

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents



Thursday May 16, 2024 1:15 pm
St Malachy's Church – The Actors' Chapel in New York City
Live Streamed to midtownconcerts.org and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com)

Opera Essentia *Excerpts of "From Hell to Antigone"*

*Jeffrey Mandelbaum ~ countertenor Kristin Renee Young & Nicole Besa ~ sopranos
Francis Liu ~ violin Serafim Smigelskiy ~ violoncello Rebecca Pechefsky ~ harpsichord*

From *Admeto*, HWV 22

G.F. Handel (1685–1759)

Overture
Chiudetevi miei lumi (Admeto)
Luci care (Alceste)
Admeto, traditor! (Antigona)
Sen vola lo sparvier (Antigona)
Cangiò d'aspetto (Admeto)
Da tanti affanni (Antigona)
Quanto godrà (Alceste)
A languir (Admeto)
Io ti bacio (Antigona)
Gelosia (Alceste)
Ah, sì, morrò (Admeto)
Alma mia! (Ensemble)

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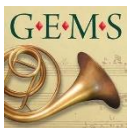
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Naomi Morse, Director of Marketing John Thiessen, Executive Director

Harpsichord Provided by Rebecca Pechefsky



www.gemsny.org

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

In distilling Handel's 1727 opera *Admeto* down to its essential components, Opera Essentia cut many plot intricacies to highlight emotional *expression*. The texts which form "From Hell to Antigone" are pure poetry – the *true* meaning lies in the feeling that the music projects. Baroque opera is full of repetition, both textual and musical, so the same words and notes convey various intentions as a moment develops. This stylized language allows a character space & time to explore an archetypal journey, deepening the passions via melodic/rhythmic variation and ornamentation. The full version of "From Hell to Antigone" has five roles: *Admeto*: the deathly-ill King, is cursed for breaking his promise to Antigone, to marry Alceste instead. *Alceste*: the recent bride of Admeto, is told by the Gods that he needs a sacrifice to save his life. *Antigone*: Admeto's former intended bride, is living in hurt and anger since his betrayal. *Trasimede*: Admeto's sibling, tricked him into rejecting Antigone, as *they* are in love with her. *Ercole*: Hero visiting after retrieving Theseus from Hell. Admeto will demand he goes back.

ABOUT THE ENSEMBLE AND ARTISTS

Opera Essentia's mission is to bring under-reached communities one of history's most transfixing art forms. We curate the largely unknown works of Handel into one-hour, approachable performances in New York City gardens, parks, and other neighborhood gathering centers. The company brings opera "outside" – literally outdoors, but more importantly, liberated from traditional venues. Contrasting opera's usually expensive and exclusive productions, we offer ours free of charge in Alphabet City, Harlem, Crown Heights, and other locales where the community has little opportunity to enjoy classical music. Delivered in a concise one-act experience, and performed by a diverse company of world-class musicians, we expose new listeners to neglected works by the composer of that holiday staple, *Messiah*. Handel perfectly conveys character and emotion through deeply expressive writing for the human voice. Opera Essentia presents this vital music on visceral gut string instruments, weaving arias into an intimate sound chronicle that all can enjoy. To expand our mission's reach, Opera Essentia is looking to develop our sponsor base. If you would like to join our Advisory Council, please email: jeffreymandelbaum@gmail.com.

Jeffrey Mandelbaum, countertenor, sang at the Metropolitan Opera in *Enchanted Island* alongside Joyce DiDonato, conducted by William Christie. Hailed a "first-class countertenor" by *Washington Post*, he returned to The Met for *The Tempest*, and *Enchanted Island's* revival. He sang *Chichester Psalms* at Carnegie Hall for Bernstein's Centenary, and *Xmas Oratorio* and *Magnificat* at Alice Tully Hall. He was in *Quarry* at Spoleto, and was engaged by New York City Opera for *Flavio*, *Ulisse*, and *Hansel and Gretel*, as well as BAM for Glass's *Galileo*. A winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (New York), he attended Oberlin and Mannes, and studied vocal technique and artistry with his mentor, Linda Monssen. Jeffrey founded Opera Essentia two years ago and is excited to continue curating Handel's neglected operas into accessible performances for all.

Kristin Renee Young, soprano, began her musical studies at age five. Equally at home in the worlds of opera, oratorio, recital, musical theater, and voiceover, Kristin has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center's Rose Theater, and the Metropolitan Opera. Lauded as "fantastic" by *The Toronto Star* and demonstrating "masterful vocal control" by *The Boston Musical Intelligencer*, Kristin's recent engagements include Sophia in *VALIS* at MIT; Lucy in *Treemonisha*, arranged by Jessie Montgomery and Jannina Norpoth; Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Barn Opera; Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute* with INSeries Opera; and Amelia Alumond (cover) in *Quamino's Map* with Chicago Opera Theater. She received degrees from Boston University and Barnard College.

Nicole Besa, soprano, joined The Met for 2022–23 & 2023–24 as chorister in *Orfeo*, *Peter Grimes*, *Lohengrin*, Mozart's and Verdi's *Requiem*. She sang with Lyric Opera of Chicago as chorister in *Der Fliegende Holländer* and *Aida*. She sang Bianca and Gabriella in *La Rondine*, Annetta in *Crispino e la Comare*, and soloist in *Messiah*. A winner of Franc d'Ambrosio Talent Search, youngARTS Foundation, National Association Teachers of Singing, and Classical Singer competitions, she sang at Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Tiroler Opern Programm von Österreich, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Teatro Nuovo, FilAm Foundation, GEMS, Governor's State Center for Performing Arts, Hearing in Color Foundation, Anchorage Opera, Dixon Theatre, Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre, Bohemian Theatre, and Idaho Falls Opera.

