



PROGRAM NOTE

After completing *Aida* and the *Requiem* in the 1870s, Verdi actually declared his creative work to be finished. Fortunately, the brilliant Shakespeare operas *Otello* and *Falstaff* as well as some sacred works were to follow.

The movements of the *Quattro pezzi sacri*, characterized by intimacy and compositional density, were written between 1887 and 1897 and were only brought together in a cycle at the request of the publisher Giulio Ricordi: an *Ave Maria* for mixed choir a cappella, and the *Laudi alla Vergine* for unaccompanied four-part female choir. In the other two “pezzi”, the choir is accompanied by a full orchestra, while in the *Te Deum*, with its massive blocks of sound, a double choir and a short, ethereal soprano solo are also required. The composer Hans Gál called Verdi’s *Quattro pezzi sacri* his “epilogue to a life’s work”, in which everything is “concentrated on what is most essential”.

The *Quattro pezzi sacri* are testimony to Verdi’s intense engagement with the polyphony of the old Italian masters, on the basis of which he ultimately found a very “modern” musical language. At the premiere it was the *Laudi* that corresponded closest to the tastes of the time, and it had to be encored. Human suffering, a lifelong theme for variation by Verdi in his operas, he now transferred in the *Stabat Mater* to the example of the Mother at her Son’s Cross. The concluding *Te Deum* is a reminiscing evocation sharing paeans of praise from earlier centuries and, at the same time, an avant-garde glimpse of things to come. In a last dramatic test of tensile strength, Verdi over-stretches the separation between the ecstatic certainty of salvation and the terror of falling into eternal damnation.

NDU choir performs Verdi’s *Four Sacred Pieces* for the first time. However the decision to perform these pieces was not risk-free and the challenges were many for the mostly young singers. While most of them have already sung works from the late romantic repertoire, especially Verdi’s *Requiem*, it was often in collaboration with other choirs, making it easier to endure the restlessness of this music arising mostly from the high tessitura and the long a cappella passages.

The opening of the concert features Iyad Kanaan settings of psalms 13 and 42, two distinguished pieces of the arabic sacred repertoire, giving voice to feelings that arise in any of the many trials that a person undergoes in life and praying for salvation; a turning point between mourning and rejoicing. Follows the *Ave Maria* from Verdi’s *Otello*, where Desdemona prays to the Virgin Mary just before *Otello* enters to take her life.

VERDI

Quattro pezzi sacri

KANAAN 2 psalms, op. 28

Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra
Notre Dame University Choir

Marie-Josée Matar soprano

Silvio Celeghin organ

Fadi Khalil conductor

Saturday April 30 – 8.00 PM

Saint Joseph church, Monnot - Achrafieh (Beirut)



In collaboration with



PROGRAM

Iyad Kanaan (1971)

2 PSALMS OP. 28

1. **Psalm 13** — إلى متى يا ربّ تنساني

2. **Psalm 42** — كما يشفق الأيّل

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

3. **Ave Maria** [from *Otello*, Act 4]

QUATTRO PEZZI SACRI

4. **Ave Maria**

5. **Stabat Mater**

6. **Laudi alla Vergine Maria**

7. **Te Deum**

IYAD KANAAN composer

Lebanese composer, studied music composition with late Professor Guy Habib and graduated from the Lebanese conservatory in 1998 with Diploma in Harmony and western music Theory, under the surveillance of Professor Joseph Fakhry. His musical career began with the NDU Choir conducted by P. Khalil Rahme, for which he wrote many vocal works and Oratorios in Arabic (until the end of time 2006- Paul Apostle of Nations- 2010/ St Joseph- 2018/ al Al7an- 2019).

Thus, he collaborated at the advancement of dramatic singing in Arabic, especially in his arabic art songs on poems by Said AKL, Elias Abou Chabke and Antoine Raad, and mostly in his Opera "QADMOUS", his major work still unperformed.

His instrumental music includes chamber works (quintet, quartets, trio, sonatas, and a CD "HANIN" for Qanun quintet), as well as orchestral works including a Violin concerto, a Trumpet Concerto, three symphonic poems (among which "The Return" performed by LPO in 2013), a set of Lebanese Dances, as well as a suite "Symphonic paintings" inspired by the work of Khalil Gibran. Recently, he finished writing his first symphony. He places the sacred songs op. 28 among his best works for Choir.

