



Lucien Knuteson

TWELFTH NIGHT

ALL'ITALIANA

HARPSICHORD AND DIRECTION David Belkovski

VIOLIN AND DIRECTION Rachell Ellen Wong

VIOLIN Shelby Yamin

VIOLA Andrew Gonzalez

CELLO Andrew Koutroubas

THEORBO Adam Cockerham

SOPRANO Nicoletta Berry

St. Mary's Church, Hamilton Village

Thursday, November 6 @ 7 PM

There will be no intermission.

PROGRAM

Overture to <i>Il Giustino</i>	Vivaldi
Sonata in A Minor, TWV 43:a5 Largo – Allegro – Adagio	Telemann
Se vago rio from <i>Aminta e Fillide</i>	Handel
Sonata in A Minor (continued) Largo e staccato – Allegro	Telemann
Sonata in D Minor FaWV N:d3 Largo – Allegro – Largo – Allegro	Fasch
Violin Concerto in E Minor, RV 278 1. Allegro 2. Largo 3. Allegro	Vivaldi
<i>Armida abbandonata</i> Recitative Dietro l'orme fugace Aria Ah crudele! Recitative Per te, mi struggo infido Recitative O voi, dell'incostante e procelloso mare Aria Venti, fermate Recitative Ma che parlo, che dico? Aria In tanti affanni miei	Handel
Concerto in G Minor 1. Affettuoso 2. Presto	Durante
É un foco quel d'amore from <i>Agrippina</i>	Handel
Concerto in G Minor (continued) 3. Largo Affettuoso	Durante
Al dispetto di sorte crudele from <i>Aminta e Fillide</i>	Handel

PROGRAM NOTES

By David Belkovski

The unparalleled wellspring of inspiration throughout Baroque Europe was undoubtedly Italy. Desperate to breathe the same air, taste the same food and hear the same music, composers such as George Frideric Handel rushed to Rome, Venice, Florence and Naples early in their careers. Those without the means, or whose employers would not allow the time off, absorbed what they could by poring over score after Italian score, as did Johann Friedrich Fasch. Others, like Georg Philipp Telemann, were content to let their imaginations run wild, fusing fashionable Italian music with the rigor of German technique. Throughout tonight's program, *All'Italiana*, these three Teutonic figureheads collide with trailblazing icons from the North and South of Italy, respectively Venice's Antonio Vivaldi and Naples' Francesco Durante.

Vivaldi naturally takes top billing on any program highlighting Italian influence. The overture to his 1724 opera // *Giustino* shows his keen sense of dramatic timing, opening with sharp stops and starts that jolt the audience to attention. A bittersweet middle movement, with its aching violin line, offers a brief moment of repose before giving way to a rustic, almost martial finale.

Known for pursuing a “mixed taste” throughout his life’s work, Telemann strove for a cosmopolitan style that could appeal to French, Italian and German musicians alike. Yet his A minor sonata in four parts shows no such pretensions; it is unabashedly Italian. Contemporary manuscripts and catalogues even reveal his youthful infatuation with Italy by way of his playful anagrammatic pseudonym, Georgio Melante. The sonata opens with a haunting, disjunct refrain that passes restlessly from one instrument to another, followed by a gigue-like movement (ironically, a dance Italians had borrowed from the English), which is suddenly cut short by more unsettled, haunting music. The mood is appropriately set for Handel’s unforgettable aria of profound melancholy, “Se vago rio”, composed during his Roman visit in 1708. Here the accompaniment undulates in a Sicilian rhythm, at once a backdrop for the voice and reflection of the protagonist’s subconscious. The sonata recommences with brusque, declamatory chords followed by a tumbling, restless finale.

Unable to find his way to Italy, Fasch was forced to admire from afar. His D minor sonata is even more à la mode than Telemann’s, balancing learned imitation with sumptuous textures. The opening movement is dark and lyrical, followed by a second that shifts between lively instrumental conversation and what sounds like playful shouting matches. The third turns to France with the expansive overture-like rhythm, before morphing into a miniature violin concerto. The finale unleashes a whirlwind of counterpoint, this time purely for raucous, theatrical effect.

Plucked from his seemingly bottomless output, Vivaldi’s E minor concerto for violin showcases traits of the Italian style that became notorious abroad, namely, startling harmonies and a penchant for surprise and effect above all else. The first movement is a case study in Italian audacity, veering abruptly across the emotional spectrum. The second is a masterclass in sustained tension, built on little more than a throbbing accompaniment and a desperate violin line. By the third movement, the chromatic turbulence of the earlier music breaks loose, underpinned by a rumble that can only be described as a seismic event.

