

27TH SEASON / 2025-2026

Scott Metcalfe, Artistic Director

BLUEHERON



In Praise of Laura Peperara
Music for the *Concerto delle dame* • Ferrara, 1580s

FEBRUARY 19-21, 2026

In Praise of Laura Peperara

Music for the *Concerto delle dame* • Ferrara, 1580s

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026, AT 7:30 PM

ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, NEW YORK CITY

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2026, AT 7:30PM

EDWARDS CHURCH, NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2026, AT 8:00PM

FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE, CONGREGATIONAL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

I. In praise of LAURA

Luca Marenzio (c. 1553–1599)

Ridean già per le piagge

Paolo Virchi (d. 1610)

Non fonte o fiume od aura (Torquato Tasso)

II. *Cara la vita mia*

Lodovico Agostini (1534–90)

De l'odorate spoglie (Orsina Cavaletta)

Giaches de Wert (1535–96)

Cara la vita mia (for five voices)

Lodovico Agostini

Fantasia ad imitatione del Sig. Alessandro Striggio

Luzzasco Luzzaschi (c. 1545–1607)

Da l'odorate spoglie

Giaches de Wert

Cara la vita mia (for solo voice & harp)

III. The barren Laurel

Luzzasco Luzzaschi

Se'l lauro è sempre verde

Luca Marenzio

Mentre l'aura spirò

Ruggiero Giovannelli (c. 1560–1625)

Nel foco d'un bel lauro

Giaches de Wert

Hor fuggi, infedel'ombra

IV. *Musica secreta*

Luzzasco Luzzaschi

Aura soave di segreti accenti

Toccata del quarto tuono

O dolcezz'amarissime d'amore (Battista Guarini)

V. The green Laurel

Luca Marenzio

Bianchi cigni e canori (? Tasso)

O verdi selve, o dolci fonti, o rivi (Tasso)

Giovanni Maria Nanino (c. 1543–1607)

Da i puri loro, e limpidi cristalli

? Giaches de Wert (Benedetto Pallavicino?)

Ninfe leggiadre, e voi, almi pastori (Tasso)

VI. Nymphs, Dawn & a Wedding

Giaches de Wert

Ha ninfe adorne e belle

Alessandro Striggio (c. 1536–1592)

All'apparir della leggiadra figlia

BLUE HERON

Sonja DuToit Tengblad *soprano*

Sophie Michaux *mezzo-soprano*

Laura Pudwell *mezzo-soprano*

James Reese *tenor*

Jason McStoots *tenor*

Sumner Thompson *tenor*

Paul Guttry *bass*

Steven Hrycelak *bass*

Amanda Beranek *harp*

Alessandro Quarta *harpsichord, speaker*

Scott Metcalfe *artistic director*



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Texts & Translations

Ridean già per le piagg' herbe e fiori,
e garir cominciava ogni augelletto,
co' i baci e co' i sospir Favonio e Clori
ebre l'alme rendean d'alto diletto.

Sentia destarsi a disusati ardori
al tempo novo ogni più nobil petto,
all'hor ch'a lo spuntar dei freschi albori
così parlò Damon con puro affetto:

Piagge, herbe, fiori, augelli, aure feconde,
novo ardor, novo tempo, amata Aurora,
non fia mai ch'io per voi cangi desire.

Volto a le stelle poi, siate seconde,
humile disse a questo; e accennò all' hora
un lauro per cui sol par ch'ei respiri.

*Paragona il canto di Laura a' dolcissimi suoni
fatti naturalmente e dimostra gli effetti de la sua
meravigliosa armonia.*

Non fonte o fiume od aura
odo in più dolce suon di quel di Laura,
né'n lauro o'n pino o'n mirto
mormorar s'udì mai più dolce spirto.
O felice a cui spira,
e quel beato che per lei sospira,
ché se gl'inspira il core,
pote al cielo aspirar col suo valore.

Torquato Tasso, *Rime* 137

All' illustre Sig. Laura Peverara

Da l'odorate spoglie
scioglie te homai la mano
che'l mio voler e disvoler mi toglie

et quell'Arpa felice
a cui non si disdice
stringersi col bel petto,
d'Amor fido ricetta,
togliete e con l'usata leggiadria
fateci udir *Cara la vita mia*.

Orsina Cavaletta (d. 1592)

The grassy meadows and flowers were already smiling,
and every little bird was beginning to sing,
when with kisses and sighs Favonius and Chloris
made their souls drunk with supreme delight.

At the new season, every noble heart
felt itself awoken to unaccustomed feelings,
so that at the dawning of the fresh morning light,
Damon spoke thus with pure passion:

“Meadows, herbs, flowers, birds, fertile breezes,
new ardor, new season, beloved Aurora,
may it never be that I change my desire for you.”

Then turning to the stars, “Be propitious,”
he said humbly, and at that moment pointed to
a laurel, by which alone he seemed to breathe.

*The poet compares the singing of Laura to the sweetest sounds
produced by nature and describes the effects of her marvelous
harmony.*

No fountain or river or breeze
do I hear make a sound sweeter than Laura's,
nor in laurel nor pine nor myrtle
was ever heard the murmuring of a sweeter spirit.
O happy one towards whom she breathes
and blessed he who, for her, sighs,
for if she inspires his heart,
he can aspire to heaven, aided by her valor.

To the illustrious Lady Laura Peverara

From that perfumed glove
free now your hand
which takes away my will and unwillingness

and take up that happy Harp
which it is not unbecoming
to press to that beautiful breast,
faithful vessel of Love,
and with your usual grace
let us hear *Cara la vita mia*.

Cara la vita mia, egl'è pur vero

Ch'altra fiamma d'Amor non v'ars' il petto
In tanto tempo sì turbato e fiero

poi che con gl'occh'io veggio
l'aria suave e 'l bel sereno volto
e con l'orecchi ascolto
tante care d'Amor dolce parole
che furn'al mondo sole
per adolcir d'ogni mio crud'aspetto,
e quel che bramai sempr'è quel ch'io cheggio
nelle mie bracc'io godo, e col gioire
tempo l'aspra cagion del mio martire.

Se'l lauro è sempre verde,

E per fredda stagion foglia non perde,
Ond'è che'l mio sfrondatao
E secco à primavera sia restato?

Dhe se pur secco fosse
A tutti, come à me, la pena mia
Assai meno saria;
Ma ingrato solo à me secco languisce,
E à gli altri, più che mai, verde fiorisce.

Mentre l'aura spirò nel verde Lauro,

Felice fù l'ardore
Con che m'accese il core,
Che lieto a l'ombra de l'amate foglie
Addolcia le mie doglie.

Hor perchè (lasso oime) secco ti vedo?
Forsi è'l foco che move
L'alma de' sospir miei caldi et ardenti?
Ma tu l'ira di Giove
N'è'l fulmine paventi.
Ahi, per me secco, e ad altri verde io credo,
Che sotto à i sacri rami un sogno tale
Veder mi fè la tua virtù fatale.

Nel foco d'un bel lauro,

Come unica Fenice,
Arsi gran tempo, e fù l'ardor felice:
Hor ch'altri hanno ristaurato
Da la medesima fiamma,
In me à dramma à dramma
Manca l'ardore; e in tutto spento sia,
Perche Amor non patisce compagnia.

My dear life, it is quite true
that no other flame of love has burned in your breast
for such a time, so troubled and fierce,

since with my own eyes I see
the gentle mien and beautiful serene face,
and with my ears I hear
such sweet words of love,
which were the only things in the world
to soften all my cruel waiting,
and what I yearned for always and what I seek
I now enjoy within my arms, and with this joy
I soothe the harsh cause of my suffering.

If the laurel is always green
and does not lose its leaves in the cold season,
why does mine remain leafless
and barren this springtime?

Ah, if it were barren
towards all as it is to me, my pain
would be much less;
but barren and unwelcoming to me alone it languishes,
and to others, more than ever, it is green and flourishing.

When the breeze blew through the green laurel,
happy was the ardor
with which it inflamed my heart,
for, joyful in the shade of the beloved leaves,
it sweetened my sorrows.

