

# Les Arts Florissants

William Christie, artistic director

Thursday, November 29, 2001, 8 pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## A Concert of Christmas Music by Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1645–1704)

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### Antiennes <<O>> de l'Avent, H. 36 to H. 43

(The "O" Antiphons of Advent from the Dominican Antiphonarium,  
performed with five of Charpentier's Noëls pour les instruments, H. 531 and H. 534)

Salutation on the Eve of the <<O>> Antiphons: O salutaris hostia

Noël: O créateur, H. 531, No. 1

First <<O>>: O sapientia

Second <<O>>: O Adonai

Noël: Vous qui désirez sans fin, H. 531, No. 3

Third <<O>>: O radix Jesse

Noël: Les Bourgeois de Châtre, H. 534, No. 1

Fourth <<O>>: O clavis David

Noël: Où s'en vont ces gais bergers, H. 534, No. 2

Fifth <<O>>: O Oriens

Sixth <<O>>: O Rex gentium

Noël: Or nous dites Marie, H. 534, No. 4

Seventh <<O>>: O Emmanuel Rex

### In nativitatem Domine canticum, H. 416

Prélude

Usque quo avertis faciem tuam Domine

Chorus Justorum: Memorare

Consolare, filia Sion

Utinam dirumperes cœlos

Prope est ut veniat Dominus

Rorate cœli de super

Nuit

Réveil des Bergers

Chorus Pastorum: Cœli aperti sunt

L'Ange: Nolite timere

Gloria in altissimis Deo

Transeamus usque Bethlehem

Marche des Bergers  
O infans  
Chorus Ultimus: Exultemus

INTERMISSION

Messe de minuit pour Noël, H. 9

(Midnight Mass for Christmas, performed with three of  
Charpentier's Noëls pour les instruments, H. 531 and H. 534)

First Kyrie

Noël: Joseph est bien marié, H. 534, No. 3

Christe eleison

Second Kyrie

Noël: Une jeune pucelle, H. 534, No. 6

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo

Domine Deus

Qui tollis peccata mundi

Quoniam tu solus sanctus

Amen

Credo

Credo in unum Deum

Deum de Deo

Et incarnatus est

Crucifixus

Et ascendit in cœlum

Et in Spiritum Sanctum

Qui locutus est per Prophetas

Et unum, sanctum catholicam

Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum

Et vitam venturi sæculi

Offertoire: Noël: Laissez paître vos bêtes, H. 531, No. 2

First Sanctus

Second Sanctus

Third Sanctus

Benedictus qui venit

First Agnus Dei

Second Agnus Dei

Third Agnus Dei

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MARC-ANTOINE CHARPENTIER:  
A PROFILE

Before charting the outline of Charpentier's career, it is worth noting the central role played by American scholars and performers in the modern revival of interest in the composer's work, which lay virtually ignored for more than two centuries. Claude Crussard's pioneering biography, published in Paris in 1945, kindled interest in the composer here in America and attracted the particular devotion of Hugh Wiley Hitchcock. The completion in 1954 of Hitchcock's doctoral thesis on Charpentier's Latin oratorios was followed by over a dozen related articles and monographs and an invaluable complete catalogue, the latter lending its compiler's initials to the "H" numbers used to classify the composer's works. Meanwhile, James R. Anthony provided considerable contextual background on French music during Charpentier's lifetime, and William Christie translated scholarly editions of his works into the practical experience of performances and recordings, setting everything from sacred works and small-scale cantatas to the grandiose opera *Médée* before a public eager to discover a hitherto neglected masterpiece.

Recent biographical and archival research by Catherine Cessac and Patricia Ranum have added details to the picture of Charpentier's life and works, including a plausible birth year of 1643 and information on his family and early years. Young Marc-Antoine's father, Louis Charpentier, was a skilled copyist and calligrapher who almost certainly enjoyed the patronage of the influential Guise family, ducal heirs of Lorraine. His son's musical talents were sufficiently developed at the time of Louis' death in 1662 to merit the decision that Marc-Antoine should leave Paris to study in Rome for a number of years, apparently with Giacomo Carissimi, among the most gifted Italian composers of his generation and an unquestionably influential teacher. It has been suggested that Marie de Lorraine, Mademoiselle Guise, financed Charpentier's extended Roman sojourn; certainly, he entered her household services as maître de musique, or master of music, on returning to Paris towards the end of the 1660s.

