



Above: Théotime Langlois de Swarte. Photo by Marco Borggreve.

Below: Les Arts Florissants. Photo by Julien Benhamou.



Wednesday, March 19, 2025, 7:30pm
Zellerbach Hall

Les Arts Florissants

Théotime Langlois de Swarte, *violin soloist*

Vivaldi's The Four Seasons at 300

- Claudio MONTEVERDI (1567–1643) *Adoramus te*, SV 289 (transcription) (1620)
- Antonio VIVALDI (1678–1741) Concerto *Madrigalesco* for strings and
basso continuo in D minor, RV 129 (c. 1720)
Adagio – Allegro – Adagio – Without indication
- Marco UCCELLINI (1603–1680) *Aria sopra la Bergamasca*, Op. 3, Aria 5 (1642)
- VIVALDI Concerto in D minor, RV 813 (ca. 1705–1710)
Allegro – Adagio – Allegro – Adagio –
Andante e piano – Largo – Allegro
- Francesco GEMINIANI (1687–1762) Concerto Grosso No. 12 in D minor,
Follia (after Corelli) (1729)
- Le quattro stagioni (The Four Seasons)* (1725)
- VIVALDI Violin Concerto in E major, Op. 8, No. 1,
RV 269, *La primavera (Spring)*
Allegro – Largo – Allegro
- VIVALDI Violin Concerto in G minor, Op. 8, No. 2,
RV 315, *L'estate (Summer)*
Allegro non molto – Adagio – Presto

INTERMISSION

- VIVALDI Overture to *La fida ninfa (The Faithful
Nymph)* in F major, RV 714 (1732) —
Violin Concerto in F major, Op. 8, No. 3,
RV 293, *L'autunno (Autumn)*
Allegro – Adagio molto – Allegro
- VIVALDI Grave from Violin Concerto
in B-flat major, RV 370 —
Violin Concerto in F minor, Op. 8, No. 4,
RV 297, *L'inverno (Winter)*
Allegro non molto – Largo – Allegro

*Both Les Arts Florissants and Théotime Langlois de Swarte
record exclusively for Harmonia Mundi.*

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A colorful figure in fascinating Baroque Venice who captivated audiences with his extravagance and virtuoso violin playing, Antonio Vivaldi was one of the most influential musicians of 18th-century Europe.

Born in Venice in 1678, Vivaldi quickly became violin master, choirmaster, and then concertmaster at the Ospedale della Pietà. There, he explored a wide range of musical activity, demonstrating an incomparable talent, notably in the invention of the solo concerto, which enchanted 18th-century musical Europe and inspired virtually all subsequent composers. His career also flourished in opera, particularly at the Teatro San Angelo in Venice, but also in Mantua, Rome, and Vienna.

Le quattro stagioni (*The Four Seasons*), whose 300th anniversary we are celebrating this year, played an essential role in the composer's fame. With its descriptive and imaginative writing, these four concertos anticipate the programmatic music that would prevail among later Romantic-era composers, and even included descriptive sonnets to help illustrate the music for performers and listeners. For violinist Théotime Langlois de Swarte, this music embodies the essence of spirituality, a metaphysical work evoking life and death, with moments of great gentleness as well as extreme violence. Through his interpretation, de Swarte seeks to capture the drama characteristic of Venetian arts: expressive density, operatic and theatrical emotion, and jubilant energy.

The works complementing the *Seasons* on our program serve to highlight musicians who influenced Vivaldi's approach, and one he in turn inspired.

The transcription of Claudio Monteverdi's *Adoramus te*, SV 289 is closely linked to Vivaldi's childhood, when he accompanied his father, a musician in the San Marco orchestra that Monteverdi had previously directed. The work also embodies the liturgical

vocal style specific to Venice, as well as the city's theatrical and musical environment. In a way, it represents Vivaldi's musical DNA, upon which he built his virtuosity, notably through the abundance of repeated notes.

The Concerto *Madrigalesco* in D minor, RV 129 is composed in the "antico" style. Its presence here establishes an interesting connection between Monteverdi and Marco Uccellini, revealing the extent to which the influences of the masters shaped Vivaldi's new style.

If Monteverdi marks the beginning of Vivaldi's musical journey, Uccellini's *Bergamasca* reveals the origin of his instrumental repertoire. A pioneer in the art of violin and sonata composition, Uccellini exerted a decisive influence on the young Vivaldi. This dance, based on a popular theme with variations, also celebrates the art of improvisation, an element dear to the Venetians and to the composer throughout his life.

Vivaldi's Concerto in D minor, RV 813 was one of his earliest written for the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice. Each hallmark of Vivaldi's style is already present: joy, virtuosity, theatricality, exaltation. The popularity of this concerto is also due to Johann Sebastian Bach's masterly transcription for keyboard.

