



In May 1, 1945, a week before the official end of World War II in Europe, the Vienna Staatsoper gave its first performance since the previous summer. Because the ornate Staatsoper on the Ringstrasse had been devastated by a direct hit during an air raid on March 12, this "opening night" took place at the Volksoper, away from the city center. A few weeks earlier, on the arrival of the Soviet army, baritone Alfred Jerger and conductor Josef Krips had taken command of the company's remnants.

Since the technical people found usable pieces of scenery for *Le Nozze di Figaro* amid the wreckage -- and because the opera's "revolutionary" angle sounded appealing to the Soviet occupation forces -- Mozart's opera was chosen. The May Day opening, also selected to please the Soviets, allowed about three weeks to get the opera together, virtually from scratch: sets, costumes, scores and parts, instruments, lighting, singers and players -- not to mention rehearsals. By October 6, the more central and satisfactory Theater an der Wien had been fixed up for the company and was reopened with Beethoven's *Fidelio*, first heard there 140 years earlier, now a token of de-Nazification.

Several of the singers involved have told of their grueling rehearsing and performing schedules, often on unheated stages and with insufficient nourishment. Without questioning the intensity and dedication that went into the remarkably rapid revival of the Staatsoper, we can also note that it fulfilled needs both personal and political. More than one singer with a problematic wartime record wiggled through the cleansing process on the strength of the phrase "Nobody else is available for the role." The first phoenix to rise from the city's ashes, the Staatsoper had the approval of the occupying powers (especially the Russians, the first to arrive). Mozart -- a figure wholly Austrian and, unlike Wagner, untainted by National Socialism -- made an ideal standard-bearer for a New Austria. Symptomatically, in 1949, when Wilhelm Furtwängler joined the Salzburg Festival, Austria's cultural shop window to the rest of the world, he proclaimed the importance of *Fidelio* and the Mozart operas that he had rarely conducted.



THE INFLUENTIAL 1934 FRITZ BUSCH/CARL EBERT PRODUCTION OF FIGARO AT GLYNDEBOURNE, REVIVED IN 1939 WITH AN INTERNATIONAL CAST HEADED BY MARIANO STABILE, MARIA MARKAN, AUDREY MILDMA, JOHN BROWNLEE, ERIC STARLING, CONSTANCE WILLIS AND SALVATORE BACCALONI; IRMGARD SEEFRIED, ELISABETH SCHWARZKOPF AND JURINAC, SALZBURG'S NOZZE TRIO IN 1947



The moment was ripe for Krips, a native Viennese and student of Felix Weingartner, who had worked at the Staatsoper as a repetiteur in the 1920s and returned as conductor in 1933. The Anschluss put an end to his public career, with the result that he came forward in 1945 with the ideal combination of musical skills and a clean political slate. (He also earned a reputation as a stern taskmaster, which may have been necessary to achieve results on a shoestring.) In any case, Karl Böhm, music director of the company since 1943, was distinctly persona non grata with the Allies, and neither Herbert von Karajan (who surely wanted the job) nor Furtwängler (who didn't want it but also didn't want Karajan to get it) had yet been de-Nazified.

From these beginnings arose what came to be known as the "postwar Vienna Mozart style." Along with Krips, the names most frequently associated with its beginnings are Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Irmgard Seefried, Hilde Gueden, Sena Jurinac, Wilma Lipp, Emmy Loose, Anton Dermota, Paul Schoeffler, Hans Hotter, Erich Kunz and Ludwig Weber. A typical description of the style was offered in 1959 by Joseph Wechsberg, *Opera* magazine's Vienna correspondent for many years: "Its ingredients are a sound sense of tradition and deep respect for the composer's score, perfect technique, impeccable taste, a subtle shading of nuances, and complete distillation of Mozart's divine beauty."



