

### **Liner notes by Benjamin MiNiMuM**

*Eastern Spring* is more than just a nod to the Arab Spring. It is an embrace of the concerns and the hopes for societal change on the part of young people across the world in the late 1960s. Following *A Woman's Journey* – a homage to the great militant American songstresses – *Eastern Spring* sees Madeleine & Salomon, alias Clotilde Rullaud and Alexandre Saada, tackle the shimmering repertoire of Mediterranean folk-pop from the '60s and '70s, rejuvenating it through the subtle, minimalist prism of their inventive, contemporary sound.

From the late 1960s to the end of the following decade, the youth of the world rose up to demand a new world order, one that was fairer, freer, more humane and more colourful. It was a political, social and cultural movement that rejected war, segregation, straitened morality and consumerist logic, while promoting the power of the imagination and a desire for justice and equity, combined with a heightened curiosity for the exploration of the planet, its images, sounds and sensations.

While Western popstars drew their inspiration from the Orient, the reverse was true for young musicians in the Middle East and around the Mediterranean, who adopted the electric sonorities and experimental bravura of the West to express themselves. It is this revolutionary, psychedelic repertoire that Madeleine & Salomon revisit with *Eastern Spring*

For a long time, these songs were known only in their respective regions or to a few attentive travellers, before their concealment by the reactionary regimes who seized power in so many places. But they have gradually resurfaced on the internet. Clotilde Rullaud and Alexandre Saada, assisted by several enthusiastic friends and fellow artists, undertook meticulous research to unearth these nuggets and polish them with their inspired flair, making them resonate for a new listenership.

There's the masterpiece of Anatolian rock, "Ince Ince Bir Kar Yağar", originally sung by the politically active Selda Bağcan; the Iranian pop hymn, "Komakam Kon", made famous by the iconic Googoosh, combined with Allen Ginsberg's historic beat poem, "Howl"; the Lebanese militant classics, "Matar Naem", by the group Ferkat Al-Ard (set to a text by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish), and "Do You Love Me?" by

the Bendaly Family; metaphysical explorations from Morocco (“Lili Twil” by Les Frères Megri), Tunisia (“De l’Orient à Orion” by K.R. Nagati), Egypt (“Ma Fatsh Leah” by the group Al Massrieen) and Israel (“Layil” by Shalom Hanoch); as well as traditional songs such as “Dere Geliyor Dere” – which the pair discovered through the amazing cover version by Tülay German – combined with the melancholic Israeli nursery rhyme “Ha’yalda Hachi Yafa Ba’gan”. Whether romantic, dreamy or militant, all of these songs engage in the sort of social or spiritual interrogation that still matters today, wherever you are in the world.

The singer and flautist Clotilde Rullaud and the pianist Alexandre Saada are accomplished improvisers whose considerable experience has enabled them to develop a honed technique combined with an intuitive agility, a stylistic elegance and a humanist engagement. Both have pursued careers in jazz, *chanson* and “world” music. Alexandre Saada, who is also a photographer, recently developed the *We Free* project in partnership with improvisers from across the world. Clotilde Rullaud, too, has been globetrotting over the past few years while she worked on the creation of her transdisciplinary project, *XXY*, a polyphonic performance piece and film series exploring gender through dance, video, text and music. With the American musician Chris McCarthy, she has formed a duo performing texts by the beat poet Diane di Prima. Clotilde also teaches traditional vocal techniques from around the globe.

Ever on the move, these two explorers of the world and its myriad of musical forms are experts at soaking up the essence of a song and giving it a new life without indulging in the clichés of a musical style or passing fad. The songs on *Eastern Spring* have been stripped back with great subtlety. Alexandre’s piano and voice and Clotilde’s singing metamorphosise with each composition, yet without ever losing their identity or affecting the cohesion of the whole. The psychedelic audacities of the era are translated into contemporary language at key moments. The original melodies, enriched with themes composed by the duo, gain a certain timelessness and universality, as do the texts.