



Bernadette Mayrhofer

Friedrich Siegfried Buxbaum (Principal Cellist)

Born in Vienna on Sept. 23, 1869, died in exile (London/UK) on Oct. 2, 1948

Joined the *Hofopernorchester* (Vienna Court Opera Orchestra, today Vienna State Opera Orchestra) and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra on Oct. 1, 1900; expulsion from the Orchestra Association already during the days of the 'Anschluss', presumably on March 13, 1938;

1883–1887 studies at the Vienna Conservatory, student of the cellist and *Kapellmeister* Ferdinand Hellmesberger, principal cellist with the Glasgow Symphony Orchestra (GB) in 1869, active as a soloist, 1893–1900 member of the Fitzner Quartet, 1900–1921 member of the Rosé Quartet, famous premieres of works by Johannes Brahms, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Arnold Schönberg and Anton Webern; 1921 founding of his own string quartet, *k. u. k. Hofmusiker* (court musician), 1903–1909 professor at the Vienna Conservatory, later professor at the Academy of Music, a.o. Prof. (associate professor) at the Academy of Music; Numerous honors: e.g. 1898 *Jubel-Medaille* bronze medal, 1908 silver medal, 1925 *Regierungsrat*, 1947 "Nicolai Silver Medal";



Friedrich Buxbaum

Escape from Vienna Aug.-Oct. 1938 (at the age of 68 or almost 69);

Activities in exile: activities during the early years in exile remain uncertain, possibly first cellist with the Symphony Orchestra in Glasgow, 1939–1944 cellist with the Rosé Quartet in London/revival of the "Rosé Quartet" in exile (with **Arnold Rosé**, Karl Doktor, violist with the Busch Quartet, and Alma Rosé, among others), regular performances in the framework of the Lunch-Time-Concerts at the National Gallery, 1942 concerts at Wigmore Hall (e.g. on the occasion of the Vienna Philharmonic's 100th anniversary), later also active as a cello soloist;

For sources see footnote¹

¹ Information on Buxbaum compiled by HAdWPh/Dr. Silvia Kargl (archivist); Walter Pass, Gerhard Scheit, Wilhelm Svoboda, *Orpheus im Exil. Die Vertreibung der österreichischen Musik von 1938 bis 1945*, Vienna 1995, pp. 247–248; www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik_B/Buxbaum_Friedrich.xml.



Expulsion from the Orchestra

„Liebe Freunde, ich bin so glücklich, dass ich wieder bei euch sein darf. Ich hab' euch stimmen hören. Es klang wunderbar rein. Ganz judenrein.“²

[“My good friends, it's so good to see you again. I heard you tune your instruments. It sounded miraculously pure. There were no flaws, there were no Jews.”]

Sarcastic welcoming remarks by Friedrich Buxbaum addressed to the Vienna Philharmonic, from which he had been expelled, praising its purity of sound while hinting at the total absence of Jewish musicians (London, September 1947)

Friedrich Buxbaum, who had held the exposed position of soloist and principal cellist, was expelled from the orchestral association immediately after Austria's annexation to Nazi Germany. The legitimacy of this decision was confirmed by State Opera director Erwin Kerber's announcement of March 18, 1938, informing the administration of the *Bundestheater* (Austrian Federal Theatres; BThV) that *„nichtarischen Mitglieder des Solopersonals [...] bis zum Einlangen höherer Weisungen im Spielplan nicht beschäftigt [werden]“³* [“until further orders are issued by higher authority, no non-Aryan soloist will be included in the repertoire”]. Friedrich Buxbaum was among the first members of the orchestra to be abruptly dismissed: *„Die notwendigen Außerdienststellungen wurden im Wege der Beurlaubung verfügt und betreffen (...) 3.) Reg.Rat Prof. Siegfried Buxbaum (...)“⁴* [“The necessary redundancies were effected by way of granting leave of absence and affected (...) 3.) Reg.Rat Prof. Siegfried Buxbaum (...)”]

In his autobiographical work “Und dafür wird man noch bezahlt...” (roughly translates as “And you even get paid for that...”), Otto Strasser, member of the Vienna Philharmonic, described the conversation between State Opera director Erwin Kerber, Arnold Rosé (member for 57 years) and Friedrich Buxbaum (member for 38 years) that immediately preceded the dismissal of the latter two and presumably took place on March 13, 1938⁵: *„Er bat beide Herren zu sich in die Direktionskanzlei, dankte ihnen für ihre jahrzehntelange vorbildliche Arbeit und teilte ihnen die Versetzung in den Ruhestand mit. (...) Das hört sich heute so an, als sei eine solche Verabschiedung eine selbstverständliche, den primitivsten Gesetzen des Anstands entsprechende Geste; damals jedoch konnte Dank an einen „Nichtarier“ als gröblicher Verstoß*

² Richard Newman, Alma Rosé. Wien 1906/Auschwitz 1944. Eine Biographie, Bonn 2003, p. 408.

