



## **Bernadette Mayrhofer**

### **Anton Weiss\* (Violin I, Section Leader)**

**Born on January 1, 1875 in Schwechat, died on December 1, 1940 in Vienna from the effects of a stroke induced by the forced eviction from his apartment**

Joined the Court Opera Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic on November 1, 1899, retired on September 1, 1936;

Member of the Jewish Community (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde) Vienna; married in Budapest on April 19, 1915 to Valerie Löwy (born in Vienna on June 15, 1875); became a widower on December 12, 1937;

1886/87 – 1892/93 studied at the Conservatory of the Society of the Friends of Music in Vienna, his violin teacher was Josef Maxintsak (member of the Hofkapelle and the Court Opera Orchestra); his professor for violin performance was Joseph Hellmesberger, Jr. (soloist and concertmaster of the Court Opera, conductor), in 1893 completion of studies and graduation with diploma.



*Anton Weiss (1925)*

Court Musician; 1919 – 1938 Business Manager of the Vienna Philharmonic; until his death on December 1, 1940, he served the Philharmonic as an administrative advisor; in May 1931 he was awarded the title of professor; received numerous awards, among others the Gold Medal of Service (1935) and the Hungarian Medal of Service (1936); Officer of the French Academy;

\*in the historical records the name is often written as "Anton Weih's";

For sources see footnote<sup>1</sup>

When in the wake of the "Anschluss" of March 12, 1938, and Vienna was gripped by

<sup>1</sup> Information on Prof. Anton Weiss, compiled by Dr. Silvia Kargl, HAdWPh; IKG Matriken und Datenbank, Personal information on Anton Weiss, MA 35/Team Evidenz, provided by Mag.a Sabine Loitfellner, Department of Matters of Restitution, Jewish Community of Vienna; Historical Certificate of Death and residency records for Anton and Valerie Weiss, City of Vienna- and State Archives (WStLA); Information from the Österreichischen Musiklexikon online on "Josef Maxintsak" and "Joseph Hellmesberger, Jr." and from the annual records of the Conservatory of the Society of the Friends of Music in Vienna, compiled by Dr. Lynne Heller, Archives of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna; Leopold Kainz, Rechtfertigungsschrift nach Kriegsende, Wiener Philharmoniker, Depot Staatsoper, Personell file Leopold Kainz; Clemens Hellsberg, Demokratie der Könige. Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker, Zurich 1992, 504.

various violent acts against Jews, including waves of large scale incarceration, brutal confiscation and plundering of personal property and intimidation of all kinds, Anton Weiss had already been retired from the orchestra (1st violin and section leader) for one and a half years, although he continued in his function as business manager of the Vienna Philharmonic which he had held from 1919 to 1938.<sup>2</sup> Because of his many years of experience, even after the 'Anschluss', Weiss continued to advise his former colleagues up until his death on December 1, 1940.<sup>3</sup> A few months before the 'Anschluss' Anton Weiss had reached the age of 64.

Anton Weiss received his musical education at the Conservatory of the Society of the Friends of Music in Vienna and became a member of the Court Opera Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic on November 1, 1899. On April 19, 1915 he married Valerie Löwy, who was born on June 15, 1875, in Budapest. His wife died on December 10, 1937, just a few months before the Nazis came to power. Both were members of the Jewish Community (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde) in Vienna.<sup>4</sup> It is not known if they had children. According to the National Socialistic racial doctrine, Anton and Valerie Weiss were classified as being of full Jewish lineage ("volljüdisch").<sup>5</sup>

