

# clevelandclassical.com

WEEK OF OCTOBER 26, 2010

PROMOTING CLASSICAL MUSIC IN NORTHEAST OHIO

Published every Tuesday • Visit our [blog](#)

The Cleveland International Piano Competition presents

**Piano Portraits**

An evening of exceptional artistry!



**EVGENY BRAKHMAN**  
Fourth Prize, 2009



**SERGEI BABAYAN**  
First Prize, 1989  
Conducting The Cleveland Competition Orchestra

Saturday, November 6 • 8:00 pm  
Gartner Auditorium  
Cleveland Museum of Art

Works by Scriabin  
Schnittke  
Shostakovich

Call the Competition Box Office at  
216-707-5397 for tickets  
Details at [clevelandpiano.org](http://clevelandpiano.org)

Site Sponsor. Click on image for more information.

- [Front Page](#)
- [Concert Listings](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Support](#)
- [Links](#)
- [About Us](#)

## 102610LesDelPrev

### Preview

### Les Délices season preview: a conversation with Debra Nagy

by Mike Telin



For its 2010-2011 season, Les Délices' founder and artistic director Debra Nagy has once again dug deep into her imagination and created three unique programs that are a sure bet to enthrall Northeast Ohio lovers of early music. Since the group's founding in 2006, Les Délices has quickly established a reputation for polished, expressive, and dynamic performances of masterpieces and little-known works from the French Baroque. And each season the ensemble brings together artists who share a



passion for this beguiling yet seldom heard repertoire. Their performances on period instruments allow them to explore a rich tapestry of tone colors, and the group's name conveys their approach to the music of this era: a delight, a fine delicacy, sumptuous, and exciting.

The planning of Les Délices' programs is an ongoing process that can take months, if not years to bring to the stage. "I have a file on my computer called "Les Délices Brainstorming", so I am always thinking and developing ideas for new programs," says Debra Nagy.

I asked Debra if she could talk me through the three concerts.

*Mike Telin: "Mirages & Monstrosities": On your website you say that "Chromatic meanderings will guide us through the maze of Marin Marais' La Labyrinthe and a rarely-heard Quartet from L'Art de la Modulation by the world's first chess-master François-André Philidor." Could you tell me more about how we can expect to meander chromatically?*

Debra Nagy: I like to think of this idea of chromatic meanderings on a couple of different levels. First, the literal meaning, although not chromaticism as in chromatic scales, but in terms of very quick and unexpected harmonic shifts and modulations. That's one kind of meandering. Also *La Labyrinth*, by Marais, is both a virtuosic and compositional *tour de force*, in terms of where it goes harmonically. And the Labyrinth is a journey one takes where you are meant to perceive and understand the place where you are, although you are not entirely sure where you are in the maze at any given time, unless you are either at the beginning or at the end of it. So there is a little bit of that experience as a listener. There's another image that only occurred to me recently when I was talking to friends who play viols. The instrument has six or seven strings and a very wide fingerboard, and the hand is sort of like a crab crawling along the fingerboard. And thinking about Josh Lee performing the Labyrinth, since it's so chromatic and a real knuckle buster, there's this idea that you are also meandering physically by crawling around the fingerboard.

*MT: Is the world's first chess master, François-André Philidor, related to the famous wind-playing family of the same name?*

DN: Yes, and wind players know the name Philidor because they were famous musicians in the court of Louis XIV. They were essentially a family dynasty. I have played music written by family members of the previous generation, but François-André is quite late. It is *gallant* music, and the quartet that we are playing is from 1755. It is interesting because players inherited their positions at the Court, which is why it was so easy for the Philidors to stay in control. But François-André started out at the court and then left the court, and it is not entirely clear if he played an instrument or even sang. But he did become a very famous composer during his time, sort of pre-Gluck, of comic opera. There are a lot of comic operas and a little bit of chamber music. Interestingly this piece from his *Art of Modulation* is the only one of the six quartets that has been recorded but it is now out of print. So I am excited to be able to present this piece, that I have not really heard yet. But he was an amazing chess player and he kind of had a dual career in Paris and in London, because he was getting a lot more attention for his chess playing. In London he would play exhibition matches for the chess clubs. He was very famous for

being able to play three matches simultaneously while blindfolded. So he was really a master of intense concentration. This is what I am excited about, because he is someone capable of planning out very sophisticated moves, whether it is in a chess match or in a piece of music.

*MT: The second concert is "La Guitarre Royale". How did this concert develop?*

DN: I first of all wanted to work with Lucas Harris again. He played two solos on our CD by two of the guitar masters of the court of Louis XIV. On the second concert, Lucas will be playing music of Corbeta, who was a guitar master for Louis XIV, and his last collection of music was titled *La Guitarre Royale*, which is where the title of the program comes from. We will also be performing some trios, which will give Lucas the chance to shine not only as a soloist but also as a continuo player.

*MT: The May program, "Myths & Allegories", sounds very interesting.*

DN: I have been wanting to do a cantata program for a while. I also had in mind a particular soprano (Clara Rottslök) that I wanted to work with, and I had been thinking about focusing around a main character, like Medea. A female character. But when I started to look at the instrumentation that I would have available, I found that I could construct an interesting and beautifully conceived program around cantatas that are dedicated to the character of Ulysses and the stories from *The Odyssey*. This program developed organically, but the idea has been spinning for a while."

*Les Délices performs "Mirages and Monstrosities" at the William Busta Gallery on Saturday, October 30 at 8, and repeats the program at Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights on Sunday, October 31 at 4. Subsequent performances take place on February 12 and 13 and May 14 and 15.*

*In addition to their Cleveland performances, Les Délices will tour the east coast in the Spring of 2011, including performances at the Museum Concert Series in Providence, Rhode Island and at the prestigious Frick Collection in New York City.*

---

[close](#)

- 
- 
-