



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EARLY MUSIC NEWS Editor-in-Chief John L. Robinson newsletter@earlymusicla.org

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FROM THE EDITOR

Virgil: of whom Horace justly declares, that the rural muses have appropriated to him their elegance and sweetness.

 — Samuel Johnson, "Criticism on the Pastorals of Virgil," *The Adventurer*, No. 92 (1753)

For a little summer vacation, let us away to the countryside and the carefree lives and loves of its rustic inhabitants, far from the rigors and the debased morality of the city. How, though, might one get there? "It's far, far away. Behind the moon, beyond the rain." Arthur Omura will be our guide to this land "over the rainbow" in "Rebuilding Arcadia—Episode II: Corelli, Scarlatti, Handel, and the Arcadian Academy of Rome."

Laurence Vittes shares insights from his recent interview with renowned early music conductor Harry Christophers about performing Palestrina and Purcell in "A Conversation with Harry Christophers, Part One." **A** *Southern California Early Music News* Exclusive!

Who says Southern California has no early music performances in the summer? Not readers of this publication! We have two wonderful concerts coming up in July. Join the Black Rose Early Music Ensemble for their "Summer Soirée" on July 20th and 21st. Read on for details!

July also brings a new vocal ensemble to Southern California, PRISM. This seventeen-voice conductorless choir, founded by Adrien Redford and Hayden Eberhart (Los Angeles Master Chorale) and Dr. Donna Di Grazia (Pomona College), will have its début concert on Friday July 12th at St. Basil's Catholic Church in Los Angeles, featuring works by Palestrina, Byrd, Cornysh, and Gabrieli. For more information, check the "Concert Calendar" and the SCEMS on-line calendars. See you there!

On June 15th, the world lost co-founder of the Waverly Consort, Michael Jaffee. By special arrangement, read Early Music America's remembrance

of this towering figure in early music: https:// www.earlymusicamerica.org/web-articles/ remembering-michael-jaffee-1938-2019/.

Be sure to check "Things to Come" for upcoming events outside Southern California and the "Concert Calendar" and the SCEMS on-line calendars www.earlymusicla.org/ calendar for more information on performances right here that you won't want to miss. 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

A CONVERSATION WITH HARRY CHRISTOPHERS, PART 1

Laurence Vittes

hile I was writing an article earlier this year for Early Music America on the growth of early music ensembles and period-instrument orchestras in North America, I spoke at length to Harry Christophers, artistic director of the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston, who will be stepping down at the end of the 2020-21 season. Thanks to his generosity, I can share material with the Society that did not make it into the final Early Music America article.

LV: What were you doing on Early Music Day, March 21?

Harry Christophers: I was back in England with The Sixteen. We were recording *Palestrina Volume Eight* in central London at St Alban's Church, Holborn.

LV: Is that where you feel most at home?

Harry Christophers: Performing Palestrina? I adore doing Palestrina. We decided to do a cycle of Palestrina's music. He wrote over a hundred Masses. There's no way I'm going to do one hundred CDs, but we're making a pretty good stab at it: we're going to do ten volumes. The music on the new recording centers on Easter, a double choir mass. In fact, of all the CDs we've done, this new one will have some of his most comprehensively good music, most of it unknown. With a famous composer like Palestrina, people know *Missa Papae Marcelli*, *O Magnum Mysterium*, and the wonderful *Song of Songs*; but he wrote such a phenomenal amount, such an enormous wealth of music. Every now and then you come across some pieces that are really special.

LV: Phenomenal is right. According to Wikipedia, Palestrina's works list includes 105 Masses, 68 offertories, at least 140 madrigals, and more than 300 motets. In addition, there are at least 72 hymns, 35 Magnificats, 11 litanies, and four or five sets of Lamentations. In fact, I recently reviewed a Palestrina recording for *Gramophone* by Greenwich Village-based Choir of Saint Luke in the Fields. (See Laurence's review in the June 2019 edition of *SCEMN*, p. 3.—Ed.) It was a modern romantic reading, historically well informed, totally different from the ascetic sound I associated with Palestrina when I was growing up. **Harry Christophers:** It's all about sound worlds. We have to remember that Palestrina's own choir would have sounded very different in the Sistine Chapel with *castrati* on the top line. There were also interesting differences from country to country. In England, because we have a phenomenal choral tradition that's been going for 500 years, there's an inbuilt way to the way we approach the music.

