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When Antal Dorati returns to conduct the National Symphony Orchestra's concerts in the Kennedy Center Concert Hall this week, he will raise his baton over an orchestra he has so thoroughly remade during the last two years that it is virtually unrecognizable — although the actual number of personnel replacements has been small. Dorati has simply (or perhaps not so "simply") energized his players to the point of unleashing previously untapped capacities for superior music-making.

This is a healthy, happy development for the community's musical life, and Dorati himself could not be happier. He is a musician neither arrogant nor burdened with false humility, but very realistically aware of his gifts and the most effective ways of using them.

"I AM EXTREMELY grateful that in my present state of life I was once more offered this opportunity to serve," he remarked recently. As he spoke he was still-beaming from a very satisfying Sunday morning rehearsal and was enjoying himself in an interview session with a group of Georgetown University students.

"Conducting is not a profession," he told the students as they were packing up their tape recorder and note pads; "it is only my occupation. My

profession is music, and conducting is the occupation in which I work at that profession."

Without posturing and with the understated elegance which never calls attention to itself, Dorati has been happily raising orchestral standards in various parts of Europe and America for the last quarter-century—building a cohe-



sive ensemble in Dallas, expanding on the Ormandy-Mitropoulos legacy in Minneapolis, marshalling the young Philharmonia Hungarica into shape as a musical entity with its own character, drilling the London Symphony in its period of transition from adequacy to recognition as one of the finest orchestras anywhere, pulling the foundering BBC

Symphony up to a level it had not known since its heady pre-war years, transforming the Stockholm Philharmonic into a group capable of touring and recording with distinction in any repertory, and, as the capstone of his career, showing his new, Washington charge to be an orchestral Cinderella, at last well on the way to earning the status implicit in its name "National Symphony."

Just how Dorati has done all this may remain his secret, but it is no secret at all that the orchestra members themselves are as delighted as their swelling audience.

After that Sunday morning rehearsal, a bass player was heard telling a visiting colleague, "Dorati has been all over us about the quality of our sound; he said we were too heavy-handed, and now we've cleaned it up a lot." This was spoken without a trace of resentment, but with an air of gratitude mixed with amazement.

DORATI HAS ALWAYS recognized the importance of players' individuality. "I have never regarded the orchestra as an instrument on which the conductor plays," he says; "an orchestra is a hundred men and women, each with his own talent and imagination." He speaks of "the orchestra's all-important I.Q., its Improvisation Quotient, which must never be neglected," adding that some conductors make

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the mistake of "conducting a rehearsal at the concert; they must not do that — they must make all their instructive points at the real rehearsals and then allow for the Improvisation Quotient at the concert itself."

One has the feeling now—both more comforting and more exciting now, midway through Dorati's third season here—that if they are things about the National Symphony still calling for remedial attention, they will not be long in coming. One area needing improvement is the programming of concerts for children and young people.

"I have my fingers on it," he said, "and I know what changes I want to make." In general, his idea is to bring the format of the children's concerts more into line with that of an adult program by placing greater emphasis on complete works and eliminating the little snippets of music. He believes that young listeners will grasp the idea of a symphony more readily by hearing a complete short one than by hearing isolated movements from longer works.

WHEN ASKED how to go about educating adult audiences, Dorati expresses disdain for the very term "education" in such a context, because "it entails two things I'm very much against: compulsion and dullness. On the other hand, I must say that every good kind of entertainment educates, and every good kind of education entertains."

"The arts," he continued, "are here to distribute enjoyment. And do you know what you enjoy when you enjoy art, basically? Underneath the sound, underneath the words, underneath the shapes and colors, you enjoy creation in progress, you enjoy creative strength.

"That is the meaning of all the arts; to confront people with the naked process of creation, face to face. That is

what it is all about, the experience of creation (since none of us was present on the famous six days). In all of us is present that lingering question of 'Why?' One of the answers—or, at least, one of the explanations—is art. You experience a work of art and feel there was no one before you enjoying it: you are its discoverer, you are in it, you are part of it.

"When I listen to a Mozart string quartet, I am Adam in that Paradise. It was just

created by Mozart and I am the first man enjoying it. And there are only first people. It comes down to first-person-singular relationships with creativity."

The idea of actually being the first to enjoy a work quite naturally led to the question of premieres and commissions. Occupancy of its new home in the Kennedy Center has heightened the orchestra's sense of mission as the major musical organiza-

tion of the Nation's Capital, and Dorati says that, in addition to the numerous world premieres and American premieres scheduled, there is a budget for commissioning new music.

As a special means of fostering those "relationships with creativity" about which he spoke so intensely, Dorati is eagerly preparing for the first three in what is to be a regular annual series of festivals at the Kennedy Center,

each of which will feature "in depth" coverage of a single composer on a top level, international scale, with symposia and other attendant events as well as the performances themselves. This spring it is to be a Bach festival, next year Mozart, and in 1975, on the grandest scale, it will be Haydn, with dozens of the symphonies plus concertos, chamber music, sacred and secular choral works and opera, and the active participation of distinguished Haydn scholars from around the world under the auspices of the International and American Musicological Societies.

DORATI'S enthusiasm for the Haydn festival is hardly surprising in view of the project he has just completed with the Philharmonia Hungarica, recording all the Haydn symphonies. He is not the first conductor to record the complete symphonies (Ernst Maerzendorfer and the Vienna Chamber Orchestra accomplished the feat for the Musical Heritage Society a few years ago), but his cycle is "more complete" than its predecessor, in that it includes all the alternative movements for the symphonies so equipped.

Dorati is one of the two or three most heavily recorded conductors in history, and has probably appeared on a greater number of different labels than any of his colleagues except Leopold Stokowski; but he has only begun to record with the two orchestras he serves now as music director.

