

# Conflict & Concord



Saturday, October 24 at 7:30 pm

*Digital Program Book*

# ARS LYRICA HOUSTON

presents

## CONFLICT AND CONCORD

Broadcast Program  
Saturday, October 24, 2020  
7:30 pm

featuring

Dominique McCormick	<i>soprano</i>
Leia Lensing	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Steven Brennfleck	<i>tenor</i>
Jason Zacher	<i>bass</i>
Colin St-Martin	<i>traverso</i>
Pablo Moreno	<i>oboe &amp; oboe d'amore</i>
Anne Leek	<i>oboe</i>
Elizabeth Blumenstock	<i>violin</i>
Oleg Sulyga	<i>violin</i>
James Dunham	<i>viola</i>
Barrett Sills	<i>cello</i>
Deborah Dunham	<i>violone</i>
Matthew Dirst	<i>harpsichord &amp; artistic director</i>

*Special thanks to St Philip Presbyterian Church  
for hosting our Fall 2020 broadcast programs.*

*Video and audio by BEND Productions, LLC*

*This program is dedicated to the memory of Maurice K. Isaac*

MUSIC BY JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

*Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* BWV 170

Aria: *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust*

Recitative: *Die Welt, das Sündenhaus*

Aria: *Wie jammern mich doch die verkebrten Herzen*

Recitative: *Wer sollte sich demnach*

Aria: *Mir ekelt mehr zu leben*

Trio Sonata from *A Musical Offering* BWV 1079

*Largo*

*Allegro*

*Andante*

*Allegro*

*Ein Herz, das seinen Jesum lebend weiß* BWV 134

Recitative: *Ein Herz, das seinen Jesum lebend weiß*

Aria: *Auf! Gläubige, singet die lieblichen Lieder*

Recitative: *Wohl dir! Gott hat an dich gedacht*

Duet: *Wir danken und preisen dein brünstiges Lieben*

Recitative: *Doch wirke selbst den Dank in unserm Munde*

Chorus: *Ersallet, ihr Himmel, erfreuet dich, Erde*

## NOTES ON THE MUSIC

### *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* BWV 170 Cantata for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity

This is a cantata in the original sense of the word: a work for a single vocal soloist and a small instrumental ensemble. Its libretto, from a 1711 cycle by Georg Christian Lehms, elaborates on key concepts from the Sermon on the Mount, the Gospel reading for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity in the Leipzig churches in 1726. In this famous sermon, Jesus calls on the faithful to renounce sin, reject the hatred and divisiveness of this world, and find peace in eternal life with God.

Its unusual scoring includes solo wind instruments and/or an obbligato keyboard part. One of these solo timbres was likely motivated by the libretto: Bach relied on the earthy sound of the *oboe d'amore* for numerous cantatas whose texts emphasize love and devotion. The other puts the spotlight on Bach's own instrument: in the late 1720s he wrote several concerted works that feature the organ in a solo role, in addition to its normal function as part of the basso continuo team. Cantata 170 was the first to include obbligato parts for the organist within an aria, with two independent organ lines in the middle movement and one in the last. For a performance in the late 1740s, Bach adapted at least one of these obbligato lines (in the final aria) for transverse flute instead. In that spirit, our performance transfers the organ obbligatos to flute and harpsichord.

The first aria, cast in the pastoral mode, reflects its sober text with one of the loveliest melodies in all of Bach. For the central aria, where the ills of the world are recounted with palpable regret and even fear, Bach created a pensive and deliberately unstable texture, one that lacks a proper bass line. Three highly chromatic obbligato lines (including the alto soloist) twist and turn above a *bassetto* part played by the unison upper strings, as this aria traverses extreme sharp keys whose painful intervals serve the text all too well. The joyous final aria celebrates the next life with a thumping bass line and swirling figuration above, in a brilliant sonic vision of heaven itself.

### Trio Sonata from *A Musical Offering* BWV 1079

Bach published his *Musical Offering* in 1747, after his famous visit to the court of Frederick the Great in Potsdam, where his son Carl Philipp Emanuel was then in residence as harpsichordist to the King. The arrival of the elder Bach was a major event in the life of this court: everyone including the King turned out to witness Sebastian Bach's improvisation on a theme supplied by Frederick himself, who was also a gifted musician. The challenging though ingenious royal melody stimulated Bach's imagination like few others, and when he returned home to Leipzig he not only notated what he had improvised at court; he created an entire *Musical Offering* for the Prussian King, comprising two fugues (both entitled "ricercar"), a trio sonata, and ten canons all on the same theme. Though we have no idea what Frederick made of this grandiose musical tribute, its unusual disposition and

odd juxtapositions of styles ensured its place in the repertoire, despite its thoroughly recondite nature. Bach's elaborate gift to this famously enlightened monarch deftly combines deeply learned compositional techniques (like invertible counterpoint) with fashionable devices of the mid-century *galant* style so beloved by Frederick, with abundant appoggiaturas ("sigh" figures), for example, in the central Andante of the Sonata.

