

# barbican



## Classical Music

### Concert programme

**Handel's Jephtha  
Il Pomo d'Oro, Joyce  
DiDonato and Michael  
Spyres**

Wed 7 May 7.30pm

Hall

# Important information



## When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 7.30pm and finishes at about 10.30pm, with a 20-minute interval.



## I'm running late!

Latecomers will be admitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



## Please ...

Switch any watch alarms and mobile phones to silent during the performance.



## Please don't ...

Take photos or recordings during the performance – save it for the curtain call.



## Use a hearing aid?

Please use our induction loop – just switch your hearing aid to T setting on entering the hall.



## Need a break?

You can leave at any time and be readmitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



## Looking for refreshments?

Bars are located on Levels -1, G and 1.



## Looking for the toilets?

The nearest toilets, including accessible toilets, are located on Levels -1, G and 2.



## Carrying bags and coats?

Drop them off at our free cloak room on Level -1.

# Handel's Jephtha

Wed 7 May 7.30pm, Hall

## Il Pomo d'Oro

**Francesco Corti** conductor

**Michael Spyres** Jephtha

**Joyce DiDonato** Storgè

**Mélissa Petit** Iphigis

**Anna Piroli** Angel

**Cody Quattlebaum** Zebul

**Jasmin White** Hamor

**Il Pomo d'Oro Choir**

**George Frideric Handel** *Jephtha*

*There will be one 20-minute interval after  
Part 2 Scene 2*

Produced by the Barbican

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**For tonight's performance of Handel's valedictory oratorio, *Jephtha*, a star cast led by Joyce DiDonato and Michael Spyres joins Il Pomo d'Oro under the direction of Francesco Corti. It's a work in which Handel brings a lifetime of experience to bear on music that powerfully brings to life the dramatic biblical tale.**

After the resounding success of the patriotic 'victory' oratorios *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Joshua*, in 1746–7 Handel's professional fortunes dipped. The two works he presented in the 1749 Covent Garden season, *Solomon* and *Susanna*, were indifferently received. In 1750 *Theodora*, his sole religious drama set in Christian times, fared even worse. For his final oratorio, *Jephtha*, Handel returned to a familiar Old Testament story laced with a fair dose of blood and thunder, a recipe that had served him well in *Samson*, *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Joshua*.

Yet progress on *Jephtha* was slow and painful. On 13 February 1751 Handel noted (in German) after the first section of the chorus 'How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees': 'reached as far as this on 13 Febr.1751, unable to continue due to the weakening of the sight of my left eye'. After resuming work on 23 February, his 66th birthday, he rapidly lost the use of his left eye altogether; and it was not until the middle of June that he returned to *Jephtha*, finally completing it on 30 August. Before the successful Covent Garden premiere on 26 February 1752 Handel was diagnosed with incipient glaucoma. Despite operations by three separate eye surgeons, in January 1753 a newspaper informed its readers that 'Mr Handel has at length, unhappily, quite lost his sight' – though reports that he was writing his own funeral anthem proved to be greatly exaggerated.



In effect Handel's swansong, *Jephtha* is the last and most personal of his many oratorios set against the background of Israelite oppression, warfare and ultimate triumph, shorn of the Old Testament's murky ethics. Thomas Morell based his libretto on the story from Judges XI, in which the Israelite leader Jephtha vows to sacrifice the first living thing he encounters if he defeats the Ammonites in battle. As in other ancient Mediterranean myths, including that of the Cretan King Idomeneus, the victim turns out to be his own flesh and blood. Israelite national triumph becomes personal disaster.

The Old Testament outcome was too brutal for audiences in the Age of Sensibility. Following earlier precedents, Morell mitigated Iphis's sentence from death to perpetual virginity, courtesy of an angel as *dea ex machina*. Handel was at best ambivalent about Morell's ending, with its eulogy of virginity (a state to be bewailed in Judges). Significantly, the Angel's tripping G major aria turns to a sober G minor for the line 'Happy, Iphis, all thy days, (pure, angelic, virgin-state)'. The penultimate number, beginning as a duet for Iphis and Hamor, likewise dips from G major to G minor when the other protagonists join in: the music here suggests regret for young love that might have been, rather than Morell's glibly cheerful paean.

We can infer that Handel was inspired neither by Morell's 'happy' ending, nor by Jephtha's presumptuousness in making his 'impious vow', set as perfunctory accompanied recitative. What absorbed him was the plight of the innocent victims, and the larger theme of man's inevitable submission to a capricious, unfathomable

destiny. This central theme is explored most searchingly in Jephtha's accompanied recitative 'Deeper and deeper still', which in its 44 bars touches on virtually every key, and the monumental chorus that follows, 'How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees'.

