

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition of overlapping circular and organic shapes in shades of purple, blue, yellow, red, and green. Overlaid on these colors is a dense pattern of white musical notes, including treble clefs, bass clefs, and various note heads, creating a musical texture. In the center, there is a vertical, textured shape that resembles a book or a stack of papers, with some faint, illegible text visible on its surface.

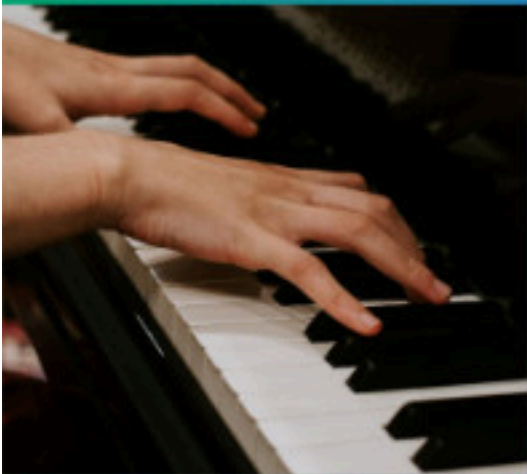
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Welcome to Charlotte Bach Festival '26

As we gather for this year's festival, I find myself reflecting with deep gratitude on what Bach Charlotte has become and on the extraordinary community that continues to shape its future. This marks my fourth festival as Executive Director and the seventh festival since Bach Charlotte was founded in 2017. In that relatively short period of time, the organization has grown in ways that are both exciting and deeply meaningful, not simply in size or scope, but in its connection to the cultural life of Charlotte itself.

From the very beginning, Bach Charlotte has been grounded in the belief that great music has the power to bring people together. The music of Bach and his contemporaries was written not for isolation, but for community: for churches, civic spaces, gatherings of friends, and moments of shared reflection and celebration. That spirit continues to guide our work today.

What has been especially inspiring over the past several years is the way Charlotte has embraced this organization with such warmth, enthusiasm, and generosity. There is a remarkable artistic energy in this city, and it has been a privilege for Bach Charlotte to become part of that broader cultural fabric. We are seeing growing audiences, expanding artistic partnerships, and a level of momentum that feels materially different even from just two years ago. There is an excitement surrounding this festival that feels genuine, organic, and rooted in a growing sense of shared ownership within the community.

This year's festival reflects that spirit in countless ways.

We are grateful to collaborate with outstanding partners including WDAV Classical Public Radio, Steinway Carolinas, Village on Morehead, Queens University of Charlotte, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, and Myers Park Presbyterian Church. These partnerships represent far more than venues or sponsorships. They reflect a shared investment in the artistic and cultural vitality of Charlotte.

We are also excited to expand into new spaces this season, including performances at Arts+ and our community hymn sing at Matthews United Methodist Church. This year additionally marks Bach Charlotte's inaugural participation in the Steinway Residency at Free Range Brewing alongside WDAV and Steinway Carolinas, an exciting collaboration that reflects our commitment to presenting world-class artistry in welcoming and accessible settings throughout the city.

One of the most meaningful aspects of this year's festival is the extraordinary artistic community coming together around it. Local singers will join the opening and closing performances alongside nationally recognized guest artists. More musicians from across the Southeast are participating than at any previous point in the festival's history. Emerging artists and internationally celebrated performers alike will share the stage in a spirit of collaboration that feels both ambitious and deeply human.

That balance is important to us.

Artistic excellence remains central to Bach Charlotte's mission, but we also believe music should feel welcoming, alive, and connected to the community it serves. The Charlotte Bach Festival is not simply a series of performances. It is a gathering place for audiences and artists to encounter beauty, thoughtfulness, joy, and one another.

As we look toward the future, I could not be more excited about what lies ahead for Bach Charlotte. We remain committed to presenting performances of the highest artistic caliber while continuing to deepen educational initiatives, expand community engagement, support emerging artists, and strengthen Bach Charlotte's role within the cultural life of this city.

Finally, thank you.

I cannot adequately express how grateful we are for your belief in this organization and in what Bach Charlotte is working to build here in Charlotte. Your support, advocacy, and presence have helped make possible a festival that continues to grow in ambition, artistry, and impact each year.

It is a joy to welcome you to the 2026 Charlotte Bach Festival. We are so glad you are here.

With gratitude,

Garrett Murphy
Executive Director
Bach Charlotte





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schedule

wednesday, may 27

3:00 pm

BACH & BRAHMS: FROM COUNTERPOINT TO POWER

Free Range Brewing, Charlotte

friday, may 29

7:00 pm

THE EARLY AMERICAN SINGING TRADITION

Mathews United Methodist Church, Mathews

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Dr. Reta R. Phifer

saturday, may 30

3:00 pm

**VIRTUOSITY UNLEASHED:
A PIANO EXTRAVAGANZA**

Free Range Brewing, Charlotte

7:30 pm

GLORIA! BACH, HANDEL, AND VIVALDI

Sandra Levine Theatre, Charlotte

In Memory of Ralph Canfield

sunday, may 31

3:00 pm

AVI STEIN, ORGAN RECITAL

St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Charlotte

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Madhu Engineer

monday, june 1

2:00 pm

ORGAN MASTERCLASS WITH AVI STEIN

Providence United Methodist Church, Charlotte

7:30 pm

LISTEN UP, LOVERS! SONGS OF LOVE AND DESIRE

Kathryn Greenhoot Recital Hall, Charlotte

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Elizabeth & Mark Hindal

tuesday, june 2

7:30 pm

DALL'ITALIA CON AMORE

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Charlotte

wednesday, june 3

12:00 pm

**TUNING IN: JS BACH CANTATA NO. 9,
"ES IST DAS HEIL UNS KOMMEN HER"**

Myers Park Presbyterian Church, Charlotte

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Dr. John Gardella

7:30 pm

HENRY PURCELL'S DIDO AND AENEAS

Arts+ Community Campus, Charlotte

thursday, june 4

12:00 pm

**TUNING IN: GF HANDEL: MY SONG
SHALL BE ALWAYS (HWV 252)**

Myers Park Presbyterian Church, Charlotte

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Emily Smith

7:30 pm

BACH AND THE FRENCH INFLUENCE

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Charlotte

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Jenny Campbell

friday, june 5

7:30 pm

ECHOES OF BACH

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Charlotte, NC

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Steinway Carolinas.

saturday, june 6

7:30 pm

HANDEL'S THEODORA

Sandra Levine Theatre, Charlotte

This concert is dedicated to the memory of Dr. T.C. Price Zimmermann.

sunday, june 7

3:00 pm

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St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Charlotte

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‡ Previous Fiscal Year (July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025)



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Sara Levy (1761–1854) was a patron, collector of music, and salonnière in Berlin during the late 18th century who commissioned works from two of Johann Sebastian Bach’s sons: Friedemann Bach and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. She is considered the “catalyst for the ‘Bach Revival’ of the early 19th century” led by her great-nephew, Felix Mendelssohn, upon whom she had significant influence.

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Free Range Brewing

2320 North Davidson Street, Charlotte, NC 28205

Wednesday, May 27, 2026 • 3:00 pm

Bach & Brahms: From Counterpoint to Power

Guy Fishman, cello

Esther Jeehae Ahn, piano

Ave Maria after *Prelude in C Major*, BWV 846

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Charles Gounod
(1818–1893)

J.S. Bach

Sonata in G major for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord, BWV 1027

- I. Adagio
- II. Allegro ma non tanto
- III. Andante
- IV. Allegro moderato

Prelude and Fugue in F Major, BWV 880, from *The Well-Tempered Clavier II*

J.S. Bach

Contrapunctus 1, BWV 1080 from *The Art of Fugue*

J.S. Bach

Sonata in E minor for Cello and Piano, Op. 38

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Allegro quasi Menuetto
- III. Allegro

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Saturday, May 30, 2026 • 3:00 pm

Virtuosity Unleashed: A Piano Extravaganza

Esther Jeehae Ahn, piano

Nicholas Susi, piano

Ma mère l'Oye
V. Le Jardin Féerique

Maurice Ravel
(1875–1937)

Hungarian Dance No. 5

Johannes Brahms

Ave maris stella, S. 506

Nicholas Susi, Primo; Esther Jeehae Ahn, Secondo

Franz Liszt

Chaconne in D minor for the Left Hand

J.S. Bach, arr. Brahms
(1811–1886)

Nicholas Susi, piano

Prelude and Fugue in F Major, BWV 880

J.S. Bach

Sonata No. 3 in F minor, Op. 5

Johannes Brahms

- I. Allegro Maestoso
- V. Finale. Allegro moderato ma rubato

Esther Jeehae Ahn, piano

Petite Suite

- II. Cortège
- IV. Ballet

Claude Debussy
(1862–1918)

Slavonic Dance, Op. 46 No. 1

Anton Dvorak
(1841–1904)

Esther Jeehae Ahn, Primo; Nicholas Susi, Secondo

Concert Duration: Approximately 60 minutes, with no intermission.

Please silence electronic devices for the duration of the performance. Audio or video recording of any portion of this event is not permitted. Thank you for honoring our musicians and preserving the value of live performance.

friday, may 29 | 7:00 pm

The Great American Singing Tradition

Matthews United Methodist Church
Matthews, NC

SET 1

J.S. Bach

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (V. 1, 4)

Early American Congregational Hymns

How Firm a Foundation (V. 1, 2)

Words: Robert Keen (e) *attributed* | Tune: FOUNDATION

Come Ye Sinners (V. 1, 2)

Words: Joseph Hart (1712–1768) | Tune: Jeremiah Ingalls (1764–1838)

The hymns sing of confidence and divine protection, as well as an invitation to assurance. Luther's Reformation chorale declares God as a fortress and defender, while the American hymns reassures believers of God's steadfast presence through trials. They show how strong congregational song moved from the German Lutheran tradition into American Protestant worship.

SET 2

J.S. Bach

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (V. 1, 3)

Early American Congregational Hymns

What Wondrous Love Is This (V. 1, 3)

Words: Anonymous | Tune: WONDROUS LOVE

When Jesus Wept (V. 1, in a round)

Words: Perez Morton (1751–1837) | Tune: William Billings (1746–1800)

Deeply reflective Passion hymns centered on Christ's suffering and sacrificial love. Bach's harmonized chorale represents the formal beauty of Lutheran Holy Week worship, while *What Wondrous Love* and *When Jesus Wept* express similar devotion through the haunting simplicity of American shape-note singing.

SET 3

J.S. Bach

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (V. 1, 2)

Early American Congregational Hymns

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing (V. 1, 3) Words: Robert Robinson (1735–1790) | Tune: NETTLETON

My Shepherd Will Supply My Need (V. 1, 3) Words: Isaac Watts (1674–1748) | Tune: RESIGNATION

These hymns overflow with joy, devotion, and longing for communion with God. Bach's counterpoint paired with warm evangelical poetry and Psalm 23 reflect two different but related streams of Protestant spirituality.

SET 4

J.S. Bach

Now Thank We All Our God (V. 1, 2)

Early American Congregational Hymns

Simple Gifts (V. 1)

Composer: Joseph Brackett Jr. (1797–1882)

Amazing Grace (V. 1, 5)

Composer: John Newton (1725–1807)

These songs share themes of gratitude, humility, and contentment. The Lutheran chorale gives thanks through rich harmonic tradition, while the Shaker tune expresses thanksgiving through simplicity and communal joy. In *Amazing Grace*, gratitude is sung as a story of individual redemption.

Laura Atkinson, Host
Eon Malan, Organ

This community event is made possible thanks to the generosity of Dr. Reta R. Phifer

Event Duration: Approximately 60 minutes, with no intermission.

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saturday, may 30 | 7:30 pm

Gloria! Bach, Handel, and Vivaldi

Sandra Levine Theatre
Sarah Belk Gambrell Center for the Arts and Civic Engagement
Queens University of Charlotte, Charlotte, NC

Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C major, BWV 1066

Overture
Courante
Gavotte I/II
Forlane
Menuet I/II
Bourrée I/II
Passepied I/II

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Highlights from *Messiah*, HWV 56

Sinfonia
And the glory
For unto us
And he shall purify
Worthy is the Lamb
Amen
Hallelujah

George Frideric Handel
(1685–1759)

— INTERMISSION —

Gloria in D major, RV 589

Gloria
Et in terra pax
Laudamus te
Gratias agimus tibi
Propter magnam gloriam
Domine Deus
Domine, Fili unigenite
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris
Quoniam tu solus sanctus
Cum Sancto Spiritu

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678–1741)

Musicians

**Avi Stein, Harpsichord,
Organ, and Leader**

Aisslinn Nosky, Violin I
Allison Wille, Violin I
Renée Hemsing, Violin I
Evan Few, Violin II
Jeanne Johnson, Violin II
Tara Hagle, Violin II
Philip Rawlinson, Viola
Guy Fishman, Cello
Heather Miller Lardin, Bass

John Lenti, Theorbo
Ezra Gans, Bassoon
Kristin Olson, Oboe I
Sarah Schilling, Oboe II
Perry Sutton, Trumpet I
Brandon Bergeron, Trumpet II
Brian McNulty, Timpani

Arwen Myers, Soprano (*Soloist*)
Paulina Francisco, Soprano (*Soloist*)
Amber Rose, Soprano
Mara Riley, Soprano

Zoë Chessa, Soprano (Vocal Fellow)
Laura Atkinson, Alto (*Soloist*)
Elizabeth Knight, Alto
Bryce Zimmerman, Countertenor
(Vocal Fellow)
Robert Jones, Tenor
Eric Laine, Tenor
Cameron Falby, Tenor (Vocal Fellow)
Harrison Hintzsche, Bass
Fredy Bonilla, Bass
Jason Awbrey, Bass
Matthew Houston, Bass
(Vocal Fellow)

This concert is performed in memory of Ralph Canfield

Avi Stein's appearances are made possible thanks to the generosity of Madhu Engineer
This Venue Access Grant is funded by Mecklenburg County and proudly administered by the Arts & Science Council

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“I have not an idea of anything so voluptuous and affecting as this music.”

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, ca. 1770

DR. ROSEEN GILES

Lt was said that the threat of an earthquake caused many would-be concert goers to flee London the week before the premiere of Handel’s oratorio *Theodora* in 1750. While earthquakes are mercifully rare in North Carolina, the likelihood of snow (nay, the mere thought of it!) is greater and always an event of some consequence. As a native Canadian, I do tend to look on in amazement as cartons of milk and loaves of bread fly anxiously off shelves in anticipation of ice and flurries. But we would certainly not be the only ones whose concertizing was thwarted by inclement weather! Poor Handel knew this to his cost (though you, dear listeners, will not miss out on the beauties of *Theodora* and still less of *Messiah*). Tonight’s concert is a partial reprise of one which ought to have taken part of the Charlotte Bach WinterFest this January, but was canceled following some inconvenient wintry whimsy.

In addition to Vivaldi’s famous *Gloria*, this program has some (if you’ll permit) rather glorious additions: J.S. Bach’s **Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C major, BWV 1066** to open the program, and selections from Handel’s most famous oratorio **Messiah, HWV 56**. The works of Bach, Handel, and Vivaldi are usually served with a substantial portion of mythology (in some cases literally). Bach and Handel, both Germans, worked in

idioms, genres, and languages far from their native ones: Bach composed orchestral music in the French and Italian styles while Handel’s English vocal music became a national symbol. Vivaldi, on the other hand, was (in)famous for his female pupils and the music he wrote for the *virtuosa* musicians of the Venetian Ospedale della Pietà, about which much was speculated, both fact and fiction.

The myths of *Messiah* are too numerous to name, though a few are worth mentioning, particularly as you allow a fresh (and snow-less) interpretation of familiar music to wash over you. Much to the irritation of his librettist, Charles Jennens, Handel allegedly wrote *Messiah* in a mere 24 days. The history of music is replete with musicians who supposedly had a direct connection to the divine (Amadeus!), although Handel’s autograph manuscript, now preserved in the British Library, does not hide its hastiness as much as Mozart’s did.

Nevertheless, Handel had an impeccable instinct for (eventually) appealing to the English audiences of his day, even as the English language was far from his native tongue. *Messiah* is a New Testament story which, unlike most of Handel’s other oratorios that favor Old Testament narratives, places Christian theology at its core. Oratorios were sacred dramatic works that

RRIIA!

had originally formed part of devotional practices and, even in Handel's time, were typically performed during the Lenten season. Handel's transformation of the genre however brought it closer to the operatic stage, and dressed it in the most fashionable musical styles of the day. What's more is that he knew his audience well: *Messiah* blends the story of the life of Christ and its penitential connotations with decidedly optimistic and even nationalistic English Enlightenment sentiment. It is, in other words, very different from his other oratorio on a specifically Christian topic—*Theodora* (1750), which features at this year's Charlotte Bach Festival—whose introverted musicality and steadfast morality might have contributed to its lukewarm reception with the English public.

As beloved as *Messiah* is today, it may come as a surprise that it was met with little enthusiasm by its London audience (and not just because of an earthquake, though there actually is one in *Messiah* as the bass sings in the voice of God 'and I will shake the heav'ns and the earth, the sea, and the dry land, all nations I'll shake!'). This was in great contrast to the resounding enthusiasm it received at its Dublin premiere in April of 1742. Ultimately, *Messiah*'s success is largely due to the revivals of the oratorio both within and beyond Handel's lifetime. Its eventual acclaim was forged rather differently from *Theodora*'s, even with the initial hesitation with the public, though there are connections between the two oratorios.

