

operamission
from the composer to the audience...

HANDEL at the Gershwin

a joint presentation with Neke Carson and the Gershwin Hotel

Daniel Bubeck, countertenor
Alteouise deVaughn, mezzo-soprano
David Salsbery Fry, bass
Matthew Garrett, tenor
Amy van Roekel, soprano
Caroline Worra, soprano

the operamission HANDEL BAND:
Joan Plana and Beth Wenstrom, baroque violin
Audrey Selph, baroque viola
Ezra Seltzer, baroque cello

led from the harpsichord by JENNIFER PETERSON

gems and rarities from George Frideric Handel's London Operas

He wrote 39 operas; they're all good. Please enjoy yourselves this evening, as we have enjoyed bringing these pieces out of the dusty libraries, giving them the breath they deserve.

8:00 PM
Wednesday, March 3, 2010
The Gershwin Hotel, New York City

program

berenice - Sinfonia to open the third Act

Please meet the **operamission HANDEL BAND** through this grand music. The fiery drama set in Alexandria in the year 80 BC involves an intense dynastic struggle between Sulla's Rome and the Queen of Egypt.

ariodante - "Vezzi, lusinghe, e brio" - "Orrida a gl'occhi miei"

The opera opens with the Princess Ginevra (**Caroline Worra**) admiring herself in the mirror. All is well. She and Ariodante are in love, her father approves; this is affirmed in a brief conversation with her lady-in-waiting, Dalinda (Alteouise deVaughn), after which who should appear but the Duke of Albany, Polinesso (David Salsbery Fry). His unwelcome advances will continue to be the major source of conflict throughout the drama. Ginevra will have none of it, as she aptly displays in her first *da capo* aria.

radamisto - "Sì che ti renderai"

Radamisto (the Prince of Thrace)'s wife Zenobia (Amy van Roekel) has just taken desperate measures. Based on a true story from Asia Minor in the first century AD, she has plunged herself into the river out of desperation to save her country and her love, which is being threatened by Radamisto's brother-in-law Tiridate (**David Salsbery Fry**). She is unwillingly saved, only to receive this devoted and generous offer to 'sleep her way to the top' with him, her husband's sister's husband. Seriously.

lotario - duetto - "Sì, bel sembiante"

Handel's operas always tie up the loose ends at the end of any drama, no matter how convoluted. In this case, we are in Italy - Spoleto, Pavia, Milan - and the bad guys - Berengario (Matthew Garrett), his wife Matilde (Alteouise deVaughn) and their no-good son Idelberto (David Salsbery Fry) are forgiven in reconciliation as the happy couple Adelaide (**Amy van Roekel**) daughter of the Duke of Burgundy/King of Italy and Lotario (**Daniel Bubeck**) the future Emperor Otto I sing their final love duet. Stay tuned for Otto II's story later in the evening. Confused? You should be: Handel changed this fellow's name to "Lotario" halfway through the composition because he had already written an opera called "Ottone."

sosarme - "Se discordia ci disciolse"

Haliata, the King of Lydia (**Matthew Garrett**) has a rebel son, Argone, in line for the throne, while he favors his 'natural' son Melo (Daniel Bubeck). His 'trusted' advisor Altomaro (David Fry) is able to complicate things enough to satisfy Handel with an excuse for an outpouring of some of his most glorious music. This B-flat major aria is rich with musical treasures, as well as being a showcase for the natural beauty of the tenor voice. Written for the same tenor who premiered Handel's *Messiah*, John Beard, this aria is rarely heard, as its name alone is damn hard to pronounce. Handel could not have portrayed Haliata's peaceful and generous nature more clearly.

rodelinda - "Tirannia"

Garibaldo (**David Salsbery Fry**) is in cahoots with the tyrant Grimoaldo, who has just seized the throne of King of Lombardy from Bertarido, and has in mind to seize the Queen (Rodelinda) as well. To climax a brief conversation with Unulfo (Daniel Bubeck), who is Grimoaldo's adviser (but secretly a spy for Bertarido) about Grimoaldo, who has just exited the stage, Garibaldo sings this short & sweet rage aria about how exactly tyranny works if you're going to do it right. Thank you Nico Castel for the following translation: "He obtained the kingdom by being a tyrant; let cruelty then preserve it for him. Severity, not pity is what underlies and sustains the rule of a king."

