

## Les Eléments

*Opera-ballet*

*by Michel-Richard Delalande and André-Cardinal Destouches*

World premiere

### **Ensemble Les Surprises**

Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas, *harpsichord and conductor*

Hasnaa Bennani, *soprano*

Eugénie Lefebvre, *soprano*

Étienne Bazola, *baritone*

Alice Julien-Laferrière, Gabriel Ferry, *violins*

Sophie Iwamura, *viola*

Laura Duthuillé, *oboe*

Sandra Latour, Matthieu Bertaud, *flutes*

Juliette Guignard, *viola da gamba*

Anaïs Ramage, *bassoon and flutes*

Marie-Amélie Clément, *double bass*

Étienne Galletier, *theorbo*

Sylvain Fabre, *percussion*

## **Les Éléments**

The ensemble Les Surprises presents its reinterpretation of the opera-ballet Les Éléments (The Elements), composed in 1721 by André-Cardinal Destouches and Michel-Richard Delalande but not performed since 1781.

By mixing orchestral music (strings, wind and percussion instruments) and sung melodies (one baritone, two sopranos) together with contemporary dance (one dancer), the ensemble takes us to the heart of the earth's creation in five movements: from the beginning Chaos to the appearance of each element – Air, Water, Fire and Earth – against a backdrop of struggles and intrigues among the gods of the Roman pantheon.

The work is brought to life on stage by the remarkable quality of the performances and fine attention to detail, with a distinctive atmosphere conceived for each element.

This new production of Les Éléments was created in 2015 during a residency at the Musique et Mémoire festival for Baroque music, followed by a residency at the Molière-Scène d'Aquitaine theatre in April 2016, with support from the Office Artistique de la Région Aquitaine. The inaugural performance will take place on 26 April 2016 at Le Carré in Saint-Médard-en-Jalles, near Bordeaux. A recording on the Ambronay label will be released in spring 2016.

### **About the music**

The four elements and Chaos were familiar themes for opera composers of the 17th and 18th centuries. They possessed the symbolic force needed to express the act of creation and inspired music that was both highly illustrative and harmonically rich.

When the opera-ballet by Michel-Delalande and André-Cardinal Destouches was performed for the first time at the Tuilleries Palace in Paris in 1721, the 11-year-old Louis XV made a rare appearance as a dancer alongside 'all the young seigneurs of the Court'. The opera-ballet's success and influence lasted through the century, with various productions in Paris, Versailles and Fontainebleau until 1781.

But opera was not just a royal prerogative, for it was also performed in more intimate settings where the latest popular tunes could be enjoyed. There are accounts of many private concerts adapted to suit both royal and bourgeois tastes. Each time, the works were reconfigured accordingly.

It is in this spirit that Les Surprises is presenting a salon version of Les Éléments, just as Jean-Philippe Rameau did for his Indes Galantes in the version called 'Indes Galantes reduced to four concerts'. We have rewritten the libretto and given new theatrical expression to Chaos, Air, Fire, Earth and Water.

## Les Surprises

Artistic director, Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas

‘Tact, a relaxed elegance, intensely expressive but without insistence, radiating with rhythmic vitality: we eagerly await the next concert of Les Surprises.’

– Alain Cochard, ConcertClassic

Founded in 2010 by Juliette Guignard and Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas, the ensemble Les Surprises communicates its passion for the music of the 17th and 18th centuries through its original and diverse programming. Using various configurations, the group can transform itself from a chamber ensemble into an orchestra. It takes its name from an opera-ballet of Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Les Surprises de l’Amour*.

In 2013 Les Surprises made its first recording for the Ambronay label, which was highly praised in the local and international press. In 2014 the ensemble was awarded the ‘musical revelation’ prize by the Union of Theatre, Music and Dance Professionals – the only time in the 50 years of the award that a Baroque music ensemble has been thus recognized. The group has performed in festivals throughout Europe, from the Semaine Musicale de Quimper and festivals of Saint-Michel-en-Thiérache and Saint-Riquier to the the Monteverdi festival in Cremona, Italy, as well as in Germany and Palestine.

