



## Venice Baroque Orchestra

Andrea Marcon, *director*

Friday and Saturday, February 13–14, 8 pm, 2004  
Zellerbach Hall

### *Siroe*

(concert staging)

Music by George Frideric Handel

Libretto by Nicola Haym and Pietro Metastasio

### Cast

*Siroe* Liliana Rugiero

*Cosroe* Robert Koller

*Emira* Katerina Beranova

*Laodice* Simone Kermes

*Medarse* Roberto Balconi

*Cal Performances' presentation of the Venice Baroque Orchestra is supported  
by the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, San Francisco.*

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and the Zellerbach Family Foundation for their generous support.*

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**Act I**

Cosroe, King of Persia, has killed Asbite, King of Cambaia, in a battle. Asbite's daughter, Emira, introduces herself into Cosroe's court in the disguise of a man named Idaspe with the intention of revenging her father. Only Siroe, Cosroe's eldest son and in love with Emira, knows of the disguise. Meanwhile, the King of Persia must choose his successor—his first-born child, Siroe, or his second-born, Medarse. To the detriment of good-natured Siroe, Medarse's sly ways have given him the advantage. Siroe is offended by his father's decision. Emira tries to involve Siroe in her plans for vengeance but he refuses. Upset, King Cambaia's daughter rejects the young Persian's love and maliciously tells Laodice, Cosroe's beloved who is in love with Siroe, that Siroe is in love with her. When Siroe denies this, Laodice turns to Cosroe and manipulates the situation. She tells the king that Siroe is his rival and has tried to seduce her. Having secretly entered the king's rooms to leave an anonymous message warning of danger, Siroe overhears Laodice and Medarse's words. He immediately comes out of hiding and faces the accusations.

**Act II**

Siroe is torn. While he forgives Laodice and wants her to forget her love for him, he is troubled by his conflicting roles as Emira's lover and the king's son. In a moment of despondence, Siroe draws his sword, wanting to kill himself. Cosroe enters and misinterprets the gesture as an attack on Idaspe's life. Siroe, who wants to die, seizes the opportunity to declare himself guilty and is taken to prison. In vain, Cosroe offers forgiveness in exchange for the name of the true traitor.

**Act III**

Cosroe orders the death of his son who is, however, defended by the crowd. When Laodice hears of Siroe's sentence, she declares his innocence and her own guilt in an attempt to save his life. Bewildered by the events, Emira, disguised as Idaspe, convinces the king to repeal his sentence. However, Arasse, the general of the Persian army, arrives, and he announces that it is too late. Emira hurls herself against the king and reveals her true identity. Arasse then tells Emira that Siroe is still alive. She dashes to the prison to stop Medarse from killing his brother. Siroe, Emira, Arasse and other followers save Cosroe from the rebels. Siroe is proclaimed king, and he forgives Medarse and Laodice while Emira renounces her plans for revenge.

**Venice Baroque Orchestra**

Luca Mares, Daniela Beltraminelli, Giuseppe Cabrio, Massimiliano Tieppo, *first violin*  
 Giorgio Baldan, Giulia Panzeri, Margherita Zane, Massimiliano Simonetto, *second violin*  
 Alessandra Di Vincenzo, Meri Skejic, *viola*  
 Francesco Galligioni, Daniele Cernuto, *cello*  
 Alessandro Sbrogì, *bass*  
 Ivano Zanenghi, Evangelina Mascardi, *lute*  
 Massimiliano Raschiatti, *harpsichord*  
 Michele Favaro, Nicola Favaro, *oboe*  
 Carles Cristobal Ferran, *bassoon*  
 Andrea Marcon, *conductor and harpsichord*

It is surprising that George Frideric Handel's *Siroe, Re di Persia* has had to wait so long for modern attention. Its poet, Pietro Metastasio, was arguably the greatest librettist of the 18th century, and the singers for whom Handel wrote were the superstars of the age: Giuseppe Boschi, the characterful bass, sang Cosroe, the King of Persia; Senesino, the famous castrato, sang the title-role of Siroe; and not one but two prima donna roles were taken by the sopranos Francesca Cuzzoni (Princess Laodice) and Faustina Bordoni (Emira), whose operatic rivalry had precipitated a brawl at the King's Theater on the last night of the season the year before, which began in the audience and ended with the two divas clawing each other's wigs to bits. The stage was set for a triumph.

