



*Les Arts Florissants*  
WILLIAM CHRISTIE

*William Christie • Paul Agnew*

## PRESS RELEASE

### A new adventure has just begun

FONDATION LES ARTS FLORISSANTS - WILLIAM CHRISTIE :  
A UNIQUE ADVENTURE IN THE FRENCH CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

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### A new adventure has just begun

#### FONDATION LES ARTS FLORISSANTS - WILLIAM CHRISTIE : A UNIQUE ADVENTURE IN THE FRENCH CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

On Wednesday February 7, 2018, William Christie was named world ambassador for French culture by Le Bureau Export, in the presence of French culture minister Françoise Nyssen. A few days earlier, on January 29, 2018, the first board meeting of the Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie was held to formalize the creation of this new legal entity.

The Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie was officially enacted by government decree on November 24, 2017 with “public utility” status under French law. Its mission is to perpetuate the work of Les Arts Florissants in the fields of baroque music and the art of gardens artistically, pedagogically and with respect to heritage.

The creation of the Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie is the culmination of several years’ endeavor to establish a permanent institution to perpetuate the life’s work of William Christie and Les Arts Florissants in the fields of baroque music and the art of gardens. **The Foundation is unique in the French cultural landscape, uniting as it does an international musical ensemble with a heritage site (William Christie’s Thiré estate, in the Vendée, which became a “Centre Culturel de Rencontre” in 2017). It is also the only organization of its type to enjoy the status of a foundation under French law.** This new legal entity will take over all the activities of Les Arts Florissants, not only artistically and pedagogically, but also with respect to the preservation and management of the Foundation’s material and immaterial heritage — the buildings and gardens in Thiré as well as the recordings and publications of Les Arts Florissants. The granting of “public-utility” foundation status by the government is, moreover, an active vote of confidence on the part of the French state. Far more than a simple change in administrative status, the Foundation is a new adventure to ensure the long-term, coherent continuation of William Christie and Les Arts Florissants’ work.

## WHY A FOUNDATION?

### A FUNDAMENTAL STEP TOWARDS PERPETUATING THE LIFE'S WORK OF WILLIAM CHRISTIE AND LES ARTS FLORISSANTS

Over the past 40 years, Les Arts Florissants have become one of the best-known and most respected baroque-music ensembles in the world, as well as the developers of new talent through their prestigious training programs, which include the international academy of Le Jardin des Voix. Under founding conductor William Christie and deputy conductor Paul Agnew, the ensemble gives over 100 concerts a year in the world's most prestigious concert halls, as well as reinforcing its activities in France through its double residence at the Philharmonie de Paris and in Thiré (Vendée, Pays de la Loire), and internationally through a long-standing partnership with the Juilliard School in New York. The granting, in 2017 of the status of “Centre Culturel de Rencontre” (“outreach cultural center”) for Les Arts Florissants’ activities in the Vendée was an important step in the creation of a permanent artistic and cultural center in Thiré.

The French state’s granting of “public utility” status to the Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie ensures the required stability for the continuation and development of this collective adventure, with the goal of perpetuating the Foundation’s material and immaterial legacy as a living resource for future generations. Without the loyal local support of the Région Pays de la Loire, the Département de la Vendée and the Commune de Thiré, the project could not have come to fruition.

### A CHANGE IN LEGAL STATUS TO ENSURE THE FUTURE OF LES ARTS FLORISSANTS

**The Foundation will take over all of Les Arts Florissants’ activities – artistic, pedagogical, outreach and heritage.** This new institution is the result of a merger between the *fonds de dotation* (“endowment fund”) Les Jardins de Musique de William Christie en Vendée (which was responsible for developing the cultural and artistic activities at William Christie’s property in Thiré) and the not-for-profit Les Arts Florissants (the legal entity that organized the activities of the musical ensemble Les Arts Florissants).

**To make this possible, William Christie gifted his entire Thiré estate to the Foundation:** the Logis du Bâtiment and its famous garden, as well as several houses and land in the village of Thiré.

### A NEW FUNDRAISING CHALLENGE FOR LES ARTS FLORISSANTS

The Foundation’s initial endowment – a requirement for “public utility” status – exceeds €1.7 million thanks to William Christie’s gifting of his entire estate and to generous donations from Les Arts Florissants’ friends and supporters.

To ensure financial independence and set it on a firm footing for the future, the Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie must significantly increase its endowment over the next few

# Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie

years. A call for major donations and a campaign to encourage bequests have been launched to this end.

