

## AMINTA E FILLIDE

Twelfth Night, the refreshingly new ensemble of young stars directed by violinist Rachell Ellen Wong and keyboardist David Belkovski, offers a scintillating program featuring Handel's Aminta e Fillide, a pastoral cantata. Singers Jessica Niles and Xenia Puskarz Thomas, the cantata's nymph and shepherd, pursue each other through a mythological Greek landscape in arias both virtuosic and poignant. To round out a captivating program, the group performs Vivaldi's electric sinfonia from his opera, *II Giustino*.

Rachell Ellen Wong David Belkovski Carmen Lavada Johnson-Pájaro Andrew Gonzalez Coleman Itzkoff Joshua Stauffer Violin and direction Harpsichord and direction Violin Viola Cello Theorbo

4.00pm Sunday January 15, 2023 Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st Street

4.00pm Sunday January 22, 2023 Online

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Please turn off cell phones. Photography and recording are not permitted.

Music Before 1800 requires everyone who comes to any of our concerts to remain masked while indoors.

### AMINTA E FILLIDE

#### Antonio Vivaldi Sinfonia from Il Giustino, RV 717

(1678 – 1741)

Allegro Andante Allegro

#### George Frideric Handel Aminta e Fillide, HWV 83

(1685 - 1759)

Overture Aria: Fermati, non fuggir! (Aminta) Aria: Fiamma bella (Fillide) Aria: Forse ch'un giorno (Aminta) Aria: Fu scherzo, fu gioco (Fillide) \*Duet: Ma, udirmi! . . . O Dei, che vuoi? Aria: Se vago rio (Aminta) Aria: Sento ch'il Dio bambin (Fillide) Aria: A dispetto di sorte crudele (Aminta) Aria: È un foco quel d'amore (Fillide) Aria: Chi ben ama non paventi (Aminta) Aria: Non si può dar un cor (Fillide) Duet: Per abbatter il rigore (Aminta, Fillide)

\*Adapted from Handel's Atalanta

Jessica Niles, soprano Xenia Puskarz Thomas, mezzo-soprano

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### **TWELFTH NIGHT**

Described as "an absolute gift to see live" (The Nevada Sagebrush), Twelfth Night is a refreshingly new ensemble of historical performance specialists led by keyboardist David Belkovski and violinist Rachell Ellen Wong, formed with the firm belief that art is best explored as a meeting place of the past, present, and future.

> "The past is a foreign country: they do things *differently there.*" – L. P. Hartley

Inspired by Shakespeare's play of the same name, the ensemble strives to invoke a spirit of boundless revelry, celebration, and community in their programming. Based in New York City and founded in 2021, the two co-directors are regarded as key young representatives of early music: Rachell is the only baroque artist to receive an Avery Fisher Career Grant and David is the first recipient in the field of early music to receive the Levinson Arts Achievement Award. In the 2022-2023 season, Twelfth Night will be hosted in concert series across the country, including Arizona Early Music (Tucson), Chatham Baroque (Pittsburgh), Chamberfest Brown County (Nashville, IN), Music Before 1800 (NYC), and Apex Concert Series (Reno). This year, they were the only historical performance ensemble to be featured at Chamber Music America's national conference showcase. Twelfth Night's upcoming video release with renowned French soprano Julie Roset explores secular and sacred 17th-century Italian songs. Further projects include recordings with Australian mezzo-soprano Xenia Puskarz Thomas, a collaboration with musicians from New World Symphony, and a full orchestral Mozart project to be held in New York.

David and Rachell met during their time as students in the Historical Performance division of The Juilliard School. Endless hours rehearsing and performing together confirmed a special chemistry and shared vision, inspiring them to dream up an ensemble for the 21st century. Through Twelfth Night, they are eager to position historical performance as an integral part of all performance.

For more information, please visit www.twelfthnightensemble.com. Twelfth Night is represented by Artist Manager Marianne LaCrosse of Suòno Artist Management (marianne@suonoartistmanagement.com).

#### THE SCENE

The gentle hills and flower-spotted fields of mythical **Arcadia**, home to gentle nymphs and quixotic shepherds, debauched satyrs and airy spirits.

#### THE PROTAGONISTS

**Aminta**, a brash, young shepherd cut from the same cloth as Goethe's Werther, is hopelessly in love with **Fillide**, a nymph whose extraordinary beauty is matched by the hardness of her heart.

