



m
usica
movd

Saed Haddad

Anass Habib

echoes of babel



Anass Habib
voice & percussions

Aurélie Tissot
qanun

Saed Haddad
composer

Nicolas André
conductor, Divertimento babelico

Ensemble Musica Nova

Esther Labourdette
Christel Boiron
cantus

Lucien Kandel
Xavier Olgne
contratenors

Jérémie Couleau
Thierry Peteau
tenors

Marc Busnel
Guillaume Olry
bassus

echoes of babel

The Musica Nova Ensemble presents in 2016 *Echoes of Babel*, an original program blending Early and Contemporary Music by way of Mediterranean depth of thought. Reflecting an impressive linguistic and cultural richness, the sounds of Southern Europe, of the Maghreb, of the Middle East, and those of the Byzantium are brought together in a single encounter. The work commissioned to Saed Haddad, a Jordanian-born composer, brings to light the harmonies between the polyphonies of the Middle Ages and the monodies sung by the Moroccan Anass Habib, accompanied by Aurélie Tissot's *qanun*.

The myth of Babel, reflecting both fear and defiance towards the Hereafter, has generated a profound fascination in the minds of men. Surpassing one's own limits and earthly condition, building higher and ascending spiritually, this may be the substance that all mortals share. The Gothic cathedrals of the Middle-Ages testify to this day to this incessant quest of reaching the peaks of existence, but music also yields to the desire of producing works of inordinate proportions. It is this desire that has led the people in Babel to align their forces in all their diversity. It is also the reason why they became subjects of Divine punishment, a penance which gave rise to a diversity of languages, bringing chaos and incomprehension on Earth. "Rewriting Babel" could allow us to consider the dissimilarity of languages not as a source of dissension, but as a reason to search for harmony. For lack of a tower, this program proposes to build a musical architecture, while laying down a possibly even greater defiance.

Languages in their diversity show and preserve identity, but they may also enrich one's voice with strange sounds, while their knowledge may amend one's world-view. For singers, exploring languages is an everyday work, a voyage deep within the human heart, a barrier always pushed further, feeding the imaginary. Musica Nova's instinct was to open its musical field to Mediterranean traditional sacred music. Be they Byzantine, Aramaic, Lebanese, Algerian,...these songs may recall the monophonic origins of Mediaeval polyphonies. The meeting with Moroccan singer Anass Habib has been crucial for this project, partly because of his anchorage in traditional Moroccan culture, but also due to his desire to explore all Mediterranean music regardless of religious beliefs.

The work thus created stems from a desire to build, beyond all linguistic and musical differences, an edifice respectful of diversity.



the music

the motets

The XIIIth century sees the birth of a new genre, the motet, which, as the name indicates, places the verb in the foreground. Its distinctive feature is the superimposing on repetitive rhythmic cells of 2, 3 or 4 different texts and languages. In the XIVth century the Ars Nova introduces multiple musical time to the pluritextual motet, rendering the a-temporal indistinguishable from the temporal. The voices thus evolve in combining each an individual text and rhythmic.

The notes chosen for this project show the musical development taking place between the XIIIth and the XVth century. From the Ars Antiqua to the Ars Nova, then from Ars Subtilior to the beginnings of the Franco-Flemish polyphony, we draw on the manuscripts of Las Huelgas (Spain), of Montpellier, of Cyprus, as well as Bologna and Modena in Italy: the works of Machaut, Perusio, Cicconia, Dufay....and of course those of anonymous authors.

A place of honor is assigned to the great motets of Dufay as the last composer to master the methods of multiple texts and isorhythmics. His famous *Nuper rosarum flores* (1436), composed for the consecration of the Florence Cathedral, beyond its circumstantial character, might as well represent the perfect example of finding musical inspiration in the myth of Babel. The acoustic foundation of the motet's structure, the Gregorian tenor, repetitively declaims the simmering words *Terribilis est locus iste* ("this place is terrifying"). Brunelleschi's dome thus becomes and is to this day the greatest cupola ever built. The motet can be seen as a metaphor for Babel where the music (melody and rhythm) is superimposed on a multiplicity of texts.

the monodies

The songs interpreted by Anass Habib originate in Byzantine, Maronite, Egyptian, Aramaic, Sufi... sacred traditions. Melodies stemming from the Middle-East have existed before Christianity and were used by the first Christians as a support for the sacred texts. They were sung acapella or accompanied by percussion instruments such as the *Naqus* (small bells). Arab, Turk, Persian and other musical influences have added a group of instruments to the interpretation (*Oud, Qanun, Ney*...).

