



St. Philip Presbyterian Church
Houston, TX
Saturday, April 19, 2025
5 pm

Cecilia Duarte, mezzo-soprano
Andrea Mut, piano
Matthew Dirst, organ

MUSIC AT  ST. PHILIP

PROGRAM

Wondrous Love: Variations on a Shape-Note Hymn

Samuel Barber
(1910–1981)

Shape-note hymn singing, invented in America sometime around 1800, refers to musical notation that uses various shapes for the notes of the solfege system. Choral and congregational music notated in this manner include dozens of 19th-century songbooks and hymnals, including *Southern Harmony*, the best-known shape-note source still in use. The American composer Samuel Barber's *Variations on Wondrous Love* (1949) explore various ways of setting this beloved melody with distinct figuration, mood, and key schemes from one to the next.

When I Rise Up

Justin Langham
(b. 1990)

Calling Dreams
Common Dust
My Little Dreams
Your World
When I Rise Up

Composed in early 2020 in Leipzig, Germany, *When I Rise Up* is a cycle of five songs for voice and piano inspired by the poetry of Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880–1966), a pioneering African American writer and key Harlem Renaissance figure known for her fearless exploration of identity, race, and social justice. Created at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the cycle mirrors Johnson's themes of hope, resilience, and transformation, drawing on her emotional depth and poetic clarity. Each song—ranging from the bold purpose of "Calling Dreams" to the soaring defiance of "Your World" and the transcendence of "When I Rise Up"—reflects a different facet of Johnson's indomitable spirit. Musically, the cycle weaves expressive melodies and evolving harmonies to parallel both the poet's legacy and the composer's own experience of reflection and cultural discovery during a time of global uncertainty. Through this work, may Johnson's voice as a "sensitive singer of sad songs" and a "dreamer of broken dreams" remind us of the enduring power of the human spirit to make change in the world.

Psalm Prelude, Set 2, No. 2

Herbert Howells
(1892–1983)

The lush and often fragrant harmonic language of Herbert Howells recalls that of friend and mentor Ralph Vaughan Williams. But Howells' is a more introspective musical voice, one redolent of the incense and ritual of the Anglican church especially, for which he wrote both liturgical and occasional works. His two collections of Psalm-Preludes for organ, all highly rhapsodic works inspired by psalm verses, are wonderful vehicles for displaying the subtle timbres of a large neo-romantic instrument. The second prelude of the second set takes its inspiration from the following verse:

*Yea, the darkness is no darkness with Thee,
but the night is as clear as the day:
the darkness and light to Thee are both alike. (Psalm 139, v. 11)*

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen

Gustav Mahler
(1860–1911)

This song comes from a set of five set to poetry of Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866), one of the most celebrated of the German Romantic writers. With his "Rückert Lieder" now a staple of the mezzo-soprano repertoire especially, Gustav Mahler followed in the footsteps of Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms, all of whom used Rückert poems in their song repertoire. As its first line suggests, *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* ("I am lost to the world"), conveys an atmosphere of resigned yet peaceful introspection.

The French composer and organist Olivier Messiaen created a unique body of music in various idioms, from opera to organ music. Strongly influenced by the more mystical elements of Christianity, he was equally entranced with the sound of birdsong. Composed in 1932, his "Apparition of the Eternal Church," constructs an aural picture of eternity through minimal means: a slow yet throbbing ostinato (rhythmic pattern) overlaid with richly colored chords. Messiaen himself described the pulsing rhythm of this work as the church's "unceasing work of construction."

—Notes by Matthew Dirst & Justin Langham

This program is offered as a musical meditation. In that spirit, please refrain from applause. A free-will offering to benefit Music at St Philip will be received at the door at the conclusion of this evening's program. You can also scan the QR code to the right.



[MASP GIFTS AND INFORMATION]

TEXTS/TRANSLATIONS

Calling Dreams

The right to make my dreams come true,
I ask, nay, I demand of life,
Nor shall fate's deadly contraband
Impede my steps, nor countermand;
Too long my heart against the ground
Has beat the dusty years around,
And now at length I rise! I wake!
And stride into the morning break!

Common Dust

And who shall separate the dust
What later we shall be:
Whose keen discerning eye will scan
And solve the mystery?
The high, the low, the rich, the poor,
The black, the white, the red,
And all the chromatique between,
Of whom shall it be said:
Here lies the dust of Africa;
Here are the sons of Rome;
Here lies the one unlabelled,
The world at large his home!
Can one then separate the dust?
Will mankind lie apart,
When life has settled back again
The same as from the start?

