

Christ Presbyterian Church
Virtual Concert
Sunday, February 28, 2021
4:00 p.m.



LES
DÉLICES
DEBRA NAGY, DIRECTOR

Women of Genius

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| Prelude from <i>Leandre et Héro</i> | Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1676-1749) text by Marie de Louvencourt (1680-1712) |
| Suite from <i>Les Genies ou Les Caractères de l'Amour</i> (1736) Ritournelle Passacaille Tambourins | Mademoiselle Duval (1718 – after 1775) |
| Airs from <i>Nouveau recueil d'airs sérieux et à boire</i> (1737) <i>Sombres lieux, obscures forêts</i> <i>Ruisseaux, suspendez votre cours</i> | Julie Pinel (fl. 1710–1737) |
| Prelude no. 1 in C major from <i>L'Art de toucher le clavecin</i> (1716) Air from <i>Nouveau recueil d'airs sérieux et à boire</i> <i>Rossignol, vous chantez les douceurs du printemps</i> | François Couperin (1668-1733) Julie Pinel |
| Violin sonata no. 3 in F major (1707) | Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (1665-1729) |
| <i>La Favorite</i> from 1er Livre de pieces de clavecin (1713) | François Couperin |
| <i>Veritas de terra</i> from 7 versets from Psalm 84 (1704) <i>for Marguerite Louise Couperin</i> | Louis Couperin (c. 1626-1661) |
| <i>Judith</i> (1708) | Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre |

Performers

Clara Rottsolk, *soprano*
Debra Nagy, *oboe*
Julie Andrijeski, *violin*
Rebecca Reed, *viola da gamba*
Mark Edwards, *harpsichord*

*The audience is invited to contribute to the expenses of this concert series
by making contributions via mail or online at cantoncpc.org*

Notes on the Program

Women of Genius honors the contributions of remarkably accomplished, creative women in 17th and 18th century France. While harpsichordist and composer Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre is often upheld as an example of isolated “genius,” we hope to challenge that notion. Instead, we want to consider the histories of female poets, performers, and composers who not only made their voices heard but exerted a stronger cultural influence than many realize.

While Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre’s wide-ranging publications constitute an amazing record of her work, one has to dig a little deeper, read between the lines and in the margins, and even review contemporary lists of who’s who to reconstruct the lives and careers of the other women featured on this program. The works of these women may lack attribution or wide distribution, but they were no less accomplished or influential.

These were the daughters, the nieces, and the cousins of musical families like the Couperins. They were poets, translators, and librettists for airs, cantatas, and operas. They were brilliant improvisers and arrangers whose celebrated performances were attested to but whose works were never published. They were singers, keyboard, and theorbo [lute] players whose intimate work impressed and delighted. They were Women of Genius.

Our program begins with a brief prelude for *Leandre et Héro*, one of seven Clérambault cantatas with a text by Marie de Louvencourt. Louvencourt’s texts inspired almost one third of Clérambault’s cantatas; she was not only a poet but also an accomplished singer and theorbo player.

Though we don’t know Mademoiselle Duval’s first name, she was only the second woman (after Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre) to have her opera performed at the Academie Royale de la Musique. Her sole surviving stage work *Les Génies ou Les caractères de l’Amour* (1736) delights in the sort of spectacle and brilliant orchestral effects that deserved to be featured alongside her operatic peers like Jean-Philippe Rameau.

Julie Pinel was born into a family of renowned lutenists but it’s not so easy to identify her early work. As with other women’s names, hers was often abbreviated or otherwise masked in publications. However, enabled by a royal privilege, she immediately put out two books of vocal chamber music beginning in 1736. The songs on our program are full of pastoral imagery - from the sweetness of springtime to happy coupling birds - but look a bit deeper and they’re clearly full of imagery that suggests a world of intense attachments and secret trysts.

What is perhaps most remarkable about Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre’s achievements is our extraordinary record of them. She was a child prodigy who was privileged to gain the attention and patronage of the most influential man in all of France if not Europe, King Louis XIV. She was well-educated and was able to see her works not only performed but -most importantly- published. There are books of harpsichord pieces, violin sonatas, trio sonatas, cantatas based on both mythology and also on tales from the Bible, as well as her opera, *Céphale et Procris*.

By the late 1690s, she was clearly taken with the fashion for all things Italian that was sweeping through Parisian salons. Influenced by the work of Antonio Corelli, she tried her hand at writing extensive violin sonatas that dispensed with dance rhythms and instead explored new types of instrumental expressions and vigorous virtuosity. The Sonata in F major from her 1707 collection of violin sonatas is a prime example.

One of the more useful sources for learning about artists from France's Ancien Régime is Évrard Titon du Tillet's *Le Parnasse François*, an extended biographical dictionary of France's greatest artists, poets, and musicians. While du Tillet writes a glowing entry for Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, he follows it immediately with reference to four remarkable young women that most early music aficionados have likely never heard of.

