

Bruno Walter (born Bruno Schlessinger, September 15, 1876 – February 17, 1962) was a German-born conductor, pianist, and composer. Born in Berlin, he left Germany in 1933 to escape the Third Reich, settling finally in the United States in 1939. He worked closely with Gustav Mahler, whose music he helped establish in the repertory, held major positions with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Salzburg Festival, Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Staatsoper Unter den Linden and Deutsche Oper Berlin, among others, made recordings of historical and artistic significance, and is widely considered one of the great conductors of the 20th century.

Born near Alexanderplatz in Berlin to a middle-class Jewish family, he began his musical education at the Stern Conservatory at the age of eight, making his first public appearance as a pianist when he was nine; he performed a concerto movement with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1889 and a full concerto with them in February, 1890. He studied composition at Stern with Robert Radecke de:Robert Radecke, and remained active as a composer until about 1910 (see list of compositions below). But it was seeing an 1889 concert by the Berlin Philharmonic led by Hans von Bülow, he wrote, that "decided my future. Now I knew what I was meant for. No musical activity but that of an orchestral conductor could any longer be considered by me. He made his conducting debut at the Cologne Opera with Albert Lortzing's *Der Waffenschmied* in 1894. Later that year he left for the Hamburg Opera to work as a chorus director. There he first met and worked with Gustav Mahler, whom he revered and with whose music he later became strongly identified

Conducting In 1896, he was appointed Kapellmeister of the Stadttheater (municipal opera) in Breslau, on the strength of a recommendation from Mahler to the theater's director, Theodor Löwe. However, Löwe required that before taking up this position the young conductor change his last name from Schlessinger, which literally means Silesian, "because of its frequent occurrence in the capital of Silesia", In a letter to his brother paraphrased by Erik Ryding and Rebecca Pechesky, Walter said he had "suggested several names, which Mahler wrote down and gave to Löwe, who returned the contract with the name Bruno Walter. These biographers add that Walter wrote to his parents that he found that "having to change his name was "terrible"; they report that Mahler and his sisters "pressed" Walter to make the change of name, and add that, contrary to occasional unsubstantiated reports, it "is unknown" whether Löwe's stipulation had anything to do with a desire to conceal Walter's Jewish origins.

In 1897, Walter became Chief Conductor at the municipal opera in Pressburg. He found the town provincial and depressing, and in 1898 took the position of Chief Conductor of the Riga Opera, Latvia. While there, he converted to Christianity, probably Roman Catholicism. In 1899 Walter was appointed music director of the Temeswar, Austria-Hungary (now Timisoara, Romania) Opera. Walter then returned in 1900 to Berlin, where he assumed the post of Royal Prussian Conductor at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden, succeeding Franz Schalk; his colleagues there included Richard Strauss and Karl Muck. While in Berlin he also conducted the premiere of *Der arme Heinrich* by Hans Pfitzner, who became a lifelong friend.

In 1901, Walter accepted Mahler's invitation to be his assistant at the Court Opera in Vienna. Walter led Verdi's *Aida* at his debut. In 1907 he was elected by the Vienna Philharmonic to conduct its Nicolai Concert. In 1910, he helped Mahler select and coach solo singers for the premiere of Mahler's Symphony No. 8. In the following years Walter's conducting reputation soared as he was invited to conduct across Europe – in Prague, in London where in 1910 he conducted Tristan und Isolde and Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers* at Covent Garden, and in Rome. When Mahler died on May 18, 1911, Walter was at his deathbed. On June 6, he wrote to his sister that he was to conduct the premiere of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, he did so in Munich on November 20, 1911, in the first half of an all-Mahler concert (the second half contained Mahler's Symphony No. 2 (Mahler) On June 26, 1912 he led the Vienna Philharmonic in the world premiere of Mahler's Symphony No. 9.



