



Bernadette Mayrhofer

Leopold Othmar Förderl (Violin II)

Born in Vienna on Nov. 6, 1892, died in Vienna on June 9, 1959

Joined the State Opera and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra on March 1, 1919, four-month suspension from the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra from March 1, 1938; during the Nazi period, forced into retirement on Aug. 31, 1938;

Education: 1899 lessons with Prof. Franz Suchy, a student of Rosé, and later lessons with Arnold Rosé himself for five years; from 1919 also active as a conductor;

Fled from Vienna on Jan. 11, 1939 to Chicago/Illinois/USA

From Feb. 1, 1939 virtuoso violinist and teacher at the "Sherwood Music School"/Chicago, promoted to conductor of the "Sherwood Symphony Orchestra" in February 1945;



Leopold Othmar Förderl

Award of the "Nicolai Gold Medal" in 1953

Returned to Vienna in September 1953: from Oct. 1, 1954 violin teacher at the Academy of Music in Vienna, appointment as professor at the Academy of Music on Dec. 21, 1956, resignation from the teaching post at the Academy of Music due to illness in September 1957;

For sources see footnote¹

Expulsion, Exile and Remigration

*"Under you the orchestra not only played artistically; but had the respect of the audience, students, teachers and school."*² – these were the words of praise expressed by a former colleague with respect to Leopold Förderl's valuable contributions as a conductor, teacher and person of strong leadership qualities during his American exile in Chicago. Even before his dismissal from the State Opera and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in 1938, it had become apparent that he would have a promising career as a successful musician. In fact,

¹ Most of the sources derive from Leopold Förderl's private archives, archive/Föderl; additional information on Förderl compiled by HAdWPh/Dr. Silvia Kargl (archivist).

² Letter from Angelo DeCaprio, Chicago, Aug. 18, 1947, archive/Föderl.

since 1919 at the latest, Leopold Föderl had been pictured by newspaper critics as a virtuoso violinist and a conductor, who would have a very bright future ahead of him.³

Despite the traumatic experience of expulsion both from the Orchestra and from Austria, it was particularly painful for Föderl to lose his "homeland". Thus it was not too surprising that he responded in a very pleased and reconciliatory manner to the hopes raised by the Opera's offer in 1947 that he may return to Vienna and assume the position of conductor. However, in the summer of 1948, these hopes were shattered: the Opera's director, Franz Salmhofer, rejected the expelled musician, while former Nazis were allowed to continue to pursue their careers in the Opera. Hence, after many delays, he did not return to Austria until September 1953, when he became a professor of violin at the Academy of Music in Vienna. He died on June 9, 1959.

Strategic Expulsion

The exact circumstances that led to Föderl's dismissal from the State Opera Orchestra and the Philharmonic Association remain unclear to this day. What is certain, though, is that the administration of the State Theater did indeed consider Leopold Föderl a potential candidate for a so-called "Weiterbelassung" (retention) on June 21, 1938 meaning that he would be spared dismissal if granted that privilege. However, on July 5, 1938 Föderl, whose second wife was classified as "Jewish" according to the racist Nazi terminology, did not figure on the definite list of candidates set up by the Opera Directorate.⁴ What is more, Föderl's name was not mentioned on "Furtwängler's list" of August 20, 1938 either, which constituted another application for "Weiterbelassung im Orchester" on behalf of those musicians threatened to be dismissed and which was signed by Wilhelm Furtwängler himself. A 1938 file (August 17) bears witness to the fact that Föderl „zur Zeit in Salzburg seinen Dienst versieht“⁵ [*is currently working in Salzburg*]. It can therefore safely be assumed that, until his "retirement", i.e. dismissal, he regularly played with the orchestra at the Salzburg Festival, at least in the framework of the Vienna Philharmonic.

This obvious and deliberate exclusion of Föderl on the part of the Directorate - and probably a number of other members of the Orchestra - might well be considered a case of intrigues and bullying. With his straightforward and outspoken manner and due to his liberal attitude, Föderl apparently provoked a great deal of antipathy towards himself. Eventually, in the autumn of 1937, a dispute erupted between Föderl and the Vienna Philharmonic's director, Hugo Burghauser, escalating in early December 1937. As a result, Föderl was suspended from the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra for a period of four months. In a long letter addressed to

³ Newspaper cuttings of the period 1919-1922, archive/Föderl.

