



THE “24 VIOLINS”

March 11, 2023 at 5pm

Good Shepherd-Faith Presbyterian Church, New York City

the Sebastians

Dessus

Daniel Lee
Vivian Mayers
Edson Scheid
Isabelle Seula Lee
Rebecca Nelson
Jude Ziliak

Hautes-contre

Nicholas DiEugenio
Peter Kupfer
Shelby Yamin
Aniela Eddy

Tailles

Jessica Troy
Theresa Salomon
Francis Liu
Annie Garlid

Quintes

Daniel Elyar
Alissa Smith
Maureen Murchie
Rosemary Nelis

Basses

Ezra Seltzer
Nathan Whittaker
Ana Kim
Cullen O'Neil
Adrienne Hyde
Wen Yang

Basse continue

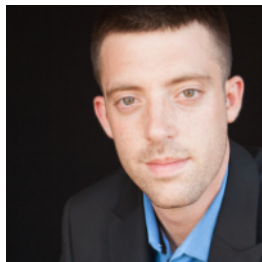
Nathaniel Chase
Jeffrey Grossman
Adam Cockerham
Rex Benincasa



Rex Benincasa
percussion



Nathaniel Chase
violone



Adam Cockerham
theorbo



Nicholas DiEugenio
violin



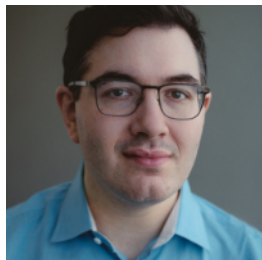
Aniela Eddy
viola



Daniel Elyar
viola



Annie Garlid
viola



Jeffrey Grossman
harpsichord



Adrienne Hyde
viola da gamba



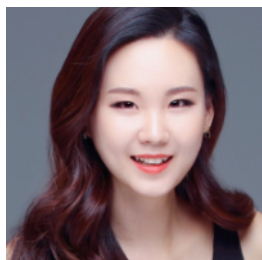
Ana Kim
violoncello



Peter Kupfer
viola



Daniel Lee
violin



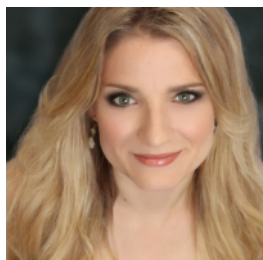
Isabelle Seula Lee
violin



Francis Liu
viola



Vivian Mayers
violin



Maureen Murchie
viola



Rosemary Nelis
viola



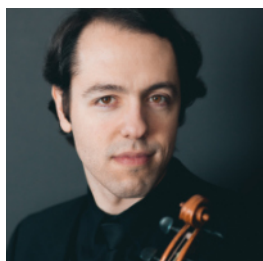
Rebecca Nelson
violin



Cullen O'Neil
violoncello



Theresa Salomon
viola



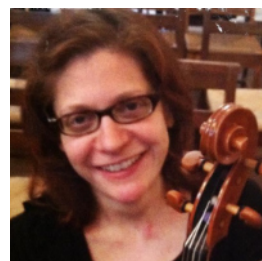
Edson Scheid
violin



Ezra Seltzer
violoncello



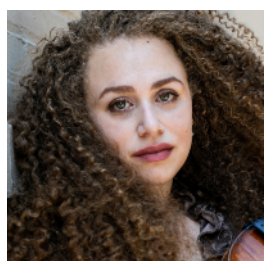
Alissa Smith
viola



Jessica Troy
viola



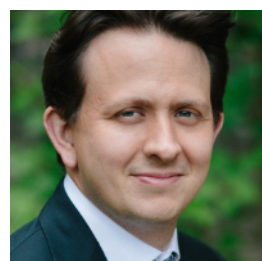
Nathan Whittaker
violoncello



Shelby Yamin
viola



Wen Yang
viola da gamba



Jude Ziliak
violin

PROGRAM

JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY

(1632–87)

