

PROGRAM

Le lever de l'Aurore

Louis Antoine Lefebvre
(1700-1763)

Sonata Op. 5 no. 12 "La Folia"

Arcangelo Corelli
(1653-1713)

Mi palpita il cor

George Frederick Handel
(1685-1759)

Harpsichord Sonata in d minor, K213

Domenico Scarlatti
(1685-1757)

Le Berger fidèle

Jean Philippe Rameau
(1683-1764)

ARTISTS

Hannah De Priest, soprano
Debra Nagy, oboe
Shelby Yamin & Kako Boga, violins
Rebecca Landell, cello
Mark Edwards, harpsichord

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Notes on the Program

In the 18th-century, *Arcadia* was a byword for a kind of pastoral perfection; an idealized vision of nature and humanity in perfect balance. Like much of Enlightenment culture, the roots of Arcadia lie in Greco-Roman mythology. A highland region at the center of the Peloponnese, Arcadia was home to shepherds and farmers as well as the rustic God Pan, who reigned over the wilderness as well as the shepherds and their flocks, playing music on his pipes while seducing nymphs.

But besides bucolic dreamscapes, *Arcadian Dreams* references Rome's Arcadian Academy. Founded in Rome in 1690, the Arcadian Academy was an intellectual home for poets, visual artists, and musicians who dedicated themselves to aesthetic values like truth and simplicity inspired by Classical form and function. The Academy also served to extend the legacy of Queen Christina of Sweden, who had patronized such composers as Alessandro Scarlatti and Arcangelo Corelli. Taking Pan's pipes as their emblem, the Arcadian Academy quickly established itself as a multi-disciplinary institution that would remain a leading cultural force for centuries. Composers from across the continent set texts by its poets (notably, the opera librettist Pietro Metastasio) such that its legacy extends to our present day.

The genre of the French cantata, by turns, is also a direct descendent of Rome's Arcadian Academy. When manuscript copies of cantatas by Giovanni Bononcini and trio sonatas of Arcangelo Corelli began to circulate in Paris' exclusive salons around 1700, French poets and composers rushed to put their own spin on the genre. As you'll hear in tonight's cantatas by Rameau and Lefebvre, the result was a unique stylistic fusion that combined rhythmically-fluid French recitative and Italian-inspired da capo arias with dramatic instrumental writing that contributed to riveting storytelling.

Our program *Arcadian Dreams* revels in the rhythms of the natural world, beginning with sunrise in **Louis Antoine Lefebvre's *Le lever de l'Aurore***. The evocative opening prelude proceeds from the dusky, muted tones of A minor to a brilliant, shining E major chord that ushers in Aurora, the Goddess of the dawn. According to the carefree opening aria "L'Olimpe se d'ore," she inspires the birds to sing and spreads flowers across the earth, leaving pearls and opals in her wake. A *Musette* (whose drones imitate a shepherd's bagpipe) calls the young shepherds, Phyllis and Titire, to the meadow so that they and their flocks might enjoy each other's sweet company.

Besides the sweet droning of musettes, we can imagine the Arcadian idyll alive to the sounds of "**La Folia**," a tune and chord progression dating to the beginning of the 16th century. A dance associated with shepherds and peasants with origins on the Iberian peninsula, "La Folia" evolved to feature a stock melody line over a sixteen-bar harmonic sequence that was ripe for improvisation and creative variations. Composers including Lully, Marais, and others took up the challenge, but the influence of Arcangelo Corelli on musicians across the continent cannot be understated. Corelli's groundbreaking Op.5 collection of twelve Violin Sonatas (1700) concluded with his 24 variations on "La Folia" that put the "Orpheus of the Violin's" imagination and prodigious technique on full display.

Georg Frederic Handel's cantatas are fabulous, dramatic miniatures that are unfortunately overshadowed today by his operas and oratorios. Handel's cantatas date primarily from the early years of his career – particularly his time in Rome (1707-1710) – where the cantata and oratorio flourished since opera was (for a time) forbidden by papal edict. The only musical genre that he refrained from publishing, scholar Ellen T. Harris considers Handel's cantatas a sort of "private" music as they were written expressly for individual patrons. They might be infrequently performed today, but Handel's cantatas (as well as his later vocal works) reflect his absorption of the musical styles of Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti (father and son), Giovanni Bononcini, and Arcangelo Corelli during his Roman sojourn. Harris has concurred, "the specific model for the changes in Handel's vocal music may be found in Scarlatti's cantatas."

