

2023|2024 SEASON

FALL/WINTER

20  
YEARS OF  
MAGIC

Matthew Dirst  
*Artistic Director*

SEPT 22, 2023 7:30 PM **FALLEN ANGELS**

NOV 3, 2023 7:30 PM **ECSTATIC VISIONS**

DEC 12, 2023 7:30 PM **AWE & WONDER**

ARS  
LYRICA  
HOUSTON 

Ars Lyrica Houston Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Season

# 20 Years of Magic

FROM THE DIRECTORS

Twenty years ago, an enterprising group of musicians and their supporters launched into the Houston arts ecosphere something new: an ensemble devoted to music from the “golden age” of lyric art for voices and period instruments. Since that time, Ars Lyrica Houston has grown steadily, from a small nucleus of musicians-for-hire into an organization with an international reputation for creative excellence. *20 Years of Magic* celebrates this milestone with musical wizardry of various kinds, from wondrous choral works by Carissimi and Charpentier to miraculous chamber pieces by Biber and Bach. We're especially pleased to offer a new production of a “magic” opera: Handel's *Amadigi di Gaula*, in its Houston premiere.

Ars Lyrica's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary owes much to a network of generous supporters, who have made possible increasingly ambitious programming, a portfolio of diverse outreach activities, newly commissioned period instruments, and biennial opera productions. Thank you for your patronage, which helps to ensure a bright future for period-instrument performance and world-class Baroque opera in Houston!

With gratitude,



*Matthew Dirst*

**Matthew Dirst**  
Artistic Director



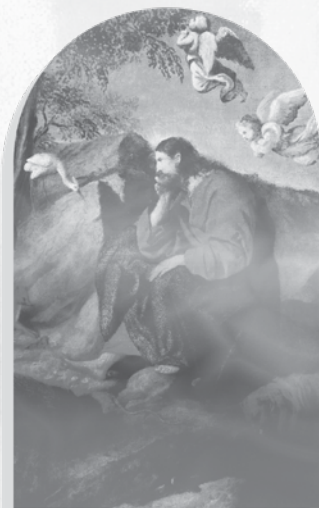
*Kinga Ferguson*

**Kinga Ferguson**  
Executive Director

# AWE & WONDER

**TUESDAY | 7:30 PM  
DECEMBER 12, 2023**

St. Philip Presbyterian Church



## FEATURING

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Julia Fox, *soprano*  
Amia Langer, *soprano*  
Sarah Dyer, *contralto*  
Michael Skarke, *countertenor*  
Thomas O'Neill, *tenor*

Hayden Smith, *tenor*  
Christopher Besch, *bass-baritone*  
Joaevian Rivera, *baritone*  
Matthew Dirst, *artistic director*

## ORCHESTRAL PERSONNEL

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<b>Traverso</b>	Colin St-Martin	<b>Viola</b>	Erika Lawson
	Alaina Diehl		Jorge Luis Zapata Marin
<b>Violin 1</b>	Stephen Redfield, <i>concertmaster</i>	<b>Cello</b>	Barrett Sills
	Maria Lin		Eric Taeyang Mun
	Hae-a Lee	<b>Violone</b>	Deborah Dunham
<b>Violin 2</b>	Oleg Sulyga	<b>Organ</b>	Mario Aschauer
	Alan Austin	<b>Harpsichord</b>	Matthew Dirst
	Kana Kimura		

**AWE AND WONDER  
PROGRAM**

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*Morning Song on the Feast of Creation, Wq 239*

Music by C. P. E. Bach  
(1714–1788)

Text by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock  
(1724–1803)

ACCOMPANIED RECITATIVE

*Noch kommt sie nicht die Sonne,  
Gottes Gesandete  
noch weilt sie, die Lebensgeberin.  
Von Dufte schauert es noch ringsumher  
auf der wartenden Erde.*

We await the Sun,  
God's messenger,  
Yet it delays, this giver of life.  
A shower of perfume still lies  
on the waiting Earth.

