

Château de Versailles Spectacles celebrates the Opéra Royal de Versailles' 250th Anniversary

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 announces a new season celebrating the **250th anniversary** of the **Opéra Royal**, inaugurated during the 1770 wedding feasts of Louis XVI to Marie-Antoinette, and the **350th anniversary** of the Parisian **Académie Royale de Musique**, founded by Louis XIV in 1669. Highlights of the 2019-2020 season include a new production of **Grétry's Richard Cœur de Lion** and the first contemporary opera to be mounted on the Opéra Royal's stage: **John Corigliano's The Ghosts of Versailles**.

The 19-20 season opens on **10 October** with a new production of **André Grétry's 1785 Richard Cœur de Lion** (*Richard the Lionheart*). The seldom-performed work is presented in Versailles for the first time since it became the catalyst for the dawn of the French Revolution as the rousing anthem "O Richard, O mon Roi" was sung by royalist officers at a garish banquet in October 1789. This was the last event held in the Opéra Royal during the Ancien Régime: three days later, Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette left Versailles, never to return.



Grétry's opera is based on the legend of the captive King Richard and his rescue by the troubadour Blondel. Schemes of love and politics interweave

as a loyal countess and exiles seek to besiege the castle and free the King. Hervé Niquet conducts Le Concert Spirituel in a new Château de Versailles Spectacles production with director Marshall Pynkoski from Opera Atelier Toronto, starring Rémy Mathieu, Reinoud Van Mechelen and Melody Louledjian.

The Opéra Royal mounts its first contemporary production on **4 December**, presenting the French premiere of **John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*** in a co-production with the Glimmerglass Festival. Corigliano's 1991 opera, written to mark the centenary of the Metropolitan Opera House, is set in the afterlife: at Louis XVI's court in Versailles. At its premiere it was hailed as 'a stunning success' by the New York Times.



The Opéra Royal (© Thomas Garnier)

The King placates his beheaded wife, Marie-Antoinette, by staging a new opera. Familiar characters, including Figaro and the Count Almaviva, reappear in the world of the dead in a scheming opera-within-an-opera by the ghost of Beaumarchais. Directed by Jay Lesenger, the cast includes Yelena Dyachek, Jonathan Bryan, Kayla Siembieda and Ben Schaefer, conducted by Joseph Colaneri.

The new season continues to celebrate the rich musical history of the royal courts of Louis XIV, XV and XVI. On **23-24 November**, the Opéra Royal hosts a staged production of **Francesco Cavalli's 1662 *Ercole Amante* (*Hercules in Love*)**, commissioned for the wedding of Louis XIV and Maria Theresa of Spain. Cavalli's premiere was the most extravagant opera production the French court had ever seen, including a theatre built specifically for the purpose. Raphaël Pichon and his ensemble Pygmalion provide music for the new production, a coproduction with the Opéra Comique and National Opera of Bordeaux.

A fully-staged production of ***Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit* (*The Royal Night Ballet*)** on **15-17 May** revives the court ballet which the 15-year old Sun King danced in 1653. The ballet includes arias from Rossi's Orfeo, Cavalli's Ercole Amante, and music by Boësset and Lambert, under the musical direction of Sébastien Daucé and his Ensemble Correspondances. A special performance on **16 May 2020** marks 250 years to the day since the Opéra Royal was inaugurated with a performance of Lully's *Persée* in honour of the marriage of Marie-Antoinette to the Dauphin.



Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit (© Philippe Delval)

Molière's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* is revived from **11 June** with the original music by Lully, in the 2019 production to be released on DVD on the new Château de Versailles Spectacles label. Directed by Denis Podalydès, the music is recreated by Christophe Coin from the Ensemble la Révérence.

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.



La Périchole
(© Vincent Begold)

The staged season at the Opéra Royal is completed with performances including **Offenbach's *La Périchole*** on 19-22 December (with Marc Minkowski and Les Musiciens du Louvre), **Mozart's *La Flûte Enchantée*** (sung in French under Hervé Niquet on 10-14 January), and **Leclair's *Scylla et Glaucus*** (with Nicholas McGegan, the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and New York Baroque Dance Company on 25-26 April). The season finishes with a staged **Pasticcio** with Robert Carsen, William Christie, and Les Arts Florissants on 13 and 15 July.