#### THE STORY

A grand overture guickly gives way to scurrying flurries of notes - the chase begins! Aminta runs after Fillide, who finds endless pleasure in toying with the frustrated shepherd. They dart across verdant plains, hop over bubbling streams, and weave around towering trees. After some time, Aminta has had enough of the games and yells out, forcing both Fillide and musicians to a screeching halt. After a few choice words for the nymph, Aminta dives headlong into an aria (Fermati, non fuggir!) imploring her to either hear him out or leave him to take his life. Handel's impetuous gestures and choppy phrases create a sonic tableau of exasperation.

It's no use. Fillide has seen this all before and she's not falling for these old tricks; she's not getting burned again. Insisting that Aminta is not thinking straight, Fillide implores him to look elsewhere for love (*Fiamma bella*). The music, buoyant and coquettish, was immediately recycled by Handel in *Agrippina* for Venetian audiences. Aminta doesn't buy it. Fillide is so adamant that she has no patience for love, yet, he says, her eyes glisten with love's flame. Aminta eagerly awaits the day when she is once again struck by Cupid's dart (*Forse ch'un giorno*). Words like *languishing*, *grieving*, and *suffering* abound in this aria, allowing Handel to flex his harmonic acuity in a technique known as word painting.

After all that, Fillide still won't budge, and Aminta struggles to understand. How could she turn him - a passionate, faithful, and downright handsome shepherd – away? In a moment that would make Petrarch proud, he asks her to remember all the times she saw her rare beauty reflected in a brook or spring. Why deny others the pure delight that comes with adoring her? Fillide responds in the only way a hopeless romantic like Aminta would understand: "Because, shepherd, I do not want to see the spring and brook swell with my tears." She insists that whoever said love leads to happiness was toying with us (Fu scherzo, fu gioco). In this sarcastic aria replete with flirtatious exchanges between voice and violin, Fillide nails her colors to the mast.

It's at this point that she's had enough, demanding the shepherd just shut up. The tension in the room finally boils over into a full-blown argument (*Ma, udirmi!* ... O Dei, che vuoi?). Quick spurts of vocal phrases and overlapping counterpoint emphasize the total distress and confusion. The musicians chatter in the background, punctuating the drama with interjections of their own.

Aminta is left despondent but draws from deep within, approaching Fillide with a final tender plea. *Se vago rio* is one of Handel's early jewels, an archetype for the arias that would later define his musical relationship with soprano Francesca Cuzzoni. The doleful string accompaniment rocks to-and-fro with a suggestive siciliana rhythm; it serves as both a portrait of the pretty river (*vago rio*), and as the shadow to Aminta's tormented psyche. Beneath each caressing metaphor and verbal bouquet Aminta proffers Fillide lies a simple, but powerful thought: there is no greater virtue in love than being faithful and true. Without her trust, though, his message is little more than an inert, lofty ideal.

#### That is, until now.

Alone to her thoughts, Fillide notices a flame growing inside her, at once familiar and new. With a Shakespearian understanding of the human condition, Handel sets the very moment Fillide begins to fall in love not to fanfare, but to arrestingly intimate music imbued with melancholy. He reminds us that love can be as confusing and uneasy as it is rewarding. Throughout *Sento ch'il Dio bambin*, we get the sense that Fillide is simultaneously reflecting on the pain she's previously endured, and optimistic about the journey she'll soon embark upon.

All the while, Aminta has been eavesdropping. Bursting at the seams with joy, he sings *Al dispetto di sorte crudele*, a heady cocktail of youthful surety and wantonness. Behind Aminta's vocal acrobatics, musical fireworks are going off. Listen to the violins exchange rocket-like passagework, challenging one another to reach dizzying heights.

By this point, the energy in the room has shifted drastically. A party is around the corner and the preparations have begun – this is Arcadia after all! The dialogue and arias which follow, while undoubtedly some of Handel's best, take on a moralistic tone. Shepherd and nymph are now one, held together by a divine bond, and feel emboldened to share their wisdom with their fellow Arcadians.

Fillide's  $\dot{E}$  un foco quel d'amore reminds us that trying to figure out this crazy little thing called love is futile. If you feel it inside you, she insists, it's only a matter of time before you are completely consumed. The accompaniment has an inexorable drive, dominated by percussive leaps and winding melodies which hurtle toward punchy conclusions. When Fillide pokes at the very essence of love, however, she forces the music to stop and sputter along with her playful line of questioning.