Ouverture

Le triomphe de Bacchus dans les Indes, LWV 30 (1666)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

(1685–1750)

Ouverture

Ouverture nach Französischer Art, BWV 831 (1733, rev. 1735)

JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY

[Air]

[Pièce de trois sortes de mouvements en trio]

[Entrée en trio]

[Passepied en trio]

[Ouverture]

Le triomphe de Bacchus dans les Indes, LWV 30 (1666)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Courante

Gavotte I – II – I

Passepied I – II – I

Ouverture nach Französischer Art, BWV 831 (1733, rev. 1735)

JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY

Ouverture

Air pour les Vents

La Marche

Air [Gavotte]

Air [Menuet] I– II

Air pour les Statües I – II

Cadmus et Hermione, LWV 49 (1673)





JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Sarabande

Bourrée I – II – I

Gigue

Ouverture nach Französischer Art, BWV 831 (1733, rev. 1735)

JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY

Entrée des Nations

Entrée des Zéphirs

Entrée des songes funestes

Deuxième entrée des songes funestes

Air pour la nymphes de Flore

Gavotte. Air pour la suite de Flore

Atys, LWV 53 (1676)

Air des échos

La grotte de Versailles, LWV 53 (1668)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Echo

Ouverture nach Französischer Art, BWV 831 (1733, rev. 1735)

JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY

Prélude

Achille et Polixène, LWV 74 (1687)

Passacaille

Armide, LWV 71 (1686)

Chaconne des Scaramouches

Le bourgeois gentilhomme, LWV 43 (1670)

NOTES

Music at the Court of Louis XIV (1638–1715, ruled 1643–1715)

Imagine for a moment the musical experiences you might have had if you were Louis XIV, the Sun King, in his magnificent Versailles palace. The musical scene at



Louis XIV

your court is splendiferous and seems never-ending: every day your rising, lunch, and dinner are all accompanied by live music. You attend a daily mass Mass that includes *grand motets* performed by practically every musician in the court. The arrival of important guests, the return of the army and the hunt, royal promenades and boating, not to mention multiple weekly

private concerts—everything is an occasion for music.

Les Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy (“the 24 Violins of the King”) stood at the top of a complicated hierarchy of musical ensembles. While some parts of the musical structure dated back to François I, who ruled from 1515 to 1547, today we are concerned with the court during Louis XIV’s time—the period of Jean-Baptiste Lully’s musical reign and the height of the *Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy*.

To give you a sense of where the *Vingt-quatre* stood in the context of music at court, here is how the musical divisions were organized:

Musique de la Chapelle (the Chapel) was the religious department, including priests (who sang plainchant), male singers, instrumentalists for motets, and of course, organists.

Musique de la Grande Écurie (the Stable) was responsible for ceremonial music in wartime and special occasions, and for outdoor ceremonies. It originally included sackbuts, cornetti, musettes, and crumhorns, but by the time of Louis XIV it comprised twelve trumpets and timpani (on horseback!), twelve oboes and bassoons, a few violins, eight fifes and drums, and occasionally flutes.

Musique de la Chambre (the Chamber) was the largest and most diverse group, which included singers (male and female), a children’s choir, and many instrumentalists. It could perform everything from solo and chamber concerts to operas, sometimes involving more than a hundred players. Both the *Vingt-quatre* and the smaller *Petite Bande* were part of this department. The *surintendant de la musique du roi* (“superintendent of the king’s music”) was responsible for daily entertainment at court: balls, ballets and comédies-ballets, tragédies lyriques, dances for the evening entertainments, and *grands motets*. This department also performed large-scale theatrical works—but “large-scale” is practically an understatement. Lully’s 1674 *Divertissements de Versailles* lasted for six days!

