

Back to his baton after 10 years



DENNIS GRAY STOLL'S Hans Andersen Suite is to be broadcast by the B.B.C. West of England Orchestra, under Frank Cantell, in his "Personally Presented" programme on the Light next month. This will be the third time they have played it.

The suite was first performed by the Hastings Municipal Symphony Orchestra in the White Rock Pavilion, under the composer's own baton, twenty years ago.

On that occasion, Mr. Allan Biggs the "Observer" critic wrote: "The impression after hearing Mr. Stoll conduct it was very favourable indeed. The six movements not only vividly illustrate their titles but in each one there is an original play of fancy that makes them delightful to follow."

Stoll was then a rising composer-conductor of 26. He had already been appointed musical director of the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, conducting many of his own works, as well as the standard Russian repertory.

Splendid promise

The music critic of the famous French journal "L'Eclair," wrote: "A young composer of splendid promise. Mr. Dennis Stoll has come to stay. He has conducted the Borodin 'Prince Igor' dances with great style and spirit. Tonight, a triumphal gala evening he directed the first performance of his own very noteworthy symphonic poem, 'Antony and Cleopatra,' with considerable success."

"Le Petit Nicos" claimed that this work was "most

beautifully fashioned, and conducted by the composer, merited the ovation it received."

Stoll later appeared as deputy for Sir Thomas Beecham with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. His Ballet Suites were widely performed by the B.B.C. and the leading radio orchestras on the Continent, as well as at concerts in Britain often under his own baton. During the earlier part of the war he continued to conduct and to lecture on music, appearing in Coventry for the London Philharmonic the night after the major part of the city had suffered total destruction.

He organised concerts to raise money for Indian famine relief, including one with the London Philharmonic at the Royal Albert Hall. It was his sympathy for the suffering of Indians that took him to Bengal, the area of distress, where he lived for three years, often in villages with peasants, and always wearing Indian dress.

Then, in 1948, polio struck him down, and he resigned himself to never being able to conduct again.

"But my wife bless her would not hear of that," Mr. Stoll told me. "And today the love and care she has lavished on me have been rewarded. My right arm is now fit enough to wield the baton. It is like a miracle."

Back to conducting

Mr. Stoll was particularly grateful to his two physiotherapists First Miss Heath, of Ootacamund "a grand old

THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER, patron, being welcomed at the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation by the founder's younger son, Dennis Gray Stoll, who is a member of the governing council. The picture was taken in 1955.

lady who in 1948 at the age of 65 gave me an hour's massage a day—the equivalent of a five-mile walk," and afterwards, on his return to England, Mr. F. C. Hanney, head physiotherapist of the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation, who "took me over and did marvellous work."

Arrangements are now being made for Stoll to resume his career as a conductor. He hopes to appear in Europe and in London on the concert platform soon.

This August he and his wife will renew old contacts in Brussels, Berlin, Hanover, Leningrad and Warsaw. In the Polish capital he will meet again Leon Woizikovski, one of the greatest stars of the original Diaghilev Russian Ballet. This magnificent dancer made a tremendous impression in the role of the Polovtsian chief during the 1936 Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo season at the London Alhambra, while Stoll conducted Borodin's exciting Prince Igor score.

Woizikovski now presides over the Warsaw ballet school described by the American impresario, Sol Hurok, as "the greatest in the world." He recently celebrated the fortieth anniversary of his theatrical debut in Warsaw, and received messages of tribute from leading members of the Royal Ballet (formerly Sadler's Wells). Incidentally, ours was the first big ballet company to visit post-war Poland.