



Haymarket
Opera company

La Giuditta

ORATORIO BY ALESSANDRO SCARLATTI

GANNON CONCERT HALL
MARCH 24, 2023 | 7:30PM

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Gannon Concert Hall for Haymarket's performance of *La Giuditta*! The year is already off to an exciting start with the February launch of our debut recording on the Cedille Records label: the premiere recording of Joseph Bologne's only extant opera, *L'Amant Anonyme*.

In 2014 Haymarket gave the Midwest premiere of Alessandro Scarlatti's first opera, *Gli equivoci nel sembiante*, to critical acclaim. In 2017 we presented his *Agar et Ismaele esiliati* as our second Lenten oratorio. Tonight we are delighted to bring you another masterpiece by a composer whose gift for melody is surely one of the greatest in the history of music. While violent, the biblical story of Judith gives us hope that one person has the power to be an agent of change for the better good.

Our season continues in June with the Chicago premiere of Johann Adolph Hasse's *Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra*. Hasse was one of the outstanding composers of Italian opera in the 18th century. Our production stars two Midwestern phenoms: Korean-American countertenor Kangmin Justin Kim, originally from Chicago, and the magnificent contralto Lauren Decker, a Milwaukee native. Look for an encore broadcast as part of the Saturday matinee opera series on WFMT this November.

In September we bring you the Midwestern premiere of *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* by the virtuoso composer, singer, and instrumentalist Francesca Caccini. Dating from 1625, it is the earliest surviving opera by a female composer. This epic showdown between good and evil tells the spellbinding tale of the sorceress Alcina, starring Sophie Michaux, Scott Brunscheen, and Lindsay Metzger. We look forward to presenting this extraordinary work in all its baroque splendor.

We invite you to join us for our popular gala, the Early Opera Cabaret, at the Arts Club of Chicago on April 20. This merry event is a marvelous chance to celebrate Haymarket's continued growth while raising funds for future productions.

Musically yours,
Chase & Craig



Chase Hopkins
General Director



Craig Trompeter
Artistic Director

Haymarket Opera Company presents

La Giuditta

(Judith)

AN ORATORIO BY **ALESSANDRO SCARLATTI**

MARCH 24, 2023 AT 7:30PM

Free pre-performance lecture presented by Dr. Louise K. Stein | 6:45pm
Performance length: Two hours, including one 20-minute intermission

Gannon Concert Hall
Holtzman Performance Center at DePaul University
2330 North Halsted Avenue, Chicago, Illinois

CAST

Giuditta Emily Birsan
Oloferne Sophie Michaux
Ozia Sarah Brailey
Achior William Dwyer
Sacerdote David Govertsen

Haymarket Opera Company enriches the musical community of Chicago and the Midwest with performances of 17th- and 18th-century operas using period performance practices.

Haymarket seeks to engage audiences with passionate performances of familiar as well as forgotten works, staged intimately and guided by close attention to details of the libretti and scores.

Original artwork by Wendy Waszut-Barrett, commissioned by Haymarket Opera Company

Instrumental Ensemble

Craig Trompeter, *leader & cello*
Jeri-Lou Zike, *violin*
Wendy Benner, *violin*
Liz Hagen, *viola*
Sue Yelanjian, *bass*

Lisette Kielson, *recorder*
Patrick O'Malley, *recorder*
Nigel North, *theorbo*
Andrew Rosenblum, *harpsichord*
Ryan Berndt, *trumpet*

Program Staff

Alessandra Visconti, *surtitles translator*
Aatman Vakil, *surtitles operator*
Dr. Louise K. Stein, *program notes and pre-performance presenter*

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Judith Beheading Holofernes by Caravaggio (1598)

