

Bruno Walter (born Bruno Schlesinger, 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 Radeke 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 Schlesinger, 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 Pechefsky, 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.

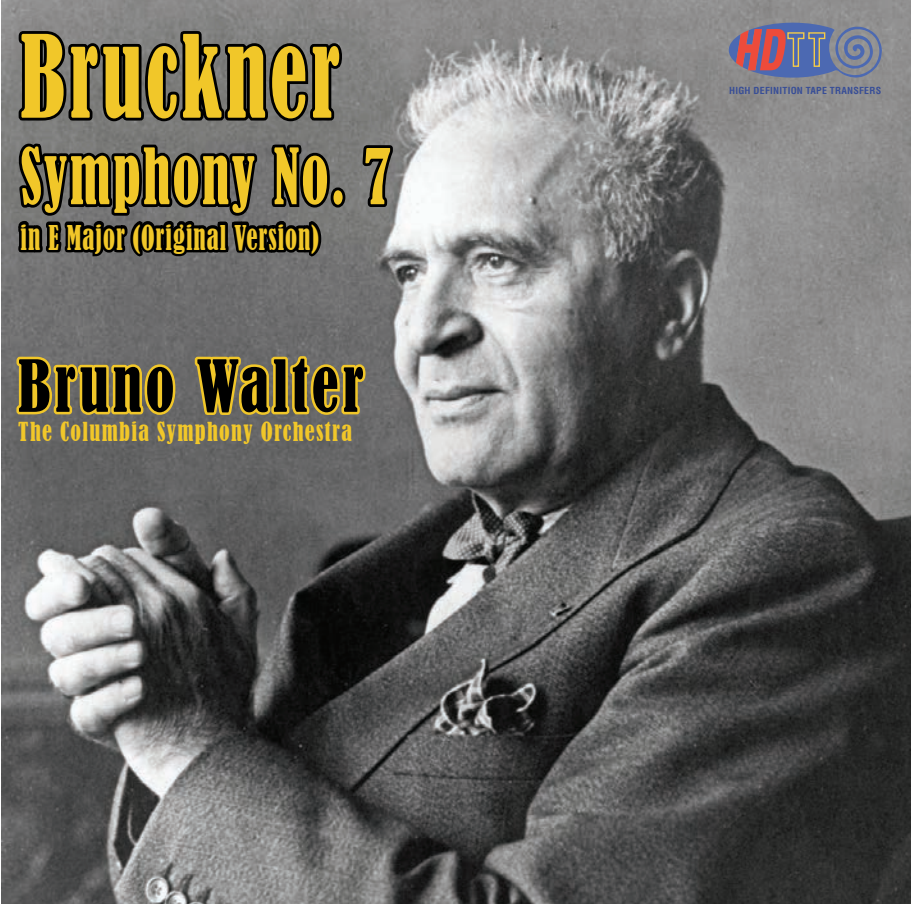
In 1901, Walter accepted Mahler's invitation to be his assistant at the Court Opera in Vienna. Walter led Verdi's *Aida* at his debut. In 1907 he was elected by the Vienna Philharmonic to conduct its Nicolai Concert. In 1910, he helped Mahler select and coach solo singers for the premiere of Mahler's 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.

Bruckner

Symphony No. 7

in E Major (Original Version)

Bruno Walter
The Columbia Symphony Orchestra



Having recently gained acceptance in Vienna with the premiere of the Fourth Symphony, Anton Bruckner received a visit from famed conductor Artur Nikisch who offered to premier the composer's Seventh Symphony. The concert took place in Leipzig with the Gewandhaus Orchestra on December 30, 1884; Hans Richter and the Vienna Philharmonic gave the symphony its local premiere in January 1885. Despite a cool reception from the critics, the work was an enormous success, and public enthusiasm helped to solidify Bruckner's growing reputation. Among the accolades was a telegram from Johann Strauss, Jr. which read "Am deeply moved. It was the musical experience of my life." Unlike most of his other symphonies, Bruckner's Seventh underwent virtually no revision; the one point of concern was a cymbal crash at the Adagio's climax which Bruckner added at the suggestion of friends, but then subsequently removed.

The symphony commences with a string tremolo from which the searching main theme arises; this theme is said to have been whistled to Bruckner in a dream by his late friend Ignaz Dorn, and it reappears throughout the symphony in subtle transformations. This is followed by a plaintive, yet animated, theme for woodwinds, and followed in turn by an imposing dance-like third theme. The development is expansive, making effective use of theme inversion, and the recapitulation is varied; a long crescendo using fragments of the opening theme forms a glowing and dynamic coda.

The deeply felt second movement, an adagio in song form, is mournful and dignified. Said to have been inspired by a premonition of Richard Wagner's death, the opening threnody breaks into a sonorous hymn for strings. This alternates with a beautiful arching theme which offers consolation at each appearance. The climax occurs with the third appearance of the movement's opening theme which, against an ostinato of rising sextuplets, is propelled to a blazing C major climax. Finally, a dirge for Wagner tubas, said to have been composed upon Bruckner's learning of Wagner's passing, follows as coda with the strings intoning a poignant transformation of the symphony's main theme.

With a contrast as stunning as the corresponding moment in Beethoven's Eroica, the windswept Scherzo which follows is one of Bruckner's best. The main theme is said to have been derived from the crowing of a cock; the wistfully nostalgic trio is deeply affecting.

The finale opens with an athletic transformation of the symphony's opening theme. This is followed by beautifully modulating chorale for strings against a walking bass, and in turn following by a thundering unison transformation of the opening theme in minor. These three wonderfully contrasting ideas are interwoven deliberately, yet with great animation and vigor, until the heartily extroverted coda brings home the symphony's opening theme in the full orchestra.

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- 1 Allegro Moderato 20:49**
- 2 Adagio. Sehr Feierlich Und Sehr Langsam 19:25**
- 3 Scherzo. Sehr Schnell 10:22**
- 4 Finale. Bewegt, Doch Nicht Schnell 13:54**

Recorded by Columbia Records March 11, 13, 19, 22, 27, 1961; American Legion Hall



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