PROGRAM

FIRST HALF - 45 MINUTES

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)
Violin Concerto in E Major, op. 8, no. 1, RV 269, “La Primavera”
1. Allegro 2. Largo 3. Allegro

Aria “Vedrò con mio diletto” (from the opera *Il Giustino*, RV 717)

Concerto for Strings in B-flat Major, RV 163, “Conca”
1. [No tempo indication] – Allegro molto 2. Andante 3. Allegro

Aria “Agitata da due venti” (from the opera *Griselda*, RV 718)

Violin Concerto in G Minor, op. 8, no. 2, RV 315, “L’Estate”
1. Allegro non molto – Allegro 2. Adagio 3. Presto

INTERMISSION

SECOND HALF - 50 MINUTES

Motet *In furore iustissimae irae*, RV 626
Aria “In furore iustissimae irae”
Recitative “Miserationum Pater piissime”
Aria “Tunc meus fletus”
Aria “Alleluia”

Violin Concerto in F Major, op. 8, no. 3, RV 293, “L’Autunno”
1. Allegro 2. Adagio 3. Allegro

Antonia Padoani Bembo (v.1640 – v. 1720)
Cantata *Per il Natale* (from *Produzioni armoniche*)

Antonio Vivaldi
Violin Concerto in F Minor, op. 8, no. 4, RV 297, “L’Inverno”
1. Allegro non molto 2. Largo 3. Allegro

ARTISTS

Leila Schayegh
VIOLIN AND DIRECTION

Sophie Naubert
SOPRANO

ARION BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

First violins
Julie Rivest
Louella Alatiit
Mélanie de Bonville

Second violins
Jessy Dubé
Marie Nadeau-Tremblay
Sari Tsuji

Violas
Jacques-André Houle
Peter Lekx

Cellos
Amanda Keesmaat
Andrea Stewart

Double bass
Francis Palma-Pelletier

Harpsichord
Hank Knox

Guitar
Sylvain Bergeron

Theorbo
Seth Dempsey
Arion Academy apprentice

BIOGRAPHIES

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

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

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

LEILA SCHAYEGH

VIOLIN AND DIRECTION

Born and raised in Switzerland, Leila Schayegh began her studies on modern violin before switching to period instruments and never looking back. She is now regarded as one of the leading violinists of the early music scene, captivating audiences with great expressiveness and energy both on and off stage. Her repertoire ranges from the beginnings of the violin literature around 1600, when the instrument was held lower down against the chest, to the high romantic period. Alongside the core repertoire of Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart, Brahms and their contemporaries, she champions works which have been unjustly overshadowed by names which are well-known today.

Schayegh's recordings have regularly won awards including several Diapason de l'année prizes, the Diapason d'Or, Editor's Choice of the Gramophone magazine and the German Record Critics' List of the Best. In 2024 she was awarded the Swiss Music Prize for outstanding and innovative music making.

Leila Schayegh is in great demand at major international festivals and a regular guest leader of both early music ensembles and modern orchestras. In 2019, Leila Schayegh founded her own ensemble, La Centifolia, with which she enjoys performing a large variety of chamber music from 1600 to 1900, from Farina to Schoenberg.

Since 2010 Leila Schayegh has been Professor at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, passing on her knowledge and experience to the up-and-coming generation of players. As successor to Chiara Banchini she directs a class for historical violin, conveying great expressiveness based on an extensive knowledge of historical sources.

SOPHIE NAUBERT

SOPRANO

Sophie Naubert is a lyric coloratura soprano acclaimed for her expressive stage presence, vocal agility, and bold versatility on stage. After making a highly praised European debut in Germany — where the Lübecker Nachrichten wrote that she "has everything it takes for an international career" — she joins Theater Lübeck as a permanent ensemble member beginning in the 2025– 2026 season, where she will perform Cunegonde (*Candide*), Olympia (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*), and Poppea (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*).

Praised for her "extraordinary vocal maturity combined with exceptional acting skills" (L'Opera), Sophie has embodied roles such as Semele (*Semele*), Le Feu (*L'enfant et les sortileges*), Euridice (*Orfeo ed Euridice*), and Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), as well as iconic musical theatre characters such as Maria (*The Sound of Music*) and Stella Spotlight (*Starmania*). Her repertoire also includes several world premieres, notably Fibi in *L'homme qui rit* by Airat Ichmouratov and Bateau in *Le phare* by Laurence Jobidon.

A prizewinner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition (St. Louis District, 2024), she has also won numerous awards, including those from the Orchestre symphonique de Montreal Competition, the George London Foundation, Jeunesses Musicales du Canada and the Sylva Gelber Foundation. In 2021, she took part in the complete recording of Massenet Songs with ATMA Classique, and she recently recorded a solo album of Handel and Purcell arias with Arion Baroque Orchestra for the same label.