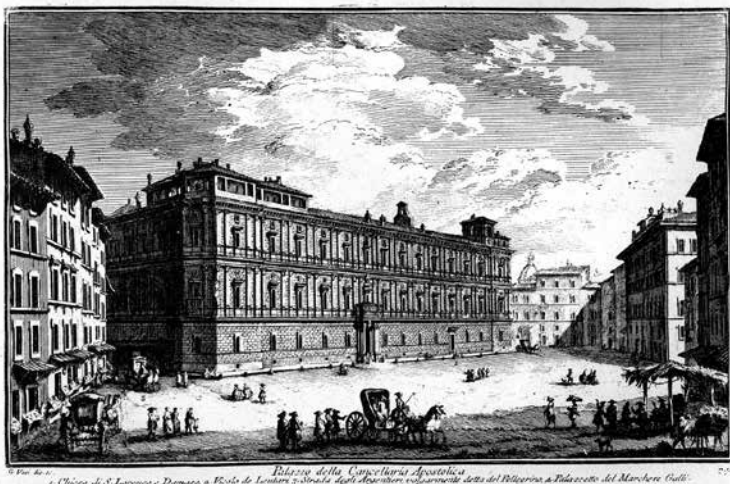


THE STORY OF JUDITH

The gory violence of the biblical Judith's beheading of Holofernes was depicted with vivid realism and *chiaroscuro* by painters including Caravaggio, Artemisia Gentileschi, and Rubens. The drama and sharp colors in the paintings find their musical equivalent in Alessandro Scarlatti's oratorio, *La Giuditta*. The story of Judith offered a comforting lesson about divine protection, especially relevant while the Catholic alliance was frequently in conflict with the Ottoman Empire, an enemy easily identified with Holofernes. While operas were typically performed during carnival, oratorios were Lenten entertainments designed to encourage devotion. In Rome both operas and oratorios featured all-male casts, with soprano and alto castrati taking roles as male and female characters.



Naples, A Festival with a Cuccagna at the Largo di Palazzo by Antonio Joli (1756–58)



Palazzo della Cancelleria, 18th-century engraving by Giuseppe Vasi

THE PATRON

The five-voiced *La Giuditta* was composed in Naples in 1693 on commission from Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, author of the libretto. As vice-chancellor of the Church in Rome, Ottoboni lived and entertained in the huge Roman palace known as the Palazzo della Cancelleria. He enjoyed a plentiful income, many pleasures, and many mistresses (it is estimated that he fathered some 60 children). Scarlatti's oratorio was just one among many excellent musical events he sponsored.

THE COMPOSER

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725), the most prolific Italian aria composer of his epoch, left us some 800 cantatas, 40 oratorios, many instrumental ensemble pieces, and lots of sacred music. In 1706 he bragged to Ferdinando de' Medici that he had composed his 90th opera. Born in Palermo, he began his career in Rome and by 1683 was composing for illustrious Roman patrons. From 1684, Scarlatti and his large family were anchored in Spanish Naples where he served as maestro of the



Portrait of Alessandro Scarlatti

Royal Chapel and opera composer for both the public theater and the viceroy's palace. Scarlatti composed quickly and, hoping for a more lucrative position, often fulfilled commissions from Roman and Florentine patrons despite his busy schedule in Naples. Though just about all of the important patrons in Italy and elsewhere commissioned, financed, and collected his music, something about his person prevented them from hiring him permanently.

Program Notes continued

THE MUSIC

Cardinal Ottoboni's libretto for *La Giuditta* (now in the Vatican Library) was sent to Scarlatti in February 1693. Surprisingly, Scarlatti's autograph score, which once belonged to G.F. Handel's *Messiah* librettist Charles Jennens, now belongs to the National Historical Park Archive in Morristown, New Jersey. The composer sent it to Ottoboni in March 1693 along with a letter begging the cardinal to make sure that the oratorio would be well rehearsed. With what might have been a touch of snobbery (since the Royal Chapel in Naples could brag of numerous brilliant castrati) he advised that, in addition to singing the notes, the singers should pay attention to his precise tempo markings. Scarlatti always tried to compose for the specific voice and character of each singer, so it is odd that Ottoboni had not told him in advance which singers would perform *La Giuditta*. It might be that letters between patron and composer about the singers have been lost. The virtuoso solo parts for cello and violin in Scarlatti's score surely reflect Ottoboni's patronage of violinists Arcangelo Corelli and Matteo Fornari, as well as star cellist Filippo Amadei, all of whom Scarlatti had worked with closely. For some reason, the "*Giuditta* sent from Naples" seems not to have been performed until March 21, 1694. Ottoboni supported the Teatro Tordinona, so it might be that singers for the oratorio were drawn from the casts of the 1694 carnival operas, Giovanni Bononcini's *Tullio Ostilio* and *Il Xerse*.

