

■ De Caelis  
Direction Laurence Brisset  
2021



# ■ ENSEMBLE DE CAELIS

Medieval vocal music and creation

The current situation is of course a challenge, but we are rising to meet it. We have adapted our practices to ensure that the COVID-19 virus does not defeat us in our artistic life.

Comprised of between four and seven artists, our ensemble is extremely flexible, and we can devise formats that are compatible with the new requirements due to the health crisis while retaining that all-important physical bond with our audiences, namely, shorter concerts given twice, open-air concerts, wider spacing and “walk-around” events...

It is our desire to share the beauty of these often unfamiliar repertoires, both ancient and contemporary, breathing life into them as they become an integral component in the experience of a shared encounter.

This year sees new horizons for younger audiences as we introduce them to medieval music with an erudite yet easily accessible performance.

We will pay a musically poetic tribute to nature in a programme designed to bring gardens, courtyards, playgrounds, and open spaces to life...

And we will also bring together the timbres and melismas of two vocal traditions of East and West in “Pray for Peace”, in a quest for transcendence and peace.

Laurence Brisset





De Caelis seeks to explore the musical territories of yesterday and today and present them in the context of an emotive and humanistic performance.

The ensemble is involved in musical research and is a regular participant in residences. It also explores and experiments with timbre, ornamentation, and improvisation.

In addition, it assumes an educational role by offering a variety of didactic programmes, workshops, lectures, and interactive projects, reflecting a quest to be ever more proactive in its desire to share and pass on knowledge and savoir-faire.

The music of the Middle Ages is extremely beneficial to those who take the time to listen to it. De Caelis' programmes demonstrate that the Ensemble is as innovative and experimental as contemporary creation and that it offers another experience of time.

■ Discover all our programmes along with video clips and audio excerpts on our website :  
[www.decaelis.fr](http://www.decaelis.fr)

## ■ A NEW PRODUCTION FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES



### **Mahaut, Girl of Wood**

*3 actress-singers, 1 musician and 1 stage manager.*

*A musical tale for the stage with vocals, instruments, masks and puppets.*

Featuring works by Guillaume de Machaut and Moniot d'Arras, and pieces of unknown origin from the 13th century; new pieces from Laurence Brisset and Jean-Lou Descamps.

Script by Anouch Paré.

Director: Véronique Samakh.

Lighting design: Simon Fritschi.

Costumes: Maxence Rapetti.

Scenography: Ludovic Meunier.

For all audiences aged 6 and above. Running time 45-50 minutes.

*Mahaut, Girl of Wood*, is a magical performance set in an imaginary Middle Ages as richly detailed as the illuminating illustrations of a medieval manuscript. It is carried along by specialists of medieval music, all of whom share the desire to combine the highest artistic standards whilst facilitating easy and immediate access.

According to an old legend, a long time ago, fairies stole babies from their cribs and replaced them with plain pieces of wood. After expending considerable love and affection, the wood comes to life... and so begins the story of Mahaut, our heroine. As in many tales, there is a spiritual journey of initiation, interspersed with exciting adventures and colourful characters, during which, laughter, irreverence, and poetry combine with music to question identity, legitimacy, lineage, kinship and love. Along the way, we will encounter Casserole the nanny, Fae des Houles, a griffin, the Mad Knight, a number of gargoyles, la Dame of Ventremort and many more.

The production is designed to be mobile with an adaptable format, for a maximum capacity of 200 people.

A coproduction of the Compagnie du Carrosse d'or (93), the Théâtre du château d'Eu (76), the Quai des Arts (61), the DOC (14), and l'Arsenal (27)

## ■ 2021 PROGRAMME



### **Odd Birds**

*Two possible casting options:*

*5 singers and organetto.*

*5 singers and organetto, with Jean Boucault and Johnny Rasse – Les Chanteurs-Oiseaux*

*(The Birdsong imitators).*

Works by Borlet, Solage, Guillaume de Machaut, Guillaume Dufay, Clément Janequin together with pieces of unknown origin from the 14th century Chantilly Codex.

Angels, rare birds, and other more familiar warblers appear throughout the programme. The entire history of music is filled with their songs. A bird is a poet, a prophet, and a singer: the miraculous alliance of art with nature.

In the Middle Ages, human song was regarded as an emulation of birdsong which itself was nothing less than the earthly echo of the angels. An alluring ancestry in which trills vied with sounds from deeper in the throat.

