

# THE *OTHER* CLEOPATRA QUEEN OF ARMENIA

*IL TIGRANE*  
ARIAS

HASSE • VIVALDI • GLUCK

ISABEL  
BAYRAKDARIAN  
SOPRANO

CONSTANTINE ORBELIAN  
KAUNAS CITY SYMPHONY



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# THE *OTHER* CLEOPATRA QUEEN OF ARMENIA

## HASSE: IL TIGRANE (1729)

*Aria: "Vuoi chi'io t'oda?" • Recitative: "E'i parte...Ma che parlo"*

*Aria: "Che gran pena" • Aria: "Strappami pure il seno" • Recitative: "Del suo duol"*

*• Aria: "Degli'Elisi alle Campagne" • Recitative: "Parte, parte Tigrane..."*

*• Aria: "Press'all'onde" • Overture*

## VIVALDI: IL TIGRANE (1724)

*Recitative: "Lasciatemi in riposo" • Aria: "Qui mentre mormorando"*

*Aria: "Squarciami pure il seno" • Aria: "Lascierà l'amata"*

## GLUCK: IL TIGRANE (1743)

*Aria: "Nero turbo il ciel imbruna" • Aria: "Priva del caro bene"*

*Aria: "Presso l'onda"*

**Isabel Bayrakdarian**, soprano

**Constantine Orbelian**, conductor

Kaunas City Symphony

**Jory Vinikour**, harpsichord

Total Playing Time: 64:06



# THE *OTHER* CLEOPATRA: QUEEN OF ARMENIA

## **IL TIGRANE (1729, Naples)** **Johann Adolph Hasse (1699–1783)**

1. *Act I, Scene 8 Aria*: "Vuoi chi'io t'oda?" (4:41)
2. *Act I, Scene 13 Recit/Accomp*: "E'i parte...Ma che parlo" (2:28)
3. *Aria*: "Che gran pena" (6:31)
4. *Act II, Scene 4 Aria*: "Strappami pure il seno" (3:15)
5. *Act II, Scene 15 Recit*: "Del suo duol" (0:43)
6. *Aria*: "Degli'Elisi alle Campagne" (5:42)
7. *Act III, Sc. 11 Recit*: "Parte, parte Tigrane..." (1:59)
8. *Aria*: "Press'all'onde" (4:58)
9. *OVERTURE* (5:22)

## **IL TIGRANE (1724, Rome)** **Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)**

10. *Act II, Scene 1 Recit*: "Lasciatemi in riposo" (0:51)
11. *Aria*: "Qui mentre mormorando" (2:23)
12. *Act II, Scene 4 Aria*: "Squarciami pure il seno" (3:29)
13. *Act II, Scene 11 Aria*: "Lascierà l'amata" (6:10)

## **IL TIGRANE (1743, Crema)** **Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787)**

14. *Act I, Scene 13 Aria*: "Nero turbo il ciel imbruna" (8:04)
15. *Act II, Scene 14 Aria*: "Priva del caro bene" (05:09)
16. *Act III, Scene 12 Aria*: "Presso l'onda" (02:17)

**ISABEL BAYRAKDARIAN**, soprano

**CONSTANTINE ORBELIAN**, conductor

**THE KAUNAS CITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**JORY VINIKOUR**, harpsichord

Total Playing time: 64:06

## INTRODUCTION

As part of my research at the University of California, Santa Barbara, I have undertaken extensive scholarly work on Baroque composers who have written operas about the Armenian King Tigranes II (140–55 BCE). There are at least twenty-four operas about him; most are lost. I have now gathered three operas—in entirety and in excerpts—by Hasse, Vivaldi and Gluck. All three bear the title *Il Tigrane* and all are based on the same libretto by Abate Francesco Silvani (1660–1728). While there are many wonderful arias and ensembles in these newly discovered operas, to give my project more focus—and more importantly, to make it fit my voice and temperament—I have concentrated on one of the main roles in the opera: Cleopatra.