Harris has further observed, "the music of the cantatas is, at its core, about longing—frequently for a love that one cannot have," and the texts frequently feature thinly-veiled eroticism. **Handel's *Mi palpita il cor***, composed just following his Italian residency and reworked several times between 1710-1713, begins with a sort of panting breathlessness that gives way to wailing and agitation. Meanwhile, the tormenting "pains" of the second aria "Ho tanti affanni" contrast with Handel's musical setting in tantalizing ways. Set in a lilting 6/8 meter (generally associated with pleasure and relaxation) and full of gravity-defying leaps in the oboe and sweet chains of suspensions, the shepherd's supposed misery seems obviously to be the object of his desires. Following an intercession to Cupid (son of Venus), a hopeful final aria in Bb major exalts in ecstatic vocal flourishes on the word "contento" (contentment).

According to 18th-century biographer John Mainwaring, Cardinal Ottoboni brought together Handel and Domenico Scarlatti when the two were just 24 for a "trial of skill." Though Scarlatti apparently conceded Handel's superiority on the organ, Scarlatti's ingenuity and technical prowess are clear from the 555 keyboard sonatas that he wrote during the last 35 years of his life that he was employed by the court of Spain. Written as a single binary movement, his **Sonata in d minor K.213** alternates painful chromaticism with wistfulness.

Primarily remembered today as a titan of French opera, Rameau's first experiments with dramatic music were also via the small-scale cantata. Studded with keening dissonances and chromaticism, **Rameau's *Le Berger fidèle*** (the faithful shepherd) begins with a lament "Faut-il qu'Amarillis périsse" (Must Amarillis die?) that vividly portrays a shepherd's distress at the goddess Diana's dictate that he sacrifice his lover. A dramatic accompanied recitative "Cependant à l'autel" (while at the altar) sees the shepherd try to save his Amarillis by offering himself to the virgin goddess. Deeply moved by his fidelity and ardor, Diana spares both Mirtil and Amarillis so that their union may be blessed by Hymen, God of Marriage. The final, celebratory air "Charmant amour" (Charming love) observes that we often arrive at happy circumstances through tenacity and perseverance.

– Debra Nagy

About the Performers

Originally from Tokyo, Japan and now based in New York, NY, **Kako Boga** is a violinist who performs on historical and modern instruments. Kako has appeared internationally as a soloist, performing alongside orchestras in Asia, Australia, and the United States, and her solo and chamber music performances have taken her to such distinguished venues as Alice Tully Hall of Lincoln Center, Weill and Zankel Halls at Carnegie Hall, and the Sydney Opera House. As an ensemble musician, Kako has performed with many renowned musical groups around the United States and abroad, including Handel and Haydn Society, Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra, New York Baroque Incorporated, New York Classical Players, and Tafelmusik. She is a co-founder and co-leader of Relic, a chamber orchestra founded in 2022 which has quickly garnered acclaim across the country for its compelling and innovative performances of Baroque music. In addition to music, Kako loves food, tea, and naps.

With a "glittering, easy voice" (Merkur) **Hannah De Priest** is a fearless performer of a wide range of lyric soprano repertoire. Especially renowned for her "masterful" (Olyrix) singing of Baroque repertoire, the young soprano has made numerous important debuts in recent seasons, including her Kennedy Center debut, European debut at the Innsbruck Early Music Festival, and multiple productions with the Boston Early Music Festival. Additional upcoming contracts include debuts with Ars Lyrica Houston, Chicago Opera Theater, Haymarket Opera, and Atlanta Baroque Orchestra. On the concert stage, De Priest has interpreted numerous important oratorio works with orchestras including Columbus Symphony, Elgin Symphony, Elmhurst Symphony, Bach Society of St. Louis, Billings Symphony Orchestra, Carmel Bach Festival Orchestra, and American Bach Soloists. This fall, she will record her debut solo album with Les Délices. De Priest has earned recognition at numerous important competitions, including the London Handel Competition and the International Cesti Competition for Baroque Singing.