⁴ "betr. Verwendung der jüdischen Versippten", July 5, 1938, AdR, Directorate of the Vienna State Opera 844-45/38.

⁵ Report, August 17, 1938, AdR, SThV 2782/38.



Burghauser, he strongly and vehemently criticized the director for publicly exposing and discrediting him by derogatorily calling him both a nihilist and an anarchist, for instance. According to Förderl, the two of them had some quite friendly conversations on two different occasions with Burghauser even stressing their common past and *„jahrelange ehrliche Freundschaft“* [“true friendship that goes back many years”]. Nevertheless, the dispute continued and finally culminated for a rather minor and trivial reason. During a *„sehr anspruchsvollen“* [“very demanding”] rehearsal with Furtwängler on December 10, 1937 – according to Förderl the Orchestra had already been very tired and irritable – Förderl gave vent to his annoyance, expressing his disapproval of Furtwängler’s way of working to his colleagues. As a consequence, Förderl was denounced to director Burghauser by one of his loyal supporters – at least that is what Förderl claimed had happened. This must have worsened the situation even further, heating up the Orchestra’s mood: *„Der Grund zu dem Krach während der Probe am 10./12. ist einzig darin zu finden, dass das Orchester nicht mehr weiter konnte. Weder meine Bemerkungen, noch die des Herrn Hofrates Rosé und Regr. Buxbaum waren ausschlaggebend. Dabei möchte ich nur noch bemerken, dass ich mich für Dich geschämt habe, als Du es wagtest, das Benehmen des verehrungswürdigsten aller Konzertmeister zu kritisieren.“* [“The only reason for the dispute that erupted during the rehearsal on Dec. 10 is that the Orchestra could no longer continue. Neither my comments nor those of Hofrat Rosé or Regierungsrat Buxbaum were of any significance. Anyway, I simply wish to add that I was ashamed of you daring to criticize the behavior of the most admirable of concertmasters.”] It is unclear what happened exactly, but it can be assumed that Burghauser’s informers, who were mentioned more than once by Förderl calling them “Berater” (advisors) in his letter, had in fact played their parts in the conflict escalation. On the other hand, it is also very likely that Förderl’s rather undiplomatic language had added additional fuel to the fire: *„Wunderst Du Dich dann, wenn ich es als eine bodenlose Feigheit bezeichnet habe, dass sich niemand von den Leitungsmitgliedern findet, das den kläglichen Mut aufzubringen gehabt hätte, Herrn Dr. Furtwängler zu bitten, die Probe abubrechen, um am nächsten Tag nutzbringender weiterzuproben.“* [“Don’t you think that it is hardly surprising I called it an outright cowardice that none of the management members had the simple courage to ask Dr. Furtwängler to call it a day in order to more effectively continue the rehearsal the next day?”] The conflict continued. Furthermore, the fact that the dispute was going on right in front of the whole Orchestra and apparently also involved Furtwängler was probably not very conducive to its resolution either. On the contrary, the situation escalated to such an extent that Förderl was unceremoniously dismissed by director Burghauser in the end. Förderl’s letter contained some harsh criticism, accusing Burghauser, among other things, of the following: *„die in letzter Zeit immer häufiger werdende, die Leistungen nicht erster Pulte auf das Niederträchtigste heruntersetzende Beurteilung“* [“...recently increasing number of pejorative judgments maliciously belittling the performances of those not seated in the front row.”] Despite his vehement complaints against Burghauser, however, Förderl made sure to



end his letter in a friendlier way.⁶ Still, the overall consequence of the conflict was Förderl's four-month suspension from the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.⁷ The fact that this dispute was indeed very significant to both Förderl and Burghauser is also clearly reflected in a letter written more than ten years later, presumably in the summer of 1948. It was sent from New York by Ludwig Wittels and was addressed to Leopold Förderl in Chicago. In his letter, Wittels made mention of that old and painful conflict in Vienna. He felt guilty for not having supported his colleague back then – a fact that he implied between the lines. At the same time, Wittels kept in touch with Burghauser even while being in exile because he was „überzeugt, dass Burghauser in die Ausschlussache (sic!) auch selbst hineingehetzt worden ist“⁸ [“convinced that Burghauser himself has just been dragged into the Anschluss-thing as well”].

