

Les Délices' SalonEra is back and better than ever for second season

by Stephanie Manning



Last year, Cleveland's period ensemble Les Délices dared to be different with their contribution to the world of online concerts: SalonEra. Billed as a "variety show for early music," the web series' unique format made it a hit among audience members, director Debra Nagy said in a recent interview.

"One thing we heard over and over again was, 'regardless of the state of the pandemic, please continue SalonEra.'" The series' second season, which premieres on September 13, aims to be even more ambitious and

exciting than what came before it.

What sets SalonEra apart from other online offerings is that it wasn't conceived as a concert series — instead, it aims for a 50-50 blend of music and conversation. "Hearing from artists, getting that context, and creating personal connections with the artists and the music is a big part of what the series is about," Nagy said. This season's lineup will feature familiar faces from last year together with new collaborators, and episodes will be released twice a month starting next week through April 2022.

The first episode, "**Bach and Beyond**," brings together SalonEra's Artists in Residence with some special guests for inventive reimaginations of music by the Baroque maestro. Nagy called this group the "home team" — keyboardist Eric Milnes, viola da gambist Mélisande Corriveau, soprano Hannah De Priest, and violinist Shelby Yamin, SalonEra's Associate Producer. The guest artist and new face on the program is tenor Philippe Gagné, who will record a new aria for a remote collaboration.

This exploration into Bach's music will involve not only arrangements — turning violin sonatas into trios, and trios into solos — but also reconstructions of music Bach theoretically could have made. "We know that Bach wrote six Brandenburg concertos," Nagy explained. "But what if there was another set of Brandenburgs using music by

Bach — reimagining that and recasting it as ensemble concertos, for instance.” Some Bach-inspired heavy metal will be “a fun way to end the episode.”

Episode Two, “**Performer-Composers**,” will mark baritone Jonathan Woody’s return to the series — this time as a composer. Woody, harpsichordist Nicola Canzano, and Baroque bassist Doug Balliett will analyze their latest projects and share their viewpoints on writing music. Balliett will discuss his experience composing a full year’s worth of weekly cantatas, while Canzano will explore the 18th-century compositional practice of *partimento*.

Woody’s appearance in this September 27 episode is perfectly timed to cross over with Les Délices’ regular concert season, which premieres on October 7. The opening performance will feature his latest commission for the ensemble, *By much love betray’d*, which he will preview during SalonEra.

For an episode that deviates from SalonEra conventions, look no further than “**Phoenix of Mexico**” on October 18. Bassoonist Catalina Guevara Víquez Klein, violinist Karin Cuellar Rendon, and soprano Raquel Winnica Young will intersperse poetry with music in a program dedicated to Mexican nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

“It’s not that I’m uninvolved,” said Nagy (*pictured*), who serves as the series’ Executive Producer, “but the three guests who are on that episode are so passionate and deep into the subject, and they have really done a lot of work to conceive the arc of the program. It will not feel like other SalonEra episodes, and I think that’s a great thing.”



Three more episodes will bring the season to its halfway point at the end of the calendar year — “**Divine Love**,” a 17th-century program resembling last season’s “Stylus Fantasticus” (November 8); “**Machaut Man**,” a deep dive into the French composer and his works (November 29); and “**Connoisseur’s Christmas**,” a collection of early music for the holidays (December 13).

After the success of last season, Nagy, the production team, and everyone involved are ready to hit the ground running. “There’s an awful lot of variety, and I’m excited to work with some people that I’ve never worked with in person. There are a few people that we are working with literally across oceans, which I’m excited and inspired by.”

Continuing SalonEra after the disruptions of 2020 is a natural extension of the series, Nagy said. “From the beginning, I was always interested in creating work that would have a life and value after the pandemic.”

You can watch SalonEra on Les Délices’ [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#), or at salonera.org. Tickets are free, with a suggested donation of \$10. A live Q&A takes place after the premiere, and the episodes will be available for 48 hours. [Subscribers](#) will get on-demand access to SalonEra’s first season.

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