

The Muck Affair

Distrust of “dangerous” immigrants. Charges of fake news. Outrage over a celebrity’s refusal to honor the national anthem. America in 2017? Actually, America exactly 100 years ago—in a scandal involving patriotism and sex that ensnared one of the world’s top conductors and threatened to take down the entire Boston Symphony Orchestra.

By Neil Swidey

PRELUDE: THE MAJOR

The wire from Rhode Island came on a day when Henry Lee Higginson had no time for it. In addition to being the founder of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and pretty much its only benefactor, Higginson was an aristocrat in high demand. He was scrambling to attend to a dozen different matters before he and his orchestra boarded the afternoon train to Providence for their first out-of-state performance of the 1917-1918 season.

It was the day before Halloween, and although Higginson was just a few weeks shy of his 83d birthday, he was as busy as ever. In business, he was a partner in the successful brokerage firm that bore his family name. In philanthropy, he was one of Harvard’s most important donors—unusual for a college dropout—having given the university, among many other gifts, 31 acres that became Soldiers Field. Most of all, he was consumed by his work with the Boston Sym-

PHOTOGRAPHS AND DOCUMENTS FROM THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA;
PHOTOCOPYING BY GLOBE STAFF





SPAD
EVENING TELEGRAPH NOV. 2, 1917

DEMAND DR. MUCK PLAY STAR SPANGLED BANNER OR CANCEL CONCERT HERE

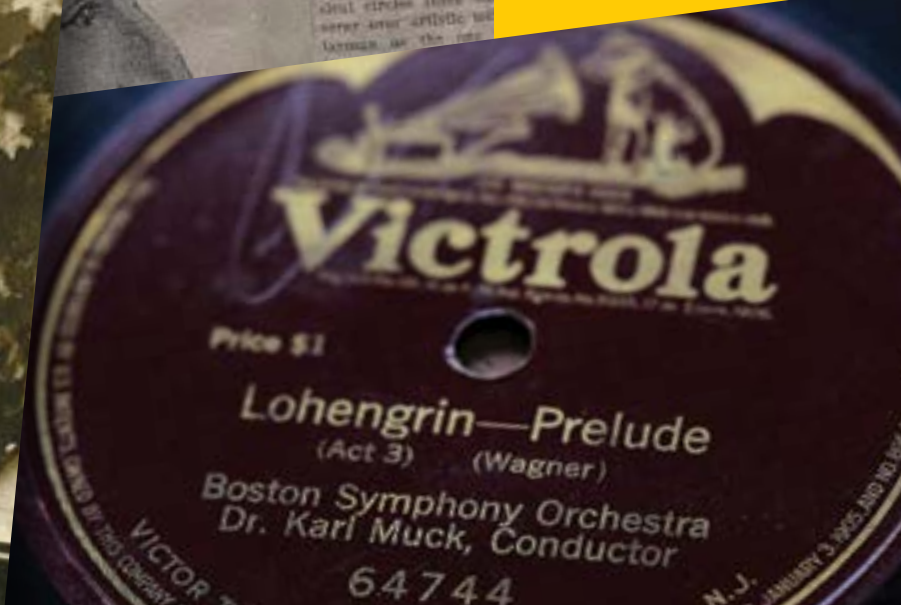
Men and Women Protest
Against Boston Symphony
Director's Attitude.

Refuses to Play National Anthem

OR REFUSES TO GO

From _____
Address: _____
Date _____

In the fall of 1917, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, under its German conductor, Dr. Karl Muck, was on top of the classical music world. In mid-October, it became the first full American orchestra to be captured on accoustical recordings (below). Muck and his wife, Anita (below left), were the toast of Boston society. But everything changed on October 30, 1917, when he was assailed for allegedly refusing to play the national anthem.



The Muck Affair

phony Orchestra, the passion project that he had begun plotting decades before he managed to create it in 1881.

The orchestra's unflappable manager, Charles Ellis, handed the telegram to Higginson. Just about everyone referred to Higginson as "Major," a title that sprang from his service in the Union Army during the Civil War. He'd actually been promoted from major to lieutenant colonel before the war was done. But there was an older Higginson cousin in Boston whom everyone called Colonel, so Major it was. Higginson's embrace of a title that shortchanged his actual rank was in keeping with a lifelong reputation for modesty.

Sporting spectacles and a bushy gray Vandyke, Higginson read the telegram and contemplated whether to bother his conductor about it. The leaders of nine ladies' clubs in Rhode Island had wired their request for the BSO to perform "The Star-Spangled Banner" during its concert in Providence that evening. Ever since the United States had declared war on Germany nearly seven months earlier, military boosters had been stepping up their demands for patriotic displays at events where they hadn't previously been considered appropriate.

The BSO's conductor, Dr. Karl Muck, could be prickly, but Higginson didn't mind. In fact, he saw it as his role to protect Muck from interference. It was the least he could do considering that the German conductor had delivered Higginson's dream for him.

Back in the 1850s, after dropping out of Harvard, Higginson had moved to Vienna to study piano, with dreams of a career in classical music. At some point during his years in Europe, he admitted to himself that he lacked the talent to be an orchestra player. Yet he returned to Boston with a burning mission.

American orchestras in the 19th century tended to be made up of itinerant, part-time musicians. In Austria and Germany, though, Higginson had seen how transcendent the performances could be when a group of exceptional musicians, under the direction of an exacting conductor, was allowed to focus on nothing else. He was determined to replicate that symphonic excellence in Boston.

Across the BSO's first three decades, Higginson had poured all of his soul and a good deal of his fortune into seeing the orchestra flourish. At the end of every season, he wrote a personal check to cover the BSO's operating deficit, which typically exceeded \$20,000 and one year topped \$50,000 (the equivalent of \$1 million a century later). He had also made possible the construction



BSO founder Henry Lee Higginson poured all of his soul and much of his fortune into seeing the orchestra flourish. But his ambition for it to rival the best European orchestras remained out of reach until he lured the German Kaiser's favorite conductor to Boston.

of the orchestra's elegant home, Symphony Hall, which opened in 1900.

Still, Higginson's ambition for the BSO to become an equal to the finest European orchestras remained out of reach until 1912, when he lured Karl Muck from Germany to become Boston's permanent conductor. At the time, Muck, who was leading the Royal Opera in Berlin, was considered one of the top two or three conductors in the world—and the personal favorite of German Kaiser Wilhelm II. Higginson didn't hesitate to offer Muck, who had earned his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Leipzig, a record-breaking salary of \$28,000 to seal the deal.

In the five years since, the intense and debonair Muck had achieved everything Higginson had hoped. So what if some of the orchestra's players complained about his punishing rehearsals,

or his acid-tongued arrogance, or his favoritism for the dozens of musicians he had personally recruited from Germany and Austria. Even Muck's chain-smoking drew complaints—the extra-potent imported cigarettes he preferred left a vile odor in his wake.

For Higginson, however, that was all just trifling noise. He couldn't have been more pleased with his orchestra under Muck's direction. Just a few weeks before the Providence performance, the BSO had been tapped to make history. The Victor Talking Machine Company arranged for all of the Boston players to squeeze into a specially designed space in Camden, New Jersey, for an unprecedented recording session of a full 100-piece American orchestra. As Muck led the orchestra in performing Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner, the work was captured for posterity on a series of acoustical recordings.

Meanwhile, the BSO's robust touring schedule during the Muck years had increasingly attracted devoted followings for performances around the country, including Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and New York's Carnegie Hall.

