aedes

LE CHANT DU SABRE

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

PERFORMANCE

With Masato Matsuura, Noh artist

2027 | 2028 programme

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In a constantly changing society, in which the frantic pace of life leaves little room for introspection or connection, a man chooses to withdraw. Alone, he goes forth in search of answers concerning the purpose of his existence and his place in this world. His quest lies at the heart of *Le Chant du Sabre,* a performance that brings together choral singing and Noh theatre.

Portrayed by the Noh artist Masato Matsuura, the protagonist takes us with him on an intimate path toward self-discovery. Torn between a desire for solitude and a longing for connection, he strives to find peace with himself and the world around him. The voices of Aedes surround, call out to, challenge, or enlighten him, revealing the shifting contours of his relationship with others.

Works chosen for their evocative power mark these ritual passages: “Der Leiermann” (the famous concluding song from Schubert’s *Die Winterreise)*, the incantatory *Curse upon Iron* by Veljo Tormis, Evelin Seepar’s *Seesama meri* (“The Same Sea”), and *Kazegaku* for *a cappella* choir and *utai* (traditional Japanese Noh chant), composed specifically for this production by Aurélien Dumont. These two musical traditions, representative of Western and Japanese cultures respectively, guide the traveller toward his ultimate destination: a return to his true self, in newfound harmony with the world.



Produced by Aedes, in co-production with the Atelier Lyrique de Tourcoing, La Cité Bleue de Genève and the Opéra de Reims.

With the support of Fondation d’entreprise AG2R LA MONDIALE pour la vitalité artistique · Région Hauts-de-France · sacem Ensemble, faisons vivre la musique · la culture avec la copie privée

Programme

Richard Wagner
Im Treibhaus
(choral arr. de Clytus Gottwald)

Johann Sebastian Bach
O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden

Franz Schubert
Der Leiermann
excerpt from *Winterreise* D. 911

Philippe Hersant
Quiétude de l'âme
excerpt from *Instants limites*

Veljo Tormis
Curse upon Iron

Evelin Seppar
Seesama meri

Aurélien Dumont
Kazegaku
(commissioned work) ©Éditions Musicales Artchipel

Alfred Schnittke
Psalms of Repentance, n°12

1h15 with no interval

Performance with surtitles

Aedes
20 singers

Masato Matsuura
martial and Noh Artist

Mayu Sato
flutist

Eriko Minami
percussionist

Mathieu Romano
conductor

Pier Lamandé
stage director

Ninon le Chevalier
scenographer

Antoine Travert
light designer

Sylvain Wavrant
costume designer

Programme overview



Veljo Tormis, *Curse upon iron*



Technical information

Total number of people on tour: 29 people

Artistic staff

24 people on stage
20 singers
1 Noh artist
1 flutist
1 percussionist
1 conductor

1 stage director
1 scenographer
1 light designer / technician

Technical staff

1 general stage manager
1 production manager

Estimated planning

D-1
Arrival of the artistic and technical teams
Light setting

The day of the concert
1 technical service
1 rehearsal
1 performance

Full technical details available
on request

Statement of Intent | Mathieu Romano

Ever since it was founded, Aedes has consistently expanded its artistic vision to embrace new creations that converse with different musical genres (French chanson, musical theatre, etc.) as well as with other cultures. The ensemble examines how seemingly distant traditions can meet on common ground, bound by a shared desire to communicate stories and human emotions. When I looked into the work of Masato Matsuura, who combines swordsmanship, Noh theatre, and the distinctively raw, gravelly power of *utai* chant, I immediately noticed fascinating parallels with works belonging to the Western musical repertoire. For instance, Estonian composer Veljo Tormis's *Curse Upon Iron* – a "shamanic" piece for choir and drum – mirrors Noh theatre by invoking both the spiritual and the physical voice. This work will be a focal point in the programme, as will the final movement of Schnittke's *Psalms of Repentance.* Against this haunting, *bocca chiusa* (hummed) choral backdrop, Masato Matsuura will display his spectacular mastery of the sword. In doing so, he reveals the sword not as an instrument of destruction or violence, but as a tool of transformation, spiritual awakening, and transition. Matsuura's movement embodies the Budo concept of *Katsujinken* (the sword that gives life): when the weapon is used to slice through one's own ego, fear, and internal chaos, it "severs" the negative, destructive components of the self to "open" and liberate a more enlightened, integrated human being.

