

Saturday, November 3, 2018, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

The Routes of Slavery

Memories of Slavery

1444 – (1865 USA) 1888

PERFORMERS

Canada

Neema Bickersteth, *voice*

United States

Aldo Billingslea, *narrator*

Mali

Mohammed Diaby, *voice*

Ballaké Sissoko, *kora and voice*

Mamani Keita, Nana Kouyaté, Tanti Kouyaté, *chorus and dance*

TEMBEMBE ENSAMBLE CONTINUO

Colombia

Leopoldo Novoa, *marimbol, marimba de chonta, tiple colombiano, and voice*

Mexico

Ada Coronel, *vihuela, wasá, dance, and voice*

Enrique Barona, *vihuela, leona, jarana, quijada de caballo, dance, and voice*

Ulises Martínez, *violin, vihuela, leona, and voice*

Brazil

Maria Juliana Linhares, *soprano*

Zé Luis Nascimento, *percussion*

Guadeloupe

Yannis François, *bass-baritone*

LA CAPELLA REIAL DE CATALUNYA

Arianna Savall, *soprano*; David Sagastume, *countertenor*; Victor Sordo, *tenor*;

Petter Udland Johansen, *tenor*; Pieter Stas, *baritone*

HESPÈRION XXI

Pierre Hamon, *flutes*; Béatrice Delpierre, *flute and shawm*; Daniel Lassalle, *sackbut*;

Jordi Savall, *treble viol*; Xavier Puertas, *violone*; Xavier Díaz-Latorre, *guitar*;

Andrew Lawrence-King, *Spanish Baroque harp*; David Mayoral, *percussion*

Jordi Savall

DIRECTION

In memoriam: Kassé Mady Diabaté (1949–2018)

This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsors Charles and Helene Linker.

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The Routes of Slavery

Memories of Slavery

1444 – (1865 USA) 1888

PROGRAM

Music: Percussion

Narration (0): Aristotle

Humanity is divided into two: masters and slaves.

—Politics, *4th century BCE*

Music: Kora

Narration (1): 1444. Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea.

The voyage of Captain Lançarote de Freitas, in the service of the Infante Prince Henry, was the first major commercial venture of the Portuguese in West Africa.

1. *Djonya* (Introduction) – Improvisations by Mohamed Diaby

Lamentation: The African view of slavery

2. La Negrina: *San Sabeya gugurumbé* – Mateo Flecha, the elder (1491–1553)

Los Negritos/Gurumbé – Jarocho son (traditional)

3. *Vida ao Jongo* (Jongo da Serrinha) – African tradition (Brazil)/Lazir Sinval

Music: Guitar (Romanesca)

Narration (2): 1505. On September 15, from Segovia,

King Ferdinand the Catholic wrote a letter to Nicolas de Ovando.

4. *Tambalagumbá* (Negrilla for 6 v. and b.c.) –

Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla (1590–1664), Mss. Puebla (1657)

5. *Manden Mandinkadenou* (Griot song) –

Musical version and improvisations by Mohamed Diaby and Ballaké Sissoko

The pleasures of youth are destined to be forgotten, but the great deeds of heroes of the past are remembered long after them, especially when they brought peace to their homeland.

Music: Malimba

Narration (3): 1620. The first African slaves arrive in the English colonies.

António Vieira, *Sermons*, 1661

6. *Velo que bonito* (San Antonio) – Traditional spiritual song (Pacific, Colombia)

Music: Percussion

Narration (4): 1657. Richard Ligon publishes *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* at London, in which he describes the music of the slaves.

Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of Barbadoes*, 1657

7. *Sai da casa* (Ciranda) – Traditional/Escurininho (Brazil)

Music: Slow drums

Narration (5): 1661. The punishments of slaves in the “Slave Code of Barbados.”
Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands*, London, 1706, vol. 1, p. lvii.

Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau Voyage aux Îles de l'Amérique*, Paris 1722, p. 248

8. Follow the drinking gourd – Slave song

9. Antonya, Flaciquia, Gasipà (Negro a 5) – Fray Filipe da Madre de Deus (ca. 1630–1690)

Music: Harp

Narration (6): 1685. The “Black Code” promulgated by Louis XIV

10. Another man done gone – Slave song

Music: Malimba

Narration (7): 1748. Montesquieu, *On the Slavery of Negroes*.

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Paris 1748

11. Simbo (Griot song) – Musical version and improvisations by Mohamed Diaby

The mythical hunter Mandé Mory, clear-sighted as the kingfisher (Kulandjan),
is compared to the great hunter Soundiata and other hunter heroes.

INTERMISSION

12. Awal (instrumental and vocal) –

Improvisations (Mamani Keita, Mohamed Diaby, and Ballaké Sissoko)

Music: Guitar

Narration (8): 1772. Guillaume Raynal, *A philosophical and political history of the settlements and trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies:*

“Wretched condition of the slaves in America”

Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, chap. X, Genève, 1772

13. Son de la Tirana: Mariquita, María – Traditional (Costa Chica de Guerrero, Mexico)

Music: Kora

Narration (9): 1781. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes of the State of Virginia*

14. Tonada de El Chimo: Jaya llúnc, Jaya llôch (Indian ritual song in Mochica language,
for two voices, bass, and tabor) – Anonymous, Codex Trujillo, No. 6 (E 180)

Baltazar [Baltasar] Martínez Compañón. Peru, Bolivia, ca. 1780

Music: Harp

Narration (10): 1782. Abandoned by her master, the slave Belinda, aged 70 years,
petitions the legislature of Massachusetts for a pension as reparations after a lifetime of labor.

15. Tonada El Congo: A la mar me llevan (for voices and bass, sung while dancing) –
Anonymous, Codex Trujillo, No. 3 (E 178)

Music: Guitar

Narration (11): 1855. Abraham Lincoln wrote to Joshua Speed, a personal friend and slave owner in Kentucky.

16. *I'm packing up* – Slave song

Music: Harp

Narration (12): 1865. The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude.

17. *Amazing grace* (Spiritual) – John Newton (1779)/William Walker (1835)

Narration (13): 1963. “Why we can’t wait,” by Martin Luther King, Jr. (New York, 1963)
Martin Luther King, Jr., Nobel Peace Prize (1964), New York
Assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968

FINALE

18. *Touramakan* (Griot song) – Musical version and improvisations by Mohamed Diaby
Touramakan, Soundiata’s half-brother, was a ferocious warrior who became a general of the Emperor’s troops and the ancestor of the Diabatés.

Narration (14): No place in the world can any longer put up with the slightest forgetting of a crime, the slightest shade cast over the matter. We ask that the parts of our history that have not been spoken be conjured up, so that—together, and liberated—we can enter into the *Tout-Monde*. And together, let us name the slave trade and the slavery perpetrated in the Americas and the Indian Ocean: Crime Against Humanity.
—Extract from a petition sent by Edouard Glissant, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Wole Soyinka to the Secretary General of the United Nations in 1998

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Selection of Mali music: Mohamed Diaby, Violet Diallo, and 3MA

Selection of Mexican and Colombian music: Leopoldo Novoa

Selection of Brazilian music: Maria Juliana Linhares

Selection of slave songs and early gospel: Jordi Savall

Historical and literary research: Sergi Grau, Manuel Forcano, and Jordi Savall

Texts translated by Jacqueline Minett

Program concept and final musical and text selection: Jordi Savall

With the support of the Departament de Cultura of the Generalitat de Catalunya, the Institut Ramon Llull, and Unesco.



Slavery Remembered

by Jordi Savall

Humanity is divided into two: masters and slaves.

—Aristotle (385–322 BCE), *Politics*

Homo homini lupus est.

