

Oliver Rathkolb

Honours and Awards (Honorary Members, Rings of Honour, the Nicolai Medal and the "Yellow" List)

A compilation of the bearers of rings of honour was produced in preparation for the Vienna Philharmonic's centennial celebrations.<sup>1</sup> It can not currently be reconstructed when exactly the first rings were awarded. In the archive of the Vienna Philharmonic, there are clues to a ring from 1928<sup>2</sup>, and it follows from an undated index "Ehrenmitglieder, Träger des Ehrenrings, Nicolai Medaillen"<sup>3</sup> that the second ring bearer, the Kammersänger Richard Mayr, had received the ring in 1929.

Below the list of the first ring bearers:

(Dates of the bestowal are not explicitly noted in the original)

Dr. Felix von Weingartner (honorary member)

Richard Mayr (Kammersänger, honorary member)

Staatsrat Dr. Wilhelm Furtwängler (honorary member)

Medizinalrat Dr. Josef Neubauer (honorary member)

Lotte Lehmann (Kammersängerin)

Elisabeth Schumann (Kammersängerin)

Generalmusikdirektor Prof. Hans Knappertsbusch (March 12, 1938 on the occasion of his 50th birthday)

In the Nazi era, for the first time (apart from Medizinalrat Dr. Josef Neubauer) not only artists were distinguished, but also Gen. Feldmarschall Wilhelm List (unclear when the ring was presented), Baldur von Schirach (March 30, 1942), Dr. Arthur Seyß-Inquart (March 30, 1942).

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<sup>1</sup> Archive of the Vienna Philharmonic, Depot State Opera, folder on the centennial celebrations 1942, list of the honorary members.

<sup>2</sup> Information Dr. Silvia Kargl, AdWPh

<sup>3</sup> This undated booklet was discovered in the Archive of the Vienna Philharmonic during its investigation by Dr. Silvia Kargl for possibly new documents for this project in February 2013.



Especially the presentation of the ring to Schirach in the context of the centennial celebration was openly propagated in the newspapers. On March 27, 1942 the chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, Wilhelm Jerger, presented the ring of honour to the Reichsleiter in his bureau at the Ballhausplatz: "Your concern always was," said Jerger, "that the orchestra remains in place also during the war."<sup>4</sup>



*Baldur von Schirach addresses the Vienna Philharmonic, 1942*

Furthermore, Schirach received the Nicolai Medal, which in this case was awarded for the very first time. In return, he decreed the renaming of a part of the Augustinerstraße in "Philharmonikerstraße". Jerger had already meticulously coordinated the overall design of the centennial celebration in detail with Schirach's general commissioner, Walter Thomas,<sup>5</sup> who himself on March 27, 1942 received the silver Nicolai Medal. Fritz Trümpi, in his contribution on the association of the Vienna Philharmonic in this project, also referred to the superintendence of the regional leader (*Gauleiter*) over the association of the Vienna Philharmonic, which by the way was obviously effective also in the case of the State Opera.

Arthur Seyß-Inquart received the ring on the occasion of a later visit of a delegation of the Vienna Philharmonic in the occupied Netherlands, and he was distinguished for his merits as regional leader of Vienna and his "active support" for the Vienna Philharmonic at that time, but also for the funding of a concert of the Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam in the context of the centennial celebration.

In 1950, these clearly political bestowals are no longer brought up, and also Prof. Wilhelm Jerger who had received the ring of honour on March 30, 1942 is not mentioned any longer – Generalintendant Prof. Clemens Krauss (March 31, 1943) however, as well as Dr. Hans Pfitzner (March 5, 1949) are still mentioned.<sup>6</sup>

Below some additional ring bearers of the early Second Republic:<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Volkmar Andrae (November 19, 1949).

Dr. Karl Renner (1950, on the occasion of his 80th birthday)

Bruno Walter (September 16, 1951 on the occasion of his 75th birthday)

Dr. Karl Böhm (August 24, 1954 on the occasion of his 60th birthday)

<sup>4</sup> *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, March 28, 1942.

