



ORCHESTRA OF EXILES is an April, 2014 LVCA dvd donation to the Hugh Stoupe Memorial Library in the Heritage United Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pennsylvania.

United States / Canada / Germany / Hungary / Poland / France / Palestine / Israel
1930s, 1940s, 2011-2012 color / black-and-white 85 minutes live action
feature docudrama Aronson Films / First Run Features Producers: Nina Krstic,
Avraham Pirchi, Chilik Michaeli, Vincent Mai, Anne Mai, Dorit Straus

14 of a possible 20 points

1/2 of a possible **

Key: *indicates outstanding technical achievement or performance

(j) indicates juvenile performer

Points

- Film Director: Josh Aronson
- 2 Film Editors: Nancy Kennedy, Pietro Gallo
- 1 Photographers: Ammon Zlayet, Nitay Netzler, Paul Sanderson,
Daniel Kedem, Josh Aronson, Ziv Berkovitz, Matt Bockelman
- 1 Lighting: Dudi Kaufman (Israel) and Ram Tzizling (Israel)
- 2 Written by: Josh Aronson*
- 1 Music: Wlad Marhulets, Felix Mendelssohn*, Johannes Brahms*
Production Designer: Stefanie Probst
- 2 Research: Leon Dische Becker*, Andrea Koenig*, Adrian Spinner*,
Victoria Stephens*
- 1 Interviewees: Zubin Mehta, Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell,
Pinchas Zuckerman, Leon Botstein, Ivry Gitlis
Voice-Over Cast: Chris Kardos, Heike Bachmann, Michael Levi Harris,
Peter Cormican, Jack Luceno, Howard Ross, Adam Boncz, Paul Bellantoni,
Heike Bachmann, Tim Eliot, Andrew Clateman, Anthony Viscusi
Acting Cast: Henk Reinicke (j) (Bronislaw Huberman as a boy),

Jan Uplegger (Jan Huberman, Bronislaw's father), Joachim Martini (Joseph Joachim, the violinist), Jutta Neuer (Singer Adelina Patti), Stefan Hauser (Wilhelm Furtwangler), Wolfgang Ronfeldt (Jacob Surowicz), Harold Magarin (Joseph Goebbels), Gil Baxpehler (Horst Salomon), Yigal Zaks (Conductor William Steinberg), Thomas Kornmann (adult Bronislaw Huberman), Alex Ansky* (Conductor Arturo Toscanini), Brett Lorier (Lorand Fenyves), Geno Lechner (Ida Ibekken), Vlasto Peyitch (Chaim Weizmann)

ORCHESTRA OF EXILES is director Josh Aronson's docudrama tribute to the life and career of distinguished violinist and humanitarian Bronislaw Huberman. Born in Poland during the year 1882, young Bronislaw was perceived by father Jacob to be the most musically talented of his children. The lad was therefore sent to master violinist Joseph Joachim for individual tutoring, a task he usually relayed to an assistant. In order to ease financial strains on the family, Bronislaw was marketed as a child prodigy, giving concert performances throughout Europe and North America before he had even reached teen years. Hailed as a wunderkind, Huberman even won the admiration of Johannes Brahms, who waxed enthusiastic about the child's performance of his Violin Concerto.

After only a few years of tutelage from Joachim and his subordinate, the Polish marvel's studies were abruptly concluded. His dad hastened to set up a grueling schedule of appearances with major symphony orchestras. This eliminated pedagogical fees and guaranteed continual income replenishment. At his father's death in 1902, Bronislaw became the major source of income for himself, two brothers and their mother. Abundant performances were essential. No matter how exhausting.

The devastation and savagery of World War I had a huge impact on Bronislaw. After the war, he immersed himself for two years in political studies at the Sorbonne in Paris. These inclined him away from dictatorships. He became attracted to Pan-Europeanism, Polish nationalism, and Zionism.

During the 1920s Bronislaw toured extensively with piano accompanist Siegfried Schultze. This duo was severed by the rise of Nazism in Germany. Sadly, all its recordings were destroyed during World War II.