The subject of *La Giuditta* suited Scarlatti's talent for dramatic contrast, formal diversity, and arias soaked in melancholy. Immediately, the oratorio opens with a special effect that Scarlatti mentioned in his letter: the *sinfonia* (i.e., overture) does not conclude with the usual *allegro* section after the *grave*. Instead, without a pause, the agitated Giuditta crashes in suddenly with her recitative "Amici, e qual v'ingombra" ("Friends, why are you so overcome with fear?"). Giuditta's first aria, "Trombe guerriere" ("Trumpets of war, why are you silent?"), exposes her bravery in agitated baroque *concitato* (excited) style with trumpeting flourishes against an insistent rhythmic pattern. In contrast, Ozia's response aria, "Se d'Amor fosse il cimento"

("Were this a conflict of love"), has two drawn-out strophes to exemplify his thoughtful reasoning. Once convinced of Giuditta's plan, he sings a more lyrical aria, "La speranza del mio seno" ("The hope in my heart, lit by the stars"), wafted along by solo violins and decorative triplet figures for the twinkling light illuminating his hope. Sustained notes allow the singer to show off his beautiful tone for "serene glory." In contrast, the ascending leaps in the Sacerdote's bass recitative, "Nell' estremo periglio" ("The extreme dangers we face"), underline the peril in the plan, while his *Largo* aria, "Quel nume clemente" ("May the compassionate deity"), describes divine guidance in long-breathed vocal phrases; sustained notes and winding melismas are woven into this aria's dense contrapuntal fabric. Giuditta's *allegro assai* aria, "Ma so ben qual chiudo in petto" ("I know my plan well"), about her "lofty plan for victory" opens with a *concitato ritornello* for violins that paints her racing footsteps. The feminine allure she will use to seduce Oloferne is traced in quick melodic decorations which are subsequently pushed aside by fast, sweeping scale figures for her "deathly fury."

Oloferne is announced by a martial *sinfonia bellica* with unusual scoring—a solo trumpet on top and reinforced bass for the "thunder and lightning" that Oloferne claims as his own. But clumsy Oloferne is no match for clever Giuditta, so Scarlatti deliberately undermines him: after the *sinfonia bellica*, his aria "Lampi e tuoni" ("With lightning and thunder") merely snarls without thunder. Oloferne's captain, Achior, an Ammonite, explains in a plaintive E-minor aria, "Vincerai s'il Ciel vorrà" ("You shall win only if Heaven so desires"), which provokes Oloferne to threaten and dismiss him. Leaving Oloferne's camp happy to escape the giant's wrath, Achior sings a lovely tenor aria, "Della Patria io torno in seno" ("Patria, I return to your bosom"), that must exude the warm consolation of homecoming. Its primary melodic figure includes a clever internal return figure, carrying him to Bethulia as Part One closes.



The Siege of Bethulia by Jacob van Swanenburg (1615)

Giuditta opens Part Two by flirting extravagantly with Oloferne, singing about her charms in a sprightly aria, “Se di gigli e se di rose” (“Fresh as lilies and roses”), that overflows with teasing vocal embellishment. Scarlatti signals to us that she is being deceptive by locating the aria in an A minor slippery with chromaticism. Oloferne sings “Vanne, vanne pur” (“Go, we’ll soon be together”) assuredly in his unsuspecting C major, while two solo violins confirm his delight. Meanwhile, Achior’s sudden presence in Bethulia tests the faith of Ozia and the Sacerdote. Ozia resolves to be hopeful in an elaborate virtuoso aria, “Se la gioia non m’uccide” (“If joy does not kill me”), with showy solo parts for violin and cello.

