

# PROSCENIUM

## **Taking Sides**

By Ronald Harwood

Taking Sides

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November to Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2011  
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

# Taking Sides

By Ronald Harwood

## Cast:

Major Steve Arnold .....Mark Sutherland  
Emmi Straube .....Hannah Lester  
Lieutenant David Wills .....Vincent Eavis  
Tamara Sachs .....Izzie Cartwright  
Helmuth Rode .....Duncan Sykes  
Wilhelm Furtwangler.....David Pearson

Directed by .....Colin Hickman

Set Design .....Michael Williams  
Stage Manager .....Linda Hampson  
Assisted by .....Kathleen Jones  
Properties .....Anne Gerrard  
Costumes .....Evelyn Moutrie  
Lighting .....Compass Theatre  
Sound .....Vincent Eavis  
Lighting/sound operation .....Arnold Glickman

The action takes place in Major Arnold's office in the  
American Zone of occupied Berlin, 1946.

Act One: February, morning.

Act Two, Scene One: April, night.

Act Two, Scene Two: July, morning.

## The Author

Ronald Harwood was born Ronald Horwitz in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1934 and moved to London in 1951 to pursue a career in the theatre. He changed his name from Horwitz after an English master told him it was too foreign and too Jewish for a stage actor. After training at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art he joined the travelling Shakespeare Company of Sir Donald Wolfit, where he met and formed a friendship with Harold Pinter, who directed the first production of *Taking Sides* in Chichester in 1995.

From 1953 to 1958, Harwood was Sir Donald's personal dresser. He would later draw on this experience when he wrote his play, *The Dresser*, and the biography: *Sir Donald Wolfit CBE: His Life and Work in the Unfashionable Theatre*. After leaving Wolfit's company he joined the 59 Theatre Company for a season at the Lyric Hammersmith.

In 1960 Harwood retired from acting and began his career as a writer, and within three years had success in the three strands of his writing: he published his first novel, *All The Same Shadows*, in 1961, wrote his first screenplay, *Private Potter*, in 1962, and had his first play, *March Hares*, produced in 1964. He continued at a prolific pace writing more than 21 stage plays, 10 books and 16 screenplays.

One of the recurring themes in Harwood's work is his fascination with the stage, concert hall and performing artists, as displayed in his plays, *The Dresser*, *After the Lions* (about Sarah Bernhardt), *Another Time* (a semi-autobiographical piece about a gifted South African pianist), *Quartet* (ageing opera singers), *Mahler's Conversion* (a rare West End flop, which starred his cousin, Antony Sher) and his book, *All the World's a Stage*, a general history of the theatre which accompanied a BBC2 series which he presented.

He also had a strong interest in the Second World War as shown by the films *Operation Daybreak*, *The Statement* and *The Pianist*, and the plays *Taking Sides* and *Collaboration*.

## The Play

In 1995 there were simultaneous world premieres of *Taking Sides* at the Minerva Theatre, Chichester, and in Krakow. The Chichester production transferred to the Criterion Theatre. More than ten years later Harwood wrote a companion piece, *Collaboration*, and the two plays appeared in repertory at Chichester in 2008, transferring to the Duchess Theatre the following year. The plays examine the behaviour of Wilhelm Furtwangler and Richard Strauss during the Nazi regime and combine some of the most important themes in Harwood's work: the Second World War, anti-Semitism, music and moral choices.

Harwood discusses the experience of writing these plays: 'Taking Sides and Collaboration deal with the conflict between art and politics and the agonising personal and moral choices that had to be faced by the protagonists. But the choices still have to be made by us, now, and the question how would we have behaved lies at the heart of both plays. It's clear that culture doesn't protect anyone from anything. Germany was the most cultured nation in Europe. It was writing these plays that taught me the lesson. It's a terrible lesson.'

Ronald Harwood's scripts leave it up to the audience either to take sides or to pause over the complex moral question of the artist's role in a political reign of terror.

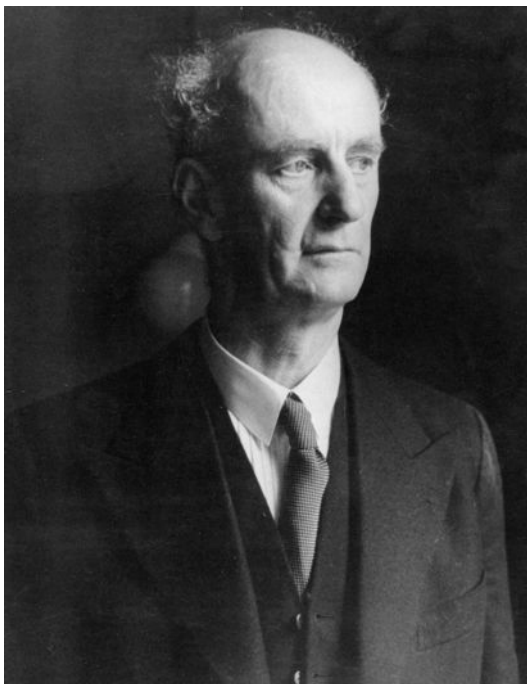
## Wilhelm Furtwangler 1886-1954

German conductor and composer, born in Berlin in 1886. Though his chief posthumous fame rests in his work as a conductor, he regarded himself, first and foremost, as a composer and wrote a symphony as early as 1903-4. He first appeared with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra as a guest conductor in 1917 and at the Berlin State Opera in 1920, and by 1930 he had built a formidable reputation as a conductor with the Leipzig Gewandhaus, as a guest conductor in London and New York and then with the BPO. His unique conducting style, remarkable alike for his flexible tempi and intuitive interpretations, attracted fanatical admirers and repelled others. To Furtwangler a musical score was a blueprint for the imagination. Above all he loathed routine. At

every concert he demanded that his orchestra (whom he regarded almost as chamber musicians) should give a 'first performance'. He retained this freshness of outlook to the end. Most famous for his performances of Beethoven, Brahms, Bruckner and Wagner he was also a champion of modern music, in particular of Hindemith and Schoenberg.