That recipe might serve for any number of "Mozart styles" -- or, for that matter, substituting another composer's name, for many other styles as well. The crunch lies in the definition of those terms. In fact, the now



VIENNA VETERAN SENA JURINAC DICTATES TO
ELENA RIZZIERI IN GLYNDEBOURNE MOZZE, 1955;
ERICH KUNZ, POSTWAR PAPAENO AT THE THEATER
AN DER WIEN



substantial sonic evidence (in live and studio recordings) of German and Austrian performances of the five major Mozart works in the active repertory from the 1930s to the 1950s encourages a certain skepticism about the identity, novelty and duration of the "postwar Vienna Mozart style."

Unfortunately, the early phases of the Jerger/Krips regime in Vienna, and the related performances at the summer Salzburg Festivals, are only scantily documented in sound. To date, no substantial "live" recordings from 1945-50 have surfaced. (No doubt performances were broadcast, but given the city's straitened circumstances during those years, probably neither the radio station nor any listeners had equipment or media available to record them.) Not until 1950 were complete Mozart operas recorded commercially in Vienna. That year, Krips conducted *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* for Decca/London, with the cast of his 1948 Salzburg Festival performances (and doubtless of numerous occasions at the Theater an der Wien as well). Neither the conducting nor the playing of the Vienna Philharmonic can be faulted, but if the reputation of the fabled "style" had to rest on this cast (Lipp, Loose, Walther Ludwig, Peter Klein and Endre Koréh), it would not rest well -- especially as concerns "perfect technique," which the singers conspicuously lack.

During those years, the company's reputation was spread through its tours, with Mozart the repertory mainstay. 1947 brought engagements in Nice, Paris and London, where Krips led *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così Fan Tutte*. A typical reaction was that of opera news' correspondent, former Met tenor Riccardo Martin, who reported that the opening *Don Giovanni* "reached such a high standard of merit that the audience

overlooked the fact that the whole opera was played in one set of three arches, with an occasional backdrop let down during a blackout to represent every change of scene.... There was not a discordant note; it was a perfect blend of orchestra, singing and acting."

These London performances produced the only live recordings so far published of the company's Mozart in this period: a *Don Giovanni* in which the former Viennese favorite Richard Tauber, resident in Britain throughout the war, rejoined his colleagues as Ottavio. Though of limited relevance to our topic, these fragments are well worth hearing, for Tauber sings his music with firm attack and a full yet sweet tone, and the martial passages of "Il mio tesoro" are uttered with élan. Except for shortness of breath in the long runs of the latter aria, the technique and expressivity are splendid, especially considering that the next day Tauber entered a hospital and was diagnosed with incurable lung cancer.

Tauber wasn't part of the "postwar Vienna Mozart style," of course; he was a survivor of an earlier generation. But his younger colleagues in that 1947 season had been working in German and Austrian theaters, including Vienna, before 1945 -- many even back into the '30s. Among those listed above, Jurinac is the principal exception. From Zagreb, she was engaged for Vienna in 1944, but the closure of the theaters in the war's final months delayed her debut until she was assigned Cherubino for the reopening night. Thus, as far as singing technique and style are concerned, one can hardly pinpoint a clear and simple break.

The Tauber recording also confirms what Martin's review mentioned in passing -- that *Giovanni* (like the other Italian operas) was sung in German. "Surely the Viennese artists of 1947 can sing in Italian," wrote Martin. Curiously, it seems they could. Since 1946, the same people had sung these same operas in Italian at Salzburg, although in Vienna, German was naturally preferred as the language of the home audience. Even when the company took five Mozart operas to Florence for the 1949 Maggio Musicale, German was still preferred. One possible reason was suggested by the *Corriere della Sera* critic, Franco Abbiati: rather than complaining, he observed (perhaps sensibly, perhaps cattily) that in the circumstances these works were probably better sung in German "than defaced by a dutiful but perilous respect for the original Italian text, which in the imperfect pronunciation of foreign singers might yield a result of God knows what absurdity."

