

HOMMAGE À ANDRÉ CLUYTENS -- BERLIOZ: Symphonie Fantastique, Op. 14. (a) rec. 1955. FRANCK: Symphony in D Minor (a); Variations symphoniques (with Aldo Ciccolini, piano) (b) rec. 1953. FRANCK: Psyché - Le Sommeil de Psyché, Psyché enlevé par les Zéphyr, Le Jardin d'Eros, Psyche et Eros; Le Chasseur maudit; Redemption - Symphonic Interlude (b) rec. 1954-55. SAINT-SAËNS: Symphony No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 78 ("Organ") (with Henriette Puig-Roget, organ; Monique Mercier, André Collard, piano) (b) rec. 1955. DELIBES: Ballet Suites - Coppelia - Prelude to Act I & Mazurka, Valse, Ballade de Épi, Theme slave varié, Valse de la poupée, Csardas; Sylvia - Prelude, Les Chasseresses, Intermezzo, Valse lente, Pizzicati, Marche et Cortège de Bacchus (c) rec. 1956. BIZET: L'Arlésienne - Suites 1 & 2; La jolie fille de Perth - Suite; Patrie Overture (a) rec. 1953-54. BIZET: Symphony in C Major (a) rec. 1953; d'Indy: Symphonie sur un chant montagnard Français, Op. 25 (with Aldo Ciccolini, piano) (b) rec. 1953. MASSENET: Les Erinnyes - Incidental Music for the Play by Leconte de Lisle (c) rec. 1953. MASSENET: Scènes Alsaciennes; Scènes Pittoresques; Phèdre Overture (with Henri Dionet, clarinet; Gaston Marchesini, 'cello) (d) rec. 1953. FAURÉ: Requiem, Op. 48 (with Louis Noguera, baritone; Martha Angelici, soprano; Maurice Duruflé, organ; Chanteurs de Saint Eustache) (e) rec. 1951. DEBUSSY: La Boite à joux (arr. Caplet); The Children's Corner (arr. Caplet) (a) rec. 1954. DEBUSSY: Le Martyre de Saint Sebastian (With Martha Angelici, Mattiwilda Dobbs, Jacqueline Jourfier, Jacqueline Brumaire, sopranos; Rita Gorr, Solange Michel, contraltos) (a) rec. 1953-54. RAVEL: Daphnis et Chloé - Suites 1 & 2; Rapsodie espagnole; Alborada del gracioso (with Chorale Marcel Briclot, in Daphnis) (a) rec. 1952-53. RAVEL: Ma Mère l'oye - Suite; Menuet antique; Pavane pour une Infante défunte; Valses nobles et sentimentales (a) rec. 1954. RAVEL: Boléro; Le Tombeau de Couperin; La Valse (a) rec. 1952-53. RAVEL: L'Heure espagnole (with Denise Duval, soprano/Concepcion; Jean Giraudeau, tenor/Gonzalve; Rene Hérent, tenor/Torquemada; Jean Vieuille, baritone/Ramiro; Charles Clavensy, bass/Gomez ) (d) rec. 1953. Angel (Japan) EAC-47195/210 16 discs/monophonic