The voices of Musica Nova and that of Anass Habib merge, indifferently of their chosen fields of interpretation, through the inspiration they draw from the selected songs. Through these diverse pieces it would be possible to re-build ties and promote dialogue between apparently very different cultures that share a common interest for music.



saed haddad

The Jordanian-born German composer Saed Haddad studied Philosophy in Beit-Jala and in Leuven, after which Music Composition in Amman, Jerusalem and London. After having had explored in his works from 2004-2006 his identity as a simultaneous resident-outsider to the Western and the Arabic traditions, Haddad has been questioning the idea of forgetfulness and distance of one's own tradition.

Haddad's music has been commissioned and performed by most prestigious international ensembles and orchestras in Europe, North America and Asia such as Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien, Ensemble Intercontemporain, London Sinfonietta, SWR Orch. Baden-Baden u. Freiburg, West Eastern Divan Orch., City of Birmingham Sym. Orch., Deutsches Sym. Orch.-Berlin, Donaueschinger Musiktage, Lucerne Festival, Wienerkonzerthaus, Salzburger Festspiele, Festival d'Automne, Festival Présences, Aldeburgh Festival with conductors such as Daniel Barenboim, Heinz Holliger, George Benjamin among others.

Haddad served as composer-in-residence to numerous ensembles, orchestras and festivals. He was guest lecturer at many universities and was invited guest at many radio and TV stations incl. SWR, BR, RBB, Radio France, France 2, RFI.

Many honors rewarded Haddad's work including the French and German Prix de Rome 2008-10, the deutsche Schallplattkritik Preis 2010, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation Commission- Library of Congress 2014 and le Prix de la fondation Coupleux-Lassalle 2015. Haddad's music can be heard on labels such as WERGO, NEOS and Ensemble Modern.

www.saedhaddad.com



Author's Note
Divertimento babelico
(for eight singers, one traditional Arab singer and qanun)

"The theme of this work is peace. I have used the first nine stanzas of the Latin text of the *Supremum est mortalibus* motet by Guillaume Dufay, but I have tried to "Babelise" the texts (especially the word "peace") by using diverse methods of composition and more than ten different languages. The languages are tied to the original Latin text through phonemic sound-links.

The piece is composed of nine movements entitled:

1 - Announcement; 2 - Anguish; 3- Exotic ; 4- Folkloric (Tribute to Stravinsky) ; 5- Children's corner (Tribute to Debussy) ; 6 - Soft/Hard ; 7- Chinoiserie ; 8- Suspended ; 9- Hatched chicks (Tribute to Mussorgsky).

As in all my previous compositions, I prefer to blend the serious to the ironic (maybe even to satire in certain movements of this work). In fact, the myth of Babel itself can be interpreted as a mixture of seriousness and irony where the gravity of the Divine punishment (resulting in incomprehensibility caused by a diversity of languages) has ironically enriched from both a linguistic and cultural point of view those who tried to defy Him."

Saed Haddad
2015



anass habib



ensemble musica nova

Anass Habib was born in Fez (Morocco) on October the 17th of the year 1980 under the civil name of Anass Azami Hassani. His singing ambitions showed at the early age of 5, when he sang classical Arabic melodies together with his family. At the age of 12, Anass gave his first solo concert in Fez.

Anass lived in Syria, where he studied singing with the great masters of Damascus and Aleppo, he then went to Lebanon to work on the techniques of singing, Aramaic and Byzantine repertoires with the great singer and teacher Ghada Shbeir, after which he continued to prepare his voice, this time in Paris with Sister Marie Keyrouz. He has performed more than a hundred concerts in Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, France, the Netherlands, Poland, South Africa and Tunisia. In Morocco he gave concerts in most of the bigger cities. He obtained his French (state) diploma of Music Teacher: Traditional Chant and Percussion in Lyon and he teaches Arab music and the sacred music of the Middle East (rhythms, modes, Classical Arab Music and Old East sacred music techniques, repertoires...).

