



A CONCERT FOR ALESSANDRA COMINI



with

Courtney Maina, soprano
Christopher A. Leach, tenor
Jared Schwartz, bass
Mikhail Berestnev, piano
Mary Dibbern, piano

SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2024 · 3:00 PM
GREAT HALL
ST. MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL
DALLAS, TEXAS



PROGRAM

Vom Nachen getragen (Carried by the Barque) (Achim von Arnim) (1805)	Bettina Brentano von Arnim (1785-1859)
Auf dem Land und in der Stadt (In the Country and in the City) (Goethe) (1776)	Duchess Anna Amalia (1739-1807)
Wanderers Nachtlied (Wanderer's Night Song), D.768 (Goethe) (1822)	Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Erlkönig (The Elfking), D.328 (Goethe) (1815)	Franz Schubert
Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor, Op.27 No.2 ("Moonlight") (1801)	Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
I. Adagio sostenuto	
II. Allegretto	
III. Presto agitato	
	
Die Hochzeit des Camacho (Camacho's Wedding), Op. 10 (Voigts) (1825)	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Duet: So kehrest du wieder (So here you are again)	
Italien (Italy), Op. 8 No.3 (Grillparzer) (1826)	Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805-1847)
Lieder ohne Worte: "Spring Song", Op. 62 No. 6 in A major (1842-4)	Felix Mendelssohn
	
Am Strande (On the Shore), ICS 36 (Gerhard) (1840)	Clara Schumann (1819-1896)
Spanisches Liederspiel: In der Nacht (In the Night), Op. 74 No. 4 (Geibel) (1849)	Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Wie bist du meine Königin (How blissful you are, my queen), Op. 32 No. 9 (Eichendorff) (1865)	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 No. 2 (1893)	Johannes Brahms
	
Vier Lieder: Erwartung (Expectation), Op. 2, No. 1 (Dehmel) (1899)	Arnold Schönberg (1874-1951)
Die stille Stadt (The Silent Town) (Dehmel) (1910)	Alma Mahler (1879-1964)
Schiele in Prison: Find Your Muse (Schwartz) (2023)	Jared Schwartz (b. 1982)
Wien, Wien nur du allein (Vienna, City of My Dreams) (Sieczyrński) (1914)	Rudolf Sieczyński (1879-1952)



Please silence cellphones and electronic devices.
Photography or recording in any manner is prohibited.

ALESSANDRA COMINI

Scholar of *fin-de-siècle* Germanic art and music, and Southern Methodist University Professor of Art History Emerita, Alessandra Comini was born in Winona, Minnesota to Eleanor Frances (“Megan”) Laird (Comini), a writer, and Raiberto Comini, a hotel and business owner in Geneva, Ibiza (island) and London in 1934.

Her parents lived in Ibiza, but before her birth, returned to Minnesota so that their child would be born with an American citizenship. They later moved to Barcelona, but the Spanish Civil War forced them to join Comini’s grandparents in Milan. By 1937, the Comini family returned to the United States, first to Winona and then to Dallas, where her father set up a portrait photography studio. During World War II, Comini, who still spoke with an accent, endured prejudice because of her Axis-country origins. Comini was introduced to the arts early with art lessons from landscape artist Ed Bearden and cello lessons from Lev Aronson of the DSO. She graduated from the Ursuline Academy, run by the Ursuline order of nuns, in 1952.

Comini entered Barnard College, her interest primarily in music. The art historian Marion Lawrence introduced her to art history. A summer in Italy (to study the language) resulted in an enthusiasm for art, especially Medieval and Renaissance.

