

BACH, HANDEL, *and* HERCULES



Digital Program
Booklet

Matthew Dirst
Artistic Director

FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 24, 2021 | 7:30 PM

Zilkha Hall, The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts

ARS
LYRICA
HOUSTON 

PROGRAM

The Choice of Hercules, HWV 69

Words by Thomas Morell (1703–1784)

Music by G. F. Handel (1685–1759)

featuring

Hercules

Pleasure

Virtue

An Attendant on Pleasure

Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen

Nola Richardson

Leia Lensing

Steven Brennfleck

Symphony

Accompagnato (*Pleasure*)

See, Hercules, how smiles yon myrtle plain,
Where num'rous sparkling rills meand'ring glide!
'Tis there I fix my jocund reign,
'Tis there my laughing train reside.
There smokes the feast, enhanced by music's sound,
Fittest to tune the melting soul to love;
Rich odours breathing choicest sweets around,
The fragrant bower, cool fountain, shady grove;
Thither thy happy footsteps will I lead,
Fresh flow'rs shall bind thy brow,
Fresh flow'rs shall strew thy bed.

Air (*Pleasure*)

Come, blooming boy, with me repair
To these ambrosial scenes of peace;
There bid adieu to noise and care,
Embath'd in bliss and wrapt in ease.

Air (*Pleasure*)

There the brisk sparkling nectar drain,
Cool'd with the purest summer snows,
There, tir'd with sporting on the plain,
Beneath the woodbine's shade repose.
There, as serene thou liest along,
Soft warbling voices melting lays
Shall sweetly pour the tender song
To love or beauty's rapt'rous praise.

Recitative & Air (*Virtue*)

Away, mistaken wretch, away!
To baser ears go trill thy languid lay;
Go, to thy revels let the fools repair,
To such go smooth thy speech, and spread thy tempting snare.

This manly youth's exalted mind,
Above thy grov'ling taste refin'd,
Shall listen to my awful voice.
His childhood, in its earliest rise,
Bespoke him gen'rous, brave and wise,
And manhood shall confirm his choice.

Recitative & Air (*Virtue*)

Rise, youth, exalt thyself and me! Approve
Thy high descent from Heav'n, and dare be worthy Jove.

Go, assert thy heav'nly race,
Ev'ry danger boldly face;
Level pride's high-plumed crest,
And bravely succour the distrest.

Recitative (*Virtue, Pleasure, & Hercules*)

In peace, in war pursue thy country's good,
Bare thy bold breast for her, and pour thy gen'rous blood.

Hearst thou, what dangers then thou must engage?
Dangers, that ill befit thy tender age,
That tender age, which was but meant to prove
The sweet vicissitudes of joy and love.

Short is my way, fair, easy, smooth and plain.
Turn, gentle youth, with me eternal pleasures reign!

Oh, cease, enchanting siren, cease thy song!
I dare not, must not join thy festive throng.

Air (*Hercules*)

Yet can I hear that dulcet lay,
As sweet as flows the honey dew?
Can I those wilds of joy survey,
Nor wish to share the bliss I view?

Air (*Attendant on Pleasure*)
Enjoy the sweet Elysian grove,
Seat of pleasure, seat of love;
Pleasure that can never cloy,
Love to source of endless joy.

Recitative & Trio (*Hercules, Pleasure, & Virtue*)
Oh, whither, reason, dost thou fly?
Purge the soft charm that fascinates my eye.

Where shall I go?
 To yonder breezy plain!
 There sweetly swim in pleasure's winding stream.
Where shall I go?
 To yonder lofty fane!
 There brightly bask in virtue's radiant beam.
Where shall I go?

Accompagnato & Air (*Virtue*)
Mount, mount the steep ascent,
Obey my voice, and live!
Let thy celestial birth lift and enlarge thy thoughts;
Behold the way that leads to fame,
And raises thee from earth immortal.
Lo, I guide thy steps – arise!