The dean of Boston newspaper music critics, Philip Hale of the *Boston Herald*, whose expert opinions and sparing praise Higginson valued more than any other, had pronounced the BSO under Muck to be virtuoso perfection.

Higginson suspected the high salary had helped lure Muck to Boston. But he knew what kept Muck at the BSO was the unyielding support and absolute creative control that Higginson guaranteed him. A few months earlier, Muck, concerned about mounting anti-German sentiment in America, had broached the idea of returning to Europe instead of renewing his five-year contract. Higginson would hear none of it, successfully appealing to Muck's loyalty to protect the excellence they had achieved.

Higginson looked again at the telegram, scanning the names associated with the various ladies' clubs. Not a single person was a subscriber to his symphony. Muck had finalized the program for that evening's performance, which would feature Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4. Higginson wasn't about to impinge on his conductor's artistic control—certainly not to please a bunch of busybodies from Rhode Island.

Wounded during his service in the Civil War, Higginson didn't need any lectures about patriotism. For the Major, the symphony was about art, pure and simple. Only after all artistic demands were satisfied, he would later say, should concern shift to "the good of the public, and the money must be an after consideration."

He'd made up his mind. He wouldn't tell Muck.

Higginson had no way of knowing how his decision to ignore the ladies' last-minute request would trigger an international scandal that transcended art to encompass war, freedom, and even sex. And he never could have suspected it would also permanently alter both Muck's life and his own, as well as the future of his beloved BSO.

The Major put the wire aside and instructed his orchestra manager to ignore the request. Then he hurried to catch the train to Providence.

FIRST MOVEMENT: THE CONDUCTOR

It felt like a nightmare, albeit a preposterous one.

Dr. Karl Muck could hardly believe what he read the morning after his orchestra's performance in Providence's Infantry Hall. The crowd inside the auditorium had been enthusiastic, but the local newspaper told a wholly different story.

"American Anthem Entirely Ignored," cried the front-page headline of the *Providence Journal*. The article described how Muck had rudely spurned a reasonable request to play "The Star-Spangled Banner," made by nine ladies' groups and the Rhode Island Liberty Loan Committee, in favor of a "programme of Russian, Hungarian, and German selections." (Although Congress wouldn't make it official for another 14 years, the song was already widely treated as the national anthem, accelerated by a 1916 order from President Woodrow Wilson that it be played at all military occasions.)

On the *Journal's* editorial page, Muck found a fulminating attack that labeled him a "dangerous alien enemy" who had "grossly offended every patriotic American by his refusal to render our national anthem."

Muck thought, *Refusal? Why is this the first I am hearing about the request?*

He learned the wire the ladies' groups had sent on the afternoon of October 30 had been prompted by an editorial in the *Journal* that morning. Written by the paper's editor, John Rathom, that first editorial called Muck "a man of notoriously pro-German affiliations." Muck had heard about Rathom's reputation as a rabid anti-German crusader, and now he sensed the editor was choreographing a campaign with his hide as the prize.

By the time the 58-year-old conductor reached the closing lines of Rathom's day-after editorial, he grew more alarmed. "Dr. Muck should be withdrawn at once and forever from the American stage," the paper thundered, "and placed where he belongs—behind bars in an internment camp."

Could an established newspaper really be demanding the imprisonment of one of the most respected cultural figures in America, simply because he had failed to honor a request to play the national anthem—a request he'd never received?

For Muck, the editorial called to mind a conversation he'd had with Major Higginson at the end of the last season, in May 1917. For decades, German-Americans had been the largest and most assimilated immigrant group in the United States. Successful in business, the press, and the arts, they were par-

ticularly dominant in the so-called German Triangle, which stretched from St. Louis in the west to Cincinnati in the east to Milwaukee in the north. The 1910 Census reported about 8 million first- and second-generation German-Americans out of a total population of 92 million. In high culture, Germans had no peers (except perhaps the Austrians). After all, with Beethoven, Bach, Brahms, and so many other heavyweight composers hailing from Deutschland, "classical music" was really just another way of saying "German music."

Nonetheless, Muck had been troubled to see how quickly the American public had turned on German-Americans since the start of the Great War in 1914, and how much worse the climate became starting in April 1917. That's when Wilson, who had long favored a policy of neutrality, persuaded Congress to declare war against Germany.

In their conversation in May, Muck had confided in the Major his fear that he might somehow end up being sent to an internment camp. Higginson had laughed. Why, the acclaimed conductor and his charming, regal wife, Anita, were the toast of Boston society. If he was sure of anything, Higginson knew his city would never turn its back on Dr. and Mrs. Muck.

Several years before his appointment as BSO conductor in 1912, Muck had temporarily led the orchestra for Higginson, "on loan" from the Kaiser. From the moment Muck had returned to Berlin in 1908, Higginson had begun lobbying to get him back to Boston for good. He wasn't about to let go of this gem again.

Muck had reason to trust Higginson. As a distinguished veteran of the Army and a pillar of Boston, the Major would surely have better instincts than Muck for predicting how the nation would behave during wartime. So the conductor had put aside his fears. The decision to stay had delighted Anita. She was fond of their life in Boston, with their stately home in the Fenway and wide network of close friends.

Now, on the morning after the Providence concert, Muck asked Higginson and manager Charles Ellis why neither had informed him of the national anthem request. They replied that they hadn't considered it serious enough to bother him with it. That decision had now cascaded into a crisis for all three of them—and especially for the one with a German accent.

Around the nation, anti-German sentiment was rapidly intensifying, leading cities to replace German street names—a few German-named US towns even renamed themselves. German instruction was summarily eliminated in many school districts. Hundreds of German-language newspapers and German-owned breweries were shuttered. A few weeks earlier, President Wilson had signed the Trading With the Enemy Act. Among its many harsh provisions, it established an Office of Alien Property Custodian, empowered to confiscate assets from anyone considered a possible threat to the US war effort.

Even the arts were not immune. Going into the new musical season, New York's Metropolitan Opera had acquiesced to pressure and removed the works of all German and Austrian composers from its program. Muck, considered the world's top interpreter of Wagner's operas, could barely conceive of



German-Americans had been the largest and most assimilated immigrant group in the United States. But after the US declared war on Germany in April 1917, much of the nation turned on German-Americans, viewing them as untrustworthy outsiders. The ground quickly shifted for Dr. Karl Muck and the BSO.

such a concession. A serious musical performance without Germans and Austrians? Why even bother taking the instruments out of their cases?

Still, in light of the nation's darkening mood, Muck told Higginson he would have readily agreed to play the anthem. The Major and the manager should have had the good sense to inform him of the request.

Two days later in Boston, Muck watched from the wings as Higginson addressed the audience at Symphony Hall. The Major's discomfort with the situation was unmistakable. He told the crowd he wished to set the record straight, making it clear that Muck had never refused to play the anthem in Providence. Higginson took responsibility for failing to relay the appeal to his conductor. He also announced that the BSO would perform "The Star-Spangled Banner" at every concert for the remainder of the season. A slip of paper attesting to the change had been inserted into each program handed out to patrons on their way into the hall.

Higginson stunned the crowd when he added, "Dr. Muck has placed his resignation in my hands." The Major made clear his reluctance to accept it. "To lose him would be disastrous," he said. "The matter rests with me. It will have my earnest consideration."

The Boston audience members made their own feelings clear, bathing Muck in warm applause as he took the stage.