³ Letter from Kerber/Directorate of the Vienna State Opera to the BThV, March 18, 1938, AdR, ÖBThV 886/1938.

⁴ Letter from Kerber/Directorate of the Vienna State Opera to the BThV, March 18, 1938, AdR, ÖBThV 886/1938.

⁵ Arnold Rosé's *Vermögensanmeldung* (property notice), see annex! “Am 13. März 1938 bin ich um meine Pensionierung als Konzertmeister der Staatsoper eingekommen. (...)” [“On March 13, 1938 I filed a request for retirement as concertmaster of the State Opera.”], Arisierungsakten (Aryanization files), AdR/VA 30013.



gegen die Richtlinien der Partei angesehen werden und Kerber in die schwierigste Lage bringen.“⁶ [“He asked both of them to come to his office, thanked them for the decades of exemplary work and gave notice of their retirement. Today, this sounds just like the natural way to dismiss your staff, a gesture complying with the most primitive of laws of human decency; at that time, however, thanking ‘non-Aryans’ could be considered a gross violation of the party’s policies and could have put Kerber in a very delicate position.”] Various sources confirm the fact that State Opera director Erwin Kerber did indeed try to maintain a certain degree of “decency and human dignity” (“Anstand und Menschenwürde”) when implementing the regime’s anti-Semitic dogmas. However, his attitude or behavior can in no way be considered “critical of, let alone hostile to the regime” (“kaum (...) regimiekritisch oder gar –feindlich”).⁷ In fact, eager to show obedience, Kerber had complied with the Nazis’ anti-Semitic doctrines without any delay and even before their racist regulations were officially legitimated in Austria – the “Nuremberg Laws” were ‘only’ introduced in Austria on May 20, 1938 (RGB1 I, p. 594). Rosé and Buxbaum’s subsequent applications for retirement can be regarded as the only possible response to the inhuman situation they found themselves in.⁸

Escaping to Great Britain

As regards the Buxbaum family’s escape from the Nazis, the author is lacking precise information.⁹ Research has revealed, however, that Friedrich Buxbaum probably left Vienna around September 1938. It can also be assumed that he did benefit from the fact that, after having completed his studies at the Vienna Conservatory, he had already played as a cello soloist with the Symphony Orchestra in Glasgow/GB.

In his letter to the Ministry of Education of July 21, 1938 Buxbaum requested that his pension entitlement be cumulated (“Kumulierung”) as long as it was not paid out and he was still receiving a salary due to his position as professor at the State Academy (i.e. till September 1, 1938). He was hoping to be granted an exemption from the prohibition of cumulation (“Kumulierungsverbot”), basing his arguments on his medical condition and even sending a

⁶ Otto Strasser, *Und dafür wird man noch bezahlt. Mein Leben mit den Wiener Philharmonikern*, Vienna 1974, p. 146. The National Socialists’ (lack of) culture boosted Otto Strassers’ career: After the ‘Anschluss’ in 1938, Strasser was appointed the new managing director of the Vienna Philharmonic by Wilhelm Jerger, the Philharmonic’s *kommissarischer Leiter*. Clemens Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, Zurich 1992, pp. 460–462; Oliver Ratkolb, *Führertreu und gottbegnadet. Künstlereliten im Dritten Reich*, Vienna 1991, pp. 130–132.

⁷ Thomas Leibnitz, *Am Grat entlang. “Politische” Aspekte der Wiener Staatsoperndirektion Erwin Kerber (1936 – 1940)*, in: Julia Bungardt, Maria Helfgott, Eike Rathgeber, Nikolaus Urbanek, *Wiener Musikgeschichte. Annäherungen – Analysen – Ausblicke. Festschrift für Hartmut Krones*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2009, pp. 596–597.

⁸ Strasser, *Und dafür wird man noch bezahlt* (see footnote⁶), p. 143.

