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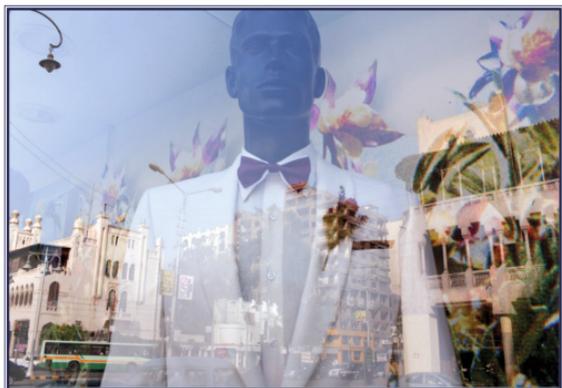
AMERICAN CLASSICS



MOHAMMED FAIROUZ

Native Informant

Melissa Hughes, Soprano • David Kravitz, Baritone
Rachel Barton Pine, Violin • David Krakauer, Clarinet
Christopher Thompson, Baritone • Steven Spooner, Piano
Imani Winds • Borromeo String Quartet



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AMERICAN CLASSICS



MOHAMMED FAIROUZ

Zabur

Dann Coakwell, Tenor • Michael Kelly, Baritone
Indianapolis Children's Choir • Indianapolis Symphonic Choir
Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra • Eric Stark



Mohammed
FAIROUZ
(b. 1985)

Zabur (2015)

Libretto by Najla Said (b. 1974)

Part I

- 1 **Prophecy** (*Chorus, Children, Dawoūd*) 4:03
2 **There is no power here** (*Dawoūd*) 4:21
3 **There is an occasional crackle far away** (*Dawoūd*) 4:30
4 **And so now what seemed so urgent before** (*Dawoūd*) 3:40
5 **The Lord scoffs at them** (*Dawoūd, Chorus*) 3:09
6 **Serve the Lord with fear** (*Dawoūd, Chorus*) 3:02

Part II

- 7 **Your candle is almost out** (*Jibreel, Dawoūd*) 3:14
8 **I tried to get the children to play, but they won't** (*Jibreel, Dawoūd*) 4:02
9 **We should all – especially the children here** (*Jibreel, Dawoūd*) 5:33
10 **Can we tell them we are hungry?** (*Children*) 3:07
11 **Yes, children, this is the power of art** (*Jibreel, Chorus*) 1:50
12 **This is inspiring!** (*Dawoūd*) 1:01
13 **Destruction of the Shelter** (*Chorus, Children, Dawoūd*) 3:48
14 **Hear my prayer, O Lord** (*Chorus*) 3:01
15 **The Lord looked down** (*Chorus, Dawoūd*) 2:37
16 **In the beginning you laid the foundations** (*Dawoūd, Chorus*) 4:44

6 أَشْبَهْتُ فَوْقَ الْبُرِّيَّةِ. صِرْتُ مِثْلَ بُيُوتِ الْخَرْبِ.

6. I am like a desert owl,
like an owl among the ruins.

11 أَيَّامِي كَطَلِّ مَائِلٍ، وَأَنَا مِثْلَ الْعُشْبِ يَبْسُتُ.

11. My days are like the evening shadow;
I wither away like grass.

12 أَمَا أَنْتَ يَا رَبُّ فَأَلَى الدَّهْرِ جَالِسٌ، وَتِكْرُوكَ إِلَى دَوْرٍ فَدَوْرٍ.

12. But you, sit enthroned forever;
your renown endures through all generations.

18 يُكْتَبُ هَذَا لِلدَّوْرِ الْآخِرِ، وَشَعْبٌ سَوْفَ يَخْلُقُ يُسَبِّحُ الرَّبَّ:

18. Let this be written for a future generation,
that a people not yet created may praise the Lord:

19 لَأَنَّ أَشْرَفَ مِنْ عَلْوِ قُدْسِهِ. الرَّبُّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ نَظَرَ،

19. "The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high,
from heaven he viewed the earth,

20 لِيَسْمَعَ أَصْوَاتِ الْأَسِيرِ، لِيَطْلُقَ بَنِي الْمَوْتِ،

20. to hear the groans of the prisoners
and release those condemned to death."