ARIOSO

*Heiliger, Hoherhabner, Erster,  
du hast auch unseren Sirius gemacht!  
Wie wird er strahlen,  
der hellere Sirius der Erde!*

Holy, most exalted one,  
you also made our Dog Star!  
How it shall shine forth,  
this bright star of Earth!

ARIA

*Schon wehen und säuseln und kühlen  
die melodischen Lüfte der Frühe!  
Schon walt sie einher, die Morgenröte,  
verkündigt  
die Auferstehung der toten Sonne.*

The melodious breezes of morning  
waft and rustle and refresh!  
They usher in the blush of day,  
heralding  
the resurrection of the lost sun.

DUET & CHORUS

*Herr, Gott, barmherzig und gnädig!  
Wir, deine Kinder, wir mehr als Sonnen  
müssen dereinst auch untergehen  
und werden auch aufgehn!*

Lord, God, gracious and merciful!  
We, your children, we more than suns  
must one day also set  
but will also rise again!

DUET

*Halleluja!, Seht ihr die Strahlende,  
Göttliche kommen,  
wie sie da an dem Himmel empor steigt.  
Halleluja, wie sie da,  
auch ein Gotteskind, aufersteht.*

Hallelujah! See the radiant,  
divine one arriving,  
as she ascends into the heavens.  
Hallelujah, as she rises up  
as a child of God.

ACCOMPANIED RECITATIVE

*O der Sonne Gottes und solche Sonnen,  
wie diese, die jetzo gegen uns strahlt,  
hie er, gleich dem Schaum auf den Wogen,  
tausend mal tausend  
werden in der Welten Ozeane!*

O God's sun and such suns  
as now shine upon us,  
he said, like the foam on the waves,  
thousand upon thousand  
grow in world's oceans!

*Und du solltest nicht auferwecken,  
der auf dem ganzen Schauplatz  
der unberdenkbaren Schpfung  
immer und alles wandelt  
und herrlicher macht durch die Wandlung?*

And should you not resurrect,  
he who on the entire platform  
of immeasurable creation  
transfigures everything everywhere,  
and thereby renders more glorious?

CHORUS

*Halleluja, Seht ihr die Strahlende,  
Gttliche kommen,  
wie sie da an dem Himmel empor steigt.  
Halleluja, wie sie da,  
auch ein Gotteskind, aufersteht.*

Hallelujah! See the radiant,  
divine one arriving,  
as she ascends into the heavens.  
Hallelujah, as she rises up  
as a child of God.

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Serenade of the Nightwatchmen, A 877a  
Serenade—Adagio (Overture)  
Allamanda  
Aria  
Ciacona  
Gavotte  
Retirata

Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber  
(1644–1704)

*Lost ihr Herrn und lasst euch sagn,  
der Hammer der hay neyne/zehne g'shlag'n,  
hets Feyer hets wohl,  
und lobet Gott den Herrn  
und unser liebe Frau.*

Hear ye and let it be known:  
the clock now strikes nine/ten o'clock.  
Huddle closely by the fire  
and praise God the Father  
and our beloved Lady.

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Messe de Minuit pour Nol, H. 9

Marc-Antoine Charpentier  
(1643–1704)

KYRIE eleison,  
Christe eleison,  
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy,  
Christ, have mercy,  
Lord, have mercy.

GLORIA in excelsis Deo.  
Et in terra pax hominibus  
bonæ voluntatis.

Laudamus te; benedicimus te;  
adoramus te; glorificamus te.  
Gratias agimus tibi  
propter magnam gloriam tuam.

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,  
Deus Pater omnipotens.  
Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe.  
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,  
Filius Patris.  
Qui tollis peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis.  
Qui tollis peccata mundi,  
suscipe deprecationem nostram.  
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,  
Miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,  
tu solus Dominus,  
tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.  
Cum Sancto Spiritu  
in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

CREDO in unum Deum;  
Patrem omnipotentem,  
factorem coeli et terrae,  
visibilium omnium et invisibilium.  
Et in unum Dominum, Jesum Christum,  
Filium Dei unigenitum,  
et ex Patre natum ante omnia sæcula.

Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,  
Deum verum de Deo vero,  
genitum, non factum,  
consubstantialem Patri,  
per quem omnia facta sunt.  
Qui propter nos homines,  
et propter nostram salutem  
descendit de coelis;  
Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto  
ex Maria Virgine: et homo factus est.

Glory be to God on high.  
And on earth peace  
to all of good will.

We praise You; we bless You;  
we worship You; we glorify You.  
We give thanks to You  
for your great glory.

O Lord God, Heavenly King,  
God the Father Almighty.  
O Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son.  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
Son of the Father.  
You who takes away the sin of the world,  
have mercy upon us.  
You who takes away the sin of the world,  
receive our prayer.  
You who sit at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy upon us.

For You only art holy,  
You only are the Lord,  
You only are the most high, Jesus Christ.  
Together with the Holy Ghost  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

I believe in one God;  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
and of all things seen and unseen.  
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only begotten Son of God,  
begotten of the Father before all worlds.

God of God, light of light,  
true God of true God,  
begotten not made;  
of one substance with the Father,  
by whom all things were made.  
Who for us  
and for our salvation  
came down from heaven;  
and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost,  
of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis  
sub Pontio Pilato,  
passus et sepultus est.  
Et resurrexit tertia die  
secundum Scripturas  
et ascendit in coelum.  
sedet ad dexteram Patris.  
Et iterum venturus est cum gloria,  
iudicare vivos et mortuos:  
cujus regni non erit finis.

Et in Spiritum Sanctum,  
Dominum, et vivificantem:  
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.  
Qui cum Patre et Filio simul  
adoratur et conglorificatur:  
qui locutus est per Prophetas.  
Et unam Sanctam  
Catholicam et Apostolicam Ecclesiam.  
Confiteor unum baptisma,  
in remissionem peccatorum.  
Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum  
et vitam venturi sæculi. Amen.

SANCTUS, Sanctus, Sanctus,  
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.  
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua;  
Hosanna in excelsis.  
Benedictus qui venit  
in nomine Domini.

AGNUS DEI,  
qui tollis peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis.

He was crucified also for us,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
and was buried.  
And on the third day He rose again  
according to the Scriptures  
and ascended into heaven.  
He sits at the right hand of the Father;  
and will come again with glory  
to judge the living and the dead;  
and His kingdom shall have no end.

I believe in the Holy Ghost,  
the Lord and giver of life,  
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
Who with the Father and the Son together  
is worshipped and glorified;  
as it was told by the Prophets.  
And I believe in one holy  
catholic and apostolic Church.  
I acknowledge one baptism  
for the forgiveness of sins.  
And I await the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Holy, Holy, Holy,  
Lord God of Sabaoth,  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory;  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is the one who comes  
in the name of the Lord.

Lamb of God,  
Who takes away the sins of the world,  
have mercy upon us.

*This program will last approximately one hour.*

*With thanks to the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, for use of its continuo organ (Bennett-Guittari, 1998) and to St Philip Presbyterian Church for providing rehearsal space for this program and its Flemish-style harpsichord (John Phillips, 2012).*

AWE & WONDER

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

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In 1782 Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, a leading poet of the German Enlightenment, penned an ode entitled *Morgengesang am Schöpfungsfeste* (“Morning Song on the Feast of Creation”) for C. P. E. Bach to set to music. Their fortuitous collaboration did not go unnoticed: a review of its inaugural performance noted that the work is “full of sublime simplicity...seldom have poetry and music been more fortunately united.” And indeed, Bach’s music makes the most of Klopstock’s vivid imagery: in the opening measures, for example, where the sun’s absence is keenly depicted with a lowing melodic figure begun in the bottom register of the accompanying strings. The Sun’s radiant appearance is celebrated not merely for its salubrious effect on the natural world and humankind; a transcendent and explicitly Christian message is also woven into Klopstock’s ode. Unresolved tension between these two poles—Christian doctrine on the one side, the Enlightenment on the other—runs through the last several sections of this ambitious work scored for four voices (SATB), flutes, and strings.

