THE ERA OF MADAME DE MAINTENON

Ryan Brown, Artistic Director

Opera Lafayette

THE ERA OF MADAME DE MAINTENON

PRESENTED BY

OPERA LAFAYETTE

MAY 2024

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In Memory of Willard J. Leroux,
Friend, Benefactor, and Dancer.

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LETTER FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The Era of Madame de Maintenon is the last of three festivals Opera Lafayette has dedicated to prominent women in 18th-century France and the musical worlds they influenced. Unlike Madame de Pompadour and Marie-Antoinette, however, Madame de Maintenon, Louis XIV's morganatic wife, was not a musician, nor, it seems, a great lover of music, and even banned many forms of theatrical entertainment at court. She was, on the other hand, both deeply religious and passionately interested in education, and these qualities shaped the musical and theatrical landscape around her.

Couperin le Grand, a program created by the distinguished harpsichordist and conductor Christophe Rousset, presents the chamber works which would have been performed in the salons of Versailles towards the end of the Louis XIV's life, a period fraught with personal loss and political challenges for the King, but during which he enjoyed the companionship of Madame de Maintenon. In her notes and essay, Saraswathi Shukla analyzes both the sophisticated instrumental works of Couperin and the cantatas on Ovidian subjects which served as a sober substitute for theatrical entertainment at court, and the ways in which each were inspired by Italian art.

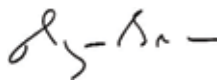
From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau and Handel's Esther highlights excerpts from the Racine play with music performed by the girls at the school founded by Maintenon at Saint Cyr, followed by excerpts from Handel's first oratorio. In his essay on the history of the education of girls at Saint-Cyr and boys at the Collège Mazarin, schools founded during the same period as an alternative to education by the church, Benjamin Bernard discusses the monarchy's hope for these schools and the role of theatrical performance in moral education. He and Anne Piéjus, in her musical note on the program, also note that *Esther* was just one of the several works of French theater which influenced Handel a generation later in England.

Philip Kennicott, drawing comparisons to the present, takes as his point of departure "the unease stirred by the 1689 performance of Racine's *Esther* at Saint-Cyr and contemporary anxieties concerning the presentation of self and identity (especially among girls and young women) on social media." He helps us understand something essential

about Madame de Maintenon when he notes that "… social media allows us to live 'at court' in ways that Maintenon would have recognized and deplored." This fascinating program is led by harpsichordist Justin Taylor, who has chosen the excerpts to be performed, and by baritone and Opera Lafayette Artistic Associate Jonathan Woody.

The staged centerpiece of our season is the modern premiere of Mouret's opera-ballet *Les Fêtes de Thalie,* first staged in Paris in 1714. In essence, it relates to the *Era of Madame de Maintenon* by celebrating what the court lacked under her influence and in the latter part of Louis XIV's reign: a sense of fun. *Les Fêtes de Thalie* is based on the premise that humor belongs in opera, and indeed it became a hugely popular entertainment in Paris just before Louis' death, and afterwards. Rebecca Harris-Warrick, whose advice has been invaluable in bringing this project to fruition, describes it as "… a series of operatic vignettes interleaved with dances, in the still young genre of opera-ballet, which broke with serious French operas by putting characters of the period on stage." Even if Madame de Maintenon did not appreciate the genre, she would have recognized this woman's world, with vignettes entitled La Fille, La Veuve Coquette, and La Femme. Catherine Turocy directs, integrating different styles of dance into a modern commentary on our human foibles. Christophe Rousset conducts Opera Lafayette's premiere production of this wonderful work not heard in over 250 years in an edition created for us by harpsichordist Korneel Bernolet.

Opera Lafayette is grateful to the many artists and scholars and patrons who have brought *The Era of Madame de Maintenon* to life. We hope that these three seasons dedicated to prominent women in 18th-century France and the musical worlds they influenced have brought our audiences pleasure, insight, and a sense that there is always something to be learned from and enjoyed in music from the past.



Ryan Brown
Artistic Director, Opera Lafayette

Opera Lafayette

PRESENTS

Les Fêtes ou le Triomphe de Thalie

Ballet en musique

1714-1720

Libretto by Joseph de La Font

Music by Jean-Joseph Mouret

The John F. Kennedy Center
for the Performing Arts Terrace Theater
Washington, DC

Friday, May 3, 2024 at 7:30 PM

Saturday, May 4, 2024 at 7:30 PM

This performance is an external rental presented in coordination with the Kennedy Center Campus Rentals Office and is not produced by the Kennedy Center.

&

El Museo del Barrio
New York, NY

Tuesday, May 7, 2024 at 6:00 PM

A modern premiere performance,
dedicated to the memory of Willard J. Leroux

This performance is approximately
2 hours & 30 minutes with an intermission.

PROGRAM

Les Fêtes ou le Triomphe de Thalie
Ballet en musique 1714 – 1720.....Jean-Joseph Mouret
Libretto by Joseph de La Font

Prologue: On the stage

La Fille (The Girl): At a harbor

La Veuve Coquette (The Coquettish Widow): In the country

Intermission

La Femme (The Wife): At a costume party

La Critique (The Criticism): On the stage

Unknown, Les Fêtes de Thalie *(Mouret, 1714), Photo of a print, 1738. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Les_F%C3%AAtes_de_Thalie_(Mouret,_1714).jpg. Wikimedia Commons.* ©

CREATIVE TEAM

Christophe Rousset, ***Conductor***

Catherine Turocy, ***Stage Director***

Korneel Bernolet, ***Edition, Continuo Harpsichord, & Musical Preparation***

Julian Donahue & Julia Bengtsson, ***La Fille Choreographers***

Anuradha Nehru & Pragnya Thamire, ***La Veuve Coquette Choreographers***

Caroline Copeland, ***La Femme Choreographer***

Marie Anne Chiment, ***Costume Designer***

Christopher Brusberg, ***Lighting Designer***

Jeffery Martin, ***Scenic Designer***

Deborah Thomas, ***Props Designer***

Rebecca Harris-Warrick, ***Historical Advisor & Pre-Concert Lecturer***

This performance is supported in part by a special gift in memory of Suzanne M. Johnson.

The dancers and choreographers in this performance are partially underwritten by a special gift in memory of Wendy Fuller-Mora.

This edition of **Les Fêtes de Thalie** *was funded by the Kenneth Gorelick Fund for Opera Lafayette Premiere Editions and Recordings, supported by a generous initial gift from Cheryl Gorelick.*

CAST/ARTISTS

Prologue: On the stage

Melpomène, Muse of Tragedy (opera diva).....Angel Azzarra
Thalie, Muse of Comedy (librettist).....Margot Rood
Apollo, God of the Sun (producer).....Jonathan Woody

Chorus including Ms. Beaudin, Ms. Wehr, Mr. Brunscheen,
Terpsichore (choreographer), Mr. Ward, Mr. Cerin and dancers
Polyhymnia (composer) and actors: Mr. Pride, Mr. Donahue, Ms. Thamire,
Ms. Nair, Ms. Valivil

La Fille (The Girl): At the harbor

Cléon (the father).....Jonathan Woody
Acaste (the captain and lover).....Jean-Bernard Cerin
Léonore (the daughter).....Margot Rood
Belise (the mother).....Patrick Kilbride
Sailors.....John Taylor Ward, Ariana Wehr,
Julian Donahue, Patrick Pride, Julia Bengtsson

Chorus.....Ms. Rood, Ms. Wehr,
Mr. Kilbride, Mr. Ward,
Mr. Cerin, Mr. Woody

La Veuve Coquette (The Coquettish Widow): In the country

Isabel (the widow).....Pascale Beaudin
Doris (her friend).....Angel Azzarra
Léandre (a military man and suitor).....Scott Brunscheen
Chrisogon (a financier and suitor).....John Taylor Ward
Village Wedding Party.....Ariana Wehr, Pragnya Thamire,
Mytreyi Nair, Deviga Valiyil,
Julian Donahue, Siri Tanjore

Offstage Chorus.....Ms. Rood, Ms. Azzarra, Mr. Kilbride,
Mr. Cerin, Mr. Woody

La Femme (The Wife): At a costume party

Caliste (wife of Dorante).....Pascale Beaudin
Dorine (wife of Zerbin).....Ariana Wehr
Dorante (husband of Caliste).....Jean-Bernard Cerin
Zerbin (husband of Dorine).....Scott Brunscheen
Dancers.....Julia Bengtsson, Julian Donahue, Patrick Pride, Adele Lorraine
Thalie (Muse of Comedy, librettist).....Margot Rood

Chorus.....Ms. Beaudin, Ms. Wehr, Mr. Brunscheen, Mr. Ward, Mr. Cerin

La Critique (the Criticism): On the stage

Polyhymnia, Muse of Music (composer).....Ariana Wehr
Thalie, Muse of Comedy (librettist).....Margot Rood
Terpsichore, Muse of Dance (choreographer).....Pascale Beaudin
Momus, God of Mockery (critic).....Patrick Kilbride
Chorus and Dancers.....Tutti

Production Team

Nancy Jo Snider.....Orchestra Personnel Manager
Natalie Kress.....Music Librarian
Paulina Francisco.....Assistant to the Stage Director

Special thanks to
Kalanidhi Dance and the New York Baroque Dance Company
for their collaboration on this project.

Opera Lafayette is grateful to Paul Walsh, Military Historian,
for his guidance on military fashion and to the Temple University
Department of Theater for their costume assistance.

OPERA LAFAYETTE ORCHESTRA

Violin
Jacob Ashworth*
Concertmaster
Theresa Salomon
Keats Dieffenbach
Natalie Kress

Viola
Kyle Miller*
Isaiah Chapman
Annie Loud
Gesa Kordes
Stephen Goist
Ann Garlid

Cello
Serafim Smigelskiy*
NJ Snider
Matt Zucker
Alexa Haynes

Recorder
Nina Stern*
Margaret Owens

Flute
Immanuel Davis*

Oboe
Margaret Owens*
Caroline Giassi

Bassoon
Anna Marsh*

Harpsichord
Korneel Bernolet*

Viola da Gamba (Continuo Solos)
Joshua Keller*

Percussion
Michelle Humphreys*

**Principal*

CONDUCTOR'S NOTE

Christophe Rousset

With the arrival of Madame de Maintenon, opera and its divertissements fell from favor at Versailles. Formerly wife of actor and theater writer Paul Scarron, she was averse to such frivolities. However, in Paris, the Académie Royale de Musique filled the void by presenting its large audiences with a bevy of new composers, including André Campra, who ushered in a new era of opera.

Like François Couperin with his chamber music, Campra introduced Italian style and color. Trending along with painting and furniture design, musical aesthetics changed to become rounder, freer, and more colorful. Jean-Joseph Mouret's work is a perfect example of the new tendency. As in *Les Fêtes vénitiennes* or *L'Europe galante* (both by Campra), Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie* abandoned mythology or heroic figures to show, on stage, contemporary situations in separate short and independent stories. Social status, whether noble or bourgeois, was left unclear in these miniatures of everyday life that carry a touch of humor. In the *fêtes galantes* painted by Antoine Watteau or Nicolas Lancret, love was shown as an eternal playing field. So too was *Les Fêtes de Thalie* staged, its playful view of love so very far from the austere life of the conservative Madame de Maintenon.

Mouret, born in Avignon and a southern composer like Campra, introduced country dances from his region, including from Marseilles or Provence. Remarkable even today is the place of women in these intrigues. These women, freethinkers, drive the action and introduce the fresh air of modernity. These short plots are mostly pretexts to frame the divertissements, choruses, dances and arias in the Italian style. Jean-Baptiste Lully had been forgotten in favor of libertinage and entertainment.

LES FÊTES DE THALIE SYNOPSIS

Rebecca Harris-Warrick

On the stage of the Paris Opéra, two of the nine Muses argue over which one of them—Melpomène, Muse of Tragedy, or Thalie, Muse of Comedy—should be in charge. Apollo, who presides over the arts, is obliged to intervene, decreeing that the two shall take turns, starting with a comedy. Melpomène leaves in a huff, while Thalie gloats, declaring that her work for today will showcase three stories of women involved in love. The chorus celebrates her triumph.

For "La Fille" (The Girl), the scene is transformed into the port of Marseille. Acaste, a sea captain, has rescued Cléon from captivity and is now bringing him home. He also hopes to soften the heart of the woman he has loved without return (unbeknownst to him, she is Cléon's daughter); he is counting on her mother to help his cause. Mother and daughter now arrive: Léonore declares she is only interested in pleasure, not in the bondage of marriage. In her lovely tenor voice (the role was assigned to a man), the mother, Belise, urges her daughter to marry. She herself has selflessly resisted a thousand lovers these ten years that her husband has been missing, to ensure her daughter's happiness. Acaste, who has overheard the conversation, despairs. Belise advises him to replace Léonore with a woman who has achieved "the age of reason"—herself. Acaste gulps but decides to play along. Just as Belise is getting ever more affectionate, who should arrive but Cléon followed by local sailors. He is horrified by his wife's betrayal, but Acaste is thrilled to have escaped Belise. Even Léonore is pleased that her suitor is not going to marry her mother. Cléon confers his daughter on Acaste, who expresses his gratitude by liberating the sailors. The sailors wish the young couple well in song and dance. No one asks Léonore if she wants to marry Acaste, but a young sailor who participates in the celebrations seems to be her mouthpiece: "Every lover is like the wind, subject to change … On the waves there is no rest; in the empire of love it's just the same. Anyone who leaves the shore is heading for a shipwreck."

Isabelle, the title character in "La Veuve coquette" (The Coquettish Widow), is delighted to have recovered her freedom following the death of her husband. As she tells her companion Doris, she enjoys flirting with the suitors who crowd around her. Two are particularly attentive, one of them very rich (Chrisogon), the other a military hero (Léandre). She plays coy as they brag about their attractions and strings both of them along, finally pretending to weep from the pressures they are putting on her. To cheer her up and put her in the mood for marriage, Chrisogon invites a troupe of shepherds

and shepherdesses, who are celebrating their own wedding, to entertain her with their songs and dances. Isabelle is not only unimpressed, she takes pleasure in telling the two suitors that she feels nothing for either of them. They shrug and depart to look for better prospects.

The third entrée, "La Femme" (The Wife) is set at a masked ball. Caliste reveals that she has decided to test her husband by disguising herself sufficiently to make him think she is someone else and has succeeded in making him fall in love with her disguised self. She tells her confidante, Dorine, that she is pretending to leave town for two days, allowing her husband, Dorante, to host a masked ball and invite his unknown beloved. Dorante's servant, Zerbin, asks why he wants to betray his wonderful wife, but Dorante is too smitten to have doubts about his conduct. He invites his masked hearththrob to dance, while the ball goes on around them. The masked Dorine decides to play the same trick on her own husband, Zerbin: with leading questions she gets him to declare that he will never be unfaithful because his wife would give him endless grief. Meanwhile Dorante repeatedly presses Caliste to unmask, while she worms an admission out of him that he respects, but no longer loves his wife. When Caliste finally removes her mask, he laughs when he recognizes her, saying that falling in love with his own wife is the best possible outcome. Thalie bursts into the ballroom, claiming victory over her sister Melpomène, as the chorus applauds.

In "La Critique" the scene returns to the stage of the Opéra, where the Muses are evaluating the show they have just produced. Polymnie, Muse of Music, tells an indignant Thalie that her libretto is feeble and that the music deserves all the glory for the success of the opera. In the midst of their squabbles, Terpsichore, Muse of the Dance, interrupts to claim that words and music mean nothing without her dancing, which "charms the eyes and seduces the heart." Will the Muses have to appeal to Apollo yet again, ask Thalie and Polymnie? But Apollo, who is thoroughly fed up with their arguments, has delegated Momus, the god of Mockery, to arbitrate in his place. Momus allows that the music is "aimable," the dance "vive, admirable," but as for the poetry, he's glad he didn't write it. Thalie is outraged, but Momus calms her by saying that all three deserve credit and by quickly calling everyone to "laugh, sing, and dance."

LES FÊTES DE THALIE: THE COMIC MUSE TAKES THE STAGE

Rebecca Harris-Warrick

"One tires quickly of weeping. Does anyone ever tire of laughing?"
– *Les Fêtes de Thalie*, prologue, scene 2

These words, uttered by the Muse of Comedy, Thalie, in the prologue to the opera that bears her name, offered a direct challenge to her sister Melpomène, the humorless Muse of Tragedy, who had just finished vaunting her own operatic masterpieces. "My subjects are kings, heroes, and gods; nothing can equal my grandiose spectacles," Melpomène boasts. In fact, in 1714 Jean-Baptiste Lully's five-act tragic masterpiece *Armide* had made one of its regular returns to the boards at the Paris Opéra, where it continued to be admired. But Thalie was correct: French opera audiences were indeed beginning to tire of the mythological or chivalric plots built around conflicts between love and duty and were happy to welcome some lighter amusement to the stage of the Opéra's theater in the Palais Royal. *Les Fêtes de Thalie*, an overtly comic work with scintillating music by Jean-Joseph Mouret (1682–1738), was a huge success, running for 57 performances between August and December of 1714, then starting up again in March, 1715. It had such enduring appeal that it was revived, whole or in parts, up until 1778 (**Fig. 1**).

LES FESTES
DE
THALIE,
BALLET REPRÉSENTÉ
PAR L'ACADEMIE ROYALE
DE MUSIQUE.
La premiere fois, le quatorze août, 1714.
La seconde, le vingt-cinq juin, 1722.
La troisiéme, le deux juin, 1738.
Remis au théâtre, le mardi 19 juin 1745.
DE L'IMPRIMERIE
M. DCC XLV.
LE PRIX EST DE XXX SOLS.

Fig. 1: The title page of the 1745 libretto, showing dates of the premiere and of previous revivals. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Aesthetic disputes over operatic styles were not new to Paris, nor was *Les Fêtes de Thalie* the first French opera to contain comic elements, but this work broke new ground in flaunting its comic credentials. The title of the work alone places it under the aegis of the comic Muse (**Fig. 2**), but librettist Joseph de La Font (1686–1725) went further by

incorporating into the fabric of the prologue an argument in favor of comedy as a legitimate genre of opera. As the two Muses, identified in the libretto as standing on the stage of the Paris Opéra, square off over which one of them will control this theater going forward, Melpomène speaks as the voice of tradition: "Armide, Phaéton, Atys, Roland, Bellérophon, Thétis—these give me sovereignty over this brilliant place. Muse, withdraw!" Thalie's tart reply—"My sister, one tires quickly of weeping. Does anyone ever tire of laughing?"—induces Apollo to intervene. As the god who oversees the arts, he decrees that the two Muses shall share the repertoire, with Melpomène controlling the winter season, and Thalie in charge during the warmer months. (This arrangement did, in fact, become the typical pattern at the Opéra.) On a stage still dominated by the tragedies of Lully even thirty years after his death, such a blatant defense of operatic comedy was a radical position.

Fig. 2: Engraving by Bonnart showing Thalie, the Muse of Comedy, holding a mirror, "a faithful image of the ridiculousness of human behavior," with stock characters from the commedia dell'arte *behind her on a stage. Bibliothèque nationale de France.*

THE GENRE OF OPERA-BALLET

This division within the repertoire was not just a matter of tone and subject matter, but also of structure. The *tragédie en musique* always consisted of a prologue (which functioned both to praise the king and to introduce the opera) followed by five acts that told a continuous story about mythological or chivalric characters caught in dilemmas over love versus duty. The lighter works, on the other hand, offered more structural variety: dominating the lighter genres was the opera-ballet, in which the prologue was followed by a series of three or four independent acts (called "entrées") connected by a theme. The first work to establish the norms for this genre was *L'Europe galante* by Antoine Houdar de La Motte and André Campra (1697), which showcased the challenges of love in four countries—France, Spain, Italy, and Turkey—each of which received its own entrée. The next opera-ballet that proved a box-office success was also by Campra, *Les Fêtes vénitiennes*, in 1710. This work consisted of a series of vignettes set in Venice during Carnival season, when everyone takes advantage of the disguises of the season to search for love and fortune. The Venetian setting also had the advantage of permitting Campra

to indulge his interests in Italian music, most notably in showy da capo arias (which the French called "ariettes"). Four year later, the unifying theme of *Les Fêtes de Thalie* was three different stages of women's love lives: courtship, marriage, and widowhood, each entrée being set in contemporary France and portrayed through a lens of cynicism. For an opera-ballet, the prologue became the place where the governing concept was laid out, so that the audience would know what to expect.

La Font's prologue for *Les Fêtes de Thalie* was not the first to put a Muse on stage as a mouthpiece for the librettist, but it was the most blunt in the arguments it staged—a phenomenon that was sharpened two months later when a "Critique" was added to the end in order to complete the frame for the work (**Fig. 3**). La Font's model was undoubtedly the "Critique" Molière had added to his controversial play *L'École des Femmes* (1662), where an imagined audience assembles to evaluate the play they have just seen. La Font's "Critique" does not have either the length or the bite of Molière's, but it does continue the mockery of opera in general and of this opera in particular that was already enshrined in the prologue. The vanquished Melpomène does not reappear in the "Critique," but another of her sisters arrives on the stage of the Opéra to claim credit for the opera's success—Terpsichore, Muse of the Dance (**Fig. 4**). Her boasts evoke long-standing arguments over the inclusion of dance within opera, which in French operas not only figured within every act but was related to the plot. Such a construction was not to everyone's tastes—and it certainly was not the norm in Italy, where dancing was located between the acts and had nothing to do with the opera. But when Terpsichore boasts that "Without my steps and without their charms, your games and songs would not shine. My figures are paintings whose

LA CRITIQUE
DES FESTES
DE THALIE,
NOUVELLE ENTRÉE
Par Monsieur MOURET, Ordinaire de la Musique de S. A. S.
Madame la Duchesse du Maine,
REPRÉSENTÉE POUR LA PREMIERE FOIS,
PAR L'ACADEMIE ROYALE DE MUSIQUE,
Le Mardy neuvième jour d'Octobre 1714.
DE L'IMPRIMERIE
M. DCC XXXV.

Fig. 3: The title page of the score of La Critique des Fêtes de Thalie, *first performed in October, 1714. Note that it mentions Mouret's patron, the Duchesse du Maine. Bibliothèque nationale de France.*

Fig. 4: Engraving by Bonnart of Terpsichore, Muse of the Dance. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

gratifying attractions enchant the eyes and seduce the heart," she may have been exaggerating her role, but was nonetheless speaking for the many members of the Parisian audience who came to applaud the dancers as much as they did the singers. In fact, the casting underscored her centrality: in 1714 Terpsichore was portrayed by one of the dancers in the troupe, one who had sufficient singing abilities to go beyond her usual duties on stage and to manage the vocal demands of the role. *Les Fêtes de Thalie* does indeed keep the members of the Opéra's dance troupe occupied throughout the entire opera and, moreover, expands their usual stylistic range by providing them with comic roles, not just serious and pastoral ones.