But now why (alas, woe is me) do I behold you barren?
Perhaps it is the fire created by
the soul of my warm and ardent sighs?
But neither the wrath of Jove
nor his thunderbolt do you fear.
Ah, barren for me, and green for others, I believe,
for beneath the sacred branches such a dream
revealed to me your fatal power.

In the fire of a beautiful laurel tree,
like the only Phoenix,
I burned for a long time, and the ardor was blissful:
now that others have found solace
in the same flame,
in me, little by little,
the ardor is fading; and let it be completely extinguished,
for Love does not tolerate company.

Hor fuggi infedel'ombra,

Del mio stanco pensier pianta infelice,
Svelli la tua radice dal cor mio,
C'hor giusto sdegno sgombra
Quel, ch'ingombrò l'ingiusto mio desio,
Nè sia più che mi sogne
(Coronato di te) larve e menzogne.

Aura soave di segreti accenti

Che penetrando per l'orecchie al core
Svegliasti la dove dormiva Amore,
Per te respiro e vivo,
Da che nel petto mio
Spirasti tu d'Amor vital desio.
Vissi di vita privo
Mentre amorosa cura in me fu spenta;
Hor vien che l'alma senta
Virtu di quel tuo spirito gentile:
Felice vita oltre l'usato stile!

O dolcezz'amarissime d'Amore,

Quest'è pur il mio core,
Quest'è pur il mio ben che più languisco,
Che fa meco il dolor se ne gioisco?
Fuggite Amore, amanti, Amore amico,
O che fiero nemico!
All'hor che vi lusinga, all'hor che ride
Condisse i vostri pianti
Con quel velen che dolcemente ancide.
Non credete ai sembianti,
Che par soave et è pungente e crudo
Et è men disarmato all'hor chè nudo.

Battista Guarini, *Il pastor fido*

Now flee, unfaithful shadow,
unhappy plant of my weary thoughts,
uproot yourself from my heart,
for now righteous indignation sweeps away
what my unjust desire had burdened it with;
may I no longer dream
(crowned with you) of phantoms and lies.

Gentle breeze [melody] with secret accents [ornaments]
which, penetrating the heart through the ears,
awakened Love where it lay sleeping,
through you I breathe and live,
since in my breast
you breathed the vital desire for Love.
I lived deprived of life
while amorous feeling was extinguished within me;
now my soul feels
the strength of your gentle spirit:
O happy life beyond the usual manner!

O most bitter delights of Love,
this is still my heart,
this is still my beloved the more I languish,
What does sorrow matter to me if I rejoice in it?
Flee Love, lovers, friendly Love—
ah, such a fierce enemy!
Just when he flatters you, just when he smiles
he seasons your tears
with that venom that sweetly kills.
Do not believe in appearances,
for he appears gentle, and is piercing and cruel
and is least disarmed at the moment he is naked.

Bianchi Cigni, e canori;

Che de la secca fronde
Cantaste i falsi pregi, e i finti honori
Qui, dove in riva à l'onde
Del Rè de' fiumi altero
Piangono il caso fero
Del mal cauto Fetonte le sorelle;
Alzate il novo LAURO oltra le stelle.

Alzate il novo LAURO oltra le stelle,
Vaghe, e leggiadre Ninfe;
E'n queste parti e'n quelle
Di mormoranti linfe,
E di garruli augei le piagge, i monti,
E le profonde valli
Rimbombin sì, che l'AURA il verde LAURO
Porti da l'Indo al Mauro:
E voi di fiumi, e fonti
Naiadi, al suon de' liquidi cristalli
Guidate dolci & amorosi balli.

Guidate dolci, & amorosi balli,
Saltanti Capri, e snelli
Fauni, e Silvani, uniti
A gara hor questi, hor quelli
Co' piè vaghi, e spediti
Premete i duri, e non segnati calli:
E voi pastori usciti
De le vostre capanne
Con l'incerate canne
Del verde LAURO ergete al Ciel gli honori,
Bianchi Cigni, e canori.

? Torquato Tasso

O verdi selve, o dolci fonti, o rivi,

O luoghi ermi e selvaggi,
Pini, Abeti, Ginebri, Allori e Faggi,
O vaghi augelli semplici e lascivi,
Ecco e tu che rispond' al mio lamento,
Chi può dar fin' a sì crudel fortuna?
Una. Dunque sol una
È la cagion del mio mesto concento?
Cento. Non son già cento e pur son molte,
In bella festa accolte.
Com' una potrà dunque il mal fornire?
Ire. Per ira mai nè per dispetto,
Non avrà fin' amor nel nostro petto.

Torquato Tasso, *Rime* 309

White and melodious swans,
who sang the false praises and feigned honors
of the barren leaves,
here, where on the banks
of the proud King of rivers
the sisters weep for the cruel fate
of the incautious Phaeton,
raise the new LAUREL beyond the stars.

Raise the new LAUREL beyond the stars,
lovely and graceful Nymphs,
and in these parts and in those,
with murmuring streams
and with chirping birds, let the plains, the mountains,
and the deep valleys
resound, so that the BREEZE may carry the green LAUREL
from the Indus to the Mauro:
and you, Naiads of rivers and fountains,
to the sound of crystalline waters
lead sweet and loving dances.

Lead gentle and loving dances,
leaping Goats, and slender
Fauns and Silvans; united
in a contest, now these, now those,
with graceful and swift feet,
tread the hard and untrodden paths:
and you shepherds, come forth
from your huts
with your waxed pipes,
and raise to Heaven the honors of the green LAUREL,
white and melodious swans.

O green woods, O sweet fountains, O streams,
O secluded and wild places,
pines, firs, junipers, laurels and beeches,
O lovely birds, simple and wanton,
and you, Echo, who respond to my lament:
Who can put an end to such a cruel fate?
One. Thus one only
is the reason for my sad harmony?
One hundred. They are not quite one hundred, and yet are many,
gathered for a beautiful celebration.
How then can just one cause ill?
Wrathful passions. Never out of wrath or spite
shall love come to an end in our breast!

Da i puri loro e limpidi cristalli

Escon le Ninfe fori
 Ornate d'herbe e fiori
 E dal mar le Sirene
 E da Cinto e Pirene
 Le Muse, e a l'ombra del mio verde Alloro
 Tra i fior' bianchi, vermigli, azurri e gialli
 Guidano dolci amorosetti balli.
 E l'aura fra di loro
 Soave ventilando
 Gli aita, e gareggiando
 Ogni vago augellin da i rami santi
 Accordano co'l ballo i dolci canti.

Ninfe leggiadre, e voi almi Pastori,

Correte à gara in queste parti e'n quelle,
 Cogliendo herbe e fiori
 Di più vari colori
 Per tesser vaghe ghirlandette, e belle
 A i crin del mio bel, verde e novo Lauro.
 O felice ristauro
 Del mio passato errore!
 Te ne ringratio, Amore,
 Poi che da infida à sì fida ombra, e grata
 M'hai posto, ond' io gioisco,
 E sol di sì dolce aura mi nutrisco.

In lode de la Mesola

Ha Ninfe adorné belle

la casta Margarita, ed essa è Dea,
 se virtù fa gli Dei come solea;
 però boschi, palaggi e prati e valli,
 secchi et ondosi calli
 le fece il grande Alfonso e cinse intorno
 navi, e d'erranti fere ampio soggiorno,
 e gionse i porti e i lustrini in cui le serra,
 perché sia la prigion campo di guerra,
 e i diletti sian glorie
 et tante prede sue tutte vittorie.

Torquato Tasso, *Rime* 930

From their pure and limpid crystalline springs
 the Nymphs emerge
 adorned with herbs and flowers,
 and from the sea the Sirens,
 and from Cynthus and Pirene
 the Muses, and in the shade of my green Laurel,
 among white, red, blue, and yellow flowers,
 they lead sweet amorous dances.
 And among them, the breeze,
 gently blowing,
 assists them, and competing
 every pretty little bird from the sacred branches
 harmonizes its sweet songs with the dance.