Francesco Geminiani's *Follia* from Concerto Grosso No. 12 in D minor, a transcription of Corelli's treatment of this famous Baroque-era theme, illustrates the lineage of three Italian masters. Corelli—whose groundbreaking Op. 5 (concluding with *Follia* and published in 1700)—was an inspirational figure to the young Vivaldi. And Geminiani's *Follia*, published in 1729, was almost certainly influenced by the appearance of Vivaldi's Op. 8 just four years earlier. It also highlights the particularly lively and joyful spirit inherent to the art of the concerto, which Geminiani had undoubtedly heard in many of Vivaldi's works.

Vivaldi's Overture to *La fida ninfa* (*The Faithful Nymph*) in F major, RV 714 evokes

*These sonnets appeared in the first edition of The Four Seasons, published in 1725.
Many assume they were penned by Vivaldi, although no one is certain.
They nevertheless must have been important to the composer.*

SPRING

Allegro

Springtime is upon us.
The birds celebrate her return with
festive song,
and murmuring streams are
softly caressed by the breezes.
Thunderstorms, those heralds of
Spring, roar,
casting their dark mantle over heaven.
Then they die away to silence,
and the birds take up their charming
songs once more.

Largo

On the flower-strewn meadow, with
leafy branches
rustling overhead, the goat-herd sleeps,
his faithful dog beside him..

Allegro

Led by the festive sound of rustic bagpipes,
nymphs and shepherds lightly dance
beneath spring's beautiful canopy.

SUMMER

Allegro non molto

Under a hard season, fired up by the sun,
languishes man, languishes the flock,
and burns the pine.
We hear the cuckoo's voice;
then sweet songs of the turtledove
and finch are heard.
Soft breezes stir the air, but threatening,
the North Wind sweeps them suddenly aside.
The shepherd trembles,
fearing violent storms and his fate.

Adagio e piano – Presto e forte

The fear of lightning and fierce thunder
robs his tired limbs of rest
as gnats and flies buzz furiously around.

Presto

Alas, his fears were justified.
The heavens thunder and roar and, with hail,
cut the head off the wheat and damage
the grain.

AUTUMN

Allegro

The peasants celebrate, with songs and dances,
the pleasure of a bountiful harvest.
And fired up by Bacchus' liquor,
many end their revelry in sleep.

Adagio molto

Everyone is made to forget their cares
and to sing and dance
by the air that is tempered with pleasure
and (by) the season that invites so many
out of their sweetest slumber to fine
enjoyment.

Allegro

The hunters emerge at the new dawn,
and with horns and dogs and guns depart
upon their hunting.
The beast flees and they follow its trail;
terrified and tired of the great noise
of guns and dogs, the beast, wounded,
threatens
languidly to flee, but harried, dies.

WINTER

Allegro non molto

To tremble from cold in the icy snow,
in the harsh breath of a horrid wind;
to run, stamping one's feet every moment,
our teeth chattering in the extreme cold

Largo

To rest peacefully before the hearth,
contented days while those outside are
drenched by pouring rain.

Allegro

We tread the icy path slowly and
cautiously,
for fear of tripping and falling.
Then turn abruptly, slip, crash on the
ground and,
rising, hasten on across the ice, lest it cracks up.
We feel the chill north winds course through
the home
despite the locked and bolted doors...
this is winter, which nonetheless
brings its own delights.

the Teatro San Angelo and shows how, opera influenced Vivaldi's instrumental music by offering extraordinary vocality. Opera also enabled him to create dramatic interactions between instruments, where brilliance, impetuosity, sensuality, and seduction blend harmoniously in the soundscape.

The Grave movement from Vivaldi's Violin Concerto in B-flat major, RV 370 is an unfinished piece, built on an ostinato chromatic bass. Théotime Langlois de Swarte has completed it here; a tribute from a young violinist to his illustrious forebear.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

An ensemble of singers and instrumentalists specializing in the performance of Baroque music on period instruments, **Les Arts Florissants** is renowned the world over. Founded in 1979 by the Franco-American harpsichordist and conductor William Christie, the ensemble named for a short opera by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, has played a pioneering role in the revival of a Baroque repertoire that had long been neglected (including the rediscovery of countless treasures in the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France). Today, that repertoire is widely performed and admired: not only French music from the reign of Louis XIV, but also, more generally, European music of the 17th and 18th centuries. Since 2007, the ensemble has also been conducted by the British tenor Paul Agnew, who was appointed Musical Co-director in 2019.

