

## BRONISLAW HUBERMAN; ARTURO TOSCANINI

### **BRONISLAW HUBERMAN**

The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in 1936 by the famous violinist Bronislaw Huberman. He foresaw the perils of Nazi persecution of the Jews of Europe and in the early thirties, took his first steps towards establishing a symphony orchestra of international level in Eretz Israel; this was an idea that was rooted in his first concerts in this country in 1929, when a makeshift orchestra was hastily organised for him. Born in 1882 in Poland, he had been a "Wunderkind" who had moved Brahms to tears when he played for him and his teacher Joachim. He had appeared in public to unanimous acclaim since he was 11 throughout Europe and the U.S., and his talent and renown continued to grow with maturity until he was in the same class as the world's greatest violinists. In the 1920s he became interested in the Pan-European movement and in Zionism, both of which he promoted throughout his life. His Zionism, combined with his foresight of the Nazi Holocaust, prompted him to seek out the finest musicians of Europe, all of them soloists or leading instrumentalists of the best European orchestras, and to persuade them to settle in the Jewish Homeland that was later to become the State of Israel. On December 26, 1936 he proudly presented the orchestra he had founded, in a makeshift auditorium at the Levant Fair Ground: the Palestine Orchestra (as it was then called) was conducted by Arturo Toscanini. Huberman himself (out of modesty) preferred not to play with "his" orchestra at this time; he wanted the orchestra, not himself, to capture the limelight and the international headlines. In 1937 he was hurt in an air crash so his first appearance with the Orchestra was not until 1938.

Throughout those years he refused to play in Germany or Austria, and when World War II broke out, in 1939, he settled in the U.S. After the war had ended in 1945 he moved to Switzerland where he died in 1947. His beloved orchestra, now renamed the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, has become one of the world's finest orchestras, counted among the "top ten" and renowned throughout the world as "Israel's finest cultural ambassador". Huberman's dream was, indeed, gloriously fulfilled.

When the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (then called the Palestine Orchestra) played its first public concert on December 26, 1936, it was conducted by none other than the immortal Arturo Toscanini, undisputedly the greatest conductor of all times. An Italian patriot and humanitarian who had left his native Italy in protest against Fascism and who was boycotting Nazi Germany, he gladly acceded to Huberman's request to inaugurate the new Orchestra as a tribute to its musicianship and as a gesture towards humanitarianism.

### **ARTURO TOSCANINI**

Toscanini was born in Italy in 1867, and began his career as a cellist. At the age of 19 he replaced an indisposed conductor and his new meteoric career was launched. In 1898 he became the Music Director of "La Scala" and subsequently he was Music Director of the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic and, at a later stage, of the NBC Symphony Orchestra which had been founded specially for him. He was highly revered, too, at his countless guest engagements throughout the world with all the major orchestras at concerts, operas and festivals, The first non-German to conduct Wagner at Bayreuth (in 1930), he refused to appear in Nazi Germany and even in his beloved Italy during the Fascist regime there, though he always kept his Italian citizenship. Few conductors have ever played so important a role in the history of music or exerted such a profound influence on musicians, music critics and audiences throughout the world. His anti-fascist and anti Nazi feelings combined with his humanitarianism to make him support the ideals of Zionism fervently. He not only cancelled other engagements so that he could inaugurate the Palestine Orchestra (now the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra) in 1936, he returned to it for further concerts in 1938, and only the exigencies of the war, his American contracts and his final retirement in 1954, prevented him from returning here in later years. He died in New York in 1957 at the ripe old age of 90, having been active until the last, editing tapes of his concerts.

Were he alive today, he would surely be proud of the orchestra he inaugurated 50 years ago, and of its having become one of the world's top orchestras.

The two stamps are portraits of Arturo Toscanini and Bronislaw Huberman. On the tabs are their autographs.