⁹ According to the Municipal and Provincial Archives of Vienna, the historical *Wiener Meldeunterlagen* (residency registration documents) did not contain any information regarding Buxbaum’s (de-)registration. Written information, Vienna, April 22, 2011.



medical certificate annexed to the letter. Since 'leaving' the country was illegal unless the emigrant was ready to pay a large amount of money, Buxbaum probably also attempted to raise the sum required for his departure. The response Buxbaum received consisted in an outright denial of his request and was backed up by anti-Semitic arguments:¹⁰

„Nach h.o. Ansicht ist eine besondere Berücksichtigungswürdigkeit bei Pensionsbeziehern, die der jüdischen Rasse angehören, nicht gegeben und daher in diesen Fällen eine Ausnahme vom Kumulierungsverbot der Bundestheaterpensionsverordnung nicht tunlich.“¹¹ [“the Department finds that the criteria for special consideration concerning pensioners who are of Jewish descent are not met, and therefore, that being the case, exemption from the prohibition of cumulation as imposed by the Bundestheaterpensionsverordnung is not feasible.”]

Buxbaum was then only 'tracked down' again in London already; in a letter to his son in Canada, dated November 7, 1938, Rosé, who was in Vienna, mentioned Buxbaum's miserable professional situation in London and that, after several weeks of looking for work, he was discouraged by the harsh reality of life in exile: *„Bux plant, nach Wien zurückzukehren, weil er zu alt ist, sich in London einen Platz zu sichern.“¹² [“Bux is planning to return to Vienna, for he is too old to find work in London.”]*

However, a biographical portrait of Alma Rosé written by the music critic Richard Newman contains a letter (dated December 1, 1938), in which the author's protagonist has some good news for her brother Alfred concerning Siegfried Buxbaum, close friend of the family and long-time music partner of her father: *„Buxb. hat gestern sein Permit für ständigen Aufenthalt + Erlaubnis zu unterrichten bekommen. Fein nicht?“¹³ [“Yesterday, Buxb. received a permanent residence permit and permission to teach. Nice, isn't it?”]*

Alma Rosé's intention to revive the Rosé Quartet in London, with Buxbaum playing the cello and she herself the second violin, also offered an attractive career prospect. On December 2, 1938 Alma Rosé presented her proposal to Adrian Boult, who welcomed the idea enthusiastically.¹⁴ In a labor market that was quite bleak for musicians, Alma's plan provided a potential lifeline for Buxbaum.

¹⁰ Buxbaum's letter of request & medical certificate, Vienna, July 21, 1938; denied by the Minister of Finance, November 15, 1938, AdR, SThV 2122/38.

¹¹ Letter from the Minister of Finance to the SThV, November 15, 1938, AdR, SThV 2122/38.

¹² Letter from Arnold Rosé to Alfred Rosé, November 7, 1938, Mahler-Rosé Collection, cited in Newman, Alma Rosé (see footnote²), p. 129.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.



Arnold Rosé and Friedrich Buxbaum: Musical Activities in London¹⁵

The re-established "Rosé Quartet" became the most important mainstay of Rosé and Buxbaum's musical lives in London exile; there they played alongside the two Englishmen Ernest Tomlinson (viola) and, after Alma Rosé had been trapped in the Netherlands in November 1939, Walter Price (second violin). The members of the group changed several times and Buxbaum's part was sometimes taken over by the cellist May Mukle. The Quartet's repertoire mainly comprised works of the *Wiener Klassik* (Viennese classical era) and Romanticism and, in particular, works by Haydn, Mozart, Dittersdorf, Beethoven, Brahms and Schumann. Shostakovich's String Quartet No 1 in C major (Op. 49) was an exception to this practice and was included in the program of December 3, 1941 for example. The Quartet regularly performed in the framework of the Lunch-Time-Concerts (held only on weekdays) at the National Gallery, which, once emptied of its paintings, could then be used for that purpose. The musicians only received reduced remunerations, the rest of which went to the "Musicians' Benevolent Fund". The pianist Myra Hess, with her ambition to donate the concerts' proceeds in order to support jobless musicians, was the driving force behind this highly successful project. On July 23, 1943, already the 1,000th concert took place and, up to that point, about 450,000 people had purchased a ticket. All in all, the Rosé Quartet held 14 concerts at the National Gallery; sometimes, however, there were only three of its members: On November 6, 1940 and on November 18, 1943, for instance, it was just Rosé, Buxbaum and Myra Hess who performed as a trio. On both occasions, they included the Piano Trio (Op. 8) by Brahms in their repertoire.¹⁶ The concerts held at Wigmore Hall on the occasion of the Vienna Philharmonic's 100th anniversary in 1942 were another musical highlight during their time in exile. The orchestra's centennial in Vienna, though, was sharply criticized and commented on with sarcasm in the British immigrants' magazine "Zeitspiegel": *„Wie sollten die Philharmoniker ihre nationale Mission erfüllen können, wenn sie – Jahr ihres hundertjährigen Bestandes – aus ihrer eigenen glanzvollen Geschichte die vielleicht glänzendste Epoche streichen, ja auslöschen müssen, die Epoche Gustav Mahlers? Wenn sie auslöschen müssen den Namen des letzten Exekutors des Mahlerschen Erbes, Brunno (sic!) Walter? Wenn sie nicht von dem Meister empfangen dürfen, der ihre letzte Periode am reichsten befruchtet hat – Toscanini? Wenn sie vor einem Parkett von S.S.-Uniformen und sadistischen Fratzen zum Wohlgefallen von Massenmördern Kunst exerzieren müssen?“*¹⁷