Back at Barnard College, she enrolled in Italian Renaissance classes with Julius Held, with whose family she became close. She studied German with her mother at Southern Methodist University, where her mother eventually taught German and Italian, later establishing the Italian Department there. Comini took an intensive senior art history seminar at Barnard taught by Marion Lawrence, graduating with a B.A. in 1956. Julius Held encouraged her to study at the University of Vienna, where she studied under Karl Maria Swoboda and Fritz Novotny. Her advisor at Vienna was Gerhard Schmidt, for whom she photographed medieval manuscripts at the Abbey of St. Florian, finding free time to help Hungarian refugees from that country’s 1956 revolution. Without a degree, Comini left the University of Vienna in 1957 for New York and San Francisco. The peripatetic Comini travelled to Mexico, learning Spanish and viewing works of Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and Georgia O’Keefe. After a few months she returned to New York, taking a job at Columbia/Princeton Electronic Music Center with Russian composer Vladimir Ussachevsky. Ever restless, and now interested in the folk music of Scandinavia, she travelled throughout Scandinavia and Denmark, continuing to Paris, London, and Prague. In 1962, she applied unsuccessfully for a teaching position at San Francisco State College; she subsequently decided to get an art history degree at University of California Berkeley.

The 1962 exhibition, *Viennese Expressionism, 1910-1924*, organized by Herschel Chipp at the University of California, focused her interest on the Austrian artist Egon Schiele. She wrote a M.A. thesis on Schiele at University of California, Berkeley, graduating in 1963. Later she cited professors Jean Bony and Walter Horn as influences. She accompanied a class of students to Vienna, led by Julius Held and Harry Bober (of NYU). There she met Walter Hofmann, director of Vienna’s Museum of the 20th Century. Comini discovered the contemporary Austrian artist, Friedrich Hundertwasser, who was living in Italy at the time. Some of his work was later put into Comini’s 1978 book, *The Fantastic Art of Vienna*.

Comini continued her research on Egon Schiele, contacting his relatives and friends, among whom was the art historian Otto Benesch, who had been painted by Schiele. She assiduously visited Schiele’s sites, and discovered the forgotten prison cell (now a museum) where he was incarcerated in 1912. Comini entered Columbia University graduate school in 1964, hearing lectures by Theodore Reff, George Collins, and Meyer Schapiro. As her Schiele profile grew, other specialists, Otto Nirenstein-Kallir and Thomas Messer, contacted her. While still a graduate student, she was a guest professor at Berkeley University in 1967. Comini received her Ph.D., “with distinction” in 1969 from Columbia, writing her dissertation under Reff, on the topic of Egon Schiele’s portraiture.

As Assistant Professor at Columbia, her students included Horst Uhr, Barbara Buenger, Charles Meyer, Alison Hilton, and Janet Kennedy. In 1972, Comini was the first woman to be awarded Princeton University’s *Charles John Gwinn and Alfred Hodder Memorial Fellowship*. She guest lectured on Expressionism at Yale University in 1973. She presented an early women’s history paper in 1980, “Art History, Revisionism, and Some Holy Cows.”

Comini accepted a professorship of art history at Southern Methodist University in 1974. There she met fellow art historian Eleanor Tufts, and the two became research partners, concentrating on forgotten women artists. The same year, Comini was awarded the College Art Association’s *Charles Rufus Morey Book Award*. Comini’s research interest expanded to Picasso and Caspar David Friedrich. Her book, *Egon Schiele’s Portraits* appeared in 1974. In 1990, Comini contributed to Norma Broude’s book, *World Impressionism*.