The *Vingt-quatre*, or *la Grande Bande*, was started around 1570 rather informally. By 1614, they numbered twenty-four, and in 1626, Louis XIII declared *les Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy* an official entity. They became the mainstay at all official events for 135 years. The *Vingt-quatre* often combined with the twelve oboes of the Stable, and some claim that this combination of a central string ensemble plus wind players constituted the invention of the modern orchestra. The *Vingt-quatre* played whenever requested by the king, including on suites to accompany royal everyday activities, on important dates like New Year’s Day, and for celebrations, ceremonies, Holy Week, weddings, funerals, receptions, royal feasts, and more.



The magnificent entrance of the King and the Queen in their beautiful city of Paris, August 26, 1660

The sound of the *Vingt-quatre* captivated Europe. Even before Lully, the *Vingt-quatre* was famous for its *premier coup d'archet*, the “first stroke of the bow,” meaning a united attack by all the strings—it was unusual for so many string players to agree on the first bow stroke! Lully took the *Vingt-quatre* to another level of unification, including bowing up and down in unison (a novel idea!).

Before Lully, Italy was considered the center for good violin playing; after him, while plenty of musicians continued to make a pilgrimage to Italy, many Italians settled in Paris. Musicians came from distant lands to observe Lully's work, including Georg Muffat (1653–1704), Agostino Steffani (1654–1728), and Johann Fischer (1646–c. 1716), and then returned with stories about the incredible French orchestra.

The Structure of the Ensemble

We're used to thinking about string music being in four parts:

Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Basso continuo
(can include cellos, basses, theorbos, keyboard, and bassoons)

This is how Handel, Bach, Vivaldi, Telemann, and most composers of the later baroque period usually wrote. By contrast, at this time in France, instrumental music was written in **five** parts:

Dessus de violon (6 players)
Hautes-contre de violon (4)
Tailles de violon (4)
Quintes de violon (4)
Basses de violon (6, plus large bass instruments, keyboards, theorbos, etc.)

The *dessus de violon* (the top line) was the violin section, and the *basses de violon* section could include violas da gamba as well as actual “basses de violon,” a French instrument slightly larger than the violoncello, tuned a whole step lower, and usually with a fifth string on top. These outer parts were played by the most number of players. The middle three parts (*haute-contre*, *taille*, and *quinte*) were played by instruments that looked like violas of different sizes.

The *quintes de violon* in particular were very large, and there's even some evidence that some of them may have occasionally had a still-lower string!

French instruments in these many varied sizes were based on more standardized Italian designs, and by all accounts they were quite special. They fell out of fashion in the 18th century and have only recently made a limited reappearance. In 2008, the *Centre de musique baroque de Versailles* spearheaded a project in conjunction with European luthiers to recreate these instruments, but as of yet, this has not resulted in a French instrument renaissance across the globe. For the moment, our imaginations will have to help us picture the orchestral colors these different dimensions and proportions might have created.

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–87)

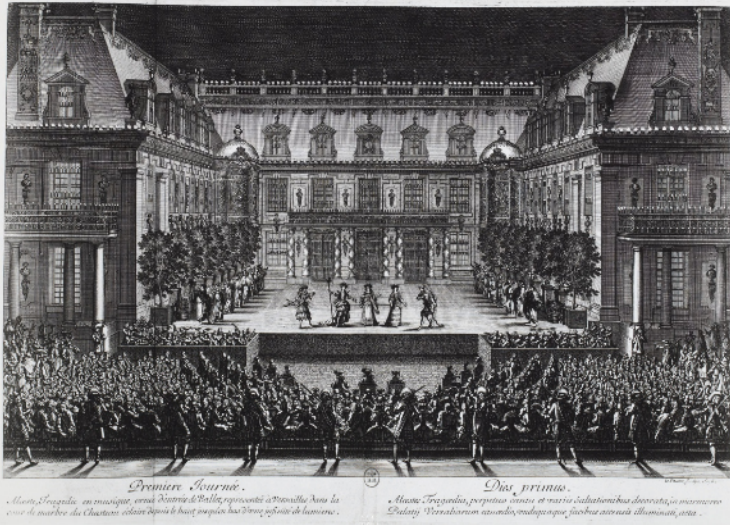
How did a common-born Italian, Giovanni Battista Lulli, come to rule France's musical life while still in his twenties?



