

Idyll & Intrigue



Friday, May 21 at 7:30 pm

Digital Program Book

ARS LYRICA HOUSTON

presents

Idyll & Intrigue: Handel's *Aminta e Fillide*

Broadcast Program
Friday, May 21, 2021
7:30 pm

featuring

Lauren Snouffer	<i>soprano (Aminta)</i>
Abigail Fischer	<i>soprano (Fillide)</i>
Kurt Johnson	<i>concertmaster</i>
Maria Lin	<i>violin</i>
Hae-a Lee	<i>violin</i>
Stephanie Noori	<i>violin</i>
Alan Austin	<i>violin</i>
James Dunham	<i>viola</i>
Erika Lawson	<i>viola</i>
Barrett Sills	<i>cello</i>
Eric Smith	<i>cello</i>
Deborah Dunham	<i>violone</i>
Richard Savino	<i>theorbo & Baroque guitar</i>
Matthew Dirst	<i>harpsichord & artistic director</i>

Video and audio by BEND Productions, LLC.

*Special thanks to St Philip Presbyterian Church
for hosting our Spring 2021 broadcast programs.*

PROGRAM

Aminta e Fillide HWV 83

George Frideric Handel
(1685–1759)

Overture

Recitative (Aminta)

*Arresta il passo, ninfa,
di questo cor empia tiranna!
E se il duol che m'affanna
come figlio d'amor udir non vuoi,
soffri almen, spietata,
come effeto crudel de scherni tuoi.*

Stay, nymph,
cruel tyrant of my heart!
If you will not recognize
the grief that torments me
then, heartless girl,
you'll suffer because of your scorn.

1. Aria (Aminta)

*Fermati, non fuggir!
Lasciami pria morir, Fillide ingrata!
Scorgi la mia costanza
poi se rigor t'avanza
scacciami del tuo sen,
bella ostinata.*

Stop, don't go!
First let me die, ungrateful Fillide!
Consider my fidelity,
then, if you remain indifferent,
banish me from your heart,
you stubborn beauty!

Recitative (Aminta, Fillide)

*Questa sol volta almeno odi le mie querele,
asolta i miei sospiri.*

*Tu mi chiami crudele
Senz' avvederti ancora
quanto lontan dal giusto erri e deliri.*

*Dunque l'amarti e l'adorati, o cara,
stimi una follia?*

*Seguir chi fugge e chi l'amor
disprezza e proprio d'alma
e delirare avvezza.*

You could at least listen to my lament
and hear my sighs.

You call me cruel
without realizing how senseless
your mad ravings seem.

So you think I'm crazy
for loving you?

To pursue someone
who despises love
is a sign of madness.

2. Aria (Fillide)

*Fiamma bella che al ciel s'invia
s'Euro infido gli negli l'affetto
cangia a forza l'usato sentier.
Cosi ancora se cruda, se ria,
te discaccio da questo mio petto
volgi altrove l'amante pensier.*

Recitative (Fillide, Aminta)

*Credi a miei detti, Aminta,
e lascia in pace me,
che per genio e per costume antico
ho troppo in odio l'amorosa face.
Come in odio aver puoi
quella face d'amor che ogni momento
si vede sfavillar ne' lumi tuoi?*

3. Aria (Aminta)

*Forse un giorno il dio d'amore
potrebbe al core piaga formati che sia mortal.
Che bel mirarti allor languire,
penar, soffrire l'aspre punture d'acuto stral.*

Recitative (Fillide, Aminta)

*In vano, in van' presumi scuotere il mio pensier
che di Cupido l'arco schernisco e dello stral mi
rido.
Deh! Per pietà, rispondi, ninfa bella e crudele,
se ti specchiasti mai nel rio, nel fonte,
come amor non asconde di tua rare beltade?
E se ami e se conosci del tuo volto gentil
tutti i tesori, perchè non brami ancor
che altri l'adori?
Perchè non vuò, pastor,
che il fonte e il rio
s'accrescan coll'umor del pianto mio.*

Even a holy ardor
must change its path
if the wayward east wind denies its course.
I may seem cruel and unkind
by driving you from my heart,
but you'll find other lovers.

Believe me, Aminta,
and leave me in peace.
By inclination and long habit
I despise the fire of love.
How can you hate love,
which at all times
is evident in your eyes?

Maybe one day the god of love
will wound your heart fatally.
I'd like to see you endure
the stinging pain of his sharp arrow.