21 لِكَيْ يَحْدُثَ فِي صِهْيُونَ بِاسْمِ الرَّبِّ، وَيَسْبِيحَهُ فِي أُورُشَلِيمَ،

21. So the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion
and his praise in Jerusalem

22 عِنْدَ اجْتِمَاعِ الشُّعُوبِ مَعًا وَالْمَمَالِكِ لِعِبَادَةِ الرَّبِّ.

22. when the peoples and the kingdoms
assemble to worship the Lord.

23 ضَعُفْتُ فِي الطَّرِيقِ قُوَّتِي، قَصُرَ أَيَّامِي.

23. In the course of my life he broke my strength;
he cut short my days.

24 أَقُولُ: «يَا إِلَهِي، لَا تَقْبِضْنِي فِي نِصْفِ أَيَّامِي. إِلَى
ذَهْرِ الدُّهُورِ سَبُوكَ.

24. So I said: "Do not take me away, my God,
in the midst of my days; your years go on through
all generations.

25 مِنْ قَدَمِ أَسَسْتُ الْأَرْضَ، وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ هِيَ عَمَلُ يَدَيْكَ.

25. In the beginning you laid the foundations of the
earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

26 هِيَ تَبِيدُ وَأَنْتَ تَبْقَى، وَكُلُّهَا كَخَوْبٍ تَبْلَى، كِرْدَاءٍ تُغَيِّرُهُنَّ فَتَتَّعِيرُ.

26. They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
Like clothing you will change them
and they will be discarded.

27 وَأَنْتَ هُوَ وَسَبُوكَ لَنْ تَنْتَهِيَ.

27. But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.

28 أَبْنَاءُ عِبِيدِكَ يَسْكُنُونَ، وَذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ تُثَبِّتُ أَمَامَكَ.»

28. The children of your servants will live in your presence;
their descendants will be established before you."

11 J: Yes, children, this is the power of art. We can say what we want, and make them feel what we feel.

Chorus: We do have all the time in the world down here, and we have nothing but our feelings to feel...

J: ...so we must express them fully!

Chorus: The only rhythm I can think of is my heart pounding inside my chest. That is my mortality, my fear, it is not "art."

J: It is fear, yes, but it can become art. Pounding, shaking, fear, anger... all of it can be conveyed wordlessly. Just try. You honestly have nothing left to lose, right?

Chorus member concedes reluctantly and joins the others. Perhaps because he doesn't want to be left alone.

12 D: This is inspiring! I have felt so alone with my words and my songs, but suddenly I feel as though I may be able to raise my voice louder and more fully, and actually make the entire world hear my voice. Yallah, to work!

They all get to it.

13 Destruction of the Shelter

They've been working and creating for some time so that when the bombs finally come and destroy the shelter, all the pages are left and a full final hymn has been created. The piece will end with them all "rising up" to sing their last song together:

1 يَا رَبُّ، اسْتَمِعْ صَلَاتِي، وَتَلِيخُلْ إِلَيْكَ صُرَاخِي.

1. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee.

3 لِأَنَّ أَيَّامِي قَدْ فَنِيَتْ فِي لُحَاثِنِ، وَعِظَامِي مِثْلُ وَقِيدٍ قَدْ نَبَسَتْ.

3. For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers.

Mohammed Fairouz (b. 1985)

Zabur

Mohammed Fairouz: An Appreciation by Rick Schultz

Zabur is Mohammed Fairouz's first oratorio, a genre for large orchestra, choir and soloists going back centuries. Such rich musical soil allows Fairouz to create a sacred dialogue — a dialogue not just between characters, but also between the artist and his listeners.

From its powerful choral opening, *Zabur* doesn't let up, placing us directly into a theater of war where a city is under siege. Like one of his literary predecessors, English poet William Blake, Fairouz rages against those "who would if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War."

