

2023 | 2024 SEASON

SPRING

20
YEARS OF
MAGIC

Matthew Dirst
Artistic Director

JAN 13, 2024 4:00 PM **FUGAL GAMES**

MAR 16, 2024 7:30 PM **VISIONS & REVERIES**

MAY 24-25, 2024 7:30 PM **AMADIGI DI GAULA**

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HOUSTON 

Ars Lyrica Houston 2023/2024 Season

20 Years of Magic



We are so proud to celebrate twenty years of excellence this season with two CD releases, diverse outreach programs including our children's play "Maria's Magical Music Adventure," and six subscription programs culminating with our fourth fully staged Baroque opera production.

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With warm regards, the Ars Lyrica Houston team

VISIONS & REVERIES

SATURDAY | 7:30 PM
MARCH 16, 2024

Zilkha Hall, Hobby Center



ARTISTIC PERSONNEL

Soprano	Lauren Snouffer
Traverso	Colin St Martin
Violin	Manami Mizumoto Maria Lin
Cello	Eric Taeyang Mun
Violone	Deborah Dunham
Theorbo/ Guitar	Richard Savino
Harpichord/ Artistic director	Matthew Dirst

*This program comprises approximately 75 minutes of music plus a 15-minute intermission.
All texts are projected in English surtitles.*

*The harpsichord for this program is a copy of a 1704 instrument by Nicolas Dumont (Paris),
by John Phillips (Berkeley, CA 1991). With thanks to St Philip Presbyterian Church for
providing rehearsal space for this program.*

VISIONS & REVERIES

PROGRAM

Sonade from L'Impériale François Couperin
Gravement—Vivement—Gravement et marqué (1668–1733)
Rondeau—Rondement—Vivement

Le Sommeil d'Ulysse Élisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre
Simphonie (1665–1729)
Récitatif: Apres mille travaux
Air: Sur une mer orageuse et profonde
Récitatif: Il en frémit
Le Tempeste (Récitatif): Pour perdre ce guerrier
Air: Venés Minerve bien faisante
Récitatif: Nos voeux sont éxaucez
Air: Dormés, dormés
Récitatif: Mais, quell songe / Alcinoüs ce Roy
Air: Ulisse que la gloire appelle

Dance movements from L'Impériale François Couperin
Rondeau
Sarabande
Bourrée
Chaconne

INTERMISSION

Cinquième Concert Jean-Philippe Rameau
La Forqueray (1683–1764)
La Cupis
La Marais

Le Berger fidèle J.-P. Rameau
Récitatif: Prest à voir immoler
Air Plaintif: Faut-il qu'Amarillis périsse
Récitatif: Mais c'est trop
Air gai: L'Amour qui règne
Récitatif: Cependant à l'autel
Air vif et gracieux: Charmant Amour

VISIONS & REVERIES
ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The unpredictable nature of the muse—occasionally generous, sometimes stubborn—makes inspiration an elusive companion. And yet, when the magic happens, miracles can ensue. Early 18th-century composers regularly channeled myth and allusion for inspiration in all kinds of music. Focusing on visions and reveries of a decidedly Gallic nature, this program features evocative chamber works by three of the most accomplished composers of the *ancien régime*: François Couperin, Élisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre, and Jean-Philippe Rameau.

L'Impériale is the third *ordre* or group of pieces from *Les Nations* (1726), a collection of trios Couperin compiled over a period of many years, as he experimented with various ways of blending the prevailing Italian and French chamber idioms. Like its three sister *ordres*, *L'Impériale* comprises an Italianate sonata in multiple sections (labeled *Sonade*, in the French manner) plus a generous helping of French dances. These large suites also pay homage to the central Catholic powers of the day via their titles: France (*la Française*), Spain (*L'Espagnole*) and Savoy (*La Piémontaise*) complement *L'Impériale*, whose title alludes to the Austrian Habsburg empire.

