



The Personality Of Three Orchestras

"ORCHESTRAS are not wholly the product of their conductors," wrote Virgil Thompson, American composer and conductor, in the New York *Herald Tribune* last October. "Their conductors train them and put them through their paces in public, but the conductor is one personality and the orchestra is another (in private life, a hundred others). A good orchestral concert is really more a duet than a domination.

"Our three great Eastern ensembles, for instance—the Philadelphia, the Boston and the New York Philharmonic—are as different from one another as the cities that created them and that forged them slowly into the image of each city's intellectual ideals. Conductors from outside have been called in to aid this formation, and a few of these have left traces of their own taste on that of the cities they have worked for. But chiefly their functions have been to care for a precious musical organism, to watch over it, to perfect it in the observance of the musical amenities and to allow it to mature according to its own nature and in accordance with its community's particular temperament. The conductor is never a static participant in such a process. He matures, too, in harmony with the community, if he stays a reasonable length of time, is nourished and formed by local ideals, becomes a part of the thing to which he has contributed his special abilities.

"Serge Koussevitzky and Eugene Ormandy are cases in point of my thesis. They have been ripened and refined by their association with the Boston and the Philadelphia orchestras in a way that was not predictable at all during their previous careers. It was obvious always that both would go far, but it was not indicated to prophecy that Koussevitzky, the temperamental Slav, would become a master of orchestral understatement, or that Ormandy, the boyish and straightforward Central European, would become a sort of specialist of delicately equilibrated orchestral sensuality. These developments, I am sure, are as legitimately creditable to environmental influence as to any previously manifested characteristics. Contact with orchestras of powerful temperament and specific orientation, as well as responsibility to cities of ancient

and irreducible character—Boston, the intellectually elegant and urbane, Philadelphia, where everything, even intellectual achievement and moral pride, turns into a luxury—contact, conflict and collaboration between their strong European and the even stronger local traditions has given to these conductors their quality of being both the creature and the guiding hand of their own orchestras.

Two Orchestras Compared

"It is surprising (and most pleasant) to observe how two orchestras as accomplished as these can differ so completely in the kind of sounds they make. Boston makes thin sounds, like the Paris orchestras, thin and utterly precise, like golden wire and bright enamel. Nothing ever happens that isn't clear.

"The Philadelphia sonorities are less transparent, and the tonal balance is less stable. Because the sounds that make it up are all rounder and deeper and more human. They breathe; they seem almost to have sentience.

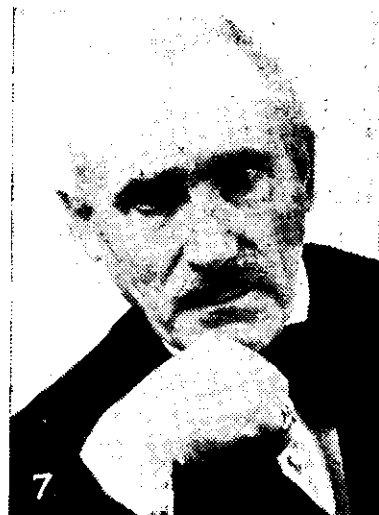
"As a price of this vibrancy, however, the Philadelphia Orchestra is not always easy to conduct. It is probably the most sensitive orchestra in the world. The leader can get a fortissimo out of it by lifting a finger, and he can upset the whole balance of it by any nervousness. Boston is tougher, more independent.

Re-Educating The Philharmonic

"Our Philharmonic is a horse of another colour, and one that has had far too many riders. It has been whipped and spurred for 40 years by guest conductors and by famous virtuosos with small sense of responsibility about the orchestra's future or about its relation to our community's culture. It has become erratic, temperamental, undependable, and in every way difficult to handle.

"Mr. Rodzinski has undertaken to heal its neuroses. At least we presume that is what he has undertaken, because improvement is noticeable already in tonal transparency, and a faint blush seems to be appearing on the surface of the string sounds. Rhythmic co-ordination, too, though far from normal, is definitely ameliorated. It is to be hoped sincerely that progress will continue. At present, its faults, like those of any spoiled child or horse, are more easily definable than its qualities."

A NEW series of 45-minute programmes of music orchestras will begin from Station 4YA on the first of December. These will take the place occupied by the regular classical music programmes. The series will include works from the standard orchestral repertoire of the American composer. Composers not yet familiar here are Aaron Copland, Howard Hanson, Roy Harris, Philip Glass, and among the orchestras are those of Cincinnati, Cleveland, and the New York Philharmonic. Station 4YO, Dunedin, will also shortly be broadcasting these programmes. These last one hour, and will begin on December 29. All the programmes have been submitted to the New Zealand Listener.



WHAT THE PICTURES SHOW: (1) Dimitri Mitropoulos, rehearsing; (2) Pierre Monteux (left), director of the San Francisco Symphony; (3) Eugene Ormandy conducts a rehearsal of the Philadelphia Orchestra; (4) Eugene Ormandy conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra; (5) The "sound shell" of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; (6) The "sound shell" of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; (7) Arturo Toscanini conducts the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra since 1938; (8) Hans Kindler, founder and conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra; (9) Eugene Ormandy, conductor of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra; (10) Artur Rodzinski, conductor of the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra.