

**NICHOLAS MCGEGAN RETURNS TO LEAD  
“BAROQUE GARLANDS” FOR  
PHILHARMONIA BAROQUE ORCHESTRA & CHORALE  
February 6 – 8, 2026  
San Francisco, Berkeley, Stanford  
Also conducts special “Jewish Nightlife” concerts  
January 29 & 31 in Palo Alto, San Francisco**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (XX December 2025) — **Nicholas McGegan**, one of the world’s foremost interpreters of 18th-century repertoire, reunites with **Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale** to conduct an exhilarating series of concerts. Called “one of the finest Baroque conductors of his generation” by *The Independent* and “an expert in 18th-century style” by *The New Yorker*, McGegan returns to conduct Philharmonia Baroque’s **Baroque Garlands**, including the world premiere of a new edition of the 1763 version of Rameau’s *La Guirlande*. **Baroque Garlands** will be presented in early February at venues around the Bay. In late January, McGegan will also lead two special concerts for Philharmonia’s popular **Jews & Music** series that will highlight evocative Baroque works by Rossi and Boccherini, as well as Syrian and Moroccan songs, and more. Credited by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as developing Philharmonia Baroque into “the nation’s leading early-music orchestra” over the course of his 35-year tenure, McGegan will bring his infectious energy back to the podium to conduct the Philharmonia Baroque musicians, who perform on period instruments and with historically informed style, recreating the vibrant sound world of the 18th century. **Baroque Garlands** will be presented **February 6-8, 2026**, in San Francisco, Berkeley, and Stanford (*see schedule below*). Tickets (\$40-\$135, \$20 for people under 30 years old) are available at [Philharmonia.org](http://Philharmonia.org).

**Baroque Garlands** offers audiences the seismic choral virtuosity of George Frideric Handel’s *Dixit Dominus*, paired with the spritely storytelling and sumptuous orchestration of Jean-Philippe Rameau’s *La Guirlande*, in a thrilling tour de force performance of orchestra and voice. The concerts will feature soprano **Nola Richardson** and tenor **Aaron Sheehan**, with the Philharmonia Chorale directed by **Valérie Sainte-Agathe**.

Handel’s *Dixit Dominus* leads the program with breathtaking choral power. Created by Handel during his four-year sojourn in Italy—which coincided with the Vatican’s short-lived prohibition of opera in Rome. “This theatrical liturgical work will rouse audiences with its virtuosic and challenging layered vocal parts and soaring solos,” remarks McGegan, one of the world’s foremost interpreters of Handel and winner of the Handel prize in Halle, Germany, “Of Handel’s spectacular repertoire, *Dixit Dominus* is a vibrant, challenging, and highly rewarding early masterpiece.”

In the evening's second work, two enchanted garlands test the faithfulness of young lovers in Rameau's *La Guirlande*, a work of lyrical beauty that dates from Rameau's later career. Featuring lavish ornamental instrumentation and playful charm, it tells the story of a shepherd and his lady who exchange magic flowers that tellingly fade if one is unfaithful to the other. The score performed by Philharmonia Baroque will mark the premiere of a new edition of the 1763 version of the work, by Opera omnia Jean-Philippe Rameau (OOR), a major scholarly project and publication series by Bärenreiter-Verlag and Société Jean-Philippe Rameau to create critical, complete editions of all works by Jean-Philippe Rameau, providing historically accurate scores. McGegan calls the piece "a charmer about nymphs and shepherds falling in and out of love in Arcadia, comparable to the great works of Boucher and Fragonard. Baroque opulence and splendor; absolutely gorgeous and very French." A free salon event to discuss the program with Nicholas McGegan and former Philharmonia Baroque vocal soloist Céline Ricci for ticket holders and donors will be held 2:30pm Sunday, February 1, 2026. The public may RSVP at [philharmonia.org](http://philharmonia.org).

Featured in *Baroque Garlands* is soprano **Nola Richardson**, an Australian American singer praised as "especially impressive" by *The New York Times*. She has performed with Baroque ensembles around the world in a repertoire spanning medieval to contemporary works and made her debut with Los Angeles Opera in 2025. Richardson appeared with Philharmonia Baroque in 2020 in Bach's *Coffee Cantata*, in which the *San Francisco Chronicle* praised her performance, noting her "graceful ebullience." She will be joined by tenor **Aaron Sheehan**, a Grammy award winning Baroque singer featured as Apollo and Trajan in Philharmonia Baroque's acclaimed 2017 production of Rameau's *Le Temple de la Gloire* and Jonathan in the company's lauded 2019 concert of Handel's *Saul*. Praised as an "attractive, strong tenor," (*The New York Times*) and as "lyrical and nimble" (*The Seattle Times*), his performance as Orphée in Boston Early Music Festival's recording of Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* won Best Opera Recording at the 2015 Grammy awards. Soloists from the Philharmonia Chorale to be featured will include soprano **Tonia D'Amelio**, soprano **Victoria Fraser**, countertenor **Kyle Sanchez Tingzon**, and bass-baritone **Chung-Wai Soong**.

Prior to these concerts, McGegan will lead musicians from the harpsichord in Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale's *Jews & Music* program, *Jewish Nightlife: Hebrew Poetry, Kabbalah, and Coffee, January 29–31, 2026*. Spanning centuries and continents, the program traces Jewish nocturnal traditions from candlelit Kabbalistic gatherings in 16th-century Italy to vibrant Hebrew poetic performance practices in North Africa and the Middle East, and the modern revival of *piyyut* (Jewish liturgical poetry) in Israel. Featuring traditional Syrian and Moroccan songs alongside evocative Baroque works by Rossi and Boccherini, the program includes commentary from *Jews & Music* Scholar-in-Residence **Francesco Spagnolo**, with vocalist and percussionist **Yair Harel**, the Philharmonia Baroque Chamber Players, and a Chorale Quintet. Audiences are invited to enjoy coffee and conversation at this event. Tickets (\$40) are also available at [Philharmonia.org/nightlife](http://Philharmonia.org/nightlife).

**Yair Harel** is a world-renowned performer from Jerusalem brought to Philharmonia for this program from Israel. An artistic director and community organizer, he is active in the revival and contemporary interpretation of the ancient art of *piyyut* (Jewish liturgical poetry) internationally

and has revolutionized the face of Israeli culture in the last decade. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of the Invitation to Piyut website and the artistic director of The Jerusalem Piyut Festival, the New Jerusalem Orchestra, and the Ben Zvi Piyut Vocal Ensemble.

### **ABOUT NICHOLAS MCGEGAN**

**Nicholas McGegan, OBE** (*Music Director Emeritus/Conductor*) led Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale from 1985 to 2020, shaping its international profile and guiding the ensemble's rise as a leading voice in historically informed performance. Now Music Director Emeritus, he appears with major orchestras around the world drawing on decades of operatic experience, from Germany's International Handel Festival Göttingen to Scottish Opera. Renowned for bringing historically informed practice into the mainstream, McGegan has built a prolific discography of more than 100 releases, including two Grammy-nominated recordings with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale. His many honors include the United Kingdom's Gramophone Award, OBE (Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire), the Halle Handel Prize, the Order of Merit of Lower Saxony, and a declaration of Nicholas McGegan Day in San Francisco, recognizing his lasting impact on Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale and the global early-music landscape. He will be honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his 45 years of service to Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale at the company's upcoming gala in April. Info at [Philharmonia.org](http://Philharmonia.org).

### **ABOUT PHILHARMONIA BAROQUE ORCHESTRA & CHORALE**

**Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale** is based in the San Francisco Bay Area and is one of America's premier ensembles dedicated to historically rooted performance of Baroque, Classical, and early Romantic music. Founded in 1981 by harpsichordist and educator Laurette Goldberg, Philharmonia has earned widespread acclaim for its vibrant, period-authentic interpretations using historical instruments and techniques. It was led by Nicholas McGegan for 35 years, followed by Richard Egarr in 2020. In 2026, Peter Whelan will become the fourth music director in the company's 45-year history. Among the most recorded orchestras in the world, Philharmonia boasts a discography of nearly 50 recordings, including a coveted archival performance of mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson in Berlioz's *Les Nuits D'été*, and a Grammy-nominated recording of Haydn symphonies. In 2020, Philharmonia released three groundbreaking recordings: a full collection of commissioned works by Pulitzer Prize winner Caroline Shaw, a selection of arias sung by rising star contralto Avery Amereau, and Handel's *Saul* with countertenor Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen. The ensemble's reach extends across the globe through acclaimed tours, and collaborations with some of the world's leading artists. Philharmonia is committed to bringing the music of the past to life with energy and relevance for today's audiences. Through its Bay Area subscription series, groundbreaking programs such as *SESSIONS* and *Jews & Music*, and robust education and community engagement efforts, Philharmonia offers both depth and innovation. Anchored by a world-class chorale and a roster of musicians who teach and perform internationally, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale continues to set the standard for historically informed performance in the 21st century.

### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS**

**WHAT:**

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**DATES & LOCATIONS:**

<i>Jewish Nightlife</i>	<i>Baroque Garlands</i>
<b>7:30pm Thursday, January 29, 2026</b> Oshman Family Jewish Community Center 3921 Fabian Way Palo Alto, CA 94303	<b>7:30pm Friday, February 6, 2026</b> Herbst Theatre 401 Van Ness Ave. San Francisco, CA 94102
<b>7:30pm Saturday, January 31, 2026</b> Congregation Emanu-El 2 Lake St. San Francisco, CA 94118	<b>2:30pm Saturday, February 7, 2026</b> First Congregational Church 2345 Channing Way Berkeley, CA 94704
	<b>1:00pm Sunday, February 8, 2026</b> Bing Concert Hall 327 Lasuen St. Stanford, CA 94305

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Baroque Garlands* (\$40-\$135, \$20 for people under 30 years old) and *Jewish Nightlife* (\$40) are available at [Philharmonia.org](http://Philharmonia.org)

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**PHOTOS:** Downloadable high-res photos are available here:  
<https://cbpr.co/press/baroquegarlands/>