Fairouz, an Emirati-American composer, once characterized himself as a "creature of the desert," referring to his deep Middle Eastern roots. Dry desert winds often drift across his emotionally resonant musical landscapes. But Fairouz, one of our country's most essential storytellers, isn't out to lecture anyone. His mission, if he has one, is to beautify the world — to create art as a counterforce to dehumanization, as a bridge to our universal past.

One of Fairouz's most aching and ravishing scores, *Zabur* conjures a timeless world in song settings of epic grandeur and shattering intimacy. Like his *Symphony No. 3 'Poems and Prayers'*, *Zabur* becomes an enticement to feel. By revealing our shared emotions and experiences, Fairouz allows us to recharge our humanity amid a surfeit of numbing images of disaster and atrocity.

At the conclusion of "Poems and Prayers," Fairouz sets Yehuda Amichai's poem "Memorial Day for the War Dead," in which the poet hopes that behind so much sorrow, "some great happiness is hiding." Paradoxically, what makes *Zabur* such a compelling war requiem is its optimism. Happiness can be found, Fairouz seems to be saying, if only we would stop, look and listen.

Rick Schultz writes about music for the Los Angeles Times, Jewish Journal and Musical America.

Composer's notes

The premise for my latest oratorio, *Zabur*, is really very simple. A young poet, blogger and writer named Dawoūd (David) is stuck in a shelter with a group of men, women and children and also with his companion Jibreel (Gabriel) while the din of artillery surrounds them and their city. As a way of focusing his mind away from the unbearable sounds and endless grief Dawoūd takes to his writing. With parts of the city on generator power Dawoūd writes by candlelight but also has no way of sharing his writing with the world. The usual avenue of just publishing his words online is not available. The terror of daily life has become mundane. Dawoūd can only write music and poetry now: "songs of sorrow and sadness but also of praise and wonder". The music and poetry cut to the core. They capture so immediately and acutely what the journalistic need to chronicle every last detail cannot seem to capture.

Not able to publish his creations online, Dawoūd is inspired to share them with the men, women and children of the shelter by his companion and muse Jibreel. Their voices rise in song.

Starting with this premise, Najla Saïd was able to construct a moving libretto that resurrects the legendary Middle Eastern figures of David and Gabriel into the contemporary Middle East. She humanizes Dawoūd and his psalms of sorrow, praise and wonder. The psalms are no longer relics but living human documents.

Zabur is the Arabic word for the Psalms and by setting the texts in Arabic we chose to return the Psalms to one of the original ancient languages of the Middle East.

Zabur is also a sort of war requiem, and documents the tragedy of war and how war touches all human beings and, most notably, the children. The oratorio begins with a flash forward of the terrible outcry in the last moments of the people in the shelter as they meet a violent fate. But by the time that this premonition returns

as the actual moment of destruction in Part II, they've been working and creating for some time so that when the bombs finally come and destroy the shelter, all the pages of their collective labor are left and a full final hymn has been created. *Zabur* ends with them all "rising up" to sing their last song together and Dawoud's eternal, resonating final lines. These lines allow the people to move beyond their confused, disastrous present and touch something timeless and eternal:

*Do not take me away, my God, in the midst of my days;
your years go on through all generations.
In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
Like clothing you will change them
and they will be discarded.
But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.
The children of your servants will live in your presence;
their descendants will be established before you.*

Mohammed Fairouz

About the Commission

The Indianapolis Symphonic Choir commissioned this new musical work through a city-wide project that brought together leaders from the arts, educational, faith and philanthropic communities of Indianapolis, Indiana. It was the vision of this body to realize a work for chorus and orchestra that speaks not to our differences and what tears us apart, but of our shared values and unite us as humankind.

The Indianapolis Symphonic Choir would like to express its gratitude to the following for important contributions to the commissioning project: Jordan College of the Arts at Butler University, Charlie Wiles and the Center for Interfaith Cooperation, and Rabbi Faedra Weiss.

Yes, I would if I could. But... well, I wrote it with a pen, by candlelight, so... well, you know.

