

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 (born Paris, 1971) is one of today's most charismatic and enterprising conductors. He has been General Music Director of the City of Cologne since 2015, leading both the Gürzenich Orchestra and the Opera. He is Principal Guest Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra and the first-ever Associate Artist of the Philharmonie de Paris and has recently been named Artistic Director of Atelier Lyrique de Tourcoing.

With a reputation for inventive programming, his incisive approach and inspiring leadership are valued around the world. He works with leading orchestras including the Staatskapelle Berlin, Boston Symphony, Cleveland, San Francisco Symphony and Zurich Tonhalle. In 2019-20, he makes return visits to the Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, Orchestre de Paris, Montreal Symphony, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony, Munich Philharmonic and Mahler Chamber Orchestras, makes a double appearance with the Boulez Ensemble and will make his debut with the Leipzig Gewandhaus.

In 2003, he founded Les Siècles, an innovative orchestra performing contrasting and colourful programmes on modern and period instruments, often within the same concert. With Les Siècles, he has given concerts throughout Europe, regularly appearing at key festivals (Berlin Musikfest, Beethovenfest Bonn, Musica Viva, Gstaad, Festival Berlioz, Enescu and Santander) and toured to China and Japan. They recreated the original sound of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in its centenary year and, subsequently, with the Pina Bausch and Dominique Brun dance companies in London, Paris, Frankfurt, Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai and Tokyo. The orchestra has twice been nominated for Gramophone Magazine's Orchestra of the Year Award.

His concerts with the London Symphony Orchestra this season explore works by Bartók, Berio, Stravinsky and Elgar and feature a new commission from Sophya Plevaya. There will be visits to Paris and Lyon. The third CD in the Panufnik Legacies series will be released during this period.

In his fifth Cologne opera season, he leads new productions of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and Berlioz' *Béatrice et Bénédicte* and a revival of Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten*. With the Gürzenich Orchestra, he continues his Bruckner cycle, exploration of Berlioz and features new commissions from Gander and Srnka alongside works by Bach, Rameau and Rebel. In celebration of the Beethoven Year, *The New Academy* carries the spirit with which Beethoven staged his academy concerts in Vienna into the here and now, juxtaposing intense moments of Beethoven's music with particular, contemporary hallmark styles. The New Academy will also tour to London, Munich, Hamburg and Lyon.

Recordings include the complete tone poems of Richard Strauss, as Principal Conductor of the SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden & Freiburg (2011-16) and, with Les Siècles, the three Stravinsky ballets (*The Rite of Spring* won German Record Critics' and Edison Klassiek Prizes). Ravel and Berlioz cycles are underway for Harmonia Mundi; the first Ravel release, *Daphnis and Chloé*, won Gramophone Awards' Orchestral Album of the Year 2018. *Mirages*, a vocal recital with Sabine Devieilhe for Erato, was *Victoires de la Musique Classique* Recording of the Year 2018. An album to commemorate Debussy's centenary (including *Jeux* and *Nocturnes*) and two marking the 150th anniversary of Berlioz' death (*Harold en Italie* and *Les nuits d'été* and, in October 2019, *Symphonie Fantastique*). With the Gürzenich Orchestra, their recording of Mahler's Third symphony joins their Fifth, both works having been premiered by this orchestra. A DVD of his first concert as London Symphony Orchestra Principal Guest Conductor, *The Young Debussy*, was recently released.

Engagement with new audiences is an essential part of François-Xavier Roth's work. With the Festival Berlioz and Les Siècles, he founded the Jeune Orchestre Européen Hector Berlioz, a unique orchestra-academy with its own collection of period instruments. They recently performed the first part of *Les Troyens* in Berlioz' birthplace. Roth and Les Siècles devised *Presto!*, a television series for France 2, attracting weekly audiences of over three million. The Gürzenich Orchestra's *Ohrenauf!* youth programme was recipient of a Junge Ohren Produktion Award.

A tireless champion of contemporary music, he has been conductor of the ground-breaking LSO Panufnik Composers Scheme since 2005. Roth has premiered works by Yann Robin, Georg-Friedrich Haas, Hèctor Parra and Simon Steen-Anderson and collaborated with composers like Pierre Boulez, Wolfgang Rihm, Jörg Widmann, Helmut Lachenmann and Philippe Manoury (from whom the Gürzenich Orchestra commissioned the "Köln Trilogy" – *Ring*, *Saccades* and *Lab.Oratorium*).

For his achievements as musician, conductor, music director and teacher, François-Xavier Roth was created a Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur.

<http://www.francoisxavierroth.com>