LV: Is it a matter of pitch, of the sound where you're performing?

Harry Christophers: St. Alban's Church, in which we've recorded our Palestrina, is fairly resonant; more akin to Saint Peter's, the Sistine

chapel and St John Lateran in Rome. It has quite a full sound and what I call a lovely tail that goes back in a very uniform way without any distortion. One other characteristic of that particular church is that it loves flat keys—we tend to perform 90 per cent of Palestrina in flat keys because that tuning is always absolutely wonderful and it doesn't tend to like sharps. It's really interesting

how different buildings do different pitches and what have you. That's why, when we're talking about performing Renaissance music, we actually don't know what key they sang these things in. We know about the clefs, and what the musicologists do, but we don't really know the actual pitch. Personally, I firmly believe that all the composers and choirmasters in those days sang at a pitch that was comfortable for whatever group of singers they happened to have that particular year.

LV: How is early music these days?

Harry Christophers: I think one of the great things about the early music movement now



is that we are going back and taking a much, much more concentrated look at what the composer actually wrote. We're just not ironing it all out anymore.

LV NB: Christophers cited as an example his recent experience with a performance at the New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, part of on an all-Purcell program that included the *Chacony in G Minor, A new Irish tune in G Major, O solitude, A new Scotch tune in G Major,* and *Welcome to all the pleasures.* The "enhanced staging" was the work of Aidan Lang, General Director at the Seattle Opera.

> Harry Christophers: So many of these editions that were done in the 60s, 70s and early 80s ironed out rhythms and made everything double-dotted. I thought: "Hang on, let's go back to what Purcell actually wrote and let's make some sort of sense of this that's not just 'dot every single note and line it all up so it's uniform'." There was a time when people wondered if Purcell really meant what

he wrote. They concluded, "of course not, let's change it." Now we know that the bloke was a genius and what he wrote to begin with was fantastic. So let's run with it, not pull it around too much, and make it work.

After all, we're not turning Purcell into Lully. Purcell is quintessentially English. He knew what was happening in France and Italy, and he adopted one or two things that suited him. However, his writing—especially his string writing, which was a major development of the viol consort—was attuned to the rhythms of the English language for which he wrote so brilliantly.

Rebuilding Arcadia

EPISODE II: CORELLI, SCARLATTI, HANDEL, AND THE ARCADIAN ACADEMY OF ROME

Arthur Omura

here is a genre of poetry, play, novel, painting, and sometimes architecture, called "Pastoral" or "Arcadian." Set usually in the countryside, it chronicles the carefree lives and loves of rustic country people: shepherds, goatherds, and farmers. The genre was immensely popular for about four hundred years in the early-modern period.

The real Arcadia is a land-locked region of the Peloponnese peninsula in Greece; it is rocky and mostly empty. Perhaps this lack of distinguishing features allowed Polybius, the second-century BCE Greek historian, to say that this was an idyllic land of musical shepherds, an idea taken up by Theocritus in his Idylls and Virgil in his *Eclogues*. In these imaginary lands, lonely workers of the field pass the long hours in poetic discourse, lamenting lost loves, falling in love anew, and taking part in friendly musical competition. They are invariably in some pleasant place: a shady grove close by a fountain of cool spring water, distant physically and metaphysically from the rigors and the debased morality of the city.

The Pastoral realm exists outside of time, just as Arcadia is a placeless place. Therefore, the genre is perfectly synthetic, completely abstract: the perfect venue for self-reflection. Arcadia's peaceful groves and grottoes can be seen as nothing but the inside of the mind. Here is not repose after the completion of a hard day's labor in the fields, but the stillness of sleep, when outside influences and troubles have been cut off, leaving room for dreams.

The Accademia degli Arcadi

It is the winter of 1689. Queen Christina of Sweden is dead. A group of fourteen writers, all members of Christina's now defunct *Accademia Reale*, have gathered in an open field in the city of Rome to discuss the future of poetry, the arts generally, and the sciences, now that their great benefactor has gone to her eternal rest.



