

CLASSICAL ICONOCLAST

"Tradition ist nicht die Anbetung der Asche, sondern die Bewahrung und das Weiterreichen des Feuers" - Gustav Mahler

Thursday, 14 June 2018

Magical Ravel *Ma mère l'Oye*. *Le Tombeau de Couperin* - FX Roth Les Siècles

François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles Ravel *Ma mère l'Oye*, coupled with *Le Tombeau de Couperin* with *Shéhérazade* between them, latest in Les Siècles's Prelude series for Harmonia Mundi which began with their *Daphnis et Chloé*, so exquisitely beautiful that it remains by my desk for frequent listening. This new disc focuses on two main works initially published for piano, but conceived with potential for orchestra. "To orchestrate, for Ravel!" said Emile Vuillemoz, was to "exploit the colour of the instruments, to atch their timbres, to vary and nuance them down to the slightest detail, without ever losing sight of the overall balance". Ideal for Roth and Les Siècles whose forte is clarity and exquisite clarity, clean jewel-like sparkle enlivened by a feel for the passionate imagination that inspired the composer. *Ma mère l'Oye* may have been written for children, but its magic is so strong that adults, too, can be drawn under its spell. With Roth and Les Siècles you don't get "kid stuff". Indeed, the more sophisticated the players, and the more sensitive the listener, the stronger the sense of enchantment.

This performance of the full 1912 ballet version of *Ma mère l'Oye* is almost too exquisite to be earthbound, though it bristles with energy. The first notes of the Prelude suggest the pipes of Pan, the swirl of flutes, the movement of some mysterious creature. Winds blow, and dizzying strings - spinning wheels - hypnotize us into reverie so we can dream, like the Beauty, sleep in the forest. More shivers and shimmerings, as the Beauty awakes to meet the Beast. the woodwinds sing, and the lower strings growl : suggesting the Beast whose form is brutish but his soul refined. In this mysterious realm (tender strings) lives too Le petit Poucet who is small and frail (birdlike woodwinds) but outsmarts the Ogre. Magical harps, tremulous woodwinds evoke the even more exotic kingdom of Laideronette. Percussion in "oriental" patterns, as angular as the shape of pagodas, building up to elegant, though wistful melody. Laideronette and her serpent friend are under a spell. Roth and Les Siècles alternate slow and more agitated passages enhancing the flow. The Apothéose, in the jardin féerique is delicate, yet magnificent.

Thus to *Shéhérazade, ouverture de féerie* (1898). Although this was to have been part of an opera, Roth and Les Siècles bring out the tightness of its structure, demonstrating the strength of its design, as purposeful as a ballet. Though Stravinsky would not have known it (it remained unpublished until 1975), this performance is so well-defined that the piece feels like a prototype for something Diaghilev might have considered for the Ballets Russe.

Roth values the importance of structure in French repertoire, evolving as it did from the baroque, where elaborations are built upon firm, disciplined foundations influenced by dance and formal patterns. Thus Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, in his four movement orchestration, premiered in 1920. Thus the piece is as much an homage to French style as a series of memorials to Ravel's friends, some of whom died in the 1914-1918 war. A vivacious Prélude, with the oboe as lithe and athletic as a creature of the forest (an unexpected link to *Ma mère l'Oye*). The dance origins of the Forlane are even more evident, a forlane being a folk dance form from Italy which Couperin adapted. Hence the sprightliness, every "step" in the music sharply articulated and vibrant. The Minuet is more formal but equally well presented. This is what period inspired performance means, not instruments per se but an understanding of repertoire itself. The Rigaudon here is particularly impressive, combining elegance with boisterousness, and a tinge of sadness. Oboe and strings interact, two voices entwining like partners in a dance, or the two brothers Ravel knew, who went cheerfully to war and were promptly killed, by the same shell.

at [June 14, 2018](#)



Labels: [Ravel](#), [Roth Francois Xavier](#)

No comments:

[Post a Comment](#)



[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

Copyright Disclaimer Under Section 107 of the Copyright Act 1976, allowance is made for "fair use" for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research. Fair use is a use permitted by copyright statute that might otherwise be infringing. Non-profit, educational or personal use tips the balance in favor of fair use. Wherever possible i quote source, I don't claim ownership of what's not mine. WARNING :if you want to copy my work ALWAYS add credit and a link to my url, the original. Do NOT pass it off as your own work, loser. That's fraud.

Search This Blog

Subscribe To

- Posts ▼
- Comments ▼

Popular Posts

 Bergen Philharmonic Berlioz Grande Messe des Morts Edward Gardner in Bergen Livestreamed from Norway, Edward Gardner conducted the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra in Berlioz Grande M...

 Dazzling Le Concert Royal de la Nuit - London Baroque Festival Le Concert Royal de la Nuit with Ensemble Correspondances led by Sébastien Daucé, the glorious culmination of the finest London Fest...

 Pan European Orpheus : Julian Prégardien, Teatro del mondo "Orpheus I am!" - An unusual but very well chosen collection of songs, arias and madrigals from the 17th century, featuring Jul...

 Painterly Charpentier Histoires sacrées : London Festival of the Baroque photo: Philippe Delval Marc-Antoine Charpentier Histoires sacrées with Ensemble Correspondances, conducted by Sébastien Daucé, ...

 Les Arts Florissants : An English Garden At the Barbican, London, Les Arts Florissants conducted by Paul Agnew, with soloists of Le Jardin de Voix in "An English Garden"...

 Outstanding Parsifal-aware Lohengrin Royal Opera House Klaus Florian Vogt and Thomas J Mayer, copyright Tristram Kenton, Royal Opera House Wagner Lohengrin at the Royal Opera House.Wit...