¹⁵ Based on information provided by several *Exilzeitschriften* (immigrants' magazines) and other sources, the author created an overview of the concerts performed by Rosé and Buxbaum in exile. For further information see: Bernadette Mayrhofer, "Die Angelegenheit des Judenabbaus geht jetzt ganz ruhig vor sich". Vertreibung von Wiener Philharmonikern nach 1938 und ihr Leben im Exil. Thesis, Vienna, 2005, pp. 149-150.

¹⁶ Raab Hansen, NS-verfolgte Musiker in England. Spuren deutscher und österreichischer Flüchtlinge in der britischen Musikkultur. Hamburg 1996, pp. 130-234.

¹⁷ Jenö Kostmann, Philharmonische Meditationen. Zum 100. Geburtstag des Wiener Symphonieorchesters, in: Zeitspiegel, no. 15, Nov. 4, 1942, p. 9, DÖW-Sig. 3001.



[“How were the Philharmonic supposed to fulfill their national mission if – at their 100th anniversary - they have had to put aside and even erase from their own splendid history perhaps the most shining of their eras, the era of Gustav Mahler? If they have to erase the name of the last executor of Mahler’s heritage, Bruno Walter? If they cannot be led by the master who has most enriched their last seasons - Toscanini? If they have to perform their music like drilling soldiers before a parquet of SS uniforms and sadistic faces, pleasing a bunch of mass murderers?”] The concerts of the ‘rival event’ taking place in London on May 4, May 28 and June 11 included performances by the Rosé Quartet and were a huge success.¹⁸

On the occasion of Rosé’s 80th birthday (Oct. 24), “The Anglo-Austrian Music Society” organized a major concert at Wigmore Hall on October 27, 1943, held by the Rosé Quartet (Buxbaum, Tomlinson and Jekel) and the pianist Myra Hess.¹⁹ Afterwards, Rosé wrote a letter to Alfred, telling him about the concert’s success and expressing his enthusiasm about the „total ausverkaufte[n] Saal und unaufhörliche[n] Ovationen“ [“completely sold out concert and endless standing ovations”]. Furthermore, he mentioned that the „Times, Daily Telegraph & andere News haben Artikel gebracht. Wurde sehr commentiert. Nach dem Concert fand im Savoy Hotel ein supper [sic!] mir zu Ehren statt, gegeben von Anglo-Austrian Music Society, am 29th ein lunch mit Frankenstein als Präsident, der einen langen toast [sic!] auf mich hielt. Sehr ehrend und herzlich.“²⁰ [“The Times, Daily Telegraph and other newspapers published a number of articles about the concert. The media attention was enormous. After the concert, there was a supper in my honor at the Savoy Hotel organized by the Anglo-Austrian Music Society. On the 29th, there was a lunch hosted by Frankenstein who proposed a long toast to me. Very honoring and cordial.”]

Buxbaum as the Vienna Philharmonic’s ‘Model Emigrant’

Evidence that Buxbaum was very well informed about the situation in Vienna shortly after the war ended is provided by several sources of the Mahler-Rosé Collection. In fact, while being in exile in London, it was Buxbaum who told Arnold Rosé, former concertmaster with the Philharmonic, of the murder of two former colleagues of theirs as well as of the numerous Nazis who were still active in the Orchestra. Rosé himself was emotionally shattered by the death of his beloved daughter Alma, who had been killed in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Buxbaum’s terrible news was the last straw then: On February 12, 1946 – six months before he died – Rosé wrote a letter to his son Alfred, expressing his deep disillusionment:

¹⁸ Newman, Alma Rosé (see footnote²), pp. 233-234; See also: Zeitspiegel no. 25, 7; no. 15, 9; no. 20, 9; 21, 7; 23, 7; DÖW-Sig. 3001; “Times”, Saturday, May 30, 1942; program flyer of the Free Austrian Movement, copy provided by Annemarie Kofler.

