

Classical, June 15

The week's essential new releases

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First rite: François-Xavier Roth conducts the 1913 score of Stravinsky's masterpiece (M.Debeusscher)

ALBUM OF THE WEEK

STRAVINSKY

Le Sacre du Printemps, Petrushka

Les Siècles, cond François-Xavier Roth

Musicales Actes Sud ASM15

“As heard at the scandalous 1913 world première” is the gist of Roth’s claims for this first period-instrument recording of *The Rite* — with special permission from Boosey & Hawkes, which usually only authorises performances of Stravinsky’s 1967 edition. It’s certainly hard to imagine the first performance, under Pierre Monteux, being as well played as this, as *Les Siècles* follow up their revelatory account of the complete *Firebird* score. The sound of their French-made turn-of-the-century (mostly 1880s to 1920s) instruments throws fresh light on these modern masterpieces: a tuba, two-thirds the size of modern ones, by Adolphe Sax, inventor of the saxophone; and wonderful Buffet Crampon clarinets and bassoons. The *Rite*’s famous bassoon solo is played without the octave key invented to make this very music less difficult to play. One can’t listen with 1913 ears, of course, but there’s a palpable sense of freshness with more astringent gut strings that convey the abrasiveness of Stravinsky’s writing better than their modern

metal equivalents. It’s not clear from the notes whether the piano soloist in *Petrushka* is using an Erard or a Pleyel, but the sound is luminous and transparent, and Roth effortlessly evokes the eeriness of the puppet’s ghostly apparition at the close. *HC*