



LES DÉLICES

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- NEW YORK TIMES

DEBRA NAGY | DIRECTOR



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LES DÉLICES

DEBRA NAGY | DIRECTOR



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).

Les Délices made its New York debut before a sold-out audience at the Frick Collection in May 2010. Recent and upcoming performances for the ensemble include 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. In addition to touring engagements, Les Délices presents its own annual four-concert series in Northeast Ohio.

The global pandemic marked an important evolutionary period for the ensemble. Highlights of Les Délices 2021-22 season included a global streaming partnership with Marquee.TV, two newly commissioned works, and the premiere of their fairytale-based chamber opera, *The White Cat*. While music of the French Baroque remains a core specialty, recent projects have seen Les Délices bring their “outstanding artistry and verve” (American Record Guide) to folksongs from Baroque-era Scotland, Classical chamber music from the Age of Revolutions, late-Medieval music, and more. Les Délices eagerly anticipates the release of two new CDs (*The Highland Lassie* and *Noel, Noel*) in November 2023 and will launch a multi-year commissioning project exploring myth and its impact on our lives in 2025.

PRESS QUOTES

“LES DÉLICES CAN’T HELP BUT GETTING ONE LISTENING AND THINKING IN FRESH WAYS.”

– SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE

“FOR SHEER STYLE AND TECHNIQUE, LES DÉLICES REMAINS ONE OF THE FINEST BAROQUE ENSEMBLES AROUND TODAY.”

– FANFARE

“A BRILLIANTLY CONCEIVED AND MASTERFULLY EXECUTED PROGRAM.”

– OPERA NEWS

“LES DÉLICES’ FLAWLESS BUT LAID-BACK EXECUTION MAKE THEIR MUSIC INSTANTLY ACCESSIBLE TO MODERN AUDIENCES.”

– CLEVELANDCLASSICAL.COM

AN EARLY MUSIC GROUP WITH AN AVANT-GARDE APPETITE.”

– THE NEW YORK TIMES

[LESDELICES.ORG](https://lesdelices.org)



LES
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DEBRA NAGY, DIRECTOR

2026-27 TOUR PROGRAMS OFFERED

Arcadian Dreams – FEATURING SOPRANO HANNAH DE PRIEST

Hailed a “breakout artist” (*Boston Globe*) with “a voice that is theater itself” (*Classique News*), soprano Hannah De Priest’s critically-acclaimed debut performing French baroque cantatas with **Les Délices** was hailed as “sensational” (*Schmoopera*). She joins the ensemble for a special program featuring works by Handel, Rameau, Bourgeois, and others. **CD Release in Spring 2026. 6 artists: soprano, oboe, 2 violins, gamba/cello, harpsichord**

The Poet & the Prodigy – NEW INSTRUMENTAL PROGRAM

This new program from Les Délices explores fascinating connections between two titans of the Baroque: François Couperin and J.S. Bach. Considered “second to none” in his day, Couperin’s musical poetry sheds new light on Bach’s profound expression, which was compared with the mythical musician Orpheus. **CD Released March 2025. Two versions: 4 artists: oboe, violin, viola da gamba, harpsichord OR 2 artists: oboe, harpsichord**

The Highland Lassie – SCOTTISH BAROQUE

Evoking the wild and rugged beauty of Scotland’s heather’d hills, this program of Scots songs and reels from 17th & 18th century sources crosses boundaries from folk to art music and from the alehouse to the salon. Soprano Elena Mullins Bailey sings tales of love and loss including “Barbara Allen” and Robert Burns’ famous “A red, red rose.” **CD Released in November 2023. 5 artists: soprano, violin, oboe/recorder, cello, harpsichord**

Sounds of Sancho’s London – CENTERING A BLACK 18TH CENTURY COMPOSER

“Sounds of Sancho’s London” centers the legacy and music of Charles Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780) alongside his contemporaries. A man of letters, merchant, abolitionist, theater lover, and musician, Sancho made history as the first British man of African descent to vote in a general election. His joyous minuets and country dances are paired with Scottish reels, popular music from London’s theater scene and its famed pleasure gardens, plus selections from George Frederick Handel’s famous Music for the Royal Fireworks. **4-6 artists: oboe, violin, cello, harpsichord; optional singer and/or additional violin**

Bohemian Rhapsody – CLASSICAL CHAMBER MUSIC WITH OBOE & STRINGS

Rarely-heard gems by Czech and Moravian composers illuminate a little-known history in this program that explores the unique sound of Bohemian chamber music for oboe, violin, viola, and cello. Fun and fascinating works by Krommer, Druschetzky, and Vanhal are heard alongside traditional folk tunes arranged for the ensemble plus Mozart’s sublime oboe quartet, KV370. **4 artists: oboe, violin, viola, cello**

14th Century Avant-garde – MEDIEVAL PROGRAM

Unparalleled freedom of thought, fearless exploration of rhythmic complexity, and a desire to explore the limits of what is possible pervades the music of fourteenth-century avant-garde composers Guillaume de Machaut, Jacob Senleches, Johannes Suzoy, and others. **4 artists: soprano, tenor, vielle & harps, medieval winds**



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DEBRA NAGY, DIRECTOR

SPECIAL PROJECTS

MOONLIT MOZART

Available February 17-28, 2027

9 Artists: 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, double bass

Artistic Director Debra Nagy draws on “her rolodex of superb musicians” (ClevelandClassical.com) to bring together North America’s finest period-instrument woodwind players for an “undeniably uplifting” all-Mozart program including selections from *The Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni* plus Mozart’s transcendent Serenade in C minor (K388).

“this ambitious octet brought the curtain down in dramatic fashion...You won’t hear finer period wind playing anywhere — or another program like this one anytime soon.” – **ClevelandClassical.com**

BACH’S MUSICAL OFFERING

Available Oct 1-11, 2026

7 Artists: flute, oboe, violin, violin/viola, bassoon, cello, harpsichord

Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Musical Offering* is the sonic equivalent of a drawing by M.C. Escher in which a single melody is continually transformed in ways that challenge both the imagination and the intellect. Myriad instrumental colors (including violins, viola, flute, oboe da caccia, bassoon, cello, and harpsichord) elucidate Bach’s complex counterpoint in this special performance, which includes a new commission from acclaimed improviser and composer in baroque style Nicola Canzano.