The great Bohemian violinist **Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber** is perhaps best known for his virtuosic solo sonatas, many of which require non-standard tuning schemes (*scordatura*). He also left a significant body of music for larger ensembles, including a **Serenade** in the five-part scoring typical of the late seventeenth century, with divided violins and violas. Effectively a suite that blends traditional dance idioms with “character” pieces, this peculiar work includes a *ciaccona* (or chaconne) that features a sung bass line beneath pizzicato upper strings. The vocal line is an ancient watchman’s song, which announces the hours while encouraging the faithful to praise God and the Virgin Mary.

The *noël*, a beloved part of French culture since the sixteenth century, provides tuneful access to the pastoral world of the Christ child and the shepherds who pay homage at the manger. Their rustic texts often mix bits of the Christmas story with more generic holiday sentiments, just as many English-language carols do. During the Advent and Christmas seasons especially, one still hears noëls sung simply by children, varied creatively by church organists, and occasionally incorporated into more elaborate musical works.

There is, in short, no better musical material for a Christmas Eve midnight mass. Taking full advantage of this opportunity, **Marc-Antoine Charpentier** incorporated eleven different noel melodies into his beloved *Messe de Minuit pour Noël*. More than perhaps any other mass



setting in the repertoire, this work sets toes tapping repeatedly thanks to its catchy tunes: the earnest pleading of “Kyrie eleison” (“Lord, have mercy”) dances to the gavotte rhythm of *Joseph est bien marié* (“Joseph married well”), while the Agnus Dei (“Lamb of God”) parties merrily to *A minuit fut fait un resveil* (“At midnight we celebrate”). Noël melodies are absent at only its most solemn moments: the Credo’s genuflection over Christ’s incarnation, for example.

Scored for eight singers distributed evenly over four parts (SATB) and a small orchestra of flutes, strings, and continuo, the **Midnight Mass** is Charpentier’s best-known work. He composed it sometime around 1694, during his service at the Jesuit Church of Saint-Louis in the Marais district of Paris. The Jesuits, as it happened, were avid consumers and promoters of noëls. During the same era, missionaries from this order circulated several of the better-known melodies among the native peoples of North America, some of which remain popular in the Huron and Mohawk languages.

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2023 Laffont  
Competition  
Houston District  
winners  
Dorothy Gal,  
Hayden Smith  
and  
Audrey Welsh



DOROTHY GAL, SOPRANO  
HOUSTON DISTRICT WINNER

HAYDEN SMITH, TENOR  
HOUSTON DISTRICT WINNER

AUDREY WELSH, MEZZO-SOPRANO  
HOUSTON DISTRICT WINNER

Come hear this year's young singers at the 2024 Houston District competition!  
Alice Pratt Brown Hall at The Shepherd School of Music.

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HOUSTON DISTRICT



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**BANNED**

Friday, October 6, 2023 | 7:30pm  
@MATCH

**CANCELED**

Saturday, November 18, 2023 | 8:00pm  
@Houston Museum of Natural Science

**REVISED**

Saturday, February 17, 2024 | 7:00pm  
@Holocaust Museum Houston

**MUTED**

Friday, May 24, 2024 | 7:00pm  
@Duncan Recital Hall

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# ARS LYRICA'S SPRING EVENTS

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## FUGAL GAMES

**Saturday, January 13, 2024 at 4 pm**

**Duncan Recital Hall, The Shepherd School of Music at Rice University**

*Fugal Games* joyously celebrates the release of artistic director Matthew Dirst's new book on Bach's *Art of Fugue* and *Musical Offering*. This instrumental program includes significant excerpts from both of Bach's masterpieces, alongside miniature marvels by Dietrich Buxtehude and George Philipp Telemann.

## VISIONS & REVERIES

**Saturday, March 16, 2024 at 7:30 pm**

**Zilkha Hall, The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts**

This all-French program showcases lyric cantatas on mythological themes by Elizabeth Claude Jacquet de la Guerre and Jean-Philippe Rameau, and a sumptuous instrumental suite by François Couperin. Featuring soprano Lauren Snouffer and a select ensemble of period-instrument specialists.

