



25 · 26 SEASON

# IL PIANTO DI MARIA

March 7 & 8

Salle Bourgie

CONCERT PROGRAM

# ARTISTS

**Anthea Pichanick**  
CONTRALTO

**Marie van Rhijn**  
DIRECTION AND HARPSICHORD

## ARION BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

### First violins

**Jessy Dubé**  
**Marie Nadeau-Tremblay**  
**Jimin Dobson**  
**Mélanie de Bonville**

### Second violins

**Julie Rivest**  
**Sari Tsuji**  
**Louella Alatiit**  
**Sarah Douglass**

### Violas

**Jacques-André Houle**  
**Peter Lekx**

### Cellos

**Amanda Keesmaat**  
**Andrea Stewart**

### Double bass

**Thibault Bertin-Maghit**

### Archlute

**Sylvain Bergeron**

### Organ

**Hank Knox**

### Bassoon

**Mathieu Lussier**

# PROGRAM

FIRST HALF

40 MINUTES

**Antonio Vivaldi** (1678–1741)

Cantata *Cessate, omai cessate*, RV 684

Recitative: “Cessate, omai cessate”

Aria: “Ah, ch’infelice sempre”

Recitative: “A voi dunque ricorro”

Aria: “Nell’orrido albergo”

*Concerto in D minor for strings and continuo*, RV 129, “Madrigalesco”

Adagio – Allegro – Adagio – [Allegro]

**Maria Margherita Grimani** (fl. 1713–1715)

Cantata *Pallade e Marte* (excerpts)

Sinfonia: Allegro – Largo – Presto

Aria: “In pompa trionfal”

INTERMISSION

20 MINUTES

SECOND HALF

40 MINUTES

**Maria Teresa Agnesi** (1720–1795)

Serenata *Ulisse in Campania* (excerpts)

Overture: Allegro

Recitative: “Quanto de lira ò Numi”

Aria: “Accostumai bambina”

**Giovanni Battista Ferrandini** (1709–1791)

Cantata *Il pianto di Maria*

Recitative: “Giunta è l’ora fatal”

Cavatina: “Se d’un Dio fui fatta Madre”

Recitative: “Ah me infelice”

Cavatina da capo: “Se d’un Dio fui fatta Madre”

Recitative: “Ahimè ch’Egli già esclama ad alta voce”

Aria: “Sventurati miei sospiri”

Recitative: “Si disse la gran Madre”

Aria: “Pari all’amor immense”

Recitative: “Or se per grande orror”



SCANNEZ POUR LE PROGRAMME  
COMPLET EN FRANÇAIS

# ANTHEA PICHANICK

**CONTRALTO**



French contralto Anthea Pichanick burst onto the music scene by winning First Prize and the Special Prize at the prestigious Antonio Cesti International Baroque Opera Competition in Innsbruck in 2015. She revealed a unique vocal texture, a strikingly deep timbre, and a musicality combining refinement and intensity. This victory earned her a recital with the ensemble L'Astrée at the Vienna Konzerthaus.

During the summer of 2016, Anthea Pichanick gave a highly acclaimed performance at the Beaune International Baroque and Romantic Opera Festival in the role of Asteria in Vivaldi's *Tamerlano* (Les Accents, conducted by Thibault Noally), marking the beginning of a loyal collaboration with the Festival (she returned to sing the title role in Scarlatti's *Mitridate*, Penelope in *Le retour d'Ulysse* with Stéphane Fuget's Les Epopées, Zulma in *L'italiana in Algeri* with Jean-Christophe Spinosi's Ensemble Matheus) and with Les Accents and Thibault Noally (with whom she reprised *Tamerlano* (Dortmund) and Fernando in Handel's *Rodrigo* at the Theater an der Wien). She has also performed notably as a servant in Strauss' *Elektra* (Opéra de Lyon, conducted by Hartmut Haenchen); *L'italiana in Algeri* (Opéra de Nancy, conducted by Giuseppe Grazioli); Ménandre in Durón's *Coronis* with Le Poème Harmonique, conducted by Vincent Dumestre (Théâtre de Caen, Rouen & Limoges Operas, Festival à Ciel Ouvert, Opéra Comique, Teatro Real Madrid, Teatro Campoamor Oviedo); and La Comtesse di Ceprano in *Rigoletto* (Montpellier Opera).

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# MARIE VAN RHIJN

**DIRECTION AND HARPSICHORD**

Soloist and continuo player Marie van Rhijn performs at international festivals and on major opera stages. She has worked for over ten years with many renowned early music ensembles and is sought after as assistant conductor, notably by Leonardo Garcia Alarcon, William Christie, Christina Pluhar, Vincent Dumestre, and Jean-Christophe Spinozi.