CONTEXTS

The trend toward incorporating humor into opera-ballets had received a major impetus when librettists and composers at the Opéra started looking to Italy for models—or rather, when they began to look toward the works performed in Paris by the Italian Theater or at the fairs, which were grounded in the long traditions of the *commedia dell'arte*. The physical comedy and gross language of the Italian originals could not be imported onto the stage of the Opéra, but with judicious toning down and with displacement of some of the humor from the words of the actors onto the bodies of the dancers, Italianisms found a home in that august theater. The most Italianate of the entrées in *Les Fêtes de Thalie* is "La Femme," which takes place at a masked ball during Carnival season, in which regard it echoes scenes set in Venice from earlier opera-ballets, most notably *L'Europe galante* and *Les Fêtes vénitiennes*. No setting beyond "a ballroom" is indicated in the libretto for "La Femme." A ballroom in Paris seems likely, yet, given the storyline, the names of the characters (Zerbin is a conventional name for a comic servant in the *comédie italienne*) and the inclusion of Arlequin and Arlequine among the dancers at the ball, it might as well be Venice.

The turn at the Opéra toward allowing the comedy to color some of the works in its repertoire happened during a period when France needed relief from the grim realities that marked its daily life. Whereas the 1697 marriage of the Duc de Bourgogne, Louis XIV's grandson, to the vivacious Marie Adélaïde de Savoie brightened life at the court for a while, the War of Spanish Succession (fought over the imposition of another of the king's grandsons to the empty throne of Spain over the claims of the Austrian heir) dragged on for years (1701–1714), with disastrous impacts on the royal exchequer. To make things worse, in 1709 a devastatingly cold winter produced famine across France. Louis XIV's son and heir died in 1711, leaving his grandson, the Duc de Bourgogne, to assume the position of Dauphin (crown prince). But the duke and his wife died of measles the following year, within a week of each other, followed two days later by their

infant son. The duke's younger brother, the Duc de Berry, died in 1714 and the succession now depended upon the health of a toddler, the only remaining child of the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne. Out of fear that chaos might ensue following his death, the king took the controversial step of legitimizing his sons by Madame de Montespan, but in the event the legitimate line sufficed. Louis XV was five years old when he assumed the throne on the death of his great-grandfather Louis XIV on September 1, 1715.

During this devastating period, Louis XIV became almost irrelevant to the creative life of his kingdom. He had stopped attending operas or other theatrical events in Paris years before, shortly following his marriage to Madame de Maintenon, preferring instead to have the performers come to Versailles to entertain him in concert versions. As he grew older, he spent more and more evenings in the company of Maintenon, listening to chamber music by composers who were also performers in the royal employ, such as François Couperin (harpsichord) and Marin Marais (viola da gamba). The king who had once loved to dance no longer attended balls, although he did invite the young Duchesse de Bourgogne to come show off her costumes before she went off to the masked balls that marked the brilliant Carnival season of 1701. Just as the king was losing interest in cultural events in Paris, so too were the Parisian intelligentsia losing interest in him. Even his children and grandchildren preferred to spend their time in their townhouses in Paris rather than their apartments in the chateau of Versailles. One sign of the times was a strong current of underground literature, some of it extremely crude, that harshly criticized the king and his ministers and to which even some of the leading intellectuals of the day contributed.

Thus, *Les Fêtes de Thalie* was a product of the urban cultural environment, not of the court. The Opéra had always had a double existence. It was partially beholden to the patronage of the king (its official name was the Académie *Royale* de Musique), but also to the paying public in Paris. Whereas the Opéra never separated itself from the court throughout the Ancien Régime, its focus turned more and more toward Paris. One measure of the evolution may be seen in the prologues, which in Lully's hands had always included encomiums of the king, but which after Lully sometimes did not allude to the king at all. It is true that thanks to the continued reliance on works by Lully in the repertoire of the Opéra, audiences would still hear the king praised on a regular basis, but librettists of new operas were now free to pay only lip service or even omit entirely such blatant political messages. The only possible reference to the king that can be read into the prologue of *Les Fêtes de Thalie* is Apollo's role as the arbiter of the arts. Louis was, after all, known as the Sun King and emblems of Apollo saturate the decorations at Versailles.

But La Font's Apollo is not at all majestic and uses similar colloquial language to that of the Muses. Moreover, Apollo can't be bothered to show up again in the "Critique" at the end of the opera and sends Momus, the god of mockery, to arbitrate in his stead. Given the censorship that controlled the theaters, direct attacks on the king were not possible on the public stage, but subtle swipes of this nature could pass. Still, such liberties were sensitive enough that it is easy to understand why the opera was given a frame that aimed at warding off opprobrium from traditionalists.

THE CREATORS

Les Fêtes de Thalie opened just over a year before the death of the now elderly Louis XIV, but like many of the works performed at the end of his long reign, it seems already attached to the spirit that the pleasure-seeking Regent, the Duc d'Orléans, was to introduce. In 1714 both the librettist and composer were novices at the Académie Royale de Musique. Little is known about La Font beyond the fact that he had written several plays before he tried his hand at opera; his greatest prior success had been *Le Naufrage ou la Pompe funèbre de Crispin*, a comic play he wrote in 1710 for the Comédie française. In a startling deviation from his inclination toward comedy, he was to write in 1716 one of the darkest librettos ever to be staged at the Opéra, *Hypermnestre*, set to music by Charles-Hubert Gervais.

La Font's collaborator on *Les Fêtes de Thalie*, the violinist-composer Mouret, had left his native Avignon for Paris in 1707. Shortly after his arrival he found work with the Duc du Maine, who was one of the illegitimate offspring of Louis XIV's liaison with Madame de Montespan and who had been raised by Madame de Maintenon. The Duc du Maine's music-loving wife (**Fig. 5**) patronized poets, composers, and dancers; the gardens of the couple's chateau at Sceaux became the site of a series of spectacular entertainments for which Mouret provided some of the music. One of his works for the Duchesse du Maine, *Les Amours de Ragonde*, in which the title character, an old woman sung by a man, develops a crush on her daughter's fiancé, has resonances with the plot of the first entrée in *Les Fêtes de Thalie*, "La Fille," where the mother

Fig. 5: Portrait of the Duchesse du Maine, Mouret's patron during his early years in Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

PREMIER RECUEIL
Des Divertissemens du Nouveau Theatre Italien
AUGMENTE
DEDIE
A S. A. R. Monseigneur Le Duc d'Orleans
Par Mr. Mouret Maistre de la Chambre du Roy
Se Vend A Paris

Fig. 6: The title page of the score of Mouret's first collection of divertissements for the Italian Theater, dedicated to the Duc d'Orléans, who was responsible for establishing the troupe in Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

is also a trouser role. After Mouret's tragic death (he died at age 56 in a mental institution), *Les Amours de Ragonde* was turned into an opera and performed in 1742 on the stage of the Académie Royale de Musique; it is often seen as a predecessor to Rameau's comic masterpiece *Platée*. Mouret composed two serious works out of his six for the Opéra, but his talents lay more in the direction of light works. It is therefore not surprising that when the death of Louis XIV in 1715 allowed the Regent, his nephew the Duc d'Orléans, to recall a troupe of Italian comedians to Paris, Mouret became their composer. The several books of divertissements he composed for the troupe (**Fig. 6**) showcase his skills in providing vivacious dance pieces and music for comic pantomimes.

The third and most experienced creator of *Les Fêtes de Thalie* was Guillaume-Louis Pécour (1653–1729), who had been dancing at the Opéra since its inception and had served as the Opéra's choreographer since the death of Lully in 1687. He had stopped dancing a dozen years earlier, but for this opera he was responsible for choreographing the 35 or so dance pieces performed by the dancers filling the approximately 66 roles (the precise number of dances and dancers varied across the run of performances). Thanks to Pécour's contractual arrangement with dance notator Raoul Anger Feuillet, 120 of his choreographies are extant—some for the ballroom, others for the stage—more than from any other choreographer of the era. None of his choreographies for *Les Fêtes de Thalie* survive, but all of its divertissements partake of familiar operatic topoi: sailors in "La Fille"; rustic participants in a village wedding in "La Veuve coquette," and masked dancers at a ball in "La Femme." This is not to say that the choreography for such scenes was interchangeable (no information about it survives beyond the names and roles of the dancers), but that audiences were undoubtedly familiar with the conventions of such roles. The most unexpected demands on the performers occur when singers dance or dancers sing, given that in general the functions of the performers at the Opéra were distinct. But in "La Fille" the title character, a singer, enters dancing, and in "La Femme" the married couple opens the ball by performing a menuet, the most prominent social dance of the day. The opposite situation occurs in the "Critique," where the role of Terpsichore was filled by a dancer with singing abilities.

THE AFTERLIFE OF *LES FÊTES DE THALIE*

The construction of an opera-ballet allowed for acts to be added or swapped out and *Les Fêtes de Thalie* underwent both types of changes. When it premiered in August of 1714 it consisted of the prologue and three entrées. The first change, in October, was to add the "Critique," thus framing the work on both sides by the conceit of the Muses meddling in the performances at the Opéra. The following March, "La Veuve" was replaced by "La Veuve coquette," the new title character being considerably more cheerful than her predecessor. This iteration, which lasted for seven years, is the one Opera Lafayette has chosen to perform. In 1722 a new entrée, "La Provençale," replaced the "Critique," and even though like "La Fille" it is set in southern France and concerns a marriageable girl, both entrées were performed on the same evening. Thereafter, however, the entrées were rearranged at will in different revivals, or entrées were performed individually as parts of programs of "fragments." In various combinations or excerpts the work was revived until late in the 18th century.

Successful operas, particularly tuneful ones, were mined by other theaters in Paris for their own purposes. The tune from *Les Fêtes de Thalie* that had the widest dissemination was the "Second Peasant Dance" from the village wedding in "La Veuve coquette." It was choreographed as a contredanse and published in 1716 in modified Feuillet notation by Jacques Dezais, Feuillet's successor in publishing dance notations (**Fig. 7**). Known thereafter as the "Cotillon des Fêtes de Thalie," it was quoted in many plays performed at the fair theaters and sometimes given words. Another big hit was the jolly piece in 6/8 meter that closes the opera, where it is both danced as a contredanse and sung ("Goûtons de doux amusements").

Fig. 7: The "Cotillon des Fêtes de Thalie," a contredanse using a tune from "La Veuve" and published in modified Feuillet notation by Dezais in 1716. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The argument articulated by La Font in favor of permitting comedy on the operatic stage continued to simmer for the rest of the 18th century, and only occasionally did genuinely comic works break through the resistance posed by influential arbiters of taste. Six years after Thalie argued her case from the stage of the Opéra, La Font published another defense of the work. His claims here are self-serving, but worth quoting in full.

> Here, I believe, is the first opera where one has seen women dressed in the French manner and confidantes who take the tone of the soubrettes of comedy. It is also the first work that hazards certain expressions appropriate for comedy that were new at the time, and even unknown on the operatic stage. At first the public was alarmed, but the theatricality that reigns from beginning to end of this ballet was found to be so amusing and playful, that people came in crowds, almost grudgingly. I recognized that I was amusing the public in spite of itself, and in order to render its pleasure pure and tranquil, I hastened to write a critique of my own work, in which I attributed all its merits to the success of the music and the dance. The public was grateful for my thoughtfulness and became so friendly toward me that for 80 performances it could not resolve to abandon me. Even today it speaks of this ballet with pleasure.

Another librettist, Louis Fuzelier, felt compelled to argue the case again in the preface to his *Ballet des âges* (1718): "This ballet will show that I believe that Thalie has as many rights over music as Melpomène. [...] I know that I risk displeasing those sad voluptuaries who love only solemn pleasures [...]." The "sad voluptuaries," however, carried the day, at least when it came to the creation of new works. In 1726 librettist Pierre-Charles Roy was to explain in the preface to his opera-ballet *Les Stragèmes de l'Amour* that "The public has decided that if this theater permits the comic, it may only be a noble type of comic, like one that reflects the character of antiquity." Revivals, however, kept popular works such as *Les Fêtes de Thalie* in the public eye, and every now and then overtly comic works such as *Les Amours de Ragonde* (1742) or *Platée* (1749) premiered at the Opéra. It should be remembered, however, that the comic hit Opera Lafayette staged last season, Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Io*, was never performed in Rameau's lifetime, for reasons that remain unknown but may have had to do with the tone of its libretto. The success of *Les Fêtes de Thalie* proved durable, and other librettists and creators were inspired by its example in attempting to broaden the generic boundaries of French opera. Yet the work remained, alas, an exception to general trends in the repertoire.

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Opera Lafayette
PRESENTS

From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau and Handel's Esther

Saint Peter's Church
New York, NY
Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 7:00pm

This performance is approximately 90 minutes with no intermission.

PAST PERFORMANCES

The John F. Kennedy Center
for the Performing Arts
Terrace Theater
Washington, DC
Thursday, February 8, 2024 at 7:30pm

This performance was an external rental presented in coordination with the Kennedy Center Campus Rentals Office and was not produced by the Kennedy Center.

PROGRAM

Esther (1689).....Jean-Baptiste Moreau
Libretto by Jean Racine

I. Overture
II. "Pleurons et gémissons"
III. "Dieu d'Israel"
IV. Prélude
V. Entracte
VI. "Que le peuple est heureux"
VII. "Un Roy sage"
VIII. Marche
IX. "Dieu fait triompher"
X. "Il apaise il pardonne"

Intermission

Esther, HWV 50a. (1718).....George Frideric Handel

I. Overture (Andante, Larghetto, Allegro)
II. "Pluck root and branch", Haman
III. "Shall we of servitude complain"
IV. "Praise the Lord", Israelite
V. "Ye sons of Israel"
VI. "I go before the King...Tears assist me", Esther
VII. "Save us, O Lord"
VIII. "Who dares intrude...Who calls my parting soul from death", Ahasuerus & Esther
IX. "Now, O Queen", Ahasuerus & Esther
X. "Turn not, O Queen", Haman
XI. "Guards, seize the traitor", Ahasuerus
XII. "How art thou fall'n from thy height", Haman
XIII. "The Lord our enemy has slain"
XIV. "Forever Blessed"

CAST/ARTISTS

Musical Direction by Justin Taylor & Jonathan Woody

Justin Taylor.....*Guest Conductor, Harpsichord*
Paulina Francisco.....*Esther/Israelite, Soprano I◆†*
Jesse Darden.....*Ahasuerus*
Jonathan Woody.....*Haman*
Elisse Albian.....*Soprano & Soprano II◆†*
Kristen Dubenion-Smith.....*Alto*
Jacob Perry.....*Tenor II†*

Benjamin Bernard, *Pre-Concert Lecture*

†*Opera Lafayette Debut*
◆*Opera Lafayette Young Artist*

Photo from our performance of Esther – *February 8, 2024 © Jen Packard*

OPERA LAFAYETTE ORCHESTRA

Violin
Jacob Ashworth*
Concertmaster
June Huang
Theresa Salomon
Keats Dieffenbach*
Natalie Kress
Gesa Kordes
Leslie Nero

Viola
Isaiah Chapman*
Alissa Smith

Cello
Serafim Smigelskiy*

Bass & Violone
Jessica Powell Fig*

Oboe & Recorder
Margaret Owens*

Bassoon & Recorder
Anna Marsh*

Trumpet
John Thiessen*

**Principal*

Esther Orchestra – February 8, 2024 © Jen Packard

PROGRAM NOTE

Anne Piéjus

The plot of *Esther* is derived from the Old Testament; the work is set in Babylon at the time of the exile of the Jewish people (in the 5th century, BCE). Aman, the cruel minister of King Ahasuerus, has obtained an edict condemning to death all Jews in the Babylonian empire, under the pretext that one member of this group, Mordecai, has refused to bow to royal power. The wise Mordecai comprehends the danger and warns his niece, Esther. (Esther is the king's favorite, and has hidden her Jewish identity from him.) Mordecai urges Esther to intercede with Ahasuerus to bestow mercy upon their people. Providence comes to the rescue: the king, tormented by a dream, remembers that Mordecai once saved him from an assassination plot. He orders Aman to lead Mordecai in triumph into the city. Aman obeys with reluctance, consoling himself by thinking of the torment he prepares for his enemy. However, Esther decides to enter the king's house, flouting a prohibition against going near. She requests the favor of having Ahasuerus to dinner in Aman's presence. She throws herself at the king's feet, confesses that she is a Jew, begs for mercy, and reveals Aman's bloodthirsty plans. Touched and convinced, Ahasuerus revokes the edict and delivers Aman to the execution prepared for Mordecai.

The play by Jean Racine was created for the young ladies of the royal house of Saint-Louis. This was an educational institution, funded by the king, which accommodated 250 girls from the nobility. The pupils were trained in theater. In 1688, Madame de Maintenon, the second wife of Louis XIV and founder of the house, commissioned a "kind of moral poem" with music, written by Racine with the assistance of composer Jean-Baptiste Moreau. *Esther* encompassed all the elements that contributed to the success of court spectacles at the time: tragedy, music, elaborate stage settings, sumptuous "Persian-style" taffeta costumes, and jewelry borrowed from the queen herself. Indeed, the work represented the collaborative effort of the foremost court artists of the time: including Racine, Moreau, and the designer and decorator Jean Bérain. Trained at Angers' cathedral choir, Moreau had recently composed the court divertissement, *Les Bergers de Marly*. After *Esther*, he would go on to compose the music for Racine's *Athalie*, along with several other pieces for Saint-Cyr.

It is highly likely that Racine collaborated with Moreau to facilitate the work's alternation between declamation and song, creating expansive musical scene structures. *Esther* contains an overture, prelude, and extensive sung scenes at the end of each act.

Music is also included within the acts, in the form of lyric interludes featuring a three-voice female choir in dialogue with detached soloists. These interventions, in which the characters of the play do not participate, suspend the dramatic action, prolonging and amplifying the effects of the text. Racine and Moreau, aiming to evoke the tradition of ancient choruses, prioritize contrasting emotions such as desolation ("Pleurons et gémissons"), supplication ("Dieu d'Israël"), confidence ("Il s'apaise il pardonne"), and joy ("Que le peuple est heureux"). During the premiere, several female singers from the courtly "Chambre du roi" mingled onstage with the student performers to form a choir of twenty-four girls. Professional female singers would take on the most demanding solo roles. The subtlety of Moreau's style lies in the finesse of the composition, inspired by contemporary French airs: the melody is not overly virtuosic and emphasizes the sung words, while the distinctly French harmony, far from Italian effects, underscores the delicacy of these interludes composed for very young performers.

Handel likely did not know either Moreau's music or Racine's play, which had been adapted into English in 1715. A few years later, however, a group of poets including Alexander Pope and John Arbuthnot created a masque based on the subject, which in turn inspired the librettist and translator Samuel Humphreys, who wrote a libretto for Handel. The first version of Handel's *Esther* was composed and likely premiered in 1718 at Cannons, at the residence of the Earl of Carnarvon, a patron and sponsor of the composer who provided his singers and private orchestra for the performance. The work was presumably presented on stage.

Fourteen years later, in 1732, at the height of his career, Handel had *Esther* performed again. In the interim, he had composed *Athalia* (first performed in 1733 at Oxford), also adapted from Racine by Humphreys, who had modified the French tragedy to make it a Jacobite work, centered on the elimination of Catholicism. In 1732, a piracy incident prompted Handel to rework *Esther* extensively. The libretto and score underwent profound modifications, and the oratorio (HWV 50b) was performed at the King's Theatre in Haymarket. Handel had Italian opera singers and an orchestra at his disposal, explaining the substantial size of the revised work. *Esther* inaugurates the form of Handel's oratorios to come. In contrast to Racine's play, the oratorio (a dramatic concert work performed without staging, sets, or costumes) is entirely sung and divided into successive musical pieces. The chorus, representing the Israelites, remains prominent in expressing fundamental emotions such as lamentation ("Shall we of servitude complain"), prayer (as in the concerted aria "Praise the lord" and in the chorus "Save us o Lord"), or rejoicing ("The Lord our enemy has slain"). Meanwhile, the named characters present ornamented and even virtuosic arias, vocal ensembles, and recitatives to advance the plot. Due to the expressive potential of the villainous character, Handel

gives a central role to the disloyal minister Haman ("Pluck root and branch"). The vivid dramatic subject allows for a musical composition based on contrast and effective musical characterization of the protagonists. In fact, however, nine of the twenty-one numbers in *Esther* are borrowed from an earlier work by Handel, the *Brockes-Passion*, created in Hamburg. This kind of musical reuse was commonplace for the composer. Handel assigns arias originally written for the pious soul or the daughter of Zion to the character of Esther, and adapts to the character of Haman arias originally composed for both Judas and Jesus. The result is a work that is powerfully expressive, despite the dramatic inconsistencies caused by these reuses (as demonstrated, for example, in Haman's final aria on the power of forgiveness). Thus, the English oratorio derived from a French tragedy sounds in places like a German passion, beautifully illustrating the vitality of musical exchanges and influences in 18th-century Europe.

MORALITY AND MEDIA IN 17th-CENTURY FRANCE: THE COLLÈGE MAZARIN AND THE MAISON ROYALE DE SAINT-LOUIS[1]

Benjamin Bernard

A powerful premodern woman could draw from a range of archetypes to brand her public image. A queen might build a matronly image as the figurative mother of the nation; a holy woman as a spiritual mystic; a noblewoman as a horse-riding Amazon. Françoise D'Aubigné, or Madame de Maintenon, was not a queen, and so she could not be mother to the nation. Nor did she take monastic vows (as her father was an equerry, the "Amazon" image might have worked). Instead, when she became royal mistress, she drew on her earlier role as governess of Louis XIV's children to fashion herself as an educator in the interests of nation and crown. She founded and oversaw the Maison royale de Saint-Louis at Saint-Cyr, which opened for the 1686 school year (**Fig. 1**).

Yet Maintenon was not the only high-ranking representative of the monarchy to consecrate an elite school in the 1680s to serve Bourbon interests.[2] Another was the Cardinal Mazarin (1602–1661), the head minister of Louis XIV, who founded the Collège Mazarin. Louis XIV, along with these two counselors, Mazarin and Maintenon, used education policy to solve two interrelated problems: to integrate newly acquired provinces into the French state both administratively and culturally, and to bolster the impoverished nobility who paid dearly for his military conquests.[3]

[1] I thank Berin Szoka and Will Schoderbek for their hospitality in Paris, which made the research for this essay possible.

[2] On Maintenon as a political figure, see: Da Vinha and Grande, *Toute la cour était étonnée*, 12.

[3] On Saint-Cyr in particular, see: Milhet, Lieutenant-colonel, "Saint-Cyr, Haut lieu voué à l'éducation," 99.

Opposite: Fig. 1: The former Maison Royale de Saint-Louis at Saint-Cyr, damaged by Allied bombs during World War II, was restored as a military school. Photo by author, January 2024.

By comparing Saint-Cyr with this contemporaneous institution, the Collège Mazarin, we can better understand the aims of the monarchy, as well as the intellectual, social, and political context of elite education out of which so much Baroque theater, including Moreau's *Esther*, emerged. The political goals of these two schools, along with Maintenon's image as an educational theorist and practitioner, shed light on the performing arts produced within this pedagogical milieu. To that end, this essay makes two main points: First, Saint-Cyr can be considered as part of a broader trend of the absolutist state attempting to supplant the church as the sponsor of elite education. Second, school theater served as one aspect of moral instruction, a goal around which school curricula and institutional procedures were organized during the pre-Enlightenment.