¹⁹ Copy of the invitation from the “Anglo-Austrian Music Society”, courtesy of Annemarie Kofler.

²⁰ Letter from Rosé to his son Alfred, October 30, 1943, Newman, Alma Rosé (see footnote²), p. 349.



„Ich bin froh, daß ich meinen Beruf beendet habe. Genug! [...] Was vor mir steht, ist – nichts. Keine Hoffnung. [...] Nur der Mensch wächst nicht mehr.“²¹ [“I am glad that I have retired. Enough! What is ahead of me is – nothing. No hope. [...] Only the person has stopped growing.”]

During the tense political period immediately following the end of the war, the memories of those expelled from the Vienna Philharmonic were (still) fresh in people’s minds. In October 1946, Buxbaum, as well as other fellow musicians who had been dismissed from the Orchestra, received a letter from the Philharmonic, officially inviting him *„in die Reihen der Wiener Philharmoniker zurückzukehren und den Platz wieder einzunehmen, von dem Sie seinerzeit widerrechtlich vertrieben wurden“* [“to come back and join the members of the Vienna Philharmonic, and then return to the seat you were unlawfully driven away from a few years ago”]. He was asked to decide as soon as possible whether he wanted to return to the ranks of the Orchestra (*„Ihren diesbezüglichen Entschluß ehebaldigst bekannt(zu)geben“*). Finally, wishing to make amends, the hope was expressed *„daß Sie uns Gelegenheit geben, einen kleinen Teil des verübten Unrechts wieder gutmachen zu können“²²* [“that you will give us the opportunity to set right at least a small portion of the wrongs that were done to you”]. And indeed, the invitation had an enormous effect: In Buxbaum’s response, there was not the slightest sign of criticism; on the contrary, he was openly delighted, very responsive and showed some constructive interest in the Philharmonic’s offer to return to Vienna and resume his position with the orchestra.

„Liebe Freunde, [Absatz] Welche Freude mir Ihre [sic!] freundliche und ehrende Einladung verursachte, können Sie sich ungefähr vorstellen. Dazu kommt noch dass das Heimats- und Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl verstärkt wurde. Getrübt wird die Freude durch die Nachrichten über die Zustände in der [sic!] sich unser liebes Wien zurzeit noch befindet. Mit Diesem [sic!] Orchester so lang es menschenmöglich ist weiter zu arbeiten ist eine verlockende Aufgabe, nur wäre es mir leichter einen Entschluss zu fassen, wüsste ich wie sich meine Verhältnisse gestalten würden. [Absatz] Ich ersuche daher das Comitee [sic!] mir über die Lebens- und Einkommensverhältnisse, Wohnungs- und Ernährungsfrage nähere Einzelheiten mitzuteilen. Auch bitte ich Sie mir zu sagen, zu welcher Zeit Sie mein Kommen wünschen. Für mich wäre die wünschenswerteste Jahreszeit das Frühjahr. [Absatz] Mit herzlichsten collegialen Grüßen S. Friedrich Buxbaum“²³ [“Dear friends, you can probably imagine what a joy it was for me to read your friendly and honoring invitation. Moreover, it caused me to get a greater sense of home

²¹ Letter from Rosé to his son Alfred, February 12, 1946, Mahler-Rosé Collection, cited in: *ibid.* p. 406.

²² Invitation from the Vienna Philharmonic addressed to Josef Geringer, Vienna, Oct. 16, 1946, HAdWPh, Josef Geringer, no. 161, correspondence with Ms. Drukker; the letters of reply suggest that Buxbaum probably received the same invitation as his colleague, i.e. both of them were asked to join the Orchestra.

