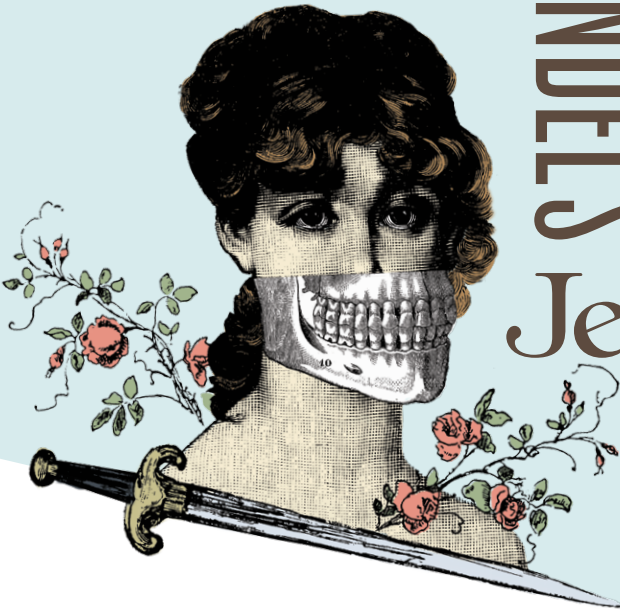




HANDEL'S  
Jephtha



**Saturday, October 15 at 7:30pm**

**Sunday, October 16 at 2:30pm**

Zilkha Hall

*Hobby Center for the Performing Arts*

MATTHEW DIRST  
*Artistic Director*

This weekend Ars Lyrica Houston is delighted to present the Houston première of Handel's *Jephtha*. We're especially happy to welcome to the Zilkha Hall stage six superb soloists, a crack period-instrument orchestra, and one of the finest collegiate chorales anywhere. All are essential to the success of a Handel oratorio: this is, after all, a genre invented precisely to take advantage of such disparate performing forces. We're also grateful to be able to present this extraordinary work twice on the same weekend at Zilkha Hall, in what we hope will become a new pattern for Ars Lyrica as it presents major works like oratorios and operas.

We look forward to seeing you next on December 31, for our next 2016/17 subscription program and our annual New Year's Eve gala. *Bachanalia* 2016 includes celebratory cantatas for this special holiday season plus a concerto by the great Leipzig master. Tickets for the pre-concert dinner at 7:30 pm, the program itself at 9 pm, and the post-concert gala are now on sale, so reserve your seats soon for Houston's most elegant New Year's Eve celebration and ring in 2017 in style with us!

2016/17 *Fables & Follies* brochures are also available this evening in the Zilkha Hall Lobby. As always, additional information on all Ars Lyrica activities can be found on our website: [www.arslyricahouston.org](http://www.arslyricahouston.org).

With many thanks for your support and patronage. We hope you enjoy the performance.



MATTHEW DIRST  
Artistic Director

DESIGN: SPINDLETOP DESIGN

## PROGRAM NOTES

Handel began work on *Jephtha*, his final oratorio, on January 21, 1751. Unlike his schedule for most such works, which typically required four to six weeks to compose, this project took seven months to finish. The unexpected death, on March 20, of the Prince of Wales shuttered the doors of London's theaters for an obligatory period of public mourning, effectively cancelling the spring oratorio season. Handel's increasingly frail physical condition further delayed the première of *Jephtha*. By the early 1750s his eyesight was failing: on the last manuscript page of the chorus "How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees" (at the end of Act 2), Handel noted that his deteriorating left eye made further progress on the work impossible.

Recuperation in the countryside eventually enabled completion of the oratorio on August 30 of the same year, and *Jephtha* was heard for the first time on February 26, 1752, as part of a Lent season of twelve programs. Revivals of the work in 1753, 1756, and 1758 ensured this oratorio a prominent place in Handel's legacy, alongside other Old Testament works like *Samson* and *Solomon*. More than a few of its arias and choruses are frequently excerpted, and the dramatic trajectory of the whole is particularly well calibrated across three acts, each with memorable highlights.

Its story is taken from the Book of Judges, Chapter 11, as filtered through various retellings, including an influential 16th-century Scottish play, George Buchanan's *Jephtes sive Votum*. The son of a harlot, Jephtha is an outcast within the patriarchal society of ancient Israel until he proves himself as a guerilla fighter. Seeking a strong man to deliver the tribe from an existential threat, the Israelites choose Jephtha to lead them in battle against the Ammonites. Accepting his command on bended knee, Jephtha promises God that if he is victorious, he will offer in sacrifice whatever comes out of his house first to greet him upon his return. Fatefully, his over-eager daughter leads the way, thus turning a scene of great rejoicing into the darkest of tragedies.

