

ensemble la fenice

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The ensemble La Fenice takes its name from the phoenix - the fabulous mythological bird, consumed by flames and arising from its ashes - and uses this image to illustrate the influence of Italian music in Baroque Europe. *La fenice* was also the title of a work by Giovanni Martino Cesare, an Italian composer and cornett player who moved north of the Alps in the early seventeenth-century.

Today, this name brings together a group of musicians, whose common desire is to share their passion for the sumptuous Italian music of that time, and also to celebrate the works of composers from across Europe. Indeed, the cornett was commonly used in the early sixteenth-century by Josquin Desprez and his contemporaries and it was still in use at J.S. Bach's time. Bach himself included it in several of his cantatas.

The cornett can be found alongside the voice in sacred music throughout the Baroque period; it is mentioned in the registers of the Royal Chapel of Versailles until 1733. As for the sound it produces, this is how Mersenne described it in his *Harmonie universelle* (Paris, 1636): « it is like a sunbeam shining through the shadows or through the darkness when it is heard among the voices in churches, cathedrals or chapels... »

Eager to respect the original instrumentations, particularly in vocal music, where the instruments shed light on the text through their symbolic significance, the ensemble's line-up varies according to the repertoire it performs. Coming from all over Europe, the members of La Fenice are all internationally renowned soloists, as well as members of many leading early music ensembles.

Founded in 1990, the Ensemble La Fenice won first prize in two international competitions (Bruges 1990 and Malmö 1992) and has been invited at many of the world's leading festivals. The ensemble's discography includes a number of award-winning recordings – for the records labels Opus 111, Virgin Classics, Ricercar, etc. -, like the critically acclaimed series *The heritage of Monteverdi* (Choc Monde de la Musique, Diapason d'Or, Répertoire, 5 Etoiles, Goldberg...).