

"Bei uns ist immer was los!"

Salzburger Festspiele / Salzburg Festival (held for 5 weeks starting, in late July)

Salzburg after Karajan: Festival

will change

SALZBURG, Austria — With the death of conductor Herbert von Karajan and the hiring of a new artistic director, the Salzburg Festival is changing its image to open up the celebrated cultural event to new forms of art and musicians who've never been invited to play.

"The festival has become an old museum, unaware of what's going on artistically in the world. We should give modern music and drama the place they deserve," said Hans Landesmann, a member of the festival board, in an interview.

"There is no crisis, but just time for change. This necessity has been in the air for years."

Gerard Mortier, director of the Brussels Opera, was named artistic director of the festival last month with a mandate to revamp the cultural showcase. For years, the festival had been criticized for being too expensive and a storehouse of the artistic totems of Karajan, its longtime guiding spirit, who died July 16 at age 81.

The five-week festival opened July 27 with Verdi's opera *Un Ballo in Maschera* under the baton of Sir Georg Solti.

Karajan had been criticized for his domineering and conservative stance. Italian media called the festival an "intrigue nest," totally subordinated to Karajan's commercial interests.

In his long career, Karajan made more than 800 recordings, many of them with the Berlin and Vienna orchestras. His fortune was estimated at 3.5 billion schillings (\$270 million). Although he resigned from the five-member directorate last year after an illness, he had retained a veto over virtually all productions.

Landesmann, a wealthy Vienna businessman with international contacts, was asked by the government to work out a reform program. In June, before Karajan's death, the board agreed in principle to Landesmann's plan to modernize festival management. Under the plan, to be formally adopted in the fall, the unpaid honorary five-man directorate will be replaced by a permanent, salaried three-member board.

The new board, comprising a president, an artistic director and an economic director, will work full time for the festival, Landesmann said.

"We need new, forward-thinking people in the management, much more aware of the contemporary scene," he said.

Albert Moser, the festival president and a Karajan loyalist who is to retire in 1991, also will be replaced.



Herbert von Karajan, who put his personal stamp on the festival.

In another major change, Landesmann said he would like to include artists on a new artistic advisory board to suggest new projects. He also would like to see more film and video galas and exhibits during the festival — the world's longest-running and most costly one.

While not playing down the merits of traditional Italian operas, which have been performed here every year, Landesmann proposes to include other composers, such as Richard Strauss or Alban Berg, the Austrian artist who combined atonality with the lyric and dramatic features of the Viennese romantic tradition.

There is talk among festival organizers of

devoting the 2,600-seat Great Festival Hall to foreign classical opera and the Little Festival Hall to Mozart productions.

"We want a repertoire consistent with the line of Mozart's heritage, something specific, typical of Salzburg," Landesmann said.

In an attempt to prevent the rise of another domineering maestro such as Karajan, Landesmann said that no permanent conductor would be named. But invitations will go out to such widely known figures as Solti, Riccardo Muti, Claudio Abbado or Sir John Pritchard, all of whom were in Austria this summer.

"Karajan was opposed to reforms. He was an old man and he didn't like changes. He was opposed to see new people and he used to ask why should we change the structure of the festival," Landesmann said.

Now in its 69th year, the Salzburg Festival pays some of the highest performer fees in Europe — and charges some of the continent's top ticket prices. Prices this year range from \$4 for standing room at a concert of sacred music to \$250 for the best seat at one of the opera performances.

Five years ago, government auditors urged festival organizers to spend less. Press chief Hans Widrich said the festival had an annual budget of \$27 million, of which state subsidies totaled \$7.7 million. The rest comes from ticket sales and radio and TV rights.

Not everyone agrees on the need for reform. Solti, musical director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, who replaced

Karajan for the Verdi opera, said the ticket prices should stay as they are.

"I don't believe that lowering their price and making them cost 10 schillings [77 cents] apiece would solve anything," he said. "All hotel doormen will rush to buy them officially and then resell them on the black market at a high profit."

Solti said he was not concerned about the artistic quality of the festival, which he considers very good.

"Politicians are talking too much," he said. "Once its quality goes down then you can say, 'Hey, we must change something.' But not for the time being."

British film director John Schlesinger, who staged *Un Ballo*, praised Salzburg, saying that "there is no house in the world offering the kind of facilities, expertise and officialdom's support we get here. We don't think we will find again similar conditions."