Like many an operatic hero from this era, Jephtha faces the ultimate dilemma: the choice between duty (or this case, faith) and love. In adapting this story for the stage, Handel's librettist Thomas Morell provides an eminently palatable alternative to infanticide; Jephtha's daughter Iphis agrees instead to dedicate her life to the Lord. Though this is hardly good news for her fiancé Hamor (one of Jephtha's soldiers), he graciously assents to her celibacy as the price of her survival. Rounding out this oratorio's cast are Jephtha's wife Storgè and his faithful lieutenant Zebul, both of whom likewise offer support and counsel to the troubled title character.

Interestingly, none of these other characters are part of the Biblical story, which mentions only Jephtha himself; even his unfortunate daughter remains unnamed. Nor does the author of the Book of Judges dwell on the morality of Jephtha's bargain with God. Whether or not such a vow ought to be fulfilled was, however, of great concern to Handel's librettist. Taking his cue from Buchanan's moralistic tragedy, Morell divests Jephtha's God of any trace of vengefulness. Refusing to countenance a human sacrifice, this merciful God sends instead a last minute reprieve: an angel, who alleviates Jephtha's agony and proposes a humane (if soberly religious) solution. Immortality becomes the endpoint and the ultimate ideal of this story, whose Old Testament roots blossom in the fertile ground of Morell's orthodox Christianity.

© MATTHEW DIRST *Artistic Director*

# *Jephtha*, HWV 70

Libretto by Thomas Morell (1703–1784)  
Music by George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

Zebul	Timothy Jones
Jephtha	Derek Chester
Storgè	Sofia Selowsky
Hamor	Jay Carter
Iphis	Dominique McCormick
An Angel	Cecilia Duarte
Chorus	The Moores School Concert Chorale
Choral preparation	Betsy Weber
Conductor	Matthew Dirst

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## ACT ONE

Overture—Largo/Allegro/Largo, Menuet

### SCENE ONE

*Zebul, with his brethren and Chorus.*

#### Accompagnato

*Zebul*

It must be so, or these vile Ammonites,  
Our lordly tyrants now these eighteen years,  
Will crush the race of Israel.  
Since Heav'n vouchsafes not, with immediate choice,  
To point us out a leader, as before,  
Ourselves must choose. And who so fit a man  
As Gilead's son, our brother, valiant Jephtha?  
True, we have slighted, scorn'd, expell'd him hence

As of a stranger born, but well I know him:  
His gen'rous soul disdains a mean revenge  
When his distressful country calls his aid.  
And perhaps Heav'n may favour our request  
If with repentant hearts we sue for mercy.

**Air**

*Zebul*

Pour forth no more unheeded pray'rs  
To idols deaf and vain.  
No more with vile unhallow'd airs  
The sacred rites profane.

**Chorus of Israelites**

No more to Ammon's god and king,  
Fierce Moloch, shall our cymbals ring,  
In dismal dance around the furnace blue.  
Chemosh no more will we adore  
With timbrell'd anthems to Jehovah due.

**SCENE 2**

*Enter Jephtha and Storgè .*

**Recitative**

*Zebul*

But Jephtha comes. Kind Heav'n, assist our plea.  
O Jephtha, with an eye of pity look  
On thy repentant brethren in distress.  
Forgetful of thy wrongs, redress thy sire  
Thy friends, thy country in extreme despair.

*Jephtha*

I will, so please it Heav'n, and these the terms:  
If I command in war, the like command,  
Should Heav'en vouchsafe us a victorious peace,  
Shall still be mine.

*Zebul*

Agreed. Be witness, Heaven.

**Air**

*Jephtha*

Virtue my soul shall still embrace,  
Goodness shall make me great.  
Who builds upon this steady base  
Dreads no event of fate.  
Virtue my soul...*da capo*

**Recitative**

*Storgè*

'Twill be a painful separation, Jephtha,  
To see thee harness'd for the bloody field.  
But ah, how trivial are a wife's concerns  
When a whole nation bleeds, and grov'ling lies,  
Panting for liberty and life.

**Air**

*Storgè*

In gentle murmurs will I mourn,  
As mourns the mate-forsaken dove,  
And sighing wish thy dear return  
To liberty and lasting love.