PROGRAM NOTES

Antonio Vivaldi, the Red Priest, worked most of his life in Venice, starting his tenure in 1703 at l'Ospedale della Pietà, a hospice for girls where music had attained an enviable state of perfection. From 1718, he traveled much, overseeing the production of his many operas, but he still needed to provide a steady flow of concertos for the talented girls of the Pietà.

The famous set *Il Cimento dell' Armonia e dell' Inventione* (The Contest between Harmony and Invention), Vivaldi's Opus 8, comprises twelve concertos for violin, strings, and continuo, of which two can be played on the oboe, as indicated in the first edition. This was published in 1725 by the house of Michel-Charles Le Cène of Amsterdam and includes certain concertos previously existing in manuscript form. Vivaldi admits to this in his dedication of the set to Count Morzin (related to Haydn's patron of the same name, in the 1750s), where he refers in particular to the first four concertos: "*le quattro stagioni*" (The Four Seasons), with which Morzin would have been acquainted "for some time now." These older manuscripts of *The Four Seasons* can be found in a collection having once belonged to Cardinal Ottoboni, and now kept in Manchester, England.

It is interesting to consider that which characterizes the opposition of harmony and invention referred to in the title of the Opus 8 set. In the title, harmony does not point exclusively to musical consonance, but manly to harmony as order and just proportion. This may correspond to what was called *perfidia*, that is, the reassuring repetition of a musical motive, devoid of striking development or modulation. It is the obsession with the familiar. A good example of this is the pastoral dance the closes the *Spring* concerto. Vivaldi opposes this notion with that of invention: the unexpected or *stravaganza*. It is the obsession with extravagance, as illustrated by the first movement of

Summer, where one meets with a variety of motives, tempos, and atmospheres.

The inestimable importance of the Le Cène edition is especially to be found in the numerous written commentaries that accompany the music of the *Seasons*, making perfectly clear the composer's descriptive intentions. Not only can one refer to the sonnets (by Vivaldi? – see the translation below) pertaining to each concerto, but also to indications revealing, for example, on which strings the soloist must play certain passages, or the nature of the accompaniment, as, for instance, the viola in the slow movement of *Spring* who is asked, in imitation of a barking dog, to sound "always loud and harsh."
Is programmatic, descriptive music less noble than what one could call "pure" music? Can't one imagine one's own narrative when listening to abstract music? In any case, let's not deny ourselves the pleasure of letting Vivaldi – who drew his inspiration directly from nature, its various manifestations and its impact on human life – fill our ears and souls with the birdsong, rustic revelry, exhilarating hunts, frost, and wild storms that color these famous concertos. And let's make them our own.

Speaking of storms, those at sea not only inspired Vivaldi one of his Opus 8 concertos, but also the *"Conca" Concerto for Strings*. The title refers to a kind of conch shell used by sailors to warn of an impending storm. The foghorn-like sound is here imitated by powerful unison string motifs heard in each of the three movements.

If Vivaldi often seeks to imitate nature, he sometimes imitates his own music. In an aria from his opera *Farnace*, for example, he uses music in which the opening of his *Winter* concerto is easily recognizable. Then there is the opening theme of the *Spring* concerto, making an appearance in a sinfonia from the first act of *Il Giustino*. Which brings us to the vocal portion of our concert.

Vivaldi in his lyric vein remains unique. Long eclipsed by his fabulous output of concertos, his vocal music, whether secular or sacred, is of the utmost quality and is undeniably attractive, almost magnetically so. Be it in his operas (*Il Giustino*, 1724; *Griselda*, 1735) or his sacred works (the motet *In furore iustissimae irae*, 1720s), it is imbued with the same spirit of virtuosity and penchant for the *cantabile*, the same exuberance and pathos that he offers the soloists of his concertos. Marc Pincherle rightly speaks of an "interpenetration between the two genres," which the Venetian master's vocal works will make abundantly clear.

Daughter of the Venetian physician Giacomo Padoani and of Diana Pareschi, who offered her an exceptional education for a girl of her time – including music lessons with the famous Francesco Cavalli – **Antonia Padoani Bembo** married in near secret the nobleman Lorenzo Bembo. He turned out to be a violent and unfaithful husband, driving her to take the brave initiative, sometime between 1674 and 1676, to flee Italy and seek refuge in Paris. It is there, we learn from the dedication to King Louis XIV of her manuscript set *Produzioni armoniche* (*ca* 1695-1701), that she became the King's protégée. Thanks to a royal pension, she lived out her days in a religious community in Paris, devoting herself almost exclusively to composition, primarily sacred music, but also secular arias as well as one opera, *Ercole amante* (1707). The sacred cantata *Per il Natale* (For Christmas), for soprano, two unspecified treble instruments (probably violins or flutes), and continuo, is one of the highlights of *Produzioni armoniche*. It vividly depicts the Blessed Virgin Mary immediately after the birth of Jesus, with the soloist alternating between the roles of narrator and Mary. Throughout, as notes musicologist Claire Fontijn, Mary expresses a wide range of emotions: pride, fear of giving in to vanity, trust, and devoutness. Sentiments we can also make our own.

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