

**Ravel****Ma mère l'Oye; Shéhérazade; Le Tombeau de Couperin**

Les Siècles, cond
François-Xavier Roth
Harmonia Mundi
HMM905281

With his Paris-based band, using *instruments de l'époque* made between 1880 and 1933, the LSO's principal guest conductor is reinventing masterpieces by the so-called French impressionists from the turn of the 20th century. These works, originally for piano and later orchestrated, focus on scores with childhood associations for the composer, who delighted in reading fairy tales to the children of his friends.

Mother Goose, usually heard in the five-piece suite derived from the piano originals, is here given in the ballet score expanded for stage performances in 1912. A prelude and five interludes link the tableaux: a variant on the Sleeping Beauty story with the old woman at her spinning wheel; an encounter with a Beast; and her successive dreams of Tom Thumb, Laideronnette (Empress of the Pagodas) and a fairy garden. The period band give the texture a transparency that never seems contrived. The "fairy overture" *Shéhérazade* and *Le Tombeau de Couperin* — Ravel's tribute to his fallen wartime friends — benefit from the same lightness. A treat. HC

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Hugh Canning, David Cairns, Paul Driver and Stephen Pettitt



A treat: François-Xavier Roth conducts Les Siècles

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ALBUM OF THE WEEK

RAVEL

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LOUIS COUPERIN

Dances from the Bauyn Manuscript: Suites

Pavel Kolesnikov

Hyperion CDA68224

The elder of the two famous Couperins seems a strange choice for the brilliant young Russian after Tchaikovsky’s *The Seasons* and Chopin’s *Mazurkas*. He takes this 17th-century dance music very seriously indeed, but his style recalls old-fashioned Bach on the piano: weighty. Not that these dances are toe-tappers. Even the *gigue* of the G minor is on the stately side. Kolesnikov justifies his championing of the composer with a variety of colour in the F sharp minor *Pavanne*. *HC*

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BEETHOVEN

Violin Sonatas: Vol 2, Opp 23, 24 and 30 (No 2)

Chloë Hanslip (violin), Danny Driver (piano)

Rubicon RCD1011

I missed the first volume, but, recorded live at Turner Sims, in Southampton, this is a delight. If their fiery C minor sonata doesn’t quite match the prodigious tension of the prewar Busch/Serkin recording, it is still remarkable. The balance is inclined to overfavour the piano, but Driver’s playing is so good, one can’t complain. His rapport with Hanslip’s splendidly incisive yet sweet-toned violin is complete. *DC*

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STRAVINSKY

Complete Music for Solo Piano

Oxana Shevchenko

Delphian DCD34203

These two discs really do contain virtually everything for solo piano from Stravinsky’s pen, though the first item is actually a *Firebird* transcription by Guido Agosti — a brilliant job. Shevchenko plays superbly: the *Three Movements* from *Petrushka* are precise and exhilarating; she gets the dry *Sonata* and *Serenade in A* just right. The early F sharp minor *Sonata* and *Four Etudes* are impressively done, but most memorable