²³ Letter from Friedrich Buxbaum to the Committee of the Vienna Philharmonic, London, Nov. 11, 1946, HAdWPh, Friedrich Buxbaum, no. 75, *Briefe B/43-006*.



and belonging. Still, the joy I feel is overshadowed by the news of the situation our lovely city of Vienna is currently dealing with. To work with this orchestra as long as humanly possible is a tempting task indeed, although it would be easier for me to make a decision if I had knowledge of the factual conditions concerning my position. I would therefore ask the Committee to provide further details regarding general living conditions, remuneration, accommodation and subsistence. I would be grateful if you could also tell me when exactly you wish for me to arrive. Personally, I would prefer spring of all seasons. With kind regards, S. Friedrich Buxbaum”]

The author has no knowledge of any direct response on the part of the Vienna Philharmonic to Buxbaum’s letter in which he stated that he would be pleased to take the orchestra up on its offer and return to Vienna in the spring of 1947. It is a fact, however, that on May 8, 1947, the Philharmonic’s management held a meeting in which it discussed Buxbaum’s difficult situation in London and eventually came to the decision to support the musician by offering him a fixed-term position in the State Opera (1 year) at the end of which he would be entitled to retire and receive full pension, i.e. *„ein Ehrenjahr in der Oper zuzubilligen, damit er nach Ablauf dieser Frist mit vollen Bezügen in Pension gehen kann“*.²⁴ Buxbaum never returned to Vienna.

One of the very rare examples of how the expelled members of the Philharmonic were received is given by the internally published comprehensive brochure *„Die Wiener Philharmoniker – ein Stück Weltgeschichte. Edinburgh-London 1947“* on the Vienna Philharmonic’s tour in Great Britain in September 1947.²⁵ As far as foreign policy was concerned, the tour would not have been possible if it had not been for the mediating role of the two prominent emigrants Bruno Walter (conductor) and Rudolf Bing (music manager).²⁶ The orchestra’s goodwill tour was to improve Austria’s reputation, repair the damages caused by the country’s negative public image and, last but not least, rehabilitate the orchestra itself at an international level. Buxbaum, who had been officially invited by the Vienna Philharmonic to take part in their Edinburgh and London concerts,²⁷ was asked in Edinburgh by interim chairman Alfred Boskovsky to resume his former position with the orchestra, i.e.

²⁴ Vienna Philharmonic Association, minutes of the board meeting of May 8, 1947, HAdWPh.

²⁵ Wiener Philharmoniker (Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra), *Die Wiener Philharmoniker – ein Stück Weltgeschichte, Edinburgh-London 1947, Vienna 1947*, p. 3.

²⁶ When the British Parliament posed the critical question of why the Orchestra was allowed to hold concerts in Great Britain when some of its members were in some way affiliated with the Nazi regime, Prime Minister Attlee replied: „Der Impresario Rudolf Bing und der Dirigent Bruno Walter, beide gewesene Flüchtlinge der deutschen Machthaber, seien Initiatoren des Unternehmens, weshalb kein Grund bestehe, sich weniger tolerant zu verhalten als diese.“ [“*Since the event was initiated by the impresario Rudolf Bing and the conductor Bruno Walter, both of whom fled from the German regime, there is no reason to show less tolerance than they do.*”]; In: Hugo Burghauser, *Philharmonische Begegnungen. Erinnerungen eines Wiener Philharmonikers*, p. 174.

²⁷ HAdWPh, Friedrich Buxbaum, no. 75, *Briefe B/43*.



„seinen alten Platz im Orchester einzunehmen“.²⁸ The Philharmonic's 1947 publication described Buxbaum's reunion with the orchestra in an effusively sweet and, what is more, marketing-effective way – again seeking to enhance its image: „Hier (in Edinburgh, author's note) trafen wir nach zehnjähriger Trennung unseren verehrten Solocellisten Professor Buxbaum. Er war trotz seiner 78 Jahre unverändert, sah glänzend aus und sein unverwüstlicher Humor war der gleiche geblieben. (...)“²⁹ [“After having been separated for ten years, we finally met our esteemed cello soloist, Professor Buxbaum, here in Edinburgh. Even at the age of 78, he seemed unchanged, looked great and his indestructible sense of humor was still the same.”] A few days later, on his 78th birthday on September 26, 1947 Buxbaum is said to have been surprised by all of the orchestra's cellists, who, according to the Philharmonic's brochure, had all been his students once: „vom Jüngsten bis zum Ältesten alle seine Schüler“. As a birthday present he was handed the “Nicolai Silver Medal”, which commemorates the Philharmonic's founder, Otto Nicolai. Thereupon, praising the Vienna Philharmonic and the good old times, Buxbaum made an enthusiastic speech which was also printed in the orchestra's 1947 publication. In his speech, the musician suggested that his former colleagues stay out of politics – a very telling advice that is said to have been given originally by Furtwängler: „Bleiben Sie so wie Sie sind und bleiben Sie der Politik ferne. Ich danke...“³⁰