## AMADIGI DI GAULA

**Friday, May 24, 2024 at 7:30 pm &**

**Saturday, May 25, 2024 at 7:30 pm (+live concert broadcast)**

**Zilkha Hall, The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts**

The Houston premiere of Handel's magic opera *Amadigi di Gaula* with four rising stars of the operatic firmament: sopranos Camille Ortiz and Raven McMillon, and countertenors Randall Scotting and Nicholas Garza. Tara Faircloth directs and Matthew Dirst conducts this spellbinding production.

## POST-OPERA SOIRÉE

Immediately following the May 25th opera performance, gather with Ars Lyrica artists, directors, and fellow patrons upstairs at Diana American Grill for a jubilant end to the evening with delicious food and drink.



OPERA  
CIRCLE

it all  
started  
in 1600

For more information on the spring programs and to purchase subscriptions and tickets (in-person and digital), please visit [www.arslyricahouston.org](http://www.arslyricahouston.org).

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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Bass-baritone **Christopher Besch** is proud to have performed in eight countries on three continents with such conductors as Lorin Maazel, Leonard Slatkin, and Jeffrey Thomas. He has been described as having “a commanding stage presence and rich resonance of deep bass sound” (DC Theatre Scene). Stage engagements have included Figaro in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Opera Colorado, Frederick in Sondheim’s *A Little Night Music* with the Castleton Festival, Ashby in Puccini’s *La Fanciulla del West* with Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, and many others. Recent concert repertoire performances have included Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* with the Symphony of the Hills, Verdi’s *Requiem* with the Green Bay Civic Symphony, and Haman in Handel’s *Esther* with Ars Lyrica. Additionally, Dr. Besch is a frequent soloist with Bach Society Houston and appeared with them twice at the Leipzig Bach Festival in Germany. As a pedagogue, he currently serves as Assistant Professor of Voice at the Texas State University and is the Voice Programs Manager for the Classical Music Institute in San Antonio.



Widely admired as a Baroque violinist of expressive eloquence and technical sparkle, **Elizabeth Blumenstock** is a long-time concertmaster with the Bay Area’s Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and American Bach Soloists, concertmaster of the International Handel Festival Orchestra in Goettingen, Germany, and Artistic Director of the Corona del Mar Baroque Music Festival in Orange County, California. Her love of chamber music has involved her in several accomplished and interesting smaller ensembles including Galax Quartet, Live Oak Baroque, Sarasa, and Voices of Music. Ms. Blumenstock teaches regularly for the Juilliard Historical Performance program, at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the American Bach Soloists’ Summer Festival and Academy, the International Baroque Institute at Longy, and the Valley of the Moon Music Festival. She plays a 1660 Andrea Guarneri violin built in Cremona, Italy, on generous permanent loan to her from the Philharmonia Baroque Period Instrument Trust.



**Jay Carter** has gained recognition as one of America's finest countertenors. A frequent collaborator with period and modern ensembles, he is recognized as a leading interpreter of Baroque repertoire, having been lauded for luminous tone, stylish interpretations, and clarion delivery. In recent seasons, he has appeared throughout North America with acclaimed conductors Nicholas McGegan, John Scott, Masaaki Suzuki, and Matthew Halls, and with

organizations including Ars Lyrica Houston, Bach Collegium Japan, the Cleveland Orchestra, Houston Symphony, National Symphony, Philharmonia Baroque, and numerous others. Carter holds degrees from the University of Missouri Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance, the Yale School of Music, Yale Institute of Sacred Music, and William Jewell College, where he studied voice with Arnold Epley. He has served on the faculty at William Jewell College and Westminster Choir College and also serves as Artistic Director for the Kansas City-based chamber choir Musica Vocale.



