

Liz Mohn, Wolfgang Schüssel

Voices for the Future

20 Years of the Trilogue Salzburg



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The Trilogue Salzburg
2001-2021

Acknowledgements

For 20 years, the Trilogue Salzburg has been a source of knowledge and inspiration, thanks to the objective, open dialogue it facilitates among political, economic and cultural representatives from all over the world. Its goal has been to make the world a bit better, more peaceful and more humane. Many of the global challenges that concern us today were already being discussed at the Trilogue at a time when few decision makers had them on their agendas – something this publication impressively documents as it looks back over the event’s 20-year history. We would like to thank those who have been part of the Trilogue Salzburg not only for their forward-looking contributions, but also for the intensive, trusting exchange that has given rise to such close ties between the participants.



Liz Mohn



Wolfgang Schüssel

Preface

Wolfgang Schüssel, Liz Mohn

The future will be challenging. Not only is that statement true today, during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was true 20 years ago as well. As preparations were being made for the first Trilogue Salzburg, which took place in August 2002, there was no shortage of events suggesting the future would be somewhat bleak, or at least promising to have an enormous impact on what was to come. As an aide to memory, here are a few notable happenings from back then: On September 11, 2001, a terrorist attack leveled the World Trade Center and killed thousands of people. Europe was taking on a new shape as Greece joined the eurozone in 2001, and 12 EU member states introduced the coins and banknotes of their common currency at the beginning of 2002. At the EU summit in Copenhagen in December 2002, the decision was made to welcome 10 new members. In a referendum in Switzerland in 2001, three-quarters of the population voted not to engage in negotiations to accede to the EU - and a few years later, comprehensive bilateral agreements were signed. In 2002, Switzerland became the 190th member of the United Nations. At the

end of 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In the first decade of the new century, there was a spirit of change and optimism in the air, and much was in flux, above all in Europe. We were all looking for ideas that could move us forward. Art in all its guises served as a source of inspiration, but how would it be possible to introduce and implement these ideas in the political and economic arenas? As German philosopher Moritz Carrière put it, "To shape the particular from the idea is the purview of art; to grasp the idea from its various sides by thought, to shape the idea of the state, of art, of humanity itself on the basis of the real and the given, by virtue of foresighted imagination and conclusive reasoning, is the purview of philosophy."

The Salzburg Festival was conceived during the First World War's darkest hour; the first *Everyman* stage was carpentered from boards used for a barrack that housed prisoners of war. Resistance and intrigues notwithstanding, Max Reinhardt succeeded in establishing the summer festival in Salzburg. Reinhardt exemplified the concept of learning by doing, of renewal - even after horrendous catastrophes such as the world war. His credo was, "When one senses that routine has begun creeping in, that's always the time to try something new."

All of these considerations gave rise to the Trilogue Salzburg: a gathering of leading individuals from the cultural, economic and political spheres, from as many countries and global regions as possible, who would meet unencumbered by the concerns of daily life to discuss and reflect, inspired by the Salzburg Festival's magnificent performances. The idea was to combine impulses from all three areas - thus the name "Trilogue" - so that something new could take shape.

The significance of art and culture was and is tangible at the Trilogue Salzburg, as artists make meaningful contributions to reconciliation, understanding and peace, not to mention innovation. Art moves and rattles us – “ice picks against the frozen sea in us,” as Franz Kafka put it. The Trilogue provides art – which must often defend itself from being preempted or appropriated – with a platform of equal standing. One unforgettable moment was the participation of director Andrea Breth, who came to Salzburg with great skepticism, but then enthusiastically embraced both the format and interdisciplinary thinking, enriching them with her comments. Wonderful musicians like Thomas Hampson, Franz Welser-Möst, Clemens Hellsberg, Valery Gergiev, exceptional directors like Jürgen Flimm, brilliant authors like Marc Elsberg and screenwriter Joan Xu have taken part in the Trilogue – which would have been impossible to realize without the active participation of Helga Rabl-Stadler, president of the Salzburg Festival, who has never failed to provide the event’s attendees with a personal introduction to the performance they are about to see.

The issues we have addressed in the Trilogue’s 20-year history have never served to address the past, but have always looked to the future, true to Albert Einstein’s motto, “I’m more interested in the future than in the past, because the future is where I intend to live.” The scope of the discussions has been wide, depending on what the future seemed to be promising at any given point in time and what merited a closer look. Topics have ranged from the search for identity to the question of how high-quality, sustainable economic development can be achieved and competitiveness maintained, to the various facets of

globalization, Asia's rise, successful neighborhood policy, and the difference between perception and reality.