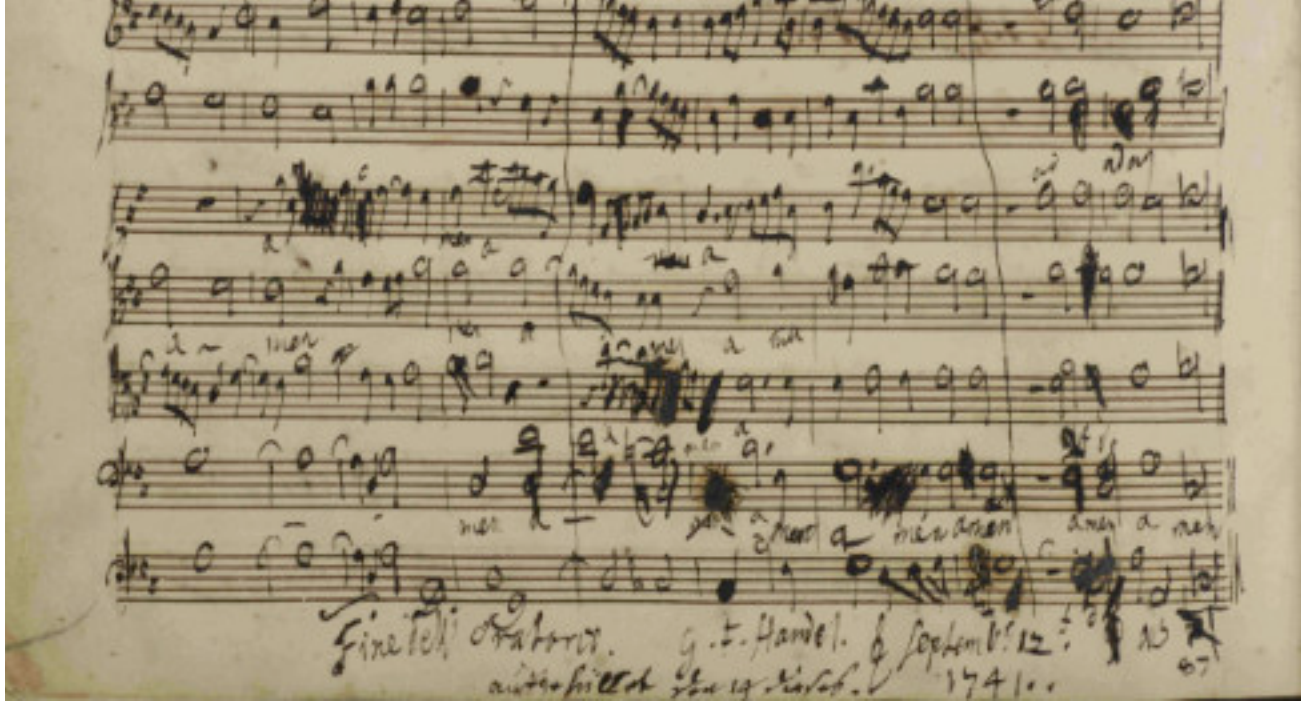
Not only did Handel subsequently make revisions and corrections to *Messiah*'s music at Jennens's request, the 1749 revival at Covent Garden featured three star Italian singers: Giulia Frasi, Caterina Galli, and the alto castrato Gaetano Guadagni. These were the same singers who sang in *Theodora*. Even more pertinent to *Messiah*'s success was the use of the chorus—notable among them, those on tonight's program—these allowed Handel to use the rigor of counterpoint to convey the steadfast and glorious sentiment so beloved by audiences, but also to blend it with the most fashionable of vocal writing. *Messiah*'s enduring success was secured in revival performances

for charity outside the theater (notably at the Foundling Hospital), but its first London performance in 1743 was at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden, now the Royal Opera House. Handel's connection to Italian opera cannot be overestimated. Those who attended the concert 'Armida Abandoned: Handel's Dramatic Cantatas' during WinterFest this year will remember the Italian chamber duets whose music was reused in passages of *Messiah*'s choruses.

Messiah blends the story of the life of Christ and its penitential connotations with decidedly optimistic and even nationalistic English Enlightenment sentiment.

It may be that the anecdote about King George II standing up at the 'Hallelujah' chorus (thus obligating everyone else in attendance to stand) is one of those unverifiable myths of *Messiah*. But it is true that Handel signed the autograph manuscript of *Messiah* with the letters SDG, an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, 'To God alone the glory'. The reason for this is not absolutely clear, but it rather intimately connects Handel to his contemporary J.S. Bach who also signed those initials after nearly all of his sacred compositions.

The centrepiece of this concert is Antonio Vivaldi's *Gloria in D major, RV 589*, written in around 1715 during the composer's employment at the Pio Ospedale della Pietà in Venice. While popular today, the music for Vivaldi's *Gloria* was forgotten after his death. It was only rediscovered in the late 1920s during a revival instigated by the Italian composer Alfred Casella. It was probably originally paired with a Kyrie, though the music for that is now lost. Vivaldi breaks up the text into several pieces to give more opportunities to create contrasts in mood and texture. The choruses are punctuated by solo sections for two sopranos and alto.



End of Handel's autograph manuscript for *Messiah*; completed Saturday, September 12, 1741 ('ausgefüllet den 14 dieses' or 'filled in' on the 14th of that month according to Handel's German note at the bottom of the page); S.D.G. (*Soli Deo Gloria*) appears above the words 'Fine dell'oratorio'; — London, British Library, R.M.20.f.2

The sections for solo voices allow for vocal virtuosity, although it is worth pointing out that Vivaldi uses the chorus both for contrapuntal writing (for example the elegant beauty of the soprano and oboe duet at 'Domine Deus'), which was more common, but also declamatory sections of text (such as at 'Gratias agimus tibi'). In this way the Vivaldi *Gloria* is actually more like J.S. Bach's *Magnificat*, BWV 243 with which it is often paired and compared. The final section of the *Gloria*—the double fugue setting the text 'Cum sancto spirito'—is another example of musical 'borrowing,' though in this case from another composer of the generation before Vivaldi: Giovanni Maria Ruggieri.

The female musicians of the Pietà were hidden in galleries fitted with grates. Although they were illegitimate, this did not always mean they came from poor families.

As mentioned, borrowing from another composer was typically seen as an act of reverence, although in this case the lifting is rather literal: unlike Handel's plagiarism of himself in *Messiah*, here there is no new language to negotiate since Ruggieri was setting the same text in the same language. One can certainly hear that the final movement is in a slightly older style than was typical for Vivaldi, and the fact that Vivaldi gave the last word to one of his predecessors is intriguing. Was this a genuine act of homage and respect for Ruggieri? Would listeners have known Ruggieri's music well enough to notice? We remember Vivaldi as one of the most prolific composers of the turn of the 18th century, while few have heard of Ruggieri. It is important to remember that even the music of Vivaldi was unpopular and essentially forgotten after his death. It makes one wonder. If a composer in the early 19th century, before the Vivaldi revival of the early 20th, should have plagiarized from Vivaldi, how many would have noticed?

Long before he died relatively penniless in Vienna, Vivaldi was one of the most celebrated violinists and teachers in baroque Venice. At the time that he wrote the *Gloria*, Vivaldi was employed at the Pio Ospedale della Pietà, one of several of Venice's *Ospedali Grandi*, charitable hospices for the care of the less fortunate. Today the Pietà, which overlooks the grand canal, is the Hotel Metropole (starting at ca.320 euro per night, canal views extra).

During the 17th and 18th centuries, these institutions became known especially for the musical education they provided to young women: the *figlie di coro* were famous for being *virtuosa* singers and instrumentalists. These women were so accomplished that visitors came to Venice specifically to hear them. And who wouldn't want their daughters to receive the finest of education? The *ospedali* accepted orphaned children who were illegitimate (that is born outside of marriage). Although illegitimacy usually precluded inheritance and social standing, for women it was often the reason why they were able to pursue an education in music at all.

There are so many myths about the young women Vivaldi taught at the Pietà between 1703 and 1740, including several exaggerated stories about his relationships with them as a celibate priest teaching the poor and destitute girls, to the way in which visitors enjoyed the mystique of their performances. The musicians of the Pietà were hidden from view in galleries fitted with grates. Although the girls of the *ospedali* were illegitimate, this, interestingly, did not always mean they came from poor families. During the 17th and 18th centuries a significant percentage of Venetian noblemen and women remained unmarried. Without primogenitor laws, the elite families severely limited the marriages of their children to consolidate and preserve wealth (land, of course, comes at a premium in aquatic Venice). Did this mean most of Venice's population dutifully remained celibate? Certainly not.

Since legitimate marriage was denied to a significant portion of even the ruling class of the city, many had relationships outside of marriage and, as a result, there were



Autograph manuscript of Vivaldi's *Gloria* (RV 589), Biblioteca Universitaria, Turin, fol. 91v

many orphans and illegitimate children. And so, some of the *figlie di coro* under Vivaldi's tutelage were children of wealth and standing, along with the orphaned daughters of poorer families. The idea of *virtuosa* girls, hidden from view for propriety was a very attractive idea, particularly to those writers later in the 18th century who wished to legitimize the rapture of hearing women without succumbing to temptation by seeing them.

One of the most famous accounts of the *figlie di coro* is by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) who wrote about the experience in his autobiographical book the *Confessions* in about 1770. This is how he described it:

Every Sunday at the church of each of the four scuole, during vespers, motettos or anthems with full choruses, accompanied by a great orchestra, and composed and directed by the best masters in Italy, are sung in the galleries by girls only; not one of whom is more than twenty years of age. I have not an idea of anything so voluptuous and affecting as this music; the richness of the art, the exquisite taste of the vocal part, the excellence of the voices, the justness of the execution, everything in these delightful concerts concurs to produce an impression which certainly is not the mode, but from which I am of opinion no heart is secure.

Rousseau describes his rapture not only at the sound itself. He was clearly also under the impression that they were very young: yet another source of mystery and imagination. But soon he became frustrated that he could not see the beauties:

What vexed me was the iron grate, which suffered nothing to escape but sounds, and concealed from me the angels of which they were worthy. I talked of nothing else.

Eventually Rousseau managed to convince his companion to allow him to visit the musicians and to see the girls he admired only by their playing and singing. A high expectation indeed! Perhaps predictably, this is what happened:

In entering the saloon, which contained these beauties I so much sighed to see, I felt a trembling of love which I had never before experienced. M. le Blond presented to me one after the other, these celebrated female singers, of whom the names and voices were all with which I was acquainted. Come, Sophia,—she was horrid. Come, Cattina,—she had but one eye. Come, Bettina,—the small-pox had entirely disfigured her. Scarcely one of them was without some striking defect.

Yes, indeed, for the *figlie di coro* were not in fact otherworldly creatures, nor were they all prepubescent girls channeling some sexless divinity to inoculate innocent listeners from the rapture of the sound! Many of them were quite ordinary looking and nor were they all so young: some of the women trained at the *ospedali* in their youth, some eventually left to be married (since of course not all came from poor families), some stayed on well into adulthood, some did take holy orders. In the end, even Rousseau realized that his fantasy of them was not all they were worth:

I said to myself, they cannot sing in this manner without intelligence and sensibility, they must have both; in fine, my manner of seeing them changed to such a degree that I left the house almost in love with each of these ugly faces. I had scarcely courage enough to return to vespers. But after having seen the girls, the danger was lessened. I still found their singing delightful; and their voices so much embellished their persons that, in spite of my eyes, I obstinately continued to think them beautiful.

—ROSEEN GILES, DUKE UNIVERSITY

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- Talbot, Michael. *The Vivaldi Compendium* (Boydell, 2011), p. 90.
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Confessions*. Trans. W. Conyngham Mallory (1928), pp. 478–80.
Spurling, Jutta Gisela. *Convents and the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice* (Chicago, 1999), pp. 18–28.

sunday, may 31 | 3:00 pm

Organ Recital with Avi Stein

St. Peter's Episcopal Church
Charlotte, NC

Prelude and Fugue in D Major, BWV 532

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Tocatta, Adagio and Fugue in C Major BWV 564

J.S. Bach

Passacaglia in C Minor, BWV 582

J.S. Bach

Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr, BWV 662

J.S. Bach

Sonata in B Minor, BWV 1014

J.S. Bach

I. Adagio

II. Allegro

III. Andante

IV. Allegro

Musicians

Avi Stein, Organ

Aisslinn Nosky, Violin

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monday, june 1 | 7:30 pm

Listen Up, Lovers! Songs of Love and Desire

Kathryn Greenhoot Recital Hall
Sarah Belk Gambrell Center for the Arts and Civic Engagement
Queens University of Charlotte, Charlotte, NC

Hor ch'è di dormire	Tarquinio Merula (1595–1665)
Si dolce è il tormento	Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)
Ohime ch'io cado	Claudio Monteverdi
Amarilli, mia bella	Giulio Caccini (1551–1618)
Se l'aura spira	Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643)
Così mi disprezzate	Girolamo Frescobaldi
L'Eraclito Amorofo	Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677)
Ed e pur dunque vero	Claudio Monteverdi
Quel sguardo sdegnosetto	Claudio Monteverdi

Musicians

Arwen Myers, Soprano
John Lenti, Theorbo/Lute
Aislinn Nosky, Violin

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Elizabeth & Mark Hindal

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LISTEN UP, LOVERS

Songs of Love & Desire

ARWEN MYERS

In the early 17th century, Claudio Monteverdi and his contemporaries did something radical.

They invented Baroque music.

Listen to music by Palestrina, the master of Renaissance polyphony, and you'll hear sweeping vocal lines interweaving, elegant counterpoint, and legato lines passing seamlessly from part to part. It's exquisite, of course, but what you won't experience is any kind of musical depiction of the words being sung (also known as text painting). The music was king.

In the late 1500s, there was a resurgence of interest in reviving the music of the ancient Greeks, largely driven by the scholars, poets, and musicians of the Florentine Camerata. These thinkers and artists believed that the music of the Greeks was driven by the text, and led by the writings of Girolamo Mei and Vincenzo Galilei (father to Galileo) and the musical experimentation of composers like Jacopo Peri, Giulio Caccini, and Claudio Monteverdi, a new style was born.

This *stile nuovo* (new style) or *stile moderno* (modern style) was typified by "monody," a solo voice with a single melodic line and relatively simple instrumental accompaniment—what would become known as basso continuo.

Most importantly, in the *stile nuovo*, it was the text that reigned supreme. The music-first compositions of the Renaissance—lyrical polyphony governed by strict rules of counterpoint and voice leading—gave way to a radical new musical style with striking mood shifts, dramatic dissonances, intense emotional expression, and absolutely wild harmonies.

While there were several important players in this movement (composer Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini invented

opera with their 1597 work *Dafne*, after all) it was Monteverdi who brought this new compositional style to fruition. His work was so shocking to early 17th century ears that he drew the ire of music theorist Giovanni Maria Artusi. Appalled by the increasing popularity of Monteverdi's madrigals, Artusi felt duty-bound to speak out about this up-and-comer who was, in his mind, clearly a bad composer.

While Artusi didn't explicitly name Monteverdi in his 1600 publication *L'Artusi, overo delle imperfettioni della moderna musica* ("Artusi, or the imperfections of modern music") or its follow-up in 1603, he did cite several of Monteverdi's compositions as good examples of bad writing, openly mocking his boorish, vulgar approach to musical composition:

Such composers, in my opinion, have nothing but smoke in their heads if they are so impressed with themselves as to think they can corrupt, abolish, and ruin at will the good rules handed down from days of old by so many theorists and excellent musicians, who are the very ones from whom these modern musicians have learned awkwardly to put a few notes together ...

Compositions like these, then, are the product of ignorance. For such composers, it is enough to set up a great roar of sound, an absurd confusion, an array of defects, and it all comes from the ignorance which keeps them benighted."

(Artusi, *Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica*)



Claudio Monteverdi revolutionized music composition and helped usher in the Baroque era. His influence is still being felt today.

(Subtlety was apparently not Artusi's thing.)

In the introduction to his *Fifth Book of Madrigals* (a must-listen if there ever were one), Monteverdi pithily responded, pointing out that he was, in fact, using another approach on purpose: a *seconda pratica* (second practice):

"I do not create my works by chance, and as soon as it is finished, [this publication] bearing on its front the name of SECOND PRACTICE, or PERFECTION OF MODERN MUSIC, which perhaps will cause some to marvel, not believing that there exists another practice than that taught by Zarlino [...] Let them be assured that... there is also another consideration different from the established one."

(Claudio Monteverdi, *Il Quinto Libro de Madrigali*)

The influence of Monteverdi and the other pioneers of this new style (Peri, Caccini, Gesualdo, Marenzio, etc) on the music that came after can not be overstated. Their innovations inspired the next generation of Italian composers like Barbara Strozzi, who took music to new heights of radical expression. Heinrich Schütz and Johann Hermann Schein took the principles of the style to Germany, Lully adapted their innovations and created what would become the French Baroque style, and Henry Purcell absorbed their music by way of Pelham Humphrey, who studied in France and Italy, and then revolutionized English song.

The throughlines continue to Vivaldi, Handel, and Bach, into the Classical period and far beyond. The development of



Also on tonight's program, clockwise, from upper left: Tarquinio Merula, Girolamo Frescobaldi, Barbara Strozzi, and Giulio Caccini.

monody and the use of basso continuo alone set up everything that followed over the next 400 years. There's a reason most pop music, rock, and jazz feature a solo singer and accompanying instruments—and that reason is the *seconda pratica*.

The strict rules of the music-first compositions of the Renaissance gave way to a radical new musical style with striking mood shifts, dramatic dissonances, intense emotional expression, and wild harmonies.

All this is to say that the music you will hear tonight epitomizes more than the core values of the Baroque—it's at the heart of all songs, whether they're written by Claudio Monteverdi or Thom Yorke (I'm in a Radiohead period), or Billie Eilish.

After all, what's the point of being a singer? It's using the text to tell a story. Amplifying words with music to connect, to move other people. Celebrating the human experience: love, joy, anger, lust, sadness, death.

So sit back and enjoy the wild ride that is the exquisite, moving, jarring—and ultimately, perfect—sound world that is early 17th century Italian song.

—ARWEN MYERS

tuesday, june 2 | 7:30 pm

Dall'Italia con amore

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Charlotte, NC

Concerto for Strings and Basso Continuo in G minor, RV 157

I. Allegro
II. Largo
III. Allegro

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678–1741)

Concerto for Cello, Strings, and Basso Continuo in B minor, RV 424

I. Allegro non molto
II. Largo
III. Allegro non molto

Antonio Vivaldi

String Quintet in E Major, Op. 11, No. 5 G.275

I. Amoroso
II. Allegro e con spirito
III. Minuetto, Trio
IV. Rondeau

Luigi Boccherini
(1743–1805)

Cello concerto in G major, G. 480

I. Allegro
II. Adagio
III. Allegro

Luigi Boccherini

Musicians

Guy Fishman, Cello and Leader

Renée Hemsing, Violin I
Fiona Hughes, Violin II
Maureen Murchie, Viola
Sarah Stone, Cello
Heather Miller Lardin, Bass
John Lenti, Theorbo

Guy Fishman's appearances are made possible thanks to the generosity of Robert and Jan Busch

Concert Duration: Approximately 75 minutes with no intermission.

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DALI'ITALIA

con amore

GUY FISHMAN

Musicians in Europe of the 1600s and 1700s experienced the magnetic pull of two opposing cultural giants. The Italians and the French were long-time political and economic adversaries who also produced music of such excellence and distinct character that German, English, Russian, Low Country, Scandinavian, and Spanish composers could not develop a national style that was completely devoid of some French or Italian element.

French and Italian composers also attempted the style of their rivals. But Italian dazzle—best exemplified by two Italian inventions, the concerto and the violin family—and French finesse, disseminated through the dance suite, virtuoso, and heavily ornamented keyboard writing, and music for the *Viola* (viola da gamba), to name a few—were distinct and the leading shaping forces of European tastes. The two were diametrically oriented in opera, with fans of each in France, England, and Germany setting off pamphlet wars, a bit akin to East Coast/ West Coast rap beefs. They couldn't even agree on pitch; the Italians favored a very high tuning pitch, while the hundreds of keyboards at Versailles were tuned sometimes a whole step below it.

The Italians and the French were long-time political and economic adversaries who also produced music of such excellence and distinct character, that composers from other countries could not develop a national style without some French or Italian element.

Johann Sebastian Bach was a sturdy man and of immobile character. He seems not only to have withstood being torn, artistically at least, by these two warring muses, but to have adopted and excelled in perfecting both styles. Bach spent his high-school years a day's journey from the Francophile court of the Duke of Celle, where it is believed he came in contact with the fine French orchestra the Duke maintained, and first heard music of the French *Clavecinists*. About ten years later Bach was employed at the court of Duke Wilhelm Ernst in Weimar. There he had the opportunity to copy the newly composed Op.

3 concerti by Vivaldi, called *L'Estro Armonico*. True to form, Bach could not help tinkering and recomposed these works when transcribing them for organ or harpsichord. In so doing he learned how to organize a concerto movement in the style of the great Venetian master, and utilized this knowledge in all his concertos.

