



St John Passion

The Theatre of Affects

In **Johann Sebastian Bach's *St John Passion***, drama unfolds not only through the narrative itself, but through a constant tension between action and introspection. More concise and more incisive than the *St Matthew Passion*, the work stands out for its **immediate dramatic energy**, which John Eliot Gardiner describes as "tense, fast-paced, almost brutal in the way it projects the action."

Our interpretation draws on these **inherent expressive forces** to reveal a true inner theatre of emotions. The choir — by turns crowd, witness and collective conscience — becomes a central protagonist in the drama. The arias do not suspend the action: they expose its fractures, tensions and moments of uncertainty, extending the narrative into a deeply introspective dimension.

Driven by **Concert de l'Hostel Dieu's** commitment and recognised ability to bring **dramatic works to life** with both intensity and precision, this interpretation embraces a deeply embodied musical approach, where every inflection contributes to the meaning of the work. **The exceptional clarity of articulation** of the **Namur Chamber Choir** plays a decisive role: it reveals the full violence of the crowd scenes, the subtlety of Bach's counterpoint and the intelligibility of the text, which lies at the heart of the dramaturgy.

Through a **concentrated and intensely embodied reading**, our approach — rooted in the work's intrinsic theatricality and rhetorical power — highlights Bach's striking modernity: his ability to organise the chaos of human emotions and shape them into a true musical drama. In doing so, it echoes the vision notably championed by **Peter Sellars**, of the *Passion* as a **theatre of consciousness**, where listening itself becomes the very space of the experience.

Conceived in this way, the *St John Passion* is not merely presented as a vast historical and musical fresco, but as an immediate and deeply human experience, inviting the audience to journey from within through the tensions and contradictions at the heart of the narrative.

— *Artistic statement by Franck-Emmanuel Comte, 2026*



Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu
Franck-Emmanuel Comte

Programme



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

St John Passion

BWV 245 (Leipzig, 1724)

Cast



Namur Chamber Choir

Thibaut Lenaerts, choir preparation

Apolline Rai-Westphal, soprano

Mathilde Ortscheidt, mezzo-soprano

Charles Pittsinger, tenor (The Evangelist)

Mathieu Gourlet, bass-baritone (Jesus)

ND, bass-baritone (Pilate)

Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu

Franck-Emmanuel Comte, artistic director & conductor

Reynier Guererro, solo violin

On stage



42 ARTISTS

5 soloists, 16 choir members, 20 musicians, 1 conductor

Touring period



1–15 April 2028

Namur Chamber Choir



Since its creation in 1987, the **Namur Chamber Choir** has been dedicated to promoting the musical heritage of its home region while also exploring the great masterpieces of the choral repertoire.

Invited to perform at some of Europe's most prestigious festivals, the choir regularly collaborates with renowned conductors including Christophe Rousset, René Jacobs, Alexis Kossenko, Julien Chauvin, Reinoud Van Mechelen and Gergely Madaras. Its extensive discography has received outstanding critical acclaim, including nominations at the Victoires de la Musique Classique, as well as distinctions such as Choc de Classica, Diapason d'Or, Joker de Crescendo, 4F de Télérama, Gramophone Editor's Choice, ICMA and the Belgian press's Prix Caecilia. The Namur Chamber Choir was also awarded the Grand Prix de l'Académie Charles Cros in 2003, the Prix de l'Académie Française in 2006, and the Octave de la Musique in 2007 and 2012 in the categories "Classical Music" and "Performance of the Year".

In 2010, Argentinian conductor Leonardo García Alarcón was appointed Artistic Director of the Namur Chamber Choir. In 2016, the ensemble took part in its first staged production at the Paris Opera. The 2017–2018 season marked the choir's 30th anniversary, launched with Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, performed throughout Europe and South America. Other highlights included Lully's *Grands Motets*, Veneziano's *Passio del Venerdì Santo*, masses and motets by Jacques Arcadelt, and Handel's oratorio *Samson*, alongside several television recordings and CD releases conducted by Leonardo García Alarcón.

From 2020 to 2025, the Namur Chamber Choir continued its exploration of Handel's great choral works, developed a wide-ranging repertoire with its Artistic Director and expanded its artistic horizons, notably towards operetta. The ensemble has continued its close collaborations with Christophe Rousset and Les Talens Lyriques, Julien Chauvin and Le Concert de la Loge, Reinoud Van Mechelen and A Nocte Temporis, while beginning new collaborations with Alexis Kossenko and Les Ambassadeurs, as well as René Jacobs and B'Rock Orchestra.

The choir's repertoire is exceptionally broad, ranging from medieval music to contemporary creation.

