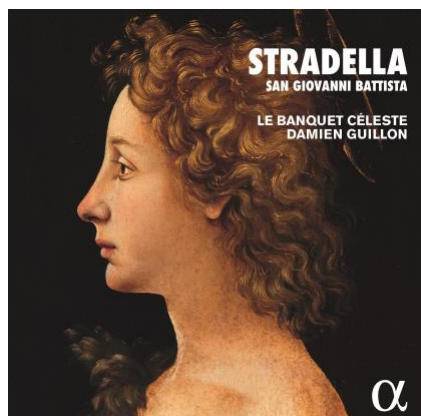




Counter-tenor Damien Guillon releases new Stradella recording with his ensemble Le Banquet Céleste before their UK debut



Friday 27 March
CD release (Alpha)



Friday 22 May
St John's Smith Square

Stradella *San Giovanni Battista*

London Festival of Baroque Music

Friday 6 March – Saturday 11 April

Damien Guillon tours with Masaaki Suzuki & Philippe Herreweghe

Brussels, Budapest, Dublin, Düsseldorf, Essen, Gent, Hamburg
Katowice, Köln, London, Lucerne, Lyon, Madrid, Milan, Paris

Counter-tenor Damien Guillon and his French early music ensemble Le Banquet Céleste make their UK debut at St John's Smith Square as part of the London Festival of Baroque Music on **22 May**. Conducted by Damien Guillon, the group's latest recording – **Stradella's San Giovanni Battista** – is released on Alpha on **27 March**. As counter-tenor, Guillon tours in the *St. John Passion* with Masaaki Suzuki and Bach Collegium Japan across Europe from 6 – 25 March, and the *St. Matthew Passion* with Philippe Herreweghe and Collegium Vocale Gent from 4 – 11 April.

Le Banquet Céleste, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2019, has been in residence at the Opéra de Rennes since 2016, and regularly appears at major early music festivals across France and Europe. With in-demand counter-tenor and founder **Damien Guillon** at its centre, the ensemble focusses particularly on Baroque music for the counter-tenor voice, with works by Dowland, Bach, Frescobaldi, Pergolesi and Caldara forming part of its growing discography of repertoire released on Alpha and Glossa.



The group appear at **St John's Smith Square** as part of **London Festival of Baroque Music** on **22 May** with a programme of some of Bach's profoundest *Cantatas*, including the famous *Ich habe genug*, BWV 82 performed in its counter-tenor version by Damien Guillon. Both *Ich habe genug* and *Vergnügte ruh, beliebte seelenlust*, BWV 170 have been recorded by Le Banquet Céleste in two Bach discs released in 2019 and 2013. Their London programme is completed with Bach's *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor*, BWV 542 and his *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* chorales, BWV 662, BWV 663, BWV 664, with organist **Maude Gratton**.



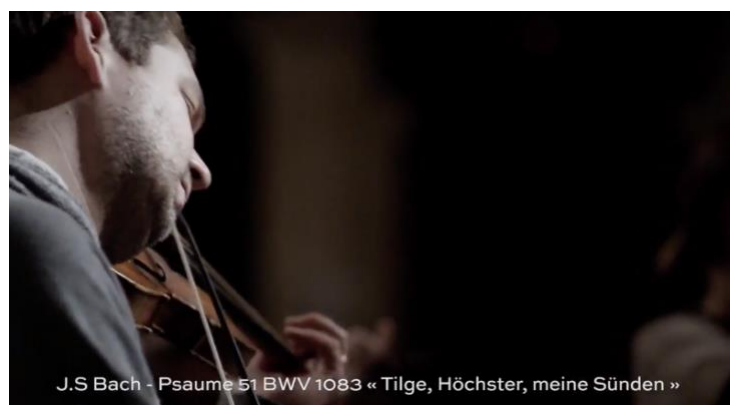
[Watch Guillon perform Bach's *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte seelenlust, BWV 170*](#)

A new disc of Stradella's vivid ***San Giovanni Battista***, the dramatic biblical tale of the beheading of John the Baptist, is released by Le Banquet Céleste on **27 March on Alpha**. Starring **Alicia Amo** as Salomé, **Olivier Déjean** as Herod, and **Paul-Antoine Bénos-Dijan** as John the Baptist, the recording follows staged performances at the Opéra de Rennes and across the region in 2019. The group tours the work to Noirlac (11 July), Saintes (18 July) and Périgueux (28 August) this summer.