—Plautus (c. 195 BCE), *Asinaria*

Man is a wolf to his fellow man.

—Thomas Hobbes (1651), *De Cive*

For more than four centuries, from 1444 (the year of the first mass slaving expedition, described in a text from the period) to 1888 (the year slavery was abolished in Brazil), more than 25 million Africans were shipped by European countries to be bound in slavery. This period of time—one of the most painful and shameful in history—is still largely unknown by the general public. The women, men, and children who were brutally deported from their villages in Africa to the European colonies in the New World had only their culture of origin to accompany them on the journey: religious beliefs, traditional medicine, dietary customs, and music—songs and dances that they kept alive in their new destinations, known as *habitations* or plantations. This evening, we will try to evoke those shameful moments in the history of humanity through a series of eloquent

texts and accounts, accompanied by the emotion and vitality of the music to which the slaves sang and danced.

And yet, how could they think of singing and dancing when they were reduced to the condition of slaves? The answer is simple: songs and dances, rhythmically structured by music, were the only context in which they could feel free to express themselves—something that nobody could take away from them. Singing was, therefore, their chief means of expressing their sorrows and their joys, their suffering and their hopes, as well as being a reminder of their origins and their loved ones. It was this that enabled all those people, with their diverse origins and languages, to create a common world and withstand the negation of their humanity.

First documented 5,000 years ago, slavery is the most monstrous of all man-made institutions. In fact, its existence only began to be objectively documented when “history” (as opposed to prehistory) began; in other words, with the invention of the earliest writing systems. Its organization is closely linked to the invention of the State (in the modern sense of the term); that is, an organ of centralized coercion, supported by an army and a civil service. Indeed, both slavery and the State—as pointed out by Christian Delacampagne in his *Histoire*

de l'esclavage (Paris, 2002)—“came about five thousand years ago, in the region that historians call the ‘fertile crescent’ [...] There is a simple explanation for this apparently surprising connection between the emergence of writing, slavery, and the State: all three became possible when the forces of production of a given social group, in a given time and place, became sufficiently developed to enable them to produce a greater quantity of food than was required for the survival of the community.”

As Paul Cartledge explains in his interesting text, in Ancient Greece there were a thousand or so separate political entities, and the principal cities based their social, political, and economic relations on slave labor. “Aristotle’s definition of a citizen—that of a man who actively participates in public affairs and sits as a magistrate—corresponds to the perfect citizen of a democratic Athens [...] Thus it appears that there was a mutually strengthened circle or loop between slavery in the mines and democracy—a virtuous circle for free citizens, but a vicious circle for the exploited and harshly treated slaves.”

In Antiquity and the Middle Ages, black slaves were rare, exotic, and very costly form of merchandise for their owners. For more than 2,000 years, the majority of slaves were white, originating in Northern Europe and the regions around the Mediterranean Sea. All this changed when a sizeable commercial trade, instigated by the Crowns of Portugal and Spain from the middle to the late 15th century, was established between Europe, Africa, and America.

Slavery already existed in Africa before the massive Portuguese and Spanish slaving expeditions began. It was because of the need to replace the workforce of native Indians—especially when it was recognized that Indians had souls and needed to be converted to Christianity—that the modern trade in black African slaves to the New World began. We know that there were black slaves on board the ships of Christopher Columbus, and also that in the years immediately after 1500, King Ferdinand I sent instructions for the purchase and transfer of black slaves to the island of Hispaniola, where they were sent to work in the gold mines. Alonso de Zuazo, appointed judge-in-residence on the island by Cardinal Cisneros, recom-

mended in a letter dated January 22, 1518: “Dar licencia general que se traigan negros, gente recia para el trabajo, al revés de los indios naturales, tan débiles que solo pueden servir en labores de poca resistencia.” (“To issue a general authorization to import Blacks, who are strong and can withstand hard work, unlike the native Indians, the latter being so weak that they are only useful for tasks that do not require much stamina.”) It was on this same island that the first revolt of black slaves took place in the New World in 1522.