Christina had abandoned her throne and moved to Rome many years before, after a crisis of religion and a shocking conversion to Catholicism. She had used her wealth to become a great patron of the arts, hired a private

orchestra, painters, artists of all kinds, and even established a popular but short-lived public theater in Rome. After her death, those she supported quickly came together with a plan of action.

The fourteen decided that they would found their own *Accademia*, improving Christina's model. Their *Accademia* would be based on the ideals found in the pastoral poetry and plays that were the members' favorite writings: Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*, Virgil's *Eclogues*, and Theocritus's *Idylls*. In these works, there was no distinction by class or gender; everyone was a poet and musician. Their *Accademia* would be egalitarian and democratic, spreading virtue and morality through poetry and the related arts. Their *Accademia* would be a proving ground for Utopia.

The Accademia degli Arcadi was founded a vear later in 1690. Giovanni Mario Cresimbeni, who was present at that first meeting, made himself the "custodian" of the shepherds (since the Arcadians were egalitarians, there could be no "president" or "king"). Members donned sheepskins and rustic attire and adapted "shepherd names" in order to leave behind their worldly selves more easily. In real life, these men and (a few) women held powerful positions in church and government. Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, grandnephew of Pope Alexander VIII, was a prominent Arcadi, as were Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili and Prince Francesco Ruspoli. The meetings of the Accademia offered them an escape from the pressures of modern city life and a venue for their poetry, music, and oratorio libretti.

The agenda of a meeting of the Accademia degli Arcadi generally included the recitation of poetry, the sounding of music, and perhaps the performance of a play or cantata on a bucolic theme. But the Arcadi also staged performances of their operas and oratorios for the enrichment of the public. This unusual group promulgated the idea that the arts should be more honest and authentic, like the song of a shepherd. To Giovanni Gravina, one of the original Arcadi and Pietro Metastasio's adoptive father, poetry was a kind of science: it expressed moral and theological truths, rather than physical or mathematical ones. Beauty and truth were considered to be absolute in the neo-Platonic sense; poets could express the truth more or less, depending on their degree of artistry and divine inspiration. The Arcadi believed the purity of their Pastoral style was best suited to expressing those truths. While they themselves did little to determine the trajectory of Italian art in the eighteenth century, their indirect influence and patronage were widely influential, particularly in music.

The Arcadians required a steady supply of music for their meetings and performances. Due to a somewhat chaotic musical scene in Rome, musicians of the first order were not difficult to encounter. Opera, a still relatively new and evolving art form, was heavily disrupted by a series of challenges from the Vatican. Pope Innocent XI banned opera outright in 1676, only for it to be restored by Alexander VIII in 1689. It was re-prohibited by Innocent XII in 1691. The resulting chaos drove opera from public to private venues. Rome's wealthy noble class was more than able to accommodate that shift. Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, for example, built his own theater in his palace, the Palazzo della Cancelleria, after the Teatro di Tor di Nona was decommissioned. Opera-adjacent musical forms-oratorio, cantata, and serenata-began to receive more attention. They required no extravagant machinery, so could be staged in a suitably opulent salon, or even outdoors, rather than in a theater. The Accademia degli Arcadi was perfectly positioned to capitalize on this chaos.



Ottoboni was an Arcadian through and through. Along with Queen Christina's library, which had been given to Alexander VIII after her death, the Cancelleria also

Portrait of Pietro Ottoboni by Francesco Trevisani

contained an art gallery dedicated to landscape

paintings and a room for tapestries of forest scenes. The Cardinal's entourage contained even more valuable treasures: Ottoboni hired Archangelo Corelli and Alessandro Scarlatti, two of Christina's best musicians, after her death.

Corelli was born in 1653 in Fusignano, in the Emilia-Romagna, to a family of deeply unmusical land owners. He quickly discovered the violin and moved in his early teens to study in Bologna. He appeared in Rome in 1675 as a third violinist and began to ascend the ranks. By 1679 he was conducting opera at the Teatro Capranica. His skill as a violinist propelled him to the first rank of musicianship in the city, where he would stay firmly ensconced until his death in 1713. (Corelli's afterlife was no less glorious. He was interred, with Cardinal Ottoboni's help, in the chapel of St. Joseph in the Pantheon.) His first published work was a set of trios published in 1681 dedicated to Queen Christina.