*Exeunt.*

**SCENE 3**

*Enter Hamor and Iphis.*

**Recitative**

*Hamor*

Happy this embassy, my charming Iphis,  
Which once more gives thee to my longing eyes,  
As Cynthia, breaking from th'involving clouds  
On the benighted traveller. The sight  
Of thee, my love, drives darkness and despair.  
Again I live, in thy sweet smiles I live,  
As in thy father's ever-watchful care  
Our wretched nation feels new life, new joy.  
Oh haste, and make my happiness complete!

**Air***Hamor*

Dull delay, in piercing anguish,  
 Bids the faithful lover languish,  
 While he pants for bliss in vain.  
 Oh, with gentle smiles relieve me.  
 Let no more false hopes deceive me,  
 Nor vain fears inflict a pain.

**Recitative***Iphis*

Ill suits the voice of love when glory calls,  
 And bids thee follow Jephtha to the field.  
 There act the hero, and let rival deeds  
 Proclaim thee worthy to be call'd his son,  
 And Hamor shall not want his due reward.

**Air***Iphis*

Take the heart you fondly gave,  
 Lodg'd in your breast with mine.  
 Thus with double ardour brave,  
 Sure conquest shall be thine.

**Recitative***Hamor*

I go. My soul, inspir'd by thy command,  
 Thirsts for the battle. I'm already crown'd  
 With the victorious wreath, and thou, fair prize,  
 More worth than fame or conquest, thou art mine.

**Duet***Iphis and Hamor*

These labours past, how happy we!  
 How glorious will they prove,  
 When gath'ring fruit from conquest's tree,  
 We deck the feast of love!  
 These labours past...*da capo*

*Exeunt.***SCENE 4***Jephtha, alone.***Recitative***Jephtha*

What mean these doubtful fancies of the brain?  
 Visions of joy rise in my raptur'd soul,  
 There play awhile, and set in darksome night.  
 Strange ardour fires my breast; my arms seem strung  
 With tenfold vigour, and my crested helm  
 To reach the skies. Be humble still, my soul!  
 It is the Spirit of God, in whose great name  
 I offer up my vow.

**Accompagnato**

If, Lord, sustain'd by Thy almighty pow'r,  
 Ammon I drive, and his insulting bands,  
 From these our long-uncultivated lands,  
 And safe return a glorious conqueror,  
 What, or whoe'er shall first salute mine eyes,  
 Shall be forever Thine, or fall a sacrifice.

*Enter Israelites.***Recitative**

'Tis said.  
 Attend, ye chiefs, and with united voice  
 Invoke the holy name of Israel's God.

**Chorus of Israelites**

O God, behold our sore distress,  
 Omnipotent to plague or bless!  
 But turn thy wrath, and bless once more  
 Thy servants, who thy name adore.

*Exeunt.*

**SCENE 5**

*Storgè, alone.*

**Recitative**

*Storgè*

Some dire event hangs o'er our heads,  
Some woeful song we have to sing  
In misery extreme. O never, never  
Was my foreboding mind disturbed before  
With such incessant pangs.

**Air**

*Storgè*

Scenes of horror, scenes of woe,  
Rising from the shades below,  
Add new terror to the night.  
While in never-ceasing pain,  
That attends the servile chain,  
Joyless flow the hours of light.  
Scenes of horror...*da capo*

**SCENE 6**

*Enter Iphis.*

**Recitative**

*Iphis*

Say, my dear mother, whence these piercing cries  
That force me, like a frightened bird to fly  
My place of rest?

*Storgè*

For thee I fear, my child;  
Such ghastly dreams last night surpris'd my soul.

*Iphis*

Heed not these black illusions of the night,  
The mocking of unquiet slumbers, heed them not.  
My father, touch'd with a diviner fire,  
Already seems to triumph in success,  
Nor doubt I but Jehovah hears our pray'rs.

**Air**

*Iphis*

The smiling dawn of happy days  
Presents a prospect clear,  
And pleasing hope's all-bright'ning rays  
Dispel each gloomy fear.  
While ev'ry charm that peace displays  
Makes spring-time all the year.  
The smiling dawn...*da capo*

*Exeunt.*

**SCENE 7**

*Enter Zebul, Jephtha and Chorus.*

**Recitative**

*Zebul*

Such, Jephtha, was the haughty king's reply:  
No terms, but ruin, slavery and death.

*Jephtha*

Sound, then, the last alarm! And to the field,  
Ye sons of Israel, with intrepid hearts,  
Dependent on the might of Israel's God.

**Chorus of Israelites**

When His loud voice in thunder spoke,  
With conscious fear the billows broke,  
Observant of his dread command.  
In vain they roll their foaming tide,  
Confin'd by that great pow'r,  
That gave them strength to roar.  
They now contract their boist'rous pride,  
And lash with idle rage the laughing strand.

