p. 9
Foreward by Marcus Rudolf Axt

Dear friends of music,

It soon will be 75 years since an orchestra was (re)founded in a small Bavarian city that had survived the War well-nigh unscathed – an orchestra that brought together musicians from Prague and German-speaking Bohemia and thus had a tradition of more than 150 years as its birthright. We want to celebrate this, looking back gratefully on 75 years of music for the entire world – a world that we have travelled from the very beginning as cultural ambassadors of Bavaria and the whole of Germany, giving more than 7,300 concerts at 535 locations in 63 countries.

Not only the gala anniversary concert – of which we are delighted to announce the Bavarian Prime Minister will be the patron – but the entire season will be filled with festive music. Celebrations almost inevitably involve the sound and rhythm of dance, which for millennia has been perhaps the most primeval form of ritualized celebration. Dance and dances in symphonic music thus also feature in our concerts. We will open the season with Carl Maria von Weber's "Invitation to the Dance” and continue our frolics with Bartók's Dance Suite, the Symphonic Dances from Bernstein's "West Side Story”, and Ravel's "Bolero", as well as ballet music by de Falla, Stravinsky and Tchaikovsky.

In this anniversary season, too, our world-renowned orchestra will be on tour from South America to Japan, and performances in the Elbphilharmonie and the concert halls of Baden-Baden, Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich and Vienna have become traditional fixtures in our annual tour schedule. The immediacy of the concert experience plays a vital role in the dialogue between cultures, and in times of climate change, as an orchestra of the world we naturally are aware of the need to preserve creation as best we can during our travels.

But 75 years of Bamberg Symphony Orchestra also means 75 years of loyal concertgoers in the World Heritage city – concertgoers who recently were voted "Audience of the Year". We are rewarding them with a special gift – a long night of chamber music at special locations throughout Bamberg and an end-of-season open-air concert on the runway of Bamberg airfield.

Do join our celebrations, whether in Bamberg or at one of our concerts in Asia, South America and Europe. Welcome!

Marcus Rudolf Axt,
Chief Executive

p. 11
Foreward by Bernd Sibler

Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear friends of music,

What a stroke of luck it was that in 1946, one year after the Second World War had ended, a world-class orchestra settled in Bamberg – a city that for the most part had been spared the turmoil of war and thus had been able to preserve both its thousand-year-old beauty and its diverse range of art and cultural treasures. In this way, the "Franconian Rome" became the new home of the former German Philharmonic Orchestra from the "Golden City" of Prague, which has so many architectural, cultural, and historical parallels to Bamberg. For 75 years, the musicians of the new Bamberg Symphony have acted as as cultural ambassadors, spreading the reputation of both Bamberg and Bavaria all over the world, and for the last 15 years bearing the honorary title of Bavarian State Philharmonic Orchestra.

During this anniversary season, too, tours around the globe will take this world-class orchestra from West to the Far East as Bamberg's musical ambassador. This is an important obligation with a long tradition: soon after its foundation, the Bamberg Symphony embraced a diplomatic cultural mission, travelling to countries that only a few years previously had been enemies in two world wars. Today, it is still the universal language of music that accompanies the dialogue of nations – for music is understood throughout the world and is able to move the hearts of those who hear it. We need this language more than ever now, in times when autocracies are gaining power, diplomatic dialogue is faltering, and social media are oscillating between political correctness and fake news. The noblest task of our Bavarian State Philharmonic Orchestra is to express the message of humanity in music.

I am delighted that the Free State of Bavaria has such an outstanding cultural ambassador in the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra and that we were able to bring Jakub Hrůša, one of the most sought-after and successful artists of his generation, to Bavaria as the orchestra's principal conductor. I wish the audience of the Bamberg Symphony an anniversary season full of inspiring musical experiences – listen to the language of music and let yourself fall under its spell!

Bernd Sibler,
Bavarian Minister of State for Science and Art

p. 20-25
“A happy coming-of-age in Bamberg”
(about Chief Conductor Jakub Hrůša)

In demand throughout the world, but continuity in Franconia: at the moment, principal conductor Jakub Hrůša and the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra can’t imagine anything better.

One man's misfortune is another man's good luck. Mariss Jansons, who had been ailing for over a year and sadly died on 1 December 2019, was forced to cancel five consecutive concerts with the Vienna Philharmonic. And thus Jakub Hrůša had the opportunity to conduct the notoriously conservative elite orchestra at the Vienna Musikverein last November. He had certainly been on their shortlist for some time, but in Vienna, philharmonic debuts can sometimes take a while.

Now the 38-year-old from Brno has made his debut with nearly all of the world’s famous orchestras. Even more importantly, he was also always invited back straight away. Because this calm, friendly, but nevertheless emphatic and highly professional conductor is characterised by traits to similar Mariss Jansons: by satisfaction. By enjoying what he does. By modesty, but also by absoluteness in decisive matters. By his capacity for friendship. By generosity without making a big deal of it. Yet these are not necessarily the qualities required to mature into a truly esteemed conductor. The music business is all too happy to rely on show stars.

Maturing, coming of age. Precisely this is what Jakub Hrůša is currently doing – with his focus as principal conductor of the Bamberg Symphony as his foundation. He is doing so without haste and scandals, without any over-ambitious tactics, even without adopting a striking style or personality. Hrůša is an arrestingly inconspicuous phenomenon, who nevertheless knows how to capture an audience’s attention quickly, whether on the Regnitz, in Spain or soon in South America. Someone whose ego does not dominate his soul, but who knows how to let that ego resurface – someone who can become very stubborn when things don't suit him.

This friendly but determined artist is a rare example of an all-rounder who knows how to play and interpret almost everything to the same high standard. In doing so, he does not explore extremes, but instead studies the score with an objective eye. He never sounds routine. Whether Jakub Hrůša conducts Beethoven or Haydn, Mendelssohn or Brahms, Tchaikovsky or Mahler, Smetana, Dvořák, Janáček, Martinů or Strauss, Stravinsky, Schoenberg or Widmann – we always have the feeling that his approach is the right one, the proportions correct, that no exaggerated, overly idiosyncratic conclusions have been drawn from his scrupulous study of the score.

Finely tuned by Hrůša, the Bamberg Symphony – as the former Prague German Philharmonic Orchestra – is delighted that their treasured first Czech principal conductor will be staying with them until at least 2026. Hrůša now is also increasingly making his presence felt in music theatre. He has already performed Janáček's "The Makropulos Affair" with the orchestra of the Vienna State Opera, as well as giving a further magnificent performance of this work in Zurich in autumn 2019. Jakub Hrůša's 2019/2020 season will end with "Rusalka" in Amsterdam and once again in Glyndebourne. His debut at the Metropolitan Opera has also been announced.

What is the secret of this skill? Talking to Jakub Hrůša, you notice the same calm, unhurriedness, serenity, but also persistence. "There was no active music-making at home, my father was an architect, my mother an engineer, my grandparents were geophysicists, hydroelectric engineers, all of them more technically oriented. But we listened to a lot of music. We loved going to concerts and the opera in Brno. It was especially important to my father. And there was no television at all. So even as a child I learned that music is something beautiful, something I had to follow."

And how did he become active himself? "Even in kindergarten, I was considered talented. My parents allowed that. The music school went a bit further, everyone there played an instrument. I learned the piano and flute, we also sang a lot, even at the end of maths class. Music was always present, quite naturally, but that did not mean I would become a musician. I was a good student. Then the question came up: grammar school or conservatory? I went to grammar school. But after a year, I missed music badly. And so I started playing music again on the side. My father was very supportive. For him, artistry was the highest ideal. Now that I'm a father myself, I realise how great it was that my parents let me follow my dream."

He always played the piano "like a conductor, with lots of pedal. And I wanted to get to the bottom of structures, but I wasn't a great player in technical terms. I was better on the trombone, in the orchestra, but I also played jazz and in a wind quintet. That was good for intonation and playing together. Making music as an ensemble was something I had to learn, as was contact with string players. I composed a bit, too. It was like a game. Music was a serious hobby. But at the age of 17 I switched to the academy in Prague after all. But as a conductor straight away, that was my intended specialization. I was able to predict that relatively well. And apparently so were the teachers who advised me to do it. I was something of a loner, quite authoritative, knew what I wanted, listened very carefully to what I could do differently in the orchestra. And I asked questions. My student orchestra supported me. They let me take the conductor's stand. That was very interesting, it worked. Then I had a private tutor, and he prepared me for the academy in Prague."

And how did things go on in the big city? "I realized I could do this. Those around me felt so early on, too. There were some doubts after a few months. But they were quickly overcome. The Czech Republic is a small country. If you're successful, the whole nation knows it, but everybody knows about mistakes, too. In my first year, I already took part in the Prague Spring Conducting Competition, although I had never been in front of a professional orchestra before, but the teacher chose us all. And I wanted to stand out, because I really wanted to study under Jiří Bělohlávek. But his class was full, I was allowed to be there as an external. In the competition, I was the only Czech to reach the second round. I received various diplomas and awards, and after that I was privileged at school, in a good sense. I quickly became the best of those around me. And then the people in charge of the local orchestras supported me well, from my third or fourth year I worked almost full time. Later, I won only one competition in Paris. I'm not a competition-focused person, and competitions haven't helped my career."

And now Jiří Bělohlávek knew that he existed. "A piano duo was needed in class, and he and I played Mahler's First Symphony for another conductor, he praised me highly for that. After my first year, I was able to switch to his class. Everything ran smoothly, without any setbacks. From the second year onwards we had our own concert with a professional orchestra, which was also important. And I had a Prague student string orchestra at my disposal, twice a week for three hours over three years, I learned a lot there. So I gained a lot of practical experience early on."

In Bamberg, where Jakub Hrůša has just finished his fourth season, he feels completely happy: "For me, Central Europe is simply my home, this is where I work and live in Bamberg, Prague and London. In America, Cleveland is my US home, every year. I have now even worked on two programmes in a row with the orchestra, which only very few guests have been allowed to do thus far. I visit some German orchestras regularly, the Orchestra dell' Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome and the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam are important, too." There are also plans with the Vienna Philharmonic, and Salzburg's festival director Markus Hinterhäuser values Jakub Hrůša highly.

"But the best thing for me at the moment is that luckily we extended my contract in Bamberg to 2026 after only two years. This was as unusual as it was forward-thinking – on all sides. But somehow we all already knew back then: this is working, this is fun. We want it to continue." And so it will, because the coming season is just halftime for the Bamberg Symphony and Jakub Hrůša, and five more seasons as the orchestra's principal conductor still lie ahead.

