

Sunday, April 27, 2025, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

The English Concert

Harry Bicket, *artistic director and harpsichord*

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Giulio Cesare in Egitto, HWV 17, an *opera seria* in three acts

Christophe Dumaux, *countertenor* (Giulio Cesare)

Louise Alder, *soprano* (Cleopatra)

Paula Murrihy, *mezzo-soprano* (Sesto)

Beth Taylor, *contralto* (Cornelia)

John Holiday, *countertenor* (Tolomeo)

Morgan Pearse, *baritone* (Achilla)

Meili Li, *countertenor* (Nireno)

Thomas Chenhall, *baritone* (Curio)

Lily Arbisser Shorr, *supertitles*

*This performance will include
a 15-minute intermission following Act I
and a 20-minute intermission following Act II.*

*The performance will last approximately
three hours and 50 minutes, including the two intermissions.*

*This performance is made possible in part by Beth DeAtley, Bernice Greene,
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Act I: *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* takes place over a six-month period in BCE 48 to 47, after Caesar defeated the Roman general Pompey at Pharsalia in Greece and pursued him to Egypt, where Pompey has sought refuge with Ptolemy and Cleopatra, the country's brother-and-sister joint rulers. (We'll now continue with their Italianate names used in the opera.) Cesare is welcomed on his arrival in Alexandria by Pompeio's wife, the noble Cornelia, and her son, Sesto. He is also greeted by Tolomeo's general Achilla, who bears a horrifying gift: the head of Pompeio, whom Tolomeo has ordered to be slain. Cornelia and Sesto are devastated by the sight, as is Cesare, who had been planning to settle a truce with his old rival and now sends a message back to Tolomeo expressing his contempt and disgust at this brutal deed. Cleopatra, too, is shocked at Tolomeo's treachery and decides to ally herself with Cesare. Tolomeo and Achilla, meanwhile, decide to kill Cesare for his insult.

Disguising herself as Lidia, the Queen's handmaiden, Cleopatra visits Cesare and uses her formidable seductive powers to draw him to her side against Tolomeo. Cesare is promptly smitten. Cornelia voices her grief at the murder of her husband, while Sesto promises to revenge them both by killing Tolomeo. Tolomeo invites Cesare to stay at the royal palace, but Cesare, distrusting his hospitality, remains wary. Sesto challenges Tolomeo to a duel, but the Egyptian king sends him to prison while punishing Cornelia by making her work in his seraglio. After a moving duet, the two are separated.

Act II opens with a scenically and musically gorgeous interlude, in which Cleopatra, still known to him as Lidia, successfully completes her seduction of Cesare. She invites him to a garden in the palace, where she appears as the goddess of Virtue in a beautiful set depicting Mount Parnassus and the nine Muses of antiquity, who accompany her bewitching song, "V'adoro, pupille." When the

besotted Cesare rushes toward her, she and the set disappear. But they soon meet again in the palace, where their lovers' tryst is rudely interrupted by Curio's announcement that a mob is outside, attempting to kill Cesare. Cesare rushes off to gather his followers and defeat Tolomeo's soldiers. Having finally revealed her real identity to Cesare, Cleopatra is left to grieve his loss and pray for his safety.

The scene moves to Tolomeo's seraglio, where the Egyptian king is one of many suitors importuning the beautiful Cornelia. He chooses her as his concubine for the night, but is thwarted by the arrival of Sesto, who has escaped from prison and now attempts to seize his father's sword and slay him. He is unsuccessful. Word now arrives that Tolomeo's forces have routed Cesare's and that Cesare has jumped into the harbor and apparently drowned. With these multiple cliffhangers, Act II closes.

Act III: The numbers against Tolomeo are building. Achilla was also a serious suitor of Cornelia and was pushed out of the way by Tolomeo's lust. Feeling betrayed, he takes his troops to Cleopatra to use against Tolomeo. But again, Tolomeo's soldiers defeat those of Achilla. Cleopatra is taken prisoner by her brother and put in chains. She also believes Cesare is dead and sings of her grief in the aria "Piangerò."

But Cesare is not dead. In an actual historical event, he has swum across Alexandria's harbor but now is separated from his troops. Sesto and Nireno have also arrived near where he came ashore and have found the dying Achilla, who gives Sesto a seal allowing him to lead Achilla's troops. Overhearing them, Cesare grabs the seal from Sesto and hurries off to rescue Cleopatra. He urges her to rouse her followers and meet him at the harbor.

In the royal hall, Cornelia defends herself from Tolomeo with a dagger. Sesto rushes in and slays the perfidious king, fulfilling the

revenge the pair had planned. In a joyous finale at the harbor, Cesare and Cleopatra celebrate their victory over Tolomeo and proclaim their undying love. Cornelia

hands Tolomeo's crown and scepter over to Cesare, and he proclaims Cleopatra sole ruler of Egypt. She, in turn, declares she will be a tributary monarch to Rome. All rejoice.