The living situation and daily existence in Vienna must have been tortuous and traumatic for Anton Weiss, who had lost his wife only shortly before the takeover of the National Socialists, at which time the anti-Semitic laws were dramatically intensified. Immediately following the outbreak of the war, Jews were not permitted to be on the streets after 8 PM and to listen to the radio. Frequenting public places was strictly forbidden.<sup>6</sup> In September 1940, protection against eviction (Kündigungsschutz) for Jews was officially terminated and between 1940 and 1942, Jewish families were forced to move numerous times, often lodging with many different people in a single room, without any washing and cooking facilities. Originally Anton Weiss and his wife, Valerie, had resided at Cottagegasse 9 in the 18th District of Vienna, where Valerie Weiss had died on December 10, 1937, at the age of 62 years.<sup>7</sup> In „Lehmann“, the historical Viennese address book, a change of residence by Anton Weiss in 1939 is documented. There it is stated that in 1939, "*Prof. State Opera Member. (Staatsopermitgl.)*" Anton Weiss was officially recorded as living in the Doblhoffgasse 7 in the 1st District of Vienna;<sup>8</sup> On June 17, 1939, Weiss was evidentially forced to change his place of residence once again. According to historical Viennese residential records, Weiss lived

<sup>2</sup> Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige* (see footnote 1).

<sup>3</sup> Kainz, *Rechtfertigungsschreiben* (see footnote 1).

<sup>4</sup> Information on Weiss, Mag.<sup>a</sup> Sabine Loitfellner, IKG Wien (see footnote 1).

<sup>5</sup> ebd.

<sup>6</sup> Erika Weinzierl, *Zu wenig Gerechte. Österreicher und Judenverfolgung 1938 – 1945*, Graz-Wien-Köln 1985, 37f, 41-43.

<sup>7</sup> Record of residence for Anton and Valerie Weiss, WStLA (see footnote 1); Personal data of Anton Weiss, MA 35, Team Evidenz, made available by Loitfellner, IKG (wie Anm. 1).

<sup>8</sup> *Wiener Adressbücher von 1859 – 1942 „Lehmann“*, Jahr 1939, See Lehmann Online <http://www.digital.wienbibliothek.at>.



from this time until his death on December 1, 1940, at the Kleine Sperlasse 1/3/34 in the 2nd District in Vienna, which was the district in which the majority of Jews were crowded into collective apartments with the intent of separating them from the 'Aryan' population and to gather them in preparation for deportation and their 'complete' liquidation.<sup>9</sup>

The circumstances regarding the death of Prof. Weiss cannot be clearly ascertained from the available documentation. It is most probable that this member of the Vienna Philharmonic was facing yet another eviction. It is recorded in the membership book of the Vienna Philharmonic that Anton Weiss died at Kleine Sperlasse 1/3/34 in the 2nd District of Vienna from the effects of a stroke induced by the forced eviction from his apartment.<sup>10</sup>

The author regrets that despite Professor Anton Weiss' prominent position in the orchestra as violinist, section leader and long-time business manager, only a very few historical sources have been found for study and evaluation. The tragic fate of Anton Weiss is representative of many other victims of National Socialism who died as a result of aggravated living conditions even before their deportation. Due to the lack of historical records, these victims, even to this day, are barely a part of the collective memory. The lives of these individuals, who were already weakened because of illness, old age or grief, must have been traumatic during the time of the National Socialists. The miserable living conditions, the ever-increasing legal restrictions and the daily humiliations caused by professional exclusion, forced eviction, economic hardship, violent attacks, etc. raised the death rate for this segment of the population immensely. To be ill, or to grow old and die in a dignified manner, was not possible. Anton Weiss, a member of the Vienna Philharmonic, was a victim of the brutal expulsion policies of the National Socialists; and this even before the systematic mass murder of the Jewish population had begun.

© Bernadette Mayrhofer

<http://www.wienerphilharmoniker.at/>

All rights reserved. Permission granted for personal use only. Subsequent use and reproduction for any other purposes is forbidden.

Translation: Gloria McElheney

---

<sup>9</sup> Residential records for Anton Weiss, WStLA (see footnote 1);

<sup>10</sup> Information on Weiss, Dr. Silvia Kargl, HAdWPh (see footnote 1); Certificate of Death, WStLA (see footnote 1).