswald was christened on 21 March 1710 in the picturesque Scottish east coast fishing village of Crail. His parents were John Oswald and Elizabeth or Elspit Horn, who were married in Crail in 1707, and James was the second of their five children. His father was a musician, and by the early 1730s James was a dancing master in Dunfermline, already copying out Italian and Scottish music into his song book. By 1736 he was in Edinburgh, teaching, composing and in 1740 publishing *A Curious Collection of Scots Tunes* - the forerunner of several such publications, culminating in the twelve-volume *Caledonian Pocket Companion* containing well over five hundred tunes.

By 1741 he was in London, having possibly visited Italy, working for the music publisher John Simpson, and eventually opening his own shop by St Martin in-the-Fields, a church designed by one of his compatriots, of whom there were many in London in influential positions. There were also several prominent Scottish freemasons, with whom musicians were always welcome: Oswald was a member of the order and composed at least two brief masonic cantatas.

All Oswald's works are on a small scale. His was a lyric rather than a dramatic gift, but his outpouring of beautiful melody is extraordinary, and it had its source in Scottish traditional music of which he was one of the greatest gatherers of any century. But in his own way he raised a monument, a Temple of Apollo, as the music society he founded in London was called. It was a temple to the airs and graces of the Scottish tradition, acknowledging but subverting the prevalent Italian style to its own ends. And if he had not the capacity to create on a large scale, he did have the ambition to produce one of the most remarkable of musical compendia – his 96 Airs for the Seasons, twelve for each season and two complete sets in all, each air named after a flower or shrub, and none repeated: the whole with an illustration of a Horace Ode on the cover, depicting Venus and the Graces leading the dance.

He was a success in London. He made money, became chamber composer to George III, and ended up master of Knebworth House: remarkable achievements for a village musician's son. But we have no portrait of Oswald either in paint or in words. We can only infer from the music, and if the music is a good signifier, then he deserved all his successes many times over. He died at Knebworth in 1769.

# **BALLANCE A STRAW**

Oswald set several verses by his fellow Scot, Tobias Smollett, including *The Tears of Scotland* - a bitter indictment of English brutality following the defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden in 1746. *Ballance A Straw* however, could scarcely be more light-hearted. It was published as 'A favourite Song in the Reprisal Sung by Miss Macklin at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, set by Mr. Oswald'. *The Reprisal* was first produced in 1757. By delivering it with such grace, the lilting, teasing melody makes Smollett's satire all the more cutting.

From the man whom I Love, tho' my Heart I disguise, I will freely discribe the Wretch I despise,
And if he has Sense but to ballance a Straw,
He will sure take the Hint from the Picture I draw.

A Wit without Sense, without Fancy a Beau, Like a Parrot he chatters, and struts like a Crow. A Peacock in Pride, in Grimace a Baboon, In Courage a Hind, in conceit a Gascoon.

As a vulture rapacious, in Falsehood a Fox, Inconstant as Waves, and unfeeling as Rocks, As a Tyger ferocious, perverse as a Hog, In Mischief an Ape, and in fawning a Dog.

In a Word to sum all his Talents together, His Heart is of Lead, and his Brain is of Feather. Yet if he has Sense but to ballance a Straw, He will sure take the Hint, from the Picture I draw.

# THE THISTLE from Airs for the Seasons (Summer, 2nd Set)

The thistle is the national emblem of Scotland, and Oswald chose it as the flower to round off the second set for Summer. The opening *Pastoralle* is not particularly Scottish, but the *Brilliante* which follows is a splendid reel. Oswald also published it as 'The Brechin Lilt' in his *Caledonian Pocket Companion*, but here it frames a beautiful *Amoroso*, a nostalgic and largely pentatonic air.

### **COLIN'S KISSES 1-4**

Like Oswald, the poet and dramatist Robert Dodsley (1704-1764) had risen to fame from a relatively lowly position of a footman, also becoming a book-seller and a major literary publisher. Oswald's setting of his *Colin's Kisses* was first published in 1742, in which year he was offering lessons in 'Scotch musick' at the Scotch Holland Warehouse in Pall Mall, where Dodsley also conducted his business, at 'Tully's Head'. It is very probable that they met regularly as both were intimately involved in London theatricals, and we may assume that Oswald's settings had Dodsley's approval, including the songs he provided for Dodsley's tragedy *Cleone* in 1758.