As Huberman watched events unfolding in Berlin, which once served as his home, he reached a decision to forego further concert appearances there. Even a 1933 invitation from Wilhelm Furtwangler, conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, failed to alter his resolution.

From 1926 to 1936, Huberman resided in Vienna, Austria. While battles raged across Europe, the discouraged Polish native set off to visit Palestine. That desert region somehow favorably impressed him. A second journey in 1934 convinced Bronislaw to consider possible emigration. With Hitler's Nazis and Mussolini's Fascists persecuting Jews, the time seemed ripe for relocation. Not simply of himself, but of all Jewish musical talent. For the next three years, he actively recruited first chair players from Poland, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Hungary, offering them positions in a future Palestine Symphony Orchestra. Many heeded that call. In numerous cases, the dragnet had to expand to include jeopardized family members. Ultimately, Bronislaw Huberman was credited with preserving the lives of nearly one thousand Jews. Not bad, for a musician with no prominent political clout.

Arturo Toscanini himself led the initial concert of Huberman's ideal orchestra in Palestine, one postponed for two months due to mounting mutual animosity and violence involving natives of the region and European newcomers. The tale of just how that came to pass is a riveting one, entailing end runs past British and Jewish political agencies, creation of a whole new type of Palestinian legal document, last-minute support from Albert Einstein, and overtime construction workers willing to settle for season tickets in lieu of extra cash.

Josh Aronson's film skirts around the delicate topic of Huberman's son Johannes, born to wife Elza Galafries in 1910 and eventually adopted in 1919 by her second husband, Hungarian composer Erno Dohnanyi. Likewise, only partial details of the famous twice-stolen violin favored by Mr. Huberman are reported in the film. A first theft occurred in Vienna while he was performing there in 1919. However, the violin was recovered after three days. But when it was again swiped, from New York City's Carnegie Hall in 1936, the instrument was lost to public tracking for forty-nine years. It did not resurface until 1985, upon the death of nightclub musician Jacob Altman. Several web sites provide fuller information

about how it eventually found a new owner, Joshua Bell, who paid nearly four million dollars to acquire it.

A 1938 plane crash in Sumatra left the violin virtuoso with two broken fingers and a broken wrist on his left hand. He was unable to play for a year. Then a triumphal return to the concert hall was made in Egypt. From there, the violinist busied himself with public appearances mainly in the Americas. He died in 1947, one year before his orchestral creation changed its name to the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

Using archival newsreels and photographs, interviews, and dramatizations of key episodes in the virtuoso's career, *ORCHESTRA OF EXILES* provides a fascinating account of a generous and creative life. It's supported by extensive research, though little is unearthed about its subject's mother, siblings, or teachers.

At no point does the film seem to lag unduly. Editing is proficient, even at times suspenseful, particularly in the section dealing with recruitment of personnel for the projected Palestine orchestra. Cast members offer acceptably reserved performances, keeping the focus on biographical and historical detail, rather than engaging in superfluous dramatics. Sound and music recording are sensibly engineered to showcase playing skill rather than soundboard experimentation. Which is as it should be for such a film. Nor is any special attention-grabbing artifice exhibited in cinematography or lighting. Such distractions would be inappropriate, if not directly repulsive.

Maximum communication is embedded in anecdotal offerings from respectful interviewees. A script which builds gradually, highlighting Huberman's race against political history, adds poignancy and interest to rich background visuals. Minimal inflection of narration by Tim Eliot is a further asset reinforcing credibility.

ORCHESTRA OF EXILES is highly recommended as a teaching tool and entertainment for families. The First Run Features dvd release includes a two-minute featurette about The Power of Music, a second two-minute bonus short concerning the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra itself, a two-minute supplement titled *HUBERMAN'S DREAM*, yet another two-minute short explaining why so

many Jews remained in Europe after the Nuremberg Laws were passed, and a short interview with the film's director Josh Aronson.

Many thanks to Wikipedia for background information about this fascinating human being whose legacy is still vital today.