Mount, mount the steep ascent,
And claim thy native skies!

Recitative & Air (*Hercules*)
The sounds breathe fire celestial, and impart
Immortal vigour to my glowing heart.
Lead, goddess, lead the way!
Thy awful pow'r, supremely wise,
Shall guide me with its sacred ray
To yonder lucid skies;
Shall lift me to the blest abode,
Crown'd with immortal youth, among the gods a god.

***Lasst uns sorgen, lasst uns wachen*, BWV 213 Or "Hercules at the Crossroads"**

Libretto by Christian Friederich Heinrici, a.k.a. Picander (1700–1764)
Music by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

featuring

Hercules
Wollust (Pleasure)
Tugend (Virtue)
Echo
Mercury

Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen
Nola Richardson
Steven Brennfleck
Leia Lensing
Jason Zacher

Chorus – Decree of the Gods

Laßt uns sorgen, lasst uns wachen
Über unsern Göttersohn.
Unser Thron wird auf Erden
Herrlich und verkläret werden,
wird aus ihm ein Wunder machen.

Let us care for and watch over
our godly son.
Our early throne
will be glorious and radiant;
it will make him wondrous.

Recitative (Hercules)

Und wo? Wo ist die rechte Bahn,
Da ich den eingepflanzten Trieb,
Dem Tugend, Glanz und Ruhm und, Hoheit
lieb
Zu seinem Ziele bringen kann?
Vernunft, Verstand und Licht
Begehrt, dem allen nachzujagen.
Ihr schlanken Zweige, könnt ihr nicht
Rat oder Weise sagen?

What is the best way
to implant in myself
a love for virtue, brilliance, and
glory
and actually achieve those things?
Reason and understanding
suggest that all this is possible.
Graceful boughs, may I request
your counsel and wisdom?

Aria (Pleasure)

Schlafe, mein Liebster, und pflege der Ruh,

Folge der Lockung entbrannter Gedanken.
Schmecke die Lust
Der lüsternen Brust
Und erkenne keine Schranken.

Sleep, my dear, and take it easy;
do whatever sounds most
enticing.
Taste the delights
of sensual nature
and forget about boundaries.

Recitative (Pleasure, Virtue)

Auf! folge meiner Bahn,
Da ich dich ohne Last und Zwang
Mit sanften Tritten werde leiten.
Die Anmut gehet schon voran,
Die Rosen vor dir auszubreiten.

Get up and follow my lead,
and without worry or constraint
we'll proceed gently.
Charm precedes you
to spread roses before you.

*Verziehe nicht, den so bequemen Gang
Mit Freuden zu erwählen.*

*Wohin, mein Herkules, wohin?
Du wirst des rechten Weges fehlen.*

Durch Tugend, Müh und Fleiß

*Erhebet sich ein edler Sinn.
Wer wählet sich den Schweiß,
Der in Gemächlichkeit
Und scherzender Zufriedenheit
Sich kann sein wahres Heil erwerben?
Das heißt: sein wahres Heil verderben.*

Aria (Hercules, Echo)

*Treues Echo dieser Orten,
Sollt ich bei den Schmeichelworten
Süßer Leitung irrig sein?
Gib mir deine Antwort: Nein!
Nein!
Oder sollte das Ermahnen,
Das so mancher Arbeit nah,
Mir die Wege besser bahnen?
Ach! so sage lieber: Ja!
Ja!*

Recitative (Virtue)

*Mein hoffnungsvoller Held!
Dem ich ja selbst verwandt und angeboren
bin,
Komm und erfasse meine Hand
Und höre mein getreues Raten,

Das dir der Väter Ruhm und Taten
Im Spiegel vor die Augen stellt.
Ich fasse dich und fühle schon
Die folgbare und mir geweihte Jugend.
Du bist mein echter Sohn,
Ich deine Zeugerin, die Tugend.*

Aria (Virtue)

*Auf meinen Flügeln sollst du schweben,
Auf meinem Fittich steigest du
Den Sternen wie ein Adler zu.
Und durch mich*

Don't hesitate to embrace joyfully
such a comfortable path.
Where, O Hercules, are you
going?
You'll miss the right path.
Only through virtue, effort, and
application
can one achieve true
enlightenment.
Who would choose labor
when in ease
and playful contentment
you can have it all?
Your way corrupts him.

