

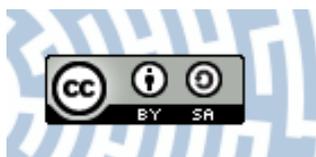


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Your Magnificence, Distinguished Rector,  
Honorable Members of the Senate,  
Esteemed Doctoral Candidate,  
Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is my great honour and pleasure to present Mr Jordi Savall i Bernadet, one of the greatest contemporary musicians, composers, musicologists, teachers, and – within a broad perspective – humanists.

Let me begin with a handful of important facts, making up the extraordinary biography and outstanding work of Mr Savall. I should start with dates, which often bear symbolic significance for many of us and leave a permanent mark on our fortunes. “A date functions like a proper name” – wrote Jacques Derrida in his famous essay *Shibboleth for Paul Celan*, a true meditation upon a date. Not just a date of birth, but various other dates, representing thresholds and breakthroughs in the life of every human being. When it comes to Mr Jordi Savall, seven meaningful dates are mentioned by Eric Loret in his portrait of the artist published in *Libération* (6 Feb. 2013) – Loret’s subtitle says “Jordi Savall en 7 dates” [“Jordi Savall in 7 dates”]; let me add that *France Musique* lists six such dates, and some of them actually coincide. The first one is 1 August 1941 – the date of Mr Savall’s birth in Catalan Igualada. Further on, the marriage to the outstanding soprano Montserrat Figueras in 1968; the same year marks the couple’s moving to Basel, where Mr Savall continued his studies with August Wenziger at Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, and took over his master’s post after a couple of years. Mr Savall took up studying cello in Bar-

celona's Conservatory of Music, later he took an interest in viola da gamba, and discovered manuscripts of Marin Marais in Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Viola da gamba was Jordi Savall's great discovery and object of attentive research, explorations and studies for many years. He was meticulously analysing the works of the outstanding gamba virtuoso Antoine Forqueray, and seeking the answer to the question what the expression "L'archet en l'air" ["The bow in the air"] meant and why "Le troisième doigt est l'âme de la musique" ["The third finger is the soul of music"]. It is said that Marin Marais played like an angel, while Forqueray, closer to the Italian style, played like a devil – Savall, in turn, finds in viol his own place, which is like home, with all conceivable connotations that the word carries; among many comments he made on the instrument is the following: "Avec la viole de gambe, je me suis senti chez moi. Plus qu'avec le violoncelle, où il fallait toujours faire des acrobaties" ["With the viola da gamba, I felt at home. More than with the cello, where you always had to do acrobatics"].

Further on, 1976 emerges as a significant milestone, when Mr Savall made his recordings of Marin Marais, Sieur de Sainte-Colombe, François Couperin and Louis de Caix d'Hervelois – I would like to point out that these premiere recordings of viola da gamba virtuosos were preceded by almost twenty years of studies.

Another important date is the year 1991, when Alain Corneau created his amazing movie *Tous les matins du monde* [*All the Mornings of the World*], based on the novel of the same name by Pascal Quignard. The film tells the story of Marin Marais, played by unforgettable Gérard Depardieu, but the main protagonist of the movie seems to be the music (it is significant that the dialogues are quite heavily limited, shifting the music into the foreground) – it is a film about free, unlimited and unconstrained art, filled with deep spirituality emanating from the artist. A movie about the conflict of two human attitudes towards art, an artist constrained by patronage or a court position, and an independent artist, outside the court, hon-

ours and positions, embodied by Jean de Sainte-Colombe, Marais's mentor. The theme frequently reoccurs in various incarnations in literature and art, for example in Paul Barz's well-known play *Mögliche Begegnung* [Händel's Ghosts] or in Peter Shaffer's drama *Amadeus*, inspired by Alexander Pushkin's poetic drama *Моцарт и Сальери* [Mozart and Salieri], later turned into the well-known movie by Miloš Forman, as well as in the famous painting with a secret message by Johannes van der Beeck (Torrentius), titled *Sill Life with Flagon, Glass, Jug and Bridle*. The movie by Corneau travelled all across Europe and the world, and thanks to Jordi Savall the incredible sound of viola da gamba could be heard (Mr Savall is often described as the instrument's herald), which without a shadow of a doubt contributed not only to its popular recognition, but also to the expression of the voice of freedom, inseparably connected with art. It is of vital importance to Mr Savall's attitude, whose father was a supporter of the republic, persecuted and forced to seek refuge in Catalonia. Mr Savall grew up in Spain under the rule of general Franco's Falange, and his uncle translated Carl Marx's *Capital* into Spanish and published the works of Lenin, Dostoyevski, Pushkin, Robespierre and Gogol - Mr Savall read them at the age of 13, over many months of recovery from typhus. As Mr Savall himself said, *Capital* made him realise that owners of means of production impose their will on others, he said also that he had always tried to fight it and that every ensemble he created was governed by the rules of full solidarity and exchange of ideas.

Let us go back to the dates, to the year 1998, when Alia Vox musical publishing house was established. Already with their first editions they became one of the most original musical labels in the world. Records produced by Alia Vox are small works of art, in which music smoothly integrates with word and image; musical works are accompanied by detailed commentaries translated into several languages, and complemented by paintings from a given epoch - the paintings do not illustrate, I emphasise,

but complement (here I would like to reiterate the words of the prominent philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy from his beautiful book *Au fond des images*, in which, defining the notion of ekphrasis, he talked about oscillation which takes place between text and image; Alia Vox editions call for an extended definition of ekphrasis, the above-mentioned oscillation happens between sound, image and text, and such a conjunction breeds a unique aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual experience).