"This is ideal for me, I put out my feelers, test which places I want to come back to, and throughout this process the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra is my great constant. And we are growing together. Both as a human and as an artist, the development is wonderful, I am able to build something up and mature. I very quickly had the feeling

that I had found long-term partners here. I feel happy and in good hands. It is as it should be. There is still so much we can discover and explore together."
And, what is particularly important for Jakub Hrůša, who only takes time off for his family and otherwise is always working: "With the Bamberg Symphony, I have the continuity to develop nuances of music making and ways of exploring acoustics, I can experiment on stage. Because the musicians have the best instincts. They have both style and precision, are able to work economically, play even more profoundly and enthusiastically. We are just talking about details, nothing fundamental. Because I felt from the very beginning that this orchestra doesn't need a revolution, that it is simply very good."

So what are his plans for the coming years? "There is still a conspicuous lack of music by Wagner in my repertory, but I will probably try that out in future opera engagements. With the Bamberg Symphony, I would like to play more Bruckner, Russian music, especially Shostakovich, and Strauss. We have several new members, on the oboe, horn, and flute, for example, and a new concert master, but the stability of the orchestra's sound is wonderful. The management's flexibility and friendliness is ideal, I cannot show my appreciation for this enough. We understand each other, pull together, want the same for the orchestra, and the musicians want the same, too. Especially on tour, I notice how the work we have invested comes to fruition, how keen the musicians are to enter the full concert halls, how delighted they are with an enthusiastic audience. I have now come to trust this orchestra completely. Our audience at home is also incredibly loyal. For me, it is no coincidence that it was precisely the Bamberg audience that was voted 'Audience of the Year' – for its enthusiasm as well as its incredible loyalty."

Manuel Brug

p. 28-31
Honorary Conductors Herbert Blomstedt and Christoph Eschenbach

In the orchestral world, the title of honorary conductor is awarded in recognition of a particularly good and long-standing relationship. Honorary conductors aren't made overnight – rather, it's about the length and quality of time spent together. In Bamberg, a further special factor comes into play: this small city, with a population of only 75,000, is home to one of Germany's most important orchestras. The Bamberg Symphony stands on a par with the greatest orchestras in the world – a miracle that is no coincidence. Those familiar with the city and its welcoming atmosphere, who appreciate the Symphony as the "voice of Bamberg" in the noisy hustle and bustle of the global music scene, know that the orchestra's success rests on shared hard work in the spirit of continuity.

Good relationships are one of the ingredients of success, and the music scene marks no exception in this regard. On the one hand, there are the basics, such as excellent planning, marketing and diplomatic skill. And then there are personal relations, whose nature and worth are virtually impossible to capture in facts and numbers. For an orchestra, personal relations are of inestimable value. Artists who have performed in Bamberg know that appreciation and respect play a major role here. Our guests become friends and ambassadors for the city in the global concert scene.

The two honorary conductors of the Bamberg Symphony belong to the orchestra's closest circle of friends. For decades, the Bamberg Symphony has enjoyed close relations with Herbert Blomstedt and Christoph Eschenbach, two musicians who each in their own way stand for artistic versatility, curiosity and cosmopolitanism. Perhaps this is the great attraction of having two honorary conductors. The German music critic Wolfgang Sandner once spoke of the "old masters" leading the Bamberg Symphony. This may sound somewhat coy, but it refers to a profound relationship developed over time between people who love music and have made it their life's purpose. Today, both honorary conductors are able to look back on careers that span decades. The sum of their experience adds up to an inspiring foundation for further musical endeavours.

Herbert Blomstedt, who was able to hear many of the "old masters" of his time conduct as a student, gave his own debut as a conductor in Uppsala in 1954 and now has served music tirelessly for more than 60 years. Even though Blomstedt is almost 93 years old, when he speaks, he still radiates youthful curiosity. When he conducts, we hear his interpretative humility and wisdom in the music. He first conducted the Bamberg Symphony on 18 December 1982. He had heard our orchestra for the first time more than 20 years previously under Joseph Keilberth, and still recalls his excitement over its "smooth orchestral sound". Herbert Blomstedt and the Bamberg

Symphony have performed in Germany and 25 times in eight other countries, with two tours of Japan in 2012 and 2016 among the more recent highlights. In the summer of 2017, Herbert Blomstedt conducted our cathedral concerts, a series that started in Bamberg and subsequently visited Würzburg and Passau before concluding in the monastery church in St. Florian in Upper Austria, the final resting place of Anton Bruckner. Here, the orchestra performed Bruckner's fifth symphony under the baton of our honorary conductor, who perhaps has a closer relation to this composer than any other. Musical moments such as these are recorded for posterity, of course. A further series of excellent recordings have been published – at the beginning of the 2019/2020 season, Gustav Mahler's Symphony no. 9 was released, a highly regarded testimony to the musical friendship between the Bamberg Symphony and Herbert Blomstedt.

The winner of prestigious piano competitions and a much sought-after virtuoso, over the years Christoph Eschenbach has devoted himself increasingly to conducting and thus has conquered the world of music twice over. Eschenbach's knowledge of music rests on this double experience – coupled with an unconditional, curious approach to epochs and styles, for his musical work has always involved the quest for new horizons. His history with the Bamberg Symphony is a wonderful illustration of this path: on 1 October 1965, almost 55 years ago, the first ever winner of the Clara Haskil competition mounted the stage in Bamberg to play Schumann's piano concerto. Twelve years later, he conducted the Bamberg Symphony for the first time – from the piano as a soloist in a pure Mozart programme. Around 57 concerts, a third of the joint concerts given thus far, took place abroad: in the USA, where our honorary conductor worked for many years, in Japan, and in South America. Christoph Eschenbach, who recently turned 80, values the "friendly atmosphere" at the Bamberg Symphony and the orchestra's willingness to take risks and go "beyond their comfort zone".

His close ties with our orchestra are attested by CD recordings, tours and numerous concerts. Recently, the two honorary conductors were able to celebrate a "tie" – each had given exactly 183 concerts with the Bamberg Symphony. These numbers add up to more than a year's worth of daily concerts with our honorary conductors!

Here they stand. Two of the greatest musicians of our time, ever humble, ever diligent – especially when it comes to realising the composer's will. Both Herbert Blomstedt and Christoph Eschenbach are known for their sociable, collegial rehearsal style, never forgetting the human beings playing under their baton, even in moments of utmost concentration. This, too, is probably one of the secrets of their success here in Bamberg. Our honorary conductors – here they stand. And here they will stay.

Alexander Moore

p. 32-38
"We Need to Liberate the Notes"
(about Featured Artist Patricia Kopatchinskaja)

The violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja is radical, dazzling, non-conformist. She was long considered an insider tip, but now has reached the pinnacle of her field, winning prizes and making music with the world's greatest performers. She is the dedicatee of numerous new violin concertos, and gives the repertory favourites a proper stirring up. Who is this woman, who stands on stage barefoot in order to be grounded, and who never plays off by heart, but always seeks to enter into a dialogue with the score?

Let's turn back time a little, to a summer's afternoon at the 2008 Menuhin Festival in the Swiss mountain village of Gstaad. A young violinist is performing: Patricia Kopatchinskaja. Her stage is a shaky platform in between flea market and sausage stalls. Undeterred, she plays Moldovan folk melodies, attacking her violin as if her life were at stake – which indeed it always is when she makes music, and especially here. For here she is playing as an ambassador for "Terre des Hommes", collecting money for children's aid projects in her home country of Moldova.

"Moldova is incredibly beautiful," she recounts in between melodies, "with strong, rustic smells, with an endless, open sky, with warm sunshine and deep black soil. The people are funny and warm, the dances fast and contagious. And when there is something to celebrate, the tables buckle under the weight of all the food."

Patricia Kopatchinskaja plays in much the same way as she describes her home country: with strong contrasts, with utter dedication to the moment, and with a very direct tone that seeks to evoke smells, tastes, and feelings – and not just pleasurable ones. After all, dirt is part of life, and thus part of music, she says.

Perhaps this uncompromising attitude stems from her childhood, during which she often accompanied her musician parents on concert tours. They are professional Moldovan folk musicians – but there is nothing cosy about this folk music. Instead, it is deeply rooted in being human, and is a way to make comprehensible primal fears and disasters, the incomprehensible, to transform them into poetry. And all of this resonates in Patricia Kopatchinskaja's violin playing.

These existential feelings – Kopatchinskaja experienced them herself, back around 1989, when the collapse of Communism brought extreme changes about in her own life. Her family emigrated from Moldova to Vienna. Thus 13-year-old Patricia Kopatchinskaja arrived in a foreign country, had her fingerprints taken in a refugee camp, and was subjected to xenophobic comments. This experience shaped her for life.

"I must help myself!" has been her motto ever since. And precisely that is what she did. She applied to Vienna’s University of Music to study violin – and composition. The reason: "I couldn't speak the language, but had so many emotions that needed to be released," she says, "I composed whole mountains back then, I was like a waterfall.”

Capturing emotions in music is what distinguishes Patricia Kopatchinskaja's genius – both in her compositions and her violin playing. And these emotions cover a vast range. In this way, she is not only able to infuse the great works of the standard violin repertoire with new life, as if the ideas inspiring them were being born that very moment. She also plays contemporary music with unprecedented naturalness, devotion and virtuosity.

A scholarship finally brought her to Berne, where she started a family – and from where, step by step, note by note, she has conquered the international concert stage – and changed the world of music. Lastingly.

"I know you – I've heard you play..." is a saying in her home country. It holds true for Patricia Kopatchinskaja, who as a person is as honest and direct, as charming and imaginative as her playing. And then again, it is not true – because in every single concert she surpasses the known, dares to do new things, goes to the limits and beyond. For example, hitting a coffin with a hammer for minutes on end in her scenic concert project "Dies irae", which mourns humanity’s destruction of our planet in music. Or makes music only with her voice instead of her violin in Arnold Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire”. Or goes on stage in a creepy skeleton costume – to visually enhance Schubert's "Death and the Maiden".

She is particularly fond of chamber music. “It’s because everyone remains an individual, everyone can develop their thoughts further," she says. This makes direct communication possible. Unlike with an orchestra. There, the conductor is often the centre of attention, and Patricia Kopatchinskaja states clearly: "A conductor disturbs the dialogue between the musicians. A conductor is only necessary when the work is so large that ensemble playing is no longer possible." This is why she has been the artistic director of Camerata Bern in her adopted home of Berne, Switzerland, since the 2018/19 season – a chamber orchestra small enough for her to conduct as "prima inter pares”, while still large enough for all conceivable musical experiments. She never uses a baton, but is always part of the ensemble, playing her violin at the front – or, on occasion, right at the back.

She always has the printed score with her – even if she has long since learned the music by heart. "If I were to play off by heart, I would already have a fixed idea in my head," she says, “and then I wouldn't be able to communicate with the score. Perhaps I'm a bit like someone who goes into that prison of the score, talks to the prisoners there and tells their stories."

But the score also motivates her to react flexibly to it, to imaginatively develop the music: "We mustn’t stick slavishly to the score, not just read out the notes. Notes are a convention, an necessity-driven definition," she says. And challenges her colleagues: "We performers need to read this thought out of the score. Like clairvoyants, we need to look at this destiny: a soul is pinned down there, like a bird that cannot fly. And we need to help it to fly. We need to liberate the notes."

