

PRESENTS



SCHOLA ANTIQUA

Performing

Sounds of Faith of Medieval Jerusalem

Featuring

Michael Alan Anderson, Nolan Carter, Matthew Dean,
Joe Labozetta, Laura Lynch, and Stephanie Culica

with special guests

Nell Snaidas, soprano and
Amro Hosny Helmy, oud and voice

Program curated by Matthew Dean

Michael Alan Anderson, artistic director

at

Perimeter Institute's Atrium - Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
May 7, 2019 at 8:00 pm

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PROGRAMME NOTES



In the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem's Old City – itself built on the foundations of a Roman temple to Aphrodite and later repurposed for a time as a mosque – a plain wooden ladder has been left weathering against the facade since at least the eighteenth century. Quarreling Christian sects, locked in a *status quo* since a *firman* by Ottoman Sultan Osman III, have ceded The Immovable Ladder, lest its removal incite an ownership debate common in this many-layered structure and land. The keys to the church are in the custody of a Muslim family, storied to be part of a direct lineage of custodians appointed by Saladin in 1187. Long before dawn, Adeen Joudeh walks from the Jaffa Gate to the church in a ritual that – even originally – was meant as a show of respect and hope for peace among parties as much as an expression of power.

On Tisha B'Av, a fast day in Judaism remembering the destruction of the First Temple and Second Temple in Jerusalem among many calamities, a psalm is recited: "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept, remembering Zion. Upon the willows we hung up our harps, for they had asked us to sing songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"

The ladder, the keys, and the harp (more literally a lyre, later translated as "organa," leading to depictions in Western medieval art as a little pipe organ hanging from a tree branch!) are as fitting emblems as any for this effort to bring a concert of music to life, responding across the centuries to the period engaged in a 2016 exhibition at The Met Cloisters in New York City, and a 2018 presentation in the artifact galleries of Chicago's Oriental Institute; you may seek these very symbols in our selections tonight. There were many successions of secular and religious power for the region, the city, and individual sites within during just these centuries, not yet to speak of the millennia before or centuries since. It cannot be varnished that these successions tolled in blood and displacement, and that diaspora led to a subsequent return of even broader influences: as with some artifacts around us, some Jewish musical wonders conceived in these moments were eventually birthed or preserved in – and must be retrieved from – other places, from Izmir to Barcelona. Methods of historical transmission of text and art and sacred sound varied widely between traditions, as did the types of individuals or groups who created these composite and parallel cultures. While it may seem provocative to some today to hear a female cantorial voice, or the adhan called in a chapel, or nasheeds honoring the Prophet beyond Qur'anic recitation, or Georgian or Armenian hymnody with established traditions of harmony predating even the flowering of monophonic chant in the West, these all represent echoes – some now forgotten – of practice which came into and out of focus in the richly intertextual, cross-pollinating "Middle Ages" of Jerusalem.

PROGRAMME NOTES



To weave a tapestry of sound together, we today use a paradigm of shared sacred experiences developed in the international Sounds of Faith series, the signature initiative of the Harran Productions Foundation in Chicago, in which Schola Antiqua and Amro Helmy have previously taken part. Without narrative – and starting with an overlapping call of sacred sounds as might be heard in some hours at the Dung Gate, or Aleppo of a former decade, or in cities of North Africa, or Mumbai – we will introduce some memories preserved in oral or written tradition from the peoples who inhabited or moved through medieval Jerusalem, many of them peaceful prayers in their own times and places as today. Since exhibitions and museums themselves are framed in later Western practices, we will close with some polyphony from subsequent centuries in Europe, where the memory of ancient and medieval Jerusalem was so potent that architectural plans and musical compositions derived proportions from its very map. Using the words of the Psalmist, composers like William Byrd and Kryštof Harant lamented for an earlier time and a complete Temple, a “being there” shrouded in an irretrievable idealization but for art.

Schola Antiqua joins with Nell Snaidas and Amro Helmy in gratitude to Perimeter Institute for this presentation, and to The Met Cloisters and Harran Productions Foundation for the original touring program framework. We hope our sounds will be ladders or keys to new and ancient portals for you as they are to us, and that in time we may all retrieve our suspended harps and make music together in lands familiar and foreign.