A letter from Förderl, in which he asks the administration of the State Theater (SthV) „fortab seine Pensionsbezüge zur Gänze seiner ersten katholisch-arischen Frau Elisabeth Förderl, Wien VI., Gumpendorferstrasse [sic!] 46 und den mit ihr in gemeinsamem Haushalte lebenden Kindern Richard und Herbert Förderl restlos zedieren zu dürfen“⁹ [“to be granted permission to, as of now, have his full pension assigned to his first catholic and Aryan wife Elisabeth Förderl, residing on Gumpendorferstraße 46 (sixth district of Vienna), as well as to her children Richard and Herbert Förderl, who both live at their mother's”], reveals very little about the circumstances regarding his suspension; only briefly does he refer to the underlying inconsistencies. „Der ergebenst Unterzeichnete wurde laut Schreiben der Staatstheaterverwaltung 2715/38 mit 1. September l.J. in den dauernden Ruhestand versetzt. Nachdem er durch volle vierundzwanzig Jahre seinen Dienst im Staatsopernorchester sowohl in disziplinärer wie auch in künstlerischer Beziehung ohne den geringsten Anstand versehen hat, kann er als Grund für die Pensionierung nur annehmen, dass er am 11. Dezember 1928 eine Dispensehe mit einer Nichtarierin eingegangen ist, wengleich auch alle seine Kollegen in gleicher oder in ähnlicher Situation weiterhin ihren Dienst im Staatsopernorchester versehen dürfen.“¹⁰ [“The humble signatory was compulsorily retired as of September 1 (CY) by letter of the State Theater Administration 2715/38. Since he had dutifully carried out his work in the State Opera Orchestra both in terms of disciplinary and artistic aspects for a full 24 years, he can only assume that the reason for his retirement must lie in the fact that he had obtained dispensation and entered into legal marriage with a non-Aryan woman, even though all of his

⁶ Letter from Leopold Förderl to Burghauser, dated Dec. 14, 1937 (no. 13), HAdWPh, correspondence Burghauser, B/40.

⁷ Förderl's threat „als Ergänzung zu dem schönen Philharmonikerbuch [Heinrich Kraliks] mit einer kleinen chronique scandaleuse aufzuwarten“, was countered by the Orchestra and the administrative committee with a four-month suspension from the Vienna Philharmonic (WPh) Association. *ibid.*; Clemens Hellsberg, *Demokratie der Könige, Die Geschichte der Wiener Philharmoniker*, Zurich 1992, p. 458.

⁸ Letter from Ludwig Wittels to Leopold Förderl, New York, summer (presumably August or September) of 1948, archive/Förderl.

⁹ *ibid.*, letter from Förderl to the SthV, Vienna, Sept. 12, 1938.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*



fellow colleagues, being in the same or in a similar situation, are allowed to continue working at the State Opera Orchestra.”]

Three months later, when Förderl received a letter of dismissal written by Dr. Otto Wächter¹¹, which already painted a very dark picture of serious financial losses awaiting himself as well as his first wife and their two sons, who had received the musician’s pension¹², he turned again to the administration of the State Theater, once more inquiring about the possible reasons for his suspension and trying to challenge his forced withdrawal from the Orchestra: „(...) *Ich wurde laut Schreiben der Staatstheaterverwaltung vom 16. September 1938, Zl.2782 mit 1. September 1938 in den dauernden Ruhestand versetzt. Nachdem sowohl zu diesem Zeitpunkt als auch heute noch eine bedeutende Anzahl jüdischer Mischlinge und jüdisch Versippter als Orchestermitglieder aktiv im Dienst sind, ergibt sich der logische Schluß, dass für meine Versetzung in den dauernden Ruhestand wohl künstlerische Gründe maßgebend waren. Nun: als Bürgen für meine künstlerischen Befähigungen kann ich Ihnen keinen Geringeren als den in öffentlicher Stellung der NSDAP verantwortlichen Referenten, Herrn Universitätsprofessor Dr. Victor Junk, Wien III., Hainburgerstrasse [sic!] 19, namhaft machen. (...)*”¹³

[“I was retired as of September 1, 1938 by letter of the State Theater Administration, dated September 16, 1938 (Zl.2782). However, since both then and today there was and still is a significant number of active members of the Orchestra who are either Jewish half-castes or Aryans married to a Jew, the logical conclusion must be drawn that the reasons for my retirement must have been of an exclusively artistic nature. Be that as it may, I should like to refer to Prof. Dr. Victor Junk himself, consultant with the NSDAP (translator’s note: National Socialist German Workers’ Party), residing on Hainburgerstraße 19 (third district of Vienna), who may act as a guarantor for my artistic skills.”]

