



Ars Lyrica Houston celebrates the release of a new recording by Artistic Director Matthew Dirst: *The Well-Tempered Clavier (Book 1)* by J. S. Bach.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: WASHINGTON, DC, March 5, 2024:

Today marks the release of a complete recording of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* (Book 1) performed on harpsichord by Ars Lyrica's Artistic Director Matthew Dirst. The twenty-four preludes and fugues from this iconic keyboard collection are available on all streaming platforms and as a double CD set. An international prize-winning harpsichordist, Dirst's previous solo recordings have been hailed as "stylish, tasteful, and technically commanding performance... expressive and brilliant playing" (*Early Music America*). This is his second solo Bach recording.

Ars Lyrica Houston is no stranger to critically acclaimed recordings, with a CD catalog that includes a GRAMMY® nomination for J. A. Hasse's opera *Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra* (Best Opera 2011). Having begun this project as a leisurely Ars Lyrica video series during the pandemic, DIRST notes that "normally recording projects involve several sessions during a period of just a few days. Thankfully for this project, with music that is really tricky on an instrument that magnifies even the tiniest of mistakes, that wasn't the case. We had the luxury of several months' time between three recording dates, which allowed me to focus on just eight prelude and fugues at a time. As a result, I'm confident that this represents the best possible performance I could give of each and every movement. And I'm thrilled to now own an instrument that delivers this music with such exceptional clarity and beauty, captured so faithfully by our sound engineers."

This album celebrates the culmination of Ars Lyrica's multi-year project celebrating the 300th anniversary of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Seeking to make Bach's music freely accessible to a wider audience, Ars Lyrica produced *Biweekly Bach*, a digital video series with performance and commentary by Matthew Dirst on the [Ars Lyrica Youtube channel](#), and this album has the work and ethos of that series at its core.

Dirst performs on a harpsichord by the noted American builder John Phillips, whose research into the work of the Gräbner family from Dresden has produced harpsichords that are valued around the world for their fidelity to the Bach ideal. This recording project was generously funded in part by a research grant from the University of Houston, the Houston Saengerbund, the Houston Endowment, and the City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance. Sound engineers for the project were Ryan Edwards and Shannon Smith.

"It is always exciting to hear the musicianship of a conductor up close in solo performance," says GEOFFREY SILVER, founder of the independent classical label, Acis. "Without the usual trimmings of orchestra, choir, and soloists, in an album like this you really get to the heart of the musician at their most vulnerable. It is wonderful to hear these time-honored works performed with such elevation of the human spirit that we saw brought out in many artists during the isolation of the pandemic. It has been a delight to work with Matthew and engineer Ryan Edwards on this album, taking breathtakingly clear audio from Ars Lyrica's Bach 300 project, and distilling it to a traditional album format—a glorious bookend to this inspiring artistic effort."

Based in Houston, Texas, **Ars Lyrica Houston** has received international acclaim for outstanding performances of neglected gems from the 17th and 18th centuries. Founded in 1998 by harpsichordist and conductor Matthew Dirst, the ensemble presents a diverse array of music, and through imaginative programming extracts the dramatic potential, emotional resonance, and expressive power of music. In 2011, Ars Lyrica received a GRAMMY® nomination for Best Opera for a groundbreaking recording of Johann Adolph Hasse's *Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra*.

Acis

Acis is one of America's leading independent classical record labels that boasts a roster of GRAMMY®-winning and nominated artists. Founded by twice GRAMMY®-nominated producer, conductor Geoffrey Silver (original co-founder of New York Polyphony, former Chorus Master of twice GRAMMY®-winning The Washington Chorus), the label has a track record of excellence in the fields of early music, choral, and organ, and champions both emerging and established artists in North America and Europe—particularly women and artists of color.
www.acisproductions.com

Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1* is available for purchase in physical format from Ars Lyrica. Studio masters are also available for download from the Acis site. Streaming on all platforms.

For media inquiries and interview requests please contact:

Lauren Ross, Ars Lyrica Houston

lross@arslyricahouston.org

Tel: 917.574.9789

Geoffrey Silver, Acis

geoffrey.silver@acisproductions.com

Tel: 646.320.8425

For print-ready images, SoundCloud, studio quality downloads, and review CD mail request, please see here:
<https://www.acisproductions.com/ars-lyrica-bach-wtcl-dirst-pressdpk>

The link for consumers is:

<https://www.acisproductions.com/matthew-dirst-bach-well-tempered-clavier-book-1-harpsichord>

ENDS//