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THURSDAY, 21 AUGUST 2014

It has been a while since a recording has changed my perspective on a great masterwork, but a new recording by the period instrument orchestra 'Les Siècles' does just that. They are performing two great ballet scores by Stravinsky, the 'Rite of Spring' and 'Petrouchka'.

'Les Siècles' are an orchestra on a mission to present music in a refreshing and new way, selecting instruments from the period to create the most authentic performance possible. Their aim, to get back to the sounds that may have accompanied the dancers on that famous premiere night in Paris of the 'Rite'. This is the only recording of the 'Rite' on period instruments and the results are stunning, revealing much of the score hitherto unheard in my previous listening. The gut strings have a different timbre, altering the balance and shifting it towards the woodwind. Whilst listening to this recording I became far more aware of how revolutionary this score must have been back in 1913. The wind writing is exposed and sounds like a beautifully barbaric free-for-all. The opening of the work is now so familiar to us - a lone bassoon playing in a high register, sounding like a fish out of water, a familiar instrument in unfamiliar territory. The bassoonist of Les Siècles uses an instrument that predates the modifications of the modern bassoon, making life a little more difficult for the player!

The complex layers of rhythm and texture in Petrouchka are also given a different quality. The decision to use an Erard piano really adds a sparkle to the score. Once again the strings are less prominent revealing Stravinsky delicate scoring. Really recommended!!

Stravinsky: Rite of Spring – Petrouchka
François-Xavier Roth / Les Siècles
Actes Sud ASM15



Jason Hatton, August 2014

BathCDs at 04:24

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