Handel characterises the main protagonists with extraordinary insight and compassion: Jephtha, whose initial braggadocio yields to inner torment at the consequences of his vow; his wife Storgè, passionate, intensely loving, formidable in anger and protest; and his daughter Iphis, growing from joyous innocence to courageous acceptance of her fate in the heartbreaking aria 'Farewell, ye limpid springs'. As the century's greatest musical magpie, Handel drew on Masses by the Bohemian František Habermann for several numbers in *Jephtha*, mainly choruses, though, typically, he ennobles everything he borrows. One instance is the first chorus, 'No more to Ammon's god and king', where, as Handel scholar Winton Dean observed, the Israelites take on the exuberance of their pagan oppressors. Another is the stupendous chorus evoking the parting of the Red Sea, 'When his loud voice in thunder spoke', coloured by the bright glint of horns, and ending in a riot of cosmic fugal laughter.

In the three minor-key choruses that form the mighty central pillars of Parts 1 and 3 and the climax of Part 2, the Israelites become awed commentators, like their counterparts in a Greek tragedy. All three – 'O God, behold our sore distress', 'How dark, O Lord' and 'Doubtful fear' – are characterised by contorted chromaticism and densely woven counterpoint. The four sections of 'How dark, O Lord', culminating

in the shockingly stark setting of Pope's maxim 'Whatever is, is right', are Handel's most profound contemplation of human experience in relation to a remote, unknowable Deity. And it is not fanciful of Winton Dean and others to suggest that the composer was mindful here not only of the appalling predicaments of Jephtha and Iphis, but also of his own affliction and enforced submission to destiny.

## Synopsis

### Part 1

The Gileadite clan of Jews, returned to the promised land after their exodus from Egypt, have abandoned Jehovah and turned to the idolatry of neighbouring tribes. Oppressed by the Ammonites, they recall the exiled commander Jephtha to lead them in battle. He is supported by his loyal wife Storgè (her name means 'love between parents and children' in Greek), his daughter Iphis and his future son-in-law Hamor. Left alone, he feels the spirit of God, and vows that if he is successful in battle he will sacrifice the first thing he sees on his return. Storgè has a foreboding of disaster and is reassured by the innocent Iphis. Invoking Jehovah's aid, Jephtha and the Israelites take the field.

### Part 2

Hamor brings news of victory, aided by an army of Cherubim and Seraphim. Jephtha and the army return and are greeted by Iphis and her troupe of maidens. Horrified, Jephtha sends her away. He tells his wife, brother Zebul and son-in-law that she must die as a result of his vow. Storgè violently protests, Hamor offers to die in her place, and Iphis courageously accepts her fate. After Jephtha breaks down in the accompanied recitative 'Deeper and deeper still', the chorus broods on the capriciousness of destiny.

### Part 3

Awaiting the sacrifice, Jephtha prays that the angels will waft Iphis to heaven. Iphis bids farewell to the world, and the priests pray to Jehovah for guidance. An angel appears and proclaims that while Jehovah does not require Iphis's life, he decrees that she must live in perpetual virginity. General happiness is mitigated by the enforced parting of the lovers Hamor and Iphis. The final chorus celebrates the Gileadites' triumph and looks forward to peace.

note and synopsis © Richard Wigmore

# Jephtha

## Part 1

### Overture

### Scene 1

*Zebul, with his brethren and Chorus.*

### Accompagnato

#### Zebul

It must be so, or these vile Ammonites,  
Our lordly tyrants now these eighteen years,  
Will crush the race of Israel.  
Since Heav'n vouchsafes not,  
with immediate choice,  
To point us out a leader, as before,  
Ourselves must choose. And  
who so fit a man  
As Gilead's son, our brother,  
valiant Jephtha?  
True, we have slighted, scorn'd,  
expell'd him hence,  
As of a stranger born, but well I know him:  
His gen'rous soul disdains a mean revenge  
When his distressful country calls his aid.  
And perhaps Heav'n may favour our request  
If with repentant hearts we sue for mercy.

#### Air

#### Zebul

Pour forth no more unheeded pray'rs  
To idols deaf and vain.  
No more with vile unhallow'd airs  
The sacred rites profane.

#### Chorus of Israelites

No more to Ammon's god and king,  
Fierce Moloch, shall our cymbals ring,  
In dismal dance around the furnace blue.  
Chemosh no more will we adore  
With timbrell'd anthems to Jehovah due.

## Scene 2

*Enter Jephtha and Storgè.*

### Recitative

#### Zebul

But Jephtha comes. Kind  
Heav'n, assist our plea.  
O Jephtha, with an eye of pity look  
On thy repentant brethren in distress.  
Forgetful of thy wrongs, redress thy sire,  
Thy friends, thy country, in extreme despair.