Franck-Emmanuel Comte

Artistic Director & Conductor

A conductor specialising in the interpretation of baroque repertoire on period instruments, **Franck Emmanuel Comte is above all committed to sharing his passion for music with the widest possible audience.**

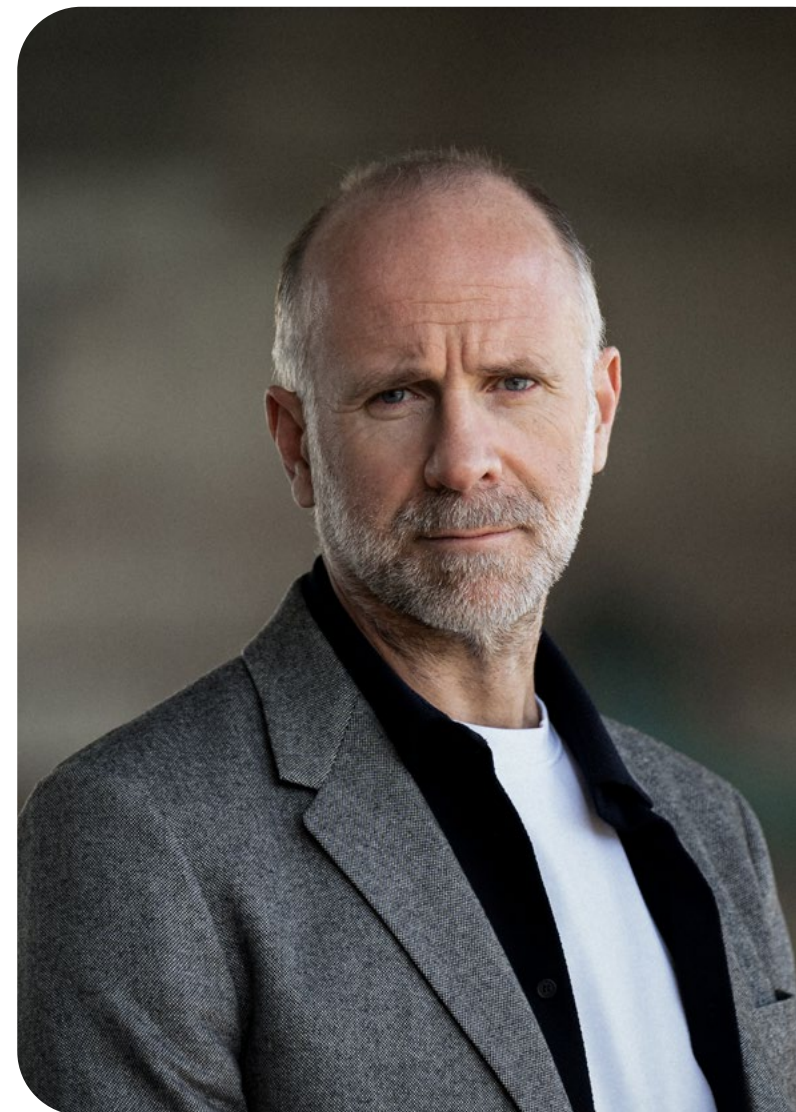
After completing his studies at the CNSMD in Lyon, he quickly held key artistic positions and was invited to collaborate with major opera houses (Nantes, Lyon, Studio Opéra de Paris...) and orchestras (Orchestre des Pays de Savoie, Ensemble Orchestral Contemporain, University of Auckland Orchestra, Collegium Musicum Riga, Arion Baroque Orchestra in Montreal...).

Regularly invited to conduct in major European and international cities (Barcelona, London, Moscow, Montreal, New York, Washington, Helsinki, Krakow, Rome, Brussels, Madrid, Tel Aviv, Beijing...) and at leading festivals (Ambronay, La Chaise-Dieu, Halle Handel Festival, Bayreuth Baroque Festival, Bruges Early Music Festival, London Baroque Festival, Granada Festival of Sacred Music...), Franck-Emmanuel Comte is passionate about baroque music as well as cross-disciplinary and unconventional projects, such as *Folia*, a ballet co-created with choreographer Mourad Merzouki, which has been performed for over 100,000 spectators across 160 performances.

In 1993, he founded **Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu (CHD)**, a Lyon-based ensemble with an international reputation, of which he remains Artistic Director. He has conducted the ensemble in more than **1800 concerts** and recorded around twenty albums. *The Ghosts of Hamlet* (Arcana/Outthere, 2025), featuring Roberta Mameli, received numerous awards from the international press. In spring 2026, *Furioso* was released with countertenor Xavier Sabata, exploring the many faces of Orlando in baroque opera.

In 2025, he became Artistic Director of **La Trinité**, a concert season dedicated to early and unconventional music, jointly organised by Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu and Superspectives.

Franck-Emmanuel Comte is also Artistic Director of the **J.S. Bach International Music Centre** of Saint-Donat and the **Baroque Festival of Pays du Mont-Blanc**.



Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu

Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu is a leading ensemble on the French baroque scene. It stands out for its sensitive and dynamic interpretations of 18th-century vocal and instrumental repertoire, consistently favouring a historically informed and philological approach.

Under the direction of **Franck-Emmanuel Comte**, the ensemble is particularly committed to highlighting the originality and uniqueness of baroque manuscripts preserved in libraries throughout the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, producing restorations and editions of previously unpublished works that reflect Lyon's close historical ties with Italy.

Bringing the richness and diversity of baroque music into the present day is another major artistic focus of Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu. Through inspiring collaborations, the ensemble creates encounters between baroque aesthetics and artists and cultures from diverse backgrounds.

Transmission and sharing lie at the heart of the ensemble's creative work, enriching the concert experience through numerous outreach and educational projects designed for a wide variety of audiences.

Under Franck-Emmanuel Comte's direction, the ensemble has performed more than **1 800 concerts** in major European and international cities and at numerous renowned festivals. Its recordings have received widespread acclaim from the international press.

*The projects of Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu are supported by **Ville de Lyon**, the **Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes**, the **Centre National de la Musique**, the **SPEDIDAM** and the **ADAMI**.*



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