Matthew Dean

Program curator and Manager, Schola Antiqua of Chicago

Program Director, Sounds of Faith Initiative, Harran Productions Foundation



Selections and translations

The Call

Adhan - call to prayer, traditional

Allah is the greatest. I acknowledge there is no god but Allah. I acknowledge that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Hasten to prayer. Hasten to success. God is greatest. There is no god but Allah. Tr. Muhsin Khan

Betzet Yisrael / In Exitu Israel [Psalm 114], melodies preserved Istanbul, arr. Joshua R. Jacobson

When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion. The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs. Why is it, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back? O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs? Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water. (New Revised Standard Version)

PROGRAMME NOTES



Ave sancte Ylarion, processional for Saint Hilarion, from the codex Torino, MS J.II.9 (ca. 1430, for Lusignan court of Cyprus). Hilarion was a saint particularly honored in the Byzantine tradition, traditionally held to be born and active in Syria Palaestina, 4th c.

Hail, Saint Hilarion / Rejoicing so many times / Pray holy Aelion / That we might be adorned with lilies / And bring us out of this world's exile Through Acatheon. For we praise you Loving God / With strings at the diatesseron / And with cymbals / forever and ever

Tala' al-Badru 'Alayna (7th c.), Amro Helmy, oud and voice

One of the oldest surviving pieces of Islamic chant, greeting Mohammad after journeys including the Isra and Mir'aj (Night Journey to Jerusalem) and Expedition to Tabouk

O the White Moon rose over us / From the Valley of Wada' / And we owe it to show gratefulness / Where the call is to Allah / O you who were raised amongst us / coming with a work to be obeyed / You have brought to this city nobleness / Welcome! best call to God's way

Mi-al har horev / Keh moshe (12th c.), via Lukas Foss and Alberto Mizrahi.

One of the oldest surviving pieces of notated Jewish chant, found in a fragment in the Cairo genizah (ritual depository for Torah). The new poetry is probably by eleventh-century poet 'Amr ibn Sahl, with fragments of Torah as well, making it a cross-cultural commemoration of Moses even before the melody, attributed to Italo (Norman)-Egyptian Obadaiah the Proselyte, a twelfth-century Christian convert to Judaism.

Who stood on Mount Horeb with me and listened—as Moses did? In the desert he led my flock, he fed them manna, got water from the well; who, like Moses, could calm me, could remind me of my own qualities of graciousness and mercy, who whispered softly to me on Mount Horeb, "Have mercy!"? Who had visions of law for entire nations, and saw them clearly without puzzles and riddles like Moses? Who taught Torah well-honed and with sharpness like Moses? Who was privileged to enter into the holy cloud like Moses? Who went up to heaven for forty days and lived without food or drink like Moses?

Mizmor l'David / Havu l'Adonai [Psalm 29, excerpts], traditional Sephardic preserved Istanbul, via Joshua R. Jacobson

A Psalm of David...The voice of the LORD is over the waters, the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over mighty waters...The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox (NRSV).

Ver Shemdzebel Vart [9th canticle of the feastday of St. John the Baptist] Georgian, Gelati Monastery tradition (founded 12th c., older melody, early harmonization transcribed 19th c.) via John A. Graham

Unable are we...

PROGRAMME NOTES



Amenayn Zham, traditional Armenian attr. Mesrop Mashtots (5th c.), arr. Yervand Yerkanian, transcribed by Alyssa Mathias

At all times my plea is this: Purify me of my sins, O Lord. My heart trembles because of my wrongs. I beg you, forgive me, Lord. Do not silence my lament, O Lord, for I am an alien in a fleeting land [echoing Exodus 2:22, Psalm 137]

Sephardic songs, Nell Snaidas with Schola Antiqua and Amro Helmy, Joe Labozetta, percussion

Ladino, or Judaeo-Spanish, was and is a language spoken by Sephardic (lit. "Spanish") Jews from Portugal to the Ottoman Empire. A functional trade language in the Adriatic in the late medieval period, it is considered a best preserver – in some cases word-for-word from Hebrew – of some early sacred, paraliturgical, and secular texts, eventually re-pollinating Jerusalem after the Alhambra Decree escalated the expulsion of non-converted Jews from Spain (the families of many of whom had arrived in Iberia in the first place from previous expulsion from Jerusalem).

I. Ah, el novio no quiere dinero (traditional, possibly via Salonica)

Ah, the groom wants no money! He only wants his bride of good fortune! I have come to see! May they have joy and prosper and always be happy!

Ah, the groom wants no silver pieces! He only wants his bride of good luck! I've come to see...

Ah, the groom wants no bracelets! He only wants his bride with her face of joy! I've come to see...

