

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents



# MIDTOWN CONCERTS

Thursday April 27, 2023 1:15 pm  
St Malachy's Church – The Actors' Chapel in New York City  
Live Streamed to [midtownconcerts.org](http://midtownconcerts.org) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com)

## The Dryden Ensemble *An Eyewitness Guide to Versailles*

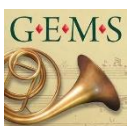
Roberta Maxwell & Paul Hecht ~ readers Jane McKinley ~ oboe Vita Wallace ~ violin  
Lisa Terry ~ bass viol Webb Wiggins ~ harpsichord

Roberta Maxwell: Élisabeth Charlotte, sister-in-law to Louis XIV  
Paul Hecht: Louis de Rouvroy, Duke of Saint-Simon, a courtier

Air tendre from <i>Huitième Concert, Les Goûts réunis</i> (1724)	François Couperin (1668–1733)
Aria from <i>Sonata in D minor</i>	Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (1665–1729)
Gavotte from <i>Suite in E minor</i>	François Couperin
Air noblement from <i>Huitième Concert, Les Goûts réunis</i> (1724)	
Sarabande in D minor	Louis Couperin (1626–1661)
Sarabande from <i>Huitième Concert, Les Goûts réunis</i> (1724)	François Couperin
La Piémontoise	Louis Couperin
Menuet in G minor from <i>Premier Concert</i> (1714)	François Couperin
Prélude in D minor	Louis Couperin
Sarabande la Désolée	Marin Marais (1656–1728)
Dans nos bois Silvandre s'escrie from <i>Trios pour le Coucher du Roi, LWV 35</i>	Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687)

Midtown Concerts are produced by Gotham Early Music Scene, Inc., and are made possible with support from St. Malachy's Church–The Actors' Chapel, The New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature; public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council; the Howard Gilman Foundation; and by generous donations from audience members.

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Harpsichord provided by Rebecca Pechefsky John Thiessen, Executive Director



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## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This dramatic musical entertainment, to be performed without breaks, combines French Baroque music with eyewitness accounts of life at Versailles, featuring actors Roberta Maxwell and Paul Hecht reading from the letters of Élisabeth Charlotte, sister-in-law to Louis XIV and the memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon, a soldier, diplomat, and diarist. The program gives listeners an idea of daily life at the court.

Élisabeth Charlotte, Duchesse d'Orléans (1652–1722), known as 'Madame' at the French court, was a German princess, daughter of Karl Ludwig, Elector of the Palatinate (1617–1680). At nineteen she married the only brother of Louis XIV and spent the rest of her life in France, cut off from her friends and relatives, though she corresponded with them regularly, especially her aunt Sophie, who became Electress of Hanover in 1692, and whose oldest son became George I of England.

Louis de Rouvroy, Duke of Saint-Simon (1675–1755), was born in the shadow of the palace. Son of Claude de Saint-Simon, a favorite of Louis XIII, he was baptized at Versailles in 1677. His godfather was none other than Louis XIV himself, with Queen Maria Theresa of Austria serving as godmother. Originally destined for a career in the army, he ultimately decided to remain at the court and went on to become an historian. Intimately acquainted with the intrigues of the palace, a close friend of various courtiers and ministers, Saint-Simon was to become the finest chronicler of courtly life. He occupied a luxurious apartment at Versailles, thanks to his wife's position as lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Berry.

Credits: Program and Script created by Jane McKinley. Readings: *A woman's life in the court of the Sun King: letters of Liselotte von der Pfalz, Elisabeth Charlotte, Duchesse d'Orléans, 1652–1722*, translated and introduced by Elborg Forster (1984); and *Memoirs of Duc de Saint-Simon, 1691–1709: Presented to the King*, translated by Lucy Norton (2007).

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Named in honor of John Dryden, the English poet laureate whose words inspired Baroque composers including Purcell and Handel, **The Dryden Ensemble** specializes in performing music of the 17th and 18th centuries on period instruments. A line from Dryden's *Song to St. Cecilia* captures the essence of Baroque music and our ensemble's philosophy: "What Passion cannot Musick raise and quell!"

