Transposition

Musique et Sciences Sociales

5 | 2015

Figures du chef d'orchestre

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“A radio-video star” (1937-1954)

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/transposition/1277>

DOI: 10.4000/transposition.1277

ISSN: 2110-6134

Publisher

CRAL - Centre de recherche sur les arts et le langage

Electronic reference

Sandrine Khoudja-Coyez, « Arturo Toscanini at NBC », *Transposition* [Online], 5 | 2015, Online since 22 November 2015, connection on 31 July 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/transposition/1277> ; DOI : 10.4000/transposition.1277

This text was automatically generated on 31 July 2019.

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Arturo Toscanini at NBC

“A radio-video star” (1937-1954)

Sandrine Khoudja-Coyez

Translation : Maggie Jones

“To praise a man, we say he is unique.”

Eugène Delacroix¹

“- Make me a star.

- Regular budget?

- Regular budget.”

Rodolphe-Maurice Arlaud²

- 1 In the modern history of musical interpretation and orchestra conducting, the development of communication means and technical advances in sound recording and reproduction first created and then conditioned new modes of listening to music. In the United States, the emergence of two radio stations in quick succession—NBC (National Broadcasting Company) in 1926 and CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System) in 1927—helped promote a new form of mass distribution of music based on a star system. This form of transmission was not entirely new; record companies such as Victor, Pathé and Gramophone had been recording well-known musicians since the early 1900s in the aim of popularizing them and selling their records to the largest possible audience. With the stock market crash of 1929, however, the record market collapsed, and radio became the most listened-to and popular medium, rivaling even cinema. As a well-organized nationwide industry, radio served a population devastated by the Great Depression and eager for news and entertainment.
- 2 Just as record and movie producers had done with actors and performers, radio gradually made artists and musicians into stars. For movie stars idealized by their roles, their image (beauty, physique, personality) is an asset that contributes to their social recognition. By contrast, musicians broadcast on the radio are invisible, but their distinct audible characteristics stimulate listeners' imaginations. Thus, their role is to perform a work, to transmit an interpretation of it, a personal vision. The lack of visual image keeps the audience's imagination active, and far from diminishing the listener's emotional memory, the more times the artist is broadcast, the more valuable and desirable they become. In

both cases, for both radio stars and movie stars, the goal is in fact the same: to win over the public and draw as big an audience as possible.

- 3 With the development of the radio broadcasting industry, cultural productions began to reach significant masses of anonymous individuals. Network³ executives quickly saw the economic potential in this, as funding for radio programs was acquired primarily through the sale of advertising contracts. The concept of the audience gradually emerged, paving the way to new fields of sociological research, with Paul Lazarsfeld, Franck Stanton and Hadley Cantril at the forefront with the Radio Research Project at Princeton in 1937.⁴ During this period, working as a singer, instrumentalist or orchestra conductor came to mean something new: these professions had entered the era of the mass cultural economy. To reach a mass market via radio, art music (considered “high culture”) required unique, powerful and exemplary intermediaries with whom American listeners would be able to identify. The programs were designed to appeal to anyone and everyone.
- 4 Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957) was one of the intermediaries who helped familiarize the American public with the works of the art music repertory. In 1930, he assumed the position of principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic, and helped make the orchestra much more widely known thanks to a number of American and European tours and concert broadcasts on CBS radio. In 1936, he withdrew to Milan, but was acutely aware that radio, now in its Golden Age in the United States, was a necessary tool for the development and fulfillment of a conductor’s career. Thus, when Samuel Chotzinoff – a pianist and music critic for the *New York Post* appointed by NBC president David Sarnoff⁵ – offered him the opportunity to return to New York to air on the leading American radio network, the prospect of reaching a massive nationwide audience coincided with his desire to further increase his popularity and be heard more widely.⁶ The “Maestro” accepted the offer.
- 5 There were a number of underlying objectives in the way Toscanini was represented as an artist and in the media during his years under contract with NBC (1937-1954), which this article will address. Stars are consecrated by the public, but the process of “making” fame is often kept under cover. This article looks at how NBC, in its role as a media power, helped construct the myth of Toscanini and his image as a star conductor in the United States. Essentially, the network created a living image (and a profitable one, as in the case of a Hollywood star) of a man who also enjoyed interacting with his audience. Because he was able to draw a massive crowd, his presence on the radio and on television guaranteed a certain audience and profitability for both the sponsors and RCA Records, the label that sold records of his concerts.
- 6 In order to analyze the figure of Toscanini through the prism of his alliance with NBC and the construction of his star status, this study draws on a selection of letters from Toscanini’s correspondence, press articles from the period, press releases and official documents from NBC archives.

David Sarnoff’s project: for “the world’s greatest conductor” to lead the NBC Symphony Orchestra⁷

- 7 From its first moments on the air in 1926, NBC called on a variety of orchestra conductors to conduct instrumental ensembles and take part in the musical programs. Conductors such as Walter Damrosch, Franck Black and Leopold Stokowski proved a good fit for the

job, adapting quickly to the difficulties of working live while also having charismatic personalities and an educational approach, and agreeing to conduct “light” music. But CBS’s weekly broadcasts of the New York Philharmonic’s concerts, directed by Toscanini, intensified the rivalry between the two American radio stations. Not to be outdone by William Paley and Arthur Judson, the founders and co-directors of CBS, David Sarnoff decided to up the ante, airing several ambitious musical programs, including one that featured a weekly concert of its own, conducted by Damrosch, and which adhered to the principles set out in the Radio Act of 1927: programming had to be of “public interest” and “necessity”,⁸ or in other words, be a tool for cultural education. Millions of auditors tuned in to “The Music Appreciation Hour”, essentially a music lesson which, by presenting major works from the Western classical music repertory, educated listeners of all ages about music.

- 8 At the CBS studios, Paley and Judson competed by cultivating the image of a station with extremely high-quality programs (sometimes even called “elitist” by the radio press), making a special point of featuring the “auditory presence” of a world-class conductor directing a critically acclaimed orchestra each Sunday. Nearly five million auditors⁹ listened to the concerts rebroadcast by the CBS. Then, in December 1936, Judson, the manager of the New York Philharmonic, decided that Toscanini would be replaced by John Barbirolli, who signed a three-year contract to serve as the orchestra’s conductor. As Toscanini had not been consulted or even informed of the change prior to his successor’s official appointment, relations between him and Judson became strained. Toscanini left the United States to return to his native Italy. When he learned of the affair, Sarnoff, working with John F. Royal, the vice president of NBC, seized the opportunity to prepare several contract offers for the Italian conductor.
- 9 What did Toscanini represent to Sarnoff? As much an ideal of musical perfection as a means of attaining several of his goals: he wanted to establish NBC’s reputation as a major player in the field of music while also drawing massive audiences to “serious” music concerts. Another argument for enlisting a famous figure for a program that the radio station was self-financing¹⁰ was the hope of reaching an audience that was already divided between concert halls and movie theaters. In 1937, stars had stepped off the movie screen, so to speak, sponsoring ninety percent of the major American radio programs.¹¹ Against this backdrop, in order to maintain the station’s reputation and attract more listeners, classical music would need a conductor whose popularity was already well-established. In terms of notoriety, Toscanini was the ideal candidate: according to a survey at the time, one in four already Americans knew of him.¹²
- 10 Thus, the project served commercial interests, publicity interests and the interests of cultural democratization, as Sarnoff himself stated after the first season of concerts:

The National Broadcasting Company is an American Business organization. It has employees and it has stockholders. It serves their interests best when it serves the public best. We believe in this principle and maintain it as our guiding policy. This is why we organized the new NBC Symphony Orchestra and invited the world’s greatest conductor to direct it.¹³
- 11 Certain NBC shareholders criticized the project, such as the president of the American Tobacco Company, George Washington Hill, who went as far as to ask Sarnoff to step down, as he considered that “symphonic music has no place in a mass medium”.¹⁴ But shortly after the inaugural concert, *Fortune* magazine published a significant article on

“how that spectacular program was put together, and why”,¹⁵ calling Sarnoff the “pivot of the Toscanini cult” in America.¹⁶

- 12 There was a price for this stardom, however: Toscanini’s presence on the airwaves for part of a year cost the NBC \$40 000 (including taxes).¹⁷ The contract included ten gala concerts at Carnegie Hall. The season was preceded by six other concerts with the new National Broadcasting Company Symphony Orchestra, a sort of “sneak preview” series conducted by Pierre Monteux and Artur Rodzinski, which allowed the sound engineers to evaluate the new orchestra’s sound, while also promoting it and preparing the public for its debut.
- 13 In his deal with Sarnoff, Toscanini stipulated a number of conditions and imposed strict working rules for what he would refer to as “his” orchestra: rehearsals were not open to the public and no clock was to be visible in Studio 8H. Toscanini was one of the only radio conductors to be allowed to choose his *tempi*, unrestricted by scheduling constraints.¹⁸ The concerts lasted approximately an hour and a half, sometimes longer depending on the program and the Maestro’s interpretation choices. By granting him this privilege, Sarnoff placed Toscanini on the same level as President Roosevelt, for they were the only two people not to have restrictions on their air time. Because Toscanini demanded that the usual background noise from the audience be eliminated in order to ensure the excellence of the broadcasts and obtain high-quality recordings, the production assistants decided to print the program notes on tissue paper. At the start of each concert, spectators were asked to cooperate by not coughing, whispering or even applauding too early or between movements.¹⁹ The broadcasts were to be “free of any advertising consideration, for the benefit of the great public”.²⁰ Toscanini also stipulated that he himself would select the works performed, engage the soloists and singers of his choice, and be the one to govern how the sections were organized and to appoint the orchestra soloists.²¹ His contract also included an exclusivity clause comparable to those used in dealings with stars: during the season, he agreed not to conduct any orchestra other than the NBS Symphony Orchestra, which had been specially created for him.
- 14 Of the ninety-two members of the NBC Symphony Orchestra, more than half were already under contract with the station for the needs of different programs, which meant the orchestra was not exactly “new”, as Chotzinoff had led Toscanini to believe.²² To complete the orchestra, Rodzinski and Chotzinoff had selected and picked twenty-one soloists or heads of section²³ from major American orchestras, such as the “Big Five” orchestras and the National Symphony Orchestra based in Washington, D.C., some of whom were already familiar with the Maestro’s character and demands.
- 15 The first concert aired live from Studio 8H in Rockefeller Center on a symbolic date – Christmas evening 1937. The program included three works from the European art music repertory: Brahms’s *Symphony No. 1*, Mozart’s *Symphony No. 40*, and Vivaldi’s *Concerto Grosso op. 3 No. 11*. Several months prior, the staff at NBC had drawn up a publicity plan aimed at making this debut a historic event. In the press, the editor-in-chief of *Musical Courier*, Leonard Liebbling called it the most highly anticipated radio event since King Edward VIII’s abdication.²⁴

A famous, “radiogenic” and highly-publicized conductor

- 16 In the pre-television era—when radio was the only medium that could allow millions of auditors to hear the same voice, or as in Toscanini’s case, the same concert—the recipe for success was to showcase a personality and to build fascination with this person among the masses using elaborate publicity strategies and media gimmicks.
- 17 In the history of interpretation, the figure of Toscanini is often associated with American-style glorification of the conductor, in reference to the massive publicity campaign and star-making process he was the focus of in the United States. It was during the last part of his career—thus, primarily in the United States—that he was subjected to the star-system practices that were, not without reservation, being reproduced and developing in the “high culture” sphere.
- 18 On the first American radio stations that emerged in the early 1920s—such as WEAf and WJZ, both based in New York—radio performers were usually broadcast anonymously, and the name that stuck with auditors was that of the corporate sponsor funding the show.²⁵ At first, musicians were fine with this arrangement: they did not want to be thought of as radio performers or amateur musicians and saw this as a way of preserving their professional credibility. But the situation changed rapidly as musicians began to understand the power of radio in promoting their persona and to look for ways to use it to their advantage.
- 19 When he signed a contract with NBC, Toscanini became a radio performer in this sense, subject to the obligation of drawing the largest possible audience. To meet Sarnoff’s objectives, his concerts would require a special promotional campaign.
- 20 In the early days of radio, being “radiogenic” meant having qualities that were appealing to listeners, whether a particular voice, discourse or opinion. Musically, a piece was considered radiogenic when being broadcast by radio did not alter its acoustical qualities.²⁶ Radiogeny was therefore a question of sound techniques, of the aesthetics of sound. Under the influence of the Hollywood star system, however, performers’ names gradually became more important than the name of the work or even the composer. Through their auditory presence on the air, performers helped cultivate listener loyalty to a station, such that radiogeny also became a matter of personality and fame. Well-known performers were highly anticipated and introduced as celebrities, and their regular performances increased the audience share. Specialized radio publications²⁷ featured profiles on the artists and announced their upcoming appearances on radio shows. The two networks, CBS and NBC, quickly saw the money-making potential of radio musicians, and in 1928, they founded their own artist agencies: Columbia Artists Management and the National Concert & Artists Corporation. Thus, many radio performers became celebrities; if the ratings showed that they were popular with listeners, massive publicity campaigns were launched, propelling them to radio stardom.
- 21 For an orchestra conductor, this situation was somewhat paradoxical, as the conductor *per se* does not actually produce any sound, and his physical person and gestures remain entirely invisible on the radio. However, Arturo Toscanini was already a celebrity among lovers of art music, and Sarnoff considered that the popularity he had gained through the rebroadcasts of his concerts with the New York Philharmonic combined with his strong

personality and reputation among musicians were a solid base for his project with the NBC. Toscanini was placed in the station's "spotlight" and the major publicity mechanisms ensured his appeal to the ears and sensibilities of all, with nearly unanimous approval among the public, the music community and the critics.

