

60-Year Anniversary of the Friends of the Salzburg Festival



Claudia Schmidt-Hahn, Managing director of the Friends of the Salzburg Festival; Rafael Frauscher, Managing director of the Friends of the Salzburg Festival; Festival President Helga Rabl-Stadler and Heinrich Spängler, President of the Friends of the Salzburg Festival. Photos: SF/Anne Zeuner

(SF, 6 August 2021) A substantial financial contribution to the construction of the Haus für Mozart, a new roof for the Felsenreitschule, the purchase of a new concert grand piano – whenever the Salzburg Festival needs financial support, the Association of Friends of the Salzburg Festival is there to help – and that has been the case for 60 years. Annual fixtures such as the popular Festival Opening Party and the initiative Festival Ticket = Bus Ticket are part of its special undertakings, alongside construction and purchase projects.

Today, the Association of Friends of the Salzburg Festival and its approximately 6,600 members under the leadership of President Heinrich Spängler have become one of the main sources of Festival financing. The association contributes roughly the same amount to the Festival budget as the deficit-covering City and State of Salzburg and the Tourism Board, amounting to five percent of the overall Salzburg Festival budget. This makes the Friends of the Salzburg Festival in their totality the largest private funder of the Salzburg Festival.

The Association of Friends of the Salzburg Festival was initiated in 1961 by Prof. Bernhard Paumgartner, the Festival's president at the time. In founding an association, Prof. Paumgartner aimed to establish closer ties between Festival visitors from around the world and Salzburg and its Festival, building a community of regular guests:

“Over time, the association should become an ideal audience group [...] feeling a personal connection, even friendship with the Festival, its thriving and accomplishments.”

Prof. Bernhard Paumgartner

“We are here to help, but we do not interfere – for years, this has been my guideline as president of the Friends of the Salzburg Festival,” says **Heinrich Spängler**, President of the Friends of the Salzburg Festival. “Today, 60 years later, Paumgartner’s idea of creating an ‘ideal audience group’ has become reality: from an initial 120 Festival aficionados in the beginning, the association has become one of the largest arts-supporting organizations in the world, with currently 6,600 members. We are delighted to offer such a broad range of membership categories – everyone can become a supporter, according to their financial means.”

“Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s wish was that the performances would bring together people flocking to Salzburg from around the world, and that they would become a unit, one audience. The fact that this has been achieved is due in very large part to the association of Friends of the Salzburg Festival. For this, and for their great financial support, I thank them on behalf of the directorate of the Salzburg Festival,” says Festival President **Helga Rabi-Stadler**.

“Our ‘Friends’ summer programme offers our members more than 60 accompanying events during the Festival season. From guided city walks to pre-concert talks and artist conversations as well as academic colloquia, there is something for everyone,” says **Claudia Schmidt-Hahn**, managing director of the Friends of the Salzburg Festival.

“The association of Friends is the most important private donor, making it one of the main pillars of financing, yet it supports this unique festival not only in financial terms, but also in spirit. The loyalty and long-term bond between the members and their association underpin the idea of the Salzburg Festival, carrying its idea and mission out into the world,” says **Rafael Frauscher**, managing director of the Friends of the Salzburg Festival.

The idea of founding an association was preceded by the opening of the Großes Festspielhaus in the summer of 1960, which made 2,200 additional seats available which had to be filled.

In the beginning, there were worries that the association might cause the Festival significant additional costs, and no one assumed that the association would become a great force:

“Everything seems to indicate that the Friends of the Festival will not be a great association with a broad range of members. Rather, it will be a limited circle of people who will pursue the goal of supporting the Festival in a loose fashion; mainly citizens of Salzburg, with the addition of the odd truly interested person from Vienna (and other Austrian states?). [...] One thing is certain, such an organization will not have any means.”

Philipp von Schoeller, President of the “Friends” from 1961 to 1967

In fact, things were to turn out quite differently:

During the past six decades, one of the world’s largest and important cultural support associations has developed, currently numbering approximately 6,600 Friends from about 60 countries, each belonging one of seven membership categories:

Young Friends Membership (annual contribution: EUR 30) for those under 26,
Printing Cost Subscriptions (annual contribution: from EUR 55),
Regular Membership (annual contribution: EUR 160),
NXG Supporters (annual contribution: EUR 600) for the Next Generation of supporters under 45,
Classic Membership (annual contribution: EUR 1,300),
Silver Club (annual contribution: EUR 10,000) and
Golden Club Membership (annual contribution: EUR 50,000)

What has changed since the founding: The size of the association as well as the forms of membership, which have become more numerous over the years, plus the offerings which – not least thanks to the digital transformation – have become more diverse (now including e-papers and podcasts, for example).