orlando - trio - "Consolati, oh bella"

This story is taken from Ludovico Ariosto's epic *Orlando Furioso* and is one of Handel's wonderful 'magic' operas. The lovers Angelica (**Caroline Worra**) and Medoro (**Daniel Bubeck**) are trying to console the lovely shepherdess Dorinda (**Amy van Roekel**), who also loves Medoro. Angelica gives Dorinda a magic ring as a gift in friendship and thanks, which will reappear and twist away at many plots to come: a cause for Orlando's jealousy and subsequent fury, as well as being instrumental in overcoming the sorceress Alcina in another opera entirely. However...the ring is insignificant when compared with what Handel can do with three voices intertwining.

sosarme - "Cuor di madre, e cuor di moglie"

If you remember King Haliata from a few songs back, this is his wife Erenice (**Alteouise deVaughn**). By Act III, adviser Altomaro has twisted so many of his communiqué's that she has been put in chains by Melo (Daniel Bubeck) and his guards, and father/son Haliata/Argone have unwittingly challenged each other to single combat. At this point, either her husband or son will die by the other's hand. And she's in chains. Sing it, girl. **Joan Plana** plays the violin solo.

siroe - “Torrente cresciuto per torbida piena”

During this period of Handel operas, box office demands at the King's Theatre, Haymarket in London gave Handel an excuse to write a hundred or more phenomenal arias for two 'dueling divas' - Faustina Bordoni and Francesca Cuzzoni. This one's for Cuzzoni, who had created the role of Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare* four years prior. The character of Laodice (**Amy van Roekel**) is insignificant in Metastasio's drama-filled plot, but her music is most certainly not! She sings this simile aria about torrents and other aquatic events to Medarse (Daniel Bubeck), who is the King (Cosroe)'s younger son, currently vying for his father's throne through many kinds of deceit, fraud, and injustice. The audience pretty much knows he won't succeed in the end because the favorite castrato of the day, Francesco Bernardi, aka “Senesino” was cast in the title role.

orlando - “Verdi allori”

Angelica (Caroline Worra) and Medoro (**Daniel Bubeck**) must escape into the forest, but first he must leave a momento of their love by carving her name into a tree.

ten minute INTERMISSION

alcina - Sinfonia to open the third Act - “Credete al mio dolore”

On-again-off-again Oronte (Matthew Garrett) and Morgana (**Amy van Roekel**) are at their height of romantic conflict. She is forced to call on the cello (**Ezra Seltzer**) to help her plead her case.

serse - “Per dar fine alla mia pena” - “Sì, la voglio”

Serse (Matthew Garrett) is the King of Persia. He and his brother Arsamene (**Daniel Bubeck**) are both in love with the same woman, Romilda. We are into the second Act, and at this point Arsamene is totally dejected, ready to drink the “l'onda di Lete” - the water from Lethe, the river of oblivion in the Underworld which was known to bring forgetfulness. Serse arrives with the chipper news that Arsamene will get his girl. However, there has been either a miscommunication or a manipulation on Serse's part, because he offers the wrong girl, which sends Arsamene into a forceful refusal in which he invokes yet another river of the underworld, “Cocito” - the river of lamentations.

siroe - “Gelido, in ogni vena”

A little footnote (thank you Winton Dean) about this character: Cosroe II of Persia (**David Salsbery Fry**), the power figure in play in this fabulous opera, is based on events true to history. “*Khosrow II, who reigned 590-628, was credited with thousands of elephants, camels, horses and women. He expanded the Sassanian Empire to its greatest extent, but lost his conquests to the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius. Siroe II (Siroe) led a conspiracy against his defeated father and had him and eighteen of his sons, including Merdaza (Medarse), put to death, but reigned for only eight months.*” This historical bloodbath is not covered in the Handel opera, which ends happily at Siroe's ascension to the throne, but we do get a glimpse at King Cosroe's human side in this gorgeous bass aria. It is early in Act III and nothing is going well for Cosroe at the moment: he has just been forced to condemn his eldest son (Siroe) to death in order to favor the younger son (Medarse).

berenice - duetto - “Quel bel labbro, quel vezzo, quel sguardo”