Ars Lyrica Artistic Director **Matthew Dirst**, recently described in the *Washington Post* as an “efficient, extremely precise conductor who has an ear for detail,” 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 and the Warsaw International Harpsichord Competition. Widely admired for his stylish playing and

conducting, Dirst leads a period-instrument ensemble with several acclaimed recordings, one of which—J. A. Hasse's *Marc Antonio e Cleopatra*—was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2011 for Best Opera. 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. His publications include *Engaging Bach: The Keyboard Legacy from Marpurg to Mendelssohn* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) and *Bach and the Organ* (University of Illinois Press, 2016).



**Sarah Dyer**, contralto, is a native Nebraskan currently based in Houston, where she recently completed a Certificate of Performance in Voice at the University of Houston Moores School of Music. During the 2022-2023 season, she appeared as Hattie in *Kiss Me, Kate* with Central City Opera, where she was in residence as a Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Apprentice Artist. Additionally, Ms. Dyer returned to Moores Opera Center as Frederico

García Lorca in *Ainadamar* and as a featured soloist in *Sondheim on Sondheim*. She has been seen as Madame Larina in *Eugene Onegin* with Music Academy of the West, Second Witch in *Dido and Aeneas* with Ars Lyrica, and Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare* with Moores Opera Center, among others. In 2023, Ms. Dyer received a Fielder Grant through the Wednesday Morning Musical Club of Austin and also won an Encouragement Award at the Houston District of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition.



Violinist **Andrew Fouts** has been noted for his “mellifluous sound and sensitive style” (Washington Post) and as “an extraordinary violinist” who exhibits “phenomenal control” (Bloomington Herald-Times). In 2008 Andrew won first prize at the American Bach Soloists’ International Baroque Violin Competition. That same year he joined Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania’s acclaimed ensemble, Chatham Baroque, with which he co-directs and performs over 50 concerts

annually. He regularly appears with Apollo’s Fire, The Four Nations Ensemble, and as concertmaster with the Washington Bach Consort. Principal teachers include Charles Castleman at The Eastman School of Music, and Stanley Ritchie at Indiana University and he has taught at the Madison Early Music Festival and the Oficina de Música de Curitiba, Brazil. Andrew plays on a violin by Karl Dennis (Warren, RI 2013), after Guarneri del Gesù’s *Le violon du Diable* (1734).



Soprano **Julia Fox** embraces opera, concert and chamber performances, and premiering new music. She works to offer an “excellent performance” (Gramophone) “with dazzling effect” (Pittsburgh Stage Review) wherever she sings. She has performed leading roles from the standard operatic repertoire—Aminta, Amore, Belinda, Cundegonde, Giulia, Gretel, Italienische Sängerin, Mabel, Micaëla, and Pamina—with Empire Opera, Opera Theater Pittsburgh, Opera in the Heights, Operativo, RecRoom Arts and others. World premiere roles have been on record with NAXOS and on stage with Musiq̃a, Houston Grand Opera's *Opera to Go!*, and Five College Opera. As featured soloist, she has appeared with Mercury, Da Camera, Aperio, HGO, Syzygy, Grace Song, Foundation for Modern Music, Texas New Music Ensemble, Houston Baroque, Duo Scordatura, and Greenbriar Consortium, and she is delighted to return to Ars Lyrica. She studied at Amherst College, apprenticed with the Brentano Quartet and Peabody Trio, and was Young Artist Fellow with Da Camera.



Since entering the world of professional music in 1972, **Benjamin Kamins** has enjoyed a wide-ranging career as an orchestral musician, chamber player, solo performer, and educator. During his nine years as Associate Principal Bassoon with the Minnesota Orchestra, Mr. Kamins taught at St. Olaf and Macalester Colleges and was a member of the Aurora Wind Quintet. In 1981 he was appointed Principal Bassoon of the Houston Symphony, a position he held until 2003. In Houston, his artistic life remained diverse as a founding member of the Epicurean Wind Quintet and the Houston Symphony Chamber Players. With faculty appointments at the University of Houston, and then at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, he extended his personal involvement with music to academic institutions and the communities they serve. Now as the Lynette S. Autrey Professor of Bassoon at Rice University's Shepherd School, Mr. Kamins continues to be an advocate for young musicians and classical music performance.



