

« The breath of life... »

Breath is the source of life. It is a natural phenomenon which gives man life and emanates from him instinctively. It is thanks to breathing that he is able to restate in words his impressions and his emotions.... By song, the supreme expressive force, the human being is able to touch souls and establish a transcendental relationship with the Divine.

Praise, omnipresent both in polytheist and monotheist worship, transmits by the grace of song, the breath which, from generation to generation, marks man's belonging to a common destiny.

In *Genesis* "divine breath" transforms the inert flesh of man into a living being endowed with a spirit. It reveals to prophets and messengers the thought they will have to express by accomplishing feats which are often supernatural. The *New Testament* with the affirmation of the Trinity bestows on the Holy Spirit (from the Greek *pneuma*, literally "breath") a personified character: it blows where it wants. Already for the Stoics, the principle of the world was *pneuma*, the original breath. Thus, Father, Son and life-giving Breath symbolize the multi-form presence of the divine.

In the *Song of Songs*, breath, kiss and love are impossible to dissociate. They seal the union with the beloved and at the same time convey spiritual union.

In the Koranic tradition, an essential role is given to "winds of fruitfulness". Their aim is to load the clouds with rain to quench the thirst of man and nature and spread seed.

The Sufi brotherhoods celebrate divine creation by acknowledging that every being, every thing and every event are nothing other than the manifestation of life-giving breath.

In Greek and Roman mythology, numerous deities evoke the terrible power of Air. Certain passages of the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* refer to the latter and to its devastating aspect. Finally, it is Zephyr who by his breath restores life to nature.

Mythology, liturgy and mysticism give a predominant role to wind instruments, symbols of invincible forces: the telluric god, Pan, makes his pipes as a tribute to the nymph Syrinx, the trumpets of Jericho prefigure the Apocalypse and the ney an ancestral type of flute is likened to the mystic breath of dervishes and Sufis. All of them are intimately linked to spiritual power.

This 21st edition of "Sacred Songs of the Mediterranean" will once again pay tribute to the different forms of vocal and musical expression from the Mediterranean world. Beyond the discovery of new musical tones, our guest artists will offer their own perception of the "Breath of Life..."