However, there is a striking contrast between that speech and the evidence provided by another source, which bears witness to the ironic and clever rhetoric Buxbaum was well known for. During an interview by Richard Newman in New York 1984, Burghauser made mention of Buxbaum's ironic remarks in London 1947. According to Burghauser, he had welcomed his former colleagues, saying: „Liebe Freunde, ich bin so glücklich, dass ich wieder bei euch sein darf. Ich hab' euch stimmen hören. Es klang wunderbar rein. Ganz judenrein.“³¹ [“My good friends, it's so good to see you again. I heard you tune your instruments. It sounded miraculously pure. There were no flaws, there were no Jews.”]

The Tragic End of Friedrich Buxbaum

Things were completely different only one year later. The Nazis' star conductor with the Vienna Philharmonic, Wilhelm Furtwängler, who had played a leading role between 1938 and 1945, and in particular on the orchestra's tours, resumed his dominating position as the

²⁸ WPh, WPh – ein Stück Weltgeschichte (see footnote²⁵), p. 6.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. For further information regarding the concept of the Philharmonic's 'apolitical nature' cf. Fritz Trümpi, Politisierte Orchester. Die Wiener Philharmoniker und das Berliner Philharmonische Orchester im Nationalsozialismus, Cologne, 2011. Trümpi concluded that it was precisely this voluntary political absence that facilitated the regime's political encroachment on the Orchestra. Moreover, he found that, by explicitly refraining from taking any political stance in public, it created an essential element of what was to become a successfully practised adaptation strategy.

³¹ Newman, Alma Rosé (see footnote²), p. 408.



Philharmonic's conductor from November 15/16, 1947, i.e. as soon as he had been given permission to work again.³² The fact that a number of the Orchestra's members had in some way supported the Nazi regime and were still 'rehabilitated' in order to go on tour, must have been an affront to Buxbaum. *„Hatten sich Paul Paray und Josef Krips im Jahre 1947 mit Substituten begnügt, welche an die Stelle der ‚gesperrten‘ Mitglieder traten, so kam diese Lösung für Konzerte mit Furtwängler nicht in Frage.“*³³ In his position *„bildete (Furtwängler) in sämtlichen künstlerischen Fragen eine freiwillig anerkannte letzte Instanz“*³⁴ [“While, in 1947, Paul Paray and Josef Krips had to content themselves with substitutes who replaced the ‘suspended’ members, such a solution was not an option for concerts led by Furtwängler. In his position, he was indeed commonly accepted as the ultimate authority with respect to any artistic matters.”] This turned out to be fatal for Buxbaum's career when, in the autumn of 1948, Furtwängler interfered in the orchestra's line-up, asking him not to take part in the London concert any longer. Before that, Buxbaum had been very excited about the Vienna Philharmonic's invitation to be part of the concert: *„Ihrer [!] Aufforderung bei den Concerten der Wr. Philharmoniker in London mitzuwirken, werde ich natürlich mit grosser Freude nachkommen. Ein Sonnenstrahl auch im musikalisch nebligem [!] London.“*³⁵ [I am very pleased about your offer and I am looking forward to taking part in the Vienna Philharmonic's London concerts. Now I can actually see a silver lining on an otherwise very cloudy London (music) horizon.”] However, Buxbaum's joy was soon to be over. In a 'dialogue' with Furtwängler in London, Buxbaum was told that any further involvement of his in the orchestra's concerts was unwanted. Furtwängler's decision was probably based on the fact that Buxbaum, being 79 years old, suffered from a decline in his fine motor skills, i.e. a tremor due to his advanced age.³⁶ Only one day later, on October 1, 1948, the rejected musician wrote a letter to Rudolf Hanzl, chairman of the Philharmonic, describing the incident with Furtwängler, which he perceived as a very painful and humiliating rejection of his artistic skills: *„Sehr verehrter Herr Vorstand, [Absatz] Es tut mir aufrichtig leid Sie und das Orchester in eine unangenehme Situation gebracht zu haben, hervorgerufen durch Ihre [sic!] liebenswürdige und mich erfreuende Einladung zu den Concerten in London, durch die ich die Versicherung bestätigt erhielt, dass das Orchester Vertrauen zu meinen Leistungen, ihrer [sic!] würdig, hatte. [Absatz] Jedoch nach einer Aussprache mit Dr. Furtwängler am gestrigen Abend, hatten [sic!] in mir den Entschluss zur Reife gebracht meine [sic!] weitere Mitwirkung bei den Concerten zu entsagen, da ich nach seinen Meinungen ein Fehler in dem schönen Gewebe dieses herrlichen Orchesters zu sein scheine. [Absatz] Mit den herzlichsten Grüßen an Sie und dem [sic!] Orchester, und nur*

³² Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige* (see footnote⁶), p. 518.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 519.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 528.

