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LA PETITE FILLE AUX ALLUMETTES

THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL

2027 | 2028 programme

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“ The story of The Little Match Girl has lost none of its urgency. In its heartbreaking simplicity, Andersen’s tale reveals the fractures of our societies.

An impoverished little girl, trying to sell her wares in the freezing cold amidst general indifference, lights matches one by one in an attempt to warm herself, and with each one she finds joy in her imaginings. One of her last few matches brings her a vision of her grandmother, who always treated her with love and kindness…

Dying of hunger or cold, even in a country such as France, is still a reality today. Faced with such persistent injustices, we are left with a question: what light can we still turn to for warmth?

In a close musical embrace between David Lang’s *The Little Match Girl Passion* and Jean-Yves Daniel-Lesur’s *Le Cantique des Cantiques* (a setting of the biblical *Song of Solomon*), Aedes brings together two different paths to redemption, both traversed by light and darkness. On the one hand, the poverty caused by the lack of love in this earthly world; on the other, the passion and warmth of lovers drawn to each other.

Two very different paths, but each one aspiring to find a warming, comforting, healing presence. Love becomes both light and a power of transfiguration.
In paying tribute to this little girl and everything she embodies, Aedes explores the fragile pathways that enable human beings to continue, despite everything, to hope and to bring forth beauty from the very depths of misery.



Sorin Dumitrascu © 58e Festival de La Chaise-Dieu

Programme

William Basinski
For whom the bell tolls and *Passio*
(excerpts from « Lamentations »)
Pre-recorded track

David Lang
The little Match Girl Passion
(excerpts)

Jean-Yves Daniel-Lesur
Cantique des cantiques

Broadcast narrative of *The Little Match Girl*
by Hans Christian Andersen

1h10 with no interval

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12 singers

Mathieu Romano
conductor

François-Xavier Guinnepain
light designer

Technical information

Total number of people on tour: 15 people

Artistic staff

12 singers
1 conductor

Technical staff

1 light technician
1 production manager

Estimated planning

The day of the concert
1 technical service (lighting)
1 rehearsal
1 performance

Artistic and Scenographic Statement | Mathieu Romano and Tido Visser

Hans Andersen's story of *The Little Match Girl* serves as the guiding thread in this production. Interwoven with the music, it is related by a recorded voice which emerges at each stage of the narrative from a different part of the auditorium (depending on the technical capabilities of the host venue). It is heard as a lament coming from afar. And it is around this central lament that the dialogue unfolds between the light of *Le Cantique des Cantiques* and the darkness of *The Little Match Girl Passion.*

On stage, a subtle lighting design accompanies the work's dramatic arc and sustains a constant tension. Which will ultimately triumph, darkness or light?

The performance opens in total darkness. Gradually a few flickering lightbulbs, scattered across the stage, emerge like fragile presences, guiding the singers dispersed among the audience towards the stage.

As soon as the narrative begins, the light stabilises: the spoken word gives shape to the world and establishes a space shared between the audience and the singers.

The broadcast narration, the movements of David Lang's *The Little Match Girl Passion* and those of Daniel-Lesur's *Le Cantique des Cantiques* expressing hope and love are intertwined, alternating in exactly the same order throughout the performance: a section of the narrative, a movement from David Lang's *Passion*; a movement from the *Le Cantique des Cantiques.*

After each lamentation in David Lang's work, a light is extinguished, to represent one of the little girl's matches burning, then going out in a final surge of hope. Aedes thus revives the centuries-old ritual of the *Tenebrae* service, in which the candles were extinguished one by one, until the final stanzas were sung in complete darkness.

In contrast, the movements of *Le Cantique des Cantiques* introduce a different quality of light: a discreet yet persistent lateral radiance suggesting the presence of love, desire, and hope.

This dual trajectory – the gradual extinguishing of the lights and the emergence of a new source of light – culminates when the light suddenly spreads, enveloping both the stage and the auditorium, dissolving the boundary between artists and audience in a shared experience of revelation.

The conclusion reverses the movement one last time. The light fades, gving way to a voice that seems to be coming from all directions. Then a glow behind the choir gradually increases until it reduces the singers to silhouettes. This indefinable, otherworldly glow may be interpreted as the figure of the grandmother, a promise of comfort, or the embodiment of the hope that endures beyond darkness.


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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.

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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.



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ensembleaedes.fr

CONTACT
Anne-Sophie Pernet I General manager
annesophie.pernet@ensembleaedes.fr
+33 7 63 52 41 39