



CUSTODIA TERRÆ SANCTÆ



The Terra Sancta Organ Festival

presents

ORGAN & MUSIC FESTIVAL SYRIA

(Damascus – Latakia – Aleppo 4- 19 November 2022)

Press release

After a two-year interruption due to the pandemic, the concerts of the Terra Sancta Organ Festival in Syria, organized by the Franciscan Friars Minor of the Custody of the Holy Land, will resume. Under the name ORGAN & MUSIC FESTIVAL SYRIA, the concerts will take place from 4 to 19 November 2022 in Damascus, Latakia and Aleppo.

The organists are of the highest international level, such as the Spaniard Juan De la Rubia, organist of the basilica of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, the Italian Silvio Celeghin, principal organist of the "Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia" in Rome, "La Fenice" theatre in Venice and teacher at the conservatory "Benedetto Marcello" in Venice, and the Austrian Michael Koller, an expert in improvisation and acoustic experimentation. In addition to them, there will be Syrian musicians, starting with the members of the Syrian National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Missak Baghboudarian and the "Ensemble Classica" from Aleppo.

The inaugural concert will be held in St. Paul's Church in Damascus - Bab Touma on Friday 4 November: the choir and orchestra of the "Ensemble Classica" conducted by Missak Baghboudarian will perform the *Missa Omnium Sanctorum* by the Czech composer Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679 - 1745).

The recitals on the beautiful organ of the Damascus Opera House, organized in co-production with the Dar al-Assad for Culture and Arts Association, feature three different characteristics: a classical solo organ program with Juan de la Rubia (7 November), a concert for organ and orchestra with Silvio Celeghin and the Syrian National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Missak Baghboudarian (10 November), and finally a concert based on improvisations from famous themes or suggested by the audience with Michael Koller and Kenan Adnawi on oud (14 November). In the church of St. Anthony in Damascus - Salhie on 12 November there will be a concert with Silvio Celeghin on organ and Rasha Abu Shuker, soprano, Marla Sehnawi, flute, Dulamah Shehab, trumpet. On 17 November, the festival will move to Latakia at the Church of the Sacred Heart, where a film-concert will be performed: as in the early days of cinematography, a silent film ("The King of Kings", a 1927 masterpiece by Cecil B. DeMille on the Passion of Christ with the world first Arabic translation of captions) will be shown, on which Michael Koller will improvise the musical commentary on the organ. The festival will end on 19 October in Aleppo with the "Ensemble Classica" and Michael Koller, this time engaged in a classical program on the Austrian "Rieger" organ of the church of St. Francis.

In Syria, where the Franciscan friars have been present since the 13th century, the Custody of the Holy Land runs convents, parishes and other activities in Damascus, Aleppo, Latakia and in the tormented province of Idlib (in Knaye and Yacoubieh). The Terra Sancta Organ Festival since 2016 is the only international classical music festival active in the country, as a sign of solidarity that goes beyond the emergency. The initiative of the Terra Sancta Organ Festival has been widely appreciated and the concerts are always well attended by Christians and Muslims. In an interview after one of the concerts of 2017 edition, the Apostolic Nuncio in



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Syria H. Em. Card. Mario Zenari said: *“people need to find these moments of spiritual relief and music can help a lot. We have heard too many sounds of wars, of bombs, of mortars falling on Damascus and this music frees us from these anxieties, helps us to elevate the soul and unites everyone with a language that needs no translation. There is a need for evenings like these and I hope there will be more of them”.*

More information on www.tsorganfestival.org.

