

Meet the artist François-Xavier Roth



WALES AT WAR: a premiere and a classic unite

PROM 34 On 9 August, François-Xavier Roth will be appearing at the Proms as associate guest conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Joining them will be a rare trio of solo instruments...

What happens when a French conductor, a Welsh orchestra and an English composer meet in the concert hall? In short, war ensues. Thankfully, in this instance it's not the performers who are at odds, but the two protagonists of *Centauromachy* ('Warring centaurs'), Simon Holt's concerto for clarinet and flugelhorn. 'It's a very special concerto, as it's for two instruments that haven't met that often in musical history,' says François-Xavier Roth, who will be conducting the BBC NOW in the work's first Proms outing. 'The way Simon Holt uses the two soloists is quite unusual – sometimes they are independent, but very often they form a unique instrument – and the dialogue they have with the orchestra is very active.'

Talking of powerful, in the same Prom, Xavier-Roth will be joining forces with the mighty Albert Hall organ (played by Thomas Trotter) for Saint-Saëns's Symphony No. 3, a work he has recently recorded with his own Les Siècles orchestra in Paris: 'I've conducted the Symphony many times and, as the son of an organist, I have the last movement in my hard drive, if you like! When Saint-Saëns gives the organ that big part, he creates two dialoguing orchestras – the challenge is to make the organ not so big that you can't hear the orchestra any more, but also not too shy. They have to be very equal, and when you have the fusion between them, it's very important that they blend.'

Given the sheer scale of both the Hall and its organ, finding that balance is by no means easy. 'We'll have to work hard at it,' agrees Roth. 'Even with the tight timescale!' *Interview by Jeremy Pound*

GETTY, CÉLINE GAUDIER, J. HENRY FAIR, PAUL MITCHELL

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