We at Bach Charlotte feel it is incumbent upon us, therefore, to present music that illustrates the many salient features of these two styles, so important as they were to Bach. Later in the week, Aisslinn Nosky will perform gorgeous French music alongside violist da gamba Sarah Stone. Tonight, Sarah is playing the gamba's Italian counterpart as we venture to *Il Bel Paese* to enjoy delights by two of its best, if not always favorite, sons.

Antonio Vivaldi was a virtuoso violinist, composer, educator, and an asthmatic ordained priest whose affliction excused him from performing most of his ecclesiastical duties. This allowed him to travel to pursue performance, publication, and the production of operas, which were most lucrative for him and which he hoped would secure his fame. Though some of his stage works are excellent, it is the immense body of concertos that Vivaldi created that is responsible for his renown, both now and during his lifetime.

Antonio Vivaldi did not invent the instrumental concerto, but he may be the single most important baroque composer in the genre.

Certainly he was the most prolific. (For what it's worth, Torelli is thought to have invented the instrumental concerto in Bologna.) Vivaldi composed for every instrument he knew, except for the viola (how Italian of him). He also composed concertos for ensemble without soloist, which was one of the many innovations he is credited with.

Such is the concerto that opens tonight's program. Ironically, RV 157 comes from a set of works known as *Concerti di Parigi* or "Paris Concertos," but only because they are housed in a library in Paris. They were, however, commissioned by a French ambassador who was interested in a souvenir from a trip to Venice.

No chachkas from street traders sufficed for the likes of him. Rather, a tourist returning from Venice brought home an opera libretto, a rare book, a painting, or a brand new concerto by Vivaldi, written just for him or her. Or so they thought. The set of 12 concertos appeared at the residence of the paying customer three days after the composer was asked for them. Vivaldi prided himself on writing faster than his work could be copied, and he was quick. But not that quick. Much of the music exists in other



This anonymous portrait in oils in the Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica di Bologna is generally believed to be that of Antonio Vivaldi.

sets in a variety of lengths. Vivaldi probably had it sitting around and made some clever edits for this commission, though some new music is included. The opening movement to RV 157 is a French dance: the *Chaconne*, a set of variations on a repeated bass line. The second movement contains those dotted rhythms that define French overtures. Perhaps these elements were made to order.

The concerto for cello in B minor, RV 424, was featured on the first tape (yes, audio tape) of cello music I received as a teenager, and I've loved it ever since. It is much more typical of Vivaldi's concerto output and illustrates the musical caste system from which concertos evolved. Three movements featuring a virtuoso solo part ("one with virtue") with its own unique material, unrelated to the music played by the orchestra (the *Ripieni*, Italian for "padding") who, ostensibly, were not capable of technical dazzle. This is, of course, not true anymore, but it was in the 17th and 18th century, when few musicians could afford private tuition and the amount of time it took to attain mastery over their instrument. Those who could were snapped up by wealthy patrons, and when the patron wanted to hear the skill of his or her investment juxtaposed against lesser talents, "padding"



A closeup view of Luigi Boccherini playing the cello. Portrait by Pompeo Batoni

would be hired, sometimes from the street, to provide a musical foil for the virtuoso to play against. Hence one of two definitions of *Concerto*—to play against.

Luigi Boccherini was a virtuoso whose prowess on the cello, as exemplified by his demanding compositions, is lauded even today.

Neither Bach nor Vivaldi knew the cellist from Lucca, and it is unknown whether he knew their music (he likely ran across some of Vivaldi's). Boccherini was taught by his father, a bass player, with whom he worked and toured. He composed his virtuoso cello music for his own use, all before the age of 26. His later appointments, to the royal family of Spain, were as a composer—Haydn regarded him highly—but he kept a special place in his heart for the cello and featured hints of his own technique in the many quintets that he composed.

The Quintet for Two Violins, Viola, and Two Cellos in E major, G. 275 is remarkable for many reasons. The image of Boccherini—a pioneer of several forms, including the quintet—as a paragon of the *Galant* style and classical balance and delicacy is well-supported in all movements. But listen carefully to

the choices Boccherini makes. He did not have to ask the strings to be muted in the first movement, nor name the movement *Amoroso* (“Loving,” though musicians typically look for “fast” or “slow.”) This is a composer interested in textures and their inherent color and characteristic. So many descriptors can be found in the music that inspire the musician’s imagination: *Dolce* (“sweet”), *sotto voce* (“hushed”), *poco forte* (“a little strong”). Though tuneful and often virtuosic, as in the unexpected display from both cellists in the first movement, it is really color that Boccherini is after.

That this work demonstrates this clearly should have been enough to recommend it to listeners and performers since it was composed in 1771. But it is the *Minuet* that has carried it across a couple of centuries and change. If you or anyone you know has studied an instrument using the Suzuki Method or their books, you know this piece. Familiar as it may be in arrangement, in this movement Boccherini invents a tapestry of sound when he could have simply added sparse accompaniment to a great tune. He delights the ear with octaves in repeated string crossings, plucked strings, mutes. It’s good to play music that is better than it has to be.

The cello concerto in G major, G. 480, is an earlier work that is reminiscent of Vivaldi but is pure Boccherini, as well. The organization of material is baroque—orchestra enters, then soloist comes in, and the two exchange episodes. But where Vivaldi gave each entity its own material, Boccherini helps advance concerto writing to where 19th century composers will pick it up, with the same material shared by both. In fact, an orchestral bass is absent while the soloist plays (suggesting that Boccherini performed both solo and orchestra part, probably to avoid hiring more musicians while on tour). When the solo line enters, it is most often accompanied in thirds by the first violins. Boccherini also provides the orchestra a developmental role in long episodes. For him, the orchestra is no “padding,” but a partner on par with the soloist, who, in fact, is one of them. Boccherini prefers the second, coexisting but entirely contradictory definition of *concerto*—to play along with.

– GUY FISHMAN

wednesday, june 3 | 12:00 pm

Tuning In: Es ist das Heil uns kommen her, BWV 9

Myers Park Presbyterian Church
Charlotte, NC

Es ist das Heil uns kommen her, BWV 9

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

- I. Chorale fantasia: Es ist das Heil uns kommen her
- II. Recitative: Gott gab uns ein Gesetz
- III. Aria: Wir waren schon zu tief gesunken
- IV. Recitative: Doch mußte das Gesetz erfüllet werden
- V. Duet aria: Herr, du siehst statt guter Werke
- VI. Recitative: Wenn wir die Sünd aus dem Gesetz erkennen
- VII. Chorale: Ob sichs anließ, als wollt er nicht

Musicians

Dr. Roseen Giles Musicologist in Residence

Aisslinn Nosky, Violin I
Fiona Hughes, Violin I
Allison Willet, Violin I
Evan Few, Violin II
Jeanne Johnson, Violin II
Maureen Murchie, Viola
Philip Rawlinson, Viola
Guy Fishman, Cello
Sarah Stone, Cello
John Lenti, Theorbo
Heather Miller Lardin, Bass
Emi Ferguson, Flute

Kristin Olson, Oboe
Ezra Gans Bassoon
Ian Watson, Organ

Carley DeFranco, Soprano
Logan Trotter, Soprano
MaryRuth Miller, Soprano
Paulina Francisco, Soprano
Mara Riley, Soprano
Zoë Chessa, Soprano – Vocal Fellow
(Soloist)
Laura Atkinson, Alto
Carrie Cheron, Alto
Kim Leeds, Alto
Elizabeth Knight, Alto

Nicholas Garza, Alto
Bryce Zimmerman, Alto – Vocal Fellow
(Soloist)
Eric Carey, Tenor
Gene Stenger, Tenor
Eric Laine, Tenor
Cameron Falby, Tenor – Vocal Fellow
(Soloist)
Ryne Cherry, Bass
Harrison Hintzsche, Bass
Fredy Bonilla, Bass
Jason Awbrey, Bass
Matthew Houston, Bass – Vocal Fellow
(Soloist)

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Dr. John Gardella

Dr. Roseen Giles's position as Musicologist-in-Residence is underwritten by Susan Shimp

Concert Duration: Approximately 60 minutes with no intermission.

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wednesday, june 3 | 7:30 pm

Henry Purcell's Dido and Aeneas

Arts+ Community Campus
Charlotte, NC

Dido and Aeneas (Z. 626)

Henry Purcell

Overture

(1659–1695)

Act I

Shake the Cloud from off Your Brow (Belinda)
Banish Sorrow, Banish Care (Chorus)
Ah! Belinda, I Am Pressed with Torment (Dido)
Grief Increases by Concealing (Belinda, Dido)
When Monarchs Unite, How Happy Their State (Chorus)
Whence Could so Much Virtue Spring (Dido, Belinda)
Fear No Danger to Ensue (Belinda, Attendant, Chorus)
See, See Your Royal Guest Appears (Belinda, Aeneas, Dido)
Cupid Only Throws the Dart (Chorus)
If Not for Mine, for Empire's Sake - Pursue Thy Conquest, Love (Aeneas, Belinda)
To the Hills and the Vales (Chorus)
The Triumphant Dance

Act II

Prelude for the Witches - Wayward Sisters - Harm's Our Delight - (Sorceress, First Witch, Chorus)
The Queen of Carthage - Ho Ho Ho (Sorceress, Chorus)
Ruin'd Ere the Set of Sun - Ho Ho Ho (First Witch, Second Witch, Sorceress, Chorus)
But, Ere We This Perform (First Witch, Second Witch)
In Our Deep Vaulted Cell (Chorus)
Echo Dance of the Furies
Ritornelle
Thanks to These Lonesome Vales (Belinda, Chorus)
Oft She Visits This Loved Mountain (Attendant)
Behold, Upon My Bended Spear (Aeneas, Dido)
Haste, Haste to Town (Belinda, Chorus)
Stay, Prince! (Spirit, Aeneas)

Act III

The Sailors' Dance
See, See, the Flags and Streamers Curling (Sorceress, First Witch, Second Witch)
Our Next Motion Must Be to Storm (Sorceress)
Destruction's Our Delight (Chorus)
The Witches' Dance
Your Counsel, All Is Urg'd in Vain (Dido, Belinda, Aeneas)
But Death, Alas! I Cannot Shun (Dido)
Great Minds Against Themselves Conspire (Chorus)
Thy Hand, Belinda (Dido)
When I Am Laid In Earth (Dido's Lament)
With Drooping Wings (Chorus)

Musicians

**Ian Watson, Harpsichord
and Leader**

Aisslinn Nosky, Violin I
Fiona Hughes, Violin I
Allison Willet, Violin I
Evan Few, Violin II
Jeanne Johnson, Violin II
Maureen Murchie, Viola
Philip Rawlinson, Viola

Guy Fishman, Cello
Sarah Stone, Cello
Heather Miller Lardin, Bass
John Lenti, Theorbo
Laura Atkinson, Dido
Harrison Hintzsche, Aeneas
MaryRuth Miller, Belinda
Paulina Francisco,
Second Woman
Kim Leeds, First Witch

Nicholas Garza, Sorceress
Gene Stenger, Sailor/Chorus
Carley DeFranco, Soprano
Logan Trotter, Soprano
Mara Riley, Soprano
Zoë Chessa, Soprano
(Vocal Fellow)
Carrie Cheron, Alto
Elizabeth Knight, Alto
Bryce Zimmerman, Countertenor

(Vocal Fellow)
Eric Carey, Tenor
Eric Laine, Tenor
Cameron Falby, Tenor
(Vocal Fellow)
Ryne Cherry, Bass
Fredy Bonilla, Bass
Jason Awbrey, Bass
Matthew Houston, Bass
(Vocal Fellow)

Laura Atkinson's appearances are made possible thanks to the generosity of Anonymous

MaryRuth Miller's appearances are made possible thanks to the generosity of Cricket Weston and Dave Molinaro

Nicholas Garza's appearances are made possible thanks to the generosity of Anonymous

Concert Duration: Approximately 65 minutes, with no intermission.

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HENRY PURCELL'S

Dido and Aeneas

DR. ROSEEN GILES

GREAT MINDS AGAINST
THEMSELVES CONSPIRE,
AND SHUN THE CURE
THEY MOST DESIRE.

These ominous words are sung by the chorus in Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* just before its heroine takes her own life. They suggest that there is something disquiet about the human condition, that even if the truth is laid bare before us, we are often blind to it. It is a truth universally acknowledged that humans will at some point get things wrong, even if we know better.

The ancient Greeks understood that when realities become stories, and stories become legends, and legends become myths, their truth ceases to be circumstantial but instead becomes psychological. The blending of fact and fiction in the

plays and poems of antiquity gives them their strength, for they are warning safeguards against unchecked human folly. Sooner or later someone will eat the forbidden fruit, or enter the cave, or open the box. It turns out that we humans are even more curious than cats, and we need fiction as much as fact to help us understand ourselves. This is why opera, in its musical re-adaptation enduring stories, is so powerful.

The story of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* is based on the legendary story of Dido, a princess of the Phoenician city of Tyre (in present day Lebanon) and queen of ancient Carthage (in present day Tunisia) towards the end of the 8th century B.C. Though the 'real' Dido was known for her chastity and took her own life to avoid a forced marriage, the Dido of Purcell's opera finds its earliest source in Virgil's *Aeneid*: here Dido lives farther back in time, during the aftermath of the Trojan War (12th century B.C.). In Virgil's telling the Trojan hero Aeneas leaves his city and takes refuge in Carthage on his way to found a new state in what would become Rome.



The Meeting of Dido and Aeneas, 1766, Nathaniel Dance-Holland. Tate London.

The goddesses Venus and Juno meddle in mortals' lives, and eventually cause a great storm that throws Dido and Aeneas together in a cave where they consummate their love. After some months of bliss Mercury, sent by Jove, appears to Aeneas reminding of his duty. Aeneas cruelly informs Dido that he has made her no promises, that the gods demand he leaves, and thus he deserts the queen who then stabs herself. But things are told very differently in Purcell's opera. It is no longer the gods whose meddling causes Dido and Aeneas to fall in love, nor is it the gods who insist Aeneas fulfill his duty: instead it is witches and false spirits, motivated only by hate and treachery, that dupe Aeneas into thinking a great duty awaits him if he abandons his queen. Dido is left to suffer the consequences of a hero misled.

Dido and Aeneas was performed only a couple times during Purcell's lifetime; neither the exact date of composition nor the circumstances of its first performance are readily agreed upon. A letter written from Aleppo (modern day Syria) by the English merchant Rowland Sherman confirms that the opera was performed some time before July 1688 at a girls boarding school in Chelsea run by Josias Priest. Some have posited that despite the letter, there are stylistic reasons to suppose that the opera

could have been composed several years earlier for a court performance at the end of Charles II's reign. Unfortunately, the earliest surviving score dates from nearly a century later (after 1777), but a libretto was printed for the earlier school production which was 'perform'd by young gentlewomen.'

The score, which casts Aeneas as a baritone and includes lower voice parts in the chorus, may actually have reflected an

***Dido and Aeneas* was performed only a couple times during Purcell's lifetime. The earliest surviving score dates from nearly a century later, though a libretto was printed for a 1688 school production 'perform'd by young gentlewomen.'**

earlier professional performance, whose parts would have been adapted to accommodate the voices of the young female pupils at the Chelsea school. This might seem unusual, not only because of the limitations of vocal range, but also for the gendered portrayal of various dramatic roles. On the other hand, single-gender casts were by no means unheard of in the 17th century (one may think of some of

the all-male casts for Shakespeare's plays), and nor was it unusual for composers to adapt parts for different groups of performers. One might recall that Vivaldi's music too, including some of the works with lower voice parts as Michael Talbot has suggested, were likely sung in their entirety by the *virtuosa* female musicians of the Pietà in Venice.

The libretto of Purcell's opera is by Nahum Tate, which he based upon his own five-act tragedy *Brutus of Alba*, or *The*

Enchanted Lovers (1678). The operatic version has a different structure from the spoken play and is instead in three acts with a prologue. This structure was more in line with the tradition of the French *tragédie lyrique* and blends literary and dramatic conventions. There are however other aspects—mirroring John Blow's opera *Venus and Adonis* (c.1683)—that draw instead on English theatrical traditions: the plethora of dances that punctuate the drama and a chorus used to embody a number of different roles in the story.

It is interesting to note that Josias Priest, the director of the girls school where *Dido and Aeneas* was performed, was himself a dancer and choreographer. It is even possible, though contested, that Priest himself may have choreographed dances for some of Purcell's most noted semi-operas: *Dioclesian*, *The Fairy-Queen*, and *King Arthur*. The fluidity of artistic media on the English stage, including incidental music for spoken plays, costumes, stage machinery, spectacle and dance, lent a tremendous versatility to its dramatic traditions.

The court entertainments called 'masques' blended media of various kinds, and in the mid 17th century could include sung and spoken drama, songs, recitatives, and choruses. This was particularly useful since the end of the 17th century was rather turbulent for music and theatre. The Puritans during the reign of Oliver Cromwell were very suspicious of song and closed the theaters during this period. Even after the Restoration and Glorious Revolution in 1688, venues for performance were diverse, and the blending of traditions from the renewed interest in continental dramatic traditions added even more variety to the dramas of late 17th-century England. And yet it turns out that opera—in which a drama is sung straight through with no spoken interludes—was initially a hard sell in England.

Purcell's teacher, John Blow, who was organist at Westminster Abbey and a composer in the Chapel Royal, was one of the few who had any success with drama that was completely sung, in the manner of French and Italian opera. Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, upon which *Dido and Aeneas* is modeled, was also later adapted for the girls of Priest's school to sing (Adonis's role was transposed up an octave). This lends further weight to the theory that Purcell's opera might also have been originally written as entertainment for Charles II, who spent his exile in France and was keen to bring opera to England.

Since opera concerns the re-adaptation of extraordinary stories, it is common to see some of its narratives as an allegory for contemporaneous political events. There have been several theories about *Dido and Aeneas*, some more convincing than



Portrait of Henry Purcell, c.1695, by or after the studio of John Closterman. National Portrait Gallery, London.

others. An earlier date of composition suggests that the prologue, whose music is lost, could be understood to represent the new stability of the Glorious Revolution through the characters of Phoebus and Venus. This doesn't necessarily hold up with the rest of the opera though, in which Aeneas abandons his duty to his queen: hardly a positive portrayal of William of Orange who owed his royal claim to his wife and co-monarch Mary, daughter of the deposed James II.

There may instead be something in the figure of Aeneas, who, like William, sailed to his destiny to found a new order. Of course, Aeneas founded Rome, whereas William took up his claim to the English throne, and while the divine right of monarchs might have seemed an attractive genealogy, the associations with Rome were not all positive. In Tate's own early version of the story, his play *Brutus of Alba*, the character of Aeneas is replaced by his legendary

Many Restoration critics were suspicious of Virgil, and assumed that his Aeneas was an idealized version of Augustus, the emperor who was easily recast as a political and religious tyrant.

grandson Brutus, the mythical founder of Britain following the 12th century chronicle of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Tate, who came from a family of Irish Puritans but as Anthony Welch puts it, 'slipped into London Tory circles,' also suggested in another poem from about 1687 that his Aeneas could be compared to James II, implying that the Roman Catholic king was unfortunately seduced by the decadent appeal of (foreign) witches and sorceresses to make his decisions. (There is also an intriguing

connection here to the witches of Macbeth, the ‘weird sisters,’ who lived on plentifully in Restoration drama, but that is another story).