Lovely nymphs, and you, gentle shepherds,
 hurry hither and thither
 gathering delicate herbs and flowers
 of the most varied colors
 to weave charming and beautiful garlands
 for the locks of my fair, green, and young Laurel.
 O happy remedy
 for my past error!
 I thank you for this, Love,
 for from unfaithful to so faithful and grateful shade
 you have brought me, whence I rejoice,
 and on such sweet breeze alone I nourish myself.

In praise of Mesola

The chaste Margherita has beautiful, richly adorned
 nymphs, and she herself is a Goddess
 (if virtue makes Gods as it used to);
 but woods, palaces and fields and valleys,
 the dry and winding lanes
 were made for her by the great Alfonso, and he drew boats
 around them, and provided ample abode for wandering beasts,
 and built the gates and dens in which he encloses them,
 that their prison might be a field of battle,
 and pleasures be glories,
 and such prey of his all be victories.

Mesola a castle surrounded by extensive hunting grounds, near Ferrara, built
 1578-83 by Alfonso d'Este for his new wife, Margherita Gonzaga

All'apparir della leggiadra figlia
E scort' alma del sol di rose adorna,
Torn' Himeneo, deh torna
Con tutta tua lietissima famiglia;
Già l'alba è giunta,
Hor piglia l'amata fac' il velo,
Che non vid' anch' il cielo,
Ne vedrà forse mai, più Bianca e bella
Alba, che vince il sol, vince ogni stella.

At the appearance of the lovely maiden
and gentle escort of the sun, adorned with roses,
return, Hymen, oh return,
with all your joyful family;
the dawn has already arrived,
now the beloved torch puts on the veil,
for not even the heavens have seen,
nor perhaps will ever see, a whiter and more beautiful
dawn, which surpasses the sun, surpasses every star.

Translations by Scott Metcalfe

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In Praise of Laura Peperara

Women and Music in the Late Sixteenth Century: The Ferrarese *Concerto delle dame*

Le donne son venute in eccellenza
di ciascun'arte ove hanno posto cura;
e qualunque all'istorie abbia avvertenza,
ne sente ancor la fama non oscura.
Se 'l mondo n'è gran tempo stato senza,
non però sempre il mal influsso dura;
e forse ascosi han lor debiti onori
l'invidia o il non saper degli scrittori.

Women have arrived at excellence
in every art in which they have striven;
in their chosen fields their renown is apparent
to anyone who studies the history books.
If the world has long remained unaware of their achievements,
this sad state of affairs is only transitory;
perhaps envy concealed the honors due to them,
or perhaps the ignorance of historians.

Praising the achievements of women across disciplines and ascribing the lack of their recognition to the negligence or jealousy of (male) historians, the above stanza seems to betray a feminist worldview one would expect from a twentieth- or twenty-first-century author, but not from a poet from the Renaissance. And yet the stanza belongs to one of the most influential literary works of the sixteenth century, the epic poem *Orlando furioso* (1516), by Ferrara-based author Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533).¹ Ariosto's advocacy for women was by no means an isolated case in the sixteenth century, as several influential figures expressed similar appreciation for women's achievements in the intellectual and artistic domains. A notable example is that of Torquato Tasso (1544–95), also an influential Ferrara-based poet, who in 1580 wrote a treatise on the virtues of women (*Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*). Neither Ariosto nor Tasso—nor the many other sixteenth-century authors who wrote on the same subject—should be seen as proto-feminists, in that their advocacy was typically reserved for “exceptional” women, either due to their

social status or to their outstanding intellectual or artistic skills. Their attitude, however, speaks to the greater role that women played in the arts, including music, in the sixteenth century, particularly in northern Italian courts like that of Ferrara. There are several reasons for the increased prominence of women in the cultural lives of northern Italian courts. Among these are the emergence of a more secular outlook and the belief that members of a court, regardless of gender, should receive a thorough education in the arts. This principle was famously articulated in Baldassare Castiglione's highly influential *Il cortegiano* (The Courtier) of 1528.

Authors like Ariosto and Tasso greatly contributed to Ferrara's central role in the sixteenth-century discourse on women's intellectual and artistic abilities. Equally important, however, was Ferrara's distinguished tradition of women musicians, several of whom shaped the cultural life of the court and of the city. This tradition was particularly strong in the late sixteenth century, when Ferrara hosted the most celebrated ensemble

1 The stanza (*Orlando furioso*, Canto XX, 2) and the English translation are drawn from Anthony Newcomb, “Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians? Professional Women Musicians in Sixteenth-Century Italy,” in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 90–115.



"Ferraria" (Bird-eye view of Ferrara), ca. 1600. © The Trustees of the British Museum, released as CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

of women musicians of the time, the *concerto delle dame* (or *concerto delle donne*), which dominated the court's musical life of the 1580s and 1590s.²

Women musicians were active at court already in the early 1570s, when noblewomen who excelled in singing, such as the sisters Lucrezia and Isabella Bendidio, performed for the ducal family accompanied at the keyboard by Luzzasco Luzzaschi (1545–1607), the most prominent Ferrarese composer of the time. This ensemble,

which at times included other noblewomen like Leonora Sanvitale, is often referred to as the first iteration of the *concerto delle dame*. However, it differed substantially from the "true" *concerto delle dame* established around 1580. The latter was composed of *dame di compagnia* (ladies in waiting) of Duchess Margherita Gonzaga, who married Duke Alfonso d'Este II in 1579. Hailing from Mantua, Margherita functioned as a catalyst for the formation of the "new" *concerto*. This would feature

² For a detailed account of the activities of the *concerto delle dame*, see Elio Durante and Anna Martellotti, *Cronistoria del concerto delle dame principalissime di Margherita Gonzaga d'Este*, 2nd ed. (Florence: SPES, 1989). For a broad-ranging discussion of the role of women musicians in sixteenth-century Ferrara, also in sacred contexts, such as at the Convent of San Vito, see Laurie Stras, *Women and Music in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

a stable core of three virtuoso sopranos who were also accomplished instrumentalists. They became such an essential feature of the court's musical culture that they have been frequently referred to as professional musicians, despite their official title as *dame di compagnia*. Margherita Gonzaga's role in the formation of the ensemble is reflected in the provenance of two of its members, namely Livia d'Arco (1565–1611) and Laura Peperara (1563–1600), who, like Margherita, were from Mantua. Livia arrived at Ferrara with Margherita in 1579; Laura would join the following year, in the spring of 1580. The other soprano, Anna Guarini (1563–98), daughter of distinguished poet Battista Guarini (1538–1612), was instead Ferrarese, and joined the ensemble later in 1580.

Coached and accompanied by Luzzaschi, the three sopranos performed for the exclusive consumption of the ducal family, often for multiple hours a day. The exclusive nature of their music making (hence the name *musica secreta*, “secret music”) reflects the high regard in which they were held by the ducal family. One of the consequences of this exclusivity is that the artistry of the three sopranos, particularly their skill in the ornamentation (“diminutioni”) of solo vocal lines, can only be inferred from accounts by court members or by the few outsiders who witnessed their performances, and from a small surviving corpus of pieces composed by Luzzaschi for the *concerto*. These works appear in the retrospective collection *Madrigali per cantare et sonare a uno, e doi, e tre soprani*, curated by Luzzaschi and published in Rome in 1601. By then, Luzzaschi was finally free to publish his work for the *concerto*: Duke Alfonso II had died in 1597 leaving no heirs, and the Duchy was dissolved and taken over by the Papal States the

following year. Both Luzzaschi's collection, which features highly virtuosic, written-out ornamentation, and the laudatory accounts provided by witnesses suggest that the ladies' skills were indeed outstanding. Here is how distinguished singer and composers Giulio Caccini (1551–1618), who visited the Ferrarese *musica secreta* in 1583, described the three *dame*:

Every evening the Duke called us into a small room, where we found the Duchess of Ferrara, the Duchess of Urbino, and three ladies—or rather three angels of paradise, for they sing so miraculously that it seems to me impossible to do better.³

Accounts by external visitors, such as that of Caccini, also helped the *concerto* to achieve fame in Italy and beyond. In fact, one wonders whether the ducal family intentionally allowed distinguished visitors from time to time so that they could catch a glimpse of the ladies' artistry and report about it enthusiastically once at home, while still preventing dissemination of actual music.