As encouraged as Muck was by the show of support, he suspected it might not extend far outside of Symphony Hall. Soon, he would see how a mistake of his own making would all but guarantee that.

In an interview he gave to a New York paper in advance of BSO stops in Manhattan and Brooklyn, Muck let his pride and indignation get the best of him. As aware as he was of the shifting landscape for Germans in America, he failed to conceal his disgust over patriotism's intrusion into art. Asking esteemed orchestras like Boston's to play "The Star-Spangled Banner," he told the reporter, "is embarrassing. It is almost an insult. Such an attempt would be destructive of the very thing the symphony stands for—musical art."

His comments prompted an angry rebuke from many prominent Americans. Most notable was former President Teddy Roosevelt, who roared, "Muck ought not to be allowed at large in this country!"

SECOND MOVEMENT: THE EDITOR

Sitting onstage at the Boston City Club, looking out at the thousand faces squeezed into an auditorium designed for half that number, John Revelstoke Rathom had reason to smile. In addition to all the occupied seats crammed between the vaulted windows and valuable artwork in the Georgian-style main hall, there were another 500 people packed into an adjoining gallery. The toastmaster told the crowd that this gathering on the evening of November 21, 1917, was the largest event ever held at the City Club.

Rathom listened as the toastmaster sketched out his biography: The Australian-born editor of the *Providence Journal* whose future as an important

American was first hinted at by his birth date on the Fourth of July. A man whose bravery in exposing German spies in our midst had subjected him to counterattacks, including an explosion in his newsroom office.

Heading into the evening's event, the toastmaster said, he had personally been approached by 107 ticket seekers yet had been able to say yes to only four. He'd heard that desperate hopefuls were offering premiums as high as \$50 for ticket holders to surrender their seats.

Rathom knew that some members of the Boston establishment would be astonished to learn of such intense interest in a talk by an ink-stained wretch from the nation's tiniest state, an overfed 49-year-old with thin lips and thinning hair. These days, though, the only thing that surprised Rathom was that some Americans were still unable or unwilling to see the danger hiding in plain sight.

Ever since the summer of 1914, when Europe became inflamed in war, Rathom had been railing at American leaders to enter the fight. The *Journal*

editor had absolutely no hesitation in choosing sides: The British and their allies needed our help to defeat the inhumane "Huns" in Germany. Because American businesses and financiers were providing the crucial lifeline of munitions and credit for the British and French, Rathom knew the Germans would stop at nothing in their attempt to scare the United States out of aiding the Allies.

He prided himself on being able to put the pieces together earlier than most people. Still, he was troubled by how long it had taken so many Americans to accept the evidence of German spying and sabotage that, by the fall of 1917, he found irrefutable.

There was the sinking of the *Lusitania* (which claimed 128 American lives), the explosion at a munitions factory in Acton, Massachusetts (felt even 30 miles away), the fire that detonated more than 1 million pounds of ammo at the Black Tom munitions depot in New York Harbor (which scarred the Statue of Liberty with shrapnel), and the arrest of a college German professor who tried to blow up the Capitol and assassinate J.P. Morgan Jr. (who was the Allies' most important financier).

When Rathom took to the City Club podium, he asked a group of his loyal reporters sitting up front to stand. The crowd vigorously applauded these "Rathom men." He then regaled the audience with swashbuckling stories of how he and his intrepid staff first uncovered

German plots using the *Journal's* wireless station on Block Island to intercept communication. He delighted in describing how the erudite Count Johann von Bernstorff, the German ambassador to the United States, was reportedly mystified that a little Rhode Island newspaper—by planting counterspies in embassies and consulates—had managed to uncover German intrigue. The small newspaper's scoops were picked up and amplified by papers around the country.



Rathom

As the Great War wore on, John Rathom, the crusading editor of the *Providence Journal*, made a national name for himself and his newspaper through relentless reporting on alleged German spies. In Dr. Karl Muck, he saw the embodiment of the arrogant, dangerous "Huns" he'd been warning of.

Fourth Programme

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 2, at 2.30 o'clock

SATURDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 3, at 8 o'clock

The National Anthem will be played as
the closing number of the programme

SOLOIST
Miss FRANCES NASH

STEINWAY PIANO USED

There will be an intermission of ten minutes after the symphony

Higginson announced that the BSO would perform “The Star-Spangled Banner” at every concert for the remainder of the season. A slip of paper attesting to the change had been inserted into each program.

“artificial divisions” that create factions, raise “false issues,” and “lead to grotesque misunderstandings and distrust.”

Rathom was grateful the nation had largely unified behind President Wilson, once he had stopped his dithering and taken the country to war with Germany. He was also pleased that the president appeared to be doing what needed to be done to win. Wilson’s actions were finally matching his toughened rhetoric that some US citizens “born under other flags” have “poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life.” And the president had pushed through the passage of the Espionage Act, drafted by US Assistant Attorney General Charles Warren, a noted Bostonian. That law made it a serious crime to interfere with the US military effort or promote the success of America’s enemies, and allowed the postmaster general to con-

Rathom dismissed anyone who accused him of exaggerating the German-American threat for his own advancement. Personally, he knew he was on the right side of history. So what if being there was also turning out to be good for his career?

Perched atop Beacon Hill, the Boston City Club had been founded around the turn of the century to help heal tensions sparked by the huge spike in immigration, which had resulted in five out of every six Bostonians having a foreign-born parent. In the words of Mayor John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald, the idea behind the club was to get past the

fiscate any mail he had reason to suspect might be seditious or treasonous.

Rathom used his talk to call on Congress to extend the declaration of war to Austria-Hungary, arguing that Austrians in America were now doing Germany’s bidding.

Rathom was upset that so many leading Americans foolishly believed refinement and breeding somehow protected against disloyalty and treason. He knew treason could sometimes be wrapped in the finest clothing. Before that professor of German tried to blow up the Capitol and kill J.P. Morgan, he had been an esteemed faculty member at Harvard University.

In the category of the dangerously naive, Rathom included Henry Higginson, who, in addition to founding the Boston Symphony Orchestra, had helped found the Boston City Club. As Rathom saw it, Higginson seemed to value art above country. Was defending his German conductor more important to Higginson than protecting his country from being swallowed up by the rapacious Kaiser? Had Higginson’s obsessive devotion to German music blinded him to the enemy right under his nose, the one holding the baton?

Beneath Muck’s obvious contempt for the national anthem, Rathom saw more than just haughtiness. After all, Muck was known to be the Kaiser’s favorite conductor and a loyal German subject. Rathom had heard from his sources that Muck was a close associate of German ambassador Bernstorff and other key operatives for the Kaiser. What better place to hide a spy than inside a concert hall?

Rathom was so sure of Muck’s disloyalty that he had helped orchestrate the campaign against him, from the telegram sent by the ladies’ groups to the resolution passed two days later by the Rhode Island Council of Defense. Signed by the governor, that resolution condemned Muck “for his deliberately insulting attitude” and banned him from conducting in Rhode Island ever again.

Muck’s reflexive arrogance made him the perfect target, especially for an American public now conditioned by war to see a threat behind every German name. Rathom would stay on the conductor’s case until he exposed him fully as the spy he believed him to be.

Before he concluded his remarks at the City Club, the veteran editor delivered the line he knew would guarantee him a spot on the front page of every Boston paper the next day. “In my judgment, there is no city in the United States,” Rathom said, “with the single exception of New York, where German and Austrian propagandists are more dangerous or persistent than here in Boston.”