II. Morena me llaman (traditional, possibly via Turkey)

They call me Morena (the dark one), I was born fair. As time passed, my beauty faded. I ascended the little ladder of gold and ivory to take my wedding vows. He: "Tell me, gorgeous, would you like to come with me?" She "My vows are strong, I cannot go with you" He called me "Morena", the son of the king... And if he calls me again – I'm going with him!

III. Scalerica de oro (traditional, possibly via Salonica)

A little stairway of gold, of gold and ivory; So the bride can go up to take her kiddushin (her wedding vows). We will come to see, we will come to see; May they have Joy and prosperity and much luck. The bride has no dowry, may she have good luck. The bride has no riches; the bride has no money. May she have great luck. We will come to see...

Insh'Allah, Amro Helmy with Schola Antiqua

Traditional refrain; verses and composition Maher Zain, arr. Amro Helmy

Do not despair and never lose hope, for Allah is at your side. God-willing! God-willing...

PROGRAMME NOTES



Surge illuminare

This music is drawn from the large body of twelfth- and thirteenth-century polyphony that developed at the Cathedral of Notre Dame of Paris. The music is set for two voices by Leonin, a composer who flourished in Paris in the closing decades of the twelfth century, set the parts of chant sung by cantors, or soloists, in organum for all the chants of the Mass and Office that could be sung in the elaborate and festive character of polyphony. When the soloists (or cantors) sing, the ancient chant underpinning is transformed into long passages as a drone, then into passages in which the chant moves more quickly, generating sections which sound almost like dances. The long, wordless passages sung on simple vowels, the quicker dance-like sections, and the highly melismatic chant sung by the choir all reinforce the ecstatic character of these pieces. – Michael Alan Anderson

Arise, shine [O Jerusalem]; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. (Isaiah 60, KJV)

Qui confidunt in Domino, Kryštof Harant (17th c.)

Near the turn of the seventeenth century. Harant was struck by the religious pluralism he encountered in Ottoman Jerusalem—totally foreign to Europe at that time. In his travelogue, in the same section where he describes composing the motet *Qui confidunt in Domino*, he relates an anecdote to his European readers that conveys something of the beauty of peaceful coexistence. He hits “pause” in his travelogue to describe the tolerant approach of Suleiman the Magnificent. As Harant puts it, in response to advisors pressuring him to force Christians and Jews to convert to Islam, Suleiman went with them to a window which looked into a garden, and...showing them the various colored flowers, said, “As the variety of flowers not only does not spoil the garden, but refreshes and cheers the eyes and mind, so variety of religion and creed does not...injure my lands, but...is of utility, if only they observe peace and are obedient to my orders.” – Michael Alan Anderson, special thanks to Erika Honisch

Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. / As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, from this time on and forevermore...peace be upon Israel! (Psalm 125, NRSV)

Ne irascaris domine, William Byrd (1589)

This choral work for five voices takes its text from the prophet Isaiah, who describes the decimation of the holy city of Jerusalem. Byrd transforms the text into an allegory for the plight of Catholics around him in late sixteenth-century England. The motet was quite popular in its time, likely for the power of its sustained, mournful cries of “Jerusalem desolata est” (“Jerusalem has been made desolate”) to conclude the piece. – Michael Alan Anderson

Be not angry, O Lord, and remember our iniquity no more. Behold, we are all your people. Your holy city has become a wilderness. Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem has been made desolate (NRSV)

Salaam; Amro Helmy, oud; traditional nasheed of peace, arr. Amro Helmy

PROGRAMME NOTES



Selected biographies

Schola Antiqua of Chicago is a professional early music ensemble dedicated to the performance of repertory before the year 1600. Executing pre-modern music with “sensitivity and style” (*Early Music America*), Schola Antiqua takes pride in providing the highest standards of research, performance, and education. Founded in 2000, the organization has received invitations to perform from festivals, libraries, universities, and other institutions across the United States, including residencies at the University of Chicago and the Lumen Christi Institute. In 2012, Schola Antiqua received the Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society for outstanding contributions to historical performing practice. Its connections to the academic community can be seen in collaborations with scholars from around the United States. The ensemble has recorded music accompanying Theodore Karp’s *Introduction to the Post-Tridentine Mass Proper, 1590-1890* (American Institute of Musicology, 2005), Margot Fassler’s *Music in the Medieval West* (W.W. Norton, 2013), and the medieval art exhibit at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, New York. Other collaborations have included Arms & Armor at the Art Institute of Chicago, late-medieval prayer books at the Morgan Library with Roger Wieck, and Religious Change and Print at the Newberry Library. The medieval Jerusalem program has been acclaimed by *Commonweal* and *Seen and Heard International* as transcendent, and is the ensemble’s first international touring program.