- 22 Several weeks after the two parties had signed the project agreement, a sophisticated-looking multi-page press release was printed on glossy paper and distributed nationwide. It included this statement by Sarnoff:

We are delighted to be able to secure the return of Maestro Toscanini to America. His incomparable genius will further stimulate and enrich musical appreciation in our country. At NBC we are pursuing the policy of giving millions of our listeners the greatest artists the world has to offer. The opportunity to bring this message of music to the countless millions of American listeners has made a great appeal to the Maestro.²⁸

- 23 The printed press picked up the story, and NBC's affiliate stations announced to millions of listeners that Toscanini was returning to the United States.²⁹

- 24 At the NBC Press Department, each new item of information about or involving Toscanini was a news event to make public and propagate, in order to keep him fresh in fans' memories, fuel the Toscanini cult, and help deify the conductor in America—essentially, to "starify" him. Superlatives abounded when describing Toscanini: "His Musical Majesty [...]. Unchallenged king of the realm of music [...]. That dream of every performer, a world-wide audience, has come true for him," proclaimed one journalist.³⁰ Goddard Lieberson, a composer and prominent figure in the American record industry, remarked on the conductor's rise in the media and how one-sided the critics had been, stating, not without irony, "The National Broadcasting Company is setting out to prove that the only God is Music and Toscanini His Messenger".³¹ Indeed, one is led to wonder about the content of the articles on Toscanini and what kind of relationship the authors had with NBC. Chotzinoff had hired the *New York Times* music editor and critic Olin Downes as the announcer and special commentator for Toscanini's concerts, so it went without saying that his critiques would always be positive and praiseful. There was also Marcia Davenport, a journalist for *Stage* and *Fortune* magazines, who was a close friend of Chotzinoff and omnipresent in the conductor's circle of friends. Her articles often sang the praises of not only Toscanini, but also Sarnoff. In a critique published in December of 1937, she wrote of Toscanini's conducting:

This twentieth-century gesture of Medici-like magnificence, carried through by an American business corporation for the benefit of millions of anonymous but powerful listeners. Only Americans have audacity that would dare to approach the god of all conductors, and having won him, proceed then to build an orchestra worthy of him.³²

- 25 In 1938, the newspaper *Radio Stars*—one of the most widely-read publications in the United States—named Toscanini as one of the "ten most unusual people in radio", alongside figures such as Fred Allen, Orson Welles and Bernard Herrmann,³³ and *Radio Guide* awarded him a Medal of Merit for his "excellence in broadcasting" on the grounds that he brought "an ideal to the America ether".³⁴ Glorified and deified as a sort of "object-God" serving music, Toscanini was far more than a conductor.
- 26 According to the musicians, Toscanini found himself unwillingly in the grips of the star system: a violist in the NBC orchestra, William Carnoni, said for example that the conductor was not self-promoting in the least, for he saw his role as to serve the composer.³⁵ In his own notebooks, Toscanini claimed to be a "dyed-in-the-wool enemy of

the press”.³⁶ Mike Rotunno, a reporter on Hollywood stars, endured a series of “unpleasant” refusals when he attempted to photograph Toscanini. In order to reveal Toscanini’s volatile side to the public, he eventually set a trap for him: he called two photographers who wanted to snap photos of the conductor while he was having lunch with his sister at a restaurant. When they saw the photographers approaching the table, Toscanini and his family threw whatever they could grab into their faces. Rotunno snapped a shot of the scene, very pleased with his trick; the photo appeared in the *Chicago Sun-Times* several days later.

- 27 In a different vein, Francis Chase Jr. published a “realistic” profile of Toscanini in *Radio Guide*, entitled “Toscanini the Mysterious”. Based on an interview, the piece was meant to show fans the real man without the podium, “a simple man like you and me”:

Toscanini—more than any modern man of music—has kept his private life strictly private [...]. On Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, T. is free. He spends those days at a large rented estate at Riverdale. [...] T. arises each morning at six o’clock, goes straight to his Steinway piano where he plays score [...]. Soup is his favorite food [...]. He reads Keats and Shelley [...]. T. doesn’t smoke [...]. After the concert, back to the Riverdale home for another week of playing with Sonia, playing scores and listening to the radio.³⁷

- 28 Essentially, this is the portrait of an ideal which “implies spirituality”,³⁸ in which the most ordinary details of daily life are related in order to foster the image of an exemplary man.
- 29 NBC also cultivated the image of a kindly conductor, far from the authoritarian and difficult behavior the musicians were often confronted with. In 1949, a press release entitled “Arturo Toscanini, Offstage. He loves Television sports, puppet shows, Music, Most of the time he’s quiet, charming” was drafted and sent to editorial departments.³⁹ As justification for Toscanini’s difficult character and conflictual relationships, the NBC piece simply reiterated that he was an eminent figure in the world of classical music, speaking to both the public and those whose job it was to cultivate his image:

Several years ago, without his knowledge, Toscanini was photographed during the rehearsal of *La Traviata*. Photographers were in the tympani and double bass sections of the NBC Symphony Orchestra with long-range lenses, and, of course, without flash bulbs. When the pictures were shown to Toscanini several months later by the orchestra’s press representative, Toscanini remarked how good the pictures were, then asked gently: “do you think I could have some⁴⁰?”

- 30 Paradoxically, Toscanini never shied away from posing for photographers with his family and appreciated the special treatment he received thanks to his status. In a letter to Ada Mainardi, he wrote that “the entire personnel of the NBC, from President Sarnoff (a truly exceptional man) and the board of directors down to the doorman, are enchanted with me and treat me like their God”.⁴¹ He also willingly accepted numerous gifts and expressions of gratitude, which sometimes veiled the advertising interests of stakeholders. In April 1948, a few days after the televised broadcast of Toscanini’s interpretation of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*, Sarnoff sent him a letter⁴² conveying the compliments of an important shareholder, the president of General Motors, which also owned the luxury car line, Cadillac. In thanks for this “unforgettable” concert, Sarnoff via General Motors had the latest Cadillac model equipped with a mobile telephone delivered to Toscanini compliments of NBC, knowing that the conductor, an automobile enthusiast, would make use of the car, thereby indirectly promoting it. Now that he was a star, Toscanini’s private life, tastes and preferences could also be used as effective marketing tools.