O faithful Echo of this place,
Shall I, by the allure
of flattery be led astray?
Give me your answer: No!
No!
Or should the call
to apply myself and work
make for a better me?
Ah, then tell me: Yes!
Yes!

My budding hero,
whose choice I once wrestled with,
Come, take my hand,
and hear my faithful counsel,
which recalls your illustrious
ancestors
for you, as if in a mirror.
I embrace you and sense already
an obedient and honorable youth.
You are my true son,
I am your witness, Virtue.

On my wings you shall fly,
on my feathers you shall climb
like an eagle to the stars.
And through me

*Soll dein Glanz und Schimmer sich
Zur Vollkommenheit erheben.*

Recitative (Virtue)

*Die weiche Wollust locket zwar;
Allein, Wer kennt nicht die Gefahr,
Die Reich und Helden kränkt,
Wer weiß nicht, o Verführerin,
Dass du vorlängst und künftighin,
So lang es nur den Zeiten denkt,
Von unsrer Götter Schar
Auf ewig musst verstoßen sein?*

Aria (Hercules)

*Ich will dich nicht hören, ich will dich nicht
wissen,
Verworfenen Wollust, ich kenne dich nicht.
Denn die Schlangen,
So mich wollten wiegend fangen,

Hab ich schon lange zermalmet, zerrissen.*

Recitative (Hercules, Virtue)

*Geliebte Tugend, du allein
Sollst meine Leiterin beständig sein.
Wo du befiehlst, da geh ich hin,
Das will ich mir zur Richtschnur wählen.
Und ich will mich mit dir
So fest und so genau vermählen,
Dass ohne dir und mir

Mein Wesen niemand soll erkennen.
Wer will ein solches Bündnis trennen?*

Duet (Hercules, Virtue)

*Ich bin deine,
Du bist meine,
Küsse mich,
Ich küsse dich.*

*Wie Verlobte sich verbinden,
Wie die Lust, die sie empfinden,
Treu und zart und eiferig,
So bin ich.*

Recitative (Mercury)

Schaut, Götter, dieses ist ein Bild

your luster and radiance
will achieve perfection.

Pleasure is indeed enticing;
but who can't recognize the danger
that threatens empires and heros?
Who could doubt, O temptress,
that in both past and future time,
as long as eternity itself,
from our godly company
you must be repudiated?

I will pay you no heed,
depraved Pleasure, I know you not.
For the serpents
that tempted me from birth
were long ago crushed and
destroyed.

Beloved Virtue, you alone
will always guide me.
I will follow your example,
which sets my moral compass.
And I want you
to be so committed
that we become one,
with me a crucial part of your
essence.
Who would break such a bond?

I am yours,
You are mine,
Kiss me,
I kiss you.
Just as lovers commit to one
another,
as they delight in desire
with faithfulness and tenderness,
so am I to you.

Behold, ye gods, this perfect image

*Von Sachsens Kurprinz Friedrichs Jugend!
Der muntern Jahre Lauf
Weckt die Verwunderung schon itzund auf.
So mancher Tritt, so manche Tugend.
Schaut, wie das treue Land mit Freuden
angefüllt,*

of Crown Prince Friedrich of
Saxony!

His lively passing years
inspire wonder even now.
Every step brings new virtue.