Stradella sets the story in a dramatic oratorio that preceded Strauss' treatment by over 200 years, though the original work was only rediscovered in 1949. Written for performance on Palm Sunday in 1675 in the Roman church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, Stradella's oratorio was soon performed in Modena and Florence, with indications it was presented as a staged production.

Dubbed the "Caravaggio of music", **Alessandro Stradella** and his infamy as a philanderer and fraudster has overshadowed his unique contribution to Italian opera and oratorio writing. At a crossroads between styles – opera and sacred drama – and eras, his vocal style and orchestral writing made his music stand out through its liveliness, expressiveness and profound humanity.

Le Banquet Céleste perform their ***Bach and Italy*** programme in Rennes (1 April) and Bayreuth (3 April), pairing Pergolesi's Stabat Mater with Bach's parodied version: *Tilge, Höchster, meiner Sünden*, a setting of Psalm 51. Le Banquet Céleste and Damien Guillon are joined by soprano **Céline Scheen**. Bach's changes in the melody and harmony create an incredible union of two musical styles by two geniuses of the Baroque era. The works are paired with Vivaldi's *Nisi Dominus*, one of his most ambitious single-voice Motets.



[Watch Guillon and Scheen perform Bach's *Tilge, Höchster, meine Sünden, BWV 1083*](#)



"The voices boasted by the countertenor Damien Guillon (also the conductor) and the soprano Céline Scheen are lithe, celestial and sensual, embracing the strings' tones rather than leaning against them."

- Télérrama

Damien Guillon is in high demand as a Baroque soloist beyond his work with Le Banquet Céleste, performing both of Bach's *Passions* on tour extensively this Spring. With Masaaki Suzuki and the Bach Collegium Japan, he sings the *St. John Passion* in Katowice, London, Lyon, Düsseldorf, Köln, Madrid, Brussels and Paris (6-23 March). He performs the *St. Matthew Passion* on tour with Philippe Herreweghe and the Collegium Vocale Gent in Budapest, Milan, Hamburg, Paris, Lucerne, Essen and Gent (4-11 April).

Featured Listings

Friday 27 March

CD release on Alpha

Stradella *San Giovanni Battista*

With:

Alicia Amo Salomé

Gaia Petrone Herodias

Paul-Antoine Bénos-Djian John the Baptist

Olivier Déjean Herod

Artavazd Sargsyan counsellor

Wednesday 1 April, 20:00

Opéra, Rennes

Friday 3 April, 20:00

Schlosskirche, Bayreuth

Bach and Italy

Pergolesi *Salve Regina* for soprano

Vivaldi *Nisi Dominus*

Bach *Tilge, Höchster, meine Sünden, Psalm 51, BWV 1083*

Pergolesi *Stabat Mater*

With:

Céline Scheen soprano

Friday 22 May, 19:15

London Festival of Baroque Music

St John's Smith Square

Bach *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, BWV 542*

Bach *Ich habe genug, BWV 82*

Bach *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*

Chorales BWV 662, BWV 663, BWV 664

Bach *Vergnügte ruh, beliebte seelenlust, BWV 170*

With:

Maude Gratton organ

Featured Listings: Damien Guillon

Friday 6 March, 19:30

NOSPR Concert Hall, Katowice

Tuesday 10 March, 19:30

Barbican Centre, London

Thursday 12 March, 20:00

Auditorium, Lyon

Saturday 14 March, 20:00

Tonhalle, Düsseldorf

Sunday 15 March, 18:00

Philharmonie, Köln

Tuesday 17 March, 19:30

Auditorio Nacional de Música, Madrid

Saturday 21 March, 20:00

Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels

Monday 23 March, 20:00

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris

Bach *St. John Passion*

Bach Collegium Japan

Masaaki Suzuki director

James Gilchrist Evangelist

Hana Blažiková soprano

Damien Guillon counter-tenor

Zachary Wilder tenor

Christian Immler bass

Monday 9 March, 20:00

National Concert Hall, Dublin

Thursday 19 March, 20:00

Chapelle de la Trinité, Lyon

Wednesday 25 March, 20:00

Laeiszhalle, Hamburg



Bach *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern, BWV 1*
Bach *Jesu, der du meine Seele, BWV 78*
Bach *Ich armer Mensch, ich Sündenknecht, BWV 55*
Bach *Mass in F major, BWV 233*