Scored for two treble instruments with basso continuo, this music can be performed on violins or wind instruments with a varied continuo, including viola da gamba and almost any kind of plucked instrument, from harpsichord to guitar. The sumptuous ***Sonade*** of *L'Impériale* has six distinct sections in contrasting tempi—rather more than Arcangelo Corelli (Couperin's inspiration for these pieces) thought to include in his own trio sonatas. Each section features carefully wrought musical ideas that are tossed back and forth between the instruments, in the “fugal style” of Italian and German contemporaries. One prominent German contemporary clearly approved: J. S. Bach transcribed the Rondeau from this *Sonade* as an organ trio.

In contrast, the dance movements that follow embrace the French tradition, which by the 1720s could encompass everything from a chirpy Bourrée to a tender Sarabande. The Chaconne, freed from its usual role of accompanying a theatrical spectacle, becomes in Couperin's supple hands something else entirely. The highpoint of this suite, this movement offers numerous surprises, with new melodic ideas at virtually every repetition of the prevailing harmonic pattern and consequential shifts from the major to the minor mode and back again.

Like the Couperin dynasty, the **Jacquet** family comprised mostly musicians and instrument makers. Its most celebrated progeny, **Élisabeth-Claude**, made a name for herself as a child at the court of Louis XIV, where her harpsichord playing made such an impression that her subsequent education was supervised by King's mistress. Following her marriage to organist Michel de la Guerre, she organized and ran one of the most distinguished musical salons in Paris. Her first publication, the *Pièces de clavecin* of 1687, led to larger compositions in virtually all genres, from sonatas to at least one full-length opera.

From her third and final published volume of *Cantates françaises* (1715), our program features Jacquet's setting of a tale adapted from Homer's *Odyssey*, which chronicles the adventures of Ulysses, the Greek King of Ithaca, in the decade following the Trojan War. This classic text, which has provided juicy material for everything from operas to Marvel movies, confirms the ultimate worth of love and constancy. Our cantata, set to a libretto by Antoine Houdar de La Motte, picks up the tale as Ulysses' ships are threatened by Neptune's powerful storm. Minerva comes to the rescue by putting our hero to sleep, hence the title of this work: **Le Sommeil d'Ulysse** (*Ulysses' slumber*). Like all French vocal writing from this era, Jacquet's *Ulysses* alternates between declamatory and lyric passages: *récitatif* and *air*, respectively. Its depiction of the storm and sleep scenes demonstrate how thoroughly Jacquet de la Guerre understood the highly pictorial musical language of the Opéra.

Rameau's ***Pièces de clavecin en concert***, published in 1741, were part of the initial wave of a newly popular kind of chamber music: obligato (fully realized) harpsichord writing with optional accompanying instruments. These suites (or *concerts*, as Rameau called them) specify violin and viola da gamba, which amplify the virtuosic keyboard writing in myriad ways while adding their own rich sonority to the sonic resources of a French double-manual harpsichord. Stylistically, these colorful and occasionally theatrical pieces combine Rameau's longstanding interest in keyboard music with his newfound mastery of opera and ballet. Following the fashion of the day, individual movements depict well-known people, places, or familiar cultural tropes. Some of their titles permit straightforward unpacking, while others require a bit of historical background.

Such is the case with the ***Cinquième Concert***, whose opening movement honors Jean-Baptiste **Forqueray**, one of the greatest viol players of the age. Its sturdy fugal nature, with successive entries of a theme featuring octave leaps followed by scalar passages, may reflect the high esteem in which Rameau held the entire Forqueray family, which had produced several gifted viol players and composers. The deliciously supple **La**

Cupis, by contrast, is Rameau's ode to a celebrated dancer, Marie-Anne Cupis, who appeared in at least one of his operas. **La Marais**, finally, returns us to the ranks of France's leading viol players—in this case, Marin Marais and his sons—with a decorative and curvaceous dance.