In 1672, Charpentier began a collaboration with the playwright Molière, who had recently broken his musical partnership with Louis XIV's favored composer, Jean-Baptiste Lully. Much to Lully's chagrin, Charpentier wrote incidental music for several works by Molière, including *Le Mariage Forcé* and *Le Malade Imaginaire*, and continued to compose for the Comédie-Française after Molière's death in 1673. Although Lully effectively remained the dominant musical force on the French stage until his death in 1687, Charpentier's increasingly ambitious pastorals, divertissements, and operas—*La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, *David et Jonathas*, and *Médée* among them—secured his reputation as an expressive and dramatic setter of words to music.

Charpentier's Italian experience, although of clear benefit to his musical development, proved of little immediate use in his native land. After Lully's appointment in 1661 to the post of Surintendant of the King's Chamber, French musical styles were officially upheld as the exclusive and only appropriate means of composition; nevertheless, Lully and his royal master were unable to proscribe Italianate forms of music absolutely, especially among the significant groups of Parisian church men who favored intellectual and cultural exchanges with Italy.

The art-loving Marie de Lorraine's support for the Italian aesthetic, coupled with the Guise family's habitual contrariness, ensured that Charpentier enjoyed a privileged career outside the royal favor. The composer responded by producing a series of liturgical and sacred works for Mademoiselle de Guise; he also added to the stock of pieces for the various churches, convents, and other religious institutions under the patronage of Louis XIV's first cousin and confidante, Elisabeth d'Orléans. She also endowed two educational Parisian establishments, the Institut du Père Nicolas Barrévoué à l'Enfant, for the relief of girls from poor families, and the Hôtel de l'Enfant Jésus, for the sons of the nobility. It appears that several of Charpentier's many works for the Christmas season were conceived for these two academies, appropriately so given the dedication of each to the infant Jesus.

As one of the two most important feasts of the church year, Christmas inspired Charpentier to produce a fine and large body of liturgical pieces and works commenting on the nativity story. In addition to the seasonal compositions he supplied to Marie de Lorraine and Elisabeth d'Orléans, he also created a variety of Christmas works for the Jesuit church of Saint-Louis on the Rue Saint-Antoine—where he served as master of the chapel from 1684 to 1698—and in the last five years of his life for the renowned boys choir of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. The works on this evening's program most probably date from the early 1690s, and reflect the composer's clear affection for the Christmas period and its traditional musical blend of popular and high devotion.

Antienne «O» de l'Avent, H. 36 to H. 43 ("O" Antiphons of Advent)

(for soloists, chorus, strings, and continuo;

performed with five of Charpentier's Noël pour les instruments, H. 531 and H. 534)

The "O" Antiphons form a group of seven ancient texts associated with the Vespers Magnificat, each of which begins with an exclamatory "O" and proceeds to unfold a short prayer. They had become part of the Roman liturgy by the 9th century, one sung in company with the Magnificat on each of the seven days before Christmas Eve. In reverse order,

the initial letters of the antiphons provide the acrostic EROCRAS, the Latin translation of Christ's promise to his followers: "I will be with you tomorrow."

Charpentier's manuscript informs that his "O" Antiphon settings were made according to the use of the Roman rather than the recently reformed Parisian breviary, suggesting that these works were composed for his Jesuit masters. Further source studies confirm that these Advent antiphons, with a prefatory "salutation" ("O salutaris hostia"), were completed by Charpentier in the early 1690s. It is significant that the manuscript is preserved alongside two groups of instrumental carols, or *noëls pour les instruments*, by Charpentier. In fact, in his manuscript for these pieces, Charpentier specifically indicates that certain of these *noëls* should be performed between the antiphons, in accordance with custom—a practice that is observed in tonight's performance.

Tradition and simplicity are upheld in each of Charpentier's "O" Antiphons, lending an atmosphere of contemplation and mystery. The opening "O" and first line of each text is usually presented in long notes, thereafter austere revealing the substance of the antiphon prayer in simple counterpoint. Jesus is summoned in more robust fashion in the second part of each antiphon with the joyful request "veni," often presented in triple time and in contrasting mood to what has gone before. The final phrases invariably invoke the quiet certainty of belief in Christ's ministry.

Charpentier's subtle scoring adds to the eloquence of these settings, with the first three antiphons delivered by a trio of male voices with basso continuo accompaniment; the fourth and fifth employing three solo voices, chorus, and an instrumental ensemble; the sixth introducing a hint of secular style with high male voice, violin duet, and basso continuo; and the seventh set for three male voices and basso continuo. The composer introduces light and shade to each setting by shrewd expression of individual words (such as the second antiphon's description of the burning bush), by his use of textural contrast and harmonic daring (as is the fourth), and by his careful handling of the brief silences.