See how the faithful rejoice
when they see this young eagle's
flight,
when they experience his brilliance,
and when their beloved prince
blossoms to universal happiness.
See as well the happy Muses
and listen to their celebratory song:

*Da es den Flug des jungen Adlers sieht,
Da es den Schmuck der Raute sieht,
Und da sein hoffnungsvoller Prinz
Der allgemeinen Freude blüht.
Schaut aber auch der Musen frohe Reihen
Und hört ihr singendes Erfreuen:*

Chorus and Arioso (Muses & Mercury)

*Lust der Völker, Lust der Deinen,
Blühe, holder Friederich!
Deiner Tugend Würdigkeit
Stehet schon der Glanz bereit,
Und die Zeit
Ist begierig zu erscheinen:*

Delight of the peoples and tribe,
Flourish, noble Frederick!
Your radiant virtue
prepares the way for glory,
and your time
is about to begin.
Hurry, my Frederick, it awaits
you.

Eile, mein Friedrich, sie wartet auf dich.

ARS LYRICA ORCHESTRAL PERSONNEL

<i>horn 1</i>	James Wilson
<i>horn 2</i>	Drew Stephen
<i>traverso 1</i>	Colin St-Martin
<i>traverso 2</i>	Meg Griffeth
<i>oboe 1/oboe d'amore</i>	Geoffrey Burgess
<i>oboe 2</i>	Pablo Moreno
<i>Baroque bassoon</i>	Ben Kamins
<i>1st violins</i>	Elizabeth Blumenstock, concertmaster Maria Lin Hae-a Lee
<i>2nd violins</i>	Alan Austin Anabel Detrick Matt Detrick
<i>viola</i>	Erika Lawson
<i>cello</i>	Barrett Sills
<i>violone</i>	Deborah Dunham
<i>organ</i>	Daryl Robinson
<i>harpsichord & conductor</i>	Matthew Dirst

PROGRAM NOTES

The earliest written sources on the Hercules legend date from a few hundred years before the birth of Christ. As recounted by the ancient Greeks, this son of Zeus and Alcmene exhibited unusual physical powers from an early age; while still in the crib he dispatched serpents, among other feats. One of the most enduring stories about Hercules revolves around a literal and metaphorical crossroads, at which two captivating though very different women compel a coming-of-age decision about the best path to glory: either a life of easy delights or one dominated by service to others.

Over the years, this pivotal moment has provided subject matter for legions of artists, writers, and musicians. In Bach and Handel's world, dominated as it was by hereditary monarchs, Hercules' choice obliged all to embrace—publicly, at least—duty over pleasure. (As for what happened in private—well, let's just say that the old line about “what happens in Vegas” didn't originate in Nevada.) That choice in literature involves no small amount of deliberation, so that the positions of both interlocutors can be fully articulated and duly assessed. The libretti of both works on this program are thus more formal than dramatic in character, with the debate between Pleasure and Virtue dominating the conversation before Hercules makes his peace with his only real option.

Both Bach and Handel set this story to music in works of similar dimensions and with an alto soloist in the title role. For Handel this meant a castrato, a superstar male singer with an otherworldly voice. (Gaetano Guadagni, a handsome and rakish Italian import, may have sung the first performance.) Bach likely assigned the role to an adolescent alto or perhaps a teenage falsettist from the all-male ranks of the St Thomas School Choir—that is, to a youth perhaps not much older than the young prince to whom this work is dedicated.

The Choice of Hercules was Handel's second work on the accumulated lore surrounding this popular figure from mythology; the first, from 1744 and entitled simply *Hercules*, is a three-act “musical drama” (an original

description indicating an unstaged opera or a dramatic oratorio) on the eponymous hero's tragic end. The shorter work heard this evening, whose libretto and score has no relationship to the earlier work, comes from 1751, when it served as a concluding act for Handel's oratorio *Alexander's Feast* during a run of performances at London's Covent Garden Theatre. Returning to this work in 1753 and 1755, Handel inserted it as a "musical interlude" between the two acts of the same oratorio. Handelian have since regarded it as a one-act dramatic cantata but with the scoring of an oratorio: with soloists, orchestra, and chorus. Tonight's performance omits the choral movements, which are not crucial to the narrative; the abridgment seemed the wisest course of action for our socially distanced return to the Zilkha Hall stage.