Förderl did not mention a single word of the earlier disputes with Burghauser and other members of the Orchestra in any of his official comments. Nevertheless, it is very likely that this was the real reason for his permanent dismissal from the Vienna Philharmonic in 1938; by applying a deeply inhuman law, the Orchestra managed to get rid of a (politically) troublesome fellow musician.

¹¹ SS *Oberführer* (senior leader) Otto Gustav (Freiherr von) Wächter played a central role in the rigorous implementation of the *Berufsbeamtenverordnung* in the *Reichsstatthaltere* on Ballhausplatz. Oliver Rathkolb, “Führertreu und gottbegnadet”. *Künstlereliten im Dritten Reich*, Vienna 1991, p. 58.

¹² Förderl was dismissed in late December 1938; there was the choice between a 12-month severance pay of the last monthly salary or a highly reduced monthly pension, the payment of which would be delayed for many years, though, due to his age (46) until he reached the age of 60; Leopold Förderl, AdR, GA 159.409; letter of dismissal dated Nov. 30, 1938, ÖBThV, 790/39; see also: letter from the *Oberfinanzpräsident* (Chief Finance President) Vienna/*Sachgebiet f. Pensionen* (pension matters) to the *Reichsstatthalter’s* (Reich Governor’s) *Staatskommissär* (state commissioner), Vienna, May 9, 1939, ÖBThV 1788/39.

¹³ Letter from Förderl to the SThV, Vienna, December 2, 1938, AdR, ÖBThV 4093/38.

Escape from Vienna - "I got Visa will cable when I start. Foederl."¹⁴

It is safe to assume that the hostilities among the members of the Orchestra, combined with Leopold Föderl's antifascist and liberal attitudes, constituted the main reasons for his dismissal. The fact that his second wife met all the criteria for being classified as "Jewish" by the Nazis served as a welcome pretext that only accelerated and – in line with their interpretation - even 'legitimized' Föderl's 'withdrawal' from the "geschlossensten Orchester der Welt"¹⁵ ["the world's most exclusive orchestra"]. Being driven out of his 'homeland' caused him particularly great emotional pain – a pain that Föderl used to express in a number of letters, in which he mentioned his deep love for Austria.

While his wife Eva, together with her seriously ill mother, went to London, Leopold Föderl fled to America, where he intended to prepare for his wife and mother-in-law to arrive later on. Leopold and Eva Föderl's dreadful history preceding their escape had been marked by dismissal, denunciation, eviction, Aryanization and expropriation. The existing sources do indicate the fact that Föderl had had a specific destination in mind: Even before he left Austria, he had arranged for him a job as professor at the Sherwood Music School, 410 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, USA. Leopold Föderl left Austria, a ship ticket in his pocket, on January 11, 1939.¹⁶ In the official letters Föderl had written before his departure he had mentioned the duration of his new employment in Chicago, which, according to the information contained in these letters, began on February 1, 1939 and ended on January 31, 1940.¹⁷ The congratulatory wishes from his colleagues at the Sherwood Music School confirm that Föderl had managed to gain a foothold in the U.S. and had effectively taken part in public concerts since the beginning of May 1939 at the latest. Moreover, according to his "Immigrant Identification Card", Föderl – being a university graduate and therefore 'useful' immigrant – was one of those privileged enough to be granted a non-quota-visa.¹⁸

Exile as an Opportunity

„(...) im Exil mehr Verständnis, Anerkennung und Bestätigung gefunden (...), als jemals in der Heimat.“¹⁹

[“...have been met with more understanding, recognition and affirmation in exile than ever before at home.”]

¹⁴ Telegram addressed by Eva Föderl from London to her husband Leopold Föderl in Chicago, Nov. 2, 1939, archive/Föderl.

¹⁵ Kerber, Erwin, director of the Salzburg Festival, in the 1940 program of the Salzburg concert cycle. Cited in Jeger, Wilhelm. *Die Wiener Philharmoniker. Erbe und Sendung*. Vienna 1942, p. 101.

¹⁶ Letter from Gustav Föderl (Leopold Föderl's father), Vienna, May 22, 1945, archive/Föderl.

¹⁷ Letter from Leopold Föderl to the SThV, January 10, 1939, AdR, SThV 137/39. Power of attorney declaration by Leopold Föderl, Vienna, January 9, 1939, AdR, Karton "Judenakten 1939 – 1940".