Blessed with an obvious magnetism, Lully was hired at age fourteen to go to Paris and serve a cousin of Louis XIV as *garçon de chambre*, assisting her in her Italian studies. Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans seems to have been amused by him, and he used the time to continue a burgeoning education including music and dance. The details are fuzzy, but Lully caught the attention of Louis XIV and ended up in the king's service, in particular, performing in the incredible *Ballet royal de la nuit* in 1653—where he made such an impression on the king that before the festivities of the Ballet were over, the king appointed him *compositeur de la musique instrumentale* (“instrumental music composer”). (Recall that Lully was six years older than the young king—in 1653, Lully was 21, Louis XIV was 15.) Meanwhile, Lully's remarkable dancing meant that he was often dancing in the same *entrées* as the king himself.

In the 1660s, Francesco Cavalli came to France to produce Italian operas in honor of Louis XIV's marriage to Princess Maria Theresa of Spain, and Lully composed ballets to enhance Cavalli's operas, as well

as popular sacred music. Once Louis XIV officially began his reign in 1661, Lully's position was secured: he was appointed *surintendant de la musique de la chambre du roi*, the highest musical office in the kingdom. Lully officially became a French citizen and married the daughter of famed French *airs de cour* composer Michel Lambert—Lully was now not only appointed into French musical aristocracy, but married into musical royalty as well.



Lully's *Alceste* at Versailles, 1674

An Expert in Opera, Ballet, and Politics

Lully's fame and power continued to grow. He collaborated with Molière (one of France's greatest writers of all time) on several *comédies-ballets* and *divertissements*, including *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*—where he also performed one of his final roles as dancer, “Il Signor Chiacchiarone” (The Chatty Man). By 1670, Lully was successful enough to begin construction of a spectacular home in Paris.

Through some clever court maneuvering, in 1672 Lully bought the royal rights to the organization soon called the *Académie Royale de Musique*. From that point until Lully's death in 1687, this theater company—singers, dancers, instrumentalists, backstage artisans, and technicians—existed only to perform Lully's *tragédies*. The first original production of Lully's *Académie* was *Cadmus et*

Hermione, the first *tragédie en musique*, a form Lully invented which integrated music, drama, dance, and visual spectacle to convey tragic stories with moral and political themes. This set the standard for both the dramatic and musical aspects of French opera for almost a century.



Despite his talents, Lully was by all accounts a calculating and vindictive man, and he shamelessly wielded his political power. After Molière's death in 1673, he was given permission to expel Molière's theater company (and an Italian company sharing the space) from their theater. He then was able to legally monopolize the entire genre of dance–music–drama, by prohibiting all other companies from employing more than two voices and six violins—and no dancers whatsoever.

While previously opera had received no financial support from the king, Louis XIV was so impressed by Lully's second *tragédie*, *Alceste*, that he decided they would henceforth be produced at court, financed by the royal treasury, and the same lavish sets, machinery, and costumes would be given to Lully for re-use in Paris. *Atys* (1676), among other works, was premiered for the king in the château of Saint German-en-Laye before transferring to Paris. (The king had not yet moved the court permanently to Versailles.)

Despite a remarkable number of political scuffles, Lully remained firmly in the good graces of the Sun King. Louis XIV served as godfather to Lully's eldest son and he continued to enjoy Lully's music. When Lully reprised his comic role in a revival of *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, the king was so tickled that he immediately appointed him *conseiller secrétaire du roi*, which immediately ennobled him. Lully continued to prosper, charging the highest prices in Paris for the good seats at his theater—



Académie royale de musique, 1685

you could even pay an exorbitant *louis d'or* to sit on the stage itself. A savvy businessman, by this point he had also maneuvered to receive royalties when audience members purchased librettos and printed music. While he continued to be ruthless to rivals in Paris, he did grant some permission to concert and theater organizers in Rouen, Marseilles, and other provinces.