You question my resolve in vain.
I scorn Cupid's bow and laugh at his arrow.

Have pity, cruel beauty, and tell me:
when you see yourself in a river or
fountain,
do you regret your own beauty?
If you can love yourself,
and treasure your many charms,
why not let others do the same?
Because, shepherd, I do not want
the river or fountain
to be swollen with my tears.

4. Aria (Fillide)

*Fu scherzo, fu gioco chi disse che il foco
del nume di Gnido contento ci dà.
Quel cor che non pena nell'aspra catena
così per diletto cantando sen v'è.*

What a joke!
Cupid's fire brings no happiness.
A heart that rejects those chains
goes its way singing joyfully.

Recitative (Fillide, Aminta)

*Libero pi'è fugga dallaccio e i giorni
coll'aura sol di libertà respiri.*

*Quei che sembran martiri,
che han faccia di tormenti
d'ogni amator nel seno.
Fillide, in un baleno si cangiano
in piaceri ed in contenti.
Dunque se ciò a t'affrena
vieni pur lieta, o cara,
incontro alla dolcissima catena.*

Taci pastor, non più!

*come dunque, crudele,
più ascoltarmi non vuoi?*

No, perchè han troppo forza i detti tuoi.

*Ah! Barbara, inumana,
se la giusta caglione dell'amor mio
nel mio parlar comprendi,
come di pari ardor tun non t'accendi?*

Thus freed from love's snare
I can breath the air of freedom.

What seems like suffering
and even torture for every lover,
changes on a dime into pleasure.
Fillide, in a moment it's transformed
into contentment and delight.
So if that's holding you back,
come, beloved, and embrace
the sweetest of chains!

Hold your tongue, shepherd!

Why, cruel girl;
will you hear no more?

No, because words are too persuasive.

Ah, barbarous girl,
if you can grasp in my words
the nature of my love,
why can't you feel it, too?

5. Aria (Aminta)

*Se vago rio fra sassi frange l'amato argento,
al fin contento posa nel mare.
Ma il ciglio mio, che sempre piange,
non trova seno che ponga freno al suo
penare.*

Even a beautiful stream's silver sheen
leads inevitably to the sea.
But my weeping eye
cannot find a sympathetic heart.

Recitative (Fillide)

*D'un incognito foco già sento a poco a poco
le vampe entro del seno.*

Mia cara pace, addio!

Vuol di me vendicarsi il cieco Dio.

Strangely, my heart now begins,
bit by bit, to melt.

Farewell, peace!

The blind god takes his revenge on me.

6. Aria (Fillide)

*Sento chi' il Dio bambin col strale
suo divin m'ha il sen piagato.
E già questo mio cor più non ricusa amor
ed è cangiato.*

The boy-god pierces my heart
with his divine arrow.
And suddenly I can no longer reject love;
I am changed.

Recitative (Aminta)

*Felicissimo punto, in cui nel seno
la mia fiamma ti giunge,
e l'amoroso dardo il cor ti punge.*

The happy moment has arrived,
when my love reaches your heart,
and you have felt the amorous dart!

7. Aria (Aminta)

*Al dispetto di sorte crudele,
costante e fedele quest'alma sarà.
Che se Filli ad amarmi si muove,
son chiare le prove di sua fedeltà.*

Despite cruel fate,
my soul shall be constant and faithful.
For if Fillide comes to love me,
its fidelity is justified.

Recitative (Fillide)

*Vincesti, Aminta, e l'amoroso affanno,
per dichiararmi affatto di libertade priva,
già dell'anima mia si fa tiranno;
ma con tanta dolcezza usa i rigori,
ch' il rio martoro, quando mi giunge in seno,
veste manto di gioia e di tesoro.*

You have won, Aminta,
and I am now a prisoner of love,
my soul's tyrant;
but it wields power gently,
so that my former pain
is transformed into joy and happiness.

8. Aria (Fillide)

*È un foco quel d'amore che penetra nel core,
ma come, non si sa.
S'accende a poco a poco,
ma poi non trova loco e consumar ti fa.*

Love's fire penetrates the heart.
How? No one knows.
It grows little by little,
and gradually consumes you.