She conducted Les Arts Florissants in Robert Carsen's production of the *Beggar's Opera*, as well as the Orchestra of the l'Opéra Royal de Versailles in a program of *Stabat Mater*, released on the Château Versailles Spectacles label and awarded a Diamant from Opéra Magazine. She also records for the Warner and Evidence Classics labels.

With the support of the Centre Culturel de Rencontres d'Ambronay, she founded her ensemble, L'Assemblée, in 2023. Winner of the FoRTE grant for Young Talents of Ile-de-France, Marie van Rhijn was artist-in-residence at the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles. Passionate about passing on her knowledge, she holds a *Certificat d'Aptitude* and puts her teaching skills to good use in projects led by L'Assemblée, as well as teaching at the Conservatoire Clément Janequin in Châtelleraut. Marie van Rhijn holds three master's degrees from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris and the Sorbonne, and studied with Ilton Wjuniski, Olivier Baumont, Blandine Rannou, Kenneth Weiss, Noëlle Spieth, and Stéphane Fuget.



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A cornerstone of Montreal's music scene for forty-five years, Arion Baroque Orchestra is a pioneer in Quebec and Canada in the world of early music on period instruments. Under the artistic direction of conductor and bassoonist Mathieu Lussier since 2019, Arion presents a series of concerts featuring internationally renowned guest conductors and soloists.

Founded in Montreal in 1981 by Claire Guimond, Chantal Rémillard, Betsy MacMillan and Hank Knox, Arion has performed in Quebec, Canada, the United States, Mexico, Asia and Europe. The clarity and freshness of Arion's interpretations of baroque and classical works are supported by a discography of more than thirty titles that have received numerous awards and widespread critical acclaim.

Committed to the creation and dissemination of youth and educational projects, and a partner of renowned institutions such as Bourgie Hall, the Université de Montréal, McGill University, the Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal, the Centre de musique baroque de Versailles and La SAMS, Arion is a unique and vital contributor to the Canadian musical scene.

# 2026 BENEFIT EVENT

May 14, 2026 \_\_\_\_\_ Le 9<sup>e</sup> (Montreal Eaton Centre)

"Every year, Arion's benefit event is a unique moment among our activities. The evening serves as a showcase for Arion to meet a network of businesspeople, promoting and highlighting the talent of its musicians. It is also a time when our orchestra receives enthusiastic support, encouragement and, importantly, financial resources. This support allows us, year after year, to dream big. To dream of expanding the activities of an orchestra with a rich history spanning nearly half a century, but also to continue to develop our involvement with young talents in baroque music, to strengthen our connections with our community and make our music available to people from all walks of life. Thank you for joining us on this adventure, whether this is your first time participating, or you are a loyal supporter of Arion. We look forward to sharing this musical experience with you!"

Mathieu Lussier  
Artistic Director



Join us for this event!

# PROGRAM NOTES

## Catharsis

The “purging of the passions” which Aristotle calls catharsis is encountered in tragedy, but also in music. In Book VIII of his *Politics*, he tells us that people prone to emotions of pity, terror, or divine exaltation can be set right when they resort to melodies that transport the soul. They are then “restored to tranquility with pleasure.”

No need, however, to suffer from morbid heartbreak (Vivaldi), be under the thumb of a potentate (Grimani), defy all manner of danger (Agnesi), or watch your child die before your eyes (Ferrandini) to feel, thanks to this highly expressive music, relieved of the weight of these powerful emotions experienced vicariously.

The chamber cantata for alto voice and strings *Cessate, omai cessate*, RV 684 by **Antonio Vivaldi**, a wizard of both voice and instruments, was probably composed in the mid-1720s, although we do not know for what occasion. It was around the beginning of that decade that Vivaldi became involved with the contralto Anna Girò, who became his pupil. She took part in several of his operas, although her continued presence alongside the priest Vivaldi caused him some embarrassment with the religious authorities. It is quite possible that this cantata about unrequited love was written for her. It recounts the lamentations of a lover rejected by his Dorilla.

The work begins with a short overture-like ritornello, confident in tone, before shifting with the entrance of the singer in the first of two *accompagnato* recitatives (accompanied by the instrumental ensemble) into pangs of misery, despair, and recrimination. These intense emotions are heightened in the first aria by a poignant orchestral accompaniment, in which the pizzicato of the strings is overlaid by the same notes bowed by a single violin and cello. As for the last aria, it erupts in a deathly fury. As always in his vocal music, Vivaldi demonstrates in this cantata a sensitivity to the variety of dramatic moods, handled with finesse and agility in both the solo voice and the accompaniment.

