



## Fritz Trümpi

### The First Republic and Austrofascism: Enhancing References to Vienna as the “City of Music” and Strengthening Internal Authoritarian Structures

*During the period of the First Republic and Austrofascism, the “politicization” of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra did not imply unilateral exploitation for national political purposes, but rather the establishment of interdependencies between political authorities and the orchestra.<sup>1</sup> This interdependent relationship demonstrates*



*Bruno Walter with members of the Vienna Philharmonic  
Salzburg 1925*

*a close link to the term “Musikstadt Wien” (City of Music) as an expression of the increased efforts to impregnate Vienna with a certain “city branding”. Unlike the time before World War I, when musical events were primarily initiated by private committees, there was a considerable degree of politicization after 1919.<sup>2</sup> This reflected a general development in music life – not only in Austria but also in Germany. The renowned contemporary music critic Paul Bekker described the state of musical life in the early 1920s as follows: „Es kommt lediglich darauf an, festzustellen, daß die öffentliche Kunstpflege durch den Krieg und seine Folgeerscheinungen in den letzten Jahren in eine Abhängigkeit von politischen Gesichtspunkten geraten ist, die jeder Ernstmeinende, gleichviel welcher Parteirichtung er angehören mag, tief bedauern muß.“<sup>3</sup> [“It is worth noting that, due to the war and its consequences, the world of public art has become dependent on political aspects – a fact that anyone in their right minds, regardless of their political orientation, cannot but deeply regret.”] The Vienna Philharmonic’s activities were also largely influenced by that trend, with an increasing number of regional and national policy interfaces. And Vienna’s enhanced image as a “City of Music” provided the orchestra with an excellent basis for operation for that purpose. Furthermore, immediately upon the establishment of the authoritarian Dollfuss regime in 1933, it radically changed its internal*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also the introduction of the text “Die Wiener Philharmoniker im Ersten Weltkrieg”.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Nußbaumer, Musikstadt, p. 358; Eder, Musikfeste, p. 20; Trümpi, Orchester, pp. 96-97.

<sup>3</sup> Bekker, Paul. Zeitwende. In: Die Musik. vol. XV, no. I, October I, 1922. pp. 1-9.

*structures, gearing them to the authoritarian rule and adapting itself to the dominant political doctrine.*

The number of concerts performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra increased continuously after World War I: Whereas there were reportedly 31 concerts in the season of 1919/20, five years later there were 65.<sup>4</sup> And with regard to the range of events, there too was a significant increase in the 1920s. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra frequently played before ever wider audiences, with explicitly political events as well as international concerts forming an increasingly significant part of the orchestra's daily business. There was a time when the Vienna Philharmonic barely turned down any requests – in the early 1920s, inviting the orchestra to perform was not a question of artistic quality but rather an indication of the financial circumstances of the organizer.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the Philharmonic did not appear to have any serious reservations when agreeing to hold concerts in the framework of the "Organisation geistiger Arbeiter und öffentlich Angestellter".<sup>6</sup> By engaging in this practice – even if only for a few seasons – the Orchestra began to sell its services to official and municipal bodies for the first time; a fact that can only be interpreted as a political concession to a radically changed society. From the early 1920s, the Vienna Philharmonic also participated in the Salzburg Festival, gradually increasing the number of their international concerts: Unlike the period between the orchestra's foundation in 1842 and the end of World War I during which it only toured six times, the orchestra toured nine times in the short period between 1919 and 1933. In two of those instances, in 1922 and 1923, the Philharmonic even travelled to South America where it held as many as 40 concerts each time.<sup>7</sup> It is that international travel activity that particularly reflects the growing political importance of the Orchestra – both nationally and internationally. According to the minutes of a committee meeting in 1924, the Philharmonic Orchestra was welcomed by the provincial governor and the mayor of Graz upon arriving in the city. It is said that both of them stressed in their speeches: „dass unsere Reisen zum politischen Verständnis beitragen, indem sie nicht nur die Bundesländer, sondern auch das Ausland uns näher bringen, was besonders unsere Erfolge in Südamerika u. Paris bewiesen haben.“<sup>8</sup> [“that our tours contribute to strengthening political understanding by developing closer ties to both the provinces and foreign countries; this has been particularly proven by the success we had in South America and Paris.”] Moreover, the minutes of the meeting also clearly record the fact that the orchestra was encouraged by public authorities to undertake such tours. For example: „Wunderer u. Weiß berichten über einen Besuch bei Unterrichtsminister Schneider, der eine Konzertreise nach Vorarlberg im Juli

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<sup>4</sup> Trümpi, Orchester, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> Hellsberg, Demokratie, p. 408.