PROGRAM NOTES

In the mid 1720s, George Frideric Handel, now in his late thirties, was at the peak of his career in London. As noted, conductor Jane Glover summarizes in her engaging biography *Handel in London*, "There were many positive elements in his life: financial and domestic freedom, court approbation, the Royal Academy of Music, the best singers and musicians in

of his greatest operas: *Giulio Cesare* (premiered February 24, 1724), *Tamerlano* (October 31, 1724), and *Rodelinda* (February 13, 1725).

Not to be confused with today's British conservatory of the same name, the early 18th-century Royal Academy was a consortium of prominent Londoners—including King George I, a devoted opera lover—who



Europe, a supportive team in his workshop, and, for the most part, trusted and invigorating colleagues." In 1723, Handel moved into a new five-story townhouse at 25 Brook Street in London's fashionable Grosvenor neighborhood; there he would live, compose prolifically, and work with his creative team until his death in 1759. The stars were now perfectly aligned for him, and the result was the "Miracle Year" of 1724 and 1725 when he created a trio

combined their considerable financial resources to sponsor Italian opera in London. In 1719, they hired Handel as their music director and chief composer and established their new company at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket.

In writing three operas within such a short period, Handel was not leaning on a formulaic blueprint, for each of these works is radically different from the others. Set in ancient Egypt, *Giulio Cesare* is a tragi-

comedy—with considerable emphasis on the comic element—of Julius Caesar’s early years as he aids the young Cleopatra in reclaiming the Egyptian throne from her sinister brother Ptolomy. By contrast, *Tamerlano* is pure tragedy and one of Handel’s darkest works: a story about the Tartar conqueror Tamburlaine and his abuse of his noble Turkish captive Bajazet. Though it also has strong tragic elements, *Rodelinda* is a domestic drama about the power of conjugal love (a theme Beethoven would take up nearly a century later in *Fidelio*).

Vital to the success of these operas was Handel’s trusty right hand, librettist Nicola Haym, who took unwieldy stories from cen-

Bussani in 1677 for an opera on the same subject by Antonio Sartorio, as well as a revised version produced in Milan in 1685. However, Haym’s finished libretto has a dramatic power and cohesion well beyond what can be found in these sources; thus, much of the scenario seems to be of his own invention. For his part, Handel, typically a phenomenally fast worker, took more time over this score, working away at it from early summer 1723 to its premiere in February 1724.

The result of Handel and Haym’s painstaking work was a masterpiece that many commentators consider to be his finest opera—even one of the greatest of the entire 18th century. “Almost twice as long as its



turies past and shaped them into compelling dramas. Originally from Rome and a cellist as well as a writer, Haym was not just a journeyman librettist, but a close collaborator with Handel, who shared his theatrical ideals. Having already created six librettos for the Saxon before *Giulio Cesare*, he now worked alongside him on the ground floor of 25 Brook Street.

Haym drew his material for *Cesare* from a libretto written by Giacomo Francesco

predecessor *Flavio*, *Giulio Cesare* is in a class of its own,” writes Glover. “Every aspect of it—its musical range and invention, its dramatic credibility, its pace, its characterization, the very sweep of its theatrical narration—is consistently excellent.” Its first audiences loved it so much that it ran an unprecedented 13 performances and was revived for another 10 the following season. Today it remains Handel’s most frequently performed opera.

A Closer Listen

For this story about one of ancient Rome's legendary leaders, Handel created a score whose dimensions were greater than anything he'd accomplished before. He used his largest orchestra, now enriched with the addition of four horns, which a few years earlier he'd employed in his *Water Music*, but never in an opera. He also added a colorful group of nine instruments—including the giant lute-like theorbo, harp, gamba, oboe, bassoon, and string soloists—as an onstage ensemble depicting the nine Muses to intensify the exotic seductiveness of Cleopatra's "V'adoro, pupille" in Act II.

Alongside this virtuosos orchestra, several of the leading vocal stars of the era shone in a parade of Handel's most unforgettable arias. Cesare himself was played by the most popular singer of the day in London, the castrato alto Francesco Bernardi, known professionally as Il Senesino for his birthplace of Siena. The composer and flautist Johann Quantz described him: "He had a powerful, clear, equal, and sweet contralto voice, with a perfect intonation and an excellent shake [trill]. His manner of singing was masterly and his elocution unrivaled."

Handel portrays Cesare as both a virile man of action and an ardent lover, easily susceptible to Cleopatra's charms. He also possesses a philosophical side in his negative reaction to the assassination of his former enemy, Pompeio. Rather than rejoicing that a rival is out of the way in Act I, he eulogizes him at the urn containing his ashes in the extraordinary *recitativo accompagnato* "Alma del gran Pompeo." In a solemn *Largo* tempo and dark G-sharp minor, Cesare meditates on the frailty of humankind that one moment wields worldly power, then is returned to dust. "Pitiful life, how frail is your state! A breath forms you and a breath destroys you." Decades later, the London musician and journalist Charles Burney called it "the finest piece of accompanied Recitative, ... with which I am acquainted. The modulation is

learned and so uncommon that there is hardly a chord which the ear expects."