<sup>5</sup> Archive Vienna Philharmonic, Depot State Opera, folder 1, file memo, January 15, 1942.

<sup>6</sup> Schweizerische Musikzeitung: *Revue musicale suisse*, volume 90, 1950, 28.

<sup>7</sup> Unpaginated index „Ehrenmitglieder, Träger des Ehrenrings, Nicolai Medaillen“, heading „Träger des Ehrenrings.“



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Ministerialrat Dipl.-Ing. Ernst Marboe (October 8, 1955)  
Präsident Dr. hc Ing. Manfred Mautner-Markhof (October 1959)  
Botschafter Dr. Franz Helmut Leitner (October 1959)  
Wilhelm Backhaus (1961)  
Josef Geringer (November 25, 1961)  
Prof. Hugo Burghauser (November 25, 1961)  
Ministerialrat Dr. Alfred Weikert (February 1963)  
Dr. Daniel Falk (May 1963)  
Dr. Otto Mayr (September 1963)  
Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Peter (April 1964)  
Franz Bartolomey II. (1964)

Among the honoured persons was one politician, but there were several officials, artists, the lawyer Otto Mayr who had represented many Philharmonic members in the denazification procedures, and the expelled emigrants Burghauser, Geringer and Falk.

A search in this index however for the second presentation of the Vienna Philharmonic's ring of honour to Baldur von Schirach, a convicted war criminal released from detention at Spandau, is in vain. One of Schirach's sons, Richard von Schirach, published already in 2004 a passage on the second presentation of the ring of honour in his book "Der Schatten meines Vaters" (München 2005), because the first ring had in 1945 supposedly been stolen by a US-soldier: „A professor from Vienna," according to the now seventy-year-old, should have conveyed the musicians' highest honour to his father, after he was in 1966 discharged from the prison for war criminals in Spandau: "He came as secret emissary of the Vienna Philharmonic, in order to present the Vienna Philharmonic's ring of honour."<sup>8</sup> I have via e-mail attempted to motivate Richard von Schirach to announce the deliverer but have failed, just like the journalist Dr. Marianne Enigl from the *Profil*, or the chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, Prof. Clemens Hellsberg. Schirach meant that he himself as well as his brother had back then promised absolute confidentiality to the emissary and that the political debate triggered by member of parliament Harald Walser had only reinforced his decision. He did also not respond to my proposal of a one-on-one conversation.

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<sup>8</sup> Marianne Enigl, „Götterdämmerung, profil, 19.1.2013  
[http://www.profil.at/articles/1303/560/353783\\_s3/goetterdaemmerung-wiener-philharmonikern](http://www.profil.at/articles/1303/560/353783_s3/goetterdaemmerung-wiener-philharmonikern)



While I was still intensively searching for the *Nachlass* of Wilhelm Jerger, I received a surprising letter from Wilhelm Bettelheim. Without being asked, he informed me in a handwritten letter from January 19, 2013: "The man who had presented the Vienna Philharmonic's ring of honour to Baldur von Schirach was Helmut Wobisch. Professor Wobisch was a SS-Mann and manager of the Vienna Philharmonic in the year 1966. Professor Krips, an old friend of the family, had related this fact to me in 1968 on the grounds of the Vienna AKH in the Alserstraße at that time."<sup>9</sup> I have passed this information on only to the film director Robert Neumüller and have asked him to interview Mr. Bettelheim for his TV documentary "Im Schatten der Vergangenheit – Die Wiener Philharmoniker im Nationalsozialismus": Wilhelm Bettelheim seems to me to be a very trustworthy witness. He was born in Vienna in the last year of war into a Jewish family which lived in concealment, and he personally knew the conductor Josef Krips.



