

# **Hopkins Center for the Arts**

at Dartmouth

presents

## **Handel Society of Dartmouth College**

Filippo Ciabatti, director

Erma Mellinger, assistant conductor and vocal coach

Mary Jane Austin, pianist

with

Erik Kroncke, bass

Mary Bonhag, soprano

Sean Parr, tenor

**Tuesday, November 16, 7:30 pm**

2021 • Hanover High School • Hanover, New Hampshire

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*Generously supported by the Gordon Russell 1955 Fund and the Friends of the Handel Society*

# Program

Approximate duration: 1 hour

Cantique de Jean Racine.....Gabriel Fauré  
Lux Aeterna.....Morten Lauridsen

## Intermission

Mass in G ..... Franz Schubert

# About the Artists

A native of Florence, Italy, **Filippo Ciabatti** is the Music Director of the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra, and the Interim Music Director of the Dartmouth's Choral Ensembles. He also contributed to creating Dartmouth's Opera Lab. In October 2018, its first production featured Grammy Award-winning baritone Daniel Belcher and soprano Amy Owens.

In 2018-2019, he led the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra on an Italian tour in collaboration with the Orchestra Toscana dei Conservatori in prominent venues and festivals, including the Puccini Days in Lucca. Other highlights of the season included an all-Beethoven concert with Israeli pianist Sally Pinkas, and a collaboration with the NPR show *From The Top*, hosted by American pianist Jeremy Denk. In 2020, Mr. Ciabatti conducted the world premiere of a new secular oratorio composed by the renowned jazz composer Taylor Ho Bynum and has collaborated on a project with the Martha Graham Dance Company.

In 2018, he made his debut with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, which he conducted again in 2019, in an event created in collaboration with the Creative Projects Chair of the VSO, Matt LaRocca. In 2021, Mr. Ciabatti will collaborate for the first time with the Portland Symphony Orchestra, as assistant conductor.

During the summer of 2018, he was invited to be a Conducting Fellow at the Aurora Music Festival in Stockholm, under the direction of Jukka-Pekka Saraste. During the festival, he conducted Hannah Kendall's 2017 composition, *The Spark Catchers*, in a

concert that also featured legendary cellist Mischa Maisky in the Konserthuset Stockholm.

In 2017-2018, Mr. Ciabatti conducted *Madama Butterfly* at Opera North in New Hampshire, *Hansel and Gretel* and *Don Giovanni* (directed by and featuring American opera star Nathan Gunn) at the Lyric Theatre in Illinois.

In 2016, Mr. Ciabatti conducted *Tosca* at Opera North in New Hampshire, directed by Russell Treyz, and Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Lyric Theatre in Illinois, directed by Christopher Gillett. In 2015, he made his South American debut conducting the Universidad Central Symphony Orchestra in Bogota, Colombia, where he also taught masterclasses in orchestra and Italian opera. With La Nuova Aurora Opera, he conducted full productions of Handel's *Rodrigo* (2015) and Purcell's *King Arthur* (2016).

As a pianist and vocal coach in Italy, Mr. Ciabatti worked for the Cherubini Conservatory, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and Florence Opera Academy. He has played for masterclasses of Renée Fleming, Nathan Gunn, William Matteuzzi, Donald George and Isabel Leonard. Since 2016, he has been music director and vocal coach of "Scuola Italia per Giovani Cantanti Lirici" in Sant'Angelo in Vado (Italy), and since summer 2019 he has joined the faculty of the Opera Vivaldi program in Verona as music director and vocal coach. He also recently joined the faculty of Camerata de' Bardi, the Young Artists Program of Teatro Grattacielo in New York City.

Mr. Ciabatti holds degrees in piano, choral conducting and orchestral conducting from Italy and the United States.

Mezzo-soprano **Erma Gattie Mellinger** has been a principal artist with many opera companies across the United States including the Cleveland Opera, the Florida Grand Opera (Miami), the Dallas Opera, the Pittsburgh Opera Theater, the Fresno International Grand Opera, Opera Maine and the Chautauqua Opera. Her roles, in over 30 operas, include Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, Dorabella in *Così Fan Tutte*, Cherubino in *Le Nozze Di Figaro*, Ottavia in *L'incoronazione Di Poppea*, and Preziosilla in *La Forza Del Destino*. She has performed with Sherrill Milnes, James Morris, Diana Soviero and David Daniels and has sung masterclasses with Frederica Von Stade and Mignon Dunn. Conductors with whom she has worked include Harry Bicket, Stephen Lord, John DeMain and Willie Waters.