My first clue that these schools were of comparable status and formed a common educational project was the observation that some families began to send their sons to the Collège Mazarin and their daughters to Saint-Cyr. A fascinating example here is a branch of the Aumale family: the improbably named Scholastique-Florence d'Aumale enrolled in Madame de Maintenon's school in 1732, while her brother Charles-François d'Aumale was sent to the Collège Mazarin in 1734.

Now, the Aumale clan's old noble title conferred status on the family, but they experienced a precarious financial position relative to other chatelains. Louis XIV's own foreign policy may have played a role in draining the family coffers, for nobles across France had depleted their fortunes to fund military regiments for Louis XIV's territorial expansion. The Collège Mazarin and the Maison Royale therefore educated the children of poor nobles of high birth whose fathers either no longer had the resources to hire private tutors or had been killed in action.

The intentions of Mazarin and Maintenon, however, seem to have been more than philanthropic: by extending royal largesse to young nobles, they effectively bought the loyalty of an entire social class who would constitute a future base of political support. The French aristocracy was not a genealogical fact of nature, but instead a class whose identity was shaped through social policy. Consider again the family of young Scholastique-Florence and Charles-François: specifically, their aunt, named Marie-Jeanne d'Aumale. Marie-Jeanne had joined Saint-Cyr as a *demoiselle* in 1690 and, after receiving a comprehensive education, she soon became the private secretary to Madame de Maintenon herself.[4] Marie-Jeanne accompanied Maintenon through life—her journal has

[4] Bryant, *Queen of Versailles*, 8.

become an important source for historians studying the school—as well as through death, for it was she who announced to Maintenon the expiration of the latter's secret husband, Louis XIV, on the morning of September 1, 1715.[5]

Fig. 2: Pierre Mignard. Portrait of cardinal Jules Mazarin. *1658–1660. Musée Condé. Wikimedia Commons.*

Mazarin had more explicit aims of cultural diplomacy in founding his school. Through those wars of conquest that had cost the nobility so dearly, the so-called Sun King had expanded the Bourbon kingdom and consolidated French control over new territories. The Cardinal Mazarin had helped broker advantageous peace agreements including the Treaty of Münster (1648) and the conference of Pheasant Island (1659), which settled peace with Habsburg Spain in part through the young king's first marriage, to his Spanish princess cousin. To solidify this successful legacy, Mazarin made provisions in his will to found a school serving elite boys—preferably aristocrats, but bourgeois if space allowed (**Fig. 2**).

This school, the Collège Mazarin, soon became known as the Collège des Quatre-Nations, for its student body was drawn from four territorial acquisitions: former Italian and Savoyard lands, parts of Alsace and Franche-Comté (conquered after Mazarin's death), Flanders (Artois, Luxembourg), and Roussillon (Sardinian lands). While Louis XIV's military architect Sébastien Le Prestre, Marquis of Vauban, secured these new frontier provinces through an "iron wall" of fortresses spaced along the border, the monarchy also turned to the cultural integration of these provinces through elite education.

[5] D'Aumale, "Marie Jeanne D'aumale"; Aumale, *Les Cahiers*; Bourrilly, "Souvenirs sur Madame de Maintenon."

Fig. 3: Meyer / Nicolas Perelle. View of the Collège des Quatre-Nations [Collège Mazarin], *1726. Source: Rijksmuseum / Creative Commons.*

The Collège Mazarin opened two years after Saint-Cyr, in 1688, with the aim of subordinating local elites and transforming them into loyal servants of the French state. The school offered full scholarships to sixty boys from the nobility of those four regions. With its palatial building designed by architect Louis Le Vau, its cutting-edge Cartesian philosophy curriculum, and its relatively high professorial salaries, it became almost immediately the most desirable collège, or elite classical high school, affiliated with the University of Paris.[6] (The complex still stands: situated directly across the Pont des Arts from the Louvre, it currently houses the Bibliothèque Mazarine as well as the five academies, including the Académie Française, of the Institut de France) (**Fig. 3**).

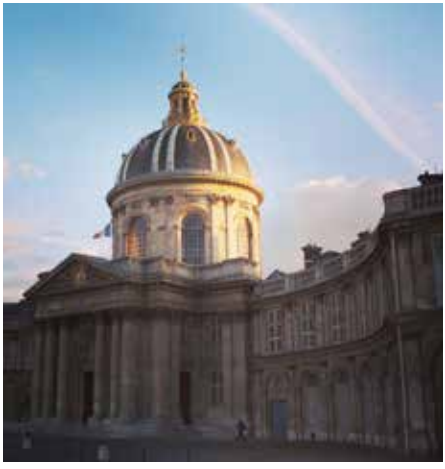

Fig. 4: The Institut de France in Paris—formerly the Collège Mazarin. Photo by author, February 2017.

[6] Brockliss, "The Moment of No Return: The University of Paris and the Death of Aristotelianism"; Compère, *Les collèges français*; Compère, *Du collège au lycée (1500–1850)*.

Fig. 5: Nicolas Perelle. The conquest of Franche-Comté *[depicting the king laying siege to Besançon]. Engraving, 1675. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.*

Cardinal Mazarin had hoped, as the school's founding charter enumerated, that "…all these Provinces would become French by their own Inclination as much as they currently are by His Majesty's domination"[7] (**Fig. 4**). They could do so by providing opportunities for acquiring wealth and status through service to the monarchy. Over time, the school became quite successful at integrating students into state administration, thereby consolidating the modern borders of metropolitan France. One boy from Besançon in Franche-Comté, Claude-Antoine Bocquet de Courbouzon (1682–1762), attended the late Cardinal's school in Paris and subsequently became a French magistrate.[8] Indeed, over time, Saint-Cyr also began to function more like the Collège Mazarin by admitting girls from far-flung, recently conquered provinces in order to integrate them into French society.[9] Other students came from the more central areas of Normandy or Ile-de-France and traveled the frontiers of the kingdom, like the aforementioned Charles-François d'Aumale.[10] After studying mathematics in school, Charles-François became the engineer-in-chief overseeing the citadel of Besançon and later rebuilt the citadel of Saint-Tropez as director of fortifications of Provence (**Fig. 5**).

Mazarin wanted more for these youth than successful careers in the French administration. The monarchy also had to teach provincial elites to adopt French "*mœurs et coutumes,*" which we might translate as "customs and mores," "moral behavior," or even

[7] "Contrat du fondation son Monseigneur le Cardinal Mazarin du College et Academie des Quatre Nations soubs le titre de Mazarini du 6 Mars 1661," *Collège Mazarin registre des délibérations*, Archives Nationales MM 462 ff1-8. Translation my own; cited in Bernard (2022), 128.

[8] Ferrer, "Claude-Antoine Bocquet de Courbouzon (1682–1762): 'Un Aigle Qui s'Approchait de La Sphère Du Soleil.'" Courbouzon's townhouse today houses liberal arts departments of the Université de Franche-Comté.

[9] Picco, "Origines géographiques des Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr," 119.

[10] Faucompret, *Les pensionnaires du Collège Mazarin ou des quatre nations, 1688–1794*, 235; Unknown, "Répertoire Chronologique d'admissions."

simply "culture." Students at the school learned virtuous manners by studying models worthy of emulation from Latin classics and Christian morality, as well as by attending chapel as a class. One regent (professor) at the school, Nicolas Theru, explained in the preface to the textbook he wrote and used that "In having this little Work printed, we had no other design but to instruct young people in their duties, to train them in piety, and to distance them from evil;" scripture would "inspire in young people wisdom, piety, the fear of God, the love of virtue, and the fright of vice" and make "an excellent protective against the corruption of the world…"[11] Schoolmasters tried to maintain airtight control over the urban popular and elite literary cultures—including theater, literature, and music—to which students were exposed.

Attempting to keep students on a virtuous path meant disciplining the ones who strayed, too. Teachers at Mazarin drew up lists of "diligent" and "lazy" students and submitted them to the school's grandmaster. The highest-achieving students might be exempt from submitting their course notes for approval that week, and the top rhetoric student would be awarded a book prize. But a young man drawn into vice—especially a gambling, drinking, or prostitution recidivist—could face expulsion, banishment from Paris, and relegation to his home province. The moral discipline of students extended far beyond the classroom, as schoolmasters sought to delimit students' experiences of pleasure. Faculty worked closely with the police lieutenant general's "*bureau des mœurs*," or vice squad, to clear out the vendors hawking alcoholic *limonade* and sweets away from the school gates and to enforce a ban on neighborhood cafés from selling liquor to students. Their notion of "mores" included other aspects of sensual pleasure as well: what we understand today as gender and sexual diversity. With increasing might through the late 1710s and 1720s, faculty and police worked in concert to close brothels in the neighborhood of the school and to prevent prostitutes from soliciting the young men's pocket money. And this powerful administrative team tracked and denounced so-called "sodomites" to prevent students from being "corrupted" into a "taste for" sexual relations with men.[12] While detailed school disciplinary records were destroyed in the French Revolution, extant sources indicate that faculty confiscated forbidden books that contained irreligious, pornographic, or immature themes. (One group of boys even made a book, unfortunately no longer extant, of adolescent rhymes set to the tunes of their chapel psalms.) By restricting students' access to media, especially print, teachers hoped to prevent the morals of immaculate youths from decaying into those of libertine adults. The results of this moral education at the Collège Mazarin were, as might be expected, mixed: in the cosmopolitan capital, with its increasingly vibrant print culture spreading heterodox ideas and with

[11] "Preface," Theru, *Instruction des jeunes gens*.

[12] See chapter 2 of Bernard, "Administering Morals."

the many pleasures of urban civil society, teachers could not keep students locked inside the school gates forever—nor could they keep the Enlightenment out.[13]

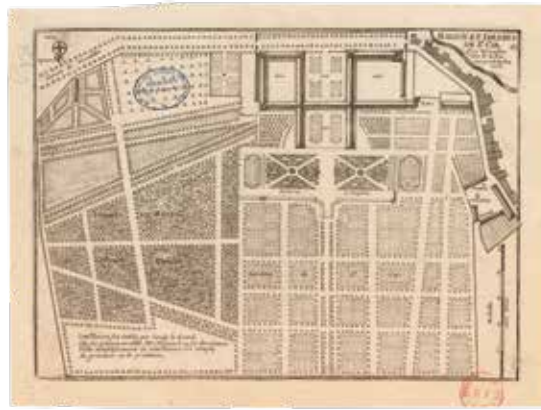

Fig. 6: Nicolas de Fer. Maison et jardins de St Cir près Versailles. *1705. Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France.*

Analogous dynamics played out at the Maison Royale de Saint-Louis in the town of Saint-Cyr. Unlike Cardinal Mazarin, Madame de Maintenon was able to administer her school closely and effectively due in part to the advantage of, well, not being deceased. By many accounts, she took an active role in designing curricula, in visiting classes, and in mentoring the *demoiselles* and instructors alike. She also wrote on educational philosophy and developed lessons in the form of "dialogues, conversations, lectures, proverbs, maxims, and commentaries" (**Fig. 6**).[14]

The purpose of Saint-Cyr, according to the printed school constitution handbook called the *Règle* or *Rule,* was to prepare girls of the impoverished nobility "for the two principle estates of [their] gender": either to remain "excellent virgins for the cloisters," or to become "pious mothers out in the world."[15] Few male educational theorists in the early modern period discussed the importance of women's education.[16] One exception was Archbishop Fénelon, who acted as spiritual mentor to Maintenon until their falling-out over a religious dispute and who may have been inspired by the writings of her grandfather. Fénelon emphasized that a woman's education should help her with "the education of her children…, of the behavior—moral and otherwise—of servants, of the household economy…" And so noblewomen such as those at the Maison Royale needed to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. According to Fénelon, noblewomen generally needed neither the military arts, nor Latin and rhetoric, nor philosophy and theology.[17] The *demoiselles* of Saint-Cyr, however, did study theology, astronomy, Latin—and arts

[13] On the relationship between collège faculty and the Enlightenment, see: Noguès, *Une archéologie du corps enseignant*; on the school experiences of future Enlightenment philosophers, see: Ben Messaoud, "Un professeur de D'Alembert"; Ben Messaoud, "Les 'Observations' de Crevier Sur 'L'Esprit Des Lois.'"

[14] Bryant, *Queen of Versailles*, 74; Maintenon, *Comment la sagesse vient aux filles*.

[15] Maintenon, Brinon, and Maison royale de Saint-Louis, *Regle et constitutions de Saint-Cyr*. Translation my own.

[16] Grell and Ramière de Fortanier, *L'éducation des jeunes filles nobles en Europe*, 7.

[17] Fénelon, Traité de l'éducation des filles, ch. 11 "Instruction des femmes sur leurs devoirs," cited in Grell and Ramière de Fortanier, 23. Translation my own.

including music and dance.[18] After the deaths of their husbands, many women would adopt management of their family estates and businesses in their own names, and they played a recognized role in transmitting virtuous culture to their children.

The *demoiselles* would accomplish this latter goal through pious exercises, catechism and religious instruction—and labor, so they might be accustomed to work. The institution's proscriptive *Règle* or *Rule* imposed austerity in architecture just as in morals. Of the school interiors, the *Rule* forbade alterations to a style of renunciation, stripped bare: "Do not suffer the least ornament," it wrote; "let all exude poverty and simplicity."[19] Maintenon exhibited similar austerity in the Attic rhetorical style in which she had the *demoiselles* taught, a simple approach with no extraneous words.[20] By practicing silence and modesty, and by distancing themselves from the temptations of court, girls could cultivate a spiritual form of ego-death, or "*la mort à soy-même*."[21] For, as the *Rule* warns: "You are at the gates of Versailles, exposed to the most violent temptations."[22] Whereas the Collège Mazarin regents and governors demonstrated near-constant worry about the possibility that young boys would become corrupted into urban vices, Maintenon and her teachers fretted about the exposure of girls to the habits of the nearby royal court at Versailles.

Maintenon was one to know, for she traveled frequently between the court and her school where, in the estimation of historian Mark Bryant, she spent two to three days per week. The three-mile journey from the royal stables to the school could have been made in well under an hour by coach, and there were numerous connections between the school and Versailles from the very start. Jean Racine and Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, both literary giants and royal historiographers, edited the school *Constitutions* for typographical errors.[23] Maintenon's protégé Michel Chamillart, the school's chief finance officer, became the comptroller of finances for the kingdom in 1699. And the king himself would pray in the school chapel on Sundays, if he visited.[24] Balancing the

[18] Bryant, *Queen of Versailles*, 74.

[19] Maintenon, Brinon, and Maison royale de Saint-Louis, *Regle et constitutions de Saint-Cyr*, 28.

[20] Boiron, "Mme de Maintenon, Professeure de Stylistique."

[21] Maintenon, Brinon, and Maison royale de Saint-Louis, Regle et constitutions de Saint-Cyr, 44. (This theme is often repeated, and fits Maintenon's austerity: due to the inconveniences of marriage, Maintenon advised her students elsewhere that young women must "forget their selves": Maintenon, Comment la sagesse vient aux filles, 45.

[22] Maintenon, Brinon, and Maison royale de Saint-Louis, *Regle et constitutions de Saint-Cyr*, 44.

[23] Piéjus, "Racine, Mme de Maintenon et Saint-Cyr," 48.

[24] Bryant, *Queen of Versailles*, 21; 73–74.

advantages of proximity to court with the dangers it posed, the school brought together the monarchy's foreign policy with court society. However, the goals of state educational policy and the all-too-human drives of courtiers sometimes came into conflict. Indeed, these collided spectacularly during performances of *Esther*.

To understand why, consider the purpose of school theater. Moral education could be accomplished with both the carrot and the stick, and theater was the carrot. At the end of the year, students in early modern elite schools enjoyed taking a break from their typical studies to perform in a play during the end-of-year festivities for the distribution of prizes to top students.[25] Often, rhetoric faculty at collèges would write their own plays, in the belief that theater could both "please and instruct."[26] As the musicologist Anne Piéjus describes:

> ...[T]he entire collège theater... aims at a certain form of pleasure... Pleasure with a thousand facets for the students, between the satisfaction of surpassing oneself, scholarly emulation, the joy of fully immersing oneself – often under the best conditions – dramatic play, singing, or dancing. This *delectare* [delighting] proceeds from an education of emulation, rooted in the self, in a direct connection with court society.[27]

In this account, pleasure, rather than an end unto itself, served as a vehicle for learning virtue. As père Jouvancy put it in his essential treatise on education, the *Ratio discendi*: "Tragedy must serve to shape mores...."[28] Some characters seem to have been intended as models worthy of virtuous emulation; Esther is a prime example. Badly behaved characters, even at their worst, are useful to think with and against, such as Corneille's wicked Cleopatra.[29] In either case, theater could make a powerful statement—one that operated, I think, on two phenomenological levels at once. First, by performing the plays, students may have felt out what it might be like to embody the virtues and vices of their characters and learn through emulation; second, the noble parents, classmates, and communities of the student-performers could attend the shows, thereby learning moral lessons from their seats in the audience.

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[25] Faucompret, *Les pensionnaires du Collège Mazarin ou des quatre nations, 1688–1794.*

[26] Piéjus, *Plaire et instruire*.

[27] Piéjus, *Plaire et instruire,* 18; see also: Piéjus, *Le théâtre des demoiselles*.

[28] Jouvancy Ratio discendi, cited in: Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV*, 45.

[29] Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV*, chapter 2.

Theater was thus a mass medium, and it merited tight control. Maintenon was not just the patron of the two Saint-Cyr tragedies; in 1697, she also famously expelled a troupe of Italian actors from Paris after being caricatured in one of their shows, *La Fausse Prude*.[30] The *Rule* instructed the community at Saint-Cyr: "Avoid curiosity; read only what is given to you by your superiors."[31] And the school constitutions mandated: "Do nothing to attract people through festivals and spectacles; you are not constituted to sing like canons, nor to do a grand mass that attracts the public…"[32] This austerity hardly sounds like the attitude of a gregarious courtier; these are instead the stipulations of a leader backtracking after scandal.

The shame of *Esther*'s premiere illustrates, scholars have noted, the inescapable anxieties about gender and sexuality that school theater provoked. At boys' collèges, performing school theater posed challenges to the norms of propriety. According to the Jesuit tradition, women should not appear as actresses onstage; to include female characters, then, entailed putting boys in women's dress—not a palatable proposition for every rhetoric instructor. Some schools therefore attempted to write plays without any women at all—which inevitably ended up boring their audiences. Additionally, it was deemed unfitting for schools to depict characters whose tragic suffering was due to love.[33] Under such restrictions, what subjects remained appropriate to perform?

There were a few common themes. School theater could treat the dilemmas facing men in war, as well as the homosocial friendships between men. One of the most popular theatrical settings was the Biblical story of David, Jonathan, and Saul: four of the first five years of school theater (as well as a revival of the topic in 1741 and 1745) at the Collège Mazarin treated this subject from various angles, and *Jonathas* by Joseph-François Duché de Vancy was performed at Saint-Cyr in 1699. Not until 1740 did the Collège Mazarin perform a comedy. David and Jonathan had long been considered as paradigmatic examples of Aristotelian "perfect friendship."[34] This category of male affection tapped into compositional elements of courtly opera without contravening rules of propriety.[35] Musicologists have suggested that successive settings of the story of David

[30] Grande, "Fausse prude ou vraie ingénue: Mme de maintenon et la scène.," 205.

[31] Maintenon, Brinon, and Maison royale de Saint-Louis, *Regle et constitutions de Saint-Cyr*, 48. Translation my own.

[32] Maintenon, Brinon, and Maison royale de Saint-Louis, 29.

[33] This paragraph is drawn from: Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV*.

[34] For example, a Jesuit philosophy teacher at the Collège of Reims interpreted this tradition for his students and readers: Cerisiers, *Ionathas, ou Le vray amy*.

[35] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 126; Henderlight, "Marc-Antoine Charpentier's David et Jonathas," 187.

and Jonathan from the 1680s to the 1720s presented increasingly chaste depictions of intense male friendships. (According to this interpretation, Handel's adaptation *Saul* was most repressed of all in the broader social context of the raids on queer English molly-houses that coincided with the policing of sodomites around the collèges of Paris's Latin Quarter.)[36] The specters of gender deviance and male intimacy haunted these productions.

Saint-Cyr experienced problems of a different nature. In order to practice the musical and theatrical arts that might one day please their future husbands, the *demoiselles* should have found performing in public useful. But putting unmarried girls on display for an audience of leering male courtiers provoked a scandal—out of public embarrassment, certainly. But the incident also represented a pedagogical failure, for the school had failed to protect the integrity of the *demoiselles*' virtuous femininity.

The incident around the premiere of *Esther* suggests how deeply Maintenon was caught between the competing ideals and mechanics of the school and the court. As a school ultimately aimed at shoring up state power, Saint-Cyr in theory should have exercised tighter control over media, just as the monarchy sought to censor the production of print. It should have liberated young minds through carefully controlling their exposure to free-thinking ideas and keeping the worldly pleasures of court libertines at a remove. Yet the genre of school theater could not break through the paradoxes inherent to its institutional context. As Piéjus continues:

> The supposed pleasure of performing and of being seen, regularly denounced [by austere religious opponents of school theater]... prompted the greatest caution from schoolmasters aware of possible excesses... all else being equal, cultivating the taste for appearance in an aesthetically regulated framework, as in a tragedy with danced interludes, is nevertheless merely a transposition to the youthful world of courtly spectacles where the princes of blood were seen dancing.[37]

The premiere of *Esther* fell victim to a contradiction: at a school founded on a monastic model yet close to Versailles, school theater could not easily serve both the school's pedagogical aims alongside the political aims and social desires of courtiers at the same time.

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[36] Henderlight, "Marc-Antoine Charpentier's David et Jonathas"; Psychoyou and Raphaëlle Legrand, "De la sublimation en musique."

[37] Piéjus, *Plaire et instruire*, 18. Translations my own.

Maintenon became more conservative in her attitudes to theater in the wake of this show. Nevertheless, she seems to represent the end of a devout generation rather than the start of a new era of moral control. What Handel biographer Victor Schoelcher wrote in relation to the London stage may apply equally to the French court: "But in proportion as religion lost its empire, it adopted severer laws in order to maintain an imposing exterior…"[38] The zeal of school productions belied how easily students might later attend—or even write and perform in—heterodox theater in the city.

The author at the gates of Saint-Cyr, January 2024.

This, then, was the great contradiction of collège drama: it taught students not only to appreciate, but also to participate.[39] The generation born in the 1720s and attending such schools as these would break free from the moral strictures of the established absolutist patronage system as the Old Regime of moral tragedy began to falter in the face of urban theater. Writers observed this shift and celebrated it. One young playwright of the next generation, Claude-Pierre Patu, wrote to a friend in 1751:

> Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, Moliere…? Oh fie, then: these latter are still good for small works. In a secondary position, fine; but to attract a crowd, …long live our lovely moderns.[40]

It was this world of the schools of Maintenon and Mazarin—the moral vision for their students, the social policies of the absolutist monarchy, the attempts at controlling media—against which Enlightenment writers, and their crowds of followers, would soon rebel.

