

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents



Thursday, October 1, 2020

1:15 pm

Streamed to YouTube, Facebook, and gemsny.org

The Raritan Players

Sonya Headlam ~ soprano Rebecca Cypess ~ square piano

Sentiment and Sympathy:

Music of Anne-Louise Brillon de Jouy and Ignatius Sancho

Dans le printemps de mes années
Grâce à tant de trumperies
Au fond d'un bois solitaire
Un beau berger sur sa musette
Viens m'aider ô dieu d'amour

Anne-Louise Boyvin d'Hardancourt Brillon de Jouy
(1744–1824)

From Romances: 1er et 2e oeuvre.

Undated manuscript, ca. 1775–1785, American Philosophical Society.

Sonata no. 4 in G minor
Andante con espressione
Rondo – Allegro

From Troisième recueil de sonates pour le piano forte avec accompagn.t
(ad libitum violin part lost).

Undated manuscript, ca. 1775–1785, American Philosophical Society.

The Complaint
Sweetest Bard

Ignatius Sancho (1729–1780)

From A New Collection of Songs. Undated publication, ca. 1769.

Minuet 5th

From Minuets for the Violin, Mandolin, German-Flute, and Harpsichord

Compos'd by an African. Book 2d. Undated publication, ca. 1770.

Anacreon Ode XIII

Friendship, Source of Joy

From A New Collection of Songs

Midtown Concerts are produced by Gotham Early Music Scene, Inc., and are made possible with support from St. Bartholomew's Church, The New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council; the Howard Gilman Foundation; and by generous donations from audience members.

Gotham Early Music Scene, 340 Riverside Drive, Suite 1A, New York, NY 10025 (212) 866-0468

Joanne Floyd, Midtown Concerts Manager Paul Arents, House Manager

Live-stream staff: Paul Ross, Dennis Cembalo, Adolfo Mena Cejas

Gene Murrow, Executive Director

www.gemsny.org



About the Artists

Musicologist and historical keyboardist **Rebecca Cypess** is an associate professor of music at the Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University. A specialist in the history, performance practices, and meanings of music in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, she is the author of *Curious and Modern Inventions: Instrumental Music as Discovery in Galileo's Italy* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), co-editor of *Sara Levy's World: Gender, Judaism, and the Bach Tradition in Enlightenment Berlin* (University of Rochester Press, 2018), and author of over two dozen articles and book chapters. Rebecca founded the Raritan Players in order to explore little known performance practices and repertoire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with special emphasis on musical practices of women. She was the 2018 recipient of the Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society for contributions to historical performance. Rebecca has sorely missed live music-making during the pandemic, but she passed the time by finishing her next book manuscript, *Women and Musical Salons in the Enlightenment*, which will be published by the University of Chicago Press.

Soprano **Sonya Headlam** is active as a soloist, chamber musician, and choral singer of a diverse range of repertoire from the Baroque to the 21st century. She is a member of the GRAMMY®-nominated Choir of Trinity Wall Street; Vocalis, a group of musicians devoted to sharing their passion for art song; and the Raritan Players, whom she joins on the recording *In the Salon of Madame Brillon*, which will be released in 2020. Recent performances include the role of Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with Light Opera of New Jersey and appearances as soprano soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with Trinity Wall Street, Beethoven's *Mass in C* with Downtown Voices, and Ellen Reid's *Dreams of the New World* in the Prototype Festival 2018. Music making during the pandemic has included virtual recitals and a premier of a short opera film *How They Broke Away*, with music and film direction by Andy Teirstein and words by Carl Sandburg. Sonya is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University where she has also worked as a part-time Lecturer in the Department of Music.

About the Ensemble

Founded by Rebecca Cypess, the **Raritan Players** explore little-known repertoire and performance practices of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries based on new musicological research, especially on the music and musical environments cultivated by women. The group's first recording, *In Sara Levy's Salon* (Acis, 2017), has garnered praise as "simply mesmerizing" (*Early Music America*) and "a fascinating concept, brilliantly realised" (*Classical Music*, 5 stars). The recording *Sisters, Face to Face: The Bach Legacy in Women's Hands* (Acis, 2019), a program of fortepiano–harpsichord duos, has been called "an enchanting disc" (*Classics Today*) and an "unexpected treasure... This album could be better only if they could find a way to scent it with freshly-baked cookies" (*American Record Guide*). The recording *In the Salon of Madame Brillon* will be released in 2020. The Raritan Players have been recipients of grants from Chamber Music America, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, and the American Philosophical Society. Please see www.raritanplayers.org for more information.

The 1780 Zumpe square piano used in this program is on generous loan from Leslie Martin, with thanks to Willard Martin.

Christopher Delgado and **Dena Orkin** provided assistance with audio–video preparation.

Anne-Louise Boyvin d'Hardancourt Brillon de Jouy and **Ignatius Sancho** are hardly household names today, but, during their lifetimes, their reputations extended across Europe and even to America. Their lives as creative artists were circumscribed by the conventions and perceptions of those around them, which were shaped by Brillon's status as a woman and Sancho's as a Black man.