Sadly, the opera's fortunes were tied to those of the Royal Academy, which was in dire financial straits. The production ran with old sets, and, to make matters worse, *Siroe* lost a good share of its audience to an English-language operetta, *The Beggar's Opera*, by John Gay and Johann Christoph Pepusch. The Academy folded just eight weeks after the last performance of *Siroe*, the cast left London, and hopes for any revivals were dashed.

Despite the disappointing history of the opera as a stage work, a number of its arias were popularized in the song sheets that flew from the presses of John Walsh and other music printers in London (see figure, from the Special Collections of the Music Library, University of California, Berkeley). Published

The  
*Favourite SONGS*  
 in the  
**OPERA**  
*call'd*  
**SIROE**  
**LONDON.**

Printed for and sold by I. Walsh, servant to his Majesty at St. Dunstons Church, and Holywell in Catharine Street in the Strand, and Joseph Moore at the Viol & Flute in Cornhill near the Royal Exchange.

(HANDEL)

well into the next decade, these hits verify that the work did receive the warm reception it deserved and suggest that had it been premiered in another season or theater, *Siroe's* career on the stage would have been very different indeed.

—Kate van Orden  
 Associate Professor  
 Department of Music  
 UC Berkeley

The **Venice Baroque Orchestra** (VBO) was founded in 1997 and is recognized as one of Europe's premier ensembles devoted to period-instrument performance. Led by Baroque scholar and harpsichordist Andrea Marcon, the Orchestra has received wide critical acclaim for its concerts and staged opera performances throughout North America, Europe, and Japan.

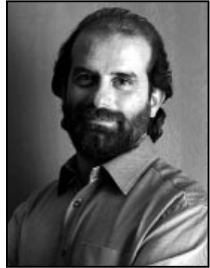
The Orchestra is comprised of Italy's finest Baroque musicians, and has appeared extensively worldwide. In 2003–04, the Orchestra tours throughout Germany; appears at festivals in Lucerne, Ambronay, Passau, and Eisenach; and performs in Zurich, Geneva, Lyon, and Basel. In 2002–03, the ensemble enjoyed a critically acclaimed, 20-concert debut tour of the United States, followed by appearances in Vienna, Paris, London, and Cologne, with mezzo-soprano Angelika Kirchschrager. Also in 2002–2003, the Orchestra appeared in concert at Rotterdam, Brussels, Cologne, Lisbon, Vienna, Barcelona, Venice, Zurich, Geneva, Munich, Dusseldorf, Lyon, and Tokyo. In 2001–02, the ensemble performed in over 35 cities, including New York, Tokyo, Florence, Milan, Munich, Paris, Berlin, Frankfurt, Geneva, Montpellier, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Aldeburgh, and London.

Committed to the rediscovery of great Baroque works, Marcon has led the Orchestra in modern-day premieres of Francesco Cavalli's *L'Orione*, and Benedetto Marcello's *La Morte D'Adone* and *Il trionfo della poesia e della musica*. With Teatro La Fenice in Venice, the Orchestra staged four sold-out performances of Handel's *Siroe* in December 2000, followed with equal success by Cimarosa's *L'Olimpiade* in December 2001. In April 2004, the Orchestra will present the first staged performances in the United States of *Siroe* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York, directed by acclaimed French-Argentine director Jorge Lavelli. Also in 2004, the Orchestra will return to tour the United States after concert performances of *Siroe* in Paris, Hamburg, and Metz. The Orchestra's 2004–05 season opens with a series of performances at the first annual Venice Music Festival.

In October 2003, the Orchestra recorded Vivaldi sinfonias as the first effort in an exclu-

sive, multi-album contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Next year, the ensemble will record a collection of Italian violin concertos with violinist Giuliano Carmignola, and Vivaldi motets with soprano Simone Kermes. The Orchestra's discography on Sony Classical includes *The Four Seasons* and two albums of previously unrecorded Vivaldi concertos. Other recordings include the Locatelli violin concertos, and a collection of Bach arias featuring mezzo-soprano Angelika Kirchschrager. For its recordings, the Orchestra has been honored with the Diapason D'Or and Echo awards.

The Venice Baroque Orchestra's concerts have been filmed by the BBC and NHK, and broadcast by RadioFrance, ORF, RaiDue, BBC3, National Public Radio, and RadioTre.