[38] Schœlcher, *The Life of Handel*, 109.

[39] On popular participation in Enligthenment culture, see: Bell, "For a New Social History of the Enlightenment."

[40] Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France MS 1277 f°227, November 10, 1751.

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Fig. 1: Antoine Coypel. Esther's Fainting Spell. *1697. Source: Musée du Louvre.*

ESTHER, MADAME DE MAINTENON AND ANALOGIES TO CONTEMPORARY LIFE, THEATER AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Philip Kennicott

The January 26, 1689, performance of Racine's *Esther* at Saint-Cyr was both a success and a sensation. From our perspective, some 335 years later, it is important to understand the distinction. The success is easy to document. First performed for the king and a select audience of courtiers, the performance was repeated five more times in 1689 and another seven times in 1690.[1] Madame de La Fayette, alert to the play's apparent coded references to current court politics and intrigue, declared it a triumph: "The play was better than anything of the kind ever written, the actresses—even playing men—left all the famous ladies of the stage far behind."[2] Shortly after the premiere, Madame de Sevigny wrote, "I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed this play," and she recalled telling the king, "Sire, I am charmed; what I have seen is beyond words."[3]

Written at the request of Madame de Maintenon, morganatic wife of Louis XIV, *Esther* was carefully tailored to reinforce the moral curriculum Maintenon hoped to teach at Saint-Cyr, the academy she founded for impoverished girls and young women born to noble families. Drama was central to her pedagogical method, but an earlier performance of Racine's *Andromaque*, full of unrequited desires, had touched on themes and passions too agitating for the young women. *Esther*, which brought a reluctant Racine out of retirement as a playwright, was designed to avoid all of that. It was, as Maintenon requested, a biblical drama, "something moral or historical" but without "any love in it."[4] At least, not the kind of love that would have discomfited an audience well aware that a school full of eligible but impecunious young women was an open invitation to scandal.

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1 Theresa Varney Kennedy, "From Stage to Cloister: Madame de Maintenon's Classroom Drama," *Yale French Studies* 130 (2016). 114.

2 Cited in Veronica Buckley, *The Secret Wife of Louis XIV: Françoise d'Aubigné, Madame de Maintenon* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 309.

3 Kennedy, "From Stage to Cloister," 113–114.

4 Buckley, *The Secret Wife of Louis XIV*, 308.

But *Esther*, (**Fig. 1**) successfully staged with elaborate sets and sumptuous costumes, may also have been *too* successful—which led to it becoming a sensation, subject to scrutiny, gossip and invidious speculations. Those details are harder to tease out and, given the interpersonal complexity and self-reflexive vigilance of court life under Louis XIV, it is not likely that any major cultural offering would have been received with sincere and unanimous approval. The criticism of *Esther* was manifold, from many sources, and it points to the deeper unease with theater, piety, and decorum that coursed through French society during the 17th century.

The Mother Superior of Saint-Cyr, Madame Durand, was apparently disturbed by the grandeur of the show, which included three changes of set and costumes, the latter designed by Maintenon herself.[5] The parish priest of Versailles, Francois Hébert, channeled longstanding anxieties about the morality of theater and fretted that Saint-Cyr would set a bad example for other educational institutions. Works like *Esther*, he declared, should be "banned from all education." His concern, that schools "instead of producing novices…will produce actresses," wasn't just a pithy expression of preference for religious life over secular amusements. It had been less than a half century since Louis XIII formally absolved actors of the charge that their profession was inherently "infamous," an animus borrowed from Roman law.[6] In the interval between that declaration and the premiere of *Esther*, lines between religious critics of the theater and advocates for its moral utility had only hardened.

Essential to the sensation sparked by *Esther* and feelings that there was something scandalous about its premiere at Saint-Cyr are what today we might call its relevance. Esther, the faithful, beautiful, level-headed Queen who convinces her husband, the Persian King Ahasuerus, to save the Jews from destruction, was seen as a perhaps self-serving cipher for Maintenon herself. The play also seemed to allude to a harem of sexually available young women, the daughters of Zion whom Racine calls "Young and tender flowers, made vulnerable by their plight," which may have been interpreted as a reference to the actresses and their classmates at Saint-Cyr.[7] Even Maintenon's own values, her professed aversion to vanity, display, and self-aggrandizing behavior, were easily detected in Racine's text. When Esther's uncle, Mardochée (Mordecai), explains the miraculous rise of the

[5] Timothy Pyles. "Bodies of Theology: Racine's *Esther* and *Athalie* as Embodied Theology," *Theater Symposium* 27 (2019): 26.

[6] Henry Philips, *The Theater and its Critics in 17th Century France* (Oxford University Press, 1980), 4.

[7] Kennedy, "From Stage to Cloister," 114–115.

young Jewish woman to be Queen of the Persians, he discounts the role played by her charm and beauty: "Be well assured, he made not choice of you/to be a vain and useless shew to Asia, Nor merely to enchant the eyes of men..."[8] Maintenon's rivals, critics and enemies would likely have heard flattery to the wife of the French king in those lines.

Changes at Saint-Cyr suggest that the anxieties provoked by *Esther* weren't a matter of its content or the intent behind its production. Rather, the success of the play had focused attention in the wrong places and unsettled the longstanding tension articulated by Molière between theater's ability to "correct men's errors" while simultaneously amusing them.[9] Racine produced yet another play for Saint-Cyr, the 1691 *Athalie*, which was performed without costumes and without the elaborate stage settings designed for *Esther*. It was also performed privately, for the girls' edification rather than the court's amusement. Theater remained integral to education at Saint-Cyr but focused on Maintenon's more rigorously moralizing classroom dramas and dramatic proverbs—short scenes, like Socratic dialogues, in which the girls enacted conversations about life, morals and proper behavior.[10]

The immediate response to *Esther* in French society seems to be a moment of retrenchment, rather than retreat from the idea that theater was a useful moral tool, or at the least, a harmless diversion. The 18th century's most cogent and inventive critic of theater, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, essentially abandoned religious arguments about the morality of writing, producing, and witnessing theatrical entertainments. Rather, he doubted theater's constructive or instructive power, including catharsis, while acknowledging that it was in many contexts essentially harmless. "I know that the poetic theater claims to...purge the passions in exciting them. But I have difficulty understanding this rule. Is it possible that in order to become temperate and prudent we must begin by being intemperate and mad?"[11] Theater reinforced preexisting moral conditions, and some communities, such as the city of Geneva, his birthplace and idealized homeland, existed in a prelapsarian innocence of any need for theater as diversion or distraction.

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[8] Racine, *Esther,* Act II Scene 1. From 1803 English translation, Edinburgh.

[9] Moliere, First Petition Addressed to the King Concerning Tartuffe, cited in Moliere, *The Misanthrope and Other Plays* (Penguin, 1959), 104.

[10] Kennedy, "From Stage to Cloister," 116.

[11] Jean-Jaques Rousseau, Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre, translated Allan Bloom (Cornell University Press, 1960), 20.

Fig. 2: Charles Nicolas Cochin. Frontispice de L'Émile. *1782. Source: The British Museum.*

In *Émile*, (**Fig. 2**) Rousseau allows theater into his curriculum, but only as a guide to taste, not morality.[12] Yet the pedagogical method advocated by Rousseau in *Emile* is essentially theatrical. Lessons are carefully prepared, staged in particular settings, held back until the student is in a state of perfect susceptibility. They are staged, so as to "engrave" their lessons all the more indelibly on the heart. "I shall begin by moving his imagination. I shall choose the time, the place, and the objects most favorable to the impression I want to make. I shall, so to speak, call all of nature as a witness to our conversations."[13] Borrowing from both 17th-century advocates and critics of the theater, Rousseau confirms the power of theater to bypass mere reason and create indelible impressions. Contemporary advocates for Christian theater essentially echo Rousseau's pedagogical use of theatrical methods ("Never reason in a dry manner with youth," he writes in *Émile*), and his skepticism of dry sermons or "long speeches."[14]

In the decades, and centuries, after the premiere of *Esther*, the powerful anti-theatrical sentiments it exacerbated don't disappear, but become a quiet, chronic background anxiety about the medium, mostly inert but with the potential for occasional flare ups. Anti-theatrical tracts published in the United States in the 19th century carry forward diluted, vestigial echoes of those anxieties even as theater became a pervasive pastime. The American Tract Society, active in the first half of the 19th century, echoed anti-theatrical arguments that would have been familiar to readers of strident anti-theatrical writers Pierre Nicole and Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (**Fig. 3**) two centuries earlier: That theater distracts us from prayer and spiritual endeavor and encourages vice; that attendance is complicity in the degradation of the actors, and the pleasures and sensations elicited by the theater cause disorder in the soul.[15]

[12] Jean-Jaques Rousseau, *Émile,* translated by Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1979), 344.

[13] Ibid., 323.

[14] Ibid., 323.

[15] Tracts of the American Tract Society, Theatrical Exhibitions. Volume IV, No. 130.

Fig. 3: Hyacinthe Rigaud. Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, bishop of Meaux (1627–1704). *1702. Source: Musée du Louvre.*

Yet even the author of that tract acknowledged that the arguments might sound "puritanical" to his or her readers. By the 20th century, the complex theological and psychological arguments mobilized against works like *Esther* essentially disappeared. Today, theatrical scandals, especially those concerning theater produced by and for young people, are centered mainly on content. And the psychological mechanism whereby content causes moral damage is relatively simple-minded compared to 17th-century arguments about how the mind and body respond to theatrical sensations. Today, theatrical skeptics argue that mere exposure to dangerous material will tempt young people to behave in inappropriate ways. And the material considered dangerous is primarily sexual, motivating reactions and efforts to censor works including *Rent*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *The Laramie Project* and *Indecent*.[16]

Off the table and no longer relevant to today's discourse is the vast range of other subjects, dangers, and anxieties that stirred 17th-century French critics of the medium. There is no broadly accepted idea that theater must be didactic and moral. Outside of undergraduate philosophy seminars, no one spends much time worrying about the inherent dangers of imitation or semblance. There is no particular worry that theater might make young people vulnerable to human foibles such as hypocrisy, vanity and arrogance. The idea that emotions that are too intensely felt might be dangerous is limited mainly to the discourse of mental health.

[16] Hannah Natansan, "The Culture War's Latest Casualty: The High School Musical," *The Washington Post,* May 2, 2023.

Nor do advocates of the theater offer a defense approaching the nuance and sophistication of 17th-century defenders. Laughter is a sign that comedy has succeeded, but there is little discussion of the inherent moral value of ridicule, as in the anonymous 17th-century *Lettre sur la comédie de l'Imposteur*.[17] Catharsis, which Rousseau questioned, is blandly accepted as the principal reason we continue to attend tragedy. Broad defenses of theater emerge when public funding for non-profit theatrical companies is questioned, but they are rarely more substantial than a vague argument that the art form has value beyond mere entertainment because it helps us exercise the muscles of empathy. Theater isn't an arena for moral speculation, but a kind of Peloton class for kindness and social cohesion.

A more compelling analogy to the heated 17th-century arguments about theater in France can be found in today's anxieties about social media, its erosion of lines between the public and private selves, its exposure of the body to desire, and its enticements to vanity and display. This analogy also offers useful, retrospective insight into some of the more opaque details of the sensation caused by *Esther*. Maintenon's reaction to criticism of *Esther* was not to eliminate drama at Saint-Cyr, but to privatize it. In 1701, she wrote, "You must limit performances to the classroom and never let them be seen by outsider spectators, under any circumstance."[18] There was concern not just with the exposure of the girls' bodies to the male gaze, but to how the spectacle of *Esther* changed the behavior of the girls, who were felt to be more vain and less tractable after their theatrical triumph.

The 17th-century reading of this, which reinforces Maintenon's own values, is that *Esther* incited vanity in the young women, encouraging behaviors and traits she associated with the hollow ambitions of court life. We might, today, suggest that the girls' successful performance of a play that enacts female heroism gave them a rare sense of agency in their own lives. This, too, would have aroused deeper 17th-century concerns about the role of theater in corrupting actors at the most basic, existential level, the anti-theatrical conviction that by impersonating or inhabiting another person's identity, we lose our own sense of self. We become fixated on things outside of and irrelevant to the more important, inner sense of spiritual wellbeing. Nicole fretted that actors, especially, would be "entirely occupied with external objects, and entirely intoxicated by the madness that we see represented there."[19] Women, especially, were deformed merely by acting with

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[17] Julia Prest, "Failed Seductions and the Female Spectator: Pleasure and Polemic in the *Lettre sur la comédie de l'Imposteur*," *Yale French Studies* 130 (2016): 16.

[18] Kennedy, "From Stage to Cloister," 116.

[19] From the *Traité de la comédie,* cited in Philips, *The Theater and its Critics in 17th Century France,* 117.

confidence before an audience. To go onstage, wrote Pierre Coustel, a woman must "fortify [herself] against the restraint, so decorous and so natural to [her] sex, in order to be able to speak with confidence."[20]

Today's anxiety about social media, both religious and secular criticism, reproduces many of the same fears. We inhabit identities that are not our own; we fixate on extraneous things; we fashion public selves from values and desires extraneous to our authentic sense of self. Just as 17th-century critics of drama argued that to impersonate sinful behavior, an actor had to recall and re-experience earlier instances of actual sin, today, we fear the power of social media to re-traumatize young people as it keeps them in proximity to a perpetual memory of earlier injuries or traumas.[21] Religious arguments about social media replicate the familiar 17th-century fear about time and salvation, as well as the dangers of court life, including the temptation to gossip and coquetry: "If you are spending all your time on social media, you are, at best, wasting time you could be using to serve God," writes the author of a Christian blog post, "Should Christians use Social Media? Does Social Media Lead to Sin?"[22]

Fig. 4: Artist Unknown. Marie Champmeslé, d'après un portrait anonyme exposé en 1878 au Trocadéro, publié par Emile Mas (La Champmeslé, Paris, Alcan, 1932). *Date Unknown. Source: Wikimedia Commons. Marie Champmeslé was one of the great interpreters of Racine, including Phèdre. Graphic created by Lloyd Greenberg.*

Social media has quantified what would have been, in 17th-century court life, more arcane and indeterminate ways of measuring social status and influence (**Fig. 4**). But that has only reinforced its power to replicate many of the social dynamics from which Maintenon sought to defend her charges, the students at Saint-Cyr. We wear masks, place ourselves on display, seek validation from the desire of others, pander to their desires, and sacrifice the peace of solitude for pursuits that

[20] Cited in Philips, *The Theater and its Critics in 17th Century France,* 186.

[21] There is a wide discourse on the power of social media to shape identity, confuse our sense of values and traumatize and re-traumatize susceptible individuals. For 17th century arguments about sin and memory, see Philips, 186. For contemporary concerns, see for example Paula Durlofsky, *Logged on and Stressed Out* and Nausicaa Renner, "How Social Media Shapes our Identity," *The New Yorker,* August 8, 2019.

[22] "Should Christians use Social Media? Does Social Media Lead to Sin?" from www.412teens.org. https://412teens.org/qna/should-Christians-use-social-media.php.

bring no meaning to our lives. The psychological cost of all of this is presaged in the words of one of Maintenon's own interlocutors, Madame Duceaux, from the spiritual proverbs: "One needs always to dissimulate, to appear sad if the king is, even when one is not; to express joy if it's expected, although one is full of sorrow…to speak contrary to one's opinion, to conform to theirs, to indulge all of their passions; to sacrifice sleep, health and often one's conscience."[23]

It's difficult, reading *Esther* in the 21st century, to understand how it could have been a subject of controversy. The mistake, of course, is to look to its themes, characters or content. The danger wasn't the subject or the treatment, but rather the invitation it offered the Saint-Cyriennes to develop one of the fundamental tools of social life, the ability to fashion their own identities. 17th-century arguments against theater were religiously motivated, but those arguments intersected closely with what may have been even deeper fears about public life, truth, selfhood, authenticity and identity. What was at stake was reality itself—our ability to distinguish the real from the feigned—a fear that feels strikingly relevant today. A 17th-century visitor to 21st-century society might be bewildered: How did a democratic, pluralistic society create technology that so effectively encourages hierarchy, status and the alienation of life lived perpetually at court?

[23] Kennedy, "From Stage to Cloister." 118.

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Opera Lafayette
PRESENTS

Couperin le Grand

PAST PERFORMANCES

The John F. Kennedy Center
for the Performing Arts
Terrace Theater
Washington, DC
Wednesday, October 25, 2023 at 7:30pm

This performance was an external rental presented in coordination with the Kennedy Center Campus Rentals Office and is was produced by the Kennedy Center.

&

Kosciuszko Foundation
New York, NY
Thursday, October 26, 2023 at 7:00pm

This performance was approximately 90 minutes with an intermission.

PROGRAM

Cantate:
La Mort d'Hercule..... Louis Nicolas Clérambault

Concert no. 7:
Les Goûts Réunis, ou Nouveaux Concerts.....François Couperin

Cantate:
Ariane consolée par Bacchus..... François Couperin

Intermission

Concert no. 3:
Concerts royaux.....François Couperin

Cantate:
L'Enlèvement d'Orithie.....Michel Pignolet de Monteclair

Christophe Rousset performing Coueprin le Grand – *October 26, 2023*
© Tatiana Daubek

ARTISTS

Musical Direction by Christophe Rousset

Jonathan Woody.....*Bass-Baritone*
Jacob Ashworth.....*Volin*
Joshua Keller.....*Viol*
Immanuel Davis.....*Flute*
Christophe Rousset.....*Guest Director and Harpsichord*†

Saraswathi Shukla, *Pre-Concert Lecture*

†*Opera Lafayette debut*

Photo from our performance of Coueprin le Grand – *October 25, 2023 © Caitlin Oldham*

Pierre Mignard (1612–1695), Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de Maintenon (1635–1719)*, oil on canvas, circa 1694. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pierre_Mignard_-_Fran%C3%A7oise_d%27Aubign%C3%A9,_marquise_de_Maintenon_(1694).jpg. Wikimedia Commons.* ©

PROGRAM NOTE

Saraswathi Shukla

The reign of Louis XIV (1638–1715), the longest ruling monarch in Europe, was a rich period of art and splendor in France. After the death of his wife Maria Theresa of Spain, however, he married the Marquise de Maintenon (1635–1719) in secret in 1683. Madame de Maintenon, as she was known, was devout and banned many forms of theater and spectacle at the court. Composers invested in non-theatrical forms of entertainment by writing religious music, sacred and secular cantatas, and instrumental music until Louis XIV's death in 1715.

François Couperin "le Grand" was born in 1668 into a musical family at the height of Louis XIV's reign. After becoming a royal organist at the court in Versailles in 1693, Couperin gave private lessons to Louis XIV's grandson, the Duke of Burgundy, and other members of the royal family alongside his duties at the court. Published in two volumes in 1722 and 1724, the *Concerts royaux* represent some of the repertoire that Couperin composed for private "concerted" (chamber music) performances at Versailles. In the preface to the first volume, Couperin recounts that they were performed in 1714 and 1715 by the violinist François Duval, the oboist Anne-Danican Philidor, the viol player Hilaire Verloge Alarius, and the bassoonist Pierre Dubois, with Couperin himself at the harpsichord. The second book of these *Concerts royaux* was published under the name, *Les Goûts réunis*, reflecting Couperin's desire to unite French musical style, represented by Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), and the Italian influences of Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713), whose virtuosity and walking basses he incorporated into the dance rhythms, ornamentation, and *notes inégales* (a practice of playing running passages in irregular lilting dotted rhythms) so characteristic of French music. To sell more copies, Couperin printed them on two staves so they could be performed as solo harpsichord pieces as well; it became common practice to notate music in reduced formats that allowed musicians to arrange scores for different combinations of musicians and increase their market value.

Alongside these exquisite chamber works, you will hear three cantatas whose mythological plots are drawn from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The first one on the program is the cantata *La Mort d'Hercule* (1716) by Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1676–1749). Louis XIV was commonly portrayed as Hercules, and his marriage in 1660 was celebrated with the premiere of Cavalli's opera *Ercole amante* and Lully's *Ballet d'Hercule amoureux*. Listeners of the time would undoubtedly have seen Clérambault's cantata on the death

of Hercules — published just a year after Louis XIV's death — as a reference to Louis himself. Unlike Cavalli's opera drawing on the same myth, Clérambault's *Mort d'Hercule* frames Hercules's death at the hands of an inhumane and jealous spouse as unjust. The moral, we learn, is that those inflicted by Love's darts ought to be tender, for fear, bewitchment, and constraint have no effect on fleeting desire. We are left wondering whether it is Déjanire's actions, or Love's wounds, that lead to Hercules's mortal downfall.

The second cantata on the program is an exciting opportunity to hear a newly discovered work. When renowned harpsichordist and conductor Christophe Rousset came across a cantata called *Ariane consolée par Bacchus* (Ariadne consoled by Bacchus) in a manuscript containing mostly anonymous works, he wanted to know more: numerous 18th-century sources reference a cantata by Couperin on the theme of Ariadne—had he found this long missing cantata? Further analysis by Rousset and by Julien Dubruque has confirmed this hypothesis: there are specificities in the notation of the figured bass that point to Couperin's work; and the cantata, unusually, has a solo viol part, an instrument which Couperin loved and wrote for extensively (he wrote two viol suites and used the instrument in his Tenebrae lessons, as well as some of the *Concerts royaux*). This is a rare opportunity! The cantata tells the story of Ariadne, abandoned on the island of Naxos by Theseus, after Dionysus or Bacchus tells him in a dream to leave the island immediately.

Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667–1737) was heavily influenced by Italian music, and his cantata, *L'Enlèvement d'Orythie*, captures the dramatic pacing of his Italian contemporaries. The cantata tells the story of Boreas, the winter northerly wind, who kidnaps Orithyia. The recitative opens in the heat of the moment: "The impetuous Boreas is consumed by the most beautiful of fires," the cantata begins. He tries to seduce Orithyia through tenderness, but she rejects his advances. Frustrated and discouraged by the prospect of losing her, Boreas invokes the natural world and conjures a tempest. The violin and continuo accompany his injunctions with violently repeating figures to match the power of his text: "Come out, roar, furious winds! Provoke a horrible storm! Confuse the earth and the heavens such that nothing escapes your storm!" Using Italian violin techniques, such as the *stile concitato*, Montéclair describes how Boreas creates disorder – chaos in the literal sense of the word – that masks his "sweet hopes" as he kisses and seizes the "proud object of his desire" and takes her to a place where she is subject to his power. Venus voices her approval of Boreas's daring victory and celebrates his crowning by Hymen, the god of marriage, even though he has wounded Orithyia. A solo violin air follows Venus's jubilant air, and the cantata closes with more advice: "Lovers," we are told, "all concede to constancy; Love triumphs over scorn."