Scandals in Lully's Later Years

In 1683, after the death of Louis XIV's wife, Marie-Thérèse, the king secretly married Françoise d'Aubigny, the marquise de Maintenon. Under her influence, Louis became more and more preoccupied with morality and religion. However, in 1685 Lully was discovered in an affair with a man in his service named Brunet. The details aren't fully known, but Lully was barred from the king's presence and sent away from court. His relationship with the king was never the same. Lully's greatest opera, *Armide*, was only performed in Paris and not for the king. Lully found a new patron, the duc de Vendôme, and his final stage works, the pastorale *Acis et Galatée* and his final opera, *Achille et Polyxène*, came out of collaborations with the duc's secretary.

The duc was popular at court, but it was an open secret that he had relationships with other men, and he was surrounded by a libertine clique which included Jean Galbert de Campistron, Lully's new librettist. Lully's final opera, *Achille et Polyxène*, invokes the star-crossed myth of Achilles and Patroclus, who for centuries had been widely portrayed as same-sex lovers by artists and philosophers.

This was so scandalous that a priest, tending to an ill Lully, refused to give him last rites until he burned the opera's manuscript. He acquiesced, though deviously continued working on a secret copy of the opera. Unfortunately, he completed only the first act before his death, from a self-inflicted wound to the foot, made while he was conducting his *Te Deum*.



An Irrefutable Legacy

Lully's immense influence on the history of French music is hard to overstate. By combining French lyric poetry and a newly-invented recitative style with some of his native Italian style, and with excellent collaborators like Philippe Quinault, he created a new operatic genre that entranced a nation. His tragédies were performed as late as the French Revolution—remarkable, in a society that generally moved on within a decade.

Aside from influencing French composers from Lalande and Charpentier to Rameau and Gluck, his works were performed in Italy, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and we can hear echoes of Lully in parts of Purcell's *King Arthur* and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*.

Lully's instrumental works continued to be published in Amsterdam for nearly thirty years after his death, further widening the influence of the “French suite” throughout Europe.

Today, we're playing music from seven of Lully's works, spanning most of his career. We begin with the *ballet-mascarade* (ballet-masquerade) *Le triomphe de Bacchus dans les Indes* (The Triumph of Bacchus in the Indies), from 1666. We have selections from two *comédies-ballets*: *La grotte de Versailles* (The Cave of Versailles) from 1668, which was also called an *églogue en musique* (an “eclogue” is a short poem or pastoral dialogue); and *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) (The Bourgeois Gentleman, also called The Middle-Class Aristocrat), the famous collaboration with Molière in which Lully's slapstick wowed the king.

Lully is credited with essentially inventing the *tragédie en musique*, which synthesized music, dance, and drama in the service of a story.

Today's selections traverse four of Lully's tragédies:

***Cadmus et Hermione* (Cadmus and Hermione) (1673):**

Lully's first tragédie, based on the Greek myth of the love story of prince Cadmus and princess Hermione, whose union is opposed by the goddess Venus in favor of Hermione's betrothed, Iphise.

***Armide* (1686):** The story of the sorceress Armide who falls in love with a knight Renaud, but her love turns to hatred when Renaud rejects her advances.

***Atys* (Attis) (1689):** Lully's only tragédie with a fully tragic ending. Attis becomes entangled in a love triangle with Sangaride and the goddess Cybele, who becomes obsessed with Attis. After she causes Attis to become temporarily insane, Attis mistakes his love Sangaride for a monster and kills her; upon realizing what he has done, he kills himself. Cybele transforms him into a pine tree so she might love him forever.

