



Bernadette Mayrhofer

Daniel Falk (Violin II)

Born January 17, 1898, in Stanislau, Galicia, died December 15, 1990, in New York

Joined the Vienna State Opera Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic on Sept. 1, 1920, compulsory suspension due to his Jewish roots on Mar. 23, 1938;

Academic High School; 1914/15 – 1915/16 and 1918/19 – 1919/20 study of the violin at the Imperial Academy of Music in Vienna, his teacher was Julius Stwertka (concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic), 1920 completion with diploma;

1918/19 – 1920/21 study of jurisprudence at the law school of the University of Vienna, July 9, 1924, promotion to Doktor juris;

Escaped by airplane to Switzerland on Sept. 8, 1938, stayed in Switzerland until Jan. 14, 1940, on Jan. 15, 1940 steamship 'Manhattan' from Genoa, Italy to New York/USA as part of the Polish immigration quota, arrival in New York on Jan. 24, 1940;

In Switzerland and the USA no professional activity until November 1940 (no work permit), support from refugee funds, from December 1940 - 1943 irregular and underpaid engagements in Houston, Texas (five months), at the Broadway Theater in New York, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Kansas City, Missouri; from 1943 until at least 1965 (but probably until 1968) member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra New York, initially also supplemental engagements as part of the Chautauqua Festival in New York and at the City Center Opera Company, also in New York.

Received American citizenship on June 18, 1945; his family – mother, both brothers, both uncles and the majority of his other relatives - were murdered by the Nazis (his father died in 1915), Falk remained unmarried his entire life;

For sources see footnote¹



Daniel Falk

¹ Correspondence Daniel Falk with Karl Maurer (1946), Hugo Burghauser (probably 1973) and Otto Strasser (1987/88), HAdWPh, Letters F/1; Letter from Daniel Falk to the chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, Gottfried von Freiberg (1946), HAdWPh, Letters F/13a, Nr. 2.; Information on Daniel Falk compiled by Dr. Silvia Kargl, Historical



*"Since leaving Vienna I have experienced years of wandering and the tragic fate of losing my entire family - mother, brothers and all other relatives - in the concentration camps and gas chambers, as well as years of becoming acquainted with a highly interesting new country."*²

Daniel Falk in a letter to Gottfried Freiberg, chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, New York, December 19, 1946;

Daniel Falk grew up in a family in which education was highly valued and encouraged. Despite difficult political circumstances - the Falk family fled the Russian army from Stanislawów (now called Ivano-Frankivsk) in Galicia to Vienna during World War I in 1914 – Falk and the other members of his family followed impressive educational paths. Daniel Falk's father had a master's degree in Pharmacy and worked as a pharmacist; his brother Isidor had a doctor's degree while his second brother, Siegmund, was an engineer. Two of his uncles were lawyers. Daniel Falk himself was considered to be a child prodigy in chess between the ages of 4½ and 7½ . After completing the academic high school in Vienna, Falk attended the Music Academy in Vienna beginning in the academic year 1914/15. Beginning in the winter semester of 1918/19 until the winter semester of 1920/21, he also studied jurisprudence at the law school of the University of Vienna, where he was promoted to *Doktor juris* on July 9, 1924. Beginning September 1, 1920, he was an orchestral musician with the Vienna State Opera and the Vienna Philharmonic. It is not known whether or not Falk ever intended to use his legal studies professionally.³

Expulsion from the Orchestra – Escape from Vienna

"Destination: all the cities of the world", wrote Daniel Falk in his passport application on August 25, 1938, in Vienna.⁴

After more than 17 years of service at the Vienna State Opera and the Vienna Philharmonic, Daniel Falk was informed in writing on March 23, 1938, of his compulsory suspension. *"The administration of the Vienna State Opera informs you herewith of your immediate suspension*

Archives of the Vienna Philharmonic; IKG Matriken/Database, among others Social Security Death Index, Online Network ancestry.com, Department of Matters of Restitution, provided by Mag.^a Sabine Loitfellner, Jewish Community Vienna (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien); Historical residency records for Daniel Falk, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv; Data sheet on Daniel Falk, study at the Imperial Academy of Music in Vienna, provided by Dr. Lynne Heller, Archives of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna; data entry form of Daniel Falk, Vienna, June 3, 1938, AdR, SThV 3031/38; compensation files on Daniel Falk, Zahl B34.349/8, AdR – Hilfsfonds; Information on Daniel Falk's studies at the University of Vienna, Archives of the University of Vienna, E-mail information on Apr. 16, 2013;

² Letter to Gottfried Freiberg, chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, New York, Dec. 19, 1946, (see footnote 1).