And...! to lighten things up a little, we thought we'd bring you a charming & cheerful little love duet. Written for a soprano castrato, the role of Alessandro (**Caroline Worra**) is our only instance of cross-dressing this evening. The Queen of Egypt, Berenice (**Amy van Roekel**), has resisted Alessandro's amorous advances through the entire opera, desiring to marry for love rather than politics. She has tried and tried, but every eligible bachelor seems to be going after her sister Selene (the contralto, of course), and has finally left it up to the political factions to decide. When Fabio, the Ambassador from Rome, chooses Alessandro, Alessandro insists that he too will marry only for love, not politics, and refuses to accept the royal signet from any hand other than Berenice's. This noble gesture causes her to cave; they rejoice over the reconciliation of politics and love in this final duet.

ottone - “All'orror d'un duolo eterno”

Ottone (David Fry) and his future wife Teofane (Amy van Roekel) have never met until this point in Act II when they approach the action from different sides of the stage. They are immediately intercepted by Ottone's cousin Matilda (**Alteouise deVaughn**), who is coming to Ottone to plead the case for her son Adelberto's life to be spared. Teofane misconstrues their relationship as amorous while Matilda, her plea rejected, launches into a vengeance aria, summoning up the very same Fury of hell, Tesifone, which Ginevra in *Ariodante* called upon in our first selection this evening. The 'formulas' are good ones, no?

arianna in creta - “Se nel bosco resta solo”

Arianna (**Caroline Worra**), in chains, sings this simile aria comparing her plight to that of a forsaken nightingale. Oh Theseus, please get it together. (He's still lost in his labyrinth here as Act II closes).

alcina - “Semplicetto! a donna credi?”

On-again-off-again Oronte (**Matthew Garrett**) and Morgana (Amy van Roekel) are off again. She storms out; he tries to stop her; and in walks Ruggiero (Daniel Bubeck) who is being TOTALLY deceived by Alcina. Oronte tries to explain it all to him: how she turns men into beasts and frozen rocks when she stops loving them, etc., and when Ruggiero doesn't get it, Oronte insults his stupidity of falling for women's wiles. This aria was also written for tenor John Beard of *Messiah* fame.

tolomeo - “Inumano fratello” - “Stille amare”

Having reached the end of his rope, Tolomeo (**Daniel Bubeck**) rages against everyone: his mother (Cleopatra), his brother (Alessandro), and the King of Cyprus Araspe & his sister Elisa who have kept him from his lovely wife Seleuce. Between recitatives, he downs some poison and throws down the cup. He is dead by the end of the arioso. [Spoiler alert: it's just a sleeping draught, he's gonna be fine.]

ottone - duetto - “Notte cara!”

Gismonda (**Caroline Worra**) and Matilda (**Alteouise deVaughn**) are in bed with the bad guys in this opera, which happens to include a pirate. It's always nice to sing a duet to wish someone 'bon voyage' - even if it's a pirate boat that carries off the fainting soprano heroine Teofane.

siroe - coro - “Dolcissimo amore ogn'alma ogni core”

Cosroe passes along his very heavy crown to his son Siroe after much ado. Read the 'footnote' above to see how long these kinds of happy endings last in real life... Thank you for joining us for 'HANDEL at the Gershwin' - we have had a wonderful time digging up this music and sorting out these plots.

fine

Radamisto 1720
Ottone, re di Germania 1722
Rodelinda, regina de' Langobardi 1725
Siroe, re di Persia 1728
Tolomeo, re d'Egitto 1728
Lotario 1729
Sosarme, re di Media 1732
Orlando 1732
Arianna in Creta 1733
Ariodante 1734
Alcina 1735
Berenice, regina d'Egitto 1736-'37
Serse 1737-'38

Agents of **operamission**, to date:

Glenn Seven Allen
Brian Anderson
Sharin Apostolou
Jason Badger
Biraj Barkakaty
Jennifer Berkebile
James Borchers
Clint Borzoni
Elizabeth Brooks
Bradley Brookshire
Kevin Burdette
Kate Burns
Earl Buys
Nico Castel
Emily Conbere
Mark Cortale
Jess Crawford
Lisa Goode Crawford
Matthew Curran
Russell Currie
Winton Dean
Marcus De Loach
Stefano de Peppo
Alteouise deVaughn
Eric Dillner
Mark Duffin
Walter DuMelle
Lawrence Edelson, *American Lyric Theater*
Scott Emblar
Kallen Esperian
Daniel Felsenfeld
Heather Fetrow
Edward Ficklin
Gabriel Fierro
Abigail Fischer
George Flynn
Melissa Fogarty
Michael Forman
Gregory Gerbrandt
Amy Gluck
Luis Gonzalez
Matt Gray
Jennifer Griesbach
Martha Guth
Rebecca Newth Harrison
Tim Hill