By far the most famous and celebrated of the three ladies was Laura Peperara, the protagonist of our concert. Combined with the Petrarchan echoes of her name (Laura was the name of Petrarch's beloved from his *Canzoniere*), her virtuosic singing and harp playing⁴ rapidly became a source of inspiration for notable poets, such as Tasso and Guarini, and for composers like Luzzaschi, Giaches de Wert (1535–96), and Luca Marenzio (1553–99), among others. Our concert will showcase a selection of the impressive poetic and musical corpus for Laura, reflecting her central role in the artistic life of Ferrara and beyond.

3 Quotation and English translation drawn from Anthony Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara, 1579–1597*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

4 The other two members of the *Concerto*, Livia d'Arco and Anna Guarini, were also proficient instrumentalists: the former was a viol player, the latter a lutenist.



The *Arpa Estense*, made by Giovanni Battista Giacometti in Rome and decorated 1587-93 by Giulio Marescotti, Giuseppe Mazzuoli, Orazio Lamberti, and Giovan Battista Rosselli. Galleria Estense di Modena. Photo: Saiko, Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0)

POETRY AND MUSIC FOR LAURA PEPERARA

Laura Peperara (or Peverara, a spelling that also appeared frequently in sixteenth-century sources⁵) was born in Mantua to Vincenzo Peperara (or Peverara) and Margherita Costanza. They were both associated with the Gonzaga court, the former as a literary preceptor, the latter as a lady in waiting. Laura's date of birth was the subject of much speculation for many decades, until Elio Durante and Anna Martellotti uncovered archival documents securely placing it in 1563.⁶ Through her parents, Laura was exposed to Mantua's rich literary and musical culture, likely receiving training from distinguished musicians like Wert and members of the dell'Arpa family, who were renowned virtuoso harpists. Given this background, it is not surprising that she was able to establish a reputation as a virtuoso singer and instrumentalist already as a *giovinetta* (a teenager). Indeed, in 1578, at age fifteen, Laura visited the musical gatherings of the Accademici Filarmonici of Verona, one of the most prestigious musical circles of the time, convened by connoisseur Count Mario Bevilacqua. Laura's virtuosic singing while accompanying herself on the harp made quite an impression, to the point that the following year the Filarmonici commissioned the compilation of an anthology of polyphonic madrigals, often referred to as the *Primo Lauro*, to celebrate Laura and her outstanding musical skills.⁷ The poetry of the collection directly references her performance abilities, while drawing extensively on the Petrarchan tropes associated with the Laura *senhal*, such as "lauro" (laurel, symbol of poetic inspiration and distinction) and "laura" (breeze, and, by extension, singing). Among the musicians recruited for the collection was the up-and-coming Rome-based composer Luca Marenzio, who set to music the anonymous sonnet *Ridean già per le piagg'herbette e fiori* (The grassy meadows and flowers were already smiling). This lush piece, rich in virtuosic melismas, will open our program, offering a glimpse of Laura's outstanding musical reputation before joining the Este court in 1580. The bulk

5 Other spellings of her last name include Pipperara or Piperara.

6 See Elio Durante and Anna Martellotti, "*Giovinetta peregrina*": *La vera storia di Torquato Tasso e Laura Peperara* (Florence: Olschki, 2010).

7 The collection was never published. The manuscript is preserved in the library of the Accademia Filarmonica of Verona (MS 220). On this collection, see Marco Materassi, *Il Primo Lauro: Madrigali in onore di Laura Peperara. Ms. 220 dell'Accademia Filarmonica di Verona (1580)* (Treviso: Diastema, 1999); and Anthony Newcomb, "The Three Anthologies for Laura Peverara," *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 10 (1975), 329–45.

of the program, however, is devoted to her Ferrarese years, especially the early 1580s, when poetic and musical celebrations of her artistry flourished conspicuously.

Although Laura's reputation was tied primarily to her singing, her harp playing was also the subject of much praise, as evidenced also by Alfonso II's commissioning in 1581 of a highly decorated double harp from a Roman builder, the so-called "arpa estense," now preserved at the Galleria Estense of Modena. To reflect this important side of Laura's musical persona, our program features several works related to the harp. For example, we will hear two parallel settings by Luzzasco Luzzaschi and Lodovico Agostini (1534–90) of a fascinating text by Ferrarese poetess Orsina Cavaletta (1531–92), *Da l'odorate spoglie* (From that perfumed garment). In this poem, Cavaletta invites Laura to remove her perfumed gloves and to accompany herself on the harp while singing the madrigal *Cara la vita mia* (My dear life) by Mantuan composer Giaches de Wert. Given the close connections with the Mantuan court—Laura was from Mantua, and Wert was a frequent visitor at Ferrara, and might have been her teacher, not to mention the long-standing family ties between the Gonzagas and the Estes—it is not surprising that a piece by Wert was part of Laura's repertoire at Ferrara. The reference to Wert's *Cara la vita mia*, however, is noteworthy for at least two reasons: the first is that it was a relatively old piece, published for the first time in 1558; the second is that although it was published as a five-voice madrigal, it was evidently often performed as a solo song, documenting the fluidity of musical genres and performance practices in this era. In our program, we'll hear Wert's *Cara la vita mia* both in its published five-voice version and in a solo-song arrangement (with harp accompaniment) featuring extensive embellishments of the vocal part,

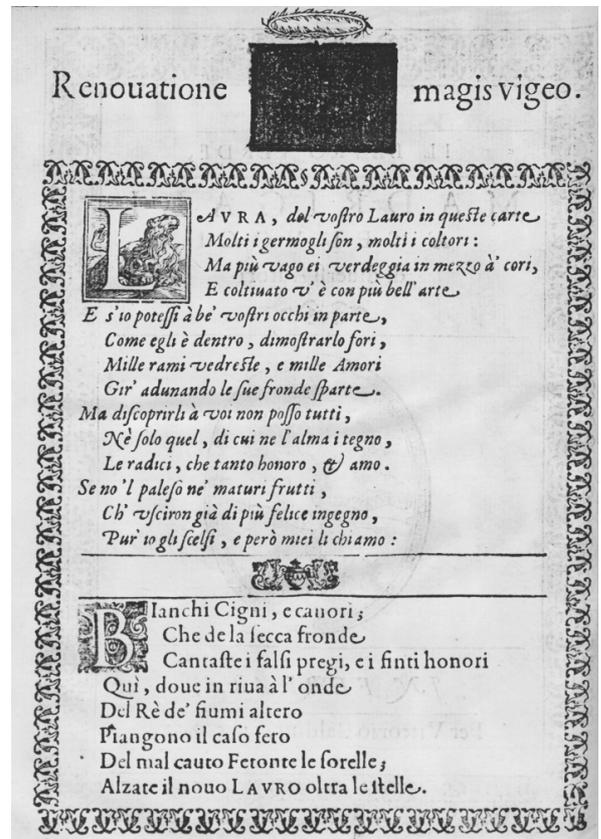
of the kind that Laura would have added to her performances. Still related to Laura's harp playing, we'll also hear two arrangements for harp solo of works originally intended for other instruments: a five-voice *Fantasia da sonar con gli strumenti* by Agostini, written in imitation of Mantuan composer Alessandro Striggio ("Ad imitazione del Sig. Alessandro Striggio") and likely intended for viol consort, and a Toccata attributed to Luzzaschi in Giacomo Diruta's keyboard collection *Il Transilvano* (1593).

