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Dorati: At Home at 70

By Paul Hume

Antal Dorati marked his 70th birthday yesterday with a press conference complete with champagne and confidence in the future of music.

While the music director of the National Symphony Orchestra called the conference primarily to give out details about the orchestra's coming season, he said he felt like being more informal than he might have been sometimes in the past. Asked how it happens that he looks younger at 70 than he did at 69, Dorati said, "It is because I was sick. Because I had the flu, I was forced to rest and lie around instead of being so busy all of the time. And so now I feel fine."

Pointing out that the orchestra's opening concert in the fall is an all-American program, with Helen Hayes as narrator in Ulysses Kay's new "Western Paradise," and Miklos Rosza's new "Tripartita," Dorati said "Rosza is as much of an American as I am, which is a very good one, I hope, who was born in Hungary.

"One of the advantages to becoming an American when grown up," he went on, "is in trying to be a useful American, which is the very essence of democracy—that you come in to it and ask what you can do for it, not what it can do for you."

While next season will be Dorati's last as music director of the orchestra, he will be back regularly and often in the years thereafter. For his final concert as director, however, he said he chose the Mahler Fifth Symphony for a special reason.

"I did not want to play anything at all sentimental, because I will be back regularly. But I wanted something joyous that would permit the orchestra to show itself at its most expansive best, which I think the Mahler will."

Dorati talked about the state of

composition today, especially in light of the new music he and the orchestra have been playing and will continue to play during the Bicentennial year. "We will not stop playing it when the year is over," the genial conductor said. "I am very optimistic about new music today. I think we are nearing the point at which we will take stock to see what of the new-fangled invention in music will remain and be of value. Communications are so fantastically stepped up that we do not have to wait a hundred years to see what is going to last.

"Composers will wake up to the fact that they are writing for the listeners, not for each other. This does not mean a descent to some audience level," Dorati said emphatically, "but a reaching out to grab them. If I reach out for someone but do not touch them I have not reached them. This is what art is to do. It is what, in the creative corner of my life, I try to do. I intend my music to be for others."

The programs for the coming season, which he announced in detail, will include the five remaining Bicentennial commissioned works, music by Ulysses Kay, Stephen Burton, Juan Orrego-Salas, Gunther Schuller, and Gene Gutehe. Dorati has also arranged five programs of music, all by a single composer: Haydn, Richard Strauss, Brahms, Beethoven and Mahler.

Guest conductors new to the orchestra will include Edo de Waart, Bernhard Klee, Michael Tilson Thomas, Klaus Tennstedt and Erich Leinsdorf. Among returning conductors are Howard Mitchell, Rafael de Burgos, George Semkov, Moshe Atzmon, Max Rudolf, James De Preist and Murry Sidlin.

Mstislav Rostropovich, who will take over the post of Music Director in the fall of 1977, will conduct a week of subscription concerts in March.