*Helmut Wobisch, 3rd from right*

I have in further consequence established contact with the widow of Josef Krips, Harrietta Krips, who lives in Montreux. She could not find any further confirmation in the *Nachlass* of her husband, but she did however find a correspondence between Wobisch and Krips in the period in question. After an argument with Krips, Wobisch is also supposed to have given him – quasi as reconciliation – as manager of the Vienna Philharmonic a leading role in the film "Die Unvollendete. Franz Schubert, Symphonie Nr. 8 D 759 h-Moll (producer: Hugo Käch), April 1969."<sup>10</sup> Krip's first wife, Mitzi Krips, was already sick in 1968; she returned to Vienna with her husband in March 1969 and was brought to the hospital on April 3, 1969, where she passed away five days later.<sup>11</sup> Despite numerous investigations into the protocols of the Vienna Philharmonic as well as at the jeweller who traditionally manufactures the ring, it was not possible to find additional hints to the deliverer. Investigations in the Spandau Prison Records in the National Archives, College Park, did likewise not bring any results.

Therefore, Wobisch could have indeed been the deliverer. As demonstrated by his SS-file in the State Archive in Berlin, he was an ardent National Socialist already prior to 1938, who

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<sup>9</sup> „Der Mensch, der Baldur von Schirach den Ehrenring der Philharmoniker überreichte, war Helmut Wobisch. Professor Wobisch war SS-Mann und im Jahre 1966 Geschäftsführer der Wiener Philharmoniker. Professor Krips, ein alter Freund der Familie, hat mir diese Tatsache 1968 auf dem Gelände des damaligen Wiener AKHs in der Alserstraße erzählt.“

<sup>10</sup> Telephone conversation of the author with Harrietta Krips, March 2, 2013. In this respect, cf. also Josef Krips, *Ohne Liebe kann man keine Musik machen ... Erinnerungen, herausgegeben und kommentiert von Harrietta Krips*, Wien 1994, 548.

<sup>11</sup> Krips, *Ohne Liebe*, 419.

after 1945 was a very skilful manager and successful musician. At the same time, he had a great tendency toward conspiracy and after 1945 skilfully denied his participation in the attempted July-Putsch of the National Socialists. After he was in a tumultuous general assembly in 1953 elected provisory manager, he requested Federal President Theodor Körner for "hindsight of the atonement consequences according to the prohibitive law 1947."<sup>12</sup> In his request, he claims "to have contributed to the retention during the Nazi era of the Jewish kin and half breeds in the Association of the State Opera Orchestra and thereby also as part of the Vienna Philharmonic." On the basis of the in the meantime extensive insights into this issue, which have also been analyzed in Bernadette Mayrhofer's contribution, there is no evidence for such a support. Wobisch also did not in the Nazi era have the capacity such as Jerger or Kainz to prepare the special permits that were ultimately decided upon in the Reich Ministry of Information in Berlin. The highly energetic Wobisch was however known as manager for his authoritarian decisions.

Furthermore, there are no clues of a decision of the chairman – as revealed by inquiries of contemporary witnesses such as Walter Barylli and other retired Philharmonic members from the time of the presentation of the ring around 1966/1967.

While the private and individual action in 1966/1967 to present Baldur von Schirach with a duplicate of the ring of honour is about to be clarified, another honour of the Nazi era has to be left open. A recently rediscovered internal plan on the centennial celebration<sup>13</sup> mentions a Nicolai Medal in gold, engraved with „Dem Führer“. This golden Nicolai Medal then is also mentioned in the already quoted index: „Adolf Hitler with the dedication ‚Dem Führer‘.“ This golden medal also appears on the balance sheet to the centennial celebration.<sup>14</sup> The media then however only report on the presentation of the silver Nicolai Medal to Schirach and Thomas as well as on the ring of honour to Schirach. In the digitized press- and speech-documents of Baldur von Schirach, which were gathered in the context of a project on the digitalization of the Regional Press Archive, there are also no clues on this originally intended presentation.

