

# LES NOUVEAUX CARACTÈRES



Véronique Gens by Sandrine Expilly

## CIRCÉ

Henry Desmarests 1661-1741

### A historical reconstruction

A page in the Court of Louis XIV where he followed the teachings of masters such as Pierre Robert, Henry du Mont and Jean-Baptiste Lully, Henry Desmarests envisioned a career at the Royal Chapel of Versailles. But, involved in a sex scandal, he had to face the law in 1699 and flee France to avoid the gallows.

His work, "Circé", is a lyrical tragedy with a prologue and 5 acts, presented to the Parisian public in 1694. Along with "Dido", it remains one of the two tragedies that forged Desmarests' skill and notoriety.

Inspired by Lullist, this score is composed on a libretto by Madame de Saintonge, a woman (which was rare). The ambitious creation requires many soloists with accomplished theatrical qualities, a choir, a full orchestra and eight changes of scenery. The Dauphin would attend several performances, a sign of their appreciation. However, the work would not escape the Parisian critics for whom the "music was good and the verses were cold"!

Many operas from after the death of the great Lully are still forgotten. "Circé" until today not given rise to any musicological or restorative work or any recording. Through work of organology and restoration, in collaboration with the Palace of Versailles and the opera of Lyon, we offer to repair this error and restore all the splendor of this score to posterity.

Beyond these representations, a modern edition of the opera was professionally captured, and the recording lasting 2h45mn was made on the set of the Royal Opera of Versailles, in June 2021 for 3 days, after a rehearsal period and a first concert.

**A creation that restores the entire palette of colors specific to this dynamic repertoire.**

**Pitch 392 Hz**

It is with a trusted partner, the Palace of Versailles, that we've embarking on this reconstruction.

To achieve our vision we have brought together an artistic team that match our ambitions, consisting of:

a team of soloists gathered around the title role Véronique Gens (Circé), Caroline Mutel (Astérie), Cécile Achille (Eolie), Romain Bockler (Phaebator), Mathias Vidal (Ulysses), and Nicolas Courjal (Elphenor)

- A choir of 23 singers responding to the stylistic balances of French choral music at the end of the 17th century
- Secondary soloists, numerous in this score
- An orchestra directed by Sébastien d'Hérin, who responds to the criteria of the time when the famous "24 Violins of the King" were the dominating actors