What has remained the same, despite a continuous increase in members: Striving for individual contact, consultation and personal attention to the “Friends”, as well as a love for opera, drama and concert – a love for the Salzburg Festival.

In addition to the parent association, five affiliated associations have been founded over the years:

In 1986 the “**Freunde der Salzburger Festspiele e.V. in Bad Reichenhall**“ was initiated in order to offer the many German supporters the possibility of tax-deductibility of donations.

In 2005 the “**Salzburg Festival Society**” in the USA followed.

In 2012 the association “**Schweizer Freunde der Salzburger Festspiele**“ was founded, in 2013 the “**Russian Friends of the Salzburg Festival**”, and, in time for the centenary, in 2020, “**Les Amis Français du Festival de Salzburg**”.

The goal of all these associations is support for the “total work of art” that is the Salzburg Festival.

The motto of the association is: “We are there when needed, but we do not interfere” – a guideline that all six presidents of the association supported and still support. Furthermore, the long periods for which they held office speak to the continuity and harmony between the Friends and the Salzburg Festival:

Dr. Philipp Schoeller (1961 – 1967)
Dr. Erich Peyrer-Heimstätt (1967 – 1975)
Dr. Kurt Asamer (1975 – 1983)
KR Wolfgang Gehmacher (1983 – 1995)
Dkfr. Elfriede Kaserer (1995 – 1999) and
KR Heinrich Spängler (seit 1999)

The Association of Friends of the Salzburg Festival contributes approximately 5% to the Festival's overall budget, making it the largest Festival sponsor. In addition to an annual programming contribution, it also funds special projects every year, such as the Festival Opening Party, the initiative “Festival Ticket = Bus Ticket” as well as the Festival Symposium. It also regularly fundraises for construction and purchasing projects of the Salzburg Festival – for example the purchase of a new concert grand piano, the construction of the Haus für Mozart, the retractable

roof of the Felsenreitschule, the refurbishment of the Haus für Mozart's stage tower, the stage of the Felsenreitschule, the artist dressing rooms and the Karl-Böhm-Saal and the switchover of the opera music stands to LED lighting.

The association of Friends is the most important private donor, making it one of the main pillars of financing, yet it supports this unique festival not only in financial terms, but also in spirit. The loyalty and long-term bond between the members and their association underpin the idea of the Salzburg Festival, carrying its idea and mission out into the world.

Every "Friend" is part of a community that has grown over decades, enjoying special advantages such as the magazine *Friends Information*, published three times a year (now also available as an e-paper) and featuring articles on Festival artists and productions. In addition, the association offers its members an exclusive podcast this year.

During the Festival summer, the "Friends" enjoy a comprehensive "Friends" summer programme, including artist encounters, pre-concert talks and guided tours.

In addition to a "Friends" ceremony celebrating the anniversary, a church concert commemorating the 50-year anniversary of the death of Prof. Bernhard Paumgartner as well as numerous pre-concert talks and guided tours, the popular conversation series *The Philharmonic Salon* with Prof. Clemens Hellsberg, *Stronegger's Summer Guests* with Prof. Siegbert Stronegger and *Your Host: the Festival President* with Helga Rabl-Stadler are scheduled for this summer as well.

Support for Salzburg Festival Projects:

In addition to the annual programming contribution, the Friends of the Salzburg Festival regularly support special projects as well as construction and purchasing projects of the Salzburg Festival – please find a selection below:

Festival Opening Party (55,000 Euro)

Festival Ticket = Bus Ticket (41,000 Euro)

Festival Symposium (21,000 Euro)

Stolpersteine (commemorative "Stumbling Stones") outside the Haus für Mozart (8.300 Euro)

Haus für Mozart (3.5 Million Euro)

New roof for the Felsenreitschule (3.2 Million Euro)

Refurbishment of the stage tower of the Haus für Mozart (250,000 Euro)

Refurbishment of the Felsenreitschule stage (177,000 Euro)

Refurbishment of the artist and orchestra dressing rooms (130,000 Euro)

Purchase of a new concert grand piano (147,000 Euro)

Switchover of opera music stands to LED stand lights (115,000 Euro)

Refurbishment and modernization of the Karl-Böhm-Saal (250,000 Euro)

Current donation project: New orchestra concert shell for the Großes Festspielhaus



Lukas Crepaz, Heinrich Spängler, Helga Rabl-Stadler, Rafael Frauscher, Markus Hinterhäuser and Claudia Schmidt-Hahn.