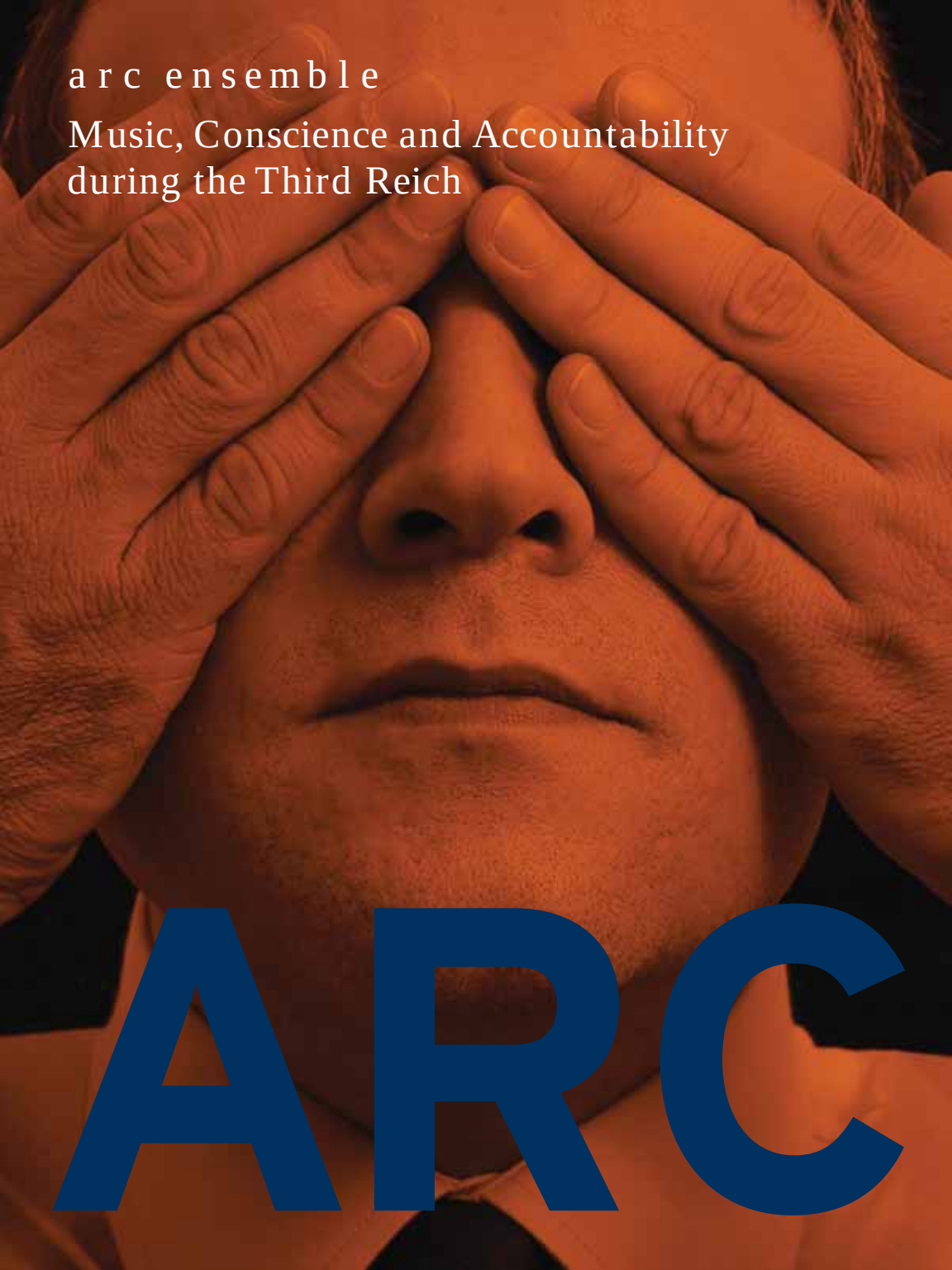
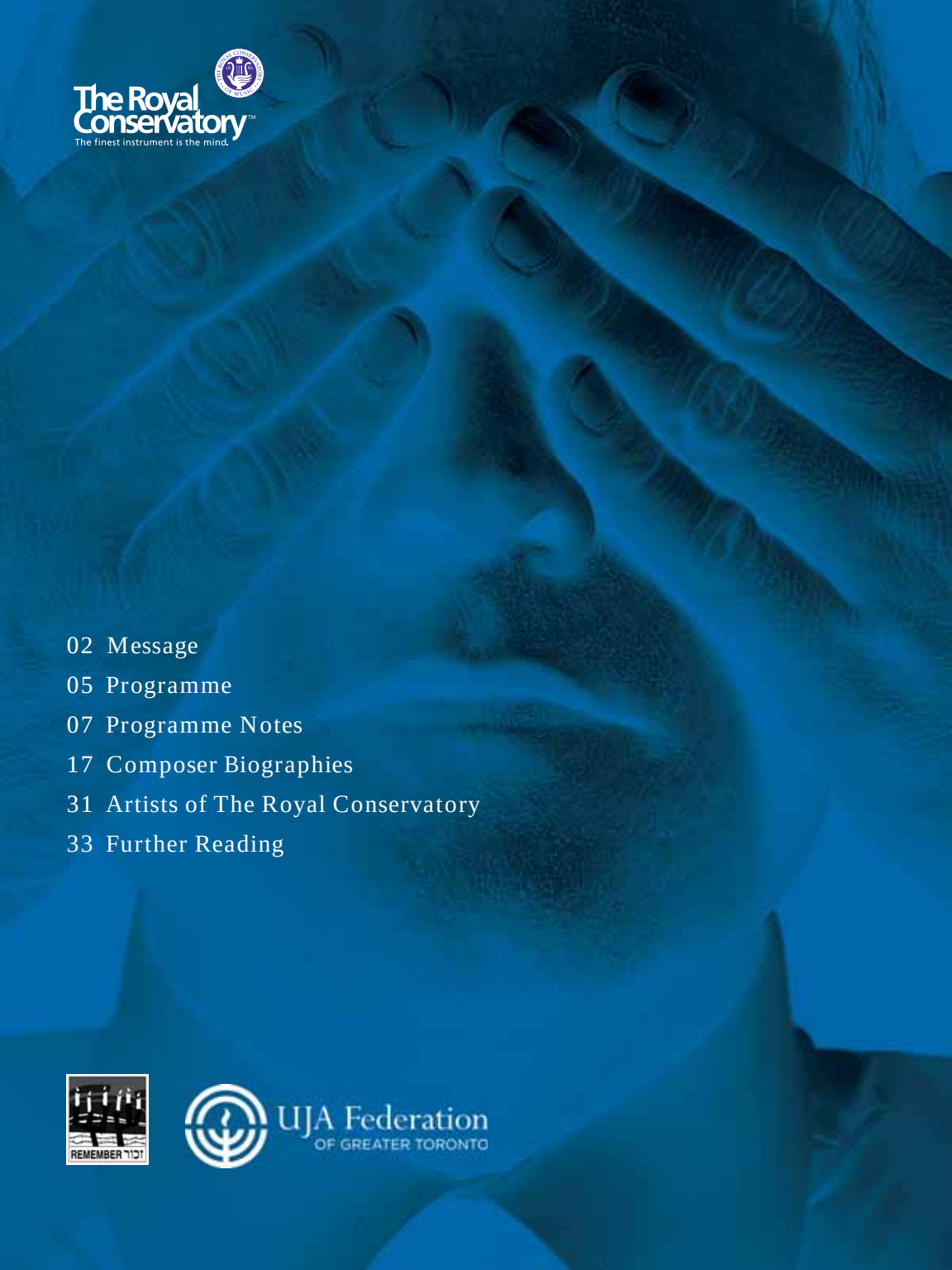

arc ensemble
Music, Conscience and Accountability
during the Third Reich
ARC



a r c e n s e m b l e

Music, Conscience and Accountability during the Third Reich

A Holocaust Education Week Programme

presented by
The Royal Conservatory

in association with the
Sarah and Chaim Neuberger
Holocaust Education Centre

and the
UJA Federation of Toronto

Tuesday, November 8, 2011

a very special musical event

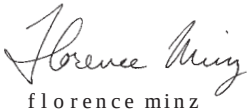
The Royal Conservatory and the ARC Ensemble are delighted to renew their partnership with Holocaust Education Week (HEW) and the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre. Our collaboration re-introduces two different constituencies to each other in a programme that resonates as strongly with HEW's 2011 theme of Accountability, as it does with the ARC Ensemble's groundbreaking research and performance.