A little later, Cesare and Tolomeo meet face to face for the first time. Tolomeo cordially invites Cesare to stay in his palace, but the Roman is already wary of the Egyptian's motives. Handel captures his mood brilliantly in the prowling *da capo* aria "Va tacito e nascosto." Since the words employ imagery of the hunt, Handel complements them with a solo obbligato horn, which stalks alongside the voice as the two men size each other up. This sound combination was a new one for London audiences and must have produced a sensation.

In Act II, we hear a very different side of Cesare in the aria "Se in fiorito," his enraptured response to Cleopatra's "V'adoro, pupille." The words are about a bird in a meadow whose song is sweeter because it cannot be seen. Handel's music takes the form of a pastoral musette dance with drone bass and a solo violin mimicking the bird's voice. Singer and violin duet charmingly throughout, and the return of the *da capo* inspires wonderful cadenza-like improvisations for both.

Cesare's following tryst with Cleopatra is interrupted by news that a mob is outside threatening to attack the Roman. Immediately, Cesare halts his lovemaking and leaps into action with the fiery "Al lampo dell'armi" ("Amid the flashing of arms"). Accompanied by a rushing full orchestra, this is a fiery demonstration of the singer's coloratura and breath control. Again, the *da capo* repeat allows the virtuosity to blaze higher.

In Act III, Cesare, having come ashore after his life-saving swim across Alexandria's harbor, sings arguably his greatest number: the combined accompanied recitative and *da capo* aria "Dall'ondoso periglio." As Handel scholar Winton Dean wrote: "The whole scene is a masterly synthesis of dramatic action and musical form." Here Cesare is swept by a whole range of conflicting emotions. He is grateful to be alive, but

realizes he has no troops to protect him. He desperately wonders what has happened to his beloved Cleopatra. And seeing dead and wounded lying on the beach, he fears what may come. Handel uses beautiful rocking music in the orchestra, suggestive of waves and sea breezes, as a prelude to the recitative and to accompany the aria “Aure” (“Ye breezes”), thus tying together this *scena* as it continually changes its mode of expression.



Left: Francesco Bernardi, known professionally as Senesino, who created the role of Giulio Cesare.

Right: Anastasia Robinson, Countess of Peterborough, who created the role of Cornelia shortly before her retirement.

and Cleopatra—who effortlessly dominate their operas.

In any performance of *Giulio Cesare*, Handel’s portrayal of the young Cleopatra steals the show. Handel wrote this magnificent role for his current prima donna Francesca Cuzzoni (see page 23), who would also create Rodelinda. The Italian soprano was peerless in her technique and in the beauty of her sound. A contemporary musician remembered her thus: “It was difficult for the



Cleopatra, the Eternal Fascinator

As biographer Jonathan Keates wrote, “If Handel’s operas, like those of almost every other 18th-century composer, are primarily focused on the singer as vocal artist, they are also concerned with the credible presentation of human feeling.” Handel’s genius for creating multifaceted, fully rounded characters through music far exceeded his many competitors. And this lifelong bachelor excelled in producing memorable female characters—like Agrippina, Alcina,

hearer to determine whether she most excelled in slow or rapid airs. ...so grateful and touching was the natural tone of her voice that she rendered pathetic whatever she sang ...” Handel rewarded her with eight glorious arias and a duet with Cesare.

In her earliest arias, Cleopatra seems like a giddy teenager, enamored of her own beauty and her ability to make men fall in love with her. But from Act II onward, she grows more mature and complex—becoming capable of loving another and fully assu-

ming the role of Queen of Egypt. This new maturation is first revealed at the top of Act II in the ravishing “V’adoro, pupille,” when she produces a sophisticated theatrical scene to lure Cesare. Handel fills it with seductive power, combining a warmly sensuous orchestra enhanced by onstage band with one of his most beautiful vocal melodies in the style of a slow saraband dance.

If one had to pick the greatest single piece in *Giulio Cesare*, most would choose Cleopatra’s tragic aria in F-sharp minor “Se pièta,” which follows Cesare’s sudden call to battle late in Act II. As she hears offstage voices crying “Death to Caesar!,” Cleopatra realizes the depth of her love for the Roman and that if he is killed, she wants to join him in death. Wrote Dean: “It is a prayer from the anguish of her soul, Bach-like in its harmonic probing of emotion and scored in rich, dark colors.” Propelled by the downward cascades of the violins, its beautiful lines make time stop in place for nine spell-binding minutes.

As Cleopatra’s situation grows more dire at the beginning of Act III, when Ptolemy’s soldiers seem to have won, she is languishing in prison and believes Cesare to be dead; she responds with the mournful “Piangerò,” bewailing her fate. Harkening back to the days of Monteverdi, this most poignant of Handel’s melodies is built over a descending passacaglia bass. However, Cleopatra has not given up: in the faster B section, she vows to return as a ghost to torment Tolomeo. However, when Cesare unexpectedly reappears and frees her, she regains her fighting spirit in the brilliant coloratura aria “Da tempeste,” before rousing her soldiers to join Cesare’s in finally defeating Tolomeo. The text plays on the imagery of a feared shipwreck and the heart’s joy when the ship returns safely to port.

