The Rose Ensemble
October 30, 2016, 2:00 pm
Dalton Recital Hall, WMU

LAND OF THREE FAITHS
Voices of Ancient Mediterranean Jews, Christians and Muslims

Cuando’l Rey Nimród   Traditional Sephardic (Morocco)
Pues que tú, Reyna del cielo   Juan del Encina (1485 – c.1530)
Una matica de ruda   Traditional Sephardic (Morocco/Turkey)
Porque llorax blanca niña?   Traditional Sephardic (Morocco/Turkey)
Coplas de las flores   Traditional Sephardic (Morocco)
Cives caelestis patriae   Plainchant (12th-century Italian)
Iudea et Ierusalem (instrumental)   Anonymous (14th-century English)
Palestina Hermoza y Santa   Traditional Sephardic (Sarajevo)
Longa Sultani Yegah (instrumental)   Anon. Turkish (Ottoman); mode: Sultani Yegah
Psalm 29   traditional Sephardic (Istanbul)
Adorámoste Señor   Francisco de la Torre (1460 – 1504)
Qubbat al-Sakhrah   Traditional Arabic nasheed
Hoy comamos y bebamos   Juan del Encina (1485 - c.1530)
Hazeremos una merenda   Traditional Sephardic
Quita’l tas, mete’l tas   Traditional Sephardic

INTERMISSION

Cantiga #424   Cantigas de Santa Maria (13th-century Spanish)
Ayyu-hā s-sāqī ‘ilay-ka l-muštakā   Hispano-Arabic muwashaha (mode: kurdī)
Arabaya Taş Koydum (instrumental)   Traditional Turkish karşılıma
Morena me llaman   Traditional Sephardic (Salonika)
Two simsimiya songs (instrumental)   Traditional Bedouin (arranged by The Rose Ensemble)
Et Sha’are Ratzon   Sephardic piyyut (Libya)
Cuando el rey Nimród   Traditional Sephardic (Balkan)

Jordan Sramek (Founder/Artistic Director, tenor, psaltery, hurdy-gurdy)
Alyssa Anderson, Natalie Nowytski (alto)
Matthew Dean (tenor)  Mark Dietrich, Jake Endres (bass)
David Burk (‘ud)  Tim O’Keefe (percussion)  Ginna Watson (vielle, rebec, harp)

with Nell Snaidas, soprano
Nell Snaidas (soprano) has been praised by the New York Times for her “beautiful soprano voice, melting passion” and “vocally ravishing” performances. Of Uruguayan-American descent, Nell began her career singing leading roles in zarzuelas at New York City's Repertorio Español. Specialization in Italian and Spanish Baroque and Sephardic music has since taken her all over the globe. Operatic performances include her European debut in Alessandro Scarlatti’s Gli Equivoci nel Sembianse at the Teatro Garibaldi in Palermo, Sicily as well as creating the role "Princess Olga" in the world-premiere of the Boston Early Music Festival’s production of Matheson’s opera Boris Goudenow in Boston and Tanglewood. Favorite projects include a North American tour of Roman Cantatas with lutenist Paul O’Dette and Tragicomedia, concerts throughout Italy and Mexico with Ex Umbris and singing with Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. Nell recently served on the faculty at the Madison Early Music Festival, teaching Spanish and Latin American Baroque Song Interpretation, and has served as a coach of Early Music and Languages of the Dominions of Spain for individuals and ensembles including NYC’s Trinity Wall Street Choir and the New York Continuo Collective. She also collaborated with Alicia Keys in the musical arrangement and Italian translation of her song “Superwoman” for Kathleen Battle for the grand finale of the 2008 America Music Awards. Nell has recorded for Sony Classical, Dorian, Koch International and Naxos and was featured on CBC radio as one of the leading interpreters of Spanish Renaissance and Sephardic song.

About this Program

One of the challenges in creating a musical program such as this, which focuses on the so-called “Land of Three Faiths” - music largely from Hispano-Arabic traditions, and which strives to represent equally the Abrahamic traditions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam - is the fact that while Christian and Jewish traditions provide scholars with an abundance of repertoire, there is, in stark contrast, no Islamic liturgical music, save the chanting of the Qur’an (which, it should be noted, is not technically viewed as “music” in the Islamic tradition, and would nevertheless be inappropriate in this concert setting). Our approach to this thematic program, therefore, is more about emphasizing the cultural, musical, and linguistic exchanges and collaborations that took place among people of different faith traditions in medieval Spain and, in subsequent generations, throughout many parts of the Mediterranean. In some traditions, manuscript sources are available (although precise, historically accurate interpretation is difficult to claim); and in other traditions, generations of people have been responsible for the preservation of melodies and texts, through orally transmitted history and by means of collective memory, notably during times of war and oppression.

Our goal has always been that audiences would be enlightened with a greater knowledge of both world history and religious history, leaving performances with a sense that the lines between what traditionalists call “sacred” and “secular,” what contemporary critics insist on labeling “folk” and “classical,” and what modern society speaks of - at once synonymously and separately - as “Islamic” and “Arab,” are very much blurred throughout history.

Our program highlights the Hispano-Arabic Middle Ages as both an important and devastating chapter of Judaic, Christian and Islamic history. In earlier times, having participated in the golden age of classical Arab culture in the Near East, Jews played an important role in Spain as mediators between Arab and Christian culture, and Jewish poetry and music consequently reached a new pinnacle. In the 13th and early-14th centuries, Jews and Arabs joined the troubadours from Spain, France and Portugal as musicians at the Castilian court. The famous Cantigas de Santa Maria (Songs of the Virgin Mary) of King Alfonso X (1252-84) show Arab and Christian musicians playing together and many Cantigas tell of Jewish and Muslim life and culture in Spain. At the court of Sancho IV, along with thirteen Christian and fifteen Arab musicians, the Jew Ismael played the rota and accompanied his wife when she danced. But in the 14th century, when the Catholic re-conquest of Spain made considerable progress, the co-habitation of Spanish Christians, Jews and Muslims began to crumble, and the persecutions of 1391 led to mass conversions of Jews and Muslims, followed by the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 and the final Muslim expulsion between 1609 and 1614.

-Jordan Sramek, Founder/Artistic Director, The Rose Ensemble
(all other program notes by Jordan Sramek)