MONUMENTAL MINIATURES: CHAMBER MUSIC IN THE GRAND SIÈCLE

Saraswathi Shukla

Today, Louis XIV is known for his patronage of extravagant court operas, ballets, and theatrical productions that drew courtiers in as both spectators and participants. Music and theater were not simply passions for him, though: his dedication to the arts was rooted in his experience of the revolt he narrowly escaped as a teenager. From 1648 to 1653, Louis XIV's own aristocrats staged a series of uprisings called the Frondes. As he grew into adulthood, Louis cultivated an image of himself as the Sun King—the center of the court, Europe, and the world. Theater and spectacle, he discovered, occupied his courtiers' time and attention, so he gradually transformed the arts into a powerful ritual that involved every member of his court. He chose a Florentine page and Italian teacher to give him dancing lessons and quickly promoted him to the head of his musical institutions. Together, the king and the dancing master—now naturalized French and bearing the gallicized name Jean-Baptiste Lully—collaborated with musicians, playwrights, set designers, and other artisans. Louis XIV expected his courtiers not only to attend theatrical and operatic works at the court, but also to dance and participate in the staging and choreography of these *divertissements*. He also invested in new institutions and academies to renew France's image as a cultural authority across the globe. This period of rich artistic production and consolidation has come to be known as the Grand Siècle (the Great Century).

After nearly two decades, though, Louis XIV had a change of heart instigated by Madame de Maintenon's arrival. Her devout lifestyle contrasted with the decadence of courtly life, and she disapproved of opera and theater, prompting a series of debates about the morality of artistic expression. Artists who had been producing works for large theaters were challenged to explore new avenues of expression. With a royal court less willing to invest in expensive artistic endeavors, artists developed forms of entertainment that could be performed in smaller, semi-private settings rather than large theaters. They nonetheless managed to retain the grandiose nature of French theatrical music, thus creating an aesthetic for "monumental miniatures"—monumental works in miniature formats. As they rebranded their artistic style, French artists looked to Italian culture for inspiration. For centuries, France had nourished a mix of admiration and intense competition with Italy, and Louis XIV only intensified this relationship. The Renaissance king

Fig. 1: Laocoön, *c. 40–30 BCE, Pio Clementino Museum, Inv. 1059.*

François I, a patron of Leonardo da Vinci and Andrea del Sarto, had famously tried to acquire Roman antiquities and statues in the early 1500s, but the Vatican refused to sell its prized statue, *Laocoön and his Sons* (**Fig. 1**) and even deemed its marble copy to be too exceptional for the likes of François I. In the end, the French king only obtained a mediocre bronze cast of *Laocoön* (Haskell and Penny 243-247). In the words of historian Jules Michelet, François I, "discouraged by far-off wars, widowed of his dream, Italy, made himself a French Italy" at Fontainebleau and rebuilt the "elegant, convenient, and well-situated arcades of the Lombard villas he would never see again. He made his Galerie d'Ulysse. His Odyssey was over. He accepted, since destiny would have it so, his Ithaca" (Michelet 404).

Louis XIV, however, was determined to succeed where François I had failed. The Sun King wanted to decorate his new gardens at Versailles with Roman statuary but soon realized that the acquisition and maintenance costs were prohibitive. Instead, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's Minister of Finances, founded the Académie de France in Rome to train French artists to not only master Italian art forms, but also surpass Italian artists (Montaiglon, 115-6). Under the aegis of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, French sculptors learned to reproduce Roman statues and perfect this art. This policy of cultural appropriation, improvement, and rebranding became a hallmark of Louis XIV's reign across art forms. Indeed, his new *surintendant de la musique*, Lully, was invested in inscribing his Italian origins into French musical traditions and cast himself firmly as the figurehead of French music-making. The debates he instigated about the superiority of French over Italian music occupied musicians and music lovers for decades.

Louis XIV's fraught relationship with Italian art and the legacy of Franco-Italian cultural exchange can be seen most clearly in the opera performed for the celebration of Louis XIV's marriage to Maria Theresa of Spain. In 1660, the Venetian composer Francesco Cavalli, temporarily moved to Paris with an entourage of musicians to stage the opera, *Ercole amante* (*Hercules in Love*).

Fig. 2: Giacomo Torelli's set for Les Noces de Thétis *(1654).*

The opera was produced by a team of Italians. Due to delays in construction at the Palais des Tuileries, the opera premiered in 1662, two years after Louis XIV's marriage. This gave Giuseppe Torelli time to complete sets (**Fig. 2**) and Gaspare Vigarani time to complete the elaborate machinery designed for the new theater at the palace, the Salle des Machines. There was no love lost between Cavalli and Lully, though. Lully felt that Cavalli's score lacked distinctive French features, so, before the premiere, he added instrumental ballets to the end of each act and doubled the length of the opera. Despite Lully's resistance, Italian instruments and musical styles crept into French music, theater, and even instrument-making practices.

Cavalli's opera *Ercole amante* is an allegory in which Louis XIV is represented—not very positively—as Hercules. In this rendition of the story, Hercules pursues his son's fiancée, Iole, to whom he had once been betrothed. Iole's father had retracted the engagement upon learning that Hercules had murdered his previous family, and Hercules instead married Deianira. The conflict between Hercules and his son, Hyllus, and Deianira plays out both on earth and in the heavens: Venus and Cupid encourage Hercules, while Juno defends Deianira. To protect Hyllus from his father's wrath, Iole accepts Hercules's advances. At the last second, Deianira gives Hercules a magic cloak that she believes will stop him from being unfaithful, but the cloak, given to her by a centaur killed by Hercules, is poisoned with the Hydra's blood from Hercules's own arrows. As Hercules puts on the cloak, he is burned alive, and the gods extricate him from his physical body. The marriage ceremony continues in the heavens, but this time with the Allegory of Beauty as his bride. The apotheosis of Louis XIV-as-Hercules demonstrates that the king's worldly pleasures might lead him astray, but by renouncing them, he prioritizes geopolitical stability over passion. The irony is that by the premiere of the opera in 1662, Louis XIV already had a royal mistress, Louise de la Vallière. The comparison between Louis XIV and Hercules would continue past the king's death, but the criticism vanished. Indeed, in Louis-Nicolas Clérambault's cantata, *La mort d'Hercules*, published the year after Louis XIV's death, Hercules is a victim of his wife's unjustified jealousy.

Fig. 3: Artemisia Gentileschi, Judith beheading Holofernes, *c. 1620, The Uffizi.*

Fig. 4: Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Apollo and Daphne, *1620–1625, Galleria Borghese.*

When Louis XIV finally turned away from opera—originally a Florentine and Venetian artform—artists in France looked to Rome, where opera had been banned, for inspiration on how to balance art and religion. Italian painters were known for their ability to elicit strong emotional responses from their publics. Painters employed *chiaroscuro*, a technique of juxtaposing light and darkness, and used architectural principles of composition (*disegno*) and color contrasts to lead the eye first to the dramatic center of a painting and gradually away from it to its peripheries. French artists also idealized how antique statues and their modern manifestations in Italy could narrate complex tales. Two examples demonstrate how visual artists subscribed to the same artistic principles as musicians in Italy.

Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith beheading Holofernes* (**Fig. 3**) epitomizes the dramatic power of light and shadow. Gentileschi draws our eyes first to the brightest point of the painting—Judith's brow, furrowed in determination. From there, we follow her arm down to Holofernes's face etched in pain, his eyes bright and clear, his mouth open in surprise. As we continue down the painting, we see the metal blade emerging from his neck and the streams of blood pouring down the bed. The architectural composition of the painting comes into focus as we notice his shoulder catch the light and his arm reach back up towards Judith. Holofernes brings the viewer's eye back up to the center of the painting, where Judith and her servant stand. Similarly, many French cantatas from the end of Louis XIV's reign draw the listener into the main dramatic event of the story before enriching the context and commentary surrounding it in the following airs and recitatives.

From Italian sculpture, French composers learned how to encapsulate dramatic forms in small formats. No sculptor was more skilled than Bernini at selecting scenes from Greco-Roman epics and capturing in a single piece of marble the dramatic arc of an entire myth. Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* (**Fig. 4**) depicts Ovid's rendition of the story of Daphne and Phoebus, or Apollo.

Apollo, proud of having killed the Python with his bow and arrow, has mocked Cupid for his small weapon. Cupid flies to Parnassus and shoots two arrows: one to make Apollo fall in love, and one to make the river nymph, Daphne, repel love. Apollo chases the fleeing naiad, and as he approaches, Daphne implores her father, a river god, to help her. Bernini's statue depicts Apollo reaching around her waist, but as he does so, Daphne begins to transform into a laurel tree. A swathe of tree bark shrouds her thigh and hips, shielding her from the eager Apollo. The ends of her strands of hair become leafy and treelike. In a single gesture, Bernini reveals two consecutive moments: Apollo capturing Daphne, and Daphne slipping out of his grasp as she becomes a laurel tree.

French composers like Marc-Antoine Charpentier and Michel Pignolet de Montéclair, who studied in Italy and traveled widely, adopted the color contrasts and dramatic lighting of Italian painting as well as the chromaticism of Roman cantatas. They mixed winds and strings to create sonorities unique to France. But even composers who had never seen these works of art could still take inspiration from them. While Louis XIV strictly censored the publication of books after the revolt of the aristocracy, the publication of engravings was not as carefully policed, and books containing inventories of private collections and images of Roman antiquities circulated widely. French composers began to dramatize their new works through chromatic harmonies and melodic lines, ornamentation, instrumentation, and declamation. Performers employed their virtuosity, good taste, and rhetorical skills to draw in listeners.

Opera in Italy flourished in Venice, but not in Rome, where opera houses and companies were banned. Rome nonetheless produced many professional singers because it had a rich musical culture in the private homes of aristocrats and high-ranking clergy. For these private chapels, palazzos, and villas, composers wrote cantatas instead of operas—a genre that French composers would rebrand and exploit in the latter part of Louis XIV's reign (Glixon 511). Cantatas are rarely more than 20 or 30 minutes in length, and French composers had to learn to recount entire myths in short formats with all the drama, tenderness, joy, and sadness that attracts a viewer and listener to opera. They did so in ways that were distinct from their Italian counterparts. Most French cantatas based on Ovid are for one or two singers, who both narrate and sing dialogues as the principal characters. These cantatas frequently open with a recitative offering the necessary context for the myth, after which the cantata cuts directly to the climax of the Ovidian myth. The entire cantata usually only depicts a single scene, not unlike a Bernini sculpture, and interprets it from a variety of perspectives, seeking, as it were, moral lessons from an allegorical reading. This frontloads the drama: the opening recitative describes the storyline and the emotional *enjeux* before the pyrotechnics of the instrumentalists and singers paint the most dramatic scene in the myth, frequently from an outside perspective rather than a first-person account of a character's anguish. The latter half of the cantata consists of airs and instrumental pieces commenting on the outcome of the myth.

Where an Italian composer might mine the buildup of one of Ovid's stories—the parts of the story that are most suspenseful and emotionally distressing—a composer like Montéclair or Clérambault was more likely to elongate the dénouement. The cantata, *Ariane consolée par Bacchus* (*Ariadne consoled by Bacchus*), presumed to be by François Couperin, beautifully highlights the difference between French and Italian narrative in miniature forms. Ariadne, King Minos of Crete's daughter, is abandoned on the island of Naxos by Theseus. In most versions of the story, after Theseus leaves the island of

Fig. 5: Titian, Bacchus and Ariadne, *1520–1523, The National Gallery, London.*

Naxos, Bacchus discovers Ariadne, falls in love with her, and throws her crown to the skies, creating the Corona Borealis. Titian's stunning painting of the scene depicts Dionysus bounding towards the Cretan princess, who turns away and flees in fear (**Fig. 5**).

The only surviving section of Claudio Monteverdi's opera, *Arianna*, is her expansive lament about Theseus leaving her to die on Naxos—the centerpiece of the opera that Monteverdi later reworked into a heart-wrenching, dissonant five-voice madrigal. By contrast, Couperin's cantata is tender and dwells on Ariadne's sadness rather than her fear and anguish. It is more akin to Eustache LeSueur's elegant painting of Bacchus crowning Ariadne (**Fig. 6**) than it is to Titian's raucous, chaotic painting.

Fig. 6: Eustache LeSueur, Bacchus and Ariadne, *c. 1640, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*

The artificial schism between French and Italian music was resolved as Louis XIV stopped exerting some of his centralizing power, and aristocrats who appreciated Italian culture began to step in as patrons of the arts. Louis XIV's nephew, Philippe II, Duke of Orléans, who enjoyed a libertine life away from the court of Versailles, underwrote several publications of French cantatas and supported Italian musicians in France (Fader 237–8). The Duchess of Guise employed Charpentier. Although Charpentier, Montéclair, Couperin, and Clérambault—as well as André Campra and Nicolas Bernier—all drew on Italian instrumental music as well as French traditions, it was François Couperin who made the most overt first steps in reconciling French and Italian tastes, Madame de Maintenon's restrictions on musical life, and the careers and preferences of court musicians and aristocrats. Couperin composed numerous motets and Tenebrae lessons—virtuosic chamber motets for the services on Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday—organ works, and incidental music for private performances that were approved by Madame de Maintenon. Only later in his life, when he moved to Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where the Stuart court was living in exile, did he begin publishing the instrumental music that marked the end of the animosity between the French and Italian camps of music-making.

Drawing on Arcangelo Corelli's sonatas, which sold well across Europe, Couperin published three collections of "concerted" works: suites that could be played with a variety of instrumentations and that brought together French and Italian styles. The best known of these are the *Concerts royaux* (1722) and *Les Goûts réunis* (1724), which collected pieces that Couperin, in the prefaces, described as having been performed in 1714 and 1715. The volumes also include pieces dedicated to Lully and Corelli, his two major influences. Couperin maximized his potential audience for these two volumes. The

pieces could be performed as solo harpsichord works; for solo harpsichord with violin accompaniment; for a treble and bass instrument, such as a violin or traverso with viola da gamba and basso continuo; or for a more varied, freer instrumentation. He demonstrated his appreciation for Lully by maintaining the structure of a dance suite and using traditional French ornamentation, which he notated meticulously. He also, however, used bass lines and melodic figures derived from Corelli. Couperin's reunification of these two distinct musical styles—a kind of peace treaty between France and Italy—made way for a celebration of national musical styles from across Europe.

This rich period of music-making in France, the era during which the French cantata and instrumental suite coalesced, is widely regarded as the apogee of the French Baroque. This was the generation during which a distinctive French Baroque style came into focus and blossomed. That was perhaps only made possible because of—rather than despite—the restrictions placed by Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon. French artists, feeling an imperative to search for new sources of inspiration, did as Louis XIV had taught artists at the beginning of his reign: they studied, imitated, mastered, and perfected the art of the Italian composition, making it their own.

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Opposite: Artist unknown. Presumed Portrait of François Couperin (1668–1733). *1800s. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francois_Couperin_2.jpg*

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Strings Opera Camp – Summer 2023

Opera Lafayette, long-time OL violinist June Huang, and Mason Community Arts Academy (MCAA) partnered in the creation and implementation of a two-week summer camp for string students aged 9–13. Participants trained with musical faculty from the Dewberry School of Music at George Mason University and worked with Opera Lafayette Lead Teaching Artist Patrick Kilbride to explore creativity and self-expression through other facets of the performing arts. The experience culminated in a collaborative performance with students and professional musicians.

Photos © Jace Chambers

Learn more at: *operalafayette.org/gmu-summer-camp*

2023/2024 Season Opener

September 14 & 19, 2023

Tregaron Conservancy Season Opener 2023 © Jace Chambers

SCAN ME

Long-time patrons and new friends joined Opera Lafayette for a preview into our 2023–24 season. In addition to a musical sneak-peek of upcoming works, attendees had the opportunity to meet the artists and connect with other opera-lovers.

Angel Azzarra, Alexa Haynes-Pilon, Natalie Kress, and Ryan Brown © Jace Chambers

To stay informed about upcoming community events, register for our newsletter at https://operalafayette.org/newsletter or through the QR code above. We'll keep you up to date on important news and upcoming events.

Location:
Tregaron Conservancy – 3100 Macomb St NW, Washington, DC, 20008

Location:
Saint Peter's Church – 619 Lexington Ave, New York, NY, 10022

Opera Starts with Oh! An Opera Lafayette Family Program

January 2024 & March 2024

Photos from DC session at the Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital © Jace Chambers

Opera Starts with Oh! was created with families in mind. This programming provides an opportunity for children and parents to enrich their musical learning with hands-on-activities.

Learn more at: *operalafayette.org/oswo*

April 6 & 7, 2024

Opera Lafayette teaching artists include professional musicians and dancers who lead youngsters into opera through movement, art, and song.

United Palace 2023 Opera Starts with Oh!
Photos © Jace Chambers

Learn more at: *operalafayette.org/oswo*

Tregaron Conservancy 2022 Opera Starts with Oh! © Jace Chambers

Opera Lafayette partners with community stakeholders when creating events to provide access to a variety of neighborhoods and is grateful for the partnership of Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital and Tregaron Conservancy in Washington, DC, and the United Palace theater in New York, NY.

Tregaron Conservancy 2023 Opera Starts with Oh! © Jace Chambers

Opera Lafayette in Higher Education

February 2024 & April 2024

Stanford in Washington hosted Opera Lafayette vocal artists and instrumentalists for brunch, discussion, and demonstrations with students in advance of their attendance at Opera Lafayette performances. Opera Lafayette is committed to providing meaningful engagement to younger generations, allowing students to explore this art form and its relevance to today's society.

Jonathan Woody, Paulina Francisco, Elisse Albian, and Emily Baltzer: February 4, 2024 © Jace Chambers

Location:
Stanford in Washington, 2661 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008

Lifetime Learning

Opera Lafayette aims to uncover and present forgotten repertoire in ways that are relevant in today's world. As part of this mission, Opera Lafayette partners with historians, musicologists, artists, and other experts in their fields to create in-person symposiums, online salons, and pre-performance discussions. These events are open to the public and focus on more fully exploring these lost works through a historical, musical, and modern framework, while also providing insights into the creative process, the production, and the performers.

Symposium at Villa Albertine
Consulate General of France in New York
February 2024

Speakers & Moderators:
Benjamin Bernard
Justin Taylor
Elisse Albian
Rebecca Harris-Warrick
Ryan Brown
Julia Doe
Sylvaine Guyot

Hosted by **Villa Albertine** in New York City, attendees experienced an engaging public discussion with scholars and artists who assisted in bringing our 2024 Festival Season, ***The Era of Madame de Maintenon***, to life. This free event also included an exclusive performance by Justin Taylor (harpsichord) and Elisse Albian (soprano).

Photos © Lisa Mion

*A special thank you to **Judith Roze**, Acting Cultural Counselor of France in the United States and Acting Director of Villa Albertine, **Cannon Williams**, Awards and Events Coordinator, and the entire staff at Villa Albertine for their collaboration and generous help for this program.*

Location:
Payne Whitney Mansion, 972 5th Avenue, New York, NY, 10075

Pre-Concert Lectures

Photo © Jen Packard

Opera Lafayette regularly attracts standing-room-only audiences to learn more about the opera being performed, its musical and historical relevance, as well as insights on the evening's production and performers. This event takes place one-hour before nearly every Opera Lafayette performance and is complimentary for all ticket-holders.

Photos © Jace Chambers

Virtual Salon Series

MADAME DE MAINTENON

September/October 2023

Scholars Christine Adams and Don Fader opened this online series by introducing the audience to Madame de Maintenon, her significance, influence, and the general political and cultural trends of the late-reign of Louis XIV, as well as providing an overview of the musical trends during this time. The second session explored the history of François Couperin and his Concerts royaux, led by musicologist Saraswathi Shukla and featured guest artist and Opera Lafayette concertmaster Jacob Ashworth.

ESTHER

January 2024

Artistic Director Ryan Brown hosted this two-part online series exploring all things *Esther*, including its origins as a play with music and what kind of educational system allowed for its creation. The first session featured musicologists Anne Piéjus and harpsichordist Justin Jonathan Taylor, who co-directed the corresponding performance. The second session led by historian Benjamin Bernard and Opera Lafayette Artistic Associate Jonathan Woody, looked further into Saint-Cyr, a school built by Madame de Maintenon, and compared it with another school created at the same time by the monarchy. We learned about the aims of the state, and the intellectual, social, and political context of elite education out of which Esther emerged.

Learn more at: *https://operalafayette.org/salon-series*

LES FÊTES DE THALIE

January 2024

Musicologist Rebecca Harris-Warrick led Opera Lafayette's final Salon Series of the season featuring *Les Fêtes de Thalie,* one of the rare instances of comic opera performed at the Paris Opéra during the reign of Louis XIV. This opera was a product of a changing urban environment, not of the court of Versailles, which by 1714 was becoming less and less relevant to French cultural life. The first session presented the historical and aesthetic contexts that gave rise to this anomalous work, with special guest director Catherine Turocy and tenor Patrick Kilbride. The second session, presented by Korneel Bernolet (international harpsichordist and conductor), shared his process in reimagining *Les Fêtes de Thalie* as a modern premiere and the work that goes into musical preparation for these masterpieces.

Watch the Salon Recordings on our YouTube Channel!

Scan the QR Code:

SCAN ME

Learn more at: *https://operalafayette.org/salon-series*

BIOGRAPHIES
Participating Scholars

CHRISTINE ADAMS is professor of European history at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

She publishes primarily in French gender and family history (17th–19th centuries). Her most recent book, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress: From Agnès Sorel to Madame Du Barry* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020), co-authored with Tracy Adams, examines the rise of the royal mistress as a quasi-institutionalized political position in early modern France. Adams was a 2020–2021 fellow with the American Council of Learned Societies and a spring 2021 Andrew W. Mellon long-term fellow at the Newberry Library where she worked on her new book project, *The Merveilleuses and their Impact on the French Social Imaginary, 1794–1799 and Beyond*. It focuses on a group of young, stylish, and politically influential Parisian women who came to define the era of the Directory (1794–1799). She writes frequently on current events and has a particular interest in politics, education, gender, and reproductive rights.

BENJAMIN BERNARD, Ph.D. is a historian of early modern France at the University of

Virginia. He received his doctorate in 2022 from the Princeton Department of History. His dissertation "Administering Morals in the French Enlightenment: Education, Sexuality, and Authority at the Parisian Collège, 1645–1763," traces the rise and fall of the public authority of elite education institutions in early modern Paris to determine moral questions, especially those relating to gender and sexuality. He has taught courses on European history and political thought at Princeton University, Fordham University, New York University, and the Institute d'Études Politiques (Reims, France). Dr. Bernard spent several years in France as an exchange student at the École Normale Supérieur and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales; he continues to split his time between the Washington, DC area and Paris. As a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Virginia, he teaches two interdisciplinary seminars: "~Decadence~: The Ethics of Excess" and "You Are Who You Meet: the History of Friendship." He is dedicated to the public humanities; currently, he is executive producing a podcast documentary "Sister Revolutions," which compares the histories of Charlottesville, Virginia and its French sister city of Besançon during the American and French revolutions. His writing has appeared in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, *EuropeNow*, and *Public Seminar*. In his spare time he plays squash and the sackbut.