The stirring excitement in the oratorio takes place in Oloferne’s tent. Here Scarlatti’s expert manipulation of form and text-painting create musical drama. First Giuditta and Oloferne sing a duet, “Mio conforto / Mia speranza” (“My solace / My hope, through you I shall be victorious”), that might at first sound like a

typical love duet. But Scarlatti alerts us to its deception in E minor with a descending bass line that proceeds with snake-like chromaticism. The words that Giuditta sings have a hidden meaning, of course. When both characters sing about the thrill of victory, Oloferne’s immediate goal is sexual consummation, while Giuditta’s is the violent beheading. Scarlatti marked the second or “B” section of the duet “*Allegro*” to be sure that the performers speed up appropriately when his music paints the intensity of “burning desire.” Interlocking patterns carry their anxious desire through striking harmonic changes before the return of the duet’s first or “A” section. In recitative, Giuditta convinces Oloferne to rest, then begins a gentle C-major prayer disguised as a lullaby, “La tua destra, o sommo Dio” (“Your right arm shall strike down tyrants”), which Scarlatti marked “*Adagio e staccato*.” Here the detached *staccato* suggests that she moves delicately on tiptoe. Oloferne interrupts, complaining that her song sounds “funereal.”

Program Notes continued

Giuditta resumes her aria with deeper intention (*grave e staccato*) but Oloferne interrupts again when she sings about a god who “wounds the tyrant.” Giuditta then reassuringly promises him “soft oblivion.” As Oloferne finally yields to sleep (“Già cedo al sonno”), his melody relaxes into even quarter notes with a sustained-note emphasis for the “sweetness” of sleep, before sliding down a descending chromatic scale over a bizarre series of harmonies whose bass line concludes with a descending chromatic tetrachord (emblem of lament). Giuditta now sings her *grave e staccato* aria, “La tua destra, o sommo Dio” (“Your right arm shall strike down tyrants”), in its fully scored version with two soft recorders, strings, and continuo. Perhaps the airy recorders bring a heavenly spirit to assist her.

The full aria prompts our imagining: Giuditta is poised with her sword over the sleeping Oloferne and prays for success. Melodic shapes on the words “destra” and “ferir” seem to predict the carving motion of the sword, while sustained notes convey her strength and courage. The aria begins in C major (no sharps or flats) and stays in related areas until it suddenly cuts into unexpected E major, the very “sharp” realm (for this period) of four sharps just when she sings about slicing off the head. Sharp-key harmonies then paint the motion of her blade. When she searchingly prays for aid, a harmonic “search” moves into flat-side harmonies (D minor and F major), as if she considers just how to chop from another angle. The aria form is highly unusual and closes with even more sustained singing when Giuditta soothes away the worries suggested by instrumental flourishes.



Judith and her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes
by Artemisia Gentileschi (1625)

Scarlatti keeps us on the edge of our seats until Giuditta narrates the beheading in a *spiritoso* recitative whose fast bass-line scale figures and surprising harmonic shifts color the moment she cuts off Oloferne’s head. Handing the gory trophy to her maid, Giuditta opens the path toward their city; here a typically Scarlattian “walking” bass escorts them from the bloody murder scene to an arrival at distant F-sharp minor.

Judith with the Head of Holofernes
by Fede Galizia (1596)



Dr. Louise K. Stein
Program notes & pre-performance lecturer

Professor Louise K. Stein currently teaches at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor and is an authority on European, Spanish, and colonial Latin American music of the early modern era, with particular emphasis on theater music and the history of singing, opera, and keyboard music.