Patricia Kopatchinskaja liberates the notes – and us, her audience. She liberates us from our entrenched listening patterns, from our preconceptions of how something ought to be played. And with every concert she shows us that music can sound even more extreme, painful, dazzling, and funny than we ever thought possible.

Jenny Berg

p. 38-39
535 places 63 countries and 75 conductors over 75 years

Milestone birthdays are a good opportunity to play with numbers. From a human perspective, "75" marks the completion of three quarters of a century, which goes hand in hand with corresponding maturity and life experience. Orchestras mature through the conductors who shape them. Over the course of the 75 years of the Bamberg Symphony, we have worked with more than 500 conductors, 75 of whom we remember here by name. Five of them are or were our principal conductors and influenced the orchestra for decades.

An orchestra gains life experience primarily through concert performances. 7,349 concerts in 75 years means an average of 98 concerts per year. We have had both lean and full years: in 1956, for example, we only gave 66 concerts, while in the historic year 1989 it was almost twice that number, namely 123. The combinations of numbers arising are coincidental: 2,299 concerts in Bamberg, 5,050 concerts on tour, of which 1,188 were given abroad. These 1,188 concerts are spread over 353 foreign tours since 1948, visiting an average of 5 countries each year. Accordingly, more than two thirds of all concerts have taken place on tour – at 535 locations in 63 countries, in places from A for Aachen to Z for Zurich and countries from A for Albania to V for Venezuela. We have been to all these places at least once, but several have been frequent destinations, and we have visited one location more than fifty times.

One might think that this would not leave much time for life or even more work, but besides giving concerts our orchestra has also regularly made recordings for both radio and CDs or records. The archives of the Bayerischer Rundfunk contain studio productions and concert recordings of more than 2,500 works with the Bamberg Symphony. This adds up to a total of more than 55,000 minutes or 900 hours or almost 40 days of non-stop listening to the canon of classical music with our orchestra.

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yellow = Number of countries visited in the year in question
green = Number of tours to the respective country
blue = Year of the first tour to the respective country

p. 40-47
“A Journey of Time“
(The orchestra’s very first tour of South America in 1962)

In the spring of 1962, the Bamberg Symphony embarked upon a concert tour of almost historical dimensions. For five and a half weeks, the orchestra toured South America, playing 26 concerts there – including in Monterrey and Mexico City, in Caracas, Bogotá and Santiago de Chile, in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro. Preparations for the trip took almost four years; orchestra manager Helga Rappoldi chartered two Lufthansa planes especially for the tour that flew one behind the other and sometimes even side by side. On board were the orchestra, the conductors Leopold Ludwig and Joseph Keilberth, a doctor and a reporter from Bamberg’s local newspaper "Fränkischer Tag". And, of course, the Lufthansa crew. The tour was not only the first guest appearance of a German orchestra in South America after the War – it was also the orchestra's largest, longest and most elaborate concert tour to date. Almost 60 years later, the remaining orchestra musicians and Lufthansa crew members met up in Bamberg for a trip down memory lane.

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. The trip to South America was not just one of the biggest projects of the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, it was by far the biggest. We were away for six weeks, played 26 concerts – nothing of the kind had happened before, nor has it happened since.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. The trip was the largest charter flight ever to take place in civil commercial aviation. Two aeroplanes flying side by side over long distances: that doesn’t happen often.

Peter Kuske, Steward. There’s no question, neither for the Lufthansa staff nor the musicians, both living and deceased – this was the most wonderful trip of their lives. Without a doubt. For me, too, of course.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. This experience is like a fixed star in the history of the Bamberg Symphony. Not many musicians who were on the trip back then are still alive. But I have the feeling that the story lives on.

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. I am still feeding off my memories of that trip today.

Peter Kuske, Steward. The trip marked my first foray into classical music, which I had had absolutely no interest in previously.

The beginnings

Claus Klein, horn. I applied to Bamberg mainly because I had read that this trip was planned in the magazine “Das Orchester”. Before that I was employed at the opera house in Wuppertal, with a good salary and a kind of civil servant status. But I thought: you’ll never get a trip like that again your whole life.

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. I had just finished my exams at the Folkwang Academy in Essen when I heard that there was a job opening in Bamberg. A friend of mine was studying art history here, so I thought: that’s one more reason to visit. I auditioned along with 70 other applicants. I took up my position on 1 September 1950, at the same time as Joseph Keilberth. His first concert as principal conductor was also my first.

Harald Zschau, violin. I only found out about South America when I was hired, I didn't know about the trip before. I arrived here at the same time as Claus in 1961. Work began on 1 October, and our first trip – to England – came around only 14 days later. Eight hours by boat.

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. At that time, the Bamberg Symphony were the orchestra, a lot was expected of us. We didn’t earn much, the housing situation in Bamberg was terrible – but we were tremendously enthusiastic! We were thrilled to be able to travel abroad. That wasn’t possible for most Germans at the time. Well, it was in theory – but hardly anyone could afford it. At about the same time, the Berlin Philharmonic was refounded – but they couldn't get out of Berlin because the Russians had sealed off the city. The Bamberg Symphony, by contrast, were a touring orchestra – in fact, we were dependent on touring. It would have been impossible to live off the concerts that were possible in our local region alone.

The concerts

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. Before our guest performances, we never knew exactly how the audience would receive us. We didn’t know this time, either. After all, there were people all over the world who had suffered personally under the Nazis. In Brussels, I once asked for directions in the street, and the man I asked just said: I don't talk to Germans. And I remember the atmosphere at our first concert in Amsterdam in 1952 – we weren't sure whether we would be attacked. It felt possible. We had been officially invited, but that didn’t mean that the population were happy with it.

Harald Zschau, violin. The audience reactions in South America were incredibly euphoric. You could feel the enthusiasm even before we started playing. They clapped wildly after every movement. We had to give autographs after the concerts.

Claus Klein, horn. The reviews were great, they really celebrated us. In some concerts I had a real sense of bliss myself. You're sitting in the orchestra and thinking: oh, isn't this wonderful.

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. In Brasilia, we were supposed to inaugurate the newly built theatre, but it wasn't finished in time. The theatre was meant to have 3000 seats, so 3000 tickets were sold – and then we ended up playing in a concert hall with 800 seats. But there were 3000 people with a ticket standing outside, all wanting to get in. Terrible chaos ensued, we felt like the whole city was standing outside the hall. And I've never sweated as much as in that concert in my entire life. It felt like 50 degrees in the hall, the sweat was pouring down me, and my tails were so wet I had to wring them out.

Apart from a few exceptions, the works that the orchestra played in its guest performances in South America belonged to the standard repertoire – not that this made them any less demanding, especially under travel conditions. Among other pieces, the programme featured, in alternation, Symphonies No. 3 and No. 7 by Ludwig van Beethoven. The Prague Symphony by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Dvořak's Fifth, Tchaikovsky's Fifth, Brahms's First, as well as the latter's Variations on a Theme by Haydn. "Don Juan" and "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks" by Richard Strauss. Also the Siegfried Idyll by Richard Wagner, "From Bohemia's Woods and Fields" by Bedrich Smetana, "Mathis the Painter" by Paul Hindemith, the French Suite by Werner Egk and the Overture to Euryanthe by Carl Maria von Weber.

Claus Klein, horn. These were very well-known pieces. You can't go on tour with an exotic programme, every organizer will tell you that won't get bums on seats. You always need a few hits.

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. After one concert, the stewardesses rained red roses down on us.

Claus Klein, horn. The concert halls were almost always old opera houses.

Harald Zschau, violin. I'll never forget the evenings in Buenos Aires – the Teatro Colon! The acoustics were amazing. We were the first German orchestra to perform there after the War.

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. By the way, I didn't think the journey was so terribly strenuous. In concert halls that we didn't know, we had a warm-up rehearsal just before the concert and tried out the acoustics – and the rest of the day was free. If you were stressed under those conditions, it was your own fault.

Claus Klein, horn. We didn’t play every night, after all. And there were a lot of tours where we did play every night. Or a tour through Germany, where we played Anton Bruckner's Seventh and Eighth twenty times in a row. This time, the breaks between the concerts were almost worse – my instrument was packed up and stowed after each concert, unlike the my colleagues’ violins and flutes, which they always had with them. Sometimes I didn't play a note for two days, just blew into the mouthpiece a bit. And you can tell! It’s like high-performance sports – if you don't train every day, your body will notice immediately.

Harald Zschau, violin. But I didn't practice the violin while travelling either. It wasn't possible, there were no rooms. We warmed up, that was enough – we really had the pieces down pat. You didn't need much by way of rehearsal.

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. By the way, there already were two women in the orchestra back then, a violinist and a harpist. It wasn't easy for them among all those men. Especially since everything on the journey was set up for us men – we had large dressing rooms, while the ladies had to get changed in the toilet.

The itinerary

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. When we arrived in Monterrey, we were exhausted, I’ve no idea how long we had been flying, we couldn't play right away. The concert there was intended as a warm-up anyway. Then we travelled on to Mexico City, where we had a whole week with several concerts – and there we did rehearse.

Peter Kuske, Steward. We travelled on two propeller aircraft, model Superconstellation 8 – nicknamed "Connie". These were the planes’ last flights – the jet age had just begun, our two planes were discontinued models.

Dieter Krauss, co-pilot. That's right – and we flew those discontinued models constantly for six weeks without a single technical hitch. That was quite extraordinary.

The route that the musicians and the crew covered with their two planes fills an entire typewritten sheet of paper. Departure: 8 March in Nuremberg. First destination: New York, stopping to refuel in Iceland. In New York the crew changed, Dieter Kraus and Peter Kuske joined the group, while Gunther Holtorf had already been with the orchestra since Nuremberg. The next destination: Monterrey, located in north-eastern Mexico. The first evening in Monterrey was followed by five concerts in Mexico City and then two performances each in San Juan, Caracas, Bogotá and Lima – a tremendous workload. In Lima, the conductor changed: the first concerts were conducted by Hamburg's General Music Director Leopold Ludwig, the following ones by Bamberg's principal conductor Joseph Keilberth. The concerts in Lima were followed by performances in Santiago de Chile, Vina del Mar, one concert in Montevideo,

five concerts in Buenos Aires, one in Porto Alegre, two in Sao Paulo, one in Brasilia and another two in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, the orchestra travelled back home via Dakar.

Peter Kuske, Steward. At that time, flying was the privilege of the rich.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. In the early 1960s, a flight to New York cost as much as a normal employee earned in half a year

Peter Kuske, Steward. It started with the musicians being unable to disembark after landing in Monterrey because the gangway wasn't high enough. So we got hold of some orange crates.

