



SOL FESTIVAL 2023

Semaine de l'Orgue au Liban

Lebanese Pipe Organ Week

from 19 to 26 March 2023

8th edition

press release

Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) and Terra Sancta Organ Festival have the pleasure to present the eighth edition of the SOL Festival (Semaine de l'Orgue au Liban | Lebanese Pipe Organ Week) from 19 to 26 March 2023. Admission is free to all concerts. All information can be found on the festival website www.solfestival.org and on the Facebook page "SOL Festival".

The Lebanese Pipe Organ Week is the only festival in Lebanon to highlight this monumental instrument, played by renowned international organists. The festival takes place in different churches and venues in many areas of Lebanon, giving the audience the opportunity to explore different music repertoires during the one-week course, with free admission to all concerts. Thanks to the joint venture between Notre Dame University and Terra Sancta Organ Festival, the Lebanese Pipe Organ Week has strong local roots and, at the same time, an international dimension.

This year's program features:

- Two concerts where the organ is associated with another instrument (trumpet or percussion)
- Two concerts with organ and choir
- A solo classical organ recital
- A film-concert with musical improvisation on the organ
- The concert by the outstanding students of the organ class of the NDU School of Music
- The March 25 concert has the patronage of the Ministry of Culture as an event for the National Annunciation Day.

All concerts start at 8 p.m.

The inaugural concert will take place **on Sunday 19 March** in the National Evangelical Church of Beirut (in front of the Grand Serail) with the Germans Axel Flierl on organ and Georg Hiemer on trumpet. **On Tuesday 21 March** in the Church of the Carmelite monastery in Mayssrah, the 1927 silent film "The King of kings" on the Passion of the Christ will be screened with organ

improvisation by the Italian Antonio Di Dedda: this masterpiece in the history of cinema directed by Cecil DeMille is presented with specially crafted captions in Arabic. Antonio Di Dedda will also be engaged in a solo classical recital **on Wednesday 22 March** in the Church of the College of the Sacred Heart in Beirut - Gemmaizeh. **On Thursday 23 March** in the church of Mar Zakhia in Ajaltoun the traditional concert of the outstanding students of the organ class of the Notre Dame University School of Music will take place. This project, which has been going on for nine years now thanks to the support of the Italian Cultural Institute in Beirut, aims to train professionals and teachers of this instrument. **On Friday 24 March**, in the church of St. Elie in Beirut – Kantary, it will be possible to attend a great concert for organ and choir with the Hymnos Ensemble - Philokalia, conducted by Sister Marana Saad and with the Mexican organist Victor Contreras: the program includes the first performance in Lebanon of Dvorak's Mass in D major and two pieces by contemporary Mexican composers. **Saturday 25 March** is the Feast of the Annunciation, which in Lebanon is a national holiday for both Christians and Muslims: this concert has the patronage of the Ministry of Culture as an event for the National Annunciation Day. The concert will take place at the American University of Beirut (AUB) Assembly Hall with the choir Les Solistes de Beyrouth conducted by Fernando Afara and accompanied by the French organist Yves Lafargue. The final concert will be held **on Sunday 26 March** in the church of the Notre Dame de Louaize monastery (Zouk Mosbeh) featuring the Spanish organist Rev. Alberto Pedro Sánchez and the Lebanese percussionist Christelle Njeim.

The Lebanese Pipe Organ Week is one of the few festivals in Lebanon that is not restricted to one area, but has the vocation to spread across the country. In these years the concerts were held not only in Beirut, but also in Zouk Mosbeh, Ajaltoun, Harissa, Maayssra, Antelias, Tripoli, the Bekaa valley, and in the near future also in Tyre.

Thanks to the Lebanese Pipe Organ Week for some years now Lebanon has witnessed a renewed interest in the pipe organ: many churches and institutions have restored their pipe organs or have acquired new ones while others are planning to install one: the Lebanese Pipe Organ Week acts as an incentive for this renaissance.

This year's edition, in which Lebanon is going through a serious economic crisis, would not have been possible without the collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute of Beirut, the embassies of Germany, Spain and France, as well as BEMO Bank and Marc -Henri Mainguy Foundation. A special thank goes to Noursat/Telemiere, which overlooked the television shooting and Joe Daou for the maintenance of the organs.

For more information, visit our website www.solfestival.org .