The centerpiece of the program is Handel’s cantata *Armida abbandonata*, written during his formative years in Italy. The work draws on the legend of Armida, the sorceress from Torquato Tasso’s epic *Gerusalemme liberata*, who falls in love with the crusader Rinaldo only to be abandoned by him. Handel seizes on her moment of betrayal, giving voice to her anguish in a single-voiced cantata of striking intensity. Written in Rome at a time when opera was routinely suppressed, the cantata offered Handel an outlet to experiment with operatic drama in miniature. Its virtuosic demands and searing emotional range foreshadow the great operatic heroines of his later career.

The true beating heart of Italy was, of course, Naples, the largest European city along the Mediterranean at the time. Here, Durante reigned supreme as a composer of both instrumental and sacred music, as well as a pedagogue who trained countless 18th-century superstars. His G minor concerto opens with a movement marked “affectionately,” immediately revealing the operatic vocal quality that pervades his slow music, despite his lack of interest in staged works. The second movement begins without pause or preparation—a brilliant use of elision that showcases Durante’s dramatic flair—careening and whipping all instruments into a frenzy. This energy paves the way for Handel’s showstopping “E un foco quel d’amore”, drawn from his Venetian triumph, *Agrippina*. A gentle return to Durante anticipates Mozart and the elegance of the Classical era, again marked “affectionately.” The program closes with Handel’s “Al dispetto di sorte crudele”, a playfully defiant and joyful outpouring of vocal and instrumental virtuosity.

TEXTS

Overture to *Il Giustino* | Vivaldi

Sonata in A Minor, TWV 43:a5 | Telemann Largo - Allegro - Adagio

Se vago rio from *Aminta e Fillide* | Handel

Aria

Se vago rio
fra sassi frange
l'amato argento,
al fi n contento
posa nel mare.

Ma il ciglio mio
che sempre piange,
non trova seno
che ponga freno
al suo penare.

Though a pretty stream
may break its lovely silver
among the rocks,
in the end it happily comes
to rest in the sea.

But my eyes
ever weeping,
find no heart
that offers respite
to their suffering.

Sonata in A Minor (continued) | Telemann Largo e staccato - Allegro

Sonata in D Minor FaWV N:d3 | Fasch Largo - Allegro - Largo - Allegro

Violin Concerto in E Minor, RV 278 | Vivaldi

1. Allegro

2. Largo

3. Allegro

Armida abbandonata | Handel

Dietro l'orme fugace

Dietro l'orme fugaci del guerrier,
che gran tempo in lascivo soggiorno ascoso avea,
Armida abbandonata il piè movea;
e poi che vide al fi ne che l'oro del suo crine,
i vezzi, i sguardi, i preghi
non han forza che leghi il fuggitivo amante, fermò le
stanche piante, e assisa sopra un scoglio, colma di rio
cordoglio, a quel leggiere abete,
che il suo ben le rapia, le luci affi sse, piangendo e
sospirando così disse:

Ah crudele!

Ah crudele! E pur ten' vai,
e mi lasci in preda al duolo,
e pur sai che sei tu solo
il diletto del mio cor.

Come, ingrato, come puoi
involare a questo sen
il seren de' lumi tuoi,
se per te son tutta ardor?

In the tracks of the fleeing warrior
whom she in sensual dalliance had long concealed,
the forsaken Armida trod;
then, having realized that her golden tresses,
her charms, her glances, her prayers were powerless
to detain the fugitive lover,
she stayed her weary feet, and seated on a rock,
with the calmness of despair upon the slender mast
that bore her love away she gazed, and weeping and
sighing thus she spoke:

Ah! Heartless man,
how could you leave me prey to grief,
when you know that you alone
are my heart's delight.

How could you, thankless man,
rob my heart of its joy
at your sight,
since I am afire for you?

Per te, mi struggo infido

Per te mi struggo, infi do,
per te languisco, ingrato.
Ah! Pur lo sai, che sol da' tuoi bei rai
per te piagato ho il seno,
e pur tu m'abbandoni, infi do amante.

O voi, dell'incostante e procelloso mare

O voi, dell'incostante e procelloso mare
orridi mostri, dai più profondi chiostri
a vendicarmi uscite,
e contro quel crudel incrudelite.

Sì, sì! Sia vostro il vanto, e del vostro rigore, un mostro
lacerar di voi maggiore.
Onde, venti, che fate, che voi nol sommergete? Ah no!
Fermate!

