



**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
EARLY MUSIC NEWS**

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FROM THE EDITOR

I've touched on the theme of developing Southern California's early music scene often since coming to the *Southern California Early Music News*. I am happy to say that we are getting wonderful new ensembles all the time. To illustrate this felicitous state of affairs, I invite you to read about a great new early music choir in this month's feature article, "**PRISM Presents *The Pomona College Concert.***"

In the October 2019 edition of the *Southern California Early Music News*, we ran a feature article on the Spanish Baroque ensemble L'Apothéose. This month, Laurence Vittes reviews the eponymous album of the article, ***Händel Tribute.***

With the new year come changes. So it is for this publication. We are no longer going to run the "Concert Calendar." We made this decision because of the demands publishing such a listing of concerts placed on our already overworked staff—myself included. Of course, if **YOU VOLUNTEER TO HELP**, perhaps we can bring back this and other discontinued features.

To keep up with the latest goings on in our community, your best, most accurate and up-to-date source is still the **SCEMS on-line calendar** www.earlymusicla.org/calendar. Should your interests take you farther afield, be sure to check "**Things to Come**" for upcoming events outside the Southland.

Thank you for your support of early music in Southern California!

Sincerely,

John L. Robinson, Editor-in-Chief,
Southern California Early Music News,
newsletter@earlymusicla.org

CD REVIEW

By Laurence Vittes



Händel Tribute, L'Apothéose, Ibs Classical

His chamber music works are like operas without words where he intensifies the dramatic and rhetorical side of the music and takes it to the limit.

I always pay attention to new recordings of Handel. He was so protean a composer and artist for so cosmopolitan an English-speaking audience that he has a special place in my listening heart. When *Southern California Early Music News* Editor-in-Chief John Robinson and I received a new CD by the Madrid-based Ensemble l'Apothéose called *Handel Tribute* (they spelled it *Händel Tribute* for the German market), it was accompanied by a note from their U.S. importer saying that the musicians were “particularly proud of this album, since they loved the repertoire since the beginning of the project. Obviously, it is an honor for any early music performer to pay homage to this great composer.”

Making a recording like *Handel Tribute*, although it encompasses only an hour of music, requires an enormous amount of preparation, commitment, and financial sacrifice. This can be explained by the musicians' need to leave

a record that is more permanent than even the recording of a live experience, as well as performing in a more exacting, perhaps more profound way. It is also good publicity.

The music on this recording is just what you would expect from someone who wrote music that was overwhelmingly beautiful and in tune with the times for an audience that had to pay either to hear the music played by others or to play it themselves. It is first-rate Handel, yet not out of the reach of talented amateurs. Once you owned the music, then and now, you could master the notes and deepen your emotional response. It meant that skilled fingers, bow arms and embouchures were just the start of magical classical music journeys.

If Handel and his audience were to hear *Handel Tribute*, they would be amazed by how comprehensively the five musicians—and the engineers, the production team, and the spouses and parents who make these undertakings possible—understood what is required for music making that is rich with sheer physical beauty and a gracious sense of affect, nuance and pace.

It's also instructive to read an artist's biography from time to time—*slowly*—to get a full understanding of just how talented musicians like Laura Quesada (flauto traverso), Víctor Martínez (baroque violin), Carla Sanfélix (baroque cello), Asís Márquez (harpsichord), and Ramiro Morales (plucked strings) are, and what an homage from them means.

In recent years the ensemble has won twelve national and international awards, including: First Prize at the 2019 York Early Music International Young Artists Competition; First Prize at the Göttingen Händel Competition 2017; Second Prize at the International Van Wassenaer Competition 2018 (part of the Oude Muziek Festival in Utrecht); and Second Prize at the Concours International de Musique Ancienne de Val de Loire 2017, chaired by William Christie. L'Apothéose is currently enjoying its status as *Ensemble in Residence* for the 2019/2020 season of the Centro Nacional de Difusión Musical in Spain. They are very good.