The stage of the Opéra Royal plays host to numerous concert performances throughout the season, including masterpieces by Lully and Rameau. On 15 November, La Chapelle Harmonique and director Valentin Tournet present **Rameau's *Les Indes Galantes***, with his ***Les Boréades*** presented by Václav Luks and Collegium 1704 on 24 January. **Lully's *Cadmus et Hermione*** – the first opera he wrote for the Académie Royale de Musique – is heard in concert on 26 November with Vincent Dumestre and Le Poème Harmonique.

Lully's *Isis* is brought to life with Christophe Rousset and Les Talens Lyriques on 10 December, while Lully's tragédie-ballet ***Psyché*** is echoed in a concert performance of English composer **Matthew Locke's** 1675 semi-opera of the same name. The first semi-opera conceived from scratch, the work draws its plot from the Classical legend of Cupid and Psyche and is performed by Sébastien Daucé and his Ensemble Correspondances on 26 January.



Christophe Rousset (© Eric Larrayadiou)

There are further opportunities to hear French operatic rarities in **André-Cardinal Destouches' *Sémiramis***, recreated 300 years after its original performances by Les Ombres with Margaux Blanchard and Sylvain Sartre on 4 March, and **Henry Desmarest's** 1694 ***Circé*** on 28 March with Sébastien d'Hérin and Les Nouveaux Caractères. Les Arts Florissants and William Christie return to present **Mozart's *La Finta Giardiniera*** on 5 November, while John Eliot Gardiner conducts **Berlioz' *Benvenuto Cellini*** with the Monteverdi Choir and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique on 8 September to mark the 150th anniversary of the composer's death.



Chapelle Royale (© JM-Manai)

Sacred concerts held in the Chapelle Royale de Versailles complement productions and concert performances in the Opéra Royal. **Grands Motets** by **Michel-Richard de Lalande** (8 December), Pierre Robert (31 January), Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (7 July) and Lully (11 July) frame the liturgical season, which opens with Gaétan Jarry and Ensemble Marguerite Louise. On 17 November, they offer musical depictions of tears including those of the Virgin Mary and Peter in ***Larmes de Grâce***, including music by **Charpentier, Carissimi, Brossard, and Lotti**; they return with **Charpentier's *Missa Assumpta est Maria*** on 29 March.

Campra's *Requiem*, likely written for performance in the Chapelle Royale, is heard there once again on 20 November under the baton of Emmanuelle Haïm and Le Concert d'Astrée. **Handel's** 1708 Easter oratorio ***La Resurrezione*** is performed on 24 November by Sébastien d'Hérin and his Les Nouveaux Caractères, who return with **Mozart's** lesser-known 1785 ***Requiem - Davide Penitente*** on 17 January. A Christmas programme in the Chapelle Royale features **Bach's cantatas** and ***Magnificat*** (performed on 20 December by Valentin Tournet and La Chapelle Harmonique), and **Praetorius' *Messe de Noël*** (performed on 21 December by Paul McCreesh and Gabrieli).

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. On 17 October Lucile Richardot offers a portrait of the 17th-century court singer Anne de la Barre, one of the first women to be part of King Louis XIV's Musique de la Chambre, and further recitals taking place across the palace include **Reinoud Van Mechelen** (21 November), **Philippe Jaroussky** (9 March), **Cecilia Bartoli** (30 March), and **Renaud Capuçon** (6 June).

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-Ange 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.



© Agathe Poupenny



The stage mechanisms (© Thomas Garnier)

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

Sacred music-making at the Château de Versailles 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. Musicians of the Royal Court, including François Couperin, performed and played the organ there.

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.