An ideal conductor with publicized political ideals

- 31 While the star system sublimated Toscanini's qualities as an interpreter of music, the printed press perfected his public image, portraying his physique and personality in a positive light with laudatory articles and profiles. The musical works that Toscanini chose also played a part, helping define him in the eyes of the public and complete his image. To borrow an observation by sociologist Edgar Morin,⁴³ Toscanini imposed his personality on his role as conductor, and his role as conductor imposed itself on his personality. With Toscanini, this "personality dialectic" and "dialectic of interpenetration",⁴⁴ as defined by Morin with regard to film actors, is omnipresent. To be the ideal conductor, the starified Maestro could not be defined solely by his role; he also had to cultivate his image and reveal his personality and political ideals to the public. The orchestra conductor influenced the star, and the star influenced the orchestra conductor. In this sense, the works that he chose to present were not just musical works: they played a role in the idealization of his persona, helping convey his social and political convictions. To the listeners and spectators, Toscanini represented the ideological model of a man dedicated to humanitarian causes and a champion of democracy in times of war, as communicated through a carefully selected repertoire chosen and interpreted in consideration of current events.
- 32 Marked by the attack on Pearl Harbor and World War II, the beginning of the 1940s was one of the most significant periods in the publicizing and media representation of Toscanini's political ideals. On 19 July 1942, he conducted the American premiere of Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7* thanks to a microfilm copy of the score that was airlifted out of Kuibyshev and flown to New York for the NBC. Even though it was Stokowski who had initiated the premiere and convinced Sarnoff to buy the rights to the score, Toscanini seized on the project and entreated Stokowski by letter to let him be the first to conduct the work: "Try to understand me, my dear Stokowski only because of the special meaning of this Seventh Symphony I asked to be its first interpreter."⁴⁵ This concert was seen as the banner of Toscanini's opposition to the Nazi regime, echoing the anti-fascist stance he had taken in 1933 when he refused Hitler's invitation to direct the Bayreuth Festival, deciding in the process never to return there. As far as Sarnoff was concerned, having the American premiere of the work be conducted by Stokowski—who was better-known in the media for his romance with Greta Garbo than for his political convictions—would not have had the same media impact, and therefore would not have been as advantageous in terms of audience, or as symbolic for the country's leading broadcasting network.
- 33 During these troubled times, a number of musicians and orchestra conductors expressed their patriotism by performing American works at concerts and festivals with politically-inspired programs, such as the Allied Music Festival by the musicians of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 1942, and conductor Hans Kindler with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. who, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, decided to announce the number and title of the American works he was going to conduct at the beginning of each season.⁴⁶
- 34 During this period, Toscanini also conducted American works with the NBC orchestra. He opened the 1942-1943 season with a concert devoted entirely to works by American composers, interpreting the symphonic poem *Memories of My Childhood* by Charles Martin Loeffler, *Choric Dance No. 2* by Paul Creston, *Lincoln Legend* by Morton Gould, and finally the

highly anticipated centerpiece of the program, *Rhapsody in Blue* by George Gershwin with soloists Benny Goodman on clarinet and Earl Wild on piano. As part of the publicity campaign for the event, the NBC Press Department did an interview with Rose Gershwin, the composer's mother. In the interview, which was sent to the editorial offices of the daily newspapers, Gershwin's mother said: "No greater honor can be paid to the memory of my son than to have his greatest composition played by a great orchestra under the genius of your [Toscanini's] baton."⁴⁷ Afterwards, a number of musicians and composers sent telegrams of gratitude and congratulations, such as Paul Whiteman, Percy Faith, Woody Herman, Roy Shield and Benny Goodman, who saw it as "a symbol of our Democracy that the works of a man who wrote musical comedy and jazz music is being given such recognition by a man who ranks among the greatest musical interpreters".⁴⁸ By mutual agreement with NBC, Toscanini repeated this type of program, presenting several modern pieces on the evening of 7 February 1943: *Comedy Overture on Negro Themes* by Henry F. Gilbert, followed by *Night Soliloquy* by Kent Kennan, *White Peacock* by Charles Griffes, and to conclude, *Grand Canyon Suite* by Ferde Grofé.

- 35 Several months later, at the request of the Secretary of the United States Treasury Department, Henry J. Morgenthau, Jr., Toscanini conducted the orchestra at Carnegie Hall for a War Bond Concert, tickets to which were obtained by purchasing National Defense bonds at a price of up to \$50 000 for a box seat.⁴⁹ Three works by Tchaikovsky were presented, including *Piano Concerto No. 1* performed by Vladimir Horowitz. The concert concluded with Toscanini's orchestral arrangement of the American anthem, *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Toscanini donated his handwritten score to be sold at auction during the intermission, which raised a million dollars in bonds. Morgenthau wrote in gratitude to Toscanini: "You expressed in music the might and power and fierce resolve deep down within us all to battle to victory."⁵⁰ Morgenthau had created the War Bond Concerts in order to raise money for American industry and weaponry, and had set up a campaign of several touring sales operations featuring cultural events aimed at reaching every socio-economic category. The first of these tours, entitled "The Stars over America",⁵¹ took place in September 1942: some 337 personalities took part, including Hollywood stars such as Bette Davis, Rita Hayworth and Irene Dunne, and musicians such as Fred Astaire, Illona Massey and Irving Berlin.⁵² Because the stars both incarnated and intensely influenced social behaviors, their presence and commitment to the effort was a means of promoting patriotism and raising awareness among the American public. Toscanini's political engagement⁵³ in the campaign was regularly praised in the printed press, and the concerts played on the air had a positive effect on his image, not only with the public, but also with politicians. The charity galas sponsored by NBC were also an excellent means of demonstrating the network's generosity with regard to a variety of causes. President Roosevelt saluted Toscanini's political engagement on multiple occasions, for example, in this letter of appreciation sent several days after a benefit concert given for a medical foundation:

My dear Maestro,

It is with great personal pleasure that I convey my deep appreciation to you and the members of the NBC Symphony Orchestra for you brilliant concert dedicated so generously to the work of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis [...]. The magnificent contributions you have made to the world of music have always been highlighted by your humanitarian and unyielding devotion to the cause of liberty. Once again, your baton has spoken with unmatched eloquence on behalf of the afflicted and oppressed. [...]

Faithfully yours,
Franklin D. Roosevelt⁵⁴

36 To which Toscanini hastened to reply:

My dear Mr. President,
It was a great privilege to be called upon to dedicate our humble work for a humanitarian cause. Your letter and your words of appreciation have deeply moved our hearts. They came unexpectedly and they were the highest recompense that we could have hoped for. We all send you our deepest thanks. As for myself, I assure you, my dear Mr. President, that I shall continue unabated on the same path that I have trodded all my life for the cause of liberty, liberty that, in my opinion, is the only orthodoxy which art may express itself and flourish freely—liberty that is the best of all things in the life of a man, if it is all one with wisdom and virtue.
With the greatest respect,
I am faithfully yours.
Arturo Toscanini⁵⁵

37 The terms “liberty”, “freedom”, “victory” and “anti-fascism” were particularly recurrent in the language used to describe Toscanini and define his image as an artist and in the media. Howard Taubman⁵⁶ wrote in the *New York Times*, “His music speaks for Freedom,” and these terms appeared in some of his concert titles, such as the “Concert for the Liberty of Italy” held on 9 September 1942, and NBC specials, such as “Victory Symphony, Act 1” which was produced and broadcast in 1943 to celebrate the fall of fascism in Italy. For this special, Toscanini conducted the first movement of Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*, with the goal of performing the entire work when Germany was defeated.