While no one political allegory maps perfectly onto *Dido and Aeneas*, it is interesting to note how Virgil’s hero is ‘annihilated’ in Tate’s retelling of the story. The focus of our sympathy and attention is replaced by Dido, the flawed and wronged queen whose fate dominates the opera. Many Restoration critics were suspicious of Virgil, and assumed that his Aeneas was an idealized version of Augustus, the emperor who was easily recast as a political and religious tyrant. Aeneas was thus reinterpreted rather as a traitor to his nation of Troy, one who betrayed his own people to Rome and got out of his duty to Dido by cowardly claiming divine intervention. As a result, many took Dido’s side, and though Tate’s own politics might have been slippery by design, his libretto places Dido, and not Aeneas front and center as model of honor and virtue. Dido’s fate fuses private and public duty (how English!).

Unlike the gods in Virgil, who meddle ceaselessly with the lives of mortals, the witches of Purcell’s opera are a kind of parody of the fates, the personifications of destiny, from classical mythology.

The key here has to do with the witches of Tate’s libretto. Unlike the gods in Virgil, who meddle ceaselessly with the lives of mortals, the witches of Purcell’s opera have a rather different heritage. They are a kind of parody of the fates, the personifications of destiny, from classical mythology. Their characterization also relies on the sorceresses of Renaissance epic, in particular Ariosto’s Alcina and Tasso’s Armida, who each were abandoned by thankless lovers. While Venus and Juno hoped for virtue to triumph, the witches of Purcell’s opera have nothing except their hatred of Dido to unite them. They have no honorable purpose. The implication in Tate’s reimagining is that you cannot blame heaven and the gods for your choices; Armida did not force Rinaldo to love her, he did so willingly, and his abandonment of her had human consequences. Fate may be preordained by supernatural forces but not to the point where our choices on earth do not matter.

In her famous lament, Dido sings, ‘Remember me, remember me, but ah! forget my fate.’ This idea that you cannot blame the gods for your actions on earth is at the core of the late 17th-century re-adaptation of the character Aeneas. He is not some blameless hero who must fulfill his destiny: instead he is misled by witches into believing he is not responsible for his own actions. Aeneas as (anti)hero is also reflected in John Dryden’s preface to his 1697 translation of the *Aeneid*. While Dryden does not, like Tate, replace gods with witches, he is very critical of

Virgil, in that Aeneas had political reasons for abandoning Dido and winning over the Romans who long looked on Carthage with enmity.

The intervention of the gods not only relieves Aeneas of any responsibility for his own political machinations, it also, according to Dryden, materially damages the credibility of the gods themselves. To complicate things even further, Dryden’s criticism of Virgil put him in line, as Anthony Welch has pointed out, with French critics of his day.

The negotiation of English, French, and Italian perspectives was a great point of controversy in the musical and literary allegiances of Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*. In Purcell’s opera Dido really does take the moral upper hand, something which Tate and his contemporaries used to further their own politics. In Virgil’s poem, Aeneas reproaches Dido by saying that he never made any promise of marriage, and his duty to the gods far outweighs any obligation to her, even as they were cast in love by more divine meddling.

Purcell’s opera, through Tate’s libretto, calls into question the authority of the gods to absolve humans of their wrongdoing. In the opera, Dido is not coerced into loving Aeneas, and when it becomes clear that he will betray her, she does not beg but rather devastatingly sends him away and sings what is one of the most famous laments in the history of opera: ‘When I am laid in earth.’

Aeneas is made to look a fool and Dido is the one with the glorious end, punctuated musically by the solidity of a ground bass crowned by an emotive and unforgettably passionate melody. In the end Dido claims her honor because she takes full responsibility for her own actions (unlike Aeneas). The final chorus—‘With drooping wings ye cupids come’—offers a musical antidote to the pronouncement of the chorus that ‘great minds against them conspire.’ In the end it is cupids who come to scatter roses on Dido’s tomb, to keep watch, and never, never part.

— ROSEEN GILES, DUKE UNIVERSITY

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thursday, june 4 | 12:00 pm

Tuning In: My song shall be alway, HWV 252

Myers Park Presbyterian Church
Charlotte, NC

My song shall be alway, HWV 252

George Frideric Handel
(1685–1759)

- I. Sinfonia
- II. Soprano and Chorus
- III. Recitative (Tenor)
- IV. Aria (Tenor)
- V. Trio (Soprano, Tenor, Bass)
- VI. Duet (Alto, Bass)
- VII. Chorus
- VII. Aria (Soprano)
- IX. Chorus

Musicians

Dr. Roseen Giles
Musicologist in Residence

Aisslinn Nosky, Violin I
Fiona Hughes, Violin I
Allison Willet, Violin I
Evan Few, Violin II
Jeanne Johnson, Violin II
Guy Fishman, Cello
Heather Miller Lardin, Bass
John Lenti, Theorbo
Kristin Olson, Oboe
Ezra Gans, Bassoon
Ian Watson, Organ

Carley DeFranco, Soprano
Carrie Cheron, Soprano
Logan Trotter, Soprano
MaryRuth Miller, Soprano
Paulina Francisco, Soprano
Mara Riley, Soprano
Zoë Chessa, Soprano – Vocal Fellow
(*Soloist*)
Laura Atkinson, Alto
Kim Leeds, Alto
Elizabeth Knight, Alto
Nicholas Garza, Alto
Bryce Zimmerman, Alto – Vocal Fellow
(*Soloist*)

Eric Carey, Tenor
Gene Stenger, Tenor
Eric Laine, Tenor
Cameron Falby, Tenor – Vocal Fellow
(*Soloist*)
Ryne Cherry, Bass
Harrison Hintzsche, Bass
Fredy Bonilla, Bass
Jason Awbrey, Bass
Matthew Houston, Bass – Vocal Fellow
(*Soloist*)

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Emily Smith

Dr. Roseen Giles's position as Musicologist-in-Residence is underwritten by Susan Shimp

Concert Duration: Approximately 60 minutes with no intermission.

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thursday, june 4 | 7:30 pm

Bach and the French Influence

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Charlotte, NC

Les caractères de la danse

- I. Prelude
- II. Courante
- III. Menuet
- IV. Bourrée
- V. Chaconne
- VI. Sarabande
- VII. Gigue
- VIII. Rigaudon
- IX. Passpied
- X. Gavotte
- XI. Sonate
- XII. Loure
- XIII. Musette
- XIV. Sonate

Jean-Féry Rebel
(1666-1747)

Trio Sonata in G major, BWV 1039

- I. Adagio
- II. Allegro ma non presto
- III. Adagio e piano
- IV. Presto

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Pièce de Clavecin en Trio No. 3 in A major

- I. La Lapoplinière: Rondement
- II. La Timide: Première Rondeau gracieux - Deuxième Rondeau gracieux
- III. Premier Tambourin - Deuxième Tambourin en Rondeau

Jean-Philippe Rameau
(1683-1764)

Musette in D major, BWV Anh.126

Anna Magdalena Bach's Notebook

J.S. Bach

Suite of Dances from La Musette

Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre
(1665-1729)

Ciacona in D minor, BWV 1178

J.S. Bach

Chaconne on Trio

Jacques Morel
(1700-1749)

Les Nations Troisième Ordre 'L'Impériale

- I. Sonade (Gravement - Vivement - Gravement et marqué - Rondeau légèrement - Rondement)
- II. Allemande (Sans lenteur)
- III. Première Courante
- IV. Seconde Courante (Plus marquée)
- V. Sarabande (Tendrement)
- VI. Bourrée (Gayement)
- VII. Gigue (D'une légèreté modérée)
- VIII. Rondeau (Gayement)
- IX. Chaconne
- X. Menuet

François Couperin
(1668-1733)

Musicians

Aisslinn Nosky, Violin I
Fiona Hughes, Violin II
Sarah Stone, Gamba

John Lenti, Theorbo
Emi Ferguson, Flute
Jennifer Streeter, Harpsichord

This performance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Jenny Campbell

Aisslinn Nosky's appearances are made possible thanks to the generosity of Noël and Edgar McCall

Concert Duration: Approximately 75 minutes with no intermission.

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BACH AND THE FRENCH INFLUENCE

SARAH STONE

The well-tempered Johann Sebastian Bach might not be considered well-traveled, as he spent almost his entire life within modern-day central and northern Germany. But that's not to say that Bach wasn't well-cultured; he collected scores by his contemporaries, including Vivaldi and Telemann, and at the age of twenty, he walked 250 miles each way from Arnstadt to Lübeck to hear the organist Dieterich Buxtehude. In his thirties, Bach worked as *Kapellmeister* for Leopold, Prince of Anhalt-Köthen, whose cosmopolitan court was influenced by the lavish spectacle of Versailles.

At the center of that universe was Louis XIV, who, at fifteen, danced the role of Apollo in Cambefort's *Ballet Royal de la Nuit* (1653), rising with the dawn to become France's Sun King. With Louis XIV at the forefront of culture for over seventy years, *ballet de cour* became a carefully staged assertion of divine monarchy through branding, propaganda, and power. As the sun set on Louis' reign in 1715, many dance forms continued to transform into purely instrumental music, outliving their original courtly function.

France's most innovative composers were based at Versailles. Both François Couperin and Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre directly served Louis XIV as keyboardists. A child prodigy, Jacquet performed for Louis XIV at five and, under his patronage, became one of the few composers allowed to publish music with his direct permission. Couperin wrote his *Les Nations* (1726) to represent Europe's Catholic powers: France, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and the House of Savoy in the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. *Les Nations* was a work that Bach knew, transcribing the *Rondeau Légèrement* from the "L'Impériale" suite for his own Organ Trio, BWV 587. France's next generation included Jacques Morel, a student of the gambist, Marin Marais, and Jean-Féry Rebel, a violinist under the tutelage of Jean-Baptiste Lully. Rameau was one of the few composers not to serve under Louis XIV, partly because he waited until the second half of his life to write opera, becoming the most famous French composer after Lully. Before that, Rameau conducted an orchestra for his patron, Alexandre Le Riche de La Poupelinière, for whom the first movement of his *Pièces de clavecin en concerts* is named.

Beyond dance, French influence extended to instruments. The Hotteterre family of woodwind builders transformed the traversière, or transverse flute, into an instrument that came

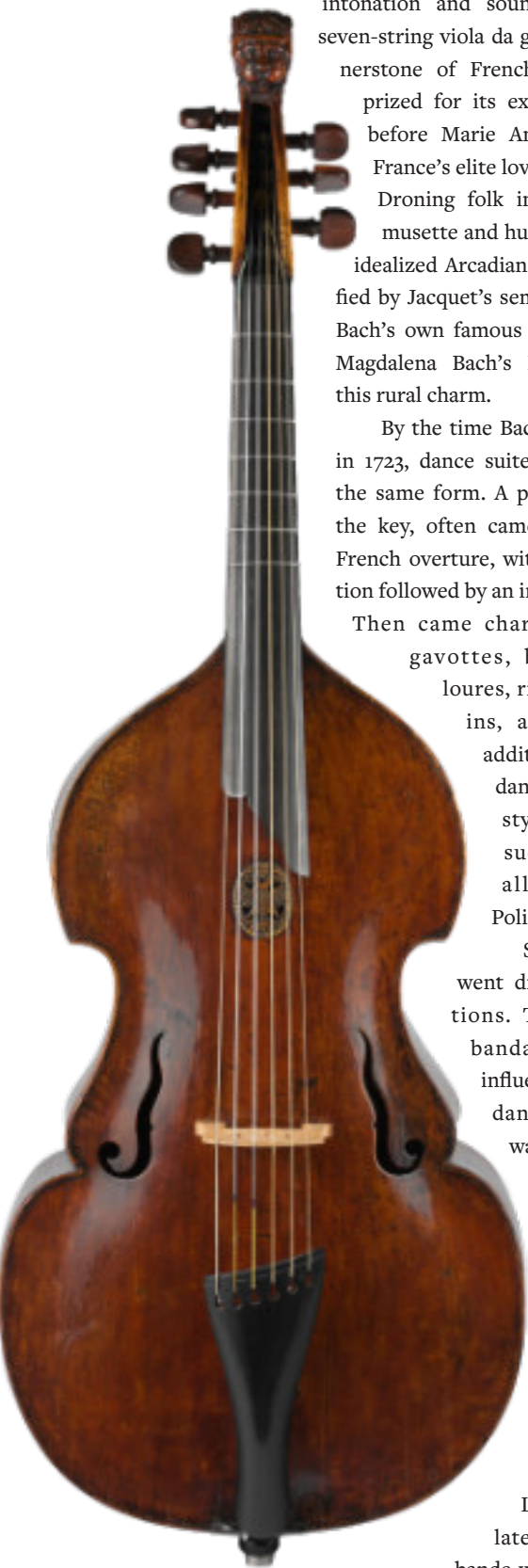
apart in three sections, helping stabilize intonation and sound production. The seven-string viola da gamba became a cornerstone of French continuo playing, prized for its extended range. Even before Marie Antoinette's Hameau, France's elite loved playing pastorale. Droning folk instruments like the musette and hurdy-gurdy evoked an idealized Arcadian simplicity, exemplified by Jacquet's semi-opera, *La Musette*. Bach's own famous musette from Anna Magdalena Bach's Notebook, captures this rural charm.

By the time Bach arrived in Leipzig in 1723, dance suites typically followed the same form. A prelude, establishing the key, often came in the form of a French overture, with a grand slow section followed by an imitative fast section.

Then came character dances like gavottes, bourrées, giges, loures, rigaudons, tambourins, and passepiés. In addition to these French dances, other national styles were included, such as the German allemande and the Polish polonaise.

Some dances underwent dramatic transformations. The Spanish zarabanda, with its Arabic influences, a couples line dance with castanets, was described in 1609 by a Jesuit priest as "a dance and song so loose in its words and so ugly in its motions that it is enough to excite bad emotions in even very decent people."

Less than a century later, the French sara-bande was stately and slow.



Johann Sebastian Bach portrait, with riddle canon, 1746, by Elias Gottlob Haussmann. Bach-Archiv Leipzig.

Suites often ended with a chaconne, featuring an elaborately decorated melody over a repeating bass line. A recent rediscovery has expanded Bach's catalogue; the Ciacona, BWV 1178 received its modern premiere in 2025 thanks to the work of the musicologist Peter Wollny.

Although famously Lutheran, Bach's output extended to secular music. In 1729, he became director of the Collegium Musicum, presenting weekly concerts at Café Zimmermann. Coffeehouses themselves were part of a broader European trend; Paris's first café, Le Procope, founded in 1686, served as a gathering place for intellectuals such as Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau. These third spaces fostered the exchange of ideas across disciplines. Bach's Trio Sonata, BWV 1039, scored for two flutes and continuo (as well as a version for gamba and harpsichord), blends Italian sonata form with French dance idioms, including a final movement featuring the characteristics of a bourrée.

In a fitting finale, Jean-Féry Rebel's *Les caractères de la danse* distills an entire tradition into a single work. Rather than presenting dances as separate movements, Rebel's piece offers a rapid succession of forms, each appearing briefly before yielding to the next. The effect is almost kaleidoscopic; a compressed anthology of dance suites in just eight minutes.

– SARAH STONE

friday, june 4 | 7:30 pm

Echoes of Bach

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Charlotte, NC

Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen	Heinrich Isaac (1450–1517)
Nun ruhen alle Wälder, BWV 392	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Nun ruhen alle Wälder (1906) Ms. Ferguson, Ms. Ahn, Mr. Fishman	Erik Satie (1866–1925)
Largo from Sonata No. 3 for Solo Violin, BWV 1005 Ms. Ahn	J.S. Bach, arr. Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)
Pièces de clavecin en concert Ms. Ferguson, Ms. Ahn, Mr. Fishman	Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764)
Fugue Valse (1906) Ms. Ferguson, Ms. Ahn, Mr. Fishman	Erik Satie
Laissez durer la nuit Ms. Ferguson, Ms. Ahn, Mr. Fishman	Sébastien Le Camus / Emi Ferguson (ca. 1610–1677)
Prélude, Choral et Fugue, FWV 21 (1884) Ms. Ahn	César Franck (1822–1890)
Fugue à tatons (from Choses vues à droite et à gauche (sans lunettes)) Douze petit chorales Ms. Ferguson, Ms. Ahn	Erik Satie
Sonata Ms. Ferguson, Ms. Ahn	Francis Poulenc (1899–1963))

Musicians

Emi Ferguson, Flute
Guy Fishman, Cello
Esther Jeehae Ahn, Piano

Steinway Piano selected from Steinway Piano Gallery-Charlotte
www.steinwaycarolina.com

Esther Jeehae Ahn's appearances are made possible partly by a donation honoring Josephine Shaffner
Guy Fishman's appearances are made possible thanks to the generosity of Robert and Jan Busch

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ECHOES OF BACH

A la française

BORROWING AND THE FRENCH CONNECTION

EMI FERGUSON

Johann Sebastian Bach is described as the prototypical “German” composer. Though he didn’t travel geographically far in his life, his music is full of styles and instruments borrowed from places far from home. In his hallmark work for solo flute, his *Partita*, BWV 1013, we see him fusing French, Italian, and German styles into a work that scaled the full range of the instrument at the time. And the flute that he was writing for was one made in the halls of the court of Louis XIV. Having conquered in battle, Louis XIV settled back at home, setting his sights on conquering the art world. Naturally, he needed a flute.

Up until this point, the woodwind instruments of France were oboes and bassoons, instruments that were used proudly in the military bands, and designed for playing out of doors. But Louis needed a wind instrument suited for the gold-decked rooms of Versailles. So the creative players of the French court tinkered and created the baroque flute in the 1680s. The aristocracy became OBSESSED with it.

And though it was at the top of the charts in the French court, it would take almost 40 years for the instrument to find its way to Johann Sebastian Bach.

Before he was able to get his hands on it, his older brother, a military oboist by the name of Johann Jacob Bach, heard the great flute virtuoso Piere-Gabriel Buffardin in 1707. Like many oboists before him, he fell in love with the flute, and even took lessons with Buffardin. I like to imagine him writing to his brother to tell him of this amazing instrument and Buffardin’s incredible skills! In 1719, J.S. Bach met Buffardin in the Dresden court, writing both his solo partita and Brandenburg 5 for Buffardin’s virtuoso skills.

French influence (and the flute) never left Bach’s music, and it was French musicians who later helped bring Bach’s flute works back into the spotlight. After the flute’s second major reinvention in the mid-19th century (this time into a metal instrument), French players and composers embraced it

wholeheartedly. At the Paris Conservatory, the legendary flutist and pedagogue Paul Taffanel gave his students a strict diet of Bach, technique exercises, and new music. The Partita may not have been heard publicly between its composition in 1719 and a performance in 1913, the same year Debussy's *Syrinx* premiered, after which it became a cornerstone of the repertoire.

It wasn't just the flute repertoire of Bach, or just Bach that French musicians were reviving. Tonight we'll hear one of Camille Saint-Saëns' transcriptions of Bach for the piano alongside one of his transcriptions of the music of Jean Philippe Rameau. Rameau, France's most celebrated Baroque composer, and court composer to both Louis XIV and XV, saw a flourishing thanks to Camille Saint-Saëns's interest in his music. Saint-Saëns's arrangements and engraving of Rameau's *Pieces de clavecin en concert* reintroduced these incredible works that feel equally at home in the 20th century as they do in the 18th.