J: Well, of course the world should see it, hear it, feel it, but... (*timidly*)... perhaps we could all of us participate and help you?

D: What do you mean?

J: We should all – especially the children here, with us, who are so frightened and feel so powerless – we should join in your effort and write songs together... to express all our overwhelming feelings and fears and thoughts. I don't mean to impose... but, it just, it occurs to me that perhaps we could all benefit from learning to express our story this way. It's so very powerful. And we would keep busy...

D: (*Curious, amused, not quite sure that this idea is even feasible but willing to try.*) Well, I suppose. Yes. Why not?

J: Wonderful, I will gather people. Let's try. It might be the best way to help get our minds off of the "music" raining down on us from the outside.

D: Alright.

J: Wonderful! This will work! I am sure of it!

D: (*Grabs J's hands before he can exit, looks at him and repeats*) "In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands."

Exit Jibrael.

Later, with the children around them, and some adults as well, J and D and their new followers collaborate on a piece of their own.

Children: Can we tell them we are hungry? I would like to have some chocolate! Can we tell them we cannot sleep, because it is loud? Do they know we didn't do anything? Can we tell them that? Can we tell them how much it hurts our hearts to see our parents die before our eyes?

Part II

Jibreel enters, addresses Dawoūd.

7 **Jibreel:** Your candle is almost out. You should rest, habibi. Your eyes should, too.

Dawoūd: I have lived without water and food, I will be ok without my eyes. As long as I have my voice, I'm still here.

J: What are you writing?

D: I don't know. I wanted to tell the world... in an article, I thought. Or a book. But I can only write music now, songs of sorrow and sadness, but also of praise and wonder. It is hard for me to explain...

J: I understand. When an experience affects your entire being in such a way, you need more than words to express... but right now we are here, in this shelter, where we may not even actually be safe. We all are reduced to being simply human here. Perhaps you should rest?

D: Yes. (*His eyes connect with J's eyes for a moment.*)

Pause.

8 **J:** I tried to get the children to play, but they won't. They're afraid to even kick around the makeshift – the funny football I created for them, out of rags.

D: Of course they are.

J: (*Gesturing to Dawoūd's notebook.*) May I see?

D: (*Surprised.*) Oh, yes. It's... (*He hands the candle and his notebook to J, who reads, curiously.*)

J: (*Reading aloud.*) "In the beginning you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands." This is... it is truly, wonderful. It occurs to me –

D: – that I should post it? Sell it? Send it? Somewhere?

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Mohammed Fairouz



Mohammed Fairouz, born in 1985, is one of the most frequently performed, commissioned, and recorded composers of his generation, with large-scale symphonies, operas and oratorios that 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. A composer who describes himself as "obsessed with text", 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 include 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



As an actress, Najla Said has performed Off-Broadway, regionally and internationally, as well as in film and television. Theatre credits include Heather Raffo's *Nine Parts of Desire* (Seattle Rep), the London and New York premières of Karen Malpede's *Prophecy*, and Naomi Wallace's *The Fever Chart: Three Visions of the Middle East* (Central Square Theater). In April 2010, she completed an eight-week Off-Broadway run of her solo show, *Palestine*. That same year, she was named one of "Forty Feminists Under Forty" by The Feminist Press. In 2012, she collaborated with Vanessa Redgrave on *A World I Loved*, based on her grandmother's memoir, which had its première at the Brighton Festival in England, and The Miller Theatre in collaboration with The Public Theatre in New York. In 2014, her play *The Assumption of Mary* was featured as one of the 48 plays in *The Mysteries* at The Flea Theatre. Najla Said is a graduate of Princeton University and studied acting in New York at The Actor's Center. Her memoir, *Looking for Palestine: Growing Up Confused in An Arab-American Family* (based on her solo play), was published by Riverhead, a division of Penguin Books, in August 2013.

