

The Salzburg Festival Society: Made for people who love music, the festival and life

Since its founding in 1920, the Salzburg Festival has always had friends, admirers, and supporters. In 2005, three Americans (two of them Austrian Americans) founded the Salzburg Festival Society. These were Gerhard Andlinger, John French III, and Isabelle Harnoncourt. Based in New York, the SFS serves as the official liaison between the Festival and its American patrons. The SFS hosts a variety of activities and supports a number of projects. For instance, the SFS has helped bring several orchestras to Salzburg, including those of Cleveland, Boston, and Pittsburgh.

Each summer, the SFS presents a series of conversations with leading musicians and other leaders in the music world. Any and all are welcome to attend these events. They are informal, enriching, and fun. The moderator Jay Nordlinger, a journalist and music critic from New York, also takes questions from the audience. There have been a plethora of guests in the series over the years. They constitute a virtual Who's Who of the music world. Among the singers: Renée Fleming, Diana Damrau, Thomas Hampson, Ferruccio Furlanetto, and René Pape. Among the conductors: Mariss Jansons, Valery Gergiev, Christoph Eschenbach, Antonio Pappano, and Herbert Blomstedt. Then there are the violinists, pianists, stage directors ...

One of the guests in 2019 was Manfred Honeck, the Austrian conductor who leads the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. He got out of his chair and demonstrated a dance for the audience – a dance incorporated by Schubert in a symphony. Speaking of Schubert and Austrian conductors: Franz Welser-Möst, too, has been a guest in the series. He is the music director of the Cleveland Orchestra. Asked to name some of his favorite composers, he said he has had one above all since the age of four: Schu-

bert. Werner Hink, a now-retired concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic, was a guest. He said that he had played in Mozart's *Magic Flute* – or *Figaros Hochzeit*, as he called it – more than 500 times. And never tired of it. Another violinist, Anne-Sophie Mutter, the starry German, was a guest in 2019. She has been playing at the Salzburg Festival since 1977, when she was 14. Her mentor was Herbert von Karajan, the late artistic director of the Festival. She related some stories about him. She also had some stories about André Previn, the late American, to whom she was once married. Was there anything that this incredibly versatile man couldn't do? Yes, said Frau Mutter: "play the fiddle and cook." (She excels in both fields.)

One of our favorite guests the Salzburg Festival Society had was Helga Rabl-Stadler, the president of the Festival, who is a native Salzburger. She answered the fascinating question: How are relations between Salzburg, the town, and Salzburg, the festival? She also gave some tips about restaurants and pastry shops – after the audience was sworn to secrecy. The Festival's present artistic director, Markus Hinterhäuser, was also an excellent guest in the series. He's in charge of booking the many artists at the Festival. Was there one he could not get? Yes, just one, and not a classical musician: Leonard Cohen, the late singer-songwriter who is honored in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Benjamin Schmid, the violinist, grew up in Salzburg. When he was a guest in the SFS series, Donald Kahn was in the audience. The late Mr. Kahn was the honorary chairman of the Society. He had purchased a Stradivarius Beni Schmid played some years ago – a fiddle named "Lady Jeanne", named for Mr. Kahn's wife. Moreover, Donald Kahn was a prime builder of a festival hall, the House for Mozart.



Nabil Chartouni with his niece Tierney Andrews and Heinrich Spängler



Joseph Bartning, Alexa Wesner and Helga Rabl-Stadler

Another Salzburg builder was Gerry Andlinger, the founding chairman of the SFS. He was a classic American story. Born in Austria in 1931, he almost starved to death during the war. In due time, he learned English from American GIs. In 1948, he was a winner of an essay contest, sponsored by the *New York Herald Tribune*. Contestants wrote on the subject "The World I Want." The prize was a three-

month trip to America. Gerhard Andlinger became a titan of American and international business. His most visible, most beautiful contribution to the Salzburg Festival is the Kulissee, a room amid the festival halls, high up. It has a balcony with a perfect panoramic view of the city. No member of the Salzburg Festival Society is more distinctive than Peggy Weber-McDowell, an Austrian American who springs



Dorothee Volpini de Maestri, Jack McDowell and Peggy Weber-McDowell



Jay Nordlinger and Anne-Sophie Mutter

from one of the oldest families in Salzburg. She and her husband, Jack McDowell, fund the English translations in the Festival program booklets. Indeed, they fund them in perpetuity. Today, the SFS enjoys the leadership of its chairman, Alexa Wesner, who is a former U.S. ambassador to Austria, and its president, Nabil Chartouni, who is a distinguished businessman and philanthropist.

The Salzburg Festival Society is made for people who love music, love Salzburg, and, really, love life.

Please join by becoming a member and register at: www.sfsociety.org/jubilee.



Manfred Honeck and Jay Nordlinger

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