“Public utility” status opens up new fundraising opportunities by offering fiscal advantages to French donors to Les Arts Florissants: a 75% reduction with respect to the *impôt sur la fortune immobilière* (IFI) within a limit of €50,000, and an exoneration of tax on inheritance and life-insurance bequests and other donations.

[> For more information on donations, please contact Camille Claverie](#)



*“Almost 40 years ago a group of friends and I founded Les Arts Florissants, the ensemble that has allowed me to rediscover the magnificent repertoire of the baroque age and perform it in all of the world’s most prestigious halls. At the same time, in the Vendée, I have accomplished another of my dreams: creating a unique and original garden around my 17th-century manor house, which is now the setting each year for the festival Dans les Jardins de William Christie, where we welcome music lovers from all over the world.*

*“Encouraged by these years of success, I now feel it is time to put Les Arts Florissants on a firm footing for the future. For this reason, the creation of a foundation, recognized by the French government as being of “public utility,” was fundamental. And to make it possible, I have decided to gift all my properties, including my house and gardens, to the Foundation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie.*

*“This project is the realization of the dream of a lifetime. A dream of music and gardens, but also of the handing on of savoir-faire and passion to future generations of artists and audiences. It is here that all my desires converge and that everything begins. This is the start of a great adventure!”*

WILLIAM CHRISTIE

## THE ROLE OF THE FONDATION LES ARTS FLORISSANTS – WILLIAM CHRISTIE

**The Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie will take over and develop all the activities of the not-for-profit Les Arts Florissants and of the “endowment fund” Les Jardins de musique de William Christie en Vendée.**

### A RICH AND DENSE PROGRAM OF ARTISTIC ACTIVITY

#### **NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RENOWN**

Today Les Arts Florissants are no doubt the best-known baroque ensemble on the international scene. With more than 100 performances each season (of which one third are outside of France), their impressive touring schedule takes them all around France and Europe, to North and South America, to Asia and to Australia.

#### **ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE AT THE PHILHARMONIE DE PARIS**

Since 2015, Les Arts Florissants have been in residence at the Philharmonie de Paris, an exceptional venue whose performance spaces enjoy outstanding acoustics. Every season, Les Arts Florissants perform several concerts at the Philharmonie. This partnership also consists in numerous outreach activities – workshops, family and school events, etc. Moreover, Les Arts Florissants’ residence at the Philharmonie brings it closer to the Musée de la musique, whose unique collections complement the ensemble’s commitment to performing on period instruments. The creation of the Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie in no way compromises this residence, quite the contrary: it will allow it to be developed with ever richer programming and new partnerships.

#### **TWO INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS IN THE VENDÉE (FRANCE)**

Created in 2012 and held every summer in the last week of August since then, the festival *Dans les Jardins de William Christie* invites over 8,000 visitors each year to discover baroque music in the idyllic setting of William Christie’s gardens in Thiré. This festival brings together the musicians of Les Arts Florissants, students of New York’s Juilliard School and singers of Le Jardin des Voix for a whole series of concerts and *promenades musicales*. Encouraged by this success, the *Festival de Printemps* (Spring Festival) was launched in the spring of 2017, and takes place over one weekend in April. Conducted by Paul Agnew, Les Arts Florissants perform a program of short concerts of sacred music in the churches of the southern Vendée.

***Festival de Printemps 2018 : 6-8 April 2018*** > [Learn more](#)

***Festival Dans les Jardins de William Christie 2018 : 25 August – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018*** > [Learn more](#)

# Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie

## A PERMANENT ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL CENTER IN VENDÉE-PAYS DE LA LOIRE ("CENTRE CULTUREL DE RENCONTRE")



In 2017, following a decision by the French Ministry of Culture, Les Arts Florissants and Les Jardins de Musique de William Christie were granted the status of "Centre culturel de Rencontre" ("cultural encounter center"), which is awarded to projects that associate artistic creation, heritage and outreach.

Recognizing Les Arts Florissants' role in the rediscovery and bringing back to life of the baroque-music repertoire, as well as William Christie's commitment to the art of gardens, this status consecrates the project to create an international cultural center in Thiré, in the Vendée-Pays de la Loire region of western France, where Les Arts Florissants have been organizing a large number of artistic, cultural and outreach initiatives for several years now.

The particularity of the Centre Culturel de Rencontre lies in its dual objectives: on the one hand keeping alive a heritage site (the Logis du Bâtiment, William Christie's gardens and the Quartier des Artistes), on the other developing and promulgating Les Arts Florissants' activities in the realms of baroque music and the art of gardens.

