

ARS LYRICA'S NEXT PERFORMANCE

Our 2014/15 season finale provides abundant vocal and instrumental fireworks, with *Alexander's Feast—Or, The Power of Music* by G.F. Handel, produced in collaboration with the Bach Society Houston.

MAY 17TH / 6PM

ALEXANDER'S FEAST —or, the Power of Music



Matthew Dirst
harpsichord

Yung-Hsiang Wang
violin

Becky Baxter
harp

Maria Lin
violin

Ars Lyrica is proud to present this rarely heard oratorio, which makes for a formidable evening of music and story—an event you won't want to miss!



Yulia van Doren
soprano



The Bach Society Houston



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ARS LYRICA HOUSTON

Matthew Dirst | Artistic Director



Matthew Dirst
harpsichord

Ingrid Matthews
violin

Bach & Sons: at Court

BACH & SONS: AT COURT
SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2015, 7:30PM
ZILKHA HALL, HOBBY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to *Bach & Sons: At Court*, the second of two Ars Lyrica programs this season that celebrate the extraordinary legacy of the Bach family. Tonight we welcome back to the Zilkha Hall stage an exceptional player and a good friend, virtuoso Baroque violinist Ingrid Matthews, who along with yours truly and Ars Lyrica's core string players offer a program of instrumental works by Johann Sebastian Bach and his two eldest sons, Wilhelm Friedmann and Carl Philipp Emanuel.

Our current season concludes on May 17 with Handel's *Alexander's Feast*, produced in collaboration with Bach Society Houston. Subtitled "the power of music," this grand oratorio is full of spectacular sonic effects, beautiful melodies, and stirring choruses. It's something you won't want to miss!

Consider joining us as well for *Seasonal Rituals*, Ars Lyrica's just-announced 2015/16 season, which begins with Houston's own superstar mezzo soprano Jamie Barton joining the ensemble on September 13. For full details on our 2015/16 programs, pick up a brochure in the Zilkha Hall lobby this evening. Subscribe now for the best seats and benefits.

We also delighted to announce our latest commercial recording: *Heart & Soul: Devotional Music from the German Baroque*, which features countertenor Ryland Angel, Ars Lyrica string players, and myself on harpsichord and organ. In addition to some sublime and rare music, this is the first recording of the mighty Fritts organ at St Philip Presbyterian Church here in Houston. Copies are available for purchase in the lobby during tonight's program, or you can order a copy from the Ars Lyrica website: www.arslyricahouston.org

With many thanks for your continued support. Enjoy the program!



Matthew Dirst
Artistic Director

PROGRAM

Sinfonia in F Major, F. 67
Vivace – Allegro
Andante
Allegro
Minuetto 1 & 2
Wilhelm Friedemann Bach
(1710-1784)

Harpsichord Concerto in D
Minor, H. 427
Allegro
Poco andante
Allegro assai
Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
(1714-1788)

INTERMISSION

Sonata in B Minor for Violin
and Harpsichord, BWV 1014
Adagio
Allegro
Andante
Allegro
Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Violin Concerto in E Major,
BWV 1042
Allegro
Adagio
Allegro assai
J. S. Bach

PROGRAM NOTES

For most of its history, Western art music has been a family business, with the greatest musical dynasties a defining feature of the Baroque era especially: the Couperins, the Scarlattis, and, of course, the Bachs. Though the music of Johann Sebastian is better known today, for much of the 18th century Carl Philipp Emanuel was considered the more important composer. Papa Bach was revered by serious musicians for his skill with counterpoint and fugue, but professionals and amateurs of Haydn and Mozart's day placed greater value on the more tuneful music of his sons.

Sebastian himself seems to have regarded his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, as the most talented of the lot. How else to explain Sebastian's repeated efforts to help Friedemann land a steady job, or the collections Bach père apparently put together to test his favorite son's legendary skills—the six trio sonatas for organ, for example? Ironically, Friedemann met essentially the same fate as his father: both were regarded in their own day as fusty eccentrics, with neither ever managing to find a post worthy of his exceptional talent. Philipp Emanuel, on the other hand, served the Prussian court before taking up reins as Director of Music for Hamburg's five principal churches, one of the most prestigious church positions of his day.

The two elder Bachs held various court posts as well, though none so prominent as Emanuel's position as harpsichordist to Frederick the Great. Before his long tenure at Leipzig's Thomasschule, Sebastian Bach served the Weimar dukes and Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. Wilhelm Friedemann fared not as well, with but one honorific court appointment and a series of church jobs in Dresden and Halle.

During this time, musical service at court meant the regular composition and performance of sonatas, concertos, suites, sinfonias, and the occasional celebratory work for birthdays and holidays. From the large output of chamber music by this extraordinarily productive family, this evening's program offers a pair of concertos, one sonata, and a multi-movement sinfonia that incorporates a couple of dance movements.