MARIE-JOSÉE MATAR soprano

At the age of sixteen years old, Marie-Josée Matar took her first singing lessons at the Lebanese National conservatory, embarking on a musical journey that would take her from her home in Beirut, a city with only a very limited opera scene, to one of the most acclaimed capitals in the world of music: Paris.

Throughout the past years she has participated extensively in concerts, recitals and festivals in many major concert halls and opera houses including the National Theatre of Opera and Ballet "Oleg Danovski" in Constanta (Romania), the Presidential Palace of the French Republic (Elysée Palace) and the Hôtel de ville in Paris, the Palace of the United Nations in Geneva, the UNESCO house in Paris, Beirut Chants festival, Festival des Nuits d'Orient in Dijon (France), among others.

Recent engagements include singing the role of soprano solo in Fauré's Requiem with the "Georges Enescu" Philharmonic Orchestra in Bucharest. Other performances included her debut at the National Theatre of Opera and Ballet "Oleg Danovski" in Constanta singing the role of Gilda (Rigoletto), Madame Herz in Mozart's Der Schauspieldirektor staged by Yves Coudray, Mozart's Requiem, Franck's The seven last words of Christ with Choeur Hugues Reiner to name a few.

Her interest in Lebanese music led her to work in close collaboration with Lebanese composers such as Toufic Succar, Bechara El Khoury, and Iyad Kanaan, as well as many others. Passionately defending this repertoire, she also gives many recitals with the pianist Georges Dacache, in Lebanon and Europe.

Marie-Josée studied Opera singing in Paris with Soprano Mihaela Mingheras, and was studying during her Bachelor's under Professor Anne Constantin. Distinguished professors and coaches, such as Virginia Zeani, Françoise Pollet, Jeff Cohen, Denis Dubois, Anne Le Bozec, have strongly influenced her musical development and helped her hone her musical interpretation.

SILVIO CELEGHIN organ

Prizewinner of several international contests (Albenga, Noale, Monferrato), and principal organist of the "Schola S. Rocco" of Vicenza, Silvio Celeghin graduated from Padua and Castelfranco Veneto (Treviso) Music Conservatories in piano (1985), organ (1990) and harpsichord (1997). He later shaped his skills with renowned artists such as V. Pavarana, F. Finotti, J. Guillou, L. Ferdinando Tagliavini, and Olivier Latry.

His collaborations include many renowned artists such as Fabiano Maniero (trumpet); orchestras such as Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto, La Fenice, Milano Classica, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Accademia Nazionale Santa Cecilia (Roma), and Simon Bolívar (Caracas); and conductors like Riccardo Muti, Marcello Viotti, Claudio Scimone, Antonio Pappano among others.

Celeghin performed in major Italian cities: Venice, Padua, Milan, Rome, Spoleto, Florence, Bolzano, Novara, Trieste, and Palermo; and he appeared as well at several international festivals: St. Maximin en Provence, Marmoutier, Nancy, Strasbourg and Alpe d'Huez, London, Zurich, Lausanne, Gstaad, Warsaw, Innsbruck, Zagreb, Istanbul, Gavle, Uppsala, Brussels, Tolosa, San Sebastian, S. Paolo-Rio DJ, Beijing and Seoul.

Celeghin teaches at the "B. Marcello" Conservatory of Venice. His recordings include various labels such as Tring, Velut Luna, Artis Records, Warner Fonit, Azzurra Music, La Bottega Discantica, Stradivarius, Tactus; among others.

FADI KHALIL conductor

Assistant director at Notre Dame University Choir and School of Music, Fadi Khalil started his music education with Toufic Succar and Joseph Fakhry at the Lebanese National Conservatory of Music, then attended the conducting class of Ennio Nicotra at the Ilya Musin society in Palermo, thanks to the support of the CPML (Centre du Patrimoine Musical Libanais).

His collaborations include orchestras such as the Roma Sinfonietta, Fort Wayne Philharmonic, and Nevsky Orchestra; and choirs such as Al Bustan Festival Choir and Philokalia Choir; as well as the Lebanese pop-star Majida El Roumi.

Khalil is also active as an educator, teaching at NDU School of Music and Philokalia Institute.