The Trilogue Salzburg was never meant to be an art-for-art's-sake event. The intention has always been to serve as a generator of ideas and impetus - for business and politics in Germany and Austria, but above all in Europe. The city of Salzburg was never located on a silk road, but a salt road that provided prosperity early on. Undoubtedly the city's most famous artist, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, was born there and contributed to Salzburg's becoming a cultural center. Hardly any location in the heart of Europe is better suited for contemplation and entertaining new trains of thought. This vibrant heart - Central Europe, in fact - offers enormous potential and also serves as a bridge to the East and Far East. The Trilogue has reflected this as well.

A range of perspectives can be found at the Trilogue, not only because of the different professions present; regional differences also offer new vantage points. The contrast in the way Europe is seen internally and externally is particularly great: The image of decay, of disintegration is often conveyed - the EU as a sick man, as a sinking ship or estranged family, home to blockades, intrigues, petty fights. Naturally, no one can deny that problems and disputes exist. Yet the opposite is also true: The EU sets standards that are considered exemplary from the US to China. The EU assists and supports, creates security and stability through peace missions and responsibly allocated development aid. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, € 400 billion has been disbursed to the EU's new member states - a huge expression of solidarity and many times more than the US made available through its Marshall Plan after the Second World War. A gentle giant, the EU makes our planet more livable, sustainable, open and secure - even if it is not always aware of its considerable power.

In his essay *After Europe*, Bulgarian political scientist and Trilogue participant Ivan Krastev analyzes how democracy and globalization have changed: “What was until recently a competition between two distinctive forms of government - democracy and authoritarianism - has evolved in the wake of the global financial crisis into a competition between two different forms of the statement: “There is no alternative politics.” Krastev criticizes that even in democracies, policy decisions are increasingly presented as having no alternative - which, after all, contradicts the very nature of democracy. The Trilogue has always been a search for possible alternatives, for best practices, for new pathways - as the quintessence of every democracy, as nourishment for free, independent citizens.

Apropos freedom: It has undoubtedly suffered the most during the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only because of the clear restrictions on movement, the social distancing and lockdowns. The state’s paternalism is evident far beyond its pandemic-management efforts. No European politician is promoting the EU these days as a force of openness, one that transcends borders even on the continent itself, or advocates in the wider world for liberalization, free trade and political progress. All of Europe is bunkering down and putting up barriers. The EU now seems to be, first and foremost, a defense mechanism and bulwark - against Chinese corporate acquisitions and American digital enterprises, against illegal migrants and against the threat of dumping from post-Brexit Britain. A Europe that curls itself up like a hedgehog and spreads its spines is not our idea of Europe. Anyone who fears freedom should consider the words of former US President Thomas Jefferson: “Timid men prefer the calm of despotism to the tempestuous sea of liberty.”

Jean Monnet once said he would, in a second attempt, give the European project a cultural foundation. That is an interesting and at the same time disquieting thought. It is precisely its diversity that makes our European way of life unique. That is even truer for the global community. Perhaps cultural exchange, translation, communication, contact, jointly organized festivals - without hegemony or a mania for centralization - would allow peaceful coexistence to flourish among the world's peoples. That was ultimately what Monnet was pursuing with the European idea: "We are not uniting states, we are bringing people closer together."

If, in the 20 years that the Trilogue Salzburg has been taking place, it has succeeded in bringing at least a few people closer together and igniting some new ideas, then they can be seen as wonderful injections of courage for the future - whatever it might bring.

Courage in an Age Lacking Courage: An Appeal

Helga Rabl-Stadler
President of the Salzburg Festival

“Our Salzburg Festival House is meant to be a symbol. It is not the founding of a theater, not a project called to life by a few starry-eyed fantasists, and not the undertaking of a provincial town. It is a matter of European culture. And of eminent political, economic and social importance.” Those were the self-assured, urgent and unmistakable words used by poet and Salzburg Festival founder, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, as he described the task Salzburg faced 100 years ago.

And in his 1917 memorandum, composed in the midst of “the ravages of this war,” von Hofmannsthal’s congenial partner, director Max Reinhardt, wrote of the “terrible reality of our days,” of the “conflagration enveloping the world” that the Salzburg Festival could and should repudiate. Founding a festival was meant to be “one of the first works of peace.” The festival owes its existence to this firm belief in the power of art and in Salzburg as a seat of power.

