



Ernest Ansermet

conducts Debussy, Ravel, Mussorgsky



Ernest Alexandre Ansermet (11 November 1883 – 20 February 1969) was born in Vevey, Switzerland. Although he was a contemporary of Wilhelm Furtwängler and Otto Klemperer, Ansermet represents in most ways a very different tradition and approach from those two musicians. Originally he was a mathematics professor, teaching at the University of Lausanne. He began conducting at the Casino in Montreux in 1912, and from 1915 to 1923 was the conductor for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Traveling in France for this, he met both Debussy and Ravel, and consulted them on the performance of their works. During World War I, he met Stravinsky, who was exiled in Switzerland, and from this meeting began the conductor's lifelong association with Russian music.

In 1918, Ansermet founded his own orchestra, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande (OSR). He toured widely in Europe and America and became famous for accurate performances of difficult modern music, making first recordings of works such as Stravinsky's *Capriccio* with the composer as soloist. Also, Ansermet was one of the first in the field of classical music to take jazz seriously, and in 1919 he wrote an article praising Sidney Bechet.

After World War II, Ansermet and his orchestra rose to international prominence through a long-term contract with Decca Records. From that time until his death, he recorded most of his repertoire, often two or three times. His interpretations were widely regarded as admirably clear and authoritative, though the orchestral playing did not always reach the highest international standards, and they differed notably from those of other famous 20th-century specialists, notably Pierre Monteux and Stravinsky himself. Ansermet disapproved of Stravinsky's practice of revising his works, and always played the original versions. Although famous for performing much modern music by other composers such as Arthur Honegger and Frank Martin, he avoided altogether the music of Arnold Schoenberg and his associates, even criticizing Stravinsky when he began to use twelve-tone techniques in his compositions. In Ansermet's book, *Les fondements de la musique dans la conscience humaine* (1961), he sought to prove, using Husserlian phenomenology and partly his own mathematical studies, that Schoenberg's idiom was false and irrational.

In his last years, he and his ensemble surprised many by issuing discs devoted to Haydn, Beethoven and Brahms. These performances were not at all conventionally Germanic, and were much criticized at the time of their appearance, but during recent years their vivacity has come to be appreciated more.

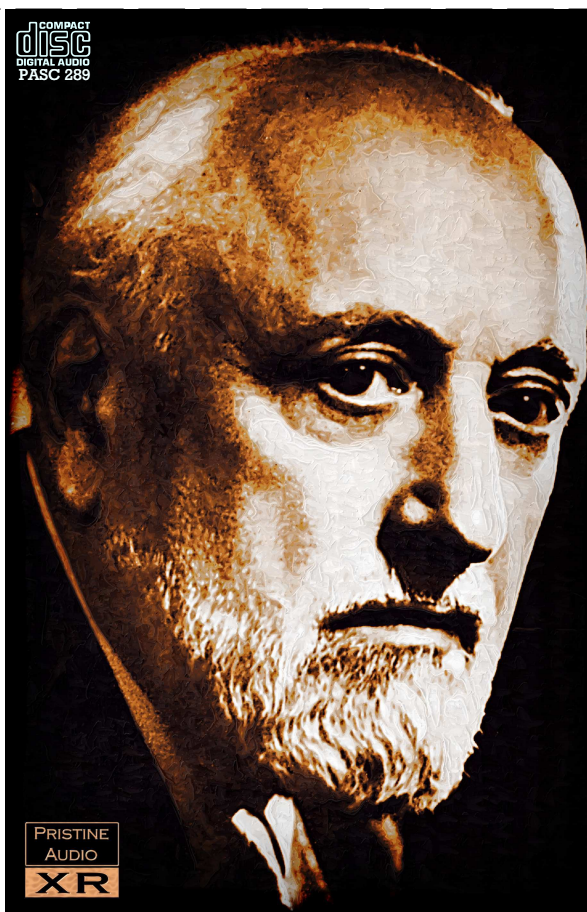
Notes from Wikipedia

Recording and restoration notes

These Decca recordings, made in Geneva and Paris in the early 1950s, demonstrate the growing technical prowess of the company in the earliest days of tape and vinyl recordings, building on their *ffrr* 78rpm recordings of the 1940s. However, there was still room for considerable improvement over the original sound quality - something which would come rapidly with experience - and there are audibly significant differences between the 1951 Debussy recording and the two later, 1953 recordings. The original Debussy lacked depth and had a quite constricted sound to it, whilst the Mussorgsky was also somewhat thin, though without sounding quite as harsh. Of the three, the Ravel, recorded in Paris rather than Geneva, was the most successful, and in these new Pristine remasterings is the one which sounds closest to the original. Fortunately Decca's equipment did capture a lot more than is apparent from a casual listen to their original LPs, and with the re-equalisation inherent in Pristine's 32-bit XR remastering technology, the hidden depths and heights of each of these superb recordings can now be enjoyed to the full. **AR**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM

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LA MER

RAVEL
LA VALSE

MUSSORGSKY
PICTURES AT
AN EXHIBITION

L'ORCHESTRE DE LA SUISSE
ROMANDE

PARIS CONSERVATOIRE
ORCHESTRA

STUDIO RECORDINGS, 1951 & 1953

Ansermet Debussy, Ravel, Mussorgsky

DEBUSSY La Mer

- 1. De l'aube à midi sur la mer (8:14)
- 2. Jeux de vagues (6:17)
- 3. Dialogue du vent et de la mer (7:38)

- 4. *RAVEL La Valse (13:23)

MUSSORGSKY-RAVEL Pictures at an Exhibition

- 5. 1. Promenade (1:44)
- 6. 2. Gnornus (2:11)
- 7. 3. Promenade (0:51)
- 8. 4. Il vecchio Castello (4:32)
- 9. 5. Promenade (0:36)
- 10. 6. Tuileries (0:59)
- 11. 7. Bydlo (2:43)
- 12. 8. Promenade (0:43)
- 13. 9. Ballet of the Chickens in their Shells (1:15)
- 14. 10. Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle (2:21)
- 15. 11. Limoges - Le marché (1:23)
- 16. 12. Catacombae (Sepulchrum romanum) (2:19)
- 17. 13. Cum mortuis in lingua mortua (1:51)
- 18. 14. The Hut on Fowl's Legs (Baba-Yaga) (3:18)
- 19. 15. The Great Gate of Kiev (5:23)

L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande Ernest Ansermet

***L'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris Ernest Ansermet**



PASC 289

XR remastering by **Andrew Rose**

Transfers from Decca LS5267 (Debussy)
& London LL.956 (Ravel/Mussorgsky)

Cover artwork based on a photograph of
Ernest Ansermet

Debussy

Recording producer: **Victor Olof**
Recording Engineer: **Arthur Haddy**
Rec. March 1951, Victoria Hall, Geneva

Ravel

Recording producer: **John Culshaw**
Rec. 15-19 & 22-25 June, 1953,
La Maison de la Mutualité, Paris

Mussorgsky

Recording producer: **Victor Olof**
Recording Engineer: **Gil Went**
Rec. December 1953, Victoria Hall, Geneva

Total duration: **67:41**

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