Since Handel transcends his own time by being so much of it, I am always curious as to how musicians hear his recyclings and borrowings. I asked L'Apothéose, through their U.S. agent, how much Handel re-used and borrowed musical subjects, and what made it original anyway. They answered:

“Handel reuses...material from his oratorios, operas and other vocal music; he does it with

both literal and transformed versions of his compositions. The originality comes with the instrumentation when the material is literally taken and transformed. He adapts everything perfectly to the instruments he uses and finds ways to exploit the musical content to get the most (out) of it. His chamber music works are like operas without words, where he intensifies the dramatic and rhetorical side of the music and takes it to the limit.”

When I asked what it felt like to make such beautiful sounds on instruments that they have spent their whole lives mastering, they answered: “It feels wonderful, because we have become so connected to Handel’s music. He uses a language we understand so well, so for us it is a way of natural expression. With this music we feel ourselves flowing and touching the sky.”



For more information on *Händel Tribute*, including a list of pieces on the CD, please see lapotheose.bandcamp.com/releases.

PUBLICATION SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

For complete submission information, consult: www.earlymusicla.org. All items should be received by the appropriate editor by the 1st of the month, one month prior to the issue month. Issues are monthly, subject to change.

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PRISM PRESENTS *THE POMONA COLLEGE CONCERT*

Donna M. Di Grazia, Adrien Redford, and
Hayden Eberhart

If the scientific studies that tout the significant positive effects choral singing has on the mind and body are true, the Southland's newest choral ensemble with early music at the center of its repertoire, PRISM, is well on its way to a long, happy, and sweet life—*Dolcissima mia vita!*

PRISM prismensemble.org will offer its second concert on Friday, February 14th, 2020 at 8 PM in the Mabel Shaw Bridges Hall of Music on the campus of Pomona College (150 E. Fourth Street, Claremont, CA). The hour-long program will include sacred and secular music from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and Italy, pieces by Vaughan Williams and Elgar, and selections of early Americana.

A Prism for Choral Music

The ensemble's name, PRISM, reflects its philosophy of music-making. In geometry, a prism is any solid with two equal bases and parallelograms at each end, but in optics, and for us, a prism is a transparent body whose polished, refracting surfaces change one's perception when looking through it. Our ensemble, PRISM, is inspired by this in our approach to music-making, offering a way to discover both the beauty inherent in early music and the harmony and balance across musical eras reflected in later music explicitly or implicitly inspired by early models.

PRISM is the brainchild of its three founders: Adrien Redford (Co-Artistic Director), Donna M. Di Grazia (Co-Artistic Director), and Hayden Eberhart (Administrative Director). All three met at Pomona College in Claremont, from which Hayden and Adrien received their undergraduate degrees in 2007 and 2014, respectively. Donna is David J. Baldwin Professor of Music at Pomona College, where she has taught music history and directed the choral program since 1998.

Dr. Di Grazia traces her love of early music to the opportunities she had to sing it in high school and college, and to study it closely from a scholarly perspective in graduate school. As a result of those experiences, she placed early music, especially works from the Renaissance, at the center of Pomona's choral program when she started teaching there, not only because of its beauty and the opportunity it provides to strengthen a singer's technical and expressive skills, but also because she believes early music should be experienced by students and audiences from all backgrounds.

Like most of their peers, neither Hayden nor Adrien had much experience singing early music when they started at Pomona, but both found that they loved the blend of early and new music they sang under Donna's direction. After graduating, they pursued professional choral work in the Los Angeles area, expanding their knowledge of the choral art. Hayden (M.M. and Graduate Certificate in Performance, USC) and Adrien successfully

auditioned for the Los Angeles Master Chorale (LAMC) shortly after graduating from Pomona; eventually they also worked together in the LAMC office. In addition to their membership in the LAMC, they were both selected for its twenty-one-voice chamber ensemble that toured nationally and internationally with the Peter Sellars production of Orlando di Lasso's *Lagrima di San Pietro*. Both also sing with other professional ensembles in Southern California and elsewhere, Hayden most notably with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale. Adrien is currently one of this year's twelve auditioned VOCES8 USA Scholars, a prestigious mentoring program run by the widely acclaimed British octet, VOCES8 www.voces8.com, for exceptionally talented young choral artists.



