

"Why the big time now, while London is dropping its contract with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and talking about dropping the one with the Chicago Symphony?"

## Rare Status Symbol

By Judith Martin

The National Symphony Orchestra, whose director is one of the classics recording stars, has landed an important record contract — a rare status symbol for any American orchestra these days.

London Records (British Decca) has reached an agreement with Antal Dorati and the orchestra to record Olivier Messiaen's "The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ" and Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony in Washington sessions from April 28 to May 3. "The Transfiguration" had its American premiere here on Tuesday.

At a time when record companies are dropping contracts with American orchestras because of the recording costs here, as compared with those in Europe, the National Symphony has agreed to contribute \$85,000 to the expenses. This represents the artistic costs only,

said orchestra manager William Denton, and is about 40 per cent of the total cost of bringing the records to the market.

"That's our investment — we expect to get it back," he said. "Our main problem now is a cash problem. We're going to try to locate a donor or benefactor — this is a unique opportunity for someone — or we may borrow it on a short-term basis."

The orchestra has never before had such an offer. In 1968, it did some "Adventures in Recording" for children on RCA, and before that there was a scattering of minor efforts for RCA and Westminster.

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Well, Dorati is most of the way through recording all of Haydn's symphonies for the company with the Philharmonia Hungarica in Germany, and the records which have been issued are selling beyond expectations and well—for the classics market.

"He's a hot item," said Denton. "Dorati's selling about a million records this year."

There is also, he pointed out, great interest in the Messiaen work. Tchaikovsky's Fourth was added because of the financial advantage it might present to the National Symphony.

"Obviously, it's a very popular work with a great sales appeal," said Denton. "But it's also non-copyrighted. We don't have to pay Mr. Tchaikovsky anything. We get a higher royalty, and it pays faster. A substantial part of the Messiaen profits go for the copyright.

"The Tchaikovsky-Messiaen marriage is a marriage of economics."

1972

Mart. 31  
(Wash Post.)