Each season, Les Arts Florissants gives around 100 concerts and opera performances in France—at the Philharmonie de Paris, where the members are artists in residence; the Théâtre de Caen; the Opéra-Comique; the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; the Château de Versailles; and at numerous festivals—and is an active ambassador for French culture abroad, being regularly in-

When published in 1725, no one could have imagined that Vivaldi's Opus 8, Nos. 1–4 (*The Four Seasons*) would become perhaps the most frequently heard music of all time. Vivaldi's singular genius continues to inspire artists the world over, as demonstrated by this concert by Les Arts Florissants led by violinist Théotime Langlois de Swarte. As this great Vivaldi performer and loyal member of Les Arts Florissants puts it: "For one of the best-known composers in Western music, it is astonishing to realize that there are still so many facets to explore."

—Fannie Vernaz © 2024

vited to cities including New York, London, Edinburgh, Brussels, Vienna, Salzburg, Madrid, Barcelona, Moscow.

Since the 1987 production of Lully's *Atys* at the Opéra-Comique in Paris, which was triumphantly revived in May 2011, it has been on the opera stage that Les Arts Florissants has enjoyed its greatest successes. Notable productions include works by Rameau (*Les Indes galantes*, *Hippolyte et Aricie*, *Les Boréades*, and *Les Paladins*, *Platée*), Lully (*Armide*), Charpentier (*Médée*, *David et Jonathas*, and *Les arts florissants*), Handel (*Orlando*, *Acis and Galatea*, *Semele*, *Alcina*, *Serse*, *Hercules*, and *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*), Purcell (*King Arthur*, *Dido and Aeneas*, and *The Fairy Queen*), Mozart (*Die Zauberflöte* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Monteverdi (his opera trilogy), but also by composers whose music is less frequently heard, such as Cesti (*Il Tito*), Landi (*Il Sant'Alessio*), Campra (*Les Fêtes vénitiennes*), and Hérold (*Zampa*).

For its theatrical productions, Les Arts Florissants has called on the talents of some of the greatest stage directors, including Jean-Marie Villégier, Robert Carsen, Adrian Noble, Andrei Serban, Luc Bondy, Deborah Warner, David McVicar, Claus Guth, and Jérôme Deschamps and Macha Makeïeff,

as well as on renowned choreographers including Béatrice Massin, Ana Yepes, Jiri Kylián, Blanca Li, Trisha Brown, Robyn Orlin, José Montalvo, Françoise Denieau, Dominique Hervieu, and Mourad Merzouki.

Les Arts Florissants enjoys an equally high profile in the concert hall, as illustrated by the ensemble's many acclaimed concert or semi-staged performances of operas and oratorios (Rameau's *Zoroastre*, *Anacréon*, and *Les Fêtes d'Hébé*; Charpentier's *Actéon* and *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*; Campra's *Idoménée* and Mozart's *Idomeneo*; Montéclair's *Jephté*; Rossi's *Orfeo*; and Handel's *Giulio Cesare* with Cecilia Bartoli as well as his *Messiah*, *Theodora*, *Susanna*, *Jephtha*, and *Belshazzar*), their secular and sacred chamber music programs (*petits motets* by Lully and Charpentier, madrigals by Monteverdi and Gesualdo, court airs by Lambert, hymns by Purcell, among others), and its approach to large-scale works (particularly the grands motets by Rameau, Mondonville, Campra, and Charpentier, as well as Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *St. Matthew* and *St. John Passions*).

The ensemble has produced an impressive discography of nearly 100 recordings (CD and DVD) and its own collection in collaboration with Harmonia Mundi directed by William Christie and Paul Agnew.

In recent years, Les Arts Florissants has launched several education programs for young musicians. The most emblematic is the Academy of Le Jardin des Voix: created in 2002, it is held every two years and has already brought a substantial number of new singers into the limelight. The Arts Flo Juniors program, launched in 2007, enables conservatory students to join the orchestra and chorus for the length of a production, from the first day of rehearsals up to the final performance. There is also the partnership between William Christie, Les Arts Florissants and New York's Juilliard School of Music, which since 2007 has allowed a

fruitful artistic exchange between the US and France. And launched in 2021, an annual program of master classes in Thiré (Vendée, Pays de la Loire) consists of short working sessions led by William Christie and Paul Agnew, with the aim of helping young professionals improve their skills.

Les Arts Florissants also organizes numerous events aimed at building new audiences. Linked to each year's concert programs, they are designed for both amateur musicians and non-musicians, adults and children alike.

In 2012, William Christie and Les Arts Florissants created the festival Dans les Jardins de William Christie, in partnership with the Conseil départemental de la Vendée. An annual event, the festival brings together artists from Les Arts Florissants, pupils from the Juilliard School, and finalists from Le Jardin des Voix for concerts and *promenades musicales* in the gardens created by William Christie at Thiré, in the Vendée. In addition to the festival, Les Arts Florissants is working with the endowment fund Les Jardins de Musique de William Christie towards the creation of a permanent cultural venue in Thiré. In 2017, following a decision by the French Ministry of Culture, Les Arts Florissants was designated a "Centre culturel de Rencontre," an honor that distinguishes projects combining creation, patrimony, and transmission. In 2018, Les Arts Florissants became the Foundation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie.