In the above-mentioned editions sound-image-word are equal, they enter the relationship of coexistence, there is no domination of one type of art over another, and hardly anyone in possession of these works poses Horace's or Lessing's questions; instead, they acknowledge their coherence and unity, this beautiful and extraordinary oscillation which occurs among them. The complete catalogue of records produced by Alia Vox lists 140 items at present, including, among others, works of François Couperin, Tomás Luis de Victoria, Johann Sebastian Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Biber and Monteverdi, Marais, Sainte-Colombe; there are also works of Mr Savall's children, Arianna and Ferran, various thematic collections, including original "record-books" and CD-books, thematically oscillating around European and world culture, inseparably connected with the Mediterranean Sea, represented by (among others) *Mare Nostrum. Orient - Occident: Dialogues*, an exceptional story of the illuminated doctor *Ramon Llull*, as well as *Éloge de la Folie* by Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Les routes de l'esclavage (1444-1888)* - the paths of the tragic history of slavery, or *Jérusalem. La Ville des deux Paix: La Paix céleste et la Paix terrestre*. The CD-Books produced by Alia Vox are great scale enterprises. They offer recipients re-reading of great and less known texts of culture, encourage a thorough reflection on historical facts, and the music, or - more precisely - the musical fresco, shapes here a whole new dimension of humanist thought. Mr Savall once said that music is the true language of Europe. I think that in the light of his recent accomplishments this formula can be

extended to the whole world. Within such an approach the history of slavery may be told with Jefferson's and Lincoln's texts or *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but also with the songs of North American slaves, gospels and chants of African sorcerers, accompanied by the kora. Those tragic narrations reverberate in the sounds of music by Bob Marley, Miles Davis, Pharoah Sanders and many, many others, but here they are told in a completely different, exceptionally original way. The thousand years of Venice's history is told by music in *Venice Millénaire*, so when we listen to *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorina* we visit the Venice of the year 1615. *Jérusalem* is a musical tale of 3200 years of history. *Marche pour la Cérémonie des Turcs* brings Versailles to our mind, from where our thoughts are redirected to Maintenon, with the incredible splendor of Madame de Maintenon palace, but the walls are decorated with drawings of the construction of the aqueduct transporting water to Versailles gardens, which bring to mind thousands of victims and take us straight to Place de la Concorde. The music thinks and holds history within, imploring it not to repeat ever again, but reminding us that history may be rhyming.

Let us return to the dates. The next one is particularly painful, the year 2011, marked by the death of Montserrat Figueras. One commentator referred to this date with the French word "disparition," instead of "death" or "departure," very accurately encapsulating this loss impossible to reconcile, the loss that is the essence of the endless work of mourning. Its manifestation are the works of Jordi Savall *Llibre Vermell de Montserrat* (a concert dedicated to his wife in Santa Maria del Pi church in Barcelona) and Arianna Savall *Hirundo Maris. Chants du Sud et du Nord* (a record with Petter Udland Johansen) – farewell songs of the South and the North of Europe, striking with their beauty, pain and despair, dedicated to her mother, released by ECM company in 2012.

The last date mentioned by Loret is the year 2013, when the CD-book *Erasmus van Rotterdam. Éloge de la Folie* was released. Since then, many

things have changed and a number of crucial dates could be added to the collection. The creative work is combined with about 140 concerts and six recordings every year – these figures bear witness to the artist’s exceptional commitment and the dimension of the work he is constantly creating.

Together with Montserrat Figueras, Mr Savall formed three well-known ensembles: Hespèrion XX (1974), later renamed as Hespèrion XXI, La Capella Reial de Catalunya (1987) and Le Concert des Nations (1989), with whom he toured around the world and has made recordings that will stay forever in the world cultural heritage.

He has been awarded and honoured for his achievements, I will mention here, for example, the Legion of Honour, awarded to him in 2011, or the Gold Medal of the Generalitat de Catalunya (2014). His works were distinguished with significant world music awards – it would take a long while to list them all. He was also awarded an honorary doctorate from universities in Barcelona, Évora, Utrecht, Louvain and Basel.

His outstanding accomplishments combine the most valuable ideas of humanism, modesty and diligence of a philologist examining old scores, openness to the Other, to many Others, and its close relative: hospitality, which rejects barriers and all prejudices, the true cult of beauty and art, not only musical, because his works are eclectic and distinguished by exceptional syncretism. Mr Jordi Savall is an outstanding artist, a fascinating musician, but also an excellent philologist and thinker, whose trans-epoch and trans-cultural work builds a great idea of modern humanism. I will repeat here the words of one of the reviewers, professor Lorenz Duftschmid: “But Jordi Savall is not only an overwhelming artist, he is also constantly working for peace in the world. Whether at concerts in the so-called jungle de Calais or with numerous topic-related music productions, he introduces large numbers of people to the higher values of humanism through his art.”

Sir! May this highest academic distinction, conferred upon you today, be the certificate of highest appreciation of your attitude and your outstandingly rich artistic, creative and educational activity. And for the University of Silesia, may it be the source of exceptional pride.

*Adam Dziadek*

*Translated by Adam Wojtaszek*