The French began to trade in black African slaves in the 1530s at the mouths of the Senegal and Gambia rivers. From the beginning of the 17th century, the English arrived in the Caribbean, first in the Bermudas (1609) and then in Barbados, while the Dutch were the first to unload 20 African slaves (August 20, 1619) in the port of Jamestown in the English colony of Virginia (which would become the center of the tobacco-growing industry). It was the first time that Blacks had set foot as slaves on the soil of the future United States. It was also the beginning of a particularly painful history: the history of today’s African Americans.

Paradoxically, it was during the “Age of Enlightenment” (1685–1777) that the Black slave trade reached its apogee. Like Christian Delacampagne, we ask ourselves the questions: “Are light and shadow truly inseparable? Was the progress of reason incapable of heralding an age of justice? Are reason and evil inextricably linked? Such would appear to be the lessons of European history. But it was to be another 200 years, dozens of wars, and several attempts at genocide later, in the aftermath of 1945, before this bitter lesson was explicitly expressed by the philosophers Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (*Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 1947).”

Tonight, we aim to present the essential facts surrounding that terrible history, thanks to the extraordinary vitality and profound emotion of this music, preserved in the ancient traditions of the descendants of slaves. The music lives on, etched into the memory of the peoples concerned, and tonight is performed by musicians from nearly a dozen countries on four continents in dialogue with Hispanic musical forms inspired by the songs and dances of slaves, native Indians, and racial mixes of all kinds based on African, Mestizo, and Indian traditions. The

contribution of the more-or-less forced collaboration of slaves in the Church liturgy of the New World is represented by the *Villancicos de Negros, Indios, and Negrillas*, Christian songs by Mateu Flecha the Elder (*La Negrina*), Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla (Puebla mss.), Roque Jacinto de Chavarría, Fr. Filipe da Madre de Deus, etc., performed by the vocalists and soloists of La Capella Reial de Catalunya and Hespèren XXI, together with musicians from countries including Brazil, Mexico, Spain, and Catalonia.

Now these forces combine in a triangular relationship, linking the continents of Europe, Africa, and South America, and the heritage of Africa and America, with borrowings from the European Renaissance and the Baroque, resulting in a disturbing and at the same time deeply hope-inspiring presentation of a musical heritage that is the positive, reverse side, of a culture of conquest and forced conversion.

There could be no starker contrast than that which exists between the striking beauty and mysterious power of this music and the brutal accounts and detailed descriptions that our selection of chroniclers and religious figures of the period gave concerning the expeditions to capture men and women in their African villages. We are given an insight into those accounts through the studies, historical research, and reflections on the subject contained in the articles in the book *The Routes of Slavery* contributed by our formidable team of experts: Paul Cartledge, José Antonio Piqueras, José Antonio Martínez Torres, Gustau Nerin, and Sergi Grau.

Through the music of the descendants of slaves, we also wish to pay tribute as we remember that dark period, and appeal to each one of us to recognize the extreme inhumanity and the terrible suffering inflicted on all the victims of that heinous trade. It was an ignoble enterprise perpetrated by the majority of the great European nations against millions of African men, women, and children, who, for more than 400 years, were systematically deported and brutally exploited to cement the great wealth of 18th- and 19th-century Europe. Those civilized nations have not yet deemed it necessary to make an unreserved apology, or even to offer any kind of compensation (symbolic or real) for the forced labor carried out by the slaves who

were regarded as chattels (nothing more than “tools” without souls). On the contrary, the four-century-long slave trade, during which they became established on the coasts of Africa, paved the way for the principal European countries’ “colonization” of Africa. In other words, it confirmed them in the belief that the continent was their property. It is as if, from the end of the Middle Ages to the end of the 19th century, Europe had relentlessly pursued one common goal: to subjugate, one after the other, all the lands stretching south of the Mediterranean.