**Andrea Marcon** (*conductor and harpsichordist*) is a leading specialist and performer of early music. A conductor, organist, harpsichordist, and scholar, he founded the Venice Baroque Orchestra in 1997. In 2003–04,

Marcon leads the Orchestra on tour throughout Germany; at festivals in Lucerne, Ambronay, Passau, and Eisenach; and at concerts in Zurich, Geneva, Lyon, and Basel. In 2002, Marcon conducted the VBO in its highly acclaimed debuts at the Concertgebouw, Aldeburgh, and the Proms, and on its much-lauded, 20-concert North American tour. He also led the WDR Symphony Orchestra in Cologne. In May 2003, Marcon conducted Angelika Kirchschrager in her performance of Bach arias in Cologne, London, Paris, and Vienna. Later this year, Marcon will lead the VBO in a series of concerts at the first annual Venice Music Festival.

Marcon's dedication to the rediscovery of Baroque masterpieces led to the first modern day staging of Francesco Cavalli's opera *L'Orione* (1998) and Handel's *Siroe* (2000). In December 2001, he conducted the contemporary revival of Cimarosa's *L'Olimpiade* at Venice's Teatro Malibran. In April, Marcon will lead the first staged performances in the

United States of *Siroe* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. He will also appear with the Frankfurt Opera in director Achim Freyer's production of Handel's *Ariodante*.

Marcon and the VBO have recently signed a multi-album, exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon. In October 2003, Marcon led the Orchestra in its recording of Vivaldi sinfonias. This year, he will conduct its recordings of Italian violin concertos and Vivaldi motets. Marcon's previous recordings as conductor, organist, and harpsichordist have won several awards, including the Diapason D'Or, the Vivaldi Award of the Cini Foundation, Germany's Echo Award, and the Deutsche Schallplatten Kritik Prize (four times). For Sony Classical, he recorded seven discs from 2000 through 2003—as conductor of the VBO with Giuliano Carmignola and Angelika Kirchschrager, and as harpsichordist with Carmignola and Anner Bylisma.

Marcon is professor of harpsichord, organ, and interpretation at Basel's Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, and served as visiting professor at the Sweelinck Conservatorium in Amsterdam. He also taught at the conservatories of Amsterdam, Toulouse, Hamburg, Helsinki, Malmö, Karlsruhe, and Copenhagen; the Royal College of Organists in London; and at the universities of Göteborg and Birmingham (UK). He has judged several international organ competitions, including Nuremberg, Toulouse, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and Tokyo.

From 1983 to 1997, Marcon was harpsichordist and organist for the Treviso-based early music ensemble Sonatori de la Gioiosa Marca. He also founded and served as artistic director of the International Organ Festival in Treviso, where he helped facilitate the restoration of the city's historic organs. In 1986, he won first prize in the organ competition at Innsbruck. In 1991, he won first prize for harpsichord performance at Bologna.

Marcon was born in Treviso and received a diploma in early music from Basel's Schola Cantorum Basiliensis for his organ and harpsichord studies with Jean-Claude Zehnder. Other influential teachers have included Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, Hans van Nieuwkoop, Jesper Christensen, Harald Vogel, and Ton Koopman.



**Roberto Balconi** (*Medarse*) was born in Milan and studied singing under Evelyn Tubb in England and Margaret Hayward and Paolo Vaglieri in Milan. He has worked with ensembles including English Baroque

Soloists, Il Giardino Armonico, Il Complesso Barocco, The Consort of Musicke, Ensemble Baroque de Limoges, Venice Baroque Orchestra, Ensemble Aurora, Il Concerto Italiano, Europa Galante, and Capella Savaria. Balconi has appeared with Opéra de Lyon; in Berlin, London (Queen Elizabeth Hall), and Vienna (Konzerthaus); and at the the Berkeley Festival & Exhibition, Holland Festival Oude Muziek, Festival van Vlaanderen, and York Early Music Festival.

Balconi began to sing opera in 1993 at Teatro La Fenice in Venice in Traetta's *Buovo Danton* under the direction of Alan Curtis. He then sang and recorded the role of the Nutrice in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner (Cremona, Rome, Vienna, London). He has appeared in John Eccles' *Semele* (Mayfield Opera Festival); Peri's *Euridice* and Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (Teatro Regio di Torino); and Marco Marazzoli's *Capriccio* (San Francisco). In summer 1996, he participated in a French tour with the Nederlandse Bachvereniging, singing works by Bach under Gustav Leonhardt. Balconi then sang for the Settimana Bachiane with Il Giardino Armonico and Robert King. In 1997, he performed throughout Holland with the Nederlandse Bachvereniging, conducted by Ivan Fischer.

In the winter of 1998, Balconi was Athamas in Handel's *Semele* for Vlamse Opera, conducted by Marc Minkowski and directed by Robert Carsen. In 1999, he sang Stradella's *Lo Schiavo Liberato* at Modena Theatre and *Liegi, La Morte di Adone* with Venice Baroque Orchestra under Andrea Marcon.

