



## CUSTODIA TERRÆ SANCTÆ



### The Terra Sancta Organ Festival in Syria and Lebanon Winter Season January 24 > February 7 - 2016

The first winter season of the **Terra Sancta Organ Festival** will open on Sunday, January 24, 2016 at 19:00 in the Church of St. Anthony (Damascus), with a recital by Syrian organist **Aghiad Mansour**. In the same location, a second concert for organ and choir (featuring the Chamber Choir of the Conservatory of Damascus conducted by **Missak Baghboudarian**) will take place on January 27 at 18:00, after which the festival will travel to Lebanon for another 5 concerts from January

31 to February 7 under the name "SOL: Lebanese Pipe Organ Week" (Semaine de l'Orgue au Liban). Admission to all concerts is free.

Organized by the Custody of the Holy Land, the Terra Sancta Organ Festival attests the presence of Middle Eastern Christian communities in the fields of music and culture and represents an opportunity to promote the maintenance of the pipe organs, which are used primarily during the liturgy.

#### The concerts in Syria

Such is the case of the **Church of St. Anthony** in Damascus, located in the district of Salhieh, where the Custody of the Holy Land takes care of a parish in which there is an active choir, conducted by **Nahim Zabita**. The repair of the organ - entrusted to the organ builder **Roberto Curletto** from Turin (Italy) - should also be seen as a sign of solidarity with the Christians who remain in their homes and continue praying and making music in their churches, in spite of the difficult situation they are going through because of the war.

It all comes to working together to create hope. This hope is not built solely filling material needs (a field of intervention where the Custody of the Holy Land is still at the forefront): hope also feeds on intangibles, moral and spiritual goods, and it is connected with the experience of beauty.

After all Damascus has not stopped being a very lively city, with bustling streets and incessant music and theater activities, especially in the modern Opera House and at the Higher Institute of Music with which the Terra Sancta Organ Festival is making an agreement to provide continuity and expand the offering of concerts in the coming years. The desire of the organizers is that, once the conditions will allow it, the festival will reach the other places where the Custody of the Holy Land is present, especially the cities of Aleppo and Latakia.

The protagonist of this first edition of the Terra Sancta Organ Festival in Syria is the Syrian organist **Aghiad Mansour**. Born in 1977, Aghiad Mansour studied at the Higher Institute of Music in Damascus under Alexey Schmitov, George Ammon and Carine Clemant; today Mansour teaches harpsichord and organ at the same institute. In his recital of January 24 (19:00), Aghiad Mansour will be accompanied by soprano **Manar Khwis** and violinist **Razan Kassar**. The program features music by J.S. Bach, Beobide, Renaud, Shukh, Szarzysky, Krygell.

The second concert of January 27 is produced in cooperation with the **Chamber Choir of the Higher Institute of Music of the Damascus**, conducted by **Missak Baghboudarian**, known for his intense



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international career as conductor of the Syrian National Symphony Orchestra and of other European ensembles. With Aghiad Mansour at the organ, the program includes compositions of sacred music by Mozart, Mendelssohn, Liszt and Pärt.

The detailed programs of the concerts and the info on the musicians can be found on:  
[www.tsorganfestival.org](http://www.tsorganfestival.org).

### The concerts in Lebanon

In Lebanon, the Terra Sancta Organ Festival goes under the name of "**SOL: Lebanese Pipe Organ Week**" (Semaine de l'Orgue au Liban): it is an independent festival, founded with the Notre Dame University of Louaize - School of Music, in collaboration with the heads of the churches that host the concerts (Maronites, Carmelites, Lasallians, Lazarists and Evangelicals: a festival that is truly "ecumenical").

The concerts will take place on January 31 at **the Maronite church of Notre Dame de Louaize in Zouk Mosbeh** (at 19:30 featuring organist Simone Vebber), on February 2 at the church of the **carmelitan convent of St. Elias in Maayssra** (at 20:30 featuring organist Daniel Matrone), on February 4 at the **Basilica of the Miraculous Medal** of the Lazarists in Beirut-Achrafiyeh (at 20:30 featuring organist Jean-Paul Lécot), on February 6 at the chapel of the **College du Sacre Coeur** of the Lasallians in Beirut-Gemmayze (at 20:30 featuring organist Naji Hakim), on February 7 at **National Evangelical Church** in Beirut- Riad Essouh (at 19:30 featuring Naji Hakim, organ, Oleg Balanuta, oboe, Octavian Gheorghiu, clarinet, Mihaita Raileanu, horn and Mario Rahi, violin).

Two concerts of the great Lebanese composer and organist **Naji Hakim** stand out in the program: Hakim was for many years the first organist of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Paris and, after, the successor of Olivier Messiaen at the Trinity Church in Paris. Equally important, and with an international curriculum are the other organists of the festival: **Simone Vebber**, professor of organ at Bergamo Conservatory and winner in St. Alban of the Bach Prize in 2011; **Daniel Matrone**, organist at the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome; **Jean-Paul Lécot**, organist of the Basilica of Lourdes.

The technical support of Italian organ builder **Saverio Anselmi Tamburini** - responsible for the maintenance, construction and restoration of the organs - was crucial for the production of the SOL Festival.

This first edition of the SOL Festival enjoyed the support of: **Institut Français Liban, Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Beirut, Fondation Marc-Henry Mainguy, Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America.**

More information about the Lebanese Pipe Organ Week can be found on the site [www.solfestival.org](http://www.solfestival.org) or may be obtained by writing to [sol@solfestival.org](mailto:sol@solfestival.org).