# BRAHMS: CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN & CELLO

ZINO FRANCESCATTI, VIOLIN  
PIERRE FOURNIER, CELLO

BRUNO WALTER

*Conducting*

THE COLUMBIA SYMPHONY



Mastered in DSD256

In April 1853, Brahms left his home city to tour with Hungarian violinist Reményi (Eduard Hoffmann) as accompanist. At the end of May, they arrived in Hanover where the already famous violinist, composer and conductor Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) had been recently appointed Kapellmeister at the King's court. (his name is pronounced YO' - ah - kim). Joachim's successful London debut at the age of 12 had been with no less than Mendelssohn conducting Beethoven's Violin Concerto. Brahms first heard this concerto five years later in 1848 with Joachim as soloist. Reményi had studied violin alongside Joachim at the conservatory in Vienna and sought to renew contact and perhaps schedule a concert there. At Joachim's request, the shy Brahms played for him several of his own compositions. Decades later, Joachim confessed to being "completely overwhelmed" by Brahms' talent. The two soon became close friends and after Brahms parted ways with Reményi, Brahms stayed with Joachim who was by then attending courses at the university in Göttingen. In September of that year, armed with an introduction from Joachim, Brahms knocked on the Schumann's door thus beginning his other important lifelong friendship. In 1863 Joachim married alto Amalie Schneeweiss (yes, Snow White). Although Amalie gave up her opera career to be the mother of six children, she continued to sing. Brahms wrote songs for her including one for alto, piano and viola on the birth of their son who was named in Brahms' honor. By 1883, Joachim had become increasingly suspicious of his talented and attractive wife. He accused her of having an affair with the publisher Fritz Simrock. Ever the gentleman, Brahms wrote a letter of consolation to her, defending her fidelity. Unfortunately, this letter was used as evidence in the divorce proceedings which Joachim initiated. Mostly due to this letter, the divorce was denied and the Joachims separated the following year. This caused a deep rift between the two old friends. Joachim would continue to play Brahms' music, but refused to resume the friendship. Brahms continually tried to repair the relationship to no avail. In August 1887, Brahms wrote to his publisher: "I must also tell you about my latest folly, a concerto for violin and cello! I had always intended to abandon the affair on account of my relations with Joachim, but to no avail. In artistic matters we have fortunately remained friends, but

I should never have thought it possible for us to come together again on a purely personal level."

For years, Robert Hausmann (1852-1909), the cellist of the Joachim quartet since 1879, had tried to get Brahms to write a 'cello concerto for him. This double concerto that Brahms produced was unprecedented for the time.

While the idea of pairings of solo instruments against a larger body of strings was not new (i.e. Corelli and Handel's Concerti Grossi, Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola K.V. 364, and Beethoven's Triple Concerto Op. 56), Brahms was the first to unite the violin and the cello in this form. Brahms clearly intended something more personal. One can project the 'cello part as representing Brahms himself, and the violin Joachim. Treating the soloists as opera characters was not an original idea, and Brahms made allusions in his letters that led some of his friends to believe that he was writing an opera. The unusual nature of a double concerto can be seen in a review by Brahms's friend, Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick, who wrote "Such a double concerto is like a drama with two heroes instead of one, two heroes who, laying claim to our equal sympathy and admiration, merely get in each other's way." Needless to say, Brahms was far too skilled in this, his last orchestral work, to let the two heroes get in each other's way.

On September 21 and 22, Brahms met with Joachim and Hausmann for rehearsals in Baden-Baden using Clara Schumann's piano. This reinforces the idea that the concerto is chamber music for soloists and orchestra, as if his C minor Piano Trio Op. 101 from the previous year were a foreshadow. The following day, the Kurssaal orchestra there gave a reading of the score in a private performance in the Louis-Quinze Room of the Kurhaus before it was formally premiered in Cologne with Brahms conducting. In their collaboration on the Violin Concerto, Joachim simplified the violin part. In this concerto, he went in the other direction, making it much more difficult.

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- 1. Allegro 16:23**
- 2. Andante 7:53**
- 3. Vivace Non Troppo 8:31**

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