



Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé CD review – a timeless score performed with clarity and colour

Les Siècles/Roth (Harmonia Mundi)

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Since he launched the orchestra 14 years ago, François-Xavier Roth has specially focussed his concerts on French orchestral music from around the turn of the 20th century, with the period instruments of Les Siècles. The scores composed for the Paris seasons of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes have been at the core of that exploration, and no work epitomises the colour and sensuousness of that music more vividly than Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*.

Roth's recording is taken from Les Siècles's European tour last year though, unlike the performance of *Daphnis* they gave at last year's Aldeburgh festival, it does include the wordless chorus (provided by Ensemble Aedes) that Ravel made optional in concert. With the strings playing on gut and wind instruments from the early years of the 20th century (all detailed in the sleeve notes), the sound is fabulously transparent; every detail of the woodwind and brass articulation, so minutely specified by Ravel, is clear. Roth's approach may be too cool for some tastes – there's not much Dionysian abandon about it – but, as a guide to one of the most brilliant of all orchestral scores, it's hard to fault.

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