*In nativatem Domine canticum*, H. 416

(for soloists, chorus, flutes, strings, and continuo)

During the late 17th century, visitors were attracted to the church of Saint-Louis in Paris not just because of its splendid Baroque architecture but also because of the dramatic preaching style of Brother Louis Bourdaloue (1632–1704). The church, known today as Saint-Paul-Saint-Louis, had been modeled on the Gesù in Rome, and its many ornate details and lavish statuary contributed to its theatrical visual impact. Here the Jesuit order celebrated festal Masses and other services with every conceivable adornment, as reported by one particularly captivated eyewitness: "After the midday meal, we were at the Jesuits' church. All around were seen more than 4,000 lighted candles, not counting the candelabra that illuminated the altar, depicting heaven and filled with figures of angels. ...Through the use of machinery and mechanical devices, the Host was lowered into the hands of the Bishop. ...There was also a magnificent concert of music made up of the best of the kings' singers and reinforced by those of that very church, who are excellent. ...The king, the queen, the cardinal, and most of the courtiers attended."

Bourdaloue's grand rhetorical sermons added to the crowd appeal of Saint-Louis, especially during Advent and at Easter, when every one, from the members of the royal family to the lesser nobility and religious snobs, would add to the traffic chaos of the Rue Saint-Antoine. It appears likely that Charpentier wrote his Latin nativity oratorio, *In nativatem Domine canticum*, H. 416, for a performance

at Saint-Louis during Christmas in the early 1690s. The text (adapted from Psalm 12:1, supplemented by passages from Luke 2:10–12) tells the well-loved nativity story of the Judean shepherd and the angel announcing Christ's coming. Charpentier animates his score with choruses of shepherds, angels, and the righteous, and there are solo parts for the Announcing Angel and for a single shepherd.

*In nativatem Domine canticum* opens with a short instrumental prelude, through which the composer establishes an atmosphere of reverence and mystery. The portentous tenor recitative, "Usque quo," gives way to the prolonged "Memorare testamenti," in which the Chorus of the Righteous plea for salvation. This is followed by an exquisite bass solo, "Consolare, filia Sion," complete with accompanying parts for two flutes and two violins. Two further choruses frame another bass solo, "Prope est ut veniat Dominus," before Charpentier requests a "petit silence" in his manuscript score. This moment of tranquility sets the scene for "Night," a lullaby-like instrumental interlude that beautifully depicts the nocturnal scene of the shepherds at rest. The theatrical tastes of the Saint-Louis congregation would have been fully satisfied by the variety of moods and narrative effects presented in Charpentier's score, not least the sudden contrast of "Night" with the bold rhythms and melodic shapes of the ensuing "Shepherds' Awakening"—a stirring wake-up call to the shepherds—and the apparition of the Announcing Angel that follows. Now the full company of angels sing praises to God, "Gloria in altissimis Deo," and call for peace on earth, their sentiments reflected in the confident "Shepherds' March," which stirringly depicts their journey to Bethlehem. The combined choruses pay

homage to the infant Jesus in music of sublime stillness—"O infans"—after which Charpentier crafts an elegant chanson, "Pastores undique." The work concludes with a chorus of exultation and joy at the glad tidings of Jesus' nativity.

Messe de minuit pour Noël, H. 9

(for soloists, chorus, flutes, strings, and continuo;

performed with three of Charpentier's Noëls pour les instruments, H. 531 and H. 534)

Popular tunes were frequently adapted, recycled, and parodied by composers of church music in the 15th and 16th centuries, providing fresh material on which to base new liturgical works and introducing widely known musical themes, often secular in origin, to the act of worship. The practice had long been in decline by 1684, when Charpentier became music master to the church of Saint-Louis, the main Parisian church of the Jesuit order. It had survived, however, in the form of the instrumental Noël, in which traditional Christmas songs were set as variations

for keyboard or occasionally for instrumental ensemble. The composers Lebègue, Gigault, and Geoffroy, close contemporaries of Charpentier, created several fine Noël transcriptions for keyboard, while Charpentier himself added to the repertoire of Noëls for ensemble.

Although liturgical custom has accepted the singing of Noëls at the Midnight Mass for Christmas since the 12th century, established Noël melodies appear not to have been used as the actual music material for Mass settings. But this is precisely what Charpentier does in his *Messe de minuit pour Noël*, H. 9, choosing 11 Christmas songs and weaving them into the fabric of the composition, their melodies subsequently imitated and developed in the vocal writing. In addition, in tonight's performance, following the composer's own indications, two of Charpentier's instrumental Noëls are inserted at different points in the Kyrie. (As with the "O" Antiphons heard earlier, the insertion of such instrumental Noëls into the nativity-related choral works was current in Charpentier's time.) The first of these Noëls, "Joseph est bien marié" (H. 534, No. 3), is played between the Kyrie and Christe, while "Une jeune pucelle" (H. 534, No. 6) rounds off the whole Kyrie section. A third Noël, "Laissez paître vos bêtes" (H. 531, No. 2) was designated by the composer to be performed during the Offertory, between the Credo and the Sanctus.

