



# Franco Fagioli sings Vivaldi and Handel

Monday 4 June 2018 7.30pm, Hall

## **Vivaldi**

Sinfonia in G major, RV146

Cessate, omai cessate, RV684

Sinfonia in G minor, RV156

L'Olimpiade – 'Mentre dormi'

Orlando furioso – 'Nel profondo, cieco mondo'

**interval** 20 minutes

**Handel** Imeneo – 'Se potessero i sospir miei'

**Handel** Il pastor fido – 'Sento brillar nel sen'

**Vivaldi** Giustino, RV717 – Sinfonia in C major

**Handel** Ariodante – 'Scherza infida'

**Geminiani** Concerto grosso in D minor 'La folia'  
(after A Corelli Op 5, No 12)

**Handel** Ariodante – 'Dopo notte'

**Franco Fagioli** countertenor

**Venice Baroque Orchestra**

**Gianpiero Zanocco** leader

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# Welcome

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We welcome Argentine countertenor Franco Fagioli and the Venice Baroque Orchestra for an evening of Baroque music that promises heightened emotions and musical thrills.

Vivaldi's instrumental music needs little introduction, with its winning blend of heady virtuosity and plangent melodies, but his vocal works have only relatively recently begun to receive the limelight they deserve. His cantata *Cessate, omai cessate* is a good case in point, combining moments of melting beauty with a compelling directness of utterance. Similarly, Vivaldi's operas (he claimed to have written 94, though only around half

that number are known to us) are full of imaginative word-painting.

Handel composed *Ariondante* for a London audience, but he would have been nowhere without Italian singers, and the publicity for the opera promised 'celebrated Voices who have been sent over from Italy'.

The composer and violinist Francesco Geminiani was another Italian import, arriving in London as a young man and rapidly proceeding to make his name, wowing audiences whether he went.

It promises to be a wonderful evening. I hope you enjoy it.

Huw Humphreys, Head of Music, Barbican

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# All the world's a stage

**For texts, please see page 6**

By mid-1700 there were already signs of the Corelli-fever that would soon grip Britain's musical public. In June, Corelli's agents, John Banister II and Robert King, advertised a subscription to the Op 5 Violin Sonatas, newly printed in Rome. London publisher John Walsh followed suit with his own imprint – so that by August two versions were available, followed closely by a third from Amsterdam publisher, Estienne Roger, known for his adroit 'pirating' of Italian editions. Musical societies across Britain subscribed to Corelli's works, which aptly suited their amateur capabilities, enhanced, if necessary, by professional performers. In 1710 Roger North wrote that 'It [is] wonderfull to observe what a scratching of Corelli there is everywhere – nothing will relish but Corelli'.

Arriving in London in 1714, the young Italian violinist and composer Francesco Geminiani (1687–1762) rapidly secured a place in the capital's musical life. It seems likely that he had studied in Rome with Corelli. Moreover, with his appointment in 1725 as 'sole Director and Perpetual Dictator' to the newly founded Masonic Philo-musicae et -architecturae societas Apollini, at the Queen's Head Tavern, Temple Bar, he was commissioned to arrange the first six of Corelli's Op 5 Violin Sonatas as *concerti grossi*. This first set enjoyed a wide circulation. The second, issued in 1729, proved less popular, apparently on account of 'having no fugues but consisting altogether of airs'. Nonetheless, Corelli's use of the well-known 'La folia' as the basis for variations in the final piece of the set (No 12), ensured its lasting popularity. By adding a second violin and viola parts to Corelli's original, and by contrasting solo with grouped strings, Geminiani enriched a work already vividly structured by shifts in tempo, harmonic pace, texture and figuration.

The societies where Corelli's works were played often resembled gentlemen's clubs: convivial

haunts for smoking, eating and drinking, with women admitted occasionally as audience members. In Venice, however, Vivaldi's instrumental works were designed for an entirely different performance context. The charitable Ospedale della Pietà, facing the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, provided musical training for girls who had been abandoned or orphaned. Those who gained proficiency would teach those less advanced, and those with particular skill were often reluctant to leave. Vivaldi, engaged as a teacher from around 1704, is likely to have composed his orchestral sinfonias for the institution's skilled, all-female ensemble, to be played in concerts following services in the Ospedale's chapel.

