



THE 24 VIOLINS CROSS THE ALPS

Saturday, May 11, 2024 at 5pm
The Sanctuary of Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City

the Sebastians

Dessus

Daniel Lee
Beth Wenstrom
Isabelle Seula Lee
Rebecca Nelson
Lydia Becker
Edson Scheid

Hautes-contre

Nicholas DiEugenio
Dongmyung Ahn
Peter Kupfer
Jude Ziliak

Tailles

Francis Liu
Shelby Yamin
Aniela Eddy
Jessica Troy

Quintes

Annie Garlid
Rosemary Nelis
Madison Marshall
Alissa Smith

Basses

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

Basse continue

Nathaniel Chase
Adam Cockerham
Joshua Stauffer
Jeffrey Grossman
Rex Benincasa



Dongmyung Ahn
violin



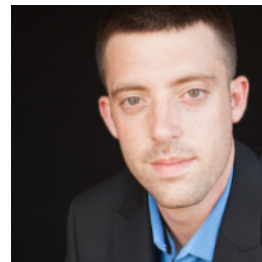
Rex Benincasa
percussion



Lydia Becker
violin



Nathaniel Chase
violone



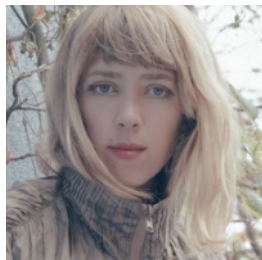
Adam Cockerham
theorbo & guitar



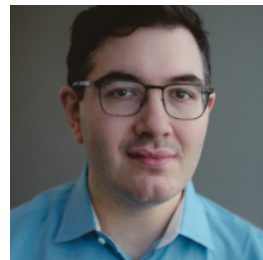
Nicholas DiEugenio
violin



Aniela Eddy
viola



Annie Garlid
viola



Jeffrey Grossman
harpsichord



Adrienne Hyde
viola da gamba



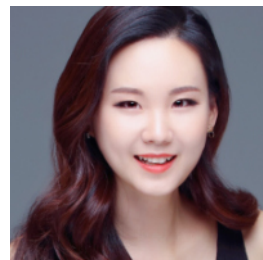
Ana Kim
violoncello



Peter Kupfer
violin



Daniel Lee
violin



Isabelle Seula Lee
violin



Francis Liu
violin & viola



Madison Marshall
viola



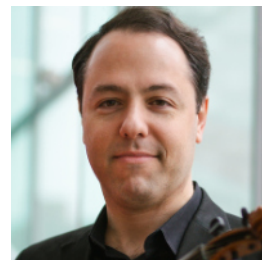
Rosemary Nelis
viola



Rebecca Nelson
violin



Cullen O'Neil
violoncello



Edson Scheid
violin



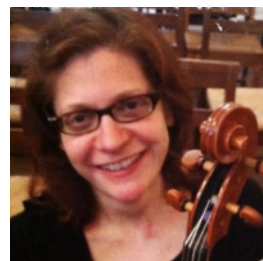
Ezra Seltzer
violoncello



Alissa Smith
viola



Joshua Stauffer
theorbo & guitar



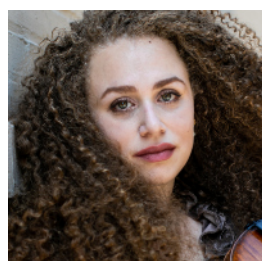
Jessica Troy
viola



Beth Wenstrom
violin



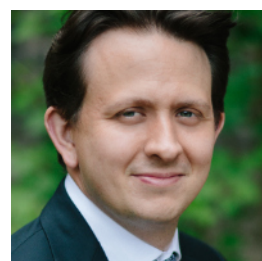
Nathan Whittaker
violoncello



Shelby Yamin
violin & viola



Wen Yang
viola da gamba



Jude Ziliak
violin

PROGRAM

JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY
(1632–87)

Ouverture
Atys, LWV 53 (1676)

ARCANGELO CORELLI
(1653–1713)