In view of the extremely serious current situation of large numbers of people risking their lives to reach Europe from Africa by crossing the sea once known as the *Mare Nostrum* and now, sadly, the *Mare Mortis*, why is it that today, in the 21st century, none of the those responsible for immigration in European countries remember our enormous moral and economic debt to the Africans who are now forced to flee homelands mired in abject poverty or ravaged by tribal or territorial wars, and frequently abandoned to corrupt dictators (propped up by our own governments) or insatiable multinational companies?

The period that saw an official end to slavery (1800–1880) also saw the rise—particularly strong in those countries where it had lasted the longest—of another aberrant, inhuman kind of relationship, characterized by a visceral hatred of the “other,” the foreigner, and, above all, of the former slave: racism. Slavery was built on contempt for the “other”—whether Black, Mestizo, or the native Indian—while racism feeds on hatred of people who are no longer slaves, but “different.” As Christian Delacampagne writes: “The history of slavery preceded and paved the way for that of racism. Historically, slavery came first. Racism was merely the consequence of a civilization’s long habituation to the institution of slavery, whose victims have always been foreigners.”

We also want to draw attention this evening to the fact that, at the beginning of the third millennium, this tragedy is still ongoing for more than 30 million human beings, of whom many are children or young girls subjected to new forms of slavery brought about by the demands of production and prostitution. We need to speak out in indignation and say that hu-





The Routes of Slavery, Photo by Clarie Xavier.

manity is not doing what it should to put an end to slavery and other related forms of exploitation. Although absolutely illegal in the vast majority of countries in the world, and despite also being officially condemned by international authorities, slavery still exists today, even in the supposedly democratic developed countries. Again, as Christian Delacampagne writes, “In the face of slavery, as in the face of racism, there is no possible compromise. There is no possible tolerance. There is only one response: zero tolerance.” Against the absolute outrage of the exploitation of child labor and the prostitution of minors, against these endemic ills in human society, which continue to breed new forms of slavery, and against that hatred of the other, which is the inhuman force of racism, the struggle is not over.

Through this evening’s concert and the texts and music of our CD/DVD and book, we hope to contribute to that struggle. We firmly believe that the advantage of being aware of the past enables us to be more responsible and therefore morally obliges us to take a stand against these inhuman practices. The music on this program represents the true living history of that long and painful past. Let us listen to the emotion and hope expressed in these songs of survival and resistance, this music of the memory of a long history of unmitigated suffering, in which music became a mainspring of survival and, fortunately for us all, has survived as an eternal refuge of peace, consolation, and hope.

—*Sarajevo/Bellaterra*

October 21–23, 2016

(translated by Jacqueline Minett)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Jordi Savall

For more than 50 years, Jordi Savall, one of the most versatile musical personalities of his generation, has rescued musical gems from the obscurity of neglect and oblivion and given them back for all to enjoy. A tireless researcher into early music, he interprets and performs the repertory both as a gambist and a conductor. His activities as a concert performer, teacher, researcher, and creator of new musical and cultural projects have made him a leading figure in the reappraisal of historical music. Together with Montserrat Figueras, he founded the ensembles *Hespèrion XXI* (1974), *La Capella Reial de Catalunya* (1987), and *Le Concert des Nations* (1989), with whom he explores and creates a world of emotion and beauty shared with millions of early-music enthusiasts around the world.

Savall has recorded and released more than 230 discs covering the Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical music repertoires, with a special focus on the Hispanic and Mediterranean musical heritage, receiving awards and distinctions such as the Midem Classical Award, the International Classical Music Award, and the Grammy Award. His concert programs

have made music an instrument of mediation to achieve understanding and peace between different and sometimes warring peoples and cultures. Accordingly, guest artists appearing with his ensembles include Arab, Israeli, Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Afghan, Mexican, and North American musicians. In 2008 Savall was appointed a European Union Ambassador for intercultural dialogue. Together with Montserrat Figueras, Savall has also been named an “Artist for Peace” under the UNESCO “Good Will Ambassadors” program.

