

Biography | September 2025

Nuria Rial | soprano
Gebhard David | cornet
Frithjof Smith | cornet
and ensemble

In recent years the instrumental ensemble Les Cornets Noirs, which specialises in Italian and German Early Baroque music, has made a name for itself internationally.

Founded in 1997 by Gebhard David and Bork-Frithjof Smith, the main interest of the group lies in solo and ensemble literature for the cornett (It. cornetto, Fr. cornet – also called “black cornett” because of its leather covering), which experienced its hey-day from the middle of the 16th to the late 17th century north and south of the Alps.

Les Cornets Noirs were prize winners in the concours musica antiqua at the Festival van Vlaanderen Brugge 2000. Since then, the ensemble has performed at festivals in Switzerland, Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, France, Luxemburg, Italy, and Portugal, both with their own programmes and in collaboration with vocal groups for the performance of large-scale Early Baroque works by Giovanni Gabrieli, Heinrich Schütz, Claudio Monteverdi, Georg Muffat, Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber, and their contemporaries.

Les Cornets Noirs’s CDs “O dilectissime Jesu” with works by Giovanni Legrenzi, “Echo & Risposta” with instrumental music for double-chorus as well as “Treasures from Uppsala” featuring music from the Düben collection were highly acclaimed by the international press. Their CD “Polychoral Splendour”, which was recorded together with the vocal ensemble Cappella Murensis at convent church Muri, was awarded with the ICMA 2013. Their latest two recordings are dedicated to Muffat’s 24-part “Missa in labore requies” and, under the title “Paradisi gloria” to works by Emperor Leopold I.

Together with Nuria Rial, Les Cornets Noirs offer programmes with different instrumentations, focusing on the secular beauty of sacred music by Monteverdi, Gabrieli, Palestrina, Merula and Legrenzi.