In 2000, Balconi performed Bach cantatas in New York and Boston under Gustav Leonhardt, Bach's *Tilge, Hochster, meine Sunden* with Andrea Marcon, Stradella's *Il*

*Barcheggio* in Rome and Milan with Ensemble Pian & Forte, and Handel's *Siroe* for Teatro La Fenice, conducted by Andrea Marcon and directed by Jorge Lavelli.

Last year, Roberto Balconi appeared in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, conducted by Rinaldo Alessandrini; a tour and recording of Stradella's *San Giovanni Battista* with Claudio Astronio; a Spanish tour of Vivaldi's *Gloria* and *Magnificat*, conducted by Alessandrini, and German arias and duets from Handel's operas with Fantazyas, a vocal and instrumental ensemble that he also conducts.

Balconi has recorded with DG Archiv, Virgin Classics, Harmonia Mundi France, Opus 111, Nuova Era, Arcana, Glossa, Bongiovanni, Symphonia, Stradivarius, Tactus, Naxos, and for many European broadcast and television companies.



**Katerina Beranova** (*Emira*) was born in the Czech Republic and studied at the Conservatory of Brno, where she earned her degree *cum laude*. She then went to Rome for several years to study with Stefania Magnifico. Later, she earned a diploma for lieder and oratory in Vienna.

Still studying in Rome, she appeared as soloist at the Academia di Santa Cecilia where she sang under the batons of conductors including Sawallisch, Thielemann, Spivakov, and Ceccato in works by Bach, Haydn, Handel, Mozart, and Orff.

She has appeared in *Parsifal* in Bayreuth, *La Cenerentola* at the opera house in Dublin,

*Die Frau ohne Schatten* in Turino, *La Finta Giardiniera* in Washington (under Placido Domingo), Wagner's *Ring* cycle at the Teatro dell'Opera Roma (under Sinopoli), *Orlando* and *Tamerlano* at Vienna's Odeon, and Stradella's *Giovanni Battista* at the International Bruckner Festival Linz.

This season, Beranova sang Handel's *Messiah* at the Musikverein in Vienna. She also participated in Sinopoli's recording of *Elektra* with the Vienna Philharmonic.

Beranova's repertory includes the most important roles of the coloratura and lighter lyric repertory, including Konstanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*.



**Simone Kermes** (*Laodice*) was born in Leipzig and studied with Helga Forner and in master classes with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Barbara Schlick, Jessica Cash, and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. In 1993, she won first prize in the Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Competition in Berlin, and in 1996, she was awarded second prize in the International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition in Leipzig.

Kermes' recent performances include appearances in Purcell's *King Arthur* at the Ruhr Triennale under Thomas Hengelbrock; Vivaldi motets and arias at the festivals of Trigonale, Eisenach, and Passau, under Andrea Marcon; operatic and recital appearances in Florence,

Ossiach, Göttingen, and Ambronay, under Alan Curtis; and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* under Thomas Hengelbrock at Baden-Baden.

Her many opera engagements have included the roles of Fiordiligi, Konstanze, Gilda, Lucia, Ann Truelove, and Rosalinde in the opera houses of Stuttgart, Bonn, Dortmund, Mainz, Wiesbaden, and Koblenz. Kermes has also sung the roles of Euridice (Gluck), Tochter (Hindemith), Clivia (Dostal), and the Handel roles of Alcina, Merab, Deidamia, and Asteria. In 2000, she appeared as Cintia in Legrenzi's *La divisione del mondo* at the Schwetzingen and Innsbruck festivals. Other notable festival appearances have included Schleswig-Holstein, Halle, Wratslavia, Dresden, Cologne Triennale, Nantes, Lisbon, Beethovenfest Bonn, Figures sacrés Paris, Feldkirch, Prague Autumn, Bologna, Rheingau, and Resonanzen in Vienna.

Kermes has been presented in oratorio and concert performances in cities around the world, including Paris, Vienna, Milan, Bologna, Siena, Rome, Florence, Cologne, Munich, Berlin, Augsburg, Leipzig, Dresden, Rotterdam, Prague, Lisbon, Kiev, Belfast, and Madrid, as soloist with orchestras including the Gewandhaus Orchestra, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Clasica de Madrid, Staatskapelle Dresden, Il Complesso Barocco, Venice Baroque Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, WDR Symphony Orchestra, Bologna Teatro Comunale Orchestra, and the Royal Flemish Philharmonic.