Hailed for her “rich, vibrant, creamy voice,” Ms. Mellinger is also at home on the concert stage appearing as soloist with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, the Monterey Symphony and the Florida Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Mellinger appeared as soloist with the Handel Society of Dartmouth College in tours of England, France, Germany and Italy, performing in venues including Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

Ms. Mellinger has been a member of the Dartmouth College faculty since 1996. In addition to her duties as Voice Instructor, she serves as the Assistant Director and Vocal Coach of the Handel Society and the Glee Club and Co-Director of the Dartmouth Opera Lab. Ms. Mellinger presents solo recitals and chamber music concerts on campus through the Chamber Works series. Ms. Mellinger is a former Director of Cantabile, a Women’s chorus based in Vermont and New Hampshire. In addition, Ms. Mellinger has directed church choirs and has served as both Stage Director and Music Director for numerous community theater productions. She is a sought-after clinician in the field of vocal production, having most recently worked with

the University Chorus and the Chamber Singers of Brandeis University.

Ms. Mellinger earned her Bachelor of Music Degree with Highest Distinction (*First in Class*) from Northwestern University. She received the Performer’s Certificate and the Opera Certificate as well as a Teaching Excellence Award while at the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester where she earned her Master of Music Degree and began her Doctor of Music Arts Degree before embarking on her singing career.

**Erik Kroncke** has been described as “engaging...a bass of astounding depth and warm timbre...an important voice and artist...” He has been in demand by opera companies and orchestras throughout the world, including engagements with the National Choral, Sarasota Opera Orchestra, Chautauqua Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Korean Philharmonic and the American Classical Orchestra. Before the pandemic Erik sang the bass soloist in the Beethoven 9th with the National Choral at Lincoln center, sang the role of Tackleton in the North American premier of Zandonai’s *Il Grillo del Focolare* with Teatro Grattacielo, and opened the 27th season of the Capriccio concert series in recital with pianist Mary Jane Austin. During the pandemic he has been asked to do two recorded concerts, a virtual Messiah, several outdoor programs, and perform the role of Don Alfonso in *Così fan Tutte* with St. Petersburg Opera in Florida. He will be performing with the newly formed UV Baroque at Dartmouth, and returns to St. Petersburg for a two-concert series in the new year. He frequently performs recitals with pianist Mary Jane Austin. A more complete biography and list of upcoming performances at [www.erikkroncke.com](http://www.erikkroncke.com).

The “extraordinary” (Classical Voice N. America) soprano **Mary Bonhag** is captivating audiences around the country with her “marvelous versatility” and “supple, expressive” voice (*San Antonio News*). As a new music specialist, Mary was featured on Resonant Bodies Festival, and has sung with 21st Century Consort, and San Francisco Contemporary Players. She has premiered or commissioned works

## About the Artists *continued*

by Lembit Beecher, Susan Botti, Evan Premo, Shawn Jaeger, Eliza Brown, Evan Chambers, and C. Curtis Smith. In demand from Carnegie Hall to rustic barns, Mary connects with her audiences, drawing them deeply into the music. She frequently performs with Aizuri Quartet, Aeolus Quartet, Decoda, Spektral Quartet and is featured across the country at chamber music festivals including Cactus Pear (TX), Five Boroughs Festival, Stanford Live and Yellow Barn. She is co-artistic director of Scrag Mountain Music, now in its 10th year, with her husband, composer/double bassist Evan Premo. Together they organize chamber music residencies and innovative and affordable concerts around Vermont. Mary has presented thought-provoking art song recitals at Dartmouth, Smith, Goucher, and University of Vermont. She attended SongFest and Tanglewood, where she received the Grace B. Jackson Prize. Mary is featured on the NPR show *Performance Today* and appears on Albany Records. In between travels, she and her husband Evan make music and homestead in Vermont where they tend to their two young boys, animals, and gardens.