Les Arts Florissants receives financial support from the state through the Regional Direction of Cultural Affairs, the Département de la Vendée, and the Région Pays de la Loire. The Selz Foundation is the ensemble's Principal Sponsor. Aline Foriel-Destezet and the American Friends of Les Arts Florissants are Major Sponsors. Les Arts Florissants has been Ensemble in Residence at the Philharmonie de Paris and is recognized as a Heritage Site for Culture.

“Performances so special that I feel a changed man from listening” (*Gramophone*); “A stunner by any standard” (*The Strad*); “Mesmerizing” (*The New Yorker*)—these represent common reactions upon encountering violinist **Théotime Langlois de Swarte**, the much sought-after soloist (on both Baroque and modern violins), chamber musician, recitalist, and conductor.

Recognition has come in the form of major awards including the 2022 Diapason D’or for his recording of Vivaldi, Locatelli, and Leclair concertos (Harmonia Mundi) and the 2022 Ambassador of the Year award from the European Early Music Network, along with multiple additional recording awards and a February 2022 cover story in *The Strad*.

In solo appearances on both Baroque and modern violin, de Swarte regularly offers concertos by all of the Baroque masters, along with those of Haydn and Mozart. Along with Les Arts Florissants, he has appeared with Le Consort, the Orchestre de l’Opéra Royal, Holland Baroque, the Aus-

tralian Brandenburg Orchestra, Les Ombrés, and the Orchestre National de Lorraine. De Swarte’s engagements have brought him to prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, London’s Wigmore Hall, the Philharmonie de Paris, Vienna’s Musikverein, Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie, Berlin’s Philharmonie, Los Angeles’ Walt Disney Hall, and the Shanghai National Art Center.

De Swarte studied at the Paris Conservatory under Michael Hentz, and became a regular member of Les Arts Florissants at William Christie’s invitation in 2014, while still a student. He has since appeared as soloist with the ensemble, and is currently performing Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons* with that ensemble throughout North America. He has also appeared in recital with William Christie, the two artists recording sonatas by Leclair and Senaille (*Generations* on Harmonia Mundi) in 2021.

As co-founder—with harpsichordist Justin Taylor—of the Baroque ensemble Le Consort, de Swarte can be heard on numerous highly acclaimed recordings, including

Les Arts Florissants

William Christie, *founder and musical director*

Paul Agnew, *musical co-director*

Théotime Langlois de Swarte, *violin soloist*

Violin I

Augusta McKay Lodge, *leader*
Valentine Pinardel
Christophe Robert
Magdalena Sypniewski

Violin II

Roxana Rastegar
Yaoré Talibart
Jeffrey Girton
Alyssa Campbell

Viola

Lucia Peralta Lopez
Nicolas Fromonteil

Cello

Hanna Salzenstein
Magdalena Probe

Double Bass

Alexandre Teyssonnière de Gramont

Harpsichord

Benoît Hartoin



Marcus Bonggreve

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Specchio Veneziano, *Opus 1*, and *Philharmonica*, all on Alpha Classics. De Swarte and Le Consort have performed widely throughout Europe, and together, their debut North American tour in 2023–24 included their Cal Performances debut in November 2023, as well as concerts in Montreal, Boston, Washington, Kansas City, Chicago, St. Paul, New Orleans, Vancouver, and Ottawa.

Besides William Christie, frequent recital collaborators include harpsichordist Justin Taylor and lute player Thomas Dunford, with whom de Swarte recorded a much-praised album, *The Mad Lover*. Another notable recording, *A Concert at the Time of Proust*, was made on the newly restored Davidoff Stradivarius at the Philharmonie de Paris Museum. De Swarte's recent recording *Antonio Vivaldi Concerti per una vita* (Harmonia Mundi) has garnered wide acclaim and both he and Les Arts Florissants, have just released their highly antici-

pated recording of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the work's first publication.

Alongside his instrumental work, de Swarte is also emerging as a gifted conductor. In 2023, he led performances at the Opéra-Comique of Lully's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (with Les Musiciens du Louvre at Marc Minkowski's invitation) and Gretry's *Zemire et Azor* (at Louis Langrée's invitation). He returns to the Opéra-Comique to lead Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* in November 2025.

Théotime Langlois de Swarte is a laureate of the Banque Populaire Foundation. He plays a violin of Carlo Bergonzi (1733) on generous loan from an anonymous patron.

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