## ACT TWO

### SCENE 1

*Enter Hamor and Iphis.*

#### Recitative

*Hamor*

Glad tidings of great joy to thee, dear Iphis,  
And to the house of Israel I bring,  
Thus then, in brief. Both armies in array  
Of battle rang'd, our general stept forth  
And offer'd haughty Ammon terms of peace,  
Most just and righteous; these with scorn refus'd,  
He bade the trumpet sound. But scarce a sword  
Was ting'd in hostile blood, ere all around  
The thund'ring Heavens open'd and pour'd forth  
Thousands of armed cherubim, when straight  
Our general cried: "This is thy signal, Lord,  
I follow Thee, and Thy bright heav'nly host."  
Then rushing on proud Ammon, all aghast,  
He made a bloody slaughter, and pursu'd  
The flying foe till night bade sheathe the sword,  
And taste the joys of victory and peace.

#### Air

*Hamor*

Up the dreadful steep ascending,  
While for fame and love contending,  
Sought I thee, my glorious prize.  
And now, happy in the blessing,  
Thee, my sweetest joy possessing,  
Other honours I despise.  
Up the dreadful steep...*da capo*

#### Recitative

*Iphis*

'Tis well.  
Haste, haste, ye maidens, and in richest robes  
Adorn me, like a stately bride,  
To meet my father in triumphant pomp.  
And while around the dancing banners play...

#### Air

*Iphis*

Tune the soft melodious lute,  
Pleasant harp and warbling flute,  
To sounds of rapt'rous joy.  
Such as on our solemn days,  
Singing great Jehovah's praise,  
The holy choir employ.  
Tune the soft...*da capo*

*Exeunt.*

### SCENE 2

*Enter Zebul, Jephtha, Hamor and Chorus.*

#### Recitative

*Jephtha*

Heav'n smiles once more on His repentant people,  
And victory spreads wide her silver wings  
To soothe our sorrows with a peaceful calm.  
Zebul, thy deeds were valiant,  
Nor less thine, my Hamor;  
But the glory is the Lord's.

#### Air

*Jephtha*

His mighty arm, with sudden blow,  
Dispers'd and quell'd the haughty foe.  
They fell before him, as when through the sky  
He bids the sweeping winds in vengeance fly.  
His mighty arm...*da capo*

#### Chorus

In glory high, in might serene,  
He sees, moves all, unmov'd, unseen.  
His mighty arm, with sudden blow  
Dispers'd and quell'd the haughty foe.

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INTERMISSION

### SCENE 3

#### Symphony

*Enter Iphis, Chorus of Virgins, Jephtha, Zebul, Hamor, and Storgè*

#### Recitative

*Iphis*

Hail, glorious conqueror, much lov'd father, hail!  
Behold thy daughter, and her virgin train,  
Come to salute thee with all duteous love.

#### Air & Chorus of Virgins

Welcome, as the cheerful light,  
Driving darkest shades of night;  
Welcome, as the spring that rains  
Peace and plenty o'er the plains!  
Welcome thou, whose deeds conspire  
To provoke the warbling lyre,  
Welcome thou, whom God ordain'd  
Guardian angel of our land!  
Thou wert born His glorious name  
And great wonders to proclaim.

#### Recitative

*Jephtha*

Horror, confusion! Harsh this music grates  
Upon my tasteless ears. Begone, my child,  
Thou hast undone thy father! Fly, begone,  
And leave me to the rack of wild despair!

*Exit Iphis.*

#### Air

*Jephtha*

Open thy marble jaws, O tomb,  
And hide me, earth, in thy dark womb!  
Ere I the name of father stain,  
And deepest woe from conquest gain.  
Open...*da capo*

#### Recitative

*Zebul*

Why is my brother thus afflicted? Say,  
Why didst thou spurn thy daughter's gratulations,  
And fling her from thee with unkind disdain?

*Jephtha*

O Zebul, Hamor and my dearest wife,  
Behold a wretched man,  
Thrown from the summit of presumptuous joy,  
Down to the lowest depth of misery.  
Know, then, I vow'd the first I saw should fall  
A victim to the living God. My daughter,  
Alas, it was my daughter, and she dies.

#### Accompagnato & Air

*Storgè*

First perish thou, and perish all the world!  
Hath Heav'n then bless'd us with this only pledge  
Of all our love, this one dear child, for thee  
To be her murderer? No, cruel man!