***Achille et Polixène* (Achilles and Polyxena) (1687):**

Lully's last tragédie, written after he had fallen out of favor with the king. He only completed the first act, in which Achilles declares his affection for Patroclus and Patroclus decides to go fight in the Trojan war, and Venus descends from the heavens to foreshadow Achilles' future love for Polyxena.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

J.S. Bach did not ever travel to Paris—his famous pilgrimage on foot, from Arnstadt to Lübeck, was only 235 miles, and Paris was twice that distance—but the French style was certainly familiar to him.

He knew and worked with French musicians on occasion, and his library included works by French composers, including Nicolas de Grigny, Charles Dieupart, and Jean Henry d'Anglebert. We Sebastianians have often explored Bach's idea of "French style" and how it relates to *actual* French music, and today we hope to put that juxtaposition on full display.

The instrumental music in French operas was widely disseminated, and the French "dance suite" was born of an overture—originally to welcome and glorify the king—combined with various

pieces designed to be danced or serving as entrance music. Outside of France, composers began writing original suites in this style and calling the whole suites "ouvertures." As these composers did, we are using "ouverture" (rather than the English word "overture") to refer to the whole suite.

The *Ouverture in the French style*, BWV 831, was published in part two of Bach's monumental *Clavier-Übung* series, along with the *Concerto after the Italian Taste*. Here he showcases the two most important national styles of his day, and he contrasts the styles in every way: the *Italian Concerto* in F major, the *French Overture* in B minor—a tritone away and in the contrasting mode. The *Italian Concerto* has three movements; the *French Overture* has eleven. In fact, the *French Overture* is the longest keyboard suite Bach ever composed.

The *French Overture* seems to show us exactly what Bach thought of French harmony, rhythm, ornamentation, and melodic invention, starting with a spectacular overture. After that, Bach turns to more standard dances. Unusually, Bach does not include an allemande—perhaps he thought that this dance, based on the French word meaning "German," was not French enough! Bach instead includes three pairs of dances, a courante, a sarabande, a gigue, and most notably, an *Echo*—not a dance, but an exploration of solo-tutti passages using the two manuals of the harpsichord to create *piano* and *forte*.

Pairs of dances were very common in French music, and as became common later in the baroque, Bach intends that the first movement of each pair be repeated. But perhaps the most memorable movement of the *Ouverture* is its humorous concluding *Echo*.

So, sit back, Your Highness! And enjoy this portal into two worlds: the decades-spanning career of Lully, arguably the king of French music, and the inner workings of Bach's approach to the French style.

—Jeffrey Grossman, Artistic Director



THE SEBASTIANS

The Sebastians are a dynamic and vital musical ensemble specializing in music of the baroque and classical eras. Lauded as “everywhere sharp-edged and engaging” (*The New York Times*), the Sebastians have also been praised for their “well-thought-out articulation and phrasing” (*Early Music Review*) and “elegant string playing... immaculate in tuning and balance” (*Early Music Today*). Their 2018 unconducted *St. Matthew Passion* with TENET Vocal Artists was called “shattering” and “a performance of uncommon naturalness and transparency.”

Recent seasons have included dozens of originally conceived programs, including collaborations with poets, choreographers, and actors; a musical installation in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine; programs dealing with musical “immigration” and nationalism; and major works of J.S. Bach led from the keyboard.

THANK YOU

The Sebastians are a 501(c)3 non-profit. Producing these concerts is a labor of love that your tax-deductible gifts help make possible. You can give online at **sebastians.org/support**. Many thanks to the generous donors who have supported our 2022–23 activities so far, as well as our volunteers and board of directors.

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Winners of the Audience Prize at the 2012 Early Music America Baroque Performance Competition, the Sebastians were also finalists in the 2011 York International Early Music Competition and the 2011 Early Music America/Naxos Recording Competition.

The Sebastians are currently in residence at the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments.

Photos by Grace Copeland, Dan Wright, and Michael Kushner

** This list up-to-date as of March 4, 2023. Please forgive any errors or omissions.*



This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



The Sebastians 2022–23 concerts are made possible, in part, by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature.



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