*Ein Herz, das seinen Jesum lebend weiß* BWV 134  
Cantata for the Third Day of Easter

The origins of this cantata are found in a secular work first performed on New Year's Day 1719 at the Cöthen court. For Easter celebrations in the Leipzig churches five years later, Bach adapted the parent work (whose text makes repeated reference to Prince Leopold as a wise and benevolent ruler) by imposing a new text above six of its eight original movements; the instrumental parts went unchanged. Additional performances of this sacred version of the work brought new revisions: in 1731 Bach recomposed its recitatives to make more sense of those sections of text, and a few years later he made various improvements to other movements in a new fair copy of the entire score.

Other aspects of the Cöthen-era work remain: notably, its reliance on dialogue in the recitatives. In the New Year's cantata, these two solo voices are named characters: Time and Divine Providence, who retain their prominence in the closing chorus, where they are joined by two additional solo voices. For the later sacred cantata, Bach surely relied on this kind of ensemble as well, with four soloists instead of a larger choir singing the final movement. The new sacred text includes neither biblical paraphrase nor a chorale but instead a joyous poetic response to the Resurrection and heartfelt thanks for God's protection and love. — *M. Dirst*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Praised by the New York Times as “dramatically astute” and a “stand out” performer, tenor **Steven Brennfleck** has been consistently acknowledged for his consummate artistry, vocal flexibility, and moving interpretations on the operatic and concert stage. His recent operatic credits include performances with the American Opera Projects, the Caramoor Festival, Glimmerglass Opera, Portland Opera, Spoleto Festival USA, The Tanglewood Festival, and the Westminster Opera Theatre in roles including Don Ramiro (*Cenerentola*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Laurie in Adamo’s *Little Women*, Gonsalve in Ravel’s *L’Heure Espagnol*, Henrik (*A Little Night Music*), and Tobias Ragg (*Sweeney Todd*). Highly regarded on the concert stage, Mr. Brennfleck made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2012. His recent collaborations include appearances with the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, American Bach Soloists, Austin Symphony Orchestra, Fall Island Vocal Arts Seminar, Georgetown Festival of the Arts, LA International New Music Festival, MET Chamber Ensemble, June in Buffalo Festival, Temple Symphony Orchestra, and the Victoria Bach Festival.



**Leia Lensing**, mezzo-soprano, will be making her Ars Lyrica debut in October of 2020. Having just completed her second year in the Houston Grand Opera studio in May, Leia performed the roles of The Page (*Salomé*) and Dritte Dame (*Die Zauberflöte*), and Mary (*Der fliegende Holländer*), as well as covering David (*Saul*). This past January, Leia competed in the Metropolitan National Council Auditions, where she was a Houston District winner, and later received 2ndplace at the Gulf Coast Region Finals. In previous summers, Leia was a member of the Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Singer Program, covering the roles of Pasqualita (*Doctor Atomic*) and Grandmother Buryjovka (Jenůfa) and in June, Leia made her Wolf Trap Opera debut as Olga in *Eugene Onegin*.



**Dominique McCormick** is a lyric soprano from New York known for her “superlative vocals complimented with wonderful expressiveness and impeccable comic timing” (Houstonia). She received her undergraduate and masters degrees from the Eastman School of Music. She continued her education and professional experience in France performing oratorio and operatic works with, l’Orchestre Nationale des Pays de la Loire, Théâtre d’Asnières, Théâtre du Tambour-Royal and upon her return to the United States, singing with Opera America, Ars Lyrica and Opera in the Heights in Houston. She is currently finishing her doctoral dissertation on the vocal works of Marital Caillebotte. She is also proud to be the Co-

Founder/owner and Artistic Director of Century Fine Arts, a music and fine arts school in Sugar Land, TX.