Venti, fermate

Venti, fermate, sì, nol sommergete; è ver che mi tradi,
ma pur l'adoro. Onde crudeli, no, non l'uccidete; è ver
che mi sprezzò, ma è il mio tesoro.

Ma che parlo, che dico?

Ma che parlo, che dico? Ah ch'io vaneggio!
E come amar potrei un traditore,
infelice mio core?
Rispondi, oh Dio, rispondi!
Ah che tu ti confondi, dubbioso e palpitante!
vorresti non amare e vivi amante.
Spezza quel laccio indegno,
che tiene avvinti ancor gli affetti tuoi.
Che fai, misero cor?
Ah tu non puoi!

In tanti affanni miei

In tanti affanni miei, assistimi almen tu,
Nume d'amore! E se pietoso sei,
fa ch'io non ami più quel traditore.

Concerto in G Minor | Durante

1. Affettuoso

2. Presto

É un foco quel d'amore from Agrippina | Handel

È un foco quel d'amore
che penetra nel core,
ma come, non si sa.
S'accende a poco a poco,
ma poi non trova loco
e consumar ti fa.

Concerto in G Minor (continued) | Durante

3. Largo Affettuoso

For you I long, faithless one,
for you I languish, ungrateful one.
Ah, but you know that
for your eyes alone my heart is stricken,
yet you forsake me, faithless lover.

Creatures of the turbulent, stormy ocean,
you fearsome monsters, emerge from the deepest
chasms to avenge me, and against that cruel man
arm yourselves with cruelty.

Yes, yes! Use your ferocity to destroy a monster
greater than yourselves. Wait... no!
Waves, winds, don't drown him, don't drag him down?
Ah! No! Stop!

Winds, cease blowing, no, do not drown him; true, he has
betrayed me, yet still I adore him. Cruel waters, do not
take his life; though he has abused me, I still love him.

But what am I saying? What words are these? Ah! My
mind wanders!
For how could my unhappy heart love my betrayer?
Answer me, dear God, answer me!
Ah, I'm confused, uncertain and fluttering:
my heart does not want to love any longer, and yet I still
love him. Break that unworthy bond that still binds your
affections.
What is it, poor heart? What is it?
Ah, you cannot!

In my deep distress come to my aid, God of love!
And if you are merciful,
bring an end of my love for the traitor.

Love is a fire
that enters the heart,
but how it does so, no-one knows.
It ignites very slowly,
but then grows fiercer
and burns you completely.

Al dispetto di sorte crudele from *Aminta e Fillide* | Handel

Al dispetto di sorte crudele,
costante e fedele
quest' alma sarà.

Despite cruel fate,
my soul will be
constant and faithful.

Che se Filli ad amarmi si muove,
son chiare le prove di sua fedeltà.

Since Fillide is moved to love me
my fidelity has been vindicated.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

David Belkovski (Harpsichord and Direction)

Born in Skopje, Macedonia, Belkovski's musical journey began with Balkan folk traditions and has evolved into a vibrant career as conductor, soloist and continuist. Known for his vivid programming and compelling interpretations, he has directed ensembles including Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Juilliard415, New World Symphony, the Milwaukee Symphony and Les Violons du Roy. Recent appearances at the Norfolk, Ryedale and Aix-en-Provence festivals highlight the breadth of his artistry. This season, he joins the San Antonio Philharmonic to direct the complete *Brandenburg Concertos*, makes his directorial debut with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and returns to conduct The Juilliard School's opera, Saverio Mercadante's *I due Figaro*.

Performing regularly on harpsichord, fortepiano and modern piano, Belkovski has won first prize in several national and international competitions, including the 2019 Sfzp International Fortepiano Competition. He has served as Assistant Conductor to Richard Egarr, Raphaël Pichon and John Butt, prepared orchestras for William Christie and held the post of Assistant Conductor with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra.

Continuo playing remains central to his creative life, with recent collaborations including Vox Luminis, Jupiter Ensemble, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Trinity Baroque Orchestra. Belkovski is also active as a composer with commissions, including one for Juilliard415, and teaches courses and workshops on continuo performance and historical pedagogy at Juilliard. He is the recipient of the Robert A. and Patricia S. Levinson Award, the first awarded in early music.

Rachell Ellen Wong (Violin and Direction)

Wong is a unique performer equally at home in Baroque and standard violin repertoire. In 2020, she made history as the only Baroque artist to receive the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. Her blend of technical virtuosity on gut strings, expressive musicianship and understanding of period performance practices has earned international acclaim and a dedicated following. Named "most approachable virtuoso" by the New York Classical Review, Wong has appeared as a soloist across six continents and collaborated with esteemed ensembles including the Academy of Ancient Music, Jupiter Ensemble, Bach Collegium Japan, The English Concert and Ruckus.