Vivaldi's sinfonias, also known as *concerti a quattro* (that is, concertos without soloists) or simply concertos, belonged to the fluid, early years of the genre, as shaped in the late 17th century by Giuseppe Torelli. Vivaldi composed nearly 60 such works, dating from the first decades of the 18th century: in 1726 the flautist Joachim Quantz posted from Venice a manuscript copy of the G major Sinfonia, RV146 to the violinist Johann Georg Pisendel. Characteristically these sinfonias were cast in a single key, with a brief slow central movement. In the case of RV156, in G minor, this central interlude is prefaced by an infectiously rhythmic Allegro and succeeded by a movement of tempestuous virtuosity. As the solo concerto increased in popularity, the sinfonia-concerto declined, often to be replaced in concerts by the opening sinfonia (or overture) of an opera. The example here heard tonight is taken from Vivaldi's *Giustino*, an opera first performed at the carnival in Rome in 1724.

Meanwhile, the secular cantata was flourishing within Italy's academies: intimate, arcane gatherings at which poetry, philosophy, aesthetics, drama and music were debated and performed. Arcadia provided both a model and a subject, such that Joseph Baretti, describing Rome's

Arcadian Academy for an English audience in 1769, wrote that 'every body who had the least knack for poetry, was metamorphosed into a shepherd, and fell directly upon composing rustic sonnets, eclogues, ydyllics, and bucolics'.

Vivaldi's *Cessate, omai cessate* (1727–8) represents a rather more nuanced approach: it's a psychological drama in miniature and casts a scorned lover as inconsolable, then vengeful, resolving to die, and in so doing to travel from the sanctuary of dark caves to the banks of the Acheron, whose waters will be tinged with his innocent blood. Manuscript studies attest to Vivaldi's thoughts as the work developed, showing how the addition of an introductory recitative not only altered the cantata's structure but subtly twisted the import of its narrative. One consequence was to throw into relief what is undoubtedly the jewel of the setting: the aria, 'Ah, ch'infelice', whose melody throbs above a bristling cushion of pizzicato and staccato strings. While the text's author is unknown, it seems likely that this cantata was sung by the mezzo-soprano Anna Girò, originally a pupil at the Pietà, with whom Vivaldi worked closely from the mid-1720s until his death. The lightness (in some accounts, 'weakness') of Girò's voice was offset by her extraordinary stage presence and dramatic ability. Seventeen or eighteen years old when this cantata was written, she had sung on stage since her early teens, progressing from minor travesty parts to leading roles.

Opera occupied much of Vivaldi's time and energy. Although only some 50 works are attributed to him (he claimed to have written 94), there are records of his involvement with many more as director, arranger or impresario. No other musician in Italy at the time appears to have worked in such a multi-faceted way – take, for

example, the performance history of *Orlando furioso*. An opera by this name, ostensibly with music by Giovanni Alberto Ristori, was first sung under Vivaldi's directorship at Venice's Teatro San Angelo in autumn 1713. For the following season, Vivaldi substituted music of his own. Then, 13 years later, he produced a further version at the San Angelo, retaining some of his earlier score, but with the majority composed anew. 'Nel profondo, cieco mondo', the first aria sung by Orlando, thus received two quite different treatments; both, however, were fiendishly difficult settings guaranteed to bring the audience to its feet. In the version sung tonight, from 1727, Orlando's acrobatic vocal line hints at the excess and instability of his character that will lead to the 'insanity' of unrequited passion.

In the case of *L'Olimpiade* (1734), Vivaldi purloined a libretto which had been set by Antonio Caldara and performed in Vienna the previous season. Pietro Metastasio's drama drew from the 'Trial of the Suitors' (Herodotus: *Historiae*, Book VI), in a plot nigh-impossible to summarise succinctly. When we encounter Licida, he has persuaded his more athletic friend Megacle to compete (on his behalf) for the hand of Aristeia, the king's daughter. Megacle is initially unaware of the contest's prize; furthermore, as it transpires, he is already in love with Aristeia. Thus, as Licida sings the tender lullaby, 'Mentre dormi', to Megacle, the listener also intuits his less noble desire for Aristeia: a rapture which slows the river's course and bids the breezes hold still (note Vivaldi's use of a sustained horn pedal). The role of Licida was originally sung by Angiola Zanuchi (Angela Zanucchi), a contralto/mezzo-soprano from Brescia who specialised in male roles.