Concerto grosso in D major, op. 6, no. 7 (Amsterdam, 1714)
Vivace – Allegro – Adagio
Allegro
Andante largo
Allegro
Vivace



LULLY

Ballet du Palais d'Alcine: Première and Deuxième Entrées
Les plaisirs de l'île enchantée, LWV 22 (1664)

MARIN MARAIS
(1656–1728)

Symphony
Gavotte
Menuet
Trios pour le coucher du roi, LWV 35

CORELLI

Trio Sonata in E major, op. 4, no. 6 (Rome, 1694)
Preludio. Adagio – Allegro – Adagio – Allegro – Adagio
Allemanda. Allegro
Giga. Allegro

GEORG MUFFAT
(1653–1704)

Sonata no. 3 in A major
from *Armonico tributo* (Salzburg, 1682)
Sonata. Grave
Allegro
Corrente
Gavotta
Rondeau

MARAIS

Symphonie
Menuet
Trios pour le coucher du roi, LWV 35

LULLY

Ballet du Palais d'Alcine: Quatrième et Cinquième Entrées
Les plaisirs de l'île enchantée, LWV 22 (1664)





The 24 Violins, March 2023

- LULLY** *Ballet du Palais d'Alcine: Troisième Entrée*
Les plaisirs de l'île enchantée, LWV 22 (1664)
- MUFFAT** Sonata no. 4 in E minor
from *Armonico tributo* (Salzburg, 1682)
Sonata. Grave
Balletto
Adagio – Presto – Adagio – Presto – Adagio
Menuet
Adagio
Aria. Presto
- LULLY** Chaconne
Trios pour le coucher du roi, LWV 35
- Ballet du Palais d'Alcine: Dernière Entrée*
Les plaisirs de l'île enchantée, LWV 22 (1664)
-
- LULLY** Passacaille
Armide, LWV 71 (1686)
- MUFFAT** Passagaglia Grave, from Sonata no. 5 in G major
from *Armonico tributo* (Salzburg, 1682)
- LULLY** Chaconne
Le bourgeois gentilhomme, LWV 43 (1670)

NOTES

The Vingt-quatre's Place in the Court of Louis XIV (1638–1715, ruled 1643–1715)

Louis XIV's magnificent court of Versailles was filled with music — music accompanied the king's daily activities, as well as the return of the army and the hunt, royal promenades and boat excursions, and the arrival of important guests.



Louis XIV

Les Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy (“the 24 Violins of the King”) stood at the top of a complicated hierarchy of musical ensembles. The *Vingt-quatre* (originally *la Grande Bande*) was started around 1570 and often combined with oboes employed by a different branch of the king's musical bureaucracy. Some scholars

point to this combination of a large string ensemble plus wind players as the invention of the modern orchestra. The *Vingt-quatre* played whenever requested by the king, including for his royal everyday activities, on important dates like New Year's Day, and for innumerable celebrations, ceremonies, Holy Week, weddings, funerals, receptions, and royal feasts.

The sound of the *Vingt-quatre* captivated Europe. During Louis XIV's time, Jean-Baptiste Lully ruled the orchestra with an iron fist, but even before Lully, it was famous for its *premier coup d'archet*, the “first bow-stroke,” meaning a united attack by all the strings. Lully pushed the *Vingt-quatre* to another level of unification, including unifying all of their up- and downbows (a novel idea!), ornaments, and rhythmic nuance.

The Sound of the Vingt-quatre

Unlike later string orchestra music, which was divided into four sections (violins I and II, viola, and bass), at this time French instrumental music was written in **five** parts. The *dessus* (the top line) was the violin section, and the *basses de violon* (the lowest line) could include violas da gamba as well as actual

“basses de violon,” a French instrument slightly larger than the violoncello. The middle three parts (*haute-contre*, *taille*, and *quinte*) were played by instruments that looked like violas of different sizes. French instruments in these many varied sizes were by all accounts quite special. They fell out of fashion in the eighteenth century and have only recently made a limited reappearance in modern-day Versailles.