In Bethulia, the Sacerdote and Ozia await news but again make the mistake of losing faith. The Sacerdote explodes at Achior with accusatory rage in “Traditor, con dolci accenti” (“Traitor, with sweet words”), a B-minor aria that drives through a forceful harmonic pattern with large vocal leaps, fast descending scales across his range, and agitated rhythms. Ozia responds with a remarkably moving *Largo* aria, “Addio, cara libertà” (“Farewell, dear freedom”), that reinterprets the Sacerdote’s rhythmic figures, smoothing them and slowing them down in deep C-minor melancholy. A lyrical cello line precedes Ozia’s tearful “cara libertà” (“dear freedom”) before a contrasting *Allegro* section flips into B-flat major as he wonders if Heaven might still intervene. The haunting, unaccompanied “cara libertà,” descending from the high soprano G, is heard four times more in the closing *Largo*. Ozia also sings an angry, fully scored aria, “Sento che questo core avvampa di furore” (“I feel wrath firing my heart”), marked “*Con spirito*” with several kinds of vocal virtuosity conveying Ozia’s consuming fear that Achior has betrayed them. But soon Giuditta confirms her success in a recitative that leads to a joyous compound final scene for the five principals (never mind that Oloferne is dead!). They sing a chorus, “Alle palme,” followed by and then interlocking with an exuberant dance-like simile aria. Giuditta sings the first strophe, “Combattuta navicella, al soffiar” (“The small battered ship”), the others respond, then Ozia sings the second strophe, “Superata la costanza” (“Constancy overcome by the rage of the spheres”), before a tightly contrapuntal celebration chorus, “Opra sol di quel Dio” (“In a few short moments Heaven alone turns a sea of tears into a sky of contentment”), in sacred style about the efficacy of Heaven’s work concludes the oratorio.

Notes by Dr. Louise K. Stein.

Synopsis

PART ONE

The people of Judea cower at the imminent invasion of the Assyrian tyrant Holofernes. Ozias, Prince of Bethulia, seeks counsel from the leaders of the city. While the High Priest favors heeding the wishes of the people to submit, the brave and beautiful widow Judith is defiant. She believes the Almighty is on the side of Judea and asks Ozias to postpone surrender for five days. She will use her beauty to gain access to the camp of Holofernes and attempt to murder him and save her people.

Holofernes arrives, boasting that he will easily conquer Judea and enslave its people. He asks his captain Achior, formerly a soldier of Bethulia, why the walls of the city have not already fallen in fear. Achior answers that victory will be granted only according to the wishes of Heaven itself. Achior's response enrages the tyrant, who casts him out of the Assyrian camp and dooms him to die with the people of Bethulia.

PART TWO

Holofernes has been captivated by Judith's great beauty and welcomes her into his camp, where he can adore her as one of his treasures. Judith secretly implores Heaven to lead her to victory. The High Priest alerts Prince Ozias that a stranger has been spotted near the walls of Bethulia. It is Achior, who offers his allegiance to Ozias and reveals that Judith has entered the camp of Holofernes.

Holofernes declares his trust in Judith and his passion for her. She replies ambiguously that he will find repose by resting his weary head in her arms. She implores him to close his eyes and let her keep watch. When he finally falls asleep, Judith prays for strength, and then beheads him. With severed head in hand, she flees the Assyrian camp and begins her journey back to Bethulia.

It is the fifth day, but news of Judith's triumph has not yet reached Bethulia. Ozias declares Judea shall submit to Holofernes. Achior is offended by the prince's lack of faith. The prince rages, condemning him to die as a traitor. Just in time, Judith returns with the head of Holofernes. Heaven has granted victory to the people of Judea because of Judith's bravery.

The Discovery of Holofernes' Corpse
by Sandro Botticelli (1470)





La Giuditta Biographies



EMILY BIRSAN | GIUDITTA

Described as “luminous” (*The Guardian*) and “radiant” (*London Telegraph*), soprano Emily Birsan is known to Chicago audiences for her “mesmerizing” (*Splash Magazine*) performance as Violetta in Verdi’s *La traviata* at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Previous performances include leading roles at Lyric Opera, Welsh National Opera, Edinburgh Festival, Boston Lyric Opera, Madison Opera; and concert performances at Carnegie Hall, BBC Symphony, Ravinia Festival, Grant Park Symphony, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and the Chicago Philharmonic. With Chandos Records, Birsan has recorded Elgar’s oratorio, *The Saga of St. Olaf*, with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Sir Andrew Davis. *La Giuditta* marks Birsan’s debut at Haymarket.