The encounter between these two arts gave birth to story.
Created in collaboration with director Pier Lamandé, this production confronts the relentless pace of modern society, raising crucial existential questions: How do we maintain our connection to others without compromising our own inner rhythm? In other words, how do we navigate the demands of a hyper-connected, fast-paced world without sacrificing our true self to the chaos? And ultimately, how can two entirely distinct cultural traditions – developed thousands of miles apart – step onto the same stage to speak a universal artistic language?

A human community – embodied by the choir – confronts a collective dilemma that forces each individual to make a choice. Masato Matsuura portrays the man who quietly steps back from the world, choosing withdrawal over protest, rupture, or violence. Throughout this musical quest, he will question his very foundations: his inner journey is structured around the Japanese *Godai* (Five Elements) system: earth, water, fire, wind, and a fifth element, void or emptiness (an empty space waiting to be filled) and fullness (ultimate fulfilment).
Each "act", dedicated to one of the five elements, provides a platform for an intense and powerful, choral work, while showcasing moments of fusion: the ensemble draws upon the Noh tradition, and guest artist Masato Matsuura becomes part of the choir to perform Western repertoire.
Serving as the narrative thread for this journey, two works accompany Masato on his journey: a chorale melody by Hans Leo Hassler (notably adapted by J. S. Bach in his *St Matthew Passion*) to represent the Western world, and a Sanskrit mantra of Japanese tradition to represent the East.
Finally, Aurélien Dumont's *Kazegaku* for vocal ensemble, a Noh actor-singer-sword artist, and two instrumentalists will serve as the modern central pillar of this production, designed to awaken "the music of the elements" and connect the human experience back to nature and the wider world.

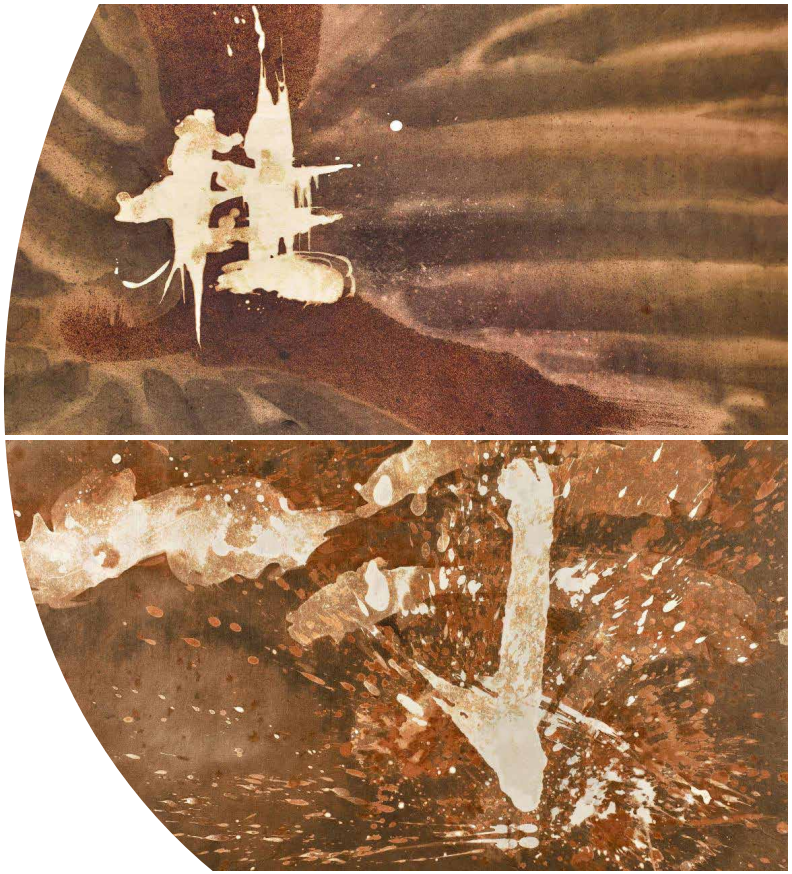
Statement of Intent | Pier Lamandé

We are often unsettled, disoriented and shaken by a reality that is difficult for us to grasp. The challenges we face today can lead us to withdraw into ourselves, decide to annihilate any form of personal evolution, or experience a fear that breeds aggression and rejection. Yet the most ancient and foundational narratives beckon us, through diverse cultural traditions, to plunge into this vast unknown – a wellspring of wisdom and illumination – and there to embrace the other in the fullness of their humanity.

Like the Japanese artist Akeji Sumiyoshi, who lived as a hermit on the margins of our world, we hold the power to expand our own reality. We can dictate a personal cadence that honours the complexity of who we are. What if the key lies in breaking through the paralysis of fear, reclaiming our true needs, and rebuilding our foundations? By rediscovering our roots and our heritage, we can navigate the future with greater clarity – and choose unity, oneness, over rejection.

