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Maestro of Philadelphia

EUGENE ORMANDY, maestro of the famed Philadelphia Orchestra, once told an interviewer he "was born in New York City at the age of 22." By this he did not mean to deny his youthful career in Europe, but rather to dramatise in a phrase his affection for his adopted country.

Actually Ormandy, who has conducted America's most travelled orchestra for nearly 20 years, was born 57 years ago in Budapest, Hungary. His music-loving father named him Jenö (Hungarian for Eugene), in honour of the famous Hungarian violinist Jenö Hubay. A diminutive one-eighth size

violin was tucked under his chin when he was little more than a baby. At five he was entered in the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest. A pupil of Hubay by the time he was nine, he learned with such rapidity that he soon was ready to make a successful concert debut. At 15 he received his State diploma as a violinist, and his professional diploma three years later. From then on he varied teaching at the State Conservatory with concert tours as a virtuoso violinist until, at the age of 22, he was encouraged by the promises of an enthusiastic but impractical Hungarian manager professing to know

American taste to undertake a tour in the United States.

This was the answer to a long-held dream, and Ormandy acted on the suggestion as soon as he could. He spent most of his savings on his passage, and arrived in the United States full of hope and enthusiasm, eager to make the dream a reality. In the meantime, the "manager," dismayed perhaps by his own rashness, had vanished. Ormandy was in a strange country, without funds and without friends. Jobs were scarce and concert tours, for unknown violinists, non-existent. After a few weeks he accepted the only available offer—a job in the violin section of a motion picture theatre orchestra. For a less gifted musician and a less resolute personality, this could have meant artistic suicide; but Ormandy was able to meet this challenge as he has met others subsequently. On the credit side of this first engagement was the fact that it was with the Capitol Theatre, then the leading moving-picture house in New York, and one that was famous for its good music.

Ormandy spent eight years with this orchestra, all but one of them in the capacity of conductor. By giving some 28 performances a week, with a weekly change of score, he built up a prodigious repertoire, and acquired performance training similar to that which an actor gains in a stock company. In his limited leisure time he studied unceasingly. Among other things, he was able to gain admittance to rehearsals of the New York Philharmonic. During the great years when that orchestras was under the baton of Toscanini, young

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Capital Punishment

AT the beginning of the 19th century, English criminal law allowed the death penalty for over two hundred offences, from regicide to stealing a pocket handkerchief. Since 1838, however, the death penalty has been exacted under ordinary law in England only for murder (with isolated instances of death for high treason). Within the last century many other countries have abolished capital punishment, except in war time and under martial law; and in those countries that retain it the strict requirements of the law are often unobserved and the need for its retention is often questioned.

In England recently the House of Commons voted for abolition or suspension, and here in New Zealand in the near future Parliament will debate the question of abolition. Again we are faced with the query: If capital punishment is to be abolished, what are the alternatives? The common practice is to impose imprisonment for life; "life" being a period liable to various interpretations and once imposed, capable of constant review.

In a debate in the English Parliament early last year, the Home Secretary stressed the difficulties of imprisonment as an alternative. His questions were—Where and for how long should the convicted murderer be imprisoned? If he is released, is society safe? And if he is not released, what of his degeneration in prison?

The satisfactory answer to these problems, social, economic and humanitarian, lies, perhaps, in the ability of the penal system to reform the criminal, and in the criminal himself—and ultimately, of course, in prevention.

An Auckland panel will discuss the alternative to capital punishment in *Question Mark* from 2YA, 3YA, 4YA, at 8.30 p.m. on Thursday, May 3 (1YA, 8.30 p.m., May 4).

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