*Storgè*

Let other creatures die?  
Or Heav'n, earth, seas and sky  
In one confusion lie,  
Ere in a daughter's blood,  
So fair, so chaste, so good,  
A father's hand's embrued.

#### Recitative

*Hamor*

If such thy cruel purpose, lo, your friend  
Offers himself a willing sacrifice,  
To save the innocent and beauteous maid!

#### Air

*Hamor*

On me let blind mistaken zeal  
Her utmost rage employ.  
'Twill be a mercy there to kill



Where life can taste no joy.  
On me...*da capo*

**Quartet**

*Zebul*

Oh, spare your daughter,

*Storgè*

Spare my child,

*Hamor*

My love!

*Jephtha*

Recorded stands my vow in Heav'n above.

*Storgè*

Recall the impious vow, ere 'tis too late.

*Jephtha*

I'll hear no more, her doom is fix'd as fate!

*Hamor, Zebul, Storgè*

And think not Heav'n delights

In Moloch's horrid rites.

**SCENE 4**

*Enter Iphis.*

**Recitative**

*Iphis*

Such news flies swift. I've heard the mournful cause  
Of all your sorrows. Of my father's vow,  
Heav'n spoke its approbation by success.  
Jephtha has triumph'd, Israel is free.

**Accompagnato**

For joys so vast too little is the price  
Of one poor life. But oh, accept it, Heav'n,  
A grateful victim, and thy blessing still  
Pour on my country, friends, and dearest father!

**Air**

*Iphis*

Happy they! This vital breath  
With content I shall resign.  
And not murmur or repine,  
Sinking in the arms of death.  
Happy they...*da capo*

**Accompagnato**

*Jephtha*

Deeper, and deeper still, thy goodness, child,  
Pierceth a father's bleeding heart, and checks  
The cruel sentence on my falt'ring tongue.  
Oh, let me whisper it to the raging winds,  
Or howling deserts; for the ears of men  
It is too shocking. Yet have I not vow'd?  
And can I think the great Jehovah sleeps,  
Like Chemosh and such fabled deities?  
Ah no; Heav'n heard my thoughts, and wrote them down;  
It must be so. 'Tis this that racks my brain,  
And pours into my breast a thousand pangs  
That lash me into madness. Horrid thought!  
My only daughter, so dear a child,  
Doom'd by a father! Yes, the vow is past,  
And Gilead hath triumph'd o'er his foes.  
Therefore, tomorrow's dawn...I can no more.

**Chorus**

How dark, O Lord, are Thy decrees,  
All hid from mortal sight,  
All our joys to sorrow turning,  
And our triumphs into mourning,  
As the night succeeds the day.  
No certain bliss, no solid peace  
We mortals know, on earth below,  
Yet on this maxim still obey:  
"Whatever is, is right."

## ACT THREE

### SCENE 1

*Jephtha, Iphis, Priests and Chorus.*

#### Air/Accompagnato

*Jephtha*

Hide thou thy hated beams, O sun, in clouds  
And darkness, deep as is a father's woe;  
A father, off'ring up his only child  
In vow'd return for victory and peace.

#### Air

*Jephtha*

Waft her, angels, through the skies,  
Far above yon azure plain.  
Glorious there, like you, to rise,  
There, like you, for ever reign.  
Waft her...*da capo*

#### Accompagnato

*Iphis*

Ye sacred priests, whose hands ne'er yet were stain'd  
With human blood, why are ye thus afraid  
To execute my father's will? The call of Heav'n  
With humble resignation I obey.

#### Air

*Iphis*

Farewell, ye limpid springs and floods,  
Ye flow'ry meads and leafy woods;  
Farewell, thou busy world where reign  
Short hours of joy and years of pain.  
Brighter scenes I seek above  
In the realms of peace and love.

#### Chorus of Priests

Doubtful fear and rev'rent awe  
Strike us, Lord, while here we bow,  
Check'd by Thy all-sacred law,

Yet commanded by the vow.  
Hear our pray'r in this distress,  
And Thy determin'd will declare.

#### Symphony

#### Recitative

*Angel*

Rise, Jephtha, and ye rev'rend priests, withhold  
The slaught'rous hand. No vow can disannul  
The law of God, nor such was its intent  
When rightly scann'd; yet still shall be fulfilled.  
Thy daughter, Jephtha, thou must dedicate  
To God, in pure and virgin state fore'er,  
As not an object meet for sacrifice,  
Else had she fall'n an holocaust to God.  
The Holy Spirit, that dictated thy vow,  
Bade thus explain it, and approves thy faith.