In the Baroque era, as public attention focused increasingly on the celebrity of particular singers,

composers sought new voices, retained old favourites, and wrote ever more spectacular arias for opera's most prized phenomenon – the castrato. Yet such celebrities could command high fees, and women who were able to take their place, in trouser roles, were also valued. Lucia Lancetti, who excelled at such parts, is known to have saved Vivaldi the expense of a top-rate castrato by singing the title-roles of Orlando and Farnace.

Just as Vivaldi was staging *L'Olimpiade* in Venice, Handel was facing a crisis at the opening of the 1734–5 London opera season. Nicola Porpora, director of the rival Opera of the Nobility, had not only usurped his position at the Haymarket King's Theatre, but taken many of his singers, including the castrato Senesino. Fighting fire with fire, Handel arranged to use John Rich's new theatre at Covent Garden, announcing a company 'compos'd of Signor Carestini [castrato], Signora Strada, the Signore Negri, and some celebrated Voices who have been sent over from Italy'. The new opera would be *Ariodante*.

At this critical juncture, and anticipating greater scrutiny than ever, Handel visibly modified his approach to the stage. He engaged fewer new Italian singers, employing instead English singers, and using choruses and even dancing to end each act; he also focused on presenting his own work (rather than others' operas), including oratorios. In this way, he differentiated productions at Covent Garden from those at the rival Haymarket. Yet *Ariodante*, held back to open the New Year in January 1735, still displayed Handel's sure knowledge of how to delight audiences. Carestini, cast in the opera's title-role, was described by Charles Burney as 'tall, beautiful and majestic ... a very animated and intelligent actor ... [who] with a lively and inventive imagination ... rendered

everything he sang interesting by good taste, energy, and judicious embellishments.' Playing to these strengths, Handel placed Ariodante's arias at strategically important moments in the opera's drama. In Act 2's 'Scherza infida', as the hero tells of his beloved's (apparent) infidelity, a mood of intense interiority is invoked by sublimely lyrical text-setting, counterpointed desolately by the timbre of bassoons. Ariodante's Act 3 aria, 'Dopo notte', in contrast, jubilantly conjures dawn, and a safe harbour following night's raging tempest. Handel's score scintillates with syncopated strings and glittering melismas, exploiting the full, two-octave range of Carestini's voice.

Carestini had already influenced the revival of Handel's *Il pastor fido* in 1734, 22 years after its first, unsuccessful performances (a contemporary diarist observed acidly, 'the scene represented only the Country of Arcadia; the Habits were old – the Opera short'). Casting Carestini in the role of Mirtillo, Handel added 'Sento brillar nel sen': a breathlessly virtuosic aria proclaiming hope that love's course will run smoothly. Yet it was a different castrato, Giovanni Battista Andreoni, who would star in *Imeneo*, Handel's penultimate opera, at Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre in November 1740. By now, audiences had seemingly tired of Handel, favouring instead the *galant* style of composers such as Galuppi and Hasse. Nevertheless, *Imeneo*'s music is of consistently high quality, its characters deftly delineated. 'Se potessero i sospir miei' is sung by Tirinto at the opening of the opera, as he reflects on the abduction by pirates of his beloved Rosmene. By turns pensive and bitter, its profound depiction of the human condition confirms Handel as a consummate composer for the stage.

Programme note © Judith LeGrove

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# Texts

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**Antonio Vivaldi**

**Cessate, omai cessate**

Cessate, omai cessate,  
Rimembranze crudeli  
D'un affetto tiranno!  
Già barbare e spietate  
Mi cangiaste i contenti  
In un immenso affanno.  
Cessate, omai cessate  
Di lacerarmi il petto,  
Di trafiggermi l'alma,  
Di toglier al mio cor riposo e calma.  
Povero core afflitto e abbandonato,  
Se ti toglie la pace un affetto tiranno,  
Perché un volto spietato, un alma infida,  
La sola crudeltà pasce ed annida.

