

News, 23/05

**Franz Welser-Möst, Austrian conductor of world renown, on rumors about leaving and on his participation in the meeting of the world's brightest heads.**

## „Today, Too Much Is Just Murky“

Apparently, the matter was already settled „the Austrian way“: Alexander Pereira, director of the Zurich Opera, recently stated that his former music director Franz Welser-Möst, 45, would expand his activities at the house. In a common press conference in mid-june they would disclose more details. The press already assumed that Welser-Möst would return to his old position. Again, it looked as if they had managed to drive away another great Austrian from his native land: Last summer, a provincial mafia prevented the world-class conductor from being designated as director of the Salzburg Festival from 2007. Jürgen Flimm, who finally won the steeplechase, pledged to place the world star into the center of his program. But since the day when the music director of the Cleveland Orchestra turned down Flimm's „Freischütz“ project (which is still not definite), the director did not contact him again. Concert director Hinterhäuser offered Welser-Möst to conduct the new era's opening concert with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (a piece by Bruckner). That was it. Harm was done only to the festival for the maestro is in great demand.

**Not a director in Zurich.** And now director in Zurich? We just could not bring ourselves to believe this. After all, in 2007 Welser-Möst will start the three-year supreme project of a new production of the „Ring“ at the Vienna State Opera. And as early as 2006/07 he will show here Richard Strauss's „Arabella“. How could he possibly manage to take up such tasks together with being director in Switzerland, while at the same time he is in America the director of one of the world's most distinguished orchestras? Welser-Möst explains, calming: „Pereira wants me to do more work at his house. I am indeed considering this because I feel very happy there. Our DVDs are extremely successful.“ But what about being music director again? „I do not know anything about that. The ‚Ring‘ in Vienna and the position of a music director in Cleveland represent a time frame to me anyway.“ Salzburg is something he looks back on without anger. However, his answer to the question whether for summer 2007 it would still be feasible to elaborate a production worthy of the Festival, is simply „No. And for 2008 only with a lot of good luck and work.“

**Director of the Vienna Opera?** In 2010, however, things will be completely different. This is when Ioan Holender leaves the Vienna State Opera, and it will be hard to replace him. Only by a charismatic person of the first rank like Welser-Möst, for that matter. Would he possibly be interested in the position of the opera director? „Certain things about it appeal to me. If you see how much in today's opera sector is murky, how much is moving in a wrong direction, I admittedly think sometimes how to do better.“

**Meeting of the best.** From 10 to 11 September 2005, Welser-Möst participates at Melk Abbey in an event which can boast one of the most exclusive guest lists of the year: The Waldzell Meeting, founded in 2004, assembles the elite of science (like Craig Venter, decoder of the human genome), of philosophy and religion with that of art. Paulo Coelho is curator of the program to further the new generation, and Welser-Möst, admired for being an intellectual resisting corruption, is a speaker. (See inset)

What may an artist contribute to such a meeting? His approach is that „Europe needs a wave of recultivation. In this time of ours, relying on science and feasibility, we are drifting towards a final conflict: Lifestyle vs. culture. ‚Aida‘ at the pyramids and ‚Turandot‘ on the Great Wall have nothing to do with culture. Artists like Anna Netrebko and Lang Lang have to be on the watch for the danger of becoming untrue to themselves. This is the outgrowth which results from the crisis of the recording industry: A singer and a pianist who masters the instrument incredibly

well--but like the Three Tenors they still have not made any contribution to making classical music more popular."

What will he tell genetic researcher Craig Venter? „Setting limits to yourself is inherent in the innermost nature of every human being. And just like I do not betray my profession through lifestyle events it is also up to the scientists to escape the trap of unlimited feasibility and decipherableness. If we stop having secrets, there is not much left of life worth living for."

And this is the difference between Nobel laureates and provincial echelons of western Austria: the Nobel laureates know who to listen to.

INSET:

### **The world meeting of the brightest heads**

10 and 11 September: „Waldzell“ at Melk Abbey

The company, founded in 2004 by Andreas Salcher and Gundula Schatz, has risen to the top instantly. „Waldzell--A Global Dialog for Inspiration“ is the title of the meeting of the brightest heads. For two days the elite from art, science, and religion meets with paying guests for a dialog. They go into questions of the meaning of life, spirituality, responsibility, and the future. Governor of Lower Austria Erwin Pröll supports the company as a highlight of his initiative for Europe. The list of speakers includes:

- Paulo Coelho, author and life counsellor; he is the curator of the program for the new generation
- Christian de Duve, Nobel Prize in Medicine,
- Franz Welser-Möst,
- Craig Venter, decoder of the human genome,
- Paul Kennedy, historian ("The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers"),
- Peter Senge, US researcher of economics,
- Anton Zeilinger, quantum researcher,
- Edwina Sandys, painter and author.

10 and 11 September, Melk Abbey, Lower Austria.

Registration: at [www.waldzell.org](http://www.waldzell.org), or telephone: +43/1/513 81 92-0.