

CLASSICAL
Spectres



Sunday, April 2 at 6pm

Zilkha Hall

Hobby Center for the Performing Arts

MATTHEW DIRST
Artistic Director

Good evening and welcome to *Classical Spectres*, Ars Lyrica's look at the musically uncanny, as depicted in shadowy gems by Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach, Jean-Marie Leclair, and Ludwig van Beethoven. For this program we're delighted to welcome back baritone Thomas Meglioranza, who made his Ars Lyrica debut on short notice this past New Year's Eve, and violinist Adam LaMotte, whose multiple appearances with the ensemble have never before included a solo concerto—a gap we are filling this evening!

On Sunday, May 21 we close our 2017/18 *Fables & Follies* season with *Don Quixote's Excellent Adventures*, a celebration of Miguel de Cervantes' great literary character with music by Henry Purcell, Joseph Bodin de Boismortier, and Georg Philipp Telemann—and with a special appearance by our flagship outreach ensemble, the Crumhorn Collective. We look forward to sharing part of Don Quixote's significant musical legacy with you, and we offer warm thanks for your patronage and support, which make Ars Lyrica's distinctive programming possible.



MATTHEW DIRST
Artistic Director

PROGRAM

An die ferne geliebte, Op. 98

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

“Ghost” Trio in D Major, Op. 70, no. 1

Beethoven

Allegro vivace e con brio
Largo assai
Presto

INTERMISSION

Pygmalion

Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach
(1732–1795)

Recitative: “Abgöttin meiner Seele!”
Aria: “Ihr Götter, welche Phantasein”
Recitative: “Nicht taub, nicht fühllos, nein!”
Accompagnato/Recitative: “Ach daß mein irdisch Ohr”
Aria: “Bald sollen diese Lippen”
Recitative: “Ja, diese leichte Mühe”
Aria: “Allgütige! Wofern dich hier”

Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 7, no. 1

Jean-Marie Leclair
(1697–1764)

Allegro
Aria: Gratoso
Vivace

An die ferne geliebte and *Pygmalion* will be performed in the original German, with English-language surtitles.

PROGRAM NOTES

The story of German song (Lieder) usually begins with Franz Schubert and Robert Schumann, though this humble genre had earlier proponents, including some major talents. Following in the footsteps of Johann Friedrich Reichardt, Franz Joseph Haydn, and even Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven's modest song output includes the first song cycle to have attained a place in the repertory: *An die ferne geliebte* ("To the distant beloved") from 1816. Unlike most later cycles, whose individual songs are free-standing works, the six short songs of Beethoven's cycle are connected by means of transitions that range from deft modulations to more artful pianistic "bridges." Scored in the traditional manner, for keyboard and voice, these songs take advantage of the delicate sonorities and sharply etched articulation of the Viennese fortepiano, a replica of which is heard this evening.

Beethoven's cycle sets six poems by Alois Isidor Jeitteles, a young Viennese physician whose pithy verse had attained great popularity. Beethoven's own longing for his "immortal beloved," the subject of a famous set of letters from July of 1812, finds its match in Jeitteles's similarly lovelorn protagonist. This cycle's "back story" is the most familiar of them all: unrequited (and, in this case, absent) love. The progression of the individual songs and their poetic themes is as follows. Pained to find himself in the place where he met his beloved, the poet finds comfort in song (1) while using nature itself as a balm: the peaceful valley calms his soul (2). Having found refuge, he asks the clouds, the brook, the birds, and the breeze to take up his sighs and tears (3). These things magically come to pass, and the poet falls into a beautiful arcadian fantasy (4), only to realize that, despite the allure of spring, this lovely season brings him only sadness (5). He resolves, finally, to make a gift of these songs to his beloved, as an artful witness to their love (6). Following the poet's lead, Beethoven, too, comes full circle at the very end by quoting the melody of his first song.