E-mail: sol@solfestival.org

Website: www.solfestival.org

Facebook: SOL Festival

Youtube: Semaine de l'Orgue au Liban

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PROGRAM

All concerts start at 8 p.m. Admission free

Sunday, 19 March

BEIRUT | National Evangelical Church

AXEL FLIERL (Germany), organ and GEORG HIEMER (Germany) trumpet

In collaboration with the German Embassy in Lebanon

Tuesday, 21 March

MAYSSRAH | Church of St. Elie - Carmelite monastery

film-concert "THE KING OF KINGS" (1927): a silent film on the Passion of Christ

ANTONIO DI DEDDA (Italy), organ improvisation and musical commentary

In collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute of Beirut

Wednesday, 22 March

BEIRUT Gemmaizeh | Collège des Frères, Sacré-Coeur

ANTONIO DI DEDDA (Italy), organ

In collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute of Beirut

Thursday, 23 March

AJALTOUN | Church of Mar Zakhia

Concert of the OUTSTANDING ORGAN STUDENTS of the Notre Dame University School of Music

In collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute of Beirut

Friday, 24 March

BEIRUT Kantary | Church of St. Elie

Hymnos Vocal Ensemble (Philokalia Institute), conducted by SISTER MARANA SAAD (Lebanon)

VICTOR CONTRERAS (Mexico), organ

Saturday, 25 March – event for the National Feast of the Annunciation

BEIRUT | American University of Beirut (AUB) Assembly Hall

Les Solistes de Beyrouth conducted by FERNANDO AFARA (Lebanon)

YVES LAFARGUE (France), organ

In collaboration with the French Embassy in Lebanon

Sunday, 26 March

ZOUK MOSBEH | Church of the Notre Dame de Louaize monastery -

REV. PEDRO ALBERTO SÁNCHEZ (Spain), organ and CHRISTELLE NJEIM (Lebanon), percussions

In collaboration with the Embassy of Spain in Lebanon

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MUSICIANS

Dr Axel Flierl was born in Nuremberg in 1976 and grew up in the Allgäu. He studied organ, organ improvisation and Catholic church music in Munich and Paris and musicology in Karlsruhe. His formative teachers were Prof. Edgar Krapp, Wolfgang Hörlin, Prof. Thierry Escaich and Vincent Warnier.

He completed his decades-long study of the work and person of Karl Höller (1907-1987) with a musicological dissertation on Höller's organ works under Prof. Dr. Thomas Seedorf, a previously unexplored chapter of German music history. Axel Flierl is considered a leading researcher on Karl Höller and an interpreter of his organ works in particular.

In 2006, he was appointed principal organist and conductor at the papal basilica minor of St. Peter in Dillingen an der Donau (Bavaria), the concathedral and second cathedral church of the diocese of Augsburg, and has turned this place into a centre of church music with charisma extending far beyond the borders of the region. For example, he initiated the international organ festival *Dillinger Basilikakonzerte* around the large Sandtner organ. He has also performed the complete organ works of Karl Höller and Maurice Duruflé.

Concerts as an organ soloist and as a lecturer at master classes regularly take him to the leading organ centres in Australia, Hong-Kong, USA, Russia, Kazakhstan, Abkhazia, South America, South Africa, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Iceland and almost all European countries.

He has also held a visiting professorship at *the Pontificio Istituto di Musica sacra*, the Pontifical Conservatory of Music in Rome, since 2022.

He has also made radio and television recordings, several CD recordings and is an author of books.

www.axelflierl.de

Georg Hiemer was born on 13 March 1991 in Kaufbeuren and began playing the trumpet at the age of 9. In October 2008 he began his concert studies with Prof. Erich Rinner at the Tyrolean State Conservatory, which he completed with a diploma in February 2014. From September 2014 he studied in Prof. Erich Rinner's master class, which he completed with distinction in July 2015. He also attended master classes with Guy Touvroun and Jean-Francois Michel. His first solo CD "Friends" was followed by his second album "Zeitreise" in 2021.

Georg Hiemer is a member of various brass ensembles and performs as a soloist in different formations. Concert tours have taken him all over Germany as well as to Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy and Spain.

Antonio Di Dedda studied at the Conservatory „U. Giordano“ in Foggia (Italy) piano with Rossella Di Chio, Gennaro Pesce and Claudio Trovajoli and organ with Luca Scandali and Francesco Di Lernia. In 2015 he obtained his „Master of Music“ at the „Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg“ in piano with Evgeni Koroliov and in organ with Pieter Van Dijk and 2020 completed his studies with the „Konzertexamen“ in piano with Anna Vinnitskaya and organ with Pieter Van Dijk. In addition to this he attended a course at the „Accademia Pianistica di Imola“ with Franco Scala and Stefano Fiuzzi and studied regularly from 2012 piano at „Scuola di Musica di Fiesole“ with Elisso Wirsaladze.

