

HOUSTON, TX—(May 16, 2011)— Following its most successful season yet, capped by a Grammy nomination for Best Opera 2011, **Ars Lyrica Houston** is proud to announce its 2011-12 season of distinctive early music programming. As Ars Lyrica enters its 7th season at the Hobby Center’s acoustically superlative Zilkha Hall, it continues to break new ground both in Houston and in the international early music community. The ensemble’s upcoming 2011-2012 season, entitled **Transformations**, explores this theme on various levels — emotional, spiritual, physical, even intellectual—and features collaborations with world-renowned musicians and dancers. Artistic Director Matthew Dirst is “delighted to be able to offer our audiences exceptional music-making in a beautiful space, and is especially excited about this season’s lineup of artists.”

The 2011-12 season begins on **September 23** at Zilkha Hall with **Paradise Found**, a journey from worldly torment to heavenly ecstasy. This program features internationally-acclaimed French-Italian soprano Céline Ricci in her Houston début, with core Ars Lyrica string and continuo players, in music of Domenico Scarlatti, François Couperin, and G. F. Handel’s recently discovered “Gloria.” *Paradise Found* also tours to Alexandria, Louisiana, on September 26.

On **November 12** **Musical Alchemy** brings together unconventional combinations of instruments, resulting in an evening of true musical gold. Baroque violin sensation Ingrid Matthews joins Ars Lyrica favorites Colin St. Martin on Baroque flute, Kathryn Montoya on Baroque oboe and recorder, and Matthew Dirst at the harpsichord, with members of the ensemble in works by J. S. and J. C. Bach, J. G. Janitsch, and Henry Purcell. *Musical Alchemy* can also be heard on November 14 at The Centrum at Cypress Creek Christian Community Center.

Ars Lyrica’s annual New Year’s Eve concert has become a tradition for many Houstonians. On **December 31**, Ars Lyrica rings in 2012 with **Bach and Time**, a program that juxtaposes Bach’s beloved Suite in D (with its famous “Air on the G String”) against vocal works by the great Baroque master on the subject of time in its multiple dimensions, including a cantata on the idea of eternity and one for the new year. Soloists include soprano Melissa Givens, countertenor Ryland Angel, tenor Zach Averyt, and bass-baritone David Grogan.

On **March 9** Ars Lyrica presents G. F. Handel’s oratorio **La Resurrezione** – a colorful and operatic reaction to the resurrection of Christ. This performance features a stellar cast: Canadian soprano Gillian Keith in her Houston début as the Angel, bass-baritone Timothy Jones as Lucifer, soprano Meredith Ruduski as Mary Magdalene, countertenor Ryland Angel as Cleophas and tenor Zachary Wilder as St. John. *La Resurrezione* tours to First Presbyterian Church, Austin, on March 10.

The 2011-12 season concludes on **June 8** with **Heaven and Hell**, presented in collaboration with the New York Baroque Dance Company, the world’s most prestigious Baroque-style dance group, with new choreography by NYBDC Artistic Director Catherine Turocy. This program features fully-staged versions of some of Claudio Monteverdi’s most imaginative scores, including the epochal *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* and the *Ballo delle Ingrate*. These two works take the listener from heaven to hell and back again, with musical imagery that still astonishes even after four hundred years.

For subscriptions, performance tickets and additional information, visit www.arslyricahouston.org.

About Ars Lyrica Houston

Founded in 1998 by harpsichordist and conductor Matthew Dirst, Ars Lyrica Houston is a group of primarily Houston-area musicians who perform world-class Baroque music using period instruments. Ars Lyrica’s latest world première recording of J.A. Hasse’s *Marc Antonio e Cleopatra*, on the Sono Luminus label, has brought the ensemble its first Grammy Award nomination: “A thrilling performance that glows in its quieter moments and sparkles with vitality when Hasse follows a more impassioned muse.” (*Early Music America*). Ars Lyrica’s distinctive programming, drawn from the rich chamber and dramatic repertoires of the 17th and 18th centuries, “sets the agenda for imaginative period instrument programming in Houston” (*Houston Chronicle*). The ensemble’s first commercial release, on Naxos International, features the world première recordings of Alessandro Scarlatti’s *La Concettione della Beata Vergine* and *Euridice dall’Inferno*. This disc brought international recognition to the ensemble: *Gramophone*, the leading journal of the classical recording industry, praised this CD for its “exemplary skill and taste,” and Ars Lyrica’s musicians for their “impassioned performance” of never-before recorded works. For more information visit www.arslyricahouston.org.

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