A MOMENT’S OBLIVION – featuring tenor Nicholas Phan

Select Touring dates available 2026-27 Season and beyond

6 Artists: Tenor, oboe/recorder, 2 violins, viola da gamba, harpsichord

GRAMMY Award-winning tenor Nicholas Phan is featured in this powerful program that explores memory, illness, and community through introspective French Baroque music and a poignant new work by composer Viet Cuong commissioned by Les Délices. At the heart of the program, *A Moment’s Oblivion* is a new cantata created by Vietnamese-American composer Viet Cuong and librettist Dave Lucas. The story comes from a traditional Chinese myth called *The Loss of Memory Myth*. In it, a middle-aged man loses his memory and is later miraculously cured, but resents his family for “healing” him, so that he now has to remember “the ten thousand vexations of my decades of life.” He wonders “where shall I find another moment’s oblivion?”

Critical Acclaim

Live Performances:

“Time and time again, Les Délices has imbued a sense of creativity into the concert experience.” –
ClevelandClassical.com, February 2022

“Les Délices produces thoughtful and satisfying music that makes the rare not only familiar but welcome. Their creative energy and growth remind us that the artistic spirit is alive and well.” –
Schmopera, October 2021

“Les Délices’ brilliant transformation into a pub band on Sunday begs the question: why not set up a standing gig? They’d be a sensation!” – **ClevelandClassical.com, May 2025**

“Nagy’s deft programming and Les Délices’ flawless but laid-back execution make their music instantly accessible to modern audiences.” – **ClevelandClassical.com, April 2017**

“The program [Myths & Allegories] is emblematic of Les Délices, a Cleveland-based ensemble led by the oboist Debra Nagy: thematically concise, richly expressive, and featuring composers few people have heard of and even fewer have performed. Concerts and recordings by Les Délices are journeys of discovery.” – **The New York Times, March 2015**

“an early music group with an avant-garde appetite.” – **The New York Times, March 2015**

“a brilliantly conceived and masterfully executed program.” – **Opera News, April 2018**

“playing with the musical ease of long-time collaborators, [Les Délices] gave musically rich performances, filled with beautifully wrought phrases and exquisitely executed ornaments.” – **Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, February 2015**

“Debra Nagy’s clever programming and her rolodex of superb musicians produced yet another splendid concert... You won’t hear finer baroque wind playing anywhere — or another program like this one anytime soon.” –
ClevelandClassical.com, October 2014

“The program was exciting in part because of its freshness...Nagy is daring to feature such unknown works, but the dare pays off: the musicians perform as if they know that every phrase is a new adventure for the audience.” –
ClevelandClassical.com, October 2013

“Les Délices’ performance was a model of chamber music playing, producing rich focused sound and impeccable ensemble and intonation...Whether you are a young string quartet, woodwind or brass quintet or even a jazz combo, you can learn a lot about ensemble playing from listening to Les Délices. It really doesn’t get much better than this.” –
ClevelandClassical.com May 2010

Recording Reviews:

“The performances are superb. Nagy offers flawless execution, impressive breath control, and elegant phrasing. A marvelous recital.” – Early Music America, March 2025

“Exemplary in grace...this is an outstandingly beautiful album.” – American Record Guide, March 2025

“Successful, risk-taking music!” – The Whole Note, November 2018

“a fun, engaging and incredibly well-realized album that will give you years of listening pleasure. Lennon and McCartney's 'Michelle' and Erroll Garner's 'Misty' have never sounded so classy.” – UK ClassicalMusicReview.com, December 2018

“Downright impressive playing underpins all the emotion and energy. Nagy’s oboe is strong and nuanced, Corriveau shows microscopic attention to detail and meticulous yet natural phrasing, while Milnes’ harpsichord provides a lush texture throughout.” – Early Music America, January 2019

“The playing is outstanding for artistry and verve.” –American Record Guide, October 2017.

“For sheer style and technique, Les Délices remains one of the finest French Baroque ensembles around, today.” – Fanfare, 2013

“The centuries roll away when the members of Les Délices bring this long-existing music to communicative and sparkling life.” – Classical Source (UK), July 2010

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“A baroque oboist of consummate taste and expressivity” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*), **Debra Nagy, director**, is one of North America’s leading performers on the baroque oboe. Inspired by a creative process that brings together research, composition in historical styles, improvisation, and artistic collaboration, recent projects have included critically-acclaimed multimedia productions of Machaut's medieval masterpiece *Remede de Fortune*, music from the *Leuven Songbook* (c. 1470), an acclaimed CD combining jazz and French Baroque airs called *Songs without Words*, and *The White Cat*, a pastiche Baroque opera for singers and chamber ensemble with puppetry and projections based on the Countess D’Aulnoy’s 1690s feminist fairytale. Debra was awarded a 2022 Cleveland Arts Prize (Mid-Career Artist) and honored with the 2022 Laurette Goldberg Prize from Early Music America for her outreach work with Les Délices. In addition to her work with Les Délices, Debra plays principal oboe with Boston’s Handel & Haydn Society, Apollo’s Fire, and many other ensembles. When not rehearsing, performing, or dreaming up new projects, Debra can be found cooking up a storm in her kitchen or commuting by bike from her home in Cleveland's historic Ohio City neighborhood.

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.

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.

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 is the artistic director of Poiesis, 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 is currently a PhD student 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.

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Guest Artists

Program: Arcadian Dreams, Song of Orpheus

Hannah De Priest is a fearless performer of a wide range of lyric soprano repertoire. Hailed a “breakout artist” (*Boston Globe*) with “a voice that is theater itself” (*Classique News*), recent credits include her Kennedy Center debut, (Opera Lafayette, *La servante maîtresse*), European debut at the Innsbruck Early Music Festival, (Gilde, *L’amazzone corsara*), and multiple productions with Boston Early Music Festival. The young soprano is set for more important debuts in the 2023-24 season, including role and house debuts with Chicago Opera Theater, Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, and Haymarket Opera, among others. De Priest’s “glittering, easy soprano” (*Merkur*) is equally at home on the opera stage and in chamber music and she is especially renowned for her “masterful” (*Olyrix*) singing of Baroque repertoire. Her critically-acclaimed debut performing French baroque cantatas with Les Délices was hailed as “sensational” (*Schmoopera*) and more engagements with the renowned ensemble have followed.

