

Arturo Toscanini



Unlike most other musicians in Italy, Toscanini refused to scramble onto the Fascist bandwagon. He refused to preface his concerts with the Fascist anthem, and eventually was made a virtual prisoner at his home. When he was permitted to leave the country, he vowed never to revisit it so long as Fascism held it in bondage.

Nowhere has the magic of Toscanini's baton been more acclaimed than in the United States. Under its spell, the Metropolitan Opera made its highest artistic mark, and the New York Philharmonic became the world's greatest symphonic ensemble.

Behind the fact of these achievements is Toscanini's constant striving

after perfection. At rehearsals he will abuse his men with violent harangues, conscious only that the music has not been fully realized. Once in trying to justify such wrath to an outraged trumpet player, he explained, "God tells me how the music should sound—but *you* come in the way."

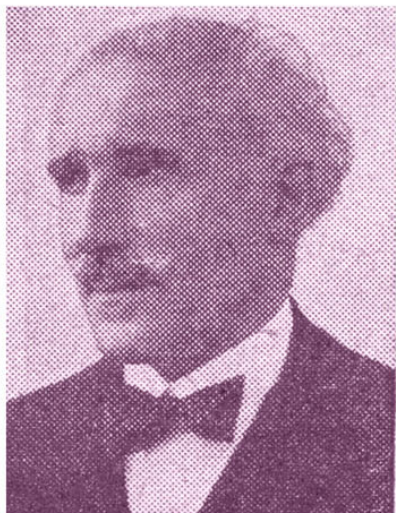
Often he expresses his rage by kicking his stand or by breaking his baton into pieces. On one occasion when a pliable wood baton refused to crack, he took off his coat and tore it to shreds.

Toscanini's musicians know that his devotion to them is unquestioned. When he took the Philharmonic on a tour of Europe in 1931, he acted to the men as a father to his children. One of the members fell ill aboard the liner, and Toscanini stood watch at his bedside until recovery took place.

Since the beginning of Toscanini's career, he has directed every performance without written music—compelled to do so by his myopic eyesight. Virtually the entire known symphonic and operatic repertoire has been photographed on his memory. One of the famous anecdotes about Toscanini's memory concerns the time a bassoon player came to him saying that his instrument could not sound E-Flat. Toscanini thought a moment: "That's all right. You can rehearse with us. The note of E-Flat does not appear in your music today."

Above all, Toscanini loves his music. He has been known to burst into weeping while listening to a radio performance. "It is so beautiful, I cannot help it," he explains.

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A "concord of sweet sounds" would hardly be considered a weapon of war, but Arturo Toscanini, whose name figures among the top orchestra conductors of all time, has

been firing the world's greatest music at totalitarianism since Mussolini marched on Rome in 1922.

Toscanini, well known here as a conductor for the Metropolitan Opera and of the N. B. C. Symphony Orchestra, is the son of one of Garibaldi's Thousand, and has been devoted to democratic ideals all his life. He refused persistently to conduct "Giovinezza," the Fascist hymn, and remained adamant to Mussolini's pleas, promises and threats. At Milan, he selected music that expressed democratic aspirations, conducted "The Star-Spangled Banner" with fervor and even some of the stirring marches of Sousa.

When Hitler took over in Germany, Toscanini quit the Wagner festival at Bayreuth and moved to the Salzburg festival in Austria. When Austria was taken over he set up a rival festival in Lucerne, Switzerland.

Toscanini's great moment came when Italy surrendered and came over to the Allies. Prepared in advance, he hurried to his New York studio and conducted for the radio what he called "Victory, Act I," which contained the V-theme from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the overture to "William Tell," "Garibaldi's Hymn" and "The Star-Spangled Banner."

"Victory, Act II," and "Victory, Act III" will be ready, he announced, when the Nazis and Japs fall.

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