Hitchcock's catalogue tentatively dates the Midnight Mass to the early 1690s; Catherine Cessac has since suggested that the work was written for Christmas 1694. Whenever the first performance, Charpentier's Jesuit employers must surely have approved of the composer's bold use of carols blessed with a particularly childlike innocence and directness of expression, and also of his practice of preserving the spirit of the original tunes. "In this Mass," writes Cessac, "Charpentier achieved a perfect synthesis between the secular and the liturgical, between popular art and learned writing." Her observation is immediately reflected in the opening pages of the Kyrie, which offer the anonymous Noël "Joseph est bien marié" in an instrumental transcription that every member of the congregation at the church of Saint-Louis would have recognized, just as readily as Anglican worshippers today would recognize "O come, all ye faithful" or "While shepherds watched." Likewise, the carol "Or nous dites Marie" translates seamlessly to serve as Charpentier's Christe, just as an unadorned instrumental version of "Une jeune pucelle" provides thematic material for the choir's final Kyrie statement.

Charpentier explicitly labels the titles of each of his chosen Noëls in the manuscript score of the Midnight Mass. Besides the aforementioned examples in the Kyrie, the Gloria makes use of "Les Bourgeois Châtre" and "Où s'en vont ces gais bergers" (heard earlier during the "O" Antiphons); the Credo employs "Vous qui désirez sans fin," "Voici le jour solonnel de Noël," and "A la venue de Noël"; the Sanctus opens with "O Dieu quen'étais je en vie," while the Agnus Dei quotes the gentle, dance-like "A minuit ut fait un réveil." For the central statement of church dogma, concerning Christ's incarnation, earthly ministry, and crucifixion, Charpentier composed entirely original and appropriately austere, contemplative music. The blend of musical symbols, effectively placing popular tunes alongside passages deliberately fashioned to honor the Holy Trinity, projects a powerful metaphor for the earthly and heavenly Christ, balancing the celebratory mood of Advent with a more profound meditation upon the text of the Midnight Mass.

—Andrew Stewart © 2000

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William Christie, harpsichordist, conductor, musicologist, and teacher, is the inspiration behind one of the most exciting musical ventures of the last 20 years. His pioneering work has led to a renewed appreciation of Baroque music, notably of 17th- and 18th-century French repertoire, which he has introduced to an ever-growing audience.

Born in Buffalo, New York, Christie studied at Harvard and Yale Universities, and has lived in France since 1971. The major turning point in his career came in 1979, when he founded Les Arts Florissants. As director of this vocal and instrumental ensemble, Christie soon made his mark as a musician and a man of the theater, in both the concert hall and the opera house, with new interpretations of largely neglected or forgotten repertoire. Major public recognition came in 1987 with the production of Lully's *Atys* at the Opéra Comique in Paris, a production that went on to tour internationally with great success.

William Christie's affinity for the French Baroque is indisputable, whether it be the music of Charpentier, Rameau, Couperin, Mondonville, Campra, or Montéclair. He is equally at home with tragédies-lyriques as with opéra-ballets, with French motets as with music of the court. His enthusiasm for French music has not precluded the exploration of other European repertoire, however, and he has given many acclaimed performances of works by Italian composers such as Monteverdi, Rossi, and Scarlatti. Purcell, Handel, and Mozart have an equal place in Christie's affections, as his extensive discography demonstrates. He has made over 70 recordings (many of which have won major awards), initially with Harmonia Mundi, and since 1994 with Warner (Erato), with whom he has an exclusive contract.

William Christie has a busy operatic career, and his collaborations with renowned stage directors—including Jean-Marie Villégier, Robert Carsen, Alfredo Arias, Jorge Lavelli, Graham Vick, Adrian Noble, and Andrei Serban—are always significant events on the musical calendar. Among his most outstanding operatic achievements are *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1996), *Les Indes galantes* and *Alcina* (1999) at the Opéra de Paris; *Médée* (1993) at the Théâtre de Caen; *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1993) at the Opéra du Rhin; and *King Arthur* (1995) at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. His many engagements with Les Arts Florissants at the Aix-en-Provence Festival include *Castor et Pollux* (1991), *Fairy Queen* (1992), *The Magic Flute* (1994), *Orlando* (1997), and most recently, the highly successful *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* by Monteverdi, which will tour to Lausanne, Paris, Caen, Bordeaux, New York, and Vienna in 2002.