No, not *that* Cleopatra (although I *did* record rare Baroque arias about Cleopatra of Egypt, released as *Cleopatra* on CBC Records in 2005). This project's Cleopatra of Pontus (110–58 BCE) was the daughter of Mithridates VI, and became the Queen Consort of King Tigranes II, known as Tigranes the Great of Armenia. As an aside, when I was growing up and learning about Armenian history in school, we learned about Tigranes, of course, but historians omitted Cleopatra's name and existence

completely, instead concentrating on the accomplishments of her husband. In fact, Cleopatra of Pontus was instrumental in making Tigranes II the greatest king in Armenian history, by the alliance through marriage of two mighty nations: Armenia and Pontus. And that is how my project "The *Other* Cleopatra: Queen of Armenia" was born.

Cleopatra is viewed from the perspective of three prolific composers—Hasse, Vivaldi and Gluck—using the same text to animate very different artistic expressions. Vocally, the composers' choice of tessitura for the role of Cleopatra sits differently, making for a diverse vocal showcase. The music of Hasse and Gluck in this project has never been recorded before, and the entire recording features eleven arias for Cleopatra and one overture, together for the first time. The Hasse and Vivaldi scores require string orchestra with cembalo/continuo (plus two horns in the Hasse Overture), while the Gluck arias add two horns and two oboes.

—Isabel Bayrakdarian

## The Plot

The story tells of the love between King Tigranes and Cleopatra, the daughter of King

Mithridates VI (Eupator Dionysius) of Pontus. Contrary to historical events, the kings are presented as enemies. To get Cleopatra's attention, Tigranes joins the army of Mithridates under a false name, fights Mithridates's foes, and wins Cleopatra's love. Apamia, a high-ranking lady in the court of Pontus, is also in love with Tigranes and becomes Cleopatra's arch rival. When Tigranes reveals his true identity to King Mithridates, his enemy, Mithridates condemns him to death and commands Cleopatra to marry Orontes, Apamia's brother, or be executed. Mithridates himself plans to marry Apamia. Cleopatra and Tigranes vow to remain true to each other.

Mithridates arrives at the Temple of Jupiter to celebrate his marriage to Apamia, which will feature the sacrifice of Tigranes to the gods. Suddenly Orontes rushes in with the news that after a surprise attack the city has fallen to the army of Cleartes, a friend of Tigranes. Cleopatra pleads with her father to flee to safety, but Mithridates prefers to fight to the last. When Cleartes and his men burst into the temple with their swords drawn, Tigranes announces that he will fight to protect Cleopatra's father, even though Mithridates had sworn undying enmity toward him and planned to have him sacrificed. Moved by the young prince's magnanimous gesture, the king undergoes a sudden change of heart. Even his rival Orontes is swayed by Tigranes' display of

virtue and revokes his claim to Cleopatra's hand. Mithridates decides that there will be a double wedding: Apamia and himself, and Cleopatra and Tigranes, and the opera ends in celebration.

### The Composers

During his lifetime, **Johann Adolph Hasse** (1699–1783) was one of the best-known opera composers. He had a fine voice and was also a talented actor with a keen understanding of drama, all of which contributed to his skill as a composer of opera. Charles Burney, the foremost music historian of the time, called Hasse "the most natural, elegant, and judicious composer of vocal music."

**Antonio Vivaldi** (1678–1741) has long enjoyed a stellar reputation as a composer of instrumental music, especially of concertos. Now his vocal music and operas are beginning to receive attention. Written during the high point of Vivaldi's career, *Il Tigrane* was a collaboration with two other composers, who wrote the music for Acts I and III. Only the music to Act II has survived; fortunately, this is the act with Vivaldi's contribution.

*Il Tigrane* is an early opera of **Christoph Willibald Gluck** (1714–1787), coming out only two years after his first opera. Gluck

went on to compose more than one hundred operas in his long career, and although *Il Tigrane* predates Gluck's "reform operas" of the 1760s, it is still in a forward-looking style that helped usher in the classical era in music.