Savall’s prolific musical career has brought him the highest national and international distinctions, including honorary doctorates from the universities of Evora (Portugal), Barcelona (Catalonia), Louvain (Belgium), and Basel (Switzerland); the order of Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur (France); the Praetorius Music Prize awarded by the Ministry of Culture and Science of Lower Saxony; the Gold Medal of the Generalitat of Catalonia; and the prestigious Léonie Sonning Prize, which is considered the Nobel Prize of the music world. “Jordi Savall testifies to a common cultural inheritance of infinite variety. He is a man for our time” (*The Guardian*, 2011).

Tembembe Ensemble Continuo is dedicated to exploring, recreating, and promoting the musical connections between the Hispanic Baroque period and traditional music from Mexico and Latin America. This mix breaks down the imaginary musical walls separating these genres, opening new possibilities for enjoying, expanding, and understanding music. The ensemble blends Baroque guitar music gathered from Spanish and Mexican tablatures, and links it with contemporary Mexican and Latin American *sones*. By exploring commonalities in terms of musical practices and instrumentation, the musicians offer a presentation of music, singing, and dancing that revives the festive spirit of 17th-century and contemporary fandango gatherings (popular festivities with live song and dance).

Tembembe's concerts explore subtlety and contrast in music, dancing, and singing. Programs include Spanish and Mexican Baroque music for guitar and *tiorba* linked with *sones* from Mexico and Latin America. These include *sones* from Veracruz, Tixtla (Guerrero), the Huasteca region, Michoacan, and Jalisco, as well as Bambuco and Joropo music from the plains of Colombia and Venezuela. This musical interweaving aims at showing how 17th-century Baroque music and traditional contemporary Mexican and Latin American music are two faces of the same coin, distant in time but close in spirit.

Members of the group organize and direct workshops on building and playing traditional instruments, and regular guest performers include Patricio Hidalgo (composer, improviser, and *jarana* player), Zenén Zeferino (composer, improviser, and *jarana* player), Ada Coronel (singer), Donají Esparza (dancer), Ulises Martínez (violin), Miguel Cicero (harpsichord), Hille Perl (viola da gamba), Lee Santana (theorbo), and Steve Player (guitar).

Tembembe has performed in Mexico's main concert halls as well as throughout the United States, France, Spain, Germany, Austria, Colombia, Singapore, and Korea. The group's recordings can be heard on such labels as Urtext Digital Classics, Sony, BMG-Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, and Alia Vox (Catalonia).

Tembembe has performed at festivals and in chamber-music seasons such as the International Early Music Encounters in Mexico City; National Encounter of "Jaraneros" in Tlacotalpan, Mexico; International Cervantino Festival; Gateway to the Americas (New York); Early Music Festival in Gijón, Spain; Eldkirch Festival (Austria); Singapore Arts Festival; Chamber Music Festival in Bogotá, Colombia; and the Hi Seul Festival in Korea.

Recently, Tembembe has developed a strong collaboration with Jordi Savall and Hespèrion XXI, performing in several tours throughout the United States and Europe.

La Capella Reial de Catalunya

Following the model of the famous Medieval "royal chapels" for which the great masterpieces of both religious and secular music were composed on the Iberian Peninsula, in 1987 Montserrat Figueras and Jordi Savall founded La Capella Reial, one of the first vocal groups devoted to the performance of Golden Age music informed by historical principles and consisting exclusively of Hispanic and Latin voices. In 1990, when the ensemble received the regular patronage of the Generalitat of Catalonia, it changed its name to La Capella Reial de Catalunya.

The newly formed ensemble specialized in the recovery and performance of the polyphonic and vocal music of Spain and Europe from the Middle Ages and Golden Age up to the 19th century. La Capella Reial de Catalunya shares with Hespèrion XXI the same artistic outlook and goals, rooted in respect for the profoundly spiritual and artistic dimensions of each work, combining quality and authenticity regarding the style of the period with a careful attention to the declamation and expressive projection of the poetic text.

