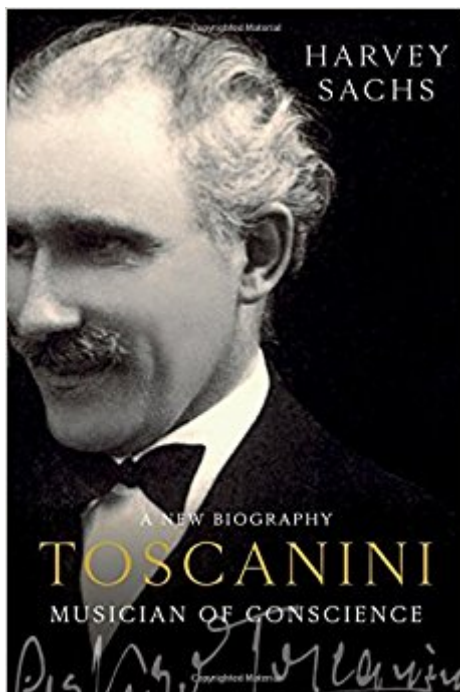


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Toscanini: Musician Of Conscience



Synopsis

On the 150th anniversary of his birth comes this monumental biography of Arturo Toscanini, whose dramatic life is unparalleled among twentieth-century musicians. It may be difficult to imagine today, but Arturo Toscanini is recognized widely as the most celebrated conductor of the twentieth century. He was once one of the most famous people in the world. Like Einstein in science or Picasso in art, Toscanini (1867–1957) transcended his own field, becoming a figure of such renown that it was often impossible not to see some mention of the maestro in the daily headlines. Acclaimed music historian Harvey Sachs has long been fascinated with Toscanini's extraordinary story. Drawn not only to his illustrious sixty-eight-year career but also to his countless expressions of political courage in an age of tyrants, and to a private existence torn between love of family and erotic restlessness, Sachs produced a biography of Toscanini in 1978. Yet as archives continued to open and Sachs was able to interview an ever-expanding list of relatives and associates, he came to realize that this remarkable life demanded a completely new work, and the result is Toscanini: an utterly absorbing story of a man who was incapable of separating his spectacular career from the call of his conscience. Famed for his fierce dedication but also for his explosive temper, Toscanini conducted the world premieres of many Italian operas, including *Pagliacci*, *La Bohème*, and *Turandot*, as well as the Italian premieres of works by Wagner, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Debussy. In time, as Sachs chronicles, he would dominate not only La Scala in his native Italy but also the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic, and the NBC Symphony Orchestra. He also collaborated with dozens of star singers, among them Enrico Caruso and Feodor Chaliapin, as well as the great sopranos Rosina Storchio, Geraldine Farrar, and Lotte Lehmann, with whom he had affairs. While this consuming passion constantly blurred the distinction between professional and personal, it did forge within him a steadfast opposition to totalitarianism and a personal bravery that would make him a model for artists of conscience. As early as 1922, Toscanini refused to allow his La Scala orchestra to play the Fascist anthem, "Giovinezza," even when threatened by Mussolini's goons. And when tens of thousands of desperate Jewish refugees poured into Palestine in the late 1930s, he journeyed there at his own expense to establish an orchestra comprised of refugee musicians, and his travels were followed like that of a king. Thanks to unprecedented access to family archives, Toscanini becomes not only the definitive biography of the conductor, but a work that soars in its exploration of musical genius and moral conscience, taking its place among the great musical biographies of our time. 80 photographs

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Customer Reviews

“[A] monumental new Toscanini biography. The most riveting pages are devoted to the nineteen-thirties and forties, when the conductor converted his favorite repertory—Beethoven, Verdi, and Wagner—into emblems of the fight against Fascism. I couldn’t help wondering: What would Toscanini have done if he had been confronted by geomusical snarl in Hamburg? He might have had something to say.” — Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*

“Without doubt the most engaging, the best-written and certainly the most comprehensive Toscanini yet to be published.” — Rob Cowan, *Gramophone*

“A very engaging and at times gripping chronicle of music and society, all of it devoted to the unending drive and conscientiousness that made Toscanini’s performances so riveting and, to some, so repellent. . . . What comes through in Sachs’s long chronicle is the extent of Toscanini’s role, witting and unwitting, in transforming the way that classical music was produced and consumed in the twentieth century.” — David Denby, *The New Yorker*

“Sachs’s account is persuasive and compelling in the important ways. . . . Today, Toscanini is receding from our consciousness, notwithstanding his many records. . . . Creative geniuses can survive for centuries, even millennia; interpreters inevitably go over the cultural cliff. But that doesn’t detract from the crucial—the central role Toscanini played in our musical culture for well over 60 years. Nor from the almost universal regard he was held in as a man.” — Robert Gottlieb, *New York Times Book Review*

“Toscanini’s significance as a superb artist and a key figure in the international arena is brilliantly captured in Harvey Sachs’s absorbing biography *Toscanini*:

Musician of Conscience. . . . [Sachs] paints a captivating portrait of the conductor, from his birth in Parma in 1867 to his final days in New York 89 years later. . . . [A] feast for those drawn to music, culture, and politics.

