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DORATI

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“At this moment I cannot propose any precise programs. But I would like to work as I have always worked: three seasons, three seasons always roughed out ahead.”

By Paul Hume

At 8 every morning during his recent 12-day stay in Los Angeles, Antal Dorati took a leisurely swim in the pool next to his hotel. While the water was somewhat heated, there were mornings when it was distinctly chillier than others. But nothing kept Dorati from doing several laps up and down the length of the pool.

That, however, was not the beginning of his day. For instance, on Thursday, April 3, when it would have been all right with me if the water had been just a bit warmer, Dorati said, “I have been up since 6 studying the score of my symphony.”

It was especially to hear Dorati conduct his symphony, both in rehearsals and in concert, that I went out to Los Angeles.

But I also welcomed the chance to watch the man who has just been named Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra—as of the fall of 1970—as he worked with another orchestra. And of course there were many questions about Washington’s orchestra to which Dorati held the answers.

As I flew across the United States, over some of the most barren stretches in this country into the Los Angeles smog, the program of classical music presented to my earphones included, quite by chance, Antal Dorati conducting the Minneapolis Symphony in music by Copland and Offenbach, and the London Symphony in Brahms and the Chopin F Minor Piano Concerto, with Gina Bachauer as soloist.

These were only the briefest samplings of a recording career that has made Dorati one of the world’s most frequently microphoned conductors, along with Ormandy, Bernstein and Stokowski.

Certainly the National Symphony’s board of directors could not have chosen a conductor more likely to engage the orchestra in new recording projects. One of his recordings, of the 1812 Overture, has won Dorati a gold medal for selling over a million copies, while a recording of miscellaneous works has brought him a second gold medal for passing the 2-million mark.

In rehearsals, Dorati is generally relaxed in his approach to the players. When I first walked into the Chandler Pavilion, he and the Los Angeles Philharmonic were going over Stravinsky’s “Firebird” Suite. I then remembered the years when Dorati was principal conductor of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

The repertoire included ballets utilizing the complete Brahms Fourth, Tchaikowsky Fifth, Beethoven Seventh, and the Shostakovich First. By the time Dorati moved over to become Music Director of the then new Ballet Theater, with its magnificent Tudor ballets and the great works to the Copland music “Rodeo” and

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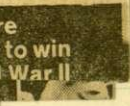
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MUSIC

DORATI: A BUSY REBUILDER OF ORCHESTRAS

DORATI, From KI

"Billy the Kid." Dorati had become, in addition to an arranger of unusual skill and perception—such pieces as "Helen of Troy," "Bluebeard" and "Graduation Ball," for samples—one of the world's most experienced and valued ballet conductors.

The Dorati debut occurred in the Royal Opera House in Budapest, in April 1926. The young pianist, who was also a student of composition with Zoltan Kodaly and Leo Weiner, then began a career that would carry him to many of the world's leading operatic theaters.

This is the kind of varied background in the whole world of music that helped to give Dorati the reputation of a man who could build a fine new orchestra or infuse new life and vigor into one needing help to become great. In Dallas, where he moved in 1945, the manager of the orchestra once said without hesitation, "Dorati really re-created the orchestra and put it into business as a first-class institution."

In Minneapolis, where Dorati was conductor for 11 years until 1960, he carried forward standards of excellence established by Ormandy and Mitropoulos. An inveterate world-traveler, who speaks German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in addition to his native Hungarian, Dorati has apartments in Rome and London.

"Rome is really our home," he said, "when we have time for a break."

Just when this man finds any "spare" time would be hard to imagine if one could see his engagement book for the months between now and the fall of 1970 when he will first raise his baton as the National Symphony's Music Director.

Having marked his 63d birthday in Los Angeles on April 9, Dorati left there on the 13th, flying back to finish the present season with the Stockholm Philharmonic of which he is the conductor, and with which, incidentally, he will make his next Washington appearance on Feb. 22, 1970.

In May he will guest conduct in Helsinki, Copenhagen, and Prague. June will find him back in his native city, Budapest, before he proceeds to Zurich and then London.

"From there, after a very short vacation, I go to Lucerne, back to London for two Prom Concerts, then Stockholm again, back for some recordings with the London Symphony, and then Geneva, London again, and Prague." By this time Dorati had talked himself right up to the beginning of 1970. Early that year he will return for what has become an annual visit to Israel, a custom he has kept each year since 1961.

From Israel, Dorati will rejoin the Stockholm Philharmonic for its U.S. tour, after which he is signed up in London, Paris, Copenhagen, and Berne.