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38 The following year, in January 1944, whereas he had always refused offers from Hollywood producers to make movies, Toscanini accepted an offer from the OWI (Office of War Information) to appear in one of the OWI documentary films on American life by directors such as Frank Capra and Robert Riskin.⁵⁸ This series of twenty-six films by left-wing Hollywood directors was to be sent to liberated territories in order to present an idealized vision of America. Toscanini agreed to play himself in his role as an orchestra conductor, without remuneration, knowing that as part of a propaganda campaign, the film would promote his convictions and political ideals. The half-hour-long film shows the conductor at the head of the NBC orchestra in Studio 8H, conducting several works by Verdi: the Overture of *The Force of Destiny* and the *Hymn of Nations*, originally composed for the 1862 International Exhibition in London, which incorporated the themes of *God Save the Queen*, *La Marseillaise* and the *Hymn of Garibaldi*. To adapt the work to the occasion, Toscanini added *The Star-Spangled Banner*, and without informing the directors of the film, changed the lyrics by the composer Arrigo Boito, replacing “Italia, o patria mia” (Italy, oh my homeland”) with “Italia, o patria mia tradita” (“Italy, oh my betrayed homeland”), in reference to Mussolini’s dictatorial regime. These televised broadcasts also played a part in constructing his image and the myth of his public personality: the cameras portrayed him through the prism of his facial expressions, posture and movements conveying force and fervor.

39 In early July 1944, the fan mail received by the Listener Relations Department included a postcard from a child with an unusual request:

Dear Mr. Toscanini, My momy told me that I would never see my daddy again because he was hurt by the bad men in Italy. My daddy told me that he never enjoyed anything as much as your recording of the Eroica symphony by Batovon [sic].

Would you please play it some Sunday afternoon? Please say when you will play it by writing it in the news paper so my daddy will know. Jimmy.⁵⁹

- 40 Toscanini of course accepted the boy's request and had NBC write a press release. On the evening of 5 November 1944, he presented *Eroica* in concert; the radio broadcast also aired in several European countries, including Italy. In this way, Toscanini offered the child a form of solace through the work. This is where the line between his role as a conductor and his public personality blurs: in appropriating the work's heroic symbolism, he appeared to his admirers as a protective figure. He conducted *Eroica* twice more for symbolic concerts which were rebroadcast by NBC: May 8th, 1945 (Victory in Europe Day) and September 1st, which marked the end of the hostilities in the Pacific.

"Video [didn't kill] the radio star"⁶⁰

- 41 With the emergence of television in the United States starting in 1941, radio gradually became a much lesser presence in American homes. It lost not only its former ubiquity to the new medium, but also many of its listeners, as the two channels, CBS and NBC, adapted the more successful radio shows to the screen in order to gain audience shares and ease the transition from one means of communication to another. In this sense, in the early years of its development, television did not so much "kill" the radio stars and radio performers as allow them to be reborn by exposing them physically. From the comfort of their living rooms, viewers could watch televised shows, live broadcasts of sports matches, and debates between presidential candidates: they now had faces to associate with the voices and personalities that were already familiar to them. Initially, the televised image enhanced the imaginative process that came with listening to the radio, but as TV began to take the place of radio, the images it imposed became fixed in auditors' minds.
- 42 A few years later, in 1947, NBC made a promotional documentary called "Behind your Radio Dial: The Story of NBC"⁶¹ offering a behind-the-scenes look at how productions were made at the Rockefeller Center studios, while retracing the history and evolution of the NBC radio station up to the emergence of television. The opening images show a radio in a living room playing the broadcast of Verdi's *The Force of Destiny* conducted by Toscanini with the NBC orchestra. The documentary ends with another appearance by the conductor, only this time using *mise-en-abîme*: in the same living room, the Toscanini film is playing on the television screen, with a forward travelling shot. Thus, the documentary, which is commented by Ben Grauer,⁶² opens and closes with the figure of Toscanini, presenting him as a symbol of modernity and the evolution of the leading radio and television network.
- 43 On the evening of 20 March 1948, David Sarnoff brought the NBC's alliance with Toscanini to a culmination, programming the first-ever live televised broadcast of a musical concert, which was dedicated to Wagner. Speaking to the cameras in front of Studio 8H, he said:

This is a great day for radio, for television and for the public. Tonight for the first time in the history of this great science and art of radio, we are televising the great music of Wagner, the great interpretive genius of Toscanini, and the playing of his gifted artists in his orchestra. Never before in the history of the world was this possible. This represents the realization of a dream—a dream we have dreamed for twenty-five years or more... I wish it were possible for the people in Italy also tonight, particularly during this critical period in the destiny of their nation, to

share with us the great privilege and the great joy of seeing and listening to their loyal native son—our own dear Maestro Toscanini.⁶³

- 44 To Sarnoff, the significance of the event had as much to do with the realization of his own dreams as increasing audience shares and the network's prestige, given that only "ten percent of the potential concert viewers" actually saw Toscanini conducting on stage.⁶⁴ Not to be outdone, William Paley, president of the rival network CBS, broadcast the channel's first-ever live televised concert the same evening, featuring Eugène Ormandy at the head of the Philadelphia Orchestra, but it was not as successful as Toscanini's performance. Shortly thereafter, the magazine *Life* published two articles comparing these televised concerts, with screenshots of the conductors beneath the projectors in front of the cameras. While Toscanini was praised for the precision of his gestures and the eloquence of his facial expressions,⁶⁵ the critics were not as kind with Ormandy, with whom they found fault for having a cough drop in his mouth while conducting on camera!
- 45 In giving the first televised concert, and as the first conductor to be filmed at the NBC studios, Toscanini became "telegenic". During the multiple rehearsals before his televised concerts, the director Hal Keith worked out how the cameramen would film the different shots. Inspired by Hollywood cinema techniques, the filming involved framings and perspectives that were potentially charged with meaning, using and alternating between close-up shots of Toscanini's face, bust and hands and low-angle shots that enhanced his grandeur, authority and power.
- 46 For the first concert, three cameras were used: two positioned on the balcony, and one directly in front of Toscanini which allowed the spectators to see him as only the musicians saw him on stage, immediately placing him in a charismatic physical position. His conductor's persona was sublimated—the slightest gesture or facial expression had an importance to it, and played a part in the construction of his image, which became impressed in the viewer's imagination. "His face was vital and intense... The music welled out of him with a force that he seemingly could not brook, and one could see him humming, chanting, almost roaring. It was as though every instrument were singing within him. Watching him via television gave you the illusion that a new dimension had been found for your comprehension of music," wrote critic Howard Taubman in the *New York Times*.⁶⁶
- 47 The staging techniques were accentuated during concerts rebroadcast from Carnegie Hall. Additional cameras increased the perspectives and the number of subjects filmed, making the broadcasts visually richer, at the risk of distracting viewers and drawing attention away from the music. When Kirk Browning was appointed director of concert broadcasts at NBC, he tried to introduce certain innovations and special effects to avoid monotony for the viewers, such as superimposing the face of a girl over Toscanini's face during the performance of the orchestrated version of Claude Debussy's *The Girl with the Flaxen Hair*. But Chotzinoff disapproved of such techniques, especially if they diverted attention from the Maestro. He instructed Browning, "Kirk, from here on, you're directing the Toscanini shows. I don't care what you do with the picture—just never be on anything but Toscanini."⁶⁷ So, Browning complied with the filming protocol and adhered to rule number one: make sure Toscanini's face and gestures appeared regularly in the foreground.
- 48 In an article on the filming of the second televised concert of 3 April 1948, *Newsweek* reported that the cameramen had focused on three main points: Toscanini, the NBC

orchestra, and the first row where important public figures were seated.⁶⁸ The images shown on television were favorable and flattering, and in this sense, presented a constructed, unified and controlled vision of the figure of Toscanini and his environment.