Filipino-American bass baritone **Enrico Lagasca**'s nascent career already comprises 16 oratorios, 17 new-music works, seven opera roles, 13 song cycles and collections, and four Grammy Award-nominated recordings. Recent performances include bass solos in Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* with Voices of Ascension; Handel's *Messiah* at Ann Arbor's University Musical Society and at Carnegie Hall with Musica Sacra; Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* at Washington Bach Consort; Mendelssohn's *Walpurgisnacht* with the St. Louis Symphony; Joby Talbot's *Path of Miracles*; Craig Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard*; as well as ensembles in Tyshawn Sorey's *Monochromatic Light (afterlight)* directed by Peter Sellers at the Park Avenue Armory and the New York Philharmonic's premiere of Julia Wolfe's multi-media *unEarth*. A graduate of New York's Mannes School of Music, Enrico lives in New York City with his domestic partner. He is a member of Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble, which is dedicated to diversity and social justice.



**Amia Langer**, soprano, is a recent graduate of University of Houston where she studied with Melanie Sonnenberg. Favorite previous roles include Margarita Xirgu (Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*), Adele (*Die Fledermaus*), Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*), and Anne (*A Little Night Music*). Past awards include an Encouragement Award at the Upper Midwest Region and being the North Dakota-Manitoba District Winner in the 2023 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, finalist in the 2023 inaugural Duncan Williams Voice Competition, semifinalist in the 2023 Houston Saengerbund Vocal Competition, and Audience Choice Award recipient at the 2022 Houston Gilbert and Sullivan Society Career Competition. She has been a young artist with Brevard Music Center, and with the Houston Grand Opera Young Artist Vocal Academy. Upcoming events include being a Young Artist in the 2023 Festival Napa Valley Manetti Shrem Opera Program, and as a part of Houston Grand Opera's 2023-2024 Opera to Go! season.

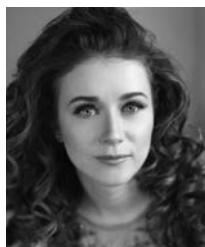




**Thomas O'Neill** is a 23 year-old tenor from Abingdon, Virginia. Based in Houston, Texas, he has been a staff singer at St. Philip Presbyterian for five years, where he has appeared in multiple recitals. Thomas has performed many roles in Moore's Opera Center productions at the University of Houston, including Don Basilio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Mercury in *Orphée aux Enfers*, Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola*, Don Polidoro in *La Finta Semplice*, Henrik in *A Little Night Music*, Vašek in *The Bartered Bride*, and Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*. In recent summers, Thomas traveled to Germany to perform as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* and Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* at Lyric Opera Studio in Weimar, and Pluto and Aristeus in Berlin Opera Academy's production of *Orphée aux Enfers*. Thomas is thrilled to be returning to Ars Lyrica Houston for two performances in the 2023/24 season.



**Sherezade Panthaki**, soprano, enjoys ongoing international collaborations with conductors Nicholas McGegan, Masaaki Suzuki, Mark Morris and more. Recent engagements include early music and oratorio performances with the New York Philharmonic, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Bach Collegium Japan, Wiener Akademie (Austria), NDR Hannover Radiophilharmonie (Germany), the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Boston Early Music Festival, and the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra (Canada). Born and raised in India, Ms. Panthaki holds graduate degrees from the Yale School of Music and the University of Illinois. She is a founding member of the Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble, celebrating racial and ethnic diversity in performances and educational programs of early and new music. Ms. Panthaki is a renown clinician, has taught voice at Yale University, and currently heads the Vocal program at Mount Holyoke College.