There may well have been approval from another quarter, as it is possible that Oswald was already courting his future wife, Mary Ann Melville, a Scottish girl whose more distinguished family did not approve the match. They were married in St James's Church, Piccadilly in February 1744. Perhaps they had met as teacher and pupil, a possibility which would account for the opening song: The Tutor.

One thing is certain, that Dodsley's rather conventional and sentimental verses have found all their better qualities in Oswald's settings. The full cycle consists of twelve kisses, of which the first ten are recorded here. While these are essentially cameo situations, there are some thematic cross-references within the cycle, and the dozen is rounded off with the beautiful The Reconciling Kiss and The Mutual Kiss, suggesting a sense of overall musical and dramatic structure.

However, the names of the lovers alter from song to song, and Oswald published some of the music separately, so we cannot be certain that it was truly conceived as a song-cycle, though it has a fair claim to be one of the first.

### 1 The Tutor

As a dancing master and singing, violin and cello teacher, Oswald had every opportunity to make the explicit requests of the lyric a reality. The melody line moves subtly between pleading and encouragement.

Come, my fairest learn of me

Learn to give and take the Bliss

Come my love here's none but we

I'll instruct thee how to Kiss.

Why turn from me that dear Face?
Why that Blush and down cast Eye.
Come, come meet my fond Embrace,
And the mutual Rapture try.

Throw thy Lovely twining Arms
Round my Neck or round my Waist
And whilist I devour thy Charms
Let me closely be Embrac'd

Then when soft Ideas rise

And the gay Desires grow strong

Let them Sparkle in thy Eyes

Let them murmur from thy Tongue.

To my Breast with Rapture cling

Look with Transport on my Face

Kiss me Press me every thing

To endear the fond Embrace

Every tender Name of Love In soft Whispers let me hear And let Speaking Nature prove Every Extacy Sincere.

### 2 The Secret Kiss

If these songs do relate to Oswald's own love life, then a secret kiss has a particular frisson, since theirs was to be a runaway marriage. The repeated words and the use of rests beautifully translate the initial hesitancy of the girl into repeated kisses.

At the Silent Evening Hour
Two fond Lovers in a Bower
Sought sought their mutual Bliss.
Tho' her Heart was just relenting
Tho' her Eyes seem'd just Consenting
Yet yet she fear'd to Kiss.

Since this secret Shade he cry'd
Will those rosy Blushes hide
Why why will you resist
When no tell-tale Spy is near us
Eye not sees nor Ear can hear us
Who who would not be Kiss'd.

Coelia hearing what he said
Blushing lifted up her Head
Her Breast soft Wishes fill
Since she cry'd no Spy is near us
Eye not sees nor Ear can hear us
Kiss - Kiss or what you will.

### 3 The Borrow'd Kiss

The pleading and hesitancy of the first two songs now takes the form of mutual teasing, the opening two phrases being more lively versions of the similar music in the previous song.

See I languish See I faint
I must borrow beg or Steal
Can you see a Soul in Want
And no kind Compassion feel
Give or lend or let me take
One sweet Kiss I ask no more
One sweet Kiss for Pitys Sake
I'll repay it o'er and o'er.

Cloe heard and with a Smile

Kind Compassionate and Sweet
Colin it's a Sin to Steal

And for me to gives not meet
But I'll lend a Kiss or twain

To poor Colin in Distress
Not that I'll be paid again

Colin I mean nothing less.

# 4 The Rapture

This is the only one of the few songs which does not have the word 'kiss' in the title - just in case we were to miss the point of what is really going on. Oswald has lavished one of his most glorious melodies on this most intimate of scenes.

Whilst on thy dear Bosom lying Coelia who can speak my Bliss. Who the Rapture I'm enjoying When thy Balmy Lips I Kiss.

Every Look with Love inspires me, Every Touch my Bosom Warms, Every Melting Murmur fires me Every joy is in thy Arms.

Those dear Eyes how Soft they languish Feel my Heart with Rapture beat Pleasure turns almost to Anguish When the Transport is so sweet

Look not so divinely on me
Coelia I shall die with Bliss
Yet, yet turn those Eyes upon me
Who'd not die a death like this.