Emily Howard
Chuck Hudson
Keith Jameson
Charles Jarden, *American Opera Projects*
Thomas Jocks
Arthur Levy
Raymond Lustig
Robert Mack, *Opera Noire of New York*
Eric Malson
David McCormick
Max Midroit
Eva Miller
Kenneth Overton, *Opera Noire of New York*
Aurélien Pederzoli
Réka Peterson
Richard Allan Peterson
John Carlo Pierce
Jonathan Pilkington
Sarah Pillow
Byron Rakitzis
Anne Ricci, *Opera on Tap*
Alissa Rose
Maury Rubin, *City Bakery*
Gonzalo Ruiz
Randall Scotting
Ellen Shade
José Simbulan
Kenneth Slowik, *Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute*
Kimberly Sogioka
Benjamin Sosland, *Juilliard Historical Performance*
Ryan Streber
Lucas Tannous
Stephen Andrew Taylor
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Katherine Wessinger-Bozic
Bruce Wetmore
Philip Wharton
Lisa Williamson
Caroline Worra
Matthew Worth

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Please refrain from recording or shooting video of tonight’s performance. If you happen to accidentally catch something on your iPhone, please do not post it onto YouTube without express permission from operamission.

Thank you

biographies

Countertenor **Daniel Bubeck** brings his distinct elegance to **operamission's** Handel evening after having performed on four continents in a vast variety of repertoire. He made his professional debut to critical acclaim in the world première of John Adams' *El Niño*, directed by Peter Sellars and conducted by Kent Nagano at the Théâtre Musical de Paris-Châtelet. He has collaborated with such renowned conductors as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Robert Spano, David Robertson and many others. Mr. Bubeck's Handelian and other baroque portrayals, including his current participation in Handel's *Partenope* at New York City Opera, include collaborations with American Bach Soloists, Carmel Bach Festival, Bloomington Early Music Festival, and Gotham Chamber Opera. Other career highlights are Oberon in Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Princeton Festival, excerpts from Philip Glass' *Akhmaten* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by John Adams, Hanz Werner Henze's *Das verratene Meer* with the Tokyo Symphony, and the American première of *Lost Objects* with Concerto Köln, music by David Lang, Julia Wolfe and Michael Gordon. Daniel Bubeck can be heard on recordings of John Adams' *El Niño* (Nonesuch /Art Haus Musik DVD) and 'William Byrd: The Three Masses' with the Indiana Pro Arte under Paul Hillier (Harmonia Mundi). He also sang for the soundtrack of the Warner Brothers thriller 'I Am Legend,' starring Will Smith.

As a winner of the Luciano Pavarotti International Voice Competition, the George London Career Grant Silver Medal, New York City Opera's Stanley Tausend Award, and the Leontyne Price Award from the National Negro Business Women's Association, mezzo-soprano **Alteouise deVaughn** has performed a wide variety of roles with dozens of opera companies in the United States and abroad, including New York City Opera, Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the opera houses of Cagliari, Rio de Janeiro, and Trieste. Other career highlights include performing with the Atlanta Symphony in Michael Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* and with Opera Theatre of St. Louis in *Orfeo and Euridice*, as well as appearing in New York City Opera's nationally televised production of *Carmen*.

"Marvelous" and "frightening" as the Commendatore in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Nashville Opera (from the review in *The Tennessean*) bass **David Salsbery Fry**'s past engagements have included the role of Arkel in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* in Tel Aviv, roles at the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and will appear this summer as Truffaldino in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Tanglewood with James Levine conducting. He has performed Handel's *Messiah* with the Los Angeles Symphony, and also enjoyed the roles of Olin Blitch in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*, Osmin in Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, T. J. Rigg in Robert Aldridge & Herschel Garfein's *Elmer Gantry*, Giove in Cavalli's *La Calisto*, and Peter Quince in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. According to *Albuquerque Journal's* review of his portrayal of Polyphemus in Handel's *Acis and Galatea* with Santa Fe Pro Musica, "as Polyphemus, bass David Fry threw marvelously wild tantrums, while plunging securely down in his range."

