

Eugene Ormandy

Born: November 18, 1899 – Budapest, Hungary

Died: March 12, 1985 – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

The musical career of the outstanding Hungarian-born American conductor, Eugene Ormandy (real name, Jenő Blau), began at a surprisingly young age. He could identify symphonies at the age of 3 and could play the violin at the age of 4. When he was 5, he became the youngest pupil in the history of the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest. By the time he was 10, he was performing for the royal family of Austria-Hungary. Ormandy's early musical experiences were made possible by his father, who wanted his son to become a world-renowned violinist.

In 1936, Eugene Ormandy was asked to conduct the Budapest Orchestra, much to his father's disappointment. Ormandy once said that his father did not realize how much more important it was to be a great conductor than a great violinist.

Eugene Ormandy was invited to undertake a concert tour of the USA, playing violin, but when he arrived he discovered he had been misled and the tour had fallen through. Down to his last nickel, Ormandy happened to run into an old friend, who was also a musician from Budapest, in a New York coffee shop near Broadway. The friend advised Ormandy to call Erno Rapee, who conducted the Capitol Theater Symphony.

Following his friend's advice Eugene Ormandy auditioned for Rapee, who responded, "You are much too good to play in a movie house. You should be playing in Carnegie Hall!" Ormandy played in the Capitol Theater Symphony orchestra, then made his conducting debut in 1924. During this time, Ormandy was greatly influenced by Arturo Toscanini at the New York Philharmonic. This influence would later show in Ormandy's precision and balance with the Philadelphia Orchestra, resulting in a totally unique sound.

Later, as a member of the CBS Radio conducting staff, Eugene Ormandy became one of radio's first important conductors. His work conducting symphonic music for commercial programs was hailed for its "finish, spirit, and accuracy."

The turning point in Eugene Ormandy's career came in 1931 when he was invited to replace Toscanini, who was slated for a guest performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra, but had suddenly become ill. Although his manager, Arthur Judson, advised him against it, Ormandy chose to do it and became an overnight sensation. He would later state, when asked what was his greatest single moment, "When I replaced Toscanini to conduct this orchestra."

In 1936, Eugene Ormandy became associate conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski, then in 1938, he was promoted to permanent conductor. It was during his time with the Philadelphia Orchestra that he became known as the "modest little maestro." He created an orchestra renowned for its warm romantic sound and developed an ensemble rapport that has been compared to a good varsity team. He personally hired every one of the 104 musicians who played under his baton.

In 1970, Eugene Ormandy cried as he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom "for bringing to each performance something more precious than his great gifts--himself and the rich experiences of his life." His sound was heard throughout the world for they toured extensively. In 1973, Ormandy's orchestra became the first American symphony to visit the People's Republic of China.

Eugene Ormandy conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra for an unprecedented 44 years. He retired from full-time music-making in 1980 and became conductor emeritus. Appropriately, his last concert was with the Philadelphia Orchestra at Carnegie Hall on January 10, 1984. He died in 1985, of pneumonia, at the age of 85.



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SHOSTAKOVICH

CONCERTO FOR CELLO IN E FLAT

Mstislav Rostropovich, Soloist

SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN F MAJOR

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
EUGENE ORMANDY



First symphonies are generally unsuccessful, or at least questionably successful as compositions. The Brahms First and the Prokofiev "Classical" Symphony are exceptions, not least because in the former instance the composer completed the work when he was 42, and in the latter because the pastiche nature of the piece reflected Prokofiev's youthful inclination toward surprises and stimulated his natural ability to write memorable melodies. Shostakovich's First Symphony is light in mood, like Prokofiev's, but is written in a thoroughly modern, if conservative vein.

Shostakovich was 19 when he completed the piece, which he used as his graduation exercise for the Leningrad Conservatory. While he was working on it, he considered calling it "Symphony -- Grotesque." It was premiered on May 12, 1926, to an overwhelmingly enthusiastic reception. The symphony quickly caught on throughout the world, as Bruno Walter, Leopold Stokowski, and other noted conductors championed it. By the age of 21 Shostakovich was something of a celebrity, even mentioned in the company of the two Russian giants living abroad, Prokofiev and Stravinsky. The symphony already shows characteristics of Shostakovich's mature style, especially in its sense -- burgeoning though it was -- of irony and satire, as evidenced in the mischievous second movement. Both the first and second subjects of the first movement are rather typical of the mature composer as well; their character would be out of place in the later symphonies, though not in the ballets and film scores to come.