JULIA DOE is Assistant Professor of Music at Columbia University. She is a scholar of eighteenth-century opera, with emphasis on the music, literature, and politics of the French Enlightenment. Her first book, *The Comedians of the King* (University of Chicago Press, 2021), traces the impact of Bourbon patronage on the development of *opéra comique* in the final decades of the Old Regime. She is currently at work on a new monograph on the Atlantic underpinnings of the pre-revolutionary French theater industry. Prof. Doe's articles have appeared in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, *Eighteenth-Century Music*, and the new collection *Histoire de l'opéra français du Roi-Soleil à la Révolution*. She is the recipient of the Alfred Einstein and M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet awards from the American Musicological Society, as well as grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Fulbright Program, and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Before beginning her tenure-track appointment at Columbia, Prof. Doe served in the music department as a Mellon Postdoctoral Research Fellow. She holds a Ph.D. in musicology from Yale University (2013).

DON FADER is Professor of Musicology at the University of Alabama, and Reviews Editor for the *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*. His research takes in a broad spectrum of issues in 17th- and 18th-century French and Italian music. A recipient of the Bourse Chateaubriand, the Westrup Prize, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, he is the author of numerous articles, essays, and musical editions. The latter includes an edition of Antonio Biffi's *Miserere* for the *Web Library of Seventeenth-Century Music*, which received its modern premiere at the Utrecht Festival in 2013. His book, *Music, Dance and Franco-Italian Cultural Exchange c. 1700*, was published in 2021 by Boydell & Brewer. It follows the prince de Vaudément and Michel Pignolet de Montéclair in their travels to Milan, and it is both a patronage study and an examination of the contributions to early 18th-century cosmopolitanism by musicians and dancers who worked across national and cultural boundaries. A professional recorder player, Don's recent engagements as soloist and chamber musician include appearance with the Staunton Festival, Troisdorf Barock, and the Tallahassee Bach Parley. He also serves as continuo player and coach for the University of Alabama Early Chamber Ensembles. He is currently working on editions of newly discovered pieces—trios by Montéclair for AR Editions, and French cantatas by Philippe d'Orléans for the Centre de musique baroque de Versailles—as well as a book on Philippe II d'Orléans and the mixing of national styles in French court contexts, 1648–1723.

SYLVAINE GUYOT is Professor of French Literature, Thought & Culture at NYU, New York, since 2021. At Harvard University, Guyot acted as the Chair for TDM Theater, Dance & Media next to her tenure at the Department of Romance Languages & Literatures. Her research interests focus on Racine, early modern tragedy and spectacle culture, the history of the body and emotions, the

politics of performing arts, and the formation of cultural institutions. She is a coleader of the Comédie-Française Registers Project, a transatlantic digital humanities endeavor devoted to the administrative archives of the Comédie-Française. Publications include *Racine et le corps tragique* (PUF, 2014) and *Databases, Revenues, and Repertory: The French Stage Online, 1680–1793* (MIT Press, 2021). Her next book, *Les Scénographies de l'éblouissement, ou les interstices de l'absolutisme*, is forthcoming with Classiques Garnier. She has also published articles on contemporary docuplays that tell the stories of historically underrepresented minorities. As a theatre director, Guyot directed multiple plays in France and the US, including Racine's *Andromaque*, Corneille's *L'Illusion comique*, Ionesco's *Macbett*, Camus' *Les Justes*, Mouawad's *Incendies*, and Lagarce's *Juste la fin du monde*. She is currently developing a lecture-performance on the letters of Elisabeth Charlotte, Princess Palatine, and understudied early modern female writing.

REBECCA HARRIS-WARRICK is Professor Emerita of Music at Cornell University,

where until 2021 she taught a wide variety of music history courses at all levels, undergraduate and graduate, and chaired the Department of Music from 2002 to 2008. She has an interdisciplinary background in musicology, performance, dance history, and literature, which she applies to her primary research interests in French opera of the 17th and 18th centuries. Her most recent book, Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera, was published fall 2016 by Cambridge University Press. Her research extends beyond the baroque into later periods of operatic history, and she has prepared a critical edition of Gaetano Donizetti's opera La Favorite. Much of Professor Harris-Warrick's scholarly work has been informed by her interests in performance and some of her research has been brought into practice on the stage, such as in productions of operas at the Boston Early Music Festival. Since 2003 she has organized four performances at Cornell of baroque operas or ballets, in which Cornell students have had the opportunity to work with professional musicians and dancers. Her most recent production, "The Pleasures of the Quarrel" in March 2022, staged an imagined mash-up of three key works performed in Paris in 1753 during the Querelle des bouffons, when Parisian opera lovers argued vigorously over the merits of French and Italian musical styles—including over Pergolesi's intermezzo La serva padrona, which Opera Lafayette is presenting this season in its 1752 French translation, La servante maîtresse.

PHILIP KENNICOTT is the Pulitzer Prize-winning Senior Art and Architecture Critic of

The Washington Post. He is also a two-time Pulitzer finalist (for editorial writing in 2000 and criticism in 2012), an Emmy Award nominee, a former contributing editor to *The New Republic*, and a regular contributor to *Opera News* and *Gramophone*. His critically acclaimed memoir, "Counterpoint: A Memoir of Bach and Mourning," was published by Norton in 2020. His 2015 essay, "Smuggler" was a finalist for the National Magazine Award and anthologized in that year's volume of "Best American Essays." He lives in Washington, DC.

ANNE PIÉJUS works at the interface between music, the performing arts, and cultural history.

She has won several first prizes at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris and is a former fellow of the Villa Medici in Rome. She wrote her Ph.D. on *Esther*, *Athalie* and the musical theatre at Saint-Cyr (*Le Théâtre des Demoiselles*, 2000, *Esther*, 2003, 2011/2, *Athalie*, 2005), curated the exhibition and edited the catalogue *Figures de la passion* (2002), led a multidisciplinary research project on performances in the colleges of the Ancien Régime (*Plaire et instruire*, 2007, *Archéologie d'un spectacle jésuite*, 2008), and produced two college performances, including the reconstruction of a Jesuit ballet based on fragmentary sources. She also co-edited Molière's *comédies-ballets* (Pléiade, 2010). Anne is a scientific and artistic adviser to a number of musical ensembles and theatre groups. She has given numerous master classes and was musical director of the production of *Les Fâcheux* for Molière's fourth centenary in 2022. She is also a specialist in Italian Renaissance and Baroque spiritual music. She is the author of two monographs, *Musique et dévotion à Rome à la fin de la Renaissance* (2014, awarded by the *Académie française*) and *Musique, censure et création* (2017). Since its creation, she has founded and directed the *Mercure galant* program of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, which produces enriched digital editions of texts on the arts, scores and prints. As part of this program, she has created a fun, artistic crowdsourcing site, voix-du-mercure-galant.org, open to all enthusiasts: you're all invited to take part!

SARASWATHI SHUKLA is Visiting Assistant Professor of Historical Musicology at the

University of Colorado, Boulder. Since receiving her Ph.D. in Musicology with a Designated Emphasis in Renaissance and Early Modern Studies from University of California at Berkeley and an AB in History from Princeton University, she has been a lecturer and researcher at the Université de Lorraine. She is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including the Alvin H. Johnson AMS 50, two Georges Lurcy Fellowships, the Chateaubriand Fellowship, a DAAD Study Scholarship at the Bach-Archiv in Leipzig, and the Society for Seventeenth-Century Music's Irene Alm Memorial Prize. Trained as a musicologist, historian, and harpsichordist, she studies instrumental music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and its revival since the twentieth century using a variety of interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies. Her research also explores questions of historiography and cultural politics in the early music movement in Europe and the United States. She is a member of the COST Action, EarlyMuse, which studies the place of Early Music in Europe. She has published in journals such as the *Sound Studies Review, Keyboard Perspectives, Eighteenth-Century Music*, and the *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*, and is frequently invited as a panelist and presenter at national and international conferences. She enjoys collaborating with soloists and ensembles specializing in early music.

Creative Team

RYAN BROWN

(Opera Lafayette Founder and Artistic Director)

Ryan Brown is the founder and artistic director of Opera Lafayette, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in the 2019/2020 season. Through his work with Opera Lafayette, Ryan has gained an international reputation for his role in the revival and reassessment of significant works from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. His discography of twelve sound recordings for Naxos has focused on the French repertoire, including well-known works by composers such as Lully, Rameau, and Gluck, as well as premiere recordings of operas by Rebel/Francœur, Monsigny, Philidor, Grétry, Sacchini, and Félicien David. Ryan has also created two DVDs with Opera Lafayette for Naxos, including the modern premiere of Gaveaux and Bouilly's *Léonore, ou L'amour conjugal*, the model for Beethoven's *Leonore*, the latter of which Opera Lafayette will present in its 25th anniversary season, as well as Rameau's *Les Fêtes de L'Hymen et de L'amour, ou Les Dieux d'Egypte*, a collaboration with the New York Baroque Dance Company, the Seán Curran Dance Company, and Kalanidhi Dance. Ryan has also led performances of operas by Vivaldi, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Paisiello, and Cimarosa. He regularly appears in Washington, DC and New York with Opera Lafayette and has also conducted in San Francisco, Seattle, and at The Glimmerglass Festival, and the Opéra Royal de Versailles. Ryan was raised in a musical family in California and performed extensively as a violinist and chamber musician before turning his attention to conducting. His teachers include Dorothy DeLay and Gustav Meier. He is a recipient of La Médaille d'Or du Rayonnement Culturel from La Renaissance Française, and when not conducting spends his time in southwestern Colorado.

JULIA BENGTSSON

(NY OSWO Lead Teaching Artist; Choreographer/Dancer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Swedish-born dance artist Julia Bengtsson has choreographed over 20 ballets, operas and films for venues including Carnegie Hall, UN Headquarters, Bruno Walter Auditorium at Lincoln Center, and Alvin Ailey Dance Center. Her stage direction of Opera Lafayette's production of Venus and Adonis was praised by The Washington Post as "a fine evening's entertainment". In 2021 she was the first dance artist to be awarded a position in Early Music America's Emerging Professional Leadership Council. She has presented workshops at Temple University, NYU Steinhardt, University of Pittsburgh and Stanford University. Her career as a dancer includes six years with Connecticut Ballet, multiple tours with New York Baroque Dance Company and soloist roles performed at Carnegie Hall. She is a mentee of Bessie-awarded director/choreographer Catherine Turocy, a graduate of Royal Swedish Ballet School and was a scholarship student at Joffrey Ballet School.

KORNEEL BERNOLET

(Edition/Continuo Harpsichord/Musical Preparation, *Mouret's Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

A conductor and harpsichordist, Korneel Bernolet is one of the most versatile talents on the international music scenes today, known and respected for his fresh, no-nonsense, immediate view and vision on music performance and style. As a conductor, debuting at age 13 leading his own compositions, he works in a repertoire span from Monteverdi till Gershwin, with a preference for opera and oratorio. Having grown up in a choral environment, he conducted the major works including the Requiems by Mozart, Fauré, Brahms, Duruflé and Verdi, Orff's Carmina Burana and Haydn's Schöpfung and Jahreszeiten. Between 2015 and 2018 he acted as assistant-conductor for Jos van Immerseel at Anima Eterna Brugge in symphonical repertoire by Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Dvorak, Martinu, Enescu and Gershwin, ending with a highly praised livestreamed guest-conductorship in Beethoven's 9th Symphony and Choir Fantasy in Bruges and Frankfurt in collaboration with Collegium Vocale Ghent. Since 2014 he works closely together with Christophe Rousset as an assistant-conductor and harpsichordist in his orchestra Les Talens Lyriques. With this orchestra, he made his much-applauded debut in 2022 as a guest conductor in Pergolesi's opera *La conversione e morte di San Guglielmo* at the famous summer Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. He also collaborates with Collegium Vocale Ghent and the Flemish Radio Choir as a regular chorus master and conductor, and with Philippe Herreweghe as pianoforte-continuo and assistant-conductor with either the Orchestre des Champs-Elysées, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra (where he also was assistant to Christophe Prégardien), Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam and Collegium Vocale Ghent.

CHRISTOPHER BRUSBERG

(Lighting Designer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Christopher Brusberg is a regional lighting designer based out of New York City. Over the past 15 years, Christopher has worked on over 200 productions focusing on Opera, Dance, and New Theatrical Works. With each work, Christopher focuses on storytelling through the use of style and collaboration, believing that lighting should always amplify the conflict in drama by carving out space and emotion, creating unique and affective spaces for action to unfold. Theater Credits include: Annapolis Opera (Resident Designer), Tri-Cities Opera, Syracuse Opera, EMERGE125 (Resident Designer), BANDPoteir (DC/NYC), Lyric Stage Company of Boston, Company One (Boston), The Cherry Arts Space (Ithaca), New Repertory Theatre (Boston), Wolftrap Opera/NOI, Manhattan School of Music, NYU Steinhardt, Boston Conservatory, Opera Omaha (Assistant Designer), Opera Saratoga (Assistant Designer) and Lyric Opera of KC (Assistant Designer). In addition to his design work, Chris spent eight summers overseeing the production of 32 operas as the Director of Production for Des Moines Metro Opera, where he launched

the Design and Production Internship Program in 2010. Christopher holds an MFA from the University of Maryland, studying under Brian MacDevitt, and is a proud member of USA829.

MARIE ANNE CHIMENT

(Costume Designer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Marie Anne Chiment has designed sets and costumes for hundreds of theater, opera and dance productions across the nation and around the world. Design credits include the Broadway musical *Metro* as well as numerous designs for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Santa Fe Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Arena Stage, Opera Theatre of St. Louis and Actors Theatre of Louisville. Internationally, she has costumed operas and ballets in Spain, Germany, England, Cuba, France and Japan. She is the recipient of the Kevin Kline Award for her costume designs for the musical *Ace*. Her set and costume designs for *I Am My Own Wife* won the Kevin Kline Award for Outstanding Production and the designs were nominated for the Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Design. Her designs were exhibited at Lincoln Center's *Curtain Call: Celebrating a Century of Women Designing for Live Performance* and her costume designs were featured in the exhibit *Costume Design at the Turn of the Century: 1990–2015* at the Bakhrushin Museum in Moscow, Russia. In 2017 Marie designed the costumes for *Le Temple de la Gloire*, a Baroque opera co-produced by Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, the New York Baroque Dance Company and Le Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles. This opera has won four awards: The San Francisco Classical Voice's #1 Opera Production, #1 Dance Production, top production for 2017 and the Isadora Duncan Dance award.

CAROLINE COPELAND

(Choreographer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Caroline Copeland is a performer, choreographer, and educator based in New York. Currently, she serves on the faculties of Hofstra University Drama and Dance Department and SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance. She earned her BA degree in Dance at Goucher College and MFA at Sarah Lawrence College. Caroline serves as Associate Director of The New York Baroque Dance Company leading performance and education projects. Her appearances with NYBDC include opera productions with Opera Lafayette, Lautten Compagney, and Philharmonia Baroque at the Kennedy Center, Potsdam Sansouci, and Drottningholm Theatre. She is a featured choreographer and performer for the Grammy-award winning Boston Early Music Festival. Her choreographic credits for BEMF include Campra's *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Monteverdi's Il *Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria,* Handel's *Almira,* and Steffani's *Niobe, Regina di Thebes.* In the various roles as director, choreographer or performer, she has collaborated on productions in opera, theater, and concert dance with the Metropolitan Opera, Nordic Baroque Dancers, Mertz Trio, Cantata Profana, The New Dutch Academy, Bourbon Baroque, and Juilliard415. Her choreography has been

presented at world renowned venues including Alice Tully Hall, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Public Theater, and Philipzaal Den Haag. She is an invited member of an interdisciplinary research group affiliated with the Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice and faculty from the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. Presently, her embodied dance research focuses on the life and dance works of Ignatius Sancho (1729–1780) and transatlantic dance traditions of Europe and the Caribbean.

JULIAN DONAHUE

(Choreographer/Dancer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Julian Donahue is a principal dancer at New York Theatre Ballet (2018 to present) where he has danced works by Jerome Robbins, Merce Cunningham, José Limón, Michel Fokine, Antony Tudor, Richard Alston, Pam Tanowitz, Nicolo Fonte, James Whiteside, David Gordon, and Martha Clarke. Julian also dances for the New York Baroque Dance Company and Boston Early Music Festival performing historical and folk dance forms, most notably at Lincoln Center in May 2023. Julian is trained in Cecchetti technique and has been a part of the legacy of archiving historical Cecchetti syllabus training at Jacob's Pillow. In 2021, Julian founded Julian Donahue Dance to create and showcase dances that express transformational political ideas, tell stories, and expand the public imagination. Julian's first work "Displacement" premiered at NYTB's Lift Lab Live performances; he recently choreographed a pièce d'occasion for the NYTB gala in April 2023. In August 2023, Julian's piece "Displacement" was showcased at Battery Dance Festival. Julian graduated in 2019 from Hofstra (BA in dance and political science) and he was the David Hallberg scholarship recipient at the ABT's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School in 2013.

JEFFERY MARTIN

(Scenic Designer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Jeffery Martin is excited to be working with his longtime collaborator, Deb Thomas. Favorite Scenic Designs include *Assassins, Sweeney Todd, The Seagull, RENT,* and *Mr. Burns: A Post Electic Play.* Previously, Jeff has served as Production Manager/Technical Director for Phoenix Theatre in Indianapolis and Associate Artistic Director for Fabrefaction Theatre in Atlanta which won the ArtsATL award for *Best Up and Coming Theatre* during his tenure. Jeffery studied Theatre at Butler University and currently serves as Director of Production for Studio Theatre in Washington, DC.

ANURADHA NEHRU

(Choreographer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Anuradha Nehru, is the founder and artistic director of Kalanidhi Dance, which was founded 32 years ago in 1991. After developing highly trained Kuchipudi dancers in the Washington metropolitan area, Anuradha, with senior dancers, expanded her organization to form the Kalanidhi Dance company in 2005, which became the first professional Kuchipudi ensembles in the United States. Under her leadership, the organization has gained a reputation of being one of the finest Kuchipudi schools and dance ensembles, worldwide. Kalanidhi boasts of a rich repertoire of new Kuchipudi productions such as, Rasa, Transcending Traditions, Bhagmati, Yaatra, Dancing with Shiva, Why We Dance, Bhoomi, Sundari Charitam, Sagarika and more. Anuradha is particularly proud of Kalanidhi's collaborations with Opera Lafayette and Ryan Brown in three of his productions, Lalla Roukh in 2013, Rameau's Les Fêtes de L'Hymen et de L'Amour in 2014 and The Enchanted Forest in 2018. She has been recognized by the Governor of Maryland for her dedicated service to the arts and is a recipient of the Master/Apprentice grant from the Maryland State Arts Council. She was awarded a "Teacher Recognition Certificate" from the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts. In 2016, Anuradha received the Montgomery County Executive's Outstanding Artist Award for Excellence in the Arts and Humanities and in June 2020, received the Pola Nirenska award for Outstanding Achievements in Dance. Anuradha Nehru was trained in the Indian dance forms Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi by Guru Vempati Chinnasatyam, Guru Krishna Kumar, Guru Guruswamy and Guru Pakiriswamy Pillai.

CHRISTOPHE ROUSSET

(Musical Director, *Couperin le Grand*; Conductor, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Founder of Les Talens Lyriques, is an internationally renowned harpsichordist and conductor inspired by a passion for opera and the exploration of the European musical heritage.After harpsichord studies at La Schola Cantorum in Paris with Huguette Dreyfus, and subsequently at the Conservatoire Royal in The Hague with Bob van Asperen (winning, at the age of 22, the prestigious First Prize in the 7th Bruges Harpsichord Competition), followed by the creation of his own ensemble, Les Talens Lyriques, in 1991, Christophe Rousset has a perfect grasp of the rich wealth and diversity of the baroque and classical repertoires.Having initially attracted the notice of the international press and record companies with his extraordinary talent as a harpsichordist, he soon went on to make his mark as a young and gifted conductor, earning invitations to perform with his ensemble at venues throughout the world (among them De Nederlandse Opera, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Salle Pleyel, Opéra de Lausanne, Teatro Real, Theater an der Wien, Opéra Royal de Versailles, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Barbican Centre, Carnegie Hall, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Aix-en-Provence and Beaune festivals). Alongside this, he has continued to pursue an active career as

harpsichordist and chamber musician, performing and recording on the most beautiful period instruments. His complete performances of the works for harpsichord of F. Couperin, Rameau, d'Anglebert and Forqueray and various recordings of pieces by J. S. Bach (Partitas, Variations Goldberg, Concertos for harpsichord, English Suites, French Suites, the Klavierbüchlein) are considered to be landmark references. Performing on the instruments of the Musée de la Musique, he has recorded three CDs dedicated to Royer, Rameau and Froberger. The albums Suites by L. Couperin, Fantasy by J. S. Bach (Aparté) and the CD devoted to Marchand and Rameau (Ambronay), have won him the acclaim of the press. His most recent record, devoted to works by Duphly (Aparté) was recently awarded the distinctions "Choc" from the review Classica and a "Diapason d'or" from Diapason.

JUSTIN JONATHAN TAYLOR

(Conductor/Co-Musical Director, *From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau and Handel's Esther*)

Franco-American harpsichordist Justin Taylor was revealed to the international scene at the age of 23 winning First Prize at the prestigious and much-coveted International Musica Antiqua Competition in Bruges in 2015. He also won the Audience Prize, the Alpha Prize, and the EUBO Developing Trust Prize awarded to the most promising young European musician. That same year, he founded Le Consort with violinists Sophie de Bardonnèche and Théotime Langlois de Swarte, dedicated to the trio sonata genre. The ensemble tours extensively worldwide. In 2017 Justin was nominated in the Young Soloist category at the French Victoires de la Musique and was awarded the Musical Revelation of the Year Prize by the Professional Critics Association. Justin is the guest of such venues and festivals as the Philharmonie de Paris, BOZAR Brussels, Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Kölner Philharmonie, LSO St Luke's London for the BBC Radio 3 Lunchtime Series, KKL Luzern, De Bijloke Gent, Auditori Barcelona, Auditorio Nacional Madrid, Auditorium du Louvre Paris, Washington's Library of Congress, Oji Hall Tokyo, Seoul Arts Center, La Roque d'Anthéron International Festival, Innsbrucker Festwochen, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Rheingau Musik Festival, Festival de Saint-Denis, Radio France Montpellier Festival, Sintra festival, Festival de Saintes. He also performed as a soloist with Concerto Köln, the Orchestre National de Lille, Orchestre National d'Île-de-France, Orchestre Royal de Chambre de Wallonie, Orchestre de Chambre de Genève, Orchestre de Picardie, Mannheimer Philharmoniker, Duisburger Philharmoniker.