We New Yorkers will need to use our imaginations to help us picture the orchestral colors these different dimensions might have created. If nothing else, having three inner parts (as opposed to the two inner parts of later string music) lends this music a special harmonic and textural richness.

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.

A German in Paris

Georg Muffat (1653–1704) considered himself German, but his family had settled in Savoy in the early 17th century. He went to Paris at age ten and spent six years studying with Lully and others—he also heard and was inspired by Lully's famous orchestra. He traveled to Italy in his late twenties, where he studied in Rome with Pasquini, heard Arcangelo Corelli's early concerti grossi, and composed pieces which were performed at Corelli's house—later published in his *Armonico tributo* (1682). Some

scholars believe he may have even influenced Corelli.

The *Armonico tributo* comprises five concerti grossi written for five-part strings. The concerti have no consistent structure, but are mixtures of dance movements, arias, rondeaux, passacaglias, and more. The dance movements are strongly French-influenced, with elegant, flowing melodies; the



The entrance of the King and the Queen to Paris, August 26, 1660

non-dance movements are Corelli-influenced, with chains of suspensions and homophonic progressions. Corelli's influence is clear also in running bass lines, contrasts between tutti and solo groups, and echo effects. The Passaglia [sic] from Muffat's fifth sonata also displays Lully's customs of repeating the theme *à la rondeau* as well as trio passages alternating with richer five-part writing.

Muffat is perhaps best known for the preface to his *Florilegium Secundum* (1698), which concerns itself with a first-hand account of Lully's performance practice. Muffat talks about the special types of bowing Lully imposed, the focus on playing perfectly in tune and in time, and the types of ornaments Lully's musicians used. He also lists "customs of the Lullists"—for instance, that instruments should preferably be tuned before the arrival of the audience(!). Muffat's treatise on French performance practice is incredible in its specificity, all the more remarkable when we consider that he was only in France as a teenager. Watching the *Vingt-quatre* rehearse and perform must have been a life-changing and formative experience for the young Muffat.

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 as a sort of Italian tutor for a cousin of Louis XIV. 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 *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*, or "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.

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 quickly

became a French citizen and married the daughter of famed French *air de cour* composer Michel Lambert—Lully was now both appointed into French musical aristocracy and married into musical royalty.

An Expert in Opera, Ballet, and Politics

Lully's fame and power continued to grow. He even collaborated with Molière (one of France's greatest writers of all time), including on *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, where he also performed one of his final roles as dancer, "Il Signor Chiacchiarone" (The Chatty Man). 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, the entire theater company existed only to perform Lully's tragédies.

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 from their theater. This allowed him 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.

Louis XIV gave unprecedented financial support to Lully's tragédies, including having them produced at court and financed by the royal treasury, and allowing Lully to re-use the lavish sets, machinery, and costumes in Paris. *Atys* (1676), among other works, was premiered for the king in the château of Saint German-en-Laye before transferring to Paris.

Despite a remarkable number of political scuffles, Lully remained firmly in the good graces of the Sun King. 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*, ennobling him.



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 conservative influence, Louis became more and more preoccupied with morality and religion. Consequently,

when Lully was discovered in an affair with a man in his service in 1685, he was barred from the king's presence and sent away from court. His relationship with the king never recovered. In fact, Lully's greatest opera, *Armide*, was never performed for the king.

Lully's final stage works exist only thanks to the help of a newfound patron, the duc de Vendôme, who was popular at court despite the open secret that he had relationships with other men and was surrounded by a libertine clique which included Lully's last 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 the priest tending an ill Lully refused to give him last rites until he burned the opera's manuscript. Lully acquiesced, though deviously continued working on a secret copy of the opera. Unfortunately, he completed only the first act before his infamous death, from a self-inflicted foot wound while conducting his *Te Deum*.

An Irrefutable Legacy

Lully's immense influence on the history of French music is hard to overstate. His tragedies were performed as late as the French Revolution—remarkable longevity 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, and 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. And of course, Lully's discipline imposed on the *Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy* inspired composers like Muffat.

Today, we're playing music from five of Lully's works, spanning much of his career:

Atys (Attis, 1689), Lully's only tragédie with a fully tragic ending.

