

MUSIC

Listen to an orchestra with a sense of adventure

It's a multi-course French meal this hour, with music written for the coronation of Napoleon by Étienne-Nicolas Méhul - and a leap into the 20th century with "Prelude to the Afternoon" of a Faun by Claude Debussy.



In a time when orchestras are sounding more and more alike, the French period instrument orchestra Les Siècles has its own sound.

"We rehearse everything like it is a premiere," says its conductor, François Xavier Roth. If necessary, all the musicians in Les Siècles will swap their instruments for ones that suit the time in which the piece was composed and first performed.

As Roth explained to DW, "When you change the instruments, you put the orchestra in the situation of

Concert Hour: Les Siècles, part one

the period. It's totally different: exciting, and at the same time, something like an adventure. That's why I decided to create this orchestra with this adventurous philosophy."



Claude Debussy in a contemporary painting

This hour, along with Debussy, we'll hear music by Étienne-Nicolas Méhul, called the composer of the French Revolution. Les Siècles dug up an interesting piece, Méhul's coronation mass for Napoleon - or the one he is supposed to have written.

In fact, not long before our concert in September 2016, doubts emerged as to the true authorship. A musicologist now says that someone had made a copy of a mass by Austrian composer Franz Xaver Kleinheinz and sold it off as Méhul's Coronation Mass.

François-Xavier Roth responded, "It was a strange story. But whether Méhul or Kleinheinz, it's interesting to see the variety of different tastes in music at this time just after the French Revolution - an event that all composers in Europe reacted to."

Claude Debussy

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun
Les Siècles

François-Xavier Roth, conductor

Recorded by West German Radio, Cologne (WDR) in the Beethoven Hall, Bonn on October 2, 2016.

Étienne-Nicolas Méhul (attrib.)

Solemn mass for the Coronation of Napoleon (excerpt)

Chantal Santon, soprano

Caroline Meng, alto

Artavazd Sargsyan, tenor
Tomislav Lavoie, bass
Flemish Radio Chorus
Les Siècles
François-Xavier Roth, conductor

Recorded by West German Radio, Cologne (WDR) in the Beethoven Hall, Bonn on October 1, 2016.



Vaclav Nijinsky as the faun in
Debussy's ballet music

DW RECOMMENDS

Composing in his dreams: Philip Glass turns 80

A founding father of minimal music and one of the most prolific living composers, Philip Glass also kept a side job as a taxi driver until his 40s. He now celebrates his 80th birthday with a series of concerts. (30.01.2017)

The classical music pop star: Nigel Kennedy at 60

The iconoclastic violinist is famous for having shaken up the classical music scene. Never looking back, he cherishes the moment now more than ever before. (28.12.2016)

Fazil Say: 'I make music like a Turk'

Music between Orient and Occident: the Turkish pianist, composer and Beethoven Prize winner tells DW how his work crosses frontiers and about the responsibility of artists like himself. (18.12.2016)

AUDIOS AND VIDEOS ON THE TOPIC

Concert Hour: Les Siècles, part one

Date 06.02.2017

Author Rick Fulker

Keywords [Concert Hour](#), [classical music](#), [Les Siècles](#), [Méhul](#), [Debussy](#)

Share [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google+](#) [More](#)

Feedback: [Send us your feedback.](#)

Print [Print this page](#)

Permalink <http://dw.com/p/2X2ye>