³⁵ Letter from Buxbaum to Rudolf Hanzl, chair of the Vienna Philharmonic; London, Aug. 15, 1948, HAdWPh, *Briefe Buxbaum*, 43-002.

³⁶ This is what the author was told by Prof. Dr. Clemens Hellsberg in Vienna on Feb. 19, 2013.



*die besten Wünsche für die Zukunft. Ihr ergebener Friedrich Buxbaum*³⁷ [“Mr. Chairman, I am truly sorry for having placed you and the whole Orchestra in an uncomfortable situation; a situation, which has been caused originally by your friendly and extremely attractive invitation to the London concerts that in fact reassured me of the Orchestra’s confidence in my artistic skills, deeming them worthy of your excellence. However, after my conversation with Dr. Furtwängler yesterday evening, I concluded that, in his opinion, I seem to be only a flaw in the Orchestra’s perfect fabric and that I will therefore renounce all forms of involvement in its concerts. With kind regards and only the best wishes for you and the future of the Orchestra, Yours sincerely, Friedrich Buxbaum”]

The sad result of the Philharmonic’s decision, recorded on an index card kept in the Vienna Philharmonic archives: „Die Absage Furtwänglers hat Buxbaum so tief getroffen, daß er, als er am nächsten Tag doch noch zur Probe fahren wollte, unterwegs einem Herzschlag erlag. Er war damals 79 Jahre alt”³⁸ [“Being rejected by Furtwängler hurt Buxbaum so much that, after having decided to attend the rehearsal after all, he had a heart attack and died on the way. He was 79 years old.”]

Friedrich Buxbaum died in exile in London on October 2, 1948. At his funeral, the chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, Rudolf Hanzl, gave a speech; a Philharmonic Quartet provided the musical framework.³⁹ A few days later, both Buxbaum’s widow and his son expressed their deep gratitude for the dignified condolences they had received by the Philharmonic.⁴⁰

However, when Buxbaum’s wife Käthe asked to be granted a widow’s pension, the family’s already ambivalent relationship to the Vienna Philharmonic, the State Opera and the Republic of Austria was even further destabilized. Irrespective of the fact that her late husband had accumulated a total of 38 years of service with the Vienna Philharmonic and 43 pensionable years with the State Opera Orchestra, she received a series of negative decisions and was exposed to a number of demoralizing delaying tactics. Almost six and a half years later, and only through the intervention of Bruno Walter and the support of Hermann Obermeyer, the Philharmonic’s new chairman, did she manage to have her right to a pension enforced.⁴¹

³⁷ Letter from Buxbaum to Rudolf Hanzl, chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic; London, Oct. 1, 1948, HAdWPh, *Briefe Buxbaum*, 43-003.

³⁸ HAdWPh, Friedrich Buxbaum, no. 75, note on an index card.

³⁹ Information on Buxbaum, compiled by HAdWPh/Dr. Silvia Kargl (archivist).

⁴⁰ Letter from Käthe Buxbaum, London, Oct. 6, 1948 & letter from Buxbaum’s son, London, Oct. 12, 1948 to the Philharmonic’s chairman, HAdWPh, *Briefe Buxbaum*, 43-004/005.

⁴¹ Oliver Rathkolb, Bruno Walter und die Wiener Philharmoniker, in: Primus-Heinz Kucher, Johannes F. Evelein, Helga Schreckenberger, *Erste Briefe/First Letters aus dem Exil 1945 – 1950. (Un)mögliche Gespräche. Fallbeispiele des literarischen und künstlerischen Exils*, Munich 2011, p. 261.



The story of Friedrich Buxbaum clearly reflects the pain, but also other contradictory sentiments, the musicians must have felt after their expulsion from their precious orchestra – an orchestra they had been loyal to throughout their lives and that had become an integral part of their identities. Furthermore, the fact that this dark side of history was suppressed and kept under wraps in public discussion by both the Vienna Philharmonic and the Republic of Austria, and especially after 1947, must have caused the expelled members of the orchestra to build up an insoluble inner conflict.

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