



Sunday, November 9, 2025, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Twelfth Night *All'Italiana*

David Belkovski, *harpsichord and direction*
Rachell Ellen Wong, *violin and direction*
Shelby Yamin, *violin*
Andrew Gonzalez, *viola*
Andrew Koutroubas, *cello*
Adam Cockerham, *theorbo*
Nicoletta Berry, *soprano*

PROGRAM

- Antonio VIVALDI (1678–1741) Overture to *Il Giustino* (1724)
- Georg Philipp TELEMANN (1681–1767) Sonata in A minor, TWV 43:a5
(c. 1715–1725)
Largo – Allegro – Adagio
- George Frideric HANDEL (1685–1759) “Se vago rio” from *Aminta e Fillide* (1708)
- TELEMANN Sonata in A minor (cont.)
Largo e staccato – Allegro
- Johann Friedrich FASCH (1688–1758) Sonata in D minor, FaWV N:d3 (c. 1750)
Largo – Allegro – Largo – Allegro
- VIVALDI Violin Concerto in E minor, RV 278
(c. 1730-31)
Allegro – Largo – Allegro

INTERMISSION

HANDEL *Armida abbandonata* (1707)
 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”

Francesco DURANTE (1684–1755) Concerto in G minor (1730s or 1740s)
 Affettuoso – Presto

HANDEL “É un foco quel d’amore”
 from *Agrippina* (1709–1710)

DURANTE Concerto in G minor (cont.)
 Largo Affettuoso

HANDEL “Al dispetto di sorte crudele”
 from *Aminta e Fillide*

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PROGRAM NOTES

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 this afternoon’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 *Il 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 re-

frain 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 the composer's 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 sound like playful shouting matches. The third turns to France with the sumptuous *ouverture*-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 master class 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.

—David Belkovski



Nicoletta Berry (above) and David Belkovski (below)



“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 they have since led projects with other major ensembles. Recent appearances include Cal Performances (with cellist Coleman Itzkoff during the 2022–23 season), Carnegie Hall, Caramoor, the Friends of Chamber Music Kansas City, and the Newport Classical Festival. Looking ahead, Twelfth Night will make its Philadelphia debut at Penn Live Arts, 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.

Born in Skopje, Macedonia, **David Belkovski**'s musical journey began with Balkan folk traditions and has evolved into a vibrant career as conductor, soloist, and continuoist. Known for his vivid programming and compelling interpretations, he has directed ensembles including Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Juilliard415, the 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 production of 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 Szfz International Fortepiano Competition. He has served as an 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 in the field of early music to receive this honor.

Violinist **Rachell Ellen 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 is a rising soprano whose artistry spans early music, the classical canon, and contemporary works. During 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 the 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*.

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Twelfth Night *All'Italiana*

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

“Se vago rio” from *Aminta e Fillide*

Aria

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

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

HANDEL

Armida abbandonata

Recitativo

Dietro l'orme fugaci del guerrier,
che gran tempo in lascivo soggiorno
ascoso avea,
Armida abbandonata il piè movea;
e poi che vide al fine che l'oro del suo crine,
i vezzi, i sguardi, i preghi
non han forza che legghi il fuggitivo amante,
fermò le stanche piante, e assisa sopra
un scoglio,
colma di rio cordoglio, a quel leggiadro abete,

che il suo ben le rapia, le luci affisse,
piangendo e sospirando così disse:

Though a pretty stream

Aria

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.

Recitative

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:

Aria

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?

Recitativo

Per te mi struggo, infido,
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, infido amante.

Recitativo accompagnato

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!

Aria

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.

Aria

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.

Recitative

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.

Accompanied recitative

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!

Aria

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.

Recitativo

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!

Siciliana

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

HANDEL

“È un foco quel d'amore” from *Agrippina*

Aria

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.

HANDEL

**“Al dispetto di sorte crudele”
from *Aminta e Fillide***

Aria

Al dispetto di sorte crudele,
costante e fedele
quest' alma sarà.
Che se Filli ad amarmi si muove,
son chiare le prove di sua fedeltà.

Recitative

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!

Siciliana

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

Aria

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.

Despite cruel fate

Aria

Despite cruel fate,
my soul will be
constant and faithful.
Since Fillide is moved to love me
my fidelity has been vindicated.