Making her mark as an “especially impressive” soprano (The New York Times), Australian-American **Nola Richardson**’s repertoire ranges from medieval to contemporary works, including several world premieres. She has been particularly noted for her performances of Bach, Handel and Mozart and has won First Prize in all three major American competitions focused on the music of J.S. Bach (Bethlehem Bach, 2016; Audrey Rooney Bach, 2018; and Grand Rapids

Symphony Linn Maxwell Keller Award, 2019). These honors have catapulted her to the forefront of Baroque ensembles and orchestras around the country, where she has been praised for her “astonishing balance and accuracy,” “crystalline diction,” and “natural-sounding ease” (Washington Post). Recent seasons have featured her debuts with the Baltimore, Cincinnati, Colorado, Helena, Kansas City, Pittsburgh, and Seattle Symphonies as well as with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, American Bach Soloists, American Classical Orchestra, Musica Angelica, and with Musica Sacra in her acclaimed Carnegie Hall solo debut.



Puerto-Rican baritone **Joeavian Rivera** recently completed his Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Houston (2023). During his graduate studies, he was featured in numerous roles with the Moores Opera Center, performing Le Père and L’usurier in *La Belle et La Bête* by Philip Glass, Maestro in *Ainadamar* by Osvaldo Golijov, Achilla in *Giulio Cesare*, Carl-Magnus in *A Little Night Music*, and as a baritone soloist in *Sondheim on*

*Sondheim*. Last Summer, Mr. Rivera participated in the Toronto Summer Music Festival’s Art of Song program where he was awarded the Weston Family Foundation fellowship and was featured in recital performances that highlighted repertoire by Schubert, Alma Mahler, Ravel, Gene Scheer, and Gerald Finzi. Mr. Rivera is thrilled to return to the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston this fall in pursuit of a Certificate in Music Performance under the guidance of Melanie Sonnenberg.



Prizewinning cellist **Barrett Sills** has gained national and international acclaim at competitions in the United States, Europe, and South America. A native Texan, he attended the Yale School of Music, where he was teaching assistant to Aldo Parisot and recipient of the prestigious Maxwell Belding Internship Award. Sills has performed with orchestras in France and Germany, and as a recitalist he has performed in Paris, the south of France, and throughout

South America as an Artistic Ambassador for the United States Information Agency. He is principal cellist with both the Houston Ballet Orchestra and the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra, and he is frequently featured soloist for the Houston Ballet. In addition to performing on the modern cello, he is a recognized artist on both the baroque cello and viola da gamba and is often heard in concert with Ars Lyrica Houston.



Praised for his “exquisite, almost ethereal tone quality,” (Vocal Arts Chicago) and “sexy, strong countertenor,” (Stage and Cinema LA) **Michael Skarke** is quickly making a name for himself as one of America’s top young countertenors. Recent engagements for Michael include a solo feature on the Houston Chamber Choir’s world premiere recording of Daniel Knaggs’ *Two Streams*,

and a concert tour and recording of the world premiere arrangement of an all-men’s Rachmaninoff’s *All Night Vigil* with the GRAMMY nominated PaTRAM Male Chorus in Jerusalem, Israel. During the 2022-2023 season, Michael made several exciting debuts including performances as Ottone in Monteverdi’s *L’incoronazione di Poppea* with Haymarket Opera and West Edge Opera and as Alceste in the North American premiere of Vivaldi’s *Ercole su’l Termodonte* with Pacific Opera Project. When not performing, you might catch Michael playing golf, basketball, or spending time with his beautiful wife Jenny and baby girl, Clarke.



Tenor **Hayden Smith** is known for his burnished tenor blessed with technique and glorious phrasing (Houston Press). This past year Hayden Tybalt performed in *Romeo and Juliette* with the Glimmerglass Festival and Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* with Houston's Opera In The Heights. Smith has participated in nationally recognized young artist programs such as Wolf Trap Opera, The Music Academy of the West as well as Houston Grand Opera's

Young Vocal Academy. In 2022, he was awarded the inaugural Carolyn Bailey Argento Fellowship in Vocal Performance by the National Opera Association. Smith has also performed roles such as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Arnalta in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, and Laurie in *Little Women*. He has earned a bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance from Temple University and recently finished his master's degree at Rice University.

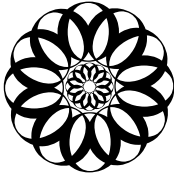
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