

# VOXNOVA ITALIA

## THE TEMPTATION OF THE OCCIDENT

*"Asia, Asia, Asia! Old and marvellous fairy tale country where imagination sleeps like an empress in her forest full of mystery."*

-Ravel, Shéhérezade

*"We need to acquire both the oriental and the occidental civilizations: acquire the understanding and the knowledge, understand and profoundly love the specific genius and the soul of both civilizations and to make a synthesis, like the meeting of two bodies of water in one."*

-Nguyen Thien Dao

Soprano, Mezzo, Bass

Ho Chung Shih: Mantra of the Heart Sutra

Giacinto Scelsi: Hô

Nguyen Thien Dao: Gio Dong

Younghi Pagh-Paan: Flammenzeichen

Artyom Kim: Earth Music

Giacinto Scelsi: Sauh II

John Cage: Ryoanji

*The Mantra of the Heart Sutra* was composed for Nicholas Isherwood by the Singaporean composer Ho Chung Shih. It is a meditation in which the harmonic spectrum of a Japanese rin influences the pitches sung by the bass. The text is one of the most important in Buddhism. Voice and instrument join to create a whole.

Giacinto Scelsi stated that his house was on the border between the Occident and the Orient. He spent time in an ashram in India and one of his muses was the Japanese singer Michiko Hirayama. Scelsi called Hô "vocalises." It is typical of his vocal pieces composed around 1960: an invented language of onomatopoeia containing hidden syllables. The vocal style is between Asian and European singing.

*Gio Dong* was written by a composer/singer for his own voice. It is a call for peace using extended techniques to illustrate the horrors of the war in Vietnam. The piece is sung in Vietnamese.

*Flammenzeichen* is a setting of a compilation of texts by members of the Weisse Rose resistance movement. It is a powerful political piece for a mezzo soprano who plays a variety of percussion instruments.

Artyom Kim is an Uzbekh composer born of a Russian mother and a Korean father. His piece reflects his fascination with the shamanic traditions of the Altai and the "khargyraa" vocal technique of Central Asia.

*Sauh II* is for two women whose voices intertwine in microintervallic play around central pitches.

In *Ryoanji*, John Cage composes a Zen garden. A relentless percussion background, played on a crystal glass, punctuates glissandi sung very softly by the three voices. It is a group meditation.

-Nicholas Isherwood