Program: A Red, red Rose

James Reese is a frequently sought tenor soloist with leading orchestras and ensembles throughout North America and Europe. A noted interpreter of baroque music, James gives performances that are both "splendid" (San Francisco Chronicle) and "captivating" (Broad Street Review). He regularly collaborates with notable performers including Philharmonia Baroque, Tafelmusik, the Boston Early Music Festival, the American Bach Soloists, and the Portland Baroque Orchestra. He won a GRAMMY award as a soloist in 2023, appearing on the album *Born* released by The Crossing. James is also an active recitalist, frequently collaborating with pianist Daniel Overly in song recitals throughout the United States. He is a graduate of Northwestern University’s Bienen School of Music, and holds a masters degree from Yale University’s School of Music. He lives in Philadelphia.

Program: The Highland Lassic

Praised for her “alluring” performances and “easy virtuosity,” **soprano Elena Mullins Bailey** has wide-ranging interests in the field of early music. As a performer of period chamber music she has appeared with The Newberry Consort, Les Délices, Early Music Access Project, and the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra. She takes a scholarly interest in the performance practices of early repertoires, and co-founded the medieval music ensembles *Trobár* (Cleveland) and *Alkemie* (Brooklyn). She holds a DMA in Historical Performance Practice and a BA in Musical Arts from The Eastman School of Music. She returned to CWRU in 2016, where she directs the Early Music Singers, and has taught on the voice faculty at Cleveland State University since 2019.

Program: The Highland Lassic, Sounds of Sancho’s London, Bohemian Rhapsody

Multi-instrumentalist **Allison Monroe** has appeared with the Boston Camerata, Newberry Consort, Les Délices, Apollo’s Fire, Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, and Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, playing violin, viola, vielle, rebec, and singing. Since earning her DMA in Historical Performance Practice from Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), Allison has pursued a range of interesting projects, conceiving and performing programs and programs of English Renaissance music (*Fair and Princely Branches*, 2020), classical and early romantic violin (forthcoming), and as a founding

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member and co-director of Cleveland-based medieval ensemble Trobár. Allison has directed CWRU's Collegium Musicum and Baroque Orchestra since 2016 and joins the faculty at Mount Holyoke as Director of the Five Colleges Early Music Program in 2023.

Program: 14th Century Avant-garde

Scott Metcalfe is musical and artistic director of Blue Heron, acclaimed by The Boston Globe as "one of the Boston music community's indispensables," and music director of New York City's Green Mountain Project (Jolle Greenleaf, artistic director), whose performances of music by Monteverdi and others have been hailed by The New York Times as "quite simply terrific." Metcalfe has been guest director of TENET (New York), the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), Emmanuel Music (Boston), the Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), Quire Cleveland, the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), and Early Music America's 2011 Young Performers Festival Ensemble. He also enjoys a career as a baroque violinist, playing with Les Délices (dir. Debra Nagy) and other ensembles. When not playing or directing, he is at work on a new edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois and teaches vocal ensemble repertoire and performance practice at Boston University. Metcalfe received a bachelor's degree from Brown University, where he majored in biology, and a master's degree in historical performance practice from Harvard.

Praised for her "warm, colorful mezzo" by Opera News, **Sophie Michaux** has become one of North-America's most versatile and compelling vocalists. Born in London and raised in the French alps, Sophie's unique background informs her artistic identity, making her feel at home in an eclectic span of repertoire ranging from grand opera to French cabaret songs. Recent solo engagements include the role of Alcina in Caccini's *La Liberation di Ruggiero dall'Isola d'Alcina*, (Haymarket Opera), Olofernes in Scarlatti's *La Giuditta* (Haymarket Opera), and the Alto solos in the Handel's *Dixit Dominus* (Upper Valley Baroque), DeFalla's *El Amor Brujo* (Lowell Chamber Orchestra). She is thrilled to collaborate with Blue Heron, The Lorelei Ensemble, Les Délices, The Boston Early Music Festival, Roomful of Teeth, Bach Collegium San Diego, Palaver Strings, and others. Last season, she was also part of the Lorelei Ensemble's US tour, premiering *Her Story* by Julia Wolfe with the Boston, Chicago, Nashville, and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras.

Les Délices conjures Arcadia in high quality (Oct. 20)

by Stephanie Manning



Arcadia: that mythological Eden, that utopian natural paradise. The members of Italy's Arcadian Academy, established in the late 17th century, aimed to replicate that pastoral life via the arts. And on October 20, Les Délices sought to do the same, by performing the music of composers from the Academy and beyond.

"Arcadian Dreams," a program featuring soprano Hannah De Priest, gave the Harkness Chapel audience a taste of the early music

group's next recording. In fact, the musicians were gearing up to get in the studio the very next day — and they delivered a suitably high-quality performance in the process.

Not every piece involved De Priest, but in those that did, the vocalist made for a magnetic presence. The lovely opener, Louis Antoine Lefebvre's *Le lever de l'Aurore*, immediately drew connections to the Arcadian theme with its lyrics about nature and young love. The soprano's sweet voice easily blended with her colleagues: violinists Shelby Yamin and Kako Boga, cellist Rebecca Landell, oboist Debra Nagy, and harpsichordist Mark Edwards.

De Priest's delivery remained impeccably polished, without scrubbing away any emotional texture. This was further proved in George Frederick Handel's *Mi palpita il cor*, where the soprano brought her acting chops up a notch in the recitative sections and added some extra intensity for the acrobatic melismas.

The performers bobbed their heads and smiled, clearly enjoying themselves — especially during Arcangelo Corelli's *Sonata Op. 5, No. 12*, "La Folia." In the absence of voice, Shelby Yamin proved De Priest's equal, leading the trio with clear sound and minimal vibrato. Rebecca Landell's cello made a few turns in the spotlight, as did Mark Edwards' harpsichord.

Edwards remained a reliable background presence all evening, though the later *Sonata in d minor*, K. 213 by Domenico Scarlatti (a member of the Arcadian Academy, as was Corelli) allowed Edwards more individual expression.