Praised for his “stirring resonance” (*San Diego Story*), bass-baritone **Jason Zacher** is thrilled to be joining Ars Lyrica this season. Recently, Jason was an Apprentice Artist at Des Moines Metro Opera where he covered the role of Jupiter in Rameau’s *Platée*. This past season, Jason was also the featured Resident Artist at Opera in the Heights. On the *Oh! Stage*, Jason’s operatic highlights include Angelotti (*Tosca*), King Balthazar (*Amahl & The Night Visitors*), Prince Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*), as well as debuting the roles of Male Admirer in Karim Al-Zand’s *The Leader* and Artie in Anthony Brandt’s *Kassandra*. As a concert soloist, Jason has performed the bass solos in Fauré’s *Requiem*, Mendelssohn’s *St. Paul*, Beethoven’s *Mass in C*, Mozart’s *Coronation Mass*, as well as Britten’s *Rejoice in the Lamb*. Jason currently holds degrees from both the University of Houston (M.M. Vocal Performance) and Montclair State University (B.M. Music Education).

## TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

### *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* BWV 170

#### **Aria**

*Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust,  
Dich kann man nicht bei Höllensünden,  
Wohl aber Himmelseintracht finden;  
Du stärkst allein die schwache Brust.  
Drum sollen lauter Tugendgaben  
In meinem Herzen Wohnung haben.*

Welcome rest, my soul's beloved pleasure,  
which lies outside the sins of hell,  
and instead in heaven's concord;  
you alone give me strength.  
Therefore only virtue's pure gifts  
shall dwell in my heart.

#### **Recitative**

*Die Welt, das Sündenhaus,  
Bricht nur in Höllenlieder aus  
Und sucht durch Haß und Neid  
Des Satans Bild an sich zu tragen.  
Ihr Mund ist voller Ottergift,  
Der oft die Unschuld tödlich trifft,  
Und will allein von Racha! sagen.  
Gerechter Gott, wie weit  
Ist doch der Mensch von dir entfernt;  
Du liebst, jedoch sein Mund  
Macht Fluch und Feindschaft kund  
Und will den Nächsten nur mit Füßen treten.  
Ach! diese Schuld ist schwerlich zu verbeten.*

The world, in all its sinfulness,  
sings only hellish songs,  
and seeks through hatred and envy  
to further Satan's plan.  
Its mouth hurls venom,  
at the poor and innocent  
and seeks only vengeance.  
Righteous God, how profoundly  
we have alienated ourselves from you;  
You love us, yet our mouths  
spread lies and enmity  
and seek to impugn our neighbor.  
Alas, our prayers pale against our sin.

#### **Aria**

*Wie jammern mich doch die verkehrten Herzen,  
Die dir, mein Gott, so sehr zuwider sein;  
Ich zittre recht und fühle tausend Schmerzen,  
Wenn sie sich nur an Rach und Haß erfreun.  
Gerechter Gott, was magst du doch gedenken,  
Wenn sie allein mit rechten Satansränken  
Dein scharfes Strafgebot so frech verlacht.  
Ach! ohne Zweifel hast du so gedacht:  
Wie jammern mich doch die verkehrten Herzen!*

How I pity the perverted souls  
who are so sorely set against you, my God;  
I tremble with a thousand pangs,  
when they rejoice in vengeance and hatred.  
Righteous God, what must you think,  
when they, with Satanic guile,  
scorn your commandments so utterly!  
Alas! Surely you have considered  
how pitiable are these perverted souls!



**Recitative**

Wer sollte sich demnach  
 Wohl hier zu leben wünschen,  
 Wenn man nur Haß und Ungemach  
 Vor seine Liebe sieht?  
 Doch, weil ich auch den Feind  
 Wie meinen besten Freund  
 Nach Gottes Vorschrift lieben soll,  
 So flieht  
 Mein Herz Zorn und Groll  
 Und wünscht allein bei Gott zu leben,  
 Der selbst die Liebe heißt.  
 Ach, eintrachtvoller Geist,  
 Wenn wird er dir doch nur  
 sein Himmelszion geben?

Who should, then,  
 want to remain here any longer,  
 when hatred and hardship  
 keep us from your love?  
 Yet I must treat even my enemy  
 as my best friend,  
 if I am to love according to God's commandment.  
 Thus my heart flees from  
 anger and resentment  
 and wishes only for life with God,  
 who is Love itself.  
 Ah, peaceful spirit,  
 when will He grant you  
 His heavenly kingdom?

**Aria**

Mir ekelt mehr zu leben,  
 Drum nimm mich, Jesu, bin!  
 Mir graut vor allen Sünden,  
 Laß mich dies Wohnhaus finden,  
 Woselbst ich ruhig bin.