PROGRAM

ORGAN & MUSIC FESTIVAL SYRIA 2022

Friday 4 November at 6:00 pm:

DAMASCUS: Church of St. Paul in Bab Touma (Deir El Kabir) Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679 – 1745): Missa Omnium Sanctorum. **Ensemble Classica** conducted by **Missak Baghboudarian**

Monday 7 November at 8:00 pm:

DAMASCUS: Damascus Opera House
Classical organ recital by **Juan De La Rubia (Spain)**

Thursday 10 November at 8:00 pm:

DAMASCUS: Damascus Opera House

Great concert for organ and orchestra with **Silvio Celeghin (Italy)** and the **Syrian National Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Missak Baghboudarian**

Saturday 12 November at 5:00 pm:

DAMASCUS: Church of Sant'Anthony in Salhieh

Concert with **Silvio Celeghin (Italy)**, organ, **Rasha Abu Shuker**, soprano, **Marla Sehnawi**, flute, **Dulamah Shehab**, trumpet.

Monday 14 November at 8:00 pm:

DAMASCUS: Damascus Opera House

Organ improvisation on classical and Syrian melodies by **Michael Koller (Austria)**, with **Kenan Adnawi**, oud.

Thursday 17 November at 7:00 pm:

LATAKIA: Church of the Sacred Heart:

Organ improvisation by **Michael Koller (Austria)** on “Passion and Resurrection of Christ” from the silent film *The King of Kings* (1927): world first Arabic translation of captions.

Saturday 19 November at 7:30 pm:

ALEPPO: Church of St. Francis

Classical organ recital by **Michael Koller (Austria)**; with the participation of the “**Ensemble Classica**”.



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ORGANISTS

JUAN DE LA RUBIA (SPAIN)

Juan de la Rubia, is the Resident Organist of the Sagrada Família church in Barcelona. His incessant activity as a soloist, conductor, accompanist and continuo has led him to step on the main stages of about thirty countries around the world, the main ones being the Auditorio Nacional de Música in Madrid, Konzerthaus in Berlin, Gewandhaus in Leipzig, Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, the cathedrals of Cologne, Westminster, Bogotá, Mexico City and Tunis, Saint-Sulpice in Paris, or the Mariinsky Theatre and the Philharmonia of Saint Petersburg, among others. De la Rubia has performed as a soloist with orchestras such as the Freiburger Barockorchester, Kammerorchester Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach, Orquesta Nacional de España, Orquesta Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya, Orquesta Barroca de Tenerife, Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, Orquesta de la Comunidad de Madrid, Orquesta de la Comunitat Valenciana, Orquesta Ciudad de Granada, or Orquesta de Cuerdas de Bogotá. During the last decade, de la Rubia has also specialized in improvisation on silent films.

SILVIO CELEGHIN (ITALY)

Silvio Celeghin is a professor of organ at the “Benedetto Marcello” Conservatory in Venice, principal organist of the “Schola S. Rocco” in Vicenza and reference organist of the “Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia” in Rome. As an acclaimed soloist, he is regularly invited to perform in Italy and all around the world. In 2007 he was one of the eight international organists to perform the world premiere of “La Revolte des Orgues” by Jean Guillou. Besides his activity as a soloist he served as the organist with several renowned orchestras (Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto; Milano Classica; Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; the Orchestra of La Fenice theater of Venice; Accademia Nazionale Santa Cecilia, Rome; the Simon Bolivar Orchestra of Caracas, Venezuela) under the direction of Riccardo Muti, Marcello Viotti, Claudio Scimone, Antonio Pappano. He has been in 2010 the first Italian organist invited directly by J.A. Abreu, to Venezuela for a concert tour with “Simon Bolivar Orchestra” and for playing the new organ “Klais” in Caracas, Venezuela.

MICHAEL KOLLER (AUSTRIA)

Michael Koller explores the organ for completely new sound dimensions. He experiments with the Wind, speaking with the organ as it were. Free and without formal corsets, he paints pictures in a wide variety of timbres, from classical tonality to harsh atonal passages. Born in 1972 in Austria, after school he worked as an organ builder in Krems / Danube. He studied catholic church music in Vienna and St Pölten with his teachers Peter Planyavsky, Otto Kargl and Michael Kitzinger. Masterstudies with Pierre Pincemaille and Rupert Gottfried Frieberger. He works as a Project Manager in Austrian Television and as a Conductor and Organist in some Churches of Austria.