



EARLY MUSIC IN BRUGES

Under the title *La Divina Commedia*, the MAfestival 2017 follows in Dante's footsteps for a musical pilgrimage from hell to heaven.

The programme of the 54th edition of the MAfestival Bruges is inspired by a literary monument: Dante's *La Divina Commedia*. This epic poem reports the imaginary journey through hell (*Inferno*), along purgatory (*Purgatorio*), up to heaven (*Paradiso*). From August 4 to 13, the programme of the MAfestival 2017 shuttles between heaven and hell.

"We were inspired by Dante's account to outline a musical journey which begins in the underworld and ends in paradise", festival director Tomas Bisschop elucidates. **Monteverdi's iconic *L'Orfeo*** is in the safe hands of Argentinian baroque specialist Leonardo García Alarcón and his team. Hofkapelle München and Vocalconsort Berlin provide a redeeming apotheosis with ***Die Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Jesu***, C.P.E. Bach's supreme masterpiece.

In **purgatory**, repentant souls beg for mercy. Charpentier gleaned inspiration from their fragile hymns and penitential psalms for his *Motet pour les trépassés: Plaintes des âmes du purgatoire*. In our own days, **Bernard Foccroule** converts *Purgatorium* in new compositions. In motets by Scheidemann and Hammerschmidt, the faithful directly confront God in a prayer for mercy. The promising **Le Concert Étranger** combines this repertoire with radiant chorales from the same period.

For this musical pilgrimage, the MAfestival teams up with international top ensembles like **Ensemble Correspondances, Vox Clamantis en B'Rock Orchestra**. But young talents like **Ghislieri Choir & Consort, Sollazzo Ensemble, InAlto** and **Voces Suaves** also explore **Dantesque themes**. What the harmony of the spheres really sounds like, is revealed in a lecture by Katrien Kolenberg, a professor of astrophysics specializing in **astral music**.

In addition to all this, we focus on a topical metaphor, that of war as an inferno. In the context of **GoneWest**, the artistic commemoration of World War I by the province of West-Flanders, MAfestival Bruges pays homage to wartime composers; **Heinrich Schütz, John Jenkins** and **William Lawes** are central in this respect. "*The highlight will undoubtedly be the Belgian premiere of the internationally acclaimed music theatre production **Earth Diver***", Tomas Bisschop recommends; this project was created by Transparant and ChorWerk Ruhr, in commission of the Ruhrtriennale. The festival day in Lissewege is dedicated to *War & Peace*. Ensemble Plus Ultra performs Cristóbal de Morales' *Missa L'homme armé*, one of the supreme polyphonic masses through which the age old song of the armed man resounds.

Why does Dante's *Commedia* remain relevant for a present-day early music festival? "*Today as well, man is in eternal pursuit of joy and mercy. For some, the quest revolves around spiritual, intellectual or corporeal development. For others – like the refugees who land in Europe – it remains a life and death reality. The dreamt-of paradise and the dreaded inferno are often much closer than we want. But if Dante could teach us one thing these days, then it is that we should never despair – in spite of all warnings*", according to dramaturge Katherina Lindekens.