#### Air

*Angel*

Happy, Iphis, shalt thou live,  
While to thee the virgin choir  
Tune their harps of golden wire,  
And their yearly tribute give.  
Happy, Iphis, all thy days,  
Pure, angelic, virgin-state,  
Shalt thou live, and ages late  
Crown thee with immortal praise.

#### Arioso

*Jephtha*

For ever blessed be Thy holy name,  
Lord God of Israel!

#### Chorus of Priests

Theme sublime of endless praise,  
Just and righteous are thy ways;  
And thy mercies still endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.

## SCENE 2

*Enter Zebul, Storgè, Hamor and Chorus of Israelites.*

### Recitative

*Zebul*

Let me congratulate this happy turn,  
My honour'd brother, judge of Israel!  
Thy faith, thy courage, constancy and truth,  
Nations shall sing; and in their just applause,  
All join to celebrate thy daughter's name.

### Air

*Zebul*

Laud her, all ye virgin train  
In glad songs of choicest strain.  
Ye blest angels all around,  
Laud her in melodious sound.  
Virtues that to you belong,  
Love and truth demand the song.

### Recitative

*Storgè*

Oh, let me fold thee in a mother's arms,  
And with submissive joy, my child,  
Receive thy designation to the life of Heav'n.

### Air

*Storgè*

Sweet as sight to the blind,  
Or freedom to the slave,  
Such joy in thee I find,  
Safe from the grave.  
Still I'm of thee possess'd,  
Such is kind Heav'n's decree  
That hath thy parents bless'd  
In blessing thee.

### Recitative

*Hamor*

With transport, Iphis, I behold thy safety,  
But must forever mourn so dear a loss,  
Dear, though great Jephtha were to honour me  
Still with the name of son.

### Air

*Hamor*

'Tis Heav'n's all-ruling pow'r  
That checks the rising sigh;  
Yet let me still adore  
And think an angel by.

### Recitative

*Iphis*

My faithful Hamor, may that Providence  
Which gently claims or forces our submission,  
Direct thee to some happier choice.

### Quintet

*Iphis*

All that is in Hamor mine,  
freely I to Heaven resign.

*Hamor*

All that is in Iphis mine,  
Freely I to Heav'n resign.

*Iphis*

Duteous to the will supreme,  
Still my Hamor I'll esteem.

*Hamor*

Duteous to almighty pow'r,  
Still my Iphis I'll adore.

*Iphis, Hamor, Storgè, Jephtha, Zebul*

Joys triumphant crown thy days,  
And thy name eternal praise.

## Chorus of Israelites

Ye house of Gilead, with one voice,  
In blessings manifold rejoice.  
Freed from war's destructive sword,  
Peace her plenty round shall spread,  
While in virtue's path you tread;  
So are they blest who fear the Lord.  
Amen. Hallelujah.

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## ARTISTIC PERSONNEL

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### THE MOORES SCHOOL CONCERT CHORALE

Betsy Cook Weber, *director*

Eric Bellah, *accompanist*

Cody Dickson, *graduate teaching assistant*

Benjamin May, *student director*

Shelby Allison  
Nicholas Almeda  
Eric Bellah  
Justin Brock  
José Castejon  
Jarrell Comeaux  
Amanda Corbett  
Emer Cordoba  
CJ Dangleben  
Jared Dees  
Janine Dworiin  
Nadiyah Eleksandry  
Victoria Flores\*  
Madison Fore  
Catherine Genzer  
Michelle Girardot  
Greg Goedecke  
Emily Hardey  
Allison Heinrich  
Elaine Herder  
Monica Hernandez  
Kirsten Hill

Katie Houghton  
Mark Kamei  
Anthony Larson  
Nick Leach  
Jessica Liu  
Matthew Lydick  
Andrew Lynch  
Ben May  
Lewis Mcadow  
Kirstie Mccallum  
Lauren Miller  
Brian Minson  
Andrea Montano\*  
Anna Montgomery  
Shannon Murray  
Hope Myers  
Sean Nanowsky  
Christine Oakes  
Chance Olsen  
Jazmine Olwalia  
Krista Pape  
Miguel Pedroza\*

Avery Rabon  
John Rehak  
Traveon Rogers  
Ryan Rogers  
Daniel Schaffer  
Justin Shen\*  
Jonathan Snowden  
Jennifer Terlouw  
Gordon Trehern  
Ricky Valle  
Imogen Van der Werff  
Andrea Walker  
Audrey Wang  
Liz Weinmann  
Jake Woodson

