

Charles Dutoit: Interview – October 2007

Conductor

At the end of the 19th Century the whole thing started with the painters; a new way of painting with less precision and more impressions. There were so many great painters at this time that obviously influenced enormously the style of all the country, including of course, the musicians.

Ravel was born in the Basque country and not born in Spain. But obviously he wrote a lot of music influenced by the Spanish rhythms. So did Debussy in Iberia that we are going to play which is a central part of the three *Images*. It was important for these composers to find their own way as a reaction against the huge volume of the music in the late 19th Century orchestra.

If you play in a hall with 2,000 people it doesn't have to be fortissimo all the way because the sound can float and shimmer which goes very well.

I studied with Ernest Ansermet in Genève. He met of course, all these composers; Ravel, Debussy, and of course Stravinsky and de Falla and so on. When I was in the Academy in Genève, I went to his rehearsals for three years and heard all of this repertoire and the way it was rehearsed and understood. I must say that all my experiences that I have with the Philharmonia have been wonderful in this kind of music. A lot of this music is played in the entire world, but not necessarily very well. It requires a lot of work. Debussy even more so as Debussy is very fragile whereas Ravel is so well orchestrated. When it is played, more or less well it is still enjoyable for everyone, but when it is played really well, all the musicians get deeply involved with the spirit of the piece and this is when the genius of Debussy comes out. I think this is very rewarding for everyone.

It is actually a great programme as you have two of the most important pieces by Debussy but of course I know that if I finish a concert the public will probably not be satisfied. So if you play 'La Valse' by Ravel after that of course, everyone is happy. I think it is also a good way to think about how the public will react, not necessarily to have a big success, but I want everyone to be happy.