Though it was at the top of
the charts in the French court,
it would take almost 40 years
for the baroque flute to find its
way to Johann Sebastian Bach.

This revival coincided with broader French fascination with the past, perhaps best embodied by Erik Satie, described by his best friend Claude Debussy as a "gentle medieval musician lost in the 20th century." Satie's music often contained throwbacks to styles of music of the past, both imagined and real. When he returned to school in his forties to get a better grip on counterpoint, Bach's chorales were the foundation for his study. As part of these studies, he reharmonized Lutheran chorales, something he had mixed opinions on, remarking in the frontispiece of one of his scores "My chorales are equal to those of Bach, with this difference: they are rarer and less pretentious."

Satie never stopped learning, and like Bach, he also played a crucial mentoring role, supporting a younger generation of French composers, most notably the group Les Six, among them Francis Poulenc. Poulenc would remember his mentorship long into the future. We even have some amazing recordings from the '50s of Poulenc performing works of Satie. A few years after that, Poulenc's Sonata for flute and piano was commissioned by the Library of Congress. Writing about the work, Poulenc described it as having "the feeling of going back a long way, but with a more settled technique. It's a sonata of Debussyan dimensions. It's the French sense of balance [*la mesure française*]." A few parallels to say the least.

Satie encouraged a young Poulenc early in his career. A 1917 correspondence between the two includes some of this wonderful advice from Satie to the young composer: "You seem to me to be lost, but easy to find.... Never get mixed up with 'schools': there's been an explosion—quite natural, by the way...Laugh my good friend." Just two years earlier in 1915, a sixteen-year-old Poulenc wrote to a number of French composers to solicit their opinions on César Franck. Satie replied "Everything leads me to suppose that Franck was a huge musician. His work is astonishingly Franckist, in the best sense of the word." Lol.

César Franck was a child prodigy whose parents moved the family from Belgium to Paris so that he could get the best musical training at the Paris conservatory where he won prizes not only in performance, but in the art of the fugue. Bachian to say the least! Retreating from public life at the ripe old age of 26, Franck dedicated his life to composition, the organ, and to teaching. His students included Vincent D'Indy who, decades later, would guide Satie through his counterpoint lessons at the Schola Cantorum. Though his *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* was conceived as a modern response to Bachian forms, he would make it decidedly his own. And as always, there were critics. Saint-Saëns wryly remarked that "the chorale is not a chorale and the fugue is not a fugue". But in it, you hear influences of the musical world that Franck inhabited. It's hard for me not to hear the melodies of the cabaret songs Satie would play at Le Chat Noir fly through its most lyrical moments.

Years prior, I had the chance to perform Franck's monumental Sonata for violin and piano. And in the great baroque tradition of adapting music to one's own instrument (whether or not it was originally written for it), I adapted the violin part to the flute. It works marvelously, and in searching for a companion piece for Franck's Sonata, I decided to make a Franckian arrangement of 17th century song *Laissez durer la nuit* by French composer Sébastien Le Camus. Little is known about Le Camus, but I fell in love with this song many years ago, and decided to "borrow" and "update" it as a 21st century pop song in my debut album *Amour Cruel*. This flute, cello, and piano version is quite different to the stacked harmonies in my pop arrangement, borrowing instead from Franck's glittering textures and shimmering melodies.

– EMI FERGUSON



saturday, june 6 | 7:30 pm

Handel's Theodora

Sandra Levine Theatre
Sarah Belk Gambrell Center for the Arts and Civic Engagement
Queens University of Charlotte, Charlotte, NC

Theodora, HWV 68

George Frideric Handel
(1685-1759)

Act I

Act II

Intermission

Act II continued

Act. III

Musicians

Ian Watson, Harpsichord and Lader

Aisslinn Nosky, Violin I
Fiona Hughes, Violin I
Allison Willet, Violin I
Evan Few, Violin II
Jeanne Johnson, Violin II
Maureen Murchie, Viola
Philip Rawlinson, Viola
Guy Fishman, Cello
Sarah Stone, Cello
Heather Miller Lardin, Bass
John Lenti, Theorbo
Kristin Olson, Oboe I
William Thauer, Oboe II
Ezra Gans, Bassoon

Chris Caudill, Horn I
Rachel Niketopoulos, Horn II
Perry Sutton, Trumpet I
Brandon Bergeron, Trumpet II
Brian McNulty, Timpani

Carley DeFranco, Theodora
Carrie Cheron, Irene
Nicholas Garza, Didymus
Eric Carey, Septimius
Ryne Cherry, Valens

Logan Trotter, Soprano
MaryRuth Miller, Soprano
Paulina Francisco, Soprano
Amber Rose, Soprano
Mara Riley, Soprano

Zoë Chessa, Soprano – Vocal FELLOW
Kim Leeds, Alto
Lauren Russell, Alto
Elizabeth Knight, Alto
Bryce Zimmerman, Countertenor
– Vocal Fellow
Gene Stenger, Tenor
Mike Trammell, Tenor
Eric Laine, Tenor
Cameron Falby, Tenor – Vocal Fellow
Harrison Hintzsche, Bass
Fredy Bonilla, Bass
Jason Awbrey, Bass
Matthew Houston, Bass – Vocal Fellow

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This concert is dedicated to the memory of Dr. T.C. Price Zimmermann

Nicholas Garza's appearance is made possible thanks to the generosity of Anonymous

Concert Duration: Approximately 2 1/2 hours, with intermission.

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I can't conclude a letter, and forget Theodora. I have heard it three times, and will venture to pronounce it, as finished, beautiful and labour'd a composition, as ever Handel made. To my knowledge this took him up a great while in composition.

The Town don't like it at all.

4th Earl of Shaftesbury to James Harris, March 24, 1750

HANDEL'S THEODORA

DR. ROSEEN GILES

Evidently 'the Town' (London) did not at all like Handel's oratorio *Theodora*. Despite a flourish of interest at the end of the 20th century, *Theodora* was given only four times in Handel's lifetime—making it the least-performed of his oratorios. Its premiere at Covent Garden on Friday, March 16, 1750 was poorly attended.

Theodora is magnificent (if unusual) among Handel's compositions, and it speaks differently now than it might have to audiences of the 18th century. There are several theories to explain why *Theodora* was poorly received in Handel's day. There was an earthquake a week before the premiere, causing many to flee the city and consequently miss the performance.

More substantially, the narrative and its musical setting was much more introverted, ambiguous, and thought-provoking in spirit than were, for example, the triumphs of *Messiah*. Another concertgoer, Thomas Harris wrote to his brother James on 22 March 1750 that *Theodora* was much appreciated only by the more discerning of the audience members: 'I was last night at *Theodora*, which does not please the generality of people, but I differ widely in my opinion, for I think it has many excellent songs, composed with great art and care.' It seems that some loved it, but many didn't much care for it.

Handel himself appears to have been greatly frustrated by this, for, as his contemporary the historian Charles Burney related in a colourful anecdote, when the composer was approached by two gentlemen hoping to get tickets to *Messiah*, he apparently scolded them for not going to *Theodora* instead! Burney, characteristically creative in his accounts, writes out Handel's words spelling them in a manner that imitated what must have been a prodigious German accent:

Mien-herren! you are a tamnaple tainty [damnable dainty]! you would not go to Teodora—der was room enough to tance dere, when dat was perform.



'Theodora and Didymus exchange clothes', engraving by Jan Luyken (Amsterdam, 1700), Rijksmuseum

Burney then informs us that Handel later changed his mind, and figured it was better to have less riff-raff there anyway:

Nevre moind; de moosic vil sound de petter
(quoted in Burney, 1785, p. 29).

The story of Theodora is quite unusual among Handel's sacred works. It tells of an early Christian virgin martyr who lived during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian in the early 4th century. Originally recounted by Saint Ambrose, the hagiographical Theodora was a chaste noblewoman who converted to Christianity and, when she refused to marry, was forced into prostitution and martyred. The story is changed in Handel's version, which has a libretto by the clergyman and classicist Thomas Morell.

Following the adaptation of the saint's story by Pierre Corneille and later Robert Boyle, Morell's Theodora was a virgin martyr in Antioch who was sentenced to prostitution not because she refused to marry but, even more cruelly, because she refused to sacrifice for the Roman god Jove on Diocletian's birthday. The story hinges on the conflict between the Christians and the Heathens, each represented in the oratorio by two choruses.

Valens is the ruthless Roman prefect of Antioch among the chorus of Heathens; he is the one who condemns Theodora when she rejects his command to worship Jove. One of his officers Septimius is by contrast sympathetic to the Christians and to his compatriot Didymus. Irene is Theodora's friend who sings with the chorus of Christians. Stuck in the middle is Didymus, the Roman soldier who is secretly a Christian and in love with Theodora. He goes to see her in prison and suggests they switch clothing so she may escape.

Didymus is then condemned for his treason and Theodora returns offering her life in exchange for his. In the end they are both sent to be executed, as Irene and the chorus of Christians sing praise of divine love and the noble strength of the martyrs.

Morell's primary source for Handel's libretto was a little-known novel by Robert Boyle called *The Martyrdom of Theodora and of Didymus* (1687). Without necessarily knowing it, most of you have probably heard of Boyle, though not as an author and certainly not as a hagiographer. Sometimes called the 'father' of chemistry, Boyle is most famous for Boyle's Law, which states that pressure and volume of a confined gas are inversely proportional. But we digress. The musicologist Ruth Smith has described Boyle's version of the Theodora story as



'Theodora halts the execution of Didymus', engraving by Jan Luyken (Amsterdam, 1700), Rijksmuseum

'proto-feminist,' in that it takes the stance, rather unusual for its day, that women could not only be passive models of virtue, but active heroines and masters of their fate. The fact that Theodora is totally steadfast and not seeking the love of a man are themselves acts of resistance. This would have consequences for the representation of female characters in plays and novels later in the century, in which women's goodness and bravery was often held in a complicated balance with their agency and determination. The title character of Samuel Richardson's highly influential epistolary novel *Clarissa* (1747–48) bears a resemblance to *Theodora*.

Such novels often left moral questions ambiguously open and demanded their readers consider contrasting interpretations of events: they showed conflicts from multiple perspectives and provoked readers to imagine what they would do if put into such a situation. What is right and what is just? How do we deal, in this case, with a story in which the protagonists

break the law and appeal to a higher authority than the state to justify their actions? It is possible that for Theodora Morell and Handel had this kind of edifying engagement in mind since, through the different media of words and music, it makes for a profound artistic statement. But it is equally possible that some audiences did not take as kindly to being 'put to work' to figure out the oratorio's message, particularly when matters of state and religion were at this time so contested. If we believe some of the attendees of the premiere, only the most discerning listeners(!) were prepared to rise to the challenge.

Despite its tragic ending, *Theodora* has given us some of the most poignant and hopeful music of Handel's career. The

contrast between a hopeless situation and music conveying its opposite is moving beyond measure. No one could forget Lorraine Hunt Lieberson's heart-cramping performance as Irene in Peter Sellars's production at Glyndebourne in 1996. The premiere's cast too was star-studded: the title role was played by

Musicologist Ruth Smith has described Boyle's version of the Theodora story as 'proto-feminist,' in that it takes the stance, that women could not only be passive models of virtue, but active heroines and masters of their fate.



George Frideric Handel, c1726–8, attributed to Balthasar Denner.
The National Portrait Gallery, London.

the soprano Giulia Frasi, Irene was portrayed by the mezzo Caterina Galli, and, probably most famous of all was Gaetano Guadagni, the alto castrato who sang the role of Didymus. After all, audiences came to see the singers as much as to hear new compositions, and Guadagni was known for his prizing of lyricism and drama over showy displays of vocal acrobatics (his most iconic role was that of Gluck's *Orfeo*).

The orchestral writing too must have been greatly appealing to those who listened to *Theodora* with discerning ears. When Theodora remains alone and imprisoned she sings 'O that I on wings cou'd rise' (part 2, scene 2), and while her actual state is pitifully trapped, the orchestra gives the impression of dove's wings rising up to beat on a cage. In this and other passages of *Theodora*, Handel's music encapsulates suffering and aspiration at the same time, using the orchestra as well as the singer's words to tell different aspects of the narrative.

A different kind of virtuosity is present in Handel's writing for Irene, a Christian and Theodora's friend. Irene is not a martyr, but while her resolve is not as strong as Theodora's, her character allowed Handel to explore precisely the kind of human ambiguity that made Morell's telling of the story so powerful. Irene's most famous air (made even more famous by Hunt Lieberson's performance) is 'As with rosy steps the morn' in part 1, scene 4. The text foreshadows the events to follow with a curious blend of symbols, scripture, and meteorology.

*As with rosy steps the morn
advancing, drives the shades of night;
so from virtuous toils well-borne,
raise thou our hopes of endless light.
Triumphant saviour! Lord of Day!
Thou art the Life, the Light, the Way.*

You may well wonder what exactly it means for the morning to be 'rosy.' While one definition may suggest that 'rosy' implies optimism or reassurance, the literary context of the time suggests another reading. The reddish morning skies appear in works by Shakespeare (*Henry IV, Part 1*, 1598), Ben Jonson (*Catiline His Conspiracy*, 1611), John Dryden (*Albion and Albanus*, 1685), and in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667).

The 'rosy' colour of the sky in literature represents not only the hope of morning, but, as Minji Kim has recently argued, simultaneously signifies impending and 'underlying distress'. The signs of nature make us keenly aware of forces greater than our own. In Irene's aria, the colour of the sky foreshadows the suffering that is to come—in her recitative directly before she warns that 'the storm now thickens, and looks big with fate'—but at the same time the music conveys the hopeful optimism for 'endless light'.

Even as the vocal and instrumental lines seem to throb, cycle, and turn back on themselves representing, perhaps, the faltered resolve of human steps in contrast to the relentless ones of night and day, Irene seems to see past the imminent violence towards the promise of light, life, and glory. The contrasting B

Handel's music encapsulates
suffering and aspiration at the same
time, using the orchestra as well as
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aspects of the narrative.

section of the aria gives a paraphrase from the gospel of John 14:6 when Jesus says: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life'. In the libretto the order is changed, implying that Jesus is the 'Lord of Day' and that 'truth', interestingly, is replaced with 'light.'

It would seem that Handel, through music, turned a rather bleak libretto into a message of hope. And yet, things are still not exactly as they seem. Handel actually omitted the end of Morell's libretto which originally included not only the serenity of Theodora and Didymus's executions, it also depicted the conversion of a thousand Roman onlookers who were compelled to become Christians after seeing the martyrdom. Even if audiences might not have been familiar enough with the story to know what happened after Theodora's death, this final text would have ensured that they understood its positive outcome

Ambiguity in art is hard to deal with.
But without ambiguity, art begins to fail
at its social purpose and, with too clear
a politics, begins to flirt with propaganda.

Even stranger is the fact that Morell actually added a ‘Hallelujah’ to this truncated version of the story which, as finale, would have had the oratorio end on an optimistic and familiar note. But Handel did not set this ‘Hallelujah’ and, famously, ended the oratorio with a chorus—‘O Love divine, thou source of fame’—in a minor key. Jubilant choruses were of course much beloved and expected by Handel’s audiences. What he gave them instead in *Theodora* is much closer to the final chorus of Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* (1688)—‘With drooping wings ye cupids come’—than it was to the choruses of *Messiah*.

So was it really earthquakes that discouraged Handel’s audience? Or was it the fact that a relatively obscure, morally and musically ambiguous story required a significant amount of contemplation from its audience, particularly as it lacked a triumphant ending? The oratorio ends with the impending death of its virtuous characters and its messages complicate the notion of loyalty in religion, politics, and nationalism.

Even if *Theodora*’s personal virtue is unassailable, Didymus is actually a traitor and it is more than possible that this disturbed listeners’ expectation of what Smith called the ‘reassuring patriotic uplift’ in Handel’s oratorios. Ambiguity in art is hard to deal with. But without ambiguity, art begins to fail at its social purpose and, with too clear a politics, begins to flirt with propaganda. *Theodora*’s radical pacifism and religious fervour may not have sat well with some subsets of Handel’s audiences; in the case of the former it may have seemed too nonconformist in its Protestantism, and in the latter, it may even have suggested a subversive Roman Catholicism.

Of course, perceptions are rather different from intents and it seems unlikely that either Morell or Handel were aiming to create an enormous controversy. Still, it is difficult not to see the more introverted *Theodora* as consciously different from

other oratorios, particularly for Handel who at this point was entering the last decade of his life.

A comparison of *Theodora* to *Messiah* may not then be the most fruitful, even as they are the two of Handel’s oratorios on explicitly Christian topics. But this did not stop many people from trying. Morell’s retrospective account of his dealings with Handel is rather liberal with the truth, although he did claim in a 1764 letter that before the composer died Morell asked Handel whether he considered the ‘Hallelujah’ chorus from *Messiah* to be his masterpiece. Handel allegedly replied tersely ‘No,’ and added ‘I think the chorus at the end of the 2nd part of *Theodora* [‘He saw the lovely youth’] far beyond it.’ Burney was perhaps a little more reliable than Morell when it came to narrating Handel’s life and personality, although contemporary accounts are all imbued with nostalgia and indeed ‘rosy’ memories.

On that note, I should give Burney the last word, who, after the composer’s death described Handel thus:

The figure of Handel was large, and he was somewhat corpulent, and unwieldy in his motions; but his countenance, which I remember as perfectly as that of any man I saw but yesterday, was full of fire and dignity; and such as impressed ideas of superiority and genius. He was impetuous, rough, and preemptory in his manners and conversation, but totally devoid of ill-nature or malevolence; indeed, there was an original humour and pleasantry in his most lively sallies of anger or impatience, which, with his broken English, were extremely risible
(Burney, pp. 31–32).

— ROSEEN GILES, DUKE UNIVERSITY

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BA|CH
CHARLOTTE ● BACH FESTIVAL

JUNE 3–
JUNE 12 2027

sunday, june 7 | 3:00 pm

Organ Recital with Leester Ackerman

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Charlotte, NC

Third Sonata in A Major, Op. 65

Con moto maestoso

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809–1847)

Three Organ Chorales from *Clavierübung III*

Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit, BWV 669
Christe, aller Welt Trost, BWV 670
Kyrie, Gott heiliger Geist, BWV 671

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Fantaisie in C Major (Version III, 1868)

Cesar Franck
(1822–1890)

Variations on 'America' for Organ (1891)

Charles Ives

Allegro-Moderato
Var. I Moderato
Var. II Andante-Interlude
Var. III Allegro
Var. IV Polonaise-Interlude
Var. V Allegro-as fast as the pedals can go

(1874–1954)

Two folk tune settings for organ

Shenandoah (Largamente e sempre rubando)

Arr. Leonardo Ciampa
(b. 1971)

Amazing Grace (Toccata for Organ)

Christopher Pardini
(b. 1973)

Carillon-Sortie (1911)

Henri Mulet
(1878–1967)

Musician

Lester Ackerman, Organ

Concert Duration: Approximately 65 minutes with no intermission.

