

250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Opéra Royal in Versailles celebrated  
on 16 May 2020 with a Louis XIV spectacle

**1770 – 2020**



*Marie-Antoinette Ballet* (© Olivier Houeix)

**"The world is full of magnificent opera houses built to impress, but the Opéra Royal de Versailles may just trump the lot."**

Opera Now

**Château de Versailles Spectacles** celebrates the **250<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of the Opéra Royal on 16 May 2020 with a gala performance of *Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit*, a musical reproduction of Louis XIV's balletic prowess with operatic excerpts from Cavalli, Rossi, Boësset and Lambert.

Exactly 250 years ago to the day, the opera house was inaugurated during the 1770 wedding feasts of Marie-Antoinette to the Dauphin Louis XVI with a performance of Lully's *Persée*. This season also celebrates the **350<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of the Académie Royale de Musique, founded by Louis XIV.

A fully-staged ballet & operatic production of ***Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit*** (*The Royal Night Ballet*) on 15-17 May revives the court ballet danced by the 15-year old Louis XIV in 1653, in his first appearance as the Sun King. Under the musical direction of Sébastien Daucé and his Ensemble Correspondances, the cast including Lucille Richardot performs a meticulous reconstruction of the original music, including arias from Rossi's *Orfeo*, Cavalli's *Ercole Amante*, and music by Boësset and Lambert, fused with modern dance choreography by Francesca Lattuada.



**Molière's** legendary comedy-ballet **Le Bourgeois gentilhomme** is revived in the Opéra Royal from 11 June, complete with the original music by Lully. The courtly farce is directed by Denis Podalydès, with Lully's music recreated by Christophe Coin and his Ensemble la Révérence. Pascal Rénéric stars as the foolish Monsieur Jordain in the work, which is 350 years old this year.

On 26-30 June, **Rameau's Platée**, the composer's first comic opera, sees an ugly water nymph aspire for the love of Jupiter, the King of the Gods, a loose allegory for the royal marriage at which it was performed. First performed in the Grande Écurie at Versailles in 1745, it is staged in the Opéra Royal under the direction of Shirley and Dino and the baton of Hervé Niquet and Le Concert Spirituel, with Jean-Vincent Blot as Jupiter and Mathias Vidal as Platée.

The staged season at the Opéra Royal is closed with a new staged **Pasticcio** with Robert Carsen, William Christie, and Les Arts Florissants on 13 and 15 July. Two budding operatic stars – Jakub Józef Orliński and Lea Desandre – sing together for the first time in a patchwork of musical treasures from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. The new work – titled *Tell me the Truth about Love* – features musical treasures by Durante, Hasse, Stradella, Porpora, Caldara and Stefani alongside numbers by more well-known composers including Scarlatti, Handel, Purcell, Mozart and Rameau.

Concert performances of two French operatic rarities in the Opéra Royal complete this season's performances. **André-Cardinal Destouches' Sémiramis** is recreated 300 years after its original performances by Les Ombres with Margaux Blanchard and Sylvain Sartre on 4 March, and **Henry Desmarest's** 1694 opera **Circé** on 28 March with Sébastien d'Hérin and Les Nouveaux Caractères.

In the neighbouring **Chapelle Royale de Versailles**, sacred concerts complement productions and concert performances in the Opéra Royal. The choral works of composers Michael Praetorius and Hieronymus Praetorius are heard on 6 March under Pygmalion and Raphaël Pichon, while Gaétan Jarry and Ensemble Marguerite Louise perform **Charpentier's Missa Assumpta est Maria** on 29 March. Easter is observed with a performance of Bach's *St John Passion* on 3 April under **Jordi Savall** and Le Concert des Nations.



Chapelle Royale (© JM-Manai)

Young **Valentin Tournet** and his ensemble La Chapelle Harmonique perform a series of Bach *Motets* on 21 June. The 23-year-old's prodigious talents have been fostered extensively by Château de Versailles Spectacles and his recent CD of Bach's *Magnificat* (recorded live in the Chapelle Royale on the Château de Versailles Spectacles label) has secured glowing reviews. In the summer, **Grands Motets** by Louis-Nicolas Clément (7 July) and Lully (11 July) close the sacred programme at the Chapelle Royale.

Concerts are given in historic rooms throughout the Palace besides the Opéra Royal and Chapelle Royale, including the Salon d'Hercule and Galerie des Glaces. Recitals taking place across the palace include **Philippe Jaroussky** (9 March), **Cecilia Bartoli** (30 March), **Jakub Józef Orliński** (20 April) and **Renaud Capuçon** (6 June).

An intimate soirée held in the **Appartements du Roi** on 22 June recreates the music of the private bedchamber of Louis XIV. The exclusive event brings together a select group, including Sébastien Daucé, under the direction of Thibaut Roussel.