The other pieces on the program do not address Laura's harp playing, focusing instead on her singing or, more generally, on her persona. Among the former are two pieces from Luzzaschi's 1601 collection: *Aura soave di segreti accenti* (Gentle breeze [i.e. melody] with secret accents [i.e. ornaments]), for solo soprano; and *O dolcezz'amarissime d'Amore* (O most bitter delights of Love) for three sopranos, on a text drawn from Battista Guarini's pastoral tragicomedy *Il pastor fido* (1590)—it's worth remembering that Battista was the father of Anna Guarini, one of the ladies of the *concerto*. Two more pieces on the program appear to be directly inspired by Laura's singing, and both are based on poetry by Torquato Tasso. One is *Non fonte o fiume od aura/odo in più dolce suon di quel di Laura* (No fountain or river or breeze/ do I hear make a sound sweeter than Laura's), a poem belonging to the *canzoniere* Tasso penned for Laura Peperara in the early 1580s, here presented in a five-voice musical rendition by Ferrara-based composer Paolo Virchi (1551–1610). Virchi's setting is an excellent example of the style labelled by Anthony Newcomb as "luxuriant" because of the extensive use of melismas across all voices.⁸ The other poem, *O verdi selve, o dolci fonti, o rivi* (O green woods, O sweet fountains, O streams), with its distinctive echo effects, was set to music by Marenzio as a six-voice madrigal in a

8 Although they were most celebrated for their solo, highly embellished singing, of the kind displayed in Luzzaschi's 1601 collection, the three ladies also engaged in performances of polyphonic music, reading from part-books.

highly virtuosic style, with emphasis on the top three voices. The style of this piece suggests knowledge of and appreciation for the *concerto delle dame*, which Marenzio likely gained during his visit at Ferrara in 1580–81 with his patron Cardinal Luigi d'Este, brother of Duke Alfonso II.

Luca Marenzio is also among the musical protagonists of the anthologies *Il lauro secco* (“The barren laurel”), for five voices, and *Il lauro verde* (“The green laurel”), for six voices, published in Ferrara by the ducal printer Baldini in 1582 and 1583 respectively. More specifically, Marenzio contributed three pieces for these two anthologies, the opening and the closing madrigals of *Il lauro secco*, and the opening madrigal of *Il lauro verde*. These two volumes are arguably the most ambitious—and perhaps the most unusual—anthologies of polyphonic madrigals of the late sixteenth century. The most conspicuous feature is their sheer size, each volume featuring thirty-one pieces, at a time when most madrigal books did not go beyond two-dozen pieces. In addition, both volumes are lavishly decorated and display the poems and their musical settings on consecutive pages. The latter feature is highly unusual, in that madrigal books typically present poems only as text underlay embedded in the musical notation, but not also as stand-alone texts printed on separate pages. The space accorded to the poems in these collections may reflect the importance of poetry in Ferrarese culture. It may also be related to the genesis of the collections, which were conceived by members of the Ferrarese Accademia dei Rinnovati (“Academy of the Renewed”), which included several poets. Among these was Torquato Tasso, who reveals himself as the editor of the enterprise—at least for its literary component—in the sonnet *Laura, del vostro Lauro in queste carte* (Laura, of your Laurel in these pages), presented in the opening page of *Il lauro verde* in lieu of a more traditional prose dedication. The



The opening page of *Il Lauro verde* (Ferrara: Baldini, 1583)

poem that follows, *Bianchi cigni, e canori* (White and melodious swans), set by Marenzio, is likely also by Tasso, sharing vocabulary and form with his famous stanzas for Laura Peperara *Vaghe ninfe del Po* (Fair nymphs of the Po, *Rime* 175).⁹

The circumstances that led the Rinnovati to assemble these two impressive anthologies remain unclear, although the festive nature of *Il lauro verde* suggests Laura’s wedding with Count Annibale Turco in 1583 as a possible occasion. Unlike other poetic works addressed to Peperara, however, the texts of *Il lauro secco* and *Il lauro verde* go beyond a purely encomiastic function. As Emilia Pantini has suggested, these texts also aim

9 Other identifiable poets of the two collections include Battista Guarini and Orsina Cavaletta.

to portray what appears to be the philosophy of the Accademia dei Rinnovati, with an emphasis on the concept of renewal and its possible Neoplatonic underpinnings.¹⁰ This may explain also the use of imagery and mottos in the opening page of *Il lauro verde*, where we observe a darkened box surmounted by a laurel, perhaps symbolizing the idea of rebirth from death, and the inscription “Renovatione magis vigeo” (I flourish through renewal).

Whereas the poetry of the two collections is rather cohesive, both thematically and stylistically, the music of the *Il lauro secco* and *Il lauro verde* is rather diverse, not only because of the shift in texture from the *secco* to the *verde* (from five to six voices), but also because of the varied geographic provenance of the composers who contributed to these anthologies. Within this diversity, however, it is possible to identify some trends. Whoever was responsible for commissioning pieces seems to have been drawn to Roman and Mantuan composers, in addition to local Ferrarese musicians like Luzzaschi. The predilection for Mantuan composers such as Giaches de Wert¹¹ and Alessandro Striggio (c. 1536/37–92) is easily explainable given the connections between Mantua and Ferrara. The presence of Roman composers, such as Ruggiero Giovannelli (1560–1625) and Giovanni Maria Nanino (1543–1607), was possibly mediated by Luca Marenzio, who, as we have seen, was familiar with the Ferrarese musical milieu thanks to his patron, Cardinal Luigi d’Este. Marenzio was clearly assigned a leading role in the collections. Not coincidentally, his opening piece for *Il lauro verde*, *Bianchi cigni, e canori*, is perhaps the most elaborate of both collections, spanning over 100 measures and boasting varied and colourful textures. Marenzio’s *Bianchi cigni* is also an effective lead-in to the final

section of our program, which features two festive pieces: one is a six-voice madrigal by Wert on a text by Tasso, *Ha Ninfe adorn’è belle/ la casta Margherita, ed essa è Dea* (The chaste Margherita has beautiful, richly adorned nymphs, and she herself is a Goddess), in praise of Mesola, one of the Este family’s leisure retreats outside Ferrara; the other is an eight-voice madrigal by Striggio, *All’apparir della leggiadra figlia* (At the appearance of the lovely maiden). Referencing Hymenaeus, the God of marriage, Striggio’s festive madrigal was aptly added as a final piece to a reprint of *Il lauro verde* published in 1593 by Pierre Phalèse in Antwerp, a publication that testifies to the fame achieved by Laura and more generally by Ferrarese poetic and musical culture, reaching well beyond the Alps.

—Emiliano Ricciardi

10 See Emilia Pantini, “Per un’ermeneutica dei due ‘Lauri,’” *Il Saggiatore musicale* 31, no. 2 (2024), 35–78.

11 One of the works on the program, *Ninfe leggiadre, e voi almi Pastori* (Lovely nymphs, and you, gentle shepherds), is attributed to Wert in *Il lauro verde*. However, there exists a conflicting attribution to Benedetto Pallavicino, who published the piece under his name in his second book for five voices of 1584. On stylistic grounds, and because Wert was affected by malaria in 1582, Newcomb (1975) finds a Pallavicino attribution to be more plausible. In either case, *Ninfe leggiadre* is a piece from the Mantuan orbit.

SOURCES

Lodovico Agostini

De l'odorate spoglie, Fantasia ad imitatione del Sig. Alessandro Striggio

Il nuovo Echo (Ferrara: Baldini, 1583)

Ruggiero Giovanelli

Nel foco d'un bel lauro

Il Lauro secco (Ferrara: Baldini, 1582)

Luzzasco Luzzaschi

Da l'odorate spoglie

Il terzo libro de madrigali a cinque voci (Venice: Gardano, 1582)

Se'l lauro è sempre verde

Il Lauro secco (Ferrara: Baldini, 1582)

Aura soave di segreti accenti, O dolcezz'amarissime d'amore

Madrigali per cantare e sonare a uno e doi e tre soprani (Rome: Verovio, 1601)

Toccata del quarto tuono

Girolamo Diruta, *Il Transilvano* (Venice: Vincenti, 1593)

Luca Marenzio

Ridean già per le piagge

Accademia Filarmonica di Verona MS 220, the so-called "Primo Lauro," early 1580s

Mentre l'aura spirò

Il Lauro secco (Ferrara: Baldini, 1582)

Bianchi cigni e canori

Il Lauro verde (Ferrara: Baldini, 1583)