The use of translation, standard practice in German-speaking countries since Mozart's time, reflects a significant split in the performing tradition for the Mozart-Da Ponte operas. Through much of the nineteenth

century and even later, only Italian companies (at home and abroad) played these works in the original -- and the only one they played frequently was *Don Giovanni*, the Romantic Era's favorite Mozart work. Well into the twentieth century, *Figaro* and *Così* were kept going primarily by German-speaking theaters.

Of course, the original singers of Mozart's Italian operas were Italians or trained in the Italian tradition; so were those who sang his German operas. Thereafter, Italian and German singing techniques and styles began to diverge considerably, both from those of Mozart's time and from each other, because of changing requirements imposed on vocal technique by developments in operatic composition -- from Donizetti through Verdi to the verists and Puccini on the one hand, from Wagner to Strauss on the other. In both cases, larger, louder and (usually) less flexible voices were required for more recent works, and the more declamatory vocal writing in each tradition was colored by the character of the language and the vocal placement its distinctive sounds demanded. The difference is perhaps most obvious in recitatives, which trip less lightly from the tongue when moved back in the mouth to accommodate German sounds. In practice, during the nineteenth century, German theaters often converted the recitatives of the Italian works into spoken dialogue. (Conversely, Italians preferred to turn the German operas' dialogue into recitative: the Met's first performances of *Il Flauto Magico*, in 1900, used a Ricordi edition with anonymous recitatives.)

LISA BELLA CASA'S BEAUTY
LIT VIENNA'S *DON
GIOVANNI*; SOPRANO MARIA
CEBOTARI AND CONDUCTOR
JOSEF KRIPS IN LONDON,
1947



The German and Italian traditions of performing Mozart's Italian operas began to converge in the 1930s, in part an inadvertent result of Nazi rise to power in Germany and the consequent emigration of many musicians. One of these, Fritz Busch, formerly music director at the Dresden Opera, was engaged by a new festival at Glyndebourne in England, where beginning in 1934 the Da Ponte operas would be sung in the original Italian by international casts, including both Germans and Italians. That year, EMI cautiously began recording at Glyndebourne -- at first, only the ensembles from *Figaro*, which, unlike the arias and duets, had never been put on disc before. When these sold well, the remainder of the opera was taken down the next summer, followed by *Così* and *Giovanni* -- the first-ever complete recordings of Mozart operas. As disseminated on disc, Busch's Mozart interpretations significantly formed listeners' expectations of Mozart style over the next two decades.

Also in 1934, another exile from Nazism, Bruno Walter, who had been presiding over Mozart in German at Salzburg since 1926, undertook to restore *Don Giovanni*'s original language, with a cast including Dusolina Giannini, Dino Borgioli, Ezio Pinza and Virgilio Lazzari, as well as several Germans, some of whom had been working in Italian at the Met and Glyndebourne. In 1937, Walter reinstated Da Ponte's words in Salzburg's *Figaro* as well. While technically flawed recordings of the two operas from that year's festival survive, they didn't circulate for several decades, and Walter's more lasting contribution took place elsewhere.

Until 1942 at the Met, the Mozart operas were the responsibility of the company's Italian wing, conducted by Tullio Serafin and Ettore Panizza. Thereafter, both Walter and Busch -- along with Erich Leinsdorf, George Szell, Fritz Reiner, Fritz Stiedry and Max Rudolf -- took them over, working with young American singers as well as veterans of Salzburg (Novotná, Pinza, Kipnis) and Glyndebourne (Brownlee, Baccaloni). The result hoped for, and sometimes achieved, was a blending of Italianate vocal finish and linguistic fluency (especially in the recitatives) with the German tradition of carefully rehearsed ensemble, both vocal and orchestral.