PRAGNYA THAMIRE

(Assistant Choreographer/Dancer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Pragnya Thamire began her dance training at age of five under Anuradha Nehru of Kalanidhi Dance. Passionate about Indian dance, Pragnya has matured way beyond her years into a confident and vibrant classical Indian

dancer. She made her debut as a member of the Kalanidhi Dance Company at the age of 12, and was presented at her solo-debut performance, accompanied by a live orchestra in 2016, at the age of 15. She belongs to the next generation of must-watch Kuchipudi artists. Pragnya represents Kalanidhi Dance at prestigious dance festivals and performances across the United States. Pragnya has also demonstrated promise as a budding choreographer and has choreographed dances for Kalanidhi's shows. A deeply committed artist, Pragnya joined Kalanidhi staff in January 2022 and is currently the Assistant Artistic Director. Her responsibilities include teaching, directing Company rehearsals, choreographing and supporting production logistics.

DEBORAH THOMAS

(Props Designer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Deb Thomas was the Props Director at Studio Theatre from 2009 to 2019. Studio credits include set design for *Terminus,* assistant set design for *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson,* and props design for *At The Wedding, Fat Ham, Heroes of the Fourth Turning, John Proctor is the Villain,* and *Pass Over,* among others. Additional credits include *Confederates, Monumental Travesties, Bars and Measures, The Till Trilogy, Birds of North America,* and *Eureka Day* at Mosaic Theater Company; and *The Tale of The Allergist's Wife* and *Freud's Last Session* at Theater J. Upcoming project at Folger Shakespeare Theatre, *Metamorphoses*. She worked as the Props Master Carpenter for the Washington Opera. She was a sculptor and sculpture consultant for TLC's *DC Cupcakes,* a set designer for the Washington Bureau of TV Tokyo, and did the original set design for Discovery Channel's *Puppy Bowl*. In addition to working for all national networks, her work includes production design for *Dolley Madison,* art direction for *Alexander Hamilton* (both *PBS American Experience*), and set design for Discovery Channel's *Moments in History,* "Jamestown: Against All Odds."

CATHERINE TUROCY

(Stage Director, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Recognized as one of today's leading choreographer/stage directors in Baroque period performance, with over 80 Baroque operas to her credit, has been decorated by the French Republic as a Chevalier in the Order of Arts and Letters. After moving to NYC in 1976 she cofounded The New York Baroque Dance Company with Ann Jacoby. Her studies in historical dance began at Ohio State University with Shirley Wynne where she and Ann performed in the Baroque Dance Ensemble. In 2018–19 she was a recipient of the Center for Ballet and the Arts Residency Fellowship in NYC for her work on Nijinsky's Bach ballet (1913). In 2018 Turocy received the IZZY Award in San Francisco for her stage direction/choreography of *Le Temple de la Gloire* by Rameau which also received two first prizes in "Best of the Bay" under both stage direction and choreography. Other awards include the BESSIE Award in New York City for sustained achievement in choreography, the Natalie Skelton Award for Artistic Excellence and the Dance Film Association Award for "The

Art of Dancing." NEA International Exchange Fellowships supported research in London and Paris. A founding member of the Society for Dance History Scholars, Ms. Turocy has lectured on period performance practices around the world including the Royal Academies of Dance in London, Stockholm and Copenhagen; the Festival Estival in Paris and The Society for Early Music in Tokyo. She is also a founding member of Dance Studies Association (DSA) and belongs to CORPS de Ballet International and the Dance Council.

She has served as consultant to Clark Tippett of American Ballet Theater, Edward Villella of the Miami City Ballet and Yaniro Castro of *a canary torsi*. She was a movement consultant to the famous master chef Thomas Keller, training his wait staff for Per Se in NYC. As a writer she has contributed chapters to dance history textbooks, articles to Opera News, Early Music America and Dance Magazine, many which have been translated into French, German, Japanese and Korean. A chapter in Janet Roseman's book, *Dance Masters: Interviews with Legends of Dance,* published by Routledge is dedicated to her work. Books in which Turocy has authored chapters include: *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader; Creating Dance: A Traveler's Guide and "Dance on its Own Terms: Histories and Methodologies,"* eds. Melanie Bales and Karen Eliot, published by Oxford.

JONATHAN WOODY

(Bass-baritone, *Couperin le Grand*; Co-Musical Director/Haman, *From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau and Handel's Esther*; Apollo/ Cléon, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Jonathan Woody is a versatile and dynamic musician who maintains an active schedule as a performer and composer in New York and across North America. Cited by the Washington Post for singing "with resonance and clarity," Woody is in demand as a bass-baritone soloist, appearing regularly with historically informed orchestras including Boston Early Music Festival, Apollo's Fire, Pacific MusicWorks, Bach Collegium San Diego, Trinity Baroque Orchestra and New York Baroque Incorporated. In the 2021–2022 season, he served as Artistic Advisor for the Portland Baroque Orchestra, curating a program of 17th century German music for voices and orchestra. An accomplished chamber musician, Woody often performs as a member of the GRAMMY®-nominated Choir of Trinity Wall Street, where he has earned praise from the New York Times for his "charismatic" and "riveting" solos. He has also recently performed in collaboration with Kaleidoscope Ensemble, Les Délices, Seraphic Fire, Byron Schenkman and Friends, and TENET Vocal Artists. Woody's compositional voice blends 17th and 18th-century inspiration with the minimalism and socially conscious subject matter of today. Since 2020, he has received commissions from Apollo's Fire, the Choir of Trinity Wall Street, Chanticleer, the Handel and Haydn Society, the Cathedral Choral Society of Washington, DC, and the Five Boroughs Music Festival, among others. As a sought-after new music proponent, Jonathan has participated in premiere performances of several leading composers' works, including Ted Hearne's The Source (2014), Ellen Reid's prism (2019 Pulitzer Prize-winner), Missy

Mazzoli's Breaking the Waves (NYC premiere, 2018), and Du Yun's Angel's Bone (2017 Pulitzer Prizewinner). Jonathan is committed to racial equity in the field of the performing arts, and currently serves on Early Music America's Task Force for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access.

THE NEW YORK BAROQUE DANCE COMPANY

Founded in 1976 by Catherine Turocy, Artistic Director, and Ann Jacoby, the NYBDC specializes in 17th and 18th century programs ranging from street performances to fully staged operas. Our creative team today includes Catherine Turocy, Artistic Director, Caroline Copeland and Sarah Edgar as Associate Directors and Julia Bengtsson who is directing the New Baroque program for our contemporary baroque creations fusing contemporary dance with Baroque practice. The NYBDC repertoire includes over 80 operas as well as reconstructed dances and ballets choreographed in period style. Through residencies at educational institutions serving grades K–12 and at the university level, NYBDC instructs professionals and the general public, thus preserving our cultural heritage. NYBDC has toured North America, Europe and Japan with conductors James Richman, John Eliot Gardiner, Christopher Hogwood, Nicholas McGegan and Wolfgang Katschner. The company also performs with Opera Lafayette Orchestra and Chorus, The Dallas Bach Society, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale and Ars Lyrica Houston. Groundbreaking productions over the past three decades include the original premiere of Jean Philippe Rameau's Les Boreades (not performed in the 18th century because of Rameau's death) and Hippolyte et Aricie, both at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and the Opera de Lyon; Henry Purcell's Indian Queen at the Barbican in London; the award winning Scylla et Glaucus by Jean Marie Leclair at the Opera de Lyon (1986) as well as over 100 performances of a double bill with Rameau's Pygmalion and George Frederick Handel's Terpsicore. The company is proud to have performed in operas directed by Ms. Turocy such as Handel's Terpsicore, Ariodante, Arianna, Alcina, Atalanta, Orlando, and Teseo at the International Handel Festival in Goettingen, Germany, under the leadership of Nicholas McGegan. In 2017, the company joined Nic and PBO in the award-winning production of Rameau's Le Temple de la Gloire. Read more about the NYBDC on our website: www.nybaroquedance.org.

KALANIDHI DANCE

Under the direction of award-winning artist Anuradha Nehru, Kalanidhi Dance captivates audiences with exquisitely conceptualized performances that push Kuchipudi in new and exciting directions. The New York Times has called Kalanidhi a "combination of bright energy, full-bodied sweetness and rapid precision" and "a rare amalgam of prime dance virtues." The company presents its work regularly at prestigious venues in the U.S. and around the world. In 2007, the company became the first ensemble based outside India to perform at the Delhi Ananya Festival. According to The Hindu, the company "took the audience by storm." Kalanidhi Dance's work is recognized and funded by Maryland State Arts Council and the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County and National Endowment For The Arts.

Performing Artists

ELISSE ALBIAN

(Soprano & Soprano II, *From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau & Handel's Esther*)

Hailed by South Florida Classical Review as a "opulent soprano" possessing "rich tones, expressive phrasing," and a "soaring top range," Elisse Albian finds delight in presenting oratorios, opera, choral compositions, and all that resonates in between. An ardent advocate for the collaborative essence of musical creation, Elisse places immense value on versatility and the inherent instrumental qualities of the human voice. A crowning achievement in Elisse's journey was securing first place at the Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition hosted by the Oratorio Society of New York at Carnegie Hall. Their artistic collaborations extend to prestigious groups like the GRAMMY®-nominated Seraphic Fire, Voices of Ascension, The Choir of Trinity Wall Street, Musica Sacra, and The Benedict XVI Choir. The 2022–2023 season showcased Elisse as the soprano soloist in performances of Bach's St. John Passion, BWV 245 alongside Voices of Ascension, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, BWV 248, and Handel's *Messiah* with Seraphic Fire. Additionally, Elisse was a soloists for Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, K. 317, and *Vesperes Solennes di Confessore*, K. 339, with Kollective366. Their season also included Telemann's Cantatas from the *Harmonischer Gottesdienst* in collaboration with Theotokos ensemble, presented through Gotham Early Music Scene's Midtown Concert series. In the upcoming season, Elisse eagerly anticipates performing as the Queen of Sheba in Handel's *Solomon* alongside Princeton Pro Musica, singing as the first soprano soloist for Handel's *Dixit Dominus* with Musica Sacra, and joining Opera Lafayette for Moreau and Handel's *Esther*. Later this season, Elisse will also perform Benjamin Britten's thrilling song cycle, *Les Illuminations*. Elisse completed a Bachelor's of Music at the University of California, Los Angeles and recently graduated with a Master of Music in Voice at Mannes (The New School). They reside in Brooklyn, New York.

JACOB ASHWORTH

(Violin/Concertmaster, *Couperin le Grand, From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau & Handel's Esther, Mouret's Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

A baroque violinist praised for his "lithe and nimble" playing and "richly detailed" conducting by the New York Times, Jacob Ashworth is the Interim Artistic Director and co-founder of Heartbeat Opera, which is fast becoming one of the most influential companies making opera today. He is also the Artistic Director and founder of Cantata Profana. As a soloist and freelance music director, Jacob appears in recitals, chamber music performances, and conducting operas throughout the United States and abroad. As a conductor Jacob has gained a reputation as a consummate stylist and curator

of music, earning Cantata Profana the 2016 CMA/ASCAP National Award for Adventurous Programming. At home on modern and baroque violin, he has performed with the Mark Morris Dance Group, American Bach Soloists, TENET, Trinity Baroque Orchestra, at the Smithsonian Institution, and with Opera Lafayette, where he serves as concertmaster. In contemporary music he has premiered works with the New York New Music Ensemble, Princeton Sound Kitchen, MATA Festival, and at the Museo National de Arte in Mexico City. Jacob has been a resident artist at the Staunton Music Festival, Chamber Music Northwest, New Haven Festival of Arts and Ideas, Wellesley Composer's Conference, France's Festival Daniou, and Lake George Music Festival. Jacob earned his master's and doctorate from the Yale School of Music under renowned violinist Ani Kavafian and studied baroque violin with Robert Mealy as a member of the Yale Baroque Ensemble. Additionally, he earned a Performer Diploma from Indiana University, and completed his undergraduate studies at the Manhattan School of Music.

ANGEL AZZARRA

(Melpomene/Doris, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

One of Operavore's "40 Under 40: A New Generation of Superb Opera Singers," young dramatic soprano Angel Azzarra is a rising star in the opera world. Performing the title role of *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis Center Stage Concert, she was praised for "demonstrate[ing] simply astonishing power and pure beauty. I saw the rafters lift about an inch" (*Broadway World*). Further productions include Gerhilde in Detroit Opera's *The Valkyries,* dell'Arte Opera Ensemble, St. Petersburg Opera, and Gulf Shore Opera's Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni,* and her Mimì in Mobile Opera's *La bohème.* She recently made her Opera Steamboat debut as Nella (*Gianni Schicchi*) and her Opera Ithaca debut as Foreign Princess (*Rusalka*). Upcoming performances include Turandot at St. Pete Opera.

PASCALE BEAUDIN

(Isabel/Caliste/Terpsichore, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Pascale Beaudin's incomparable diction, intelligent musicality and expressivity make her much sought after for concert and recital work. She has graced operatic stages in North America and Europe in roles such as Zerlina, Papagena, Oscar, and Marzelline, earning praise from the New York Times and Opera News Magazine. Of her Fiordiligi, the Washington Post music critic reported that she sang the aria "Per pietà" with such deliberate quiet elegance and restraint that it was a highlight not just of the evening, but also of my year. The Acadian soprano has been a soloist with Chatham Baroque, the Orchestre Métropolitain, the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, the Lanaudière Festival, Vancouver Early Music, the Lamèque Early Music Festival, and the Orford Festival. She has created roles for the Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal and toured Belgium with Hockey Noir, a contemporary opera that marries hockey and organized crime in a film noir atmosphere. Pascale

is a member of the Four Nations Ensemble, based in New York, and specializing in Baroque chamber music. After years of living in Montreal, she's happily made a home in Pittsburgh with her husband Scott and their dog Ruby. She's delighted to return to Opera Lafayette after Così fan tutte (2013), Les Femmes vengées (2014), L'Épreuve villageoise (2015), Léonore ou l'amour congugal (2017), Leonore (2020), and The Blacksmith (2020).

SCOTT J. BRUNSCHEEN

(Leandre/Zerbin, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Scott J. Brunscheen's "sweet and substantial lyric tenor" (Chicago Tribune) has garnered acclaim throughout the country. His recent performances of Caccini's La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina, Haydn's L'isola disabitata, Marais' Ariane et Bachus, and Cesti's L'Orontea with Haymarket Opera received praise from Opera News, Chicago Tribune, Wall Street Journal, and many others. Other operatic engagements have included several engagements at Chicago Opera Theater including Purcell's The Fairy Queen, the world premiere of Stewart Copeland's The Invention of Morel, and Mozart's Der Zauberflöte. He performed at the Caramoor Bel Canto Festival in Poulenc's Dialogues des Carmélites and Donizetti's La Favorite. With Madison Opera, he was seen in Puccini's Tosca and Mozart's Der Zauberflöte. Other highlights include Purcell's The Fairy Queen at Long Beach Opera, Rossini's La Cenerentola with Lyric Opera of Chicago's Lyric Unlimited, and Britten's The Turn of the Screw and The Rape of Lucretia with Chicago Fringe Opera. Outside of his work in opera, Scott can be heard on a Musica Omnia album of Agostino Steffani duets. He has also been the tenor soloist for Haydn's The Creation, Buxtehude and Bach canatas, Orff's Carmina Burana, Handel's The Messiah and Judas Maccabaeus, Pergolesi's Magnificat, Bach's Magnificat, Resphigi's Lauda per la Nativita, Donizetti's Miserere, Mendelssohn's Elijah, and Britten's Serenade and Canticles. Scott was a finalist and prize winner in the Oratorio Society of New York, Handel Aria Competition, and the Grand Rapids Keller Bach Award. He currently lives in Minneapolis, MN with his husband and their dog.

JEAN BERNARD CERIN

(Acaste/Dorante, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Haitian baritone Jean Bernard Cerin has portrayed villains, buffoons, and heroes with the Aspen Opera Theater Center, Brevard's Janiec Opera Company, Center City Opera Theater in Philadelphia, and Opera Philadelphia, among other. Last season he made his role debut as John Styx with Opera Ithaca & Raylynmor Opera in New Hampshire. Favorite roles include Mozart's Don Giovanni and Papageno as well as Benjamin Britten's Tarquinius from The Rape of Lucretia. Jean Bernard performs extensively as a baritone with leading early music ensembles across the United States including Philadelphi based Choral Arts, Piffaro Renaissance Wind Ensemble, Tempesta di Mare Baroque Orchestra, Night Music, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society's Gamut Bach

Ensemble, Les Delices in Cleveland, Louisville's Bourbon Baroque, Classical Uncorked in Seattle, and American Bach Soloists in San Francisco.

JESSE DARDEN

(Abasuerus, *From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau and Handel's Esther*)

Jesse Darden's tenor voice has been described as "warm and buttery" (Boston Classical Review). Originally from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Jesse Darden was the 2018–2019 Principal Artist-In-Residence with Boston Lyric Opera. With the company, he was seen as A Boy in the world premiere of Schoenberg in Hollywood, Male Chorus in The Rape of Lucretia, and Luke in The Handmaid's Tale. Jesse returned to Boston Lyric Opera in November 2019 to portray Timothy in Fellow Travelers to great acclaim. In 2022, Jesse made his debut with Lincoln Center Theater in their production of Intimate Apparel. He made his Union Avenue Opera debut in 2019 in the title role of Candide and returned to the company in the Summer of 2022 to perform the role of Fenton in Falstaff. In the Fall, Jesse joins the Helena Symphony as a soloist for a performance of Mozart's Requiem. Jesse spent his 2017 and 2018 summers as an Apprentice Artist with the Santa Fe Opera, performing several small roles, and covering the role of Robert Wilson in Doctor Atomic. Jesse has completed apprenticeships with Chautauqua Opera and Opera North. Jesse was a New England Regional Finalist with the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, won Third Prize in the Gerda Lissner International Voice Competition, received the Chautauqua Opera Studio Artist Award, and received the Boston Lyric Opera Shrestinian Award for Excellence. He has performed extensively with Boston Lyric Opera, Odyssey Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Dartmouth College, New York Festival of Song, the Rhode Island Civic Chorale and Orchestra, Boston University Opera Institute, Piedmont Opera, Chautauqua Opera, and the Chautauqua Symphony.

IMMANUEL DAVIS

(Flute, *Couperin le Grand,* Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Immanuel Davis is one of the most versatile flutists of his generation. Equally at home on the modern and baroque flutes, Immanuel has performed as a soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States and abroad. In 2005 he received a Fulbright Fellowship to study baroque flute with Wilbert Hazelzet at the Koninklijk Conservatorium in The Hague. Since then, he has performed as soloist and chamber player with such early music ensembles as Opera Lafayette, Early Music New York, ARTEK, Lyra Baroque, REBEL and the Bach Society of Minnesota and Mercury Orchestra of Houston. He has also performed on NPR's "Performance Today" and in recitals with baroque flute luminaries Barthold Kuijken and Wilbert Hazelzet. In 2021 Immanuel released the CD on the NAXOS label, "La Magnifique: Flute Music for the Court of Louis XIV" a program of French music for two traversi and continuo with legendary baroque flutist, Barthold Kuijken.

A popular guest teacher, he has been invited to teach classes at Yale University, New England Conservatory, Grinell College, the North Carolina School of the Arts and Seattle Pacific University. He has made multiple trips to Mexico, where he has served as woodwind clinician for the Guanajuato Symphony Orchestra. Educated at the Juilliard School, Mr. Davis received both Bachelor's and Master's degrees as a student of Julius Baker. Immanuel Davis has been the flute professor at the University of Minnesota since 2001.

KRISTEN DUBENION-SMITH

(Alto, *From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau and Handel's Esther*)

Recognized for her "velvety legato and embracing warmth of sound" (Washington Classical Review) and "lyric-mezzo of uncommon beauty" (The Washington Post,) mezzo-soprano Kristen Dubenion-Smith enjoys an active performing career in oratorio and sacred vocal chamber music, specializing in music of the medieval, renaissance, and baroque eras. Ms. Dubenion-Smith performs regularly with the Washington Bach Consort, the Washington National Cathedral Baroque Orchestra, The Clarion Choir, and the Dryden Ensemble as well as being a past American Bach Soloists Academy participant and Virginia Best Adams Fellow at the Carmel Bach Festival. In 2016, Ms. Dubenion-Smith was the first woman to be hired to join the choir of Men and Boys/Girls at the Washington National Cathedral. The Washington National Cathedral Choir sings at high profile events such as the funerals of Senator John McCain and former President George Bush Sr., the inaugural prayer service for President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, and the interment of Matthew Shepard. In the spring of 2023, she joined The English Concert and The Clarion Choir for an International tour (UK, Spain, L.A., Berkeley) of Handel's Solomon (Solomon Cover) with The English Concert which ended at Carnegie Hall in New York City. She also sings on the 2021 Grammy winning recording of The Prison by Ethel Smyth with The Experiential Choir and Orchestra. She can be heard on commercial recordings with The Folger Consort, Apollo's Fire, Cathedra, and Via Veritate. Originally from Michigan, Ms. Dubenion-Smith attended Alma College (Bachelor of Music) before moving to Maryland to complete her studies at The Peabody Conservatory of Music (Master of Music) in Baltimore.

PAULINA FRANCISCO

(Esther, *From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau and Handel's Esther*)

Soprano Paulina Francisco is quickly rising as an engaging and versatile performer of Baroque and early Classical music. She was recently named one of eight winners of 11th edition of Les Jardin des Voix with Les Arts Florissants, with whom she is touring Purcell's The Fairy Queen throughout the 2023–2024 season. Additional season highlights include a young artist residency with Opera Lafayette, singing the title role in the North American premiere of John Eccles' Semele with the American Baroque Opera Company, and curating a program of chamber music by women

composers for the Washington Bach Consort. Paulina has performed as a soloist and chamber musicians with ensembles throughout North America, including TENET Vocal Artists, Bach Akademie Charlotte, Washington Bach Consort, Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal, La Chapelle de Québec, and the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra. Paulina has been a finalist in international competitions including the Aria Borealis Bodø Chamber Music Competition in Bodø, Norway, and the Handel Aria Competition. Paulina is passionate about building stronger connections between research and performance. She has presented interdisciplinary research on the 17th-century trillo at the Spheres of Singing, International MedRen, Indiana University Historical Performance Conferences, and has performed new research presentations for Robert Ketterer (University of Iowa), Donald Burrows (The Open University), and Ayana Smith (Indiana University). Paulina's research interests include 17th century monody and chamber music, early voice training, and the education and music making of early modern women. Her Master's thesis *The Virtuosi of Ferrara: The Concerto delle Donne 1580–1601*, including a modern edition of Luzzasco Luzzaschi's *Madrigali* (1601), and DM dissertation, *The 17th Century Trillo: Historical Practice for the 21st Century Singer*, are available on ProQuest.

JOSHUA KELLER

(Viol and Continuo, *Couperin le Grand,* Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Joshua Keller is an avid performer and teacher of viol, lirone, and cello. After studying viola da gamba with Wendy Gillespie and Hille Perl, Josh embarked on an international performance career. He has performed in the early music festivals of Bruges, Bremen, Bloomington, Regensburg, Thüringen, and in the opening ceremonies of the Utrecht Early Music Festival. Early and modern orchestras alike continue to invite him to play the viol solos of Bach's Passions. He has worked with Opera Theater St. Louis, Opera Studio Netherlands, Opera NEO San Diego, and Scherzi Musicali (BE) playing lirone. As a teacher, Josh has contributed to workshops for the viola da gamba societies of America and Australia, teaches private cello lessons, and has pursued a certification in Pilates instruction. Joshua also maintains an active local music life playing in chamber ensembles, orchestras, and recording at local studios. He has recorded with Josh Lee, Masaaki Suzuki, and Música Ficta. Beyond music, Josh loves roller-skating, practicing Pilates and his two boxers, Margot and Hiram.