I am sickened by this life;  
 therefore take me home, Jesus!  
 I shudder at my own sinfulness;  
 so let me find a dwelling-place  
 where I may be at peace.

*Ein Herz, das seinen Jesum lebend weiß* BWV 134

**Recitative (Tenor & Alto)**

Ein Herz, das seinen Jesum lebend weiß,  
 Empfündet Jesu neue Güte  
 Und dichtet nur auf seines Heilands Preis.  
 Wie freuet sich ein gläubiges Gemüte.

A heart that lives in Jesus  
 absorbs goodness from Him  
 and praises unceasingly its Savior.  
 How joyful are the faithful!

**Aria (Tenor)**

Auf, Gläubige, singet die lieblichen Lieder,  
 Euch scheint ein herrlich verneuetes Licht.  
 Der lebende Heiland gibt selige Zeiten,  
 Auf, Seelen, ihr müsset ein Opfer bereiten,  
 Bezahlet dem Höchsten mit Danken die Pflicht.

Rise up, believers, and sing delightful songs,  
 a resplendent light shines upon you.  
 The living Savior blesses humanity;  
 rise up and prepare an offering,  
 make your devotions to the Most High with thanks.

### **Recitative (Tenor & Alto)**

*Wohl dir, Gott hat an dich gedacht,  
O Gott geweihtes Eigentum;  
Der Heiland lebt und siegt mit Macht  
Zu deinem Heil, zu seinem Ruhm  
Muß hier der Satan furchtsam zittern  
Und sich die Hölle selbst erschüttern.  
Es stirbt der Heiland dir zugut  
Und fährt vor dich zu der Höllen,  
Sogar vergießet er sein kostbar Blut,  
Daß du in seinem Blute siegst,  
Denn dieses kann die Feinde fällen,  
Und wenn der Streit dir an die Seele dringt,  
Daß du alsdann nicht überwunden liegst.*

*Der Liebe Kraft ist vor mich ein Panier  
Zum Heldenmut, zur Stärke in den Streiten:  
Mir Siegeskronen zu bereiten,  
Nahmst du die Dornenkrone dir,  
Mein Herr, mein Gott, mein auferstandnes Heil,  
So hat kein Feind an mir zum Schaden teil.*

*Die Feinde zwar sind nicht zu zählen.  
Gott schützt die ihm getreuen Seelen.  
Der letzte Feind ist Grab und Tod.  
Gott macht auch den zum Ende unsrer Not.*

### **Duet (Alto & Tenor)**

*Wir danken und preisen dein brünstiges Lieben  
Und bringen ein Opfer der Lippen vor dich.  
Der Sieger erwecket die freudigen Lieder,  
Der Heiland erscheint und tröstet uns wieder  
Und stärket die streitende Kirche durch sich.*

### **Recitative (Tenor & Alto)**

*Doch würke selbst den Dank in unserm Munde,  
In dem er allzu irdisch ist;*

Blessed ones, God has remembered you,  
as one of His consecrated.  
The Savior lives and His power conquers  
for your salvation, to His glory;  
Satan must tremble fearfully  
and hell itself be shaken.  
The Savior dies for you  
and for you journeys to hell,  
He even sheds His precious blood,  
so that you might triumph through it;  
it can defeat your enemies  
and when you are faced with strife,  
you will not be defeated.

Love's power is a banner over me  
for a hero's courage, for strength in the battle:  
to prepare a victor's crown for me,  
You put on the crown of thorns,  
my Lord, my God, my resurrected salvation,  
thus no enemy can harm me.

Our enemies, however, are vast.  
God protects souls faithful to Him.  
The ultimate enemy is death and the grave.  
God made even these to end our suffering.

We thank and praise Your ardent love  
and bring a resounding offering before You.  
The Victor prompts songs of joy,  
while the Savior appears and comforts us  
and through Himself strengthens the Church.

You put gratitude in our mouths,  
since they are too worldly;

*Ja schaffe, daß zu keiner Stunde  
Dich und dein Werk kein menschlich Herz vergißt;  
Ja, laß in dir das Labsal unsrer Brust  
Und aller Herzen Trost und Lust,  
Die unter deiner Gnade trauen,  
Vollkommen und unendlich sein.  
Es schließe deine Hand uns ein,  
Daß wir die Wirkung kräftig schauen,  
Was uns dein Tod und Sieg erwirbt  
Und daß man nun nach deinem Auferstehen  
Nicht stirbt, wenn man gleich zeitlich stirbt,  
Und wir dadurch zu deiner Herrlichkeit eingehen.*