Juxtaposed against the two starring roles, Handel created two other major characters who are the opera’s most tragic: Cornelia, the widow of Pompey, and her

adolescent son, Sesto. Handel wrote Cornelia for the English mezzo soprano Anasztasia Robinson, who had been featured in many of his recent operas; because of his youth, Sesto was given to the soprano Margherita Durastanti rather than a castrato. A noble Roman matron of great poise and courage, Cornelia is also a beautiful woman who, most unwillingly, attracts the attentions of all the male characters, except Cesare. Handel has given her several of *Giulio Cesare*’s most emotionally moving arias, most of them in very slow tempos. The first of these is the saraband “Priva son d’ogni conforto,” sung shortly after she has suffered the devastating shock of seeing her husband’s severed head paraded before Cesare. This is a relatively unadorned aria; it doesn’t even have an orchestral introduction. Nevertheless, it is a lament of piercing beauty, intensified by the addition of a solo flute, the traditional instrument of mourning, and emotionally compelling harmonic movement.

Sesto has also had a heavy burden laid upon him, not least because he believes he has the duty to avenge his father. Shortly after Cornelia’s lament in Act I, he sings “Svegliatevi nel core,” a split-personality *da capo*, in which the B section switches tempo, meter, and key as Sesto listens to his father’s ghost. Introduced by furious strings in the A section, he tries to rouse his spirits to kill Tolomeo. More persuasive, however, is the slower middle section in which he hears his father’s voice saying, “My son, from you severity is expected.”

The importance of Cornelia and Sesto’s roles to Handel is confirmed by his awarding them the closing number of Act I, the magnificent mother-and-son duet “Son nata a lagrimar” (“I was born to weep”). At his first confrontation with Tolomeo, Sesto has challenged him to a duel. Tolomeo orders Sesto to be imprisoned and sentences Cornelia to labor at the seraglio. As they

part, perhaps forever, the two lament their fate with this heartbreaking E-minor duet in a gently rocking *siciliano* rhythm. Dean: “The drooping theme, sung by each voice in turn, conveys an impression of overwhelming pathos.... This is one of the score’s supreme moments.”

When the 1723–1724 season opened, Handel had two rival composers, Giovanni Bononcini and Attilio Ariosti, serving along with him at the King’s Theatre. By the end of

the season, they had both left. It was impossible to compete with Handel’s musical and theatrical genius or his burgeoning popularity with the London public.

—Janet E. Bedell © 2025

Janet E. Bedell is a program annotator and feature writer who writes for Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Caramoor Festival of the Arts, and other musical organizations.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The English Concert is an outstanding orchestra: exceptional in the world-renowned quality, ambition, and variety of its live and recorded output; unique in the zeal of its players for working and performing together; unwavering in its desire to connect with audiences throughout the world. Founded by Trevor Pinnock in 1972 and now under the artistic direction of Harry Bicket and principal guest Kristian Bezuidenhout, the group has earned a reputation for combining urgency, passion, and fire with precision, delicacy, and beauty.

Trevor Pinnock directed the ensemble for more than three decades, shaping its distinctive sound and championing the performance of Baroque and Classical music on period instruments. The group’s outstanding recording output under his leadership, which includes critically acclaimed interpretations of Bach, Handel, and Vivaldi, won international recognition and helped establish the English Concert as a leading force in the early-music revival. This rich musical legacy continues to inspire and inform the orchestra’s work today.

The English Concert’s regular collaborations with key artistic partners reflect and enhance the pursuit of new ways to bring music to life. Joyce DiDonato, Dame Sarah Connolly, Iestyn Davies, Alison Balsom, and many others have contributed their ex-

traordinary skills to individual projects and continue to help shape the way the ensemble performs.

A cornerstone of the orchestra’s annual schedule is its international Handel opera tour. Blossoming from an ongoing relationship with Carnegie Hall established by Harry Bicket, the group now regularly presents the composer’s masterworks at the Theater an der Wien, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the Elbphilharmonie, and Barbican Centre, with the roster of important venues continuing to grow, particularly in East Asia and the United States, where the English Concert has appeared as part of each Cal Performances season since November 2021. Meanwhile, a regular London series allows the ensemble to explore a different path, presenting programs that challenge and inspire audiences closer to home.

In 2023, the English Concert launched its ambitious Handel for All project, which aims to film and make freely available all of Handel’s works online. For more information, visit englishconcert.co.uk.

Harry Bicket was born in Liverpool and studied at the Royal College of Music and the University of Oxford, where he was Organ Scholar at Christ Church. He is an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music and was awarded an OBE in the 2022 Queen’s Birthday Honors.



Bicket is internationally renowned, especially for his interpretations of Baroque and Classical repertoire. Since 2007, he has been Artistic Director of the English Concert,

one of Europe's finest period orchestras, with whom he has recently undertaken a project to record all of Handel's works as a public online resource.

Following his tenure as Chief Conductor since 2013, Bicket was appointed Music Director of the Santa Fe Opera in 2018. His productions with the company include *Don Giovanni*, *Orfeo*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Carmen*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Fidelio*, *La finta giardiniera*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Alcina*, *Candide*, and *Così fan tutte*, and in 2019, he conducted Strauss' *Four Last Songs* with Renée Fleming. He returns this summer for *Le nozze di Figaro*.