Equally accomplished on modern violin, she debuted publicly with Philharmonia Northwest at age 11 and has performed as a soloist with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and Seattle Symphony, among others. Wong also teaches for the Valley of the Moon Music Festival in Sonoma, CA.

Recent appearances include the New World Symphony, Camerata Pacifica, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Ilumina Festival in São Paulo, Reno Chamber Orchestra, The Northwest Sinfonietta and The Rome Chamber Music Festival. Among her many awards, Wong won the inaugural Lillian and Maurice Barbash J.S. Bach Competition. Originally from the Pacific Northwest, she studied at the University of Texas at Austin, Indiana University and The Juilliard School, where she was a Kovner Fellow. She performs on a Baroque violin from the school of Joachim Tielke ca. 1700 and a 1953 Carlo de March violin, and currently resides in New York City with her two bunnies.

Nicoletta Berry (Soprano)

Berry is a rising soprano whose artistry spans early music, the classical canon and contemporary works. In the 2024/25 season, she was praised by The Boston Musical Intelligencer for her “clear soprano” in the world premiere of Phil Kline’s *ghost story*, a new song cycle presented at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Other recent highlights include Polissena in Handel’s *Radamisto* with Opera Essentia and appearances with New York Festival of Song in their Tour de France program.

In 2024, Berry made her Carnegie Hall debut as the Seraph in Beethoven’s *Christ on the Mount of Olives*. She also performed Despina in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* at Opera Saratoga and previously appeared as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* at the Aspen Music Festival, where she was a Renée Fleming Artist. Additional operatic credits include Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Tytania in Britten’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Clizia in Handel’s *Teseo*.

Twelfth Night

“Bold, often brusque, always brilliant,” (The Boston Musical Intelligencer) Twelfth Night is the newest period-instrument ensemble making a splash on concert stages at home and abroad. Based in New York City, the ensemble is dedicated to reanimating forgotten repertoires as vivid, living art: bridging the past, present and future. Co-founded and co-led by keyboardist and conductor David Belkovski and violinist Rachell Ellen Wong, Twelfth Night presents programs ranging from intimate chamber configurations to full operatic and orchestral productions, all grounded in historically informed performance. Founded in 2021, the ensemble has already earned praise for its “zesty, impeccable playing” and “sensitivity and virtuosity” (New York Classical Review). Both artistic directors are regarded as leading young representatives of early music. Wong made history in 2020 as the only baroque violinist ever to receive an Avery Fisher Career Grant and she continues to distinguish herself internationally on both modern and period violins. Belkovski, born in Skopje and trained in both folk and classical traditions, has gained recognition as a dynamic conductor, continuo player and composer. In 2024, the duo co-directed the New World Symphony in a landmark period-instrument program and have since led projects with other major ensembles. Recent appearances include Cal Performances, Carnegie Hall, Caramoor, Friends of Chamber Music Kansas City and the Newport Classical Festival. Tonight, Twelfth Night makes its Philadelphia debut, and looking ahead, will return to Carnegie Hall and launch new productions exploring lesser-known Baroque operas and chamber works. At its heart, Twelfth Night is more than a historical ensemble; it is a revel of musical community, where old voices speak freshly and new ones resonate with echoes of history.

25 ★ 26 SEASON

UPCOMING NEW & EARLY MUSIC

JAN 29

RUCKUS WITH DAVÓNE TINES

WHAT IS YOUR HAND IN THIS?

In this Penn Live Arts debut performance, intrepid early music ensemble Ruckus and Davóne Tines, a "singer of immense power and fervor," (*Los Angeles Times*) deliver the bite of America's earliest revolutionary music, time-traveling through four centuries of reimagined songs, hymns and dance tunes.

MAR 13

ALARM WILL SOUND WITH BORA YOON

AMERICAN STORIES

Joined by Bora Yoon, Alarm Will Sound celebrates 25 years of dynamic virtuosity with American Stories, a collection of bold works that reflect the vast, evolving landscape of our country's identity.

APR 23

TIBURTINA ENSEMBLE

CELESTIAL HARMONY: MUSIC FOR THE HEAVENLY COURT BY HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

Hailing from the Czech Republic, this all-female collective of vocalists and a harpist makes its Philadelphia debut with a program of glorious music by influential musician, theologian and healer, Hildegard of Bingen.

PENNLIVEARTS.ORG



Huy Luong