The ARC Ensemble's "Music in Exile" initiative, a series of events that explore the works of composers who fled Germany during the 1930s, has established it as a global player in the resuscitation of lost music. Under the auspices of the RCM, it has presented "Music in Exile" programmes in London, New York, Toronto, Rome, Budapest and, most recently, Israel: a remarkable series of events and collaborations with Tel Aviv University, the Jerusalem Cinematheque and Mishkenot Sha'ananim. Two of the ensemble's recordings have been nominated for Grammy Awards, and its recent performances include the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and the Ravinia Festival.

This evening's programme, devised especially for HEW by Simon Wynberg and the ARC Ensemble, raises questions surrounding the rôle, responsibility and culpability of artists during the Hitler years. "Accountability" becomes more

difficult to unravel the further one moves away from those who wielded direct political and military authority, and perspective is blurred with the passing of time. Few of these questions have simple or straightforward answers, most have qualifications, exceptions and caveats. Nevertheless they all need to be raised and discussed. Ultimately, as a cultural institution we have a duty to encourage both our faculty and students to define their responsibilities, not just as teachers and performing musicians but as members of the larger community.

On behalf of The Royal Conservatory, the ARC Ensemble and our colleagues at the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, it is our privilege to welcome you to this very special musical event in the 2011 Holocaust Education Week programme.



florence minz
Project Advisor, ARC Ensemble

peter simon
President, The Royal Conservatory

Programme

Zwei ernste Weisen
heinz tiessen [1887–1971]

Elegie op. 30, no. 2b (from the *Hamlet Suite*)
Tötentanz Melodie op. 29, no 2b (from the *Tötentanz Suite*)

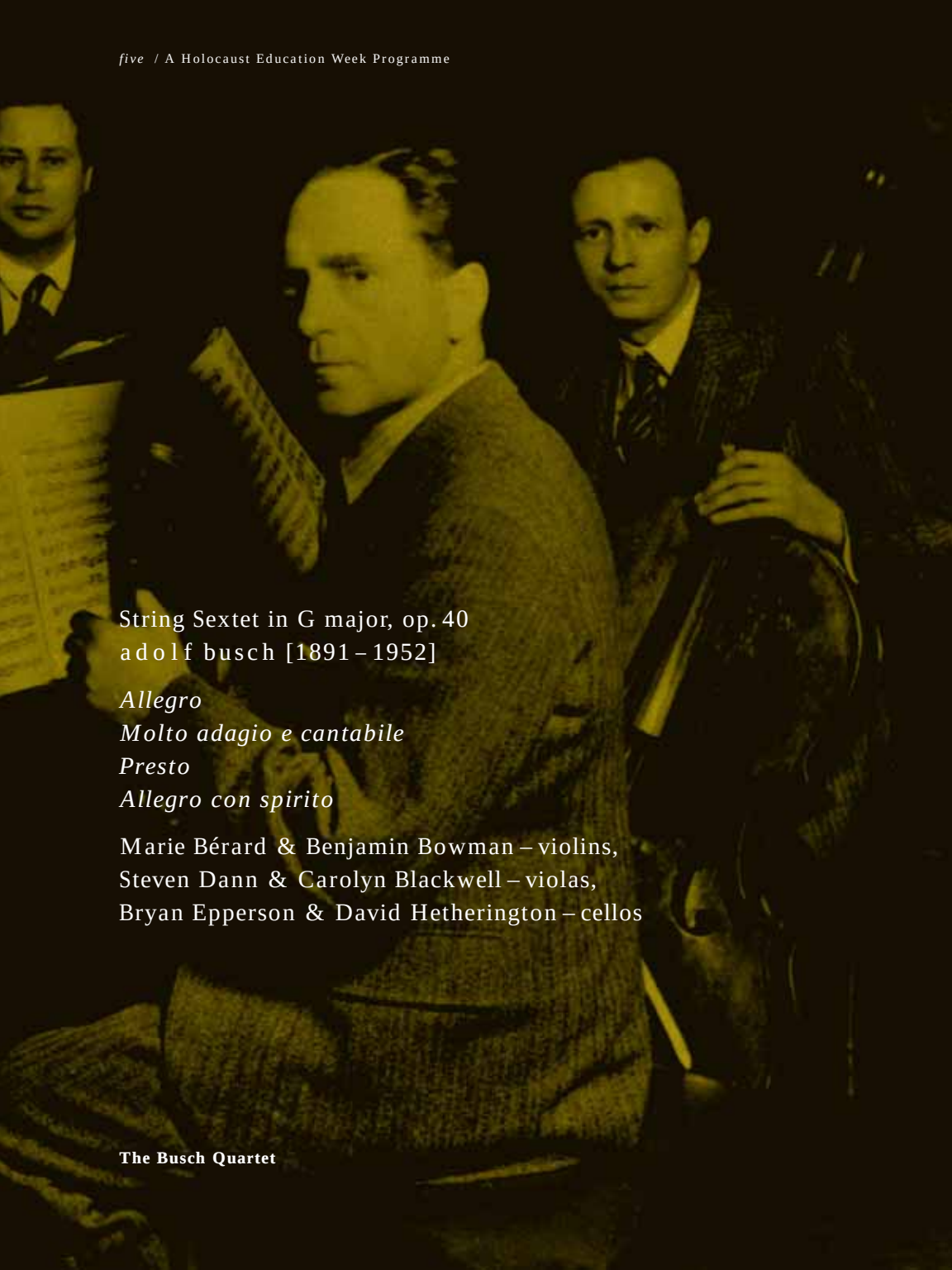
Steven Dann – viola, David Louie – piano

Quartet No. 1 "Carillon"
karl amadeus hartmann [1905–1963]

Langsam
con sordino
(finale)

Erika Raum & Marie Bérard – violins,
Steven Dann – viola, Bryan Epperson – cello

intermission

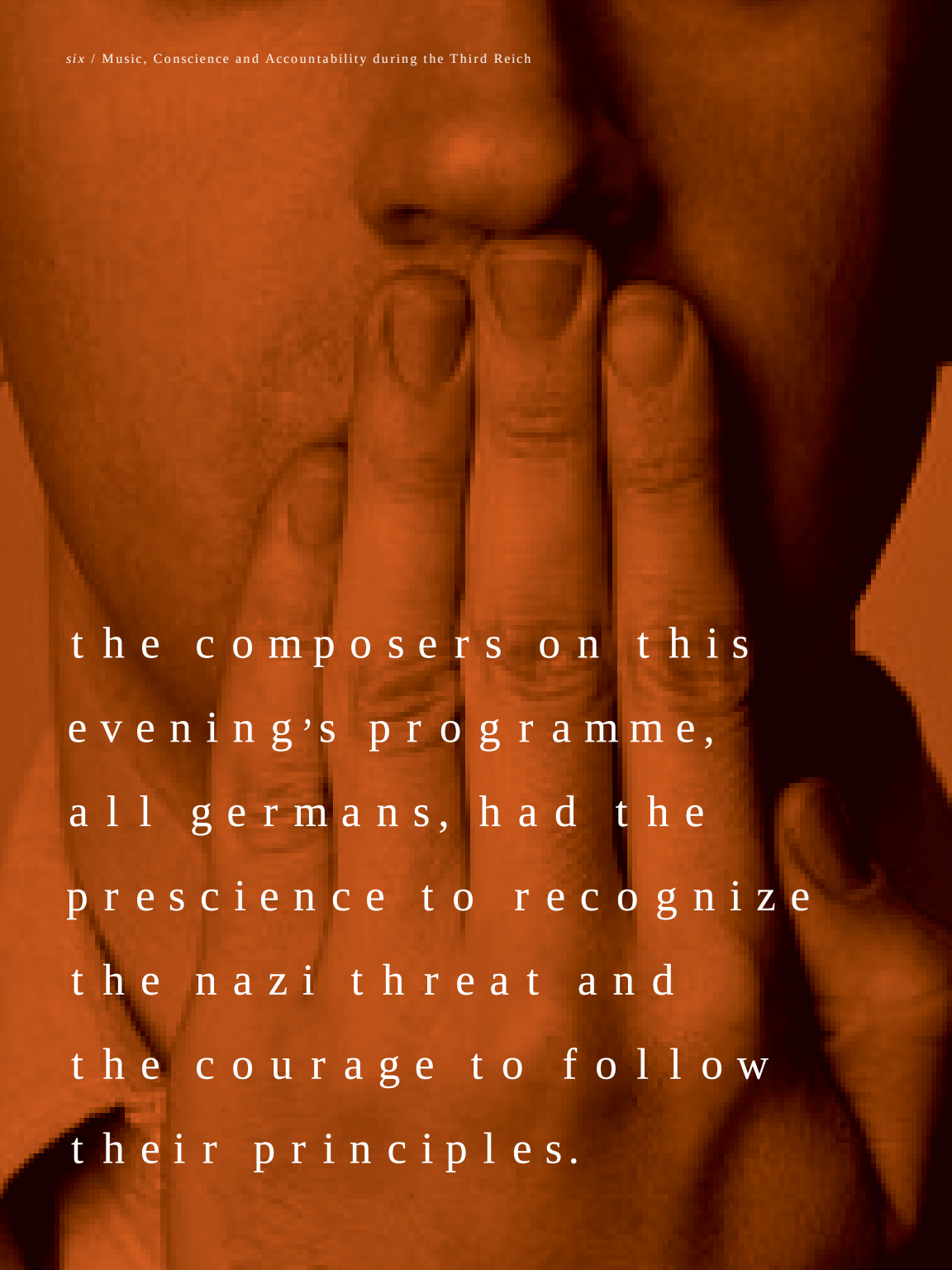


String Sextet in G major, op. 40
adolf busch [1891 – 1952]