INTERMEZZO: THE ENSEMBLE

On December 7, 1917, Congress did what John Rathom and many others had been demanding: It declared war on Austria-Hungary. The move came on the heels of several developments that Muck had found unsettling. There was the decision by President Wilson to require all male non-citizen Germans in the US to register as enemy aliens, and making it illegal for them to leave home without their registration card or to step foot in Washington, D.C. There was the arrest under the Espionage Act of Hollywood producer Robert Goldstein, the son of German Jewish immigrants, for subverting the military by inciting hatred of its allies. Because his film, *The Spirit of '76*, included graphic but accurate scenes of wartime atrocities by the redcoats during the American Revolution, prosecutors alleged that Goldstein was now, more than a century later, trying to drive a wedge between the Americans and the British.

The Muck Affair

And there was the fiery rally in Baltimore, led by former Maryland governor Edwin Warfield, to block Muck from leading the BSO's planned performance there or ever playing in that state again. During the rally in the birth city of the man behind "The Star-Spangled Banner," Warfield had cried, "I hope Francis Scott Key will rise out of his grave and haunt Muck until doomsday!" Some in the 2,000-strong crowd responded by chanting, "Kill Muck! Kill Muck!"

Muck did receive some rare good news on the same day Congress declared war against Austria-Hungary. Ever since the national anthem controversy, he had insisted he should not be considered an enemy threat because he was not actually a German citizen. Rather, he was a citizen of Switzerland. Although he had been born outside Frankfurt and spent the bulk of his life in Germany, his father had obtained Swiss citizenship for himself and his son, and the conductor had maintained it. While Rathom and other critics alleged this claim was a dodge, Muck insisted it was his only citizenship.

On December 7, the Swiss Embassy agreed. It officially declared Muck to be a Swiss citizen, meaning he would not be considered an enemy alien in the US—at least not in the eyes of the Swiss government.

At last, Muck felt he could return his attention to his true calling of leading an orchestra to unprecedented heights. Before the anthem controversy, he had put together an ambitious schedule of concerts for the season. It featured a wide range of soloists, from celebrated Australian soprano Nellie Melba, who commanded a hefty \$1,000 appearance fee (and was famous enough to have a peach dessert named after her), to 22-year-old up-and-coming soprano Rosamond Young, who would be paid one-tenth that.

Muck knew the only way to create a world-class orchestra was to be relentless in the pursuit of perfection, and demand nothing less from every player. He refused to relax his standards now, although he was more careful with his sardonic humor. Years earlier, when a player arrived late for rehearsal, begging forgiveness because he had overslept, Muck cracked, "A German would have lied and said he was sick."

His reprieve from the Swiss Embassy turned out to be short-lived. In mid-December, the US Justice Department informed Higginson that, regardless of the Swiss findings, it still considered Muck to be an enemy alien.

The most hopeful development for Muck came in January 1918, although he remained unaware of it. A. Bruce Bielaski, the head of the Bureau of Investigation in Washington, D.C.—forerunner to the FBI—had assigned one of his trusted agents to probe the Muck case and separate fact from fiction. After several weeks of digging, that agent filed a confidential report to Bielaski on January 18. His conclusion? Muck was no spy and posed no security threat. The whole affair, the agent wrote, was "a frame-up of the *Providence Journal*." Around that time, editor John Rathom was still railing in the pages of the *Journal* about "the jelly fish management and insolent Prussian leadership" of the BSO.



Hoping to get past the anthem controversy, Muck led his orchestra in a rehearsal on March 25, 1918 (above). After lunch with his wife and their dear friend Isabella Stewart Gardner, he resumed the punishing rehearsal. Unbeknownst to the conductor, federal agents were waiting for him.

During the war, the 400-agent Bureau of Investigation was being inundated with allegations of a spy ring in every city. It was a relief for its chief, Bielaski, to be able to put another in the "nothing to worry about" category.

The Bureau was so understaffed that in 1917 Bielaski had accepted an offer from a Chicago advertising executive to create a secret force of agents from the business world. The volunteer agents in this American Protective League were given sweeping powers to be the government's eyes and ears in their communities. The APL would eventually grow to 250,000 volunteer agents in 600 cities and run secret investigations on an estimated 3 million Americans, all in the name of ferreting out

dangerous spies, draft dodgers, and agitators.

As winter wore on, Major Higginson kept up his goal of writing personal replies to every one of the legions who wrote to criticize him for his defense of Muck. However, his reply in February to a New York socialite by the name of Lucie Jay only seemed to inflame the situation. A former board member of the New York Philharmonic Society, Jay had been demanding Muck's head since the Providence eruption. In response to Higginson's contention that Muck had done nothing wrong, Jay organized an open letter that she and her fellow socialites described as a "final warning" to the Major.

"Can you prove that Doktor Muck has 'done nothing wrong?'" the open letter read, Germanizing the spelling of "doctor" for maximum effect. After strenuous campaigning by the likes of Jay and Rathom, the cities of Pittsburgh, Detroit, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Springfield, Massachusetts, had all banned Muck. "Are we to pour forth our blood and nerve and brain and treasure and still hold to German musical domination?" the letter continued. "Rather a thousand times that the orchestral traditions fade from our lives than one hour be added to the war's duration by clinging to this last tentacle of the German Octopus."

Tensions spiked again in March 1918, when the German military launched its furious spring offensive. With Russia out of the war, Germany moved half a



million men from the eastern to the western front. Fears rose in America that this tactical advantage would decisively swing the fight for the “Huns,” and they would eventually cross the ocean to conquer America.

Recognizing that the withering spotlight on Muck might never dim, the conductor and the Major revived their conversation about the future. Higginson had long held that if Muck left, that might well be the end of the BSO, especially since many of the German and Austrian musicians in the orchestra would probably leave with him. For years, Higginson had refused to allow his orchestra to unionize. He didn’t want some union operative to dictate how long rehearsals could be. In turn, the unions had essentially blacklisted the BSO, which made the orchestra exceedingly reliant on skilled foreigners, the bulk of them from Germany and Austria. Out of the orchestra’s 100 musicians, only 17 were native-born Americans.

Despite all that, Higginson now recognized that Muck could not remain as conductor for another year. They quietly agreed he would depart after the

1917-1918 season concluded in May.

With that weighty decision made, Muck was free to turn his focus to preparing his orchestra for its March 26 performance at Symphony Hall, when it would tackle Bach’s exceedingly challenging *St. Matthew Passion*.

THIRD MOVEMENT: THE FEDS

The first step before questioning Dr. Muck would be to find him. On March 25, Special Agent Feri Weiss and his colleagues in the Boston office of the Bureau of Investigation sent a messenger boy to Muck’s house at 50 Fenway. He reported back that the conductor was leading a dress rehearsal at Symphony Hall.

Joined by two fellow agents and a Boston Police sergeant, Weiss headed to Massachusetts Avenue. They told BSO manager Charles Ellis they needed to see Muck at once. At first, an indignant Ellis insisted the conductor couldn’t be disturbed in the middle of a critical rehearsal. Then he pleaded with the agents to wait until its conclusion, so as not to cause a scene.

They agreed, on the condition that Ellis pledge his full cooperation. As Weiss headed into the hall, the sacred sounds of the symphony greeted him. He asked someone what they were playing, and he was told it was “Bach’s Passion Play.” He and his colleagues fanned out in the hall, each taking a different quadrant. Then they sat and listened and waited.