Elsewhere this season, Bicket makes his Opernhaus Zurich debut with *Agrippina*, and returns to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for a collaboration with the Joffrey Ballet. With the English Concert this season, Bicket is currently leading the European and US tour of Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, as well as the group's regular London series and presentations of the *Messiah* in Madrid and Barcelona.

He is a regular guest at the Metropolitan Opera, where his recent productions have included *Rodelinda*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Agrippina*, and *Così fan tutte*. Bicket's many titles at the Lyric Opera of Chicago include *Carmen* and *Rinaldo*. At the Canadian Opera Company, he has conducted *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Maometto II*, and *Hercules*, and at Houston Grand Opera, *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Rusalka*. Bicket is regularly invited to conduct North American orchestras including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra,

Cleveland Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Houston Symphony, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Seattle Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and NACO Ottawa,

In Europe, Bicket made his debut at the Paris Opera during the 2023–24 season with *Ariodante* in a new production by Robert Carsen and returned the following season for *Giulio Cesare*. At the Bavarian State Opera, Munich, he has conducted *Rinaldo*, *Ariodante*, *Serse*, *Orlando*, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and *Die Zauberflöte*. At the Liceu, Barcelona, Bicket received the Opera Critics Best Conductor Prize for *Giulio Cesare* and he has also appeared at Theater an der Wien (*Iphigenie en Tauride*, *Mitridate*) and the Bordeaux National Opera (*Alcina*).

Popular in the UK, Bicket made his Glyndebourne Festival debut in 1996 in Peter Sellars' landmark production of Handel's *Theodora* and he has made numerous appearances with the English National Opera, Scottish Opera, and Welsh National Opera. His *Theodora* at the Royal Opera House in 2022 was nominated for an Olivier Award for Best New Production.

Bicket's vast orchestral experience includes repertoire from Bach to Britten with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic, Prague Philharmonic, Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, RTE National Symphony Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic, and Tokyo Symphony.

He is a prolific studio artist and has made many recordings with the English Concert, most recently Handel's *Rodelinda* and *La*

Resurrezione and *Serse*, released to critical acclaim in 2023 for Linn Records. Bicket's discography also includes five recordings with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, among them collections of Handel opera arias with Renée Fleming (Decca) and Ian Bostridge (EMI), as well as selections from Handel's *Theodora*, *Serse*, and the cantata *La Lucrezia* with Lorraine Hunt Lieberson (Avie), which was nominated for a Grammy Award. His solo recordings with David Daniels (Virgin Veritas) and Susan Graham (Erato) were both nominated for *Gramophone* Awards.



Christophe Dumaux,
countertenor
(*Giulio Cesare*)

Undoubtedly one of the most sought-after singers in the world, Christophe Dumaux is a regular guest on the great international opera stages. With his exceptional vocal capacities, the intensity of his performances, and his unique stage presence, the French countertenor burst onto the international operatic scene in 2022 as Eustazio in Handel's *Rinaldo* with the Freiburger Barockorchester, conducted by René Jacobs. Since then, his career has been firmly established in the finest musical venues.

The list of conductors with whom he has collaborated includes, alongside Jacobs, William Christie, Emmanuelle Haïm, Gianluca Capuano, Giovanni Antonini, Harry Bicket, Andrea Marcon, Ivor Bolton, Philippe Jaroussky, Ottavio Dantone, and Francesco Corti. Dumaux also sings with major symphony orchestras including the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain and its music director, Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Similarly, the list of stage directors with whom he has collaborated includes Claus

Guth, David McVicar, Robert Carsen, Calixto Bieito, Barrie Kosky, David Alden, Christof Loy, Barbora Horáková, and Richard Jones.

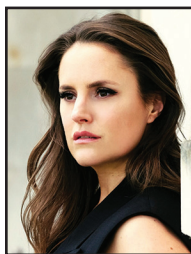
With these esteemed partners, Dumaux tackles masterworks from Monteverdi to Handel to Mozart. He sang Ottone in *Agrippina* in Hamburg; the title role in *Orlando* at the Theater an der Wien; Polinesso in *Ariodante* at the Vienna State Opera (Salzburg), the Bolshoi Theatre, and last year at the Opéra Garnier; and Athamas in *Semele* in Zurich. Dumaux has a special relationship with the opera *Giulio Cesare*: his Tolomeo is in demand all over the world (Metropolitan Opera, Paris Opera, Salzburg Festival, La Scala), and last season, he appeared in the title role in Amsterdam.

Dumaux has tackled, with equal success, other Baroque masters, including Vivaldi (Melindo in *La verità in cimento* in Zurich and the title role in *Il Giustino* in Berlin) and Cavalli (the title role in *Il Giasone* in Antwerp and Endimione in *La Calisto* in Milan).