Explore the Opéra Royal and the Chapelle Royale in 360° HD here:
https://www.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr/tag/opera-royal_t60/1

Selected Listings

Full season listings available at:
en.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr

10, 11, 12, 13 October

Opéra Royal (staged)

Grétry *Richard Cœur de Lion*

Rémy Mathieu Blondel
Reinoud Van Mechelen Richard
Melody Louledjian Laurette
Marie Perbost Antonio, the
Countess
Geoffroy Buffière Sir Williams
Jean-Gabriel Saint-Martin Urbain,
Florestan, Mathurin
François Pardailhé Guillot, Charles
Cécile Achille Mrs. Mathurin,
Collette

Le Concert Spirituel

Hervé Niquet musical director
Marshall Pynkoski director

20 November

Chapelle Royale

Campra *Requiem*

Marie Perbost soprano
Samuel Boden countertenor
Zachary Wilder bass
Victor Sicard bass

Le Concert d'Astrée chœur et orchestre

Emmanuelle Haïm director

21 November

Salon d'Hercule

Dumesny, haute-contre de Lully

Reinoud Van Mechelen
countertenor, director
A nocte temporis

23, 24 November

Opéra Royal (staged)

Cavalli *Ercole Amante*

Nahuel di Piero Ercole
Anna Bonitatibus Giunone
Giuseppina Bridelli Dejanira
Francesca Aspromonte Jole
Krystian Adam Hyllo
Eugénie Lefebvre Pasithea Clerica,
Terza Grazia, Secondo Pianeta
Giulia Semenzato Venere, Bellezza,
Cinthia
Luca Tittoto Nettuno, Eutyro,
Tevere
Ray Chenez Il Paggio
Dominique Visse Licco
Marie Planinsek Prima Grazia
Perrine Devillers Seconda Grazia,
Primo Pianeta
Corinne Bahuaud Terzo Pianeta
Olivier Coiffet Prima Aura
Renaud Bres Seconda Aura, a
Sacrificatore
Nicolas Brooymans Ruscello,
Busiride, a Sacrificatore

Pygmalion

Raphaël Pichon musical director
Valérie Lesort, Christian Hecq
directors

4, 5, 7, 8 December

Opéra Royal (staged)

Corigliano *The Ghosts Of Versailles*
FRENCH PREMIERE

Yelena Dyachek Marie Antoinette
Jonathan Bryan Beaumarchais
Kayla Siembieda Susanna
Ben Schaefer Figaro
Brian Wallin Count Almaviva

Joanna Latini Rosina

Orchestre de l'Opéra Royal
Joseph Colaneri musical director
Jay Lesenger director, dramaturgy

8 December

Chapelle Royale

Lalande *Grands Motets*

Caroline Danguin-Bardot, Caroline Weynants, Adèle Carlier, Jeanne Lefort sopranos

Lucile Richardot, Marie

Pouchelon mezzo sopranos

David Lee, Clément Debieuvre,

Randol Rodriguez, Davy Cornillot,

Constantin Goubet, Antonin

Rondepierre tenors

Étienne Bazola, René Ramos

Premier baritones

Thierry Cartier, Renaud Bres,

Emmanuel Vistorky, Guillaume

Olry basses

Ensemble Correspondances

Sébastien Daucé director

10 December

Opéra Royal (concert)

Lully *Isis*

Eve-Maud Hubeaux Isis, Io, Thalie

Bénédicte Tauran Fame,

Melpomène, Mycène, Junon

Ambroisine Bré Calliope, Iris,

Syrinx, Hébé

Robert Getchell Apollo, Pirante, la

Furie

Fabien Hyon Mercure

Edwin Crossley-Mercer Jupiter,

Pan

Philippe Estèphe Argus, Neptune

Aimery Lefèvre Hierax

Julie Calbete Nymph

Julie Vercauteren Nymph

Les Talens Lyriques

Christophe Rousset director

Chœur de chambre de Namur

19, 20, 21, 22 December

Opéra Royal (staged)