Dieter Krauss, co-pilot. Half of the airfields we landed at we didn't know at all. You had to prepare intensively to know how long the take-off and landing runways were, how wide, what altitude. That was quite an adventure. Even just starting from Bogotá: the airfield had an altitude of 2000 metres and was in a caldron, the piston engines really struggled to deliver the power required to get us out of there. Then we circled over the airfield for half an hour and slowly spiralled upwards until we had just enough altitude to get over the mountains. It was the same in Santiago. On the way to Buenos Aires we had to cross the Andes, luckily the weather was good.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. At the airport in Monterrey, there was no way of reporting our arrival to the central office in Frankfurt. For our colleagues there, we were like a lunar module that had simply disappeared into space. Then someone told me that there was a military station broadcasting Morse on the other side of the runway. Okay. But there was no crossing. So I looked once to the left and to the right to make sure there really was nobody taking off or landing, and then I marched across the runway. That would be unthinkable today! On the other side, a soldier was sitting in the booth, I introduced myself and showed him my passport, inside the passport was a dollar bill – and then he assiduously passed the message I had written down for him on to Frankfurt.

Peter Kuske, Steward. The airports in Monterrey, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Caracas, Bogotá and Lima were terra incognita for Lufthansa before then – our Connies were the first Lufthansa planes to land there after the War. This also meant that nothing had been prepared there. Usually one of us is standing there and says: this is where you can park, there's the luggage, here's the cabin food, and there's your hotel. None of that existed. That's why you were so important, Gunther, because you did all the work for us at the locations – the loading, the unloading, the accommodation, all that. We stewards went to the kitchens on site ourselves, handed in the packed Lufthansa cutlery for the trays and checked everything. They were really worried about the food going off, so they were really fussy. And so a steward had to taste every meal in each cabin. To make sure it was all done properly.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. The journey required a huge amount of preparation – and the risk factor was very high, because the planes were nowhere near as reliable as ultra-modern aircraft. And our travel schedule was tight, often including a performance by the musicians on the same day we landed, in venues that had been sold out for months. Thus it was essential that both planes arrived safely and on time at all costs – because it was possible for the solo trumpeter to be on the first plane, but his trumpet to be stowed on the second.

Dieter Krauss, co-pilot. We also crossed the equator on the way. We celebrated that, of course. We had direct access to the cargo area from the cabin, so the musicians got their instruments out and serenaded us in the air. When the time came, we flew up and down slightly, like a wave, so you could feel the equator.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. We removed the front rows of seats in the cabins and used nets to separate off a cargo area for the double basses, harps and other bulky instruments – the aeroplanes were not built for that much cargo. Every day, it was a really fiddly job to fit everything in.

Dieter Krauss, co-pilot. Of course, we had to keep to a meticulous schedule at every location – including all changes at short notice. In Mexico City, for example: we were supposed to depart around noon, but then we noticed that the airfield has an altitude of 7000 feet – that's 2000 meters. With the high temperatures at noon, the engines would have given up immediately. So we changed our departure to 8 a.m.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. That worked out perfectly, only Mrs. Rappoldi wouldn’t speak to me for a few days. Most of the time, after driving the instruments to the airport at night and stowing them, I went to the airport kitchen to help with breakfast. Any trade union or works council would ban that immediately today.

The adventure

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. Neither Lufthansa nor the Bamberg Symphony were aware of the risk they would be taking, for sure. I’m a fundamentally optimistic person, I’ve done many things in my life that perhaps I shouldn’t have. But looking back, it truly seems incomprehensible that our joint management really let themselves in for this trip.

Dieter Krauss, co-pilot. We're not talking about life and death here. But if only one engine on one plane had failed, our schedule would have been ruined.

Peter Kuske, Steward. On the second part of the journey, we performed in a different place every day. That meant: packing everything up after the performance, driving to the airport, stowing everything, buttering rolls at night, taking off in the morning –

the flight times were twice as long as they are today, you see. And in the evening playing a concert in another country. No one had really realised what that meant before. Thank God, maybe, or else they wouldn't have done it.

Dieter Krauss, co-pilot. Then we would have been deprived of a great experience. From 1960 to 1996, I flew all the routes covered by Lufthansa. But this flight was the absolute highlight in my entire life as a pilot. Second to none – even though there were several other trips that also were quite nice and varied.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. We were completely on our own and – I can only repeat myself – we were lucky, we were more than lucky. We had a technician with us who was stationed in Sao Paulo, so he spoke Portuguese, German and Spanish. We had a lot of important spare parts on board. Spare wheels, spare brakes, all that stuff. But we needed practically none of it, we just filled up the oil, refuelled, inspected the planes, but nobody needed to pick up a screwdriver to repair anything. At least until the return flight to Nuremberg – the Bamberg Symphony were dropped off at their home airport, of course. That same night the aircraft were to be transferred to Hamburg, to the Lufthansa hangar. But then they both gave up the ghost in Nuremberg. Nothing went wrong the whole time we were away, and then in Nuremberg nothing worked. Both planes were broken. In need of repair. Unbelievable, unbelievable.

Country and people

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. The nice thing was that the concerts in Mexico only started at 9 pm. If we didn't have to rehearse during the day, we had the day off. I was lucky to know a German family there – and so I got to know the sights there first hand.

Claus Klein, horn. On our first day off there, we went to the outdoor pool. And you need to know, Mexico City has an altitude of 3000 metres – if you don't go into the shade, you'll get sunburnt immediately. I didn't know that. We had a doctor with us, who just said: My God, Klein, look at you. I even got a fever. But when you're young you can deal with all that.

Heinrich Stangenberg, viola. In the hotels we stayed in double rooms. Usually sharing with your stand partner – management decided on the allocation.

Claus Klein, horn. The hotels were all very posh. That was unusual for us, we all lived rather simply at home, and now there were always two waiters standing behind you at dinner.

Harald Zschau, violin. The hotels were fantastic – those breakfast buffets! On our German tours, we got two rolls in the morning, a piece of butter and jam. That was it.

Claus Klein, horn. That really was something very special for us. Of course, everything had long since become available again at home. But the joie de vivre, the way of living, that was completely different here. I still remember well that many colleagues in the orchestra were very frugal – even decades later, they still took their own bags with a thermos and sandwiches along on tour.

Harald Zschau, violin. In Mexico, the older colleagues immediately asked where there was a German restaurant. I just thought to myself: my goodness, if I'm in Mexico, I don't want to eat schnitzel and roast pork. But those colleagues were quite fixated.

Claus Klein, horn. While we were travelling, we were paid in dollars. But we hardly needed anything. We had breakfast at the hotel, lunch was often on the plane, and after the concerts we were almost always invited to the German embassy, usually there was even German beer.

Harald Zschau, violin. I still remember that in Rio there were stalls with fresh fruit on almost every corner. Just like sausage stalls in Germany. Fabulous – a slice of pineapple to take away, just like that! So delicious, it was like being in paradise. I lived almost completely on pineapple.

Claus Klein, horn. They warned us about some excursions. Once we wanted to ride up a mountain on a very rickety train, and they told us: If the string players do that, fine, then we'll play with two or three fewer today. But you wind players, don't you dare go up there!

Harald Zschau, violin. In my opinion, the organisation was simply perfect. Especially when you think about it: there were no mobile phones, no computers, just telegrams. There wasn’t a single incident, everything went smoothly.

Claus Klein, horn. Well, Harald, we didn't notice everything. From time to time I went out with two older colleagues. We soon just referred to them as the "Marsala brothers" because they once ordered sweet wine by mistake. Before a concert, Mrs. Rappoldi watched them trying to clamber into their suit trousers. She just whispered to them: You two aren't performing today.

Harald Zschau, violin. One day off, a colleague and I wanted to go to the museum in Buenos Aires. We asked how to get there – our hotel porter said we had best take the bus. He told us that there were no stops and we should just raise our hand when a bus was approaching, then it would take us along. The only problem was: the road in front of the hotel had eight lanes, we were standing at the edge, and the buses were driving somewhere in the middle. We let the first one pass. The second one too. When the third appeared, we raised our hands very timidly – and then the bus indicated, pulled to

the right and drove straight across three lanes to get to us. Everyone honked like mad – imagine that happening here!

Claus Klein, horn. As a young person in your early 20s, you cope with a journey like that much more easily, of course. We were told not to eat soups or salad there, so as not to take any risks. But I don't know if we followed that advice. At some point we bought a bottle of whiskey and took a sip of it every morning before getting up to disinfect everything in our stomachs.

Life afterwards

Peter Kuske, Steward. After the trip, each of us continued to fly, carving out our careers. I flew to Moscow with Willy Brandt for the signing of the German-Russian treaty. I was there when West German President Heinrich Lübke made the first German state visit to Paris after the War. I flew twice with Pope John Paul II and with almost all the German chancellors.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. Having proven myself on this trip, I was stamped as an expert on South America. But I wasn't an expert at all, nor did I know any Spanish – but three months after my return I was transferred to Buenos Aires, later to Santiago and finally to Hong Kong. I owed all of that to the trip with the Bamberg Symphony.

Dieter Krauss, co-pilot. I continued to fly across the Atlantic until 1965, soon on Boeing 747s, and then trained as a captain – I was one of the youngest, and many of my colleagues were still old World War pilots. Over the course of my life I have flown across the Atlantic with a single engine, twin engines, three engines, and four engines.

Finale

Peter Kuske, Steward. The relationship with the musicians on the journey was almost like with family. It got better and better the longer the journey lasted. In Chile, we even took a small bus into the mountains and went to a hacienda there, the musicians took along their instruments, and we celebrated happily and had dinner together. The more we learned about each other and the better we got to know each other, the better our relationship became, and in Nuremberg we were in tears when we had to say goodbye.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. Everyone had their fixed place on board, in the end it felt like coming home.

Peter Kuske, Steward. At the last concert in Rio, two colleagues secretly put on tails, grabbed two instruments, I think a clarinet and a flute, and went on stage for the encore. Keilberth didn't know anything about this, but he must have wondered who was sitting in front of him.

Dieter Krauss, co-pilot. The day after the last concert we took off from Rio straight after each other, had a stopover in Dakar in Senegal – and then, after almost a day and a half in the air, we landed in Nuremberg within two minutes of each other.

Peter Kuske, Steward. I see the biggest difference to today in communication. Everyone flying today phones home in the bus to the airport, says we're about to depart, I'm on the apron right now, we're about to take off. And shortly after landing they make another phone call. Back then I wrote postcards. From every single stop, just: Lots of love, all is well. It took a week or two for the cards to arrive at home. They never heard anything else from us for six weeks. I didn't have any children at that time, but I was already married – but it was a matter of course, so to speak, that we flyers didn't get in touch when we were on the road. A bit like Alexander von Humboldt, who had been missing for years before he reappeared. I liked it better, you were freer, didn't feel obliged. And if something bad had happened, they would have found out about it anyway.

Gunther Holtorf, location manager. During our last evening in Santiago, my daughter was born at home in Frankfurt. We arrived in Montevideo, I open the door, get out first, someone asks me half in Spanish whether a certain Holtorf was on board – and shortly afterwards I had a bottle of champagne emptied over my head. Then someone showed me the telex: You've just become a father.