**Sean Parr D '99, tenor**, is Professor of Music at Saint Anselm College where he teaches voice performance, conducting and music history. He has performed many operatic roles, including the title roles in Gounod's *Faust* and Massenet's *Werther*, Rodolfo in *La bohème*, Kaspar in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, Acis in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, with companies such as Raylynmor Opera, Opera North, the Natchez Festival of Music, the Irvington Music Festival, Regina Opera, Brooklyn Repertory Opera and Eastern Festival Opera, among others. Most recently, he performed Tamino in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera51. In concert, he has performed as tenor soloist in works such as Handel's *Messiah*, Respighi's *Laud to the Nativity*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Dvorak's *Mass in D*, Bach's *Ascension Oratorio*, and Saint-Saëns's *Christmas Oratorio* with groups such as Ensemble ExCathedra, the ProMusica Singers, Concord Chorale, Chorus pro Musica and the Manchester Choral Society. As an undergrad at Dartmouth, he studied music and mathematics, and

served as the Handel Society's first Conducting Assistant, under Melinda O'Neal. After a brief stint as a software engineer, he earned his MM from Florida State University, studying Voice Performance, and then completed his PhD in Historical Musicology from Columbia University. His first book—*Vocal Virtuosity: The Origins of the Coloratura Soprano in Nineteenth-Century Opera*—was published in April 2021 by Oxford University Press. Hailed by both opera singers and musicologists, the book has been praised as “provocative, engaging, and thoroughly original.” Supported by a 2021-22 Frederick Burkhardt Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies, he is currently a Visiting Scholar at Dartmouth, working on his next book project which focuses on Wagner, breathing, and heroic singing.

**Mary Jane Austin** is enjoying a rich musical life in Vermont and abroad, where her interests range from recital work and full scale opera productions to teaching and choral conducting. She has been the conductor of the Mad River Chorale since 2018 after a long tenure as a collaborative pianist for the organization. Discovering a love for opera while studying with opera legends Claudia Pinza, Maurizio Arena, Enza Ferrari, and Warren Jones, she began working at the summer Italian opera program EPCASO starting in 1994. She is principal keyboardist of the Vermont Symphony, and in 2016 she was awarded the title of “Honorary Conductor” by the VSO. She is a rehearsal pianist for the Opera Company of Middlebury (OCM), and also frequently collaborates with the Craftsbury Chamber Players, TURNmusic, Eleva Chamber Players and Vermont Virtuosi. She co-founded Vermont Italian Opera with bass Erik Kroncke, and together they direct opera and operettas at the Unadilla Theatre in Calais every summer, as well as produce outdoor concerts at the State House in Montpelier. She currently teaches at the University of Vermont and Northern Vermont University, works as a collaborative pianist/vocal coach at Dartmouth College and has conducted musicals at Middlebury College. She is also the organist at the Waterbury Congregational Church, and serves as rehearsal pianist for the South Burlington Community Chorus as well as the Handel Society.

# Handel Society of Dartmouth College

Filippo Ciabatti, director

## **Soprano**

Memory Apata  
Alice Bennett  
Susan Cancio-Bello  
Katina Christensen '25  
Melissa Dillier  
Julianne Harden  
Eva Roux  
Katie Kalata Rusch  
Heidi Ruth  
Madelyn Gearheart

## **Alto**

Emma Ambroggi  
Carol Barr  
Kate Chamberlin  
Katie Christie  
Anne Felde  
Linda Fowler  
Anna Gado  
Mary MacVey  
Kristi Medill  
Cathleen Morrow  
Rosemary Orgren  
Maansey Rishi '24  
Bonnie Robinson  
Jo Shute  
Elissa Sullivan  
Averill Tinker  
Leah Todd

## **Tenor**

Brian Clancy  
Scott Drysdale  
Jon Felde  
Charlie Freeman  
Melissa Herman  
Joel Lazar  
Rick Read  
David Thron  
Ashton Todd

## **Bass**

Ben Alford '22  
Greg Bazylevicz  
Benson Canfield  
Robert Gearheart  
Tyler Harwell  
Paul Hecht  
Harry Higgs  
Dave Robinson  
Allan Wieman

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