

Hitler Applauding at a Performance Conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler at the Berlin Philharmonic (1939)

Abstract

During the Weimar Republic, Wilhelm Furtwängler (1886-1954) had established himself as one of Germany's most successful and internationally known conductors. Courted by the National Socialists, Furtwängler became Vice President of the Reich Chamber of Music in 1933. He was later accused of having allowed himself to be used as a cultural "poster child" for the Nazi regime, but he claimed that he was an apolitical artist who did not support National Socialism. In fact, he intervened on behalf of Jewish and other musicians persecuted by the Nazis and provided them with hiding places. As head conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic (a position he had assumed in 1922), Furtwängler had some initial success in getting the philharmonic exempted from the "Aryan articles." But as Nazi cultural policy became harsher, he found that his reputation and influence no longer sufficed to make a difference. In 1934, he premiered a work by the composer Paul Hindemith, who had been defamed as "degenerate" and banned by the Nazis. This caused a scandal, and Furtwängler was forced to resign all his posts. He attempted to emigrate to the United States in 1936, but was prevented from doing so by a plot hatched by Göring. Despite all this, Furtwängler was still permitted to appear before audiences as a guest conductor, which is exactly what he did at the 1939 Berlin Philharmonic concert shown below. The photograph shows Hitler, a great admirer of Furtwängler, applauding him from the "Führer's loge" of the Berlin Philharmonic. Emmy and Hermann Göring stand at his right, and Joseph Goebbels appears at his left.

After the collapse of the Nazi dictatorship, Wilhelm Furtwängler was acquitted by a denazification court; in 1952, he once again assumed the leadership of the Berlin Philharmonic.

Source



Source: Applause from the Führer's box at a concert by Wilhelm Furtwängler in the Berlin Philharmonie. Unknown photographer.

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