*J.A. Hasse, Il Tigrane*

**Act I, Scene 8, Aria: "Vuoi ch'io t'oda?"**

Apamia, a high-ranking lady of the court in Pontus, is the unwilling object of the widower King Mithridates' passion, for she secretly loves young Tigranes instead. Apamia's brother Orontes seeks to marry Cleopatra, the king's daughter, and thus stake his future claim to the throne of Pontus, but she rejects his advances. In this aria Cleopatra resists attempts by her rival and suitor to persuade her to abandon her love for the foreigner Tigranes.

*Aria:*

Vuoi, ch'io t'oda? Vuoi, che ascolti?  
Dite o stolti d'esser degni  
del mio scherno, e de' miei sdegni, ed  
allor v'ascolterò.  
Tu d'amica e tu d'amante hai sembiante,  
e mostri orgoglio,  
Te disprezzo, e te non voglio, l'uno e  
l'altra in odio avrò.



*Aria:*

Do you want me to hear you out?  
Do you want me to listen?  
Say, you fools,  
that you're worthy  
of my scorn and disdain,  
and then I'll listen to you both.  
Your countenance is  
a friend's, and yours is a lover's, and you  
show how prideful you are,  
but I despise you [Apamia], and do not  
love you [Orontes]: I will hate you both.

**Act I, Scene 13: Recit/ Accomp./Aria:  
"E' i parte . . . Ma che parlo . . .  
Che gran pena"**

Here, in the final scene of Act I, after a quarrel with Tigranes ends with the princess haughtily telling him to go to his own death, Cleopatra, left alone on stage, is overcome with remorse, and reaffirms her love for the young foreign king.

*Recitative:*

Ei parte. Oh Dio, che fò? Riedi ben mio;  
deh riedi a me, più non ti scaccio, e, spen-  
ta l'inimicizia antica,  
sono amante con te, non più nemica.  
Ma che parlo? ove corro?

Qual cieco amore i passi miei consiglia?  
Posso Tigrane amar, quando son figlia? Sì;  
ch'ei parta, che mora:  
vinca il dovere, e vinca l'odio ancora. Ed ei  
morrà! morrà quel dolce e caro idolo del  
cor mio!  
E Cleopatra il soffre? e sia che infida d'un  
amante fedel sia l'omicida?  
Ahi, che il mio cor trafitto da doppia  
pena, e fiera,  
smania, piange, s'adira, e si dispera.

*Aria:*

Che gran pena trafigge il mio core, l'odio  
parla e son vinta d'amore; fremo irata, e  
pietosa mi struggo, quel che fuggo  
più deggio bramar.

Forma il labro sdegnosi [g]l'accenti, sorge  
il core e [g]li dice tu menti.  
Chi vuoi morte? quel dolce tesoro, per  
cui moro,  
e m'è caro il penar?



*Recitative:*

Oh God, he's leaving! What shall I do?  
Come back, mylove, oh, come back to me,  
I will no longer drive you away, and, with  
our former enmity now ended,  
I'll be your lover, not your enemy.  
But what am I saying? To where am I run-

ning? What blind love counsels my steps?  
Can I love Tigranes, when I'm [my fa-  
ther's] daughter? Yes, let him depart, let  
him die;  
Let duty triumph, and once more let  
hatred win.  
And he will die! That sweet, dear idol of  
my heart will die?  
And [how] will Cleopatra endure it? Could  
it be that, faithless to a faithful lover,  
she may become his murderer?  
Ah! my heart is pierced by a fierce,  
double pain;  
it yearns, weeps, rages and despairs.

*Aria:*

What great pain pierces my heart;  
hatred speaks, and I am overcome by  
love; I tremble with fury, and I pine with pity;  
I flee from that which I must most desire.

My lips form disdainful words,  
my heart rises up and tells them:  
"you lie."  
O Death, whom do you want? That sweet  
darling, for whom I die,  
and for whom I delight in suffering?

#### **Act II, Scene 4, Aria: "Strappami pure il seno"**

When Tigranes, who has been at court in  
Pontus in disguise, now reveals his true

identity to his old enemy King Mithridates, the latter condemns him to die. When Cleopatra suddenly reveals her love for Tigranes to her father, Mithridates is enraged, and threatens his daughter with dire consequences.