¹⁸ "Immigrant Identification Card", issued on September 7, 1939; "Declaration of Intention" as a prerequisite "for permanent residence" and future "naturalization", signed and sworn in on October 14, 1939, archive/Föderl.

¹⁹ Letter from Leopold Föderl to Ernst Kosak (SThV), presumably in late 1946, archive/Föderl.



Leopold Föderl is one of those musicians who - despite the difficult living conditions and, in his case, particularly strong love for his "homeland" - perceived exile as an opportunity and knew how to seize it successfully.

Indeed, a number of newspaper articles as well as letters from his colleagues very impressively demonstrate the fact that he was able to pursue his professional career as an artist and teacher at the Chicago Music School exceptionally well.²⁰ There he worked in said positions until 1945 when, in February of that same year, his career was boosted even further: Leopold Föderl was finally appointed conductor of the "Sherwood Symphony Orchestra". His colorful career in exile is also documented in his private archives. Throughout his professional activity at the Sherwood Music School, Föderl was a recognized and valued teacher – a fact that is endorsed by numerous letters from his students. A letter that Föderl received from a former colleague at the Chicago Music School highlights his valuable achievements as follows: DeCaprio's colleague Julio *"commented that under you the orchestra not only played artistically; but had the respect of the audience, students, teachers and school"*.²¹

Failed Reintegration into the Philharmonic after 1945

After the end of the war, Leopold Föderl asked the State Theater Administration about his rights which – under the *Beamtenüberleitungsgesetz* – also legally entitled him to continue to play. Having been forced to flee the country and thus been politically sensitized in his thinking, Föderl remained very tenacious and self-confident in other respects too, especially in criticizing Austria's post-war society, in challenging the State Opera's staff policy by posing some uncomfortable questions, and in claiming his legal rights.

*"Ich erlaube mir darauf hinzuweisen, daß es keinesfalls meine Schuld ist, wenn ich noch nicht in meine Heimat zurückgekehrt bin. Bis heute – zwei Jahre nach dem Zusammenbruch – hat es die SThV nicht für nötig erachtet, die Rückwanderung, der sich fast unüberwindliche Schwierigkeiten entgegenstellen, in irgendeiner Art zu erleichtern."*²²

*„Sie sind zweifellos im Besitz dieser Briefe, von deren Beantwortung viel, sehr viel abhängt. Leider warte ich auf diese Antwort bis heute vergebens [...]. Wenn Sie bedenken, daß eine recht bedeutende Anzahl jener „Kollegen“, die mich aus der Heimat jagten, nach wie vor in Amt und Würden sind, so können Sie es mir kaum verübeln, wenn ich, der ich meiner Heimat selbst unter Lebensgefahr treu geblieben bin, mich durch das fortgesetzte Schweigen der BThV schwer verletzt fühle."*²³

²⁰ Letter from Carl Reif to Leopold Föderl, Chicago, May 23, 1939, archive/Föderl.

²¹ Letter from Angelo DeCaprio to Leopold Föderl in Vienna, Chicago, Feb. 25, 1955, archive/Föderl.

²² Letter from Leopold Föderl to Ernst Kosak (SThV), Chicago, Feb. 6, 1947.

²³ Letter from Leopold Föderl to Ernst Kosak (SThV), Chicago, April 5, 1947, archive/Föderl.



["Allow me to remind you that it is not my fault in any way that I have not returned home yet. Up until today – two years after the collapse – the SThV (translator's note: State Theater Administration) has not seen the need to in any way facilitate my return, which is hindered by almost insurmountable difficulties."]

"There is no doubt that you are in possession of these letters, and that a great deal depends on their reply. Unfortunately, though, I have been waiting in vain for a response up to this day. If you take into account the fact that quite a considerable number of those 'colleagues', who had driven me out of my homeland, is still active in the Orchestra, you can hardly blame me, who has remained loyal to my country even at the risk of my own life, for feeling deeply hurt in light of the continuing silence of the BThV (translator's note: administration of the Bundestheater/Austrian Federal Theatres)."

From September 1947, things changed for the better when the State Opera began to strike an exclusively cordial tone on Förderl. The letter from Franz Salmhofer, the Opera's new director, dated September 10, 1947 played a key role in this respect, with Salmhofer raising great hopes on the part of Förderl, who was led to believe he would return to Vienna and be offered a position as conductor.