Handel adapted some of the arias for *The Choice of Hercules* from his own incidental music for the ill-fated *Alceste*, a play by the Scottish writer Tobias Smollett. Based on the original story from Euripides, Smollett's play never opened, but Handel's music got a second lease on life with different words. For this adaptation, Handel likely relied once again on Thomas Morell, with whom he had collaborated on several oratorios, from *Judas Maccabeus* (1747) onward. Morell, if indeed he authored the words, fashioned his libretto for *The Choice of Hercules* from a popular poem written a few years earlier by Oxford professor Robert Lowth. Handel's music treats with great imagination and color the distinct sensibilities of its female characters especially: Pleasure's music is by turns alluring and carefree, while Virtue is steadfast and purposeful. Hercules, by contrast, projects in his first aria a gentle, knowing presence, one susceptible to temptation but cognizant of necessity. His resolute but minor key closing aria suggests some regret, perhaps, at his rejection of youthful frivolity.

Bach led the first performance of his "dramma per musica" *Hercules at the Crossroads* on September 5, 1733, at Zimmerman's coffee garden in Leipzig, where the city's Collegium Musicum performed regularly under his direction. The occasion, the eleventh birthday of Prince Friedrich Christian of Saxony, invited a salutary reminder to the young prince of his destiny: to succeed his father Friedrich Augustus II, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, while following the example of Hercules by embracing virtue over vice. Barely six weeks before, Bach had visited Dresden to present the Elector with an inestimable musical gift, a handsome manuscript copy of the Kyrie and Gloria that later became part of the B-Minor Mass. Bach's accompanying petition for the title of *Capellmeister* (court composer) would not be granted for some three years, but other opportunities—birthdays of the crown prince, for example—offered other opportunities for royal cultivation.

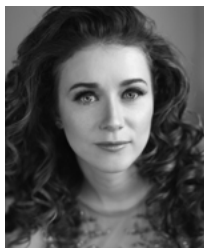
The opening chorus, sung by a choir of deities, is addressed not to Friedrich Christian but rather to his subjects, who are encouraged with lilting grandeur to honor and support him. Hercules then takes the stage, and he has questions. With Picander's help and in contrast to Morell's libretto on the same subject, Hercules' quest for glory proceeds here as a dialectic, with the noble hero requesting advice from both Pleasure (Wollust) and Virtue (Tugend).

Pleasure's bewitching initial aria encourages Hercules to leave his worldly cares for the sensual world of dreams, made palpable in a luxurious accompaniment for full strings. A brief argument with Virtue ensues, after which Hercules sings a tuneful soliloquy to Echo, the famous nymph whose cruel fate left her unable to say anything except the last words spoken to her. Virtue's turn comes next, in an aria whose breathless text Bach illustrates masterfully in a busy fugal texture including obbligato oboe and violin solos. Hercules, who needs no further convincing, rejects Pleasure in the following aria, with the help of a forthright unison violin line. He and Virtue then embrace one another in a duet that celebrates brotherly love with disarming tenderness; their entwined voices are joined by a mellifluous pair of violas, to irresistible effect.

