



LUMINOSO ORIENTE

17th-century music and Sevdah songs from the Balkans

Katarina Vukadinovic & Teatro dei Cervelli

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The prince's widow stands before a mournful king. She's almost naked, barely covered by a dark veil. From head to toe, her skin is dyed black. She rips her bleeding face with despair as she curses the monarch. A woman next to her cries incessantly. Gathered around her, a group of female singers performs a lament so that her soul will find relief in the sorrow of music.

With these words, in a letter from Persia, 17th-century traveller Pietro Della Valle refers to the tragic death of Safi Mirza, son of Shah Abbas the Great (1557-1629).

Throughout history, the complex relationship between the East and the West has been marked by mutual fear and admiration. Eastern nations have always represented a potential threat of military and religious domination for Europe, but also endless opportunities for commercial, cultural and scientific exchange. Maybe it was thanks to this ambiguous influence that a highly politicized, composite image of the Orient was developed across the centuries —an image that was incessantly revisited by artists of all times and disciplines. Because the East constitutes, for the West, the borders of faith, but it is also home to its Greek and Christian roots. In the broadest sense, the Orient is the land of the rising sun, the source of true knowledge and the cradle of Christianity – which was never delivered from the hands of the 'enemy'. Danger, suspicion, mysticism and seduction all merge together into a powerful representation of 'otherness' that is mirrored and expanded in all sorts of artistic creations.

A century of travelers and inventors, the music of the 1600s were characterized by the invention of monody, the ultimate development of the madrigal, and the birth of the opera. In such repertoires, poetic images and stories inspired by the Orient are widespread and varied. A good example can be found in Francesco Cavalli's operas, mostly dealing with Eastern plots. Likewise, there is a great number of madrigals - by Domenico Mazzocchi, Claudio Monteverdi, Barbara Strozzi, among others - that reflect an everlasting interest for Christian epic poems and a tireless enthusiasm for Greek mythology and literature. Thus, a renewed taste for exotic lands and adventures predominates in this music as the perfect settings for the most fascinating tales of war, love and death.

This programme was conceived as a dialogue between 17th-century Italian music and the ancient Sevdalinka song tradition of the Balkans, one of the most vibrant expressions of the Eastern European heritage. A melting pot of Western, Arabic, Sephardic and Ottoman influences, this extraordinary poetical-musical language of Medieval origins is sung today in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and beyond. A common feature between the two repertoires is the central role of melancholy. In fact, the term **sevdah** seems to derive from the Turkish word **sawda**, the exact translation of "melancholy", and the very essence of early-baroque music. But above all, Sevdah melodies, like Italian 17-century monody and madrigals are a tribute to love, death, distance and absence. Both languages are built upon the fervent conviction that "the sorrow of music" can dissolve the boundaries between love and war, light and darkness, pleasure and pain...



PROGRAMME

Domenico Mazzocchi, *Madrigali a cinque voci* (1638)
Udito ho, Citerea

Tarquinio Merula, *Il quarto libro delle canzoni da suonare* (1651)
Canzon sesta "La Illica"

Francesco Cavalli, *La Statira* (1655)
"Alba, che imperli i fiori all'erbe in seno"

Anonymous, *Sejdefu majka budjase*, Bosnia

Barbara Strozzi, *Il primo libro de' madrigali* (1644)
Quel misero usignolo / Come può, non come suol

Anonymous, *Ruse kose curo imas*, Bosnia

Anonymous, *Tamburalo momce u tamburu*, Bosnia

Giovanni Rovetta, *Madrigali concertati libro secondo* (1640)
Venga dal Ciel migliore virtù

Anonymous, *Mesecina*, Serbia

Claudio Monteverdi *Madrigali, libro terzo* (1592)
Vattene pur, crudel con quella pace

Anonymous, *Kradem ti se u veceri*, Bosnia

Francesco Cavalli *La Calisto* (1651)
"Lucidissima face"

Anonymous, *Gde si duso, gde si rano*, Serbia

Claudio Monteverdi, *Madrigali, libro ottavo* (1638)
Vago augelletto che cantando vai

Total length: 60 minutes



Theatro dei Cervelli

Katarina Vukadinovic (soloist)

Lina Marcela López, Esther Labourdette (sopranos)

Jacopo Facchini (alto)

Roberto Rilievi (tenor)

Marco Saccardin (bass, theorbo)

Claudia Combs (violin)

Lina Manrique (violin, viola da gamba)

Diana Fazzini (violone, viola da gamba)

Ryoko Katayama (harpsichord, organ)

Flora Papadopoulos (harp)

Andrés Locatelli (recorder, conductor)



Katarina Vukadinovic was born in Belgrade, Serbia. She studied piano, music theory and music pedagogy. During her studies she joined the multi-awarded choir "Collegium Musicum" at the Belgrado University of Music, conducted by Darinka Matic-Marovic. Following her passion for traditional music, Katarina studied Ethnomusicology in parallel to her activity as a singer.

She then taught Serbian singing techniques in various contexts. Later in her career she discovers the operatic repertoire, after her arrival in France in 2004. An eclectic artist, Katarina cultivates her interests for a variety of repertoires, epochs and styles. She is part of Mikrokosmos Choeur de Solistes (contemporary music) and she frequently appears on opera productions at Opéra de Tours, Soirées Lyriques de Sanxay, Opéra de Limoges, etc. She created two ensembles devoted to Balkan folk music: Trio BelaVilo and Uzdah.

Andrés Locatelli is an Argentine-Italian recorder player, conductor and musicologist. He completed his Master's studies in Musicology in 2016 and his PhD in 2020 at the renowned Department of Musicology and Cultural Heritage of Cremona, University of Pavia (Italy), with a dissertation on early-15th-century composer Matteo da Perugia. Parallel to his academic activity, he participated in choir and orchestral conducting courses and master classes taught by Facundo Agudín (Switzerland), Adrián van der Spoel, Rob Vermeulen (The Netherlands) and Michael Reif (Germany).



As a conductor of 17th and 18th-century music, he has appeared in concerts in Holland, France, Switzerland, Italy and South America. In 2016, he conducted the renowned orchestra Concerto Köln for the modern première of Francesco Cavalli's "Veremonda, l'amazzone di Aragona" (a co-production of Schwetzingen Festspiele and Mainz Staatstheater, directed by Amelie Niermeyer). The production was acclaimed by the international press (Financial Times, Opernglas, OP Online). In 2017 he created the ensemble Theatro dei Cervelli, based in Basel (Switzerland) and devoted to the rediscovery of 17th-century Italian music. He collaborated with theatre director Jeffrey Döring (Goldstaub e.V) in 2019 in the creation of *Wankelmut der Herzen* (Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart), an innovative interdisciplinary project of experimental theatre and vocal music by Claudio Monteverdi. As a musicologist, he has lectured in the USA, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and Argentina. He is frequently sought after as a performance practice specialist to teach at conservatories and academies across Europe and South America. In 2019, he was Visiting Student Research Collaborator at the Department of Music of Princeton University.



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