Claus Klein, horn. For me, the journey easily could have continued. We were bachelors, had no other commitments.

Harald Zschau, violin. Of course, things were different for the newlywed colleagues. And many older colleagues were happy to get home, too. But I couldn't stand it at home, I was a sub-tenant and had a huge room that was very difficult to heat. At home I just put my suitcase down and used my remaining dollars to buy a ticket to the Kleinwalsertal to go skiing.

Texts and logs: Florian Zinnecker

p. 45&47
“Playing Where Speaking is Difficult”
(A symphony orchestra as a cultural ambassador)

Of course it is beautiful at home, especially in Bamberg, a world cultural heritage city. Nor is Schweinfurt, the symphony orchestra’s second home, to be sneered at. But is music, if it is good music, not always a siren song, a call from the distant, the other? Of course, there is also the sense of comfort that reliably arises when this orchestra plays Dvorák, for example: that feeling of being at home. Home – Heimat – and wanderlust have been two powerful forces in the history of the Bamberg Symphony right from the beginning.

In 1946, their very first year, the orchestra already played in the rest of Germany at least as often as in their founding and home city on the Regnitz. This Germany was wounded, and even these first trips were more than just "tours". From today's point of view, it is almost incredible how quickly cultural and especially symphonic life started up again in post-war Germany. This was true of the Berlin Philharmonic, who came together to play Mendelssohn just a few weeks after the war had ended. It was also true for the Bamberg Symphony, who started with Beethoven in March 1946, welcomed as an "orchestra of metropolitan standing", as a "gift of the muses", of which the city had to "prove itself worthy”. – Can we even imagine the hunger for music, for beauty, meaning and consolation that existed in those years?

Very soon the orchestra crossed the country’s borders for the first time. Its first international concert took place as early as 1948 in neighbouring Austria, and the following year the Bamberg Symphony already visited France – the first German orchestra ever to do so. Taking music to places where tanks had rolled not long before was a delicate mission. This first, cautious visit was successful because not speeches about reconciliation and international understanding, but communication without words were important. This experience in France must have left a deep impression upon the orchestra's self-image, for it forms the basis of one the orchestra’s special talents to this day: to go to exactly those places where conversations in words are difficult – and to do so very consciously and with an instinct not only for notes, but also for diplomacy. The colonialist attitude of playing perfect interpretations of Beethoven, Mahler, and Mozart to the rest of the world, that otherwise will hardly ever get to hear such miracles – this stance is a poor match for the Bamberg Symphony, their history and Prague pre-history. This history has a lot to do with the catastrophes of the twentieth century, but its deeper layers are also rooted in the history of great music itself. Mozart’s return from Prague, if you so will, on the way to somewhere else.

In 1950, this “somewhere else” lay in Spain and Portugal, in 1954 in the USA and Cuba, and in 1962, having traversed Europe many times, in the first tour to South America, a journey that the orchestra has been delighted to repeat several times since. In 1968 the Symphony made its first journey to Japan, the Asian country with the greatest number of classical music fans, and in 1969 visited Iran and Egypt, where preconceptions of classical music differ, but people’s curiosity is enormous.

We can trace world history in the Bamberg Symphony’s list of destinations: After the fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 1990s, the musicians travelled to the Baltic States and Albania. 1986 saw their first trip to China. While their second visit took until 2007, the orchestra now tours the country regularly. They travelled to the Czech Republic in 1990; it would be interesting to know how mixed their feelings on this journey were. In any case, they were to return regularly. By 2020, the Symphony – all performances have been counted – had played 7,237 concerts, 1,175 of which were in foreign countries far and near. What is still lacking for the orchestra to have circled the entire globe is most of Africa – or at least Africa south of Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco and north of South Africa – and Australia. These destinations will surely come, and using music to counter the current catastrophes will make for a great story that has a lot to do with healing.

It has a lot to do with freedom, too. For in 2020, the Bamberg Symphony will give concerts not only in Spain and Poland, Switzerland and South America, but also on the Bosporus. Playing Beethoven in today’s Turkey is a statement. In the words of the great jubilarian: “Freedom, moving forward, is the purpose not only of the world of art, but also of great creation in its entirety.” The same goes for the Bamberg Symphony: they move forward.

Holger Noltze

p. 52-57
“The Bamberg Symphony. The story of an end and a beginning, with a happy ending.”

On 20 March 1946, at the end of a harsh winter, a heart-warming event took place in Bamberg. In the crowded Zentralsaal, the central hall, the Bamberg Tonkünstler Orchestra played for the very first time. “Only on rare occasions have we been able to welcome an orchestra of such high quality as our guests in Bamberg," noted the reporter of the Fränkischer Tag. To know that such an orchestra now forms one of Bamberg’s artistic assets “seems almost like a gift from the Muses, and yet it is the work of an art-loving and energetic man, who thus has entered his name in Bamberg's annals of music in glowing letters: Dr Hermann Etzel."

Today, a good 75 years later, we cannot even begin to imagine how important this "gift of the Muses" was back then as the sign of a new beginning after the unprecedented devastation of the Second World War. The painful loss of the shared experience of harmony, on the other hand – that is something we now can empathise with. In spring 2020, theatres, museums and concert halls are closed across the board in almost all of Europe. The anniversary of the Bamberg Symphony, 75 years after its foundation, thus also constitutes a turning point. There is a “before”. And there will be an “after” – an “after the Corona pandemic”.

In normal times, culture entertains, and in difficult times it keeps hope alive. Back in March 1946, Hermann Etzel, who was praised so eloquently at the beginning, put it in the following words: "In the midst of this country’s defeat and distress, this orchestra is an expression of idealism, a commitment to ‘nevertheless’, its activity a means of comforting people who have become discouraged.”

Zero hour

Zero hour was rung in fittingly in the Zentralsaal in Bamberg with a programme of Beethoven pieces. The aforementioned reviewer waxed lyrical about the orchestra’s performance. It was impossible to heat the hall properly, in quiet parts of the concert one must have been able to hear the odd stomach rumbling, the musicians were wrapped in worn-out clothes, but – it was possible to go on this way. Wasn’t it?

The Bamberg Symphony, as the Tonkünstler Orchestra was soon called, was a gift; it still is a gift today, and has the best chance of remaining so. But this gift did not fall from heaven. People probably associated "zero hour" with the hope for a new beginning without being mortgaged to the past. But the Bamberg orchestra that had formed in the months leading up to that memorable March 1946 had its own prehistory. This history goes back to Mozart and constitutes an echo of the unique European cultural landscape of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as of the upheavals that destroyed this

cultural landscape. It tells of the coexistence of different cultures, of conflict, war and tyranny. Of continuities. And of the small miracle of the “Bohemian sound”.

The Bamberg Symphony inherited a rich legacy. Its roots in their various ramifications go back as far as the orchestra of the Estates Theatre, where Mozart had premiered his opera "Don Giovanni" on 29 October 1787, conducting it himself. This marked the high point of the enthusiasm for Mozart in Bohemia and Moravia, an enthusiasm that also had an impact on Czech musical culture. Mozart was meant to premiere "La Clemenza di Tito" there, too, but died shortly after his last visit to Prague. The Estates Theatre continued to write music theatre history, for example under its artistic director Carl Maria von Weber.

The trail continues to the New German Theatre Prague. Following 1848, the year of revolution, national sensibilities that had not yet played a role in Mozart's time were on the rise. In 1881 the Czech National Theatre was opened, followed by the New German Theatre in 1888. But the German and Czech theatres did not take the bread from each others’ mouths; they competed, and their rivalry led them to excel.

And yes, Germans and Czechs were able to come together. The orchestra for an 1892 charity concert in aid of the victims of a mining accident, for example, was formed from the members of the orchestras of the Czech National Theatre and the New German Theatre. This happened again on a spectacular occasion in 1908: Gustav Mahler conducted the premiere of his Symphony No. 7 in Prague. Mahler insisted on the considerable number of one hundred instrumentalists. The programme thus mentioned a certain "exhibition orchestra", made up of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orchestra of the New German Theatre – not an easy undertaking in the final years of the Habsburg Empire. Gustav Mahler himself was a prime example of Prague’s international tradition. Mahler had been born in Kaliště into a Jewish family, and as a child had learned at least rudimentary Czech. As a youth he had lived in Prague for some years, and also had been the conductor at the city’s Royal German Theatre. The premiere of his Seventh Symphony was attended by all well-known and respected critics from both the German and the Czech cultural spheres.

Even after the First World War, the New German Theatre still saw its task as bringing together the Czech and German nations on an artistic level. In the 1920s and 1930s, the theatre even metamorphosed into a stronghold of modern and experimental music theatre and eventually became a refuge for many Jewish artists and emigrants. But grimmer times were soon to come. The orchestra of the New German Theatre disintegrated in a climate of distrust. The Wehrmacht, which marched into Prague in 1939 on Hitler's orders, put a definitive end to the golden age of the New German Theatre. Artists emigrated or were deported to camps and murdered.

The rest of the orchestra, which initially had fled to the Sudetenland to escape the rage of the Czechs violated by the Nazi regime, returned shortly afterwards. As a tool of NS cultural policy? This question is not easy to answer. The Nazis probably wanted to reinforce the Germans' triumph on a cultural level as well. But was the now so-called “Sudeten German Philharmonic Orchestra” a means to this end? Hitler and his propaganda chief Goebbels did not really trust the orchestra. Goebbels did not consider the Sudeten German Orchestra able to compete with the Czech Prague Philharmonic, while Hitler initially wanted to send the best orchestras from the Reich to Prague. The orchestra, soon to be known as the German Philharmonic Orchestra Prague, does not seem to have been the most important item on Goebbels' cultural policy agenda. Perhaps this explains some of the leeway afforded it.

In 1940, Joseph Keilberth became the orchestra’s conductor. He was young, in his early thirties, but already highly respected. Under Keilberth, the German Philharmonic Orchestra in Prague became a leading ensemble. Who was he? Not a Nazi, that we can say. An artist who had not emigrated. And thus someone who sometimes had to play the song of those whose bread he ate. His conducting diaries record concerts at a Knight's Cross award ceremony, for example. Or a memorable performance in 1943 to mark the occasion of the first anniversary of the death of Himmler's favourite Reinhard Heydrich. The deputy "Reichsprotektor" of Bohemia and Moravia, organiser of the so-called "Final Solution", had been fatally wounded in an assassination attempt in Prague in 1942. Did Keilberth have any points of contact with Heydrich? The blond model Aryan had played the fiddle quite proficiently when he was not busy with terror and mass murder. His father was glad that all he had to do was talk to the Nazi functionary about playing the violin, Keilberth’s son Thomas says today.