In 1994, Comini authored another catalog and traveling exhibition on Egon Schiele. Comini received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women’s Caucus for Art in 1995. In 1996, she was named Distinguished Visiting Lecturer at the European Humanities Research Centre of Oxford University. The same year, she received the Distinguished Teaching Prize at SMU’s Meadows School of the Arts. A memoir of her extensive travels, *In Passionate Pursuit*, was published in 2004. She retired from SMU in 2005. Comini was awarded the Grand Cross of Honor by the Republic of Austria for her work on Austrian art and music. She has contributed chapters to a wide variety of specialist books while authoring a number of exhibition catalogues and opera booklets. Comini has authored many illustrated lectures, a number which were commissioned by institutions such as The Guggenheim Museum, Metropolitan Museum, American Musicological Society and the Curtis Institute of Music, among others. Her work has been translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch and Swedish. In 2014, Comini curated the blockbuster exhibition, *Egon Schiele: Portraits* for the Neue Galerie Museum for German and Austrian Art (New York). Since 2014, Comini has written twelve art and music history mystery books: *Killing for Klimt*, *The Schiele Slaughters*, *The Kokoschka Capers*, *The Kollwitz Calamities*, *The Munch Murders*, *The Kandinsky Conundrum*, *The Mahler Mayhem*, *The Beethoven Boomerang*, *The Brahms Bust*, *The Schumann Shaming*, *The Mendelssohn Malice* and *The Wagner Victims*, now all being translated into German. Former students have created two scholarships in her name for undergraduate and graduate research.

Comini describes herself as a revisionist art historian. She has applied social-historical criteria to the popular artists Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele, artists whose histories had been largely aesthetically focused. She also characterizes her work as concentrating on “neglected geographical areas, such as Scandinavia; women artists past and present; and modern myth-making and the manipulation of imagery.”

CATHEDRAL ARTS ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

Soprano **COURTNEY MAINA**, a native of Houston, received degrees in Vocal Performance from Sam Houston State University (BA, 2012) and Southern Methodist University (MM, 2015), where she performed Adele (Die Fledermaus), Susanna (Le nozze di Figaro), Papagena (The Magic Flute), Belinda (Dido and Aeneas), Mrs. Hayes (Susannah) and Serpetta (La finta giardiniera). She has been engaged by The Dallas Opera's Education and Community Engagement program for several seasons as a Teaching and Touring Artist in the DFW area with the roles of Despina (The Three Little Pigs), Dorabella (The Bremen Town Musicians) and Adina (The Elixir of Love). Maina is in demand as a recitalist for The Puccini Society, Winnsboro Center for the Arts, The Dallas Opera Guild, Preston Hollow UMC and St. Matthew's Cathedral Arts, where she has performed in recitals and videos, and in 2021 was featured in the new CD of songs by the American composer Mary Howe for Toccata Classics (London). She made her mainstage debut in The Dallas Opera's production of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and returned as The Page in Verdi's *Rigoletto*. In addition to her love of singing, she enjoys crafting and reading, and she especially loves to cook and bake for her family and friends. "Anytime I can spoil others with cooking/baking, sign me up!"

Tenor **CHRISTOPHER A. LEACH**, a native of Kingsville, Texas, performs extensively in the DFW area. Most recently, he was seen on stage as Nemorino in The Dallas Opera's Education production of *The Elixir of Love* and in concert in Paris, France, and has been featured as a soloist in TDO's Hart Institute for Women Conductors showcase concert. With the Fort Worth Opera he premiered the role of Senator Ralph Yarborough in David T. Little's *JFK* (2016). His other notable roles include the title role in *Doctor Miracle*, Eddie Pensier in *The Bremen Town Musicians*, Miguel in *Pépito*, Don Giovanni in *The Three Little Pigs*, Dandini in *The Billy Goats Gruff*, Don Basilio in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Donald in *Gallantry*, Don Hilarión in *La Verbenda de la Paloma*, and Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*. Leach is active as a recitalist in performances for The Dallas Opera Guild, The Puccini Society and St. Matthew's Cathedral Arts, among others, showcasing in particular the works of 20th-century women composers and working to bring their extraordinary music into the modern repertoire.