Unfortunately, there is a lack in the protocols of the extraordinary general assembly from March 25, 1942, in which these honours were decided. Arthus Seyß-Inquart, then Reich commissioner for the occupied Netherlands, thus also received the ring of honour. Furthermore, the Nicolai Medal was awarded to numerous other persons:

With name engraving in silver:

Baldur von Schirach

Dr. Artur Seyß-Inquart

Dr. Friedrich Rainer

Dr. Albert Reitter

Dr. Erwin Kerber

Stadtrat Dipl.-Ing. Hanns Blaschke

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<sup>12</sup> Archiv der Republik, Wien, Bestand Präsidenschaftskanzlei, Zl. 8022/1953

<sup>13</sup> Archive of the Vienna Philharmonic, Depot State Opera, folder 1, internal plan.

<sup>14</sup> Archive of the Vienna Philharmonic, Depot State Opera, folder 1, balance sheet, centennial celebration.





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Schirach, Seyß-Inquart, Reitter and Blaschke were high-ranking representatives of the Nazi state, who after 1945 were in most cases also classified as war criminals. Reitter had, by the way, at the Salzburg Festival in 1938 denounced Hugo Burghauser while he was still performing with the orchestra.

Further Nicolai Medals were received in 1942 by amongst others:

Contributors to the Festschrift:

Prof. Joseph Marx

Dr. Gerhard Hauptmann

Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer

Dr. Josef Weinheber

Max Mell

Heinrich Ritter von Srbik

Dr. Aurel Wolfram

In the media were mentioned also:

Dipl.-Ing. Rudolf Töpfer (Reichsbahnpräsident)

Dr. Wilhelm Mengelberg

Conductors of the Vienna Philharmonic:

Dr. Richard Strauss

Staatsrat Dr. Wilhelm Furtwängler

GMD Hans Knappertsbusch

Clemens Krauss, Intendant

München

Dr. Karl Böhm,

Generalmusikdirektor Dresden

GMD Leopold Reichwein

Dr. Ernst von Dohnányi

Staatsrat Dr. Wilhelm Furtwängler

Staatskapellmeister Rudolf Moralt

Franz Léhar

Wilhelm Wacek



*Wilhelm Furtwängler in Concert with the  
Vienna Philharmonic*

Added in a different writing was:

Bruno Walter, presented 1947

On January 14, 1943 additional Nicolai Medals in silver and without a date were awarded to Heinrich Damisch, Vienna, Wilhelm Altmann and Georg Richard Kruse, both in Berlin, as well as Gustav Bosse in Regensburg.



The Vienna Philharmonic kept their distance from the Nazi regime only in the case of honorary memberships, which were defined as follows: "The honorary membership for all those founders, sponsors, subscribers, friends and members, who by their quite extraordinary achievements have contributed an essential part to the great artistic, economic or social success of the orchestra."<sup>15</sup>

An honorary membership was awarded to:

Dr. Hans Richter  
Fürstin Pauline Metternich-Sándor  
Dr. Arthur von Krupp  
Maria von Thielen  
Dipl.-Ing. Magnus Taeklind  
Dr. Jerome Stoneborough  
Dr. Felix von Weingartner  
Richard Mayr, Kammersänger  
Prof. Robert Fuchs  
Gräfin Johanna Hartenau-Battenberg  
Ritter von Aichried Emil Sauer  
Dr. Josef Neubauer  
Dr. Richard Strauss  
Staatsrat Dr. Wilhelm Furtwängler  
Gesandter Dr. Emil Junkar  
Hofrat Prof. Arnold Rosé  
Hofrat Dr. Franz Schmidt  
Maestro Arturo Toscanini  
Prof. Wilhelm Backhaus  
Envoy Baron Georg Frankenstein (in retrospect, delayed by the war events 1939–1945; presented by Prof. Fritz Sedlak in December 1945 – thus the note in the index)  
Generalmusikdirektor Prof. Bruno Walter  
Prof. Rudolf Jettmar  
Vera de Villiers  
Prof. Franz Schütz, Präsident der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde  
Dr. Friedrich Werner, Vizepräsident der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde  
Dr. Hedwig Kraus, Archivarin der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde  
Prof. Dr. Nikolaus Jagić  
Hermine Kittel, Kammersängerin  
Anny Konetzny, Kammersängerin  
Georg Maikl, Kammersänger  
Hans Pernter, Min. a. D.; due to political events presented upon the liberation of Austria by Prof. Fritz Sedlak in January 1946