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Dann Coakwell



The tenor Dann Coakwell can be heard as a soloist on the GRAMMY®-winning *Conspirare: The Sacred Spirit of Russia, 2014* (Harmonia Mundi) and GRAMMY®-nominated *Conspirare: A Company of Voices, 2009* (Harmonia Mundi). He has performed as a soloist internationally and nationally under such acclaimed conductors as Helmuth Rilling, Masaaki Suzuki, William Christie, Maria Guinand, Nicholas McGegan, Matthew Halls, and Craig Hella Johnson. Coakwell serves as instructor of voice at Yale University, and holds an Artist Diploma in Vocal Performance from the Yale School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music, a Master of Music degree from Texas Tech University, and a Bachelor of Music from the University of Texas at Austin. More information is available at www.danncoakwell.com

Michael Kelly



Photo: Robert Mannis

American baritone Michael Kelly continues to distinguish himself as a consummate artist, sought-after for his interpretations of recital, concert and operatic repertoire. Captivating audiences with his “exquisitely self-effacing” artistry, Michael Kelly is a versatile and innovative vocalist, having performed with the Cleveland Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and many others. He has won prizes in several prominent competitions, including first prize in the 2013 Poulenc Competition and the 2011 Joy in Singing. He is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music and Juilliard, and was a member of the Opernstudio at Opernhaus Zurich. He is also the co-founder of *SongFusion*, a song recital series based in Manhattan.

Psalm 2

- 1 لِمَاذَا ارْتَجَّتِ الْأُمَمُ، وَتَفَكَّرَ الشُّعُوبُ فِي الْبَاطِلِ؟ 1. Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?
- 2 قَامَ مُلُوكُ الْأَرْضِ، وَتَوَامَرُوا رُؤَسَاءَ مَعَا عَلَى الرَّبِّ وَعَلَى مَسِيحِهِ، قَائِلِينَ: 2. The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying,
- 3 «لِنَقْطَعُ عُيُودَهُمْ، وَلِنَطْرَحَ عَنْهُمْ أَسْبَابَهُمْ.» 3. “Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.”
- 4 السَّائِكِينَ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ يَضْحَكُ. الرَّبُّ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ. 4. The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.
- 5 جِئْتَنِي يَتَكَلَّمُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِغَضَبِهِ، وَيَرْجِفُهُمْ بِغَيْظِهِ. 5. He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
- 6 «أَمَا أَنَا فَقَدْ مَسَّحْتُ لِيكَ عَلَى صِهْيُونَ جَبَلَ قُدْسِي.» 6. “I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.”
- 7 إِنِّي أُخْبِرُ مِنْ جِهَةِ قَضَاءِ الرَّبِّ: قَالَ لِي: «أَنْتَ ابْنِي، أَنَا الْيَوْمَ وَلَدْتُكَ.» 7. I will proclaim the Lord’s decree: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have become your father.
- 8 اسْأَلْنِي فَأَعْطِيكَ الْأُمَمَ مِيرَاثًا لَكَ، وَأَقَاصِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَكًا لَكَ. 8. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.
- 9 كَحَطْمَتِهِمْ بِقَضِيبٍ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ. مِثْلَ إِنَاءٍ خَرَأَفٍ كَتَسْرُفِهِمْ.» 9. You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”
- 10 فَالآنَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُلُوكُ تَعَقَّلُوا. تَأَذَّبُوا يَا قُضَاةَ الْأَرْضِ. 10. Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.
- 11 اسْبُدُّوا الرَّبَّ بِخَوْفٍ، وَاهْتَفُوا بِرَعْدِهِ. 11. Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling.
- 12 قَبِّلُوا ابْنَكُمْ لِئَلَّا يَغْضَبَ فَنَبِيدُوا مِنَ الطَّرِيقِ. لِأَنَّهُ عَنِ قَلِيلٍ يَتَّقِدُ غَضَبُهُ. طُوبَى لِجَمِيعِ الْمُتَكَلِّمِينَ عَلَيْهِ. 12. Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

the horror, the unspeakable pain
the nightmares that have become the mundane
the hunger and fear
the anguish,
the cold fear and longing,
the darkness that gives way
only
to more darkness
and the lone crackle of the something
that blends with the hum.