Ah ch'infelice sempre  
Me vuol Dorilla ingrata,  
Ah sempre più spietata,  
Mi stringe a lagrimar.

Per me non v'è ristoro,  
Per me non v'è più speme.  
E il fier martoro e le mie pene  
Solo la morte può consolar.

À voi dunque ricorro,  
Orridi specchi, taciturni orrori,  
Solitari ritiri, ed ombre amiche,  
Tra voi porto il mio duolo,  
Perché spero da voi quella pietade,  
Che Dorilla inhumana non annida.  
Vengo, spelonche amate,  
Vengo specchi graditi,  
Alfine meco involto  
Il mio tormento in voi resti sepolto.

Nell'orrido albergo, ricetta di pene,  
Potrò il mio tormento sfogare contento,  
Potrò ad alta voce chiamare spietata  
Dorilla l'ingrata, morire potrò.

Leave off, leave off  
you cruel memories  
of a tyrannical love!  
Since, barbarously and mercilessly  
you have changed my happiness  
into boundless anguish.  
Leave off, now leave off  
lacerating my breast,  
rending my soul,  
robbing my heart of rest and peace!  
My poor heart, afflicted and forsaken,  
robbed of peace by a tyrannical love,  
since a pitiless face and a faithless soul  
nourish and cherish nothing but cruelty.

Ah, how the ingrate Dorilla  
always wishes me woe,  
ah, ever more mercilessly  
she compels me to tears.

For me there is no cure,  
for me there is no hope,  
and my fierce torment and pain  
death alone can console.

In you then I take refuge,  
grim caves, silent darkness,  
solitary retreats and welcoming shades,  
to you I bear my sorrow,  
for from you I hope for the pity  
that inhuman Dorilla does not cherish.  
I come, beloved caverns,  
I come, welcoming dens,  
that with my earthly burden  
my torments may lie buried in you.

In this grim refuge, abode of pain,  
I may give free vent to my torment,  
I may loudly call the ungrateful Dorilla  
merciless, and I may die.

Andrò d'Acheronte su la nera sponda,  
Tingendo quest'onda di sangue innocente  
Gridando vendetta,  
Ed ombra baccante vendetta farò.

*Anonymous*

I shall go to the black shores of Acheron,  
dyeing its floods with innocent blood,  
crying for vengeance, and shall then,  
as a raging shade, take revenge on her.

*Translation by Derek Yeld © Harmonia Mundi*

### **L'Olimpiade – 'Mentre dormi'**

*Licida*

Mentre dormi, Amor fomenti  
Il piacer de' sonni tuoi  
Con l'idea del mio piacer.

Abbia il rio passi più lenti,  
E sospenda i moti suoi  
Ogni zeffiro leggier.

*Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782)*

While you sleep, let Cupid nurture  
pleasure in your slumber  
with the thought of my joy.

Let the stream run more slowly,  
and every breeze  
cease moving.

### **Orlando furioso – 'Nel profondo, cieco mondo'**

*Orlando*

Nel profondo, cieco mondo  
Si precipiti la sorte  
Già spietata a questo cor.

Vincerà l'amor più forte  
Con l'aia del valor.

*Grazio Bracciolini (1682–1752),  
after Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533)*

Let fate, that has treated my heart so cruelly,  
be cast down  
into the deep, sightless world.

Aided by valour,  
the stronger love will prevail.

*Translations by Kenneth Chalmers © DG*

**interval** 20 minutes

### **George Frideric Handel**

#### **Imeneo – 'Se potessero i sospir miei'**

*Tirinto*

Se potessero i sospir miei  
Far che l'onde a queste sponde  
Riportassero il legno infido, io vorrei  
Tutti sciogliere là sul lido  
I sospiri del mio cor.

Ma non possono far dal mare  
Ritornare a me Rosmene.  
Deh! Sull'ale a queste arene  
La conduca il dio d'amor!

*Silvio Stampiglia (1664–1725)*

If my sighs could only compel  
the waves to drive the treacherous ship  
back to this coast, I would  
stand on its shore and let every sigh  
in my heart issue forth.

But my sighs cannot bring Rosmene  
back to me from the sea.  
Alas! May the god of love  
fly her home to this shore!

