

75TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

APRIL 15, 2017 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



PROGRAM

12:00 and 2:00 • West Building, West Garden Court

Eya: Ensemble for Medieval Music

Rachel Barham, soprano

Allison Mondel, soprano, symphonia, director

Sarah Issaekhouri, mezzo-soprano

Florence: The Cultural Crucible

Presented in honor of *Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence*

I.

Lauda, Anonymous, *Florence Laudario*, early 14th century

"Lamentomi et sospiro per più potere amare"

Lauda, Anonymous, 15th century

"Gesù, sommo conforto" (I)

Canto, Anonymous, Florentine, late 14th - early 15th century

"Canto della Prudenza"

Motet, Francesco de Layolle (1492 - c. 1540)

"Ave Maria"

II.

Lauda, Anonymous, *Florence Laudario*, early 14th century

"Del dolcissimo Signore"

Lauda, possibly Luca Bettini (1489 - 1527)

"Ecco 'I Messia"

Chanson, Heinrich Isaac (1450 - 1517)

"Helas, que pourra devenir"

III.

Lauda, Anonymous, *Florence Laudario*, early 14th century

"Vergine sancta Maria"

Chanson, Guillaume Du Fay (1397 - 1474)

"Du tout m'estoie abandoné"

Lauda, Simone Verovio (c. 1550 - 1607)

"Gesù, sommo conforto" (II)

Chanson, Alexander Agricola (1446 - 1506)

"J'ay beau huer"

The Musicians

Eya is an award-winning vocal ensemble based in Washington, DC, specializing in the interpretation of medieval music for women's voices. Launched in 2010 and directed by Allison Mondel, Eya has established its place in the Washington, DC, community as an early music ensemble of impeccable vocal quality and deep, creative spirit. Eya presents concert programs that interweave diverse repertoires of the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, from Hildegard von Bingen to Notre Dame, to the flyleaves of early English manuscripts and beyond. Through this lens, these programs seek to tell a story that forges new points of connection between contemporary audiences and medieval repertoire, underlining our common humanity with these early poets and composers.

Our performers are some of the finest, young, early music specialists in the area and appear regularly with the Washington Bach Consort, Apollo's Fire, the Folger Consort, and Cathedra. Eya has performed at a variety of notable venues, including the Music Center at Strathmore, the Washington National Cathedral, Dumbarton Oaks, the Boston Early Music Festival Fringe, Georgetown University, Williams College, and the College of William and Mary.

Eya is the proud recipient of the 2013 Greater DC Choral Excellence Award for Best Specialty Group: Early Music, as well as a 2015 nominee for Most Creative Programming. The ensemble will be releasing a second album, *The Three Marys*, in March 2017. Eya (pronounced "EH-yah") is a Latin exclamation of joy.

Rachel Barham, soprano

Soprano Rachel Barham, whose singing has been described by the *Washington Post* as "superb," is known for importing her keen sense of theatrical performance to the concert repertoire. In addition to being a busy ensemble singer in the Washington Metro Area, Barham is sought after by composers for her vocal versatility and sensitivity to text. She has received rave reviews for her chamber opera performances at the Capital Fringe Festival and has performed at many world premieres. She was chosen as one of the City Choir of Washington's 2012 Young American Artists and received critical acclaim for her performances of *Magnificat* settings of Bach, Stanford, Mozart, and Berio. She has returned to the City Choir as a soloist in Haydn's *Creation* and other works. A creative and innovative recitalist, Barham has also performed in North Carolina, Mississippi, and Hawaii.

Allison Mondel, soprano and director

Lauded by the *Washington Post* for her "ethereal soprano" and "spare, otherworldly radiance," Allison Mondel is a highly versatile performing artist and teacher. She received her master's in early music vocal performance from the Longy School of Music and is a specialist in medieval music, notably in the notation and performance of the chants of Hildegard von Bingen. Mondel enjoyed the honor of singing Hildegard's music at President Obama's second Inaugural Prayer Service at the Washington National Cathedral. Mondel has led teaching and coaching sessions and offered lectures on early music at the Peabody Conservatory, Williams College, Georgetown University, the Arts Club of Washington, and the Washington Early Music Festival. Mondel has appeared as a soloist or ensemble singer with the Boston Early Music Festival and Tanglewood, Bach Sinfonia, Chantry, and Cathedra. She teaches voice in the National Cathedral's chorister program and at Georgetown University.