*Aria:*

Strappami pure il seno, ecco te l'offro  
ignudo, senza riparo o scudo, eccoti  
ancora il cor.  
Col ferro e col veleno  
mi puoi svenare, e uccidere;  
ma non potrai dividere  
sì caro e dolce amor.



*Aria:*

Rend open my breast;  
here, naked I offer it to you, without  
defense or shield; here once again is my heart.  
With steel and poison  
you may drain my veins, and take my life,  
but not separate me  
from such a precious, sweet love.

**Act II, Scene 15, Recitative/Aria: "Del  
suo duol . . . Degl'Elisi alle Campagne"**

Once more rejecting Orontes' advances,  
Cleopatra announces her wish to die, as

Tigranes at the head of the besieging Armenian forces prepares to lead an assault on the city walls.

*Recitative:*

Del suo duol, di sua pena  
pietade avrei, se a lui pietà giovasse, ma  
del padre inumano  
la sentenza crudel m'empie d'orrore, e l'  
risoluto core  
già s'appresta costante,  
l'alma a spirar per il suo caro amante.

*Aria:*

Degl'Elisi alle Campagne l'alma fida  
andrà fastosa  
e dell'ombre sue compagne il gioir  
non turberà.  
Fra quei mirti, e questa, e quella le dirà:  
deh' vieni, o bella  
alma invitta ed amorosa, a goder di  
tua beltà.



*Recitative:*

I would have pity on his pain  
and suffering, if pity he deserved, but the  
cruel sentence  
issued by this inhuman father fills me



with horror; and my resolute, constant heart  
is already preparing  
my soul to die for my dear lover.

*Aria:*

Through the Elysian Fields  
my faithful soul will go, in splendor,  
unmoved by the rejoicing  
of its companion shades.  
Among those myrtles, first one shade  
and then another will say to me: "come  
now, o lovely  
unvanquished and amorous soul, to take  
delight in your beauty."

**Act III, Scene 11, Recitative/Aria:  
"Parte Tigrane . . . Presso a l'onde"**

Cleopatra's rival Apamia, having accepted Mithridates' offer of marriage, will become queen as well as Cleopatra's step-mother. With wedding preparations underway, Tigranes speaks of his decision to die rather than to live without Cleopatra, the daughter of his longtime enemy, and exits the scene. Alone on stage, Cleopatra sings the following recitative/aria.

*Recitative:*

Parte Tigrane, e dove? A far su l'occhio  
d'un regno intiero a le ferali nozze d'un  
barbaro regnante orrido fasto!

E Cleopatra ancora  
di tanto amor per frutto  
può sua morte soffrire ad occhio a-  
sciutto? O Dei! Già veggio in su del capo  
illustre cader la scure, e veggio il labbro  
amato palpitante esalar l'ultimo fiato.  
Veggio lo spirto invitto  
già presso a valicar l'onda di Stige,  
e a me volto mi chiama e dice: osserva,  
osserva o Cleopatra,  
qual sostenni per te sorte proterva.

*Aria:*

Presso a l'onde d'Acheronte odo il  
misero gridarmi:  
mi dicesti, o Dio, d'amarmi; e qui vengo  
or senza te.  
Vedi Amor che piange l'onte del comune  
nostro affetto,  
e ti sgrida in mezzo al petto: sei spergiura  
e senza fè.



*Recitative:*

Tigranes is departing, but for where?  
To gaze upon an entire kingdom at the  
bestial wedding of a barbaric ruler,  
O horrid festivity!  
And can Cleopatra still  
suffer his death with dry eyes?  
Is this to be the fruit of so great a love?

O gods, already I see the axe fall upon  
that illustrious head,  
and I see those beloved lips trembling as  
he breathes his last.  
I see his unvanquished spirit  
already preparing to pass across the Styx;  
turning toward me, he calls to me and  
says: "see, O Cleopatra, see  
what proud fate I embraced for you."

*Aria:*

By the waves of the Acheron I hear the  
wretch cry to me:  
"you said, O God, that you loved me; and  
I come here now without you.  
See Cupid, who weeps for the shame of  
our mutual affection,  
and who within your breast rebukes you:  
'you are forsworn and faithless.'"

