

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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"Mother Tongue" Concert a Playful Review of the Gaffes and Glories of English Text Setting—from the 1700s to Today

The concert delivers three major choral commissions, in addition to a wide range of English language hits from Purcell to Gilbert & Sullivan, Britten and Thompson

BOSTON, MA – MARCH 28, 2007 – Boston Secession's tenth anniversary season wraps up with a final "music of ideas" concert that is—according to artistic director Jane Ring Frank—"a playful exploration of the joys and pains of getting the notoriously lumpy English language to make great vocal music." This concert—"Mother Tongue: The Music and Meter of the English Language"—takes a look at the historical drought of important English-speaking music since the middle 1700s, and celebrates the unique successes of artists like Gilbert & Sullivan and W. H. Auden & Benjamin Britten, songwriting teams who balanced the natural accentual rhythm of English verse with crisp and innovative musical meters. Secession does its own part to contribute to the English language repertoire with three commissioned choral premieres featuring the poetry of Walt Whitman, Joyce Carol Oates, and Anthony Hecht.

"There are practical reasons why most vocal music is based on what we consider 'foreign' texts," says Ring Frank. "This concert asks a simple linguistic question: why was the English language so unpopular for English-speaking composers and audiences between Purcell and Benjamin Britten?" The show includes a quick tour of the technical challenges of strong and weak beats in English poetry—"we're thinking of it as 'Versification 101,' and we'll demo some pretty funny and embarrassing examples of bad text setting"—and a survey of the impassioned pleas of poets against the 'sing-song' and doggerel musical settings that were ruining perfectly good poems in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The program features music of from Handel to John Blow and Virgil Thomson—plus a showcase performance of one of the masterworks of modern English text setting: Benjamin Britten's 1942 "Hymn to St. Cecilia," based on the classic poem by W. H. Auden. The concert also features an unprecedented triple commission premiere. Secession's composer-in-residence, Ruth Lomon, premieres her setting of Joyce Carol Oates's "After the Storm," Boston composer Scott Wheeler premieres his setting of Anthony Hecht's poem "Prospects," and California composer Byron Adam's premieres his setting of Walt Whitman's "Ashes of Soldiers." [Note: headshots at bostonsecession.org]

Special Appearance

September 29, 2006 Celebrating Broadway's Best Benefit for Cambridge Housing Assistance Fund (CHAF)

Opening Gala

October 14, 2006

Berlin On the Charles
Cabaret Benefit with Nancy
Armstrong

2006-2007 10th Anniv. Season "The Music of Ideas"

November 17, 2006 Altered States: Mysticism in Music

February 2, 2007 (Un)Lucky In Love Alternative Valentine Concert

March 16, 2007 Surprised by Beauty: Minimalism in Choral Music

April 27, 2007

Mother Tongue: The Music and Meter of the English Language

DATE, TIME & TICKETS: One performance only (concert plus post-concert composer reception and 10th anniversary birthday party): Friday, April 27, 2007, at 8 p.m. - First Church in Cambridge, Congregational (11 Garden Street, Harvard Square; T-stop: Harvard Square). Tickets: \$30 in advance, \$35 at the door (students and seniors \$10 in advance or at the door). Tickets are available at all BosTix locations, on the Web at www.bostonsecession.org, or by calling 617-499-4860.

ABOUT JANE RING FRANK, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

In the world of choral music making, Jane Ring Frank is a conductor's conductor. Her orchestral command of ensemble, her acute sense of intonation and sound coloring, her relentlessly scholarly preparation and her sparkling sense of humor come together to create a unique choral concert experience—for performers and audiences alike.

An accomplished pianist and conductor, Ring Frank started her career at California State University/Long Beach as associate conductor of the 70-voice University Choir, staff pianist, lecturer, and musical director/conductor for the Department of Theatre Arts there. Ring Frank also worked as a *repetiteur* with professional opera companies in Los Angeles, including the Los Angeles Music Center Opera and the Long Beach Opera Company.

Ring Frank moved to Boston in 1991 to conduct at Harvard University. Five years later she founded Boston Secession. In addition to her artistic director responsibilities with Boston Secession, Ring Frank is currently 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, Director of Music at the First Congregational Church in Winchester, and Conductor of the 50-voice Concord Women's Chorus.

ABOUT BOSTON SECESSION

Hailed as "revitalizing the concert experience" (*Boston Magazine*), *Boston Secession* delivers performances of music from nine centuries with surpassing excellence, forging connections between music and the wider sphere of cultural life: art, politics, philosophy, religion, sexuality.

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. This modernized the presentation of fine art forever by removing the barrier between art and audience.

Inspired by the original Secession, Jane Ring Frank founded *Boston Secession* in 1996 as a laboratory for modernizing professional vocal performance. Her goal: bringing the audience more deeply into the music. First, Ring Frank helps the audience "hear the music, not the chorus" by creating a uniquely transparent sound, achieved through application of typically orchestral technique to her ensemble of professional singers.

Blending individual voices into a tightly-tuned, unified sound, *Secession* produces an aural effect "so precise"—according to Richard Dyer of *The Boston Globe*—"[it makes] the ears ring." Ring Frank then puts this unique sound to work in creative thematic programs that take the concert experience further. Listening through the music, *Secession's* audiences directly experience the ideas and the cultural connections embedded in the sound.

For more information about *Boston Secession*, or to purchase the debut CD *Afterlife*, visit www.bostonsecession.org or call 617-499-4860.

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