

Les Folies françaises - biography

In 2000, some of the most promising French musicians decided to form Les Folies françaises. The ensemble revives the repertoire of the 17th and 18th centuries under the direction of violinist Patrick Cohën-Akenine, in the same spirit of freedom, plurality and creativity, which motivated the musicians of the Grand Siècle.

In the same way as François Couperin's Treizième Ordre, of which the ensemble takes its name, *Les Folies françaises* aim to express the full palette of colours and feelings that characterised the musical sensibility at this time. Since their creation, *Les Folies Françaises* have been developing their own and recognizable sound, based on the best historically informed performance practices.

2008 was the beginning of a new adventure – immeasurable for the assertion of *Les Folies'* artistic project in particular and the rediscovery of French musical heritage in general: the revival of "Les Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy". This ambitious project, managed in association with the CMBV (Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles), pays tribute to the orchestra of King Louis XIV, which turned out to be the "laboratory" of French sound, modeled by Jean-Baptiste Lully.

Renowned for their sense of variety and innovation, *Les Folies françaises* have become a key figure of the international Baroque stage. The ensemble has been invited by many concert venues, including the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the Théâtre du Châtelet, the Cité de la Musique, the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, the Arsenal de Metz, the Chapelle Royale and the Royal Opera of Versailles, Dijon and Nantes Operas... It regularly performs within the Nantes Folles Journées, the Ambronay, Saint-Denis, Saintes, Beaune, Sully, Saint-Michel-en-Thiérache, La Chaise-Dieu and Sablé-sur-Sarthe festivals, among others, and tours in Europe as well: London, Utrecht, Echternach, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Belgium...

Recent productions abroad namely include: two chamber music American tours (Washington, Boston and NYC in 2010, Colombia in 2012); a Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy Lully European Tour (Paris, Brussels, Valencia... in 2010); a collaboration with Namur Chamber Choir for a French grands motets program (Wallonie festival, 2010).

In 2013, the dance company *L'Eventail* and *Les Folies françaises* presented "A European Journey" in China (Beijing Forbidden City Concert Hall and Wuhan Theater) for the first time. Created in 2000, this ballet was performed many times ever since.

Les Folies françaises keep on innovating and exploring the fruitful relationship between baroque repertoire and contemporary creation (N. Bacri, K. Saariaho...), now focusing on A. Scarlatti's Lamentazioni per la Settimana Santa. In association with the Noirlac Abbey, the ensemble commissioned a Miserere to composer Thierry Pécou. The program was selected by France Festivals for his "Fabrique nomade" scheme.

In 2016, Les Folies françaises will tour a Scarlatti's oratorio involving countertenor Philippe Jaroussky.

Les Folies Françaises has been a resident ensemble of Orléans since 2008. By establishing a close collaboration with local presenters and organizing its own concerts series, the ensemble daily works on music awareness actions, thanks to meetings, workshops or training courses.

Les Folies françaises are supported by the French Ministry for Culture and Communication (DRAC Centre), the city of Orléans and the Région Centre. They have set up a long-term partnership with the CMBV (Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles). The ensemble is a full member of the FEVIS (Fédération des Ensembles Vocaux et Instrumentaux Spécialisés) and PROFEDIM.

Les Folies françaises' recordings – published by Cypres, Alpha, Fontmorigny, K617... (CDs) and Camera Lucida (DVDs) – have received unanimous praise from the critics since the release of their first CD devoted to French opera arias (Rameau, Lully, Charpentier... - 2002) with soprano Patricia Petibon (Virgin Classics, 2002). The

ensemble has recorded (a. o.) four CDs dedicated to J. S. Bach: the complete violin and basso continuo Sonatas (Choc du "Monde de la Musique"); "Concerto in Dialogo" (cantatas) with soprano Salomé Haller and bass baritone Stephan Mac Leod; the harpsichord concertos (BWV 1052, 1053, 1055 and 1056) with Béatrice Martin (Diapason d'or, 2011). They were followed by a recording dedicated to Campra's petits motets (Cypres, 2012), recorded on the historic organ of Saint-Michel-en-Thiérache, and "Il maestro famosissimo di violino", a tribute to Corelli (2014). In 2015, Patrick Cohën-Akenine recorded "Violon Solo" (Nomad Music).