Please silence electronic devices for the duration of the performance. Audio or video recording of any portion of this event is not permitted. Thank you for honoring our musicians and preserving the value of live performance.

artistic leaders



AISSLINN NOSKY

VIOLIN

Violinist Aisslinn Nosky captivates audiences around the world with her innovative interpretations and impeccable technique. Her fierce passion for early music and skill as a soloist, director, and conductor has generated robust appreciation by press and audiences alike. Hailed as “superb” by *The New York Times* and “a fearsomely powerful musician” by *The Toronto Star*, widespread demand for Aisslinn continues to grow.

In 2011 Aisslinn was appointed Concertmaster of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston. She is also Concertmaster of Bach Charlotte and has been Guest Artist-in-Residence with the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra since 2018. Aisslinn has also collaborated with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Holland Baroque, and the Charlotte Symphony. She was a dedicated member of Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra from 2005 to 2016 and served as Principal Guest Conductor of the Niagara Symphony from 2016 to 2019.

Aisslinn is a founding member of the Eybler Quartet, who explore repertoire from the early quartet literature on period instruments. Their most recent recording features Beethoven's Op. 18 string quartets. *Gramophone Magazine* mused, “they make no bones about treating Beethoven as a radical. ... This set might delight you or it might infuriate you: either way, I suspect, Beethoven would have been more than happy.” With the Eybler Quartet, Aisslinn serves on the faculty of EQ: Evolution of the String Quartet at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. EQ is an intensive summer course for emerging artists which celebrates the lineage of the string quartet, both as a historical genre and as a freshly invigorated practice in the 21st century.

Born in Canada, Aisslinn began playing violin at age three and made her solo debut with the CBC Vancouver Orchestra at age eight.

Aisslinn Nosky's appearances are made possible thanks to the generosity of Noël and Edgar McCall



GUY FISHMAN

CELLO

Guy Fishman is principal cellist of the Handel and Haydn Society, with which he made his Symphony Hall solo debut in 2005. He is in demand as an early music specialist in the U.S. and Europe, having performed as principal cellist and with Tafelmusik, Seraphic Fire, Bach Charlotte, Arcadia Players, Connecticut Early Music Festival, Querelle des Bouffons, Emmanuel Music, the Boston Museum Trio, Boulder Bach Festival, El Mundo, and with Boston Baroque and Apollo's Fire, among others.

On standard cello he has performed with Bargemusic, Les Violons du Roi, Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Albany Symphony Orchestra, the Colorado Music Festival, The Mark Morris Dance group, and others. He has appeared in recital with Dawn Upshaw, Mark Peskanov, Eliot Fisk, Richard Eggar, Lara St. John, Gil Kalish, Kim Kashkashian, and Natalie Merchant. His playing has been praised as “plangent” by *The Boston Globe*, “electrifying” by *The New York Times*, and “beautiful....noble” by the Boston Herald, and “dazzling” by the *Portland Press Herald*. *The Boston Musical Intelligencer* related having “... heard greater depth in [Haydn concerto] than I have in quite some time.”

Guy has recorded for the Olde Focus, CORO, Telarc, Centaur, Titanic, and Newport Classics labels. Vivaldi cello concerti with members of the Handel and Haydn Society were called “brilliant” by the Huffington Post and “a feast for the ears” by Early Music America, which remarked on the “exuberance ... adroit sense of phrasing and extraordinary technique...grace and agility” found in his recording with H+H of the cello concerti by CPE Bach.

Guy studied with David Soyer, Peter Wiley, Julia Lichten, and Laurence Lesser, with whom he completed Doctoral studies at the New England Conservatory of Music. In addition, he is a Fulbright Fellow, having worked with famed Dutch cellist Anner Bylsma in Amsterdam. He plays a rare cello made in Rome in 1704 by David Tecchler.

Guy Fishman's appearances are made possible thanks to the generosity of Robert and Jan Busch

musicologist-in-residence

ROSEEN GILES

MRS. ALEXANDER HEHMEYER ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF MUSIC
DUKE UNIVERSITY



Roseen Giles is a musicologist with a specialty in early modern musical culture; she is also the curator of DUMIC (Duke University Musical Instrument Collections). In her research she examines the aesthetic, professional, and personal relationships between poets and musicians of the Italian 17th century. Her monograph (Cambridge University Press, 2023)—*Monteverdi and the Marvelous: Poetry, Sound, and Representation*—contributes to the histories of music and literature by arguing that the controversial experiments of 17th-century poets had a profound influence on techniques in musical composition, most notably in the works of Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643). Her most recent book—*Lettera amorosa: Musical Love-Letters in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge University Press, 2025) explores the musical history of epistolary poetry. She has published essays on music and philosophy in the Renaissance, memory and orality in the notation of medieval music, and the relationship between music and devotional practice in the 17th century.

Dr. Roseen Giles's position as Musicologist-in-Residence is made possible thanks to the generosity of Susan Shimp

vocalists



CARLEY DEFranCO, SOPRANO

Soprano Carley DeFranco gives meaningful and embodied performances. Her favorite projects include the roles of Anna/Dido/Dido's Ghost in the East Coast premiere of *Dido's Ghost* (Errolyn Wallen) with Emmanuel Music, a fully staged *Les Illuminations* (Benjamin Britten) with Urbanity Dance, singing and dancing onstage as a siren with Boston Ballet and Lorelei Ensemble in *La Mer*, and the premiere of *Lost Birds* (Christopher Tin) with VOCES8. A former Lorraine Hunt Lieberston Fellow with Emmanuel Music, Carley has sung over 100 Bach cantatas in their weekly series and has been a soloist and chorister in all of their recent concert and staged productions. She has been a guest soloist with many organizations throughout the U.S. and regularly performs with Boston Lyric Opera, Oregon Bach Festival, Sarasa Ensemble, Musicians of the Old Post Road, Handel and Haydn

Society and Ensemble Altera. A loving teacher, Carley is the founder of DeFranco Music LLC, which partners with local schools to offer music lessons, and she is a Voice Instructor in Harvard University's Holden Voice Program.



PAULINA FRANCISCO, SOPRANO

Paulina Francisco's "vivacious soprano was a ray of sunshine" (*The Guardian*). Hailed for her "agility, impact, and vibrant projection" (*ClassyKey*) which "preserves a finesse of delivery allowing one to savor the ornamentation and agility" (*Olyrix*), Paulina enjoys an international career, in demand as a soloist, collaborator, and project curator. Paulina is a winner of the "Le Jardin des Voix" with Les Arts Florissants and is a soloist in their production of Henry Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*, with staging and choreography

by Mourad Merzouki. In March 2025, she made her London Handel Festival debut singing the role of L'Allegro in *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*. In the 2023–24 season, Paulina was a Young Artist with Opera Lafayette, making her Kennedy Center debut in the role of Thalie in Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*. Additional role credits include Semele in John Eccles' *Semele* with American Baroque Opera Company and Esther in Handel's *Esther* with Opera Lafayette.



MARYRUTH MILLER, SOPRANO

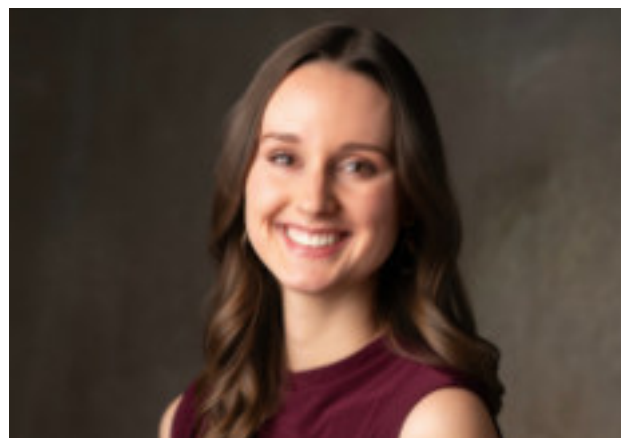
MaryRuth Miller, soprano, has appeared worldwide as a choral artist and concert soloist. MaryRuth is a founding member of the newest VOCES8 Foundation ensemble, Lyyra. In 2024–25, she joined VOCES8 as a substitute soprano for performances all around the world, including an especially memorable performance at the BBC Proms with the King's Singers. She also sings with the Handel and Haydn Society Chorus, New York City's Clarion Choir, Bach Collegium San Diego, and the Oregon Bach Festival Chorus. An equally passionate soloist with a love for baroque music, she has recently been featured with Upper Valley Baroque, Pegasus Early Music, San Diego Baroque, the Charlotte Master Chorale, the Baldwin Wallace Bach Festival, and the Oregon Bach Festival. She is the 2026 Virginia Best Adams Soprano Fellow with the Carmel Bach Festival. She lives in San Diego, CA, and hails from West Columbia, SC.



ARWEN MYERS, SOPRANO

Known for her “crystalline tone and delicate passagework” (*San Francisco Chronicle*), soprano Arwen Myers captivates audiences with her timeless artistry and exquisite interpretations. Transmitt-

ing a warmth and “deep poignancy” (*Palm Beach Arts Paper*) on-stage, she shines in solo performance across the U.S. and beyond. With outstanding technique and mastery of a wide range of vocal colors, Arwen's performance highlights include appearances with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Portland Baroque Orchestra, Early Music Vancouver, Charlotte Bach Festival, and Indianapolis Early Music Festival, as well as the world premiere of Zachary Wadsworth's JUNO-nominated oratorio *When There is Peace* with Chor Leoni. She has worked with such notable conductors as Nicholas McGegan, Monica Huggett, David Fallis, John Butt, David Hill, Anthony Trecek-King, Alexander Weimann, Beth Willer, and Stephen Stubbs, among others.



MARA RILEY, SOPRANO

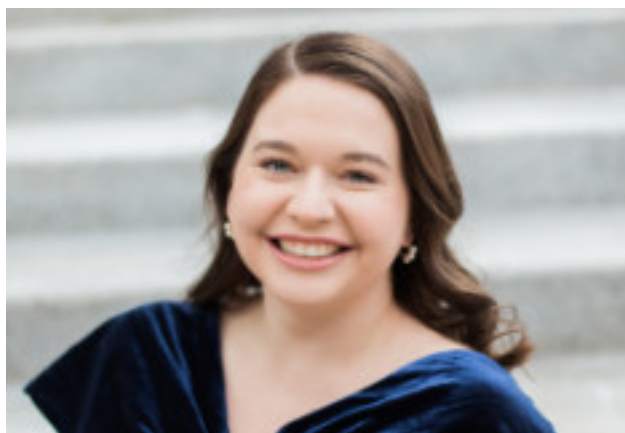
Mara Riley is a Boston-based soprano and flutist with an affinity for early music and ensemble singing. In the 2025–26 season, she has sung the role of Belinda in Errolyn Wallen's *Dido's Ghost* with Emmanuel Music. She joined Boston Early Music Festival's production of Telemann's *Don Quichotte* at the Magdeburger Telemann-Festtage in Germany, and sang the role of Armillo in *La Stellidaura vendicante*. She sang with Aeternum in Napa Valley, the Handel and Haydn Society, Boston Baroque, and was featured as a soloist on Emmanuel Music's 55th Cantata Series. Mara sang last season with the Boston Early Music Festival, Sarasa Ensemble, Colorado Bach Ensemble, Emmanuel Music, Nightingale Vocal Ensemble, and the Boulder Bach Festival. She was a 2024–25 Voces8 US Scholar and a 2025 Vocal Fellow with Toronto Summer Music. As a Baroque flutist, she has played with Blue Hill Bach, BEMF, and the Handel and Haydn Society.

AMBER ROSE, SOPRANO

Praised for her uniquely effervescent and iridescent vocal sound, American soprano Amber Rose is celebrated for her stylistic range across a multitude of genres. In concert, she recently appeared as the soprano soloist in *Carmina Burana* with Caroline Calouche & Co., was featured with the Mount Pleasant Symphony as a soloist for their “Land of Eire” concert and was the soprano soloist in Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* with the Taylor Festival Choir, with whom she also recorded for their recently released album *Pathways to Healing*. On the operatic stage, Amber was



most recently seen as the title role in Donizetti's *Rita* with the Charlotte Lyric Theatre, with other recent engagements including Königin der Nacht in *The Magic Flute* with First Coast Opera and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with Greensboro Opera. She also performs regularly in several professional chamber choirs such as the Chicora Voices, Bach Charlotte, and Taylor Festival Choir.



LOGAN TROTTER, SOPRANO

Logan Trotter is a versatile classical soprano praised for her expressive musicianship and compelling performances across opera and oratorio. She made her solo debut with the Handel and Haydn Society in December 2025 and joined Upper Valley Baroque in March 2026. Logan has appeared in such opera productions as *Iphigénie en Tauride* with Boston Baroque and *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Handel and Haydn Society.

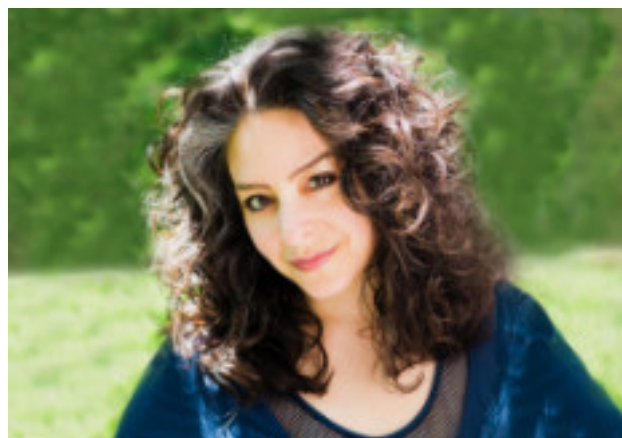
Her operatic roles include Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with Boston Summer Opera, Elisa in *Il re pastore* with New England Conservatory Opera, and Morgana (cover) with MassOpera. In addition to her solo work, Logan is a highly sought-after choral soprano, regularly performing with ensembles such as the Handel and Haydn Society, Boston Baroque, Odyssey Opera, and the Marsh Chapel Choir.

Logan was a semi-finalist in the 2024 Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition and holds degrees from the New England Conservatory of Music and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.



LAURA ATKINSON, ALTO

Laura Atkinson is a Louisville (KY) native who has carved out a career as a professional singer and music educator in both the U.S. and Europe. She completed her teacher training in the foothills of Appalachia at Maryville College and her master's degree in Vocal Performance and Early Music at Yale University. In 2010 she was awarded a Fulbright Grant to study at the Mendelssohn Music Conservatory in Leipzig, Germany. She spent the subsequent near-decade enjoying Germany as an ensemble member at the Staatstheater Braunschweig and as a freelance singer in Berlin with her husband, who was an ensemble member at the Komische Oper Berlin. Since relocating back to Louisville, Laura has begun a career as a public radio host for Louisville's classical music station, 90.5 WUOL. You can hear her weekday afternoons, 12:00–3:00 pm. She is a roster member of NouLou Chamber Players and continues to work around the country as a professional ensemble singer and soloist.



CARRIE CHERON, ALTO

Known for setting "a supremely high bar," (*Textura*) with her "mystifying simplicity," (*Boston Musical Intelligencer*), mezzo-soprano Carrie Cheron's recent and upcoming performances include events with New Bedford Symphony, Boston Landmarks Orchestra, Emmanuel Music, Plymouth Philharmonic, Boston Baroque, Monadnock Music, Portland Bach Experience, Boston Holiday Pops, Musicians of the Old Post Road, and more. She is known particularly for her performances of Bach, Vivaldi, Telemann, and

other early composers, and for her performances of contemporary classical repertoire, including premieres by John Harbison, Benedict Sheehan, Francine Trester, and Marti Epstein. Appearing regularly with the GRAMMY®-nominated Skylark Ensemble and Lorelei Ensemble, she is a featured soloist on all of Skylark's GRAMMY-nominated albums. Carrie lives in Boston and is a nationally-recognized performing singer-songwriter. She has been celebrated by the John Lennon Songwriting Contest, Great Waters Folk Festival, Rocky Mountain Folks Fest, and Connecticut Folk Festival Songwriting Contest. She is an Associate Professor of Voice at Berklee College of Music.



NICHOLAS GARZA, COUNTERTENOR

Characterized by *The Dallas Morning News* as a “countertenor full and fluent, glowing on top, dispensed with the loveliest legato,” Nicholas Garza has been hailed for intimate, engaging performances across the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. An early music specialist, Garza has performed with ensembles including the Chicago Arts Orchestra, Ars Lyrica, ensemble viii, Spire Ensemble, Publick Musick, La Follia, Oklahoma Bach Choir, Austin Baroque Orchestra, Tactus, and Mountainside Baroque, among others. Working with noted singer and conductor Simon Carrington, Nicholas was twice a singing fellow at the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival of Yale University. Additional festival credits include the International Cervantino, Bach Charlotte, Victoria Bach, Big Moose Bach, and Hawaii Performing Arts Festivals.



ELIZABETH KNIGHT, ALTO

Elizabeth Johnson Knight, American mezzo soprano, is in demand as both a choral and solo artist. She made her Carnegie Hall debut as alto soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with Andrew Megill. Elizabeth has also sung in professional choral ensembles across the U.S., including Orpheus Chamber Singers, Vox Humana, Kinnara, Spire Ensemble, and the South Dakota Chorale.

Elizabeth is a long-time member of the Chorale of the Carmel Bach Festival. She has recorded with many of these ensembles, including the GRAMMY-nominated *Tyberg: Masses* album with South Dakota Chorale. Elizabeth joined the faculty of the University of Georgia's Hugh Hodgson School of Music in 2016. She is a 2022 recipient of UGA's Sandy Beaver Excellence in Teaching Award and has published research in *Journal of Voice* and presented papers nationally. Elizabeth is a graduate of the University of North Texas (DMA), Indiana University (MM), and the University of Mississippi (BM).



KIM LEEDS, ALTO

Described as a “rich, smooth mezzo soprano”, Kim Leeds has appeared as a soloist with GRAMMY-winning ensemble Apollo's Fire, GRAMMY-nominated True Concord Voices and Orchestra, Gramophone award winning ensemble Blue Heron, Tafelmusik Baroque Chamber Orchestra and Choir, the Oregon Bach Festival, Les Délices, Cantata Collective, Bach Charlotte, Bach Choir of Bethlehem, and Bach Society of St. Louis. Kim has garnered multiple accolades, including winning the Tafelmusik Vocal Competition in 2016, attending the Carmel Bach Festival as a Virginia Best Adams Fellow in 2017, and attending the Aldeburgh Festival as a Britten-Pears Young Artist in 2019. In 2022, she was a semi-finalist in the Oratorio Society of New York Solo Competition.

As a choral artist, Kim has performed with the GRAMMY-winning ensembles the Crossing and Apollo's Fire; GRAMMY-nominated ensembles Seraphic Fire, True Concord, Clarion Choir; and the Oregon Bach Festival, Handel and Haydn Society, and Ensemble Altera.

LAUREN RUSSELL, ALTO

Young dramatic soprano Lauren Russell, known for her powerhouse vocals across operatic, musical theater, and choral genres, makes her home in Charlotte and regularly performs with Opera



Carolina, Queen City Concerts, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, Charlotte Master Chorale, and Bach Charlotte. This season, she was heard with Opera Carolina in *Suor Angelica* as Cercatrice and *Songs For A New World* as Woman 2 with Queen City Concerts. Lauren has recently performed concerts and recital repertoire with the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra on their Summer Pops in the Park concert, *Sea Symphony* (soprano cover) under Christopher Warren-Green, and Verdi's *Requiem* (soprano cover) under Kwamé Ryan. She has sung as a soloist for Charlotte Master Chorale on Bach's *Mass in B minor*, Mozart's *Requiem*, *Considering Matthew Shepard*, *Alzheimer's Stories*, and *Gospel Mass*. Lauren holds a B.A. in Vocal Performance from Wingate University and currently studies with Melinda Whittington.



