



**THE FRATERNITY – AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF YOUNG PRIESTS  
RELEASE DEBUT ALBUM *REQUIEM*  
PRESENTING REPERTOIRE FROM EARLY ROOTS OF CHORAL MUSIC**

**AVAILABLE MAY 12, 2017**  
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**The Fraternity** – an international community of young priests that includes some of today’s most skilled and committed singers of Gregorian chant –presents ancient melodies anew, on the album *Requiem*, to be released by **De Montfort Music/Sony Classical** on **May 12, 2017**.

“The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living,” said the Roman philosopher Cicero. For centuries to come in the Western world, the liturgical text of the Requiem as set to music has served as one of the most expressive means for mourning the deceased, as their lives become our memories. The deathbed Requiem of Mozart and the Romantic-era masterpiece by Fauré are famous examples of music helping to transmute grief into the highest art. Stravinsky composed a modernist Requiem, and the tradition goes back through the ages to the glowing polyphony of such Renaissance composers as Victoria and the pioneering medieval Requiem of Ockeghem. Yet even earlier, the original sounds of the Requiem, or the Mass for the Dead, were heard via the plainsong melodies of Gregorian chant, voiced by devout European monks nameless to us today.

*Requiem*, the debut major-label release by The Fraternity, was recorded by two of the top talents working in classical music today: multiple Grammy Award-winning producer **Christopher Alder** and engineer **Brad Michel**, also a Grammy winner. The executive producers of *Requiem* are **Kevin and Monica Fitzgibbons** of De Montfort Music, which has helped cultivate a new audience for ancient choral music by developing several chart-topping albums of chant. This latest recording transfigures the sound of mourning and remembrance into something mystical and beautiful, inspiring a feeling of hope in the cycle of life and an embrace of the eternal through the gift of meditative song. *Requiem* is a uniquely curated presentation, comprising 20 tracks of sublime melody, mostly monophonic Gregorian chant but concluding with the lush sound of polyphonic motets by the great 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italian composer Palestrina and a less well-remembered 18<sup>th</sup>-century composer, Giovanni Battista Martini, one of Mozart’s teachers.

Many have heard The Fraternity sing Requiem chants at funeral services over the years, often suggesting that the group record this moving music. The decision to make their major-label debut with the music of *Requiem* was unanimous among the priestly singers, as they realized that nothing is so universal as the experience of death and the many emotions evoked

by the living. After all, if a mother's lullaby to her child was perhaps the very first song ever heard, a lament for the death of a loved one wasn't far behind. The text of the Mass – beginning with “Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine” (Grant them eternal rest, O Lord) – is spiritually uplifting, meant to convey souls to a particular vision of the beyond; the effect of the music is far-reaching and timeless, bound to touch the deepest emotions of any human heart.

**Fr. Garrick Huang**, co-music director of **The Fraternity** and a singer on *Requiem*, reflected on the roots of Gregorian chant, saying: “The style of chant that we sing goes all the way back to ancient Rome, but it even has its sources, as certain people believe, in Jerusalem, with certain melodies Middle Eastern in origin. Rome has been cosmopolitan for centuries, of course, so it has always been a crossroads of many cultures. So there are even some sounds that we could say come from the East (Byzantine), or even different parts of the eastern empire.” Fr. Huang points out that for monks down through the centuries, it was never enough to simply recite the sacred texts: “We sing them, because it has always been part of human nature to express love and joy, despair and sadness – the gamut of emotions – in song. That said, the Requiem chant is not a performance for us. We say that we ‘sing’ the Requiem, but it’s more that we’re *praying* the Requiem.”

**Christopher Alder**, who has worked with some of the greatest classical singers of the past 30 years, echoes this idea that the words and melodies of the Requiem chant are deep inside the members of The Fraternity. “This community has obviously put a lot of emphasis on concentrated musical training in their education of young men to become priests,” he says. “They know this material intimately, as it rolls out of them as if it were poetry that one has recited countless times. They know it by heart, in every sense of the term because the text is being simultaneously believed and sung at the highest level.” **Fr. Zachary Akers**, music director of The Fraternity and a singer on *Requiem*, explains the relationship of the words to the melodies by noting, “I’ve heard it said that the music is meant to ‘clothe’ the texts.” Although most people may only know the Requiem via the celebrated version by Mozart, the composer was himself inspired by the somber beauty and unadorned profundity of Gregorian chant, taking it as an emotional-aesthetic standard. **Fr. Akers** explains: “In this album we are hearing this type of music that was around long before Mozart, approaching the beginning of sacred music.”

The Fraternity began in 1988, but from its roots in Rome, the community has spread far and wide, now including some 280 priests in missions worldwide. Still, it’s a youthful community, with 35 the average age of its priests. **Fr. Gerard Saguto**, the North American Superior of The Fraternity who also sang on *Requiem*, explains that the daily responsibilities of the priests entail shepherding its flock’s greatest joys and its deepest sorrows, from a marriage in the morning to a funeral in the afternoon. St. Augustine’s sense of the sacred was a beauty “ever ancient, ever new.” This beautiful work that’s ancient yet made anew whenever he and his confreres sing it – serves as a message of hope. And for **Fr. Saguto**, this new recording of the Requiem – was “a way to share some of what we do on a wider scale, to put something beautiful and sacred out into the world.”

**View the EPK on the Requiem here:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f\\_iQHw5b8z0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_iQHw5b8z0)

#### **About Sony Music Masterworks**

Sony Music Masterworks comprises the imprints Sony Classical, Masterworks, Okeh, Portrait, and Masterworks Broadway. Our artists range from icons to newly developing talents in classical, crossover and adult music, plus new and legendary jazz artists, as well as a vast catalogue of musical theatre recordings. For more information visit [www.sonymusicmasterworks.com](http://www.sonymusicmasterworks.com)

#### **About De Montfort Music**

De Montfort specializes in chant, polyphony and all areas of sacred music with a concentration on singing orders and communities well trained in this venerable repertoire. AimHigher Recordings is the sister label of De Montfort Music and releases eclectic Classical and Jazz music. Both labels provide a unique storytelling approach to extraordinary audiovisual projects. The labels have launched several *Billboard* chart-topping albums, consistently reaching #1 and/or top slots on *Billboard*'s Classical Traditional Year-Ending charts for 2012-2016. For more information visit: [www.DeMontfortMusic.com](http://www.DeMontfortMusic.com)

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