• Jonathan Rosenberg, Christian Science Monitor

“As a study of the life and times of one of the greatest conductors of all time, this book will not soon be bettered.

• Economist

“No other musician had as great an impact as Arturo Toscanini on the performance of opera and symphonic music in the twentieth century. With tremendous passion and stubbornness—and thanks to his extraordinary talents—he reshaped our ideas about what a conductor’s goals should be and how to achieve them.

• James Levine

“Sachs examines not only the artistic aspects but also the political, social, and private aspects of the man whom many consider the greatest conductor of his time. A reading of this biography helps us to understand this inflexible man, this musician who was so severe, also with himself, this conductor who represents a legend of the musical world, past and present.

• Riccardo Muti

“Arturo Toscanini was a gigantic figure in the history of musical performance. Harvey Sachs’s new biography is the most complete and involving story ever written about this amazing life.

• Plácido Domingo

“Arturo Toscanini was not only one of the twentieth century’s towering figures of classical music and opera, but an inspirational figure as the world-renowned Italian artist who stood up to fascism. In this monumental biography, Sachs artfully weaves together both of these stories, offering rich insight into music and politics across an extraordinary life.

• David I. Kertzer, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Pope and Mussolini*

“Considering the great impact Arturo Toscanini had on my family—and certainly my father, Carmine Coppola, his first chair flute during the 1940s—I would say that Toscanini’s powerful personality brought a unity to his conducting. He was the music he was conducting, the interpretive being. I am reminded of all of this in reading Harvey Sachs’s comprehensive new biography, which dramatically re-creates both the conductor’s musical genius and the politics of a distant age.

• Francis Ford Coppola

“An astonishing story of how Toscanini became a musical giant. The unbelievable detail in this book re-creates vividly the musical environment from the late 1800s onward.

• Antonio Pappano, music director, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London

Harvey Sachs is the author or coauthor of ten books and has written for *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*, among others. He lives in New York, and is on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

The book arrived quickly and perfectly. I found it disappointing, because it is overly long-winded and obsessed with largely uninteresting detail, so I actually prefer Sach's earlier biography. His heart and mind are in the right place, but an editor should have shaped it up, and more musical details, fewer lists of places and programs would have helped. I would like to know more about Toscanini's interactions with Busoni, Richard Strauss, Horszowski, Debussy, other conductors & particular orchestral players, and so on, and less about who was at what concert and travel details, for instance. It's still better than most writing about Toscanini, however.

Love love love this book. It's long but I am taking my time going through it because it is quite detailed is very well written and apparently very well researched. If you're looking for tabloid gossip, this IS NOT your book. Scandals are noted but not sensationalized (another reason I really like the book). I highly recommend this book.

Begin to read it, so far I find this biography very interesting, entertaining and very informative of the great conductor Toscanini. It is easy to read and I enjoy it very much. Helps me to understand his contribution to the world of classical music, specially opera.

In the print version it's 900 pages. Some complains it's toolong. I wish it were even longer with more discussion of his interpretations and, from recordings, how they agree or disagree with other great conductors of the time. But it is still one of the best biographies of its kind.

a must have book for people who love toscanini.....some is quite personal ! enjoy !

Excellent, Have read old and new. This one is a well written miracle

much too big. should be atleast 2 volumes

Discloser: I am a long time Toscanini fan. I own most of his recordings and all but one of his bios. The interest in a biography of a famous person lies in the gossipy bits. How the artist works with colleagues, projects finished and cancelled etc. Mr. Sachs' first bio was well done but there were omissions or gaps. Probably because documentation was unavailable. This new bio is chock full of facts, quotations and gossipy items to satisfy even the most avid fan. But the real value is all

goes much further and by evoking the Musical and Ethical principals that guided the Maestro during his 60+ year career. In short this large book presents Toscanini as a man (warts & all). A Human whose dedication to his art was complete. To begin to understand the person and the turbulent times in which he lived, read this very readable biography.

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