#### Jephtha

I will: so please it Heav'n;  
and these the terms.  
If I command in war, the like command  
(Should Heav'n vouchsafe  
us a victorious peace)  
Shall still be mine.

#### Zebul

Agreed; be witness, Heav'n.

#### Air

#### Jephtha

Virtue my soul shall still embrace,  
And goodness shall make me great.  
Who builds upon this steady base  
Dreads no event of fate.

### Recitative

#### Storgè

'Twill be a painful separation, Jephtha,  
To see thee harness'd for the bloody field.  
But ah! how trivial are a wife's concerns  
When a whole nation bleeds, and  
grov'ling lies,  
Panting for liberty and life.

## Air

### Storgè

In gentle murmurs will I mourn,  
As mourns the mate-forsaken dove,  
And sighing wish thy dear return  
To liberty and lasting love.

*Exeunt.*

## Scene 3

*Enter Hamor and Iphis.*

### Recitative

#### Hamor

Happy this embassy, my charming Iphis,  
Which once more gives thee  
to my longing eyes,  
As Cynthia, breaking from  
th'involving clouds  
On the benighted traveller. The sight  
Of thee, my love, drives  
darkness and despair.  
Again I live, in thy sweet smiles I live,  
As in thy father's ever-watchful care  
Our wretched nation feels new life, new joy.  
Oh haste, and make my  
happiness complete!

### Recitative

#### Iphis

Ill suits the voice of love when glory calls,  
And bids thee follow Jephtha to the field.  
There act the hero, and let rival deeds  
Proclaim thee worthy to be call'd his son,  
And Hamor shall not want his due reward.

#### Hamor

I go; my soul, inspir'd by thy command,  
Thirsts for the battle. I'm already crown'd  
With the victorious wreath,  
and thou, fair prize,  
More worth than fame or  
conquest, thou art mine.

## Duet

### Iphis and Hamor

These labours past, how happy we!  
How glorious will they prove.

*Exeunt.*

## Scene 4

*Jephtha, alone.*

### Recitative

#### Jephtha

What mean these doubtful  
fancies of the brain?  
Visions of joy rise in my raptur'd soul,  
There play awhile, and set  
in darksome night.  
Strange ardour fires my breast;  
my arms seem strung  
With tenfold vigour, and my crested helm  
To reach the skies. Be humble still, my soul!  
It is the Spirit of God, in whose great name  
I offer up my vow.

### Accompagnato

#### Jephtha

If, Lord, sustain'd by Thy almighty pow'r,  
Ammon I drive, and his insulting bands,  
From these our long-uncultivated lands,  
And safe return the glorious conqueror,  
What, or whoe'er shall first salute mine eyes,  
Shall be forever Thine, or fall a sacrifice.

### Recitative

#### Jephtha

'Tis said.

*Enter Israelites.*

Attend, ye chiefs, and with united voice  
Invoke the holy name of Israel's God.

### Chorus of Israelites

O God, behold our sore distress,  
Omnipotent to plague, or bless!  
But turn thy wrath, and bless once more  
Thy servants, who thy name adore.

*Exeunt.*



## Scene 5

*Storgè, alone.*

### Recitative

#### Storgè

Some dire event hangs o'er our heads,  
Some woeful song we have to sing  
In misery extreme. Oh never, never  
Was my foreboding mind disturb'd before  
With such incessant pangs.

### Air

#### Storgè

Scenes of horror, scenes of woe,  
Rising from the shades below,  
Add new terror to the night;  
While in never-ceasing pain,  
That attends the servile chain,  
Joyless flow the hours of light.

## Scene 6

*Enter Iphis.*

### Recitative

#### Iphis

Say, my dear mother, whence  
these piercing cries  
That force me, like a frighted bird, to fly  
My place of rest?

#### Storgè

For thee I fear, my child;  
Such ghastly dreams last  
night surpris'd my soul.

#### Iphis

Heed not these black illusions of the night,  
The mocking of unquiet  
slumbers, heed them not.  
My father, touch'd with a diviner fire,  
Already seems to triumph in success,  
Nor doubt I but Jehovah hears our pray'rs.

## Air

#### Iphis

The smiling dawn of happy days  
Presents a prospect clear,  
And pleasing hope's all-bright'ning rays  
Dispel each gloomy fear;  
While ev'ry charm that peace displays  
Makes spring-time all the year.

*Exeunt.*

## Scene 7

*Enter Zebul, Jephtha and Chorus  
of Israelites.*

### Recitative

#### Zebul

Such, Jephtha, was the haughty king's reply:  
No terms, but ruin, slavery and death.

#### Jephtha

Sound, then, the last alarm; and to the field,  
Ye sons of Israel, with intrepid hearts,  
Dependent on the might of Israel's God.