Tenor **Matthew Garrett** is energetically stepping into **operamission's** Handel evening directly following a portrayal of the role of Fernando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with the Jacksonville Symphony in Florida. This exciting young tenor has attracted attention among conductors and directors as a versatile singing actor with considerable musical intelligence that affords him an active career both in opera and concert. On stage, he has appeared as Belmonte in Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* with the Israel Chamber Orchestra and the Connecticut Opera, Pedrillo in the same work with Chicago Opera Theater and for the Cincinnati May Festival, Ernesto in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* at Syracuse Opera, as well as featured roles at Glimmerglass Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, and Opera Omaha. Other notable appearances include the role of Zen in Elliot Carter's *What Next* at the Miller Theater at Columbia University, the Soldier in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and New World Symphony under James Conlon, Harry in *La Fanciulla del West* with the Opera Orchestra of New York, and Don Basilio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with San Francisco Opera's Merola Center. In Europe, he has appeared as Paulino in *Il Matrimonio Segreto* with the Scottish Opera.

The sparkling and effortless phrases of soprano **Amy van Roekel** are a welcomed addition to **operamission's** Handel equation. Having appeared in leading roles and concerts with Lyric Opera of Cleveland, Florida Grand Opera, Central City Opera, Chautauqua Opera, American Opera Projects, Virginia Symphony, Master Chorale of Washington, Santa Fe Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, and here in New York with the Mostly Mozart Festival and American Opera Projects, she was recently seen at the Zipper Factory Theater in Daniel Felsenfeld's *The Bloody Chamber* and other new operas, directed by Christopher Alden, and is featured on Albany Records soon-to-be-released CD 'The Machine Awakes' - a new work by Stephen Andrew Taylor composed specifically for Ms. Van Roekel with a commission by Sinfonia da Camera at the University of Illinois. Amy's affinity for new music and jazz bring added inspiration and spontaneity to her approach to Handel opera.

Internationally acclaimed Grammy nominee **Caroline Worra** has thrilled audiences in over 50 operatic roles in over 20 opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, New York City Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, and the Wexford Festival Opera in Ireland, including ten world and American premières. Her next appearance in a full Handel role will be as Ginevra in *Ariodante* at the Princeton Festival this June, and is thrilled to be making her role debut of Mozart's *Elettra* in *Idomeneo* with the Boston Lyric Opera in May of 2010, where she will also be seen in the title role of Handel's *Agrippina* in 2011.

The **operamission HANDEL BAND** consists of the top period instrument players in New York City. Born in Lleida, Spain, internationally acclaimed baroque violinist **Joan Plana** has performed extensively in Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, England, Canada, and the United States. He is a founding member of the baroque ensemble CONCITATO and is an inaugural member of The Juilliard School's Historical Performance Program. Baroque violinist **Beth Wenstrom** has performed and recorded in the ensembles of Apollo's Fire (Cleveland's Baroque Orchestra) and New York's Concert Royal, and is also a member of Juilliard's Historical Performance Program. Debuting with operamission, baroque violist **Audrey Selph** has performed extensively throughout the United States and in Italy at the Schlern International Music Festival. She has been featured on concerts with the New York Chamber Players, the Aulos Ensemble, and the International Baroque Institute at Longy in Boston. As operamission's continuo cellist, **Ezra Seltzer's** expertise has been showcased frequently in the New York area. He is an inaugural member of Juilliard's prestigious Historical Performance Program, and has graced the stages of Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, Banff Music Festival, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, and Aspen Music Festival. With an avid interest in contemporary music on the modern cello, he has performed numerous times on Yale University's New Music New Haven series. As a member of the Grammy-nominated Yale Cellos, he has toured the world to England, France, and South Korea.

Newly-founded **operamission** has established its artistic presence in presenting opera both of today and of the past. Upcoming co-presentations with Neke Carson at the Gershwin Hotel include 'OPERA IN FLIGHT: new scenes & one-acts' which will feature the world première of Clint Borzoni's *Margot Alone in the Light*, a one-act operatic adaptation of Ray Bradbury's 'All Summer in a Day' April 2 and 3, 2010, staged by Scott C. Emblar. As founder and director of operamission, Ms. Peterson is active in both the opera and early music and has appeared with over 50 opera companies in the U.S. and internationally, including New York City Opera, Opera Memphis, Des Moines Metro Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and the International Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv, Israel.