³ Letter to Otto Strasser, NY, Oct. 23, 1987; Postcard from D. Falk to Burghauser, Dec. 20, probably 1973 (see footnote 1); Information on Daniel Falk's study (see footnote 1).

⁴ "Reisepaß-Anweisung", Vienna, Aug. 25, 1938, compensation files (see footnote 1).



*until further notice. With German Greeting, Administration of the Vienna State Opera.*⁵ According to the racist Nazi terminology, Falk was considered to be "fully Jewish". It can be assumed that Falk recognized the potential danger early on and began looking at options for escaping. On June 24, 1938, he had employer references issued to him by the directorate of the State Opera and the Salzburg Festival.⁶ In a note in his file on August 12, the accounting department of the State Theater Administration confirmed Daniel Falk's forced retirement effective August 31, 1938.⁷ As Falk's plans for escape became more concrete, he applied at the State Theater Administration for a one time severance payment as well as reimbursement of his pension contributions because he was "*leaving German territory at the beginning of September for an engagement in America*" and had high travel costs to pay.⁸ The State Theater Administration supported Falk in his request for a severance payment. The official in the State Theater Administration responsible for pensions, Dr. Juch, personally spoke with the State Commissioner in the Reich governorship on behalf of Falk's request for a severance payment.⁹ The severance payment – the equivalent of three times his last monthly salary – was granted, whereas the reimbursement of his pension contributions was denied.¹⁰ Following the severance payment from the State Theater Administration, the Vienna Philharmonic made a payment in the amount of 336 RM to Daniel Falk on March 9, 1939.¹¹ How Falk received this money is unclear, as by this point he had already left the country. It is also unclear what happened with Falk's securities (valued at 5000 RM) and savings deposits (valued at 9000 RM) when Falk escaped Austria in September 1938.¹² Considering the expulsion practices of the National Socialistic regime it is safe to assume that in the course of his escape from Austria, Falk lost his entire savings to the Nazis.

Daniel Falk made an application for a passport at the district police headquarters of the inner city of Vienna on August 25, 1938. As his destination he wrote "*all the cities of the world*".¹³

Intermediate Stop in Switzerland

Daniel Falk was 40 years old, unmarried and without children, when he "*left Vienna on September 8, 1938, at 2 PM in a small Swiss Air plane for 22 persons into an uncertain future.*"

⁵ Letter of the Directorate of the State Opera to Dr. Daniel Falk, Opernring 9, I, Wien, on Mar. 23, 1938, AdR, Directorate of the State Opera 367/1938.

⁶ Employer references, Directorate of the State Opera and the Salzburg Festival, June 24, 1938, Directorate of the State Opera 367/1938.

⁷ Pension form Daniel Falk, Accounting Office of the State Theater Administration (SThV), Aug. 12, 1938, SThV 3031/38.

⁸ Severance pay request of Falk, SThV, Karton "Judenakte 1939 – 1940", SThV 3031/38.

⁹ Official memo of the State Commissioner to the Reich governor, Sept. 3, 1938, *ibid.*; List of personnel of the SThV, Transfer of personnel list on Oct. 11, 1938 to State secretary Kajetan Mühlmann and Gauleiter Odilo Globocnik, Signature Alfred Eckmann, Director of the SThV, AdR, SThV 3459/38.

¹⁰ Pension form Daniel Falk, Accounting Office of the SThV, August 12, 1938, SThV 3031/38.

¹¹ Information on Daniel Falk, compiled by HAdWPh/Dr. Silvia Kargl (Archivist).

¹² Statement of Assets of Daniel Falk, Vienna, July 15, 1938, AdR, VA-46906.