SOPHIE MICHAUX | OLOFERNE

Praised for her “warm, colorful mezzo” by *Opera News*, French mezzo-soprano Sophie Michaux’s current season includes engagements with the symphony orchestras of Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco; The Lorelei Ensemble, and Blue Heron. As a noted early music specialist, Michaux was praised by the *Boston Musical Intelligencer* for her “astonishing range and flexibility” in performances at the Boston Early Music Festival. *La Giuditta* marks Michaux’s debut at Haymarket.



SARAH BRAILEY | OZIA

Grammy Award-winning soprano Sarah Brailey has been praised for her “radiant, liquid tone” (*New York Times*). Notable recent and upcoming projects include Barber’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the Colorado Symphony, Julia Wolfe’s *Her Story* with the Lorelei Ensemble with the Boston, Chicago, Nashville, National, and San Francisco symphony orchestras, and John Zorn works with Barbara Hannigan at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, Germany. Brailey was appointed director of vocal studies at the University of Chicago in 2021 and serves as the artistic director of the Handel Aria Competition. *La Giuditta* marks Brailey’s debut at Haymarket.



WILLIAM DWYER | ACHIOR

Tenor William Dwyer is praised for his “vibrant tone and stylish expression” (*Chicago Classical Review*). Prior engagements with Haymarket Opera include Stradella’s *La Susanna*, Rossi’s *Oratorio della Settimana Santa*, and Alecton in Marais’ *Ariane e Bacchus*. Dwyer is well known to Chicago audiences for performances with Chicago Opera Theater, Porchlight Music Theater, and Light Opera Works.



DAVID GOVERTSEN | SACERDOTE

Bass-baritone David Govertsens was lauded for the “excellence” (*Chicago Classical Review*) he brought to the role of Seneca in Haymarket’s acclaimed 2022 production of Monteverdi’s *L’incoronazione di Poppea*. Notable previous performances include Arkel in Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and numerous roles at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Govertsens will be featured on Cedille Records’ upcoming recording of Stacy Garrop’s oratorio *Terra Nostra*. Previous Haymarket credits include Ophéon in Bologne’s *L’Amant Anonyme*, Zoroastro in Handel’s *Orlando*, and the Dragon in Lampe’s *The Dragon of Wantley*.

Haymarket
Opera company

*Ancient Egypt meets
18th-century Naples in
a musical love affair*

Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra

BY JOHANN ADOLPH HASSE

JUNE 23-24 AND 26-27, 2023 AT 7:30PM

Jarvis Opera Hall at DePaul University

Haymarket presents Hasse's serenata *Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra* as a lavish operatic event starring Kangmin Justin Kim and Lauren Decker.



Kangmin Justin Kim
as Cleopatra



Lauren Decker
as Marc'Antonio

Virtuosic music and high-baroque drama collide as history's star-crossed lovers Mark Antony and Cleopatra contemplate their bleak political and personal future. Eavesdrop on their final declaration of undying love as they brace for their double suicides.

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opera company

An epic showdown
between Good and Evil

La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina

BY FRANCESCA CACCINI
SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 1, 2023
Jarvis Opera Hall at DePaul University

Haymarket champions Francesca Caccini's only surviving opera, *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina*, in a spellbinding period production featuring a cast of virtuosos, a colorful orchestra of period instruments, and sets and costumes to conjure up an evil sorceress's enchanted island. Peer beyond the palms to discover the beautiful, seductive, and evil sorceress Alcina!



Sophie Michaux
as Alcina



Scott Brunscheen
as Ruggiero



Lindsay Metzger
as Melissa

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WORLD-PREMIERE RECORDING OF L'AMANT ANONYME AVAILABLE NOW!

Purchase and stream Haymarket's debut album of L'Amant Anonyme by Joseph Bologne, the Chevalier de Saint-Georges. This album was produced with Chicago's Grammy Award-winning label, Cedille Records and is the first project to be funded, in part, by the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Fund for Vocal Recordings.

Our recording of Bologne's L'Amant Anonyme is available for purchase online and streaming on major music platforms including Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, Pandora, and ArkivMusic.



"Look for a Grammy nomination sometime down the road." (Hyde Park Herald, June 2022)



*Haymarket is thrilled
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