Entering last is Mercury, the god of tradesmen and therefore near and dear to the citizens of Leipzig, who in a closing *accompagnato* connects the dots by reminding us about the young Saxon prince's journey. Mercury then leads the muses in a dance-like final chorus that showers good wishes on the virtuous Crown Prince and his grateful people. Except for this final movement and the recitatives, Bach repurposed the rest of *Hercules at the Crossroads* in his 1734 *Christmas Oratorio*, a collection of six sacred cantatas for the Christmas/New Year season.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Soprano **Nola Richardson** is rapidly making her mark as an “especially impressive” (The New York Times) young soloist and has been praised by the Washington Post for her “astonishing balance and accuracy,” “crystalline diction” and “natural-sounding ease.” Her wide repertoire spans from music of the medieval period to several world premieres, and she performs frequently throughout the United States. Some highlights of her current and past seasons include her major symphony debut as the featured soloist with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Philharmonia Baroque, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Oregon Symphony Orchestra, Colorado Symphony and an appearance with the Boston Pops under Keith Lockhart in *Simply Sondheim*. She also made her debut with Opera Lafayette, The English Concert, The Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado, Musica Sacra, and as the First Lady in Clarion Music Society’s production of *Die Zauberflöte*. Her recent performance with the American Classical Orchestra was described as a revelation by ConcertoNet.com: “Her single song from the carols, *Or nous dites Marie*, became a ray of resplendent light, a voice of virginal purity for these very pure songs.”



Mezzo-soprano **Leia Lensing** made her Ars Lyrica debut in October of 2020. In May 2019, she completed her second year in the Houston Grand Opera Studio. Leia performed the roles of The Page (*Salome*) 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 2nd place 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*.



Acclaimed as a “young star” and “complete artist” by The New York Times and “extravagantly gifted...poised to redefine what’s possible for singers of this distinctive voice type” by the San Francisco Chronicle, countertenor **Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen** is one of the classical vocal world’s most promising rising stars. Performances of the 2021-22 season include a role debut as Handel’s Giulio Cesare with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra conducted by Christopher Moulds, gala concerts with The Dallas Opera led by Emmanuel Villaume, and debuts at the Opernhaus Zürich in a world premiere ballet creation choreographed by Christian Spruck upon the music of Monteverdi’s Madrigals and at the Metropolitan Opera in the company’s new production of *Hamlet* by composer Brett Dean. Highlights of past seasons include opera performances at Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, Theater an der Wien, and Adelaide Festival and concert appearances with San Francisco Symphony, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and the Buffalo Philharmonic.

Mr. Nussbaum Cohen’s performance is generously underwritten by Dr. Ellen R. Gritz & Milton D. Rosenau, Jr.



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.



Bass-baritone **Jason Zacher** is quickly gaining attention on a national level as a rising new talent and versatile performer. Most recently, Jason joined Des Moines Metro Opera as an Apprentice Artist for their 2021 Summer Festival, where he covered the role of Jupiter in their production of Rameau's *Platée*. In addition, last season Jason made his company debut with Ars Lyrica in their all-Bach program titled "Conflict & Concord," as well as making his role debut as both Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and Raimondo (*Lucia di Lamermoor*) with Opera in the Heights at White Oak Music Hall. This upcoming season, Jason is thrilled to be rejoining Ars Lyrica, as well as performing as the bass soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with both the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and Chapelwood United Methodist Church. In the spring, Jason will also be rejoining Opera in the Heights, where he will be performing the role of Prince Gremin in Eugene *Onegin*.



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 Ars Lyrica Houston, 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 Marburg to Mendelssohn* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), *Bach and the Organ* (University of Illinois Press, 2016), and *Learned Play: Bach's Art of Fugue and Musical Offering* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2022).

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Founded in 1998 by harpsichordist and conductor Matthew Dirst, Ars Lyrica Houston presents a diverse array of music in its original context while creating connections to contemporary life. Ars Lyrica's acclaimed programming features neglected gems alongside familiar masterworks, and extracts the dramatic potential, emotional resonance, and expressive power of music. Its local subscription series, according to the Houston Chronicle, "sets the agenda" for early music in Houston. Ars Lyrica appears regularly at international festivals and concert series because of its distinctive focus, and its pioneering efforts in the field of authentic performance have won international acclaim, including a Grammy nomination for Best Opera.

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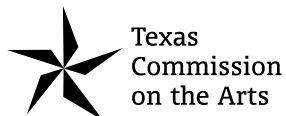
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