Keilberth's repertoire provides us with some clues: it contains mainly classical and romantic pieces – German-Austrian, naturally – a lot of Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, sometimes also Schubert, Schumann and Reger, but only rarely does it feature designated protégés of the Nazis. Perhaps Keilberth retreated to the canon to keep a low profile, or at least to maintain his freedom, says Vlasta Reittererová, who was commissioned by the Bamberg Symphony to study the orchestra's history: "It's not easy to judge, especially if you weren't around at the time. There is no black or white." Yet another indication: Keilberth did not conduct a concert in Prague for Hitler's birthday.

The orchestra’s Prague era ended with the fall of the Nazis. On 1 May 1945, the Philharmonic Orchestra played its last concert in Prague, a Beethoven programme, while revolts against the retreating Germans were already breaking out. Thomas Keilberth remembers how as a child he experienced running the gauntlet through a hate-filled crowd in his father's arms. "I only realised much later how much this traumatised me," he says today. What can be proven today is that Keilberth was a man who wanted to keep his orchestra together as long as possible. His son Thomas recalls

that when players were called up, Keilberth filled the gaps with Czech musicians. At rehearsals, he gave instructions in Czech. Even more telling is Thomas’s recollection that shortly after the war, as general music director in Dresden, Keilberth senior was targeted by the Communists. It was the statements of those Czech temporary musicians that saved him. They all stated unanimously that Keilberth was a decent man.

A new home

We have devoted so many words to Joseph Keilberth because he played a formative role – not only in the German Philharmonic Orchestra in Prague, but later also as principal conductor of the Bamberg Symphony. After all, it was his Prague musicians who formed the core of his future orchestra on the Regnitz, and who gave it that “Bohemian sound": soft, playful, sometimes dark. Musicians who had matured less in the Slavic repertoire than in the multicultural climate of Prague.

But why had the Bohemian musicians landed in Bamberg? After the war, German artists from the overrun eastern territories of the Reich flocked to the West in large numbers. Many of them first moved to Bayreuth. Lots of newcomers to the city, which had been severely damaged by the war, were radically rethinking the future. A symphony orchestra was founded, as well as an art association, which at the time achieved quite a remarkable standard. There were even completely new ideas for the Bayreuth Festival.

Franz Wilhelm Beidler, Richard Wagner's first (and now largely forgotten) grandson, a Social Democrat and early exile, sought to direct the festival, supported by a committee headed by Thomas Mann. But Thomas Mann failed to pull his weight, the American authorities were not really keen, nor was the city's establishment. Pragmatic thinking outweighed all other considerations, and so at some point control of the “Green Hill” was placed in the hands of Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner, despite Wieland's entanglements with the Nazis. The BSO, the Bayreuth Symphony Orchestra: to put it briefly, it foundered after a few years due to a lack of money and support. The city was relying on Wagner, not on a new orchestra.

And in Bamberg? In Bamberg housing was still available, at least more housing than in Bayreuth. There was still a tradition from the time before the war, there was the orchestra’s grateful reception by the town’s citizens and two support associations, and there was the cautious benevolence of the American authorities, who certainly regarded culture as a tool in their denazification programme. And at least Wagner, Hitler's favourite composer, could not be associated with Bamberg. Accordingly, the fact that improvisation was required did not pose much of a problem. Rehearsals were held in the back room of the pub "Fäßla", for example. Performances took place in the Zentralsaal, the central hall, which had good acoustics but was cramped, and later, from 1950 onwards, in the Dominican church, which offered sufficient space but whose

acoustics were problematic. None of this was a major issue – at least performance spaces actually existed, while in the German music metropolises the concert halls lay in ruins.

And Bamberg is a beautiful city, of course. Perhaps the Prague musicians fled precisely to Bamberg because the cityscape looked so familiar. Wolf Dieter Neupert, the symphony's first "flower girl", says: "Stand at the Kranen. Look across the river, up to the Michelsberg. Doesn't that remind you of Prague, the Vltava and the view up to the Hradčany?"

Joseph Keilberth had already enthused about "wonderful, beloved Bamberg" after his second concert there in 1943 – which, like the first, took place during a tour with the German Philharmonic Orchestra in the middle of the Second World War. This entry in his conductor's diary now seems prophetic. "He never wrote anything like that about any other city, it must have been something like love at first sight," says his son Thomas. Keilberth had yet another Bamberg experience that must have set a precedent. On 8 March 1948, Keilberth was allowed to travel from Dresden to the West for the first time. In Bamberg's central hall, he took his place in front of the new orchestra as its guest conductor. In his biography, written by his son, this occasion is described in sober yet strangely touching terms: "As a reminder, all of the Prague musicians had taken the seats they had occupied in Prague, thus revealing poignant gaps. However, the conductor quickly was able to satisfy himself that worthy replacements had been hired." Keilberth was soon to return Bamberg, this time for life.

The parents of the Bamberg Symphony

Was Hermann Etzel, as quoted at the beginning, the father of the Bamberg Symphony? Or was Hella Rappoldi its mother? Or were both of them together the orchestra's parents? We have yet to introduce Hella Rappoldi: she came from a highly musical family and had worked for UFA. But her personality was just as important as her inherited talent and professional experience. She possessed "charm and incredible assertiveness," Thomas Keilberth attests, "and she maintained good relations with the Americans." Together with the orchestra's chairman, horn player Josef Fischer – also a Prague veteran – she took over the management of the orchestra in 1946. "The Bamberg Symphony is a pure refugee orchestra," she claimed in a letter. "Its members come from the German Philharmonic Orchestra Prague." Even in the 1950s, the Bamberg Symphony was still advertised as the former German Philharmonic Orchestra Prague.

Hermann Etzel fought for years to have his part in the orchestra's foundation recognised, but in vain. In later works on the Bamberg Symphony, Etzel, who in his day was a quarrelsome and controversial politician of the Bavarian Party, plays no role

whatsoever. Wolf Dieter Neupert, who enjoyed close connections to music and the Symphony through his family's company, was very young when, thanks to Hella Rappoldi, he became the orchestra's official flower presenter. His memories take a highly subjective perspective: "To my childish mind, there was no question: this is my orchestra." The more successful the orchestra became, the more important became its roots. The festschrift commemorating the Bamberg Symphony's tenth anniversary recounts the following heroic saga about the Prague-born orchestra's revival: "When the hoarfrost of destruction fell over this region of German culture, its flowers appeared to have been destroyed once and for all. But in the related soil of Franconia, new blossoms sprouted from the battered stems."

The echoes of a pithy newsreel voice, accompanied by Liszt fanfares, are certainly no coincidence. However, this example of historical amnesia is not an isolated case, and certainly not the worst. After all, the onward march of time performed far more impressive miracles of historical dislocation for the Bayreuth Festival and the Munich State Opera, and did so until recently. It is true, at least, that in Franconia new life grew and flourished from "battered stems". But this new life was not the seedling of a "region of German culture", but of an area whose multiculturalism is matched at best by the European Union at its height.

The end of the beginning

After a few years as general music director in Dresden, Joseph Keilberth became principal conductor on the Regnitz in 1950. It was the end of the beginning and the beginning of a world career. Under Keilberth, the Bamberg Symphony developed into a class of its own. Thus it appears only fitting that the new concert hall, which replaced the Dominican church in 1993, was christened the "Joseph Keilberth Hall".

Shortly before Keilberth took up his position, the Symphony had already become the first German orchestra to play in France. Under Keilberth, it became a touring orchestra, an ambassador par excellence, and has remained so a good 50 years after his death. The Bamberg Symphony has fans as far away as China, Japan, and North and South America. Wolf Dieter Neupert says: "Bamberg was largely spared by the war. And in return it was given an orchestra." The Bamberg Symphony, as the hoary Hans Knappertsbusch said in 1947 at his first appearance in Bamberg after a brief ban on employment, is able to keep up with the great orchestras of Europe. The citizens of the small town were gifted an orchestra by the Lord God, in their sleep, as it were – "hopefully they are aware of it".

They are aware of it, and it is fair to assume that they are still aware of it – a fact to which the Bamberg Symphony has done much to contribute. They are constantly on the road and soon will be again. They are Germany's touring orchestra par excellence. And yet they unmistakeably have put down roots in Bamberg. Hermann Etzel's

prediction has come true: the Bamberg Symphony is indeed a Bamberg orchestra. Those who were lucky enough to be present a few years ago when the celebrated Jonathan Nott conducted his 500th concert as the Bamberg Symphony's principal conductor witnessed an intimate and veritably spine-tingling connection between the city and the orchestra.

True life is more than just lineage. Today, Jakub Hrůša is the orchestra's principal conductor. His appointment has been called a stroke of luck for the Bamberg Symphony. Is the fact that he is Czech important? "He's a good musician," says Thomas Keilberth, "that is what counts, and not whether he's Czech or German." On the other hand: "I think it's nice that he's Czech, because the orchestra has its roots in Bohemia. It's like coming full circle."

Michael Weiser

p. 58-61
“Message in a Bottle”
(The Bamberg Symphony in recordings: a long history)

Music is a sacred art, the Composer sings in Richard Strauss’s prologue to “Ariadne auf Naxos”. By its very nature it is also an ephemeral art, as every sound already contains its own fading. We need to remind ourselves of this occasionally, because it is now well over a century since humanity learned how to conserve its music – a technical possibility that we now use so extensively that an unrecorded concert, living on only as an impression and memory in the minds of those present, forms something of an exception today. From the point of view of our safe place in the stalls, the preservation of sounds (if these sounds are worth it) is a beautiful thing, allowing us to experience what once was, yesterday or a hundred years ago. From the musicians' perspective, it is more of a double-edged sword, and has been so from the beginning of recording history up to the present day. After all, every recording also captures things you might not want to hear again; mistakes, less inspired performances. Some of this can be corrected, but not everything. This is a pragmatic and eminently understandable concern. But some musicians, and not the worst, also experience a deeper-seated, more fundamental unease with the conservation of music.

Joseph Keilberth, the defining first principal conductor of the Bamberg Symphony, falls into this group, as does Wilhelm Furtwängler, by the way, who valued his younger colleague and recommended him for the German Philharmonic Orchestra in Prague in 1940. For both conductors, a concert, an opera performance was an event taking place in the moment, something fundamentally unrepeatable, and recordings were at best a weak transcript of the irretrievable. Thus the entry for 5 November 1949 in Keilberth's private "conducting diary" uses the strong word "terrible" to describe the Bamberg Symphony’s five-hour recording session at "Radio Heidelberg" that day. Gluck’s overture to Iphigénie en Aulide, Mozart's Prague Symphony and Dvořák’s New World Symphony had been recorded.