Sarah Issaelkhoury, mezzo-soprano

Sarah Issaelkhoury, mezzo-soprano, can be seen performing with several ensembles in the Washington, DC, metro area, including the Washington Bach Consort, Cathedra, Chantry, and more. Her recent solo engagements have included the Virginia Consort, the Washington Bach Consort Cantata Series, and recitals with the Dacor-Bacon House and St. John's Wednesday Concert Series. Issaelkhoury's operatic roles include Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Rosina (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Angelina (*La Cenerentola*), Dorabella (*Così Fan Tutte*), and Miss Todd (*The Old Maid and the Thief*). Issaelkhoury holds a bachelor of music degree from James Madison University and a master's from the University of Michigan.

Program Notes

The musical landscape of Renaissance Florence reveals a splendid symbiosis of contrasting elements: sacred and secular, foreign and native, highborn and humble. These elements nurtured the development of an unusually vibrant cultural climate that supported the creative lives of artists, architects, musicians, politicians, clergy, and ordinary citizens within the relatively small confines of a magnificent Italian city.

In this program, Eya traces these coexisting elements within the cultural and social fabric of Florence from the Trecento (late fourteenth century) through the late sixteenth century. Each part of the program begins with a chant from a unique manuscript utilized by a devout confraternity and continues to explore the varied forms of vocal music that define this rich cultural moment. The program also offers a snapshot of the local musical tastes and political leanings that influenced poetic inspiration and musical composition.

The union of sacred and secular is perhaps most evident in the lauda, an Italian sacred song. The texts of these songs, notably in the vernacular, were often interchanged with other musical settings, a tradition known as *cantasi come* ("sing like [this song]"), evidence that tunes were well-known and frequently paired with different texts. Authors commonly penned secular texts suited to particular occasions such as Carnival, and hence borrowed music from a lauda setting in order to suit their particular song, a canto or canzona. Notable poets on the program include Lorenzo de Medici and Girolamo Savonarola, as well as several women, Lucrezia de Medici and Caterina de Ricci, the latter a nun and ardent supporter of Savonarola's political reforms of the fifteenth century.

In addition to these distinctive Florentine traditions, the musical culture of the city was profoundly influenced by the influx of composers from Burgundy and the Low Countries whose work flourished under the support of legendary Florentine patrons like the Medici. Franco-Flemish music was considered the gold standard of polyphonic composition throughout the European continent, and this was certainly the case amongst Florentine circles. Eya explores the works of several generations of Franco-Flemish composers who are represented in a sumptuous *chansonnier* (songbook) from the era of Lorenzo the Magnificent (late fifteenth century), as well as several works by native Francesco de Layolle, composing in the style of the Burgundians, which further testifies to the preeminence of northern composers within the Florentine macrocosm.

Program notes by Allison Mondel

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fifth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

Musical Dialogues: An Exploration of Hope

April 16, 3:00

West Building, East Garden Court

Sound Impact

"Washingtonians on Wednesdays"

Music by Polina Nazaykinskaya,
Sergei Prokofiev, and Dmitri Shostakovich

April 19, 12:10

West Building, East Garden Court

East Coast Chamber Orchestra

Music by Caplet, Lutosławski, Suk,
and Theofanidis

April 23, 3:30

West Building, East Garden Court

West Garden Trio

"Washingtonians on Wednesdays"

Music by Kenji Bunch, Charles Ives,
and Paul Schoenfield

April 26, 12:10

West Building, East Garden Court

Matt Haimovitz and Christopher O'Riley

All-Russian program

April 30, 3:30

West Building, East Garden Court

Tonality of Culture

Multidisciplinary Estonian concert

Presented as part of the
European Month of Culture

May 3, 12:10

East Building Auditorium

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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Cover Luca della Robbia, *Madonna and Child* (detail), c. 1475, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

Back cover *West Building, Constitution Avenue entrance, viewed from Sixth Street NW*, 1941, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gallery Archives