\*section leaders

## ARS LYRICA HOUSTON

Matthew Dirst, *Artistic Director*

### ARS LYRICA ORCHESTRAL PERSONNEL

Colin St Martin	<i>traverso</i>	Alan Austin	<i>violin 2</i>
MaryAnn Shore	<i>Baroque oboe</i>	Stephanie Raby	
Anne Leek		Hae-a Lee	
		Nadia Lesinska	
Ben Kamins	<i>Baroque bassoon</i>	James Dunham	<i>viola</i>
Nathaniel Mayfield	<i>natural trumpet</i>	Erika Lawson	
Wes Miller		Barrett Sills	<i>cello</i>
Jin Kim	<i>violin 1</i>	Eric Smith	
Maria Lin		Deborah Dunham	<i>violone</i>
Oleg Sulyga		Jeffrey Cooper	<i>organ</i>
Andrés González		Richard Savino	<i>theorbo</i>
		Matthew Dirst	<i>harpsichord/ conductor</i>

*Special thanks to the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, for use of its John Phillips Florentine-style harpsichord and Bennett-Guittari continuo organ, and Elizabeth Duerr, Kate & Malcolm Hawk, Janet & Ed Hess, Joyce & David Fox for providing accommodations to Ars Lyrica artists.*

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



**Dr. Betsy Cook Weber** began the first thirteen years of her career as an elementary, then middle school, then high school choral director in the public schools. She is now Director of Choral Studies at the University of Houston and also serves as director of the *Houston Symphony Chorus*, preparing various programs for some of the world's greatest conductors. In 2013 she became the 1st woman to receive TCDA's coveted *Texas Chormaster Award*. She is editor of the *Betsy Cook Weber*

*Choral Series* with Alliance Music Publications.

Weber is highly active internationally as a conductor and clinician. She holds degrees from the University of North Texas, Westminster Choir College, and the University of Houston.



**The University of Houston Concert Chorale** is the university's premiere large choral ensemble. Under the direction of Betsy Cook Weber since 2002, the ensemble has performed for four TMEA conventions (2005, 2008, 2013, 2017) and the national ACDA convention in Miami (2007, 2017).

The ensemble has also been active internationally, placing in and/or winning the following prestigious competitions: 47th *Eisteddfod*; Wales, UK (2009); *Florilège Vocal*; France (2011); *International Chamber Choir Festival*; Germany (2013); *Grand Prix of Nations*; Germany (2015).

Chorale's location in Houston presents many opportunities, including performances with/for *Houston Symphony*, *Ars Lyrica Houston*, *Mercury*, *Latin Grammys*, *Star Wars in Concert*, NBC's *Clash of the Choirs*, *Josh Groban*, *Houston Astros*, *Houston Texans*, *KUHF*, ABC, NBC, and Fox.

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Praised by the *New York Times* for his "beautifully shaped and carefully nuanced singing," tenor **Derek Chester** is steadily making a name for himself in the world of classical singing. In demand as an interpreter of oratorio, Chester has appeared as soloist with such organizations as Boston Baroque, *Ars Lyrica Houston*, the Korean Broadcasting System Symphony, the Toronto Symphony, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Colorado Symphony, Bach Collegium

San Diego, and the American Bach Soloists. He holds degrees from University of Georgia and the Yale School of Music as a full scholarship recipient. After a year as a Fulbright Scholar in Germany, Chester competed his Doctorate in Music from the University of North Texas. As a well-regarded pedagogue Chester participated in the 2016 NATS Intern Program and has given master classes across the country. He currently serves on the voice faculty at the University of Northern Colorado and continues his worldwide career as an interpreter of concert repertoire.



Bass-baritone **Timothy Jones** is one of the most respected concert singers of his generation. Timothy has soloed with the Cleveland Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Utah Symphony, Baton Rouge Symphony, and Boston Baroque. A favorite of living composers Jones has premiered over fifty works written specifically for his voice. He has been praised in the opera world, where he has amassed over thirty leading roles, for his passionate

performances, solid vocal technique, and outstanding musicianship. Dr. Jones's first, full-time academic appointment was at the University of Texas in San Antonio back in 1994. He is currently an Associate Professor at the University of Houston's Moore School of Music.