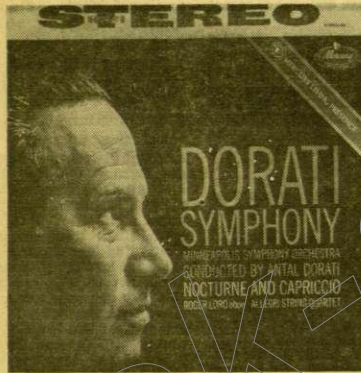
Before he returns to Washington in the fall of 1970 to begin work with the National Symphony there are a few engagements which will have to be "adjusted" to permit him to commence his new duties.

"But already I am very excited and full of ideas and plans about Washington," the busy conductor said.

"I want to make a great orchestra in Washington. I have been an American citizen since 1947, and I see the Capital as a special city, not under the shadow of New York or any other city, but one which has not yet become completely a center of culture as it should be."

"What about the size of the National Symphony?" I asked.

Dorati's answer was as direct as it was diplomatic. "In the time of Mitchell the orchestra has been increased," he began. "I should like to continue where



While his answer is direct, it avoids specifics. Purely speculatively, I should imagine that Dorati wants the National Symphony expanded as it should be, to the size of those orchestras in this country that are universally accounted great.

These being Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Cleveland, have, among other things in common, a total membership of around 104 to 106 players. For the National Symphony to reach this size would mean adding 12 players to its present roster.

Dorati has already been quoted on another troublesome matter, that of adequate numbers of rehearsals. When Dorati was first named to succeed Howard Mitchell, M. Robert Rogers, managing director of the orchestra, was quoted as saying, "Mr. Dorati has asked for added rehearsals. We will give them to him if we can afford them." There is, however, no question that

Dorati will insist, as he should, on four rehearsals per concert as a norm.

I asked Dorati if he had any plans for the orchestra's sound.

He said, "Every great orchestra's eternal quest is to get more and more fine instruments into the hands of their artists. This is nothing new. As of now I do not know what can be done. But however many fine instruments we can secure for the members of the National Symphony we will get."

I asked what music he planned to conduct.

Dorati said, "At this moment I cannot propose any precise programs. But I would like to work as I have always worked: three seasons, three seasons always roughed out ahead. They might change, but this way I can serve the public best. In a small season—and every season is a small season, even if we played 365 concerts in a year the season would be small for the repertoire we want to play—we have to give a fair representative of every style, every epoch.

"I am available — ." Here Dorati stopped. It was one of the rare times when he was searching for precisely the words with which he wanted to say something very precisely. Then he began again, "I know of many styles and epochs. And if I am not available, then I would like guest conductors who are known for a certain style."

While Antal Dorati is one of the busiest men in the world of conducting, he has found time almost every year for the past two decades to add another major work to the growing list of compositions he began while working with Kodaly and Weiner.

His symphony, which is recorded on Mercury SR 90248, where it is paired with a lovely work for oboe and string quartet dating from 1926, is a remarkably powerful and immediately appealing score. Superbly written for large orchestra, it is in five movements

whose titles—Sonata, Variations, Scherzo, Nocturne and Rondo-finale—give clues to the composer's classic temperament. Through driving rhythms and urgent melodies, as well as in excellent formal design that unifies the whole, it is a highly successful achievement.

If the conductor's attractive wife, who enjoys the world-girdling travels that are a constant part of her life, has any complaint about her husband's unceasing schedule, it is that it robs him of time she wishes he had for composing. Yet the last dozen years have seen him completing a long cantata, "The Way of the Cross," to a text by Paul Claudel; a lyrical scene for baritone and chamber orchestra to poems by Li Tai Pei; "Threnos" for strings; a *Missa Brevis* for chorus and percussion; "Magdalena," a choreographic legend; a Madrigal Suite for chorus and chamber orchestra; an octet for strings, and a set of seven pieces for orchestra. That's a laudable output for any composer.

It is easy to understand the honors that have come, and that continue to be awarded to Dorati. His honorary doctorate in music is from Macalester College in St. Paul. He is a member of the Swedish Academy, an honor once enjoyed by Mozart and Haydn.

His latest honor came on April 16 when Dorati received the George Washington Award from the American-Hungarian Studies Foundation. Since 1961 the award has been given annually "to persons who have advanced the appreciation and understanding of Hungarian culture."

In following a tradition established by Artur Nikisch with the Boston Symphony, and followed by Reiner, Ormandy, Szell and Solti, Dorati stands securely in the line of Hungarian conductors who, as a national group, must be said to have contributed the most of any single European country to the musical growth and splendor of this country.