

La Passion selon St Jean

Johann Sebastian Bach

ensemble Les Surprises

Davy Cornillot, **Evangéliste**

Eugénie Lefebvre, **soprano solo**

Blandine de Sensal, **alto solo**

Paco Garcia, **tenor solo**

Jean-Christophe Lanièce, **Jésus**

Etienne Bazola, **Pilate**

Choir and et orchestra (31 musicians)

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

To celebrate their ten years anniversary, the ensemble Les Surprises wanted to interpret emblematic pieces of the baroque repertoire, through their predilection composers as Jean-Philippe Rameau (two unseen operas *Le Retour d'Astrée* and *Les Sybarites*), Charpentier or Purcell ; and the Passion selon St-Jean from Bach came out as an obviousness in order to celebrate this musical decade.

« This spectacular and poignant piece guided me since my childhood, some of the tunes and chorals composing it lulled my first musical studies. It will always be one of my greatest musical impact – Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas »

From the two Passions by Bach that came to us, the Passion selon St-Jean is the first one. Written in 1724, Bach reworked it multiple times until 1747. It was the first huge piece he wrote for his new positions of Kantor at the St-Thomas church in Leipzig. There, pieces for the Holy Week were part of an ancient tradition perpetuated since his predecessor Johann Kuhnau and his multiple passions.

Before Johann Sebastian Bach took his position, the city of Leipzig was very clear that he needed to stick to « non theatrical compositions », preventing him from writing operas. A few months after, Good Friday 1724, he played this Passion according to St-Jean which seems to ignore these obligations (!) in that it had a dramatical dimension and called upon theatrical effects. Bach shows his rhythm and sequences art, while the chorals bring serenity or contemplations moments.

In Leipzig, the church St-Thomas had a well-trained vocal and instrumental headcount, in which soloists, singing tunes and choirs, could achieve the required virtuosity that Bach asked. This piece is one of his very best achievement, and centuries after, it still touches us.



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 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

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