



**2008-2009
Season**

**Bach, Brahms &
Schnittke: The Sacred
Imagination**

November 15, 2008

**Chestnuts Roasting:
A Secession Holiday
Concert**

December 5, 2008

(Un)Lucky in Love

February 13 & 14, 2009

**World Premiere of
Testimony of Witnesses**

March 22, 2009

PRESS RELEASE

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**Boston Secession Presents Bach, Brahms & Schnittke:
The Sacred Imagination**

Sacred German Choral Music Showcased in November 15 Concert

BOSTON, MA – October 16, 2008 – Professional choral ensemble Boston Secession launches its 2008-09 concert season on November 15th with **Bach, Brahms & Schnittke: The Sacred Imagination**. Here, two beloved canonical masterworks, Bach's *Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden* and Brahms' *O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf*, are joined by an impassioned 20th century triumph, Alfred Schnittke's *Requiem*. The repertoire explores the breathtaking range of sacred German choral music, and bears witness to the Russian-born Schnittke's place within this tradition.

Bach's *Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden* (Praise the Lord all ye heathens), one of six motets by the composer, draws its entire text from the jubilant first two verses of Psalm 117. Unlike Bach's other motets, *Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden* was not intended to be a funeral motet and uses only four vocal lines and a continuo part added later. (Because of this, and the fact that the earliest source is a printed copy from 1821, some scholars have questioned the authorship of the piece.) The scintillating effect of the trumpet-like opening subject and the final dance, as well as the jubilant nature of the text suggest the possibility that the piece may have been adapted from a chorus, in motet style, from a lost cantata.

The composition of Brahms' *O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf* (O Savior, tear open the heavens) reflects the north German heritage at the center of the composer's work and his admiration for Bach in particular. *O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf* offers variations on a Chorale tune, comparable, on a smaller scale, with Bach's "Jesu meine Freude." The canonic voices in Brahms' motet enter closer and closer with each variation, erupting in a bright and rollicking final movement, where the chorale tune is fragmented and turned in on itself.

The concert concludes with Schnittke's 1975 *Requiem* from the music to Schiller's drama *Don Carlos*. The work, scored for voices, percussion, organ, and piano, includes fourteen

movements. Although he was born and lived in Russia, Schnittke was keenly influenced by German music and culture. About his German heritage, he observed, “I haven’t a drop of Russian blood in me, even though I have lived here all my life. ...My German forbears, who lived here for two hundred years, remained Germans. Not, in a certain sense, the kind of Germans who grew and flourished in the West, but the kind who seem to have preserved the psychological characteristics peculiar to Germans in an earlier time.”

Secession’s Artistic Director Jane Ring Frank noted, “We chose this repertoire with an eye towards showcasing the extraordinary abilities of Boston Secession’s ensemble, which includes many of Boston’s finest voices. And of course we’re thrilled to present this concert at First Church of Cambridge, Congregational, which is such an appropriate and inspiring setting for sacred music.”

Boston Secession is a professional choral ensemble founded in 1996 by Jane Ring Frank as a showcase for the breadth and depth of choral music. Ring Frank is also Conductor of Philovox (publishing house E.C. Schirmer’s resident professional recording chorus), Resident Scholar at the Women’s Studies Research Center at Brandeis University, Minister of Music at the First Congregational Church in Winchester, and Conductor of the Concord Women’s Chorus. Now in its twelfth season, Secession has earned a reputation as “...a polished, finely blended chamber choir” (Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*) and an “...extraordinary chorus, notable for its beautiful balance [and] musical surety.” (David Perkins, *The Boston Globe*).

Boston Secession has produced two professional recordings, including *Surprised by Beauty: Minimalism in Choral Music*, released in 2008, featuring compositions by Gavin Bryars, Arvo Pärt, Ruth Lomon, and William Duckworth, with a bonus track by William Walker. Writing for *The Arts Fuse*, reviewer Caldwell Titcomb observed, “The Secession chorus under Ring Frank’s direction is marvelous. There are a few brief vocal solos, but for most of the time we get a wonderfully homogeneous and completely blended sonority.”

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For photos visit: <http://www.bostonsecession.org/page.cfm?pageid=5872>

Concert Program**Bach, Brahms & Schnittke: The Sacred Imagination**

Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden (Praise the Lord all ye heathens), BWV 230
[date unknown] Psalm 117: 1-2

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf, Op. 74, No. 2 [1863]
(O Savior, tear open the heavens)

Johannes Brahms (1833-97)
Friedrich von Spee (1591-1635)

Requiem from the music to Schiller's drama *Don Carlos* [1974/75]

Alfred Schnittke (1934-98)

Boston Secession's 2008 - 2009 Season

Subscriptions to *Boston Secession's* 2008 - 2009 season are currently available through the *Boston Secession* website (www.bostonsecession.org) or by calling 617-499-4860. Subscriptions range from \$135 to \$150, and tickets to individual concerts start at \$25. The subscription package includes:

Bach, Brahms & Schnittke: The Sacred Imagination

Saturday, November 15, 2008 • 8 pm
First Church in Cambridge, Congregational
11 Garden Street, Harvard Square

Chestnuts Roasting: A Secession Holiday Concert

Friday, December 5, 2008 • 8 pm
Old South Church, Copley Square

(Un)Lucky in Love

Friday, February 13 & Saturday, February 14, 2008 • 8 pm
Margaret Jewett Hall
First Church in Cambridge, Congregational
11 Garden Street, Harvard Square

Testimony of Witnesses

Sunday, March 22, 2008 • 3 pm
Sanders Theatre, Harvard University
45 Quincy Street, Cambridge

In addition to savings on the price of tickets, subscriber benefits include two guest passes per subscription, free parking for Boston Secession's Cambridge concerts, and preferred seating at all four concerts.

