



WEST COAST REPORT

L. A.'s "Most Likely to Succeed"

HOLLYWOOD BOWL, now nearing the brim of its thirty-fourth season, has been a focus of especial interest this summer for those Angelenos to whom music is something more than a coefficient of cooling breezes in a pleasantly sylvan setting. No undue credit for this need be given to the programs which, eye to turnstiles, have hewn stolidly to a weatherworn repertoire, embellished by interludes devoted to such frontier enthusiasms as squaredancing and the coonskinned glamour of Davy Crockett.

What lifts the present season above the ordinary is the element of speculation attending the podium appearance of this summer's several guest conductors, a development intensified by the announcement last June that the end of the 1955-56 season would find the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in the market for a new musical director to succeed the resigning Alfred Wallenstein. This is the first time in twelve years that symphony-goers have been in a position to scrutinize any visiting conductor with an eye to a permanent position, and it has stimulated a conjectural buzz not paralleled in this city since the pregnant hours that preceded D-Day.

Among the names that bubble to the surface most frequently in musical gatherings are those of Eduard van Beinum and Georg Solti, both of whom were heard during the opening weeks of the season, and both of whom are contracted for further appearances with the orchestra during the coming winter. Mr. Solti, who since 1952 has been musical director of the Frankfurt Opera, was first heard here in the fall of 1953, when he won the instant affection of operagoers with his brilliant handling of several of the repertoire's more prickly items. A subsequent span of symphonic conducting at Hollywood Bowl last summer, however, left some of his most ardent partisans with their enthusiasm faintly tempered, and the present season's two opening concerts found him bringing no more than a literal approach to standard material that was curiously at variance with the virility of his operatic showing. Some considerable part of this may have been due to the orchestra, which like all orchestras has its own dark, unfathomable moods, and which seemed determined on this occasion to give Mr. Solti no

quarter. Hollywood Bowl, of course, is scarcely the place to judge of any conductor's prowess, since only the bolder outlines of any musical reading are preserved across the reaches of the amphitheatre's 20,000-seat acreage.

The same, of course, goes for Mr. van Beinum, with the difference that his not inconsiderable qualities are already well known to many of us through recordings, and that the baton which has successfully conjured with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw was able to wreak an instant and salutary effect upon the Los Angeles ensemble. By the end of his four concerts, antebellum Angelenos who remember Otto Klemperer's distinguished regnum here were visibly heartened. Even those most persuaded of Van Beinum's musical gifts felt some misgivings over his espousal of so many Mengelbergian dramatic artifices, however.

A vacant podium, of course, does not mean that every visiting conductor who crosses it briefly is interested in taking up a permanent stance thereon. His audience, for all this, is apt to eye him as purposefully as a parent with seven marriageable daughters, and this intent scrutiny has been the common portion of such further summertime visitors as Izler Solomon, Enrique Jorda, Leonard Bernstein, Carlos Chavez, and Erich Leinsdorf.

But whether any or all of the summer's visitors might be persuaded to take up permanent residence in the City of the Angels is a question not likely to be answered before next year, if then. Van Beinum, especially, would appear to be comfortably occupied between his Concertgebouw chores and his continuing affiliation with the London Philharmonic. On the other hand, Southern California is able to offer any conductor such inducements as an attractive salary, an attractive climate, and a wealth of fine instrumentalists.

At the moment, local odds are being offered on Van Beinum, but there is still a winter season ahead, and one that will bring William Steinberg here for a concert pair early in February. The ardency felt here in musical circles toward Pittsburgh's Promethean little maestro has reached epic proportions at times, and his visit to the Philharmonic Orchestra—his first in a dozen winters—is certain to have provoking consequences. Meanwhile, Los Angeles ponders her problem of succession.

—MILDRED NORTON.

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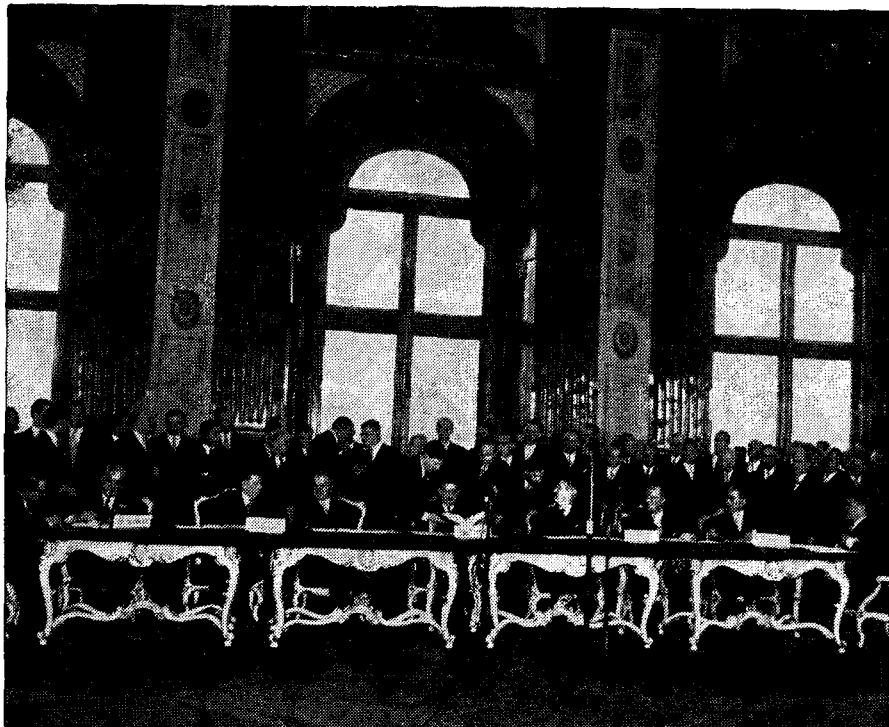
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—Acme.

