

“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

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

History

Music festivals had been held in Salzburg at irregular intervals since 1877 held by the International Mozarteum Foundation, but discontinued in 1910. Although a festival was planned for 1914, it was cancelled at the outbreak of World War I. In 1917, Friedrich Gehmacher and Heinrich Damisch formed an organization known as the *Salzburger Festspielhaus-Gemeinde* to establish an annual festival of drama and music, emphasizing especially the works of Mozart.^[1] At the close of the war in 1918, the festival's revival was championed by five men now regarded as the founders: the poet and dramatist Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the composer Richard Strauss, the scenic designer Alfred Roller, the conductor Franz Schalk, and the director Max Reinhardt, then intendant of the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, who had produced the first performance of Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann* at the Berlin Zirkus Schumann arena in 1911.

The Salzburg Festival was officially inaugurated on 22 August 1920 with Reinhardt's performance of Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann* on the steps of Salzburg Cathedral, starring Alexander Moissi. The practice has become a tradition, and the play is now always performed at Cathedral Square, from 1921 accompanied by several performances of chamber music and orchestra works. The first operatic production came in 1922, with Mozart's *Don Giovanni* conducted by Richard Strauss. The singers were mainly drawn from the Wiener Staatsoper, including Richard Tauber as Don Ottavio.

The first festival hall was erected in 1925 at the former Archbishops' horse stables on the northern foot of the Mönchsberg mountain according to plans by Clemens Holzmeister and opened with Gozzi's *Turandot* dramatized by Karl Vollmöller. At that time the festival had already developed a large-scale program including live broadcasts by the Austrian RAVAG radio network. The following year the adjacent former episcopal *Felsenreitschule* riding academy, carved into the Mönchsberg rock face, was converted into a theater, inaugurated with the performance of *Servant of Two Masters* by Carlo Goldoni. In the 21st century, the original festival hall, suitable only for concerts, was reconstructed as a third venue for fully staged opera and concert performances and reopened in 2006 as the Haus für Mozart (House for Mozart).

The years from 1934 to 1937 were a golden period when famed conductors such as Arturo Toscanini and Bruno Walter conducted many performances. In 1936, the festival featured a performance by the Trapp Family Singers, whose story was later dramatized as the musical and film *The Sound of Music* (featuring a scene of the Trapp Family singing at the *Felsenreitschule*, but inaccurately set in 1938). In 1937, Boyd Neel and his orchestra premiered Benjamin Britten's *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* at the Festival.



Cathedral Square