She is frequently invited to work with conductors Thomas Hengelbrock, Peter Neumann, Herman Max, Martin Haselböck, Alan Curtis, and Andrea Marcon, and has also worked under Raphael Frühbeck de Burgos in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Lothar Zagrosek in *Die Fledermaus*, Marc Soustrot in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and Thierry Fischer in Britten's *Les Illuminations*.

In recent years, Simone Kermes has appeared on numerous recordings, several of which have been singled out as the finest performances of the repertory. These include Haydn's *Creation* with Thomas Hengelbrock for BMG; and Handel arias and duets for Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, and the title role in Handel's *Deidamia* for Virgin Classics, both with Alan Curtis.

In 2004, she will make her debuts at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and in New York at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the role of Laodice in Handel's *Siroe*, with Andrea Marcon and the Venice Baroque Orchestra.



**Robert Koller** (*Cosroe*) was born in 1973 in Basel, Switzerland. After completing his diploma in composition and music theory, working with Detlef Müller-Siemens at the Musikhochschule in Basel, he began studying singing with László Polgár at the Zurich Opera. In February 2002, he gained his post-graduate concert diploma at the Conservatory of Zurich (with distinction).

Koller has taken part in various master classes, including those by Daniel Ferro (New York), Carol Smith, and Gérard Wyss. In 2001 and 2002, he won the Migros-Genossenschafts-Bund Solo Song Competition in Switzerland, also receiving a scholarship from the Ernst Göhner Foundation.

In recital and opera, he has performed a varied repertoire, including the role of Frank Murrant in *Street Scene* by Kurt Weill in Zurich; the title role in Cárnci's *Giacometti* with the Ensemble Phoenix in Zurich, conducted by Jürg Henneberger; as a guest member of Basel Opera in *Schwarzerde* with the Basel Symphony Orchestra, Basel (2001/2002); as Jesus in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at the Tonhalle in Zurich (March 2002); the Count in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Lucerne, conducted by Christopher Ross (2002); the bass soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* with the National Hungarian Radio Chorus (July 2002); the baritone soloist in the premiere of *Kein blasser Schimmer*, conducted by Jürg Henneberger in Zurich, and in the Theater Kontra-Punkt Düsseldorf, Germany (January 2003); as a guest member of Zurich Opera in *Moderato Cantabile* by Beat Furrer, directed by Christoph Marthaler (July 2003); and as the bass soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* in the Kultur- und Kongresszentrum Lucerne, conducted by Alois Koch (November 2003).

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



**Liliana Rugiero** (*Siroe*) is an Italian-Argentinian mezzo-soprano. She was born in Buenos Aires, and studied at the Instituto Superior de Arte of the Colón Theater. Rugiero won a scholarship at the Concorso Mozarteum

Argentino, which allowed her to move to Italy to study singing and music at the Gioacchino Rossini Music Conservatory in Pesaro. After her return to Argentina, she won the Concorso Promociones Musicales and the Concorso Teatro Argentino de la Plata. She then returned to Europe, and completed her musical education with Alberto Zedda at the Rossini Opera Festival (Pesaro).

Rugiero has been a finalist in several international competitions, including Belvedere (Austria), Alfredo Kraus (Spain), Vercelli

(Italy), and S'Herfontenbosch (Holland). A sophisticated interpreter of the Baroque repertoire and the music of Rossini, she has been a guest of several European and international theaters, including Teatro Colón of Buenos Aires, Teatro Argentino de la Plata, Teatro Coliseo of Buenos Aires, Teatro Regio of Turin, the July Music Festival of Taormina (Italy), Festival Chimay, Festival Beaune, Kongresshaus Zurich, Kongresszentrum Luzern, Grosses Festspielhaus Salzburg, Yakultzaal Amsterdam, and Festival de Cuenca, Spain. Her intense performing activities extend from the traditional symphonic repertoire and lieder to contemporary music.

Liliana Rugiero is a soloist in Ensemble Elyma, conducted by G. Garrido. She has also been a guest of the Baroque ensemble Capriccio Stravagante, directed by Skip Sempé; Europa Galante, directed by Fabio Biondi; and Complesso Barocco, directed by Alan Curtis.

# Z Cafe

Enjoy a light meal in Zellerbach Hall's new Z Cafe, open one hour before performance on the mezzanine level. The menu features freshly made sandwiches (including one vegetarian selection per performance), quiches and tarts (served with a small green salad), assorted gourmet cookies, and a selection of beverages, including wine, Full Sail beers, coffee, teas, soda, and sparkling water. Or, order a meal just before the performance, and it will be waiting for you in the cafe to enjoy during intermission. (Seating is limited.)