

Bruno Walter: Target of Nazi Wrath

Noted Conductor, Erstwhile Head of Berlin Opera, Among those Barred from Germany

By
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MUSIC LOVERS in Germany, and their number is legion, must be deeply shocked (but unable to voice their resentment) at the report that Bruno Walter—next to Toscanini the most universally esteemed among conductors—has been banned by Hitler from Germany. Although not outwardly manifested, hosts in Berlin, Munich, Leipzig and in other music centres in the Fatherland contemplate with sorrow and indignation the prospect of being deprived, for an indefinite period, of the esthetic joys annually brought to them by the superb gifts of that truly German conductor—Bruno Walter.

When nearly a dozen of the world's best known conductors are moved to cast aside all thoughts of a natural professional rivalry to protest indignantly (as did those listed elsewhere on this page, headed by Toscanini) against the "expulsion" from the classical land of music of a man like Walter, it is high time that the powers that be sit up and take notice.

In appraising the significance of Bruno Walter, one is, of course, tempted first to dwell on his remarkable role in the Salzberg Festivals—in collaboration with that other renowned Jew, Max Reinhardt, who is likewise presently in exile due to Herr Hitler's wrath. Reinhardt himself is wont to say that the outstanding event of these Festivals is the conducting of Walter, who is regarded by experts as the uncrowned monarch of musical programmes. It is his performances that lend the most convincing festal justification to these "festspiele." It is the inspiration of his artistic soul that bestows a festive mood upon every presentation entrusted into his adroit hands.

That commanding figure in all the arts and sciences, as well as leaders in other walks of life, pilgrim from many parts of the globe to Salzburg, is due in no small measure to the irresistible art and personality of Walter.

BRUNO WALTER comes from a family of old and prominent merchants. Walter was a pupil of Gustav Mahler. He made unusually rapid progress in the field of operatic conducting and soon became first conductor of the very organisation—the Vienna Opera—which Mahler's genius raised to a position of pre-eminence not only



Bruno Walter, whose art has brought delight to music lovers in many lands. American audiences have been especially warm in their appreciation.

in Europe but probably in all the world.

Walter's activities in Vienna were terminated by an invitation, before the World War, to direct the Munich Opera. And for the next decade he was in Munich. During this period he lifted the prestige of that Opera House to a plane it had never enjoyed before, nor ever since. Both his orchestra and the singing ensemble became exemplary throughout Europe. After ten years of glorious achievement he parted from the Munich Opera.

I happened to live in Germany at the time and had it on good authority that the Bavarian Gov-

ernment viewed with disfavour (this was after the war) the rising star of this Jew who became a widely acclaimed figure as head of the Opera. I confronted him with this, but Walter preferred at the time not to attach any special significance to the fact that the Government had accepted his resignation without any comment.

His own explanation for leaving Munich was a desire to escape the somewhat narrowing confines of an operatic career.

"I longed," he said, "to conduct a variety of concerts, to come in contact with other distinguished orchestras, to travel and broaden my horizon. My artistic soul yearned for new things and experiences, new opportunities and surroundings. And this desire became intensified by the actual calls that came to me. Offers came from London, Berlin, Moscow, Vienna . . . Budapest. It was difficult to resist."

There followed years of travel, the foundation of an international career. Year after year he conducted (six times each season) the Berlin Philharmonic, the famous Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, the Opera at Covent Garden; he toured all through Russia, Scandinavia, France, Holland (whence a call has come to him in protest against the Hitler ban), Austria, Hungary, and other countries. Meanwhile, he was also summoned to America, making his debut with the Damrosch Orchestra, thence going to the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles.

Years ago the Municipal Opera of Berlin invited him to stewardship at an incredible salary (100,000 marks), which no other opera director in Europe has ever received), with a concession of sufficient time out for fulfilling his concert commitments. Every operatic performance under Walter in Berlin became an event, invariably spelling sold-out houses.

It may not be amiss also to mention that Bruno Walter introduced the incomparable Yehudi Menuhin to German audiences. Professor Albert Einstein was among the worshipful notables present.

Whether or not the protest of leading musicians will enable Bruno Walter to return to Germany, the scene of many of his triumphs, remains to be seen. But there can be no doubt that true lovers of music in the Fatherland will be infinitely poorer spiritually for his absence, while hosts in other lands will (amidst condemnation of Hitlerism) rejoice at the added opportunity to hear Walter conduct.

Toscanini Leads in Protest of Musical Notables Against Hitler.

ARTURO TOSCANINI heads the list of eleven signatories, all musicians of international repute, to a protest against the persecution of their fellow musicians in Germany. Moreover, Mr. Toscanini is said to be inclined, as a further expression of his solidarity with Bruno Walter and others, to cancel his contract with the Wagnerian Festival at Baireuth, Germany, next summer. The protest is addressed to Chancellor Adolf Hitler.