Allegro
Molto adagio e cantabile
Presto
Allegro con spirito

Marie Bérard & Benjamin Bowman – violins,
Steven Dann & Carolyn Blackwell – violas,
Bryan Epperson & David Hetherington – cellos

The Busch Quartet



the composers on this evening's programme, all germans, had the prescience to recognize the nazi threat and the courage to follow their principles.

Music, Conscience and Accountability during the Third Reich

Do we need to judge an artist's ethics before we embrace their work? Richard Wagner's vicious anti-Semitism (infamously expressed in his essay *Das Judentum in der Musik* "Jewishness in Music," as well as in his autobiography, *Mein Leben*) was integrated into the dramaturgy of several of his operas – the evidence of this conscious overlay is now overwhelming – and yet we are still more than willing to accept his works as an integral part of our musical inheritance. In Israel there is a residual resistance to Wagner performances, not necessarily because of his anti-Semitism or its dramatic projection, but because Hitler co-opted his music as the Reich's rallying cry. Recently, in a much-publicized attempt to separate the composer from the man, the Israel Chamber Orchestra performed Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* in a programme that included works by Mendelssohn and Mahler. The venue: Bayreuth, the bosom of Wagner worship.

A miasma of anti-Semitism wafted through much of 19th century Europe, with casual barbs from composers such as Schumann, Chopin and Liszt. The good Lutheran J.S. Bach thought little of employing an anti-Semitic liturgy for the St John Passion and most of us think nothing of that now. Clearly this particular strand of moral shortcoming played little if any part in preventing their works from entering the musical canon, even less so in literature; witness

r i c h a r d
w a g n e r

the writings of Virginia Woolf, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Ernest Hemingway, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Graham Greene.

If we defer to Wagner's music and ignore the man, we must surely do the same for the morally scrupulous (although clearly good behaviour can never substitute for creative genius). So ultimately is it only the work that matters? While biographical information provides a context to a piece, is it a dispensable part of its appreciation? And if morals and ethics play no role in qualifying art, why then should we care how artists behave? Are we required to spend any time examining the actions or loyalties of specific musicians during the dozen years of the Third Reich's authority? Furthermore, is it even possible to measure accountability? And is it appropriate, given that these individuals are no longer alive and able to explain or defend their decisions?

Hindsight has a habit of derailing sound judgement, no more so than when one attempts to appraise the actions of those who choose compromise over some kind of self-sacrifice. At the best of times self-interest and the protection of one's family and livelihood are instinctive priorities. Our judgement is further clouded by a culture that urges us to create heroes and demons, and to ignore anything in-between. A nuanced view is anathema in a society that gravitates to oppositional extremes, and so we manufacture cartoon-like reductions: the sadist, the saint, the defiler, the rescuer, the victim, the conqueror. But German behaviour under the Nazis cannot only be defined at the farthest ends of a spectrum. This is not to excuse or ignore egregious conduct (several examples of which are discussed below) or to forswear criticism, but to caution against exaggeration: the creation of the "one good German," as the composer Karl Amadeus Hartmann has been labelled, or the damnation of *all* Germans, as Daniel Goldhagen suggests in *Hitler's Willing Executioners*.

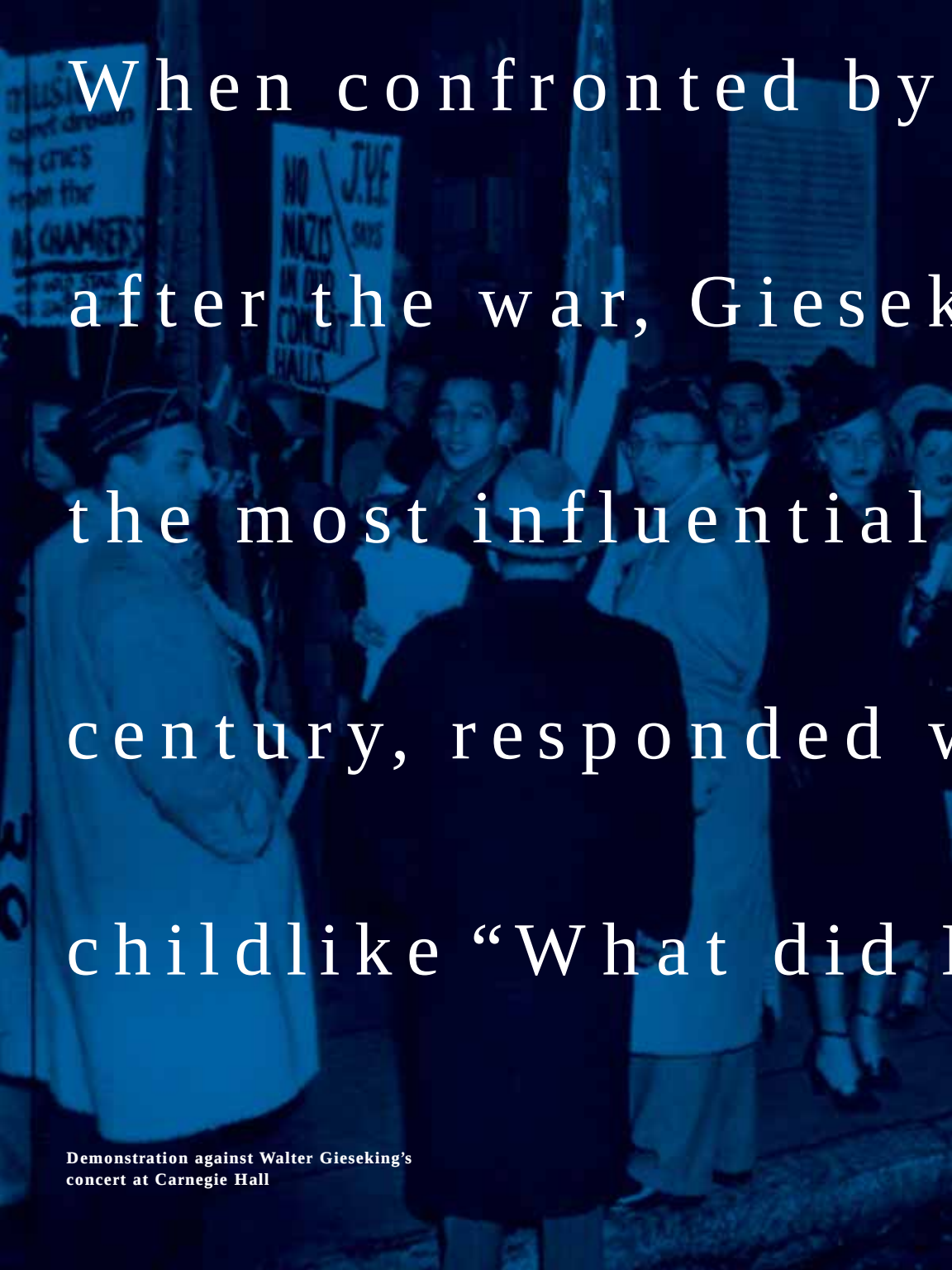
Attempts to determine degrees of collaboration and to apportion blame, generally render few conclusive answers, but rather reveal endless shades of grey. The producer and curator Michael Haas has pointed out to me that both Ernest Krenek, whose *Jonny Spielt Auf* was reviled by the Nazis, and Alma Mahler,

Faced with opportunity on the one hand and the risk of reprisal on the other, it is not entirely surprising that most German musicians of the 1930s chose something between compromise and complete capitulation.

the wife of one of the Nazis' most despised composers, reveal a bilious level of anti-Semitism in their respective memoirs and letters. Yet both had Jewish spouses, as did the operetta composer Franz Léhar, a favourite of Hitler, who remained in Germany and saw his wife's family taken off to the gas chambers. How does one begin to discuss responsibility, apportion blame or judge accountability when anti-Semitism weaves its way through society in so unpredictable and irrational a fashion?