ERIC FINBARR CAREY, TENOR

Praised for his “silken tenor” (*Opera News*), Eric Finbarr Carey makes a series of significant debuts in the 2025–26 season. He appears at La Scala, Elbphilharmonie, Wiener Konzerthaus, Rudolfinum, Gewandhaus and the Ojai Music Festival. He performs Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* with the Czech Philharmonic under Semyon Bychkov, with the Gewandhausorchester, and at Ojai with Esa-Pekka Salonen. Additional engagements this season as tenor soloist include *Messiah*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Britten's *Les Illuminations*, and Bach's *Easter Oratorio*, as well as recitals with pianist Erika Switzer and a performance in Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* led by Mitsuko Uchida, and a return to the Marlboro Music Festival. A particular highlight of the upcoming season is the role of Evangelist in three of Bach's major works.

Eric is a prize-winner of the Oratorio Society of New York Competition, The Gerda Lissner Song Competition, the Sparks and Wiry Cries Art Song Competition, and the Clermont-Ferrand International Singing Competition. He has held residencies at the Marlboro Music Festival, Tanglewood Music Center, Britten–Pears Young Artist Programme, and the Carnegie Hall SongStudio.



ROBERT JONES, TENOR

A native Charlottean, tenor Robert Jones has a varied vocal background ranging from Renaissance and early classical music to modern choral style. In addition to Bach Charlotte, he has been honored to perform with many groups in the area including the Charlotte Symphony Chorus and Chamber Singers, Opera Carolina, and Caritas A Capella Ensemble. Robert is also a past member of the Bach Charlotte Board of Directors. A husband and father of two, Robert works as an independent financial advisor. He is a graduate of Clemson University, where he received a Bachelors of Science in Accounting.



ERIC LAINE, TENOR

Acknowledged for his “vocal allure” and “fiery declamation” (*San Diego Story*), Eric Laine, tenor, has performed with Hungarian State Opera, Opera Neo, Cincinnati Song Initiative, Opera in the Heights, Toronto Summer Music, Orchestra of New Spain, Boston Early Music Festival, Houston Masterworks Chorus, American Baroque Opera Co., Musica Sacra San Antonio, First Coast Opera, Symphony of the Hills, Mercury Chamber Orchestra, Fort Bend Symphony Orchestra, Tyler Civic Chorale, and Moores Opera

Center, among others. Eric is a published author in the *Journal of Singing* and *Kapralova Society Journal: A Journal of Women in Music*, and his research interests include Latin American art song repertoire, vocal agility, and the intersection of exercise science and vocal pedagogy. He currently serves on the voice faculty of Texas Christian University as Assistant Professor of Voice.



GENE STENGER, TENOR

Deemed an “impressive tenor” (*The New York Times*), Gene Stenger is a Bach specialist who is also heralded for his “crisp, clear tenor in action” (*Washington Post*) of his performances of oratorios by Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, and Mozart. Gene has been a featured soloist with the Virginia Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Toledo Symphony, Charlottesville Symphony, Portland Symphony, Winston-Salem Symphony, Helena Symphony, Eastern Connecticut Symphony, New Haven Symphony, American Classical Orchestra, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Baltimore Choral Arts, Resonance Works Pittsburgh, Blue Hill Bach Festival, Washington Bach Consort, Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Colorado Bach Ensemble, Bach Society of St. Louis, Bach Charlotte, Resonance Works Pittsburgh, Baldwin Wallace University Bach Festival, Northeast Pennsylvania Bach Festival, and the Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart.

Originally from Pittsburgh, Gene holds degrees from Yale University’s School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music, Colorado State University, and Baldwin Wallace University Conservatory of Music.

MIKE TRAMMELL, TENOR

A Charlotte native and early music tenor, Michael H. Trammell fell in love with the music of J.S. Bach performing with Bach Cantata Academy for the Thüringer Bachwochen in Weimar, Germany under the distinguished baton of renowned conductor, Helmuth Rilling, and with Internationale BachAkademie in Stuttgart, Germany under the direction of Hans-Christoph Rademann. Michael has performed as a soloist with Holy Trinity Lutheran’s “Bach Vespers” series in New York City, the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, Bach Charlotte, and the Taylor Festival Singers of Charleston, SC. He has also appeared in opera roles with the Amherst Early Music Festival and Opera Carolina.



Michael is the founder of Bach Charlotte, an organization dedicated to historically informed performances of the music of J.S. Bach. A manufacturing operations professional, Michael received his B.S. and MBA from Clemson University and is married to Andrea Mumm Trammell. They live in Charlotte with their daughters, Norah and Madison, where he loves to cook, entertain friends, watch his Clemson Tigers, and play with their dog Amelia.



JASON AWBREY, BASS

Baritone Jason Awbrey, praised by *The Dallas Morning News* for having “one of the most gorgeous baritones on earth,” is an accomplished soloist and choral artist. Known for his expressive lyric voice and clear diction, his repertoire spans from early 16th-century works to contemporary music. Critics have described his performances as “easy, natural,” and “sheer magic.” Jason has appeared with leading ensembles across the United States, Mexico, and Europe, including Ars Lyrica of Houston, Conspirare, Roomful of Teeth, Dallas Symphony, Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and Harmonia Stellarum. His recordings include collaborations with Conspirare, Vox Humana, and others, including appearances on Conspirare’s GRAMMY-nominated albums *The Hope of Loving* and *Pablo Neruda: The Poet Sings*. Recent highlights include Bach’s *Magnificat* and *Weihnachts-Oratorium*, as well as Handel’s *Messiah* and Barber’s *Dover Beach*.



FREDY BONILLA, BASS

Fredy Bonilla comes from Houston, Texas, where he received his Bachelor of Choral Music Education from the University of Houston's Moores School of Music. Fredy has performed with vocal ensembles in the Houston area including Cantare Houston, the Houston Chamber Choir, and the Houston Grand Opera Chorus. He earned his Master of Music degree from the Yale School of Music and Yale Institute of Sacred Music, studying Voice, Chamber, and Oratorio music with professor James Taylor. As a member of the Yale Voxtet, he has sung as bass soloist for Yale Schola Cantorum, and has sung under the direction of David Hill, Masaaki Suzuki, Jeffrey Douma, and Felicia Barber. In the summer of 2024, he toured the U.K. as the bass soloist in Bach's *Mass in B minor* conducted by David Hill with Schola Cantorum and Juilliard415. Fredy is currently based in New Haven, CT.



RYNE CHERRY, BASS

Praised for his "gripping performances" by *The New York Times*, baritone Ryne Cherry is a regular performer with professional Early Music and Choral ensembles from around the country.

Ryne's current season includes performances of Handel's *Saul* and *Messiah* with Handel and Haydn Society, Bach's *Mass in B minor* with Madison Bach Musicians, Bach's *St. John Passion* at University of Chicago's Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, and performances with Lyra Baroque in Minneapolis, MN. Recent highlights include his solo debut with Handel and Haydn Society in Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion* with Bernard Labadie and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and Mozart's *Requiem* with La Chapelle de Quebec at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, Canada. Ryne was a 2022 Virginia Best Adams Vocal Fellow at Carmel Bach Festival and a Tanglewood Music Center Fellow from 2016–18. Ryne is currently in his 4th year as Executive and Artistic director of Just Bach Concerts, a Baroque ensemble based in Madison, WI.



HARRISON HINTZSCHE, BASS

Baritone Harrison Hintzsche is recognized for his warm lyric tone, nuanced musicality, and dedication to text. His passion for Baroque music, art song, and choral music has led him to perform on world-class stages such as London's Wigmore Hall, New York City's Alice Tully Hall, and Seoul's National Theater of Korea; and collaborate with great leaders in music such as Masaaki Suzuki, Graham Johnson, and Nicholas McGegan. Recent recording credits include the bass arias in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and *St. John Passion* with Cantata Collective, as well as various Lieder by Luise Greger on New Muses Project's inaugural self-titled album. Hintzsche sings regularly with some of the nation's leading choral ensembles, including the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Ensemble Altera, and the Oregon Bach Festival Chorus, and holds degrees in music from St. Olaf College and the Yale School of Music. He hails from DeKalb, IL, and now resides in Brooklyn, NY.

instrumentalists



EVAN FEW, VIOLIN

Atlanta native Evan Few has established himself as a leader in historical performance specialists, having studied and performed repertoire ranging from Monteverdi to Gershwin on period instruments. He has performed on stages across the globe with some of its most esteemed early music ensembles, including Anima Eterna Brugge, Bach Collegium Japan, and the Taverner Consort. Evan is a core member of the Carmel Bach Festival, Associate Concertmaster of Atlanta Baroque, Principal Second Violin of Philharmonie Austin, and co-founder of Filament.

Evan received his principal violin training at Oberlin College (BM, MM) as a pupil of Marilyn McDonald, and pursued further studies in string quartet performance at Rice University and in baroque violin at the Koninklijk Conservatorium in Den Haag (MM). He has participated in the making of numerous recordings available from Accent, Bridge, CPO, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, and Zig-Zag Territoires, among others. His violin was built for him in 2010 by Matthieu Besseling of Amsterdam, after early Stradivarius examples.



TARA HAGLE, VIOLIN

Tara Hagle received her Bachelor's Degree at the New England Conservatory, where she studied violin with Ayano Ninomiya, and baroque violin with Adriane Post, and will begin her graduate studies at the Juilliard School's Historical Performance program this fall.

This past summer, Tara attended the Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Intensive and was an Apprentice at the Valley of the Moon Festival. Tara is also a recipient of a 2026 Early Music America Workshop Scholarship. Interested in lesser-explored soundscapes ranging all time periods and styles, Tara also enjoys playing new music and frequently plays the works of emerging composers. A longtime fellow in the NEC Community Partnerships in Performance program, Tara designed and performed interactive programs for audiences spanning schools, senior living facilities, and community spaces throughout the Boston area.

Originally from Chicago, Tara first studied with Erica Carpendo, and later attended the Music Institute of Chicago Academy, where she studied with Almita Vamos. Tara plays on a 1755 Louis Guersan violin generously provided by a scholarship grant from the Virtu Foundation.



RENÉE HEMSING, VIOLIN

Dr. Renée Hemsing, a native of Los Alamos, New Mexico, earned her Doctorate of Musical Arts in violin performance at the University of Colorado, where her quartet (Ajax Quartet) was also graduate Quartet-in-Residence with the Takacs Quartet from 2017–2019. She earned her master's degree at the University of North Texas in modern violin under Emanuel Borok, and in baroque violin under Cynthia Roberts (Juilliard); and her BA from the University of New Mexico under renowned Brazilian soloist Dr. Cármelo de los Santos. Most recently, she has appeared as guest principal violist of the Handel and Haydn Society. Renée has been featured in master classes with such quartets as the Takacs Quartet, Pacifica Quartet, Jupiter Quartet, Escher Quartet, American Quartet, and has been featured as a soloist in master classes including Augustin Hadelich, Don Weilerstein, Sylvia Rosenberg. Renée currently lives in Boston, Mass., but maintains her online Parlando studio of beloved students in Boulder, Colo.

FIONA HUGHES, VIOLIN

Fiona Hughes holds degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and Cleveland Institute of Music. She is artistic director of Three



Notch'd Road: The Virginia Baroque Ensemble, a member of Handel + Haydn Society and has recently performed with L'Harmonie des saisons (Montréal), Philharmonie Austin (TX), and was a faculty fellow soprano at the 2025 Catholic Institute of Sacred Music (Menlo Park, CA) specializing in polyphony and Gregorian chant. Fiona has performed in numerous music festivals, including National Repertory Orchestra, Banff (Canada), Staunton Music Festival, and Japan's Pacific Music Festival. For inspiration in music she thanks especially Adam DeGraff, Marilyn McDonald, Lucy van Dael, and Harry Christophers. Her violins are by Claude Pierray (1720 Paris) and Jonathan Vacanti (2025 Charlottesville).



JEANNE JOHNSON

Baroque violinist Jeanne Johnson's music can be heard around the world, from Brazil to Indonesia, Sweden to Turkey. She has been concertmaster for the Washington Bach Consort and Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, and has performed, toured and recorded with numerous groups including Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Tafelmusik, Portland Baroque Orchestra, Chatham Baroque, Asheville Baroque, Bach Charlotte, North Carolina Baroque Orchestra, Nashville Chamber Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony, Opera and Ballet, Charleston Symphony, Savannah Philharmonic, and Chattanooga Symphony. A winner of an Early Music America Professional Development Award in 2002, Jeanne has been featured on several radio broadcasts including Harmonia, Performance Today, and WNYC. Performances by her baroque trio Music of the Spheres include The Frick Collection, the TAGE Alter Musik Festival in Germany, the Berkeley Early Music Festival

main stage, and the San Francisco Early Music Society. In 2016, Centaur Records released Jeanne's recordings of violin works by Johann Jakob Walther and Jean-Fery Rebel with Eco dell'Anima.



ALLISON WILLET, VIOLIN

Allison Willet is a multi-instrumentalist who has spent her career promoting early music and founding baroque ensembles in North Carolina, including the North Carolina Baroque Orchestra and Raleigh Camerata. Allison performs on modern violin, baroque violin, baroque viola, viola da gamba, and viola d'Amore. She is also an educator and teaches privately in Wake Forest where she lives.



MAUREEN MURCHIE, VIOLA

Maureen Murchie (violin/viola) is concertmaster of the Bismarck-Mandan Symphony Orchestra, assistant conductor of the Bismarck-Mandan Symphony Youth Orchestra, and a member of the Handel and Haydn Society. Having grown up in Japan and attended Japanese schools, Maureen speaks, reads, and writes Japanese at a native level. For over a decade she lived in New York City and worked as a Japanese translator while maintaining a freelance performing career that included Broadway pits, Harry Connick Jr., the baroque and contemporary orchestras of Trinity Wall Street, and many ensembles across the U.S.

Maureen holds degrees from Baylor University and a doctorate from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she wrote a dissertation on the history of the Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra. Dr. Murchie has held teaching positions at

Eastern Illinois University, McLennan Community College, University of Illinois, University of Mary, and Bismarck High School. Currently she is Assistant Dean of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences at Bismarck State College in Bismarck, North Dakota.



PHILIP RAWLINSON, VIOLA

I am an artist interested in exploration, curiosity, play, and resistance through interdisciplinary and cross-genre practice. I continue to use music, writing, and visual art in intertwined ways as a method of articulation and expression—these mediums are modes of processing the world, and living in it. As a collaborator, I am always searching to fill a collective pool of energy, and to show up in a way that asks us to hold one another.

As a facilitator, I hope that my engagement with students is one that instructs a more embodied approach and holistic practice that I pass along from mentors at the New England Conservatory, and from those that nurture(d) me outside of the institution. I hope that you and I might work together soon, and that our collaborative creation would facilitate something more urgent and more nourishing for us both at the moment our paths intersect, musical and otherwise.



SARAH STONE, CELLO

Sarah Stone is drawn to cello and viola da gamba through a curiosity in the cultural history of the music she plays and how it intersects with the stories we tell today. This season, she performs with Apollo's Fire, Tafelmusik, The Staunton Music Festival, Seraphic Fire, The Sebastians, Bach Charlotte, New York Baroque Incorporated, and the Trinity Baroque Orchestra. At home in New York

City, Sarah is Executive Director of the early music ensemble Repast Baroque, programming the concerts in their 2025/2026 season 'Literary Circles' inspired by book genres including Myth, Science Fiction, Classics, Gothic Horror, and Adventure. She also facilitates Bitterroot Baroque, a community baroque orchestra on period instruments in Hamilton, Montana. Sarah holds Masters degrees from the Juilliard School and San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and a Bachelors from Rice University.



HEATHER MILLER LARDIN, BASS

Heather Miller Lardin is principal bassist of the Handel and Haydn Society, directs the Temple University Early Music Ensemble, and co-directs the Philadelphia-based Classical period instrument ensemble Night Music. Recent engagements have included Boston Early Music Festival, Tempesta di Mare, Choral Arts Philadelphia, Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Staunton Music Festival, and Brandywine Baroque. This summer, Heather serves as faculty for a Symposium for Women & Non-Binary Bassists at the Curtis Institute of Music, Amherst Baroque Academy, and the Viola da Gamba Society of America Conclave. She lives in her native Philadelphia suburbs, where she started playing double bass in 6th-grade orchestra.



JOHN LENTI, THEORBO

John Lenti has made basso continuo improvisation on lute, theorbo, and baroque guitar the cornerstone of a career that encompasses chamber music, recitals, and work for opera companies and orchestras both modern and baroque. He has recorded, with various ensembles, some nice albums you can find on all the streaming services. Some critics have said very nice things about

him but not generally pithy enough to share in this format, you know, how sometimes the name of the newspaper takes up more space than the single adjective the artist has been hailed-as-by? In short, he has been favorably hailed. He studied lute with Nigel North, Jacob Heringman, and Elizabeth Kenny. His favorite authors are Jorge Luis Borges and Sylvia Townsend Warner, though he's in the throes of more than casual manias for Gina Berriault and Thomas Hardy. John likes cheap wine, fancy sausage, and mid-level cheese.



EMI FERGUSON, FLUTE

Emi Ferguson is on a mission to shake up classical music. Whether playing modern or historical flutes, singing, composing, or speaking about music, she brings centuries of music to life with an adventurous spirit and a fresh perspective. Her performances, ranging from Baroque masterpieces to brand-new commissions are anything but predictable, blending historical performance with a fearless, modern edge. A recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Emi thrives as both a soloist and a collaborator, appearing at major festivals and concert halls around the world. She performs regularly with AMOC*, Ruckus, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Handel and Haydn Society (where she is principal flute), and the Manhattan Chamber Players. As music director of Camerata Pacifica Baroque, she curates bold, genre-defying programs that highlight the Baroque for Southern California chamber music audiences.



EZRA GANS, BASSOON

Ezra Gans is a performer and composer based in New York. His work straddles the worlds of historically informed performance and experimental improvisation, interweaving instruments and

musical techniques of the past and present to create music that examines our relationship with history. Aside from performing on woodwinds of many shapes and sizes, Ezra incorporates live electronics, spoken word, and even, on occasion, fun costumes into his works.

As a historical bassoonist, Ezra has performed extensively around the world, including with Les Arts Florissants, at the Oregon Bach Festival, and as a featured soloist with Juilliard415. He is a member of slapslap, a performance-art-rock band consisting of two electric bassoons and two drummers, and BRIGE, a group alternately known as “a multi-disciplinary experiment in radical geometry” and “just four friends.” Ezra’s debut solo album, *Callings*, a dichord of improvisations for bassoon, alto clarinet, and live electronics, was released in October 2023.



