

François-Xavier Roth

Conductor

If he hasn't already got the nickname Special FX, then Roth should adopt it ... empathetic musicality and flair for colour, sometimes conjuring up such startling touches that the players look stunned.

Neil Fisher, The Times

Like the difference between a sparkling fruity champagne and an old, long stored red wine ... a seductive bouquet of strong, warm and velvety nature smells, noble woody notes and dark, full colours.

Remy Franck, Pizzicato, Ravel: Daphnis & Chloé CD

Reviews of François-Xavier Roth's regularly praised recordings in our pages all hint at one thing: there's never anything routine about his approach, the sound or the vision.

Mark Cullingford, The Gramophone

François-Xavier Roth is one of today's most imaginative conductors and programmers, whether in his roles as General Music Director of the City of Cologne and founder of Les Siècles, or with leading orchestras such as London Symphony Orchestra, of which he is Principal Guest Conductor. A born communicator, he is a charismatic and persuasive advocate for classical music of every description.

In Cologne, where he has directed both the Gürzenich Orchestra and the Opera since 2015, his programming is notable for its breadth and depth, including new commissions alongside Baroque and Romantic music. In one of the most original events of Beethoven's anniversary year, he and the orchestra honoured the spirit of the composer's Academy programmes, presenting his works alongside modern classics and world premieres, touring Europe as the New Academy. Roth upholds the orchestra's pioneering heritage, which includes having given the world premieres of Mahler's Third and Fifth Symphonies, the Brahms Double, Strauss's *Don Quixote* and *Till Eulenspiegel*, and Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten*. For Cologne Opera he has led new productions of *Benvenuto Cellini*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Soldaten* and *Salome*.

His sense of musical exploration led him in 2003 to found Les Siècles, which performs contrasting programmes on modern and period instruments, often within the same concert. Together, they have toured Europe, China and Japan, appearing at the Berlin Musikfest, BBC Proms and Enescu festivals, and at the Hamburg Elbphilharmonie. Projects have included recreating the original sound of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, in collaboration with the Pina Bausch and Dominique Brun dance companies, and performing the cycle of Beethoven's symphonies at the Palais de Versailles and around France for the composer's anniversary year.

Roth enjoys a close relationship with the Philharmonie de Paris, recently becoming its first Associate Artist, and he has been named Artistic Director of Atelier Lyrique de Tourcoing, where Les Siècles has become a resident orchestra.

He is a champion of new music and has premiered works by Georg-Friedrich Haas and Hèctor Parra, and collaborated with composers such as Pierre Boulez, Wolfgang Rihm, Jörg Widmann, Helmut Lachenmann and Philippe Manoury. He has a leading role in the LSO's Panufnik Composers Scheme, mentoring young emerging composers.

Engagement with new audiences is an essential part of Roth's work, whether speaking from the podium or working with young people and amateurs. With the Festival Berlioz and Les Siècles, he founded the Jeune Orchestre Européen Hector Berlioz, which has its own collection of period instruments and performed *Les Troyens* in Berlioz's birthplace. In Cologne he has initiated a community orchestra and his Ohrenauf! youth programme was recipient of a Junge Ohren Produktion Award. His television series Presto! attracted weekly audiences of over three million.

His prolific discography includes the complete tone poems of Richard Strauss, Stravinsky ballets, Ravel and Berlioz cycles, Mahler and Schumann symphonies, and an album commemorating Debussy's centenary. He was recently awarded the German Record Critics' Honorary Prize 2020, the youngest conductor ever to receive it. For his achievements as musician, conductor, music director and teacher, François-Xavier Roth was created a Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur.

Appointments

General Music Director, City of Cologne (2015–present); Principal Guest Conductor of London Symphony Orchestra (2017–present); Associate Artist of the Philharmonie de Paris (2018–present); Artistic Director of Atelier Lyrique de Tourcoing (2019–present)

Guest conducting appearances (2020–21)

Staatskapelle Berlin, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Berlin Philharmonic, Montreal Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, Concertgebouw Orchestra, Boulez Ensemble

Opera productions (2020–21)

Written on Skin, Faust (Cologne Opera)

Damnation de Faust (Netherlands Opera, Concertgebouw Orchestra)

Pelléas et Mélisande (Opéra de Lille, Les Siècles)

Recent awards

Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur (2017); German Record Critics' Honorary Prize (2020).

With Les Siècles: Edison Klassiek Prizes 2012; German Record Critics' Prize 2016, Gramophone Awards Orchestral Album of the Year 2018; Victoires de la Musique Classique Recording of the Year 2018

New releases

Schumann Symphonies Nos.1 & 4 with Gürzenich Orchestra (Myrios Classics)

Beethoven Symphony No.5 and Gossec Symphony in 17 Parts (Harmonia Mundi)

Mussorgsky, Ravel with Les Siècles (Harmonia Mundi)

Saint-Saëns Le Timbre d'argent with Les Siècles (Palazzetto Bru Zane)

Panufnik Legacies III with London Symphony Orchestra (LSO Live)