

On the Aisle

Bruno Walter and the Chicago Symphony in a Memorable Mozart Requiem

BY CLAUDIA CASSIDY

WHEN ILLNESS struck him down Bruno Walter had been scheduled to open the Chicago Symphony orchestra season with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. It was almost an unheard of gesture—this opening of a season by any but the resident conductor—but Mr. Walter is a long time member of the orchestral family, and the invitation was given at Fritz Reiner's suggestion.

Last night when Mr. Walter, happily recovered and seeming strong of more than heart and spirit, came to keep his postponed engagement he had changed his program. Perhaps he especially wanted to give us the Mozart Requiem be-

cause he was less than satisfied with the performance in 1951. Perhaps his choice of Mozart and Schubert proves nothing more than that a musician born in Berlin can be a Vienna man at heart.

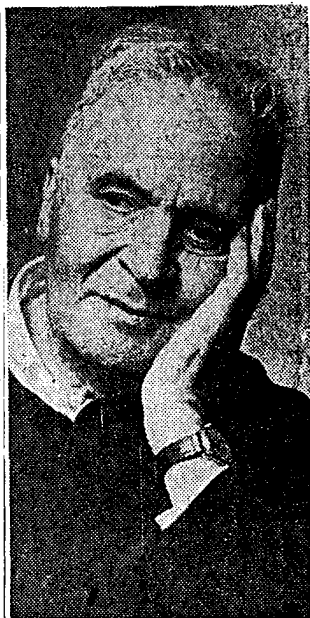
In any case, this time the Mozart really came off. It is not a fully satisfying work—like all things finished by another's hand it leaves the tantalizing question of what it might have been had Mozart's haunted, tormented spirit found whatever haven it sought of peace, whether of joy or of oblivion. When Suessmayer takes over much beauty remains, but the aura of this special Mozart, which is unlike any other, has vanished. The Requiem ends, but the toll of the bell has lost its terror.

It was a wonderfully strong performance Mr. Walter gave us, deploying his forces with a direct, powerful simplicity of style. In the Mozart Requiem the chorus is the focal point,

Concert by the Chicago Symphony orchestra, Bruno Walter, conductor; the Chicago Symphony orchestra chorus, Margaret Hillis, director, and soloists including Maria Stader, soprano; Maureen Forrester, contralto; David Lloyd, tenor, and Otto Edelmann, bass-baritone. Presented in Orchestra hall Thursday evening, March 13, 1958, and scheduled for repetition Friday afternoon.

THE PROGRAM
Symphony No. 8 in B minor,
"Unfinished" Schubert
Requiem in D minor, K. 626 Mozart

the orchestra and soloists of the highest quality are taken for granted. The Chicago Symphony orchestra is in high estate, with the kind of clairvoyance that gives a conductor what he wants in sound. The four soloists, three of them new to the orchestra, were tiny Maria Stader of the soprano that sounds like an angelic flute, stately Maureen Forrester of the contralto so big, warm and gentle it makes you feel rested just to listen, David Lloyd of the musicianly tenor, and Otto Edelmann, who could give no more than a tempting



Bruno Walter

sample of the big bass-baritone so renowned in the opera realms of Hans Sachs and Baron Ochs. They made a wonderful Mozart quartet.

None of this was surprising. The evening's card up the Mozartean sleeve was the new Chicago Symphony orchestra chorus of about 100 voices, expertly chosen and admirably trained by Margaret Hillis. It had balance and glints of brilliance, it was adroit in attack and it had moments of reassuringly imaginative song. The Confutatis in particular caught the haunted terror that was Mozart's when the mysterious commission for the Requiem convinced him that the death knell he wrote was his own.

Before the Mozart came the Schubert "Unfinished," an autumnal performance of great beauty. When will Mr. Walter come again? He says that from now on he will conduct only on special occasions. But then it is always a special occasion when he conducts.