In 2014, Dumaux sang his first Mozart role as Farnace in *Mitridate* at the Drottningholm Theatre and he returned to this role with Emmanuelle Haïm in Paris. Last season, he made his role debut as Orfeo at the Sydney Opera in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. And this year, he returns to some of his favorite Handel roles; along with this current tour with the English Concert in the title role in *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, Dumaux will sing Polinesso in *Ariodante* at the Opéra du Rhin, and Arsamene in *Serse* and Nerone in *Agrippina* at the Zurich Opera. He will then return to *Giulio Cesare* at the Salzburg Festival under Emmanuelle Haïm, with Dmitri Tcherniakov's direction.

Dumaux's discography includes several recordings on the Ambrosie, Harmonia Mundi, and Naïve labels. On DVD, his recordings include three productions as To-

Iomeo in *Giulio Cesare* (Glyndebourne with William Christie and David McVicar for Opus Arte; Theater an der Wien with Ivor Bolton and Keith Warner for Unitel; and Salzburg with Giovanni Antonini and the Moshe Leiser/Patrice Caurier collaboration for Decca).



Louise Alder,
soprano (Cleopatra)

One of the most in-demand artists today, British soprano Louise Alder has firmly established herself as “an instinctive singing-actress” (*The Arts Desk*) and “a terrific talent, combining a big, lustrous voice with flawless intonation and keen intelligence” (*The Times*). A hugely versatile artist she is equally at home on the world’s most important stages, including at the Royal Opera House (Covent Garden), Vienna State Opera, Glyndebourne Festival, Bavarian State Opera, Carnegie Hall, and Wigmore Hall, where she held a widely acclaimed residency in 2024.

During the 2024–25 season, Alder is making several anticipated role debuts: as Donna Anna in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* at the Vienna State Opera; Micaëla in *Carmen* at San Francisco Opera, and her first Constanza in a new production of *Le nozze di Figaro* at Glyndebourne; as well as returning to the role of Susanna in the same opera, in the production she premiered at the Bavarian State Opera last season. On the concert platform, Alder’s appearances include Strauss’ *Vier Lieder*, Op. 27 with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra; a concert of Mozart arias at the Royal Danish Theater; and Haydn’s *The Creation* with the Gulbenkian Orchestra. Handel also features heavily this season with engagements such as *Alexander’s Feast* at the Mozartwoche in Salzburg and the current tour of *Giulio Cesare* with the English Concert at the Barbican

and in North America, culminating with a performance at Carnegie Hall. In recital, Alder joins forces with tenor Mauro Peter and pianist Joseph Middleton for Wolf’s *Italienisches Liederbuch*, which the duo will present in venues across Europe.

Her engagements last season included Fiordiligi in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* and Susanna in a new production of *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Bavarian State Opera, and Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare* for the Glyndebourne Festival Opera. On the concert platform, she sang Mozart concert arias with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment; arias by Mozart and Rossini with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra; the title role in Schumann’s *Das Paradies und die Peri* with the Royal Northern Sinfonia; Canteloube’s *Chants d’Auvergne* with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra; Mahler’s Symphony No. 4 with the Bavarian State Orchestra and Vladimir Jurowski; Haydn’s *Creation* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Edward Gardner; and Brahms’ *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and Philippe Jordan. Alder also gave recitals in Schwarzenberg, Vienna, Helsinki, and Stockholm, and curated a season-long residency at London’s Wigmore Hall.

Concert highlights include Mahler’s Symphony No. 2 with the London Symphony Orchestra and Sir Simon Rattle and the composer’s Symphony No. 4 with the Bavarian State Orchestra and Vladimir Jurowski; Janáček’s *The Cunning Little Vixen* with Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and Jakub Hrůša; Mozart’s *Exsultate, jubilate* with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Kirill Petrenko; Strauss’ *Four Last Songs* with the Ulster Orchestra and Daniele Rustioni at the BBC Proms; the title role in Handel’s *Theodora* at the BBC Proms and at the Konzerthaus in Vienna with Arcangelo and Jonathan Cohen; the title role in Handel’s *Semele* on tour with the Monteverdi Choir and Sir John Eliot Gardiner; Schumann’s

Scenes from Goethe's Faust with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; *Messiah* with the New York Philharmonic and Harry Bicket; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Tokyo Philharmonic; and Mozart arias at the Salzburg Mozartwoche with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Daniel Harding.



Paula Murrihy,
mezzo-soprano
(Sesto)

Irish mezzo-soprano Paula Murrihy enjoys a busy career working at the highest level in both Europe and the United

States. Previously a member of Oper Frankfurt's ensemble, she has since appeared on major international stages including Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, Opéra de Paris, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Zurich Opera, the Bolshoi Theatre, and the Salzburg Festival.

Last season, Murrihy made an acclaimed role and company debut at the Komische Oper Berlin as Dejanira in Handel's *Hercules* in a new production by Barrie Kosky. She returned to the Paris Opera as Prince Charmant in Massenet's *Cendrillon* and to Santa Fe Opera as Octavian in Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. Concert appearances included Didon in Berlioz' *Les Troyens* with the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra in Paris, Berlin, and at the BBC Proms, and Marguerite in Berlioz' *Damnation de Faust* with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra.

