



## Roger Wagner (1914–1992)

Roger Wagner (born Le Puy, France, January 16, 1914) who died Thursday, September 17, 1992 at Dijon, France (his mother's birthplace), grew up in Southern California. Studying for the priesthood at Santa Barbara, he decided aged 17 to pursue a career in music. He returned to France, studied Gregorian music at Solesmes and organ with Marcel Dupré. Upon settling in Los Angeles he became choirmaster and organist at St. Joseph's, the downtown Franciscan church on 12th Street, continuing in the post until Vatican II *aggiornamento* led to the substitution of mariachi and mambo for Palestrina and plainchant.

An incomparable exponent of Renaissance polyphony, Roger Wagner in his flowering period ranked equally with Robert Shaw among choral conductors in the nation. To Roger Wagner the editor of IAMR owes an incalculable debt for his rescuing of Latin American Renaissance and Baroque masterpieces. His epochal concerts in Schoenberg Hall during April 1961 revealed Latin Americans such as Juan de Lienes, Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla, Juan de Araujo, and many others, as composers equal to the most illustrious peninsular composers of their generations.

His Université de Montréal doctoral document dealt with the masses of Josquin des Prez. His authority as a conductor of Bach's B minor Mass, the Beethoven Missa Solemnis, and the Fauré Requiem rivalled his genius in revealing the inner souls of Palestrina and Victoria.

His paramountcy as a conductor matched his glow as an educator. The instruction that his revival of buried Latin American masterpieces gave successor conductors continues to bear fruit. His successors' exposure to the sublime music created in Mexico and South America during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries will continue gaining converts because of the five LP's that he recorded at various times beginning with *Salve Regina: choral music of the Spanish New World* (Angel S36008).

No words can adequately encompass the indebtedness of all lovers of the Latin American historic musical patrimony to Roger Wagner, knighted by Paul VI in 1966—the same year during which Angel issued his Latin American LP entitled *Salve Regina*. Lester D. Brothers magesterially reviewed and catalogued Wagner's first four Latin American albums in *Latin American Music Review*, v/2 (Fall–Winter 1984), pages 293–305.