This is how many good stories begin: with things being "terrible” to start. This day in early November 1949 was the beginning of a really good story: it marked the Bamberg Symphony’s first foray into the world of media. And despite the great Keilberth’s reservations, during his era – from 1950 to 1968, when he dropped dead during a Tristan performance at only sixty years of age – a large number of recordings were made. Some of these were for the Bayerischer Rundfunk, which soon discovered that the world-class orchestra from provincial Bamberg was an excellent instrument for radio productions; others were made for Deutsche Grammophon, which as early as December 1951 recorded Mozart's Haffner Serenade and two Verdi overtures under Ferdinand Leitner in Bamberg’s former Dominican monastery, which offered excellent acoustics even though it was in need of renovation. Yet more recordings were made

with Deutsche Grammophon’s competitors Telefunken, with whom Keilberth had already entered into a contract during his time in Prague, and which now continued in Bamberg. Even though the conductor was uncomfortable with this exclusive relationship, recordings for Telefunken continued to be made into the 1960s.

It is fascinating to compare the recording of Mozart's Prague Symphony of October 1940 by Keilberth's German Philharmonic Orchestra Prague (included in a Deutsche Grammophon Bamberg Symphony box set) with the recording of the same work by the Bamberg Symphony under the same conductor fifteen years later: an answer, obvious to the ear, to the oft-raised question of how much "Prague” – really, how much Bohemian – musical tradition the Bamberg Symphony’s playing really contains. A lot, we can hear, despite the differences in tempo and even though the Bamberg Prague Symphony sounds slightly more polished.

With all due respect to the concern that a recording can never be more than a snapshot of something only reproducible in outline (which, understood in this way, still applies to today’s high-resolution audio and video recordings), these examples nevertheless demonstrate the marvellous capacity of record or radio recordings to serve as a message in a bottle from past times: not only do we hear the technical transmission and recording standards of a bygone era and the interpretation of the piece of music (which in this case is similar), but we also hear something of the sound of the time, the circumstances, the prevailing atmosphere when the red light turned on. We hear far more than just notes, especially in the historical documents. We hear it dramatically in the final movement of Brahms's First Symphony in Furtwängler's last concert before the end of the war with the Berlin Philharmonic, held in the Admiralspalast on 23 January 1945, a kind of collective doom-laden trance; we also hear traces of it in the 1940s recordings from the German Opera House or the Rudolfinum in Prague, made under the political conditions of the German occupation and its cultural policy, under which "German" music in the "Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" was intended as a National Socialist statement towards the Czech Philharmonic, for example. But through all the hissing and crackling, we also hear deeply inspired music making.

Suspending time

Those responsible at the Bamberg Symphony soon realised that consolidating and maintaining the orchestra’s high standard would require “efficacy” beyond concert subscriptions at home in Bamberg: the orchestra required both a physical presence, through travelling and intensive touring, and a presence in the media, through productions for the Bayerischer Rundfunk, who became established cooperation partners from 1950 onwards, and for various record labels – not only Keilberth’s Telefunken and Deutsche Grammophon, but also early on for the French L'Oiseau Lyre and the American VOX, and since 1992 mainly for the Swiss label Tudor. 1962 saw the release of what still remains the go-to recording of Smetana's The Bartered Bride under

Rudolf Kempe with Fritz Wunderlich, Pilar Lorengar and Gottlob Frick on Electrola (later EMI). Besides this masterpiece, the Bamberg Symphony's proud tally of almost a thousand hours of recorded music contains almost no opera (we could mention a 1955 Valkyrie); and the orchestra likewise exercised restraint where the contemporary repertoire was concerned: Bamberg, that meant developing a profile in the classical and romantic core repertoire, and successfully so, even though the discographic competition in this field is fierce. Keilberth's Mozart symphonies of the 1950s and 60s still sound fresh and vibrant today. The fact that Mozart conducted the first performances of Don Giovanni and Titus in Prague: is it too far-fetched to include the orchestra at the Estates Theatre among the Bamberg Symphony's line of predecessors? Is there a link to the Bohemian Gustav Mahler? – Whether these historical references are straightforward or convoluted: listening to the Bamberg Symphony's Mozart recordings, or Jonathan Nott's Mahler cycle, praised for its tonal accuracy, we hear a long history. The recordings suspend time, and not in the sense of a museum-like fixation of something once achieved: each project represents an encounter between a tradition and an ever-changing present that also is reflected in the principal conductors' different temperaments and personalities: Mahler's Fourth under Nott in 2006 and under István Kertesz in 1971 are two ways of telling a story, both of which end by taking us to the heavenly realms. Jakub Hrůša's intense study of Smetana, Dvořák, and Brahms, as idiosyncratic and unique as it is, stems from the genetic code of this orchestra, which is so familiar with this music.

The conductors like to think in terms of projects and larger work complexes: Horst Stein's dedication to Reger, the discovery of the great symphonist and Wagner contemporary Joseph Joachim Raff under Hans Stadlmair, Christoph Eschenbach's Schumann cycle and Ingo Metzmacher's important rediscovery of Karl Amadeus Hartmann in the 1990s, Neeme Järvis's focus on Glazunov and Martinů in the 1980s, Notts's Schubert in the new millennium, pairing this composer's symphonies with Rihm, Berio, Zender and Widmann. In between, we find scintillating individual pieces: Bruckner's Ninth with Günter Wand, Mahler's Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen under Jascha Horenstein in 1953, and Das Lied von der Erde under Keilberth in 1964 with Fritz Wunderlich and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. These recordings are not coffins that archive a dead past, but rather represent the living simultaneity of a great musical tradition. They are letters in a bottle that we are allowed to open, and the messages they contain are very good indeed.

Back to: direct to disc

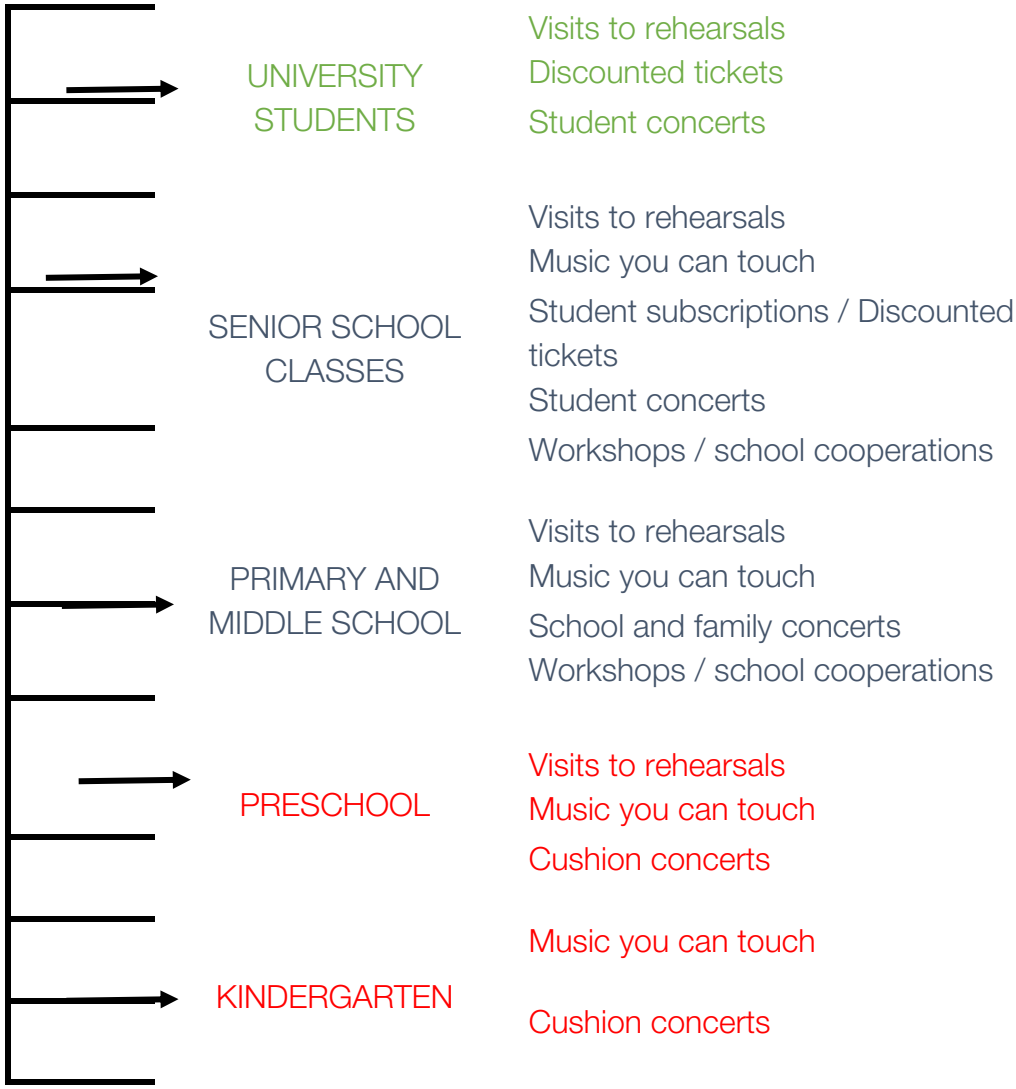
At the end of the 2019 season, after a brilliant final concert in which the Bamberg Symphony and Jakub Hrůša had captivated the Proms audience at London's Royal Albert Hall with Smetana's Má Vlast, the orchestra came together once more in the Joseph Keilberth Hall at home in Bamberg. They played Má Vlast again, after their many performances of this work on tour and after having recorded the whole cycle three

years earlier. And yet this was something new, something quite risky: a direct-to-disc recording. “Direct to disc” means: no corrections, everything is cut into the lacquer foil in the most direct and noiseless way possible exactly as played, and high-quality vinyl records are then taken directly from the lacquer. For audio purists, this technique represents a dream of immediacy; for musicians, it can be a nightmare if a small mistake spoils the whole thing. But in the case of the Bamberg Symphony, it worked, and it worked quickly. In the end, those who took part in the recording session said that everyone involved was proud and happy. There are not many orchestras that can do this, and you can see it in terms of professional prowess. However, the Bamberg direct-to-disc experiment also takes us right back to the beginnings of recording history. Music that has been conserved, true, but hand-crafted with professionalism, passion and love.

Holger Noltze

p. 64-67
Education and Music Communication with the Bamberg Symphony

Overview



Music up close and tangible

Nowadays, music is omnipresent. It is an essential part of everyday life, from conscious listening to the background music in shops. And music is becoming more and more available. On the one hand, this is a wonderful thing, because "without music, life would be a mistake," as Friedrich Nietzsche once mused. On the other hand, this expectation of its constant availability poses particular challenges for many genres. Classical music is increasingly becoming a niche product. It features less and less in everyday life, is used less and less by the media, and thus it is hardly surprising that the age structure in

classical concerts has changed significantly – in short: classical music is struggling to attract a younger audience!

