

Why A Great Orchestra Leader is Irresponsible

If the Genius Toscanini Smashes His Baton on the Head of a Musician Who Is Playing a Little Flat---Well, That's His Artistic License, So the Italian Courts Decided



Adagio



Espressivo



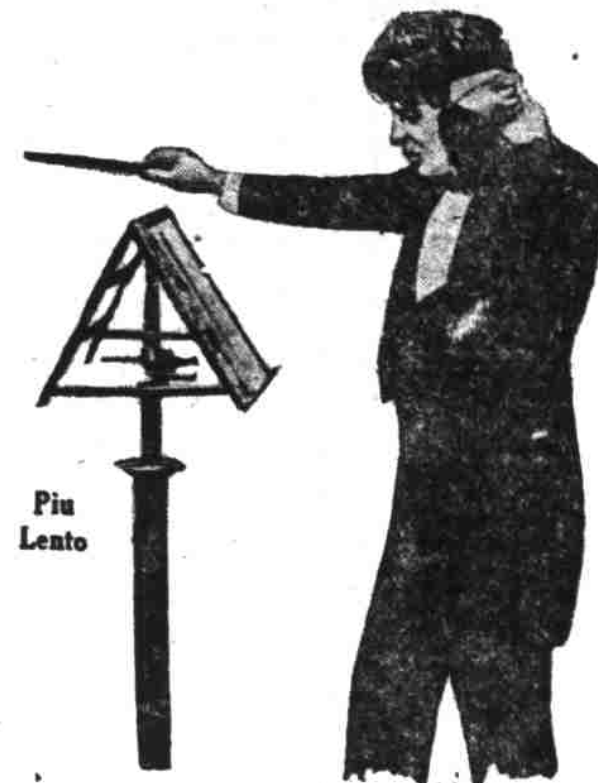
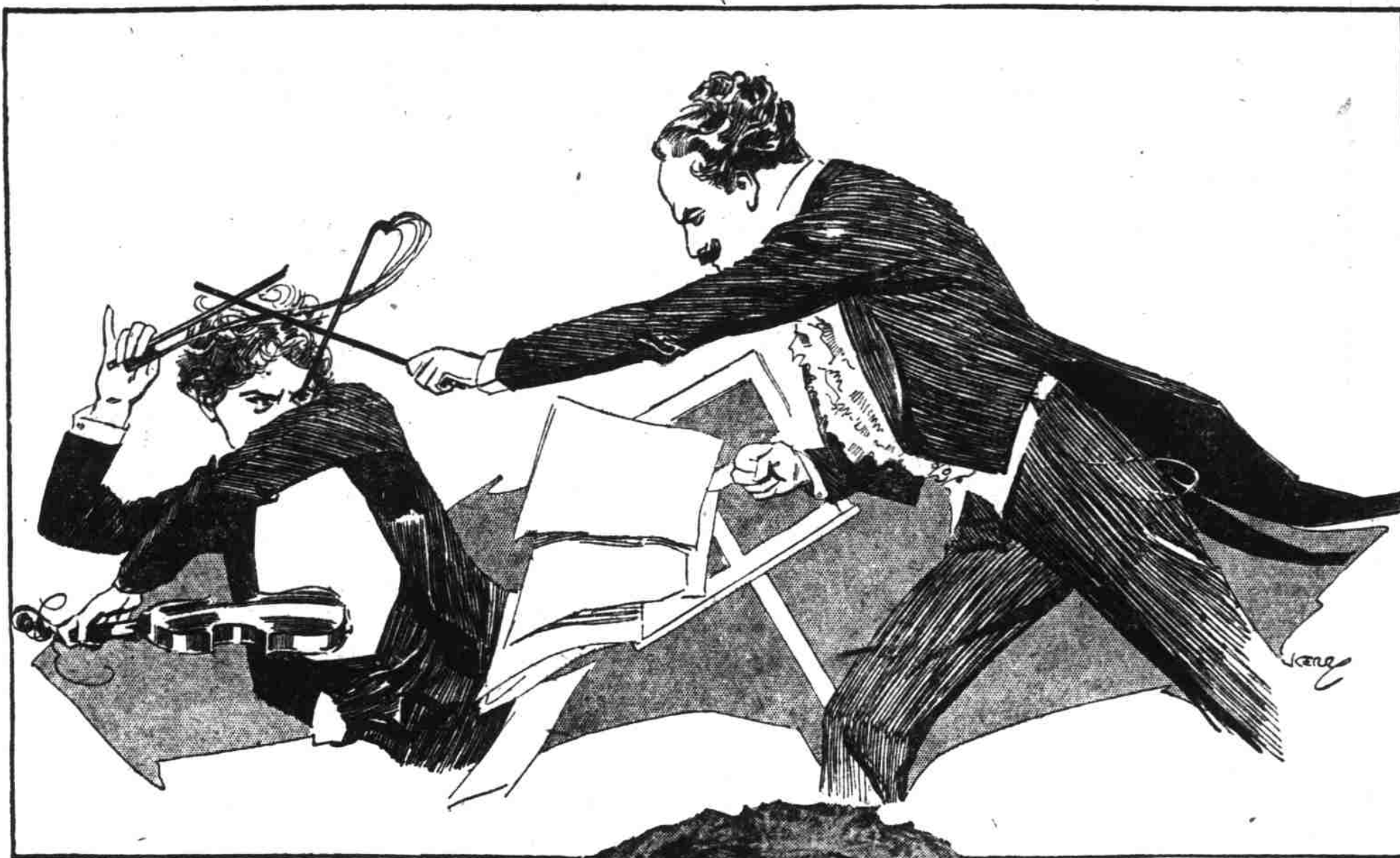
Moderato