Since 2008 he has held concerts and master classes in France, Poland, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, South Africa etc. His voice is considered as one of the most beautiful Arabic voices, with his ability of going from the deep and warm low tones in the baritone range (Anass' primary range) all the way to the high tenor voice to express emotions and devotion. His repertoires go through a lot of countries and civilizations. From the great Lebanese diva Fairouz to the Egyptian Oum Kalthoum, from the Syrian Sabah Fakhri to the Lebanese Marcel Khalife, from Sufi poems to Maronite (old Christian) melodies and medieval Sephardic Andalusian songs...

He performs either acapella, accompanied at times by percussions, or by other musical instruments. Though he speaks perfect French and English, he prefers singing in Arab, Aramaic or Ancient Greek.

www.anasshabib.com

Founded in the year 2000, the Musica Nova Ensemble brings together a group of talented singers, and also sometimes instrumentalists, under the artistic direction of singer and conductor Lucien Kandel. A passionate quest in search of emotion through music drives the group to produce a diverse musical programme. From the Middle Ages to Baroque, Musica Nova departs into various musical periods and universes.

The ensemble approaches its music with an eye for historical accuracy, through the use of original manuscripts. The interpretation of period documents involves a serious reflection with respect to the musical rules of the time (such as *musica ficta* and pronunciation) as well as the intended nuances of the pieces. The singers and musicians read their music in facsimile and their interpretation of it is thus inevitably modified.

The result is a very specific sound, a particular momentum, a musical line which make of Musica Nova one of the most exceptional Early Music ensembles in the world, a group whose energy seems to transport the listener; temporally and spiritually.

The Musica Nova Ensemble has performed on some of the most prestigious French and international stages, and several of its recordings are considered benchmark interpretations.

www.musicanova-lyon.fr

lucien kandel, musical director and contratenor



After studying German and Linguistics at the University of Limoges, Lucien Kandel turned to singing. Between 1991 and 1996 he was trained at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique (CNSM) in Lyon, where he studied classical, romantic and contemporary repertoires under Jacqueline Bonnardot and subsequently ancient chant under Marie-Claude Vallin. He has performed all types of music from Gregorian chant to present-day works. He has sung regularly with A Sei Voce, The Huelgas Ensemble, Elyma, The Bernard Tetu Solistes de Lyon and Douce Mémoire.

Lucien Kandel is particularly committed to the pedagogy of singing and he has taught at the ENS-LSH in Lyon as well as at the Académie des Cuivres in Le Monastier. He is also regularly invited to direct master classes at Royaumont Abbey on the repertoires of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He has been teaching ancient music at the Haute École de Musique in Geneva since 2011.

esther labourdette, cantus



After graduating the Maîtrise de Radio-France, she continues her singing studies with Sylvie Sullé and Stéphanie Révidat and obtains a Degree in Music Studies from the City of Paris, while pursuing a course in Musicology. She furthers her Medieval and Renaissance chant training with Katarina Livljanic, Benjamin Bagby, Lucien Kandel and Francis Biggi, and Baroque singing with Julie Hassler, Agnès Mellon, Gabriel Garrido and Rosa Dominguez.

She performed as a soloist with Early Music ensembles such as Douce Mémoire, les Folies du Temps and I Sospiranti. She has interpreted the role of the Musician in “The Bourgeois Gentleman”, the Second Lady in “Dido and Æneas”, and Sangaride in “Atys”. She has also been invited to take part in contemporary music productions. In addition to her collaboration with Musica Nova, she works with ensembles such as Sequentia, Candor Vocalis, Territoires du Souffle, the Chapelle-Musique du Val-de-Grâce, Aquilegia, Les Voix Animées and the BelaVilo trio, as well as the soloists choir Mikrokosmos and the chamber choir of Namur.

christel boiron, cantus



After studying at the Saint-Etienne Conservatory, she joins the CNSM of Lyon, specializing in Early Music under Marie-Claude Vallin, Dominique Vellard and Gérard Geay.

