

## **Background Information about the Concert on 20 October 2016 on the occasion of the XVIII European Congress of the European Federation of Building Societies in Budapest**

Several years ago, the conductor, Jack Martin Händler, conceived a concert series devoted to the artistic life of the conductor Bruno Walter. Bruno Walter (1876–1962) was one of the major conductors of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 1930s Walter led the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and from 1936 to 1938 was the director of the Vienna State Opera. After the Annexation of Austria by the National Socialists in 1938, Bruno Walter was forced to give up these posts and emigrate. He first went to France and then in 1939 to the United States. There he was immediately appointed conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and in 1946 became a naturalised citizen of the United States.

During his long life Bruno Walter was active in all the major music centres of Europe including Berlin, Leipzig, Munich, Budapest, Bratislava and Vienna. He stands amongst a group of illustrious artists who, through their European-wide artistic endeavours, showed an example of a Europe without borders using culture as a key to integration.

In November of 2009 on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain a concert of Beethoven's 9th Symphony was performed in the Vienna Musikverein. In attendance were official representatives from Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. With this commemorative celebration as a backdrop, the Bruno-Walter-Society was called into being.

The opening of the countries of Eastern Europe was the beginning of sweeping economic integration for all of Europe, but it also brought with it cultural integration. European economic integration required mutual cultural enrichment for its long-term success – it needed an integration of the heart.

Within the framework of this fundamental objective, culture as a motor for integration addresses central humanistic values. Peace and tolerance are two of these foremost values. But in this context, we should also not forget ideas, remembrance and reconciliation

Bearing these values in mind, the region of Vienna-Bratislava-Budapest and Berlin have a special importance.

For this reason the Bruno-Walter-Society is committed to regularly offering concerts in Vienna, Budapest and Bratislava in order to strengthen and support the further integration of the region beyond language barriers, committed also to peace and tolerance.

The initiative of the integration of the region beyond economic aspects and towards the integration of hearts began in Bratislava and Vienna. It is supported by the Bausparkasse PSS AG in Bratislava as well as the Fundamenta Bausparkasse in Budapest.

Herbert G. Pfeiffer

President of the European Federation of Building Societies