Crescendo



Andantino Agitato



Piu Lento



Scherzoso



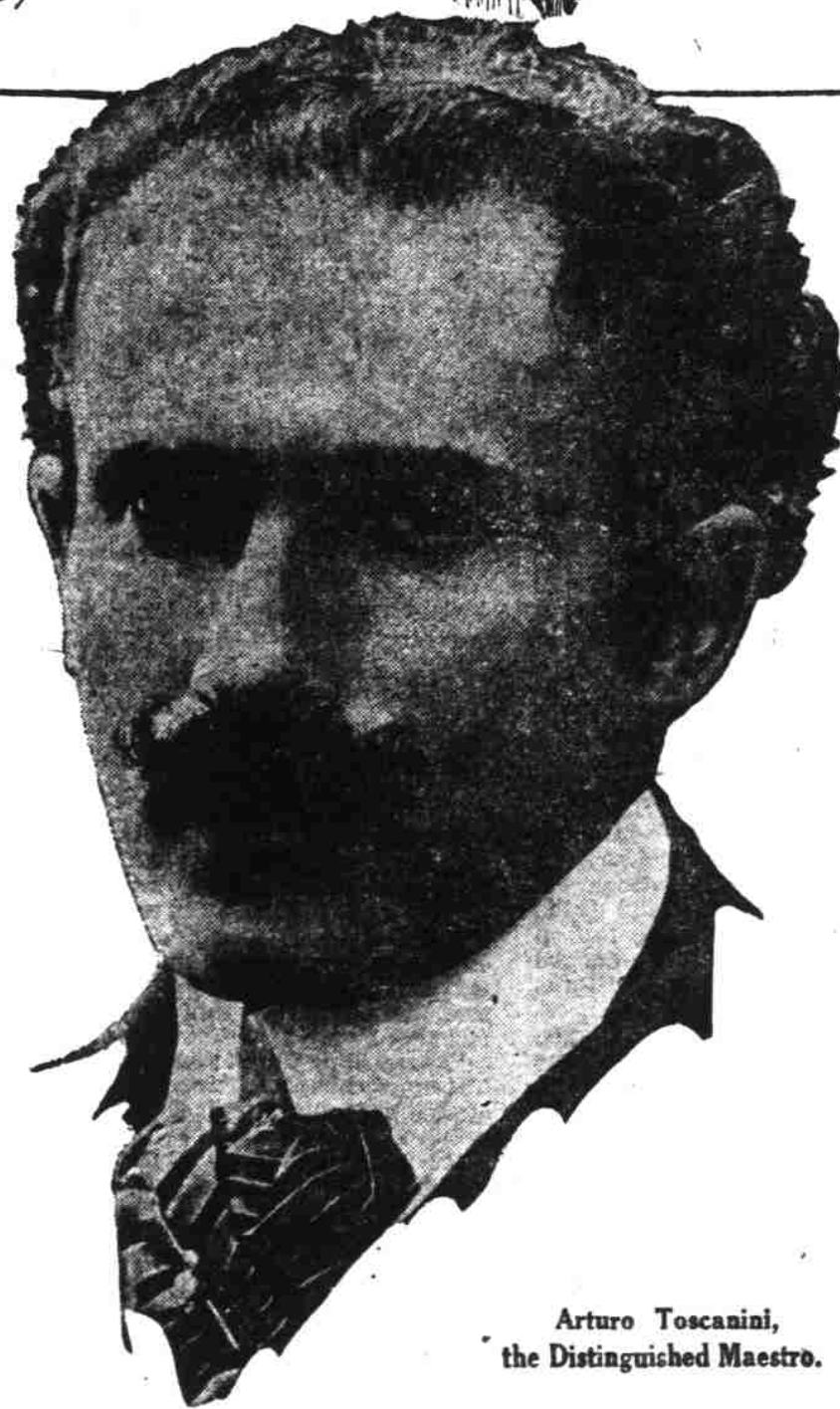
Pianissimo



Grazioso



Fino



Arturo Toscanini, the Distinguished Maestro.

THE jealous concern with which a great composer nurses his own musical creation is like the tender anxiety a mother feels for a delicate child.

In the orchestral rendition of a musical masterpiece the solicitude of the leader is not less than the solicitude of a mother for the well being of her infant.

If the composer is himself leading an orchestra and the first violin by playing flat is "murdering" the melody his feelings at the moment against this delinquent would be quite similar to the feelings of a mother who observed a nurse strangling her infant.

Great musical genius bespeaks the superman—and the ordinary laws of the land must not be applied to a superman! Thus the courts of Italy have just ruled in the case of the famous musical genius, Toscanini, who struck at a member of his orchestra with his baton, broke the man's violin bow and drove the corner of the broken bow into the unfortunate player's eye. And Toscanini was freed of responsibility for his outburst of artistic temperament because it was held that great musicians are not responsible for what they do under the exaltation of their genius.

The decision was fully supported by scientific psychological reasons. The latter apply with equal force to the many acts of violence and eccentricity, often verging on insanity, which have been committed by men of genius and great talent in all ages.

This remarkable decision was rendered during the trial, at Turin, Italy, of an assault charge against Arturo Toscanini, the world-famous orchestral conductor, who is so well known in the United States. The maestro was charged with assaulting the violinist during a rehearsal of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at a local opera house.

Some musical witnesses testified that the poor violinist was playing off the pitch, while others said that he was not keeping perfect time with the other players. These facts would doubtless have explained the great orchestra leader's rage very clearly, but they would not, perhaps, have sufficed to secure his acquittal but for a most singular circumstance.