HOMMAGE À ANDRÉ CLUYTENS - BERLIOZ: Overtures - Benvenuto Cellini, Béatrice et Bénédicte, Le Carnaval romain, Le Corsaire (a) rec. 1961. BERLIOZ: La Damnation de Faust - Marche hongroise, Ballet des sylphes, Menuet des follets (c) rec. 1956. WEBER: Invitation to the Dance (arr. Berlioz) (R. Cordier - solo 'cello) (b) rec. 1965. Roméo et Juliette - Queen Mab Scherzo, Les Troyens à Carthage - Chasse royale et orage (with Choeur René Duclos) (b) rec. 1965; L'Enfance du Christ - Trio des jeunes Ishmaelites (Michel Debost, Raymond Guiot, flutes; Bernard Gallais, harp) rec. 1965. FRANCK: (x) Le Chasseur maudit; Les Éolides; Les Djinns (with Aldo Ciccolini, piano); Rédemption - Symphonic Interlude. (f) rec. 1962. DEBUSSY: Jeux; Images pour orchestre - Gígues (orch. compl. Caplet), Iberia, Rondes de printemps (b) rec. 1963. RAVEL: (x) Daphnis et Chloé - Ballet (with Choeurs René Duclos) (b) rec. 1962. RAVEL: (x) Boléro; (x) Rapsodie espagnole; (x) La Valse (b) rec. 1961. RAVEL: (x) Ma mère l'oye - Ballet; (x) Valses nobles et sentimentales (b) rec. 1962. RAVEL: (x) Le Tombeau de Couperin; (x) Menuet antique; (x) Alborada del gracioso; Une barque sur l'océan; (x) Pavane pour une Infante défunte (b) rec. 1962.

ROUSSEL: Symphonies - No. 3 in G Minor, Op. 42; No. 4 in A Minor, Op. 53 (b) rec. 1965. ROUSSEL: Bacchus et Ariane, Op. 43 - Suite No. 2; Le Festin de l' araignée, Op. 17 - Symphonic Fragments from the Ballet-Pantomime; Sinfonietta for Strings, Op. 52. (b) rec. 1963. Angel (Japan) EAC-40070/79 10 discs/stereophonic

- (a) - Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion Francaise
- (b) - Orchestre de la Societe des Concerts du Conservatoire
- (c) - Orchestre du Theatre National de l'Opera
- (d) - Orchestra du Theatre National de l'Opera-comique
- (e) - Unnamed orchestra
- (f) - Orchestre National de Belgique
- (x) - Recorded earlier wholly or in part in monophonic format

For several weeks after receiving these two handsome packages issued by Toshiba-EMI, Japan under the Angel label -- sixteen monophonic discs elaborately boxed and ten in stereophonic format individually packaged with four-color art by Brueghel and a bevy of French post-impressionists -- I puzzled over why such an extravagant Hommage à André Cluytens, to cite the collective name for the whole production? Since the Japanese in the recent past have done superb historical anthologies of Toscanini, Furtwangler, and the young Karajan, why not a comparable giant of the French school of conducting, Pierre Monteux?

Inquiry to some of my colleagues better versed than I am in the ways of the Japanese with Western musical culture on and off records indicated two factors at work on behalf of Antwerp-born Cluytens (1905-1967): 1. The ready availability of master tapes; and 2. the fact that the Japanese cherish a "personality cult" of internationally recognized orchestral conductors comparable to that which we lavish on our operatic superstars. Add to this the fact that Cluytens was a very prolific recording artist.

Though trained in Belgium, where his father was conductor at the Royal Theatre in Antwerp and at the Royal Conservatory in Amsterdam, Cluytens pursued the greater part of his professional career in Paris, where he succeeded Charles Munch as conductor of the concerts of the Paris Conservatoire. He also was chief conductor at the Opéra. Engagement at Bayreuth led to a major international career, including guest appearances with the Vienna State Opera, an international tour with the Vienna Philharmonic, and guest shots with the New York Philharmonic.

The impeccably manufactured Japanese Angel discs devoted to Cluytens cover about half his total output for discs, and with the exception of the Berlioz arrangement of Weber's Invitation to the Dance are confined to French repertoire. Save for the Ravel L'Heure espagnole none of his extensive work in opera is represented; nor are we given any overview of the substantial range of the Cluytens repertoire, which on discs has extended from the nine Beethoven symphonies, still available in the U.S. at this writing on Seraphim, through the Russians, early and late, to Gershwin's An American in Paris. I'm not so sure that I would not have

preferred the Japanese to have widened the repertoire range in their "Homage" and eschewed some of the repeats of the same works in both mono and stereo format.