Not yet willing to get off his high horse, Aminta insists he was right all along and reasserts his life's motto: love will come to those who remain constant and true (*Chi ben ama non paventi*). Handel writes bobbing two-note figures in the violins and interjections by the full band, as if they were wagging a collective finger at the audience along with Aminta. In *Non si può dar un cor*, Fillide revels in her newfound romance for the first time. No pontificating, no games. Just pure, unadulterated joy reserved for children and carefree mythical spirits. The music bounces and bubbles without any hint of tension or uncertainty.

The table has been set, the guests have arrived - it's time to begin the festivities! Aminta and Fillide join hands in one of Handel's most charming duets (Per abbatter il rigore d'un crudel). Nymph and shepherd are engaged in a vocal dance, taking turns leading and following, being very careful not to step on each other's toes. The beauty of the Italian language is on full display: the plosive patter of consonants invokes the battle between love and cynicism while voluptuous vowels wind around each phrase like a velvet thread. We have witnessed frustration and mistrust dissolve into understanding and patience. An inseparable union is forged before our very eyes.

### TEXT AND TRANSLATION

#### Recitativo AMINTA

Arresta, arresta il passo, ninfa, di questo cor empia tiranna! E se il duol che m'affanna come figlio d'amor udir non vuoi, soffri almen, spietata, come effetto crudel de' scherni tuoi.

#### Aria

AMINTA Fermati, non fuggir! Lasciami pria morir, Fillide ingrata!

Scorgi la mia costanza, poi, se rigor t'avanza, scacciami dal tuo sen, bella ostinata!

#### Recitativo

AMINTA Questa sol volta almeno odi le mie querele, ascolta i miei sospiri!

#### FILLIDE Tu mi chiami crudele, senz' avvederti ancora, quanto lontan dal giusto erri e deliri.

AMINTA

Dunque l'amarti e l'adorarti, o cara, stimi una follia?

FILLIDE Seguir chi fugge, e chi l'amor disprezza, è proprio d'alma a delirare avvezza.

#### Aria

FILLIDE Fiamma bella ch'al ciel s'invia, s'Euro infido gli nega affetto, cangia a forza l'usato sentier.

Così ancora, se cruda, se ria te discaccio da questo mio petto, volgi altrove l'amante pensier.

#### Recitativo

FILLIDE

Credi a' miei detti, Aminta, e lascia in pace me, che per genio e per costume anticoho troppo in odio l'amorosa face.

#### Recitative

AMINTA Stop! Stop running, nymph, merciless tyrant of my heart. If you don't believe the grief that afflicts me is borne of love, unfeeling girl, then consider it the cruel result of your scorn.

#### Aria

AMINTA Stay, don't flee! Let me die, instead, ungrateful Fillide!

Notice how devoted I am, then, if you insist, drive me from your heart, you stubborn, beautiful girl.

#### Recitative

AMINTA Just this once, hear my laments; listen to my sighs!

FILLIDE You call me cruel, and yet you can't see how far you have strayed from good sense.

#### AMINTA

Loving you, adoring you, that makes me a fool?

#### FILLIDE

Chasing after one who flees and despises love leads me to believe you've gone mad.

#### Aria

FILLIDE The loving flame drifts toward heaven, but should a wayward wind deny it affection, it must change its course.

And so, if cruelly and harshly I drive you from my heart, turn your loving thoughts elsewhere

#### Recitative FILLIDE

Believe my words, Aminta, and leave me in peace, for it's in my nature – I have too much hate for love's flame.

#### AMINTA

Come in odio aver puoi quella face d'amor che ogni momento si vede sfavillar ne' lumi tuoi?

#### Aria

AMINTA Forse ch'un giorno il Dio d'amore potrebbe al core piaga formarti che sia mortal.

Che bel mirarti allor languire, penar, soffrire, l'aspre punture d'acuto stral.

#### Recitativo

FILLIDE Invano, invan presumi scuotere il mio pensier, chè di Cupido l'arco schernisco e dello stral mi rido.

#### AMINTA

Deh, per pietà, rispondi, ninfa bella, e crudele! se ti specchiasti mai nel rio, nel fonte, come amor non ascondi di tua rara beltade? E se ami, e se conosci del tuo volto gentil tutti i tesori, perchè non brami ancor che altri l'adori?

#### FILLIDE

Perchè non vuò, pastor, che il fonte e il rio s'accrescan coll'umor del pianto mio.

#### Aria

FILLIDE Fu scherzo, fu gioco chi disse ch'il foco del nume di Gnido contento ci dà.

Quel cor che non pena nell' aspra catena così per diletto cantando sen va.