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<sup>15</sup> „Die Ehrenmitgliedschaft für all jene Gründer, Förderer, Abonnenten, Freunde und Mitglieder, die durch ihre ganz außerordentlichen Leistungen einen wesentlichen Teil zu großen künstlerischen, wirtschaftlichen oder sozialen Erfolgen des Orchesters beigetragen haben.“



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— 1842 —

1942

Generalmusikdirektor Prof. Hans Knappertsbusch

1949

Dr. Hans Pfitzner

1951

Prof. Clemens Krauss

1955

Dr. Karl Böhm

1960

Maria Mautner-Markhof

Karl Schuricht

1962

Dr. Heinrich Drimmel

Dr. Josef Klaus

1963

Präs. Ing. Manfred Mautner-Markhof

1967

Fritz Sedlak

Hugo Burghauser

In summary, it can be noted that the bestowal of rings of honour and Nicolai Medals to high-ranking NSDAP-functionaries and the unresolved Nicolai Medal in gold for Adolf Hitler constitutes a highly inglorious ingratiation to the totalitarian and inhuman Nazi regime. These honours to my knowledge have hitherto never been officially nullified.

### **The "Yellow List"**

In stark contrast stands the racial stigmatisation of Jewish artists in the comprehensive statistics on the occasion of the anniversary in 1942. On a "yellow leaflet," a list of "Jews or half breeds" is given, which was prepared on the basis of the "Lexikon der Juden in der Musik" of Theo Stengel and Herbert Gerigk (Berlin 1940). According to oral tradition, the publication was otherwise in danger of being withdrawn.<sup>16</sup> A just recently discovered work list shows<sup>17</sup> that this "labelling" ultimately remained incomplete – Daniel Falk, Paul Fischer, Josef Geringer, Moriz Glattauer, Viktor Robitsek, Berthold Salander, Max Starkmann and Ludwig

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<sup>16</sup> Information of one of the co-authors of the statistic 1842–1942, Dr. Hedwig Kraus, to Prof. Otto Biba (e-mail to Prof. Clemens Hellsberg, February 28, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Archive of the Vienna Philharmonic, Depot State Opera, folder 1.



Wittels were “forgotten,” Friedrich Buxbaum, Armin Tyroler, Anton Weiss on the other hand are listed as well as Alma und Arnold Rosé.

What is peculiar, however, is that the internal anti-Semitic work list is in fact complete, but in the case of individual former Vienna Philharmonic as well as for more than 50 “Non-Aryans” these additions do not appear on the printed list – the “work list” thus contains also non-Philharmonic, artists that have performed together with the Philharmonic. The stigmatisation is in the end limited for the most part to those who were quoted in the “Lexikon der Juden in der Musik.” No clear reply may be given to the question why the stigmatisation was at first omitted, as in other publications, but then still the leaflet – albeit incomplete – was produced. Also the concerned people’s very correct form of address at first as “personalities” (*Persönlichkeiten*) in order to then clearly exclude them racially as “Non-Aryans” raises more questions than answers. The editors of this volume obviously felt uncomfortable with the per se mandatory stigmatisation of Jews in books. At the same time, it becomes evident how strongly the attribution of Jewish descent had become burnt into the minds of people far beyond the official Nazi lexica.

Judged on the whole, this “yellow list” of exclusion remains the extreme opposite to the flood of honours of Nazi potentates and supports of the Nazi regime in the cultural sphere in the year 1942.

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