As soon as Muck put down his baton and dismissed his musicians, Weiss moved in. He guided the conductor down the corridor and into Ellis’s office, before informing him, “You are under arrest.”

Muck reacted with cool restraint. Earlier in the afternoon, he had lunched with his wife, Anita, and her dear friend Isabella Stewart Gardner. (Mrs. Gardner was such a staunch defender of the Mucks that when public pressure had first forced the conductor to lead the BSO in playing the national anthem at Symphony Hall, she stood up in her private box and walked out of the hall in protest.) Knowing Anita would be waiting for him in the corridor, Muck asked to bid her goodbye. Then he followed the agents into the car that would take him to Boston Police Station 16.

While Ellis negotiated with the lieutenant at the station for permission

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to furnish Muck with acceptable food, the conductor was searched and then locked up in a cell. He was told he would be transferred in the morning to the East Cambridge Jail and held without bail as a dangerous enemy alien. If he was upset, he didn’t let it show—at least, not until he was informed that, in jail, he would not be allowed to smoke his beloved cigarettes.

On March 30, Higginson addressed the press. Whether he was bowing to public pressure or reacting to new information that he’d been made aware of, the Major announced that he had accepted Muck’s resignation.

The conductor’s arrest drew appreciative coverage around the country from a credulous press. The *Boston Traveler* declared, “MUCK ARREST MOST IMPORTANT OF WAR.” Two days later, Muck was led into a conference room for questioning.

“The answers you make, technically, could be used against you,” Thomas Boynton, the US Attorney for Boston, told Muck. “You understand?”

“Yes,” the conductor replied.

Backed by a team of special agents and assistant US attorneys from the Boston office of the federal Department of Justice, Boynton began with a series of biographical questions. Muck said he was born in Darmstadt, Germany, “by chance” because his father, a government bureaucrat and aspiring musician, “was rehearsing an opera” there.

Boynton asked if the position Muck held before moving to Boston, leading the orchestra in Berlin, was an official government position.

“No,” Muck replied. “The Royal Opera House is an absolutely private institution. It is subsidized by the Kaiser privately.”

“Do you claim German citizenship?” Boynton asked.

“No, Swiss.”

“Have you ever claimed German citizenship?”

“No.”

“When did you become a Swiss citizen?”

“I was seven years old,” Muck replied, explaining that, at that time, his father didn’t have to live in Switzerland to get his family citizenship. He simply needed to own property there.

A special agent asked Muck why he had failed to register as an enemy alien and had traveled to Washington, D.C., in violation of President Wilson’s regulations.

“I am a Swiss,” Muck said.

There was a series of questions about the conductor’s relationship with various German-born professors in the US. Muck suggested they were mere acquaintances with whom he had limited contact.

An agent mentioned that, in some of Muck’s correspondence they had obtained, the conductor had referred to the infiltration of “Rathom’s men” in the

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Department of Justice. “To whom were you referring when you referred to ‘Rathom’s men?’” the agent asked.

“Of course, the whole trouble against me started from Rathom,” Muck replied, “in November, with that rotten lie that I had refused to conduct the anthem.”

“What gave you the impression that Rathom men were employed by the Department of Justice?”

“I heard that many times,” Muck said. “I mean Rathom himself says that he has, in every branch of the National Service, his men.”

Boynton handed Muck an opened letter, attached to an envelope, marked #1. “I wish you would look at this letter and tell us whether you wrote it.”

Scanning it, Muck said, “Yes.”

“Did you deposit it in the mail?”

“Yes.”

Boynton handed Muck several more letters, asking him the same questions. The conductor answered in the affirmative each time, until Boynton handed him one marked #4 and asked, “Did you write that letter?”

“No,” Muck replied.

“Did you say you did not write that?”

“Yes, but I’m not—.” Muck had remained collected during this interrogation, but now he was flustered. “I would prefer not to discuss any personal matter concerning a lady. Personally, if I am allowed—of course I think it would be unfair to her to do that.”

Boynton, who earlier in his career had served as chief postal inspector for New England, knew exactly what he was doing. “All I am asking you is whether you wrote this letter and whether you deposited it in the mail.”

Muck nodded. “Yes.”

FOURTH MOVEMENT: THE RISING STAR

Having just finished her horseback ride, the young woman returned to her family estate in Milton to find her mother in a panic. “Officers of the Department of Justice are here!” her mother cried. “They have a warrant and have already searched your room, where they found letters and pictures of Dr. Muck!”

Still holding a horsewhip in her hand, the young woman followed her mother and brother into the library, where she spied a black metal box sitting on the table. The ruddy color drained from her cheeks. She had left that locked metal box hidden in the window seat of her bedroom. Now it was on prominent display in her family library, with two government



agents in dark suits standing beside it.

One of them, a mustachioed man, introduced himself as Special Agent Feri Weiss.

The young woman could see him silently admiring her figure, which was accentuated by her riding costume. She had seen that look countless times before in her 22 years. Fixing her glare on the

black box, she exclaimed, “What a contemptible insult!”

Weiss put a finger to his lips and said something about keeping voices down so the servants wouldn’t hear. He then handed her some correspondence. “I came across this letter, which is addressed to you, bearing yesterday’s postmark.” He asked her to open the black box, which she knew contained many more letters from Muck. Her brother encouraged her to comply with the government agent’s request.

“Must I?” she asked. “Oh, God, must I?”

Eventually, she left the room and returned with the key. She handed it to Agent Weiss and watched as he opened the box with great interest.

Inside, Weiss found numerous letters to the young woman from the acclaimed conductor, as well as photos of Muck from various points of his life. With his high collars and finely tailored suits, Muck cut a dashing figure. His aquiline nose and dark, penetrating eyes added to his urbane allure, as did the fact that, in cultured circles, there was no bigger name than his.

The young woman was fluent in German, as well as Italian and French. But if she thought the fact that some of the letters were written in Muck’s native language would protect their intimate correspondence, she soon learned otherwise.

Agent Weiss was also fluent in German—as well as Hungarian, French, and Flemish. Born some 40 years earlier in Austria’s Styrian Alps, he was of Austro-Hungarian heritage and had been educated in Vienna. Yet, as he regularly proclaimed—more regularly in the three years since the outbreak of the Great War—he considered himself “America First.”

In addition to letters and photos, the metal container held keys to two bank safe-deposit boxes. The agent asked her if she would accompany him in the morning to the bank to retrieve the contents. At this point, she was already fully exposed, so why resist further?

She knew that, during these fraught times of war, the details in the letters



could compromise not just Muck's musical career, but also her own.

The woman's name was Rosamond Young. She was the same rising star who had performed pieces in English, German, French, and Italian during a recital in Jordan Hall that attracted strong notices and attendance by the likes of Major and Mrs. Higginson. And she was the same ambitious soprano whom the BSO had paid \$100 to be Muck's featured soloist at an orchestra concert in December.

Agent Feri Weiss would later confess that, upon meeting the ruddy-cheeked Rosamond Young in her riding costume, "I was at a loss whether to admire her feminine beauty or her athletic stature the most. My heart once more beat with sorrow when I realized that within a few minutes this recipient of heavenly perfection must be submitted to a bitter grilling in my hands."