PRISM's Approach to Performing

PRISM doesn't use a conductor, creating a more collaborative and collegial music-making environment in which the singers can create their art organically. This approach requires a deeper sense of listening and expressive awareness—being “in tune” with each other.

In preparation for their inaugural concert on July 12th, 2019 at St. Basil's Catholic Church in Los Angeles, the seventeen-voice ensemble met four times. They learned a lot along the way about what works and what doesn't when there is no conductor. Now, as they approach their second concert, PRISM is well-positioned to move forward, involving the singers more deeply in conversations about the soundscape they want to create and the overall narrative

they want to tell with each piece. Collaboration in this way is always a work in progress, but the agency it offers for each member of the ensemble is refreshing, and allows for an energized perspective in each piece that they hope their audiences feel.

Such was certainly the case in the debut concert, which began with William Cornysh's (1465–1523) haunting meditation *Wofffully araide* prismensemble.org/media, from the early sixteenth-century Fayrfax Manuscript (c.1500). It is an intimate, rarely heard work by a composer who is little known in the United States.

The rest of that first program included more familiar selections by William Byrd (c.1539/40 or 1543–1623), Gregorio Allegri (1582–1652), Thomas Tomkins (1572–1656), Thomas Weelkes (baptized 1576–1623), Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), Edward Elgar (1857–1934), Shawn Kirchner (b. 1970), plus Giovanni Gabrieli's (c.1554/1557–1612) *Angelus Domini descendit* prismensemble.org/media, another early music gem that deserves wider exposure.

For their upcoming concert on February 14th, the founders have chosen to focus on music from England and Italy, with a program that again reflects their collaborative and open approach. The bulk of the concert (as of this writing) will focus on sacred and secular music by Thomas Tallis (c.1505–1585), John Taverner (c.1490–1545), Carlo Gesualdo (1566–1613), Giaches de Wert (1535–1596), Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611), Orlando di Lasso (1532–1594), Thomas Morley (1557 or 1558–1602), and Weelkes. It will also include selections of America's own early music from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

PRISM aligns itself with a historically aware model, while also allowing for more modern developments. For example, the group uses women's voices for early sacred music, and



frequently elects to present secular works that were originally sung with one on a part (such as de Wert's *Giunto alla tomba* and Gesualdo's *Dolcissima mia vita* in the next concert) with the full group. This approach fits with PRISM's fundamental philosophy: just as a prism refracts light and changes one's perception of what one sees, PRISM aims to cast new light on works from earlier historical eras, changing one's perception of what one hears and how one responds to the music, both early and modern.

The idea of changing perceptions extends beyond what PRISM's performances reveal. One of the goals of the ensemble is to alter assumptions about who performs early music. PRISM's education plans include introducing

Renaissance music to young singers in high school programs throughout the Los Angeles metropolitan area through interactive learning with ensemble members. Adrien, Donna, and Hayden believe the best way to engage a more diverse group of young people is to expose them to the glories of the repertoire early on. This personal engagement was exactly how each founder came to know and love early music themselves.

In recent years, both within and outside of the classical music world, many have noted the lack of diversity among classical performers; early music is certainly no exception. PRISM's founders believe that it has a responsibility to help change this by giving young people the

PRISM: *THE POMONA COLLEGE CONCERT*

(Program subject to change)

Thomas Tallis: *Loquebantur variis linguis*

John Taverner: Agnus Dei from *Missa Corona spinea*

Tomás Luis de Victoria: Kyrie from *Missa pro victoria*

Orlando di Lasso: *Tutto lo di*

Carlo Gesualdo: *Dolcissima mia vita*

Giaches de Wert: *Giunto alla tomba*

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Three

Shakespeare Songs

Jeremiah Ingalls: Northfield

Walker/Hauser: Invitation (new)

Oliver Holden: Cowper

William Billings: *When Jesus wept*

William Batchelder Bradbury: *Angel Band*

Luca Marenzio: *A la strada*

Thomas Morley: *Fyre! Fyre!*

Jacob Arcadelt: *Il bianco e dolce cigno*

Thomas Weelkes: *Hark! All ye lovely saints above*

Orlando di Lasso: *Allala pia calia*

Thomas Weelkes: *Gloria in excelsis Deo*

Elgar/Cameron: *Lux aeterna*

opportunity to hear and experience first-hand what early choral music in particular is, and how it can be relevant for them in the modern world.