The ensemble's extensive repertory ranges from the Medieval music of the various cultures of the Mediterranean to the great masters of the Renaissance and the Baroque. The group has distinguished itself in various Baroque and Classical opera repertories, as well as in contemporary works by Arvo Pärt. The Capella Reial de Catalunya can be heard on Jacques

Rivette's soundtrack of the film *Jeanne La Pucelle* (*Joan the Maiden*, 1993), based on the life of Joan of Arc.

In 1992 La Capella Reial de Catalunya made its opera debut accompanying all the performances of *Le Concert des Nations*. The artists have received various awards and distinctions in recognition of their more than 40 CDs. Under the direction of Jordi Savall, the ensemble pursues an intense program of concerts and recordings all over the world, and since the group's creation it has performed regularly at the major international early-music festivals.

Hespèrion XXI

Ancient music's most important value stems from its ability as a universal artistic language to transmit feelings, emotions, and ancestral ideas that even today can enthral the contemporary listener. With a repertoire that encompasses the period between the 10th and 18th centuries, Hespèrion XXI searches continuously for new points of union between the East and West, with a clear desire for integration and for the recovery of international musical heritage, especially that of the Mediterranean basin and with links to the New World.

In 1974 Jordi Savall and Montserrat Figueras, together with Lorenzo Alpert and Hopkinson Smith, founded the ancient music ensemble Hespèrion XX in Basel as a way of recovering and disseminating the rich and fascinating musical repertoire prior to the 19th century on the basis of historical criteria and the use of original instruments. The name "Hespèrion" means "an inhabitant of Hesperia," which in ancient Greek referred to the two most westerly peninsulas in Europe: the Iberian and the Italian. It was also the name given to the planet Venus as it appeared in the west. At the turn of the 21st century Hespèrion XX became known as Hespèrion XXI.

Today Hespèrion XXI is central to the understanding of the music of the period between the Middle Ages and the Baroque. The musicians' labors to recover works, scores, instruments, and unpublished documents have a double and incalculable value. On the one hand, their rigorous research provides new information and understanding about the historical knowledge of the period, while on the other hand, their exquisite performances enable people to freely enjoy the aesthetic and spiritual delicacy of the works of this period.

From the start Hespèrion XXI set out on an artistic course that would lead to the establishment of a school in the field of ancient music because the members conceived, and continue to conceive, ancient music as an experimental musical tool and with it they seek the maximum beauty and expressiveness in their performances. Any musician in the field of ancient music will have a commitment to the original spirit of each work and has to learn to connect with it by studying the composer, the instruments of the period, the work itself, and the circumstances surrounding it. But as craftsmen in the art of music, they are also obliged to make decisions about the piece being played: a musician's capacity to connect the past with the present and to connect culture with its dissemination depend on skill, creativity, and the capacity to transmit emotions.

Thanks to the outstanding work of numerous musicians and collaborators who have worked with the ensemble over all these years Hespèrion XXI continues to play a key role in the recovery and reappraisal of musical heritage. The group has released more than 60 CDs and performs concerts around the world, appearing regularly at the great international festivals of ancient music.



Enrique Barona



Neema Bickersteth



Aldo Billingslea



Ada Coronel



Béatrice Delpierre



Mohammed Diaby



Xavier Diaz-Latorre



Yannis François



Pierre Hamon



Petter Udland
Johansen



Mamani Keita



Daniel Lassalle



Andrew Lawrence-
King



Maria Juliana
Linhares



Ulises Martínez



David Mayoral



Zé Luis
Nascimento



Leopoldo Novoa



Xavier Puertas



David Sagastume



Arianna Savall



Ballaké Sissoko



Victor Sordo



Pieter Stas