With the rise of the NDSP, many Germans saw a chance of reversing the country's economic woes, re-establishing national pride and stifling Bolshevism. Others, both within and without Germany, considered Hitler no more than an hysterical nut – a temporary nuisance. But the NDSP's enthusiasm for culture, both as a means of defining and promoting German identity, and as a way of separating it from "foreign" influence – specifically the work of Jewish or partly-Jewish creative artists – became apparent early in its reign. Amongst musicians particularly, there was a growing sense that with increased subsidy and centralized support, their widespread unemployment might be ameliorated and an underfunded industry revitalized. Richard Strauss accepted the directorship of the newly-created *Reichmusikkammer* with this very much in mind, although within two years, his independence and his Jewish connections, both familial and professional (with the librettist Stefan Zweig), had soured Goebbels' view of him. By the mid-1930s, opportunities for musicians who were well-trained, talented and prepared to make political and moral concessions had increased considerably.

Faced with opportunity on the one hand and the risk of reprisal on the other, it is not entirely surprising that most German musicians of the 1930s chose something between compromise and complete capitulation – true altruism and heroism are rarities, particularly in times of economic hardship and political upheaval. Karlrobert Kreiten, a young pianist of enormous promise who performed throughout Germany and provoked comparison with Walter Gieseking, was hanged for listening to a BBC news broadcast and then sharing



Demonstration against Walter Gieseking’s concert at Carnegie Hall

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his criticism of Hitler with his landlady, who then promptly informed the Gestapo. Perhaps artists would have taken more risks had they known of the privations and brutality that were to come. While self-preservation is instinctive, self-interest is as powerfully seductive. One need only recall the stars who, happily broke the UN's cultural boycott and signed contracts to perform in South Africa during the apartheid years. Among them were Frank Sinatra, Freddie Mercury, Elton John, Linda Ronstadt, Julio Iglesias, Ray Charles, Boney M., Black Sabbath, Rod Stewart, Tina Turner and Dolly Parton. Not one could be described as a struggling artist.

To put self-sacrifice in context, it is worth examining how the careers of those prominent musicians who nurtured cordial relations with senior Reich officials developed after the war. The pianists Elly Ney and the aforementioned Walter Gieseking present two very good examples.

When confronted by allied interlocutors after the war, Gieseking, one of the most influential pianists of the last century, responded with almost childlike "What did *I* do?" protestations. He had served the Reich well, performed happily in occupied territories and fulfilled the regime's every request. An opportunist, a careerist and a fervent Nazi, Gieseking refused to play with Jewish artists and diligently signed his letters with the *Hitlergruß*. Yet when the de-Nazification committee attempted to clarify his political sympathies, he claimed that "it was difficult to tell who started the war," which, he opined, had largely been prosecuted "to fight communism." In any case, Gieseking claimed, his artistic status inoculated him from political enquiry. Although initially some of his post-war recitals were greeted with vociferous protests, notably in Australia and the US, where he was obliged to cancel a tour, Gieseking still managed to rehabilitate his career and reputation.

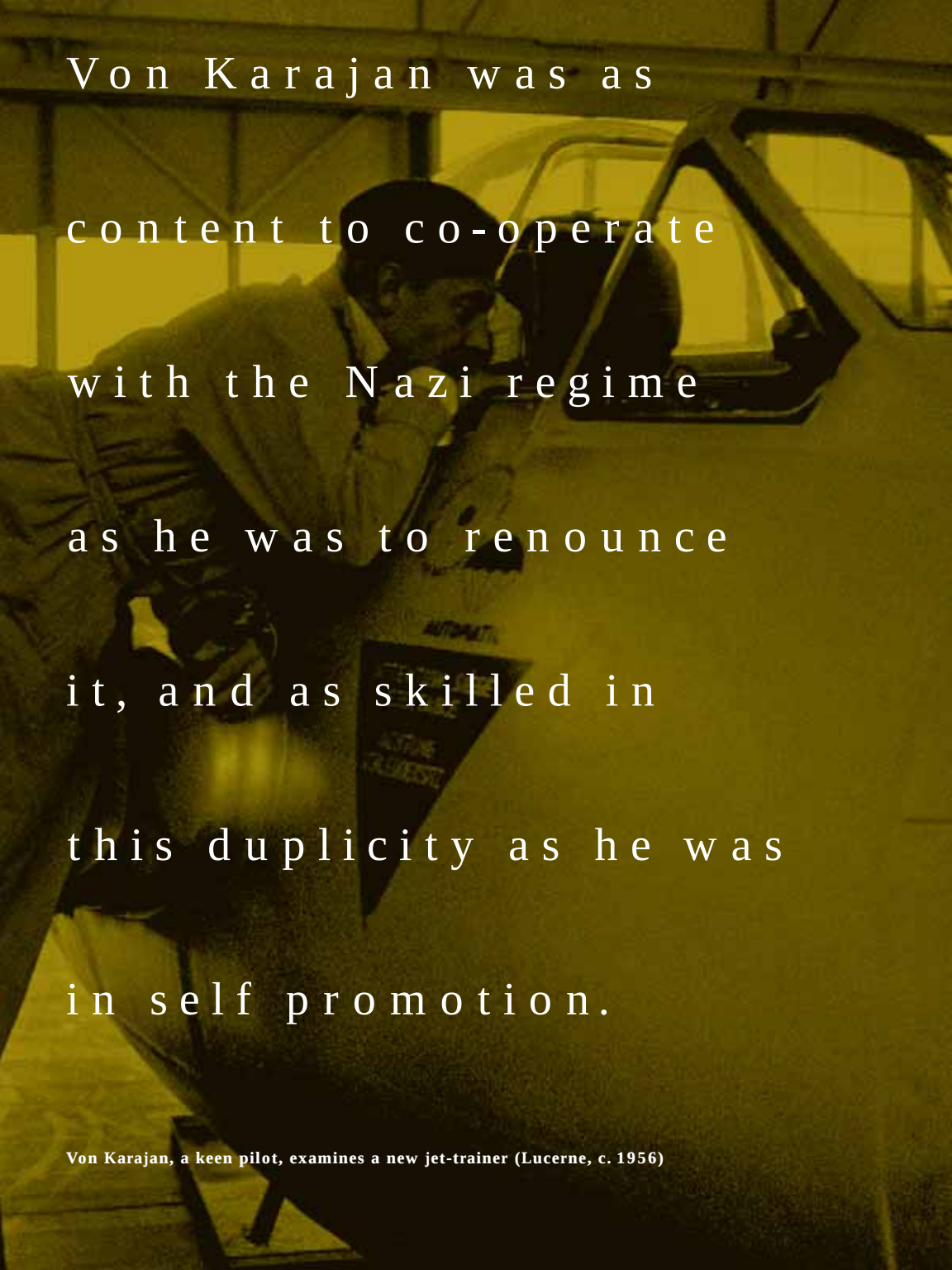
Elly Ney, a charismatic, leonine performer, and a particularly fine Beethoven interpreter, spent the Nazi years yearning for an opportunity to give a private recital for the Führer. Her dream was never fulfilled and she deeply envied Wilhelm Backhaus, who had enjoyed this particular honour. But Ney did manage

Elly Ney, a charismatic, leonine performer, and a particularly fine beethoven interpreter, spent the Nazi years yearning for an opportunity to give a private recital for the Führer.

to shake Hitler's hand, an encounter she later described as the apogée of her life. Her case is compelling because her commitment to National Socialism barely faltered after the war. Neither did her hatred of Jews. Although she ultimately renounced Hitler (in 1952!) declaring that the "Nazis had betrayed Germany," her true allegiance remained constant, even as her touring career gradually petered-out. It is more than a little depressing to note that her biography (on a website devoted to her life and the promotion of her recordings) conveniently skips over her devotion and sterling service to the Third Reich – a dedication so enthusiastic that she always preceded her concerts with a devotional peroration on the glories of National Socialism. Likewise, Gieseking's support for Hitlerism has largely been reconfigured into a sequence of unfortunate misunderstandings.