PATRICK KILBRIDE

(Tenor II, *From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau & Handel's Esther;* Belise/Momus, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Praised for his "beautiful", "sweet-voiced" tone, and "superbly acted" portrayals, Patrick Kilbride, tenor, is enjoying an international career. He is a graduate of Northwestern University and the University of Maryland Opera Studio, with fellowships from the Aspen Music Festival, Tanglewood Music Festival and L'Académie du Festival Aix-en-Provence. He was the winner of the 24th International Concours de Chant in Clermont-Ferrand, France, making his European debut in opera houses throughout France in Handel's *Acis and Galatea* with Damien Guillon and Le Banquet Céleste (Rennes, Clermont-Ferrand, Chaise-Dieu, Avignon). He has sung roles with Festival Aix-en-Provence in Cavalli's *Erismena* with Leonardo García Alarcón and Cappella Mediterranea in the opera houses of Paris, Saint-Denis, Luxembourg, and Versailles, and with the Britten-Pears Aldeburgh Festival at Snape Maltings Concert Hall in Handel's *Theodora* with Christian Curnyn and Sarah Connolly. In the United States Patrick has performed roles with the Boston Early Music Festival, Annapolis Opera, Heartbeat Opera and frequently with Opera Lafayette, debuting at the Kennedy Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music and El Museo del Barrio in productions of Handel's *Esther*, Rameau's *Io,* Pergolesi's *La Servante Maîtresse,* Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, Stradella's *La Susanna*, Jommelli's *Cerere Placata* and Monteverdi's *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorind*a. As a concert soloist he has appeared with the Washington Bach Consort, Cathedral Choral Society, Seraphic Fire and New World Symphony. Recent appearances include triumphs in Strasbourg, France, where he made his debut with Opéra National du Rhin in a new touring production of Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* with Ensemble Pygmalion, conducted by Raphaël Pichon and directed by Evgeny Titov, which will receive future performances with Opera Graz in Austria. He is a Lecturer for the University of Maryland Opera Studio and is a member the American Guild of Musical Artists. Alongside his performing and teaching, Patrick enjoys his role overseeing Artistic Services Management on the staff of Opera Lafayette.

SARAH LAUGHLAND

(DC OSWO Lead Teaching Artist)

Sarah is a performer, photographer, and dance educator & choreographer. She lives & works between the Washington, DC area and Southwest Virginia after spending 5 years at Barter Theatre (Abingdon, VA), where she performed in 33 plays & musicals. In the DC area, she most recently performed at Imagination Stage (*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*) and Theatre J (*Lovesick*). She currently teaches dance for multiple studios around the region. She adores learning, and is constantly striving for new and improved ways to move, strengthen, & communicate. She holds her B.A. in Music Theatre from Seton Hill University." Dancer. Singer. Actor. Educator. Actors' Equity Association.

ADELLE LORRAINE

(Dancer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Adelle Lorraine was born in Raleigh, North Carolina. She started dancing at the age of 7, training with multiple studios including City Ballet, Raleigh School of Ballet, International Ballet Academy, and Carolina Dance Center. Adelle graduated with a BFA in Commercial Dance at Pace University. At Pace, Adelle has received training from Rhonda Miller, Lauren Gaul, Scott Jovovich, Mandy Moore, Dee Caspary, Jess Hendricks, Suzi Taylor, Jennifer Hamilton, Dominique Kelley, Donna Drake, Caroline Liem, Lisa Hopkins, Ms. Vee, and "Chi Chi" Smith. Adelle has also performed choreography by The Barton Sisters, Ephrat Asherie, Michael Rooney, and Paul Taylor's "Company B" (restaged by Ruth Andrien) while at Pace. Currently Adelle is a trainer for the Tracy Anderson Method in New York City. Adelle believes that dance is the most universal approach to human expression and strives to always tell a story when she teaches, choreographs, and performs. Her motto is "never a dull moment."

MYTREYI NAIR

(Dancer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Mytreyi Nair, a senior at Independence high school has been a student at Kalanidhi Dance for 12 years and has been part of the Kalanidhi Dance Company since 2021. A passionate dancer, Mytreyi performed extensively as a Kalanidhi Dance company member, locally, nationally and internationally. She was selected to be one of seven dancers to travel to India with Kalanidhi in January 2024, and quickly became an integral part of Kalanidhi's touring troupe. A budding artist of note, Mytreyi has demonstrated her interest and talent for choreography by creating dances for local community associations' theater productions in the DMV area. A testament to Mytreyi's talent for dance and choreography was proven when she was selected, through a highly competitive process, to attend the prestigious Governor School's Summer Residential Program for Visual and Performing Arts in 2022.

JACOB PERRY

(Tenor II, *From Saint-Cyr to Cannons: Moreau & Handel's Esther*)

Tenor, Jacob Perry, is lauded for his stylish interpretations of early music. As a soloist, he lends his graceful sense of phrasing and luminous tone to engagements with Apollo's Fire, Bach Collegium San Diego, Jacksonville Symphony, Mountainside Baroque, New York Philharmonic, Philharmonia Baroque, Portland Baroque Orchestra, Tempesta di Mare, Washington Bach Consort, and the Washington National Cathedral. Jacob joined the Carmel Bach Festival in 2022 as the tenor participant in the Virginia Adams Best Masterclass. Deeply immersed in vocal chamber music, Jacob enjoys active membership in Les Canards Chantants, a soloist-ensemble based in Philadelphia, as well as

engagements with ensembles such as the Art of Early Keyboard (ARTEK), Cathedra, Ensemble Altera, The Leonids, New Consort, Res Facta, and TENET Vocal Artists. He has explored the vocal works by contemporary composers through engagements with Third Practice, hexaCollective, and Great Noise Ensemble. As Co-Artistic Director of Bridge, a genre-defying vocal collective based in Washington, he draws on his instincts for theatricality and story-telling, as the group explores the connections between early masterpieces and ground-breaking new works. Career highlights include his recent solo debut with the New York Philharmonic singing Handel's "Israel in Egypt", multiple tours performing in Roman Basilicas with the choir of the National Shrine, headlining the inaugural festival of Western Early Music at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music with Les Canards Chantants, and "English Orpheus"—a tour de force exploration of love songs and poems from the Elizabethan, Restoration, and early 18th-century periods he performed with Tempesta di Mare.

PATRICK PRIDE JR.

(Dancer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Patrick Pride Jr. is a NYC-based dancer & performer born & raised in Richmond, VA. During his high school years in Tennessee, he discovered his passion & love for dance & the theater. He graduated with a BFA in Dance at Austin Peay State University, the 1st among his colleagues. His first dance he choreographed, "Boundaries", was selected to participate in the American College Dance Association Southeast Region. After graduating, he performed in various musicals around the Nashville area, became a company member for Found Movement Group (a Contemporary-based Dance Theatre Company in Nashville), and taught dance at a local dance studio. During the summer of 2020, Patrick decided to risk it all and move to NYC to further pursue his dance career. During his time here, he has danced in music videos & dance projects. He also danced for AP Dance Inc. (a Brooklyn- based Dance company), which won the Special Mention award in 2021. In 2022, he became a company member for the New York Baroque Dance Company where he performed at the Kennedy Center. He is also a company member for Skin Dance Company, a NYC-based Contemporary dance company. Patrick Pride loves being able to share his passion of dance and hopes you enjoy the performance.

MARGOT ROOD

(Thalie/Leonore, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Margot Rood, hailed for her "sterling, gleaming tone and magnificent control" by The Washington Post, performs a wide range of repertoire. Margot's upcoming operatic performances include the title roles in Handel's *Esther* and in Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie* with Opera Lafayette, with which Margot stepped in to sing the title roles in the world premiere of Rameau's *Io* and the modern premiere of de La Garde's *L*éandre *et Héro* at the close of the 2022/2023 season. Her recent operatic appearances include La Renommée in Lalande's *Les Fontaines de Versailles* and Nunzia in Francesca Caccini's *Alcina* with Boston Early Music Festival, Galatea in *Acis & Galatea* with Handel + Haydn Society, Polly in *The Beggar's Opera* and Hyacinthus in Mozart's *Apollo et Hyacinthus* with Emmanuel Music, and Johanna in *Sweeney Todd* with St. Petersburg Opera. Recent and upcoming solo appearances include those with Washington Bach Consort, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Dunedin Consort, Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Philharmonia Baroque, New Jersey Symphony, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, New World Symphony, Handel + Haydn Society, Seraphic Fire, Bach Collegium San Diego, A Far Cry, and Blue Heron. Notable recordings include Blue Heron's *Ockeghem Songs Vol. 1,* La Paix in Charpentier's *Les Arts Florissants* and La Renommée in *Lalande's Les Fontaines de Versailles* with Boston Early Music Festival, and Emily in Rorem's *Our Town* recorded by Monadnock Music. Margot can be heard on Blue Heron's *Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks Vol. 5*, which won the 2018 Gramophone award for Early Music.

SIRI TANJORE

(Bride, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Siri is a 7th grader at Rocky Run Middle School and a passionate dancer and an excellent performer. She has been learning and performing kuchipudi dance at Kalanidhi for over five years. She has an impressive stage presence and a knack for expressing herself through movement. She has showcased her talent at the school's annual event and at several cultural events celebrating Indian festivals. Siri is also a hard-working and focused student who excels in advanced academics. She enjoys playing competitive club volleyball and has been one of the core players for top club in the region..

DEVIGA VALIYIL

(Dancer, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Deviga has been learning from Smt. Anuradha Nehru since the age of 10. Deviga has been a Kalanidhi Dance company member since 2014, participating as a key member in many Kalanidhi productions, some of which include *Lalla Roukh, Les Fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour, Rasa Revisited, Why We Dance, Dancing with Shiva, Bhagmati, Chandalika, and Kuchipudi Through the Ages*. She has performed at stages including the Kennedy Center, the Lincoln Center in NYC, and the Library of Congress. A beautiful and graceful dancer, Deviga has the uncanny talent of transforming into any character role that she adorns. Outside of dancing, Deviga works as a software engineer at Northrop Grumman and is pursuing her MBA from University of Maryland.

JOHN TAYLOR WARD

(Young Sailor/Chrisogon, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

John Taylor Ward performs with "stylish abandon" (The New Yorker), "intense clarity and color" (New York Times), "finely calibrated precision and heart-rending expressivity" (Washington Post). A native of Boone, North Carolina, Taylor grew up in a musical family – mostly bluegrass and Broadway. Before pursuing opera, early music and chamber music studies at the Eastman and Yale Schools of Music, he spent his early years living a double life as both a sought-after musical theater actor and an Anglican boy treble. Taylor's "lithe, louche, and admirably game" approach to the repertoire (Opera News) has yielded recent acclaimed debuts at Spoleto USA in the premiere of Unholy Wars; Mexico's Compañía Nacional de Teatro, staring in Iannis Xenakis' Oresteia; Vienna's Musikverein as Jesus in Bach's St. Matthew Passion; and Opéra Rouen in Thierry Pécou's Nahadzáán, an operatic adaptation of the Navajo creation story. Notable DVD releases include the role of Nick Shadow in The Rake's Progress with Barbara Hannigan, Proteo in Orfeo Chaman with Christina Pluhar and L'Arpeggiata, and an upcoming documentary series on the life and works of Claudio Monteverdi with the English Baroque Soloists. Taylor is also featured on recordings with Les Arts Florissants, the Seattle Symphony, and the Boston Early Music Festival and is a member of the Grammy Award-winning chamber ensemble, Roomful of Teeth.

ARIANA WEHR

(Young Sailor/Young Girl/Polyhymnia/Dorine, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*)

Brazilian-born soprano Ariana Wehr, originally from Batesville, Indiana is a graduate of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program with Washington National Opera. In the 2018–2019 season, the soprano sang Despina in Cosi fan tutte for Opera in the Heights, Gretel in Hansel and Gretel in a return to Brava! Opera Theater, a debut with the Naples Philharmonic singing Pulcinella by Stravinsky, and Micäela in Carmen in a return engagement with Opera Louisiane. Ms. Wehr debuted the roles of Girlfriend #1/Nurse/Congregant in Blue at The 2019 Glimmerglass Festival to great critical acclaim, and will reprise the roles at Washington National Opera in 2020. In the 2017–2018 season, Ariana was seen as Amy March in Mark Adamo's Little Women with Annapolis Opera, and Konstanze in Mozart's The Abudction from the Seraglio with Brava! Opera Theater, and she advanced to the Semi-Finals of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. In the 2016–2017 season, the soprano was Barbarina in Mozart's Le Nozze di Figaro for Washington National Opera, as well as Susanna in the Domingo-Cafritz performance of Le Nozze di Figaro. Additional performances for Washington National Opera included Ms. Holy in the world premiere of Mohammed Fairouz's The Dictator's Wife, and Zerlina in Mozart's Don Giovanni directed by Francesca Zambello. In the 2015–2016 season, Ariana was Abigail Williams in Francesca Zambello's production of The Crucible at The Glimmerglass Festival, Kahua in the world premiere of Better Gods at Washington National Opera, and Gretel in Washington National Opera's Holiday Opera production of Hansel and Gretel. She appeared as Frasquita in Washington National Opera's 60th Anniversary season opening production of Bizet's Carmen.

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ABOUT OPERA LAFAYETTE

RYAN BROWN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
OPERA *Lafayette*

Opera Lafayette
921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE
Washington, DC, 20003
DC: (202) 546-9332 | NYC: (212) 634-9388
OperaLafayette.org

Opera Lafayette is the pre-eminent American interpreter and producer of period- instrument opera from the 17th through the 19th centuries and an international leader in this repertoire. Based on meticulous research and the creation of modern performing editions, the company's compelling performances and recordings of rediscovered gems and historical masterpieces highlight the works' original appeal and introduce a new generation to their contemporary relevance.

Opera Lafayette rehearsing at the Opéra Royale in Versailles

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Central to Opera Lafayette's mission is creating a legacy of the forgotten repertoire the company brings back to life. Opera Lafayette released its first CD on the Naxos label, and now has 12 commercial audio recordings. In 2018, Opera Lafayette released its first DVD, and now has three on the Naxos label. In 2019 Opera Lafayette published its first illustrated book. These books complement Opera Lafayette's discography and further bolster the legacy of early opera to new audiences. In 2020, the company filmed its first production for PBS, with initial regional broadcast dates on RMPBS in 2022.

PBS

The Blacksmith (2022)
François-André-Danican Philidor, composer
François-Antoine-Quétant, librettist
English Translation by Nick Olcott
Adaptation by Nick Olcott and Ryan Brown

Illustrated Retellings

As told by Kelley Rourke and illustrated by Amy Severson

Radamisto (2019)
George Frideric Handel, composer
Nicola Francesco Haym, librettist
Based on L'amor tirrannico by Domenico Lalli and after L'amor tyrannique by Georges de Scudery

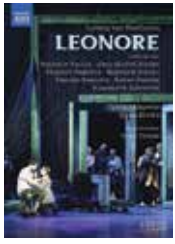
La Susanna (2019)
Alessandro Stradella, composer
Giovanni Battista Giardini, librettist
Based on *Susanna and The Elders* from *The Book of Daniel*

Leonore (2020)
Ludwig van Beethoven, composer
Joseph Sonnleithner, librettist

DVDs

Les Fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour, ou Les Dieux d'Égypte (2019)
Jean-Philippe Rameau, composer
Louis de Cahusac, librettists
Cover: Louis Forget

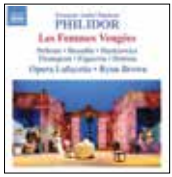
Leonore, ou L'Amour conjugal (2018)
Pierre Gaveaux, composer
Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, librettist
Also available on Blu-ray
Cover: Pierre-Etienne Bergeron



Leonore (2021)
Ludwig van Beethoven, composer
Joseph Sonnleithner, librettist, after Bouilly
Cover: Louis Forget

CDs

L'épreuve villageoise (2016)
André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry, composer
Pierre Desforges, librettist
Cover: Louis Forget



Les Femmes Vengées (2015)
François-André Danican Philidor, composer
Michel-Jean Sedaine, librettist
Cover: Louis Forget

Lalla Roukh (2014)
Félicien David, composer
Michel Carré and Hippolyte Lucas, librettists
Cover: Louis Forget

Le Roi et le fermier (2013)
Pierre-Alexandre Monsigny, composer
Michel-Jean Sedine, librettist
Cover: Restored 1780 set designs for *Le Roi et le fermier*
Photo by J.M. Manai

Le Magnifique (2012)
André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry, composer
Michel-Jean Sedaine, librettist
Cover: The Composer André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry by Jean-Baptiste Stouf (1724-1826) Purchase, Josephine Bay Paul and C/ Michael Paul Foundation Inc.
Gift and Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation Inc. Gift, 1969 (69.77) – Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Sancho Pança (2011)
François-André Danican Philidor, composer
Antoine-Alexandre-Henri Poinsinet, librettist
Cover: Louis Forget

Le Déserteur (2010)
Pierre-Alexandre Monsigny, composer
Michel-Jean Sedaine, librettist
Cover: *The Deserter Pardoned* by George Moreland (1763–1804) (The Holburne Museum of Art, Bath, UK/The Bridgeman Art Library)

Zélindor, roi des Sylphes (2009)
François Rebel and François Francœur, composers
Text by François-Augustin Paradis de Moncrif
Cover: Louis Forget

The Tragedy of Armide (2008)
Jean-Baptiste Lully, composer
Philippe Quinault, librettist
Cover: Rinaldo and Armida by Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) (Louvre, Paris, France, Lauros/Giraudon/ The Bridgeman Art Library)

Rameau Operatic Arias (2007)
Featuring Jean-Paul Fouchécourt
Cover: Carol Rosegg

Oedipe à Colone (2006)
Antonio Sacchini
Cover: *Oedipus and Antigone* by Johann-Peter Krafft (1780–1856) (The Art Archive/Musée du Louvre, Paris/Dagli Orti)

Orphée at Euridice (2005)
Christoph Willibald Gluck
Cover: *Orpheus Leading Eurydice from the Underworld*, 1861 by Jean Baptiste Camille Corot (1796–1875) (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA/Bridgeman Art Library)

PATRICK DUPRE QUIGLEY
Artistic Director Designate

Opera Lafayette's Founder and Artistic Director Ryan Brown has announced he will be passing the reins in 2025 after Opera Lafayette's 30th season. Opera Lafayette has announced Brown's successor, appointing Patrick Dupre Quigley as Artistic Director Designate. Quigley's new role is effective immediately, and he will work closely with Brown for the next two seasons along with the musicians, audience, staff, and board to ensure the continuation of the vibrant, decades-long standard set by Brown and Opera Lafayette.

Quigley joins Opera Lafayette via Seraphic Fire in Miami, FL where he serves as Founder and Artistic Director of the critically-acclaimed vocal ensemble. Opera Lafayette audiences will recognize his name from last season's Pergolesi production, for which he was Guest Conductor. Quigley is known for his engaging performances of historically-informed programming that draw in new audiences and delight regular concertgoers.

> "Opera Lafayette fills a unique place in America's musical life, and Quigley brings all the qualities that can broaden the importance and significance of our work," Brown says. "He is an outstanding musician and conductor with an entrepreneurial spirit. Moreover, he is a caring human being who understands the nature of arts organizations and the crucial role they play in enriching the lives of artists, audience, and the public at large. I look forward to working with Patrick over the next two years and eagerly await the wonderful experiences he will bring us in the future."

While serving as Artistic Director Designate, Quigley will conduct Edmond Dédé's *Morgiane, ou, Le Sultan d'Isphahan* as part of Opera Lafayette's 30th Anniversary season (2024/25). The piece is the earliest known opera by a Black American – a violinist, conductor and composer raised in New Orleans who made his career in France in the 19th century. Quigley himself is originally from New Orleans, a city whose significance in American musical history Opera Lafayette has highlighted with several past productions. This production, in collaboration with New Orleans' historical opera company, OperaCréole, will expand on this work of rediscovery.

Following this production, Quigley will assume full Artistic Directorship on July 1, 2025, as the organization moves into its 31st season (2025/26).

> "It is an incredible honor to follow the revolutionary tenure of Ryan Brown and join the Opera Lafayette family as Artistic Director Designate," Quigley says. "Opera Lafayette, under the direction of Maestro Brown, has exemplified the qualities of a 21st century arts organization. They have been uncompromising in artistic quality and indefatigable in creative energy, while constantly pushing the boundaries of what it means to be an historical opera company."

OPERA LAFAYETTE'S 2024/2025 SEASON

MARKS THREE DECADES OF BRILLIANT MUSIC-MAKING

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Our 30th Season Continues the Adventure:

OCTOBER 2024

Opera Lafayette presents
Ensemble Amedyez and Friends
Artists from countries depicted in 19th-century French works
use music, art, and dance to re-invent
these pieces in their own styles and voices

FEBRUARY 2025

As featured on NBC Nightly News, Opera Lafayette,
in collaboration with New Orleans' OperaCréole, presents
the World Premiere of the earliest known opera by a Black American,
Edmond Dédé's Morgiane (1887)
Don't miss this riveting, historic milestone.

MAY 2025

Opera Lafayette: A 30-Year Retrospective
Join us as we celebrate Founding Artistic Director
Ryan Brown's visionary leadership
by revisiting the best of our past
with young artists of today

EDMOND DÉDÉ'S *MORGIANE*

Edmond Dédé, The Historic New Orleans Collection, *Gift of Mr. Al Rose, File: Edmond Dédé.jpg - Wikimedia Commons.* ©

From *The Era of Madame de Maintenon:*

"One tires quickly of weeping. Does one ever tire of laughing?"
–Les Fêtes de Thalie, *Prologue, Scene 2*

"The trend toward incorporating humor into opera-ballets had received a major impetus when librettists and composers at the Opéra started looking to Italy for models – or rather, when they began to look toward the works performed in Paris by the Italian Theater or at the fairs, which were grounded in the long traditions of the *commedia dell'Arte.*"

–Rebecca Harris-Warrick

"From Italian sculpture, French composers learned how to encapsulate dramatic forms in small formats."

–Saraswathi Shukla

"...when she became royal mistress, she (Madame de Maintenton) drew on her earlier role as governess of Louis XIV's children to fashion herself as educator in the interests of nation and crown.... However, the goals of state educational policy and the all-too-human drives of courtiers sometimes came into conflict. Indeed, they collided spectacularly during performances of *Esther.*"

–Benjamin Bernard

"A more compelling analogy to the heated 17th -century arguments about theater in France can be found in today's anxieties about social media, its erosion of lines between the public and private selves, its exposure of the body to desire, and its enticements to vanity and display."

–Philip Kennicott