#### Chorus of Israelites

When his loud voice in thunder spoke,  
With conscious fear the billows broke,  
Observant of his dread command.  
In vain they roll their foaming tide,  
Confin'd by that great pow'r  
That gave them strength to roar.  
They now contract their boist'rous pride,  
And lash with idle rage the laughing strand.

## Part 2

### Scene 1

*Enter Hamor, Iphis and Chorus of Israelites.*

#### Recitative

##### Hamor

Glad tidings of great joy to thee, dear Iphis,  
And to the house of Israel I bring.  
Thus then, in brief. Both armies in array  
Of battle rang'd, our general stept forth  
And offer'd haughty Ammon terms of peace,  
Most just and righteous; these with scorn  
refus'd,  
He bade the trumpet sound.  
But scarce a sword  
Was ting'd in hostile blood, ere all around  
The thund'ring heavens open'd and pour'd  
forth  
Thousands of armed cherubim, when  
straight  
Our general cried: 'This is thy signal, Lord,  
I follow Thee, and Thy bright heav'nly host.'  
Then rushing on proud Ammon, all aghast,  
He made a bloody slaughter, and pursu'd  
The flying foe, till night bade sheathe  
the sword,  
And taste the joys of victory and peace.

##### Chorus of Israelites

Cherub and Seraphim, unbodied forms,  
The messengers of fate,  
His dread command await;  
Of swifter flight, and subtler frame,  
Than lightning's winged flame,  
They ride on whirlwinds, directing the storms.

#### Recitative

##### Iphis

'Tis well.  
Haste, haste, ye maidens, and in richest  
robes  
Adorn me, like a stately bride,  
To meet my father in triumphant pomp.  
And while around the dancing banners play.

#### Air

##### Iphis

Tune the soft melodious lute,  
Pleasant harp and warbling flute,  
To sounds of rapt'rous joy;

Such as on our solemn days,  
Singing great Jehovah's praise,  
The holy choir employ.

*Exeunt.*

### Scene 2

*Enter Zebul, Jephtha, Hamor and Chorus.*

#### Recitative

##### Zebul

Again Heav'n smiles on his repentant  
people,  
And Victory spreads wide her silver wings,  
To soothe our sorrows with a peaceful calm.

#### Air

##### Zebul

Freedom now once more possessing,  
Peace shall spread with ev'ry blessing  
Triumphant joy around.  
Sion now no more complaining,  
Shall, in blissful plenty reigning,  
Thy glorious praise resound.

#### Recitative

##### Jephtha

Zebul, thy deeds were valiant,  
Nor less thine, my Hamor;  
But the glory is the Lord's.

#### Air

##### Jephtha

His mighty arm, with sudden blow,  
Dispers'd and quell'd the haughty foe.  
They fell before him, as when through the  
sky,  
He bids the sweeping wind in vengeance fly.

##### Chorus of Israelites

In glory high, in might serene,  
He sees, moves all, unmov'd, unseen.  
His mighty arm, with sudden blow,  
Dispers'd and quell'd the haughty foe.

### Scene 3

#### Symphony

*Enter Iphis, Storgè and Chorus of Virgins.*

#### Recitative

##### Iphis

Hail, glorious conqueror!  
Much lov'd father, hail!  
Behold thy daughter, and her virgin train,  
Come to salute thee with all duteous love.

#### Air

##### Iphis

Welcome as the cheerful light,  
Driving darkest shades of night;  
Welcome as the spring that rains  
Peace and plenty o'er the plains.  
Not cheerful day,  
Nor spring so gay,  
Such mighty blessings brings  
As peace on her triumphant wings.

##### Chorus of Virgins

Welcome thou, whose deeds conspire  
To provoke the warbling lyre,  
Welcome thou, whom God ordain'd  
Guardian angel of our land!  
Thou wert born His glorious name  
And great wonders to proclaim.

#### Recitative

##### Jephtha

Horror! Confusion! Harsh this music grates  
Upon my tasteless ears – be gone, my child,  
Thou hast undone thy father! Fly, be gone,  
And leave me to the rack of wild despair.

*Exit Iphis.*

#### Air

##### Jephtha

Open thy marble jaws, O tomb,  
And hide me, earth, in thy dark womb,  
Ere I the name of father stain,  
And deepest woe from conquest gain.

#### Recitative

##### Zebul

Why is my brother thus afflicted? Say,  
Why didst thou spurn thy daughter's  
gratulations,  
And fling her from thee with unkind disdain?

##### Jephtha

O Zebul, Hamor, and my dearest wife,  
Behold a wretched man,  
Thrown from the summit of presumptuous  
joy,  
Down to the lowest depth of misery.  
Know, then, I vow'd the first I saw should fall  
A victim to the living God. My daughter,  
Alas, it was my daughter, and she dies.