And so this being appears at the centre of a world suffocating under its own frantic pace and overwhelming abundance. Driven to slow down his experience of that world, he halts to question each of its underlying elements. Straddling the line between tradition and contemporaneity, he explores every facet of this chaotic landscape – all in the hope of reconstructing a cohesive reality of which he can truly be a part.

Striking at the core of Japanese tradition, the sword cuts through space to isolate and redefine the five elemental forces: earth, water, fire, air (wind), and the void – the ultimate seat of fulfilment and creation. By practising his art, the protagonist paves the way to rebuilding his existence and restoring cosmic balance. This performance ultimately encourages us to embark on a similar journey, guiding us towards a less antagonistic future.



© Akeji Sumiyoshi

The onstage collaboration between a Noh artist and a Western choir offers a rare, transcendent experience.

While the vast geographical distance between these two traditions inspires wonder, their profound points of convergence are unmistakeable. Through distinct artistic approaches, they weave a shared tapestry that cross-examines human existence and our place in the world. Drawing on timeless myths and narratives – both secular and sacred – together they offer a detached, critical perspective on the modern world.

Composed by Aurélien Dumont – a creator who maintains close artistic ties with Japan – the score masterfully manipulates theatrical pacing. His music functions like an emotional time-slider, pulling the audience fluidly between ancient history and the modern era, and from explosive action to meditative stillness. This stark dynamic contrast perfectly mirrors the character's internal psychological evolution on stage.

The minimalist stage design borrows key elements from the Noh tradition, reimagining them for Western theatre spaces. The audience area and aisles transform into the *hashigakari* (bridgeway), symbolising the liminal transition between the spiritual realm and the physical, temporal human world. The stage itself is split into two distinct zones. At the centre lies the narrative world – this is where the core dramatic plot, character interactions, and storytelling take place. Surrounding it at the periphery is the musical world, for the musicians and the chorus. Rather than being a detached observer, the chorus directly reflects the protagonist's quest, serving as a powerful vocal and emotional extension of his inner self.

Ultimately, these artists stand together as a microcosm of humanity – complex, diverse, and interconnected. Yet, the collective never overshadows the individual; there are as many distinct identities on stage as there are performers. *Le chant du sabre* brings together voices from opposite ends of the earth to deliver an urgent message: we must learn to inhabit this stage – this world –together. It is a powerful reminder that we can share our spaces, build a common future, and meet our challenges side by side.



Illustration by Ninon Le Chevalier, production scenographer



Illustration by Ninon Le Chevalier, production scenographer

Masato Matsuura

Born in Japan, Masato Matsuura trained in Noh theatre as a direct disciple *(uchi deshi)* of the Living National Treasure, Master Tetsunojyo Kanze VIII. Wishing to expand his dramatic range, he later studied contemporary theatre, while also training in various martial arts, including *kenjutsu* (Japanese swordsmanship).

He aims to cultivate harmony between body and mind, and also to create a bridge between the martial arts and the performing arts.

Based in Paris since 2006, Masato Matsuura founded his own school, *Les deux spirales,* which is now established in both Paris and Brussels. There, he teaches these diverse disciplines while researching ancient, forgotten energy techniques.

Regularly invited to share his expertise internationally, he frequently conducts workshops and demonstrations, notably at the Maison de la Culture du Japon in Paris. In 2017, at the invitation of cellist Dominique de Williencourt, he performed a Noh-inspired choreography of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.

Other recent productions include:
Sleeping (2019–2020), directed by Serge Nicolaï and Yoshi Oida.
Goldberg Noh (2021), in collaboration with harpsichordist Frédérick Haas at the Philharmonie de Paris.
Médée, Nō (2023), directed by Maxime Pierre, fusing Noh theatre with Senecan tragedy, at the Théâtre de l'Alliance Française, Paris.



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Pier Lamandé

An actor, director, artistic collaborator, and dramaturge, Pier Lamandé built his career alongside numerous acclaimed artists, including Thomas Jolly, Stanislas Nordey, Valérie Lang, Éric Ruf, Christine Letailleur, Philippe Berling, and Arthur Nauzyciel. He is currently dedicated to supporting a new generation of artists encountered in the course of his professional journey, such as Étienne Gaudillière, Anthony Thibault, Louise Dudek, Anaïs Müller, and Bertrand Poncet. Additionally, Pier Lamandé conducts extensive research into the role of the artist by exploring the works of established playwrights, such as Heiner Müller, Sarah Kane, and Peter Handke, as well as those of emerging contemporary authors like Gwendoline Soublin, Vincent Fontano, and Sarah Pèpe.

