

# A revelatory *Rite of Spring*

Daniel Jaffé is bowled over by Les Siècles' period instrument approach



**TIME-TRAVELLER:**  
François-Xavier Roth  
heads back to 1913



## STRAVINSKY

### The Rite of Spring; Petrushka

Les Siècles/François-Xavier Roth

Musicales Actes Sud ASM15 68:54 mins

BBC Music Direct

£15.99

Prior to *The Rite of Spring's* publication, several of the original score's details were altered to mitigate its perceived difficulties. Here, now, is a chance to hear the *Rite* close to how Stravinsky originally conceived it for its 1913 premiere in Paris – an enticing prospect in itself: more than that, this is an exciting, visceral performance, culminating in a ferocious final dance.

Professional orchestras today can perform the *Rite* virtually on autopilot; so last year, the ballet's centenary, it made sense for François-Xavier Roth and his orchestra Les Siècles to attempt Stravinsky's more challenging original score, as rehearsed by Pierre

### This is an exciting, visceral performance of *The Rite of Spring*

Monteux for the *Rite's* premiere. There are some obvious differences: two passages are pitched an octave lower than in the standard version; and in the opening pages of the sacrificial dance, strings ambitiously alternate pizzicato with bowed notes. Most striking, though, is the revelation of hearing the *Rite* played by the instruments of its

time. The austere soundworld of the beginning, with timbres conjured as it were from a past civilisation, is utterly unlike anything else from that era. Even using brass instruments not as powerful as the American-style monsters that are standard today proves an advantage, as they balance more readily with strings and woodwind, allowing far more evocative detail to be heard.

*Petrushka* seems, if anything, even more lively, perhaps because the technical demands are not quite so great, though its ebullient character surely helps too.

**PERFORMANCE**

★★★★★

**RECORDING**

★★★★★



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