Bach Collegium Japan
Masaaki Suzuki director

Hana Blažiková soprano
Damien Guillon counter-tenor
Zachary Wilder tenor
Christian Immler bass

Saturday 4 April, 19:30
 Liszt Academy, Budapest

Le Banquet Céleste



de Fontevraud, as well as several major Festivals: Ambronay, Sablé, Saintes, the International Baroque Music Festival of Beaune, the Abbaye de Noirlac, Sinfonia in the Périgord region, Les Arts Renaissants (Toulouse), the Festival de Froville, the Festival de Lanvellec, Saint-Michel-en-Thiérache, etc.

Le Banquet Céleste also enjoys a remarkable international presence, performing in many festivals such as the Oudemusiek Festival in Utrecht, the Valetta International Baroque Festival, the Klangvokal Festival (Dortmund), the Pergolesi Spontini Festival in Jesi (IT), the Bach Festival in Lausanne, Wallonie Festival & Flagey Musiq'3 (Brussels), Concertgebouw (Bruges), de Singel (Antwerp), Salle Bourgie (Montreal), as well as in Korea and China.

The ensemble's programmes cover Renaissance and Baroque pieces from all over Europe - ranging from the most renowned composers including J. Dowland, H. Purcell, G.F Handel, A.Vivaldi, G.B Pergolesi or J.S Bach to less known figures such as G. Frescobaldi, A. Caldara, A. Stradella, P.H Erlebach or G. Karpberger. Le Banquet Céleste also took a step into the world of opera, with its stage performance of G.F Handel's *Acis and Galatea* (staged by Anne-Laure Liégeois) and of the C. Monteverdi's *Incoronazione di Poppea* in 2021.

Following a recording in 2012 dedicated to Bach's cantatas BWV 35 and 170 for alto, and with the record having received stellar reviews, Damien Guillon pursued his research and interpretative work by devoting a second album to these Cantatas for alto solo: the Cantatas BWV 169 and BWV 82, combined on the same record scheduled for release in March 2019 (Alpha Classics). In 2018, the oratorio *Maddalena ai piedi di Cristo* by A.

Monday 6 April, 20:00

Teatro alla Scala, Milan

Tuesday 7 April, 20:00

Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg

Wednesday 8 April, 19:30

Théâtre des Champs Elysées, Paris

Thursday 9 April, 18:30

Concert Hall, Lucerne

Friday 10 April, 17:00

Philharmonie, Essen

Saturday 11 April, 17:00

Sint-Pieterskerk, Gent

Bach *St. Matthew Passion*

Collegium Vocale Gent

Philippe Herreweghe conductor



Caldara (Alpha Classics) was released and awarded a CHOC award by Classica. Two other records dedicated to Italian Baroque music were released in collaboration with Glossa. The first included Nisi Dominus by Vivaldi and Psalm 51 Tilge, Höchster meine Sünden by JS Bach with the Soprano Céline Scheen, and the other was Affetti Amorosi focusing on Arie Musicali by G. Frescobaldi.

In 2019, the ensemble celebrated its 10th anniversary. This was an excellent opportunity to list some of its most exceptional work: St John Passion by JS Bach (Rennes Opera, Angers-Nantes Opera, Festival de Sablé, Chaise Dieu Festival; Maddalena ai Piedi di Cristo by A. Caldara, and San Giovanni Battista Oratorio by A. Stradella (staged by Vincent Tavernier) to be released in March 2020.

Le Banquet Céleste has been in residence at the Rennes Opera house since 2016, supported by the Ministry of Culture (DRAC Bretagne organisation), Brittany's Regional Council and the City of Rennes.

