

A detailed medieval manuscript illustration. On the left, a pale hand is shown with fingers slightly spread, holding a small, thin, golden object. The hand is positioned against a deep blue, textured background that resembles a heavy robe or cloak. A wide, reddish-brown belt is cinched around the waist, with a large, dark, rectangular buckle. The blue fabric has a radial pattern of lines emanating from the belt. The overall style is characteristic of late medieval or early modern manuscript illumination, with visible brushstrokes and a rich, saturated color palette.

■ Season 2023

# ENSEMBLE DE CAELIS

Medieval vocal music and creation

Directed by Laurence Brisset

# ENSEMBLE DE CAELIS

The voice, the Middle Ages, creation, heritage, encounters, conviviality, surprise... have been making the De Caelis Ensemble vibrate ever since it was formed.

This year, our activity will focus on research, with the creation of a new programme of sacred music, “Les Thébaïdes”. In this programme, we will be taking a new look at the Las Huelgas manuscript by associating it with the Christian repertoire of the Orient.

We will continue to perform our flagship programmes, celebrating the enchantment of nature with “Odd Birds” in collaboration with the Birdsong Imitators, a moment full of poetry, humour and the crazy feats of these extraordinary artists.

“The Chatterboxes” will persist in chattering with words and motets in an astonishing musical ping-pong between the 14th and 21st centuries.

Young ears will be initiated into the medieval repertoire with the musical show, “Mahaut, Girl of Wood”, which can be found on tour, from the Amphitheatre of the Opéra Bastille in Paris to small rural municipalities.

In order to enable people to discover our repertoire in places where it’s not necessarily expected, by incorporating it into lively and original programmes, we will continue to organize numerous cultural actions, to invent new forms and meet other traditions and other artistic disciplines...

And, as we love celebration, sharing and passing on our values, it will be a great pleasure for us to organize the second edition of our festival titled Les Rencontres musicales REGARDS at Domfront-en-Poiraise (Normandy) in 2023, with talented artists and many musical surprises!



# THE THEBAIS

## DESERT SPIRITUALITY

### *Sacred chants*

*The Las Huelgas manuscript (14th century)*

*Byzantine, Maronite, Sufi songs.*

**6 voices and organetto**

**Guest artist: Alia Sellami, song**

The desert of Thebes was the refuge of the early Christians, and since then any place - even a symbolic one - where people live in isolation to lead a life of asceticism and prayer has been called Thebaid. The desert - evocative of withdrawal and ordeal but also a place of revelation - links the three monotheistic religions. It's a metaphor

for a solitary life where one comes to contemplate "invisible realities", while praying and singing. De Caelis takes a new look at the Las Huelgas manuscript, a female monastery founded in the 12th century in Spain, a land where East and West converged for centuries. This repertoire will be performed in the light of Byzantin, Maronite and Sufi chants in order to detect traces of a common source.

The grace of the hymns of Cassian, a saint, abbess, poetess and composer, from the Byzantine empire of the 9th century, will mingle with that of a medieval repertoire belonging to a women's foundation. A tribute to these women, these sisters who, down through the ages, traditions and spaces, hidden, in seclusion, veiled, either by choice or by constraint, lent their voices to these wonderful chants.

🕒 Recording at the end of 2023





# ODD BIRDS

*Pieces by Borlet, Solage, Machaut,  
Janequin and pieces of unknown  
origin from the Chantilly Codex  
(14th century)  
Birds songs.*

**5 female singers, organetto,  
The Birdsong Imitators – Jean  
Boucault and Johnny Rasse  
([www.chanteurs-oiseaux.com](http://www.chanteurs-oiseaux.com)).**

Angels, rare and not-so-rare birds appear as this programme unfolds, a tribute to the feather, poetic and a tad mischievous. The entire history of music is filled with their songs. A bird is a poet, a prophet and a singer: a wondrous alliance of art and

nature. In the Middle Ages, human song was regarded as an imitation of birdsong, which itself was merely the earthly echo of the angels. An alluring ancestry in which trills vied with sounds from deeper in the throat!

The bird songs of Jean Boucault and Johnny Rasse dialogue, play and mingle – with incomparable virtuosity – with the female singers' voices.

This programme can be performed outdoors, and the birds in the garden are cordially invited to join in the concert!



