



## **Indianapolis Symphonic Choir, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra to present world premiere performance April 24**

***Composer Mohammed Fairouz's first Oratorio Zabur to be featured alongside acclaimed Fauré's Requiem***

Friday, April 24 | 8 p.m. | Hilbert Circle Theatre | Tickets on sale now!

INDIANAPOLIS – Composer Mohammed Fairouz's first Oratorio, *Zabur* will receive its world premiere performance by the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra at 8 p.m. on Friday, April 24, at the Hilbert Circle Theatre in downtown Indianapolis. Paired alongside the always intimate and moving *Fauré's Requiem*, the large-scale *Zabur* takes its name from the Arabic title for the Psalms of David. The performance will also feature the Indianapolis Children's Choir and guest soloists performing a new setting of the ancient Psalm text, re-imagined in the contemporary Middle East.

"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," says Indianapolis Symphonic Choir Artistic Director Eric Stark.

"The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir regularly join together to perform great choral masterworks," says 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."

*Zabur* was commissioned by a consortium led by the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir, comprised of Jewish, Christian and Islamic congregational partners as well as public and private schools, and other arts institutions. Scored for chorus,

children's choir, soloists and orchestra, *Zabur* 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,” Mohammed Fairouz is an adept and accomplished writer for the voice with an opera (a second in progress), 13 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,” says Fairouz. “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.”

Tickets are on sale now and range from \$20 to \$56 with student tickets available for \$10. Tickets are available at the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra Box Office, [IndianapolisSymphony.org](http://IndianapolisSymphony.org), or via phone at 317-639-4300. Ticketed patrons will have the opportunity to meet the composer at the Words on Music event beginning at 7:15 p.m.

For more information, visit [indychoir.org](http://indychoir.org) and [indianapolissymphony.org](http://indianapolissymphony.org).

### **About the Artists:**

**Mohammed Fairouz**, born in 1985, is one of the most frequently performed, commissioned, and recorded composers of his generation. 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,” his large-scale symphonies, operas and oratorios all engage major geopolitical and philosophical themes with persuasive craft and a marked seriousness of purpose. Fairouz recently became the youngest composer in the 115 year history of the Deutsche Grammophon label to have an album dedicated to his works with the spring 2015 release of *Follow, Poet*. The album, which launched the label’s *Return to Language* series, includes two works that exalt the transformative power of language: his elegiac song cycle *Audenesque* and the ballet *Sadat*. The album has met with broad critical acclaim and received “highbrow and brilliant” distinctions in *New York Magazine*’s taste-making Approval Matrix. Fairouz’s solo and chamber music attains an “intoxicating intimacy,” according to New York’s WQXR. A composer who describes himself as “obsessed with text,” with a deep respect for the power of the human voice, he has been recognized by *New Yorker* magazine as an “expert in vocal writing” and described by *Gramophone* as “a post-millennial Schubert.” 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](http://www.indychoir.org).

Founded in 1930, the **Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra** is the largest performing arts organization in Indiana and has become a leading orchestra in the nation with its commitment to artistic excellence, diverse and creative programming inside and outside its historic Hilbert Circle Theatre home, and its engagement with communities throughout the state. Appointed in 2011, ISO Music Director Krzysztof Urbanski has now become one of the most acclaimed young conductors in the world and is joined by the extraordinary artistic 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 string trio Time for Three its first ever ensemble-in-residence. For more information, visit the ISO at [www.IndianapolisSymphony.org](http://www.IndianapolisSymphony.org).

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