¹³ „Reisepaß-Anweisung“, August 25, 1938, Compensation files (see footnote 1).



*The borders were closed two days later.*¹⁴ Despite the fact that since April 1, 1938, a visa had been required of all former Austrian citizens who wished to enter Switzerland, and entry for refugees with an Austrian passport was particularly problematic¹⁵, Falk was able to enter Switzerland without a visa. He was already in possession of a German passport, thus for him the regulations regarding entry of foreigners for citizens of the German Reich were applied. Still, he was very fortunate in being able to enter the country. The Swiss immigration authorities were becoming increasingly strict, as illustrated by a circulatory letter of September 7, 1938, with the instructions *"that refugees without a visa, particularly those who are Jews or very probably Jews, are to be turned away, and in their passports the comment 'rejected' ('refoulé') is to be entered.*"¹⁶

Falk landed at the airport at Dübendorf, Switzerland on September 8, 1938. Almost exactly 50 years later he wrote a letter from his American exile to the Vienna Philharmonic and its former chairman Otto Strasser, that *"unknown Swiss life-savers (...) deposited 50,000 Swiss Francs – in order for me to stay in Switzerland as an intermediate stop on my way to the USA (I had to stay there for 15 months)".*¹⁷ Who these life-savers were, why they provided assistance to Falk and how this assistance was accomplished is not known to the author. The record is also unclear in regard to Daniel Falk's 15-month stay in Switzerland, before he was able to continue on to New York in January 1940. In his application for compensation by the Republic of Austria of September 10, 1963, Falk stated that while in Switzerland he had not practiced any profession and lived off of the support of the refugee fund.¹⁸ Refugees in Switzerland were forbidden to work and the state provided no financial support for the maintenance of those refugees who had no political status, as was the case with most of the Jewish emigrants.

In some cantons, reception centers and transit camps were set up, which were administered by various charitable agencies. The main financial burden was shouldered by the Swiss Jewish Communities. The Swiss federal government required that the Swiss Jews pay the costs of the refugee assistance.¹⁹ According to Falk's own statements, he apparently spent the entire 15

¹⁴ Letter to Otto Strasser, NY, June 12, 1988, (see footnote 1).

¹⁵ A visa requirement for Austrian passports was enacted by the Swiss Parliament on March 28, 1938. The massive increase in the number of refugees illegally entering the country caused a very restrictive directive on August 19, 1938. Border controls were increased and all illegal refugees and all Austrian passport holders without a visa for Switzerland were to be rejected. Compare the Swiss Independent Commission - Zweiter Weltkrieg, Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus, Bern 1999, 78f.

¹⁶ *ibid.* 79.

¹⁷ Letter to Otto Strasser, NY, Sept. 10, 1988 (see footnote 1).

¹⁸ Compensation files (see footnote 1).

¹⁹ Gerhard Wanner, Flüchtlinge und Grenzverhältnisse in Vorarlberg 1938 – 1944. Einreise- und Transitland Schweiz, Rheticus Vierteljahresschrift der Rheticus-Gesellschaft 1998, Heft 3/4, 227 – 271, http://www.erinnern.at/bundeslaender/oesterreich/e_bibliothek/seminarbibliotheken-zentrale-seminare/an-der-grenze/229_Gerhard_Wanner.pdf.

month transitory stay in the capital, Zurich. The exact circumstances of Falk's living situation as well as the question of how he spent his days in Switzerland have yet to be determined.

Based on an initiative of the Swiss government, Nazi Germany and Switzerland agreed on September 29, 1938, to the stigmatizing and degrading practice of the German authorities marking passports held by Jews. When Daniel Falk had to extend his passport on August 17, 1939, in Switzerland, the first page was stamped with an oversized 'J' by the German General Consulate in Zurich.²⁰