KRISTIN OLSON, OBOE

Kristin Olson, oboe, is an educator, organizer, and performer. In addition to a varied career performing on modern and historical instruments across North America and beyond, she is the director of 7th Street Concerts in Charlotte, where she curates and directs an eclectic array of concerts and community outreach events. Kristin is also professor of oboe and chamber music at Wingate University and teaches a number of oboe and piano students in her private studio. Kristin fell in love with classical music in 4th grade when she performed the role of Mozart in the school musical, “Of Mice and Mozart,” and never looked back.



SARAH SCHILLING, OBOE

Sarah Schilling, DM, is in demand as a period woodwind player (oboes, recorders, Renaissance winds) and performance practice specialist. In addition to Charlotte Bach Festival, ensembles this

season include Washington Bach Consort, Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, Three Notch'd Road, ForgottenClefs, Malarmé Music, Music of the Regiment, Raleigh Camerata, The Thirteen, and Spire Chamber Orchestra. Sarah works as Music Administrator for VPM (Virginia's Home for Public Media) and collaborates with Agecroft Hall & Gardens (Richmond, VA) for Shakespeare-related music programming.



WILLIAM THAUER, OBOE

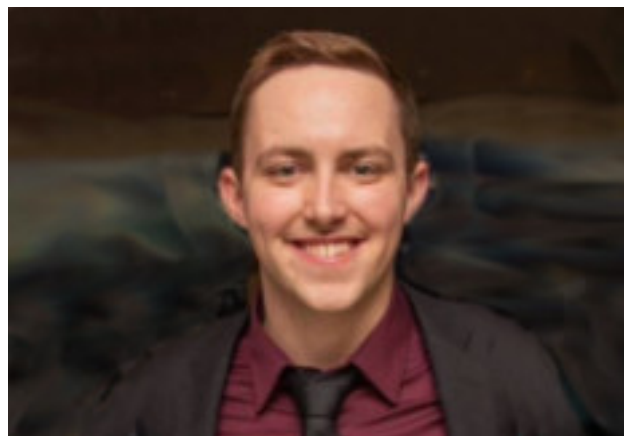
Praised by *The Boston Globe* for his “elegant oboe playing,” Will Thauer is a founding member of the North Carolina Baroque Orchestra and the Bach Series at Duke Chapel. He performs with Raleigh Camerata, Mallarmé Chamber Players, and SC Bach, and has recently been a guest of Williamsburg Baroque, Handel Choir of Baltimore, and Seicento Baroque. He has performed with the Bach Societies of Dallas, Houston, and Charleston, the Washington Bach Consort, Baroque & Beyond, and Grand Harmonie. While living in Boston, he performed with The Handel and Haydn Society, Boston Baroque, Concert Royal, and l’Orchestre Baroque de Montréal. He has recorded for the Atma, Virtuosi, and Reunion Studios, and has published articles on historical oboes and repertoire for the German label, Ars Produktion.



PERRY SUTTON, TRUMPET

Perry Sutton, baroque trumpet, is one of today’s leading American early trumpeters, maintaining a busy performing schedule across the country, both in the orchestra and as a soloist. Noted for his “extreme excitement” and “aplomb” (*The Boston Globe*),

highlights of Perry’s credits include Apollo’s Fire, Tempesta di Mare, Trinity Baroque Orchestra, Handel and Handel Society, Seraphic Fire, Bach Charlotte, English Concert, and the Boston Early Music Festival. Perry also maintains a busy schedule performing on modern trumpet in New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia. In the times that his trumpet remains in the case, Mr. Sutton has a small teaching studio and enjoys home cooking, photography, and golf.



BRANDON BERGERON, TRUMPET

Brandon Bergeron, a native of Austin, Texas, enjoys performing a wide range of historical music in the New York Metropolitan and New England areas. His repertoire spans from Baroque music on period instruments to early jazz and ragtime on early 20th-century brass. A specialist in period performance, Brandon has appeared with ensembles such as Boston Early Music Festival, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Trinity Baroque Orchestra, Boston Baroque, Tempest di Mare, and The American Classical Orchestra.



CHRISTOPHER CAUDILL, HORN

Horn player Christopher Caudill is a graduate of Northwestern University, where he earned a B.A. in European History before studying horn with Dale Clevenger, former Principal Horn of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He toured the U.S. and Russia with the American-Russian Youth Orchestra, and spent two summers at Boston Symphony’s Tanglewood Music Center. He was a member of Michael Tilson Thomas’s training orchestra, the New World Symphony, in Miami Beach, Florida, where he met his

future wife Rachel Niketopoulos. He has played Principal Horn with the Honolulu Symphony and the Milwaukee Symphony, spent a season with the National Symphony in Washington, D.C., and was a member of the North Carolina Symphony for 19 years. Chris and Rachel live in Raleigh, N.C. and have performed with Atlanta Baroque, Apollo's Fire, Raleigh Camerata, Indianapolis Baroque, Bach Charlotte, NC Baroque, and the Duke University Chapel Bach Cantata series.



RACHEL NIKETOPOULOS, HORN

Iowa native Rachel Niketopoulos has been playing the horn since she was 12 years old. She studied horn performance and received her undergraduate degree from the University of Iowa in Iowa City, and her master's degree at the University of Missouri in Kansas City. She met her duet partner and husband Christopher Caudill at the New World Symphony in Miami Beach. She was a member of the Virginia Symphony, before moving to Raleigh, N.C. to play with the North Carolina Symphony.

After graduating from the Alexander Alliance training program, she became a certified instructor of the Alexander Technique, and has been teaching private and group lessons ever since. She has been a certified yoga instructor since 2010, and has pursued further study in mindfulness by completing the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at Duke University. Rachel has performed together with NC Baroque, Raleigh Camerata, Indianapolis Baroque, Atlanta Baroque, Apollo's Fire, Bach Charlotte and the Duke University Chapel Cantata Series on Baroque and Classical horns.



BRIAN MCNULTY, TIMPANI

Brian McNulty is excited to return to the Charlotte Bach Festival in

2026. Brian can be heard performing historical timpani and percussion with the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, Bach Charlotte, and Bloomington Bach Cantata Project, and Tonos del Sur, among other organizations. Brian also serves as principal timpanist of the Terre Haute Symphony Orchestra and principal percussionist of the Columbus (Indiana) Philharmonic. He holds a DM in percussion from Indiana University, an MM in percussion from The Ohio State University, and undergraduate degrees in percussion and mathematics from Penn State University. He has studied organ extensively with Colin Andrews and is a church organist and handbell choir director based in Bloomington, Indiana.



ESTHER JEEHAE AHN, PIANO

Praised by *The Boston Musical Intelligencer* for her interpretive coherence and grace, pianist Esther Jeehae Ahn has captivated international audiences with her distinctive blend of brilliance, sensitivity, and depth, appearing at leading venues including Lincoln Center, Boston's Symphony Hall, Seoul Arts Center, and the Moscow Conservatory.

A dynamic soloist and chamber musician, she is known for performances that combine expressive clarity with imaginative musical storytelling. Her artistic work spans core repertoire and contemporary and interdisciplinary projects, reflecting a wide-ranging and evolving creative vision.

Esther holds degrees from the New England Conservatory and the Eastman School of Music. In addition to an active international performance schedule that includes concerts, residencies, and recording projects, she is Assistant Professor and Director of Keyboard Studies at the University of Central Florida. She also serves on faculty at Bay PianoFest at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and has held leadership roles with the Music Teachers National Association and Utah Music Teachers Association.

NICHOLAS SUSI, PIANO

Dr. Nicholas Susi is Assistant Professor of Piano at the University of South Carolina, President of the American Matthay Association, and Associate Director of the Southeastern Piano Festival. Described in *The WholeNote* as "an innovative musician and aggressive thinker with a gift for keyboard brilliance," Dr. Nicholas Susi enjoys a multifaceted career living out his deep love of music. He recognizes that Classical music has been a transformative



force in his life, and seeks to share its power with others through his teaching and performing.

Dr. Susi's research has been awarded grants from such organizations as the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD), Mu Phi Epsilon Foundation, and Legacy Foundation for the Arts. He completed his doctorate at the University of Michigan, with previous studies at the University of Kansas and at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln as a two-time DAAD grantee.



LESTER ACKERMAN, ORGAN

Lester Ackerman is the Director of Music Ministry and Organist at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Charlotte. He began his tenure in 2010 and has served churches as full-time music director in California, Texas and North Carolina. Lester holds degrees in Church Music and Organ Performance from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ., and both a Master of Sacred Music from Perkins School of Theology, and a Master of Music in Organ Performance from Meadows School of the Arts, both at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.

EON MALAN, ORGAN

Originally from Johannesburg, South Africa, Eon Malan is Music Ministry Associate/Organist/Administrative Assistant & Director of Handbells at Matthews United Methodist Church. He is an accomplished organist with a Master of Music in organ from Stellenbosch University, along with an Advanced Diploma in Organ



Performance and Diplomas in Hymnology and Church Music. Eon's musical journey has taken him across continents, performing extensively in New Zealand, the U.S., the United Kingdom, and his homeland.

Throughout his academic pursuit, Eon has been honored with numerous performance and academic bursaries from institutions such as the Southern African Church and Concert Organists Society (SAKOV), the Dutch Reformed Church, Stellenbosch University, and the South African Academy for Science and Arts.



AVI STEIN, ORGAN

Avi Stein is the organist and chorusmaster at Trinity Church in New York and on faculty at The Juilliard School where he teaches continuo accompaniment, vocal repertoire, and chamber music. Avi is the artistic director of the Helicon Foundation and has directed the International Baroque Academy of Musiktheater Bavaria, and the young artists' program at the Carmel Bach Festival. He has conducted a variety of ensembles including Tafelmusik, Philharmonia Baroque, the Portland Baroque Orchestra and the Bang on a Can All-Stars.

Avi conducted Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* at Juilliard in a production that toured in London and at the Royal Opera House at the Palace of Versailles. Another Juilliard production, Luigi Rossi's *Orfeo*, was named one of the best performances of 2021 by *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* described Avi as "a brilliant organ soloist" in his Carnegie Hall debut.



JENNIFER STREETER, HARPSICHORD

Jennifer Streeter has performed throughout the United States and Europe with critically acclaimed ensembles such as the North Carolina, Indianapolis, and Seattle Baroque Orchestras, Three Notch'd Road: The Virginia Baroque Ensemble, Alkemie, the Early Music Access Project, Raleigh Camerata, and as concerto soloist with the Monte Carlo Philharmonic, North Carolina Baroque, and Indiana University Baroque Orchestras. She has been a featured artist at the Charlotte Bach Festival, Bloomington, Magnolia, and Amherst Early Music Festivals and on the nationally syndicated radio show *Harmonia*. She holds masters' degrees in harpsichord and recorder from the Early Music Institute at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, studying with Elisabeth Wright and Eva Legêne. Originally from Monaco, she now calls Cary, NC home where she is a freelance performer, recorder and harpsichord teacher, and Myofascial Release therapist.



IAN WATSON, ORGAN, HARPSICHORD

Ian Watson has been acclaimed in numerous performances as an operatic and symphonic conductor, period instrument specialist and virtuoso harpsichordist, organist, and pianist. In September 2016, he was appointed Associate Conductor of the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston. Ian has appeared as soloist or conductor with the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, Scottish Chamber, English Chamber, Polish Chamber, Irish Chamber, and Stuttgart Chamber Orchestras, Bremen Philharmonic, Rhein-Main Symphony Orchestra, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Handel and Haydn Society, English Baroque Soloists, and The Sixteen among many others. He has invited to be the assistant conductor, organ and harpsichord soloist, and continuo player for Sir John Eliot Gardiner's *Bach Cantata Pilgrimage*, performing all Bach's cantatas on the correct liturgical day in places where Bach lived and worked. He has also been featured on more than 200 recordings and film soundtracks, including *Amadeus*.

vocal fellows



ZOË CHESSA, SOPRANO

Zoë Chessa is a soprano based in Baltimore, Maryland. She is an enthusiastic interpreter of early music, opera, and Jewish music. Her recent operatic performances include the role of Dorinda in the modern world premiere of Reutter's *Dafne* with Amherst Early Music Festival, *Satirino* in Cavalli's *La Calisto* with Peabody Opera at the Baltimore Theater Project, *Mercury* in *The Judge-*

ment of Paris at Shenandoah Bach Festival, *Cleonilla* in Vivaldi's *Ottone in Villa* at Carnegie Mellon University, and the First Spirit in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* with Pittsburgh Opera. An avid ensemble singer, Zoë sings with the Peabody Camerata, NEXT ensemble, Peabody Renaissance Ensemble, and DUALIS ensemble. Zoë holds an M.M. in Historical Performance in Voice from the Peabody Institute, where she studied with Randall Scarlata, and a B.F.A. in Vocal Performance from Carnegie Mellon University under Sari Gruber. When she is not singing, Zoë loves spending time learning languages, reading, and playing with her two orange kittens.

BRYCE ZIMMERMAN, COUNTERTENOR

Atlanta native Bryce Elliot Zimmerman is a countertenor celebrated for a voice described as "warm as a plum," equally at home in the ethereal upper reaches of the countertenor range and a remarkably resonant lower register. A versatile artist, he balances a distinguished career in historical performance with a robust commitment to contemporary music, having premiered fifteen new works to date. Bryce's 2024-26 seasons feature significant role and solo debuts, including *Nerone* in Monteverdi's



L'incoronazione di Poppea with Chicago Summer Opera and alto soloist in Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostrum* with Jacobs Concentus. Recent highlights include Handel's *Dixit Dominus* with the Toronto Consort, Bach Cantatas BWV 100 and BWV 42 with the Bloomington Bach Cantata Project and Baltimore Baroque Band, and the role of Cupid in John Blow's *Venus and Adonis*. Bryce is currently completing a Master of Music in Historical Performance at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.



CAMERON FALBY, TENOR

Tenor Cameron Falby is a Baltimore-based composer and vocalist specializing in choral, early, and sacred musics. Raised by two choir directors in central Maryland, they went on to study at Manhattan School of Music and then the Peabody Conservatory. They

regularly perform with local ensembles including the Emmanuel Choir, Mind on Fire, The Thirteen, the National Cathedral Choir, and the Washington Master Chorale; and ensembles abroad including Elevation, Apollo's Fire, and the Santa Fe Desert Chorale. As a soloist Cameron has appeared with the Emmanuel Choir, Bach in Baltimore, and on the University of Maryland Bach Cantata Series.

Cameron is a founding member of the Baltimore-based vocal quartet Anchorites. They have served as a fellow at the Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Institute, Yale's Norfolk Festival, the American Bach Academy, and with Tenet Vocal Artists. In 2026 they will appear as a fellow with VOCES8 and at the Charlotte Bach Festival.



MATTHEW HOUSTON, BASS

Matthew Houston is a baritone and music educator from Sadieville, KY. A summa cum laude graduate of the University of Louisville, he holds degrees in Music Education and Vocal Performance. He has performed with ensembles including the Spoleto Festival Chorus, Ex Cathedra, Epiphoni Consort, and the University of Louisville Cardinal Singers, touring across Asia, Europe, and Africa. In 2026, he worked with Tenet Vocal Artists through the Tenet Trailblazers program and sang with the JSB Ensemble at the Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart in Germany. In 2023–2024, he was selected as a U.S. Scholar with VOCES8, performing and recording with the ensemble. Locally, Matthew sings with the Louisville Chamber Choir and Kentucky Bach Choir and serves as assistant music director at the Shrine of St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church in Louisville.

The Vocal Fellows Program

Our Vocal Fellows Program brings to Charlotte young professional singers who are looking to develop their careers with highly specialized training and collaborating with leading artists in the field of Baroque music. At the Charlotte Bach Festival, Vocal Fellows experience high-level coaching with our artistic leadership team and benefit from mentorship from seasoned singers. They perform the music of J.S. Bach and his contemporaries as chamber singers and as soloists in a historically-informed setting. The specialized training provided for Vocal Fellows comes free-of-cost for the singers thanks to the generous support of the Maurer Family Foundation.

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Photography & Recording Notice

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our mission

Bach Charlotte connects people through exceptional live performances that promote understanding and appreciation of the music and influence of J.S. Bach.

our core values

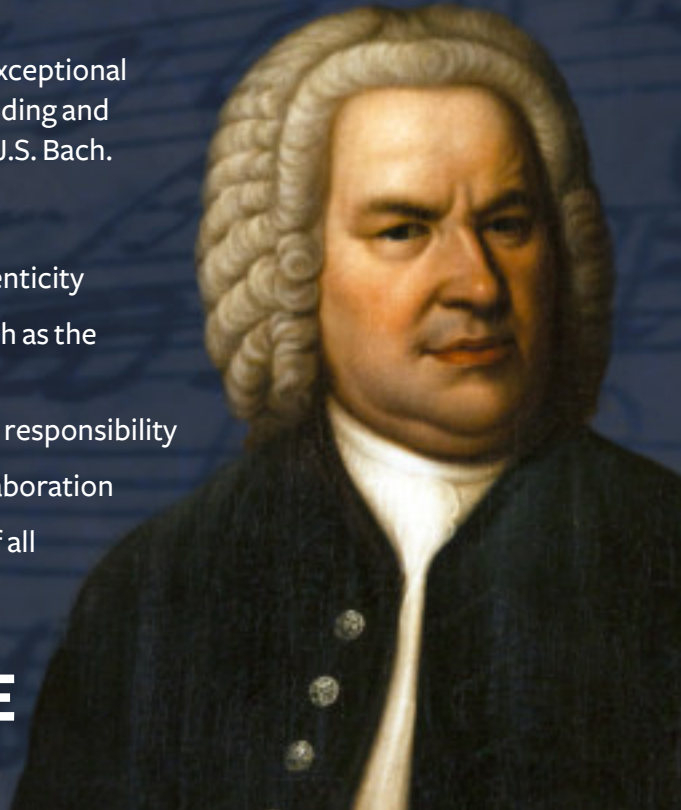
Artistry – excellence, creativity, and authenticity

Wisdom – knowledge, learning, and growth as the basis for innovation

Leadership – inspiring through vision and responsibility

Community – respect, inclusion, and collaboration

Gratitude – honoring the contributions of all who make our work possible



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2027

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Caravaggio REVOLUTION

BAROQUE MASTERPIECES FROM THE ROBERTO LONGHI FOUNDATION

April 26–October 25, 2026

Mint Museum Uptown at Levine Center for the Arts

M.A. ROGERS

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Caravaggio | Revolution: Baroque Masterpieces from the Roberto Longhi Foundation is generously presented by M.A. Rogers and Bank of America. Individual sponsorship support for this exhibition is kindly provided by Betsy and Alfred Brand; Jane and Hugh McCol, Pat Rodgers, Leigh-ann and Martin Sprock; Beverly and Jim Hance, Marshalette and Milton Prime, Rocky and Curtis Trenkelbach; Mary and Charles Bowman, Jo Ann and Joddy Peer; Marty and Weston Andress, Robin and Bill Branstrom. The Mint Museum is supported, in part, by the City of Charlotte and the North Carolina Arts Council. Organized by The Mint Museum and the St. Petersburg Art Museum in collaboration with Fondazione di Studi di Storia dell'Arte Roberto Longhi and Civita Mostre e Musei. IMAGE: Valentin de Boulogne, known as Le Valentin (French, 1591-1632). *Denial of St. Peter* (detail), 1615-17, oil on canvas. Florence, Fondazione di Studi di Storia dell'Arte Roberto Longhi.

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