At the same time, she actively takes part in the creation of Musica Nova of which she is a permanent member. She regularly collaborates with ensembles such as Gilles Binchois (D. Vellard), the Huelgas Ensemble (P. Van Nevel), Les Solistes de Lyon (B. Tétu), Discantus, Alla Francesca, Quam dilecta, and Douce Mémoire.

xavier olagne, contratenor



After studying singing and choral direction at the CNR of Bensançon, he obtained his degree in Choral Direction at the CNSM of Lyon. In addition to being a permanent member of Musica Nova, he is a Choir Director for the CRR of Lyon and teaches Choral Direction at the ENS-LSH of Lyon.

He is also a singer in ensembles such as Douce Mémoire or the Solistes de Lyon.

jérémy couleau, tenor



He stated his Early Music training at the Conservatory of Toulouse, later perfecting his skills with the help of Julie Hassler and Lucien Kandel. He is part of prestigious ensembles specializing in Early Music such as Douce Mémoire or Scandicus, performing in large music festivals (Saintes, Odyssud, Utrecht, Cathédrales en Picardie, Toulouse les Orgues, Thoronet, Sylvanes...). In addition to his singing career he is an associate professor and researcher. In particular, he is in charge of the programs of the Scandicus ensemble.

thierry peteau, tenor



A graduate singer of the Toulouse Conservatory, with a Master’s degree from the Center of Baroque Music of Versailles, he approaches a repertoire ranging from XIVth century to contemporary music. He sung with ensembles such as Accentus, Chapelle Royale, Sagittarius, Douce Mémoire, Les Éléments. He is a permanent member of the Musica Nova ensemble.

He is also a stage actor and a researcher. After becoming familiarized with Baroque gesture and restored XVIIth century French pronunciation thanks to Nicole Rouillé, he undertook the study of oratorical arts. He has since performed sermon recitals, funeral

orations and La Fontaine fables.

He teaches Baroque singing and Declamation at the École de Théâtre CRTH of Paris, as well as the University of Tours.

marc busnel, bassus



It is during his Musicology training at the Tours University that he approaches Renaissance repertoire as part of the Jacques Moderne Ensemble, conducted by Jean-Pierre Ouvrard. In parallel to his Musical and Music writing studies at the Tours Conservatory, his singing lessons with Pali Marinov allow him to tackle other musical periods, including contemporary creations. Starting his career within the Clément Janequin Ensemble, and in addition to his performances with Musica Nova, he has worked with ensembles such as Huelgas, Douce mémoire, Les jeunes Solistes. He teaches facsimile music reading during the “Early Music Weekends” of the Tours Conservatory and he is a research fellow for the Center for Advanced Renaissance Studies of Tours.

guillaume olry, bassus



He began his vocal and musical training as part of the Maîtrise de garçons de Colmar, under the direction of Arlette Steyer.

He enters the Lyon Conservatory in 2004 in the class of Marie-Claude Vallin, graduating in 2007. Obtaining a scholarship in 2008, he pursues his studies under Harry van der Kamp at the Musikhochschule de Bremen (Germany). Returning to Lyon, he perfects his skills with the help of Cécile De Boever.

He works regularly with ensembles such as Douce Mémoire (Denis Raisin-Dadre), La chapelle Rhénane (Benôit Haller), Weser Renaissance (Manfred Cordes), Orlando di Lasso Consort (Detlef

Bratschke), Ensemble Gilles Binchois (Dominique Vellard), Sequenza 9.3 (Catherine Simonpietri)... He also performs as an oratorio singer, his repertoire ranging from Baroque to the Romantic era.

musica nova

ensemble
musiques
anciennes
Lyon

Lucien Kandel
Artistic Director

Florence Duperray
Administrator
administration@musicanova-lyon.fr

Ioana Popa
Production & Communications Manager
concerts@musicanova-lyon.fr

42 rue de Marseille 69007 Lyon
(0033) 7 69 46 77 27
www.musicanova-lyon.fr

*Musica Nova Ensemble receives financial support from the Regional Office of Cultural Affairs (DRAC), the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region and Lyon City.
This project was awarded the Coupleux-Lassalle Prize 2016.
Commission Contract for Saed Haddad with the support of Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung and the Festival Format Raisins (Fondation Cumulus).
Financial Assistance for an Original Musical Work from the French Ministry of Culture and Communication.*