As a prelude to the final piece, the Scarlatti led smoothly into Jean Philippe Rameau's *La Berger fidèle*. Once again, De Priest made it easy to get swept up in the story. As she sang about a shepherd pleading to the goddess Diana to save his beloved, I thought of the word "plaintive" even before looking down to read that this section was called "Air plaintif." The shepherd's searing emotions stir the heart of Diana, as the soprano did for the listeners, and ultimately it appears that the lovers will be reunited.

Sunday's performance was presented as part of the 2024 Early Music America Summit, which filled the venue with some extra early music devotees. Debra Nagy, also Les Délices' artistic director, became visibly emotional during her remarks, emphasizing the importance of Harkness Chapel to her personally (as a Case Western grad) and for the early music scene at large (as the venue for the now-retired series Chapel, Court & Countryside).

Interestingly, the elegant, neo-Gothic structure itself was originally a memorial. The Harkness family funded its construction at the turn of the 20th century, after the untimely death of Florence Harkness Severance. Perhaps the family hoped that when Florence passed over into the next life, an Arcadia-like paradise would be waiting on the other side.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com October 30, 2024.

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Les Délices contemplates what makes us human in “A Moment’s Oblivion” (Feb. 23)

by Stephanie Manning



“How wretched to forget,” sings the son in *A Moment’s Oblivion* — a character whose father now struggles to recognize members of his own family. “For all we were forms who we are.”

But the miracle cure that restores his father’s memory turns out to be a more fraught solution than it appears. Such is the conflict at the heart of Les Délices’ recent commission, with music by Viet Cuong and libretto by

Cleveland poet Dave Lucas. The early music ensemble’s latest program surrounded the world premiere of *A Moment’s Oblivion* with more musical opportunities to reflect on the complex, and sometimes contradictory, emotions that make us human.

François Couperin’s sunny *La Visionnaire* opened the February 23 concert at Westshore Unitarian Universalist Church in Rocky River, as it had the previous day at Heights Theater in Cleveland Heights. Baroque oboist Debra Nagy, violist da gamba Rebecca Landell, and violinist Shelby Yamin all smoothly absorbed their sounds into that of Mark Edwards’ harpsichord. The listeners’ attention was naturally drawn into specific moments — like the calming melodies of the violin and oboe — like a photograph where the edges are tastefully blurred.

The other purely instrumental work, Marin Marais’ “Le Labryinthe” from *Livre 4ème*, provided a kind of wordless meditation after Cuong’s piece. Rebecca Landell stepped into the spotlight here, supported delicately and unobtrusively by Mark Edwards. Her viola da gamba carefully adorned the music with trills and scales, like the intricate gold patterns on the black and red harpsichord behind her.

Tenor Nicholas Phan joined the quartet for *A Moment’s Oblivion*, inhabiting the characters of the Chinese myth from a book he read as a child. With a beautiful straight tone and clear enunciation, he skillfully embodied the devastated son, desperately searching to relieve his father’s dementia; the crafty scholar, who promises a miracle

cure; and the father himself, who emerges angry at his family for ripping away his blissful state of forgetting.

The natural-sounding libretto, penned by local poet Dave Lucas, fit together so effortlessly with Cuong's music it was hard to tell which came first. The lyrics were projected on the wall behind the stage, a welcome choice, though it was a pity the printed booklet didn't also include the text. (Les Délices later remedied this and made it available [here](#).)

Each syllable typically corresponded to just one note, letting the words flow with little repetition. In contrast, the instrumental parts repeat often, with different textures and melodies often reappearing at key symbolic moments. The oscillating oboe rhythm from the scholar's opening then returns at the closing, before the final words implore: "Let us remember, lest we all forget."

The quintet of Phan, Nagy, Yamin, Landell, and Edwards journeyed through two more cantatas, both by Michel Pignolet de Montéclair. *La Bergère*, which swapped oboe for recorder, created a pastoral atmosphere both figuratively and literally, with calming instrumental interludes and lyrics of contemplation amid flocks of sheep.

Le Dépit généreux ended things with an angstier atmosphere, accented by Phan's melismas and Nagy's beautifully unblemished oboe tone. Like the father in *A Moment's Oblivion*, the narrator of this piece also has something they wish to forget — in this case the betrayal of an unfaithful lover. Love and memory, perpetually intertwined, for better or for worse.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com February 27, 2025.

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Les Délices delights with “The Mermaid” in Rocky River (April 27)

by Daniel Hathaway



As their name implies, the rarefied music of the French baroque is the *pain quotidien* of Cleveland’s period instrument ensemble Les Délices, but artistic director Debra Nagy occasionally points her excellent and variable group in other directions.

The latest crossing of genres at West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church on Sunday afternoon, April 27, took Nagy and her colleagues out of the salons of Paris across the Channel to the docks of Portsmouth.

Wielding her baroque oboe and recorder, Nagy joined soprano Elena Mullins Bailey, violinist Allison Monroe, cellist Rebecca Landell, percussionist Anthony Taddeo, and special guest Sean Dagher, shantyman and Irish bouzouki artist, in slightly more than an hour’s worth of rollicking sea shanties, plus oceanic tunes by Henry Purcell, Joseph Haydn, and Maurice Green.

This was an informal program: Nagy referred to its origins in “the golden age of sail...roughly 1650-1840,” and encouraged the audience to “Clap when you want to, and sing if you’re moved.”

The first of eight sections, *Saying Farewells*, addressed itself to landlubbers in the 1784 tune “To you who live at home at ease,” followed by “The Boatman” (aka “The Bonny Scot”), expressively sung by Elena Mullins Bailey with nice fiddle filigree from Allison Monroe.

The sea shanty “Randy dandy oh” introduced the striking declamation of Seán Dagher, and “Haul on the Bowline” featured vocals with recorder and fiddle solos in the section *Working By Day*.

Fiddling by night was especially attractive for the 1793 Edinburgh tune “John come kiss me now.” Beginning with a slow, soothing intro by Monroe, the tempo picked up with the lively percussive rhythms of Anthony Taddeo’s variations. Nagy joined the mix for the country dance, “The Mermaid.” *Meanwhile, at home...* marked the end of day with “At setting day, and rising morn,” featuring vocals by Mullins Bailey and Monroe, and a fantastic oboe obligato by Nagy, who stayed on for her solo role in Henry Purcell’s “If love’s a sweet passion.”