Despite Muck's reputation for cold conceitedness, Weiss found in his letters strong indications of a warmblooded man who undeniably shared the agent's admiration for Ms. Young's "heavenly perfection." In one, the conductor told Young:

"I fail to find words to express my joy over your decision to renew our friendship, which you so cruelly broke off in a moment of despondency ... must we, for the sake of foolish sentiments that are imposed by others, fore-swear the love that is divine and inexpressible by common language? No, Rosamond, darling, a thousand times no! You are mine, and I am your slave, and so we must remain."

In another, he told Young: "I am intoxicated with the anticipation of the pleasure in meeting you."

If the letters failed to offer much evidence for Muck being a scheming German spy, some of them laid bare his true feelings for many of the people filling his audiences: "I am on my way to the concert hall to entertain the crowd of dogs and swine who think that because they pay the entrance fee they have

Agents didn't find the evidence of spying that they were looking for in Muck's correspondence. But the letters exposed an affair with rising-star soprano Rosamond Young. The revelations led to Muck's arrest, which became a bonanza for newspapers across the country.

"I am on my way to the concert hall to entertain the crowd of dogs and swine who think that because they pay the entrance fee they have the right to dictate to me my selections," Muck wrote.

the right to dictate to me my selections."

Continuing that theme, in another he wrote: "What do they know about art? All they know is dollars. I hate to face the rabble and it hurts my soul to play to the vulgar crowd."

Weiss was more troubled by what Muck, who had long insisted he was Swiss, had written in a letter he sent Young from Pittsburgh: "You can understand how I feel in this smoke-covered city where every chimney makes me think of the tons of munitions that are being manufactured to destroy my fatherland."

In another, he wrote: "Fatherland, Fatherland, if I could only help you." And: "I cannot tell you how cruel life appears to me here, surrounded by enemies, who hate me from the depths of their hearts because I am a German."

Some of his letters revealed an unmistakable fondness for the Kaiser, a man whom Americans now loathed more than any other. Still, Muck had penned many of these letters prior to the US entry into the war, and it was unclear if the conductor might have been exaggerating his relationship with the German leader to impress his paramour. It was equally unclear if there was any truth to how he characterized his wife's awareness of his special friendship outside of the marriage:

"It will, perhaps, surprise you to learn that, to a certain extent, Mrs. Muck knows our relationship. She has a noble heart, and her mind is broad beyond the comprehension of the swine-like people among whom we must live a while longer. ... And it will be only a very short time when our gracious Kaiser will act upon my request and recall me to Berlin. Once there, through the good offices of my beloved friend, Mister Schmidt, our Kaiser will be prevailed upon to see the benefit to the Fatherland in my obtaining a divorce and making you my own."

Even if the letters provided no evidence of treasonous acts, Weiss felt they gave him and his colleagues at the Bureau the final damning pieces they needed to arrest Muck. At the very least, this man was a flagrant German sympathizer.

Already, his file had contained questions relating to a cottage Muck had rented over the summer in Seal Harbor, Maine. Acting on a tip several months before the national anthem controversy, investigators had appeared at Muck's cottage door. He had freely allowed them in, where they found extensive wireless communications gear as well as wiring beneath a trap door. Though the equipment appeared to have been dormant for some time, they speculated that Muck could have used the gear for furtive communications with Germany.

When investigators contacted the landlord, he offered a logical explanation, saying the house had been owned by an elderly man who'd been an avid electricity and wireless hobbyist.

What had kept alive the investigation into Muck—even after Bielaski, the head of the Bureau in Washington, had considered it closed—were reports

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of the conductor's fondness for the fairer sex. And not just Rosamond Young.

During the loud anti-Muck campaign waged in New York by socialite Lucie Jay, a wealthy resident of Madison Avenue by the name of Mrs. Henry Dakin had contacted the US Attorney's office in that city. Mrs. Dakin provided the office with letters that Muck had written to her daughter.

The US Attorney's office had sent the suggestive letters to Washington. After headquarters deemed them not worthy of pursuing, the New York office had forwarded them to its counterpart in Boston. The package included notes from an interview with the director of a music school in New York. That man told of the conductor's affair with Young, whom he described as being "extremely infatuated" and "completely under the influence of Muck."

In exploring this personal aspect of the conductor's character, investigators had heard allegations of numerous other affairs by Muck, including at least one with another soprano and one with the wife of his concertmaster.

That, in turn, had delivered Weiss to Young's door, and, before long, delivered Muck to the East Cambridge Jail.

The US Attorney for Boston and his team suggested Muck could be prosecuted based on the contents of the "indecent" letters alone, particularly in light of the Espionage Act and its toughened postal regulations.

The conductor had to choose: maintain his innocence of the spying accusations and see the intimate details of his personal life splayed across the newspapers. Or face the fear he had confided to Higginson earlier, and agree to go quietly to an internment camp.

FINALE: THE OUTPOST

On April 6, 1918, Muck arrived at Fort Oglethorpe in northern Georgia, just over the border from Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Army post, on the site of the Civil War Battle of Chickamauga, served as home to the 11th Cavalry. In 1917, it was converted into an internment camp that would eventually house about 4,000 inmates, a combination of several thousand German-American and Austrian-American civilians like Muck, who were considered dangerous enemy aliens, and military prisoners of war.

Instead of relaxing in his stately Fenway home or leading punishing rehearsals in elegant Symphony Hall, Muck had to get accustomed to being inmate No. 1337 in a village of stripped-down wooden barracks. Surrounding the camp was a double ring of barbed-wire fences studded with sentry watch-



Muck was one of thousands of German-American and Austrian-American civilians held at the internment camp at Fort Oglethorpe in Georgia. There was so much talent there that the inmates organized a mini-university.

tower boxes equipped with machine guns.

Yet if Muck had any reason to second-guess his decision to accept internment rather than taking his chances with an increasingly intolerant public, evidence for the wisdom of his choice had come just one day before his arrival at Oglethorpe. It concerned Robert Prager, a German-American miner in Collinsville, Illinois. Although he'd been born in Germany, Prager was pro-American (albeit with socialist leanings), and he had even tried to enlist in the US Navy. Several townspeople, however, accused him of being a German spy. With a green light from police, a drunken mob had paraded Prager naked along a main street and

then, just after midnight on April 5, had lynched him.

The crime shouldn't have shocked anyone who had been paying attention. After all, former president William Taft, known for his probity and even temper in the White House, had just a few weeks earlier publicly advocated that any German spies found in America be put before a firing squad.

To Muck, the United States appeared to be coming unhinged. Within a few weeks of the conductor's arrival at Oglethorpe, Robert Goldstein, the Hollywood producer who had made the film that negatively portrayed the British redcoats, was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Around the same time, at President Wilson's urging, Congress passed the Sedition Act, which, by removing the need for prosecutors to prove intent behind anti-government comments, effectively outlawed free speech in the country.

Considering all the uncertainty and mayhem on the streets of America, Muck would find a way to make do inside this internment camp. In truth, he had to admit conditions weren't all that bad. Oglethorpe was split into three sections. Camp A was for interned civilians of means—professors, scientists, musicians—who were charged \$18 a month. Those fees subsidized the cooking services in Camp A by kitchen crew members of German steamships sent to Oglethorpe after their vessels had been impounded. Camp B was mostly for those who couldn't afford to pay room and board and were required to work at Oglethorpe. Camp C housed inmates considered to be more serious trou-

ble, such as “Wobblies” or members of the Industrial Workers of the World. Many union-busting factory owners had successfully pushed for the arrests of employees from Germany and Austria who had become labor agitators, rebranding these internal troublemakers as dangerous enemy aliens.

