

Ormandy, score in hand, sat far back in the darkened auditorium listening and absorbing.

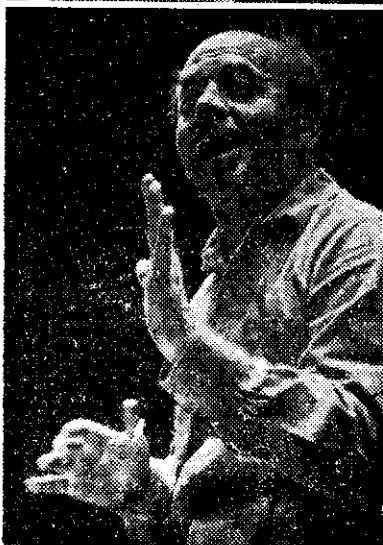
All the while Ormandy's abilities were maturing and were receiving both public and critical recognition. He became one of radio's first important conductors; he was recording for leading phonograph companies; and he was frequently invited as guest conductor for summer concerts at the Lewisohn Stadium in New York City and Robin Hood Dell in Philadelphia.

The great opportunity which took him out of the popular entertainment field and gave him his true place as an outstanding musician and conductor came in 1931. Toscanini, scheduled for a series of guest performances with the Philadelphia Orchestra, was taken ill. Various conductors were sought as a substitute, but one after another declined, fearing that unfavourable comparison with Toscanini might damage their reputations. The offer was made to Ormandy and even his manager advised refusal. Ormandy agreed there was no substitute for the great maestro, but he also believed in his own powers, and again, it was not in him to refuse a challenge. The response of the Philadelphia audiences was unexpectedly favourable. Perhaps they did not have the Toscanini they had paid to hear, but they had Ormandy at his best, and that was sufficient reward.

Ormandy's success in Philadelphia brought him an immediate offer to conduct the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. He remained with this orchestra for five years, during which time he established himself as a conductor of the first rank.

In 1936 Leopold Stokowski decided to limit his conducting activities with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Ormandy was asked to come to Philadelphia as co-director. Two years later, when Stokowski resigned, there was much speculation as to the choice of the next conductor. Several world-famous conductors, William Furtwangler among them, sought the post, which was a coveted one, both from the standpoint of prestige and remuneration. But Philadelphia audiences knew what they wanted. They were not seeking a "name" conductor; they preferred the energetic young Eugene Ormandy, whose musicianship and great gifts had already been amply demonstrated.

To realise the importance of this appointment one must know that the Philadelphia Orchestra is among the first three orchestral groups in the United States. Musical excellence alone is responsible for its great prestige, but other factors have assisted in extending its fame. To begin with, it is America's most travelled orchestra, having travelled more than 1,200,000 miles since it was organised in 1900, and has played more concerts in more different cities and countries than any other symphony orchestra in the world. Additional renown has come through phonograph recordings. It was the first orchestra to make phonograph recordings (1917) under its own name and conductor. Since that time more than 46,000,000 records bearing the Philadelphia label have been sold in the United States alone. It was also the first established orchestra to have sponsored broadcasts over a nationwide network. In 1948 it was the first orchestra to be televised. This distinction was obtained only by



★EUGENE ORMANDY snapped in characteristic poses at rehearsal

the barest of margins since Arturo Toscanini and his NBC Orchestra appeared before the television camera one hour and a half later the same evening.

The people of Philadelphia take great pride in their orchestra and its director Eugene Ormandy. And the affection and respect he feels for the orchestra have been demonstrated frequently by the answer he gives to other organisations who have sought his services. He simply says: "But who would want to leave the Philadelphia Orchestra?"

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 27, 1956.

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