Dagher delighted with *Listen up, boys!* which began with “Stormalong,” a song about a tall, mythical sailor who wears small ships for shoes. Taddeo joined him, providing drum beats in “Captain Ward and the Rainbow” and fine solos during instrumental interludes.

Nagy’s recorder introduction to “Tide’s come in, Babby’s Fancy,” inspired a series of smart and snappy dance tunes. Then it was time for Dagher, the master storyteller, to narrate the program’s title song, “The Mermaid,” complete with striking percussion by Taddeo and a festive group sing at the end.

Fever Dreams featured a sea tune by Haydn arranged by Nagy, and a splendid arrangement of “The Mermaid’s Song” for violin, recorder, and cello.

Nearing the end of the program, *Clear Skies* reflected every sailor’s dream in a valedictory vocal ensemble performance of “Goodbye, fare-ye-well” led by Dagher. The instrumental ensemble had fun with “Fisher’s Rant, Of She Goyes,” Nagy leading off with her recorder until Taddeo ratcheted up the tempo.

In “Leave her Johnny, leave her,” Dagher declared, “She’s no fun. No booze. We’d be better off in jail and smuggle in some ale.”

Reunited brought this jolly collection of seafaring tunes to a conclusion with Maurice Green’s soft “Fair Sally,” sung by Mullins Bailey, and Landell introduced the full ensemble finale, “Good Night and joy be wi’ ye á,” each player taking a solo turn.

Of course an encore was demanded — and supplied. During “Haul away,” Rebecca Landell’s daughter made a delightful cameo appearance, taking a bow on behalf of the whole company.

Les Délices' brilliant transformation into a pub band on Sunday begs the question: why not set up a standing gig at one of Cleveland's watering holes? They'd be a sensation!

Published on ClevelandClassical.com May 20, 2025.

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Les Délices opens season with “The Highland Lassie”

by Mike Telin



Why is it that people never seem to tire of 18th-century Scottish folk songs? The moment we hear the poems of *A red, red rose*, they conjure up the image of the lonely romantic, sitting alone next to a fireplace or in the corner of a village pub while a band entertains the other patrons.

On Saturday afternoon, September 24, Les Délices brought these images to life during their season opener, “The Highland Lassie.” The program mixed an entertaining set of songs steeped in romantic sentimentality, with fiddle tunes that made it impossible not to tap along. The venue — Dunham Tavern Museum — provided the perfect ambiance for the capacity crowd to sit back and enjoy the 60-plus minutes of top-notch performances that blurred the lines between folk song and art song.

The program’s success was due in large part to the charming arrangements created by the ensemble’s artistic director, Debra Nagy. And the musicians — Nagy (Baroque oboe, recorders, and voice), Elena Mullins (soprano), Allison Monroe (violin, viola,

and voice), Rebecca Reed (cello), and Mark Edwards (harpsichord) — transformed themselves into the ideal Edinburgh dance band.

The arrangements also provided an opportunity for Nagy, Mullins, and Monroe to showcase their vocal prowess, as they did during a magical rendition of *As I came o'er the Cairney Mount*, which opened the program. During *The bonny boatman*, Monroe showed off her fiddling chops, underscoring Mullins' clear delivery of the text, while Edwards provided some inventive solo lines.

However it was during *A red, red rose* and *William and Margaret* that Mullins' richly hued voice filled the room with crystalline tones. Robert Burns' poetry took on a deep introspection, while the ghastly tale of William, who betrayed his lover Margaret while she was alive, finds her returning from the grave to confront him with his misdeeds. Suffice to say that things don't end well for William.

While many of those songs' lyrics were on the darker side, each was followed by a set of energetic dances. Monroe brought lively fiddling to *I love my love in secret* and the ensemble was in fine form during a set of Caledonian Country Dances — *Scornful Nancy*, *Galloway Tom*, and *Bonnie Lass Reel*. And Edwards again took center stage during Niel Gow's *Major Graham*.

The final set of works began with a splendid performance of *The Broom of Cowdenknows* featuring the vocal trio of Mullins, Nagy, and Monroe and led into three foot-stomping dances — *Lady Doll Sinclair's Reel*, *Border Reel*, and *Rantan, Rantan Highland-man*.

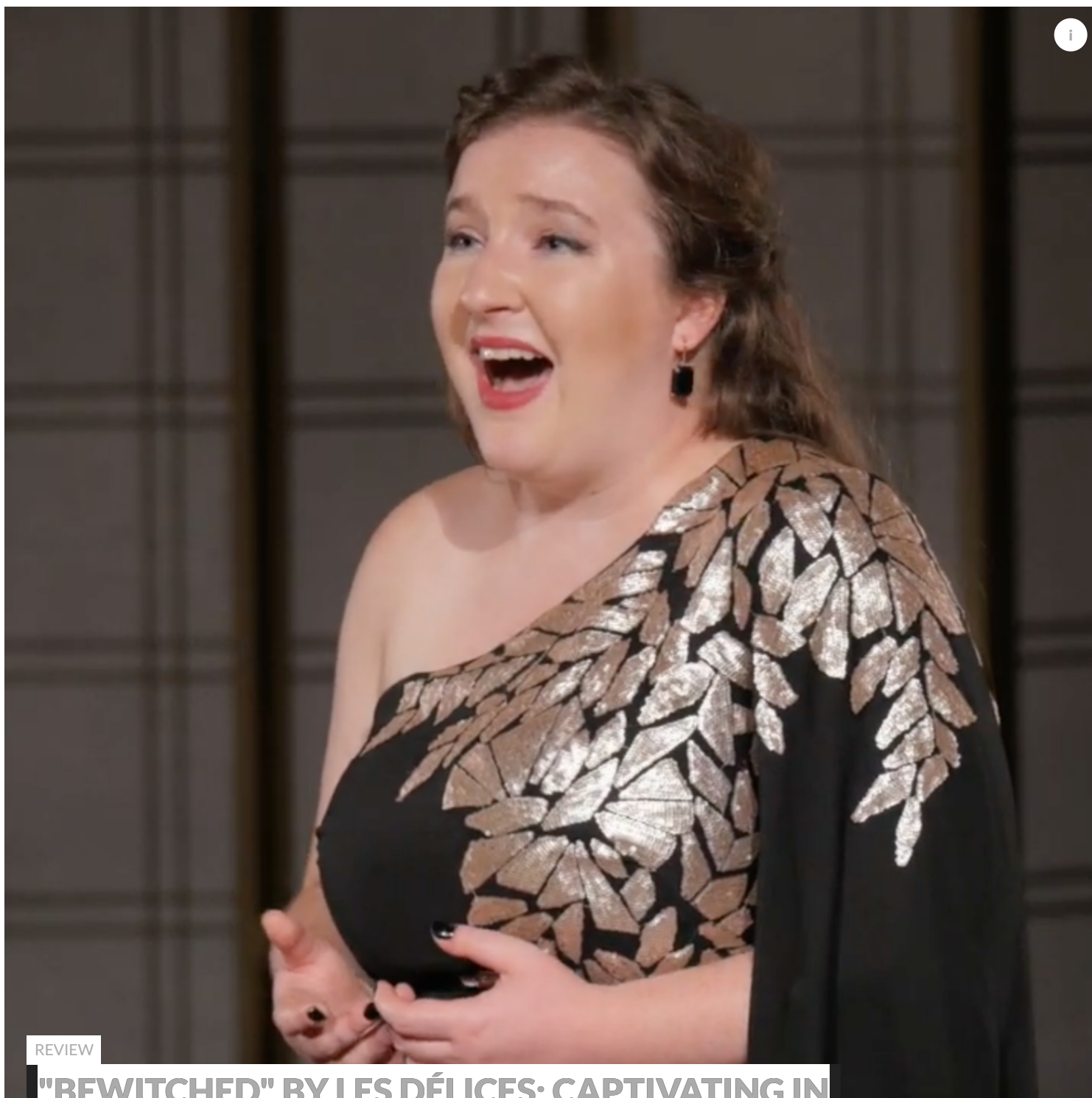
“The Highland Lassie” was a great way for Les Délices to kick off their season. It's a program that has traveling legs that will hopefully reappear in a pub near you.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com September 29, 2022.