In 1590 the Venetian writer Giovanni Battista Guarini published a pastoral tragicomedy that continues to define his legacy. Translated into multiple languages within a few years, *Il pastor fido* (*The Faithful Shepherd*) was read in every corner of Europe; over the next two hundred years, it inspired countless operas and solo cantatas, from Monteverdi through Mozart. Setting this tale to music in 1728, Rameau treats the shepherd Mirtillo and his beloved Amarilli with the care and finesse one might expect at a reunion of old friends. By turns tender and exuberant, **Le Berger fidèle** demonstrates this composer's mastery of text setting well before he tried his hand at theatrical music.

In the opening recitative and aria, Mirtillo bewails the fate of Amarilli, whose life the goddess Diana intends to offer to the gods. Mirtillo thus proposes himself in the second recitative for the sacrifice, so that Amarilli might live. The second aria (now in the third person) congratulates Mirtillo for having demonstrated “a love both rare and beautiful.” The narrator calls on Diana to stop Mirtillo's noble sacrifice, since it has kindled true love in his beloved. Addressed to Cupid himself, the final aria observes that the greatest misfortunes can produce unanticipated rewards.

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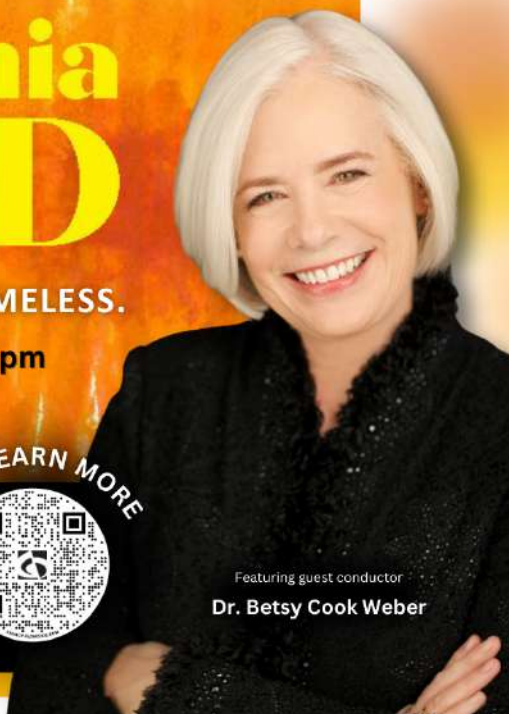
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AMADIGI DI GAULA

FRI & SAT | 7:30 PM
MAY 24 & 25, 2024

Zilkha Hall, Hobby Center



PRODUCTION TEAM

Tara Faircloth, *stage director*
Matthew Dirst, *music director*
Christina Giannelli, *lighting designer*
Ryan McGettigan, *set designer*

Julius Sanchez, *stage manager*
Macy Lyne, *costume designer*
Jenna Wallis, *surtitles*

CAST

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Amadigi	Randall Scotting	Amadigi Cover/ Supernumerary	Michael Skarke
Dardano	Nicholas Garza	Dardano Cover/ Supernumerary	Sarah Dyer
Melissa	Raven McMillon	Melissa Cover/ Supernumerary	Christine Boddicker
Oriana	Nola Richardson	Supernumerary	Joeavian Rivera

ORCHESTRAL PERSONNEL

Natural trumpet	Wes Miller	Viola	James Dunham Erika Lawson
Oboe/ Recorder 1	Kathryn Montoya	Cello (continuo)	Eric Taeyang Mun
Oboe/ Recorder 2	Pablo Moreno	Cello	Sydney ZumMallen
Bassoon	Benjamin Kamins	Violone	Deborah Dunham
Concertmaster	Andrew Fouts	Theorbo/ Guitar	Hector Alfonso Torres
Violin 1	Maria Lin Andrés González Kana Kimura	Harpsichord	Alexander Jones
Violin 2	Alan Austin Hae-a Lee Joanna Becker Laura Cividino	Harpsichord/ Conductor	Matthew Dirst

*This production will last approximately 2½ hours, including a 15-minute intermission.
All texts are projected in English surtitles.*

