



PressRelease

Mohammed Fairouz: Zabur

Indianapolis Symphonic Choir commissions composer's Oratorio on the Psalms of David for Mixed Choir, Children's Choir, Soloists and Orchestra

Eric Stark to conduct world premiere performance on April 24th 2015 at Indianapolis's Hilbert Circle Theatre

NEW YORK, NY – In April 2015, composer **Mohammed Fairouz's** first Oratorio, *Zabur* will receive its world premiere by the **Indianapolis Symphonic Choir with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra**. Commissioned by a consortium led by the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir and comprised of Jewish, Christian and Islamic congregational partners, public and private schools, as well as other arts institutions, the large-scale oratorio takes its name from the Arabic title for the **Psalms of David**. The work is scored for chorus, children's choir, soloists and orchestra and sets several of the Arabic psalms within the context of an original libretto by acclaimed writer and actor **Najla Said**. Said re-imagines King David as a poet living and writing in the upheaval of the contemporary Middle East, composing the Psalms as a way to contend with his day-to-day reality.

Described by *Gramophone* as “**a post-millennial Schubert,**” Fairouz is an adept and accomplished writer for the voice with an opera (a second in progress), thirteen song cycles, and hundreds of art songs to his credit. For *Zabur*, Fairouz looked to Stravinsky's Latin *Symphony of Psalms* and Bernstein's Hebrew *Chichester Psalms* as models. “I was eager to bring my own cultural dimension to the Psalms,” he writes. “By bringing back the essential Arabic aspect of the Psalms as well as by setting the ancient texts in a contemporary environment, *Zabur* attempts to take the Psalms 'off the shelf' and restore their original form as raw human poetic documents.”

Eric Stark, Artistic Director, Indianapolis Symphonic Choir writes, “Performing and commissioning new, bold works is at the heart of our mission, and the Symphonic Choir sees a call to engage others in our community in that experience of creating new works of music.” The commissioning partners have been involved in the entire process, from establishing parameters of the work – broad themes, identification of potential composers, musical traits – to a three-week, city-wide unveiling surrounding the premiere in April 2015. Stark says, “**This consortium model is transformative for the Indianapolis arts and faith communities.**”

"The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir regularly join together to perform great choral masterworks," said Gary Ginstling, CEO of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. "Now, we have the rare opportunity to bring to life a new large-scale oratorio from an acclaimed young composer, a work that

communicates across the religious divide using the universal language of music and draws upon the strengths of so many performing arts and faith-based organizations in Indianapolis."

About the Artists:

Mohammed Fairouz, born in 1985, is one of the most frequently performed, commissioned, and recorded composers today. Hailed by *The New York Times* as "an important new artistic voice" and by *BBC World News* as "one of the most talented composers of his generation," Fairouz integrates Middle-Eastern modes into Western structures, to deeply expressive effect. His output encompasses virtually every genre, including opera, symphonies, ensemble works, chamber and solo pieces, choral settings, and more than a dozen song cycles. His works engage major geopolitical and philosophical themes with persuasive craft and a marked seriousness of purpose. Commissions have come from Rachel Barton Pine, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Borromeo String Quartet, Imani Winds, New York Festival of Song, Da Capo Chamber Players and Cantus. His principal teachers in composition have included György Ligeti, Gunther Schuller, and Richard Danielpour, with studies at the Curtis Institute and New England Conservatory. Fairouz's works are published by Peermusic Classical. He lives in New York City.

Najla Said is an actress and writer. As an actress, she has performed Off-Broadway, regionally and internationally, as well as in film and television. In April 2010, Najla completed an eight-week sold-out Off-Broadway run of her solo show, *Palestine*. That same year, she was named one of "Forty Feminists Under Forty" by The Feminist Press. Her memoir, *Looking for Palestine: Growing Up Confused in an Arab American Family* was published by Riverhead Books in August 2013. Her shorter writing has appeared in numerous magazines and periodicals. Najla is a graduate of Princeton University. She studied acting in New York.

The **Indianapolis Symphonic Choir** is marking its 78th season in 2014/2015, underwritten by Season Sponsor BMO Harris Bank. Among the most active symphonic choruses in the nation, the Choir reaches in excess of 25,000 people each season with more than 25 performances and a comprehensive educational outreach program. The choral partner of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, the Symphonic Choir was founded in 1937 at the Orchestra's request to perform the great choral-orchestral repertoire. This continued partnership exhibits the very best of collaborative ideals – two independent arts organizations combining their strengths to create beautifully lasting musical results. The Choir is dedicated to excellence in the performance of choral music, the creation of new choral masterworks, and to community outreach and education throughout the community. The Choir is now in its sixth year as the official choral partner of the Indianapolis Public Schools, providing teacher training, educational resources, performance experiences and free printed music. For more information about the Symphonic Choir, visit www.indychoir.org.

Founded in 1930, the **Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra** is the largest professional performing arts organization in Indiana and has been recognized with the Arturo Toscanini Music Critics Award for recording of a new composition and by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers for excellence in programming. Krzysztof Urbanski became the seventh Music Director in the ISO's history when, in 2011, he joined the artistic leadership team of Jack Everly, Principal Pops Conductor, and Raymond Leppard, Conductor Laureate. Concertmaster Zach De Pue, one of the youngest concertmasters in the U.S., joined the ISO in 2007. In 2009, the ISO named De Pue's string trio Time for Three its first ever ensemble-in-residence. In 2013, the ISO became the first orchestra to partner with an artist-services organization/record label New Amsterdam in order to periodically showcase the sophisticated new musical vocabulary of these classically-trained composers and instrumentalists. The ISO can be heard around the world through its extensive music library at InstantEncore.com, the largest of any orchestra in the country.

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