Recitative (Aminta, Fillide)

*Gloria bella di Aminta mirar Fillide vaga,
dalla sua fedeltà costretta e vinta.*

*Sì, sì, vincesti.
Ed io fedele amante...
Ed io sempre costante...*

To my great pleasure,
Fillide has been conquered by fidelity.
Yes, you won...
I am your faithful lover...
I am ever true...

*dirò che non fu mai vana speranza,
vincer l'altrui rigor con la costanza.
ridir potrò, che spargere querele
non fu mai vista indarno alma fedele.*

9. Aria (Aminta)

*Chi ben ama non paventa
di trovar un dì pietà.
Che ministre dei contenti
con costanza e fedelta.*

Recitative (Aminta, Fillide)

*E pur, Filli vezzosa,
risolvi di dar pace alle mie pene?
La mia gioia, il mio bene
altri non è che Aminta, e questo core
arde tutto per te d'immenso amore.*

10. Aria (Fillide)

*Non si può dar un cor
sì felice in amor come il cor mio.
Quel bene che mi piace sente la stessa face,
ed hanno le nostre alme un sol desio.*

Recitative (Aminta, Fillide)

*O felice in amor dolce tormento,
se partorisce al fin gioie e contento!*

11. Duetto (Aminta & Fillide)

*Per abbatte il rigore d'un crudel spietato core
forte scudo è la costanza e il valor di fedeltà.
Volga al cielo i sguardi, ai numi,
chi al fulgor di quei bei lumi
vuol nutrire la speranza
di trovar un dì pietà.*

And I admit that indifference
can be overcome with constancy.
I can affirm that a faithful soul
does not lament in vain.

One who loves truly
should never despair,
since the engines of contentment
are constancy and fidelity.

And so, charming Fillide,
will you always comfort me?
My joy, my treasure,
is only Aminta, and my heart
burns with boundless love for you.

No heart is happier
than mine in love.
My lover feels the same fire,
and our souls share one desire.

O happy the sweet torment of love,
if it brings forth joy and contentment.

To overcome a lover's indifference
constant fidelity is the strongest shield.
Look to heaven, to the gods,
through the splendor of those lovely eyes,
and cherish hope
as a way to find compassion.

Translation by Matthew Dirst

PROGRAM NOTES

Upon arrival in Italy in late 1706, George Frideric Handel found his way expeditiously into circles of generous and powerful patrons. One of these, the Marquis (later Prince) Francesco Ruspoli, hosted weekly *conversazioni* at his multiple residences and commissioned the young Saxon composer to provide new cantatas for these gatherings. For several years Ruspoli also hosted meetings of the Roman Arcadian Academy, a literary forum that promoted pastoral poetry, drama, and music. *Aminta e Fillide* was very likely the centerpiece of that academy's opening event on the 1708 outdoor (summer) season.

The basic scheme of any Italian cantata from this era reduces that of contemporaneous opera or oratorio to its essentials: a steady alternation of recitative (pitched declamation) and aria (song). As such, the cantata offered a flexible vehicle for vocal display on an intimate scale for discriminating audiences, who savored the genre for its musical and literary charms.

During the decades around 1700 especially, rustic subject matter was the rage across the arts, from painting to music. Iconic scenes depicted by Poussin and Watteau become audible in many Italian cantatas from this time, which typically center around a pair of lovers, one of whom plays hard to get. Unusually in *Aminta e Fillide*, the shepherdess eventually drops her pretense, giving the lovelorn shepherd what he so desperately wants, and all ends happily.

Aminta e Fillide also boasts, atypically, a full string complement under its two soloists; a more typical cantata scoring includes just accompanying continuo players. Handel borrowed a few of its musical ideas from Reinhard Keiser, his former boss at the Hamburg Opera. *Il caro Sassone*, in turn, adapted several of his own arias from *Aminta e Fillide* for two later operas: *Agrippina* (Venice, 1709) and *Rinaldo* (London, 1711).

© Matthew Dirst

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Soprano **Abigail Fischer** “...sings with a passionate restraint that has no equal in her generation... You didn't want her to stop” (The New York Times). Ms. Fischer created the roles of Isabelle Eberhardt in Missy Mazzoli’s *Song from the Uproar*, and Mrs. X.E. in Du Yun’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Angel’s Bone*. Her 2019-20 engagements include a return to Da Camera Houston as Julia Child in Lee Hoiby’s *Bon Appetit!*, reprises of *Angel’s Bone* with Los Angeles Opera and Beijing Music Festival, and repertoire by Schoenberg and Sirota with Telegraph String Quartet.

