

# Dubois: Musique Sacrée et Symphonique CD review - top-class performances but the music is only occasionally striking

Descharmes/Giardini/Les Siècles/Roth/Brussels PO/Niquet (Ediciones Singulares, three CDs)

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Last year, Ediciones Singulares launched a series of excellently presented three-disc portrait collections devoted to composers whom history had passed by. The first volume focused on the works of Théodore Gouvy, whose music went unperformed for almost a century after his death in 1898, and the latest surveys the output of Théodore Dubois (1837-1924).

Taught by Ambroise Thomas, Dubois won the Prix de Rome in 1861, succeeding César Franck as choirmaster at the Basilica of Sainte-Clotilde in Paris, and then followed Camille Saint-Saëns as organist at the Church of the Madeleine, before becoming director of the Paris Conservatoire in 1896.

Dubois composed copiously, and this set samples Dubois's orchestral music (the Second Symphony and the *Symphonie Française*), instrumental works (the Piano Sonata and Piano Quartet) and a disc of choral works, including a mass and a sequence of motets. Unsurprisingly, given Dubois's pedigree, it is all well made. Occasionally it can be striking, as in the echoing of Mussorgsky at the opening of the Second Symphony, but much, especially the choral music, is conservative and unremarkable. The performances - modern instruments from the Brussels Philharmonic under Hervé Niquet, period ones from Les Siècles and François-Xavier Roth, and fine piano playing by Romain Descharmes - are top class.

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