Much in demand as a guest conductor, William Christie receives regular invitations from prestigious opera festivals such as Glyndebourne, where he has conducted the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in productions of *Theodora* and *Rodelinda* by Handel. He will conduct the revival of *Rodelinda* at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris in January. Other guest appearances include the Zurich Opernhaus, where he recently conducted Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*. In October 2002, he will be the first guest conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic under Simon Rattle's directorship.

William Christie is equally committed to the training and professional development of young artists, and has nurtured several generations of singers and instrumentalists over the last 25 years. Indeed, many of today's leading Baroque conductors began their careers with Les Arts Florissants. Between 1982 and 1995, Christie was a professor at the Paris Conservatoire, with responsibility for the early music class. He is often invited to give masterclasses, and to lead summer schools such as Aix-en-Provence and Ambronay. His latest venture in the field of training and development, *Le Jardin des Voix*, is a European workshop for young singers, which will take place late next year.

William Christie was awarded the Légion d'Honneur in 1993, and is an officer in the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. He was granted French citizenship in 1995.

Les Arts Florissants is one of the most well-known and respected early music groups in the world. Performing in an historically informed manner, the ensemble was founded in 1979 by the Franco-American harpsichordist and conductor William Christie, and takes its name from a short opera by Marc-Antoine Charpentier.

Les Arts Florissants is largely responsible for the resurgence of interest in 17th- and 18th-century French repertoire, and in European music of this period more generally. This was repertoire that had, for the most part, been neglected (much of it unearthed from collections in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France), but which is now widely performed and admired.

Since the acclaimed production of Lully's *Atys* at the Opéra Comique in Paris, it is in the field of opera where Les Arts Florissants has found most success. Notable productions include works by Rameau (*Les Indes galantes* in 1990 and 1999, *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1996), Charpentier (*Médée* in 1993 and 1994), Handel (*Orlando* in 1993, *Acis and Galatea* in 1996, *Semele* in 1996, *Alcina* in 1999), Purcell (*King Arthur* in 1995), Mozart (*The Magic Flute* in 1994, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at the Opéra du Rhin in 1995), and Monteverdi (the much-praised *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* at Aix-en-Provence in July 2000).

The ensemble has collaborated on projects with renowned stage directors including Jean-Marie Villégier, Robert Carsen, Alfredo Arias, Pier Luigi Pizzi, Jorge Lavelli, Adrian Noble, Andrei Serban, and Graham Vick, as well as with choreographers Francine Lancelot, Béatrice Massin, Ana Yepes, Shirley Wynne, Maguy Marin, François Raffinot, and Jiri Kylian, to name a few.

Les Arts Florissants has an equally high profile in the concert hall and on disc, as its many acclaimed performances illustrate. The ensemble's repertoire includes concert performances of operas (*Zoroastre*, *les fêtes d'Hébé* by Rameau;

Idoménée by Campra; Jephté by Montéclair; Il Sant'Alessio by Landi; Orfeo by Rossi), secular chamber works (Actéon, Les plaisirs de Versailles, Orphée aux Enfers by Charpentier; Dido and Aeneas by Purcell), and sacred music (the Grands Motets by Rameau, Mondonville, and Desmarest; Handel oratorios such as Messiah, Israel in Egypt, and Theodora), not to mention a large number of choral works. Les Arts Florissants has also touched on the contemporary repertoire with the creation of Motets III—Hunc igitur terrorem de Betsy Jolas on the occasion of the group's 20th anniversary.

The ensemble has an impressive discography. After making more than 40 recordings for Harmonia Mundi, Les Arts Florissants signed an exclusive contract with Warner (Erato) in 1994 and has since recorded over 20 discs, many of which have won awards (including the Gramophone Award, which the group has received four times). Recent recordings include La guirlande and Zéphyre by Rameau, and Noël's by Charpentier, which was released last month.

For more than 10 years, Les Arts Florissants has had a residency at the Théâtre de Caen, and each season the group presents a concert series in the Basse-Normandie region. The ensemble also tours widely, both within France and internationally, and is a frequent ambassador for French culture (it is regularly invited to the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Lincoln Center in New York, and to the Barbican Centre in London, for example). Forthcoming international projects include a collaboration with the Philharmonie in Berlin in 2002 and a tour of Japan and Southeast Asia in 2003.

Les Arts Florissants is funded by the French Ministry of Culture, the Town of Caen, and the Conseil Régional de Basse-Normandie. Its principal sponsor is the global financial services company MORGAN STANLEY DEAN WITTER.

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