He remained in Berlin while the Nazis were in power. Although he resigned all his official posts in 1934, he continued to conduct, as an independent musician, the BPO in Berlin and at Bayreuth, and toured England several times between 1936-8 and Switzerland and Scandinavia in 1942-3. His last wartime concert with the BPO was on 28 January 1945. He had a reputation for offering help and comfort to his Jewish colleagues. His uneasy relationship with the regime is examined and debated in the play.

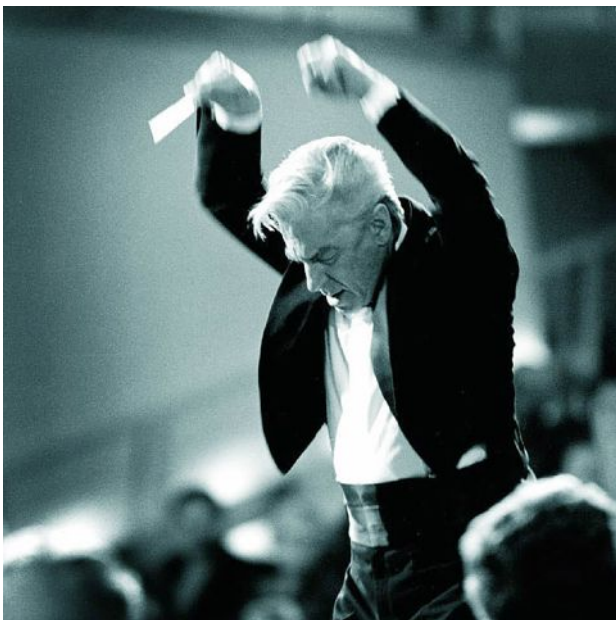
Towards the end of the war he fled to Switzerland, where he composed his symphony No2 in E minor, given its premier in 1948 in Berlin. He came before the Denazification Tribunal in December 1946 and was cleared of all charges by the Joint Allied Tribunal in January 1947.



## The Other Conductors

### ***Herbert von Karajan*** **1908-89**

Austrian orchestral and opera conductor born in Salzburg in 1908. In 1955 he was appointed Music Director for Life of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra as successor to Furtwangler. He made his debut with the orchestra in 1937 and his 1938 conducting of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* was hailed by Berlin critics as 'Das Wunder Karajan' (the Karajan miracle). He was a member of the Nazi party but Karajan was discharged by the Austrian Denazification Board in March 1946 and he resumed his conducting career.



### ***Vittorio de Sabata*** 1892-1967



Italian conductor and composer who was appointed Principal Conductor at La Scala, Milan, as successor to Toscanini. Guest conductor with the BPO in the middle 1930s, both at Bayreuth and Berlin, in spite of his Jewish background.

## **The Hinkel Archive**

After the Nazis seized power in 1933 Hans Hinkel (1901-1960) was appointed Reich Organisation Leader of the Militant League for German Culture and manager of the Reich Culture Chamber. From 1935 he was a special commissioner of 'cultural particulars', and as SS officer and member of the Blood Order he was responsible for Anti-Semitic issues and the removal of Jews from cultural undertakings. He kept detailed files on all the artists he came into contact with.

## **Bruckner and Furtwangler**

From an article on Bruckner in The Guardian, October 7 2011: You can experience the most dynamic vision of Bruckner in recorded history in performances given by Wilhelm Furtwangler, including some during the second world war with the Nazi-sponsored Berlin Philharmonic. There's a performance from 1942 that is still shockingly intense, vital and energetic. For anyone who thinks Bruckner only wrote slow, static bo-constricting music, this is the performance to hear. There's an intensity and wildness Furtwangler finds that flatly contradicts the monolithic vision Hitler and Goebbels had of the composer.

## **Art and Politics**

Ronald Harwood's contention that the moral issues around art and politics resonate today was confirmed by another musical dispute in September of this year. The London Philharmonic Orchestra suspended four musicians for using its name in a letter calling unsuccessfully for the cancellation of a concert by the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra at the Proms. The letter stated, in an argument similar to Major Arnold's in Taking Sides; 'Denials of human rights and violations of international law are hidden behind a cultural smokescreen. The IPO is perhaps Israel's prime asset in this campaign.' The LPO's response reflects some of Furtwangler's arguments in the play, declaring that for them 'music and politics do not mix' and that they believed in the power of music to bring peace and harmony to the world.

Once more we are invited to take sides.

# Judgement Day

By Odon von Horvath

Translation by Christopher Hampton

Judgement Day is a play by Odon von Horvath, author of "Tales from Vienna Woods".

Set in a small minded provincial backwater in Germany in 1937 the play concerns itself with issues of moral responsibility. The Station Master, "who has always done his duty" fails to change the signal. An error of judgement that has catastrophic results for everyone in the town. But the play asks us to consider who else is to blame. Is it the individual or the community?

Directed by Crystal Anthony

Wednesday 18th to Saturday 21st January 2012

7.45pm, Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Box Office : 020 8866 7075

## About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week, at the Harrow Arts Centre for rehearsals, so that four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Artistic Director : Michael Gerrard

Secretary : Izzie Cartwright

Chair : Crystal Anthony

Contact us at [www.proscenium.org.uk](http://www.proscenium.org.uk)