The Austrian treaty-signing (May 15)—“after the F sharp major chords . . . only silence.”

FAREWELL SYMPHONY

The Austro-American Radio

By H. C. ROBBINS LANDON

THE PROPAGANDA of an occupying military power is seldom welcomed by the defenseless populace of the country in question; and this was especially true of Austria, whose long-promised freedom was ten full years in the making. From 1945 to 1955 she had four occupying powers with which to contend, and that she preserved friendly relations with all four was sometimes difficult, in view of the crude propaganda measures which, for example, the Russians used to woo the Austrian people. In these circumstances it is a pleasure to report the overwhelming success of the Austro-American radio, “Rot-Weiss-Rot” (the national colors), which broadcast its final program on July 27.

European radio stations are almost without exception (Luxemburg is one) state-owned and state-controlled. The Russians were the first to arrive in Vienna in 1945, and they promptly took over the direction of Radio Vienna, popularly known as “Ravag.” In the succeeding years the Austrian Government gradually assumed control of its radio, but the Russians insisted on reserving the

most popular hours of the day for their own programs, a source of constant annoyance to the Government and, more especially, to the listeners. “This Is the Russian Hour” was the occasion of thousands of radios clicking into silence. The Viennese, who are good-natured and easygoing, were not furious; they were simply bored to death by the droning Russian propaganda that emerged from their loudspeakers.

When the Americans arrived in Western Austria they took over Radio Salzburg and Radio Linz, to which, shortly afterwards, was added a Viennese station. These three were joined in a network which was given the title “Red-White-Red”; their call-signal (no one seems to remember who was the originator of this brilliant idea) was the first few notes of the “Blue Danube” Waltz, and their mission, briefly, was to provide Austria with a free, democratic radio run on American principles. “Red-White-Red,” though it was supported by American funds, was never a rich network, and so the program officers had to make up in ingenuity what they lacked in money. They hired young and unknown artists and made them famous. Their technicians were

often magicians, working with outmoded equipment and contacting each other with old German Army field telephones. I can remember an elegant broadcast of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in Salzburg in which the technician’s only contact with the studio was through one of these dilapidated instruments.

IN THE course of the years a number of innovations was introduced. Austrian charm was wedded to American efficiency: charm in the tones of the speaker, in his way of presentation; efficiency in the fact that programs started and finished on time (something unheard of in the Austrian State Radio). The staff operated as a team, and anyone who had a good idea could voice it at one of the program meetings. Out of these ideas often came brilliant programs. All sorts of American programs appeared, cleverly made Austrian by one or another small detail. “Radio Family,” a sort of high-grade soap opera, achieved enormous success. “Radio Parliament,” a forum in which the listeners can say what they think, was a purely American idea which fascinated the Austrians. Altogether, “Red-White-Red” became the favorite station of the man in the street: he knew that it was a democratic institution, where his opinion counted. And if he wrote a letter, objecting to this or that program, his letter would be answered; and very likely he might be invited to participate in the next open forum.

Classical music (*i.e.*, the entire Salzburg Festival) was balanced by lighter fare and by jazz. Of course, American composers and conductors were represented, but never rammed down the listener’s throat; a Barber symphony or a Copland overture was always sandwiched in between Mozart or Schubert, and a Haydn quartet would often pave the way for Bernstein or Menotti. In sharp contrast to the programs of the State Radio, which in all fairness are badly organized and for the most part dull, “Red-White-Red”’s average day moved swiftly and smoothly. One program, in which current events were sharply criticized (bad movies and silly politics alike came under the hammer), reached such popularity that the State Radio may be forced to take it over. The RWR news broadcasts—there were over twice as many as on any other station—were models of compact reporting, and all through the dark era of American witch-hunting RWR miraculously managed to stay aloof, continuing its matter-of-fact presentation of current events the world over. It did not take long for the “Blue Danube” call-signal to reach almost every home throughout