Portrait of Arcangelo Corelli by the Irish painter Hugh Howard (1697)

After Christina's death, Corelli was installed in an apartment in the Cancelleria, where he lived for the rest of his life. The stability of Ottoboni's patronage, and the influence of the Arcadians, is perhaps why Corelli's music is imbued with a kind of serene grace. Corelli himself was

accepted into the *Accademia degli Arcadi* in 1706; his Arcadian name was Arcomelo Erimanteo. His stable position and the constant demand from the Arcadians for music allowed Corelli the opportunity to develop the concerto into the form we know and love today. Corelli had numerous influential students, among them Francesco Gasparini, Pietro Locatelli, and Francesco Geminiani. His relatively few published works became touchstones for generations of string players.



Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725) was also a great favorite of the Arcadians. Scarlatti split his time between Rome and Naples, although the death in 1700 of Carlos II, King of Spain, and the War of Spanish Succession meant Scarlatti's Roman patrons were more

Alessandro Scarlatti

politically stable. Cardinal Ottoboni would later put him and his prodigious talent as a composer to work composing cantatas for the theater at the Cancelleria, where Corelli was concertmaster.

It was into this supportive milieu that a new face appeared in late 1706-a man known everywhere as Il Caro Sassone, or the "Dear Saxon." He played the organ at San Giovanni di Laterano in January of 1707, was instantly recognized as a world-class talent, and fell in with the Arcadi without hesitation. This amazing personage was, of course, the young George Frideric Handel. Handel was escaping from the stuffy confines of Germany, and from Hamburg in particular, where he had fought his infamous duel with his closest friend Johann Mattheson. He would spend the next four years roaming around Italy's musical centers-Rome, Naples, and Venice-soaking up as much music as he could and laying the foundation upon which his spectacular later works would be built.

When in Rome, *Il Caro Sassone* became an instant hit with the *Arcadi* and immediately

found patrons among them. Cardinal Pamphili was the librettist of one of *Il Sassone's* more well-known works from this period, *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno (The Triumph of Time and Disillusion)*. In this *serenata*, ideas are personified as Time, Beauty, Truth, *et al.*, and have a philosophical repartee, very much in the style of the relentlessly intellectual *Arcadi*. In Pastoral writing, where characters are often symbolic, figurative, and sometimes genderfluid, such things often happen. *Il Trionfo* was revised twice, in 1737 and 1757.

According to John Mainwaring, an early biographer of Handel, Cardinal Ottoboni arranged a keyboard-playing competition between Handel and Domenico Scarlatti, Alessandro's hyper-talented son. Both prodigies were the same age (born in 1685); both were still in their formative years, and though their styles diverged in later life, they shared many qualities during this Roman period. In their duel, Scarlatti was thought to be a better



The Chandos portrait of George Frideric Handel by James Thornhill, c. 1720

harpsichordist, but *Il Sassone* far surpassed him on the organ. Scarlatti the younger would go on to work for the Infanta Maria Barbara, composing his famous five hundred keyboard sonatas and generally encouraging music into the Classical era.

Strangely, Il Sassone's

most pastoral work from the time, another serenata, was not written by or for the Arcadi. Aci, Galatea e Polifemo was a commission for the wedding of the niece of Neapolitan grande dame Aurora Sanseverino and was based on the episode in Book XIII of Ovid's Metamorphoses. The Metamorphoses was a bountiful source for pastoral adaptation. Many of the episodes were themselves set in a countryside world devoid

ARTHUR OMURA BIOGRAPHY



Arthur Omura is a specialist in historical keyboard instruments based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He studied organ repertoire of the Baroque under Charles Rus in San Francisco, modern technique

under Dr. Ladd Thomas at the University of Southern California, and harpsichord repertoire under Dr. Lucinda Carver at USC. He has performed at the Boston and Berkeley Early Music festivals and given numerous performances in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. Omura keeps an active performance schedule as an organist and harpsichord player. He has worked with MicroFest, wildUp, iPalpiti, Les Surprises

Baroques, Musica Angelica, the Los Angeles Baroque Players, and the American Bach Soloists. Omura has collaborated on several recordings, most recently on "Kontrapunktus," a collection of new music by composer Mark Moya written in a Baroque idiom. His interest in instrument making and organology led him to work with harpsichord builder Curtis Berak, whom he has assisted in restoring several instruments, and with organ builder Manuel Rosales. Omura has a Master's Degree from the University of Southern California and is the director of music at Grace Episcopal Church in Martinez, CA. https://www.arthuromura. com

of town and city and populated by elemental beings (Galatea was a Nereid) in a time before history—the same time and location as the mythical eclogues and bucolics that were the favorite subjects of the *Arcadi*.