Switzerland considered itself primarily to be a transit country. Only political refugees were allowed to stay in the country for longer periods of time. Those individuals who were considered by the Nuremberg racial laws to be "not Aryan" were not included in this category. The overwhelming majority of refugees were forced to leave Switzerland after as short a time as possible.²¹ Thus, being not recognized as a political refugee, Daniel Falk was only tolerated in Switzerland for a short period of time. On December 18, 1939, Falk's application for an entry visa for the USA was approved by the American consulate in Zurich. His birthplace in Stanislau, Poland was probably responsible for his being included in the Polish immigrant quota. Falk received a transit visa for Italy on January 9, 1940, from the Italian consulate in Zurich. On January 14th he crossed the border from Switzerland to Italy and on the next day, January 15, 1940, the steamship 'Manhattan' lifted anchor in the harbor in Genoa. One week later, on January 24, 1940, Daniel Falk arrived in New York.²²

Exile in the USA

Professional Situation

"The earliest period, the first four years in the US was the most difficult time in my life. Poorly paid seasonal engagements of 4-5 months duration; at first in Houston Texas, then in Kansas City with Karl Krüger, who had conducted us one time successfully in Vienna, then in Pittsburgh under Fritz Reiner (tremendous); everywhere I was in competition with young violinists until I got to the Metropolitan Opera, where Wittels and Geringer had already been for a year. While I was looking for something stabile the news came that my entire family - mother, both brothers, uncles (two lawyers) - had been killed."²³

Details about the first difficult months of Daniel Falk's exile in New York are not known. It is clear that for at least six months Falk was prohibited from practicing his profession, because the American Federation of Musicians required a six-month residency for orchestral

²⁰ German passport of Daniel Falk, Nr. 12948, issued on Aug. 27, 1938, compensation files (see footnote 1).

²¹ Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland – World War II, (see footnote 1) 61.

²² German passport of Daniel Falk, Nr. 12948, issued on Aug. 27, 1938, compensation files (see footnote 1). Passenger List, <http://search.ancestry.de/search/db.aspx?dbid=1355>.

²³ Letter to Otto Strasser, New York, Mar. 14, – Postal stamp Mar. 13, – 1987, (see footnote 1).



musicians. According to information given by Falk, he did not practice any profession after his arrival in New York on January 24, 1940, and lived from the support of the Refugee Fund.²⁴ As a professional orchestral musician and long time member of the Vienna Philharmonic it was possible for him to find engagements in the USA - although at the beginning these were accompanied by major physical and psychological strains. *"After my first job in Houston, Texas (four three-hour rehearsals for the 'Fledermaus' overture) I went back to New York (three day bus trip with two steamer trunks-) and was glad to get at job after six weeks at the Broadway Theater. I played the 'Merry Widow' in the summer months eight times a week (with two matinees on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 2 bis 5, and 8-11 in the evenings with Kiepura and Martha Eggerth – and Robert Stolz. After three months I thought I would go crazy. In the meanwhile, I taught myself English by finding newspapers in Central Park and studying them with my Langenscheidt dictionary on a park bench."*²⁵

In 1943 Falk performed a successful audition at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where his Vienna Philharmonic colleagues Hugo Burghauser, Ludwig Wittels and Josef Geringer were already playing in the orchestra. His professional situation stabilized, but the contracts were not guaranteed from year to year: *"Every year there was a conference of the conductors on March 15th, which decided between life and death"*.²⁶

In addition, the Metropolitan Opera season was only 16 weeks long during the war, with a couple of weeks of touring tacked on. The musicians were forced to find additional engagements in the long breaks to bridge the gaps. We know that beginning in 1944, in addition to his job at the Met, Falk took part in the annual Chautauqua Festival in New York and played with the New York "City Center Opera Company".²⁷ Only in 1966 was the season at the Met expanded to cover nearly the entire year.²⁸ Daniel Falk remained for 25 years at the Met in New York. After leaving the Met he had no claim to a pension, because a pension plan for the musicians at the Met was only instituted at a later time. In a letter to Otto Strasser of the Vienna Philharmonic, Falk mentioned support which he received from the "emigrant fund, in order to pay for my cabinet."²⁹

On September 10, 1963, Daniel Falk applied for compensation for the injustices he had suffered from the Austrian "fund for assistance to political refugees who have permanent residence in a foreign country" (*Hilfsfonds*). The *Hilfsfonds* was only enacted in the Austrian Parliament after long negotiations between the Austrian government and the Committee for

²⁴ compensation files (see footnote 1).