O verdi selve, o dolci fonti, o rivi

Il sesto libro de madrigali a sei voci (Venice: Gardano, 1595)

Giovanni Maria Nanino

Da i puri loro, e limpidi cristalli

Il Lauro verde (Ferrara: Baldini, 1583)

Alessandro Striggio

All'apparir della leggiadra figlia

Il Lauro verde (2nd. ed., Antwerp: Phalèse & Bellère, 1591)

Paolo Virchi

Non fonte o fiume od aura

Il primo libro de madrigali a cinque voci (Venice: Vincenzi & Amadino, 1584)

Giaches de Wert

Cara la vita mia

Il primo libro de madrigali a cinque voci (Venice: Gardano, 1558)

Hor fuggi, infedel'ombra

Il Lauro secco (Ferrara: Baldini, 1582)

Ninfe leggiadre, e voi, almi pastori

Il Lauro verde (Ferrara: Baldini, 1583)

Ha ninfe adorne e belle

Il nono libro de madrigali a cinque et sei voci (1588)

BLUE HERON



Blue Heron has been acclaimed by *The Boston Globe* as “one of the Boston music community’s indispensables” and hailed by Alex Ross in *The New Yorker* for its “expressive intensity.” The ensemble ranges over a wide repertoire from plainchant to new music, with particular specialities in 15th-century Franco-Flemish polyphony and early 16th-century English sacred music, and is committed to vivid live performance informed by the study of original source materials and historical performance practices.

Founded in 1999, Blue Heron presents a concert series in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and has appeared at the Boston Early Music Festival; in New York City at Music Before 1800, The Cloisters (Metropolitan Museum of Art), and the 92nd Street Y; at the Library of Congress, the National Gallery of Art, and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C.; at the Berkeley Early Music Festival; at Yale University, the University of Chicago, and the University of California, Davis; in Cleveland, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Providence, St. Louis, San Luis Obispo, Seattle, and Vancouver; and in England, Germany, and Belgium, including concerts in the chapel at Peterhouse in Cambridge, England, and in Cipriano de Rore’s hometown of Ronse, Belgium. Blue Heron has been in residence at the University of Chicago, the Center for Early Music Studies at Boston University, and Boston College, and has enjoyed collaborations with A Far Cry, Dark Horse Consort, Les Délices, Parthenia, Piffaro, and Ensemble Plus Ultra.

Blue Heron’s first CD, of music by Guillaume Du Fay, was released in 2007. Between 2010 and 2017 the ensemble issued a 5-CD series of *Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks* (also available as a boxed set entitled *The Lost Music of Canterbury*), including many world premiere recordings of works copied around 1540 for Canterbury Cathedral and restored by Nick Sandon. The fifth CD in the series was awarded the 2018 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Early Music, making Blue Heron the first non-European ensemble



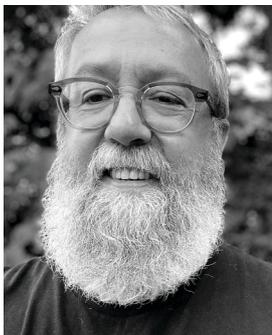
PHOTO: LIZ LINDER

to receive the honor. In 2015 Jessie Ann Owens and Blue Heron won the Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society to support the world premiere recording of Cipriano de Rore's *I madrigali a cinque voci*, released in 2019. Between 2015 and 2023 Blue Heron celebrated the circa-600th birthday of Johannes Okeghem (c. 1420–1497) by performing his complete works in a multi-season project entitled *Okeghem@600* and recording all of his songs for a two-CD set; Volume I of the set was named to the *Bestenliste* of the *Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik*. Blue Heron's recordings also include a disc accompanying Thomas Forrest Kelly's book *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation*, the live recording *Christmas in Medieval England*, a compilation of medieval songs entitled *A 14th-Century Salmagundi*, a live recording of a concert production of Guillaume de Machaut's *Remede de Fortune, Christmas & New Year's in 15th-Century France & Burgundy*, and a disc of works by Mehmet Ali Sanlikol, *Lessons from Nightingales*.



Amanda Beranek is a Baroque and modern harpist based in New York City. Maintaining a particular passion for early music, Amanda performs on various types of harps, including pedal, lever, Italian triple, and German double harps. In July 2023, Amanda participated in The Helicon

Project, a Baroque improvisation festival in Verona, Italy, where she performed on both the Spanish harp and Baroque triple harp. Amanda has also presented solo music at the World Harp Congress in Wales. She regularly performs early and contemporary folk music on modern and historical instruments. Amanda has recently performed with Juilliard 415, the Silentwoods Collective, and TENET Vocal Artists. She holds two degrees from The Juilliard School.



Bass-baritone **Paul Guttry** has performed throughout the USA and internationally with Sequentia, Chanticleer, the Boston Camerata, and New York's Ensemble for Early Music. A founding member of Blue Heron, he has also appeared in and around Boston as soloist with Emmanuel Music, the

Handel & Haydn Society, the Boston Early Music Festival, the Tanglewood Music Center, Cantata Singers, Boston Cecilia, Prism Opera, Boston Revels, Collage, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and Intermezzo. Paul can be heard on Blue Heron's recordings and on discs of medieval music by Sequentia.



Steven Hrycelak, a Ukrainian-American bass from Rochester, New York, has crafted a career focused on both new and early repertoires. As a new music singer, he is a founding member of the vocal ensemble Ekmeles, which was recently awarded the 2023 Ernst von Siemens

Music Foundation Ensemble Prize. He has also performed with Roomful of Teeth and Toby Twining Music, and at festivals including Ostrava Days in the Czech Republic, New Music New College, Prototype, and the Bang on a Can Marathon. He is a longtime member of the Grammy-nominated Choir of Trinity Wall Street, with whom he has been a frequent soloist on works from Schütz, Bach, and Handel to Stravinsky, George Crumb, and Terry Riley, and has worked on over a dozen recordings, both as a vocalist and as a diction coach. In the early music domain, he has toured Handel's *Theodora* with The English Concert, performed with the Mark Morris Dance Group in Purcell and Handel operas, performed Monteverdi with Opera Omnia, and works with Pegasus, NYS Baroque, ARTEK, the Portland Bach Experience, TENET Vocal Artists, and The Green Mountain Project. He also performs regularly with Blue Heron and is proud to have sung on their album *Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks*, Vol. 5, which won a Gramophone Award in 2018. In the spring of 2022 he toured the UK with TENET to celebrate the 450th anniversary of Thomas Tomkins's birth, and in August 2022 had the pleasure of finally doing a twice-delayed run of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* with Pegasus. Steven studied at Indiana University and Yale University, where he sang with the Yale Whiffenpoofs. He is also a vocal coach and accompanist.



Reviewers describe **Jason McStoots** as “elegantly amorous” (*Parterre*), with a “strong satiny voice [that] filled the hall with grace and, when called for, humor” (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*). His operatic appearances with the Boston Early Music Festival include Sancho Panza in Telemann’s *Don*

Quichotte, Lepidus in Keiser’s *Octavia*, *Le Jeu* in *Les plaisirs de Versailles* by Charpentier, and Morpheus in *Circe* by Desmarest, among many others, and he has been Associate Director of BEMF’s Young Artist Training Program since 2017, providing stage direction and mentorship. Recently he has taken on more frequent projects as stage director for operas with the Amherst Early Music Festival, Connecticut Early Music Festival, Brandeis University, and Les Délices. A widely-respected interpreter of early music, he has performed with Bach Collegium San Diego, Les Délices, the Folger Consort, The North Carolina Symphony, and the Newberry Consort, and he recently appeared as Odoardo in Handel’s *Ariodante* with Boston Baroque. He has been a member of Blue Heron since 2005.