#### Accompagnato and Air

##### Storgè

First perish thou, and perish all the world!  
Hath Heav'n then bless'd us with this only  
pledge  
Of all our love, this one dear child, for thee  
To be her murderer? No, cruel man.

#### Recitative

##### Hamor

If such thy cruel purpose, lo, your friend  
Offers himself a willing sacrifice,  
To save the innocent and beauteous maid.

#### Air

##### Hamor

On me let blind mistaken zeal  
Her utmost rage employ.  
'Twill be a mercy there to kill  
Where life can taste no joy.

#### Quartet

##### Zebul

Oh, spare your daughter –

##### Storgè

Spare my child,

##### Hamor

My love.

##### Jephtha

Recorded stands my vow in Heav'n above.

**Storgè**

Recall the impious vow, ere 'tis too late.

**Hamor, Zebul and Storgè**

And think not Heav'n delights  
In Moloch's horrid rites.

**Jephtha**

I'll hear no more; her doom is fix'd as fate.

**Scene 4**

*Enter Iphis.*

**Recitative****Iphis**

Such news flies swift. I've heard the  
mournful cause  
Of all your sorrows. Of my father's vow  
Heav'n spoke its approbation by success:  
Jephtha has triumph'd. Israel is free.

**Accompagnato****Iphis**

For joys so vast too little is the price  
Of one poor life; but oh! accept it, Heav'n,  
A grateful victim, and thy blessing still  
Pour on my country, friends, and dearest  
father!

**Air****Iphis**

Happy they; this vital breath  
With content I shall resign;  
And not murmur or repine,  
Sinking in the arms of death.

**Accompagnato****Jephtha**

Deeper and deeper still, thy goodness, child,  
Pierceth a father's bleeding heart, and  
checks  
The cruel sentence on my falt'ring tongue.  
Oh, let me whisper it to the raging winds,  
Or howling deserts; for the ears of men  
It is too shocking. Yet – have I not vow'd?  
And can I think the great Jehovah sleeps,  
Like Chemosh and such fabled deities?  
Ah no; Heav'n heard my thoughts, and  
wrote them down.

It must be so.

'Tis this that racks my brain,  
And pours into my breast a thousand pangs  
That lash me into madness. Horrid thought!  
My only daughter! So dear a child,  
Doom'd by a father! Yes, the vow is past,  
And Gilead hath triumph'd o'er his foes.  
Therefore, tomorrow's dawn – I can no more.

**Chorus of Israelites**

How dark, O Lord, are Thy decrees,  
All hid from mortal sight!  
All our joys to sorrow turning,  
And our triumphs into mourning,  
As the night succeeds the day.  
No certain bliss,  
No solid peace,  
We mortals know  
On earth below:  
Yet on this maxim still obey:  
'Whatever is, is right.'

**Part 3****Scene 1**

*Jephtha, Iphis, Priests and Israelites.*

**Air****Jephtha**

Hide thou thy hated beams, O sun, in clouds  
And darkness, deep as is a father's woe;

**Accompagnato****Jephtha**

A father, off 'ring up his only child  
In vow'd return for victory and peace.

**Air****Jephtha**

Waft her, angels, through the skies,  
Far above yon azure plain;  
Glorious there, like you, to rise,  
There, like you, for ever reign.

## Accompagnato

### Iphis

Ye sacred priests, whose hands ne'er yet  
were stain'd  
With human blood, why are ye thus afraid  
To execute my father's will?  
The call of Heav'n  
With humble resignation I obey.

### Air

### Iphis

Farewell, ye limpid springs and floods,  
Ye flow'ry meads and mazy woods;  
Farewell, thou busy world, where reign  
Short hours of joy and years of pain.  
Brighter scenes I seek above,  
In the realms of peace and love.

### Chorus of Priests

Doubtful fear and rev'rent awe  
Strike us, Lord, while here we bow,  
Check'd by Thy all-sacred law,  
Yet commanded by the vow.  
Hear our pray'r in this distress,  
And Thy determin'd will declare.

### Sinfonia

### Recitative

### Angel

Rise, Jephtha, and ye rev'rend priests,  
withhold  
The slaught'rous hand. No vow can disannul  
The law of God. Nor such was its intent  
When rightly scann'd; yet still shall be  
fulfill'd.  
Thy daughter, Jephtha, thou must dedicate  
To God, in pure and virgin state forever,  
As not an object meet for sacrifice,  
Else had she fall'n an holocaust to God.  
The Holy Sp'rit, that dictated thy vow,  
Bade thus explain it, and approves thy faith.

### Air

### Angel

Happy, Iphis, shalt thou live,  
While to thee the virgin choir  
Tune their harps of golden wire,  
And their yearly tribute give.  
Happy, Iphis, all thy days,  
Pure, angelic, virgin-state,

Shalt thou live, and ages late  
Crown thee with immortal praise.