La Caisse des Dépôts is the first sponsor of the musical ensemble Les Surprises, which also receive the support of the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication – Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles d’Aquitaine, the city of Bordeaux, the Conseil Régional d’Aquitaine, the Conseil Départemental de la Gironde but as well as occasional support from various associations that aid artists and musicians, such as ADAMI, SPEDIDAM, the Institut Français, IDDAC, CMBV and OARA.



**Hasnaa Bennani, Soprano**

Hasnaa Bennani graduated from the Paris Conservatory, where she studied singing with Glenn Chambers. She also did advanced work in early music interpretation with Howard Crook, Isabelle Poulénard and Stéphane Fuget. In 2011 she was awarded first prize in the Baroque singing competition in Froville.

She has since sung many operatic roles: the child in Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*; Barbarina in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* with Opera Éclaté, directed by Olivier Desbordes; Teosena in Pagliardi's *Caligula Delirante* with Poème Harmonique, a production that toured France and Belgium under the direction of Vincent Dumestre; Venus in John Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, directed by Jean-Claude Malgoire and performed at the Théâtre de Tourcoing and the Théâtre des Champs Élysées in Paris; and Corisande in Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Amadis* at the Beaune Festival and Versailles with Les Talens Lyriques under the baton of Christophe Rousset. In addition she appeared as soloist in the Bach Mass in B Minor that toured Amsterdam, Lausanne and Vienna with Marc Minkowski, and recorded François Couperin's *Les Leçons des Ténèbres* with Poème Harmonique for the Alpha label at the château of Versailles.

Engagements in the 2015–16 season include Bach's St. Mark Passion at the Ambronay Festival with Le Concert Étranger; *Vom Schatten zum Licht* with Ensemble Pygmalion, directed by Raphaël Pichon, at the Alte Oper in Frankfurt; and a tour (Salle Gaveau in Paris, Palais des Beaux-Arts in Charleroi, De Bijloke in Ghent, AMUZ in Antwerp) performing works from a Handel recording with Les Muffatti.



**Eugénie Lefebvre, Soprano**

After entering the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles in 2007, Eugénie Lefebvre did advanced study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. She also worked with Howard Crook, Isabelle Poulénard and Stéphane Fuget. She won the Froville international Baroque singing competition in 2013.

Since then her roles have included Hymen in Lully's opera *Cadmus et Hermione*, directed by Vincent Dumestre and performed by Poème Harmonique at the Opéra Comique; Hersilie in *Le Pouvoir de l'Amour* by Pancrace Royer, with Patrick Bismuth directing; and *La Conversation* in Charpentier's *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* at the Lille Opera, conducted by Emmanuelle Haïm.

Among Eugénie Lefebvre's many other credits are *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, with François Morel and the ensemble *La Rêveuse*, which toured throughout France; and regular appearances under the batons of Emmanuelle Haïm (*Hippolyte et Aricie*), Pierre Cao (Bach Magnificat), Olivier Schneebeli, Vincent Dumestre and Jean-Claude Malgoire.



**Etienne Bazola, Baritone**

Trained as both a pianist and a singer, Étienne Bazola graduated from the Lyon Conservatory with a degree in singing under Isabelle Germain and Fabrice Boulanger. He then took master classes with François Leroux, Christian Immler, Rosemary Joshua and Udo Reinemann.

In 2015 he joined Les Surprises and Correspondances for their latest recordings. Other engagements include Ubalde in Lully's *Armide* in December 2015 and the Magician in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* with Les Talens Lyriques under Christophe Rousset in September 2016.

Other roles include Figaro in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, a Phrygian in Rameau's *Dardanus*, leader of the Hebrews in *Il Mosè* by Colonna, Gasparo in *Rita, ou le Mari Battu* by Donizetti, and the Portrait in *Alexandre bis* by Martinu.

Étienne Bazola has performed as soloist in Haydn's *The Creation*; Bach's *St Matthew Passion*; the requiems of Fauré, Brahms and Duruflé; Bach's *Magnificat*, Handel's *Dixit Dominus*; *La Conversione di Maddalena* by Bononcini with María Cristina Kiehr; and many motets and psalms by Charpentier.