*Vivaldi, Il Tigrane*

**Act II, Scene 1, Recit/Aria: "Lasciatemi  
in riposo . . . Qui mentre mormorando."**

As the curtain rises on Act II, the princess  
Cleopatra is alone on stage, and about to  
fall asleep in a beautiful garden filled with  
flowers and fountains. She is tormented by  
thoughts of young Tigranes II, King of Arme-  
nia, with whom she has fallen in love despite  
the ongoing conflict between the latter and  
her father, King Mithridates VI of Pontus.

*Recitative:*

Lasciatemi in riposo qualche momento  
almeno tormentosi pensieri,  
e date al mesto seno tregua almen, se  
non pace. [...]  
Già con la mente,  
agitata da un mar sì tempestoso, vacilla-  
no le piante,  
e mi fanno cercar qualche riposo.

*Aria:*

Qui mentre mormorando corron l'onde  
m'invitano a sopir il mio tormento.



*Recitative:*

Let me rest, tormenting thoughts,  
for at least a few moments, and give my  
sorrowful heart  
at least some respite, if not peace.[...]  
Together with my mind,  
tossed on such a stormy sea, the foliage  
here is all asway, making me seek  
some rest.

*Aria:*

As they flow by here, murmuring,  
the waves  
bid me to calm my anguish.

**Act II, Scene 4, Aria: “Squarciami pure il seno”**

When Tigranes, who—intrigued by reports of Cleopatra’s great beauty—has been in Pontus in disguise, now reveals his true identity to his old enemy King Mithridates, the latter condemns the young foreign king to die. When Cleopatra unexpectedly announces her love for Tigranes to her father, Mithridates is enraged, and threatens his daughter with dire consequences. She responds with the following aria.

*Aria:*

Squarciami pure il seno, ecco te l’offro  
ignudo, senza riparo, o scudo, eccoti  
ancora il cor.  
Ferro o veleno  
mi ponno uccidere, ma non dividere  
dall’alma un giusto ardor.



*Aria:*

Go on, cleave open my breast; here,  
naked I offer it to you, without defense or  
shield; here once again is my heart.  
Steel or poison may slay me, but  
not separate  
from my soul such a rightful passion.

**Act II, Scene 11, Aria: “Lascerà l’amata”**

King Mithridates has just given his daughter Cleopatra an ultimatum: she must marry her suitor Orontes, as the King has ordered her to do for reasons of state, or face execution. In this scene between Orontes and Cleopatra, after the furious King has stormed off, her suitor tries once again to coax the princess into accepting his offer of marriage. Gently but firmly she declines, however, and informs Orontes that she will willingly accept death in order to remain true to her first and only love, with whom she will never break faith.

*Aria:*

Lascerà l’amata salma lieta l’alma,  
bel trofeo d’amore e fè, sentirà dirsi  
fastosa degli’Elisi più amorosa,  
più costante l’alma non v’è.



*Aria:*

My soul will happily leave her  
beloved body,  
beautiful trophy of love and faith,  
And proudly will hear it said:  
“In all of Elysium there is no more loving,  
no more constant soul.”

*Gluck, Il Tigrane*

**Act I, Scene 13, Aria:**

**“Nero turbo il ciel imbruna”**

Here, in the final scene of Act I, after a quarrel with Tigranes ends with the princess haughtily telling him to go to his own death, Cleopatra, left alone on stage, is overcome with remorse, and reaffirms her love for the young Armenian king.

*Aria:*

Nero turbo il ciel imbruna, freme già crudel tempesta, e la sorte mia funesta già mi porta a naufragar.  
Ah! nel mezzo al gran periglio non ho cor, non ho consiglio, ed è vano il sospirar.



*Aria:*

A black storm darkens the sky, a fierce tempest shakes the air, and my accursed fate already leads me toward shipwreck.  
O! in the midst of great danger I lack courage, I lack counsel, and my sighs are all in vain.

**Act II, Scene 14, Aria: “Priva del caro bene”**

Cleopatra has refused her father King Mithridates' command to marry Orontes. Enraged by her refusal, the king gives Cleopatra an ultimatum: either his daughter must yield to his will and take Orontes as her husband, or face death at the hands of the executioner. The princess tells Orontes that he has no hope of obtaining her hand, and blames him for her dilemma, for she loves only Tigranes.