Le Banquet Céleste is also subsidised by the Fondation Orange, counts the Mécénat Musical Société Générale as its primary sponsor and the Caisse des Dépôts (Deposits and Consignments Fund) as its major patron.

banquet-celeste.fr/en/

Damien Guillon Music Director



Damien Guillon began his musical life at the Maîtrise de Bretagne before pursuing his vocal training at the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles. Whilst there he also studied the harpsichord and organ, and deepened his research on early music interpretations with renowned teachers such as Howard Crook, Jérôme Corréas, Alain Buet and Noëlle Barker. He completed his studies at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis Scholl under the tutelage of Andreas Scholl.

His vocal and musical qualities have earned him regular invitations to perform with renowned conductors including William Christie, Vincent Dumestre, Emmanuelle Haïm, Bernard Labadie, Jean-Claude Malgoire, Paul McCreech, Hervé Niquet, François-Xavier Roth, Christophe Rousset, Jordi Savall, Masaaki Suzuki and Philippe Herreweghe.

His wide ranging repertoire spans from Songs and Odes of the English Renaissance to major Italian Baroque oratorios and operas, as well as sacred German works, to which he is particularly sensitive.

He took part in several stage productions, including Athalia (Joad) by G.F Handel with the Académie Baroque Européenne of Ambronay, Teseo (Arcane) by G.F Handel at the Opera in Nice and at the Festival de Beaune, Giulio Cesare (Tolomeo) at the theatre in Caen, Il Ritorno d'Ulisse (Anfinomo) by C. Monteverdi at the Théâtre de La Monnaie in Brussels and Il Sant'Alessio by Landi on a European and America-wide tour with Les Arts Florissants.

Damien Guillon performed at the Carnegie Hall in New York with Les Violons du Roy and Bernard Labadie, under whom he also appeared with the New World Symphony in Miami and at Tokyo City Opera Hall, as well as in Kobe and Sapporo with the Bach Collegium Japan and Masaaki Suzuki; in France and China (Beijing and Wuhan) as part of the Banquet Céleste, and in Europe both in Barcelona and at the Château de Versailles



conducted by Jordi Savall, and lastly at the Festival de Herne with Accademia Bizantina conducted by Ottavio Dantone. He was particularly sought after in Germany: in Frankfurt with the Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester conducted by Emmanuelle Haïm; in Leipzig together with the Gewandhaus Orchestra, in Dresden with the Staatskapelle Orchestra and in Amsterdam with the prestigious Concertgebouw orchestra conducted by Philippe Herreweghe.

In 2009, Damien Guillon founded Le Banquet Céleste with which he has conducted extensive work in the baroque repertoire, supported by a regular group of talented solo singers and instrumentalists.

His large discography includes – among other projects – a recording of JS Bach's B Minor Mass with the Collegium Vocale Gand (Phi-Outhere label), conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, as well as Cantatas and Motets by JS Bach and a record of Cantatas by JS Bach with Pygmalion: "Köthener Trauermusik 244^o" (Harmonia Mundi). Damien Guillon took part in the entire recording of the Cantatas by JS Bach conducted by M. Suzuki (Bis Record, vol 54) and with Le Banquet Céleste, he recorded two Solo Cantatas for Alto for Outhere; "Affetti Amorosi" devoted to the Arie Musicali by G. Frescobaldi as well as Nisi Dominus by Vivaldi and Psalm 51 by JS Bach combined in a collaboration with the Glossa label. Maddalena ai piedi di Cristo was produced in September 2018. This oratorio by A. Caldara (Alpha Classics label), was granted a CHOC award by Classica.

In addition to his singing, Damien Guillon is also a renowned conductor and was invited to direct La Maddalena ai piedi di Cristo by A.Caldara with Les Musiciens du Paradis, the Magnificat by J.S Bach with Café Zimmermann, a programme of cantatas by J.S Bach at the Festival de Saintes with the Collegium Vocale Gent upon an invitation from Philippe Herreweghe, the Requiem de Bouteiller with Hervé Niquet's Spiritual Concert, a staged production of Acis and Galatea by Handel with Le Banquet Céleste at the Centre Lyrique d'Auvergne, at the Opera in Avignon, at the Chaise Dieu Festival, as well as concerts at the Opera in Rennes and at the Beaune Festival. In 2019, he conducted San Giovanni Battista by A. Stradella on tour with the Angers-Nantes-Opera (staged by Vincent Tavernier), in addition to a series of concerts of the St John Passion.

For more information on any of the above, please contact:

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