### **THE THIRÉ ESTATE: THE LOGIS DU BÂTIMENT AND ITS GARDENS**

In 1985, William Christie acquired a late 16th-century manor house (known as the Logis du Bâtiment) and 4 hectares of land in Thiré, in the Vendée region of western France. Since then, in tandem with his international musical career, he has been pursuing his other passion: the creation of an ambitious garden imagined as a place for music, around the house which he rescued from ruin. The delightful and eclectic result – a homage to the apogee of the art of gardens in 16th-century Italy and 17th-century France – has been hailed by critics and experts, and in 2006 was listed on the French supplementary inventory of historic monuments. This unique site, which is undergoing constant transformation, is the setting every summer for the baroque-music festival *Dans les Jardins de William Christie*.

### **THE QUARTIER DES ARTISTES (THE ARTISTS' QUARTER)**

In the heart of the village of Thiré, Les Arts Florissants have established a permanent and international cultural and artistic center. Known as the Quartier des Artistes, and located a short walk from William Christie's house and gardens, it offers residencies to musicians, musicologists and young landscape designers, as well as a program of concerts, workshops, discussions and public rehearsals. The winners of the Maryvonne Pinault Ephemeral Garden Prize (for young landscape designers) have been invited there for creative residencies since 2015, and the biennial academy for young singers, Le Jardin des Voix, took up residence there in 2017.

# Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie

## THE ARTISTS AND AUDIENCES OF TOMORROW

### **LE JARDIN DES VOIX**

Directed by William Christie and Paul Agnew, Le Jardin des Voix welcomes young classical singers who are just starting out in their careers. Founded in 2002, this biennial academy has become an exceptional nursery for international talent. After three weeks' intensive training, the finalists perform a concert that afterwards tours the globe. Laureates of Le Jardin des Voix go on to have international careers in the world's most prestigious concert halls, as well as becoming regular partners of Les Arts Florissants. As of 2017, Le Jardin des Voix has found a permanent home in Thiré, in the heart of the Quartier des Artistes and the international cultural center.

### **PARTNERSHIP WITH THE JULLIARD SCHOOL IN NEW YORK**

Since 2007, William Christie and Les Arts Florissants have been involved in an exceptional partnership with the most prestigious music conservatory in the U.S., the Juilliard School in New York. The ensemble spends part of each year in residence there, and Juilliard students are also invited to take part in the festival *Dans les Jardins de William Christie*, which gives them the chance to work alongside experienced musicians in an exceptional setting.

### **REACHING OUT TO ALL AUDIENCES**

The ensemble offers an annual program of educational and outreach activities for all audiences, with a particular emphasis on winning over future generations of concert goers. Three main types of intervention are proposed: a school outreach program (workshops, class presentations) in the Île-de-France and the Vendée; the opportunity to discover live baroque music for teenagers who had never previously attended classical concerts through the Baroque LIVE program; and workshops and participatory concerts tailored to families.

### **ARTS FLO JUNIORS**

Launched in 2008, Arts Flo Juniors is an annual program aimed at students reaching the end of their time at the conservatory and offering them their first professional experience. They join the choir and the orchestra of Les Arts Florissants for the duration of a production, and are mentored by members of the ensemble.

### **PUBLISHING AND MULTIMEDIA**

Since their founding, Les Arts Florissants have built up a unique editorial and discographic collection that constitutes a true living memory of baroque music. Les Arts Florissants' publications and recordings are a rich repository that allows everyone to enjoy this rediscovered repertoire, through various formats : scores, CD and DVD recordings (with the collection « Les Arts Florissants » by harmonia mundi), but also a huge catalogue of online media available for free on [www.arts-florissants.com](http://www.arts-florissants.com)

# Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie

## SELECTIVE CHRONOLOGY

- 2018** • **7 February** : William Christie is named world ambassador for French culture by Le Bureau Export
- **29 January** : First board meeting of the Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie
- 2017** • **24 November** : Official creation of the Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie
- **January** : Les Arts Florissants' project in the Vendée is granted the status of "Centre culturel de Rencontre" ("cultural encounter center")
- 2015** • Beginning of Les Arts Florissant' residence at the Philharmonie de Paris
- 2013** • Paul Agnew is named Associate Musical Director of of Les Arts Florissants
- Beginning of the rehabilitation works in the « Quartier des Artistes » in Thiré
- 2012** • First edition of the festival *Dans les Jardins de William Christie*
- 2008** • William Christie is elected to France's Académie des Beaux-Arts
- 2007** • Beginning of the partnership with the Juilliard School in New York
- 2002** • First edition of Le Jardin des Voix, international academy for young singers
- 1985** • William Christie buys a property in Thiré (Vendée, France), consisting of a house (Le Bâtiment) and 4 hectares of land
- 1979** • Creation of the ensemble Les Arts Florissants