Collaborative and collegial involvement with music that we love and want to share—that is what PRISM is about.

We hope you will join us at 8:00 PM on February 14th, 2020 in Claremont.

E-mail PRISM at heyitsprism@gmail.com

Visit our website prismensemble.org for more information and to join our mailing list.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES



Adrien Redford (bass, PRISM Co-Artistic Director and Founder)

Adrien Redford began his music studies at age five. An alumnus of Pomona College, he joined the Los Angeles Master Chorale in 2017, which led to

his participation in the touring production of *Lagrime di San Pietro*, staged by director Peter Sellars. In recent years, Adrien has enjoyed singing with the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles and the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles, as well as Los Angeles-based choral ensembles Tonality and Golden Bridge. He is a member of the 2019–20 VOCES8 USA Scholars Program, sponsored by the highly-acclaimed British ensemble VOCES8 www.voces8.com.



Donna M. Di Grazia (alto, PRISM Co-Artistic Director and Founder)

Donna M. Di Grazia holds degrees from the University of California, Davis (B.A., M.A., music) and Washington

University in St. Louis (Ph.D., musicology).

As a singer, she has been affiliated with numerous professional choirs, including the St. Louis Symphony Chorus and Chamber Singers, and the Millennium Consort Singers in Los Angeles. Her professional life as a choral conductor and musicologist is situated at the intersection of historical scholarship and performance, where she incorporates the perspective of a historian with that of an active practitioner of the choral art. She holds the David J. Baldwin Professorship in Music at Pomona College in Claremont, CA.



Hayden Eberhart (soprano, PRISM Administrative Director and Founder)

A native of Dallas, Hayden has sung with the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Golden Bridge, and for eleven seasons

with the Los Angeles Master Chorale, where she has been a part of the *Lagrime di San Pietro* world tour. She has been a soloist in Handel's *Messiah* and Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*. She has appeared as a guest artist with Pasadena Master Chorale, LA Daiku, Hollywood Master Chorale and the Pomona College Choir and Orchestra. She can be heard on film soundtracks for *Frozen*, *The Conjuring*, and *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, among others.

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CALENDAR ONLINE

The Early Music Around Town online calendar features the very latest listings with updates and additions at <http://www.earlymusicla.org>. Report listing corrections and any errors to the Calendar Editor at calendar@earlymusicla.org.

SUBMIT LISTINGS

Free for all early music events! In one step, submit a listing to the online SCEMS calendar at calendar@earlymusicla.org. Mail season brochures to: SCEMS, PO Box 41832, Los Angeles, CA 90041-0832.

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For SCEMS Members Only! The following ensembles are among those offering special pricing for members of the Southern California Early Music Society for selected performances: Con Gioia • Jouyssance • LA Master Chorale • LA Opera • Los Angeles Baroque Players • Musica Angelica • Tesseract

For additional information on special pricing for selected performances, please consult the SCEMS calendar or contact SCEMS at info@earlymusicla.org or www.earlymusicla.org.

THINGS TO COME

EMAT Calendar www.earlymusicla.org/calendar, a monthly shortlist of local early music concerts and events.

Current Master Calendar <http://www.earlymusicla.org/2019-2020-calendar>, a list of the entire season of concerts and events.

The San Francisco Early Music Society has announced its 2019–2020 Concert Season: Passions of the Dance. For more information, please go to <https://sfems.org/19-20-concert-season>.

The Boston Early Music Festival has announced its 2019–2020 season. For more information, please go to www.bemf.org.