Scott Metcalfe is widely recognized as one of North America’s leading specialists in music from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries and beyond. Musical and artistic director of Blue Heron since its founding in 1999, he was music director of New York City’s Green Mountain

Project from 2010–19 and has been guest director of TENET (New York), the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), the Toronto Consort, The Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), Quire Cleveland, and the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), in music ranging from Machaut through Monteverdi to Bach and Handel. He has also enjoyed a long career as a baroque violinist, from a decade playing

with Tafelmusik to more recent work with Les Délices (dir. Debra Nagy), L’Harmonie des Saisons (dir. Eric Milnes), and other ensembles. Metcalfe’s scholarly work, centered on the historical performance practice of medieval and Renaissance vocal music, has been published in numerous program and recording notes, and he is the author of two articles in the *Journal of the Alamire Foundation*, two chapters in a recently-released book on music at Peterhouse, Cambridge (*Music, politics, and religion in early seventeenth-century Cambridge: the Peterhouse partbooks in context*), and editions of music for Antico Edition and the Alamire Foundation. He spent fall 2025 in residence at the Alamire Foundation in Leuven, Belgium, working on a new edition of the songs of Binchois (c. 1400–1460). Metcalfe has taught at Boston University, Harvard University, the New England Conservatory, and the Peabody Institute, and been guest director of the baroque orchestra at Oberlin Conservatory. He received a bachelor’s degree from Brown University (1985), where he majored in biology, and a master’s degree in historical performance practice from Harvard (2005).



Praised for her “warm, colorful mezzo” (*Opera News*) and her “astonishing range and flexibility” (*Boston Musical Intelligencer*), **Sophie Michaux** has become one of New England’s most versatile and compelling vocalists. Born in London and raised in the French Alps, Sophie’s

unique background informs her artistic identity, making her feel at home in an eclectic span of repertoire ranging from grand opera to French cabaret songs. Recent solo engagements include the roles of Alcina in Caccini’s *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall’isola d’Alcina* (Haymarket Opera), Olofernes in Scarlatti’s *La Giuditta* (Haymarket Opera), Ceres in Lalande’s *Les Fontaines de Versailles* (Boston Early Music Festival), and Clorinda in Monteverdi’s *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (A Far Cry), as well as soloist in the world premiere of Kevin Siegfried’s arrangement of *Three Shaker Songs* (Boston Symphony Chamber Players), in Handel’s *Messiah*

Photo: Anna Metcalfe

(Upper Valley Baroque), and in De Fallá's *El Amor Brujo* (Lowell Chamber Orchestra). She is thrilled to collaborate with Blue Heron, Lorelei Ensemble, Roomful of Teeth, A Far Cry, Palaver Strings, Les Délices, Bach Collegium San Diego, Ruckus, Upper Valley Baroque, and other ensembles performing across the US. She is also the Artistic Director of the cross-genre ensemble Tiny Glass Tavern.



Grammy-nominated mezzo-soprano **Laura Pudwell** has established a superb reputation through her performances in London, Paris, Salzburg, Houston, Vienna, and Boston. Ms. Pudwell sings a vast repertoire ranging from early music to contemporary works, and has received

international acclaim for her recordings. She is best known in Boston for her appearances in operas presented by the Boston Early Music Festival. A frequent guest of many national and international presenters, she has had the privilege of working with many outstanding conductors, including Hans Graf, Hervé Niquet, Andrew Parrott, Ivars Taurins, David Fallis, Brian Jackson, John Sinclair, Bernard Labadie, Lydia Adams, Howard Dyck and Robert Cooper. On the opera stage, Ms. Pudwell has performed across Canada with such companies as Opera Atelier, the Calgary Opera, Vancouver Early Music, and Festival Vancouver, as well as with the Houston Grand Opera and the Cleveland Opera. Her many roles include Cornelia (*Giulio Cesare*), Marcelina (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Nerone and Arnalta (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*), Mrs. Quickly (*Falstaff*), and Dido/Sorceress (*Dido and Aeneas*), which also was an award-winning recording performed by Ms. Pudwell in Paris. She is a regular participant in many festivals, including Festival Vancouver, the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, the Banff Summer Festival, the Elora Festival, the Boston Early Music Festival, the Grand River Baroque Festival, and the WinterPark Bach Festival in Orlando. Ms. Pudwell appears regularly with the Toronto Consort and is a frequent guest soloist with Tafelmusik, the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, the Toronto Chamber

Choir, Symphony Nova Scotia, the St. Lawrence Choir, Le Concert Spirituel, Chorus Niagara, and the Menno Singers.



The conductor, keyboard player, singer, composer, and linguistic coach **Alessandro Quarta** is the founder and director of Concerto Romano, an ensemble dedicated to Roman and other Italian repertoire from the 16th to 18th centuries. He has performed in Italy, Austria, Germany, Belgium,

the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United States, and Mexico. and has released numerous CDs, including the world premiere recording of Bernardo Pasquini's *Sete di Christo*, which was awarded the 2016 Diapason d'or; *Sacred music for the poor*, which won the Prix Caecilia in 2015; *Soto: 20 laudi spirituali* (for Brilliant); and *Missing Vittorio* (2024) which received five stars from *Musica*. Quarta is guest conductor at the Teatro de Roma, Theater Kiel, Staatstheater Darmstadt, Oper Köln, and the Teatro Comunale di Ferrara. His musical collaborations (as guest conductor, coach, and continuo player) include the Boston Early Music Festival Ensemble, the Consortium Carissimi of Minneapolis, Progetto Syntagma, Darmstädter Barocksolisten, Ecclesia Nova of Verona, Blue Heron, Ensemble Voces Suaves of Basel, and the National Baroque Orchestra of Italian Conservatories. He has also coached the Ensemble Vocal du Luxembourg and the Arnold Schoenberg Chor in Vienna. From 2019 to 2025 he was professor of ensemble music in the early music department of the Conservatorio E. F. Dall'Abaco in Verona and collaborated as a professor with the Hochschule für Kunst Bremen and the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz (University of Music and Dance) in Cologne. He has taught at the International Early Music Course in Urbino organized by the Fondazione Italiana per la Musica Antica (FIMA) since 2007 and has been Artistic Director of the Urbino International Festival of Early Music since 2018. In 2022, he was named president of the Fondazione Italiana per la Musica Antica.



With a voice the *Washington Post* calls “bright, agile, and full of heart,” **James Reese** is a frequently sought performer with orchestras and ensembles throughout North America. James has sung in Blue Heron since 2019, and maintains close relationships with other leading early music

ensembles, including Tafelmusik, the American Bach Soloists, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Montana Baroque, The Sebastians, TENET Vocal Artists, and the Boston Early Music Festival. James is also a recitalist, performing with lutenist Brandon Acker in innovative programs of lute songs, and with pianist Daniel Overly in concerts of lieder and art song. Reviews have called James’s singing “captivating” (*The Broad Street Review*) and “splendid” (*San Francisco Chronicle*). He is a graduate of Northwestern University’s Bienen School of Music and holds a master’s degree from Yale University’s School of Music. He lives in Philadelphia with his wife Natalie.



Pre-concert speaker **Emiliano Ricciardi** is Associate Professor of Music History at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He holds a PhD from Stanford University, which he completed in 2013 with the support of an ACLS/Mellon fellowship, and an MPhil from the

University of Cambridge. In 2015 he was a Lauro de Bosis postdoctoral fellow in the history of Italian civilization at Harvard University. His main research area is the late Italian madrigal, with an emphasis on the settings of Torquato Tasso’s poetry. He is the director and general editor of the Tasso in Music Project (www.tassomusic.org), a digital critical edition of the musical settings of Tasso’s poetry, which has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities in the form of two grants, a Scholarly Editions and Translations Grant in 2016 and a Digital Advancement Grant in 2022.



Soprano **Sonja DuToit Tengblad** has appeared as a soloist with A Far Cry, the Boston Philharmonic, the Boston Landmarks Orchestra, Boston Baroque, the Handel and Haydn Society, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and Minnesota’s Bach Roots Festival, and she recently

checked Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center off the bucket list with the New York City Chamber Orchestra. In addition to her independently curated projects Modern Dickinson and Beat Song, ensemble singing is a cornerstone of her career. She sings with the Grammy-nominated Lorelei Ensemble, Emmanuel Music, Blue Heron, Cut Circle, and the Grammy-winning ensemble Conspirare. After her son was born in 2017, she had a minor existential meltdown and founded Beyond Artists and Mothers Out Front East Boston. You can learn more about these efforts and her teaching method, The Regulated Voice, on her website (sonjatengblad.com). She teaches at Wellesley College and at Harvard University through the Holden Voice Program.