A member of the aristocracy, **Madame Brillon** was wealthy and, in some respects, highly privileged. Brillon hosted one of the most glittering salons in Paris, where her guests included some of the leading intellectuals, diplomats, and professional musicians of her day. She set important trends in musical culture, for example, by offering her patronage to composers such as Luigi Boccherini and Johann Schobert, both of whom dedicated published works to her. She also advocated for the use of novel keyboard instruments. As early as the 1760s she owned an English square piano nearly identical to the one used in our performance, and her collection also included a German piano and a harpsichord.

Despite her high social standing and her cultural erudition, Brillon's activities as a creative artist were limited by social norms that frowned on women's authorship. She never published any of her compositions, and she took a purposely unstudied approach to her creative activities. In a letter to her friend Benjamin Franklin, Brillon explained her thinking on this subject: "I am a woman, and my lot and my taste are modesty; I have a lively mind, and nothing prevents me from using it, but only for myself and for my most intimate friends." She explained further, regarding a story that she had written for Franklin, "I have corrected certain faults in this story; there is still much to do, but I am afraid of becoming like the sculptor who, finding the nose of one of his creations a little too big, reduces it until it disappears entirely." Study of Brillon's compositions elucidates what this meant for her musical creativity: for example, she avoided complex forms and sometimes ignored rules of counterpoint. Instead, she prioritized other aspects of musicianship. She wrote long, beautiful, cantabile melodies, which can be heard in both the songs and the sonata on today's program. And she wrote lush, harp-like accompaniments that take full advantage of the ethereal sounds of English square piano.

In some ways, the life of **Ignatius Sancho** could not have been more different from that of Madame Brillon. Born into slavery on a ship in the Middle Passage in 1729, Sancho was orphaned at a young age when his mother died in slavery and his father committed suicide to escape slavery. Sancho was taken to England, where he was sold to three sisters in Greenwich. He came to the attention of John Montagu, 2nd Duke of Montagu (of the first creation), who helped him gain access to books that would enable him to self-educate. In 1749 Sancho escaped to the Montagu home, where he worked as a butler for two years. He left this position upon the death of the Duchess of Montagu, but soon returned to service in the Montagu home as valet to George Montagu, 1st Duke of Montagu (of the second creation), the son-in-law of his former patron. He later established a grocery in the center of London, where he continued to mix with members of elite society, writers, and artists.

Despite being denied a systematic education, Sancho was widely known as a writer and composer. Some of his correspondence was published during his lifetime; most significant were the letters that he exchanged with the novelist Laurence Sterne. Sancho asked that Sterne devote "one half hour's attention to slavery, as it is at this day practiced in our West Indies." Sterne replied warmly, assuring Sancho that he viewed people of all races as part of a single brotherhood, and lamenting, "'Tis no uncommon thing, my good Sancho, for one half of the world to use the other half of it like brutes, & then endeavour to make 'em so.'" (The story of a Black girl inspired by Sancho's letter appears in Volume 9 of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.)

In 1782, two years after Sancho's death, a friend edited and published two volumes of *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho*. These show that Sancho adopted Sterne's distinctive style of writing, including innumerable fragmentary sentences designed to evoke an authentic style of speech. Sancho referred to his letters as "conversable," meaning that they imitated friendly conversation, embracing what he called "philanthropy"—the love of humankind. Sancho's letter to Sterne shows his conviction that the arts had a role to play in eradicating slavery and inspiring friendship and sympathy ("fellow-feeling") across racial

difference. Sancho thought that if Sterne were to include a story related to slavery in his novel, it would help his readers to relate to enslaved Blacks as human beings.

Sancho's *New Collection of Songs* exhibits the same motivation. This modest volume of songs — it contains only six in all — is replete with simple, touching melodies, and it seems designed to celebrate and stimulate friendship above all else. The text of “The Complaint,” drawn from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, laments the futility of romantic love in fostering happiness. “Sweetest Bard” is taken from David Garrick's *Ode*, composed for the Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769; that event as a whole was designed to unite disparate people around love of the “national poet.” The final song celebrates friendship as the source of joy.

Despite the beautiful simplicity of Sancho's songs and instrumental dances, the radical nature of his publications of music cannot be overstated. For a Black man of African descent, formerly enslaved and entirely self-educated, to publish either musical or literary works was nearly unthinkable to many white individuals. Thomas Jefferson, for example, derided Sancho's letters for their “Shandian” pretensions (referring to the title of Sterne's novel), even casting doubt on whether Sancho was truly their author. (Jefferson had no evidence to claim otherwise, and surviving manuscripts of Sancho's letters confirm that he did write them.) If Sancho's faith in friendship seems naïve, it is worth remembering that his “conversable” letters — mirrored by his equally sociable music — helped to inspire the British abolitionist movement.