ANTON DERMOTA'S DON OTTAVIO SOOTHES THE DONNA ANNA OF LJUBA WELITSCH; ALFRED JERGER, MEZZO ELISABETH HÖNGEN, CEBOTARI, GUEDEN, KUNZ AND THEIR COLLEAGUES DEPART VIENNA FOR THE COMPANY'S TRIUMPHANT LONDON SEASON, SEPTEMBER 13, 1947



At Salzburg after the war began, these operas reverted to German -- which in most other German theaters they had never left. Archival recordings now on CD document this practice: *Don Giovanni* under Keilberth (1936) and Karl Elmendorff (1934), *Figaros* under Böhm (1938, with his Dresden ensemble) and Krauss (1942, Salzburg); a Vienna *Così* under Böhm, recorded in the late war years, apparently has not survived. At postwar Salzburg Festivals, Italian returned -- except in 1953, when Furtwängler reverted to the German translation of *Figaro* by the great conductor Hermann Levi (replaced during the Nazi years, for racial reasons, by a revision).

Something of the difference language made can be inferred from recordings that show Schwarzkopf, Seefried and Kunz singing *Figaro* in both Italian (1950 Karajan recording) and German (the 1953 Salzburg Furtwängler performance). Seefried, for example, sings Susanna's last-act recitative and aria in Italian with lovely line and tone, certainly expressive, yet lacking variety in the actual delivery of the words. In the German performance, her consonants are more distinct without disrupting the legato line, individual words are uttered more concretely, and the shape and meaning of verbal phrases clearly influences the more inflected delivery of musical phrases. (Since the Karajan recording omits the *secco* recitatives, direct comparison of those isn't possible, but almost anything conversational in the concerted numbers emerges more vividly in the German version than in the Italian.)

Similar observations can be made about the studio recordings Maria Cebotari and Schwarzkopf made under Krips in London in 1947, singing in Italian arias they were concurrently performing at Covent Garden in German. Based on these, one might conclude that the Vienna casts in these years are not heard at their best in the familiar Italian-language recordings. On the other hand, the need to learn their Mozart in Italian probably gave some of these singers a start on the Italian roles that figured prominently later in their careers: Schwarzkopf's Alice Ford, Jurinac's Elisabetta di Valois, Gueden's Gilda and Mimì. (Seefried, by contrast, rarely sang Italian except in Mozart.)

Recordings also suggest that the original Vienna team had its weak spots. The miniature Lipp instrument is inadequate for the high soprano roles. Walther Ludwig, Dermota's alternate, is a throaty, clumsy tenor. Even Dermota, whose sound aspires to Tauber's ringing sweetness, seems dramatically bottled up by his vocal technique. The relatively dry baritone of the theatrically skilled Schoeffler and the rougher sound of his colleague Alfred Poell could hardly be described as suave. No, the vocal glories of this roster were undoubtedly the sopranos, distinct in temperament as well as talent, who became international singers in the '50s: Schwarzkopf, Seefried, Gueden, Jurinac and, later, Lisa della Casa.

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an ideal standard-bearer for a New Austria.

Among the whole range of Mozart recordings from Glyndebourne to the later 1950s, the "postwar Vienna" style seems more a transitional moment -- between the earlier German-Austrian tradition and the internationalized style of the 1950s, with its proliferating variants -- than a destination point. Perhaps the major contribution of Krips and company in those early years was to demonstrate how the neoclassical leanness, the textural and rhythmic clarity, espoused at Glyndebourne could be upholstered to good effect with

a more sensuous sonority, both orchestral and -- at least on the female side -- vocal. (As far as appoggiaturas and added ornamentation are concerned, Vienna performances were as literal as those from Glyndebourne. Although some conductors of the German school who worked at the Met -- notably Szell -- encouraged appoggiaturas in the recitatives, for most of them "deep respect for the composer's score" was the ruling principle. Both among performers and scholars of the time, the prevailing "sound sense of tradition" had lost sight of unwritten practice.)