Praised for his “elegant style” (*The Boston Globe*), **Sumner Thompson** is highly sought after as both baritone and tenor. His appearances on the operatic stage have included roles in the Boston Early Music Festival’s productions of Conradi’s *Ariadne* (2003) and Lully’s *Psyché* (2007) and several

European tours with Contemporary Opera Denmark as Orfeo in Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*. He has performed across North America as a soloist with the Handel & Haydn Society, Concerto Palatino, Tafelmusik, Apollo’s Fire, Les Boréades (Montreal), Les Voix Baroques, Pacific Baroque Orchestra, the King’s Noyse, TENET, Mercury Baroque, and the symphony orchestras of Charlotte, Memphis, and Phoenix. Highlights of the last several seasons include Monteverdi’s *Vespers of 1610* and other programs with

the Green Mountain Project (2010–20), a tour of Japan with Joshua Rifkin and Cambridge Concentus in the St. Matthew Passion, repeat appearances at the Carmel Bach Festival, a performance as a soloist in Britten's *War*

Requiem with the New England Philharmonic, and many programs with L'Harmonie des Saisons (Quebec). He has been a member of Blue Heron since 2002.

Cover Illustration Credits

A Celebration of German Poetry & Song, c. 1150-1450

Codex Manesse: Heidelberg University Library, Codex Palatinus germanicus 848

Christmas in 16th-Century Spain

The Annunciation, Budapest Master (Spanish, Castilian, c. 1500)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City (Public Domain)

In Praise of Laura Peverara

A Concert, anonymous (Italian, Venetian, mid-1520s)

The National Gallery, London (CC4.0)

Okeghem: *Missa Cuiusvis toni*

Okeghem and his singers in an illustrated MS of the 1520s

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 1537, f. 58v

Le grant rhetorique: The Music & Poetry of Guillaume de Machaut

Love presents his children Sweet Thought, Pleasure, and Hope to Guillaume de Machaut.

Machaut MS A: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 1584, f. A1

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2:00 PM **Concert: *Le grant rhetorique*
The Music & Poetry of
Guillaume de Machaut**
Sanctuary
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7:00 PM **Candlelight Concerts:**
&
8:30 PM ***Messe de Nostre Dame***
Lindsey Chapel
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May 3

6:00 PM **Cabaret Concert: Machaut
& the Ars subtilior**
The Allen Center
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Acknowledgements

Blue Heron exists thanks to the devotion, hard work, and financial support of a large community of musicians, staff, board members, volunteers, donors, and concertgoers. We are grateful to everyone who joins us in creating, nurturing, and sustaining an organization dedicated to making vocal ensemble music live and thrive in the twenty-first century.

We are grateful to several people in particular for making this week's concerts possible. The program is the result of a fruitful collaboration with Emiliano Ricciardi, professor of music history at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Our New York performance is sponsored by Deborah Malamud and Andrew Manshel, and our gracious hosts at St. Ignatius of Antioch are the Reverend Dr. Andrew Blume and Organist, Choirmaster, and Director of Music Gwendolyn Toth. Adam Simon, music director at the Edwards Church, and John Yannis, former general manager of Blue Heron and current resident of western Massachusetts, made our Northampton concert possible and supported it in various ways. The virginal played by Alessandro Quarta in Cambridge and Northampton was provided by Peter Sykes, music director at First Church in Cambridge, and the harpsichord used in New York, by Gwen Toth and Dongsok Shin. Many thanks to all for your generous help!

We are extraordinarily fortunate to work with a slate of talented and skilled designers, engineers, videographers, and photographers. Our concerts and CDs are recorded by Joel Gordon. Kathy Wittman (Ball Square Films) is our videographer. Our programs, printed publicity materials, and CDs were designed

by Melanie Germond until 2019 and by John Kramer from 2019 to 2023; John continues to design our CDs; the new designer of our programs and all other material is Shawn Keener. FlashPrint in Harvard Square prints our programs, as they have since 1999. Erik Bertrand built our website and keeps it functioning properly. Liz Linder is our photographer, recently joined by Anna Metcalfe and Alexandra Weliever. Our debt to these wonderful people who have shaped our look and sound is impossible to overstate.

Many thanks to our hardworking and devoted board, and to all our dedicated volunteers.

We are very grateful to the hosts who offer their gracious hospitality to our artists who join us from out of town and to musicians on tour. This week we extend our gratitude to Kristen and Evan Benjamin, John Carey, Laura Jeppesen and Daniel Stepner, and Deborah Malamud and Neal Plotkin.

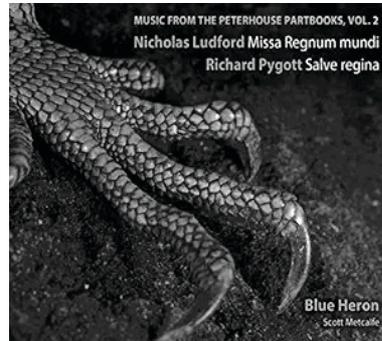
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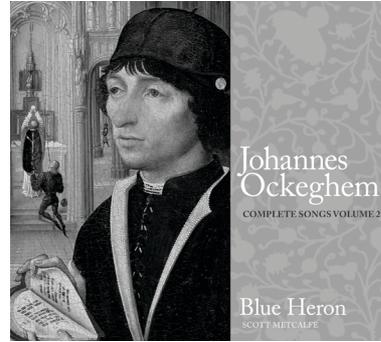
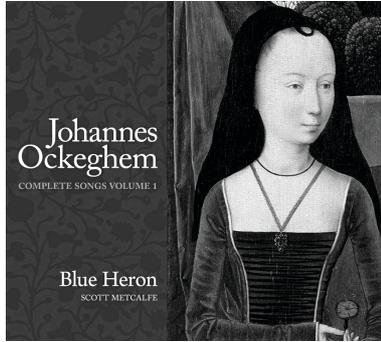
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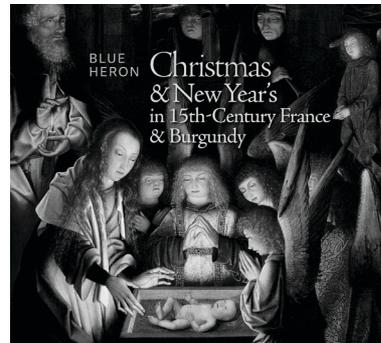
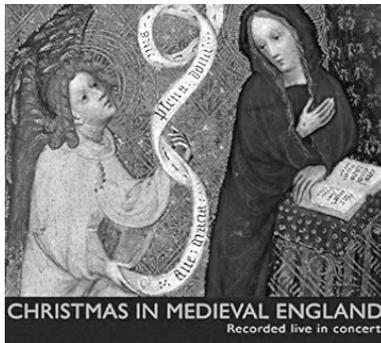
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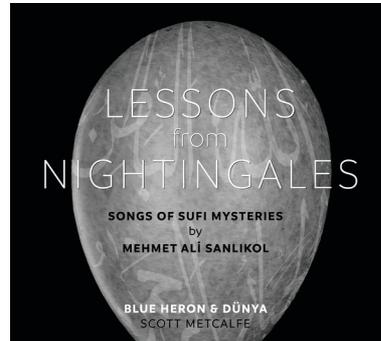
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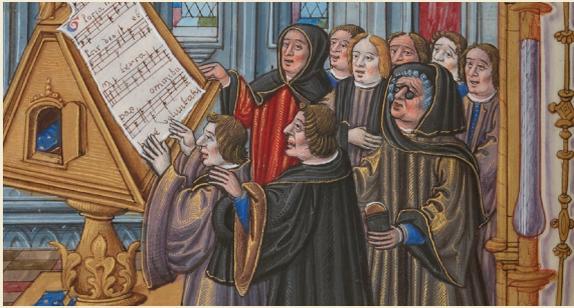
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