*Aria:*

Priva del caro bene, ah, che morir vogl'io; vivere in tante pene non può l'amante cor.



*Aria:*

Without my beloved, oh, I want to die; my loving heart cannot live with such pain.

**Act III, Scene 12, Aria:  
“Presso l'onda”**

Tigranes is in despair at the thought of never being able to overcome the obstacles to marrying his beloved Cleopatra. She pleads unsuccessfully with him not to throw away his life fighting against her



father and his troops, but Tigranes is determined to die “for having loved you too much.” Left alone on stage, Cleopatra contemplates her own love-death as a last act of devotion to Tigranes, although he has already pleaded with her to live on after he has passed away.

*Aria:*

Presso l'onda d'Acheronte odo il  
misero gridarmi:  
mi dicesti, oh Dio! d'amarmi; e qui vengo  
or senza te.



*Aria:*

By the waves of the Acheron I hear the  
wretch cry to me:  
“you said—O God!—that you loved me;  
and I come here now without you.”

### Artist Biographies

It's not every prima donna who can boast a degree in biomedical engineering, but then, **Isabel Bayrakdarian** isn't your average prima donna. As an eagerly anticipated visitor to opera houses and concert halls the world over, she's become as celebrated for her beauty, presence, and style

as for her strikingly multihued voice that is wholly in sync with the rest of her.

A winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions—the same year she graduated from the University of Toronto *cum laude* with a Biomedical Engineering Degree—Ms. Bayrakdarian thereafter found her career taking rapid wing. She scored a notable success in the Lyric Opera of Chicago's world premiere production of William Bolcom's *A View from the Bridge*; the following year, she walked away from Plácido Domingo's prestigious Operalia competition with first prize. More debuts followed, including her San Francisco Opera debut, as Valencienne in *The Merry Widow*, and her Metropolitan Opera debut, in the New York premiere of Bolcom's opera; a season later, she won plaudits as Teresa in the Met premiere of Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*. Mozart became a specialty: Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* (New York, Houston, Salzburg), Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* (Los Angeles, London), and Pamina in *The Magic Flute* (New York, Toronto). Her roles at Toronto's Canadian Opera Company range from Gluck's Eurydice to Debussy's Mélisande to Poulenc's Blanche in *Dialogues des Carmélites*; and away from Canada, she has shone as Monteverdi's Poppea in Barcelona, Handel's Romilda (*Serse*) in Dresden, and Janáček's Vixen in New York, Florence, and the Saito Kinen Festival in Matsumoto, Japan.



But opera is only one page of the Bayrakdarian résumé. An ever-active concertizer, she has appeared with the premier orchestras of the world under the baton of such eminent conductors as Seiji Ozawa, James Conlon, David Zinman, Michael Tilson Thomas and Alan Gilbert.

Her versatility is also reflected in being the featured vocalist on the Grammy® Award-winning soundtrack of the block-

buster film *The Two Towers* from *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and on the soundtrack of Atom Egoyan's *Ararat*. A trance music collaboration with the electronica band Delerium garnered yet another Grammy® nomination. She sings on the BBC-produced short film *HOLOCAUST A Music Memorial Film from Auschwitz*, as well as her Gemini-nominated film *Long Journey Home*, documenting her first visit to her ancestral homeland, Armenia.

Bayrakdarian is the winner of four consecutive Juno Awards for Best Classical Album, and her latest recording, *Mother of Light*, on the Delos label, was nominated for a 2018 Juno Award. Her recordings with orchestra include Henryk Górecki's Symphony No. 3 with John Axelrod conducting the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, released on the Sony Classical label; Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2, with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the San Francisco Symphony; and Respighi's *Il Tramonto* with Orchestre Symphonique de Laval.

She is also the recipient of many awards, including the Marilyn Horne Foundation Competition Award, Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee and the Diamond Jubilee Medals, the Arbor Award from the University of Toronto, the George London Foundation Award, Canada Council's Virginia Parker Prize, and the Republic of Armenia "Komitas Medal." Most recently, she was awarded the "Movses Khorenatsi" medal, the Republic of Armenia's highest cultural award.