²⁵ Letter to Otto Strasser, New York, Sept. 29, 1987, (see footnote 1).

²⁶ Letter to Otto Strasser, New York, Oct. 23, 1987, (see footnote 1).

²⁷ Letter to Gottfried Freiberg, Chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, New York, Dec. 19, 1946, (see footnote 1).

²⁸ Hugo Burghauser, *Philharmonische Begegnungen. Erinnerungen eines Wiener Philharmonikers*, Zürich 1979, 168.

²⁹ Letter to Otto Strasser, New York, Oct. 23, 1987, (see footnote 1).

Jewish Claims on Austria (Claims Committee) and pressure from the USA, on January 18, 1956.³⁰ On November 15, 1963, Falk was granted compensation based on the Federal Compensation Law (BGBl 181/1952) in the amount of ATS 47,124"³¹.

Ambivalent Attitude toward Austria and the Vienna Philharmonic

"It is strange that after 49 years, as you have calculated - after all these events, that we have reestablished contact and have so much to talk about. We should keep it up, and I think perhaps it could come to a reunion..." wrote Daniel Falk in October 1987 at the age of 89 years to his former colleague Otto Strasser, who was an NSDAP member during the Nazi era and from 1958 until 1966 chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic. Falk continued *"I was in Austria after the war in Bad Gastein, but I couldn't bring myself to visit Vienna. During my second visit I came only to visit the grave of my father, who died in Vienna in 1915 (Central Cemetery Gate 1) and place an inscription on the gravestone: In memory of my mother Ernestine and both brothers, engineer Siegmund and Doctor Isidor Falk, murdered by the Nazis. (...) It took three days to find my father's grave. Father was a Magister Pharma (pharmacist) in Stanislaw in Galicia -, and in 1914-1916 we were refugees from the Russians and fled to Austria (World War I)."*³²

Daniel Falk's family was murdered in the Nazi extermination camps. His mother, Ernestine Falk, born on February 18, 1868, was deported to Theresienstadt on August 13, 1942. Her last address in Vienna was Seegasse 9 in the 9th district. On August 25, 1942, Ernestine Falk was transferred to Maly Trostinec, where she was murdered.³³ The two brothers Siegmund and Isidor Falk, as well as two uncles, were also murdered. Only one cousin of Daniel Falk, *"who withstood six most terrible years"*, is known to have survived the holocaust.³⁴

In the tense political phase shortly after the end of the war, the emigrants were (still) remembered by those in Vienna. At the end of 1946, Falk, as well as other displaced colleagues, received an official invitation from the Vienna Philharmonic to *"return to the ranks*

³⁰ The *Hilfsfonds* was endowed with 550 million Schilling. The term *Hilfsfonds* was intended to obscure the actual purpose, which was the financial compensation of the victims of National Socialism. Austria, which only met its obligations under pressure from the USA, did not wish to create the impression, that it "in any shape or form took responsibility for National Socialist crimes". Thus the payments were declared as assistance and not compensation. See Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, *Die Entstehung der Rückstellungs- und Entschädigungsgesetzgebung. Die Republik Österreich und das in der NS-Zeit entzogene Vermögen*, Vienna, Munich 2003, 374, 581-584.

³¹ Claim to compensation according to Federal Law of July 18, 1952 *über die Gewährung von Entschädigungen wegen politischer Maßregelung im öffentlichen Dienst (Beamtenentschädigungsgesetz)*, BGBl Nr. 181/1952 as well as Federal Law of Apr. 21, 1961, BGBl Nr. 117/1961; which changed and augmented the Civil Servant Compensation Law, BGBl. Nr. 181/1952; compensation files (see footnote 1); For texts of the original laws see <http://www.ns-quellen.at/>.

³² Letter to Otto Strasser, New York, Oct. 23, 1987, (see footnote 1).

³³ Documetary Archives of the Austrian Resistance, Online database, <http://www.doew.at>.

