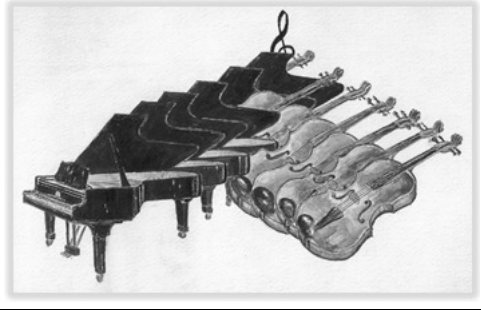


# The Classical Reviewer



Saturday, 27 April 2013

## A world première of a lost early work by Debussy in period instrument performances from Les Siècles conducted by François-Xavier Roth released by Musicales Actes Sud

Claude Debussy (1862-1918) wrote his **Première Suite d'Orchestre** sometime during the years 1882-1884 whilst still a student at the Conservatoire de Paris. Most books don't even list this early work that appears in manuscript both for piano duet and for orchestra. Indeed it seems that this work did not appear in any list until François Lesure included it in his catalogue of 1977 where it is catalogued as *L50, Suite for orchestra (piano reduction) (1883)*.

The manuscripts for these two versions of the work appear to have travelled considerably, first being sold in New York, then acquired by another collector before being deposited in the Pierpoint Morgan Library in New York [www.themorgan.org/home.asp](http://www.themorgan.org/home.asp). The piano duet version was published by Durand in Paris in 2008 but the orchestral version lacked the orchestral score of the third movement, *Rêve*.

Composer Philippe Manoury [www.philippemanoury.com](http://www.philippemanoury.com) undertook the orchestration of the third movement and on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 the whole work was performed at the Cité de la Musique à Paris by François-Xavier Roth conducting Les Siècles as part of the celebrations of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Debussy's birth.

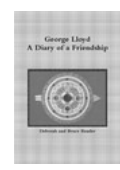
**It is this première performance of Debussy's Première Suite d'Orchestre that was recorded by Musicales Actes Sud [www.actes-sud.fr/rayon/arts/musique](http://www.actes-sud.fr/rayon/arts/musique) and is now released on CD together with a live performance of Debussy's La Mer.**



ISBN 314-9-02802-332-9

Les Siècles was founded in 2003 by the conductor François-Xavier Roth [www.francoisxavierroth.com](http://www.francoisxavierroth.com) and performs contrasting programmes on modern and period instruments as appropriate, often within the same concert. Roth has given concerts with Les Siècles in France, Italy, Germany, England and Japan. They were awarded a Diapason Découverte for their CD on the Mirare label of music by Bizet and Chabrier and on the orchestra's own label Les Siècles Live <http://lessiecleslive.wordpress.com/les->

## George Lloyd A Diary of a Friendship



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### About Me



#### the classical reviewer

The Classical Reviewer has been involved in music for many years, as a classical record distributor, as a newspaper concert reviewer and writer of articles relating to music. He assisted in the cataloguing of the scores of the late British composer George Lloyd and has co-authored a memoir of his friendship with the composer. Having a particular interest in British music, he regularly undertakes talks on Elgar. The Classical Reviewer lives on the borders of Herefordshire and Shropshire where he also works as an artist, having provided CD covers for a number of record companies.

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siecles-live , they have released works by Berlioz, Saint-Saëns, Martin Matalon, Stravinsky and Liszt.

Debussy's **Premiere Suite d'Orchestre** opens with *Fête*, a lively, rhythmic, piece with a flowing second subject. It is effectively orchestrated though there is no distinctive Debussy sound here as he looks more to his contemporaries of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Ballet* is a less conventional piece, full of attractive ideas and a little scent of the East. *Rêve*, orchestrated by Philippe Manoury, has more of the mature Debussy sound that we expect to hear, though that might be due to the orchestration more than the actual musical invention. There is a quiet luscious melody, certainly very French and full of atmosphere. *Cortège et Bacchanale* is attractive and full of ideas and some lovely brass sounds from the old 19<sup>th</sup> instruments.

François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles recorded **La Mer (1903-05)** live at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa-Cecilia, Rome [www.santacecilia.it/en](http://www.santacecilia.it/en) in April 2012. This is a very characterful performance. *De l'aube à midi sur la mer*, has a lovely ebb and flow, played with a fine sensitivity that brings out many of Debussy's little orchestral details. François-Xavier Roth is wonderful in the way he holds the tension so that, when the final climax bursts out, it is magnificent, a great surge of the sea. There are some great shimmering string sounds in *Jeux de vagues*, superbly played. Roth and his orchestra are wonderful in the way that they handle all the changes in this movement. The harp that can be heard towards the end is an early Erard, though no date is given. *Dialogue du vent et de la mer* receives a wonderful reading, full of drama yet with some exquisitely quite moments, particularly when the flute and oboe play over hushed strings.

The effect of using period instruments from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century is not as obvious as when much earlier instruments are used for music of the baroque or classical era. However, as caught in these live recordings, these old instruments certainly give a lovely sound, full of character.

It is fascinating to hear Debussy's very early work and the performance of *La Mer* is excellent in its own right. There is a well-illustrated and informative booklet with informative notes and pictures of some of the period instruments.

Posted by the classical reviewer at 09:32

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