How I would have loved to hear the playing of Marie-Françoise Certain. Her repertoire included her own arrangements of all the symphonies from Lully's operas, as well as the keyboard pieces of Louis Couperin, Chambonnière, and Marchand. She was also apparently a remarkable accompanist, giving concerts in her home and welcoming the best composers. Even the great writer Jean de la Fontaine (famous for his fables) praised her and her concerts:

*Certain, in a thousand ways equally charming,
And in a thousand fine arts equally learned,
Whose rare genius and brilliant hands
Surpass Chambonnières, Hardel, the Couperains.
Of this amiable child the unique harpsichord
Affects me more than Isis and all his music.
I want nothing more, and there's nothing better
To please the mind, and the ear, and the eyes;
but to see her once a week.*

Titon du Tillet also described Marguerite-Louise Couperin as "one of the most celebrated musicians of our time, who sang with admirable taste and who played the harpsichord perfectly." Her extraordinary prowess earned her rare honors: her name was published with works she sang and she had special permission to sing in the Royal Chapel (where women were typically excluded) alongside singers including Marie-Anne and Jeanne Delalande. In Louis Couperin's *Veritas de terra*, the musical language projects confidence and righteousness in keeping with the text and invites us to imagine Marguerite-Louise's brilliant and flexible voice.

Our program concludes with Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre's cantata on the old testament story of Judith & Holofernes. *Judith* vividly immerses us in an ancient story of the righteous assassination of a brutal and lusty conqueror at the hands of the least-powerful: the subjugated woman.

Jacquet de la Guerre draws an almost cinematic effect from her music and text: she takes us on a journey that begins with the wide-angle scenery of a besieged city to the finest focus of heroine Judith's conscience. Following the trumpet blasts of the opening prelude that effectively usher in the warrior Holofernes, we hear him sing a blustering, flirtatious aria claiming that glory can't hold a candle to Judith's charms. Later, it seems that an inner voice urges Judith to follow a path of

seduction in “Enfoncez le trait qui le blesse” and quicken Holofernes’ intoxication leading to a fateful sleep.

Jacquet de la Guerre’s colorful and brilliantly specific musical writing enlists the players and singer equally in the rhetoric. While the singer advances the story and explores the characters, it’s the instruments who often depict the moments of critical action. For instance, the violin relates the murder- in Euripidean fashion “off stage”- illuminating the gravity and struggle in Judith’s action.

-Debra Nagy

Biographies

Les Délices (pronounced *Lay day-lease*) explores the dramatic potential and emotional resonance of long-forgotten music. Founded by baroque oboist Debra Nagy in 2009, Les Délices has established a reputation for their unique programs that are “thematically concise, richly expressive, and featuring composers few people have heard of.” *The New York Times* added, “Concerts and recordings by Les Délices are journeys of discovery.” The group’s debut CD was named one of the “Top Ten Early Music Discoveries of 2009” (NPR’s *Harmonia*), and their performances have been called “a beguiling experience” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*), “astonishing” (*ClevelandClassical.com*), and “first class” (*Early Music America Magazine*).

Les Délices made its New York debut before a sold-out audience at the Frick Collection in May 2010. Recent and upcoming performances for the ensemble include Music Before 1800 (New York City), Da Camera Society (Los Angeles), Houston Early Music Society, Early Music Hawaii, Morrison Chamber Music Center at San Francisco State University, Boston’s Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, San Francisco Early Music Society, the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments, and Columbia University’s Miller Theatre. In addition to touring engagements, Les Délices presents its own annual four-concert series in Northeast Ohio. Les Délices has been featured on WCPN, WCLV and WKSU in Ohio, WQXR in New York, NPR’s syndicated *Harmonia* and *Sunday Baroque*, and had their debut CD featured as part of the Audio-guide for a special exhibit at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art (Watteau, Music, and Theater). Les Délices’ fourth CD, *Songs Without Words*, was released on the Navona label in November 2018 to critical acclaim.

“Pure and shining” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*) soprano **Clara Rottsoik** has been lauded by *The New York Times* for her “clear, appealing voice and expressive conviction” and by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* for the “opulent tone [with which] every phrase has such a communicative emotional presence.” In a repertoire extending from the Renaissance to the contemporary, her solo appearances with orchestras and chamber ensembles have taken her across the United States, the Middle East, Japan and South America. In collaboration with pianists Sylvia Berry and Byron Schenkman, and guitarist-lutenist Daniel Swenberg, Ms. Rottsoik has given recitals of song from the 17th to 21st centuries in venues including the Goethe-Institut Boston, Town Hall Seattle, St. Mark’s Church Philadelphia, and Swarthmore College. Her recordings are *Myths and Allegories*, French Baroque cantatas with Les Délices and “supple and stylish... and unflaggingly attractive” (*Gramophone Magazine*) *Scarlatti Cantatas* with Tempesta di Mare on the Chandos-Chaconne label.