But now I find words have escaped me
The horrors are too real,
the descriptives are useless
because they paint a picture so vivid and clear
that it is horror to even imagine hurting
those on the outside
who will have to suffer along
silently
and also without power.

Perhaps they shouldn't know.

☐ And so now what seemed so urgent before –
the need to chronicle every last detail
has left me completely
and I'm left with the music
again
in my ears

Because only a melody
can render
such fears.

Indianapolis Symphonic Choir

Eric Stark, Artistic Director · Michael Pettry, Executive Director

Michael Davis, Assistant Artistic Director · David Duncan, Keyboard Artist



Founded in 1937, the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir is one of the nation's most established and dynamic musical institutions and this recording marks its 80th anniversary season. Among the most active symphonic choruses in the United States, this independent symphonic chorus reaches in excess of 25,000 persons each season with more than 25 performances and a comprehensive educational/outreach program. The approximately 200 volunteer singers demonstrate the Choir's commitment to musical excellence through their talent and dedication during each forty-four-week season. Under the Artistic Director Eric Stark, the organization is led by a professional staff and governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. More information is available at www.indychoir.org.

Indianapolis Children's Choir



The Indianapolis Children's Choir nurtures and inspires student achievement through quality music education and the pursuit of artistic excellence in choral music performance. Founded in 1986 by Henry Leck and under the artistic leadership of Joshua Pedde, the ICC has grown into one of the world's leading choral and music education programmes for children. The ICC regularly tours across the United States and abroad, having performed on six of the world's seven continents. The choir also performs for many major public events, including mayors' and governors' inaugurations, the Super Bowl, and the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500. Through its many programmes, the ICC serves more than 2,500 children throughout central Indiana each week. www.icchoir.org

Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra



and holiday programming to hundreds of thousands of people each year. The ISO has received national and international acclaim with its radio broadcasts, tours and recordings and became the first major orchestra with a resident ensemble (Time for Three).

Under the leadership of Krzysztof Urbanski the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra is dedicated to performing concerts of the highest artistic quality, offering accessible musical experiences for all ages, working collaboratively to create powerful, enriching arts events, and serving its community like never before – inside and outside the concert hall. In the decades since its debut concert, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra has emerged as one of America's top orchestras that attracts the finest musicians, guest conductors and artists from all over the world and presents quality classical, pops, family and holiday programming to hundreds of thousands of people each year. The ISO has received national and international acclaim with its radio broadcasts, tours and recordings and became the first major orchestra with a resident ensemble (Time for Three).

www.indianapolissymphony.org

Eric Stark



In a dynamic career that combines performance, scholarship and collaborative community leadership, conductor Eric Stark has established himself as a choral-orchestral specialist and an inspiring leader of singers of all ages. His expertise extends from works of the eighteenth century through living composers. He has conducted in the Oriental Art Center Concert Hall in Shanghai, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Strathmore Hall in Bethesda, MD, and the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing among many others. Stark was named a Sagamore of the Wabash, Indiana's highest civilian award. In addition to his duties as Artistic Director of the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir, Stark is also Director of Choral Activities and Professor of Music at Butler University's Jordan College of the Arts. Stark is a graduate of Wabash College and Indiana University.

Zabur

Libretto by Najla Said

Part I

1 Prophecy

Chorus and Children's Chorus: Aaah!

Psalm 2

1 لَمَّاذَا ارْتَجَّتِ الْأُمَمُ، وَتَفَكَّرَ الشُّعُوبُ فِي الْبَاطِلِ؟

1. Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

2 **Dawoūd:** There is no power here.
The electricity has departed
The light has turned black
Even the silence is muted,
And those who sleep
are still awake.

There is still the hum
of a something –
I don't know what it is.

Is it
the song of a city
ancient and regal
modern and plain?

3 There is an occasional crackle
far, far away
There is an infant's cry
every so often
and a whiff of jasmine and magnolia
peppered with gas.

and still the hum of that something
murmurs to me
telling me something
something
has passed.
I came here with songs
but found I could only write
the truth of what I was seeing