

Elisabeth Möst: Uniting musical eras

BY CELIA WREN

In classical music, there is an exciting symbiosis between the present and the past. That, at least, is the opinion of Austrian flutist Elisabeth Möst, a champion of contemporary music who also loves older repertoire. Möst says she finds it thrilling to sleuth out the connections between modern scores and the works of Bach, Mozart and other masters.

Conversely, Möst, who will perform at the Austrian Embassy on Aug. 12, appreciates the sometimes "exciting extremes" in contemporary music, pointing to the super-loud and super-quiet dynamics in a Luciano Berio piece she played recently.

"These days, classical music is often felt [to be] boring, usual, unadventurous," Möst said by e-mail from her home in Detmold, Germany.

"Can contemporary music [provide] an impulse backwards to let classical music feel less meaningless, less harmless, less murmuring along?" she mused. "Awak[e] classical music to how it was always meant: deeply stirring?"

Möst awoke to music as a child in Austria, where her mother sang a lot with the children. (Her brother Franz Welser-Möst, a conductor, is music director of the Cleveland Orchestra.) She began violin lessons at age 6, then switched to the recorder and the flute.

Möst's affinity for the flute was strong enough to propel her into a

music career. She has performed around the world, released several albums and taught in Germany and Bulgaria. But a career in music hasn't closed off other creative outlets: Möst writes poetry, including a recent poem about 50 kinds of tea (her personal taste runs to herbal), and has published a children's book.

She also devises events she calls "meditative soundscapes" — weaving together music and speech with an inspirational or spiritual theme. One particularly successful example featured music performed by Möst and actors reading the Chekhov story "Easter Eve."

The Aug. 12 program at the Austrian Embassy will be purely musical, with pieces by contemporary Austrian composers Thomas Daniel Schlee, Dominik Sedivy and Wolfram Wagner and American composers Lowell Liebermann and Katherine Hoover. Also on the bill will be Berio's "Sequenza," which Möst calls a masterpiece, and a Mozart-themed fantasia by 19th-century composer Friedrich Kuhlau.

Italian film history

Don't expect the National Gallery of Art's film series "Titanus Presents" to be a parade of usual movie-history suspects. Sure, a masterpiece such as Luchino Visconti's 1963 film "The Leopard" will be represented in this showcase produced by Italy's 111-year-old Titanus studio. But the roster also includes many lesser-known works, including pieces of high-



GEORG THUM, MUNICH

Elisabeth Möst plays at the Austrian Embassy on Aug. 12.

quality genre entertainment.

"We thought it might be a slightly different take on Italian film history," NGA film curator Peggy Parsons said of the series, which is being presented with the Italian Embassy and others.

When Americans recall Italy's screen achievements, Parsons said, they usually focus on the neo-realist movement that took root around the end of World War II, or else on such visionary directors as Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni and Bernardo Bertolucci in the 1960s and '70s. The movies in the "Titanus Presents" series, by contrast, "are the kinds of films that more Italians were seeing throughout the 20th

century," she said.

Titanus, founded in 1904 by Gustavo Lombardo, was always a family concern. (Guido Lombardo, Gustavo's grandson, now heads it.)

The studio was at its peak in the post-World War II years, when it minted comedies, melodramas, mysteries and epics, as well as some films by auteur directors such as Fellini (represented here by 1955's "Il Bidone").

Movies in the series include "Days of Glory" (1945), a landmark documentary about a Nazi-Fascist massacre and its aftermath; Antonioni's 1955 "Le Amiche"; "Two Women," which won Sophia Loren a best-actress Oscar in 1962; and "The Bird With the Crystal Plumage" (1970), a gothic thriller based on the American pulp novel "The Screaming Mimi."

"We're trying to mix up the comedies and mysteries and genre films with the birth of this auteur culture," Parsons said.

style@washpost.com

Wren is a freelance writer.

Elisabeth Möst Aug. 12 at 7:30 pm at the Austrian Embassy, 3524 International Ct. NW., Washington, D.C. Free. For information and to register, visit www.acfdc.org/upcoming-events.

Titanus Presents: A Family Chronicle of Italian Cinema Aug. 8-Sept. 27 at the National Gallery of Art's East Building. Free. Visit www.nga.gov.