Offenbach *La Périchole*

Aude Extremo Périchole

Stanislas de Barbeyrac Piquillo

Alexandre Duhamel Don Andrés de
Rebeira

Eric Huchet Don Miguel de
Panatellas

Anas Seguin Don Pedro de
Hinoyosa

Sébastien Monti first notary, the
Marquis

François Pardailhé second notary

Olivia Doray Cousin Guadalupe,
Manuelita

Julie Pasturaud Cousin Berginalla,
Frasquinella

Marie-Thérèse Keller Lady-in-
waiting Ninetta

Adriana Bignagni Lesca Cousin
Mastrilla, Brambilla

**Chœur de l'Opéra National de
Bordeaux**

Les Musiciens du Louvre

Marc Minkowski musical director

Romain Gilbert director,
dramaturgy

20 December

Chapelle Royale

Bach *Cantata 'Nun komm, der
Heiden Heiland'*

Bach *Cantata 'Herz und Mund und
Tat und Leben'*

Bach *Magnificat*

La Chapelle Harmonique

Valentin Tournet director

21 December

Chapelle Royale

Praetorius *Messe de Noël*

**Les Pages et les Chantres du
Centre de musique baroque de
Versailles**

(Olivier Schneebeli, director)

Gabrieli Consorts and Players

Paul McCreech director

10, 11, 12, 14 January

Opéra Royal (staged)

Mozart *Die Zauberflöte*

Florie Valiquette Pamina
Mathias Vidal Tamino
Marc Scoffoni Papageno
Chantal Santon-Jeffery Queen of the Night
Tomislav Lavoie Sarastro
Pauline Feracci Papagena
Olivier Trommenschlager Monostatos
Suzanne Jérôme First Lady
Marie Gautrot Second Lady
Mélodie Ruvio Third Lady
Matthieu Lecroart The Speaker
François Pardailhé First Priest, Man in armour
Jean-Christophe Lanièce Second Priest, Man in armour

Le Concert Spirituel
Hervé Niquet musical director
Cécile Roussat, Julien Lubek director, scenography

24 January
Opéra Royal (concert)

Rameau *Les Boréades*

Deborah Cachet Alphise
Caroline Weynants Sémire, Love, Polimnie
Mathias Vidal Abaris
Benedikt Kristjánsson Calisis
Benoît Arnould Adamas
Tomáš Šelc Borilée
Nicolas Brooymans Borée
Lukáš Zeman Apollo

Collegium 1704
Václav Luks director

28 March
Opéra Royal (concert)

Desmaret *Circé*

Gaëlle Arquez Circé
Caroline Mutel Astérie
Hélène Carpentier Eolie
Sébastien Droy Ulysse
Nicolas Courjal Elphéonor

Les Nouveaux Caractères
Sébastien d'Hérin director

29 March
Chapelle Royale

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

30 March
Opéra Royal

Vivaldi recital

Cecilia Bartoli mezzo soprano
Les Musiciens du Prince
Andres Gabetta conductor, violin

25, 26 April
Opéra Royal (staged)

Leclair *Scylla et Glaucus*

Véronique Gens Circé
Chantal Santon-Jeffery Scylla
Judith Van Wanroij Vénus, Témire, Dorine
Aaron Sheehan Glaucus
Douglas Williams Licas

Les Chantres du Centre de musique baroque de Versailles (Olivier Schneebeli, director)
Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra
Nicholas McGegan musical director
New York Baroque Dance Compagny
Catherine Turocy director, choreography

15, 16, 17 May
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

Davy Cornillot Endymion

Etienne Bazola Sleep

Renaud Brès Ercole

Nicolas Brooymans Grand
Sacrificer

Ensemble Correspondances

Sébastien Daucé musical director

Francesca Lattuada director,
choreography

11-21 June

Opéra Royal (staged)

Molière / Lully *Le Bourgeois
Gentilhomme*

Ensemble La Révérence

Christophe Coïn musical director

Emmanuel Bourdieu director

Éric Ruf scenography

26, 27, 28, 30 June

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

13, 15 July

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

Rebecca Howell choreography

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 include *La Messe du Roi Soleil* (Lully, Couperin, Delalande, Guilain, Philidor) by Gaétan Jarry, Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* by Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Biber's *Missa Salisburgensis* & Lully's *Te Deum* by Vaclav Luks, Lully's *Phaéton* by Vincent Dumestre, *Récital d'Orgue* (Bach) by Ton Koopman, and Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine* by Raphael Pichon.

<https://en.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr/>

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