



On and Off the Record: A Memoir of Walter Legge

By Elisabeth Schwarzkopf



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For decades, Walter Legge (1906-1979) was the dominant figure in the recording of classical music. As music critic of the Manchester Guardian, head of the classical division of EMI/Angel, assistant artistic director at Covent Garden, and founder-owner of the great Philharmonia Orchestra, he was at the very center of international musical life during the mid-twentieth century. A self-absorbed authoritarian and perfectionist who was either revered or detested by his contemporaries, Legge was passionately devoted to the highest standards of performance. Known as the "autocrat of the turntable" or "the pope of music," Legge collaborated with such singers and conductors as Maria Callas, Herbert von Karajan, Sir Thomas Beecham, and Otto Klemperer to produce hundreds of recordings that are still considered the finest ever made in opera, the symphonic literature, chamber music, and especially German Lieder. In *On and Off the Record*, the great soprano Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Legge's wife and musical associate for over thirty years, compiles and annotates writings both by and about her late husband to provide a fascinating and rich portrait of this complicated musical genius. Connected by Schwarzkopf's own charming narrative, the collection combines fragments from Legge's unfinished autobiography, his correspondence, and his musical criticism with tributes from colleagues as well as radio and television interviews. The work includes an appreciation by Dorle Soria, cofounder of Angel Records, observations by distinguished musicologist Edward Greenfield on Legge's studio sessions, and a selected discography by Alan Sanders.

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Editorial Review

Review

Legge is precise, colorful, and knowledgeable, and so are the music-makers . . . who populate this book as they filled his life. -- *New Yorker*

One reads these pages. . .with a sense of elation for what Legge accomplished. -- *Robert Jacobson, Opera News*

About the Author

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf is an internationally renowned soprano who specializes in the works of Mozart, Strauss, and Hugo Wolf. She lives in Switzerland. Herbert von Karajan (1908-1989) was one of the greatest and most celebrated conductors of the twentieth century. Peter G. Davis is the classical music critic for New York Magazine and the author of *The American Opera Singer*.

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