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An evening of 328 Akiyama flair

By CYNTHIA ASHTON

Saturday night saw an unusually large gathering of musicians of the stage of the Orpheum. The occasion was the North American debut of the Osaka Philharmonic, which Kazuyoshi Akiyama conducted in Japan, joining forces with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra for a concert in the QM/FM Great Composer Series.

Not surprisingly conductor Akiyama took advantage of the opportunity to present works which require larger than usual forces. The program opened with the Overture to Tannhauser by Richard Wagner with its rousing Pilgrims' Chorus and Venusberg music. The two orchestras combined affectively under Maestro Akiyama's baton to give the work a moving performance, especially the magnificent finale.

The two orchestras then separated for the remainder of the first half to perform as individual units. First the VSO played Orchestral Suite by Lothar Klein. Born in Germany in 1932 Klein is a modern musician who, in this work, succeeds in combining some of the elements of early music within a modern framework. The use of a harpsichord during the slow Prelude, melodious strings in the Madrigal and medieval dance rhythms played on bongo drums for Fantastic Spirits produced a sort of

synthesis of early and modern styles which was pleasing. The VSO rose to this unusual combination and made it effective.

It was then the turn of the Osaka Philharmonic to show their paces, and this they did in Osaka Fantasy by Hiroshi Ohguri. The work included some Japanese instruments, including the chanchiki, a percussion instrument. The sounds and rhythms were strange at times to Western ears but agreeable.

The musicians played with a pyrotechnical precision and it was obvious that Akiyama was enjoying himself as he moved with the music with quick incisive gestures. A theme played by three piccolos in drum rhythm based on the festival music of the lion dance at Ikytama Shrine, Osaka, brought the work to its exciting conclusion.

The second half of the concert brought the main work of the evening, the Symphonie Fantastique by Hector Berlioz and for this the two orchestras again combined forces. The stage was literally full to bursting point with musicians.

Under Maestro Akiyama's baton the two orchestras portrayed the varying moods of these movements and the roof-raising finale received a warm ovation and the orchestra played Berlioz's "Marche Hongroise" as an encore.