

# Grandes Odes

John BLOW

Henry PURCELL

Saint Cecilia Ode « Begin the Song ! » - John Blow

Saint Cecilia Ode « Hail, bright Cecilia » - Henry PURCELL

## Ensemble Les Surprises

Cécile ACHILLE, Eugénie LEFEBVRE, Amandine TRENC, **sopranos**  
Paulin BUNDGEN, Clotilde CANTAU, Alice HABELLION, **altos**  
Paco GARCIA, Martin CANDELA, Davy CORNILLOT, **tenors**  
Etienne BAZOLA, Sébastien BROHIER, Louis-Pierre PATRON, **basses**

## 18 instrumentists

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

## **Together, let's celebrate music and pay tribute to its power!**

Saint Cecilia was a young female from Roman high society when Christians were persecuted. Converted to christianism, she converts her husband and family and was then sentenced to death. It's said that her persecutor couldn't execute her despite his main efforts. She praid 3 days long before her passing. In the course of centuries, many legends linked her to music. I the XVth century, Saint Cecilia became the musicians patron saint.

From 1670, England started to celebrate Saint Cecilia name day with wonderful musics : « *A superb amusement is proposed, preceded by music played by the best voices and instruments of the city. Lyrics, which always pays tribute to the patron saint, are interpreted by the great masters of the city. This party is one of the most distinguished one in the world. There are no other amusements like this one, and clothes are always wonderful ;* » (*The Gentelmans Journam, 1691*)

Musicians and composers were the most important from the end of the XVIIth century in England, such as Henry Purcell, John Blow, William Turner, Giovanni Draghi...

The two composers in this program, Purcell and Blow, were very good friends who influenced each other. Blow, less famous today, was Purcell master. He wrote him an amazing tribute when he died : An Ode on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell.

John Blow was the Composer and Organist of the Royal Chapel, a title he shared with his student ! His masterpiece *Venus and Adonis* made a huge impact on Purcell, and inspired him for his own opera *Dido and Aenas*. This shows us the significance of this great composer, eventough he fade from memory.

As for Purcell (no introduction needed), the musicologist Charles Burney described him like « *our British Orpheus, or rather our musical Shakespeare* » in 1798. His work is very impressive for someone who died at only 36 y.o.

Those two musicians were asked by the London Musical Society to compose Odes in homage to Saint Cecilia. They both used their great science in order to pay tribute to the power of music. Blow with counterpoint and affects, Purcell with trumpets and drums, multiplying instrumentals colors and vocal virtuosity.

« Begin the Song ! », wrote in 1684, and « Hail, bright Cecilia », composed in 1692, offer two very different and compatible figures of Music, performed by two friends and huge musicians.



## **Ensemble Les Surprises** – artistic direction, Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas

« Les Surprises have ideas, talents, a repertoire to explore. An ensemble that gives, and promises even more. » (*Muse Baroque*).

The ensemble Les Surprises is a baroque and multifaceted ensemble, founded in 2010 on the initiative of Juliette Guignard, violist, and Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas, organist and harpsichordist.

In borrowing its name from the opera ballet *Les Surprises de l'Amour* by Jean-Philippe Rameau, the group has placed its destiny under the lucky star of this composer, with the aim of exploring operatic music in all its shapes and forms !

By taking the ensemble artistic direction, Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas wishes to participate to the baroque repertoire rediscovery and its improvement with new interpretations but also to explore the sounds richness offered by a baroque instrumentarium.

The work of the ensemble is anchored in a process of musicological and historical research. Indeed Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas endeavour to highlight scores that have never been released since the 18th century, thanks to music libraries such as Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) or Bibliothèque de l'Opéra de Paris. The latest records *Passion* with Véronique Gens and *Rameau chez la Pompadour* are good examples of this will.

In 2014, Les Surprises received the “Révélation musicale” (new discovery) prize awarded by the French critic’s circle for the performing arts (“Syndicat professionnel de la critique de théâtre, musique et danse”).

Les Surprises recorded six discs for the Ambronay Editions label. All have received warm praises from international and national press. The ensemble also begun a partnership with the Alpha Classics label in 2020 (*Purcell-Tyrannic Love*, *Passion* with Véronique Gens, *Rameau chez la Pompadour*, *Nuit à Venise*), the next record *Te Deum*, dedicated to Charpentier and Desmarets, will be released in 2024. All have received warm praises from international and national press.

Since the beginning of its activities, the ensemble performed on multiple stages and festivals all over  
ensemble Les Surprises / version 2023

Europe and worldwide : Opéra royal de Versailles, Opéra de Massy, Auditorium de Radio France, Opéra de Montpellier, festival d'Ambronay, festival Sinfonia en Périgord, festival de Saintes, Rencontres Musicales de Vézelay, festival Sanssouci (Potsdam – Allemagne), saison des Bozar (Bruxelles – Belgique), Saint John's Smith Square (Londres – UK), Salle Bourgie (Montréal), Beirut Chants Festival (Beirut – Liban), Singapour...

Team : **Juliette GUIGNARD** – general direction  
**Delphine NAISSANT** – administration  
**Eléonore MINOT** – production

The ensemble Les Surprises is supported by Fondation Société Générale C'est vous l'avenir. The ensemble benefits from the support of the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication – Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles de Nouvelle Aquitaine, the Conseil Régional de Nouvelle Aquitaine, the cities of Bordeaux and Poitiers and the Conseil Départemental de la Gironde. It occasionally receive the support of the Centre National de la Musique, ADAMI, SPEDIDAM, Institut Français, Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles and Office Artistique de la région Nouvelle Aquitaine. The ensemble is a member of the FEVIS (Fédération des Ensembles Vocaux et Instrumentaux Spécialisés) and PROFEDIM.

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