## The Opéra Royal

Inaugurated on 16 May 1770 with Lully's *Persée*, the opulent **Opéra Royal** was commissioned by Louis XV and built to celebrate the marriage of the Dauphin, the future Louis XVI, to the archduchess of Austria, Marie-Antoinette. Designed by Jacques-Angé Gabriel, the Opéra Royal provided a permanent location for palace entertainment, and with operas heard by assembled nobility including Rameau's 1777 *Castor et Pollux* (for the visit of the Emperor Joseph II) and Gluck's 1782 *Iphigène en Aulide*.

The luxurious Opéra Royal was intended for exceptional use, and never served as a public theatre nor hosted a full season, hosting only forty or so performances before the fall of the French monarchy. Thousands of candles were needed to light the theatre, and the theatre also doubled as a ballroom and banqueting hall, with an ingenious mechanism designed to raise the orchestra pit to stage level to allow for dancing. The spectacular acoustics are a feature of the original neo-classical design, with the building made of wood painted as faux marble, rather than marble itself.



Opéra Royal © Agathe Poupenev

Historic state visits continued to take place in the Opéra Royal after the French revolution, including a visit by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1855 and Queen Elizabeth II in 1957. The building has since enjoyed a colourful history, with the Sénat convening there for three years from 1876.



The stage mechanisms (© Thomas Garnier)

The theatre has since been restored to its 1770 original state, and reopened in 2009 after an extensive two-year renovation brought equipment to a modern standard. The old staging mechanisms can still be seen, and lighting imitates the original candlelit performances.

Sacred music-making took place in the historic **Chapelle Royale**. Completed in the reign of Louis XIV and inspired by Gothic architecture, the King would have attended King's mass in the chapel each morning, performed by musicians of the Royal Court, including François Couperin.

Today, music can be heard across the grounds of Versailles, with **Château de Versailles Spectacles** performances taking place from the Galerie des Glaces to the Cour de Marbre to the Gardens. Such a practice harks back to music-making at the Château before 1770, before the long construction of the Opéra Royal was finished, when temporary makeshift performance venues would be constructed all over the premises to celebrate major occasions.

## Selected Listings

Full season listings available at:  
[en.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr](http://en.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr)



performances are recorded for the Château de Versailles Spectacles label



**Friday 6 March, 20:00**

Chapelle Royale

*Praetorius: Vêpres imaginaires*

**Hieronymus Praetorius** *Magnificat quinti toni*

**Hieronymus Praetorius** *Psalms for double choir*

**Michael Praetorius** *In dulci jubilo*

**Michael Praetorius** *Psalms for double and triple choir*

**Pygmalion**

**Raphaël Pichon** director

**Saturday 28 March, 19:00**

Opéra Royal (concert)

CD

**Desmaret** *Circé*

**Gaëlle Arquez** *Circé*

**Caroline Mutel** *Astérie*

**Hélène Carpentier** *Eolie*

**Sébastien Droy** *Ulysse*

**Nicolas Courjal** *Elphénor*

**Les Nouveaux Caractères**

**Sébastien d'Hérin** director

**Sunday 29 March, 16:00**

Chapelle Royale

CD

**Charpentier** *Missa Assumpta est Maria*

**Cécile Achille, Virginie Thomas**

soprano

**Anaïs Bertrand** mezzo soprano

**Sean Clayton** countertenor

**Antonin Rondepierre** bass

**David Witczak** grand bass

**Ensemble Marguerite Louise**

**Gaétan Jarry** director

**Monday 30 March, 20:00**

Opéra Royal

*Joyaux Baroques Italiens*

**Cecilia Bartoli** mezzo soprano

**Les Musiciens du Prince**

**Andres Gabetta** conductor, violin

**Friday 3 April, 20:00**

Chapelle Royale

**Bach** *St John Passion*

**Simon Bode** Evangelist

**Thomas Stimmel** Jesus

**Laila Salome Fischer** mezzo-soprano

**Terry Wey** counter-tenor

**David Szigetvári** tenor

**Konstantin Wolff** bass-baritone

**Le Concert des Nations**

**Jordi Savall** director

**La Capella Reial de Catalunya**

(dir. Lluís Vilamajó)

**Friday 15 May, 19:30**

**Saturday 16 May, 19:00**

**Sunday 17 May, 15:00**

Opéra Royal (staged)

*Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit*

**Lucile Richardot** *Night, Italian Venere*

**Violaine Le Chenadec** *An Hour, Cintia, a French Grace*

**Caroline Weynants** *Euridice, a French Grace*

**Ilektra Platiopoulou** *Junon*

**Caroline Dangin-Bardot** *Venere, Silence*

**Perrine Devillers** *Pasitea, Mnemosyna, Aurora*

**Léa Trommenschlager** *Moon, Dejanira, a French Grace*

**David Tricou** *Apollo*

**Etienne Bazola** *Sleep*

**Renaud Brès** *Ercole*

**Nicolas Brooymans** *Grand Sacrificer*

**Dancers, acrobats & jugglers**

**Ensemble Correspondances**

**Sébastien Daucé** musical director

**Francesca Lattuada** director, choreography

**11-21 June**

Opéra Royal (staged)