She holds an Honorary Doctorate from Canada's Wilfrid Laurier University and an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. Ms. Bayrakdarian is Associate Professor of Voice and Opera at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

**"Constantine Orbelian** stands astride two great societies, and finds and promotes synergistic harmony from the best of each." (*Fanfare*) For 30 years the brilliant American pianist/conductor has been a central figure in Russia's and Eastern Europe's musical life—first as Music Director of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia of Russia, and more recently as Chief Conductor of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra in Lithuania, and Director of the Armenian State Opera and Ballet Theater. He toured with American stars in Russian music centers, and Russian stars in North American music centers, and extended these splendid collaborations to tours in Europe, UK, Japan, South Korea, and music capitals throughout the world.

Orbelian's appointment in 1991 as Music Director of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra was a breakthrough event: He is the first American ever to become music director of an ensemble in Russia. During the years that followed, he became well known as a tireless champion of Russian-American cultural exchange and international ambassadorship through his worldwide tours. In January 2004, Orbelian was awarded the coveted title "Honored Artist of Russia," a title never before bestowed on a non-Russian citizen.

"Orbelian has star quality, and his orchestra plays with passion and precision," *The*

*Audio Critic* wrote of his acclaimed series of over 65 recordings on Delos. Among his concert and televised appearances are collaborations with stars Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Sondra Radvanovsky, Renée Fleming, Lawrence Brownlee, Ewa Podles and with Van Cliburn in Cliburn's sentimental return to Moscow.

*Opera News* called Orbelian "the singer's dream collaborator," and commented that he conducts vocal repertoire "with the sensitivity of a lieder pianist." Orbelian's numerous collaborations with Hvorostovsky include repertoire from their Delos recordings "Where Are You, My Brothers?" and "Moscow Nights," featured on many tours and telecasts, including historic live telecasts from Moscow's Red Square, and also appearances in the late baritone's annual series of concerts "Hvorostovsky and Friends" in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Orbelian was also the conductor of another historic Red Square performance of world opera luminaries Hvorostovsky and Anna Netrebko in June 2013.

Orbelian's first film production, *Renée Fleming and Dmitri Hvorostovsky: An Odyssey in St. Petersburg*, was filmed in St. Petersburg's most glorious palaces, and stars Fleming and Hvorostovsky in opera scenes and arias. The film was in some ways a culmination of Orbelian's efforts in



St. Petersburg, since he is the founder of the annual Palaces of St. Petersburg International Music Festival.

Born in San Francisco to Russian and Armenian emigré parents, Constantine Orbelian made his debut as a piano prodigy with the San Francisco Symphony at the age of eleven. After graduating from The Juilliard School, he embarked on a career as a piano virtuoso that included appearances with major symphony orchestras throughout the U.S., U.K., Europe, and Russia. His recording of the Khachaturian piano concerto with conductor Neeme Järvi won the "Best Concerto Recording of the Year" award in the United Kingdom.



Orbelian is a four-time Grammy® Nominee. In 2014, his recording of Rossini's virtuoso arias, performed by the American tenor Lawrence Brownlee with the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra, was nominated for a Grammy® award. His recording of the "Russia Cast Adrift" vocal cycle, with the great Dmitri Hvorostovsky and the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, received a 2017 Grammy® nomination. Orbelian's subsequent recording of the complete opera, *Rigoletto*, with Hvorostovsky in the title role, was nominated for a 2019 Grammy®. His 2020 nomination was for the vocal album "A Te, O Cara" with tenor Stephen Costello and the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra. Orbelian's recordings have also received six ICMA (International Classical Music Award) nominations between 2014 and 2020.

In 2001 Orbelian was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, an award given to immigrants, or children of immigrants, who have made outstanding contributions to the United States. In 2012 he was awarded the Order of Friendship by Russia in recognition of his contribution to promoting Russian culture in and outside the country, and in 2015 he was awarded the Order of Friendship by the Republic of Armenia. In November of 2017 he received a special "Concord" prize from the Union of Armenians as the "Pride of the Nation."