“A baroque oboist of consummate taste and expressivity” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*) with a musical approach that’s “distinctly sensual...pliant, warm, and sweet,” (*New York Times*), **Debra Nagy, director**, is one of North America’s leading performers on the baroque oboe. In addition to her work with Les Délices, Debra plays principal oboe with Boston’s Handel & Haydn Society, American Bach Soloists, Apollo’s Fire, and many other ensembles. She also indulges her love of late-medieval music as a regular collaborator with Boston’s Blue Heron and Chicago’s Newberry Consort. Inspired by a creative process that brings together research, composition in historical styles, improvisation, and artistic collaboration, highlights of Debra’s recent projects include a critically-acclaimed multimedia production of Machaut’s medieval masterpiece *Remede de Fortune* and a Baroque-Jazz crossover program called *Songs without Words*. She has received many awards for her creative and scholarly pursuits and her discography includes over 30 CDs with repertoire ranging from 1300-1800. Debra is also an unabashed foodie and loves commuting by bike from her home in the heart of Cleveland’s historic Ohio City neighborhood.

Violinist **Julie Andrijeski** is celebrated as a performer, scholar, and teacher of early music and dance. She has been recognized for her “invigorating verve and imagination” (*Washington Post*), “fiery and poetic depth” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*), and “velvety, consistently attractive sound” (*New York Times*). In addition to her frequent performances with Les Délices, she is Co-director of the ensemble Quicksilver, Artistic Director and Concertmaster of the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, and Principal Player with Apollo’s Fire, the Cleveland Baroque Orchestra. Ms. Andrijeski joined the Music faculty at Case Western Reserve University in 2007, where she is now Senior Instructor, teaching early music performance practices and directing the baroque orchestra, chamber music, and dance ensembles. She won Early Music America’s Thomas Binkley Award, for outstanding achievement in performance and scholarship, and was named a 2016 Creative Workforce Fellow by Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (Ohio), supporting her research and performance of 17th-century music in manuscript.

Cellist and gambist **Rebecca Landell Reed**’s “luminous” (*Cleveland.com*) and “notable” (*The New York Times*) sound elicits a range of expression “from classically evocative to Hitchcock horrifying” (*Washingtonian*). Her solo appearances include performances with Apollo’s Fire, Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Three Notch’d Road, and Batzdorfer Hofkapelle. Rebecca pursues a diverse professional career, such as performing and acting in Studio Theatre’s *An Iliad*, working with composer Eric Shimelonis on NPR children’s show *Circle Round*, and developing educational programs with the Crumhorn Collective. She is currently based in Oberlin, Ohio, where she teaches cello and viola da gamba.

First prize winner in the 2012 Musica Antiqua Bruges International Harpsichord Competition, Canadian harpsichordist and organist **Mark Edwards** is recognized for his captivating performances, bringing the listener “to new and unpredictable regions, using all of the resources of his instrument, [...] of his virtuosity, and of his imagination” (*La Libre Belgique*). An active chamber musician, he is the artistic director of Poiesis, collaborates regularly with Les Boréades de Montréal, and has performed with Il Pomo d’Oro, Pallade Musica, and Flûtes Alors!. He has also

given solo recitals at the Utrecht Early Music Festival and Brussels' Bozar and performed concertos with a number of award-winning ensembles, including Il Gardellino (Belgium), Neobarock (Germany), and Ensemble Caprice (Canada). He is currently a PhD student at Leiden University and the Orpheus Instituut, Ghent, where his research examines the intersection of memory, improvisation, and the musical work in seventeenth-century France. Since 2016, he is Assistant Professor of Harpsichord at Oberlin Conservatory.



Future Events in the 2020-21 Concert Series

via Facebook  and YouTube 

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Sarah Pozderac-Chenevey, alto • Michael Wallace, tenor

Palm Sunday, March 28, 2021, 4:00 p.m.

Enter into Holy Week with *Abraham and Isaac*, the well-known Old Testament narrative in which God tests Abraham, set in a canticle by 20th century English composer Benjamin Britten.

With multimedia presentation by Dr. Emily Isaacson

The Art of Sacrifice: The Binding of Isaac Story in Visual Art, Literature, and Music

Dr. Isaacson demonstrates how, throughout history, various artists, writers and composers have chosen to interpret this story, not only from a religious perspective, but also as commentary on contemporary political and social issues.

FRESH AIRE

Nancy Paterson, harp • Dianne Williams, flute

Sunday, April 25, 2021, 4:00 p.m.

The delicate sounds of harp and flute combine in lush arrangements of classical selections.

Christ Presbyterian Church

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