At the Habsburg imperial court in Vienna, music played a prominent role, particularly in the genre of oratorio, thanks to ties with Rome and northern Italy. From the late 17th to the early 18th century, several female composers had their dramatic works and oratorios performed at the Viennese court. Among them was **Maria Margherita Grimani**, about whom nothing is known except for her two oratorios and the *componimento drammatico per musica*, a kind of dramatic cantata, *Pallade e Marte*. However, Maria Margherita may have been related to the ambassador Pietro Grimani, who in 1713 negotiated an alliance with Emperor Charles VI, to whom the work was dedicated when it was performed on November 6 for his name day.

The music of *Pallade e Marte* has come down to us in a single, magnificent manuscript, dated April 5, 1713, in Bologna. The cantata alternates between recitatives and arias in which the deities Athena (Pallade, soprano) and Mars (Marte, alto) sing the praises of the sovereign. Mars' aria "In pompa trionfal" is remarkable for its accompaniment for obbligato cello and theorbo supported by basso continuo. It is reasonable to assume that the theorbo part was written specifically for the famous theorbo player and prolific composer Francesco Bartolomeo Conti, who was then employed by the imperial court. Although the text of this aria was intended at the time solely to sing the praises of the emperor, today it sounds more like a warning...

We know a little more about the Milanese composer **Maria Teresa Agnesi** (sometimes referred to by her married name, Pinottini). Maria Teresa distinguished herself early on for her musical talents, performing in her father's house (her father was generous and open-minded) as a harpsichordist, singer, and composer alongside her sister Maria Gaetana, who later became a famous mathematician. From the late 1740s onwards, Maria Teresa composed several operas, serenatas (a type of cantata) and collections of arias, as well as keyboard works, most of which were intended for the Habsburgs of Milan and Austria, or for the ruling family of Saxony. These included Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, as well as Maria Antonia Walpurgis, Princess of Bavaria and Electress of Saxony, who was also a musician and composer. (The latter, incidentally, was a pupil of Giovanni Battista Ferrandini.)

The serenata *Ulisse in Campania* was composed in 1768 for the wedding in Naples of King Ferdinand IV and Marie-Caroline of Austria. Its elegant manuscript is preserved in the Library of the Conservatory of Naples, in Campania. The work recounts the tribulations of Odysseus, the Homeric hero, in this region of the southwestern Italian peninsula, where he and his companions were to face the sorceress Circe. In the *secco* recitative (with

basso continuo accompaniment only) and the aria “Accostumai bambina” that follows, Ulysses recounts his bravery and perseverance against the perils that fate has presented him with throughout his life.

After enjoying artistic freedom that was uncommon for the time, even though it was impossible for her to achieve professional status, once widowed, Maria Teresa died in relative poverty. Admired by many of her contemporaries, yet long forgotten by music history, we can rejoice that her music can once again be heard.

A composer of Venetian origin who was active in Munich for much of his life, **Giovanni Battista Ferrandini** has emerged from obscurity in recent decades thanks to the appeal of his highly expressive writing, which combines a mastery of counterpoint with a sensitive, often highly emotional harmony in a very personal approach to the *galant* style. His operas for Munich, his symphonies for Darmstadt, and his virtuoso concertos for flute have all since been brought to light. But perhaps none of this would have been possible if the work we are concerned with today, the cantata *Il pianto di Maria*, had not long been mistakenly attributed to Handel. Fortunately, thanks in part to the Italian musicologist Paolo Cattelan, it has been established that the work was written by Ferrandini. An oboist at the court of Elector Karl Albrecht from 1722 (at the age of 13!), he was appointed composer in 1732. It was he who was called upon in 1753 to inaugurate with his opera *Catone in Utica* the magnificent theater hall of the Munich Residence, the work of architect François de Cuvilliés, who became the master of Bavarian Rococo. Ferrandini then went to Padua, where he received a visit in 1771 from the young Wolfgang Mozart and his father Leopold. He ended his life back in Munich.

Probably composed in the late 1730s, *Il pianto de Maria* features a succession of *secco* and *accompagnato* recitatives, and arias—including a cavatina of such poignant beauty that it is repeated after a recitative. Originally composed for soprano, the cantata has been transposed here to suit the contralto voice. The Mary of the title is, of course, the mother of Christ, who expresses her anguish and even her indignation at seeing her son die, nailed to the cross. The listener, too, does not emerge completely unscathed.

But to paraphrase Aristotle once again, may these cathartic melodies nonetheless bring you some harmless joy.

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