About Boston Secession

Boston Secession is a professional choral ensemble comprised of 25 voices, with a repertoire ranging from medieval chant to contemporary classical music.

Founded in 1996 by Conductor and Artistic Director Jane Ring Frank, Boston Secession has garnered critical acclaim for its uniquely blended and transparent sound. David Perkins of the *Boston Globe* called Secession an “extraordinary chorus, notable for its beautiful balance, musical surety, and English-styled straight-toned singing” (March, 2008), while Tom Garvey of the *Hub Review* praised the ensemble for its “lushly transparent singing conducted with intelligence and wit” (February, 2007).

Boston Secession performs four times annually, with thematic programs exploring topics ranging from the enduring influence of George Frideric Handel to expressions of passion and sensuality in choral music. Secession concerts frequently feature premieres of new choral music. The ensemble’s annual alternative Valentine’s Day concert, *(Un)Lucky in Love*, which takes a lighthearted look at the vicissitudes of love, has sold out for many years.

In the spring of 2009, Boston Secession will premiere *Testimony of Witnesses*, a new multilingual oratorio based on the poetry of Holocaust victims and survivors by Secession’s composer-in-residence Ruth Lomon. *Testimony of Witnesses* is a concert-length work scored for chorus, orchestra, and soloists. Lomon's provocative and hauntingly beautiful settings illuminate the personal experience of seventeen poets, whose texts – in seven languages – reflect the truly international impact of the Holocaust and the variety of individuals and communities that were forever changed by it.

In the spring of 2008, Boston Secession released its second professional CD recording, *Surprised by Beauty: Minimalism in Choral Music*, featuring compositions by Gavin Bryars, Arvo Pärt, Ruth Lomon, and William Duckworth. Secession’s first recording, *Afterlife: German Choral Meditations on Mortality*, was praised by the *American Record Guide*, which noted that the ensemble is “a very fine one, well blended and excellently in tune. Their performances of often quite difficult music are assured and musical.”

Boston Secession was founded on the belief that vocal music is a uniquely powerful way to share intellectual ideas and has the power, above all arts, to create community. Its mission is to create, through its superlative performances, a deeper connection between the audience and the performers.

So, why the name Boston Secession?

One hundred years ago, Austrian painter Gustav Klimt’s artist’s co-operative, the Vienna Secession, created a sensation by displaying paintings at eye level for the first time. Now the common practice for all art galleries, the Secessionists’ approach modernized the presentation of art forever. Inspired by the original Secession, Jane Ring Frank founded Boston Secession in 1996 as a professional studio for modern vocal performance, bringing classical music to “eye level.”

About Jane Ring Frank, Conductor and Artistic Director

Boston Secession’s Conductor and Artistic Director, Jane Ring Frank, has earned a reputation for her orchestral command of ensemble, her acute sense of intonation and sound coloring, her relentlessly scholarly preparation, and her sparkling sense of humor. The result, in the words of Thomas Garvey of the *Hub Review*, is “lushly transparent singing conducted with intelligence and wit.”

Ring Frank founded Boston Secession in 1996 on the program of Gustav Klimt's Vienna Secession of a hundred years ago: bringing uncompromising art and innovation to the people through public performances. Ring Frank and her 25-member vocal art ensemble achieve this goal through rich, uniquely-themed programs and exquisitely realized music.

Ring Frank has conducted and produced two CDs with Boston Secession. *Afterlife: German Choral Meditations on Mortality* features the works of Distler, Brahms, Bach, and Ruth Lomon, Secession's composer-in-residence. This debut disc has received critical acclaim for its outstanding performance quality. Ring Frank and Boston Secession recently recorded a second CD, *Surprised by Beauty: Minimalism in Choral Music*, which features works by Lomon, Arvo Pärt, Gavin Bryars, and William Duckworth.

In addition to her Secession Artistic Director responsibilities, Ring Frank is Conductor of Philovox, publishing house E.C. Schirmer's resident professional recording chorus. She is a Resident Scholar at the Women's Studies Research Center at Brandeis University, Minister of Music at the First Congregational Church in Winchester, and Conductor of the Concord Women's Chorus, a 50-voice ensemble.

An accomplished pianist and conductor, Ring Frank started her career in Los Angeles as assistant to Professor Frank Pooler, an important choral innovator known for championing new music and experimental performance techniques. With degrees in accompanying and conducting, Ring Frank began her professional career as associate conductor of the 70-voice University Choir, staff pianist, lecturer, and musical director/conductor for the Department of Theatre Arts at California State University, Long Beach.

Ring Frank moved to Boston in 1991 to conduct at Harvard University. From 1998–2003, Frank was Director of Chapel Music at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, where she worked extensively with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Bishop Emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa. Ring Frank has toured Vienna, Austria, Munich, Prague, Stockholm, Poland and the United States extensively as a guest lecturer, choral/instrumental conductor, and pianist.