<sup>6</sup> Trümpi, Orchester, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> For further details see Hellsberg, Demokratie, pp. 396-398.; Trümpi, Orchester, p. 68.

<sup>8</sup> Prot. KS, 6/17 1924. HAWPh, A-Pr-024, 13.



vorschlägt.”<sup>9</sup> [“Wunderer and Weiß mentioned a conversation with Schneider, Minister of Education, who suggested that a concert tour to Vorarlberg be organized in July.”] With regards to foreign policy interests, the Vienna Philharmonic provided its services in that respect too. The Orchestra’s 1925 tour of Germany, for instance, displayed Austria’s annexation efforts to the then democratically constituted Germany. That tour of the Philharmonic undoubtedly had a diplomatic function, which is also reflected in the reporting of the daily newspaper *Neues Wiener Abendblatt*. The Orchestra was received in Munich’s City Hall in the presence of the city’s mayor, town councillors, the Austrian Consul General as well as several political and cultural representatives. In his address, the mayor pointed out that he welcomed the orchestra „als Sendboten der Zusammengehörigkeit aller deutschfühlenden und deutschgesinnten Volksteile; ob sie nun diesseits oder jenseits dieser unnatürlichen Grenzen wohnen, ob auch die Vereinigung, die unausbleiblich ist, früher oder später kommt, nichts wird die Kulturzusammengehörigkeit trennen können, zu der wir uns bekennen.“<sup>10</sup> [“as a messenger reflecting the unity of all people who feel German and are Germanophile; whether they live within or beyond these unnatural borders, whether unification will take place sooner or later, which is inevitable - nothing whatsoever will be able to break the bond of the common culture we share.”] The director of the Munich Music Academy stated just as clearly: „Diese Konzertreise ist nicht eine Frage der Musik, sondern eine Frage des ganzen deutschen Geisteslebens und der ganzen deutschen Zukunft.“<sup>11</sup> [“This concert tour is not a question of music, but a question of the whole German intellectual life and of the German future.”] In his response, the orchestra’s chairman spoke of his intention to take home his impressions of Germany and tell people about them, saying: „mit nach Oesterreich nehmen und davon erzählen,“ which, according to him, was the only thing poor musicians could do.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it was not unusual at all for the Vienna Philharmonic’s management to refrain from casting too political a light on the orchestra in public. Instead of making any direct references to politics, during the First Republic the orchestra preferred to underline its role as a representative of the “City of Music” with all that that implied. On the occasion of the Vienna Philharmonic’s 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Wilhelm Jerger, then simply a member of the orchestra until appointed “kommissarischer Leiter” by the National Socialists, illustrated this in an unpretentious but nevertheless very self-confident way: „So sind die Philharmoniker im Ausland die geschätztesten Vertreter des kostbarsten Wiener Kunstbesitzes, der Wiener

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<sup>9</sup> Prot. KS, 5/22 1924. HAWPh, A-Pr-024, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Neues Wiener Abendblatt, 7/4 1925, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Neues Wiener Abendblatt, 7/4 1925, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Neues Wiener Abendblatt, 7/4 1925, p. 2. With regard to the Orchestra’s point of view on this tour cf. Hellsberg, *Demokratie*, p. 418; Trümpi, *Orchester*, pp. 101-102.

Musik, geworden.”<sup>13</sup> [“The Philharmonic has become the most valued international representative of Vienna’s most precious piece of art: its music.”]