# THE ALMOND from Airs for the Seasons (Winter, 2nd Set)

There is a bittersweet flavour to the almond, and so too to the melody and harmonies of the opening **Affetuoso**, which is also marked 'Plaintive'. But all plaintiveness is dispelled by the irresistible **Allegro** with its canonic writing like the two halves of a split almond, each mirroring the other. This is miniaturism at its very finest - absolutely immediate and yet refined and subtle.

# **COLIN'S KISSES 5-7**

### 5 The Stolen Kiss

Colin, apparently finished with Celia, moves on to Chloe. The musical portrait of this rural fantasy is beautiful, but while the previous three songs had been lilting in triple time, there is a more determined sense of movement in the four beats with which he approaches the latest sleeping attraction, and which robs the situation of some of its poetry - for this is, after all, a theft.

Oswald published the tune in his *Caledonian Pocket Companion* with the mistaken title of 'The Secret Kiss'; and later it became known as 'My Bonny Mary' and, from Burns's setting, as 'Go fetch to me a pint of wine'.

On a Mossy Bank reclin'd

Beauteous Cloe lay reposing

O'er her Breast each am'rous Wind

Wanton play'd its sweets disclosing.

Tempred with the Swelling Charms
Colin happy Swain drew nigh her
Softly Stole in to her Arms
Laid his Scrip and Sheep Hook by her.

O'er her downy panting Breast
His delighted Fingers roving
To her Lips his Lips he prest
In the Extacy of Loving

Cloe, waken'd with his Kiss

Pleas'd yet frowning to Conceal it

Cry'd true Lovers share the Bliss

Why then Colin wou'd you Steal it.

# 6 The Kiss Repaid

With instinctive subtlety, Oswald makes the music a little more self-conscious for this somewhat arch encounter, using a slightly more florid vocal line at the opening, and touches of sequence. Sequential writing is an artificial way of generating melody, and neither Oswald, nor the Scottish musical tradition from which he came, have much use for it.

Cloe by that borrow'd Kiss
I alas am quite undone.
'Twas so Sweet so frought with Bliss
Thousands will not pay that One.

Least the Debt should break your Heart Roguish Cloe smiling Cries, Come a Thousand then in part For the present shall Suffice.

# 7 The Parting Kiss

The opening line of the verses (with a different melody of Oswald's) was probably the inspiration for Robert Burns's 'Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!' A partial repeat is added to the usual repeat of the last line to extend the leave-taking. The melody is perfectly balanced, shaped to match the restrained emotion of the situation.

One kind Kiss before we Part
Drop a Tear and bid adiew
Tho we Sever my fond Heart
Till we meet shall pant for You.

Yet yet Weep not so my Love

Let me Kiss that falling Tear
Tho' my Body must remove

All my soul will still be here.

All my Soul and all my Heart
And every Wish shall pant for you
One kind Kiss then ere we part
Drop a Tear and bid Adiew.

## A SONATA OF SCOTS TUNES

(from A Curious Collection of Scots Tunes)

Published by Oswald in 1740, this remarkable and popular work was the first to employ different traditional tunes as the basis for each movement. Alexander Munro had published Scottish variation sonatas in Paris in 1732; but each sonata was based entirely on a single tune. Geminiani partially imitated Oswald's idea but, as far as is known, Oswald never repeated the experiment. It is a pity, as no other composer has done it so well.

### 1 O Mother what shall I do

The tune which is the basis for the opening 'Largo' appears first in the Sinkler MS c.1710 and then as a song in Allan Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* of 1729. In Oswald's trio sonata version of 1740 the part movement is beautifully managed without suppressing the tune itself, which has natural poise and dignity.

### 2 Ettrick Banks

The lyric (from Allan Ramsay) in William Thomson's second 1733 edition of *Orpheus Caledonius* is typical of the genre of Highland wooings. With its nice touches of imitation, Oswald's unfussy bass line does much for the pastoral character of the air, which is rich and expressive.

### 3 She rose and let me in

16 English and Scottish versions of this tune exist side by side - Oswald even called a version of it *She rose and let me out*, perhaps to avoid confusion. In any event he has arranged it splendidly to match the character of a French Bourrée.

## 4 Cromlit's Lilt

William Thomson published this as a song in 1733, but in Oswald's arrangement it serves as a kind of gentle Sarabande.