*Odd Birds* is a fine tribute to our feathered friends that is both enchanting and poetic as well as a tad mischievous. A concert in which virtuosity and grace become one.

For our added pleasure, the concert can be supplemented with the inclusion of those two renowned birdsong imitators, Jean Boucault and Johnny Rasse ([www.chanteurs-oiseaux.com](http://www.chanteurs-oiseaux.com)).

This programme can be performed outdoors, which offers the birds in the garden a chance to join in the concert!



## Pray for Peace

*7 singers.*

*Guest vocal artists: Sara Hamidi and Alia Sellami*

*Gregorian chant, sacred polyphony from the 14th century, Arabic and Persian song.*

Women's voices have often been doomed to silence in the world and this highly symbolic encounter between Western and Eastern song highlights the affinities between the two traditions. Melismas and poems complement each other, sometimes coming together yet never disappearing into each other. Since her childhood, Sara Hamidi, the Great Eastern vocalist from Isfahan has been performing Radif, the traditional repertoire of Persian classical music listed by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. For her part, Tunis-born Alia Sellami draws on sacred Coptic and Maronite vocals. Uniting their powerful voices, they serve up an array of Gregorian chants and Medieval Western polyphonies of unknown origin.

This programme is intended to be performed in a venue with adequate acoustic reverberation.



## Chatterboxes

*5 female singers and 1 actress. Music and poetry.*

*Music and poetry.*

13th century motets of unknown origin, John Cage, Jacques Rebotier, Gherassim Luca.

The “natural music” of the word forms the basic raw material for this programme which places the emphasis on humour and dramatic quality. The poems of Gherassim Luca, who has a talent for weaving words to the point of absurdity, forge a comical and metaphysical bond throughout the concert. All the pieces in the programme have a flair for exuberance, experimentation and the intrinsic comedy inherent in the written word. Often whimsical, sometimes surprising, these precious manifestations of sound architecture vie with one another for inventiveness.

From jabber to chitter-chatter and tittle-tattle, they offer a touch of eloquence for 6 chatterboxes in search of a little gratification! This programme can be adapted to a variety of different venues including museums, gardens, and theatres. It is comprised of several modules that can be presented successively or simultaneously—a flexible format that can be specifically tailored to suit venues of different sizes.

## ■ COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMES

With the musicians of the **Orchestre Régional de Normandie**

### **Le miroir de Jésus, André Caplet (1878-1925)**

Vocal and instrumental chords combine and complement one another. Six musicians from the Orchestre Régional de Normandie and the De Caelis vocal ensemble come together to perform this major piece from the early 20th century by Caplet, an inveterate connoisseur of the Middle Ages

With the musicians of the Ensemble Sillages (Brest)

### **Le temps des nuages, Jonathan Bell (1982-)**

A participatory programme in which professional artists and an amateur chorus interact on stage. Featuring the artistic and educational tool SmartVox (a smartphone app developed by the composer Jonathan Bell in association with IRCAM), which gives users access to music without the need to read a score.

## ■ CULTURAL ACTIONS

De Caelis accompanies its audiences beyond its concerts by offering vocal workshops, public rehearsals, and lectures.

Raising awareness and nurturing the public is at the core of its artistic mission.

In conjunction with its production of Mahaut, Girl of Wood, De Caelis is offering guidance and artistic immersion with a series of workshops that provide the young with an introduction to singing, the art of puppetry and scriptwriting prior to seeing the performance.

## ■ SUPPORT

The De Caelis Ensemble is registered with the DRAC Normandie and supported by the Normandy Region and the Département of the Orne. Its principal sponsors are the Mécénat musical Société Générale and the Caisse des Dépôts. It receives funding from SPEDIDAM, ADAMI, Musique Nouvelle en Liberté, Odia Normandie, Bureau Export, Sacem and the Institut Français.

The Ensemble was awarded the Prix Liliane Bettencourt for choral singing in 2016. It is a member of Profedim, the Federation of specialised vocal and instrumental ensembles (FEVIS) and the Futurs composés network.

### The artistic team:

Laurence Brisset, direction, chant et organetto.

Estelle Nadau, Eugénie De Mey, Caroline Tarrit, Marie-George Monet, Florence Limon, Claire Trouil-loud, Hélène Richer, Sara Hamadi, Alia Sellami, chant.

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