It seems entirely logical to me that the Trilogue was founded at the beginning of the new millennium in the “heart of the heart of Europe” (as Hofmannsthal defined my hometown). Above all, I would like to thank Liz Mohn in particular for mobilizing all of the Bertelsmann Stiftung’s intellectual and organizational resources, and for continuing to make them available. I would like to thank Wolfgang Schüssel that the decision was made in favor of Salzburg. After all, this city is ideal for thinking about the world, for thinking anew and thinking ahead.

What Reinhardt postulated about the festival applies here, too, to some extent. He was convinced that the exceptional could only be achieved “at a remove from the everyday bustle of city life” and “far from the distractions of the metropolis.” The gatherings at the Trilogue, which usually give rise to inspiring exchanges after just a few hours, show that he was right. And the evening visits to the festival have always been more than mere entertainment – if I may say so.

“Art is a language that uncovers the hidden, tears open the sealed, makes tangible what is innermost, one that warns, excites, unsettles, gladdens.” That is what the great Austrian conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt passionately proclaimed to the audience during his remarks as the Salzburg Festival celebrated its 75th anniversary. “A work of art that wants to inspire, to move, needs qualified rejection as much as it needs approval” and “the great artworks are masterpieces because they always have something to say to people – even if every generation sees something different.” The title of his remarks was “What Is Truth? or Zeitgeist and Trends.”

Especially today, policy makers from all parties are tempted to follow the zeitgeist, allowing them to celebrate quick successes online. To me, that makes art’s

contribution all the more important. No, artists are not smarter, they do not occupy the moral high ground. But in a time of hasty answers, they know how to ask questions that force - at best, inspire - the public to reflect.

Max Reinhardt, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss were firmly convinced that antique mythology offered subtle possibilities for interpreting modern problems of both a personal and political nature. Von Hofmannsthal, Strauss's favorite librettist, put it thus: "For if this age of ours is anything, it is mythical - I know of no other expression for an existence which unfolds in the face of such vast horizons - for this being surrounded by millennia, for this influx of Orient and Occident into our self, for this immense inner breadth, these mad inner tensions, this being here and elsewhere, which is the mark of our life. It is impossible to catch all this in middle-class dialogues. Let us write mythological operas! Believe me, they are the truest of all forms."

Our operas *Salome* and, this year, *Elektra*, provide impressive, breathtaking proof of this thesis. The temporal distance enables us to clearly see, as with a magnifying glass, the eternally valid conflicts: war and peace, love and hatred, forgiveness and revenge.

And anyone looking for change architects could very well find them among our artists. Director Peter Sellars incorporated environmental issues into his productions long before Greta Thunberg took to the streets for the same cause - not bathetically, not using a sledgehammer, but with an artist's sensibility for the looming catastrophe.

The Trilogue gave representatives of art and culture an equal place at the table with captains of industry and government ministers, so they could negotiate the future - a position we had to struggle for in the quotidian political

arena during the pandemic. Everything else seemed more important - the hospitality industry, retail, the agricultural lobby. Yet the longer the lockdown went on, the more people quoted Reinhardt: art not as mere decoration, but as nourishment. And suddenly, the Salzburg Festival was again being praised for being what it was originally created to be: a beacon in dark times.

In April 2020, however, sympathies were not on our side. At a time when practically all other festivals were being cancelled, one feuilleton writer for a German-language publication stooped to the scurrilous assertion that “the Salzburg Festival undoubtedly wanted to become the cultural world’s Ischgl.”

Should we have allowed the coronavirus to wrest control completely and let the long-planned 100th anniversary of the world’s largest classical music festival simply go unobserved? Or was it more appropriate to carry out the event - while always giving the health of our artists, employees and audiences top priority, of course - so it could set an example of the power of art in a powerless time? No one could give us advice, there were no precedents to look to. The mood at the highest leadership levels was - and remains - marked by uncertainty, whether in business, politics or culture.

The lockdown imposed by governments was followed by an equally fatal lockdown in the brains, in the responses of those who should actually be leading, be thinking of alternatives. That the Metropolitan Opera closed its doors in March 2020 and announced it would reopen sometime in the autumn of 2021 after an incredible 18 months is not merely a loss for opera fans. It will be a blot on New York’s reputation as a cultural metropolis for a long time to come. It discredits the value of art. Art and culture are nourishment. They are essential services.