*Harpsichords by John Phillips (Berkeley, CA) after a Florentine prototype (c1700) and
a single-manual Flemish instrument by Albert Delin (1768). With thanks to St Philip
Presbyterian Church and the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston for
providing instruments and rehearsal space for this production.*

AMADIGI DI GAULA
ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Four years after the triumph of *Rinaldo*, his first opera for the London stage, George Frideric Handel presented at the King's Theatre in London his latest creation: *Amadigi di Gaula* (HWV 11). Its successful premiere on May 25, 1715, led to multiple performances and various revisions over the next three seasons. The opera played in Hamburg as well between 1717 and 1720, under the title *Oriana* and with additional music by Reinhard Keiser. It would be more than 200 years before the work was heard again, however. Though filled with glorious music, *Amadigi* remains a relative rarity, perhaps because it calls for only four voices: two sopranos and two altos.

Praised by no less than Charles Burney, the great English music historian, for its invention and variety, *Amadigi* wowed audiences from the start with colorful music and magical stage effects. Perhaps its most spectacular moment, much commented upon in the London press, was an actual fountain at the beginning of Act II, which required the services of multiple plumbers. This production employed so many machines that audience members accustomed to walking onto the stage were warned not to do so, lest they injure themselves.

The story comes from a 14th-century epic about a chivalrous knight-errant named Amadigi, King of Gaul. This knight's love for Oriana, daughter of the King of England, is fraught with challenges, not the least of which are wicked witches and friends who become enemies. Essentially a juicy tale about hapless nobles, it proved irresistible to the movers and shakers of French opera under Louis XIV, inspiring two *tragédies en musique*: *Amadis de Gaule* (1684), with words by Philippe Quinault and music by Jean-Baptiste Lully, and *Amadis de Grèce* (1699), with words by Antoine Houdar de La Motte and music by André Destouches.

The libretto for Handel's setting, which differs somewhat from both predecessors, may have been penned by Giacomo Rossi, who fleshed out the story line of *Rinaldo*, or perhaps by Nicola Haym, a cellist and composer who likewise excelled in libretto adaptation. Its plot, as realized in our production, may be summarized as follows.

ACT I

Amadigi and his companion Dardano are trapped in the garden of the sorceress Melissa. As he plots his escape, Amadigi tries to convince Dardano to flee with him. He shares a picture of his beloved, Oriana, and Dardano realizes they've both fallen for the same woman. Dardano decides to betray his friend and seeks out Melissa to warn her. While Amadigi ponders his fate in the garden alone, Melissa appears. When her declaration of love is rebuffed, she threatens him. Amadigi leaves in search of Oriana.

The tower where Oriana is held captive is in flames. Stopped by the fire, Amadigi learns that Dardano has become his rival. The outer structure collapses and Oriana is revealed. Believing they are free, the lovers rejoice, but Melissa and her minions arrive and snatch away Oriana, leaving Amadigi to rail at such cruelty.

ACT II

At the Fountain of True Love, a bereft Amadigi seeks comfort, but grief overtakes him, and he faints. Melissa appears with her prisoner Oriana, whose affections are misunderstood by Amadigi, and the two lovers fight before Oriana storms out. Amadigi's suicidal thoughts change to anger at Melissa, and they argue vociferously.

INTERMISSION

In Melissa's palace Dardano broods until Melissa offers a ruse: she will transform him to look like Amadigi so that he may seduce Oriana. The scheme seems to work until the real Amadigi appears, and a duel ensues. Dardano dies, and a furious Melissa swears vengeance.

ACT III

Amadigi and Oriana plead for their lives, but Melissa, vowing revenge, summons the ghost of Dardano to help her. Her plan backfires as the spirit warns Melissa that the gods will not countenance such an injustice. She tries to kill Oriana but is magically restrained; in desperation, she stabs herself instead.

With the villainous sorceress vanquished, Amadigi and Oriana embrace, joyously united at last.

