

CONTACT: **Louisa Spier**
Cal Performances
(510) 643-6714
lspier@calperformances.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 26, 2021
[Press Room](#)



Images of The English Concert, Harry Bicket, and Karina Gauvin are available for download from the Cal Performances [press room](#).

**CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS
THE ENGLISH CONCERT
AND GUEST SOLOISTS
IN A CONCERT PERFORMANCE OF HANDEL'S *ALCINA*
LAUNCHING A NEW MULTI-SEASON PROJECT
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7
AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

Berkeley, October 26, 2021 — Cal Performances at UC Berkeley welcomes back **The English Concert**, the celebrated early-music ensemble directed by **Harry Bicket**, with a concert performance of Handel's *Alcina* on Sunday, November 7 at 3pm in Zellerbach Hall. The London-

based orchestra's long-awaited return to Berkeley launches a multi-season project, paused during pandemic closures, that will feature annual visits focusing on a concert performance of a complete Baroque oratorio or opera, usually by Handel. The English Concert performance of *Alcina* this season features a group of acclaimed international soloists making their first Cal Performances appearances, including Canadian soprano **Karina Gauvin**, one of the world's leading Baroque interpreters, in the title role.

“It brings me the greatest pleasure to be able to present The English Concert, under the ever-brilliant Harry Bicket in one of the true masterpieces of opera – baroque or otherwise – Handel’s *Alcina*.” says Cal Performances Executive and Artistic Director Jeremy Geffen. “The piece is a miracle of invention, of beauty, of virtuosity and of human expression, and will no doubt thrill audiences in the hands of the world class vocal soloists assembled for the event. Every time I have heard a Handel opera, the effect on the audience is extraordinary: one is never the same person at the end as one was before it began. It is a truly rewarding, deep artistic journey.”

A runaway hit with spectacular stage effects when it premiered in 1735, *Alcina* was Handel's first opera created for the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden in London. *Alcina* is an allegorical fantasy set on an enchanted island with not one but two sorceresses; where discarded lovers are transformed into wild beasts and a young woman disguises herself as a man to track down her missing lover. The irresistible sorceress Alcina is portrayed by Gauvin, who has won numerous awards for her extensive discography, including a Chamber Music America Award, three Grammy nominations, and several Opus Prizes. She is joined by soprano **Lucy Crowe** (Morgana), mezzo-soprano **Elizabeth DeShong** (Bradamante), mezzo-soprano **Paula Murrin** (Ruggiero), tenor **Alek Shrader** (Oronte), and bass **Wojtek Gierlach** (Melisso) in their Cal Performances debuts.

Bicket says, “I’ve always loved this piece because Handel is writing about this fairy tale, but it’s also so human—the whole piece for me is about the disintegration of a relationship – Handel plays with ideas of reality, what is real and what isn’t in a relationship.”

A conversation about *Alcina* with Harry Bicket and Jeremy Geffen can be viewed on the “Beyond the Stage” section of Cal Performances’ website [here](#).

Ticket Information

Tickets for *The English Concert: Alcina* on Sunday, November 7 at 3pm at Zellerbach Hall range from \$42–\$125 (prices subject to change). Half-price tickets are available for UC Berkeley students.

Tickets are available through the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, at (510) 642-

9988, at calperformances.org, and at the door. For more information about discounts, go to calperformances.org/discounts.

#

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Sunday, November 7, 3pm

Zellerbach Hall

Bancroft Way at Dana Street,
UC Berkeley campus

Early Music

The English Concert

Harry Bicket, *artistic director*

Karina Gauvin (Alcina), *soprano*

Lucy Crowe (Morgana), *soprano*

Elizabeth DeShong (Bradamante), *mezzo-soprano*

Paula Murrihy (Ruggiero), *mezzo-soprano*

Alek Shrader (Oronte), *tenor*

Wojtek Gierlach (Melisso), *bass*

Program:

Handel/ *Alcina*, HWV 3

London's Handel specialists The English Concert, directed by conductor Harry Bicket, returns to Cal Performances with a concert performance of Handel's *Alcina*. The engagement launches a multi-season project that will feature annual visits focusing on a concert performance of a complete Baroque oratorio or opera, usually by Handel. An allegorical fantasy with love triangles and mistaken and misrepresented identities, *Alcina* takes place on an enchanted island where discarded lovers are transformed into wild beasts and trees. Canadian soprano Karina Gauvin, one of the world's leading Baroque interpreters, makes her Cal Performances debut singing the title role, portraying Handel's sorceress; she is joined by an international cast of soloists in their Cal Performances debuts: soprano Lucy Crowe as Morgana, mezzo-soprano Elizabeth DeShong as Bradamante, mezzo-soprano Paula Murrihy as Ruggiero, tenor Alek Shrader as Oronte, and bass Wojtek Gierlach as Melisso.

Tickets: \$42–\$125 (prices subject to change)