„Durch Konzertmeister Meithner habe ich von Ihrem schönen künstlerischen Aufstieg in der neuen Welt Kunde bekommen. Seien Sie versichert, dass ich jede Gelegenheit wahrnehmen werde, Sie dem Wiener Publikum als Dirigenten vorzustellen. (...) Ich kann mir aber vorstellen, dass im Frühjahr ein Einstieg Ihrerseits in Wien möglich wäre. Unter allen Umständen werde ich alles tun, Hindernisse – so gut ich es kann – zu beseitigen, um Ihre Wünsche zu erfüllen. (...)“²⁴
["Concertmaster Meithner has informed me of your wonderful rise as an artist in the New World. Please rest assured that I will take every opportunity to present you as a conductor to the Viennese audience. (...) However, I do think that it would be possible for you to start work in Vienna in spring. In any case, I will do everything in my power to remove the existing barriers in order to make your wish come true."]

In his letter of reply, Förderl clearly showed his delight for Salmhofer's encouraging lines:

„ (...) Ich habe hier alles gefunden, wonach ich in der Heimat vergeblich strebte, bis auf eines: eine Heimat. Dieses Fleckchen Erde, von welcher ich mir ein kleines Fläschchen mitgenommen habe, ist Musik, ist mein Leben. Und wenn es mir gegönnt sein sollte, ihr durch Ihre Hilfe wieder dienen zu können, so wissen Sie, dass Sie einen Menschen nach so furchtbaren Enttäuschungen glücklich gemacht haben. (...)“²⁵

²⁴ Letter from Franz Salmhofer to Leopold Förderl, Vienna, Sept. 10, 1947, archive/Föderl.

²⁵ Letter from Förderl to Opera Director Franz Salmhofer, Chicago, Oct. 4, 1947, archive/Föderl.



["Here I have found everything I searched for in vain at home, except for one thing: a home. This lovely spot, a small piece of which I have taken with me, is my music, is my life. And if I will find myself lucky enough, with your help, to be able to serve my homeland again, then you will know that, after so many terrible disappointments, you have made another person happy."]

In another letter addressed to Förderl, the deputy head of administration, Ernst Kosak, who had executed forced retirements as early as 1938, spoke of his possibilities of being hired again in Vienna.

„[...] wobei ich allerdings glaube, daß ein Dirigieren Ihrerseits in der Volksoper nicht in Frage käme, sondern, daß es schon die Philharmoniker sein müssten, die Sie dirigieren.“²⁶

["[...] I do believe, however, that it would not be appropriate for you to take on the position of conductor at the Volksoper, and that instead it must be the Philharmonic Orchestra, of course, that you should lead as a conductor."]

However, Förderl's expectations were soon to be shattered: In the summer of 1948, he received a second letter from Salmhofer feigning false kindness that affronted him. The reasons Salmhofer used as an excuse for his non-committing reserve can well be considered an excellent and very clear example of the 'typically Austrian' way of politically 'dealing' with its history of war; this comprised the 'policies' of repressing one's own responsibility as a perpetrator upholding the values of the Nazi regime, of implementing the initiative of denazification only half-heartedly and of adopting animosities against emigrants.

„Sehr verehrter Herr Professor!

Wir haben uns sehr gefreut, durch die Bundestheaterverwaltung gehört zu haben, dass Sie mit uns einen Kontakt aufnehmen wollen. Aber zwischen Wollen und Können liegt leider Gottes immer noch ein grosser Weg dazwischen. Ich weiss nicht, ob Sie sich auf die Entfernung eine Vorstellung machen können von den zeitbedingten Schwierigkeiten, mit denen wir hier zu kämpfen haben und bei diesen Schwierigkeiten steht natürlich an erster Stelle immer wieder die leidige Geldfrage. Aber schön wäre es, wenn wir es uns leisten könnten, Ihnen einfach schreiben zu können: „Lieber Professor, kommen Sie zu einem Dirigiergastspiel nach Wien, wir bieten Ihnen neben einem anständigen Honorar die Vergütung der Reisespesen, etc.“ Hier beginnen aber für uns schon die ersten grossen Schwierigkeiten. Abgesehen davon, dass wir derzeit eine Konstruktion im Bezug auf Kapellmeister haben, die ganz anders gelagert ist als in der Zeit, da Sie Mitglied des Hauses waren. Es sind derzeit bei uns in erster Position: KRIPS, BÖHM, KNAPPERTSBUSCH, MORALT, GERENSCIK, ACKERMANN, KLEIBER verpflichtet. Auch KRAUSS, KARAJAN und FURTWÄNGLER müssen placiert werden. Wir können Ihnen daher zu unserem grossen Bedauern weder ein bestimmtes Tätigkeitsfeld noch [sic!] eine bestimmte Zeitdauer

²⁶ Letter from Ernst Kosak (SThV) to Leopold Förderl, Vienna, Dec. 10, 1947, archive/Förderl.