Strikingly, all four characters in this drama want just one thing: to be loved. This desire renders each vulnerable to betrayal and dramatic mischief of all kinds, from incongruous conflagrations to exotic spells. But even the most fantastic libretto and stagecraft cannot guarantee a memorable opera; one needs an equally magical score. Handel, a consummate man of the theatre, took up this task with evident relish.

His masterful music for the evil sorceress Melissa, for example, encourages us from the outset to sympathize with this scorned woman. Handel treats her rival Oriana with great tenderness, in music that is by turns heartfelt and eloquent. Dardano's arias, by comparison, veer from the wildly energetic to the sumptuously doleful. For Amadigi, finally, Handel embraced fully the heroic mode while indulging sudden emotional swings with unanticipated twists and turns.

Like virtually all *opera seria* of this age, *Amadigi di Gaula* offers multiple options, with substitute arias sometimes offering more interesting options than first efforts. Ever the practical impresario, Handel borrowed some arias from *Silla* (1713) while reusing others original to *Amadigi* in *Alcina* (1735). A few years after its premiere, he even recycled Amadigi's triumphant final aria (shorn of its vocal line) as a hornpipe in *Water Music*. Handel thereby reminded George I, as he sailed down the Thames on that long night in July 1717, what triumph over adversity sounds like.

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Founder and Artistic Director of Ars Lyrica Houston, **Matthew Dirst** is widely admired for his stylish playing and conducting. Winner of major international prizes in both organ and harpsichord, he is featured on two new recordings: Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book 1, and Alessandro Scarlatti's 1710 oratorio *La sposa dei cantici* (both from Acis Productions). About the latter, *Early Music America* notes that "Dirst brilliantly brings it all to life," in a "historically informed and compelling performance...of this rarely heard work." Dirst's other recordings with Ars Lyrica have received similar critical acclaim, including a Grammy nomination for Best Opera (2011). As Professor of Music at the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, Dirst teaches courses in musicology and performance. He is the author of *Engaging Bach: The Keyboard Legacy from Marpurg to Mendelssohn* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) and *Bach's Art of Fugue and Musical Offering* (Oxford University Press, 2023). His academic 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.



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 Federico 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.



New York born **Manami Mizumoto** started her lifelong relationship with music at age 3 on the violin. Early exposure to chamber music sparked in her a devoted love of collaboration. This led to a dual fascination with working with living composers, and bringing back to life little-known works of the past. Manami is a founding member of the group Nuova Pratica, a collective of composer-performers working with centuries-old practices of improvisation in the modern day. Manami is also a founding member of Harmonia Stellarum Houston, which focuses on presenting newly discovered vocal-instrumental works of the 17th and 18th centuries in scholarly informed performances. Passionate about exploring different approaches to music making in history, Manami is equally at home on the baroque violin, modern violin, and electro-acoustic setups with Ableton Live. Manami is a graduate of the Juilliard School where she earned a Bachelor's with Catherine Cho and Joel Smirnoff, a Masters in Historical Performance, and graduated with the Norman Benzaquen Career Advancement Grant. In 2022, she was selected a member of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and continues to be a Fellow of The English Concert in America, elected in 2021.



Praised by critics for his “flawless lightness and grace”, **Eric Taeyang Mun** has been called “the very model of an elegant cellist” (Dallas Morning News), and his performances of the complete cello suites by J.S. Bach described as “nuanced, thoughtful, and technically sound” (Theater Jones). Eric has concertized throughout the U.S., Mexico, South America, and Europe with some of the nation's leading period instrument ensembles, performing on cello and viola da gamba as a soloist, chamber musician, and conductor. In addition to serving as Artistic Director of the American Baroque Opera Company, Eric has collaborated with many ensembles including the Grammy-nominated Ars Lyrica Houston, La Follia Austin Baroque, Ensemble VIII, Dallas Chamber Players, Bach Society of Houston, Oklahoma Bach Choir, New York's Concert Royal, Texas Camerata, and was a guest artist with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Eric attended the University of North Texas studying cello under the tutelage of Eugene Osadchy and early music with lutenist Lyle Nordstrom, where he was honored as a Winspear scholar. Eric performs on a rare cello made in 1751 by Leonhardt Maussiell in Nuremberg, Germany.