## 5 Polwart on the Green

Oswald's variations sparkle with rhythmic invention, and the theme keeps returning with sturdy self-assertion, celebrated by some sportive improvised additions in this performance. Again this tune first appeared as a song in William Thomson's 1725 edition of *Orpheus Caledonius*.

### THE DANCING MASTER

This mannered little song satirises the fancy footwork of foreign dancing masters and was published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1754. To underline the point, it starts off with Italian-style recitative, and the high-stepping tune verges on the silly. It is interesting to compare this piece of deliberately absurd fluff with *The Tutor* where the Scottish dancing master takes his own techniques of seduction much more seriously.

Would you obtain the gentle fair, Assume a French fantastic air; Oft when the gen'rous Briton fails, The foppish foreigner prevails.

You must teach her to dance,
As the mode is in France,
And make the best use of your feet;
Cock your hat with a grace,
All be brazen your face,
And dress most affectedly neat.

Then bow down like a beau,

Hop and turn out your toe,

Lead miss by the hand, and leer at her;

Draw your glove with an air,

At your white stockings stare,

And simper, and ogle, and flatter.

Walk the figure of eight,
With your rump stiff and streight,
Then turn her with delicate ease:
Bow again very low,
Your good breeding to show,
And missy you'll perfectly please.

If these steps you pursue,
You will soon bring her too,
And rifle the child of her charms,
Her poor heart will heave high,
And she'll languish and sigh,
And caper quite in to your arms.

## **DIVERTIMENTO IV**

Only one copy of Twelve Divertimentis for the Guittar Dedicated to Her Grace the Dutchess of Grafton Composed by James Oswald is known to survive. They are composed for the wire-strung 18th century guittar, 'a sort of hybrid between the cittern, the guitar and the lute' as Robert MacKillop describes it. The English Guittar, as it was known, was primarily promoted by two Scots - James Oswald and Robert Bremner. Such was its popularity among ladies of leisure that it began to affect sales of harpsichords, so the London harpsichord maker, Kirkman, proceeded to give away these guitars to beggars and prostitutes, rapidly putting them out of fashion, which may explain the scarcity of the Oswald pieces, which are in their own way little gems.

Divertimento IV has a *Largo Affetuoso*, a Gavotta, an Aria and a final Con *Spirito*. The music is wholly unpretentious; blessed with the charms of a world of lost musical innocence. What a tragedy if this one copy had been lost.

### THE DUST CART CANTATA

The Dust Cart, a favourite Cantata Sung in the old Woman's Oratory at the new Theatre in the Hay Market, in manner of the Moderns is how the publication proclaims this brilliant satire on the musical conventions of the day. It was first performed in December 1751 and has a companion piece called The Wheelbarrow Cantata.

The convention being mocked is that of Italian recitative and aria and, just as in *Ballance a Straw* the satire is heightened by the fact that Oswald has composed music which could easily be confused with the real thing. The lover is a tinker and the beloved is in a dustcart, but are their passions any less real or more ridiculous than those of the court whose musical clothing they have borrowed?

### Recitativo

As Tink'ring Tom the Streets his Trade did cry,
He saw his lovely Silvia Passing by,
In Dust Cart high advanc'd, The Nymph was plac'd
With the rich Cinders round her lovely Waist,
Tom with uplifted Hands th'occasion blest,
And thus in soothing strains, the Maid addrest.

### Aria

Oh Silvia! While you drive your Carts
To pick up Dust you steal our Hearts,
You take our Dust & steal our Hearts,
That mine is gone alas! Is true
& dwells among the Dust with you;

Oh lovely Silvia ease my Pain!
Give me the Heart you stole again,
Give me my Heart out of your Cart,
Give me the Heart you stole again.

### Recitativo

Silvia advanc'd above the Rabble Rout,
Exulting roll'd her sparkling Eyes about,
She heav'd her swelling Breast as black as Sloe,
And look'd disdain on little Folks below,
To Tom she noded as the Cart drew on,
And then resolv'd to speak, She cry'd stop John.

### Aria

Shall I who ride above the rest,

Be by a paltry Crowd opprest,

Ambition now my Soul does Fire,

The Youths shall languish & admire;

And ev'ry Girl with anxious Heart,

Shall long to ride in my Dust Cart.