In the course of the 1920s, the orchestra increasingly represented an integral part of the “City of Music”. Likewise, it made sure to have this connection rhetorically highlighted in the media. However, the orchestra also invented another way of enhancing that image by introducing the “Philharmonikerball” (Vienna Philharmonic Ball) in 1925, for instance. By choosing the Musikverein as its venue, the orchestra once again emphasized its claim of representing the “City of Music” – not only when giving concerts. In addition, the Ball received protection at the highest political level: In 1925, for example, the Austrian Federal President Michael Hainisch from the Christian Social Party and the mayor of Vienna Karl Seitz from the Social Democrats were members of the “Honorary Committee”. The fact that the Committee was represented by more than one political party clearly shows that it was not so much a party political orientation that guided the Vienna Philharmonic, but rather the national cross-political context.

Through the organization of such a festive event, the Vienna Philharmonic managed to create a more tangible reflection of its attachment to Vienna, which before then had been primarily achieved through media coverage. Furthermore, it was able to project its status as a private association: Balls were a private matter and therefore organized by associations, political groups, clubs, etc.<sup>14</sup> Being such an association (and certainly no institution subjected to political control or administration), the Vienna Philharmonic contributed to the strengthening of the concept of Vienna as a “City of Music” – and not only by means of its musical performance. Conversely, it was that concept that provided the base for its legitimacy as an autonomous orchestra. In this way, the orchestra’s activities did indeed fulfill political functions without the need of even the slightest intervention on the part of political authorities that would affect its organizational structure.<sup>15</sup>

Even after the establishment of the authoritarian Dollfuss regime, this kind of indirect politicization did not seem to change: Political interference in the orchestra’s institutional structures proved non-existent. However, the general rise of authoritarianism started to affect its internal organization in the early 1930s. At its general meeting on July 9, 1933 and only a few months after Federal Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss had dissolved parliament, the Vienna Philharmonic decided „mit allen gegen 2 Stimmen“ [“approved by all but two votes”] to

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<sup>13</sup> Jerger, Wilhelm. Aus der Geschichte einer Wiener Musikervereinigung. 85 Jahre Wiener Philharmonisches Orchester. In: Reichspost, 11/5 1927, pp. 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Kus, Monika. Das Wiener Ballwesen aus geschichtlicher, sozialer und wirtschaftlicher Sicht. Thesis at the Vienna University of Economics and Business 1987. p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Trümpi, Orchester, pp. 99-100.

strengthen the Board's position, which consequently entailed enhancing the association's authoritarian structures: „Dem Vorstande steht das Recht zu im Einvernehmen mit dem Dirigenten, diejenigen Mitglieder, welche solistisch hervortreten, für alle philharmonischen Veranstaltungen zu bestimmen und [es] darf sich kein Mitglied weigern eine ihm zugeteilte Stimme zu übernehmen.“<sup>16</sup> [“The Board is, in agreement with the conductor, entitled to appoint those members for all the events of the Philharmonic who are outstanding soloists, and not a single member may object to take on their allocated part.”]

In fact, the present practice of hiring guest conductors, which remains controversial even today, can be traced back to the early days of 'Autrofascism': The transition from a system of subscription conductors to one of guest conductors was a consequence of said decision, which entailed a growth in power for the orchestra's board. Furthermore, it is striking that Gustav Hawranek, who was elected director in 1932, resigned only one year later, in 1933, and was replaced by Hugo Burghauser as the Vienna Philharmonic's new leader. Of course, Burghauser's appointment was no coincidence at all. He maintained close contacts with prominent political leaders of the 'Austrofascist' movement as well as with the "Vaterländische Front" ("Fatherland Front"), founded by Dollfuss in May 1933. Moreover, he was appointed "Erster Vorsitzender des Ringes der österreichischen Musiker" by the Ministry of Education for the period between 1934 and 1938 and in 1935, by decision of the *Wiener Landesgericht* (Regional Court of Vienna), he became "Sachverständiger für Musik" (musical consultant).<sup>17</sup>

