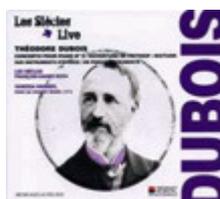


THÉODORE DUBOIS: Piano Concerto No. 2; Overture from 'Frithiof'; Dixtuor – Vanessa Wagner, p./ Les Siècles/ François-Xavier Roth – Musicales Actes Sud

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THÉODORE DUBOIS: Piano Concerto No. 2; Overture from 'Frithiof'; Dixtuor – Vanessa Wagner, piano/ Les Siècles/ François-Xavier Roth – Musicales Actes Sud CD (no #), 64:08 (Distr. by Harmonia mundi)

French composer, organist and teacher Théodore Dubois (1837-1924) is all but forgotten today, but based on this CD, his music might well be worth digging out. Bearing the unmistakable influence of Richard Wagner, his music fits in with the music of the disciples of Cesar Franck, such as Chausson, D'Indy, Duparc and Lekeu, among others.

François-Xavier Roth is inspiring with his period instruments group Les Siècles who perform this music like it's second nature to them. Vanessa Wagner plays, with distinction, on an Érard concert piano from 1874. The overall sound of these period instruments in performance is not a whole lot different from the sound of modern instruments.

The piano concerto is reminiscent of the Saint-Saëns piano concertos. The *Frithiof* overture is sweeping and exciting in a typically Romantic era manner. *Dixtuor* is a double quintet for strings and winds and is more modern sounding, i.e. less Romantic, than the other two works here. *Dixtuor* is a French word meaning a composition for 10 instrumentalists.

The one drawback is Dubois' style. There are sections of what sounds like a good melody that begins, only to be cut off while Dubois rambles around with what can charitably be called inconsequential note-spinning. He appears to have been a talented orchestrator. From that point of view, the music is interesting, but not memorable.

The recording, part of a series called Les Siècles Live, is a mighty effort worthy of praise. The fold out case has lots of printing on it, but little information about the music. There is a whole page devoted to the musicians and their instruments for each composition. English and French only.

The quibbles: there is no way to tell what the record label name is. Is it Les Siècles Live or Musicales Actes Sud? There is no catalog number on the painted CD label or on the fold-out cover for the CD. It does have a UPC number: 3 149028 017625 on the back of the cover.

Incidentally, the sound is gorgeous, clear and solid. Recommended, but be warned about the drawbacks mentioned. It could be that there is more here than meets the ear.

—Zan Furtwangler