### **SERENATA IV**

The Twelve Serenatas were published in 1762, shortly after Oswald was appointed Chamber Composer to his Majesty George III. The appointment had probably been promised to him by his former patron, Frederick Prince of Wales, the King's father, who died before he could succeed to the throne. Oswald himself had only seven years to live, but as he had secretly married the widow of Robinson-Lytton and was therefore residing in Knebworth House, they must have been pleasant years.

The Serenatas are thoroughly sophisticated pieces of music, quite distinct in style from the rest of his work in that they seem to inhabit the Italian idiom with such absolute assurance that there is scarcely a trace of the Scot or the Briton in them. But they enjoy that natural flow of melody and rhythm which marks all Oswald's work. The concluding *Pastorale con Spirito* which has something of the cheerful character of a hunt, with what sound like imitations of hunting horns calling out at the end.

### **COLIN'S KISSES 9-10**

### 9 The Feast

Polly is the new girl on the scene, but she is greeted with a beautifully expressive melody, as sweet as her kisses, and the tempo changes to a boastful *Spirito* which prepares the way for The Meeting Kiss.

Polly when you your Lips you join,
Lovely powting Lips to mine,
To the Bee the flow'ry Field,
Such a Banquet does not yield.
Not the dewy morning Rose
So much sweetness does inclose,
Not the Gods such Nectar Sip,
As Collin from thy balmy Lip.
Kiss me then with rapture Kiss.
We'll surpass the Gods in Bliss.

# 10 The Meeting Kiss

An element of gentle satire has crept into the first of the three sections of this song with its slightly florid Handelian musical gestures, as though all the pastoral intimacies of what is supposed to be a *scena* with shepherd and shepherdesses had been transferred to a grander environment in which musical convention substitutes for genuine feeling. The pathos of the next section with its flowing tears is likewise very slightly overdone and is virtually mocked by the *Spirito* which speaks of 'Th'excess of joy'. Only the last two songs of the cycle restore the balance to that of heartfelt emotion.

Let me fly into thy Arms

Let me Taste again thy Charms,

Kiss me press me to thy Breast

In Rapture not to be exprest.

Let me clasp thy lovely Waist

Throw thy Arms around my Neck

Thus embracing and embrac'd

Nothing shall our Raptures Check.

Hearts with mutual pleasure Glowing,
Lips with Lips together Growing.
Eyes with Tears of Gladness flowing.
Eyes and Lips and Hearts shall show,
Th'Excess of joy that Lovers know.
Th'Excess of joy that Meeting Lovers know.

# THE NARCISSUS from Airs for the Seasons (Spring, 1st set)

Narcissus, falling in love with his own reflection, drowned, and was commemorated by the gods with the flower which bears his name. Narcissus was also beloved of Echo, so the opening *Andante Pastorale* is full of musical references to reflections and echoes. The following *Giga - Vivace* is, however, a lively Scottish jig, for the narcissus dances the first dance of spring. It is nice to imagine Oswald himself dancing to this spirited movement.

### **COLIN'S KISSES 8**

# The Imaginary Kiss

This is a little dance of a song, as fresh as the narcissus, and as illusory in its self-absorption, which allows another to steal away with - not Celia, not Chloe, not Polly, but Fanny. Well, serve him right. The true winner in all of these songs is Oswald with his lightness of touch and unfailing lyric gift, coupled with just a hint of knowing satire, that is yet kindly enough to leave us with our sentiments and our sweet illusions intact.

When Fanny I saw as she trip'd o'er the Green,
Fair blooming soft Artless and kind.
Fond Love in her Eyes Wit and sense in her Mien,
And Warmness with Modesty join'd,
Transported with sudden Amazement I stood,
Fast riveted down to the Place,
Her delicate Shape easy Motion I view'd,
And wander'd o'er every Grace.

Ye Gods! What Luxuriance of Beauty, I cry,
What Raptures must dwell in her Arms!
On her Lips I could feast, on her Breast I could die,
O Fanny, how sweet are thy Charms!
Whilst thus in Idea my Passion I fed,
Soft Transport my Senses invade,
Young Damon step'd up, with the Substance he fled,
And left me to kiss the dear Shade.

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