The boxed monophonic set is accompanied by twenty-two pages of biography and program notes, all in Japanese save for work titles and recording dates. The same holds for the sleeve notes that come with the individual stereo discs. A careful check of the recorded performances as a whole reveals that among the mono items, only the Massenet suites and Phèdre Overture, plus the Debussy Martyre de Saint Sebastien and Ravel La Valse failed to find U.S. release on Angel or Vox; while from among the stereo recordings, the Weber-Berlioz Invitation to the Dance, plus the excerpts from Berlioz's Roméo et Juliette and Les Troyens à Carthage were not issued over here.

Taking the recorded performances as a whole, I am impressed with what a decent clean-up job the Japanese have done with the often less than ideal French originals. Until well into the 1950's the French seem to have preferred a rather dry acoustic ambience for much of their recording. In a parallel connection, it is interesting to note from these discs the steady gravitation of French orchestras toward a more "international" performance style, tonally speaking, and toward more polished ensemble. I do not miss the saxophone-like horn tone of the earlier recordings in this series.

The works which find resonances in Cluytens the theatre conductor seem to me to fare best interpretively. His Cesar Franck readings, both mono and stereo, are endowed with sinew and rhythmic drive and are free from any trace of sentimental mooning. Of the Ravel readings, I respond most positively to L'Heure espagnole, where both Cluytens and his excellent singers make the most of the mordant irony in this delightful work. The works with solo piano by Franck and d'Indy get good solid readings, with Ciccolini displaying his stylistic expertise to fine advantage; but I can imagine a more subtle handling of the orchestra in both the Franck variations and the d'Indy Mountain Air piece. Again, speaking in generalities, I find more character in Cluytens's well-pointed Ravel readings -- a strong La Valse, in particular, than in his Debussy, save for a nice feeling for the sarcastic bits in Golliwog's Cakewalk. Roussel fares better in the ballet scores and in the admirably terse string Sinfonietta than in the symphonies, which for my taste have had more effective recorded performances before and since.

In keeping with Cluytens's theatrical proclivities which are yet balanced by a good sense for classic mesure, most of Berlioz comes out with a fine combination of fire and clarity. The Royal Hunt from Les Troyens, complete with chorus, is a real stunner. On the other hand, the existence of so many later recorded performances, equal or better as interpretation and certainly superior in sound, leave the Saint-Saëns Organ Symphony as a superfluous inclusion for my taste; nor do I see much point in giving us the not very good sound of the 1951 Fauré Requiem.

Of the items not heretofore issued in the U.S. by far the most interest for me attaches to the Debussy La Martyre de Saint Sebastien. The two sides are extracted from a 1955 French Columbia issue (FCX 338/40) that in its original form occupied six rather than the usual four called for in the editings by Inghelbrecht and others. This edition, it seems, grew out of a 1952 open air production devised by actress Véra Korène, working with Victor de Sabata. Though the singers are credited on the Japanese tape-edited abridgement, the actor-narrators are not: they are Véra Korène in the title role and Jean Marchat as the Emperor, plus Henriette Barreau, Paul Guers, Maria Casarès, and Jacques Eyser in the lesser roles. Despite some abrupt-even disconcerting-cutoffs resulting from the editing down of the original recording, we do have all of the actual music that Debussy composed for the original d'Annunzio-Ida Rubinstein spectacle, and it remains for me among his most moving. It's just a shame that one must also put up with a certain amount of over-heated text and French-style theatrical declamation in order to get the music. The soloists are altogether superb, and Cluytens gets the very best out of his chorus and orchestra.

Concluding again on a general note, I have nothing but admiration for the solidity of Cluytens's musicianship and his often telling sense of theatre; but speaking even in terms of two of his countrymen who were also significantly represented on discs, I wish that Cluytens had been endowed with some of the volatility of Désiré Défaux at his best or the dynamism of Franz André, both of whom I have heard in the concert hall as well as through their discs. Meanwhile, we await a definitive Hommage à Monteux!

David Hall

Editor's Note: Japanese Angel EAC 47195/210 and EAC 40070/9 are available from Tower Records, 2525 Jones Street, San Francisco, CA 94133.