³⁴ Letter to Otto Strasser, New York, Mar. 14, 1987; Letter to Gottfried Freiberg, Chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, New York, Dec. 19, 1946, (see footnote 1).



of the Vienna Philharmonic and take up the place from which you were unlawfully driven". The recipients were urged to "inform us of your decision in this matter as soon as possible" and the letter closed with the hope "that you give us an opportunity to in a small degree make up for the injustices committed".³⁵ The effect of this invitation upon Daniel Falk was primarily positive, but ambivalent emotions can also be detected in his reply. "Since leaving Vienna I have experienced years of wandering and the tragic fate of losing my entire family - mother, brothers and all other relatives - in the concentration camps and gas chambers, as well as years of becoming acquainted with a highly interesting new country. (New paragraph) In the case of my return, many questions would be raised - here as well as there - which neither you, esteemed colleagues, nor I, can at the present time answer."³⁶ Due to several open questions, among others "the question of the restoration of my earlier rights and that of my living situation" it was not possible for "to give a definite answer" and expressed the hope that the Philharmonic itself would "make your position known in response to the questions within your jurisdiction, as soon as the situation in Austria allows."³⁷ The question of whether the Vienna Philharmonic responded to Falk's reply and particularly whether there was a constructive and encouraging reaction to Falk's open questions cannot be answered with certainty, but presumably there was not. Had it been so, Daniel Falk would most probably have responded promptly, yet in the Historical Archives of the Vienna Philharmonic no such pertinent documentation is to be found. In other cases also, the initial courageous initiatives on the part of the Philharmonic to invite the displaced colleagues to return to the orchestra were quickly abandoned. Only beginning in March 1987 is there once again documentation of official correspondence between Daniel Falk and the Vienna Philharmonic.

Even in exile, the Vienna Philharmonic held special significance for the displaced musicians. This is especially true in the case of Daniel Falk. The two suitcases which he took into exile were filled with Philharmonic memorabilia. "*When I was able to leave Vienna, just in time on September 8, 1938, I was able to get 'everything' into my two suitcases, including diaries from our tours, gifts for the ladies at the Philharmonic Balls, which decorated the walls of my New York apartment, letters from conductors -: congratulations from Dr. Richard Strauss for receiving the Doktor Grades Juris from the University of Vienna (...)*"; Right after the war, Falk took out a subscription for the *Wiener Zeitung*, in order to get as much information as possible about the Vienna Philharmonic. At an advanced age he wrote in a letter to Otto Strasser: "*I can tell you today, in 1987, that I still follow the Philharmonic with the same affinity*

³⁵ Philharmonic invitation to Josef Geringer, Vienna, Oct. 16, 1946, HAdWPh, Josef Geringer, Nr. 161, Correspondence with Mrs. Drukker; from the replies it appears that all emigrants received the same invitation to rejoin the orchestra as did Geringer.

³⁶ Letter to Gottfried Freiberg, Chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, New York, Dec 19, 1946, (see footnote 1).

³⁷ *ibid.*



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and devotion that I had at that time - the tours, programs and the goodwill of my former colleagues."³⁸

The intensely personal letters which Daniel Falk wrote between March 1987 and September 1988 to Otto Strasser, former Philharmonic chairman and one-time NSDAP member, illustrate the paramount importance of the Vienna Philharmonic in Falk's life. He had in common with Otto Strasser the mutual time of study at the Academy of Music "*under the unforgettable, good-natured Julius Stwertka, and being in the same orchestra, which brought us so much joy*"³⁹. Julius Stwertka became a victim of the *shoah* and died in Theresienstadt in 1942. It appears that especially in his later years in New York, Daniel Falk's memories of the Vienna Philharmonic reached an emotional highpoint. Perhaps Falk's devoted attitude to the orchestra was bolstered by the painful loss of his family and the fact that he never formed a family of his own - "*Unfortunately, I have remained without a family.*"⁴⁰ The Vienna Philharmonic, according to the impressions made upon the author through the study of the correspondence with Otto Strasser – became Daniel Falk's replacement family, which in later years he never blamed for his displacement or the injustices perpetrated against him.

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Translation: William McElheney

³⁸ Letter to Otto Strasser, New York, Mar. 14, 1987, (see footnote 1).

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Letter to Karl Maurer, New York, Sept. 26, 1946, (see footnote 1).