The Bamberg Symphony recognised this early on and more than 15 years ago developed an extensive and at the same time inherently versatile programme for the communication of music. This programme includes targeted offers appealing to all age groups: from kindergarten children to primary school pupils, to secondary schools, to students, to people in their mid-thirties. And while in the past, the aim perhaps really was pure "advertising" or to attract new audiences, music education today has a special responsibility with regard to school students as a target group: "Music – and classical music in particular – promotes social skills, so it is good for every young person to be brought into contact with it," says Heiko Triebener, outlining his motivation for becoming involved in educational work and music communication. Triebener's main occupation is principal tuba of the Bamberg Symphony, but for many years he has been a member of the orchestra's education team, which also includes the horn player Swantje Vesper and the viola player Martin Timphus. At the level of the orchestra management, these three musicians are supported by Ronja Günther.

Scientific studies suggest that studying classical music has a holistic, positive influence on adolescents' development. "We end up with better physicists and engineers, too, if they are involved with music in their childhood," explains Marcus Rudolf Axt, artistic director of the Bamberg Symphony. "What always touches me most is the effect that our music education has on children who come into contact with music for the very first time through us. Those who come from a home where the parents can't afford any extras, who may still need to learn our language, but who understand the language of music immediately and unconsciously." For this reason among others, the orchestra has initiated a special project in Bamberg, embarking on an intense cooperation with the Heidelsteigschule, the city of Bamberg's "School of Culture". Here, a visit to the Bamberg Symphony is part of the curriculum. The students are allowed to take a detailed look behind the scenes, meet the many invisible hands behind the stage, and as a special highlight are allowed to take a sneak peek at the rehearsals. But the visits are reciprocal: musicians from the orchestra also come to the school to introduce themselves and their instruments in detail. In addition, musicians and students rehearse a piece together, which is then performed at a school cultural festival. For many students, this is an unforgettable and very special event. And for Martin Timphus, too, this is a key motivating factor: "Music can play a very strong and important role in the life of every human being at very different times or on very different occasions. This is why we need to ensure that lots of children encounter our art at an early age. Their later understanding of music will be all the greater." His comrade-in-arms Swantje Vesper agrees, and her dearest wish goes even further: "I would love it if every child had the chance to try out instruments and learn what suits them. That is a difficult undertaking, of course, as it always requires financial resources, but it would be my wish that every child, regardless of their family background, could have this opportunity."

Cooperating with schools is undoubtedly important, but even at kindergarten age children are easily inspired by (classical) music. Besides the already established forms of music education, such as visits to rehearsals and school concerts, in recent years the Bamberg Symphony has also increasingly offered children's and family concerts. In addition to the traditional "Carnival of the Animals" in carnival season, special educational concerts for children now take place every season. These concerts feature established works from the standard concert repertory, which are adapted for children in cooperation with a narrator who provides additional explanations. For the upcoming season, the education team has set its sights on Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake".

"Ruby Red" will also be allowed back on stage. This intrepid girl, conceived and composed by the Symphony's cellist Eduard Resatsch, will experience yet another musical adventure as part of the orchestra's "cushion concerts". Here, Swantje Vesper is involved not only behind the scenes, but also on stage as a presenter and storyteller: "It was wonderful to see the children sitting on our concert hall stage up close to our musicians, beaming, their eyes full of amazement," she says, looking back as well as forward.

But the orchestra's music education programme focuses on more than just the little ones. Where the generation of 20- to 35-year-olds is concerned, the decision was made to go to where the majority of this generation spends their time: the city's clubs. The leitmotif "high culture meets subculture" involves a fruitful reciprocity. Regular listeners are attracted by their curiosity about the new surroundings, and at the same time the orchestra is able to tap into a new audience that does not have the Joseph Keilberth Hall on their list of places to go on a night out. The casual atmosphere of the clubs, where you can walk around with a beer in your hand instead of having to sit while enjoying the concert, adds to the appeal. And a concert in a club also has its attractions for the orchestral musicians: "You don't perceive a new environment only through your eyes and ears. Even the smell in the club had its own charm, showing that this is actually a place to party and dance." Jens Herz is the Bamberg Symphony's solo drummer and was part of the last Club Symphony at the Live Club in the Sandstraße, the heart of Bamberg's nightlife. "Installing an ensemble here that plays chamber music, which is not something you really move to rhythmically, was particularly appealing, of course," he recalls, but at the same time also mentions other side effects: "The dry acoustics were definitely a challenge for us." Going forward, he would like to see a stronger combination of music and modern media, which could make the concert experience even more appealing for both sides. This is roughly the direction in which the already proven tradition of the Slam Symphony is heading. This special concert format combines classical music with poetry slam culture, which enjoys great popularity in Bamberg as it does elsewhere. Three literary authors take the theme of the evening's central piece of music and write short texts on it, which they then present to the audience in a kind of poetry competition. The orchestra intersperses the poets'

performances with excerpts from the work before playing it once again in its entirety at the end.

In the coming season, the Bamberg Symphony will once again offer a broad and varied concept of music education. “Children and young people are not just our future audience – they are our future," Triebener, Vesper and Timphus all agree. And classical music has a great advantage over the many other genres with which it competes for attention: through the work of the Bamberg Symphony, it becomes close and tangible.

Martin Wohlgetan

p. 74-77
Dancing through the anniversary year

"Everything is predestined, both beginning and end, by forces over which we have no control. It is predestined for insects no differently than for stars. Human beings, plants, and dust, we all dance to a mysterious melody struck up by an invisible player in the far reaches of space." (Albert Einstein) People have been dancing since time immemorial – and not always for entertainment. Dance originally formed part of magic or mystery cults. Cave paintings created many thousands of years before the birth of Christ reveal that the body language we call dance already was significant at that time. For instance, these paintings show people dressed as animals engaging in rhythmic movements, thereby hoping to achieve a more successful hunt. Archaic rites were combined with dances, as was the worship of the gods. After all, it was said at the time: “Learn to dance, human, or the angels in heaven won't know what to do with you!" The basic element of dance was always an order that followed a certain rhythm. For dancing is hardly possible without music – even though in former times people may only have clapped their hands, and it was yet to take a long while before compositions were written down.

One thing is certain: both music and dance are rooted in the cultures of the world’s different peoples and their numerous festivals. All Christianity’s attempts to ban folk dance accompanied by instrumental music, condemning it as a pagan practice, were unable to alter this. In antiquity and the High Middle Ages, minstrels provided the music for social dances, true to the motto: "Where two fiddlers play will soon be a roundelay." Troubadours, dancers and jugglers roamed the country to entertain the people with their stories, music and dances. Today, folk dance continues to exist in all regions of the world in all its diversity. In addition to folk dance (and partly also from it), ballroom dancing developed, encompassing many different forms of dance – which often changed according to given circumstances. At the European courts, dance training became an ever more important aspect of courtly behaviour, and was a taught subject, just like mathematics and Latin. The goal: to cut as good a figure as possible! Monarchs loved grand celebrations, which often lasted for days, and they invited everyone of rank to their castles.

This development in courtly life reached its heyday in Versailles under the reign of the Sun King Louis XIV. And music was required for this, of course: dancing master Jean Baptiste Lully set the tone for these lavish celebrations with his numerous dances. He may have set the dance rhythm so wildly that it led to his tragic demise: unluckily, he rammed the tip of his 2-metre (!) baton, the “dancing master baton", into his foot – the wound became infected and Lully died. Many dances of that time inspired classical music, finding their way into the works of numerous composers. For example, Henry Purcell used the traditional English "hornpipe" in his opera "The Fairy Queen" as well as

other dances. The hornpipe's task was to escort visitors to their seats and put them in the right mood for the performance. Johann Sebastian Bach likewise used the fashionable dances of the time for his suites, including the allemande, bourrée, courante, sarabande, chaconne and gigue – baroque music for ultimate dancing pleasure.

Even when rhythm-dictating heavyweights such as Lully were long out of fashion, dances continued to be composed diligently for court celebrations. In the time of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, so-called "Deutsche Tänze", German dances, were particularly popular at balls: these were down-to-earth, folksy rotary dances in 3/4 time and, like the Ländler, forerunners of the waltz. This was also the great age of the minuet, which was the most important courtly dance and long survived as a standard movement of the symphony. But Beethoven also composed a typical folk festival as part of his "Pastoral Symphony": the third movement, in which he caricatures a village band striking up a dance, is titled "Merry gathering of country folk". Many other composers were likewise invigorated by the dance form, including Schubert, who wrote dances throughout his career. These musical works often constitute high art that simply incorporates the movements of a certain dance.

Some time later, couples whirled across the dance floors of Vienna in a truly intoxicated state to the waltzes of Strauß. The motto: left turn, right turn! Vienna descended into a veritable frenzy of dance, despite doctors' warnings against "life-threatening dizziness". The fiddle-playing "King of Waltz" once said: "When I play my fiddle, even the chicks in their eggs dance along!" Strauß and his fellow composers wrote a vast quantity of rousing works that set listeners' toes tapping. Besides the waltz, dances such as the polka or the polonaise were also fashionable. Brahms was a regular guest at the Vienna concerts – and deplored the fact that he himself had not composed a popular hit like the "Blue Danube". He was able to write ingenious dances himself, and these are often found in his works: sophisticated character pieces that were not really intended for the dance floor. Eduard Hanslick phrased it this way: "No one expects real dance music, of course: waltz melody and rhythm are treated artistically, given a free form and ennobled, as it were, by aristocratic expression."

Over the centuries, classical composers have incorporated traditional dance melodies into their works – be it Richard Strauss, Bruckner or Mahler. In the 19th century, precisely when European countries were seeking to emancipate themselves from German-Austrian culture, more and more national dances started to appear in great orchestral works. Composers increasingly became aware of the old customs and folk songs of their respective home countries. Folkloristic influences of Dvořák's Bohemian homeland, such as the furiant, are found everywhere in his works. Grieg integrated the Norwegian leaping dance "Halling", Manuel de Falla used flamenco, while Ravel, who was born in the Basque Country, created his famous "Boléro" and further works inspired by folklore – as did Debussy, who used his imagination to create an idealized

Spain in "Ibéria". In Poland there was the mazurka, in Hungary the csárdás, and in Italy the tarantella, all of which also featured in classical works – the number of folk dances is almost incalculable, as each region has produced its own forms.

Composers also became acquainted with other cultures through the world exhibitions and improved opportunities for travel. This left its mark, for example in Mendelssohn's "Hebrides Overture". And Bartók conducted genuine field research to then integrate the folk music sources he had discovered into works like his “Miraculous Mandarin". For Russian composers, too, folklore plays an important role – as can be heard in Tchaikovsky's voluptuous orchestral works and his famous ballets such as "Swan Lake". Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" features a bizarre ballet of unhatched chicks. And Stravinsky likewise regularly wove dances into his works, whether in "Petrushka" or particularly in his scandalous piece "Le sacre du printemps" – which reminds us of the pagan origins of dance and contains a sacrificial ritual. Fashionable American dances such as the tango, ragtime or Charleston as well as other, sometimes only short-lived ballroom dances provided new rhythmic fuel for classical compositions. As Friedrich Nietzsche once said: “A man’s stride betrays whether he has found his own way... But whoever approaches his goal dances.”

Heidi Rogge

(Translations: Margaret Hiley)