

## WELCOME FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



**ANTOINE PLANTE**

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

LYNN WYATT CHAIR

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Houston Early Music Festival 2018! I hope you will take the opportunity to discover more early music this upcoming week. Our colleagues from La Speranza, Ars Lyrica Houston, Bach Society Houston, Piping Rock Singers and Houston Early Music are working hard to present many great early music concerts to Houston audiences as a part of the sixth annual Houston Early Music Festival, tonight through Friday.

For our contribution, Mercury is presenting a concert that features Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. This piece holds a special place in my heart, as it's one of the first Baroque works I truly fell in love with. I discovered it when I was 15 years old, studying in a jazz music festival in the south of France. On a balmy Sunday morning, one of my roommates, who was a trombonist, played a recording of this amazing choral work. Although I can't recall his name, the glorious music he played deeply impressed me, and inspired me to seek out more Baroque music. This led to my lifelong love of Baroque music, and eventually to the founding of Mercury.

Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* is a setting of a Latin poem that dates from the Middle Ages. *Stabat Mater dolorosa*, or "sorrowful Mother standing", speaks of the pain suffered by the Virgin Mary while she watches as her Son is crucified, dying an agonizing death. The imagery is strong and symbolic, and the text is so very poignant. Pergolesi's music, composed while he was dying in a Franciscan monastery, makes the poetry stronger, and the poetry in turn makes his music transcendent. To balance out tonight's program, we are also performing music from Handel, composed around the same time. The concerto grosso, or grand concerto, features the orchestra and punctuates some of Handel's most beautiful duets from operas and oratorios.

I am so glad to be performing tonight with Dominique Labelle and Daniel Taylor. This is my first time working with these two artists, both of whom are renowned performers of Baroque music. It will be a treat to perform this music with these great soloists and our great orchestra. Thank you for coming to tonight's concert, and I hope this is just the first of a wonderful week of musical experiences for you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antoine Plante".