The story repeats itself with Herbert von Karajan, who was as content to co-operate with the Nazi regime as he was to renounce it, and as skilled in this duplicity as he was in self-promotion. He actually joined the party twice, the first time as early as 1933, when there was no professional need or urgency to do so. His conduct during the de-Nazification process was both charming and strategic. He asked for little, expressed his full support for the committee's work and offered to help in whatever way the authorities considered appropriate. Eventually his musical and political influence grew so powerful, that any enquiries into his past (which were met with misleading obfuscation) were simply overwhelmed by the might of the von Karajan promotional machine.
By his death in 1989 he was generally regarded as the twentieth century's most successful conductor. With assets of over 200 million dollars he was certainly its wealthiest.

His colleague, the soprano Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, remained tight-lipped about her party associations and her rôle as a leader of the Nazi Student League. She claimed that joining the Nazi Party was a *pro forma* action with no ulterior motive; that she was apolitical and that, quoting Tosca, she simply lived for her art – "Vissi d'arte." Variations on this rationalization were offered by the conductors Karl Böhm, Eugen Jochum, Hans Knappertsbusch and Wilhelm



Von Karajan was as content to co-operate with the Nazi regime as he was to renounce it, and as skilled in this duplicity as he was in self promotion.

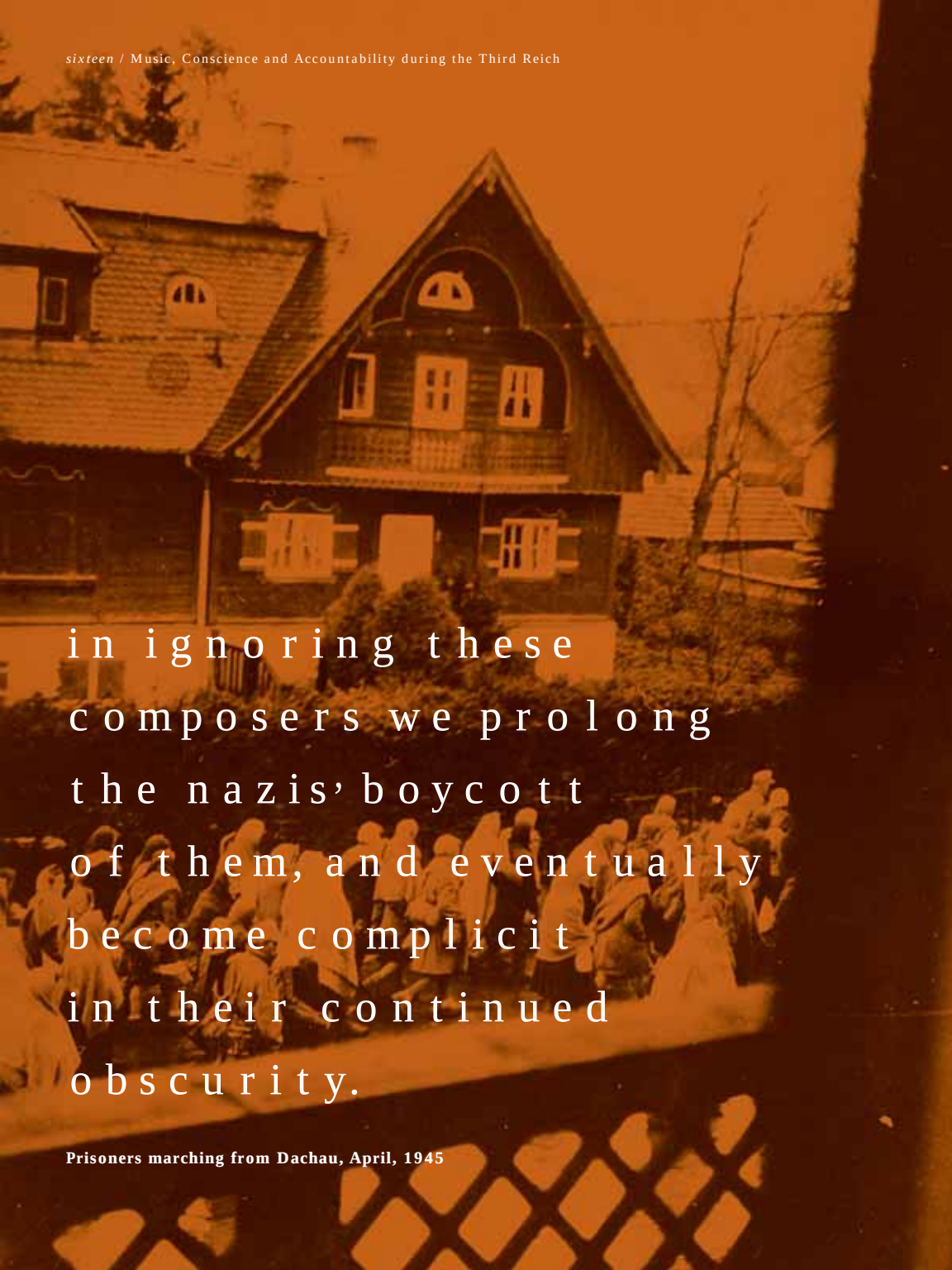
Von Karajan, a keen pilot, examines a new jet-trainer (Lucerne, c. 1956)

wilhelm
furtwängler

Furtwängler, the self-appointed curator and protector of German musical tradition. There was a raft of other less prominent musicians, teachers, critics and musicologists who soon rejoined institutions and schools in post-war Germany. Composers and fellow-travellers, some of whose works survived their tainted past, include Carl Orff, Hans Pfitzner, Rudolf Wagner-Régeny, Wolfgang Fortner and Cesar Bresgen.

The composers on this evening's programme, all Germans, all subject to the same temptations, had the prescience to recognize the Nazi threat and the courage to follow their principles. Heinz Tiessen, Karl Amadeus Hartmann and Adolf Busch made few compromises, but all three, to varying degrees, were marginalised after the war; their reputations diminished and, with the rise of the avant-garde, their works ultimately damned as reactionary. If there is any truth to the old adage that no good deed goes unpunished, their fates confirm it.

In ignoring these composers we prolong the Nazis' boycott of them, and eventually become complicit in their continued obscurity. Given that both the music industry and the musical public generally turned a blind eye to the actions and allegiances of former Nazis, surely we have an obligation to audition the works of those who had the backbone to resist the regime's temptations, not to mention the legacy of those who were obliged to flee Europe. We owe them this at least.



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Prisoners marching from Dachau, April, 1945

Composer Biographies

heinz tiessen

Heinz Tiessen was born in Königsberg, Eastern Prussia in 1887, now Kaliningrad and part of Russia (although separated from it by Poland and the Baltic states). In 1905 Tiessen graduated from the Allenstein Gymnasium, just south of his home-town and left for Berlin, where, at his father's behest he enrolled at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University to read law, switching to philosophy the following semester. He simultaneously registered at the Stern Conservatory, where Schoenberg had taught two years earlier. Tiessen studied composition with Philipp Rufer, theory with Wilhelm Klatte and conducting under Arno Kleffel. Among his contemporaries were the pianist Edwin Fischer and the conductor Otto Klemperer. Richard Strauss, conductor of the court and opera orchestras from 1908 to 1919 and one of Germany's most prominent composers, was central to Berlin's musical life and it was to Strauss that Tiessen dedicated his First Symphony in C, op.15 "as a token of respect and gratitude."

Despite early success, Tiessen did not fully commit to a composing career until May 1914 when he heard his one-movement Second Symphony *Stirb und Werde!* ("Die and Revive!") op.17, conducted by Hermann Abendroth. The symphony's title is drawn from Goethe's *Selige Sehnsucht* ("Blessed Longing"). Its genesis, and the compression and assimilation of a traditionally three- or

heinz tiessen

four-movement work into one, can be found in the Chamber Symphony, op. 9 (1906) by Arnold Schoenberg, a composer who fascinated Tiessen, although he never subscribed to serialism as a doctrine:

"*In spite of similarities of sound, I remain opposed to atonality as a fundamental denial of harmonic relationships, despite the fact that both systems have a certain tonal rapprochement. To me, even the most obscure harmonies and their concatenations, in terms of cadential logic, seem to have a potential for gradual expansion and development grouped around the tonic. As I see it, the interaction of tension and release is a fundamental law that is eternally valid, no matter how diverse the forms in which it is expressed, no matter how broad or narrow the range of harmonic tension latent in the style of the music or its author.*"
Heinz Tiessen in *Selbstzeugnis des Kunstlers,* an article in *Musica*

He came to regard the Second Symphony as his first legitimate work, dismissing his first sixteen opus numbers as juvenilia. The years 1911 to 1917 he henceforward described as his "first creative period." In addition to the Second Symphony, he produced the atmospheric *Amsel* (Blackbird) Septet, op. 20, and the *NaturTrilogie*, op. 18, a substantial work for solo piano (1913). Tiessen later wrote:

"*Today these would be considered uncontentious works – melodic, harmonic and by no means discordant – but forty years ago they would have been classified as advanced music by a conservative professional world that had some difficulties in following the music of Reger and Strauss. Except for a little linear flexibility and a flirtation with atonality, their style, quite unmistakably, derives from the tonal idiom of Richard Strauss. In fact I have learnt most of what I know from his works – from Don Juan to Ariadne – and from his wise and modest comments.*"
Heinz Tiessen in *Schaffen und Wirken in Wege eines Komponisten,* Berlin, 1962

Tiessen's direction of the socialist Junger Chor at the University of Berlin drew Nazi ire, as did his various connections with Jewish professionals, particularly the influential Leo Kestenberg…

Tiessen's works

During this first period Tiessen also contributed critical pieces to the *Allgemeine Musik Zeitung* and, from 1920 to 1922, worked as the resident composer for Berlin's newly constructed Volksbuhne, as well as for the Grosses Schauspielhaus. He wrote effective and dramatic incidental music for Sophocles' *Antigone*, Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, and Strindberg's *Advent* which were directed by luminaries such as Max Reinhardt, Louis Berger and Erich Engel. Tiessen conducted the Akademische Orchester, taught music theory and composition at the Berliner Musikhochschule from 1925 to 1945, and co-founded the German division of the ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music) in Berlin. In the 1920s he consolidated his reputation as one of the country's most promising new-music composers and later became a musical representative of the movement known as "Neue Sachlichkeit" (new objectivity, or dispassion), a reaction to the expressionism of the preceding years. This manifested itself in the visual arts, literature and architecture, as well as in Tiessen's two dramatic cantatas, *Ein Fruhlings-Mysterium*, op. 36 (1927), and *Aufmarsch*, op. 40, which he hoped would find a broader audience.

The NDSP were not impressed by Tiessen's artistic circle which included the critic Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, the conductor and new music enthusiast Hermann Scherchen, and the Jewish playwright Stefan Zweig (all of whom left Germany with Hitler's arrival). Nor did they approve of his involvement in the *Novembergruppe*, a group of socialist artists who hoped to repeat the cultural achievements of Germany's 1918 revolution. Tiessen's direction of the socialist Junger Chor at the University of Berlin drew Nazi ire, as did his various connections with Jewish professionals, particularly the influential Leo Kestenberg, onetime head of the Prussian Ministry of Culture's music section. All this put his job at the Hochschule in jeopardy, and although he was eventually allowed to remain, Tiessen lost the urge to compose and his works vanished from concert programmes. In 1933 his royalty income was one one-hundredth of the previous year's.

When Germany surrendered in 1945, Tiessen's untarnished reputation (and the

karl amadeus
hartmann

Reich's disapproval of him) made him a perfect candidate to join in the huge challenges of Berlin's cultural reconstruction. He directed the city's Konservatorium from 1946-1949 and headed the composition department of the Hochschule from 1955. His many students include the Romanian Sergiu Celibidache, who conducted the the Berlin Philharmonic after the war, the pianist and composer Eduard Erdmann, and Wolfgang Steffen, Josef Tal, Klaus Sonnenburg, Rolf Kuhnert and the Finn Erik Bergman. Tiessen died in 1971.

His *Zwei ernste Weisen* ("Two Serious Melodies") for viola and piano have their origins in movements of Tiessen's *Hamlet* and *Tötentanz* suites, incidental music for the theatre. The two pieces were reworked and published as *Elegie und Vision* in a version for violin and piano. The *Elegie*, which is essentially an extended introduction to the *Tötentanz*, opens with a theme that is harmonically ambiguous and emotionally unsettled, an example of the "flirtation with atonality" mentioned above. This chromaticism gradually melts away and the melody becomes more direct; the harmony more stable and purposeful. The main theme of the *Tötentanz*, while superficially innocent, has a chilling insistency that conjures up images of a scythe-wielding Death figure, crooked finger beckoning.

karl amadeus hartmann

Karl Amadeus Hartmann banned his music from German performance, a ban that lasted for the duration of the Reich. However he did encourage and organize the performance of his works in free-Europe. It was the 1934 premiere of his *Miserae* in Prague that precipitated his decision. In a perceptive essay on the precariousness of Hartmann's life (*Composers of the Nazi Era – Eight Portraits*), Michael Kater notes that the dedication to the memory of Dachau's early victims inscribed on the *Miserae* score could only have been known to the conductor Hermann Scherchen, and possibly one or two others. Had the *Reichsmusikkammer* been aware of it, the inscription would have been a death warrant. An unauthorized trip to Prague with its various communist conclaves was cause enough for Nazi displeasure.

As I see it, the interaction of tension and release is a fundamental law that is eternally valid, no matter how diverse the forms in which it is expressed…

A Collision Course

The son of a poor, left-wing family – his brother was an avowed communist – Hartmann was born in Munich in 1905, where he based himself for most of his life. His early musical interests incorporated jazz as well as dadaist and futurist elements, but integral to their amalgamation was the explicit aim of dissolving musical
and social barriers. His artistic convictions therefore "programmed [him] for a collision course with the National Socialist regime even before it came into being […]" (Michael Kater). A number of his compositions bear witness to his outrage. *Simplicius Simplicissimus,* an operatic allegory, describes the trials of an innocent – a sort of "anti-superman" – cast into an amoral world of violence and mendacity. The *Concerto Funèbre* for violin and strings is a lament on the start of hostilities, while the Symphony No. 1, *Versuch eines requiems* ("Attempt at a Requiem") begun in the mid-1930s, ultimately became a memorial to victims of the Holocaust.

But Hartmann's most immediate composition of the Nazi years, in terms of both its expression and its provenance, is the Piano Sonata 27 April 1945, written while he was living at his in-laws' bucolic summer villa in Kempfenhausen, southwest of Munich. As Allied forces approached Dachau, German troops frantically emptied the camp and the death march of 20,000 inmates proceeded past Hartmann's house. "Endless was the stream. Endless was the suffering. Endless was the misery." reads Hartmann's inscription on the Sonata manuscript.

The Carillon Quartet

Hartmann completed what would become the "Carillon" Quartet in 1934 and dedicated it to the influential conductor Hermann Scherchen, with whom he had a long and productive though highly problematic relationship. If the viola's opening lamentation is not a direct melodic quote, its Hebraic allusions are fairly explicit. But as one-by-one the other strings enter, the melody's anguish is subverted and random interjections transform its character into something more

Hartmann's artistic convictions programmed him for a collision course with the National Socialist regime.

Karl Amadeus Hartmann

By the end of the war Hartmann was one of a handful of composers whose reputation still remained wholly untainted by Nazi association.

ominous. In contrast, the relentless dance-like section which follows is strongly defiant and shares the pungent Eastern European flavours of Bartók and Kodály. The middle movement, labelled simply *con sordino* (with mute), is the quartet's most impassioned and questioning. The opening elegiac cello solo now actually quotes a Jewish folk-tune, a consciously subversive act and nothing short of a finger to Nazi authority. It is interrupted by a strange, serpentine melody played near the bridge (*ponticello*), and another equally curious folk-tune. The questioning figure returns and concludes in a whisper. The Finale recollects the thematic material and the *Alla Ungarese* quality of the opening movement. It is in essence a rondo that alternates an obstinate rhythm (which incorporates aggressive glissandi and pizzicati) with more introverted polyphonic passages.

The quartet was premiered in 1936 at the Gesselschaft für Zeitgenössische Kammermusik in Geneva and performed by the Hungarian String Quartet, then led by the 24-year-old Sandor Végh. The work had been entered into the city's "Carillon" competition and the jury, of Gian Francesco Malipiero, Ernest Ansermet and Albert Rousell, awarded it the first prize. Although Hartmann had written many pieces before this first quartet, it was his habit to revisit, recast and recompose his works. Towards the end of his life he gave the "Carillon" Quartet the opus number one.

Post-War

By the end of the war Hartmann was one of a handful of composers whose reputation still remained wholly untainted by Nazi association. OMGUS (the US Military Government in Germany) invited him to assume the directorship of the Bavarian State Opera, but admitting his lack of experience, he took the job of dramaturge. The highly successful Musica Viva Concerts, which he established and programmed just after the war, were broad and open-minded in their choice of repertoire, promoting modernists and the *entartete* composers forbidden by the Nazis, as well as traditional works. But ultimately Hartmann's success was

karl böhm

thwarted on two fronts: firstly by the post-war avant-garde establishment who regarded his music as regressive, and secondly by former Nazi sympathizers who had insinuated their way into positions of authority (conductors like Herbert von Karajan and Karl Böhm for example) and then diligently avoided programming any works by composers of whom they disapproved or who might remind them of their disparate loyalties. Although his own musical legacy still awaits a broader listenership, Hartmann's teaching influence has been warmly acknowledged by composers such as Hans Werner Henze.