Highlights of the current season include a return to Frankfurt Opera as Dejanira; Waitress in a new production of Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence* at the Semperoper Dresden; Béatrice in Berlioz' *Béatrice et Bénédicte* at Irish National Opera; Komponist in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Opéra de Rouen; Fox in Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen* at the Opéra de Paris; and her current tour as Sesto in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* with Harry Bicket and the English Concert.

An accomplished recitalist, Murrihy has appeared at London's Wigmore Hall, the Oxford Lieder Festival, the Aldeburgh Festival, and for Performance Santa Fe. Her debut solo album *I will walk with my love* was released in 2020 on Orchid Classics.



Beth Taylor,
contralto (Cornelia)

Lauded by the *Guardian* for her "dark and focused" voice, "sensational coloratura," and "spectacular singing," Beth Taylor is one of today's most

electrifying singers. This season, she makes her title role debut in Rossini's *La Cenerentola* at the Opéra de Nancy, with performances in Luxembourg, Caen, and Reims. Along with her current tour with the English Concert as Cornelia in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*—which includes stops at Carnegie Hall and the Barbican Centre in London—she appears as Lisea in Vivaldi's *Arsilda, regina di Ponto* in Amsterdam and Madrid. Taylor also appears in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Berlin Philharmonic in Baden-Baden; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 and Haydn's *Harmoniemesse* at the Paris Philharmonie; *Harmoniemesse* at the Konzerthaus Berlin; Mahler's Symphony No. 3 with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and *Das Lied von der Erde* with the Orchestre de chambre de Paris; Alma Mahler's *Fünf Lieder* with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra; Michael Haydn's and Mozart's *Requiem* with the Handel and Haydn Society for her debut in Boston; Tippett's *A Child of our Time* at Glyndebourne; Elgar's *Sea Pictures* for BBC National Orchestra of Wales; and de Falla's *El amor brujo* with the Tonkünstler Orchestra.

Recent performances include Cornelia and Bradamante in Handel's *Alcina* at Glyndebourne; Arsace in Rossini's *Semiramide*, La Cieca in Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, and

Erda in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* for the Deutsche Oper Berlin; Giuliano Gordio in Cavalli's *Eliogabalo* in Zurich; Falliero in Rossini's *Bianca e Falliero* and Dardano in Handel's *Amadigi di Gaula* in Frankfurt; Anna in Berlioz' *Les Troyens* at the Salzburg Festival, Berlin Festival, BBC Proms, and the Berlioz Festival; Sorceress in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* at the Teatro Real Madrid, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, and Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the London Philharmonic; Mozart's *Requiem* at the BBC Proms and Paris Philharmonie; and Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* in Dublin.

Taylor is also a popular recitalist, having performed with Malcolm Martineau at the Buxton Festival, among others.

She is a grand finalist of the 2023 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition, the winner of the 2022 Elizabeth Connell Award, and Third Prize at the 2019 Wigmore Hall Competition.

A graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the Open University, Taylor has also studied with Jennifer Larmore and Iain Paton.



John Holiday,
countertenor
(*Tolomeo*)

Countertenor John Holiday has established himself as "one of the finest countertenors of his generation" (*Los Angeles Times*). His voice has been praised as "a thing of astonishing beauty" (*The New Yorker*), "arrestingly powerful, secure and dramatically high" (*Wall Street Journal*), and "timeless" (*Washington Post*). Holiday's unique voice and powerful story have been the subject of profiles in the *New Yorker* and *Los Angeles Times*, on CNN's *Great Big Story*, and elsewhere.

Highlights for his 2024–25 season include his debut in the role of Farnace in Mozart's *Mitridate, re di Ponto* at Boston Lyric Opera in a production by James Darrah. Last month, he sang the title role in Philip Glass' *Akhmaten* in a new Barrie Kosky production at Komische Oper Berlin. Holiday appeared with the Bavarian State Opera last October in Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* and will return there this summer for Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, following his current tour with Harry Bicket and the English Concert. This season, he performs with the San Francisco Symphony, the New Jersey Symphony, and the Apollo Chamber Players, and appears in a solo recital at the Wolf Trap Foundation of the Performing Arts. Holiday will also appear on NPR's Tiny Desk Concert series and on NPR's *Amplify with Lara Downes*.



Morgan Pearse,
baritone (*Achilla*)

Morgan Pearse is one of the most exciting baritones of his generation. He studied at the Royal College of Music, where he won the Gold Medal at

the Royal Over Seas League Annual Music Competition and the Lies Askonas Prize. He went on to become a member of the Houston Grand Opera Studio and made his UK debut with the English National Opera singing Figaro in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Recent and future opera highlights include the Mozart roles of Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Araspe in Handel's *Tolomeo* for the Staatstheater Karlsruhe; Sid in Britten's *Albert Herring* at the Buxton Festival; Belcore in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* and Figaro/*Barbiere* for New Zealand Opera and the State Opera of South Australia; Ned Keene in Britten's *Peter Grimes* with the Auckland Philharmonia; Figaro/*Nozze* with the Opernhaus Zurich; Papa-

geno/*Zauberflöte* with the Russian National Orchestra; Scarpia in Puccini's *Tosca* for Opera Holland Park; and Enrico in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* for both the State Opera of South Australia and Opera Holland Park. Concert highlights include a solo recital at Wigmore Hall; concerts with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Moscow Musica Viva Chamber Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, Gabrieli Consort, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Academy of Ancient Music, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and King's College Choir Cambridge; and *Messiah* with the Tasmanian,

West Australian and Adelaide symphony orchestras, RSNO, London Handel Festival, and Sydney Philharmonic Orchestra.