# CHATTERBOXES

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

**5 female singers**

**1 actress-singer**

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 Ghérasim Luca, who weaves words to the point of absurdity, forge a comical and metaphysical bond throughout the concert. All the pieces in the

programme smack of playfulness and fun. Often surprising and whimsical, these precious manifestations of sound architecture vie with one another for inventiveness.

The motet was very fashionable in the 13th century and skilfully played with musical discourse and dialectic art. It superimposed and intertwined different texts and languages, bloating, gasping, rambling, mocking or praising at will.

The recent pieces of the programme share this spirit, this taste for experimentation and the extraordinary. They use language in a virtuoso and musical manner.

Poetry gets mingled with it, entangling and untangling, giving the chatterboxes a voice. Chatter, glibness, cackle and eloquence!



# MAHAUT, GIRL OF WOOD

*A new production for audiences aged 7 and above A musical tale for the stage with vocals, instruments, masks and puppets.*

**4 actress-singers,  
1 actor-musician,  
1 stage manager**

Pieces by Guillaume de Machaut, Thibaut de Champagne, Gace Brulé, unknown 13th century composers, Jean-Lou Descamps/Text by Anouch Paré. Directed by Véronique Samakh and Xavier Legasa.

This production offers to introduce young audiences to the medieval

repertoire, the aim being to combine high artistic standards with easy and immediate access.

“Mahaut, girl of wood”, is a production whose action is set in an imaginary, turbulent and wondrous Middle Ages. Legend has it that a long time ago, fairies used to steal babies from the cradle and replaced them with a plain piece of wood. After lavishing a lot of love and affection, the wood came to life... and so begins the story of Mahaut, our heroine. It's an initiatory quest interspersed with exciting adventures and colourful characters, where laughter, irreverence and magic mingle with the music. On the way, we are given a glimpse of the notions of identity, legitimacy, lineage and love.

A co-production of the Compagnie du Carrosse d'or, the Théâtre du Château d'Eu, the Quai des Arts, the DOC, and the Arsenal, Ville de Domfront.



# CULTURAL ACTIONS

In addition to performing concerts, the De Caelis Ensemble is committed to awareness-raising activities aimed at fostering encounters between its repertoire and the public. These moments of sharing can either be occasional at a pre-concert presentation, a conference or a meeting with the public, or they can take place over a longer period of time, to allow for a more in-depth discovery (vocal practice workshops, participative creation...).

In 2022-2023, the Ensemble proposes the following actions :

**PARTICIPATIVE CONCERTS - “REGARDS SUR LA BRUME” BY IVAN SOLANO** : vocal practice workshops for amateur choristers, vocal and creative work based on improvisation and the discovery of graphic scores leading to a concert with the De Caelis Ensemble.

**IMPROMPTUS EVENTS** : small concerts given in unusual places (markets, cafés, media libraries, etc.) to introduce people to medieval music.

**MINI-CONCERTS IN PEOPLE’S HOMES** : : inviting 10 people to a 10-minute mini-concert, over a cup of coffee with friends, followed by a discussion with the artists about voice, singing, music...

**LISTENING BOOTH « I HEAR VOICES »** : Installation of a listening booth, with recordings of the ensemble to be listened to with headphones (transport and insurance at the expense of the organizer).





# FESTIVAL

## LES RENCONTRES MUSICALES REGARDS

2023 EDITION

Following the success of its first edition, the Rencontres musicales REGARDS festival will return for two weekends at Domfront-en-Poiraise and the surrounding region. It will feature talented artists and champion the beauty of the Middle Ages' repertoire and creation. The voice will be the key word at this festival, which is organized by the De Caelis Ensemble in partnership with the town of Domfront.



# PARTENAIRES

The De Caelis ensemble is an ensemble approved by the Cultural Ministry and supported by the Normandy Region and the Orne department. It receives support from the CNM, ODIA Normandie, FCM, SPEDIDAM, ADAMI, Musique Nouvelle en Liberté, Sacem and the Institut Français. It is also supported by the Caisse des dépôts. De Caelis is a member of Profedim and the Federation of Specialized Vocal and Instrumental Ensembles (FEVIS).

The show “Mahaut, girl of wood” receives support from the CNM, the Société Générale musical patronage, the Caisse des dépôts and the Musical Creation Fund.

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