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.



Recognized for her unique artistic curiosity in world-class performances spanning the music of Claudio Monteverdi and Johann Adolph Hasse through to Missy Mazzoli and Sir George Benjamin, American **Lauren Snouffer** is celebrated as one of the most versatile and respected sopranos on the international stage. Lauren Snouffer celebrates two high profile operatic debuts this season: with the Royal Swedish

Opera she creates the role of Justine in the world premiere of Karlsson and Vavrek's opera *Melancholia*, and she makes a Glyndebourne debut as Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*. A deeply admired guest of The Cleveland Orchestra, Lauren Snouffer returns for Mahler's Fourth Symphony and the North American premiere of Besty Jolas' *Ces belles années*. Other highlights of the symphonic calendar include Sir George Benjamin's *Written on Skin* with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Stravinsky's cantata *Les Noces* with the San Francisco Symphony, Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* with the Houston Symphony, Handel's *Messiah* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Bach's *Weihnachtsoratorium* with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and *St. John Passion* with the Seattle Symphony.



Possessed of a keen interest in seventeenth and eighteenth century culture from a young age, **Colin St. Martin** began playing the traverso at the age of fourteen. He began his formal studies at the Royal Conservatory of Music (Brussels, Belgium) receiving a First Prize under the tutelage of the renowned master, Bart Kuijken. St. Martin continued his studies with graduate work at Indiana University where he was the traverso instructor. From 1993 to 2010, St. Martin served as the early-flute professor at Peabody Conservatory. As a performer, St. Martin has appeared with many of North America's finest period-instrument ensembles, including Arcanum, Washington Bach Consort, Tafelmusik, American Bach Soloists, North Carolina Baroque Orchestra, Tempesta di Mare, Four Nations, Rebel Baroque Ensemble, Folger Consort, National Cathedral Baroque Orchestra and Opera Lafayette. St. Martin's extensive recording catalogue contains a wide variety of repertoire on such labels as Centaur, ASI Gaudeamus, Lyrichord, Naxos, Focus and Newport Classic labels.



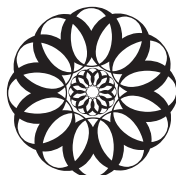
Dallas-based cellist and viola da gamba player **Sydney ZumMallen** was the winner of The Juilliard School's inaugural baroque cello concerto competition, making her solo debut with Juilliard415 at Alice Tully Hall in New York in 2019. Sydney has toured extensively with Paul Leenhouts and Fantasma throughout South America and Europe, across Italy with Fabio Bonizzoni, and across Europe and New

Zealand with Robert Mealy and Juilliard415. During her studies at the University of North Texas, The Royal Conservatory of The Hague, and The Juilliard School, she worked with esteemed musicians including Jaap ter Linden, Kristin von der Goltz, Albert Brüggen, Rachel Podger, Maasaki Suzuki, and Richard Egarr. Sydney received her master's degree from Juilliard in 2020, where she was a recipient of the Historical Performance Scholarship and led the continuo group in the acclaimed production of Handel's *Rinaldo* conducted by Nicholas McGegan. Sydney has since made appearances performing with Science Ficta, American Baroque Opera Company, Dallas Bach Society, Ars Lyrica, Philharmonie Austin, and more. She is currently the Professor of Baroque cello and viola da gamba at The University of North Texas.

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Ars Lyrica Houston gratefully acknowledges our 23/24 season artist hosts: Dmitry Bazykin, Sonja Bruzauskas & Houston Haymon, Bettie Cartwright, Elizabeth Duerr, Anna & Brad Eastman, Kinga & Jamie Ferguson, Isabelle Ganz, Ed & Janet Hess, Andreea Mut & Josh Langham, Heidi & Nick Rockecharlie, Troy Scheid, and Barrett Sills.



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