Antonio is a laureate of various competitions, such as „Premio Venezia 2009“ (Italy), M.Tariverdiev Organ Competition 2015 (Russia) and Robert Schumann Competition Zwickau 2020 (Germany). As a soloist he performed in many prestigious Organ and Piano festivals in Italy, Germany, England, Spain, France, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Israel and China, and can be heard in recordings for „Radio Vatican“ and NDR Hamburg. He was „VakanzOrganist“ at the Hauptkirche St. Michaelis in Hamburg 2021-2022.

Currently Antonio teaches piano at the Conservatorio di Musica „C. Pollini“ in Padova.

Victor Contreras is a renowned Mexican organist who honed his skills in Paris, France, under Eric Lebrun and received harpsichord training with Richard Siegel and Élisabeth Joyé. He studied orchestral conducting with Sergio Cárdenas and Fernando Lozano. He is the director of the Baroque Orchestra of the National Conservatory of Music, and has acted as guest director for several symphony orchestras in Mexico. Contreras has performed as a soloist in prestigious forums and festivals across Mexico, Europe, the US, and South America. He won the Guillermo Pinto Baroque Organ Competition and the José Nazarre Baroque Organ Competition in 2008 and was recognized by the National Fund for Culture and Arts, FONCA. Contreras teaches at the National Conservatory of Music and the Superior School of Music in Mexico and is considered a reference in the training of young organists. He founded the Santa Prisca Organ Festival, the International Organ Festival of the Guadalupano Sanctuary, and the International Organ Festival of Mexico City with the support of the National Institute of Fine Arts.

Hymnos Vocal Ensemble was founded in February 2022 at Philokalia Institute by S. Marana Saad. It is an ensemble that comprises professional singers who thrive to achieve and accomplish high-quality music. It visions a wide repertoire of different musical genres including traditional, classical and modern. This ensemble welcomes professional musicians from various musical backgrounds which allows it to create a unique and charming sound.

Hymnos' main mission is to spread the musical culture, and to be a source of hope, resilience and perseverance from Lebanon to all over the world, despite all the critical circumstances that the country is facing. Moreover, Hymnos Vocal Ensemble aims to give Lebanese professional singers the opportunity to reap the fruits of their hard work throughout the years, by participating in fructuous, local, and international musical works. Also, this ensemble focuses on promoting Lebanese composers, musicians, and writers.

Sister Marana Saad is the founder and president of Philokalia Institute and Organization. She is also, the founder and conductor of Philokalia Choir, known until 2018 by Saint Rafqa Music Institute's Choir. Sr Marana also conducts the new Ensembles: "Ashtar" and "Hymnos". She teaches at Philokalia Institute, NDU and USF. Sr. Marana holds a PhD in Monastic Theology from the Pontifical Atheneum of St. Anselm in Rome and a PhD in Music from the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK). She studied choral conducting with Maestro Walter Marzilli at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome. Moreover, she directed concerts with prominent orchestras all over Lebanon and abroad (France, Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Germany, and USA). She participated in different conferences and workshops (Sweden, Estonia, Vatican, Croatia, Cyprus, etc) and also composed several sacred songs and published articles in music and theology.

Born in 1969, **Yves Lafargue** studied organ with Georges Lartigau, Aude Heurtematte, then entered Jean Boyer's and Liesbeth Schlumberger's class at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Lyon, until he gets graduated in 1998. Attending Jean-Claude Raynaud's and Jean-Claude Henry's classes at the CNSM in Paris, he was awarded first prizes in both harmony and counterpoint.

In 2000, he is selected for a one-year stay as the organist in residence of Sapporo concert hall, Japan. During this original artistic residence, he teaches the organ, performs several times as well in Sapporo (where, during the Pacific Music Festival, he joins the NHK Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Charles Dutoit for a performance of Poulenc's Organ concerto) as in other cities all over the country, and records a programme of French works for Christmas time.

Yves Lafargue is the titular organist of the Basilique Notre-Dame de Fourvière in Lyon France and the Organ professor at the Conservatoire de Lyon. As a recital performer, he has participated in several organ seasons and festivals in France, Latvia, Switzerland, Japan. He often performs with Orchestras such as l'Orchestre National de Lyon, Orchestre de Macon, Spirito...or even accompany vocal ensembles and choirs such as Chœur d'Oratorio de Lyon, Le Puy cathedral children's choir, Lyon cathedral boy's choir.

In 2019 he performed with Karine Deschayes and Lise Berthaud in a trio concert celebrating Berlioz at the Auditorium of Radio-France.

He also spends part of his time writing organ transcriptions (Beethoven, Allegretto from 7 th Symphony) and composing organ pieces, vocal pieces and church music.