## FUTURE HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Ariodante* by Handel**, conducted by William Christie – New production at the Wiener Staatsoper and on European tour : 24 February-18 March 2018 [> Learn more](#)
- **Bach Motets**, conducted by Paul Agnew – European tour (Opéra royal de Versailles, Wigmore Hall London, Opéra de Perpignan, Philharmonie de Paris) : 25 March-3 April 2018 [> Learn more](#)
- ***Festival de Printemps (Spring Festival) 2018*** : 6-8 April 2018 [> Learn more](#)
- ***The Beggar's opera* by J. Gay**, conducted by William Christie – New production at the Bouffes du Nord Theater (Paris) : 20 April-3 May 2018 [> Learn more](#)
- ***L'Incoronazione di Poppea* by Monteverdi**, conducted by William Christie – New production of the Salzburger Festspiele, 12-28 August 2018 [> Learn more](#)
- ***Festival Dans les Jardins de William Christie 2018*** : 25 August – 1st September 2018 [> Learn more](#)

## BIOGRAPHIES

### LES ARTS FLORISSANTS

**Founded in 1979 by William Christie, Les Arts Florissants have become one of the most acclaimed baroque vocal and instrumental ensembles in the world.**

Specialized in the performance of baroque music on period instruments, Les Arts Florissants are renowned the world over for having played a pioneering role in the revival of the 17th- and 18th-century baroque repertoire. Conducted by **William Christie** and **Paul Agnew**, the ensemble gives around 100 performances and opera performances each year in France and all over the world, with many acclaimed concert or semi-staged performances of operas and oratorios, secular and sacred chamber-music programs as well as large-scale works.

Les Arts Florissants have launched several education programs for young musicians: Le Jardin des Voix, their Academy for young singers created in 2002 and, since 2007, the Arts Flo Juniors program for conservatory instrumentalist students and a partnership with The Juilliard School. They also organize numerous outreach and educational events aimed at building new audiences. In order to allow everyone to discover their rich repertoire, they have produced an impressive discography of nearly 100 recordings (both CDs and DVDs), especially with the Les Arts Florissants collection in partnership with harmonia mundi.

In residence at the Philharmonie de Paris since 2015, Les Arts Florissants have also developed a strong attachment to the Vendée as well, a region of France where William Christie has made his home. It was in the village of Thiré, where he lives, that the festival *Dans les Jardins de William Christie* was launched in 2012 in partnership with the Conseil départemental de la Vendée. The village is now set to become the beating heart of Les Arts Florissant's activities, with several key projects. 2017 marked a turning point in this respect, with the establishment of the Jardin des Voix in Thiré, the creation of the Festival de Printemps conducted by Paul Agnew, and the granting of "Centre Culturel de Rencontre" by the French culture ministry for Les Arts Florissants' projects in the Département de la Vendée and the Région Pays de la Loire.

*Les Arts Florissants receives financial support from the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the Département de la Vendée and the Région Pays de la Loire. The Ensemble has been in residence at the Philharmonie de Paris since 2015. The Selz Foundation, American Friends of Les Arts Florissants and Crédit Agricole Corporate & Investment Bank are Principal Sponsors.*

[www.arts-florissants.com](http://www.arts-florissants.com)

### WILLIAM CHRISTIE MUSICAL DIRECTOR, FOUNDER OF LES ARTS FLORISSANTS

A harpsichordist, conductor, musicologist and teacher, William Christie was at the forefront of the rediscovery of French baroque music and its introduction to a wide audience. Born in Buffalo, and

# Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie

educated at Harvard and Yale, William Christie has lived in France since 1971. The turning point in his career came in 1979 when he founded Les Arts Florissants. As director of this vocal and instrumental ensemble, he made his mark in both the concert hall and the opera house. Major public recognition came in 1987 with the production of Lully's *Atys* at the Opéra Comique in Paris, which then went on to tour internationally. William Christie has also led many acclaimed performances of works by baroque masters such as Monteverdi, Rossi, Scarlatti, Purcell, Handel, Mozart and Haydn. Notable among his recent operatic work are: *Atys* at the Opéra Comique and the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2010, Charpentier's *David et Jonathas* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in 2012, *Rameau, Maître à Danser*, which premiered in Caen in 2014 before touring internationally, Campra's *Les Fêtes vénitiennes* in 2015, Handel's *Theodora* in 2016 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and in 2018 Handel's *Jephtah* and *Ariodante*, respectively at the Paris national Opera and at the Staatsoper in Vienna.