- 49 But in response to the repeated camera shots focused on the conductor, Howard Taubman raised the question “Should Conductors Be Seen or Just Heard?”,⁶⁹ which leads us here to wonder whether the novelty of video was not being used to legitimize and “prop up” a musical genre that was gradually losing its audience to other more entertaining genres. The visual dimension enabled visitors to enjoy a concert from the comfort of their homes, but seeing Toscanini’s facial expressions did not help them better understand the work. Ultimately, even if video did not “kill” radio stars and performers, it did drastically change the way music was perceived by shifting part of the auditory concentration to visual attention, making the visual dimension just as important, if not more so, than the auditory dimension. The ten NBC Symphony Orchestra concerts filmed and produced from 1948 to 1952 first and foremost helped build and promote Toscanini’s image, and used his stardom to increase the channel’s audience share and prestige.
- 50 In 1952, when Toscanini began making fewer appearances, both NBC and CBS created shows dedicated to the study of the musical works in the canon. One example is the series entitled “Omnibus”, the first host and artistic director of which was Leopold Stokowski, succeeded by Leonard Bernstein, America’s new star conductor.
- 51 On 25 March 1954, Toscanini sent Sarnoff a letter of resignation expressing his wish to retire. He also said that throughout his many years with NBC, it was “a joy for me to know that the music played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra has been acclaimed by the vast radio audiences all over the United States and abroad”.⁷⁰ In reality, this letter, which was also publicized,⁷¹ was probably written by his son, Walter Toscanini, following an exchange with Sarnoff in which they had agreed that Toscanini would step down.⁷²
- 52 The conductor gave his final concert on 4 April 1954 at Carnegie Hall. Unable to contain his emotion during the performance, at one point, Toscanini suddenly stopped conducting the orchestra and covered his face with his left hand. His assistant, Guido Cantelli, suspended the broadcast. After a long break, Toscanini returned to the stage and conducted the Prelude to Wagner’s *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* to conclude the program. Several months later after a series of negotiations with Chotzinoff, the NBC Symphony Orchestra was dissolved due to a lack of funding and sponsors.⁷³ At their own initiative, some of the musicians chose to continue the ensemble until 1963 under the name “symphony of the Air”, which Stokowski and Bernstein agreed to conduct during public concerts and telecasts.
- 53 As a famous conductor, Toscanini was one of the primary reasons the public listened to, watched and attended the concerts produced by NBC. Although considered a mythic figure in the music world and among orchestra conductors, in the broadcasting industry and at the Radio Corporation of America,⁷⁴ Toscanini was primarily considered a “merchandise star”,⁷⁵ subject to the same obligation to draw an audience as other big radio stars.
- 54 At the end of his career, Sarnoff told his biographer Ben Grauer that he was proud to have achieved his goal of democratizing “high culture” by creating a reputed cultural environment for both seasoned lovers of classical music and the general population.
- 55 During his seventeen years under contract with NBC, Toscanini played an important role in the transformation and evolution of how the figure of the orchestra conductor was

represented in the United States. Because he sought to remain absolutely faithful to the score, claiming that respect for the composer's intentions was a foremost priority, and made a repertory of works usually played in their full version not only accessible, but popular, Toscanini became the symbol of a "perfectly sanctified culture".⁷⁶ In this regard, he did represent an ideal in terms of the cultural practices which had emerged in American society at the dawn of the twentieth century, and a certain view of the orchestra conductor's role, which came to be defined as "pursuance and preservation of what was often referred to as the 'divine art'".⁷⁷

- 56 Today, tours of the NBC studios, still located in Rockefeller Center, take visitors through Studio 8H, which was turned into a television studio in 1950 and has been the home of one of America's most famous TV shows, "Saturday Night Live", since 1975. Certain more curious visitors may notice, tucked away in a corner down a hallway lined with television producers' offices, one of Arturo Toscanini's rehearsal stands bearing the simple description: "Toscanini's Music Stand For NBC Symphony Orchestra"—a vestige from an era that is forever gone.

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« President Roosevelt lauds Toscanini for its devotion to cause of liberty », 20 April 1943, *NBC press release*, Folder 1238.

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NOTES

1. "On dit d'un homme pour le louer qu'il est un homme unique." (DELACROIX, Eugène, *Journal (1822-1863)*, ed. A. Joubin, R. Labourdette, Paris, Plon, 1996, p.270).