Meili Li,
countertenor
(Nireno)

London-based Meili Li is the first countertenor originally from China to have an international career. He is the winner

of the Farinelli Prize (2016) and Second Prize (2022) at the London Handel Festival Singing Competition.

THE ENGLISH CONCERT

Harry Bicket,
director/harpsichord

Violin 1

Nadja Zwienen, *leader*
Annie Gard
Kinga Ujszászi
Anna Curzon
Jeffrey Girtan
Jimmy Drancsak

Violin 2

Tuomo Suni
Elizabeth MacCarthy
Jacek Kurzydło
Davina Clarke
Mark Seow

Viola

Alfonso Leal del Ojo
Louise Hogan
Joanna Patrick

Violoncello

Joseph Crouch
Jonathan Byers

**Violoncello/
Viola da Gamba**
Samuel Ng

Double Bass
Alexander Jones

Flute/Recorder
Katy Bircher

Oboe
Clara Espinosa Encinas
Jon Olaberria Lopez-Quintana

Bassoon/Recorder
Katrin Lazar

Horn
Ursula Paludan Monberg
Joseph Walters

Theorbo
Sergio Bucheli
Pablo FitzGerald Cerdán

Harp
Oliver Wass

Harpsichord
Tom Foster

Alfonso Leal del Ojo,
Chief Executive

Sarah Fenn
Head of Artistic Planning

Holly Scrivener
Head of Development

Lucy Roberts
Artistic Planning Manager

Aidan Tulloch
Development and Events Officer

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Recent roles include Licida in Vivaldi's *L'Olimpiade* under Peter Whelan (Irish National Opera, Royal Opera House, and Nouvel Opéra Fribourg); Adone in Salvatore Sciarrino's *Venere e Adone* under Kent Nagano (Hamburg State Opera); Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo e Euridice* under Peter Whelan (Blackwater Valley Opera Festival); Spirit in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (Royal Opera of Versailles under Jordi Savall and the Royal Opera House/Roundhouse under Christopher Moulds); Eunuch in Shostakovich's *The Nose* under Vladimir Jurowski (Bavarian State Opera); Oberon in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* under Andreas Schüller (Theater Gießen); Liang Shanbo in Richard Mills' *The Butterfly Lovers* under Mills (Victorian Opera Melbourne); Peleo in Fux's *La corona d'Arianna* under Alfredo Bernardini (Styriarte Festival); and Alcasto in von Bayreuth's *Argenore* under Attilio Cremonesi (Theater Münster). Handel roles include the title roles in *Giustino* under Markellos Chryssicos (Theater an der Wien), *Tolomeo* under Stefan Vladar (Theater Lübeck), and *Fernando, re di Castiglia* under Leo Duarte (London Handel Festival); Alessandro in *Tolomeo* under Federico Maria Sardelli (Händel-Festspiele Karlsruhe); and Dardano in *Amadigi di Gaula* under Attilio Cremonesi (Meiningen State Theater).

Past and upcoming concerts include appearances at Carnegie Hall, the Barbican Centre, 11 Downing Street State Room, Salle Gaveau, the Concertgebouw, Tchaikovsky Concert Hall, and numerous major concert halls in China.

CD releases include *Variations on Choice and Longing*, Fux's *La corona d'Arianna* with Zefiro under Alfredo Bernardini, and the upcoming *Giulio Cesare* with the English Concert under Harry Bicket.

Li holds degrees in film and philosophy from Peking University; a MA and Dip-RAM (with Distinction) in voice from the Royal Academy of Music, where he remains one of the few students to have been awarded full marks for his final recital; and an Artist Diploma (with Distinction) in opera from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.



Thomas Chenhall,
baritone (Curio)

Thomas Chenhall, a London-based baritone, recently graduated from the Royal Academy of Music. He made his international debut as La-

quais in Massenet's *Don Quichotte* at the Wexford International Opera Festival in 2019 and has worked extensively throughout the UK and Europe, making his Royal Opera House concert debut in 2023 as part of the lunchtime recital series.

Recent highlights include a house debut at Glyndebourne Festival Opera as Curio in David McVicar's acclaimed production of Handel's *Giulio Cesare*; Schaunard in Puccini's *La bohème* for Hurn Court Opera; Papageno in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* for the Royal Opera House's outreach live stream; Maestro Spinelloccio in Puccini's *Gianni Schicci* for Nevill Holt; and Silvio in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* for West Greenhouse Opera.

Upcoming engagements include Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the BVA trust and Glyndebourne players; and covering the role of Schaunard in Sir Jonathan Miller's production of Puccini's *La bohème* for the English National Opera.