My Little Dreams

I'm folding up my little dreams
Within my heart tonight,
And praying I may soon forget
The torture of their sight.
For Time's deft fingers scroll my brow
With fell relentless art —
I'm folding up my little dreams
Tonight, within my heart!

Your World

Your world is as big as you make it.
I know, for I used to abide
In the narrowest nest in a corner,
My wings pressing close to my side.
But I sighted the distant horizon
Where the skyline encircled the sea
And I throbbed with a burning desire
To travel this immensity.

I battered the cordons around me
And cradled my wings on the breeze,
Then soared to the uttermost reaches
With rapture, with power, with ease!

When I Rise Up

When I rise up above the earth,
And look down on the things that fetter me,
I beat my wings upon the air,
Or tranquil lie,
Surge after surge of potent strength
Like incense comes to me
When I rise up above the earth
And look down upon the things that fetter me.

—Georgia Douglas Johnson

Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen *I am lost to the world*

*Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen,
Mit der ich sonst viele Zeit verdorben,
Sie hat so lange nichts von mir vernommen,
Sie mag wohl glauben, ich sei gestorben!
Es ist mir auch gar nichts daran gelegen,
Ob sie mich für gestorben hält,
Ich kann auch gar nichts sagen dagegen,
Denn wirklich bin ich gestorben der Welt.
Ich bin gestorben dem Weltgetümmel,
Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet!
Ich leb' allein in meinem Himmel,
In meinem Lieben, in meinem Lied!*

I am lost to the world
With which I used to waste much time;
It has for so long known nothing of me,
It may well believe that I am dead.
Nor am I at all concerned
If it should think that I am dead.
Nor can I deny it,
For truly I am dead to the world.
I am dead to the world's tumult
And rest in a quiet realm!
I live alone in my heaven,
In my love, in my song!

–Friedrich Rückert, translated by Richard Stokes

ARTIST BIOS

A soloist in the Grammy award winning *Durufle: The Complete Choral Works*, **CECILIA DUARTE** has been praised by *New York Times* as “a creamy voiced mezzo-soprano.” She has been recognized for creating the role of Renata in the first Mariachi Opera, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, commissioned by Houston Grand Opera in 2010. She has appeared with Houston Grand Opera (2013, 2018), Châtelet Theatre in Paris, Chicago Lyric Opera, San Diego Opera, Arizona Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Teatro Nacional Sucre in Quito, New York City Opera, El Paso Opera, Minnesota Opera, and Opera San Antonio. In addition to her many operatic roles, she is also a passionate performer of early music, including performances with Ars Lyrica Houston, Mercury Houston, Bach Society Houston, Boston Early Music Festival, Bach Collegium San Diego, Naissance Opera, Early Music Vancouver, Pacific Music Works, and others. She also sings with the Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble, which performs early and contemporary music.

Pianist **ANDREEA MUȚ** earned multiple national and international prizes in her home country of Romania and has performed in numerous other countries, including France, Spain, Colombia, Mexico, and the United States. In 2015 she completed a DMA in collaborative arts from the University of Houston. A frequent performer with ROCO Houston, Houston Grand Opera, Da Camera, Aperio – Music of the Americas, Opera in the Heights, Houston Symphony Chorus, Opera San Antonio, and the Texas Music Festival, she serves as organist and pianist at St Stephen’s United Methodist Church and accompanist for the Grammy-winning Houston Chamber Choir. A dedicated educator, she has also served since 2016 as staff pianist and vocal coach at the University of Houston and will return to the Tanglewood Institute this summer as a vocal coach for its Young Artist Vocal Program.

Organist **MATTHEW DIRST** is widely admired for his stylish playing and conducting of Baroque music especially. He is featured on two new recordings on the Acis label: Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book 1, and Alessandro Scarlatti’s 1710 oratorio *La sposa dei cantici*. About the former, the *American Record Guide* enthuses that “his playing sounds like great conducting...the musicians are his own fingers; while about the latter, *Early Music America* notes that “Dirst brilliantly brings it all to life” with Ars Lyrica Houston, a period-instrument ensemble he founded in 2003. His recordings with Ars Lyrica have also been recognized with a Grammy nomination for Best Opera (2011). Professor of Musicology at the Moores School of Music, University of Houston, and organist of St Philip Presbyterian Church, 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), and the editor of *Bach and the Organ* (University of Illinois Press, 2016).