Ihrer Tätigkeit anbieten. Ich stelle es mir aber vor, dass es möglich ist, wenn Sie – sagen wir es ganz offen: auf eigene Kosten – nach Europa kommen, dass wir Sie in den Monaten Jänner oder Februar 1949 an Ort und Stelle zu dem einen oder anderen Gastdirigieren einladen können. [...] Wir erwarten also gerne Ihre weiteren Mitteilungen, wie sich ein solcher Plan in Ihre Dispositionen einbauen lässt.“²⁷

[“Dear Professor Förderl!

We were very pleased to hear from the administration of the Austrian Federal Theatres that you wish to contact us. Unfortunately, though, wishing is one thing and being able to is another. I am not sure if you, being so far away from home, get any idea of the difficulties we have to deal with due to the changed circumstances – difficulties, of course, that are first and foremost related to the vexed question of money. Indeed we would be very satisfied to be able to afford to go ahead and just say to you: ‘Dear Professor, please come to Vienna and lead a performance as our guest conductor! We will provide a proper salary and will reimburse your travel expenses, etc.’ The thing is, however, that this is exactly where the first serious difficulties begin to get in our way. Furthermore, at present, we have a certain construction concerning concertmasters that is clearly different from the one you knew when you were still a member of the House. The conductors currently hired by us are the following: KRIPS, BÖHM, KNAPPERTSBUSCH, MORALT, GERENSIK, ACKERMANN, KLEIBER. At the same time, KRAUSS, KARAJAN and FURTWÄGLER must be placed, too. Therefore, and to our deep regret, we can neither offer you a specific field of activity nor are we able to lay down a specific term for your activity. Having said that, however, I do think that it might be possible for us to hire you every now and then as a guest conductor for the month of January or February 1949, but on the condition - to put it bluntly - that you decide to come to Europe at your own expense. With that in mind, we are gladly expecting your reply as to the compatibility of such a plan with your schedule.”]

Föderl replied in an unambiguous and very critical way:

„[Seien] Sie [...] versichert, daß ich - im Gegensatz zu Ihrer Vermutung – trotz der Entfernung nicht nur eine sehr gute Vorstellung sondern auch eine ganz bestimmte Meinung über die „zeitbedingten Schwierigkeiten“ habe. Ich sehe sie nur nicht in den „leidigen Geldfragen“, die Ihnen so viel Kopferbrechen macht [sic!], sondern in dem, was Sie in Ihrem Schreiben die „Konstruktion in Bezug auf Kapellmeister“ nennen, eine Konstruktion, auf deren Pfeilern das Wohl und Wehe von zwei Opernhäusern ruht. Ein Blick auf die Liste jener Herrn, die derzeit in erster Position sind, gibt allerdings ein Bild, welches die zeitbedingten Schwierigkeiten in keinem erfreulichen Licht zeigt [sic!]. Mit Ausnahme von Krips, dem ich – nach allem was er durchzumachen hatte – aus ganzem Herzen alles Beste wünsche, sehe ich: 1.) Ausländer, die sogar erst „gecleaned“ werden müßten, um ihre weitere Tätigkeit irgendwie rechtfertigen zu

²⁷ Letter from Franz Salmhofer to Leopold Förderl, Vienna, July 6, 1948, [author’s emphasis], archive/Föderl.



können, 2. Eine Reihe von (um ein härteres Wort zu vermeiden) „Ostmärkern“, die – wie Sie in Ihrem Brief sagen – placiert werden müssen und 3.) einige Namen, die mir nur insofern bekannt sind, als sie von der Kritik mit wenig Enthusiasmus genannt werden. [...] In dieser „Konstruktion im Bezug auf Kapellmeister“ liegen die Gründe, weshalb Sie mir zu Ihrem großen Bedauern weder ein bestimmtes Tätigkeitsfeld noch eine bestimmte Zeitdauer [...] anbieten können.“²⁸