Within these ideals, conductors of the '50s found room for much individuality. To begin with, there's that 1950 Karajan *Figaro* recording with its Krips-era cast. (By this time, Schwarzkopf, urged by EMI producer Walter Legge, had pretty much withdrawn from Vienna, in order to focus her career on Covent Garden.) Evidently, Karajan's intent here was to combine fairly fleet tempos with a polished surface, with the result that his singers, notably Schwarzkopf and Seefried, sometimes seem to be vacating their notes before having fully inhabited them. (Often regarded as a hallmark of the postwar Vienna Mozart style, this "note-pecking" was probably a passing consequence of these singers intersecting with this phase of Karajan's career.)

Then there were Furtwängler's more measured performances, which could do wonders for the works' ritual solemnities, at some sacrifice to other aspects. Another direction, more central and very structurally aware, is found in Erich Kleiber's 1955 *Figaro*, in which Cesare Siepi's resources produced an uncommonly mordant protagonist. At the Aix-en-Provence Festival, Hans Rosbaud achieved clarity and character with casts including younger singers from all over Europe. (Krips' only recorded contribution to this period was a *Don Giovanni* with a cast of mixed backgrounds and abilities that unfortunately never jells.)

In the '50s, internationalization became inescapable. Broadcasting, recordings and travel all contributed to wider dissemination of performers and performances -- but also to the gradual breakdown of such historic continental institutions as "resident company" or "ensemble company." Other labels besides EMI discovered the advantages of recording in Vienna, and while the majority of Mozart recordings continued to be made there, exclusive contracts and the desire to cast for maximum appeal in a range of markets made the recordings more like *ad hoc* undertakings than reflections of stage performances. For example, after Seefried switched her allegiance from EMI to DG (because her opportunities at EMI seemed limited after Schwarzkopf married Legge), she figured in Ferenc Fricsay's fascinating but distinctly un-Viennese recordings from Berlin.

Fairly quickly, then, the "postwar Vienna Mozart style" became diluted; what remained inhered in the conductors and in the Vienna Philharmonic itself. Yet in the process, its singers and conductors, and their recordings, influenced performances throughout the opera world. In our era of instant musical communications, change is the only constant, the interplay of styles and traditions becoming ever more rapid. After all, who in the 1950s could have imagined that the Staatsoper would one day have an Italian music director?

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The following recordings mentioned in this article have been published on compact disc:

Die Entführung aus dem Serail

Krips/Vienna 1950: London 443-530-2

Le Nozze di Figaro

Busch/Glyndebourne 1934-35: Pearl 9375

Walter/Salzburg 1937: Arkadia 50004

Böhm/Stuttgart 1938 (Dresden cast,
in German): Preiser 90035

Krauss/Salzburg 1942 (in German): Preiser 90203

Karajan/Vienna 1950: EMI CMS7-69639-2

Furtwängler/Salzburg 1953 (in German): EMI CDHC-66080-2

Kleiber/Vienna 1955: London 417-315-2

Rosbaud/Aix 1955: EMI CMS7-64376-2

Don Giovanni

Keilberth/Stuttgart 1936 (in German): Preiser 90263

Busch/Glyndebourne 1936: EMI CHS7-61030-2

Walter/Salzburg 1937: Radio Years RY-83.85

Elmendorff/Dresden 1943 (in German): Berlin Classics 0325-001

Furtwängler/Salzburg 1950: EMI CHS5-66567-2

Furtwängler/Salzburg 1954: EMI CHS7-63860-2

Krips/Vienna 1955: London 411-626-2

Fricsay/Berlin 1958: Deutsche Grammophon 437-341-2

Così Fan Tutte

Busch/Glyndebourne 1935: EMI CHS7-63864-2

Selections

Krips/Cebotari 1947 (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, "Dove sono" only): Preiser 90034

Krips/Vienna/Tauber 1947 (*Don Giovanni* tenor scenes, in German): Eklipse EKR-CD5

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