



Bernadette Mayrhofer

Julius Stwertka (Concertmaster, Solo Violinist)

Born March 7, 1872 in Vienna, died on December 17, 1942 in Theresienstadt

Joined the Vienna State Opera and the Vienna Philharmonic on August 1, 1902, and retired Sept. 1, 1936;

Member of the Jewish Community, married to Rosa Kohlberg (born Oct. 15, 1875) in 1899;

Education/Instructors/Students: Private study with Joseph Joachim in Berlin, 1886/87 - 1890/91 Studied at the Vienna Conservatory under Professor Jakob Moritz Grün (renowned soloist; teacher of Carl Flesch and until 1909 concertmaster of the Vienna Court Opera), in 1891 graduated with honors in violin from the Vienna Conservatory; Students of Stwertka included Vienna Philharmonic members Dr. Daniel Falk and Josef Geringer (both of whom were driven from Vienna in 1938, emigrating to New York, USA);



Julius Stwertka

Julius Stwertka was recruited from Hamburg as concertmaster by Gustav Mahler and was engaged for this position with the Vienna State Opera Orchestra and Vienna Philharmonic (1902-1936). From Sept. 15, 1903 - Dec. 31, 1908 he was instructor and professor at the Conservatory of the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna; From Jan. 1, 1909 - Feb. 28, 1933 he was instructor and professor at the Imperial Music Academy, and from 1920 department head;

On April 28, 1921 he was awarded the title of *Regierungsrat*, on June 8, 1933 he received the Honorary Gold Medal for Service to the of the Republic of Austria.

He was deported from Vienna to Theresienstadt on August 27, 1942, along with his wife, Rosa Stwertka;

Sources see footnote¹

¹ Information regarding Julius Stwertka was compiled in the Historical Archives of the Vienna Philharmonic HAdWPh by Fr. Dr. Silvia Kargl (Archivist); IKG Matriken/Database Department of Matters of Restitution,, provided by Mag.a Sabine Loitfellner, Section for Matters of Restitution, Jewish Community of Vienna; Historical residency records for Julius Stwertka and Rosa Stwertka, Archives of the State and City of Vienna; Information from the Austrian Musical Dictionary online regarding „Jakob Moritz Grün“ and from annual reports of the Vienna Conservatory of the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna, compiled by Frau Dr.in Lynne Heller, Archives of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna; Documentary Archives of the Austrian Resistance, Online-Database, <http://www.doew.at>.



At the beginning in March 1938, when racial pogroms against the Jews broke out in Vienna, which included waves of mass incarceration, brutal dispossession, plundering and intimidation of every sort, Julius Stwertka, a violinist and former concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic, had already been in retirement for a year and a half. Five days before the 'Anschluss', Julius Stwertka entered into his 66th year and could look back upon a successful career as a musician and pedagogue. Stwertka had been brought to Vienna from Hamburg by Gustav Mahler and without an audition had been accepted as a concertmaster and violin soloist in the Vienna State Opera Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic.² He was an instructor and professor at the Conservatory of the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna and the Academy of Music.³ In 1899 Julius Stwertka had married his wife, Rosa (maiden name Kohlberg), and both were members of the Jewish Community in Vienna.⁴

Shortly following the 'Anschluss' on March 12, 1938, many anti-Jewish laws took effect - in the former territory of Austria some 250 anti-Semitic laws had been enacted by the end of the war⁵ - discriminating against, isolating and disenfranchising the Jewish population. Beginning in 1940, the Stwertkas were forced to move several times. The historical records in the state archives document numerous changes of their place of residence. Julius Stwertka and his wife moved from their apartment at Ungargasse 59, in the 3rd district, to Uhdegasse 4/5, also in the 3rd district. At the end of November 1941, they changed their address once again to the Vereinsgasse 28 in the 2nd district and in January of 1942, remaining in the 2nd district, they moved to Novaragasse 32, which was their final address in Vienna. On August 27, 1942, Julius and Rosa Stwertka were deported together to Theresienstadt.⁶

The ghetto of Theresienstadt, located northwest of Prague, was only a temporary stopover for a great portion of the people before their being relocated - generally in mass transports - to various extermination camps where they were to be murdered. In addition to the constant fear of being transferred to extermination centers such as Treblinka, Auschwitz or Maly Trostinec, there were miserable living and working conditions in this ghetto. "Hunger, lack of sanitation facilities, and inferior clothing resulted in many casualties."⁷

² The author received information about Julius Stwertka's admission procedure in the orchestra from Dr. Christian Merlin, germanist and musicologist, music critic at „Le Figaro“.

³ Information regarding Julius Stwertka was compiled in the Historical Archives of the Vienna Philharmonic HAdWPh by Fr. Dr. Silvia Kargl (Archivist)

⁴ IKG Matriken/Database Department of Matters of Restitution,, provided by Mag.a Sabine Loitfellner, Section for Matters of Restitution, Jewish Community of Vienna.

⁵ Erika Weinzierl, *Zu wenig Gerechte. Österreicher und die Judenverfolgung 1938 – 1945*, Graz-Wien-Köln 1986, 36.

⁶ Historical residency records for Julius Stwertka and Rosa Stwertka, Archives of the State and City of Vienna; Information regarding Julius Stwertka was compiled in the Historical Archives of the Vienna Philharmonic HAdWPh by Fr. Dr. Silvia Kargl (Archivist)

⁷ Documentary Archives of the Austrian Resistance, Online-Database, <http://www.doew.at>.

A total of 140,000 people were deported to Theresienstadt. Of those around 33,000 died there due to the dreadful living conditions in the ghetto, while some 88,000 were transported to extermination camps where they were murdered.⁸

Philharmonic member Julius Stwertka died in Theresienstadt, only a few weeks following his deportation from Vienna on December 17, 1942. His wife, Rosa Stwertka, was transferred on May 16, 1944, to Auschwitz, where she was also murdered. The date of her death is unknown.⁹

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Translation: Gloria McElheney

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Documentary Archives of the Austrian Resistance, Online-Database, <http://www.doew.at/personensuche>.