[“Rest assured that I – contrary to your assumption and despite my being so far away from home – do not only have a very good idea of those ‘difficulties...due to the changed circumstances’, but also have a very specific opinion about them. What I do not see, however, is their relation to the ‘vexed question of money’ that seems to be bothering you so much; I believe, rather, that the cause of these difficulties is rooted in what you call a ‘certain construction concerning concertmasters’ in your letter – a construction, on the pillars of which is resting the weal and woe of two opera houses. And yet, looking at the current list of conductors reveals a picture that does not reflect too well on your ‘difficulties... due to the changed circumstances’. Apart from Krips, who has been through a lot and whom I wish all the best from the bottom of my heart, I see 1.) foreigners who would, first of all, have to be ‘cleaned’ in order to be able to justify their current position in any way, 2.) a number of – let me be less blunt about it - ‘Ostmärker’ (translator’s note: After the ‘Anschluss’, the formerly independent First Republic of Austria was given the name ‘Ostmark’ by Adolf Hitler; the term ‘Ostmärker’ refers to the country’s citizens) who, according to your letter, need to be placed and 3.) a few names I only know in so far as they have not been embraced too enthusiastically by the critics. Hence it is this ‘certain construction concerning concertmasters’ that evidently renders you – to your deep regret - unable to offer me neither a specific field of activity nor a specific term for my activity.”]

Föderl indeed wanted to return, but encountered a wide range of obstacles instead. In 1952, when he reached the age of 60, which consequently entitled him to the pension he had acquired in Austria, the administration of the State Theater set an assessment basis of 24 years for his case, entitling him to only 84% of his pension, the rest of which he would have received only if a total of 30 years had been taken into account – a benchmark he could not have met due to his expulsion. It required a lot of effort as well as the support of his son Herbert Föderl, who was born during his first marriage and lived in Vienna, for his objections to be finally heard and taken seriously. „Verzeihen Sie Herr Regierungsrat, aber um die Jahre und Summen, um die mein Vater zu kurz kommt, kann man nicht Quälgeist genug sein“ [“Forgive me for saying so, Mr. Regierungsrat, but, taking into account all the years and amounts of money that my father is being denied, one cannot be enough of a nuisance”] – was Herbert Föderl’s response, serving as his father’s representative, to Regierungsrat Oppensberger from the administration’s department of pension affairs, who had complained

²⁸ Letter from Leopold Föderl to Franz Salmhofer, Vienna, July 6, 1948, [author’s emphasis], archive/Föderl.



about his father being a nuisance.²⁹ Leopold Föderl himself invoked the „*Beamtenüberleitungsgesetz [als] die einzige Grundlage für Rehabilitierung*“ [“*Beamtenüberleitungsgesetz as the only basis for rehabilitation*“], stipulating that „*der zu Rehabilitierende so gestellt [...], wie er nach menschlicher Voraussicht stehen wuerde, wenn eine Besetzung Oesterreichs nicht stattgefunden haette*“ [“*the person sought to be rehabilitated shall be given the same rights they would have been expected to be granted today if Austria had never been occupied*“]. Finally, after many delays, he succeeded in having his rights enforced so that „*ihm die ganze Dienstzeit wieder angerechnet [wurde]*“ [“*the total number of pensionable years was now taken into account*“], including “*Alterszulagen*” (pension supplements) and “*Ruhegenussbemessung*” (old-age pension calculation for civil servants).³⁰

In September 1953, Föderl and his wife returned to Vienna. However, he was not able to pursue the career of his dreams being a conductor but worked as a violin teacher instead. On October 1, 1954 he obtained a teaching assignment for violin of ten hours a week at the Academy of Music in Vienna. The fact that he was considered both a good and valued teacher – as had been the case in Chicago - is reflected in a number of letters from his students warmly expressing their gratitude.³¹ Leopold Föderl died in Vienna on June 9, 1959.

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Translation: Verena Umgeher

²⁹ Letter from Herbert Föderl to his father in Chicago, Vienna, presumably written in early September 1952, archive/Föderl;

³⁰ Letter from Föderl to BThV/Regierungsrat Oppenberger, Chicago, Sept. 25, 1952, archive/Föderl; Föderl quotes from a letter addressed by the State Theater Administration (SThV) of April 1947, see: letter from Ernst Kosak/StHv to Föderl, Vienna, April 16, 1947, archive/Föderl.

³¹ Teaching contracts (1954–1956), letters of thanks, archive/Föderl.