While Hartmann's principled decision to remove himself from the world of German music was as admirable as it was unusual, his stand needs to be placed in context. Hartmann's father-in-law owned a factory that produced ball-bearings which contributed substantially to the Nazi war machine. Despite some foreign success, Karl Hartmann's earnings plummeted during the war years and in order to sustain his wife and family, he, like thousands of others, had little choice but to accept a tainted subsidy.

adolf busch

Busch's reaction to Nazism and its racial ideology was not simply one of moral revulsion. That the well of German culture, so profound in its philosophy, history and learning – and he one of its more famous musical ambassadors – could be fouled by a polity so insidious and inglorious, both embarrassed and shamed him:

"*[Adolf's] sense of shame was difficult for an onlooker to witness. We were all in this chaotic mess, without future and facing every imaginable difficulty. We were the persecuted but he felt responsible. He was ashamed to be a German.*"

Maltschi Serkin, as quoted in *Artists in Exile*, Joe Horowitz

Busch was tall, strong-jawed, blonde; an Aryan who embodied all the finest characteristics of the German string tradition. "Unser Deutsche violinist",

"Endless was the stream. Endless was the suffering. Endless was the misery" reads Hartmann's inscription on the Sonata manuscript.

declared Hitler. With this proud expression of ownership is the implicit relief that Busch was not Jewish, unlike so many of Germany's virtuosi (although ironically it was Joachim, a Jew, who represented Busch's violinistic ideal). Busch's repertoire concentrated on the core Austro-German tradition, including not only all the major violin concertos and sonatas but most of the chamber repertoire as well. His playing deferred *a priori* to the composer and embodied an elegance, restraint and intelligence; qualities which made the teenage virtuoso Rudolf Serkin a natural choice as a recital partner.

Busch's immediate family was intensely musical. His father was a well-regarded violin maker and instrument repairer, and his siblings were all exceptionally accomplished: Adolf's brother Fritz (1890-1951) became one of the twentieth century's major conductors and the artistic force behind the creation of Glyndebourne; Willi (1893-1951), a Shakespearean actor; Hermann (1897-1975) a cellist and member of the Busch String Quartet; and Heinrich (1900-1929) a pianist and composer. Adolf was born in 1891 in Siegen, Westphalia, the birthplace of Peter Paul Rubens, and was enrolled at the Cologne Conservatory (75 km to the west) at the age of 11. Here he studied the violin with Willy Hess and Bram Eldering, both disciples of Joseph Joachim (the dedicatee of Brahms' violin concerto), while Fritz Steinbach, another distinguished Brahmsian, taught Busch conducting and composition.

Early Success

By 1912, at the age of 21, Busch was leading the Konzertverein Orchestra in Vienna under Ferdinand Löwe. From this august ensemble was born the Wiener Konzertvereins-Quartett, which Busch led until the outbreak of war. By 1918 he was teaching the violin at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, where he took over from the French virtuoso Henri Marteau.

During the 1920s and early 1930s Busch became one of Europe's most sought-after soloists, performing with all the major orchestras and conductors in a fearsome schedule of almost continuous, back-to-back concerts; he played

adolf busch

the Beethoven concerto at least four-hundred times during this period (not counting open rehearsals which were German practice). Furthermore, these engagements were complemented by tours with the Busch Quartet, which had re-formed after WWI. Busch earned a reputation for readings that possessed not just a wonderfully judged sense of musical line and architecture but, as the critic and music historian Tully Potter has observed, a stylistic sensibility that within the context of *Werktreue* (faithfulness to the original text) always admitted a charm and geniality. The Busch Quartet's extraordinary recordings of Beethoven's string quartets remain a vital legacy.

"Busch never confused being serious with being solemn. He started with an attitude of complete fidelity to the score, but this was only the beginning. A Busch journey through the great Bach solo violin Chaconne, or the fugue of Beethoven's C Sharp Minor quartet, would become a search, a pilgrimage in which the music emerged as if it were being composed on the spot. He saw, with complete honesty and directness, right into the heart of Beethoven's musical intentions. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the B flat quartet, with its kaleidoscopic changes of mood ranging from the angry to the fantastical, from the humorous to the sublime."

Liner notes to the original LP issue of Beethoven's Quartet op. 130, Tully Potter

Exile

Busch's refusal to replace the two Jewish members of his ensemble with Aryans, and his dismissive attitude to the *Reichsmusikkammer* and the Nazi status quo did not augur well – at a concert in Stuttgart in 1933, he publicly admonished an audience member for giving the Hitler salute. The swift arrival of anti-Semitic statutes, and specifically the attacks on Jewish businesses, which he witnessed first-hand in Berlin on April 1st, 1933, led him to cancel all his German concerts and to publicly renounce the Nazi regime. He was stripped of his citizenship shortly thereafter. While Adolf Busch based himself in Basel, in

The swift arrival of anti-Semitic statutes, and specifically, the attacks on Jewish businesses, which he witnessed first-hand in Berlin on April 1st, 1933, led him to cancel all his German concerts and to publicly renounce the Nazi regime.

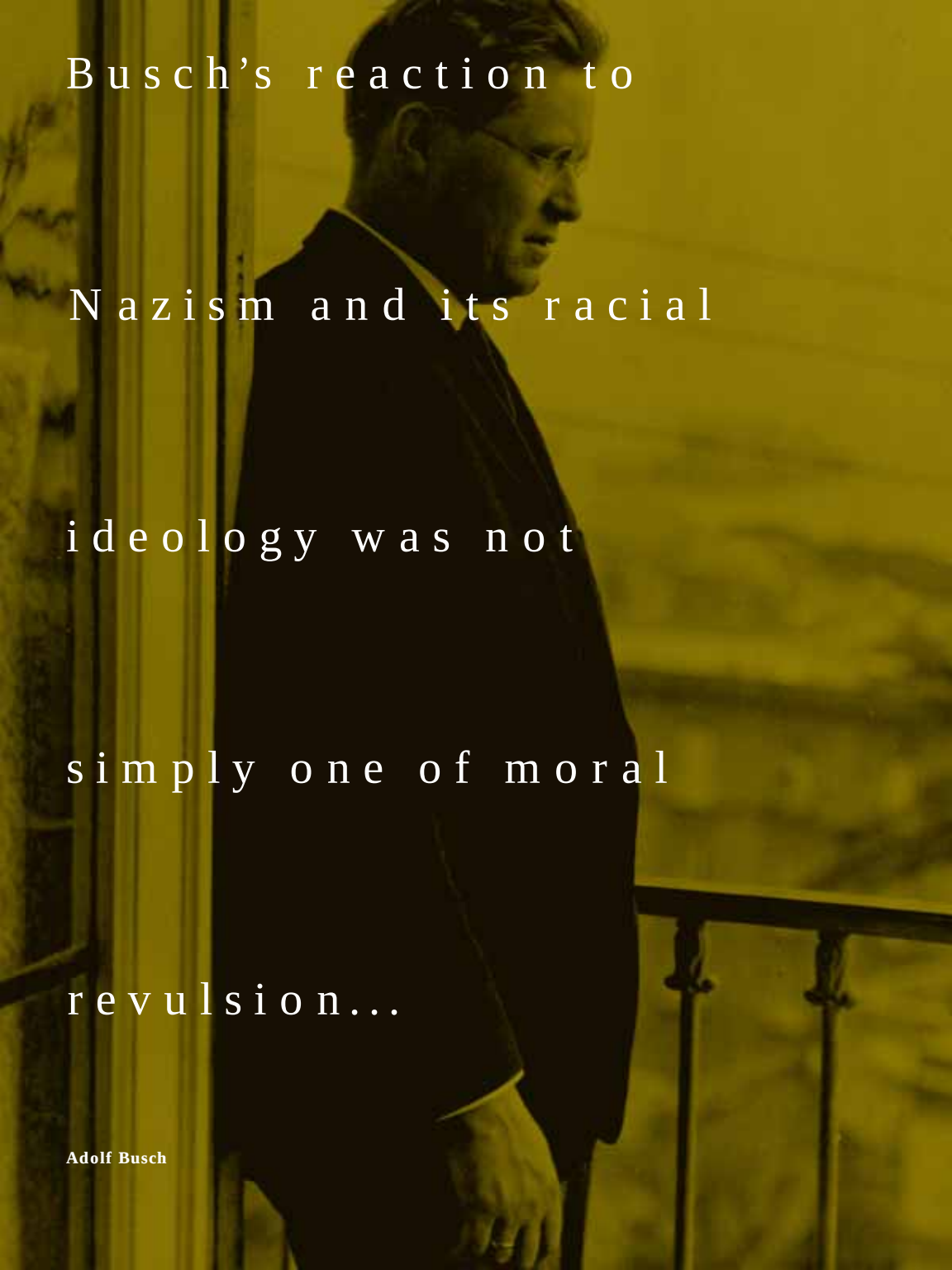
neutral Switzerland, his brother Fritz, not quite as incorruptible, left a short time later and went on to develop a career at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, and in England, where he conducted the first Glyndebourne productions.