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"BEWITCHED" BY LES DÉLICES: CAPTIVATING IN CLEVELAND



REVIEW

"BEWITCHED" BY LES DÉLICES: CAPTIVATING IN CLEVELAND



John Hohmann - Oct 28, 2020

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Witches are people too, and they have relatable issues. Those mythological heavy hitters, Medea and Circé, are the subjects of “Bewitched,” the first installment of *Embracing Change*, the four-concert virtual season being streamed by the Cleveland-based early music group, [Les Délices](#). Resorting respectively to filicide and transforming men into beasts, these mythic women are nonetheless captivating. Artistic director, Debra Nagy and her group don’t explain away their actions but they do provide edifying narrative context that amplifies the circumstances of the women behind the myths. Les Délices meets the pandemic head on with creative energy in this gracefully produced and beautifully performed concert.

The four composers involved, all of the French baroque, are not widely known with the exception perhaps of Francois Couperin, whose “La Française Sonade” played by the ensemble, opens the program. “Medée” and “Circé”, cantatas by Louis-Nicolas Clérambault and Colin de Blamont, sung by soprano [Hannah De Priest](#), flank “Le Vertigo,” a work for solo harpsichord by Pancrace Royer played by Mark Edwards.

The gleaming Georgian Colonial architecture of the Plymouth Church in the Cleveland suburb of Shaker Heights, the setting for the entire series, is in the fullest sense of the phrase, simply elegant. Nagy and her group appear in the perfect environment for their naturalistic style of video that revels in dramatic fades to black, subtle cross fades and deft use of camerawork and lighting. The passing from day to night, from a sun-filled hall to one of intense lighting and dramatic shadow, is visually alluring.



"Bewitched", presented by Les Délices, 2020.

The magic lies in its contrasts; refined but not averse to showing snakes of electric cord or bank of lights and up-close intimacy while maintaining a distinct artistic distance. “Bewitched” raises the bar for streaming events that have fairly taken over since the pandemic halted live performing arts. At a most challenging time Les Délices embarks on a creative adventure to extend its audience beyond their in-person performances rather than an alternative to them. The modest ticket price is a

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The concert, lasting just over an hour, is essentially “live” with interspersed pre-recorded narration by Nagy, De Priest and Edwards. Nagy speaks with the cool head of the group’s leader, De Priest with the requisite concern of a soprano about to embody two furious figures, and Edwards with an efficient charm that evokes his prowess at the harpsichord. Collectively they present information that doesn’t halt the evening’s momentum but actually increases our anticipation for the music to come.

The ensemble, in addition to Edwards at the harpsichord, consists of Nagy on baroque oboe and recorder, Julie Andrijeski playing baroque violin and Rebecca Reed on cello and viola da gamba. Their rendition of “La Françoise Sonade” marked by close communication and a restrained flair for shifting moods, creates an atmospheric backdrop for the mythological meltdown that follows. These musicians are finely tuned to each other. Watch as the camera captures their many communicative moments, especially with De Priest. We would likely miss these in live performance but the sensitive camerawork guides the eye.



"Bewitched", presented by Les Délices, 2020.

Chicago-based De Priest, to whose voice adjectives like “sparkling” and “shining” have already been applied, takes her lyric soprano to fervent depths as she creates vivid portraits of two complex figures with only a one cantata for each to work with. These are nuanced witches. De Priest’s Medea is plagued by internal rage and revenge, while Circé registers uncertainty and regret as she evokes much of her community of gods and goddesses. De Priest’s French sounds and feels impeccable adding to the luster of these singular interpretations. Wearing a black and gold power gown, she exudes the formality of a diva and lovely emotional accessibility. With roles such as Belinda in *Dido and Aeneas* and Drusilla in *L’incoronazione di Poppea* already in her repertoire, the future of this young soprano is bright on both the operatic and recital stages.

If any of the four composers are due for a resurgence, it’s Rover. Composing in the shadow of the more famous Jean-Philippe. Unlike other sites, we’re **keeping Schmoopera ad-free**. Support us for as little as **\$1.00 per month**.

intensity, Edwards is the epitome of virtuosity. His crisp articulation and hold on the perfect balance between the confines of the score and technical dynamics ignite the heretofore prim harpsichord.



"Bewitched", presented by Les Délices, 2020.

