

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Ars Lyrica and Bach Society Houston Conclude the 2014/15 Season with Handel Oratorio**



**HOUSTON, TX (April 5, 2015)** - Houston's Grammy-nominated early music ensemble Ars Lyrica Houston and Bach Society Houston present *Alexander's Feast -- Or, The Power of Music* by G. F. Handel on May 17th at 6:00pm in Zilkha Hall at the Hobby Center for Performing Arts.

This jointly-produced 2014/15 season finale provides abundant vocal and instrumental fireworks, including early-music sensation Yulia van Doren, *soprano* (pictured, top left). Handel's remarkable musical tale relates how the enchanting song of a musician named Timotheus moved Alexander the Great towards both contemplative reflection

and heroic action. This rarely-heard oratorio, which also celebrates the "power of musick" as revealed through its patron St Cecilia, also features tenor Daniel Mutlu, baritone Brian Shircliffe, the Houston Bach Choir, and a full Baroque orchestra, all under the direction of ALH Artistic Director Matthew Dirst.

Audiences are invited to learn more about this work and this collaborative presentation at a 5:30pm "*Moment with the Artists*," an on-stage preview with ALH Artistic Director Matthew Dirst, Bach Society Houston's Director Rick Erickson, and *soprano* Yulia van Doren.

**PERFORMANCE AND TICKET INFO:**

*Alexander's Feast - Or, The Power of Music*

May 17th at 6:00pm

Zilkha Hall, Hobby Center for the Performing Arts

Ticket Prices: \$36-\$57, Students: \$22

ONLINE: [www.arslyricahouston.org/alexanders-feast/](http://www.arslyricahouston.org/alexanders-feast/)

CALL BOX OFFICE: (713) 315-2525

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS:**

### **Yulia van Doren**

Recently recognized by Opera Magazine as “A star-to-be” following her Lincoln Center debut, young Russian-American soprano Yulia Van Doren’s recent debut with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra was acclaimed as “This year’s big revelation... a ravishing lyric voice and an ease with vocal ornamentation that turned her into an enchanted songbird” (Toronto Star).

Particularly in love with the collaborative process of bringing to life repertoire off the beaten path, recent highlights include creating the lead female role in the world premiere of Shostakovich’s *Orango* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, directed by Peter Sellars; two Grammy-nominated opera recordings with the Boston Early Music Festival; the modern revival of Montsigny’s opera *Le roi et le fermier* at Opera de Versailles, Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center; her Carnegie Hall debut premiering a commissioned work by composer Angel Lam; a leading role in Scarlatti’s *Tigrane* at Opera de Nice; and Nielsen’s *Symphony No. 3* with the American Symphony Orchestra.

Especially recognized for her work in the baroque repertoire, within just a few seasons Ms. Van Doren has debuted with the majority of the North American Baroque festivals and orchestras, and has the distinction of being the only singer awarded a top prize in all four US Bach vocal competitions. A frequent collaborator of choreographer Mark Morris, recent projects include multiple tours and international performances as Belinda in his iconic version of *Dido and Aeneas*.

Born in Moscow, Ms. Van Doren was raised in the United States in a music-filled household in which she and her seven younger siblings were taught by her Russian mezzo-soprano mother and American jazz pianist father. Before turning her full attention to singing, she was an accomplished classical pianist and amateur flutist and violist. Ms. Van Doren is honored to be an Astral Artist, a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow, and as the recipient of a Beebe Grant for Advanced European Study she spent the 2010-2011 season based in Paris.

### **Matthew Dirst**

Artistic Director Matthew Dirst is the first American to win major international prizes in both organ and harpsichord, including the National Guild of Organists Young Artist Competition and the Warsaw International Harpsichord Competition. Widely admired for his stylish playing and conducting of Baroque music especially, the Dallas Morning News named his “crisp but expressive direction” of the Monteverdi 1610 *Vespers* “*Best Classical Performance of 2010.*” Early Music America described his most recent solo CD, of harpsichord works by François and Armand-Louis Couperin (*Centaur*), as a “*stylish, tasteful, and technically commanding performance... expressive and brilliant playing.*” Dirst’s recordings of music by Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti and J. A. Hasse with Ars Lyrica Houston, on the Naxos and Sono Luminus labels, have earned a Grammy nomination (for Best Opera 2011) 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, his work on Bach and Bach reception is published in a variety of journals, and his book *Engaging Bach: The Keyboard Legacy from Marpurg to Mendelssohn* was published last year by Cambridge University Press. Dirst also serves as Associate Professor of Music at the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, and Organist of St Philip Presbyterian Church in Houston.

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For high resolution images and additional artist bios, please contact Jacqueline Gonzalez at 713-622-7443 or [jgonzalez@arslyricahouston.org](mailto:jgonzalez@arslyricahouston.org)

### **About Ars Lyrica Houston**

Founded in 1998 by harpsichordist and conductor Matthew Dirst, Ars Lyrica Houston is a Texas-based ensemble that performs world-class Baroque music on period instruments. Ars Lyrica’s world premiere recording of J.A. Hasse’s *Marc Antonio e Cleopatra* brought the ensemble its first Grammy nomination for “*a thrilling performance that glows in its quieter moments and sparkles with vitality*” (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,*” according to the Houston Chronicle. The ensemble’s first commercial release, on Naxos International, features the world première recordings of Alessandro Scarlatti’s *La Conception 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. Ars Lyrica’s latest Sono Luminus recording of Domenico Scarlatti’s comic intermezzo *La Dirindina* and his chamber cantata *Pur nel sonno* was released in August 2012.

For more information visit [www.arslyricahouston.org](http://www.arslyricahouston.org).