### Air

### Jephtha

For ever blessed be Thy holy name,  
Lord God of Israel!

### Chorus of Israelites

Theme sublime of endless praise,  
Just and righteous are thy ways;  
And thy mercies still endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.

### Scene 2

*Enter Zebul, Storgè, Hamor and Chorus  
of Israelites.*

### Recitative

### Storgè

O let me fold thee in a mother's arms,  
And with submissive joy, my child, receive  
Thy designation to the life of Heaven.

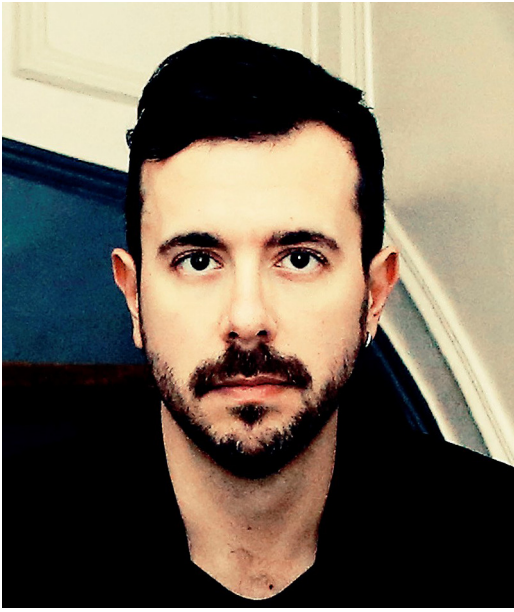
### Hamor

With transport, Iphis, I belod thy safety,  
But must for ever mourn so dear a loss:  
Dear! though great Jephtha were to  
honour me  
Still with the name of son.

### Chorus of Israelites

Ye house of Gilead, with one voice,  
In blessings manifold rejoice,  
Freed from war's destructive sword:  
Peace her plenty round shall spread,  
While in virtue's path you tread;  
So are they blest who fear the Lord.  
Amen.  
Hallelujah.  
Amen.

Libretto by Thomas Morell (1703–84)



© Caroline Doutre

### Francesco Corti

Harpichordist and conductor Francesco Corti was born in Arezzo into a musical family in 1984. He studied organ in Perugia, then harpsichord in Geneva and Amsterdam. He won prizes at the 2006 International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition in Leipzig and the 2007 Bruges Harpsichord Competition.

As a soloist and conductor, he has given concerts over much of the world. He has performed in prestigious halls, including the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, BOZAR, Brussels, Vienna Konzerthaus, Berlin and Hamburg Philharmonie, Salzburg Mozarteum, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Teatro Real, Madrid, Palau de la Música Catalana, Barcelona, Zurich Tonhalle and Müpa, Budapest.

Since 2018 he has been principal guest conductor of Il Pomo d'Oro. Projects with the ensemble have included European tours of Handel's *Orlando*, *Radamisto*, *Tolomeo* and *Berenice*, as well as a number of recordings. He has also guest conducted the Freiburger Barockorchester, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Les Musiciens du Louvre, Tafelmusik, Kammerorchester Basel, B'Rock and the Nederlandse Bachvereniging. In January 2023 he became musical director of the Drottningholm Royal Court Theatre.

This season he directs Il Pomo d'Oro in Handel's *Alcina* and *Jephtha*; Terradellas's *Merope* at Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu; and Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto* at Teatro San Carlo in Naples.

His solo recordings have received accolades, including the Diapason d'or de l'Année, Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik and Gramophone Editor's Choice.

Francesco Corti has given masterclasses all over the world. Since 2016 he has been professor of harpsichord at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis.



© Andie Bottrell.

### Michael Spyres

Michael Spyres is one of the most accomplished tenors of his generation, with more than 40 DVDs and CDs to his name. Born and raised in the Ozarks, Missouri, to a musical family, he has appeared at leading international venues such as the La Scala, Milan, Metropolitan Opera, New York, Vienna State Opera, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Paris Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Teatro Real, Madrid, Liceu, Barcelona and Lyric Opera Chicago, as well as the Baden-Baden and Salzburg festivals and the BBC Proms.

He has reached cult status as the only active baritenor of today and for his

interpretations of the widest range of repertoire. This encompasses Baroque to the 20th century. Most recently, he has emerged as one of today's leading interpreters of German Heldentenor repertoire, having made debuts as Lohengrin in Strasbourg and Siegmund (*Die Walküre*) at Bayreuth, where he returns this year as Stolzing (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*).

He has worked with many renowned conductors, including Daniel Barenboim, Sir Mark Elder, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Edward Gardner, Daniele Gatti, Fabio Luisi, Riccardo Muti, John Nelson, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Antonio Pappano, Kirill Petrenko, Raphaël Pichon, Christophe Rousset and Alberto Zedda.