*Was in uns ist, erhebt dich, großer Gott,  
Und preiset deine Huld und Treu;  
Dein Auferstehen macht sie wieder neu,  
Dein großer Sieg macht uns von Feinden los  
Und bringet uns zum Leben;  
Drum sei dir Preis und Dank gegeben.*

### **Chorus**

*Erschallet, ihr Himmel, erfreuet dich, Erde,  
Lobsinge dem Höchsten, du glaubende Schar.  
Es schauet und schmecket ein kedes Gemüte  
Des lebenden Heilands unendliche Güte,  
Er tröstet und stellet als Sieger sich dar.*

make it so that at no time  
will humanity ever forget You and Your works;  
let the refreshment of our bodies  
and the comfort and delight of every heart,  
that accepts your grace,  
be complete and unending.  
May your Hand enclose us,  
so that we see clearly how  
your death obtained victory for us,  
and that now, through your Resurrection,  
we do not die, even though we leave this world,  
and thereby enter into Your glory.

Whatever we possess exalts You, great God,  
and praises Your mercy and faithfulness.  
Your Resurrection makes all new again,  
your great victory frees us from all enemies  
and brings us back to life;  
Therefore we thank and praise You.

Resound, you heavens, rejoice, O earth,  
sing praise to the Highest, O faithful flock.  
Each and every being sees and tastes  
the living Savior's eternal goodness,  
He comforts us and reveals Himself as the Victor.

IN MEMORIAM  
MAURICE KENNETH ISAAC  
born in Bristol, September 23, 1942  
died in Houston, July 15, 2020

*I dream of voices I can never hear;  
High, sparkling, agile, rich, pure, powerful,  
With sostenuto that can bring a tear,  
Or from soft, trembling lips a sigh can pull,  
That trap the listener in a magic snare,  
Can duel with trumpeters till loss of breath,  
And violinists' flying fingers sear,  
In the acoustics of the church, can dare  
To put the voice of angels to a test,  
Cause faith to rise and doubt to disappear.*

(from an *Ode to Castrati* by Maurice Isaac)



Goethe's Faust complained there were two souls within his breast. Maurice had at least half a dozen: hiker/caver/birder, poet, singer, dandy, collector of first editions, cigarette cards, rugby enthusiast but, above all, music lover. Baroque was his passion, Handel his hero, and Bach a close second.

He had come to Houston in the late sixties to work for Chevron, was transferred to San Francisco where he married, had two sons and then found himself back in Houston in the mid-1980s. Upon retirement in 1998 and particularly after the death of his wife Nola in 2003, he set about exploring the many facets of Houston and discovered a wealth of cultural diversions. His initial exposure as a youngster to Handel, through a 78rpm recording of the *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba* from the oratorio *Solomon*, made Maurice a Handel enthusiast and lover of Baroque music.

What joy, then, to discover that Houston had become a hub for Early Music, classical concerts informed by historical practice and performed on period instruments. Prominent among the ensembles proliferating in Houston was Ars Lyrica, which he enthusiastically supported as a subscriber and donor. The high point of this musical aspect of his life was Ars Lyrica's production of Handel's *Agrippina* in 2018. His evident delight garnered him a much-treasured glimpse of the preparations for this "first" in Ars Lyrica's history. He eagerly anticipated a similar Baroque bonbon in the form of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* until, alas, fate took over in the form of COVID 19 and (non-related) ill health. Gratefully, with this virtual concert, we remember one for whom music truly was the food of love.

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# Ars Lyrica's Next Performances



## Bach 2 Bach

November 15, 2020 | 5 pm

Our second all-Bach installment is devoted to music for violin and harpsichord, including two of the beloved “duet” sonatas for harpsichord and violin. Both players also take solo turns with music Bach composed for the other instrument, in transcriptions that reveal new ways of hearing familiar repertoire. Featuring renowned Baroque violinist Elizabeth Blumentock and Ars Lyrica founder Matthew Dirst, this will be the chamber highlight of our 2020/21 season.

Bach 2 Bach is presented jointly with Music at St. Philip.



## Comfort & Joy

December 18, 2020 | 7:30 pm

This festive holiday program includes seasonal favorites alongside seldom-heard gems of the Baroque era, all with abundant vocal and instrumental display. Soprano Camille Ortiz and mezzo-soprano Cecilia Duarte are featured on this multi-national holiday gift for the Ars Lyrica family.



Cecilia Duarte  
mezzo-soprano



Camille Ortiz  
soprano