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**Bruno Walter**

## Polydor Acoustics Vol. 2 - Overtures

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**Bruno Walter** (September 15, 1876 – February 17, 1962), born near Alexanderplatz in Berlin to a middle-class Jewish family as Bruno Schlesinger, 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. However, following visits to one of Hans von Bülow's concerts in 1889 and to Bayreuth in 1891, he changed his mind and decided upon a conducting career. 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 idolized and with whose music he later became strongly identified.

In 1896, Schlesinger took a conducting position at the opera house in Breslau – a job found for him by Mahler. The conductor recorded that the director of this theater, Theodor Lowe, required that before taking up this position he change his name of Schlesinger, which literally means Silesian, "because of its frequent occurrence in the capital of Silesia", although other sources attribute the change to a desire to make his name sound less Jewish. (Note: It is often stated that Walter was his middle name and he merely dropped the surname Schlesinger. This is not true; he had no middle name and "Walter" had never been one of his names.) In 1897, he took an opera-conducting position at Pressburg, and in 1898 he took one at the Riga Opera, Latvia. Then Walter 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 neue Hainrich* 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 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 Tchaikovsky's *The Wreckers* at Covent Garden, and in Rome. A few months after Mahler's death in 1911, Walter led the first performance of *Das Lied von der Erde* in Munich, as well as Mahler's *Symphony No. 9* in Vienna the next year.

Although Walter became an Austrian citizen in 1911, he left Vienna to become the Royal Bavarian Music Director in Munich in 1913. In January of the following year Walter conducted his first concert in Moscow. During the First World War he remained actively involved in conducting, giving premieres to Erich Wolfgang Korngold's *Violanta* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen* as well as Hans Pfitzner's *Palestrina*. In 1920 he conducted the premiere of Walter Braunfels' *Die 14 Tage*.

Walter ended his Munich appointment in 1922 and left for New York in 1923, working with the New York Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall; he later conducted in Detroit, Minnesota and Boston. Back in Europe, Walter was re-engaged for several appointments, including Berlin in 1925 as musical director at the Stadtsche Opera, Charlottenburg, and in Leipzig in 1929. He made his debut at La Scala in 1926. In London, Walter was chief conductor of the German seasons at Covent Garden from 1924 to 1931.

In his speeches in the late 1920s, Nazi leader Adolf Hitler complained bitterly about the presence of Jewish conductors at the Berlin opera, and mentioned Walter a number of times, adding to Walter's name the phrase, "alias Schlesinger". In 1933, when the Nazis took power, they undertook a systematic process of barring Jews from artistic life.

While rehearsing Mahler 9 with the Berlin Philharmonic, Nazis entered the theater to take Walter. The orchestra hurried the maestro out the back door. He left for Austria and did not see his family for 5 years. Later, when listening to a playback of the first movement, principal players of The Columbia Symphony were ushered out of the booth as Walter began to weep. After the door was closed, the musicians were told, "Gentlemen, you must excuse him. This was the place in the symphony when the Nazis entered the hall. He was smuggled out the back door and didn't see his family for 5 years." [Notes from Wikipedia, continued online](#)

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## Polydor Acoustics Volume 2 - Overtures

Beethoven *Coriolan*  
Cherubini *Wasserträger*  
Schumann *Manfred*  
Mendelssohn *Hebrides*  
Wagner *Faust*  
Berlioz *Benvenuto Cellini*

Berlin State Opera Orchestra  
conductor **Bruno Walter**

Studio recordings, 1923-25  
Transfers by Ward Marston

## Walter Polydor Acoustics, Vol. 2

1 BEETHOVEN *Coriolan Overture* (7:52)

Recorded 1 August 1923  
Matrices 73az and 74 az; Polydor 65928

2 CHERUBINI *Der Wasserträger - Overture* (10:08)

Recorded 1 January 1924  
Matrices 647 az and 648az; Polydor 66073

3 SCHUMANN *Manfred Overture* (10:24)

Recorded 1 March 1925  
Matrices 1836 1/2 as 1837as; Polydor 66074

4 MENDELSSOHN *Die Hebriden Overture (Fingal's Cave)* (9:25)

Recorded 1 August 1923  
Matrices 82 1/2 az and 83az; Polydor 65930

5 WAGNER *Faust Overture* (12:33)

Recorded 1 August 1923  
Matrices 1519as, 71az and 72az; Polydor 65955/56

6 BERLIOZ *Benvenuto Cellini - Overture* (11:12)

Recorded 1 January 1924  
Matrices 621 1/2 az, 622az, and 623az; Polydor 66075/76

**Berlin State Opera Orchestra Bruno Walter**

Transfers and remastering by  
**Ward Marston**

Cover artwork based on a 1912  
photograph of **Bruno Walter**

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Total duration: **61:34**

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