Les Solistes de Beyrouth is a Beirut-based vocal ensemble recently founded in 2021 by baritone and singing professor Fernando Afara. The ensemble comprises promising and talented, lyrically trained soloists, intermediate and advanced students of Mr. Afara coming from a variety of backgrounds to share their passion for singing.

Fifteen singers of all ages and levels with vibrant voices and promising talents aspire to develop their careers in Lebanon and abroad. The Beirut soloists, under the direction of Fernando Afara, have performed in several concerts in Lebanon, notably at the Saint-Esprit USEK University; Notre Dame University; Saint Joseph University, Byblos and Beirut. They have performed opera works, melodies from different eras and styles and strive to create a mixture combining Eastern and Western traditions. Despite the situation in Lebanon; the economic and financial collapse and the drastic repercussions on the lives of the Lebanese people, the Soloists of Beirut aspire to enhance their potentials and capacities; promote the ideals of peace and prosperity, and believe in a Lebanon open to exchange between different cultures.

'Les Solistes de Beyrouth' have recently performed in a Christmas concert with the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra in coordination with the Lebanese National Conservatory, under the patronage of the ministry of culture, and are due to perform in March 2023 for the feast of

Annunciation alongside their director and a renowned French organist; a special eclectic French program.

Born in Lebanon, **Fernando Afara** studied lyrical singing at the National Conservatory of Beirut and pursued a BA in Musical Education at the Notre Dame University Lebanon. He joined the Conservatoire de Lyon and the Schola-Catorum in Paris. In 2014 he was admitted to the Lausanne University of Music “Haute Ecole de Musique de Lausanne” HEMU in Switzerland where he pursued his first Master’s degree in opera singing in the class of Frédéric Gindraux. In 2017 he joined the opera studio in Bern. Subsequently, he pursued a second master’s degree in classical singing / vocal teaching orientation at the Geneva University of Music (Haute Ecole de Musique de Genève) in the class of Maria Diaconu.

He took part in master classes with Nadine Denize, Hanz Peter Blochwitz, Leontina Vaduva, Nathalie Stutzmann, David Jones, Helmut Deutsch, Maria Diaconu, Brigitte Balleys, Simone Alaimo, Hiroko Kawamishi.. as well as the Lausanne Opera, and Geneva grand theater vocal coaches where he had the opportunity to perform as a soloist. In 2015, he won the 2nd prize unanimously at the 39th Lyceum International Music Competition in Switzerland. Fernando Afara performs regularly in concerts and productions across Europe and Lebanon.

He is currently a Classical singing and vocal techniques professor at the Conservatoire de Lannion-trégor CRI in France as well as the Université de Saint-Esprit Kaslik USEK and the Notre Dame University in Lebanon. He is the founder director and singing professor of the newly founded vocal ensemble “Les Soloists de Beyrouth”.

Reverend Pedro Alberto Sánchez, O.S.A. was born in Salamanca, Spain. His earliest music training began as a member of the famous boys’ choir at the Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial and studied in the music conservatory of Madrid “Arturo Soria”, where he graduated with the degree of Organ Professor.

He then moved to Rome to attend the well-known Conservatorio Santa Cecilia advancing in organ and composition under the tutelage of great maestros, including Ottorino Baldassarri, Jiri Lecjian, and Federico del Sordo and was a member of the Schola at Saint Peter’s Basilica. Later he continued his studies at the Pontificio Instituto de Música Sacra where he specialized in Gregorian Chant and Improvisation.

Father Sánchez received a Master’s Degree in Organ Pedagogy from the Real Conservatorio Superior de Musica in Madrid, where his mentor was Dr. D. Miguel Bernal Ripol. He has performed organ concerts in Spain, Mexico, Poland, Switzerland, Italy, Panama, Belgium and the United States of America.

Father Sánchez was ordained a Priest of the Augustinian order, with religious studies at the Estudios Eclesiásticos por la Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca and Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome (Canon Law).

Currently, he holds the title of Music Director and Organist at the Real Monasterio del Escorial and Director of the Semana Internacional de Organo de Madrid.

Christelle Njeim is a Lebanese percussionist, born in Beirut in 1993. She holds a Musical Baccalaureate in Classical Percussion from the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music (2018), in addition to a BS in Speech Therapy from the Lebanese University (2016). She is a member of the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra since 2016, and has performed with the orchestra in several festivals with prominent Lebanese and international music figures.

Ms. Njeim is also a percussion instructor at the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music since 2022, and at the Lebanese Band Association for the Promotion of Music (LeBAM) (2014-2019). She has been participating in music outreach projects with several NGOs centered around music education and music appreciation with different populations. She has served as Assistant Project Coordinator with “Jeunesses Musicales du Liban” for the online fundraising project “United in Music, JML for CCCL” (May – June 21, 2020).