Michael Spyres's accolades include the 2024 International Opera Award, Oper! and Opus Klassik Awards, a 2022 Gramophone Award and, in 2021, the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres.



© Sergi Jasanada

### Joyce DiDonato

Multi Grammy Award-winner Joyce DiDonato has for years been at the top of the classical music industry as a performer, producer, teacher and fierce advocate for the arts. With a repertoire spanning over four centuries, a varied and highly acclaimed discography and industry-

leading projects, her artistry has defined what it is to be a singer in the 21st century.

She recently opened and closed the Metropolitan Opera's 2023/24 season as Sister Helen in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* and Virginia Woolf in Kevin Puts's *The Hours*, as well as concluding her three-year, 50-city tour of *EDEN* – a project combining a virtuosic concert experience with dedicated educational work across four continents. This season she reprises her critically acclaimed interpretation of Irene in *Theodora* at the Teatro Real in Madrid.

Celebrated concert appearances continue with the Philadelphia Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, her debut with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, a European recital tour, a genre-bending Holiday tour with Kings Return and a residency with the Dortmund Konzerthaus. She has also recorded a new album around the poetry of Emily Dickinson, with music by Kevin Puts.

In 2024 Joyce DiDonato received the Concertgebouw Prize, only the 14th recipient in the legendary hall's history.



© Christophe Serrano

### Mélissa Petit

French soprano Mélissa Petit was born in Saint-Raphaël and studied singing in her hometown and in Nice before joining the International

Opera Studio of the Hamburg State Opera in 2010 and the Zurich Opera in 2015.

Since 2017 her many debuts have included the Bregenz and Salzburg festivals, National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing, Deutsche Oper am Rhein and Paris Opera in repertoire ranging from Handel to Verdi.

Her most recent successes include her acclaimed debuts in the title-role of Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* and Juliette (*Roméo et Juliette*) at Theater an der Wien; her debut at the Staatsoper Berlin as Ilia (*Idomeneo*); a tour with Cecilia Bartoli across Europe's most prestigious concert halls as Servilia (*La clemenza di Tito*); her debut as Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*) at the Grand Théâtre de Genève; and returns to the Bregenz Festival as Amenaide (*Tancredi*) and the Salzburg Festival as Servilia.

Forthcoming projects include Servilia, Freia and Woglinde (*Das Rheingold*) at Monte-Carlo Opera and Angelica (Handel's *Orlando*) at the opera houses of Lorraine, Caen and Luxembourg.



© Simone Deiola

### **Anna Piroli**

The Italian soprano Anna Piroli performs a wide-ranging repertoire that spans from medieval to contemporary music. She studied at the Milan and Lugano conservatories.

A significant milestone in her career was her encounter in 2021 with Jordi Savall, which has led to frequent performances with Hespèrion XXI and within the Capella Nacional de Catalunya.

She also collaborates with some of the finest ensembles in Europe, including Collegium Vocale Gent, Il Pomo d'Oro, La Cetra Barockorchester, La Fonte Musica, La Compagnia del Madrigale and Ensemble Cristóbal de Morales.

She has performed under the baton of Emilio Pomarico, Philippe Herreweghe, Andrea Marcon, Leonardo García Alarcón, Maxim Emelyanychev, Alessandro Quarta and James Wood.

Recent highlights have included La Musica and Proserpina (Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*) at the Birgitta Festival and Second Witch (*Dido and Aeneas*) on a European tour with Il Pomo d'Oro.



© Altin Kaffira

### **Cody Quattlebaum**

American baritone Cody Quattlebaum is equally in demand on the opera stage and in the concert hall in repertoire from the Baroque to contemporary music. He began this season with a strikingly innovative project – a newly imagined trilogy of Carl Orff's works entitled



*Trionfi*, conducted by Kent Nagano and staged at the Staatsoper Hamburg by Calixto Bieito. Other highlights this season include his debut at English National Opera as the Count (*The Marriage of Figaro*); *Messiah* with the Academy of Ancient Music here at the Barbican and in Las Palmas; Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Riccardo Minasi; and tonight's performance of *Jephtha* with Il Pomo d'Oro.

Last season he made several notable debuts, including the title-role in Simon Steen-Andersen's opera *Don Giovanni's Inferno* for the Royal Danish Theatre and *Kurwenal (Tristan und Isolde)* at the Opéra de Rouen. He also returned to the role of Venus (*Venus and Adonis*) at Staatsoper Hamburg. Other recent highlights include Bhishma in the world premiere of Thierry Pécou's *Until the Lions* and Ratefreund in Braunfels's *Die Vögel*, both with Opéra National du Rhin; the Count with the Handel and Haydn Society; his debut with Israeli Opera as Figaro (*The Marriage of Figaro*) and with San Francisco Opera as Masetto (*Don Giovanni*).