**Molière / Lully** *Le Bourgeois*

*Gentilhomme*

**Jean-Noël Brouté** master tailor,  
Covielle  
**Isabelle Candelier** Madame Jourdain  
**Julien Campani** music tutor, Dorante  
**Manon Combes** Nicole  
**Bénédicte Guilbert** Dorimène  
**Francis Leplay** philosophy tutor  
**Leslie Menu** Lucile  
**Nicolas Orlando** fencing master  
**Pascal Rénéric** Monsieur Jourdain  
**Léo Reynaud** lackey, dancer, little mufti  
**Thibault Vinçon** dancing master,  
Cléonte  
**Laurent Podalydès** lackey

**Windy Antognelli, Flavie Hennion,**  
**Artemis Stavridis** dancers

**Ensemble La Révérence**  
**Christophe Coin** musical director  
**Éric Ruf** scenography

**Sunday 21 June, 16:00**  
Chapelle Royale

CD

**Bach** *Lobet den Herrn*  
**Bach** *Komm, Jesu, Komm*  
**Bach** *Jesu, meine Freude*  
**Bach** *Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf*  
**Bach** *Fürchte dich nicht, ich bin bei dir*  
**Bach** *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*  
**Bach** *O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens licht*

**La Chapelle Harmonique**  
**Valentin Tournet** director

**Monday 22 June, 19:00**  
Appartements du Roi

CD

*Les Couchers du Roi*

**Les Musiciens du Roi**

**Thibaut Roussel** theorbo, director

**Danaé Monnié** soprano  
**Julie Dessaint, Myriam Rignol,**  
**Mathilde Vialle** viols  
**Josèphe Cottet, Yoko Kawakubo**  
violins  
**Thomas Leconte, Valérie Balssa**  
flutes  
**Sébastien Daucé** harpsichord

**Friday 26 June, 20:00**  
**Saturday 27 June, 19:00**  
**Sunday 28 June, 15:00**  
**Tuesday 30 June, 20:00**  
Opéra Royal (staged)

**Rameau** *Platée*

**Mathias Vidal** Platée  
**Jean-Christophe Lanièce** Momus  
**Marc Labonnette** Cithéron  
**Enguerrand de Hys** Mercure  
**Marianne Croux** Clarine  
**Jean-Vincent Blot** Jupiter  
**Marie Perbost** Madness  
**Marie-Laure Garnier** Junon

**Ballet du Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse**  
**Le Concert Spirituel**  
**Hervé Niquet** musical director  
**Corinne and Gilles Benizio** (Shirley et Dino) directors, costumes

**Monday 13 July, 20:00**  
**Wednesday 15 July, 20:00**  
Opéra Royal (staged)

*Pasticcio: Tell me the Truth about Love*

**Lea Desandre** mezzo-soprano  
**Jakub Józef Orliński** countertenor

**Les Arts Florissants**  
**William Christie** musical director  
**Ian Burton** libretto

## Château de Versailles Spectacles



© Nicolas Chavance

A private subsidiary of the Château de Versailles, Château de Versailles Spectacles' mission is to perpetuate the tradition of shows and performing arts through exceptional events. True to its history, Château de Versailles continues today to be the backdrop for a rich cultural life and a great variety of events.

Shows and performances are programmed all year long in exceptional settings – open air shows, Versailles Fountains Shows, costume receptions – and a musical season at the Opéra Royal and the Chapelle Royale de Versailles, with operas, concerts, theatre, and ballets interpreted by world-renowned artists.

The Opéra Royal reopened in 2009, and now offers a programme of opera, music and dance performed by renowned French and international artists including Cecilia Bartoli, Philippe Jaroussky, Marc Minkowski, Raphaël Pichon, Leonardo García Alarcón, Jordi Savall, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Angelin Preljocaj, Sébastien Daucé, Franco Fagioli, Jean-Christophe Spinosi, Robert King, Hervé Niquet, William Christie, Sébastien d'Hérin, Vincent Dumestre, and others.

The Opéra Royal celebrated its tenth season from 2018-19 with the launch of a new record label, Château de Versailles Spectacles, comprising both CD and DVD recordings made during concerts taking place in the Opéra Royal and the Chapelle Royale.

Upcoming discs from the Château de Versailles Spectacles label, now in its second year, include a *Stravaganza d'amore: the Birth of Opera at the Medici Court* and Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine*, both by Raphaël Pichon and his Pygmalion ensemble.

[en.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr](http://en.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr)

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