

NACHWEIHNACHTZEIT / POST CHRISTMAS SEASON

Neujahrstag (der 1. Januar): New Years Day

Neujahrstagsitte: New Years Day custom



For many years, Karajan was the unofficial principal conductor

A darker period

After the annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany in 1938, authorities revoked the orchestra's self-governing structure. It was only after the intervention of conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler that the decision was reversed. It was hardly a golden era for the Philharmonic, however: all Jewish members were dismissed, five died due to imprisonment in concentration camps or were murdered, another two died in the wake of persecution in Vienna. Nine musicians were forced into exile. The eleven orchestra members who were married to Jews or stigmatized as "half-Jews" stayed on in constant fear of losing their special privileges. In 1942, 60 of 123 active members of the Vienna Philharmonic were members of the Nazi Party, a far higher proportion than in the populace at large.

These facts have only come to light a few years ago. Citing Austria's history of coming to terms with its Nazi heritage in fits and starts, Swiss historian Fritz Trümpi told DW, "Public pressure on the orchestra became so great that it had to open up its archives." An ongoing, exhaustive review of the era including primary sources with the disturbing stories of several individuals has been published on the [Vienna Philharmonic's home page](#) since 2013.

• Into the modern era



An impressive backdrop for a TV broadcast

The past has done little to stain the Philharmonic's postwar glamor. It continued to work with the world's foremost conductors, including five decades in close association with Herbert von Karajan and a period with honorary member Leonard Bernstein. The Vienna Philharmonic has performed at the Salzburg Festival nearly every year since 1922, and the "Vienna Philharmonic Weeks" have taken place in New York and Japan since 1989 and 1993, respectively. The annual performances in Vienna's Schönbrunn park draw upwards of 100,000 visitors.