

André Cluytens was among the leading French conductors of his time. His father, Alphonse Cluytens, was also a conductor, and recognized the boy's musical talents. André was enrolled in the Royal Flemish Conservatory at the age of nine. He studied in the piano class of Emile Bosquet, and received first prize for piano at the age of 16. The next year he won first prize in harmony, theory, counterpoint, and fugue.

His father was conductor at the Royal French Theater of Antwerp. André became his assistant and a choirmaster there. When an illness prevented Alphonse from conducting, André made his performance debut in 1927 in Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de perles*. After that experience he devoted his efforts to orchestral and opera conducting rather than choral work, and he became a resident conductor in the house.

In 1932 he accepted a position as the musical director of orchestral concerts at the Capitole de Toulouse, and he became a French citizen. In 1935 was appointed the opera director in Lyons. He was an assistant of Josef Krips in a summer series in Vichy and, once again, was called on to substitute when that conductor could not perform. He became musical director of the Lyons Opera in 1942, conductor of the Conservatoire Concerts and the French National Radio Orchestra in Paris in 1943, and in 1944 conducted at the Opéra de Paris. From 1947 to 1953 he was music director of the Paris Opéra-Comique, and in 1949 was appointed as principal conductor of the Conservatory Concerts. He retained that position for the rest of his life. In 1955 he was invited to conduct *Lohengrin* at the Bayreuth Festival, the first French person to appear on the podium there. He debuted in the United States in 1956, and in Britain in 1958, when he substituted for Otto Klemperer. He formed a close relationship with the Vienna State Opera, which he first conducted in 1956, becoming a permanent guest conductor in 1959. In 1960 he became conductor of the Belgian National Orchestra in Belgium, also holding that post until his death. He also formed a close link with the Berlin Philharmonic, with which he made a notable recording of the Beethoven symphonies. However, he was primarily known for French repertoire, premiering works by Françaix, Jolivet, Messiaen, Milhaud, Tomasi, Büsser, and Bondeville. He was invited back to Bayreuth in 1965.



Berlioz

Symphonie Fantastique

André Cluytens
Orchestre de la Société des
Concerts du Conservatoire

Recorded live
1964 in Tokyo

Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14, in full *Symphonie fantastique: épisode de la vie d'un artiste*, English *Fantastic Symphony: Episode in the Life of an Artist*, orchestral work by French composer Hector Berlioz, widely recognized as an early example of program music, that attempts to portray a sequence of opium dreams inspired by a failed love affair. The composition is also notable for its expanded orchestration, grander than usual for the early 19th century, and for its innovative use of a recurring theme—the so-called *idée fixe* (“fixed idea” or “obsession”)—throughout all movements. The symphony premiered in Paris on December 5, 1830, and won for Berlioz a reputation as one of the most progressive composers of the era.

After completing medical studies at the behest of his father, who was a doctor, Berlioz rebelliously pursued music and literature, for which he had harboured passions since childhood. In the fall of 1827, at age 24, he attended the opening night of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, performed in Paris by an English theatre company. Because his formal education had exposed him only to Latin and Greek, Berlioz understood little of the language. Nevertheless, he was transformed by the experience and recalled it in his memoirs: “Shakespeare, coming upon me unaware, struck me like a thunderbolt.”

On that night, however, Berlioz was fascinated by more than the work of the revered English poet: he was enchanted by Harriet Smithson, the young Irishwoman who played Ophelia. That enchantment soon turned to obsession as Berlioz haunted the stage door and inundated Smithson with love letters only to have his advances ignored. Motivated by the pain of unilateral love, Berlioz began after three years to compose an elaborate quasi-autobiographical piece of program music, a symphony that would depict a disconsolate lover driven to the brink of suicide by his lady’s indifference. That work became *Symphonie fantastique: épisode de la vie d'un artiste*, or simply *Symphonie fantastique*.

Berlioz declared in his memoirs that the music portrays the dreams of a young man who, in the aftermath of a failed love affair, has taken an overdose of opium. The first movement, which begins gently but increases in intensity, is intended to depict the delights and despairs of love. The second movement, an elegant waltz, evokes a ball where the lover again encounters the woman he can never possess, now in another man’s arms. The idyllic strains of the third movement portray his attempt to escape his passions by traveling to the countryside, but, as memories of the unattainable woman return to his thoughts, the tone

grows sombre. The composition takes a highly dramatic turn in the ponderous fourth movement, when the young man imagines that he has murdered his beloved and is about to be executed for the crime. The music depicts his march to the guillotine, where his last thought is of the woman he loves. In the final movement, he is in hell at a witches’ sabbath over which his beloved herself presides, surrounded by echoes of the ancient hymn *Dies irae* (“Day of Wrath”), from the Catholic requiem mass.

Aside from its pioneering role as a symphony with a program—that is, with a story to tell—*Symphonie fantastique* is remarkable for its use of the *idée fixe*, which surfaces in every movement and unites the entire work. The recurring theme is essentially the tune of the beloved, representing in its varying moods the woman’s ever-changing image in her lover’s eye. Berlioz’s *idée fixe* paved the way for the development of similar compositional devices in the mid-19th century, including the thematic transformations associated with the works of Franz Liszt and the leitmotifs of Richard Wagner’s operas. *Symphonie fantastique* also constituted the largest-scale symphony composed by anyone to that time, with its five movements spanning nearly an hour and a dauntingly large orchestra that employed new wind instruments—such as the ophicleide (predecessor of the tuba) and the valve trumpet—as well as doubling on the harp and timpani parts.

Although the lover and the beloved are nowhere united in *Symphonie fantastique*, Berlioz, against all odds, eventually achieved the union in life. Two years after the piece’s premiere, when the composer was planning another Paris performance of the massive symphony together with its new choral sequel entitled *Lélio*, or *Le Retour à la vie* (1832; “The Return to Life”), he arranged for an English newspaper correspondent to attend the concert with Smithson as his guest. The unsuspecting actress was not warned about what music was on the program, nor was she aware that Berlioz himself would be there. She took the shock reasonably well and was observed to be reading the composer’s descriptive program notes closely and paying keen attention to the music. The performance was well received, and soon afterward Smithson consented at last to meet Berlioz. The following year, on October 3, 1833, the two were married. Their marriage, however, was not a happy one, and the couple separated less than a decade later.

Berlioz Symphonie Fantastique

André Cluytens conducts the
Orchestre De La Société Des Concerts Du Conservatoire
(1964 Tokyo Live)

1. Rêveries - Passions (Daydreams - Passions) 13:25
2. Un bal (A ball) 6:37
3. Scène aux champs (Scene in the Country) 15:35
4. Marche au supplice (March to the Scaffold) 4:31
5. Songe d'une nuit de sabbat (Dream of a Witches' Sabbath) 9:02

Total Time: 49:10



For more info e-mail us:
admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
www.highdeftapetransfers.com