### **Il pastor fido — ‘Sento brillar nel sen’**

*Mirtillo*

Sento brillar nel sen  
Un novo, lieto ardor  
Che mi consola.

Ah, che la sola spene  
Del caro amato bene  
Al duoi m’invola!

*Giacomo Rossi (fl 1710–31) after a work by  
Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538–1612)*

In my breast I feel the blaze  
of a new and happy flame  
that comforts me.

Ah, only the hope inspired  
by my sweet beloved  
rescues me from sorrow!

*Translations by Susannah Howe © DG*

### **Ariodante — ‘Scherza infida’**

*Ariodante*

E vivo ancora?  
E senza il ferro, oh Dei! che farò?  
Che mi dite, o affanni miei?

Scherza infida  
in grembo al drudo,  
lo tradito a morte in braccio  
Per tua colpa ora men vò.

Ma a spezzar l’indegno laccio,  
Ombra mesta e spinto ignudo,  
Per tua pena io tornerò.

And am I still alive?  
And without my sword, ye Gods, what shall I do?  
What do you tell me, my grief?

The unfaithful woman  
Frolics on the bosom of her paramour.  
Betrayed, I go off into the arms of death  
Through your fault.

But, a sad shade and a naked spirit,  
I shall return for your pain  
to break the unworthy bond.

### **Ariodante — ‘Dopo notte’**

*Ariodante*

Dopo notte, atra e funesta,  
Splende in Ciel più vago il sole,  
E di gioia empie la terra.

Mentre in orrida tempesta  
Il mio legno è quasi assorto,  
Giunge in porto, e ’l lido afferra.

*Anonymous libretto after a work by Antonio Salvi  
(1664–1724)*

After the night, dark and funereal,  
the sun shines brighter in the heavens,  
and fills the earth with joy.

Although my little boat was almost swamped  
in a terrible storm,  
it reaches port, and grasps the shore.

*Translations by Frederick Hammond ©  
Harmonia Mundi*

# About the performers

Igor Studio/DG



Franco Fagioli

## **Franco Fagioli** countertenor

Franco Fagioli is one of the leading virtuoso countertenors of our time. Renowned as much for his artistry as for the beauty of his voice (which spans three octaves) and his masterful technique, he is the first countertenor to sign an exclusive contract with DG. The singer's new relationship with the label reflects his status as one of the brightest stars of Baroque and early 19th-century *bel canto* opera. To date he has released two solo albums for the label: *Rossini* with Armonia Atenea and George Petrou and a disc of Handel arias with Il Pomo d'Oro.

For other labels he has recorded the title-roles in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Ezio*, Pergolesi's *Adriano in Siria*, Handel's *Berenice* and *Teseo*, Vinci's *Artaserse* and *Catone in Utica*, Caldara's *La concordia de' pianeti*, Hasse's *Siroe, re di*

*Persia* and the solo albums *Arias for Caffarelli* and *Il maestro Porpora*.

This season's highlights include his debut at La Scala, Milan, as Andronico (*Tamerlano*) and his debut for the Dutch National Opera in the title-role of Cavalli's *Eliogabalo*, as well as concert tours with the Kammerorchester Basel, Il Pomo d'Oro and the Venice Baroque Orchestra.

His stage roles include the title-role in *Eliogabalo* for Opéra national de Paris; Arsace (*Semiramide*) for Opéra national de Lorraine; Idamante (*Idomeneo*) for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; *Piacere (Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno)* for the Aix-en-Provence Festival, Opéra de Lille and the Théâtre de Caen; and the title-role in *Giulio Cesare* for the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires and Zurich Opera House.

Future seasons see him return to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and the Staatstheater Karlsruhe, and make debuts with the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, Hamburg State Opera and Madrid's Teatro Real.

Franco Fagioli has also achieved distinction as a concert artist, appearing at the Halle, Ludwigsburg, Innsbruck and Salzburg festivals, collaborating regularly with such conductors as Rinaldo Alessandrini, Alan Curtis, Gabriel Garrido, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, René Jacobs, José Manuel Quintana, Marc Minkowski, Riccardo Muti and Christophe Rousset.

