



2023-24 Season

Curtis Opera Theatre Presents
L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato:
George Frideric Handel's Glorious Pastoral Ode
of Darkness and Light, November 10, 12

Director Chas Rader-Shieber returns, and conductor Nicholas McGegan makes his Curtis debut in this new, cleverly reimagined stage production featuring members of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra at the Philadelphia Film Center

PHILADELPHIA, PA—October 24, 2023—The **Curtis Opera Theatre**'s 2023–24 season opens on **November 10 at 7:30 p.m.** and **November 12 at 2:30 p.m.** with **George Frideric Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*** (*The Cheerful Man, the Thoughtful Man, and the Moderate Man*) at the **Philadelphia Film Center**. Inspired by the poetry of 17th-century English writer John Milton, author of the epic *Paradise Lost*, this magnificent pastoral ode, adapted and extended by Charles Jennens (librettist of *Messiah*), features staging and costume design by acclaimed director **Chas Rader-Shieber**. Under the masterful baton of **Nicholas McGegan**, “one of the finest baroque conductors of his generation” (*Independent*), *L'Allegro* showcases an exciting cast of rising young opera stars accompanied by members of the **Curtis Symphony Orchestra**.

One of Handel's most daring and inventive works, this theatrical oratorio in three parts adapts the text of Milton's complementary poems, “L'Allegro” and “Il Penseroso” (one cheerful, one pensive) and contrasts them with a third poetic emotion penned by Jennens, “il Moderato,” where happiness is seen as a moderation of these two extremes. Despite its Italian title, the work's unique, non-linear structure—loosely described at its 1740 premiere in London as an “entertainment”—is written in English, with poetry that captures the “busy hum” of a bustling city, the thrill of a hunt and merry milkmaids, boisterous shepherds, and warbling birds of the countryside. As the opposing concepts of mirth and melancholy find a common understanding, if not a common ground, moments of beauty arise in this moderate, neutral world where both temperaments can peacefully coexist.

Praised by Toronto's Classical 96.3 FM for his “daring and visionary approach to staging,” Chas Rader-Shieber's vision for Handel's lush, painterly score and Milton's evocative texts captures the electricity

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between these dueling moods and highlights the relationship between humans and nature, emotion versus reason, with a devotion to ideas in pursuit of harmonic resolution. With visually compelling costumes that allude to 18th-century fashion with a subtle, contemporary touch, the production is accentuated with bursts of breathtaking movement, both elegant and exhilarating, courtesy of critically acclaimed New York City-based dancer, choreographer, educator, and director **Isaac Martin Lerner**.

Curtis Opera Theatre's *L'Allegro* features an ingeniously layered set by theater and opera scenic designer **Judy Gailen** that reveals its delights as the piece progresses and is enhanced by imaginative lighting that plays with color, texture, and mood, courtesy of Seattle-based lighting designer **Connie Yun**. Conductor and harpsichordist **Nicholas McGegan**, music director laureate of the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale, and principal guest conductor of Capella Savaria, makes his Curtis debut. Director **Chas Rader-Shieber** returns to direct his thirty-first opera at the school and lead the cast and members of the **Curtis Symphony Orchestra** in this unique, fully staged work, sung in English with English supertitles. Composed during Handel's transition from opera to sacred oratorios, *L'Allegro* is a spectacular collision of darkness and light, innocence and experience, and a celebration of the wonders of nature and the mysteries of life.

Single tickets for *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* start at \$19 and are available for purchase at [Curtis.edu](https://www.curtis.edu). Subscriptions for the 2023–24 season are on sale now. The flexible Choose Your Own subscription option offers 25% off ticket prices when purchasing tickets to two or more performances. For the 2023–24 season, Curtis is also offering a Season Pass, with access to all events in 2023–24 for one low rate of \$179. Each Season Pass is valid for one best-available ticket to each paid season performance. To order a subscription, visit [Curtis.edu/Subscribe](https://www.curtis.edu/Subscribe), call (215) 893-7902, or email tickets@curtis.edu.