Schola Antiqua has released four commercial CDs on the Naxos of America and Discantus labels, and much of the music has not seen a modern recording. Music from these albums has aired on the national broadcasts of *With Heart and Voice*, *Harmonia*, and *Millennium of Music*, and has received reviews in *Early Music America*, *Fanfare*, the *Journal of Plainsong and Medieval Music*, and *Notes* (Music Library Association). The group’s latest CD, *Missa Conceptio tua: Medieval and Renaissance Music for Advent* (Naxos of America, 2014) was named one of the best classical albums in 2014 by Culture Catch.

Michael Alan Anderson was named Artistic Director of Schola Antiqua in 2008, following the retirement of its founding Artistic Director, Calvin M. Bower. He is a founding member of the ensemble and currently serves on the musicology faculty of the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester, where he specializes in music and devotion in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. He is author of the book *St. Anne in Renaissance Music: Devotion and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) and received the PhD from the University of Chicago in 2008. He is a two-time winner of the Deems Taylor Award (American Society for Composers, Authors, and Publishers) for outstanding writing about music, and his achievements with Schola Antiqua earned him Chorus America’s 2016 Louis Botto Award for Innovative Action and Entrepreneurial Zeal. Other awards include the Noah Greenberg Award (American Musicological Society), the Alvin H. Johnson American Musicological Society 50 Dissertation-Year Fellowship, the Grace Frank Grant (Medieval Academy of America), and the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend.

PROGRAMME NOTES



Matthew Dean, tenor, has served as a performer and advisor with Schola Antiqua since 2002, and as Program Director of the international Sounds of Faith Initiative at the Harran Foundation since 2009. Trained at the University of Chicago as a medieval art historian, Matt has developed both early music and folk music singing paths into national touring appointments with vocal luminaries The Newberry Consort and The Rose Ensemble. As a Baroque and modern oratorio soloist, Matt has been praised for his “firm vocalism and beautiful timbre” (John von Rhein, *Chicago Tribune*), his “stellar” collaborative singing (Alan Artner), and his “stirring” storytelling as a Bach Evangelist (*Chicago Classical Review*). Matt has had the honor of working with Amro Helmy since 2012 on Sounds of Faith, and with Nell Snaidas since 2015 through the Rose Ensemble and The Newberry Consort.

Amro Hosny Helmy is a unique and highly talented teacher and oud player who is a master of a large number of styles using different techniques, approaches and textures. His style of playing and his compositions have earned him a considerable international fan base. His musical style deeply captures the emotion of the audience. He began to teach himself how to play oud from age 14 and graduated from music college in Egypt in 1992. He is now recognized as an innovative performer and composer; he has performed more than fifty concerts around the world, among them a focus on interfaith events in Chicago. Beyond his outstanding onstage performances, he is also a teacher of the musical arts and of Arabic in many schools in Chicago. Amro’s dedication to his craft and his students ensures that quality music will continue to flourish.

American-Uruguayan soprano **Nell Snaidas** has been praised by *The New York Times* for her “beautiful soprano voice, melting passion” and “vocally ravishing” performances. Her voice has also been described as “remarkably pure with glints of rich sensuality” (*Vancouver Sun*); and she has been called “a model of luminous timbre and emotional intensity” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*). Specialization in Latin American and Spanish Baroque music has taken her all over Europe, North and Latin America, as a vocal soloist, guitarist, and language and repertoire advisor, with ensembles including Apollo’s Fire, The Seattle Baroque Orchestra, Ex Umbris, Ensemble Viscera, El Mundo, and Chatham Baroque. She has recorded for Sony Classical, Koch, Naxos and Dorian. Her latest album as a featured soloist with El Mundo has been nominated for a Grammy in the Best Small Ensemble category. While still a student at the Mannes College of Music, Nell was introduced to the Sephardic repertoire by her mentor Nico Castel. She has toured the world with Sephardic Heritage Award winner Gerard Ederly in his ensemble and has served as Ladino consultant with The Rose Ensemble as well as co-director with Jeannette Sorrell in the program “Sephardic Journey” with Apollo’s Fire. Nell was featured on CBC radio as one of the leading interpreters of Spanish Renaissance and Sephardic song. In addition to her busy performing career, Nell is the co-Artistic Director of GEMAS:Early Music of the Americas. This concert series in NYC, devoted to the Early Music and Performers of Latin America and Canada, is a project of the Americas Society and GEMS (The Gotham Early Music Scene). More information can be found at www.gemasconcerts.org