Beethoven composed his "Ghost" Trio in 1808, well after the onset of deafness, prompting a famous complaint from the composer Louis Spohr, who describes a tragic rehearsal of the work at Beethoven's home. The composer, it seems, failed to negotiate the piano part of his own composition successfully and was blissfully unaware that his own instrument was horribly out of tune. The work's nickname, acquired sometime during the composer's lifetime, aptly describes its central Largo, whose spooky *tremolandos* and meandering harmonies anticipate the sound world of horror flicks. Samuel Beckett was so taken with this movement that he specified excerpts from it for his eponymous television play, whose enigmatic narrative adds visual byways to Beethoven's harmonic rabbit hole. Even the otherwise boisterous opening Allegro hints at the harmonic instability that permeates the work: its opening D-major theme, after just a few measures, turns provocatively to the "wrong" note of F natural, which the cellist resolves only after a long wait.

As chamber musician to Count Wilhelm von Schaumburg-Lippe in Bückeberg, Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach put his own particular spin on the solo cantata, by intensifying this Italian genre with the quicksilver musical language of his day and the sentimental verse of local German poets. A son of the great Sebastian Bach, the "Bückeberg" Bach (as he is often called in the literature) produced several such "monodramas," including *Die Amerikanerin* (heard on a November 2015 Ars Lyrica program) and the present work on the myth of Pygmalion, whose ardent love for his own sculpture turned marble into human flesh. Librettist Carl Wilhelm Ramler was a close friend of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, who may have provided the necessary introduction for his younger brother.

This timeless tale—as related originally in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and adapted by, among others, Lerner and Loewe (in *My Fair Lady*)—is the ultimate power trip: an artist imbues his own inanimate creation with life. Ramler and Bach have great fun with this idea, especially in the central accompanied recitative, which features paens to various gods, including Venus (Aphrodite), earthquakes and thunderbolts, and the slow emergence of a touchingly modest though well-sculpted beauty.

Leclair’s D-minor violin concerto, finally, provides a sonic antidote to the intense introspection and private shudders of the three German works on our *Classical Spectres* program. Refuge, in this case, is found in the self-confident and singing gestures of the Italian Baroque concerto, as perfected by Corelli and Vivaldi and as practiced by most of the leading “international” composers of the early eighteenth century. The great French violinist Jean-Marie Leclair is a case in point: raised in Lyon, he perfected his art in Turin with one of Corelli’s most successful students before settling in both Paris and the Netherlands to pursue various musical opportunities. His prowess and renown as a violinist determined, to a large extent, his compositional output, which consists of mostly sonatas and concertos. This particular concerto, from his Opus 7 (1737), is cast in the conventional scheme of three movements, with lively bookends and an interior minuet.

© MATTHEW DIRST *Artistic Director*

ARTISTIC PERSONNEL

ARS LYRICA HOUSTON

Matthew Dirst, *Artistic Director*

CLASSICAL SPECTRES ARTISTS

Thomas Meglioranza	<i>baritone</i>	Hae-a Lee	<i>violin 2</i>
Adam LaMotte	<i>violin soloist and concertmaster</i>	Nadia Lesinska	<i>violin 2</i>
Kurt Johnson	<i>violin 1</i>	Erika Lawson	<i>viola</i>
Maria Lin	<i>violin 1</i>	Barrett Sills	<i>cello soloist</i>
Oleg Sulyga	<i>violin 1</i>	Deborah Dunham	<i>violone</i>
Alan Austin	<i>violin 2</i>	Matthew Dirst	<i>fortepiano & organ</i>

Special thanks to the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, for use of its Chris Maene fortepiano (after Walther, 1790) and its John Phillips harpsichord (after Florentine models, c1700).

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Baritone **Thomas Meglioranza**, a winner of the Naumburg and Concert Artists Guild competitions, has sung Carmina Buranas, Messiahs and Bach passions with many major orchestras, as well as *Eight Songs for a Mad King* with the LA Philharmonic, Bach cantatas with Les Violons du Roy and Orpheus, Copland's *Old American Songs* with the National Symphony. He has also sung with Philharmonia Baroque, Apollo's Fire, the American Bach Soloists and Mercury.

Operatic roles include Pierrot in *Die tote Stadt*, Chou En-Lai in *Nixon in China* and Prior Walter in Peter Eötvös' *Angels in America*. An avid recitalist, he has recorded two Schubert CDs and a French album with pianist Reiko Uchida, as well as Bach cantatas with the Taverner Consort, and songs of Virgil Thomson with BMOP. He is a graduate of Grinnell College and Eastman.