The Curtis Opera Theatre returns to the Philadelphia Film Center on Friday, March 15, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, March 17, at 2:30 p.m. for an exciting double bill featuring Francis Poulenc's outrageously funny farce, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (*The Breasts of Tiresias*), alongside Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's darkly satirical "ballet chanté," *The Seven Deadly Sins*. The 2023–24 opera season concludes with Leoš Janáček's masterpiece, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, at the Kimmel Cultural Campus's Perelman Theater, May 2 and 3 at 7:30 p.m., and May 4 and 5 at 3:00 p.m. To learn more about these performances, as well as the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble 20/21 concerts, Curtis Recital Series, and more, visit [Curtis.edu/Calendar](https://www.curtis.edu/Calendar).

About Curtis Opera Theatre

Through imaginative productions and extraordinary musicianship, the promising young artists of Curtis Opera Theatre work alongside renowned conductors, directors, and designers to present audiences with fresh and passionate performances from across the operatic repertoire. With the visionary leadership of Eric Owens and Miloš Repický, Curtis's voice and opera students are cast regularly throughout the season, providing a unique level of performance experience to draw upon throughout their careers with top opera companies across the United States and Europe, including La Scala, Covent Garden, the Vienna Staatsoper, Houston Grand Opera, the San Francisco Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera.

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About Curtis Institute of Music

At Curtis, the world's most talented young musicians develop into exceptional artists, creators, and innovators. With a tuition-free foundation, Curtis is a unique environment for teaching and learning. A small school by design, students realize their artistic potential through intensive, individualized study with the most renowned, sought-after faculty. Animated by a learn-by-doing philosophy, Curtis students share their music with audiences through more than 100 performances each year, including solo and chamber recitals, orchestral concerts, and opera—all free or at an affordable cost—offering audiences unique opportunities to participate in pivotal moments in these young musicians' careers. Curtis students experience a close connection to the greatest artists and organizations in classical music, and innovative initiatives that integrate new technologies and encourage entrepreneurship—all within an historic campus in the heart of culturally rich Philadelphia. In this diverse, collaborative community, Curtis's extraordinary artists challenge, support, and inspire one another—continuing an unparalleled 100-year legacy of musicians who have led, and will lead, classical music into a thriving, equitable, and multidimensional future. Learn more at [Curtis.edu](https://www.curtis.edu).

CURTIS OPERA THEATRE: *L'ALLEGRO, IL PENSEROSO ED IL MODERATO*

Music by George Frideric Handel

Based on two poems by John Milton, adapted and extended by Charles Jennens, libretto

Featuring members of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra

November 10, 2023 | Friday at 7:30 p.m.

November 12, 2023 | Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

Philadelphia Film Center

1412 Chestnut Street

Nicholas McGegan, conductor

Chas Rader-Shieber, stage director

Isaac Martin Lerner, choreographer/movement director

Judy Gailen, scenic designer

Chas Rader-Shieber, costume designer

Connie Yun, lighting designer

Brittany Rappise, hair and makeup supervisor

CAST

	November 10, 12
Soprano	Maya Mor Mitrani
	Juliette Tacchino
	Sarah Fleiss
	Juliet Rand
	Dalia Medovnikov

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Alto	Sam Higgins Katie Trigg Shikta Mukherjee
Tenor	Jackson Allen Hongrui Ren
Bass	Evan Gray Nathan Schludecker

TICKETS

Tickets and subscriptions are on sale now. Single tickets starting at \$19 are available at [Curtis.edu](https://www.curtis.edu).

Fully staged production with members of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, sung in English with English supertitles by Celeste Montemarano.

The Curtis Opera Theatre is generously supported by the Ernestine Bacon Cairns Trust, the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, and the Wyncote Foundation.

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