© Shirley Suarez

## Jasmin White

American contralto Jasmin White has been acclaimed for their deep, flexible voice and charismatic performances.

This season marks Jasmin White's first season as a member of the soloist ensemble at Volksoper Wien. There, they will perform *Third Woman (The Magic Flute)* Martha (*Jolanthe und der Nussknacker*), Suzy (*La Rondine*) and Frau Reich (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*). They will make debuts with Les Arts Florissants and Danish National Symphony Orchestra, and will join Il Pomo d'Oro for *Alcina* and tonight's performance of *Jephtha*.

Jasmin White also sings in Mahler's Second Symphony at the Salzburg Easter Festival with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, before returning to their home country for Mahler's Third Symphony with both the Kansas City and Oregon Symphony orchestras. They finish the season in recital with pianist Michał Biel in Bergen and a tour of *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* with Les Arts Florissants.

## Il Pomo d'Oro

Il Pomo d'Oro was founded in 2012 and has become renowned for its authentic, dynamic interpretation of operas and instrumental works from the Baroque and Classical periods. The musicians, all well-known specialists, are among the best in the field of historical performance practice.

Since 2016, Maxim Emelyanychev has been its chief conductor, with Francesco Corti becoming its principal guest conductor three years later. The ensemble has also worked with Riccardo Minasi, Stefano Montanari, George Petrou and Enrico Onofri. Concert master Zefira Valova leads the orchestra in various projects.

It has collaborated with world-renowned musicians in the concert hall and on recordings, and is a regular guest at leading halls and festivals all over the world.

This season the orchestra continues its collaboration with outstanding musicians and soloists in concert performances of Handel's *Alcina* and *Jephtha* and staged productions of Vivaldi's *Orlando furioso* and Pergolesi's *Stabat mater*. In recital, the ensemble joins forces with Julie Fuchs, Michael Spyres, Pene Pati, Joyce DiDonato and Jakub Józef Orliński and will continue to work with cellist Giovanni Sollima for performances across Europe. The album of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, recorded following a sell-out European

tour with Joyce DiDonato and Maxim Emelyanychev, was recently released on Erato.

## Il Pomo d'Oro Choir

The Il Pomo d'Oro choir was created in 2021 and made its first public appearance together with the orchestra during a concert tour and the recording of Handel's *Theodora*, which went on to win a *BBC Music Magazine* award in 2023. Led by chorus master Giuseppe Maletto, it brings together a group of singers with outstanding expertise in the performance of early Italian music, in particular madrigals by Monteverdi and Gesualdo, but also in the great repertoire of sacred music by Monteverdi, Cavalli, Gabrieli and Gesualdo.

Its first solo album featured the First Book of Gesualdo's *Sacrae Cantiones*. Last year the choir reunited with the orchestra and Maxim Emelyanychev for a European concert tour and recording of Carissimi's *Jepthe* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*.

It follows this with a recording of Monteverdi's *Psalms*, a tour of Gesualdo's *Sacrae Cantiones*, a performance of Monteverdi's *Vespers* in Zagreb, and the current tour of *Jephtha*.

# Il Pomo d'Oro

## Orchestra

**conductor/  
harpsichord**  
Francesco Corti

**organ**  
Maria Shabashova

**harpsichord**  
Guillaume Haldenwang

**violin I**  
Stefano Rossi  
Lucia Giraud  
Jesus Merino  
Laura Andriani  
Veronica Bohem

**violin II**  
Nicholas Robinson  
Ruiqi Ren  
Dmitry Lephekov  
Cristina Prats Costa  
Andria Chang

**viola**  
Archimede de Martini  
Jonathan Ponet  
Svetlana Ramazanova

**cello**  
Ludovico Minasi  
Natalia Timofeeva  
Kristina Chalmovska

**double bass**  
Jonathan Alvarez  
Riccardo Coelati

**flute**  
Marta Gawlas

**oboe**  
Rodrigo Gutierrez  
Petra Ambrosi

**bassoon**  
Alejandro Perez

**horn/trumpet**  
Alexandre Zanetta  
Olivier Mourault

## Choir

**soprano**  
Rossana Bertini  
Francesca Cassinari  
Alena Dantcheva  
Anna Piroli (soloist)  
Marta Redaelli

**alto**  
Giulia Beatini  
Elena Carzaniga  
Elena Biscuola  
Annalisa Mazzoni

**tenor**  
Giuseppe Maletto  
Gianluca Ferrarini  
Massimo Lombardi  
Alessandro Baudino

**bass**  
Matteo Bellotto  
Davide Benetti  
Guglielmo Buonsanti  
Marco Scavazza

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