First prize winner in the 2012 Musica Antiqua Bruges International Harpsichord Competition, Canadian harpsichordist and organist **Mark Edwards** is recognized for his captivating performances, bringing the listener "to new and unpredictable regions, using all of the resources of his instrument, of his virtuosity, and of his imagination" (*La Libre Belgique*). An active chamber musician, he collaborates regularly with Les Boréades de Montréal, and has performed with Il Pomo d'Oro, Pallade Musica, and Flûtes Alors!. He has also given solo recitals at the Utrecht Early Music Festival and Brussels' Bozar and performed concertos with a number of award-winning ensembles, including Il Gardellino (Belgium), Neobarock (Germany), and Ensemble Caprice (Canada). He recently completed his PhD at Leiden University and the Orpheus Instituut, Ghent, where his research examines the intersection of memory, improvisation, and the musical work in seventeenth-century France. He is Associate Professor of Harpsichord at Oberlin Conservatory.

Cellist and gambist **Rebecca Landell's** "luminous" (Cleveland.com) and "notable" (The New York Times) sound elicits a range of expression "from classically evocative to Hitchcock horrifying" (Washingtonian). Her solo appearances include performances with Apollo's Fire, Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, Les Délices, The Smithsonian, and Batzdorfer Hofkapelle. Rebecca will be working on a Beethoven recording at the Smithsonian this season, along with continued collaborations with Apollo's Fire and Les Délices. Rebecca's teaching career includes her faculty position at the Baroque Performance Institute and at Oberlin Conservatory teaching baroque cello and viola da gamba.

"A baroque oboist of consummate taste and expressivity" (Cleveland Plain Dealer) with a musical approach that's "distinctly sensual...pliant, warm, and sweet," (New York Times), **Debra Nagy, director**, is one of North America's leading performers on the baroque oboe. She plays principal oboe with the American Bach Soloists, Seattle Baroque Orchestra, and Apollo's Fire, and is a regular guest with the Handel & Haydn Society, Boston Early Music Festival, and Portland Baroque Orchestra, among other ensembles. Following studies at the Oberlin Conservatory, Conservatory of Amsterdam, and Case Western Reserve University, Debra has received many awards for her creative and scholarly pursuits including first-prize in the American Bach Soloists Young Artists Competition, a 2009 Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and a 2010 Creative Workforce Fellowship from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. She has recorded over 40 CDs with repertoire ranging from 1300-1800 on the Chandos, Avie, CPO, Capstone, Bright Angel, Naxos, and ATMA labels, and has had live performances featured on CBC Radio Canada, Klara (Belgium), NPR's Performance Today, WQXR (New York City) and WGBH Boston.

Violinist **Shelby Yamin** brings signature vivacity to performances across the globe, from the historic state rooms of George Washington's Mount Vernon to the storied chapel at Versailles. Equally adept on modern and baroque violin, Shelby has appeared as a soloist with Philharmonia Baroque Chamber Players, the San Francisco Academy Orchestra, Tafelmusik Winter Institute, and as guest concertmaster of the 2019 Berwick Academy of the Oregon Bach Festival. Also an active chamber musician, she regularly collaborates with a wide range of New York based ensembles and Cleveland's Les Délices. Shelby earned degrees from the Manhattan School of Music, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and The Juilliard School, where she won the Historical Performance Concerto Competition. In addition to her active performance and teaching career, Shelby is the Associate Producer of SalonEra. She currently resides in New York City.

Les Délices (pronounced Lay day-lease) brings long-forgotten music alive for contemporary audiences. Founded by baroque oboist Debra Nagy in 2009, Les Délices has established a reputation for unique programs that "can't help but get one listening and thinking in fresh ways" (San Francisco Classical Voice). The New York Times observed that "Concerts and recordings by Les Délices are journeys of discovery," while UK Classical Source added, "The centuries roll away when the members of Les Délices bring this long-existing music to communicative and sparkling life." Touring highlights for Les Délices include performances for Music Before 1800 (New York City), the Boston Early Music Festival, Da Camera Society (Los Angeles), Houston Early Music Society, Early Music Hawaii, Morrison Chamber Music Center at San Francisco State University, Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, San Francisco Early Music Society, the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments, and Columbia University's Miller Theatre. Les Délices also presents its own annual four-concert series in Ohio and produces SalonEra, an acclaimed webseries and podcast for early music. Known for their adventurous, thematic programming, Les Délices is launching a multi-year commissioning project exploring myth and its impact on our lives beginning in 2025.