Performance highlights include *Song from the Uproar* with Los Angeles Opera, Cincinnati Opera, and Chautauqua Opera; *Incidental Music to A Midsummer Night’s Dream* with Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood; Handel’s *Messiah* with Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra; Hosokawa’s *The Raven* with Fondazione Haydn di Bolzano e Trento in Italy; and performances with Los Angeles Philharmonic and Boston Baroque.



Recognized for her unique artistic curiosity in world-class performances spanning the music of Claudio Monteverdi and Johann Adolph Hasse through to Missy Mazzoli and George Benjamin, **Lauren Snouffer** is celebrated as one of the most versatile and respected sopranos on the international stage. Past seasons include Houston Grand Opera performances of *Le nozze di Figaro* conducted by Harry Bicket in a production by Michael Grandage as well as presentations of *Carousel*, *Show Boat*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, and *L’italiana in Algeri*; Lyric Opera of Chicago performances of *Rusalka*, *La clemenza di Tito*, and a new production of *Orphée et Eurydice* directed and choreographed by John Neumeier under the baton of Harry Bicket; and Max Emanuel Cencic’s new production of Hasse’s *Siroe* at the Opéra Royal de Versailles, with additional performances in Budapest and Vienna.

An impactful discography includes Hasse’s *Siroe* and Handel’s *Ottone* with George Petrou for Decca, Gottschalk’s *Requiem for the Living* with Vladimir Lande on Novona Records, Grantham’s *La canción desesperada* conducted by Craig Hella Johnson on Harmonia Mundi, and Feldman’s *The Rothko Chapel* with Steven Schick for ECM. An alumna of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, Lauren Snouffer was graduated from Rice University and The Juilliard School.



Ars Lyrica Artistic Director **Matthew Dirst**, recently described in the *Washington Post* as an “efficient, extremely precise conductor who has an ear for detail,” is the first American musician to win major international prizes in both organ and harpsichord, including the American Guild of Organists National Young Artist Competition and the Warsaw International Harpsichord Competition. Widely admired for his stylish playing and conducting, Dirst leads a period-instrument ensemble with several acclaimed recordings, one of which—J. A. Hasse’s *Marc Antonio e Cleopatra*—was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2011 for Best Opera. His degrees include a PhD in musicology from Stanford University and the *prix de virtuosité* in both organ and harpsichord from the Conservatoire National de Reuil-Malmaison, France, where he spent two years as a Fulbright scholar. Equally active as a scholar and as an organist, Dirst is Professor of Music at the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, and Organist at St Philip Presbyterian Church in Houston. His publications include *Engaging Bach: The Keyboard Legacy from Marpurg to Mendelssohn* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) and *Bach and the Organ* (University of Illinois Press, 2016).

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Founded in 1998 by harpsichordist and conductor Matthew Dirst, Ars Lyrica Houston presents a diverse array of music in its original context while creating connections to contemporary life. Ars Lyrica's acclaimed programming features neglected gems alongside familiar masterworks, and extracts the dramatic potential, emotional resonance, and expressive power of music. Its local subscription series, according to the Houston Chronicle, "sets the agenda" for early music in Houston. Ars Lyrica appears regularly at international festivals and concert series because of its distinctive focus, and its pioneering efforts in the field of authentic performance have won international acclaim, including a Grammy nomination for Best Opera.

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Ars Lyrica's Next Performance



Cantio Polonica

May 23, 2021 | 6 pm

An exemplary selection of Polish Baroque music illustrates this culture's significant and little-known contribution to European musical practice during the "golden age" of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Curated by lutenist and scholar Arash Noori, this program on the musical heritage of Poland also features Ars Lyrica Artistic Director and harpsichordist Matthew Dirst, violinists Stephanie Raby and Maria Lin, and da gamba player Eric Smith. The program will feature four different composers due to the extraordinary quality of their work, with music that highlights their contribution to European culture.



Arash Noori
lutenist and curator

On the program:

- Marcin Mielczewski
 - Canzon prima a 2
 - Canzon seconda a 2
- Adam Jarzębski
 - Tamburetta – Concerto a 3
 - Concerto Terzo – Concerto a 2
- Wojciech Długoraj, Selections from the Długoraj Lute Book
- Matthäus Weissel, Set of Polnischer Tantz from Weissel Tabulatura

This concert will be broadcast virtually.