In June of 2016 Constantine Orbelian was appointed Artistic Director of the A. Spendiaryan National Opera and Ballet Theatre of Armenia, and in 2017 became its General Director.

**Jory Vinikour**, harpsichord, performs repertoire ranging from Bach and before, to Poulenc and beyond. He has appeared as soloist with the Cleveland Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonic of Radio France, and as recital soloist in series and festivals throughout much of the world.

Mr. Vinikour's debut recording for Sono-Luminus, the complete harpsichord works of Jean-Philippe Rameau, was nominated for a Grammy® award, in the category of Best Classical Solo Instrumental Recording in 2013, an honor also accorded to his *Toccatas: Contemporary American Works for Harpsichord* in 2015. Mr. Vinikour's recording of J.S. Bach's Partitas for harpsichord was released in late 2016.

He has recorded the sonatas for violin and harpsichord of Johann Sebastian Bach with Rachel Barton Pine (Cedille 2018), touring this program throughout the USA. Well known for his work with singers, Mr. Vinikour has performed extensively with



Anne Sofie von Otter, recording a recital CD, *Music for a While* (Deutsche Grammophon, 2004), with her.

Mr. Vinikour's recordings for Delos include Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, Handel's harpsichord suites, arias from Handel's *Rinaldo* and *Orlando* with Ewa Podles and Antonio Soler's six concerti for two keyboards, with Philippe LeRoy.

In recent seasons, Mr. Vinikour has made appearances as conductor/soloist with the St. Louis Symphony, Bergen Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Musica Angelica, Korea Chamber Orchestra, MusicAEterna,

Juillard415, Florentine Opera, as well as making his debut with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra in Handel's *Messiah* in 2019.

**The Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra** (KCSO) evolved from the Kaunas Chamber Orchestra, which was founded in 1988. Since 2000, the orchestra has been managed by Algimantas Treikauskas, with Constantine Orbelian as its principal conductor.

A prestigious Grammy® Awards Nominee, the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra is an integral part of the cultural life of Lithuania and the entire Baltic region.

The orchestra performs more than sixty concerts per year. It has appeared at Lithuanian music festivals—the International Young Musicians festival, the festivals of composers M. K. Čiurlionis and Edvard Grieg, the Pažaislis Music Festival, the international contemporary music festival "Iš arti"—as well as the "Fjord Cadenza" in Norway and "Murten Classics" in Switzerland. The Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra has also given concerts in other foreign countries such as Latvia, Estonia, Croatia, Italy, Germany and Finland.

In 2020, the orchestra celebrates its 15-year anniversary; during those years, a number of major and significant projects have tak-



en place. Memorable concerts—not only of classical but also popular music—have been added to the KCSO's biography. The orchestra has also collaborated in performances with legendary bands and world artists such as The Scorpions, Electric Light Orchestra, Smokie, Bonnie Tyler, Chris Norman, Robert Wells and Maggie Reilly.

The orchestra has made a remarkable series of recordings, produced tremendously successful projects and had the honor of performing with some of the world's most famous vocal soloists. Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Lawrence Brownlee, Charles Castronovo, Stephen Costello, John Osborn, José Carreras, Ildar Abdrazakov, Na-

dine Sierra, Elīna Garanča, Sarah Coburn, Asmik Grigorian, Sarah Brightman and Barbara Frittoli are some of the greats who have performed with the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra.

The orchestra's discography consists of over twenty CDs recorded with Maestro Orbelian and released in collaboration with the Delos label.

These recordings have received great critical acclaim, and have been nominated for prestigious international classical music awards such as the Grammy® Awards, the International Classical Music Awards and others.

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I thank Maestro Constantine Orbelian for planting the seed of this project in the hills of Sonoma years ago.

I dedicate this recording to the memory and legacy of my dear friend, mentor, and CBC producer Neil Crory, who envisioned the original Cleopatra for me, and was so proud that the new one was being born.

—Isabel Bayrakdarian

Special thanks to Algimantas Treikuskas, General Director of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra

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