As a guest conductor, William Christie is frequently invited to opera festivals including Glyndebourne or to opera houses such as the Metropolitan Opera, the Zürich Opera and the Opéra de Lyon.

Between 2002 and 2007 he regularly appeared as a guest conductor with the Berlin Philharmonic. His extensive discography includes more than 100 recordings. His most recent, *Music for Marie-Antoinette, Airs sérieux et à boire* and *Un jardin à l'italienne* were released by harmonia mundi in their "Les Arts Florissants" collection.

Developing his work as an educator, William Christie has been artist in residence at The Juilliard School since 2007, where he gives master classes twice a year. Moreover, in 2002 he founded an academy for young singers, the Jardin des Voix. In 2012, he launched the festival *Dans les Jardins de William Christie* in his own gardens, located in the French village of Thiré in the Vendée, where he welcomes every summer young musicians from the Juilliard School along with the musicians and singers of Les Arts Florissants.

In 2008, William Christie was elected to France's Académie des Beaux-Arts. He is also an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Music in London. In 2018 he was named world ambassador for French culture by Le Bureau Export, in the presence of French culture minister Françoise Nyssen.

## **PAUL AGNEW** ASSOCIATE MUSICAL DIRECTOR OF **LES ARTS FLORISSANTS**

Trained at Magdalene College in Cambridge, British high tenor Paul Agnew has performed with conductors such as Marc Minkowski, Ton Koopman, Paul McCreesh, Jean-Claude Malgoire, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Philippe Herreweghe and Emmanuelle Haïm. He came to the attention of William Christie in 1992 during the triumphant tour of *Atys* (Lully) with Les Arts Florissants, and went on to develop a highly acclaimed career in the baroque repertoire singing, among others, music by Rameau, Charpentier, Handel and Purcell. In 2007, Agnew's career took a new turn when he began conducting projects for Les Arts Florissants. He made his début as guest conductor with a program of Vivaldi's vespers, followed by Handel's odes and anthems

## Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie

and Purcell's *The Indian Queen*. He also conducted *Lamentazione*, a concert of Italian-baroque polyphony that he recorded as Associate Conductor of Les Arts Florissants. His work on Italian cantatas led him to conduct the complete cycle of Monteverdi's madrigals in nearly 100 concerts throughout Europe, a project he recorded for harmonia mundi in their "Les Arts Florissants" collection. In 2013, Paul Agnew became Associate Musical Director of Les Arts Florissants. Since then he has conducted the ensemble in the reprise of the ballet *Doux Mensonges* at the Paris national Opera and in the new production of *Platée* at the Theater an der Wien, Paris's Opéra Comique and New York's Lincoln Center. Recent highlights include an international tour of Monteverdi madrigals, a new production of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* and the creation of a *Festival de Printemps* in the churches of Vendée, for which he is artistic director.

As a guest conductor, Paul Agnew has also worked with several orchestras that play modern instruments including the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Staatsphilharmonie Nürnberg.

Agnew is co-director of Le Jardin des Voix, Les Arts Florissants' academy for young singers. He also conducts ensembles such as the Orchestre Français des Jeunes Baroque and the European baroque academy in Ambronay.

# Fondation Les Arts Florissants – William Christie

## **BOARD OF THE FONDATION LES ARTS FLORISSANTS - WILLIAM CHRISTIE :**

### **College of the founding members**

William Christie, replaced from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 by John Hoyland, designated by William Christie  
Henry-Claude Cousseau

Pierre Legal, designated by Les Jardins de Musique de William Christie en Vendée • President  
Jean-Philippe Hottinguer, designated by Les Jardins de Musique de William Christie en Vendée  
Martine Kahane, designated by the association Les Arts Florissants

### **College of the ex-officio members**

French Ministry of the Interior (Thomas Campeaux)

French Ministry of Culture (Alain Loiseau)

Région Pays de la Loire (Myriam Garreau)

Département de la Vendée (François Bon)

Thiré City Council (Catherine Denferd)

### **List of qualified members suggested by William Christie**

Catherine Massip

Dominique Senequier

Bernard Selz

Laurent Bayle, General Director of the Philharmonie de Paris

Françoise Girard, President of the American Friends of Les Arts Florissants



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*William Christie • Paul Agnew*

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