In a letter Muck wrote to a friend a few weeks after arriving, he acknowledged he was still trying to make sense of the upheaval in his life. “That I would ever have to write you from a prison camp,” he said, “is something I could never have imagined.”

Yet in subsequent letters, he showed himself to be more at peace with his situation among “200 companions-in-misfortune in Camp No. A,” as Muck described it in a letter to a friend in Germany. “I’m living with 25 men in one barrack. Each of us has a ‘room’ for one’s own, eight feet long. . . . The administration supplies a metal bed, mattress, pillow, and blanket; the other furnishings we made ourselves or purchased.”

With all the brainpower penned inside Oglethorpe’s barbed wire, it was only a matter of time before enterprising inmates put their talents to use. They organized a mini-university, offering classes in a wide range of subjects. Despite his doctorate in philosophy, Muck opted for more vocational courses, including carpentry and tinsmithing, which he told friends he enjoyed.

He had two chief complaints. First was Georgia’s summer heat. “In the entire camp there is not one tree, so that the only protection from the unmerciful tropical sun [is] had by crawling under the barracks, which were erected on pilings,” he wrote a friend. His second complaint involved the absence of solitude. “It is impossible to concentrate,” he wrote. “There is not a minute during the day when one does not have nearby talking, noise, and unrest.”

Muck’s stature as one of the world’s top conductors did not go unnoticed at Oglethorpe, though he was not the only interned maestro. Ernst Kunwald, the noted conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, had been an inmate for four months by the time Muck arrived. Born in Vienna, Kunwald had been arrested shortly after the US declared war on Austria, then released, then rearrested by an order signed by a shrewd young official at the Bureau of Investigation by the name of J. Edgar Hoover.

The Cincinnati conductor had already put together a full orchestra of interned musicians, including players from impounded German steamships as well as the naval band of the former German protectorate of Tsing-Tao, China.

Struck by how cheery Kunwald appeared to be, Muck kept his distance from the camp orchestra. Perhaps it triggered too many painful memories of his satisfying life before John Rathom’s “rotten lie” in the fall of 1917. Muck had heard what had befallen the Boston Symphony Orchestra since his arrest. The BSO had dismissed 18 of its finest musicians at the end of the season, simply because they were German or Austrian. (The triumphal headline in the *Boston American*: “Symphony Drops Huns.”) Major Higginson, who had put his every fiber into the orchestra since founding it 37 years earlier, had resigned in despondence, turning governance of the organization over to a newly created board of directors and leaving it with a precarious future. Muck knew that Higginson’s support for him had wavered near the end. He had reason to believe that government officials may have showed the scrupulous Major those steamy letters.

In addition to this emotional baggage, Muck was now weighed down with physical ailments, including rheumatism and gallbladder complications. However, as enthusiasm around the camp built for the orchestra, several inmates eventually prevailed upon Muck to pick up his baton again.

He agreed to lead the orchestra of 60, but demanded the musicians com-

At President Wilson’s urging, Congress passed the Sedition Act, which, by removing the need for prosecutors to prove intent behind anti-government comments, effectively outlawed free speech in the country.

mit to his regimen of six rehearsals. On the evening of December 12, 1918, some 3,000 inmates from all three sections of Oglethorpe gathered for the concert, some of them clearly seeing a symphony orchestra perform for the first time. Muck led his fellow inmates, dressed in their concert-hall finest, in the performance of Brahms’s *Academic Festival Overture* and then *Eroica*, Beethoven’s Third Symphony. The performance drew uproarious applause. One inmate, an eminent scientist, would later write about the concert in his autobiography, declaring it “absolutely perfect.”

As December wore on, Muck’s health problems expanded to include a serious heart condition. He never performed again at Oglethorpe.

By the time of that unforgettable concert, the armistice ending the Great War had already gone into effect, at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918. Yet in the months leading up to the armistice,

the number of German and Austrian enemy aliens that the United States rounded up had continued to spike, topping 6,300. After the war was over, the wind-down that would eventually lead to their release took longer than Muck and his fellow inmates had hoped.

Kunwald was released at the end of May 1919, but only after he agreed to return immediately to Germany. Muck, however, refused. While he did plan to return to Europe, he insisted that he be allowed to make that decision himself. As a Swiss citizen, he felt it was his right.

During his year-plus in captivity, Muck had surrendered many of his rights. His bank account and his Boston house at 50 Fenway had been confiscated by the Custodian of Alien Property, a position that A. Mitchell Palmer would use as a launching pad to become Wilson’s attorney general. That left Muck’s wife without a home, until Anita was able to make a rental agreement with Palmer’s office to remain in the Fenway house.

As Muck wrote in a letter to a friend in Germany, “This past year has seemed like a bad dream for Anita, of course, almost more than for me.”

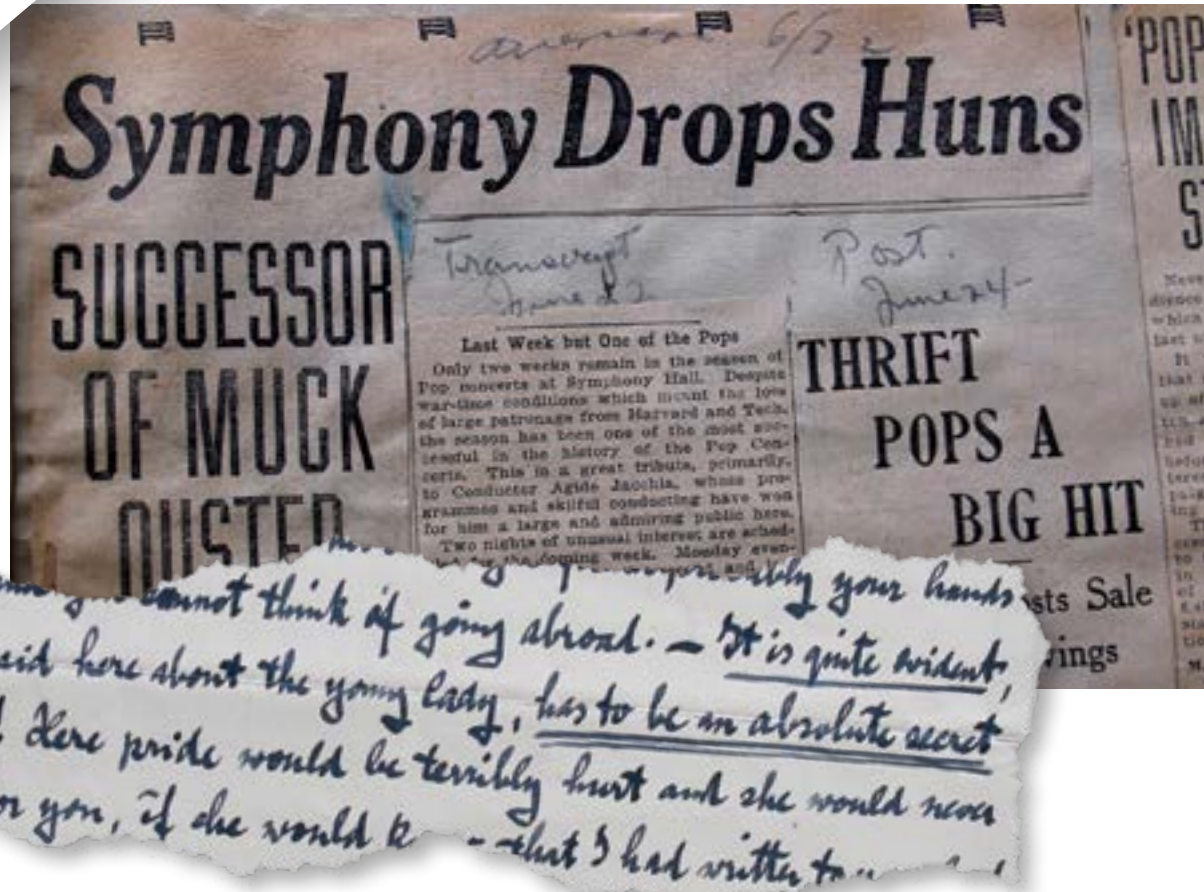
What of Anita, the elegant woman of fine breeding who had been with Muck since their first romantic meeting in Prague in 1886? How did she endure? And what, if anything, did she really know about her husband’s affairs? The answer to the last question remained elusive, at least for a few months more. However, her loyalty to her husband, and her pride in his towering talent, remained unshakable.