Each illustrates in its own way the growing importance of purely instrumental music during a crucial time: at precisely the moment when music without text became widely valued for its hitherto unnoticed expressive powers.

Somewhere along the line, W. F. Bach's Sinfonia in F Major acquired the subtitle "Dissonant" because of its surprising harmonic twists and turns. Like his younger brother Philipp Emanuel, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach forged an individual style, one that owed something to his father's art but which also embraced the *Sturm und Drang* (literally, "Storm and Stress") idea popular among leading German literary and musical figures in the middle of the 18th century. C. P. E. Bach's Concerto in D Minor for solo harpsichord and strings likewise embraces this aesthetic, with tempestuous outer movements and a tender, über-sensitive central *Andante*.

Sebastian Bach's works for violin include a number of important collections, including a set of six sonatas for violin and obbligato keyboard in which the harpsichord's part is, unusually, fully written out in two staves. The normal custom in sonatas from this period was just a single line for the keyboard player, with figures indicating what harmonies to improvise in the right hand. Bach's ingenious texture turns what might have been a solo sonata into a trio sonata texture—but in this case, it's a trio for just two players! The Sonata in B Minor, cast in the traditional four four movements, combines artful counterpoint with fashionable *galant*-style figuration, especially in its memorable slow movements.

Bach wrote his violin concertos, along with the more famous "Brandenburg" concertos, for the music-loving Prince Leopold, who seems to have been the perfect patron. A sunny atmosphere prevails in most of these works, nowhere more clearly than in the outer movements of the E-major violin concerto. Bach liked this work so much that he returned to it during his Leipzig years, rearranging its solo line for harpsichord and transposing the whole to D major for performances by the Collegium Musicum at Café Zimmerman. Returning to the theme of our November program (*Bach & Sons: At the Café*), this concerto then brings us full circle—and just a week after Papa Bach's 330th birthday!

© M. Dirst

ARTISTIC PERSONNEL

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| solo violin/leader | Ingrid Matthews |
| violin I | Oleg Sulyga, Hae-a Lee, Maria Lin |
| violin II | Alan Austin, Alana Youssefian, Stephanie Raby |
| viola | James Dunham, Erika Lawson |
| cello | Barrett Sills |
| violone | Deborah Dunham |
| harpsichord solo | Matthew Dirst |

ARS LYRICA STAFF

Matthew **Dirst**, *Artistic Director*

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Jacqueline **Gonzalez**, *Marketing & Admin. Director*

Special thanks to St Philip Presbyterian Church for providing rehearsal space for this program. Harpsichord by John Phillips (Berkeley, CA) after Nicolas Dumont (1707).

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

INGRID MATTHEWS has long been established as one of the leading baroque violinists of her generation. She founded the Seattle Baroque Orchestra with Byron Schenkman in 1992, and served as Music Director until stepping down from that position in 2013. Ms. Matthews won first prize in the 1989 Erwin Bodky International Competition for Early Music, and since that time has performed extensively around the world with numerous period-instrument ensembles. She has served as concertmaster for orchestras such as the New York Collegium, the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, and Musica Angelica (Los Angeles); and has appeared as a guest director and soloist with many others including the New York Collegium, the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, the Magnolia Baroque Festival Orchestra (Winston-Salem, NC), New Trinity Baroque (Atlanta), the Bach Sinfonia (Washington DC), Les Idees Heureuses (Montreal), the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, and the Victoria Symphony.

For close to a decade she was first violinist of the ensemble La Luna, which specialized in 17th century music, touring and recording to great critical acclaim. She has served on the faculties of the University of Toronto, the University of Washington, Indiana University, the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, the International Baroque Institute at Longy, and Amherst Early Music; and



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

has given master classes in baroque repertoire and style at numerous colleges and universities. Currently on the faculty of Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, Ms. Matthews is a graduate of Indiana University.

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, the Dallas Morning News recently praised his "crisp but expressive direction" of the Monteverdi 1610 Vespers while naming this performance "Best Classical Performance of 2010." Dirst's recordings of music by Scarlatti and Hasse with Ars Lyrica, 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 book *Engaging Bach: The Keyboard Legacy from Marpurg to Mendelssohn* was published in 2012 by Cambridge University Press.



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. The ensemble's distinctive programming favors little-known Baroque dramatic and chamber works, and its pioneering efforts have begun to attract international attention: 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.

Ars Lyrica's most recent recording, of Domenico Scarlatti's comic intermezzo *La Dirindina* and his chamber cantata *Pur nel sonno*, features mezzo soprano Jamie Barton (recently crowned Cardiff Singer of the World 2013) and soprano Céline Ricci. Details about forthcoming recordings and upcoming programs can be found at www.arslyricahouston.org.



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