**Roberta Maxwell**, reader, is known to New York audiences for performances with Ethan Hawke in Chekhov's *Ivanov* and other productions at Classic Stage, and on Broadway in *Equus*, *Othello*, *Henry V*, and *The Merchant of Venice*, and Off-Broadway in *Stevie*, *Ashes* (Obie Award), *Mary Stuart*, *A Whistle in the Dark* (Obie Award) and many others. Her credits include regional theater productions at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Tyrone Guthrie Centre, the Old Globe Theatre, McCarter Theatre in Princeton, and others. She has also performed for television and in movies, including *Popeye*, *Psycho III*, *Philadelphia*, *Dead Man Walking*, and *Brokeback Mountain*.

**Paul Hecht**, reader, has performed extensively on stage, in movies, and for television. He made his debut on Broadway as the Player in *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead* (Tony nomination 1968). Other Broadway appearances include *Night & Day* with Maggie Smith, *Invention of Love* (Tom Stoppard), *1776* (original company), *The Rothschilds*, Shaw's *Caesar & Cleopatra*, and Pirandello's *Henry IV* (both with Rex Harrison). Television audience members may recognize him from his appearances over the years as Charles in *Kate & Allie* and as several unsavory characters on *Law and Order*.

**Jane McKinley**, oboe and artistic director of the Dryden Ensemble, studied oboe at Northwestern University, historical musicology at Princeton University, and Baroque oboe with the late Jürg Schaefflein in Vienna. She has performed with many Baroque ensembles in the Northeast and appeared with the New York Collegium in a staged production of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at BAM. She has a passion for creating concert programs that combine Baroque music with readings from letters and diaries of the period. She has been writing poetry for twenty years and recently received a 2023 Poetry Fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

**Lisa Terry**, bass viol, is a longtime member of both the Dryden Ensemble and Parthenia Viol Consort, and is principal violoncellist of Tempesta di Mare, Philadelphia's Baroque orchestra. A founding member of ARTEK, Lisa has performed with the New York Philharmonic, New York City Opera, and has appeared as soloist in the Passions of J.S. Bach throughout her career. She serves the Viola da Gamba Society of America as Past-President. Lisa is often heard in dance bands for English Country Dance in New York. She studied viol with the late Richard Taruskin and violoncello with the late Harry Wimmer.

**Vita Wallace**, violin, known as a powerful, sensitive, and versatile musician, is a member of Anima, ARTEK, the Dryden Ensemble, and Opera Feroce, and leads the Accord-O-Leles (on the accordion). She likes to learn "new" instruments; she's performed on the vielle and lira da braccio and added the viola d'amore and the violino piccolo to the list in 2020. She and her brother, Ishmael, have performed, recorded, and taught extensively as the Orfeo Duo. Their recordings include the complete Beethoven and Schumann sonatas on period instruments. They have served as directors of What a Neighborhood!, celebrating the creative spirit in their Manhattan neighborhood.

**Webb Wiggins**, harpsichord, recognized internationally for his innovative continuo realizations, has performed and recorded with the Folger Consort, the Violins of Lafayette, the Baltimore Consort, Apollo's Fire, Smithsonian Chamber Players and Orchestra, and the National Symphony—and has also played in New Zealand, Taiwan, and China. Webb is one of the foremost teachers of harpsichord as well as a chamber music coach. He recently retired from his position as Professor of Harpsichord at Oberlin Conservatory. Webb's solo performances are admired for their elegance and musical intensity. His recording of Froberger's complete works for solo harpsichord and organ on the Smithsonian label has been widely acclaimed.

## **ABOUT MIDTOWN CONCERTS**

Welcome to the largest and most diverse series of free chamber music concerts in the nation, comprising weekly performances by over 40 different professional ensembles and artists. Midtown Concerts is celebrating its twenty-fifth season and will run through June 29, 2023. For further information on future programs as well as links to our live streams and archived performances, please visit [www.midtownconcerts.org](http://www.midtownconcerts.org)

**NEXT WEEK: House of Time**  
*Angels & Demons*