

Quiet Grief Underlies Orchestra Rehearsal

By WILMA SALISBURY

The Cleveland Orchestra was rehearsing on stage. Administrators and assistants were at work in their offices. Patrons came to the box office to buy tickets.

On the surface Severance Hall was unchanged.

But beneath the calm appearance of business-as-usual, lay an atmosphere of deep sadness.

George Szell was gone. And his absence was felt as profoundly yesterday as his presence had been in the past.

"EVEN WHEN SZELL came in the back door. I felt that the pillars stood up a little straighter," said Louis Hood, director of public relations for the orchestra. "He had the most fantastically organized mind, a delicious bawdy sense of humor and a fabulous gift of languages. It was a great privilege to work with him."

Klaus G. Roy, director of publications and program book editor, expressed similar feelings. "To have had the privilege of working with him so closely has been an extraordinary experience," he said. "One never failed day by day to learn something from him.

"The thing that is most memorable too," he continued, "is that Mr. Szell was the complete professional. I have never known anyone who was so totally committed to doing the job as perfectly as it was humanly possible, with attention to the minutest details.

"I FELT THAT his concept of art was the total realization of an intention in sounding form. This applied to all areas of related activity, whether it was program content and style or hall maintenance. He even used to tell the cleaning ladies how to hold their brooms. But that was a business matter. He never wasted time on small talk.

"If things were all right, he wouldn't bother to comment. He rarely offered praise for things well done. Yet he could be very compassionate with other people's problems."

Most of the orchestra members vanished

immediately after the rehearsal. But a few of them briefly stated their reactions to Dr. Szell's death.

"It was a great shock to all of us," said John Mack, principal oboist. "No one in the orchestra had any idea that the situation was as serious as it was. I suppose we held onto the idea of just going on through the years with Mr. Szell. His death is a great blow and an irreplaceable loss."

MACK AND HIS colleague, principal clarinetist Robert Marcellus, also expressed concern for the orchestra's future.

"We will have to carry on by ourselves on our own initiative now," said Marcellus. "Our responsibility as an orchestra increases." A Cleveland Orchestra member for 17 years, Marcellus added, "I feel his death as a great personal as well as artistic loss. He has enriched my life and that of my students."

Composer-conductor Aaron Copland, who will lead the orchestra tonight at Blossom Music Center, commented, "We will not change the program. Szell would not have wanted us to.

"I KNEW HIM a long time, at least 20 years. He was, as a conductor, a figure who stood apart in the sense that we tend to consider conductors with showmen, actors and performers. There was no conductor quite like him for seriousness of purpose. He had an attitude toward the art of music which was inspiring—even to a composer who thinks of himself as a carrier-on of tradition.

"The sum of his intellectual and musical capacities added up to a unique personality as a conductor. His death is a loss to our art. But he left us something which everyone who came in contact with him will profit by and remember."

One of the orchestra musicians who knew Dr. Szell longest is principal harpist Alice Chalfoux. "We all are very sad," she said. "His contribution to the city and the orchestra was quite fantastic. He brought the city of Cleveland to the world."