His creative work extends into the realm of dance: collaborations with Thierry Thieû Niang, Guesh Patti, and, more recently, Lino Mérion and Salim Mzé Hamadi Moissi (Salim Seuch) on their Krump creations. After serving for many years as an artistic and pedagogical advisor at the École du TNB (École supérieure d'art dramatique du Théâtre National de Bretagne), he recently guided the 46th and 47th graduating classes of the École du TNS (École supérieure d'art dramatique du Théâtre National de Strasbourg) through four productions based on texts by Sonia Chiambretto. Alongside his teaching at major theatres, he conducts numerous workshops tailored to highly diverse audiences.

For the past decade, he has been a Senior Lecturer *(Maître de Conférences)* at the University of Poitiers, teaching within the Master Pro in *Mise en scène et dramaturgie* programme. Throughout his career, he has viewed theatrical creation as a vibrant space for dialogue and vital exchange.



Sylvain Gripoix © Aedes 2026

Mathieu Romano

At the heart of Mathieu Romano's conducting lies a commitment to expressiveness and connection – bringing musicians together in a shared emotional experience in order to communicate deeply with the audience.
Drawing on historical research while focusing on a lively, intense interpretation, his approach consistently highlights the meaning and emotional power of the musical texts. He works both with singers and with orchestras, and his versatility, deep understanding of the human voice, precise gestures, and acute listening skills make him just as at home on the concert platform as he is in the opera pit.
A dynamic artist constantly on the lookout for new experiences, his repertoire ranges from music of the Baroque period to contemporary works. He also regularly takes on cross-disciplinary projects: real-time electronic music, film concerts, musical theatre, site-specific performances…

In recent seasons, he has worked with many distinguished orchestras and ensembles including Les Siècles, the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, L'Itinéraire, the Orchestre National de Lille, the Yellow Socks Orchestra, the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, the Orchestra of Teatro Carlo Felice Genova, the Orchestre de la Garde républicaine, Les Frivolités Parisiennes, the Chœur de Radio France, the RIAS Kammerchor, and the Nederlands Kamerkoor.
In the field of opera, he has conducted, amongst other works, *Breaking the Waves* (Mazzoli) at the Opéra-Comique and *Don Giovanni* (Mozart) at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. This season he will be conducting *Orphée aux enfers* (Offenbach) at the Paris Conservatoire (CNSMD) and *Noye's Fludde* (Britten) at the Atelier Lyrique de Tourcoing with Les Siècles.
He is the founder and artistic director of Aedes. Together they take part in some of the most prestigious musical seasons. The ensemble and its many recordings are highly acclaimed by audiences and critics alike.

In recognition of his artistic achievements, Mathieu Romano was awarded the honorary distinction of Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters *(Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres)* by the French Ministry of Culture in 2020.

aedes

Regarded as “one of the finest choirs in France” *(Le Figaro),* capable of “doing everything – singing and performing – to perfection” *(Le Monde),* Aedes ranks among Europe’s leading ensembles, acclaimed for the purity and intensity of its performances.

Founded in 2005 by Mathieu Romano, this seventeen-voice ensemble has forged a unique sound under his direction that is at once precise, sensuous, and strong, with a vibrant energy that goes straight to the heart.

With a repertoire ranging from Baroque to contemporary works, with forays into other artistic spheres, Aedes loves to surprise, innovate, and blur boundaries: dance, theatre and the visual arts interact with singing, constantly opening up new horizons. Every Aedes concert is also a sensory experience.

A regular guest on the major French and European stages, Aedes also partners with prestigious orchestras to perform masterpieces of the choral repertoire. The ensemble’s extensive discography, devoted primarily to music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, has reaped numerous awards.

Based in the Somme region and in residence at the Atelier Lyrique de Tourcoing, Aedes places transmission at the heart of its commitment by training future choral conductors, performing for a wide range of audiences, and raising awareness of choral singing among pupils and teachers.

In September 2026, Aedes launches a new festival – “Vibrations”, at the Royal Abbey of Saint-Riquier – dedicated to the art of choral singing.

During the 2026–2027 season, Aedes will take to France’s premier stages with three major productions showcasing its skills: *Le Chant du Sabre,* in collaboration with martial artist Masato Matsuura, *Dans l’oubli,* with actor Denis Podalydès, and *Mozart’s Requiem,* performed alongside Les Siècles and under the baton of Mathieu Romano.



Sylvain Gripoix © Aedes 2026

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