Anita journeyed from Boston to Fort Oglethorpe for lengthy stays a half-dozen times during her husband’s captivity. In June 1919, she penned a revealing letter to BSO manager Charles Ellis to enlist his help in getting her husband released:

“It was a slap in the face not only of Mr. Higginson but of any lover of art in this country that Dr. Muck could be treated the way he was. . . . That he was handled not much better than a horse thief might be by a half-bred sheriff’s gang of ruffians in some Wild West place is an everlasting shame. . . . In no other country could it have happened; the English, French, Italians possibly would have interned him too; but they always would have shown their in-borne respect for the art he represents. . . . That he shall have to leave this country as a condition of his release is more repulsive to him than anything else. . . . Lord knows how anxious he is to go — but he wants to go by his own volition.”

By July, Muck gave in. He and Anita would agree to sail for Germany. Still, he refused to be seen as some war criminal leaving the country on a government-chartered vessel.

On August 21, 1919, after nearly 17 months in captivity, he and Anita boarded a luxury Scandinavian-American liner, headed to Copenhagen, never to return.



CODA

On April 14, 1921, after a battle with cancer that stretched more than a year, Anita Muck died in Germany. In the obituary it published about her, the *Boston Post* noted that the “quiet, charming, little woman remained loyal to her husband through it all.” It also noted that “her vision of her husband’s love for her became dimmed with tears, as she was brought to realize that he had been unfaithful not only to America and to those who had placed him at the peak of success—but unfaithful to her. The stories of his lovemaking to young Boston women, his avowals of everlasting love to women other than his wife, became public property.”

The *Post’s* phrasing in that last sentence was interesting. In fact, the stories of the conductor’s lovemaking had become public property only because a disgruntled government employee had sold that same newspaper copies of Muck’s intimate letters, after Rosamond Young had been assured they would remain private.

Two years before Anita’s death, in the same month that Major Higginson died and just three months after the Mucks left the country, the *Post* had published an explosive 12-part series that breathlessly exposed the letters documenting the conductor’s affair with the young soprano. Although Young’s name never appeared in the articles, it didn’t take long for word about her identity to spread.

Once again, however, Anita stood by her husband, who remained busy through a series of guest-conducting assignments in and around Germany. Meanwhile, at Anita’s urging, he had persisted in his quest to get the US government to return their property, which included a house valued at \$28,000 and about \$47,000 in savings. Although those dollars were significant for the

Mucks, they were a mere rounding error for the staggering total in assets the Custodian of Alien Property had confiscated from German and Austrians in the US, a figure north of \$500 million. Most people who had been deemed dangerous enemy aliens were not allowed to get their property back. Insisting his Swiss citizenship entitled him to full return of his assets, Muck continued to press his case, with assistance back in Boston from Ellis, his former orchestra manager.

In a letter to Ellis in May 1921, a month after Anita’s death, Muck described his paralyzing grief: “I am utterly broken down, body and soul, by the loss of the best wife, the noblest friend, the bravest companion.” In another letter, in mid-August, he hinted at no small measure of guilt. “Since Anita’s death all these questions about property have lost any interest for me,” he wrote. “Anita had suffered dreadfully from this wandering about, from place to place, from hotel to hotel.... It was for Anita’s sake that I carried through my rights with all my energy. Today, it is quite another thing. My life is finished.” (It would take until 1928 for Muck to receive a partial return of his assets, about \$37,000.)

Just a few weeks after that August letter, Muck wrote Ellis again, this time asking for discreet assistance with Rosamond Young. His infatuation with the soprano had apparently worn off. “You know that the young lady is in Europe,” Muck wrote. “I cannot say how sorry I am for her: she too had to suffer! But now she is doing inconsiderate things sometimes, placing herself and me

Following Muck’s exit, founder Henry Higginson left after 37 years, putting the BSO’s future in doubt. Then 18 of the orchestra’s German and Austrian players were dismissed, a move cheered by the papers (top). Back in Germany, Muck wrote a friend (above), worried that Rosamond Young had followed him there.

in awkward positions. She evidently cannot see how fate has changed everything in the world.”

A September 1921 dispatch carried in *The New York Times* and other American papers reported that Young, then 26, had followed the 62-year-old Muck to Europe, and they were to be wed. It disclosed that the pair had been romantically involved before the BSO’s conductor’s ignominious downfall. The dispatch carried vehement denials from Rosamond’s mother. She was speaking the truth. There was never any marriage—just one more example of newspaper fodder at Muck’s expense.

And who was the disgruntled government employee who sold the *Boston Post* copies of Muck’s intimate letters to Rosamond Young? That would have been none other than Feri Weiss, the special agent who had arrested Muck just days after retrieving the black box from the window seat in the soprano’s bedroom.

Finally, what of John Rathom, Muck’s chief ink-stained tormenter? In 1920, the government released a copy of a secret confession Rathom had signed in 1918. The confession was part of a deal the crusading editor had made with federal investigators to avoid testifying before a grand jury looking into claims he’d published in the *Providence Journal*. Rathom had written often about his daring counterespionage to expose German propaganda and root out the German spies who had infiltrated the government. But in the confession, he admitted he had fabricated or grossly exaggerated most of those claims. The bulk of the “scoops” the *Journal* had trumpeted had, in fact, been fed to him by British intelligence sources, as part of their own propaganda campaign. Muck’s relentless accuser, in turned out, had not been a tireless patriot but rather an opportunistic fabulist doing the work of a foreign government. ■

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SOURCES: Research assistance from BSO archivist Bridget Carr; *Globe* correspondents Lisa Tuite and Matt Mahoney, and Jerry Manion of the *Globe* staff. Also: Gayle Turk London, author of “The Case of Dr. Karl Muck” (Harvard thesis); Bill Mills, author of *The League: The True Story of Average Americans on the Hunt for WWI Spies*; Jon Ceander Mitchell, author of *Trans-Atlantic Passages: Philip Hale on the Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1889-1933*; Joan Jensen, author of *The Price of Vigilance*; Edmund A. Bowles, author of “Karl Muck and His Compatriots” (article in *American Music*); Bliss Perry, editor of *The Life and Letters of Henry Lee Higginson*; Brian Bell; National Public Radio. For information on Fort Oglethorpe: Chris McKeever at the Sixth Cavalry Museum; Jim Ogden, historian at Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park; and Smith Murray. And the archives of *The Boston Globe*, *Boston Post*, *Providence Journal*, *Washington Times*, New York Public Library, and Boston Symphony Orchestra, among others.