



**New call for application: scholarships offered by Fondazione Giorgio Cini onlus –
Fondation Concordance – Irma Merk Stiftung – L. + Th. La Roche Stiftung**

Early Music Seminars Egida Sartori and Laura Alvini
Director: Pedro Memelsdorff

Opera and Slavery in the French Caribbean 1760-90

Master-classes and lectures by **Vivica Genaux**, Bernard Camier
and Pedro Memelsdorff

Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, **18-23 February 2019**

Deadline for application: **15 November 2018**

Full grants scholarships are available for solo baroque singers

The Fondazione Giorgio Cini, in collaboration with the foundations *Concordance*, Irma Merk, and L. + Th. La Roche, has organized an Early-Music Seminar planned for November 2018, focused on the comparison between the Caribbean *Concerts Spirituels* and the *Messes à l'usage des nègres* (Mass settings to be sung by slaves of Caribbean plantations) of the period 1750-80. Both repertoires highlight the artistic richness and social tensions typical for the microcosm of Caribbean cultures at the dawn of the Haitian revolution.

On **February 18-23, 2019** the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, once again in collaboration with the foundations *Concordance*, Irma Merk, and L. + Th. La Roche, will hold **a further (and complementary) Early Music Seminar**, focusing on the operatic repertoires of the French-Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue in about the same period. In particular, the Seminar will examine the career of Elisabeth Alexandrine Louise (stage name Minette), the first title-role singer of colour, and granddaughter of a freed slave. After her debut in February 1781, Minette sang in some forty operas and became the most celebrated title-role singer of the colony while founding something of a myth and provoking highly controversial critical reactions, witnessed by the local press of the time.

A number of Minette's performances were based on librettos by philosophers such as Voltaire or Rousseau (or on paraphrases thereof), which thematised slavery and racial differences thus emancipation providing the repertoire with a particular sociologic dimension. Moreover, as an artist of colour who faced traditionalist critics, Minette enflamed the mixed-race élite of her spectators and became a symbol of the feared and coveted phenomenon of miscegenation.

Singing and acting in comedies such as *L'amant statue* by Nicolas Dalayrac or *L'amoureux de quinze ans* by Jean Martiny, and especially in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's melodrama *Pygmalion*, she voiced perhaps unwillingly an interracial dialogue that must have shocked 18th-century audiences as it does nowadays. *Pygmalion*, let us remember, thematises the autonomy of art-works from their creators, as well as the animation of the statue Galathée, which in Minette's case must have been likened to her own status of a ('non-animated') freed slave. In Dalayrac's *L'amant statue*, finally, the dialogue about the animation of a fake musical automaton must have alluded to the enslaved flutist who actually accompanied the scene from the orchestra.

Summarizing: a key player of the first blind casting of history, Minette must have symbolized the fears and ambitions of a society, which used theatre to explore the threatening liminal space between freedom and slavery.

Scholarships

Scholarships are available for young solo singers of all tessituras especially but not only haut-contres and coloratura sopranos who are familiar with the French language and with French theatrical and operatic repertoires of the mid-late 18th century. Moreover, scholarships are available for young baroque and/or classical traverso players.

Scholarships include enrolment fees, board (breakfast and lunch) and lodging (at the Vittore Branca Center Residence), and travel (in economy class, up to 700 EUR for intercontinental flights, always to be agreed with the secretariat of the Seminar).

To apply, candidates must send to the secretariat (musica.antica@cini.it) the following material before November 15, 2018:

- detailed CV;
- Copy of an ID document;
- Link to a video recording of two solo pieces belonging to Baroque or Galant repertoires, one of which in French language (possibly uploaded on an easily accessible platform).

The Seminar is also open to suitably qualified auditors, who must apply to the secretariat.

Contacts:

Seminari di Musica antica Egida Sartori e Laura Alvini | Fondazione Giorgio Cini
Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore - 30124 Venezia – Italia | Tel. 39 041 2710258 - Fax +39 0412710221
musica.antica@cini.it – www.cini.it

More information on the International Vittore Branca Center:

<http://www.cini.it/en/vittore-branca-center>