#### Recitativo

#### FILLIDE

Libero piè fugga dal laccio, e i giorni coll'aura sol di libertà respiri.

#### AMINTA

How can you hate that loving flame, which glistens in your eyes at every moment?

#### Aria

AMINTA One day, perhaps, the god of love may strike your heart with a fatal wound.

How lovely, then, will it be to gaze upon you languishing and grieving, suffering the stinging wounds of a sharp arrow.

#### Recitative

FILLIDE Your attempts to trouble my thoughts are entirely in vain, since I scorn Cupid's bow and laugh at his arrow.

#### AMINTA

Ah! For pity's sake, answer me, fair and cruel nymph: have you ever seen your reflection in brook or spring and noticed your rare beauty? And if you have loved, and are aware of the delights your delicate face brings, why do you not also want others to adore you?

#### FILLIDE

Because, shepherd, I do not want to see the spring and brook swell with my tears.

#### Aria

FILLIDE He spoke in jest, in mockery, who said that Aphrodite's fire brings happiness.

A heart which does not suffer in harsh chains goes on its merry way singing in delight.

#### Recitative

FILLIDE With unfettered steps I will fly from your snare and all my days breathe only the air of liberty.

#### AMINTA

Quei che sembran martiri, che han faccia di tormenti d'ogni amator nel seno, Fillide, in un baleno si cangiano in piaceri ed in contenti; dunque se ciò t'affrena, vieni pur lieta, o cara, incontro alla dolcissima catena.

FILLIDE Taci, pastor, non più!

#### Duetto AMINTA

Ascolta!

FILLIDE O Dei, che vuoi? Taci, e lascia al mio destino quel rigor, ch'io ben comprendo.

#### AMINTA

Ferma, e dimmi il tuo destino, che sì fiero io non comprendo.

#### FILLIDE

Quel che porto in mezzo al cor è un dolor, che sola intendo.

#### AMINTA

Ah! cos'è quel rio dolor ch'hai nel cor? ch'io non intendo.

#### Recitativo

AMINTA Come dunque, crudele, più ascoltarmi non vuoi?

FILLIDE No, perché han troppa forza i detti tuoi.

#### AMINTA

Ah, barbara, inumana! se la giusta cagione dell'amor mio nel mio parlar comprendi, come di pari ardor tu non t'accendi?

#### Aria

AMINTA Se vago rio fra sassi frange l'amato argento, al fin contento posa nel mare.

Ma il ciglio mio che sempre piange, non trova seno che ponga freno al suo penare.

#### AMINTA

In the breast of every lover, Fillide, tortures and torments change in a flash of lightning to pleasures and delights. Therefore, if that is what holds you back, come then, beloved, to be bound by the sweetest of chains!

FILLIDE That's enough, shepherd! No more!

#### Duet

AMINTA Listen to me!

#### FILLIDE

Oh god, what do you want from me? Enough, leave me to determine my fate. These are pains I know all too well.

#### AMINTA

Hold on, tell me what your fate is. It seems so harsh, I can't understand.

What I carry in my heart is a sorrow only I can understand.

#### AMINTA

FILLIDE

Ah! And what is that bitter sorrow you hold inside, which I don't understand?

#### Recitative

AMINTA Why are you acting so cruel? Will you no longer listen to me?

#### FILLIDE No – your words have too much power.

AMINTA

Ah, unfeeling, inhumane Fillide! If the true cause of my loveyou understand from my words why do you not burn with an equal flame?

#### Aria

AMINTA Though a pretty stream may break its lovely silver among the rocks, in the end it happily comes to rest in the sea;

But my eyes, ever weeping, find no heart that offers respite to their suffering.

#### Recitativo FILLIDE

D'un incognito foco già sento a poco a poco le vampe entro del seno. Mia cara pace, addio! Vuol di me vendicarsi il cieco Dio.

### Aria

Sento ch'il Dio bambin col strale suo divin m'ha il sen piagato.

E già questo mio cor più non ricusa amor ed è cangiato.

#### Recitativo

AMINTA Felicissimo punto, in cui nel seno la mia fiamma ti giunge, e l'amoroso dardo il cor ti punge.

#### Aria

AMINTA A dispetto di sorte crudele, costante e fedele quest' alma sarà.

Che se Filli ad amarmi si muove, son chiare le prove di sua fedeltà.

#### Recitativo

FILLIDE

Vincesti, Aminta, e l'amoroso affanno, per dichiararmi affatto di libertade priva, già dell'anima mia si fa tiranno; ma con tanta dolcezza usa i rigori, ch'il rio martoro, quando mi giunge in seno, veste manto di gioia e di tesoro.

