

As a pianist and producer, Sarah Rothenberg has a history of weaving music, words and visual art together in evenings of thematic exploration. Her 2009 multimedia presentation *The Blue Rider* explored early-20th-century avant-garde culture through the works of Vasily Kandinsky and Arnold Schoenberg. This May, her piece *In the Garden of Dreams* combined the paintings of Klimt and the writings of Freud and Strindberg with Schoenberg's *Book of Hanging Gardens*, all seen through the prism of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

Rothenberg's penchant for drawing connections can also be seen in her work as artistic director of **Da Camera of Houston**. When planning her seasons, she doesn't simply bring in top classical and jazz musicians; she arranges them thematically. For

instance, the 2013–2014 season carries the banner "Late Styles and Young Trailblazers." "Late Styles" concerts include the late quartets of Shostakovich, played by the Jerusalem String Quartet; a "Late Style NOW" program, with the International Contemporary Ensemble playing recent works of Reich, Adams and Andriessen; and a Wayne Shorter concert, celebrating the saxophonist's 80th birthday.

Da Camera's programs connect not only to one another, but to the cultural life of Houston itself. *In the Garden of Dreams* was developed in collaboration with Houston Grand Opera, and scheduled to coincide with the company's production of *Tristan*. A February program, "Music for Rothko Chapel," featured composer Kaija Saariaho and the world premiere of her piece *Sombre*—a work inspired by the chapel's

collection of dark, contemplative Rothko works.

"What keeps me going is connecting music to other aspects of life," Rothenberg says. She studied piano at the Curtis Institute—where the educational focus, in her words, was "music is music is music"—but on the side, she was a "closet reader" and a lover of fine arts. "I would go into a museum and think about music," she says. "I realized more and more it wasn't all separate: it doesn't exist in a vacuum."

Rothenberg sees her programming efforts as an extension of her work as a pianist. "It's about making what I'm doing more personal," she says. "I want the audience to experience what I experience." ■

www.dacamera.com

 Watch *In The Garden of Dreams* at www.chamber-music.org/extras

Connections

Pianist Sarah Rothenberg and mezzo-soprano Charlotte Hellekant in the premiere of *In the Garden of Dreams*.