2. “– Faites-moi une vedette./ – Budget habituel ?/ – Budget habituel.” (ARLAUD, Rodolphe-Maurice, *Cinéma-Bouffe. Le cinéma et ses gens*, Paris, J. Melot, 1945, p.163.)
3. American stations and channels are affiliated with networks, a concept which differs from that of a centralized channel, like the BBC in England, or a cooperative network, like the ARD in Germany. NBC was the first national network in the United States.
4. Two years earlier, in 1935, Hadley Cantril published a first social psychological study on the radio audience: CANTRIL, Hadley & ALLPORT, Gordon W., *Psychology of Radio*, New York, Harpers & Brothers, 1935.
5. David Sarnoff (1891-1971) was the founder of NBC and president of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) created in 1927. In a long memo to the CEO of Marconi in 1915, he revealed his visionary project to make wireless telegraphy into an entertainment instrument for the general public: “I have in mind a plan of development which would make radio a ‘household utility’ in the same sense as the piano or phonograph” (cited in and borrowed from HILLIARD, Robert L., KEITH, Michael C., *The Broadcast Century and Beyond. A Biography of American Broadcasting*, Boston, Focal Press, 2004, p.16).
6. On this subject, see the article by American author and radio editor DUNLAP, Orrin, “Music in the Air”, *New York Times*, 7 March 1947. Especially: “The main force encouraging Mr. Toscanini to accept is that radio enables him to reach such an infinitely larger audience in one broadcast than during an extended concert tour.”
7. “I invited Maestro Arturo Toscanini, the world greatest conductor, to return to America [...]” (SARNOFF, David, “Toscanini returning to U.S. for series of NBC broadcasts”, 5 February 1937, NBC Archives, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. [hereinafter “NBC Arch.”], *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1241).
8. “The licensing authority may grant such permit if public convenience, interest, or necessity will be served by the construction of the station [...]” (excerpt from *Public Law*, No. 632, 69th Congress, Section 21, cited in BARNOUW, Erik, *A Tower in Babel. A History of Broadcasting in the United States To 1933*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1966, p.310). After an initial period of chaos due to the uncontrolled multiplication of broadcasting stations in the 1920s, the American Congress created the Federal Radio Commission (FRC), under the Radio Act of 1927, in order to regulate the attribution of radio frequencies. The FRC (which became the Federal Communications Commission in 1934) was a federal agency tasked with granting a broadcasting license to any station that was “of public convenience, interest or necessity”, on the condition that it had complied with the technical regulations and guidelines laid down by Congress.
9. DELONG, Thomas A., *The Mighty Music Box. The Golden Age of Musical Radio*, Los Angeles, Amber Crest Books, 1980, p.152.
10. During the first decades of American radio, unsponsored radio program—such as educational, religious and political shows, and certain rebroadcasts of concerts—were called “sustaining programs”, because they were solely for public benefit. Thus, the station financed this type of program itself, paying for them partly with the profits from sponsored programs.
11. MORIN, Edgar, *Les Stars*, Paris, Éd. du Seuil, 1972, p.12.
12. DAVENPORT, John and Marcia, “Toscanini on the Air”, *Fortune Magazine*, January 1938, p.62-63. According to a survey conducted by *Fortune Quarterly Survey* in 1937.
13. SARNOFF, *NBC Press Release*, 7 March 1938, NBC Arch., Folder 1241.
14. Cited in BILBY, Kenneth, *The General. David Sarnoff and the Rise of the Communications Industry*, New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1985, p.241.
15. “You probably know someone who has been talking for weeks about Toscanini’s first broadcast with the new NBC orchestra on Christmas night. This is the story of how that spectacular program was put together, and why” (DAVENPORT, “Toscanini on the Air”, art. cit., p.62).
16. *Idem*.

17. Letter from Toscanini to John F. Royal dated 24 December 1937, NBC Arch., *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1242.
18. "Clockless Studio is legacy left by Arturo Toscanini", 17 March 1938, NBC Arch., *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1241.
19. DUNLAP, Orrin, "Sound and Fury; Listeners Wish Radio Would 'Shush' Studio Applause and Stop Other Pests", *New York Times*, 5 September 1937.
20. DOWNES, Olin, "Return of Toscanini", *New York Times*, 14 February 1937.
21. Letter from Toscanini to Sarnoff dated 8 February 1937, NBC Arch., *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1243.
22. SACHS, Harvey, *Toscanini*, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Co., 1978.
23. *The NBC Symphony Orchestra*, New York, 1938, NBC Arch. This promotional publication featured a biography of each musician in the orchestra along with a portrait drawn by artist Bettina Steinke.
24. LIEBLING, Leonard, "His Musical Majesty Arturo Toscanini", *Radio Guide*, 25 December 1937, p.2.
25. For example, "The Atwater Kent Hour", a music program that aired on NBC from 1926 to 1934. The name of the brand was assimilated and integrated into listeners' minds almost subliminally: after a performance by a singing quartet, the host introduced the performers as the "Atwater Kent Quartet", just as the tenor was "the tenor of the Atwater Kent Hour", and the orchestra was "The Atwater Kent Symphony Orchestra". For more on this subject, see DUNNING, John, *On the Air. The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998, p.48-49.
26. On the notion of "radiogeny", see the book by COEUROY, André, *Panorama de la radio*, Paris, Éditions Kra, 1930.
27. Within the specialized press devoted to the radio industry, the following publications are of particular note: *Radio Digest*, *Radio Stars* and *Radio Mirror*.
28. "Mr. David Sarnoff's Statement to the Public", March 1937, NBC Arch., *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1241.
29. After the last concert of the season, NBC sent out another press release which sparked articles such as this unsigned editorial in the *New York Times*: "The Messenger Boy. Mr. David Sarnoff, who began his life in America as a messenger boy, has again glorified his office", *New York Times*, 7 March 1938.
30. LIEBLING, "His Musical Majesty Arturo Toscanini", art. cit., p.2.
31. LIEBERSON, Goddard, "Over the Air", *Modern Music*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1938, p.115.
32. DAVENPORT, Marcia, "All Star Orchestra", *Stage*, December 1937, p.79.
33. HAENLEY, Jack, "The Ten most Unusual People in Radio", *Radio Stars*, October 1938, p.20-21.
34. CURTIS, Mitchell, "Medal of Merit awarded to Arturo Toscanini", *Radio Guide*, January 1938, Vol. 7, No. 11, p.1.
35. "He did nothing for show, nothing for himself [...] and the Old Man always felt the composer was much more important than the conductor" (HAGGIN, Bernard H., *The Toscanini Musicians Knew*, New York, Horizon Press, 1967, p.57-58).
36. LYNCH, Christopher, *When Hollywood Landed at Chicago's Midway Airport. The Photos & Stories of Mike Rotunno*, Charleston, The History Press, 2012, p.34.
37. CHASE, Francis Jr., "Toscanini the Mysterious", *Radio Guide*, 23 March 1940, p.4-5.
38. MORIN, *Les Stars*, op. cit., p.46: "The idealization of a star of course implies spirituality. Photos often show the star busy painting, as if inspired by the most authentic form of talent, or perhaps crouching before their bookshelves consulting a great book [...]" ; "L'idéalisation de la star implique bien entendu une spiritualité. Les photos nous

montrent souvent la star occupée à peindre sous l'inspiration du plus authentique talent, ou bien accroupie devant sa bibliothèque, consultant un bel ouvrage [...].”

39. “Arturo Toscanini, Offstage. He loves Television sports, puppet shows, Music, Most of the time he’s quiet, charming”, 22 November 1949, NBC Arch., *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1240.

40. *Idem*.

41. TOSCANINI, Arturo, *The Letters of Arturo Toscanini*, ed. H. Sachs, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2006, p.318. Letter from Toscanini to Ada Mainardi, dated 23 December 1937.

42. Letter from David Sarnoff to Arturo Toscanini, dated 7 March 1948, “NBC’s upcoming gift to him of a 1948 Cadillac equipped with a mobile telephone”, NBC Arch., Folder 1240.

43. MORIN, *Les Stars*, *op. cit.*, p.170: In his study on the star system practices in Hollywood movie industry, Morin examined the star’s relationship with his fictional character, his public character and the ways he is represented, as well as his own statements and those made by the press. He explains: “The star is the product of a personality dialectic: an actor imposes his personality on his roles, and his roles impose their personality on him. This superimposition gives rise to a mixed being which is the star. This means that the actor contributes a certain capital—his own personality”; “La star est le produit d’une dialectique de la personnalité : un acteur impose sa personnalité à ses héros, ses héros imposent leur personnalité à un acteur ; de cette surimpression naît un être mixte : la star. Cela signifie que l’acteur apporte son capital de personnalité propre.”