By a rare piece of good fortune for Toscanini he had invited a professional psychologist, Professor Pastor, to attend the rehearsal, and this scientist was able to explain the exact psychological reasons that justified Toscanini's conduct. Ordinarily Toscanini does not permit any outsider to attend a rehearsal, but he made an exception in favor of Professor Pastor, who was preparing a psychological monograph on "Enthusiasm" and believed he could gather some points from Toscanini's behavior. The courtesy was well repaid, for Professor Pastor proved to be the decisive witness for the defense, and delivered a convincing scientific argument, proving the irresponsibility of genius in the throes of creation or under the stress of artistic labor.

In the first place, Professor Pastor said that he had made a special pathological study of Toscanini, and had found that on great occasions this prince of conductors becomes so possessed by sublime frenzy that his normal personality forsakes him. He becomes transfigured by genius, beside, or rather outside of, himself, so that the inhibitory nerves are completely paralyzed. In a paroxysm of inspiration he falls a tragic prey to the tyranny of art, and the faculty of distinguishing good

from evil is subordinated to the extreme ebbs and flows of sensibility. Stupendous words and vivacious deeds break forth, with volcanic force.

So impossible is anything like a quiet return to normal equilibrium that throughout the night after a performance he continues in a state of pitiful nervous exaltation. He cannot sleep, his teeth chatter incessantly, the muscles of arms and legs become painfully rigid and his whole organism vibrates like the subsoil after a terrific earthquake.

In reply to other questions Professor Pastor explained the irresponsibility of genius on other grounds besides those applying peculiarly to Toscanini.

Genius has long been defined correctly as "an infinite capacity for taking pains." It has also been defined by psychologists as an intense concentration of activity in certain areas of the brain and nervous system. The genius's mental activity is many times more than normal.

When the genius is in a creative state of mind he becomes unconscious of or indifferent to all things except those that help to carry out the object he has in view. If any person or obstacle comes in his way he is obliged to remove him or it.