NEXT WEEK: Burning River Baroque
A Mad, Burning Desire

Texts and Translations

1.

Dans le printemps de mes années
Je meurs victime de l'amour,
Semblable à ces roses d'un jour,
Que le même jour voit fannies.
Ah, gardez-vous de me guérir,
J'aime mon mal, j'en veux mourir.

Douce amitié, raison sagesse,
Vous seule pour qui je vivais,
Reprenez-moi tous vos bienfaits.
Ils ne valent pas ma tristesse.
Ah, gardez-vous de me guérir,
J'aime mon mal, j'en veux mourir.

N'exigez pas que le silence
Vous dérobe mes tendres feux.
Les derniers biens des malheureux
Sont la plainte avec l'espérance.
Ah gardez-vous je me guérir,
J'aime mon mal, j'en veux mourir.

2.

Grâce à tant de tromperies,
Grâce à tant de coquetteries,
Nice, je respire enfin.
Mon cœur, libre de sa chaîne,
Ne déguise plus sa peine.
Ce n'est plus un songe vain.

Tu crois que mon cœur t'adore,
Voyant que je parle encor
Des soupirs que j'ai poussé.
Mais tel au port qu'il désire
Le rocher aime à redire
Les périls qu'il a passé.

1.

In the springtime of my years
I fall victim to love,
Just like these roses of a day,
Which fade the same day.
Ah, don't try to heal me.
I love my illness; I want to die of it.

Gentle friendship, reason, wisdom,
You alone for whom I lived,
Take back for me all your kindnesses.
They are not worth my sadness.
Ah, don't try to heal me.
I love my illness; I want to die of it.

Do not demand that silence
Conceal from you my tender fires.
The last comforts of the unhappy
Are complaint and hope.
Ah, don't try to heal me.
I love my illness; I want to die of it.

2.

After so many deceptions,
After so much coquetry,
Artless, I breathe at last.
My heart, freed from its chain,
No longer disguises its pain.
It is no longer a vain dream.

You believe that my heart loves you,
Seeing that I speak again
Of sighs that I have let out.
But it is just as, at the harbor,
The rock wants to recount
The perils it has passed through.

3.

Au fond d'un bois solitaire
Le berger Tircis un jour,
Trouvant seule sa bergère,
Lui parla de son amour.
Vous savez, dit-il cruelle
Quelle est ma fidélité.
Votre rigueur éternelle
Ne m'a jamais rebuté.

Si mon âme était légère,
Mon destin serait plus doux.
Plus d'une aimable bergère
M'a voulu venger de vous
Ah! qu'aisément avec d'autres
J'eusse trouvé mon bonheur.
Si d'autres yeux que les vôtres
Aient pu charmer mon cœur.

4.

Un beau berger sur sa musette chantait toujours.
Il n'est point de douceur parfaite sans les amours.
De vos amants jeunes bergères n'ayez point peur.
Ils ont quoiqu'en disent vos mères:
Ils ont un cœur.

Souvent Ismene allait se rendre près du Berger,
Et prenait plaisir à l'entendre sans y songer.
Elle apprit bientôt la pauvre, pour son malheur.
Qu'on peut pour une chansonnette
Donner son cœur.

Aujourd'hui la plaintive Ismene n'a plus d'amour
Et tout le long de la semaine, va répétant.
Defiez vous de la voix tendre d'un séducteur.
Hélas! Sans celle de Silvanre
J'aurais mon cœur.

3.

In the depths of a solitary wood
The shepherd Tircis, one day,
Finding his shepherdess alone,
Spoke to her of his love.
"You know," he said, "cruel one,
How faithful I am.
Your eternal harshness
Has never discouraged me.

If my soul was fickle,
My destiny was sweeter.
More than one amiable shepherdess
Wanted me to seek revenge against you.
Ah, how easily I would have
Found happiness with others,
If only other eyes than yours
Could have charmed my heart."

4.

A handsome shepherd sang constantly with his bagpipe:
"There is no perfect happiness without love.
Young shepherdesses, have no fear of your lovers.
They have that which your mothers speak of:
They have a heart."

Often, Ismene would yield to the shepherd,
And enjoyed hearing him without thinking of it.
She soon learned, poor thing, to her misfortune,
That, for a little song,
One can give one's heart.

Today the plaintive Ismene has no more love,
And all week long she goes repeating:
"Beware of the tender voice of a seducer.
Alas! Without the voice of Silvanre,
I would have my heart."

5.

Viens m'aider ô dieu d'amour,
A peindre celle,
Celle, tant, tant belle,
Que tant aimerai toujours.
Elle a bien du gai printemps
Gente humeur et fin sourire.
Blanches perles sont ses dents,
Roses sa bouche respire.

5.

Come help me, oh god of love,
To portray this one,
This one, so, so beautiful,
Whom I will love so much always.
She has received from happy springtime
A gentle disposition and fine smile.
White pearls are her teeth,
Her mouth breathes roses.