The work is cast in four movements, with the second lasting about five minutes and the other three having a duration of around eight to ten minutes each. The first movement begins with an introductory theme played by muted trumpet and answered by the bassoon. The main theme is march-like and serious, while the second subject is lyrical and has an air of nonchalance and grace. There is much color in the orchestration when the themes are developed. Overall the melodies in this movement, light though they are, are as memorable as any Shostakovich would write.

As mentioned above, the second movement is satirical and a fine example of the composer's precocity. While it is colorful and imaginative, again featuring brilliant orchestration, it also divulges the influence of Prokofiev. It is no mere imitation, though. The third movement (*Lento*) begins with an oboe solo and leads to a threatening theme from the brass, after which a *Largo* brings calm but at the price of gloom. This movement also brings hints of the composer's later tragic style.

The finale is connected to the third movement by a drum roll. The finale (*Allegro molto*) clearly comes across as episodic, switching from fast to slow and from triple *forte* to triple *piano*, and moving from melancholy moods to irony and even playfulness. The music also has a tendency to stop and start in places. Overall, though the work is not one of Shostakovich's greatest, it is one of the finest first symphonies ever written and has remained in the standard repertoire.

Shostakovich composed this music in July 1959 and Mstislav Rostropovich introduced it at Leningrad on October 4, with Yevgeny Mravinsky conducting. It is lightly scored for double winds, piccolo, contrabassoon, a single horn (no other brass), timpani, celesta, and strings.

Although a prolific composer in other forms, Shostakovich wrote only six concertos. If those for keyboard seem prevailingly saucy and sun dappled, the four string concertos are somberly serious. Where there's any laughter at all, it sounds forced and hollow. To lighten it (or try) only reinforces the "holy fool" (*yurodiviy*) analogy that haunts Solomon Volkov's Testimony, the posthumously alleged Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich.

When the First Cello Concerto was written with almost Mozartean speed, Stalin had been dead six years but not forgotten. In 1958 Boris Pasternak was forced to decline a Nobel Prize for his anti-Stalinist novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, and then was expelled from the Writers' Union. Ian MacDonald, in *The New Shostakovich*, concluded that Pasternak's humiliation and subsequent persecution significantly influenced the First Cello Concerto. Volkov, on the other hand, gave no hint, nor did Elizabeth Wilson in *A Life Remembered*. Most of what she included, anent the concerto, was Rostropovich's celebration of himself, with this notable exception: "In the First Cello Concerto [M.R. speaking], Shostakovich alludes to Stalin's favorite song, 'Suliko.' These allusions are undoubtedly not accidental, but...are camouflaged so craftily that even I didn't notice them to begin with. The first time Dmitry Dmitriyevich hummed this passage through to me [from the concluding rondo movement], he laughed and said, 'Slava, have you noticed?'"

Cello Concerto No. 1 is a major-key work in minor keys more often than not, recalling the mature Schubert's subtle modulations. It was his first large-scale undertaking after the Eleventh Symphony a year earlier and one of the works he quoted in his autobiographical Eighth String Quartet of 1960. The published score has a preface, "adapted" as follows by the late Leonard Burkat:

"This four-movement concerto is divided into two large parts: the opening movement, and then three more movements played without pause. Together, they form an integral whole with unified themes and images.

"The main theme of the *Allegretto* first movement is a [four-note] motto that lends itself to dynamic development and reappears many times. The second theme is a rich musical image of Russian character, full of stoic grief and strength of will.

"The second movement, *Moderato*, has a restrained introduction, after which the cello sings a song-like theme against violas in the background. The melodious second theme is highly expressive, leading to a dramatic climax.

"The third *Andantino* -- *Allegro* movement is monolog for unaccompanied cello [i.e., a long cadenza] that recalls the first-movement motto and second movement themes while preparing for -- "The *Allegro con moto* finale in rondo form [that] sums up the whole work, with a coda [based on] the principal subject of the first movement...." The end is both harsh and abrupt.

SHOSTAKOVICH

Mstislav Rostropovich, Soloist

SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN F MAJOR

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

EUGENE ORMANDY

Concerto In E-Flat Major For Cello And Orchestra, Op. 107

1 Allegretto 6:29

2 Moderato 10:38

3 Cadenza 5:32

4 Allegro Con Moto 4:37

Total Time: 27:16

Symphony No. 1 In F Minor, Op.10

5 Allegretto 8:28

6 Allegro 4:36

7 Lento 8:20

8 Allegro Molto 8:36

Total Time: 30:10

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape

Recorded 8 Nov 1959, Broadwood Hotel, Philadelphia by Columbia records



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Shostakovich Cello Concerto and Symphony No. 1 Rostropovich, cello Ormandy Philadelphia Orchestra

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