If a painter, who is creating a masterpiece, sees an obtruding head between his eye and the canvas, he will remove it by pushing it, punching it, removing it, or any other method that is practical. Nothing matters so long as he removes the offending obstacle. The genius is often totally unconscious of the violent manner in which he is behaving, the impulsive act being carried out by his subconsciousness.

Similarly, if any note jars the perfect harmony of a musical performance, the creator will annihilate the cause of the disharmony instantly if he can.

The Italian judges were so completely convinced by Professor Pastor's arguments that they decided it would be a flagrant injustice to penalize a musical genius like Toscanini with even so much as the infliction of a fine.

Toscanini, as everybody knows, has had an amazing career. While still a young man he was acclaimed the greatest conductor in Italy, and since that day discriminating critics have generally agreed that nowhere is there to be found his equal with the baton.

From the night when quite unexpected-

the war he returned to his native land and made every effort to enlist.

Although not accepted for military service on account of his age, Toscanini won a silver medal for his bravery under fire. During the battle of Monte Santo he led a band of musicians up a shell-swept mountainside to the ruins of a convent in the summit.

There, with shells bursting all around, he led his men through a long programme of patriotic airs. "Tranquil and calm," an eye-witness wrote, "his baton seemed to be directing a concert, showing repeated contempt for danger."

The music stirred the Italian soldiers to incomparable enthusiasm and they turned what seemed like certain defeat into a smashing victory over their Austrian foes.

Many ardent music lovers affirm that merely seeing Toscanini conduct is better than hearing a whole opera under ordinary conditions. The musicians in his orchestra say that when he conducts electric sparks seem to flash from him—from his finger tips, from his baton, from his eyes.

The tremendous energy which Toscanini consumes in thus galvanizing his musicians with the force of his personality frequently brings him to the verge of nervous breakdown. He is an indefatigable worker, and when studying some new opera will often go for weeks without regular meals and sleep.

Ever since the beginning of time geniuses—musicians, poets, painters and authors, notably—have been acting in a violent, absent-minded or eccentric manner, and now we know why they do it and why they are not responsible legally.

Professor Lombroso tells us that Beethoven, one of the greatest of composers, was arrested at Neustadt for walking through the streets without clothes. He had been wandering in the forest, thinking over a new sonata, and in order to enjoy greater freedom had thrown off most of his clothing. When the composition was complete in his mind he walked briskly away, not thinking of such earthly things as the clothes he had left behind.

Lombroso has shown that many men of genius are defective in part of their mental structure, thus making possible the abnormal activity in that line in which they are pre-eminent. Many have been deaf, deficient in sensitiveness to pain, epileptic and so forth.

Forgetfulness is a common peculiarity of genius. Sir Isaac Newton, while thinking of the law of gravitation, rammed his niece's finger into his hot pipe, believing that it was his own finger.

Mozart, another great musical composer, when carving meat would cut his own fingers, accustomed only to the piano, so frequently that he had to give up carving. Buffon, the great French naturalist, while thinking of a puzzle in natural history, climbed up a tower and slid down a rope without knowing what he had done, although he had seriously endangered his life.

Rossini when conducting his "Barbiere," which was at first a failure, did not realize that the public had left the performance and went on conducting.

Donizetti, after beating his wife in a savage manner, immediately composed his most beautiful air, "Thou to whom God hast given wings."

edly he was given his opportunity to conduct an opera for the first time his career has been marked by many of the eccentricities which the world associates with genius.

It was in Rio Janeiro. Toscanini was then only a humble cello player. When the regular conductor was hissed from the orchestra pit somebody suggested trying the young celloist in his place.

As soon as the temperamental Toscanini heard this suggestion he fled to a dark corner in the basement of the opera house and hid himself under a heap of old costumes. Fellow members of the orchestra found him there, dragged him to the pit and forced the baton into his hand.

In an instant he won the favor of the turbulent audience by discarding his score and conducting entirely from memory. From that night his fame was assured, and within a few years all the great musical centres were bidding fabulous sums for his services.

Toscanini's phenomenal memory is one of the most striking characteristics of his genius. He has more than 150 operas in his repertoire, and he has them so completely memorized that he never even glances at a score while conducting. This astonishing burden which his memory carries probably accounts in large measure for his self-absorption and consequent eccentricity.

Toscanini was conductor at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York for several years, receiving, it is said, \$45,000 for a season's work. When Italy entered