Francis Liu, violin, specializes in exploring period interpretations of Baroque, Classical, and Romantic repertoire. Principal 2nd violinist of Philadelphia Baroque orchestra *Tempesta di Mare*, and concertmaster of Oklahoma Baroque Orchestra, he performs regularly with NY Baroque Inc, the Sebastians, Boston Baroque, Handel & Haydn Society, and National Cathedral. Francis has appeared with the Smithsonian Chamber Players, Teatro Nuovo, and the Transforming 19th Century (TCHIP) research project at Oxford. He has given interactive concerts at the Polish Consulate in New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the New York Performing Arts Library. He has degrees from Rice University, University of Maryland, and The Juilliard School.

Serafim Smigelskiy, violoncello, has appeared with the Jupiter Chamber Players, Trinity Baroque, the Sebastians, El Mundo, Frisson, New York Baroque, Incorporated and Argento – alongside Robert Mealy, Monica Huggett, William Christie, Nicholas McGegan, and others. He has given world premiere performances guided by composers including Arvo Pärt, Chaya Czernowin, Georg Friedrich Haas, Mathias Pintscher, and Magnus Lindberg. This season he performs with Helicon, TACO, Opera Lafayette, and the MOAB festival. Serafim also composes electronic music as Faremis Sound, and produces audiobooks with his wife, Sierra Prasada, as HiSierrafim Audio. He studied Baroque violoncello with Phoebe Carrai at The Juilliard School.

Rebecca Pechefsky, harpsichord, has performed at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, as well as Morris-Jumel Mansion, where she led Brooklyn Baroque annually. She's given recitals in Milan, Bologna, Amsterdam, Berlin, Basel, Tallinn, London, and Paris. For Krebs' 300th birthday, she performed in Zwickau and Altenburg, and for Couperin's 350th birthday, in Cambridge. For Quill Classics she recorded the complete harpsichord music of François d'Agincour, Bach and His Circle, Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier Books 1 and 2, and Johann Ludwig Krebs @ 300. She has premiered works by Mark Janello, Graham Lynch, Frank J. Oteri, Johnny Reinhard, and others. Organist at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Queens, she lives in Brooklyn with Erik Ryding, with whom she co-authored *Bruno Walter: A World Elsewhere*.

Rod Gomez was named Best Director 2019 by the Latin ACE Awards for *El Barbero de Sevilla* with New Camerata Opera. He has directed Chicago Summer Opera (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), dell'Arte Opera (*Juana*), One World Symphony (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and *Peter Grimes*), Bronx Opera (*The Consul*, *Don Giovanni*, *Falstaff*, *La Traviata*, *Albert Herring*, and *Cinderella*), Chelsea Opera (*I Pagliacci*), Pocket OperaNY (*Così fan Tutte*), Big Apple Baroque (*Fairy Queen*), Opera Company of Brooklyn (*Giulio Cesare*), New Jersey Concert Opera (*West Side Story*), Winter Garden (*Path of Miracles*), San Francisco's Pocket Opera (*Madame Butterfly*, *Rigoletto*, *Martha*), and Opera Roanoke (*Die Zauberflöte*, *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, and *Carmen*).

Next Week: Caroline Nicolas & Friends
Gamba Rivalry

Text Translations – Excerpts from *Admeto*, HWV 22

Chiudetevi miei lumi (Admeto)

Close, my eyes, in perpetual oblivion; thus with my death, take away suffering, eternal gods.

Luci care (Alceste)

Dear eyes, goodbye, rest! Stars beloved, sleep, sure upon waking, that you'll see me no more. We'll meet again in Elysium, though separated, reunited, happy together among blessed souls.

Admeto, traditor! (Antigona)

Admeto, Traitor, faithless lover! For broken trust, in a sickbed you're condemned by Zeus.

Sen vola lo sparvier (Antigona)

The sparrow hawk flies every foreign shore, searching each nest, to see if it can find new prey.

Cangiò d'aspetto (Admeto)

It has changed, cruel fate, and in my breast is already renewed all the joy.

Da tanti affanni (Antigona)

By so many woes oppressed, I say to myself: living thus you cannot, wretched lover. It may be confirmed by Love, saying my heart's pain will only leave, when my soul departs.

Quanto godrà (Alceste)

How he will rejoice, when he sees me, my beloved husband, my dear treasure!

A languir (Admeto)

To languish and to suffer I've been destined by Love.

Io ti bacio (Antigona)

I kiss you, oh lovely image of my fair idol.
Now with you, I go to satisfy my constant desire.

Gelosia (Alceste)

Jealousy, pitiless fury, you escaped the inferno and entered, by force, into this heart.

Ah, sì, morirò (Admeto)

I'll die; and then I'll be able to divide my heart, which in life is too little.
Thus in double love, to one and the other beauty, a torch will blaze, with double fire!

Alma mia! (Ensemble)

My soul! Sweet balm! I embrace you, I hug you to this breast;
Sweet and dear is every trial, if I return to my sweet one.