

Already one of the best of the year

CLASSIC

François-Xavier Roth

Berlioz 'Harold and Italy', 'Les nuits d'été' (Harmonia Mundi)

★★★★★

The Berlioz-year could not have started nicer than with this new CD by Les Siècles, that great Parisian ensemble that adapts its instruments to the music it plays. Founder and musical director is François-Xavier Roth, who assisted Sir Colin Davis and later Sir John Eliot Gardiner at the beginning of his career when they both prepared Berlioz's colossal opera 'Les Troyens'. Since then Roth has been a real Berlioz fanatic, and you can hear that in the symphony 'Harold en Italie' and the song cycle 'Les nuits d'été'.



Tabea Zimmermann is the viola player who has to represent the wandering Harold (actually Berlioz himself). Magnificent how she gives the ever-returning Harold theme the full pound. Roth keeps the authentic instruments beautifully in balance. With this old instrumentation you can hear even better how fantastic Berlioz could orchestrate. Very clear is that in the song cycle, here sung by Stéphane Degout. How the different horns sound here! It is unusually beautiful. Degout's diction and phrasing are a wonder of color and precision, and with his typical French baritone he is perfect for this repertoire. Already one of the best CDs of the year. Les Siècles and Roth will perform in Amsterdam tomorrow and Sunday in The Hague. No Berlioz unfortunately, but Mozart and Lachenmann. (**Peter van der Lint**)

Trouw

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