

FRANÇOIS-XAVIER ROTH

CONDUCTOR

‘Empathetic musicality and flair for colour’

The Times

One of today's most imaginative conductors and programmers, François-Xavier Roth is a charismatic communicator with a voracious intellectual curiosity. He brings fresh perspectives to every kind of classical music, whether performing Baroque music and Stravinsky on original instruments, leading large-scale iconic modern masterpieces, or presenting standard favourites.

Through nurturing long-term musical partnerships, Roth pursues his vision of developing distinctive orchestral sounds and engaging with local audiences, a goal which he has achieved with successive orchestras. In September 2025 he becomes Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of SWR Symphonieorchester – he served as Chief Conductor of its predecessor SWR Sinfonieorchester Freiburg & Baden-Baden from 2011 to 2016.

As General Music Director of Gürzenich Orchestra and Oper Köln from 2015 to 2024, he built on the orchestra's pioneering heritage of having given premieres by Mahler, Brahms and Richard Strauss by premiering many new works. He has been Principal Guest Conductor of London Symphony Orchestra since 2017.

He founded Les Siècles in 2003 to perform wide-ranging repertoire on the instruments for which it was composed and to illuminate the connections between music of various eras, offering thrilling revelations about different sound worlds. Projects included recreating the original sound of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*. He and the orchestra toured Europe, China and Japan, appearing at the Berlin Musikfest, BBC Proms, Edinburgh and Enescu festivals. They celebrated their 20th anniversary in the 2023–24 season with several tours and special projects.

Roth brings his charisma and command to collaborating on ambitious and impactful projects. In recent years these have included Bernd Alois Zimmermann's epic *Die Soldaten*, directed by Calixto Bieito, and Philippe Manoury's large-scale spatial triptych *Köln Trilogie*. In 2023 he spearheaded celebrations for Ligeti's centenary year, curating a two-week festival at Maison Radio France, including Ligeti's thought-provoking masterpiece *Le Grand Macabre*.

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 last year performed *Les Troyens à Carthage* in Berlioz's birthplace. In Cologne he

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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 in France. He has a leading role in the LSO's Panufnik Composers Scheme, mentoring young emerging composers.

Roth's prolific award-winning discography includes the complete tone poems of Richard Strauss, Stravinsky ballets, Ravel and Berlioz cycles, Bruckner, Mahler and Schumann symphonies, and albums commemorating Debussy's centenary. He was awarded the German Record Critics' Honorary Prize 2020, the youngest conductor ever to receive it. He was made a Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur in 2017 and given the Royal Philharmonic Society Conductor Award in 2024, with the jury citation describing him as a 'modern-day musical Midas'.

Recent recording releases

Stravinsky: Le Rossignol with Les Siècles (Erato)

Bizet: Djamileh with Les Siècles (Bru Zane)

Bruckner: Symphony no.1 & 2 with Gürzenich Orchestra (Myrios Classics)

Bruckner: Symphony no.9 (original version) with Gürzenich Orchestra (Myrios Classics)

Bruckner: Symphony no.3 with Gürzenich Orchestra (Myrios Classics)

Bruckner: Symphony no.4 with Gürzenich Orchestra (Myrios Classics)

Saint-Saëns: Symphonic Poems, Le Carnaval des Animaux with Les Siècles (Harmonia Mundi)

Ligeti: Six Bagatelles, Chamber Concerto with Les Siècles (Harmonia Mundi)

Ravel: Bolero and L'heure espagnole with Les Siècles (Harmonia Mundi)

Stravinsky: Violin Concerto, chamber works (Harmonia Mundi)

Les Nuits de Paris with Les Siècles (Bru Zane)

Mahler: Symphony no.4 with Les Siècles (Harmonia Mundi)

Ravel: Piano Concertos and Melodies with Les Siècles (Harmonia Mundi)

Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande with Les Siècles (Harmonia Mundi)

Bruckner: Symphony no.7 with Gürzenich Orchestra (Myrios Classics)

Saint-Saëns: Symphony no.3 and Piano Concerto no. 4 with Les Siècles (Harmonia Mundi)

Strauss: Don Quixote and Til Eulenspiegel with Gürzenich Orchestra (Harmonia Mundi)

Schumann: Symphonies nos.1 and 4 with Gürzenich Orchestra (Myrios Classics)

Beethoven: Symphony no.3 and Méhul: Overture, Les Amazones (Harmonia Mundi)

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

Debussy/Ravel with London Symphony Orchestra (LSO Live)

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)