Adam LaMotte is well known to audiences throughout the country as a leader of both period and modern ensembles. He has appeared as soloist, concertmaster, and conductor of numerous orchestras throughout the country, including the Northwest Sinfonietta in Seattle, String Orchestra of the Rockies, Astoria Festival Orchestra, Portland Baroque Orchestra, the Maggini String Orchestra, Ars Lyrica, and most recently, The Orchestra, in his home town of Portland, Oregon.

As part of the baroque ensemble El Mundo Adam was nominated for a 2012 Grammy Award. Mr. LaMotte has been hailed by critics as an “especially compelling” musician with “exceptional talent,” whose performances are “energetic and exquisite.” As Artistic Director of the Montana Baroque Festival, he brings world-class period instrument performances to the rural Montana community. He has co-founded two critically-acclaimed ensembles, in Portland and in Houston, and continues to produce many chamber music and chamber orchestra performances.



Barrett Sills is a prizewinning cellist in international competitions in Europe and South America. A native Texan, he was a scholarship student at Yale, where he was a teaching assistant to Aldo Parisot and recipient of the prestigious Maxwell Belding Internship Award. Mr. Sills has performed with orchestras in France and Germany, and as recitalist has performed in Paris, the south of France, and throughout South America as an Artistic Ambassador for the United

States Information Agency. He is principal cellist with both the Houston Ballet Orchestra and the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra, and he is frequently featured soloist for the Houston Ballet. In addition to performing on the modern cello, he is a recognized artist on both the baroque cello and viola da gamba and is often heard in concert with Ars Lyrica Houston.



Ars Lyrica Founder & Artistic Director **Matthew Dirst** is the first American musician to win major international prizes in both organ and harpsichord, including the American Guild of Organists National Young Artist Competition (1990) and the Warsaw International Harpsichord Competition (1993). Widely admired for his stylish playing and conducting, the *Dallas Morning News* recently praised his “clear and evocative conducting” of Handel’s *Alexander’s Feast*, which

“yielded a performance as irresistibly lively as it was stylish.” Dirst’s recordings with Ars Lyrica have earned a Grammy nomination and widespread critical acclaim. His degrees include a PhD in musicology from Stanford University and the *prix de virtuosité* in both organ and harpsichord from the Conservatoire National de Reuil-Malmaison, France, where he spent two years as a Fulbright scholar. Equally active as a scholar and as an organist, Dirst is Professor of Music at the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, and Organist at St Philip Presbyterian Church in Houston. He is the author of *Engaging Bach: The Keyboard Legacy from Marpurg to Mendelssohn* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) and the editor of *Bach and the Organ* (University of Illinois Press, 2016).

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ABOUT ARS LYRICA

Founded in 1998 by harpsichordist and conductor Matthew Dirst, **Ars Lyrica Houston** presents a diverse array of music from the 17th and 18th centuries on period instruments. Its local subscription series, according to the *Houston Chronicle*, “sets the agenda” for early music in Houston and it also appears regularly at major festivals and conferences, including the 2014 Berkeley Early Music Festival & Exhibition. Ars Lyrica’s distinctive programming favors Baroque dramatic and chamber works, and its pioneering efforts have won international acclaim: the ensemble’s world première recording of Johann Adolf Hasse’s *Marc’Antonio e Cleopatra*, hailed by *Early Music America* as “a thrilling performance that glows in its quieter moments and sparkles with vitality,” was nominated for a Grammy Award® for Best Opera 2011.

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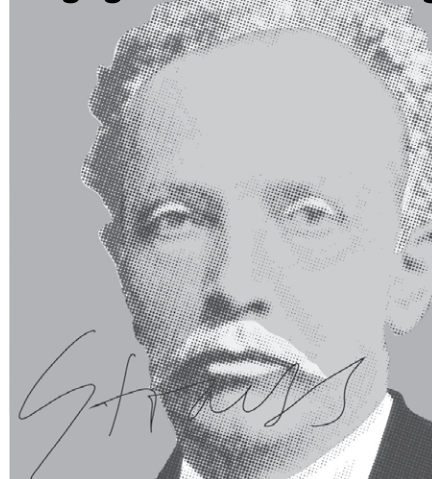
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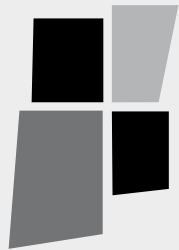
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