Burghauser's political stance and his close links to the regime did in fact have an impact on both the association's and the assembly's management, despite the fact that the general meeting, being the sovereign institution of the association, prevented the Board's Executive Office from becoming too powerful. Nevertheless, Burghauser knew very well how to influence the political course of the Philharmonic's meetings by using the leverage of his political arguments, for instance.<sup>18</sup> This is exactly what Heinrich Kralik praised in his *Orchestermonographie* (monograph, for orchestra) on the Vienna Philharmonic that was published shortly before the 'Anschluss' in 1938; he underlined the chairman's growing power, saying: „Die Machtbefugnisse, die der Vorstand erhält, sind nicht gering. Und wenn er Talent und Temperament dazu hat, kann er ein wirklicher Führer sein. Etwa wie heutigen Tags Professor Hugo Burghauser, der auf diesem Posten eine außerordentliche philharmonische Vitalität entfaltet, idealistisch und realpolitisch.“<sup>19</sup> [“The powers that the chairman is endowed with are significant indeed; and if he has both the talent and temperament, he could be a real

<sup>16</sup> Neufassung des § 35 der Geschäftsordnung. Prot. OHV, 7/9 1933. HAWPh, A-Pr-029, 2a).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Mayrhofer, „Angelegenheit“, pp. 73-74.; Trümpi, Orchester, pp. 118-120.

<sup>18</sup> For more details see Trümpi, Orchester, pp. 120-122.

<sup>19</sup> Kralik, Heinrich von. Die Wiener Philharmoniker. Monographie eines Orchesters. Vienna 1938. p. 108.



leader such as Professor Hugo Burghauser is today, displaying an extraordinary Philharmonic vigor in this post - being both idealistic and politically pragmatic.”]

Hence the regime had no reason to urge the orchestra towards closer cooperation between its institutions and the state as this was – as regards political content at least – warranted anyway. It must not be forgotten either that the importance of music for shaping the political base of the Austrian image had increased considerably over the years since the 1920s<sup>20</sup>, being frequently used as a reference that helped Austria assert itself as an independent German state alongside National Socialist Germany.<sup>21</sup> As one of the most effective musical institutions in Austria, the Vienna Philharmonic pursued its political ambition through a number of concerts at home and abroad. Finally, one of the first large-scale propaganda campaigns promoting the Dollfuss regime was the Philharmonic’s journey to Italy in May 1933 where it visited Mussolini’s “Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista” and was the first orchestra to play secular music before the Holy See. That journey, however, not only reflects Austria’s efforts of annexation to fascist Italy, which were officially recorded in the “Rome Protocols” shortly afterwards, but also served as a testimony of the clerical and Catholic aspect firmly promoted by the regime.<sup>22</sup> Still, the Vienna Philharmonic’s sphere of action during the period of ‘Austrofascism’ was much wider than that: It participated in the World Exposition of Paris in 1937<sup>23</sup> and was involved in concerts aimed at strengthening domestic support for the regime, such as the “Geistliche Festkonzert im Rahmen des Deutschen Katholikentages zugunsten der Dr.-Ignaz-Seipel-Gedächtnisstiftung” in September 1933 or the „Festversammlung anlässlich der 400-Jahr-Feier des Ordens der ‚Barmherzigen Brüder‘“ of October 1937, among other things.

Through the strengthened power of the Board’s position and the orchestra’s multifaceted representation of Austria that effectively promoted national policy, its configuration in 1938 only facilitated the National Socialists’ political encroachment on the Vienna Philharmonic in the aftermath of the ‘Anschluss’. Furthermore, the fact that the orchestra had, since 1933, already consisted of numerous illegal party members even further facilitated its integration into Nazi cultural policy.

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<sup>20</sup> See Trümpi, Orchester, p. 123.

<sup>21</sup> For further details see Trümpi, Orchester, pp. 123-125.

<sup>22</sup> For more details see Trümpi, Orchester, p. 126.

<sup>23</sup> With regard to the political importance of music for Austria’s representation at World Expositions cf. Mayer-Hirzberger. Voting for Shifts in Austria: How the Ständestaat (1934–1938) Used Musical Clichés to Improve the Country’s Image Abroad. In: Ingram Susan et al. (ed.). Ports of Call. Central European and Hertz American Cultures in Motion. Frankfurt am Main 2003. pp. 199–209. Here p. 202.



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