## Venice Baroque Orchestra

The Venice Baroque Orchestra was founded in 1997 by Baroque scholar and harpsichordist Andrea Marcon and is recognised as one of today's leading period-instrument ensembles. The orchestra has received widespread critical acclaim for its concert and opera performances throughout Europe, North America, South America, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China, and has appeared in more cities across the United States than any other Baroque orchestra.

The VBO is committed to the rediscovery of 17th- and 18th-century masterpieces and under Marcon's leadership has given the modern-day premieres of Cavalli's *L'Orione*, Vivaldi's *Atenaide* and *Andromeda liberata*, Marcello's *La morte d'Adone* and *Il trionfo della poesia e della musica*, and Boccherini's *La Clementina*. At La Fenice in Venice, the orchestra has staged Cimarosa's *L'Olimpiade*, Handel's *Siroe* and Galuppi's *L'Olimpiade*, reprising *Siroe* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York, the work's first full staging in the USA. The orchestra has been the subject of television features on the BBC, ARTE, NTR (Netherlands) and NHK, as well as appearing on a number of DVDs and featuring in *Vivaldi in Venice*, a documentary by Richard Dindo.

Highlights of the 2018 season include two tours with Franco Fagioli, with concerts in Europe, Japan and China. The orchestra's annual tour of the USA featured Anna Fusek on recorders. Recent festival appearances include the Enescu Festival with mezzo-soprano Magdalena Kožená, Grafenegg with harpist Xavier de Maistre, and Schleswig-Holstein with mandolinist Avi Avital.

Last season it performed Vivaldi's *Juditha triumphans* at Carnegie Hall, the Krannert Center of the University of Illinois, here at the Barbican Centre, and at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels; gave concerts with violinist Viktoria

Mullova in Vienna and Budapest; and undertook an 18-city tour of the USA with violinist Nicola Benedetti, and a tour of Japan with Avi Avital.

Earlier performance highlights have included tours of Europe, the United States and Asia with countertenor Philippe Jaroussky; concerts with contralto Marie-Nicole Lemieux in France and Belgium; concerts with Avi Avital in Italy, Croatia, Germany, Spain, France, Mexico, the United States and Canada; performances in Dresden's Frauenkirche with soprano Karina Gauvin; and a tour with Magdalena Kožená including the Istanbul Festival and the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. In 2010, the VBO premiered Philip Glass's violin concerto, *The American Four Seasons*, with violinist Robert McDuffie in a 28-city tour of the USA.

The orchestra's numerous recordings include Vivaldi concertos with Avi Avital (DG); Porpora arias with Philippe Jaroussky, which received a Grammy nomination (Erato); and a pasticcio of Metastasio's *L'Olimpiade* for the Naïve label featuring the recording premieres of many 18th-century opera arias, which was awarded a Choc du Monde de la Musique. Its world-premiere recording of *Andromeda liberata* for DG was followed by more Vivaldi: violin concertos with Giuliano Carmignola and Viktoria Mullova; sinfonias and concertos for strings; motets and arias with soprano Simone Kermes; and a disc of arias with Magdalena Kožená, with whom the orchestra has also recorded Handel arias; and, with Patricia Petibon, a disc of Italian Baroque arias. The orchestra's earlier discography on Sony with Giuliano Carmignola includes *The Four Seasons*, previously unrecorded Vivaldi concertos, and a collection of Bach arias featuring Angelika Kirchschlager. The orchestra has also been honoured with a Diapason d'Or, an ECHO Award and an Edison Award.

*The Venice Baroque Orchestra is supported by Fondazione Cassamarca in Treviso.*

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# Venice Baroque Orchestra

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## **Violin 1**

Gianpiero Zanocco *leader*

Giacomo Catana

Mauro Spinazzè

Francesco Lovato

## **Violin 2**

Giorgio Baldan

Matteo Marzaro

Giuseppe Cabrio

## **Viola**

Alessandra Di Vincenzo

Meri Skejic

## **Cello**

Massimo Raccanelli

## **Double Bass**

Alessandro Pivelli

## **Bassoon**

Stefano Meloni

## **Harpsichord**

Lorenzo Feder



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Fri 26 Oct

# Handel's Serse Il Pomo d'Oro

**Franco Fagioli** stars as the  
hot-blooded Persian tyrant Xerxes