Acis and Galatea, written a decade later at Cannons, a stately home in Little Stanmore, Middlesex, England, is a different work entirely. The libretto was compiled by John Gay, one of a group of English poets that included John Dryden, who translated Virgil and Ovid, and Alexander Pope, who wrote his own popular *Pastorals.* The music was freshly composed, but undoubtedly inspired by Handel's Italian sojourn, the countryside of eighteenth-century Middlesex, and the distinctly English sound of John Eccles and Henry Purcell. With the Pastoral mode very much alive in England, Handel's experience with the *Arcadi* prepared him perfectly for working with the British Arcadians.

Handel's other theatrical work written at Cannons, along with the Chandos Anthems, is *Esther*, the first of a long line of successful oratorios composed in England. If Handel learned anything from his trip to Italy and from working with Scarlatti and Corelli, it was how to write an oratorio. Even Handel's most renowned work, Messiah, is indebted to the Arcadi, not only because of the Pifa in the first act, but because of the tools he acquired working for the Accademia degli Arcadi. Little did the Arcadi know on that first meeting that that their influence would be felt even today. These quixotic, whimsical role-players set out to offer a glimpse of the Pastoral ideal, and gave us a vision of the future instead.

Coming: "Rebuilding Arcadia—Episode III: Henry Purcell, Alexander Pope, Capability Brown, and the English Arcadians"

THINGS TO COME

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

Current Master Calendar www. earlymusicla.org/2017–2018-calendar, a list of the entire season of concerts and events.

The San Francisco Early Music Society has announced that registration is open for its 2019 Summer Workshop. For more information, please go to https://app.artspeople.com/index.php?class=sfems.

The Society for Historically Informed Performance has announced its 2019 Summer Season, with performances from June 25th to August 8th, 2019 in Lincoln, Andover, and Cambridge, MA. For more information, please go to http://www. sohipboston.org.

The Port Townsend Early Music

Workshop will be held from July 7th to 13th, 2019 at the University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA. For more information, please go to http://www.seattle-recorder.org/ workshop.

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.

BLACK ROSE EARLY MUSIC ENSEMBLE

Did you know that the plot of Henry Purcell's unfinished semi-opera *The Indian Queen* revolved around palace intrigue between the Aztecs and Incas before the Spanish invasion? Or that, for the first full rehearsal of Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, over 12,000 people tried to attend, causing a three-hour traffic jam on London Bridge? Maybe you didn't know that the thousands of pieces composed in France between 1690 and 1760 for the French Baroque bagpipe, the *musette de cour*, were outnumbered only by those for flute and violin.

The Black Rose Early Music Ensemble will share these and other fascinating tidbits during their "Summer Soiree" on July 20th and 21st. The group specializes in the less-well-known works of master composers and popular music sung and played in homes and on the streets during the Baroque, with an occasional foray into contemporary pieces. Past events have featured Telemann's pastoral cantata *Die Landlust*, a set of mournful Irish slow airs, John Stafford Smith's "Anacreontic Song" (which became "The Star-Spangled Banner"), and an arrangement of Richard and Robert Sherman's "Toot Sweets" from the Disney movie *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. Each concert ends with a rousing audience sing-a-long and a post-concert reception with refreshments!

Admission is free, but a \$10 donation will be greatly appreciated. For more information: e-mail dragonstone@earthlink.net or call 818-361-8519.

Saturday, 20 July, 7:00 pm

St. Bede's Episcopal Church 3590 Grand View Blvd., Los Angeles, CA

Sunday, 21 July, 3:00 pm

Church of the Angels 1100 Avenue 64, Pasadena, CA

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, September through June, subject to change. Calendar listings are free, but restricted to early music relevant events. For information on advertising (reservation deadlines, pricing and requirements), please call 310-358-5967 or email ads@earlymusicla.org. Please do **not** mail any submissions to the SCEMS P.O. Box.