#### Aria

FILLIDE È un foco quel d'amore che penetra nel core, ma come, non si sa.

S'accende a poco a poco, ma poi non trova loco e consumar ti fa.

#### Recitativo

AMINTA Gloria bella di Aminta mirar Fillide vaga, dalla sua fedeltà costretta e vinta.

FILLIDE Sì, sì, vincesti.

#### Recitative

FILLIDE Little by little I feel the flames of an unknown fire within my breast. Farewell, my dear peace! The blind god will have his revenge upon me.

#### Aria FILLIDE

I feel that Cupid has wounded my breast with his divine arrows.

Already my heart is changed and no longer refuses love.

#### Recitative

AMINTA Ah, the happy moment when my flame reaches your breast and love's dart pierces your heart.

#### Aria

AMINTA Despite cruel fate, my soul will be constant and faithful.

Since Fillide is moved to love me my fidelity has been vindicated.

#### Recitative

FILLIDE You have won, Aminta, and by declaring me utterly deprived of liberty, love now reigns over my spirit; but it rules with such gentleness that its usual cruel pain, upon reaching my heart, wears a cloak of joy and delight.

#### Aria

FILLIDE Love's fire penetrates the heart – but how? No one knows.

It grows, bit by bit, but then finds no place to go and consumes you.

#### Recitative

AMINTA It is Aminta's wondrous glory to see beautiful Fillide chained and conquered by his fidelity.

FILLIDE Yes, yes, you have won. AMINTA e FILLIDE Ed io fedele amante... Ed io sempre costante...

#### FILLIDE

... dirò che non fu mai vana speranza, vincer l'altrui rigor con la costanza.

#### AMINTA

Ridir potrò, che spargere querele non fu mai vista indarno alma fedele.

#### Aria

AMINTA Chi ben ama non paventi di trovar un dì pietà.

Che ministre dei contenti son costanza e fedeltà.

#### Recitativo

AMINTA E pur, Filli vezzosa, risolvi di dar pace alle mie pene?

#### FILLIDE

La mia gioia, il mio bene altri non è che Aminta, e questo core arde tutto per te d'immenso amore.

#### Aria

FILLIDE Non si può dar un cor sì felice in amor come il cor mio.

Quel bene che mi piace sente la stessa face, ed hanno le nostre alme un sol desio.

#### Recitativo

AMINTA e FILLIDE O felice in amor dolce tormento, se partorisce al fin gioie e contento!

#### Duetto

Per abbatter il rigore d'un crudel spietato core, forte scudo è la costanza e il valor di fedeltà.

Volga al cielo i sguardi, ai numi, chi al fulgor di quei bei lumi vuol nutrire la speranza di trovar un dì pietà.

FIN

AMINTA and FILLIDE And I am your faithful lover! And I am ever true!

#### FILLIDE

Your hope of overcoming my coldness with constancy was never in vain.

#### AMINTA

I will say it, time and again, that never was a faithful soul seen to utter laments in vain.

#### Aria

AMINTA Whoever truly loves has no fear they will find compassion one day.

Happiness is delivered by constancy and fidelity.

#### Recitative AMINTA

And is gorgeous Fillide still determined to bring comfort to my torments?

#### FILLIDE

My joy, my love, is no one but you, Aminta, and my heart burns with boundless love entirely for you.

#### Aria FILLIDE

No one could find a heart so happy in love as mine.

For my lover feels the same fire, and our souls have a single desire.

#### Recitative

AMINTA and FILLIDE Oh happy is love's sweet torment, if at last it gives birth to joy and happiness!

#### Duet

To break through a cold, pitiless heart, bring constancy and fidelity as your mighty shield.

Let them turn his gaze to the gods above, who in the splendor of those fair eyes would nourish hope of one day finding compassion.

FIN



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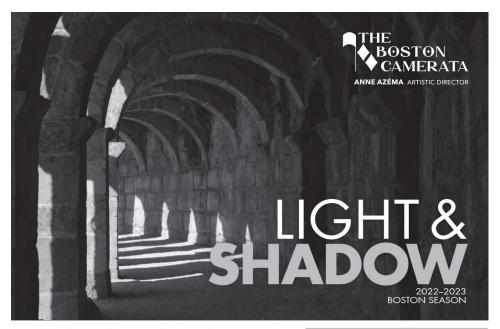




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