Praised by *Opera News* as a "silvery-luminescent mezzo-soprano of power and poise," Maryland native **Sofia Selowsky** is a recent graduate of the Houston Grand Opera Studio. This season, Ms. Selowsky performs de Falla's *Siete Canciones Populares Españolas* at The Menil Collection with Da Camera of Houston, Handel's *Messiah* with The Minnesota Orchestra, and Mozart's *Requiem* with Sarasota Orchestra. During her time in the HGO Studio, she

was heard as The Fox in Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince*, the Second Wood Nymph in *Rusalka*, Nell Gwynn in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd's new opera, *Prince of Players*, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, and also made her debut with the Houston Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Selowsky has received awards from the Gerda Lissner, Shoshanna, and Kurt Weill Foundations. In 2014 she was a National Semifinalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and won Third Place in the Houston Grand Opera's Eleanor McCollum Competition.



**Dominique McCormick** is a lyric soprano from Long Island, New York. She is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Aaron Copland School of Music and the Conservatoire National de Région Boulogne-Billancourt in France. Performing in the United States and Europe, her roles include: Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*; Laetitia in Menotti's *The Old Maid and the Thief*; Susanna in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*; Sola Myrrhis, in

Messager's *Coup de Roulis*; Lady Marian in De Koven's *Robin Hood*; Hanna Glavari in Lehar's *The Merry Widow*. As soloist, works include: Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*; Mozart's *Mass in c minor* and *Requiem*, Brahms's *Requiem*; Handel's *Messiah* and *Dixit Dominus*; Bach's *Mass in b Minor*, *Magnificat*, and *St. Matthew's Passion*; Poulenc's *Gloria*; Mendelssohn's *Psalm 42* and *Lauda Sion*; Recitalist for *Les Musicales de Normandie*; and *Les Nuits de Cheronne*. Currently completing her doctoral dissertation in music, Dominique is happy to be newly relocated to the Houston area and is overjoyed to be performing with Ars Lyrica.



**Jay Carter** has gained recognition as one of the nation's finest countertenors. A frequent collaborator with period and modern ensembles, Carter is recognized as a leading interpreter of late Baroque repertoire. Recent appearances include Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the American Bach Soloists and the Choir of St. Thomas Church, Handel's *Messiah* with the National Symphony, and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Handel's *Saul* with Musica Vocale and the Kansas City

Baroque Consortium, and the North American Premiere of John Tavener's *Lament for Jerusalem* with the Choral Arts Society of Washington. In recent seasons he has appeared with acclaimed conductors Nicholas McGegan, John Butt, Ton Koopman, John Scott, and Matthew Halls. In the coming season Jay makes debuts with the Bach Collegium San Diego and with Masaaki Suzuki and the Bach Collegium Japan in a touring production of Bach's *Weinachts Oratorium*.

He received a Masters in Music from the Yale School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music, and received his undergraduate degree from William Jewell College where he studied voice with Arnold Epley. He lives in Liberty, Missouri with his family, and serves as Artist-in-residence at William Jewell College.



Mezzo-soprano **Cecilia Duarte** appeared with Ars Lyrica Houston last February in *All in a Garden Green, Songs about Springtime*. She created the role of Renata in the first opera with mariachi music *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* with Houston Grand Opera, touring with it to the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, France, and then in later performances at Chicago Lyric Opera, Houston Grand Opera (revival), San Diego Opera and Arizona Opera. Cecilia is an active

performer in the circle of contemporary music, and has premiered several works, such as Ethan Greene's *A Way Home* (HGO and Opera Southwest), David Hanlon's *Past the Checkpoints, The Ninth November I was Hiding* (HGO), and chamber pieces written by composers Mark Buller and Paul English also through HGO. An early music enthusiast, Cecilia has performed at the Oregon Bach Festival, the Festivalensemble in Stuttgart, Germany, and the Festival de Música Barroca of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, as well as performing often with the Bach Society Houston and Ars Lyrica Houston. Past performances include Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* (Opera in the Heights), Jessie Lydell in *A Coffin in Egypt* (HGO) and several operas with the University of 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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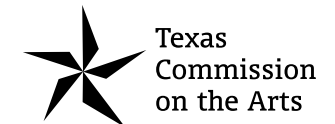
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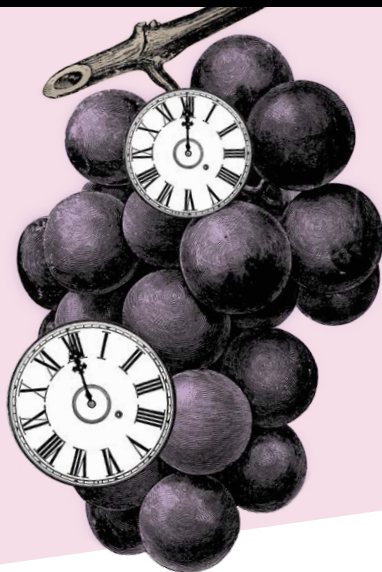
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