44. *Ibid.*, p.37. The author considers that a “dialectic of interpenetration” occurs between a movie star and her role: “A star is not just an actress. Her characters are not just characters. The characters in the movie contaminate the star, just as the star herself contaminates her characters”; “La star n’est pas seulement une actrice. Ses personnages ne sont pas seulement des personnages. Les personnages du film contaminent les stars. Réciproquement, la star elle-même contamine ses personnages.”

45. Letter from Arturo Toscanini to Leopold Stokowski dated 25 June 1942, in TOSCANINI, *The Letters of Arturo Toscanini*, *op. cit.*, p.386.

46. For more on this subject, see: FAUSER, Annegret, *Sounds of War. Music in the United States during World War II*, New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p.50-53.

47. “Gershwin’s Mother pays war tribute to Toscanini for first rendition of famous jazz classic”, NBC Press Department New York, 14 October 1942, NBC Arch., *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1238.

48. “America’s Top dance band conductors acclaim Toscanini for *Rhapsody in Blue* presentation”, 23 October 1942, NBC Arch., *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1238.

49. {0>Concert du 25 avril 1943, « President Roosevelt lauds Toscanini for its devotion to cause of liberty », Arch. NBC, *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1238.<0}>Concert on 25 April 1943, “President Roosevelt lauds Toscanini for his devotion to cause of liberty”, NBC Arch., *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1238.<0}

50. {0>« You expressed in music the might and power and fierce resolve deep down within us all to battle to victory » (« Morgenthau sends warm thanks to Toscanini for war bond concert », 20 mai 1943, Arch. NBC, *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1238).<0}>“Morgenthau sends warm thanks to Toscanini for war bond concert”, 20 May 1943, NBC Arch., *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1238.<0}

51. {0>À ce sujet, voir l’ouvrage de ROSE, Kenneth, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*:<0}>On this subject, see ROSE, Kenneth, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*.<0}> {0>A Social History of Americans in World War II, New York, Routledge, 2008.<0}>A Social History of Americans in World War II, New York, Routledge, 2008.<0}

52. BUSH JONES, John, *The Songs that Fought the War. Popular Music and the Home Front (1939-1945)*, Waltham, Brandeis University Press, 2006, p.198. Irving Berlin, the author of the famous *God Bless*

America, composed a song called “Any Bonds Today?” for a cartoon produced by the United States Treasury Department to promote National Defense war bonds and savings bonds.<0}

53. Keeping in mind that Toscanini’s political engagement in the anti-fascist movement went farther back. As principal conductor at La Scala in Milan, he publicly expressed and manifested his opposition to Mussolini’s regime, advocating for a democratic Italy. He refused to play the fascist party’s hymn *Giovinezza* before the curtain went up, as ordered by Il Duce’s Black Shirts, and he refused to allow portraits of Mussolini to be hung on the walls of the Scala. In 1933, he also opposed Hitler, boycotting German orchestras and theatres in protest of anti-Jewish laws which were forcing Jewish musicians into exile. See SACHS, *Toscanini*, *op. cit.* On Toscanini’s relationships with political authorities, see also the book by the same author: *Reflections on Toscanini*, New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1991.

54. Correspondence between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Arturo Toscanini, reproduced in a press release of 20 April 1943 entitled “President Roosevelt lauds Toscanini for his devotion to cause of liberty”, NBC Arch., *NBC Press Release*, Folder 1238.

55. *Idem.*

56. TAUBMAN, Howard, *New York Times*, 26 September 1943.

57. SACHS, *Toscanini*, *op. cit.*

58. “Toscanini appears in his first film, but refuses any salary for sounding anti-fascist paean again,” NBC Arch., *NBC Daily News*, Folder 1238.

59. NBC Arch., Folder 1238.

60. In reference to the song entitled *Video Killed the Radio Star* by the English band, The Buggles.

61. “Behind your Radio Dial: The Story of NBC”, 1947. Film available online at: <https://archive.org/details/BehindYo1947>

62. Ben Grauer (1908-1977) was a star announcer on NBC. Toscanini chose him to be the designated announcer for the NBC Symphony Orchestra from 1940 to 1954. In 1963, he produced and presented the series “Toscanini, The Man Behind the Legend”, which aired on the radio until 1980.

63. SARNOFF, David. Speech introducing the first-ever live televised broadcast of a concert on NBC on 20 March 1948. Source: “Arturo Toscanini—The Television Concerts 1948-1952”, DVD Vol. 1, Testament, 2006.

64. *Idem.*

65. “Petrillo relents Television presents Toscanini”, “Rival CBS program featured a maestro who ate cough drops”, *Life Magazine*, 5 April 1948, p.43-46.

66. TAUBMAN, Howard, “Should Conductors Be Seen or Just Heard?”, *New York Times*, 25 April 1948.

67. HILLIARD, Robert L., KEITH, Michael C., *The Broadcast Century and Beyond. A Biography of American Broadcasting*, Boston, Focal Press, 2004, p.158.

68. “Toscanini by Television”, *Newsweek*, 29 March 1948, p.79.

69. TAUBMAN, Howard, “Toscanini Concert is Telecast by NBC”, *New York Times*, 21 March 1948.

70. TOSCANINI, *The Letters of Arturo Toscanini*, *op. cit.*, p.445.

71. HOROWITZ, Joseph, *Understanding Toscanini. A Social History of American Concert Life*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994, p.302.

72. SACHS, *Toscanini*, *op. cit.*, p.314.

73. HOROWITZ, *Understanding Toscanini. A Social History of American Concert Life*, *op. cit.*, p.303.

74. The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) also owned the “Victor RCA” record label under which Arturo Toscanini’s records were marketed.

75. From the French “*star-marchandise*” as defined by MORIN in *Les Stars*, *op. cit.*, p.9.

76. LEVINE, Lawrence W., *Highbrow/Lowbrow. The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1988. This ideal of cultural practices refers to the creation of cultural hierarchies and the divide between two types of culture—elitist and popular, or highbrow and lowbrow—that coexisted in the second half of the nineteenth century in the United States. This dichotomy gradually replaced the notion of “shared public culture” that Levine describes in his book. This “cultural bifurcation” involved the sanctification of the art music repertory manifested through respect for the work’s integrity.

77. *Ibid.*, p.147.

ABSTRACTS

This article presents and analyses various aspects of how the orchestra conductor Arturo Toscanini was represented in the media and perceived during his years under contract with the National Broadcasting Company, from 1937 to 1954. Over the course of this period, NBC helped elevate him to mythic status using mass media advertising techniques to boost his popularity throughout the United States. In reality, behind Toscanini’s collaboration with the American broadcasting network was an artistic, political and economic agenda which served the interests of both parties.

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Keywords: Toscanini, NBC, star system, publicity, politics

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