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CONCERT CALENDAR

FRIDAY, JULY 12, 8 PM PRISM: Debut Concert

PRISM, a conductorless chamber ensemble with a love for Renaissance choral works, invites you to our inaugural concert! Come hear 17 expert singers perform an exquisite program.

Cornysh: Woffully Araid; Tomkins: It is my well-beloveds voice; Byrd: Haec dies quam fecit Dominus; Allegri: Miserere mei, Deus; Gabrieli: Angelus Domini à 8; Weelkes: As Vesta was from Latmos hill descending; Mendelssohn: Richte mich Gott; Palestrina: Missa Papae Marcelli–Kyrie; Elgar (arr. Cameron): Lux aeterna (Nimrod); Kirchner: Angel Band

The concert is FREE , so bring a handful of friends. More info: https://www.facebook.com/ PRISMensemble/424-272-7267

St. Basil's Catholic Church 3611 Wilshire Blvd.Los Angeles, CA

SATURDAY, JULY 20, 7 PM Black Rose Early Music Ensemble: Summer Soiree

Program: music by Handel, Couperin, Salaverde, Purcell, Boismortier, and songs from Shakespeare's plays.

Bruce Teter, recorders and musette (French Baroque bagpipe); Morgan O'Shaughnessy, violin, and other interesting things; Deborah Anisman-Posner, harpsichord; Marisa Rubino, viola da gamba; Matthew Ian Welch, baritone and narrator

Admission is free, but a \$10 donation will be greatly appreciated.

For more information: call 818-361-8519, or e-mail dragonstone@earthlink.net

St. Bede's Episcopal Church 3590 Grand View Ave., West Los Angeles.

SUNDAY, 21 JULY, 3 PM Black Rose Early Music Ensemble: Summer Soiree

See July 20 listing for concert information

Church of the Angels, 1100 Avenue 64, Pasadena.

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.

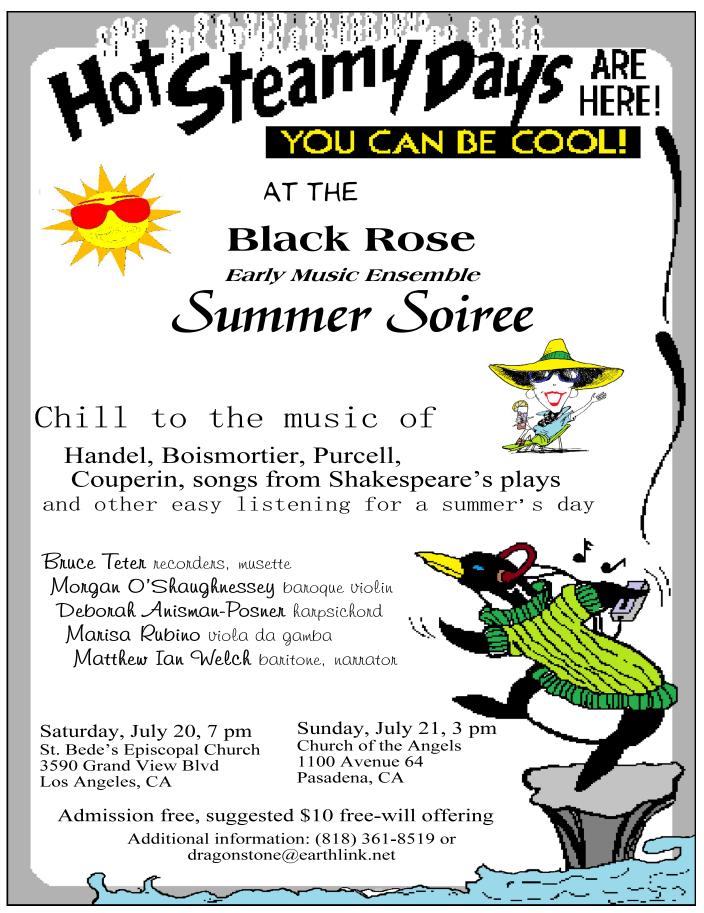
SUBMIT LISTINGS

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.

TICKET DISCOUNTS

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 • Tesserae

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.





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