Les plaisirs de l'île enchantée (The Pleasures of the Enchanted Isle, 1664), the first of Lully and Molière's collaborations, written for Louis XIV's first great spectacle at Versailles. The Ballet du Palais d'Alcine was written for the third day of the week-long

festivities (!) and was accompanied by fireworks.

The *Trios pour le coucher du roi* (Trios for the King's Bedtime) exist only as a manuscript collection. Recent scholarship has determined many pieces in the collection are actually by Marin Marais, one of Lully's students and the leading French composer for the viola da gamba—also the first to publish dance suites in trio form.

Armide (1686), Lully's greatest tragédie, includes what may be his most spectacular chaconne.

Le bourgeois gentilhomme (1670) (The Bourgeois Gentleman, or The Middle-Class Aristocrat), the famous collaboration with Molière in which Lully's slapstick wowed the king.

"The new Orpheus of our days"

Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713) was born, educated, and famous in Italy, particularly Rome, and though he only published six collections of works, they became enormously popular throughout Europe. He was also in demand as an orchestra leader, paid exorbitant

sums to direct oratorios by G.B. Lulier, A. Scarlatti, and Handel.

We have no records of what Corelli may have known or thought of Lully—certainly the young Muffat would have had stories to tell, during his time in Rome, and the orchestral discipline of the *Twenty-four Violins* must have been appealing to Corelli, who apparently insisted on unanimity of bowing among players, in the style of

Lully. Like Lully, Corelli leveraged his fame to amass a large fortune. However, though Corelli was a passionate performer, contemporaries described him as "remarkable for the mildness of his temper and the modesty of his deportment"—quite a contrast to Lully's rather monstrous behavior!

Despite the tumult of his life at court, we can't help but admire Lully's orchestral legacy. And while we hope our musical community today has less intrigue and backstabbing (more Corelli than Lully, you might say!), we hope you've enjoyed this musical exploration of Lully's influence across Europe. We can't think of a grander way to end our 2023–24 season. Thank you for all your support this year—see you next season!

—Jeffrey Grossman, Artistic Director



Arcangelo Corelli leading a serenata at Piazza di Spagna, 1687

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 uncondacted *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.

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.

They have performed at the Princeton Festival (NJ) Music Matters (LaGrua Center in Stonington, CT), Friends of Music at Pequot Library (Southport, CT), St. John’s Episcopal Church (Tulsa, OK), Juilliard in Aiken (SC), in the Twelfth Night Festival and Concerts@One at Trinity Wall Street (New York, NY), Early Music in Columbus (Ohio), the Renaissance and Baroque Society

of Pittsburgh (PA), the Academy of Early Music (MI), and Houston Early Music (TX). The Sebastians are currently in residence at the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments.

The ensemble’s recordings range from *Night Scenes from the Ospedale*, pairing Vivaldi concerti with newly composed interludes by Robert Honstein (“beautifully-nuanced playing and thoughtful expressivity”); to *the Sebastians a 2: Virtuoso Music of the Holy Roman Empire*, exploring the rich baroque repertoire of music for violin and harpsichord written by composers from modern-day Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic; and, most recently, *Folia*, which juxtaposes trio sonatas and vocal works by Corelli, Colista, Handel, and Vivaldi, featuring soprano Awet Andemicael.



Photos by Michael Kushner and Grace Copeland

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Producing these concerts is a labor of love that your tax-deductible gifts help make possible. With your support, we can bring these baroque treasures to life and share them with audiences around New York and across the country.

If this music moves you, please consider making a donation— no amount is too small. You can give online at sebastians.org/support, or by mailing a check made out to “Sebastian Chamber Players” to 163 Saint Nicholas Avenue, #2H, New York, NY 10026. **Thank you.**

THANK YOU

The Sebastians would like to thank the generous donors who have supported our 2023–24 activities, as well as our volunteers and board of directors. We couldn't do it without you!

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** This list up-to-date as of April 30, 2024. Please forgive any errors or omissions.*

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The Sebastians 2023–24 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.

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



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