When you stream this event, available through November 2 - and you should - be sure to watch the pre-concert interview conducted by Nagy with Seth Pevnick, curator of Greek and Roman Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art and Timothy Wutrich, Professor in the Classic department at Case Western Reserve University. Using photos of two wine kraters, one featuring Medea, in the collection at CMU and another with Circé at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, along with a wealth of scholarly perspective, they bring the infrastructure of this captivating concert full circle.

For further information and tickets, contact lesdelices.org.

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Les Delices draws charming links between past and present with 'Songs Without Words' (review)



Les Delices kicked off its 2016-17 season last weekend with an unusual program titled "Songs Without Words," which drew links between music of the 17th and 18th centuries and popular music of the 20th. (*Steven Mastroianni*)

By **Zachary Lewis, The Plain Dealer**



Email the author

on October 17, 2016 at 3:00 PM

By MARK SATOLA

SHAKER HEIGHTS, Ohio -- In the 1960s, the harpsichord had an unexpected renaissance in popular music, appearing in songs all over the map.

Its sudden ubiquity (usually in the form of a Baldwin electric harpsichord, the real thing being perhaps a little less accessible) was partly the result of an interest in sonic novelty, partly a nod toward the fad for all things Edwardian.

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Here in 2016, the Baroque ensemble Les Delices accomplished a very different aim with the opening concert of its eighth season, by finding an unexpected connection between the love songs of 17th- and 18th-century French music and songs from the mid-20th century, by such stalwarts as Johnny Mandel, Billy Strayhorn, Charles Aznavour, Johnny Mercer and, yes, Aretha Franklin, all performed on Baroque instruments.

The incomparable Baroque oboist Debra Nagy shared the stage Sunday afternoon at Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights with two equally adept and imaginative artists, Emily Walhout, viola da gamba, and Eric Milnes, harpsichord. Mixing old and new numbers freely, the ensemble liberated the music of both eras, creating a kind of conversation across the centuries.

The program opened with a semi-improvised Prelude by harpsichordist Milnes, which presaged the course of the program, evoking a 17th-century keyboard toccata, but with the unexpected appearance of some dissonant harmonies and a series of tone clusters that were definitely not from the Baroque era.

The French Baroque selections were what we've come to expect from Les Delices: chosen with taste and rendered with an alertness of style that demonstrates a deep understanding of the music.

As always, there was an element of exploration too, with Marin Marais and Jean-Baptiste Lully being the best known among a lineup of composers that also included Michel Lambert, Joseph Chabanceau de la Barre and Jean-Baptiste de Bousset, all played with intelligence and spirit.

But it was in the modern pieces that the players notched it up by quite a few degrees. Without any shift in technique, they undertook such classics as Mandel's "Emily" (with a beautiful solo by gambist Walhout), Strayhorn's "A Flower is a Lovable Thing," and the Aznavour-Nina Simone chestnut "Tomorrow is My Turn," in such a way that it was sometimes difficult to detect the shift from old to new till you were well into the song.

Nagy's Baroque oboe, with its rounder and fuller tone, was the perfect stand-in for the human voice in songs from both eras, and she took full advantage of the instrument's flexibility with elaborate embellishments, especially in the upbeat treatment of Mercer's "Autumn Leaves," with pizzicato viola da gamba standing in for jazz bass and fine jazzy comping from the harpsichord. Nagy cut loose with a well-thought-out solo that would have done any seasoned jazz artist proud.

Harpsichordist Milnes played his own arrangement of Queen Aretha's mega-hit "Chain of Fools," leading into it with a spare, toccata-like intro that set up the minor-key soul sound. The funky arpeggios in the left hand played nicely against the big chords in the right until, at the end of the tune, Milnes swirled back into the 18th-century style toccata, delightfully (and instructively) blurring the decades between the Baroque years and the pinnacle of American R&B.

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OPERA NEWS

Music for Fated Lovers | Clara Rottsolk, Jason McStoots, Les Délices

NEW YORK CITY

Miller Theatre at Columbia University

4/7/18

ON SATURDAY, APRIL 7 the chamber ensemble Les Délices presented a concert of French Baroque rarities titled *Music for Fated Lovers* at the Miller Theatre at Columbia University. Anchored by selections from Rameau's groundbreaking opera *Hippolyte et Aricie*, *Music for Fated Lovers* explored the tales of three pairs of star-crossed lovers and included a pair of obscure and thrilling solo cantatas by the nearly forgotten eighteenth-century French composer Louis-Nicolas Clérambeault.

The program began with Jean-Féry Rebel's early eighteenth-century Trio Sonata *L'Immortelle*, which set the tone for the concert with its brooding foreshadowing and energetic passion effectively played by Les Délices members Julie Andrijeski on baroque violin, Emily Walhout on *viola da gamba*, and Debra Nagy, the ensemble's founder, on baroque oboe and recorder.

Throughout the evening, Nagy narrated the program's vocal selections, giving important context to the scenes from Rameau's 1733 opera *Hippolyte et Aricie*. As Aricie, soprano Clara Rottsolk at first sang timidly in Aricie's Act I air, "Temple sacré, séjour tranquille," but gained confidence and authority in the succeeding scene, in which Aricie and Hippolyte, sung by tenor Jason McStoots, argue passionately over her decision to dedicate herself to the chaste goddess Diana. McStoots, like Rottsolk, found his footing slowly, though both singers may have been saving their resources for the cantatas they each sang later in the program.

The two other instrumental works tied together the vocal selections smartly. Andrijeski was simply hypnotizing in the virtuosic violin part of Jean-Baptiste Senaillé's Sonata Op. 1, No. 6, a compact yet dramatic and compelling work that deserves to be heard more frequently. On the second half of the program, harpsichordist Mark Edwards displayed a similar passionate virtuosity in Antoine Forqueray's *Jupiter* for harpsichord.

Louis-Nicolas Clérambeault's Italian-style cantatas *Léandre et Hero* and *Pirame et Tisbé*, both written in 1713, are virtually unknown today. Simply by programming these works, and allowing them to be heard, Les Délices argues for their artistic merit, of which there is much to be celebrated. Both cantatas boast rich musical storytelling, expertly realized by Les Délices and the playing of Debra Nagy in particular, who alternates calmly and expertly between her baroque oboe and two baroque recorders. In *Léandre et Hero*, Rottsolk's delicate and focused soprano brought much subtle nuance to the third-person retelling of the tragedy of Hero and Leander, channeling exciting reserves of energy and drama for the Tempest section when Leander is drowned in a sudden storm while swimming to meet his love.