Director of Performing Arts and Artist in Residence for St. Matthew's Cathedral Arts, the American pianist **MARY DIBBERN**, PhD in Humanities (UTD), is a specialist in vocal accompaniment and opera coaching. She has been Music Director of Education for The Dallas Opera since 2012. A graduate of Southern Methodist University (MM in Piano Performance), she moved to Paris, France, where she studied with Nadia Boulanger and played for singers in the studios of Pierre Bernac, Gérard Souzay and Dalton Baldwin. She resided in France for thirty-one years, with a successful international career as vocal coach for the Opéra National de Paris, all of the major French venues, and numerous companies in Europe, Asia and North America. Dibbern is in demand for vocal recitals and recordings for Harmonia Mundi France, Claves, Magelone, Toccata Classics, and JTBProd (Paris). Her recordings of French composer Jacques Leguerney with baritone Kurt Ollmann was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque (Académie Charles Cros), and her CD *Songs of Franz Liszt* with Jared Schwartz (recorded at St. Matthew's) received the Best Lieder Recording of 2017 (Voix des Arts). Dibbern has edited musical editions for Musik Fabrik (Paris), Classical Vocal Reprints (USA), and Editions Max Eschig (Paris). Her eight books on French vocal repertoire are published by Pendragon Press (New York). Her 2022 recording of songs and duets by the American composer Mary Howe (1882-1964) with Courtney Maina and Christopher A. Leach (also recorded at St. Matthew's) was produced to great acclaim by Toccata Classics (London).

Pianist **MIKHAIL BERESTNEV** has been praised for his "flawless technique, constant inspiration and superb sonority" (Belgian La Libre Magazine) and as "an astonishingly gifted pianist...equally at home as a soloist and collaborative pianist" (Theater Jones). He has appeared with the Sydney Symphony, Brazilian Symphony, Royal Chamber Orchestra of Wallonia, Fort Worth Symphony, San Angelo Symphony, Meadows Symphony and the Greater North Texas Youth Orchestra. Mikhail has performed with orchestras and as a recitalist at the Grand Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory and International Music House in Moscow, the National Concert Hall in Dublin, Flagey Theater in Brussels, the Sydney Opera House, Palau de la Música Recital Hall in Barcelona, the English Hall at St. Petersburg Music House, the Eisemann Center for Performing Arts and more. His collaborations include work with Grammy Award-winning violinist Matt Albert, Avery Fisher Grant recipient violinist Aaron Boyd, concert pianist Andrei Ponochevny, Dallas Symphony violinists Eunice Keem and Lydia Umlauf, French hornist David Cooper, concert violinist Hubert Pralitz, the Seraphim Piano Trio (Melbourne, Australia), Sao Paulo City String Quartet (Brazil), Julius String Quartet (U.S.) and with the Meadows Distinguished Artist in Residence violinist Emanuel Borok. His awards include prizes at prestigious international piano competitions, including the Sydney International Piano Competition of Australia (Fourth Prize and Special Prize), the BNDES International Piano Competition in Rio de Janeiro (Silver Medal and Special Prize), the National MTNA Competition in New York (Third Prize), the Eric Sorantin Young Artist Award, the Judith Solomon Piano Award in Chamber Music, the Harold von Mickwitz piano award, the Dmitri Shostakovich National Junior Competition, the Voronezh Central Music School National Competition, Stanislav Neuhaus International Piano Competition and the International Delphic Games Competition (Gold Medal). Mikhail holds degrees from the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music, where he studied with Irina Grebenkina, Andrei Khitruk, Alexei Skavronsky and Vladimir Tropp; from Texas Christian University with Tamás Ungár; and from Southern Methodist University with Joaquín Achúcarro.

SPECIAL GUEST

JARED SCHWARTZ is an opera composer and operatic bass. He has written eight operas, the most recent based upon Dr. Alessandra Comini's book, *Schiele in Prison*. Schwartz traveled to Austria with Dr. Comini and spent the night in Schiele's prison cell in order to complete the opera. As a singer, Jared has sung around the world and also recorded four albums, including two with Dr. Mary Dibbern. Originally from Indiana, Jared studied piano, violin, and French horn before finally completing his graduate studies in singing at the Eastman School of Music. For more information, visit www.jaredschwartz.com.

Design and notes by Jon White

This concert is given in loving memory of Lucy Tamez Creech and Graham Clarke,
dear colleagues and great friends of St. Matthew's Cathedral Arts.