Busch's stand cost him at least half his annual income, a figure further reduced by his subsequent boycott of Italy and, with the *Anschluss*, Austria. While rare, it was not unique – Erich Kleiber also abandoned Germany very early on – but the speed of his decision and his public denouncement of the regime were exceptional.

In the mid-1930s, he organized the Busch Chamber Players, a conductorless orchestra that gave performances of Bach and Mozart, and included musicians such as the flautist Marcel Moyse; his son the flautist and pianist Louis; Louis's wife, the violinist Blanche Moyse Honegger; cellist Henri Honegger, and conductor August Wenzinger. In 1939, just prior to the outbreak of war, Busch immigrated to the US, eventually settling in Vermont. He was known in the US as a chamber musician and recitalist, rather than a concerto soloist, and his programmes eschewed the virtuoso showpieces so beloved of players of the Jewish-Russian tradition, Heifetz and Milstein for example. He found the commercialism of American musical life both foreign and distasteful: the pressure to perform in large halls in order to generate maximum compensation, when the music itself demanded intimacy. His major contribution to American music was the establishment of the Marlboro Music School and Festival, which he founded with Rudolf Serkin (who had married Busch's daughter Irene in 1935).

A heart attack in 1940 was the first in a series of health problems that limited his performances throughout the next decade. In 1951 he returned to Germany for a series of concerts and although another major tour was planned for the following year, his poor health forced a premature retirement. He died suddenly at his home in Vermont on June 9, 1952.

While Busch's playing is widely available on recordings, his compositions remain largely unknown. His output was massive, especially so given his performing schedule: orchestral works, including three symphonies and



Busch's reaction to Nazism and its racial ideology was not simply one of moral revulsion...

Adolf Busch

Busch's refusal to replace the two Jewish members of his ensemble with Aryans, and his dismissive attitude to the Reichsmusikkammer and the Nazi status quo did not augur well.

a Concerto for Orchestra, concerti for violin, piano and cello, a quintet for saxophone and strings, a flute quintet, a piano quartet, a glorious early Divertimento and an array of chamber and vocal music, pieces often composed in-between engagements, on trains or boats or in hotel rooms. While his language has its roots in the polyphony of J.S. Bach and the music of the late nineteenth century – Brahms in particular – Max Reger was a critical influence in Busch's development as a composer. Their relationship began when the 17-year-old Busch visited the composer and played (from memory) his terrifyingly difficult violin concerto. The two went on to perform widely as a duo.

Busch's String Sextet

Busch's Sextet, his only essay in the genre, was composed in 1928 and revised in 1933. Like all his string works the piece is perfectly idiomatic. Its challenges lie in a polyphonic density and complexity that demand transparency, instrumental balance and a clear separation of musical strands. It is a work written by a virtuoso violinist and composer for an equally expert ensemble. The piece opens with a phrase of Brahmsian yearning but Busch, irresistibly drawn to contrapuntal exploration, soon embarks on a remarkable series of musical expeditions. Like all great contrapuntists, Busch uses his gifts to heighten or relax musical tension, employing devices such as stretto (the premature arrival of another fugal voice) and unanticipated key changes. While one is tempted to summon Brahms as a progenitor of the *Adagio molto e cantabile*, the manner in which Busch's ravishing melodies unspool is altogether original, as is the fugato *Presto* movement: fleet, scintillating, full of charm and wit. But it is in the finale *Allegro con spirito* that the full power of Busch's technique reveals itself. In its swerving harmonic and rhythmic complexity, his use of fugue and counterpoint is not only breathtaking but seemingly inevitable.

The ARC Ensemble

The ARC Ensemble

cultural ambassadors

The ARC Ensemble (Artists of the Royal Conservatory) is the institution's ensemble-in-residence. It comprises The Glenn Gould School's senior faculty, together with special guests that include its most exceptional students and graduates. The ensemble collaborates with a wide range of artists, tours internationally and is not only the institution's flagship ensemble but an important cultural ambassador for Canada.

The ensemble plays a leading role in unearthing repertoire that has been ignored due to political changes or shifts in musical fashion, particularly works that were lost because of the upheavals of World War II. The ARC Ensemble has received accolades from most of the world's major music journals and magazines.

ARC's first two CDs, recorded on the Sony Masterworks label, *On the Threshold of Hope* and *Right Through the Bone*, were nominated for Grammy Awards in the category of Best Chamber Music Recording. *Two Roads to Exile*, the ensemble's third CD, which is devoted to string works by Adolf Busch and Walter Braunfels, was released in 2010 to exceptional reviews. The ARC Ensemble's recordings are played on networks around the world, and ARC's performances have been broadcast on CBC, National Public Radio in the US and on public radio in Europe, Poland and Hungary.

ARC's "Music in Exile" series, which explores the music of composers whose lives and careers were changed forever by the Holocaust and World War II, has been presented to huge critical acclaim in New York, London, Budapest, Toronto and, most recently, in Israel, a major project that involved collaborations with Tel Aviv University, Mishkenot Sha'ananim and the Jerusalem Cinematheque. The "Music in Exile" series has led to concerts at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and performances in Rome, Sweden and Poland. Highlights this season have included concerts at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and the Ravinia Festival. Upcoming appearances include performances in Canada, the US, Germany and the UK, including the ensemble's debut at the Wigmore Hall.

James Conlon is the ARC Ensemble's Honorary Chairman; its artistic director is Simon Wynberg.

www.arcensemble.com

the arc ensemble is indebted to the following foundations and individuals for their generous support:

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The Albert & Temmy Latner Family Foundation
Austin and Nani Beutel
James D. & Margaret E. Fleck
Nancy Pencer
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Gerald Sheff and Shanitha Kachan
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further reading:

Joe Horowitz, *Artists in Exile*

Elizabeth Janik, *Recomposing German Music: Politics and Tradition in Cold War Berlin*

Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and their Music in the Third Reich*

Michael H. Kater, *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits*

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David Monod, *Settling scores: German Music, Denazification, & the Americans, 1945-1953*

Tully Potter, *Adolf Busch: The life of an Honest Musician*

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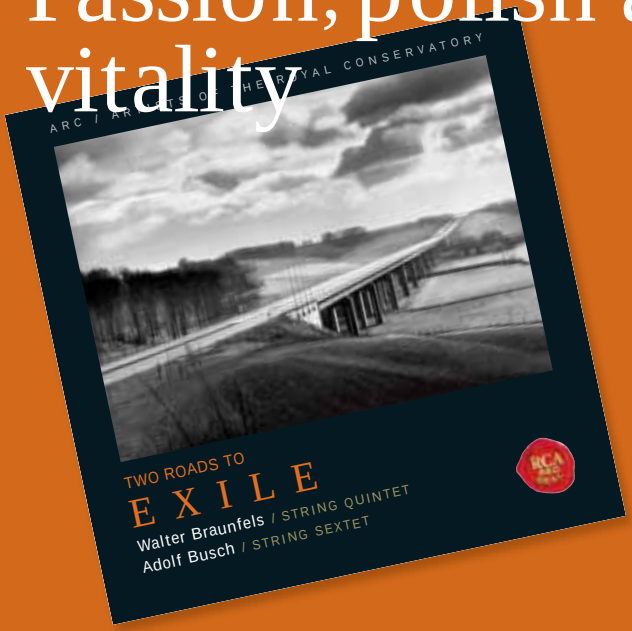

The ARC Ensemble's third recording, Two Roads to Exile

Featuring two major discoveries for strings by Adolf Busch and Walter Braunfels, Two Roads to Exile is the ARC Ensemble's third release for Sony Masterworks (on the RCA Red Seal label). The ensemble's first two releases were both nominated for Grammy awards.

"The ARC Ensemble plays with fierce conviction"
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