McStoots gave a strong and arresting performance of Clérambeault's *Pirame et Tisbe*. Like *Léandre et Hero*, the cantata is told mostly in the third-person, with the exception of Pirame's exquisite *plainte*, "Quoi, Tisbé? Tu n'es plus?" McStoots sang the cantata as if he were giving a dramatic reading of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe for the first time ever, moving between airs and recitatives seamlessly.

By the final set of the program, selections from Acts IV and V of *Hippolyte et Aricie*, Rottsolk and McStoots were secure and prepared to give impassioned performances, full of abandon and, at its conclusion, whimsical joy. The core members of Les Délices joined in the celebration with the opera's *chaconne* finale, a fitting end to a brilliantly conceived and masterfully executed program of truly delightful rarities. —Steven Jude Tietjen

Classical

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Reveling in the Unfamiliar

Les Délices experiments with overlooked gems of music.

FOR YEARS, ULYSSES has roamed the campus of Columbia University. The hero of Homer's "The Odyssey" is an annual specter for students here: The epic is mandatory reading for every freshman. This year they've been able to encounter him up close in the exuberant collages of Romare Bearden's "Black Odyssey," part of an exhibition at the Wallach Art Gallery that closed this month. "The Odyssey" is also the subject of a program of French baroque music titled "Myths and Allegories," which the period-instrument ensemble Les Délices is scheduled to present at the university's Miller Theater on March 28 with the soprano Clara Rottsohl.

But here, the epic's female characters come to the fore: the guiding goddess Minerva; the temptress Circe; and Penelope, Ulysses' faithful wife. The program is emblematic of Les Délices, a Cleveland-based ensemble led by the oboist Debra Nagy: thematically concise, richly expressive, and featuring composers few people have heard of and even fewer have performed. Concerts and recordings by Les Délices are journeys of discovery. Melissa Smey, Miller Theater's executive director, likens the ensemble to an early-music group with an avant-garde appetite. Ms. Nagy, she said in a phone interview, "has a kind of spirit of adventure that's very similar to a lot of the contemporary music ensembles that we work with at Miller."

The program includes selections from Jean-Féry Rebel's opera "Ulysse," which traces the love triangle between Circe, Ulysses and Penelope as well as his sonata "La Fidelle," which here evokes the patient love of Penelope. The lure of the Sirens is the subject of a cantata, "Les Sirènes," by Thomas-Louis Bourgeois (1676-1750); the clamor of war is revealed in a suite by Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667-1737). Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (1665-1729), a child prodigy and protégée of King Louis XIV, is represented with the cantata "Le Sommeil d'Ulysse."

None of these composers are household names, and Ms. Nagy likes it that way. A scholar-performer, she sifts through the growing corpus of music manuscripts made available online by French libraries for overlooked gems, which she edits and arranges. She said she takes pride in presenting "music that people haven't heard before. Our core audience has come to expect that they're not going to recognize the names on the program. It's ideas and themes and concepts — and of course very high artistic standards."

Ms. Nagy said that part of her mission is to dispel preconceived notions of French baroque music as "regimented or just littered with ornaments." "I'm trying to emphasize the complexity and a great range of expression," she said.

The most recent program Les Délices presented in the Cleveland area consisted of music for Lent by Charpentier and Couperin. "You might think of this as a program of sacred music but it shouldn't sound penitential," Ms. Nagy said. Much of this music was written for singers from the opera, she explained, and well-heeled patrons "had others hold their seats two weeks in advance" to hear them.

What gives performances of Les Délices a distinctly sensual feel is the sound of Ms. Nagy's oboe, which is pliable, warm and sweet. The instrument is a copy of a late-17th-century instrument made of boxwood that is tuned to an extraordinarily



VAL KOZLENKO



LIZ LINDER

Top from left, Michael Sponseller, Julie Andrijeski, Debra Nagy and Emily Walhout performing as Les Délices. Above from left, Mr. Sponseller, Ms. Nagy, Scott Metcalfe and Ms. Walhout.

low pitch, a full step below a modern concert A. With a row of recorder-like open finger holes, supplemented by two keys at the bottom, it allows Ms. Nagy to sculpt sustained notes with a subtle finger vibrato that is impossible on a modern oboe.

In Montéclair's instrumental suite "La Guerre" ("War"), part of the Miller Theater program as well as on the album "Myths and Allegories," Ms. Nagy uses it to create startlingly human-sounding moans in a passage designed to evoke the cries of the wounded. One of the most delightful aspects of any performance by Les Délices is this exploration of the dramatic potential of pitch — how to curve, stretch or wilt a note in a way that's emotionally resonant.

For Ms. Nagy, that flexibility is the baroque oboe's main advantage. The modern oboe, she said, built to "cut through 80 string players" and fitted with metal keys, doesn't allow quite the same fluidity of articulation in baroque ornaments that are meant to sound spontaneous and free. She said she loves to work with great baroque string players — in Les Délices she partners with the violinists Scott Metcalfe and Julie Andrijeski — because it inspires her to emulate their command of variable bow speed. "With a baroque oboe I can do that, I can play with this wind speed that has its own expressive capabilities."

Another source of inspiration are singers. In the late 17th century, wind players looked to airs and other vocal material for solo repertory, she said, setting themselves the challenge of imitating not only the quality of a human voice but also the sound of certain consonants and vowels. No wonder French composers integrated the oboe into their operas so soon after its reinvention as an orchestral, indoor instru-

ment in the 1660s. Before that, double-reed instruments like the shawm were played mostly outdoors and carried either pastoral or martial connotations.

Those military overtones may also have influenced the composers of the Ulysses-themed pieces on Les Délices's program to reach for the oboe. In the preface to the first book of études published for the instrument in 1695, the English oboist John Banister invoked the "inimitable charming sweetness" of its sound, which, "when well played upon," could be every bit as majestic and stately as a trumpet — apt, then, as he put it with a refreshing lack of tact, for "the greatest heroes of the age who sometimes despise strung-instruments."

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