

Talking to Mozart's music: Rubén Dubrovsky is the new chief conductor at Gärtnerplatz

Highlights: Rubén Dubrovsky will be the new chief conductor of the Gärtnerplatz Theatre from autumn. Mozart's "Le nozze di Figaro" will premiere on 29 June at the Munich repertory house. The Argentine, born in Buenos Aires, is a baroque expert who also plays cello, baroque guitar and several percussion instruments. He comes from a very aristocratic family on the outskirts of the city of Vienna, but his father was in active resistance.

Markus Thiel - newsrnd

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He will not take up his post as chief conductor until autumn. But Rubén Dubrovsky is already conducting one of the core pieces of the repertoire at Gärtnerplatz: Mozart's "Le nozze di Figaro" will premiere on 29 June. Dubrovsky, born in 1968, comes from Buenos Aires, is a baroque expert, also plays cello, baroque guitar and several percussion instruments.

There are conductors who avoid "Figaro" because it is too perfect.

It is indeed a great challenge to do justice to Mozart in general. At the same time, it is the most beautiful challenge that a musician faces. It seems to me that they want to trace a wonderful animal. It never quite succeeds, but you try again and again. Mozart's music is also like a person you talk to.

You come from the early music scene. When you conduct Mozart at a repertory house, is that a constant compromise in terms of performance practice?

Performing music is always a process. You want to get the most out of a score. When you're working on a concert in the independent scene, you meet for two or three days and prepare it in a compressed and very concentrated way. That has its advantages. At a repertory house, on the other hand, a piece can mature over months in the consciousness of all those involved. This, in turn, offers great opportunities. Here, however, you have to design the rehearsal work in such a way that you prepare not only the premiere, but also the last performance.

Will the repertoire at Gärtnerplatz now develop more in the direction of Viennese Classicism and Baroque?

I can contribute a lot in terms of repertoire. But baroque is no stranger to the house. Of course, my view of early music offers a different, new impulse for the cultivation of these works. My most important contribution, however, will not be what we play, but how we approach the epochs and national styles in terms of performance practice. My wish is that we master all these styles like a mother tongue.

You live in Vienna, now work in Munich: What are the differences between the two musical biotopes?

There are many similarities. But tradition is written in Vienna with even bolder letters. In Vienna, you feel as if you are descended directly from Mozart, Schubert and Mahler. This also gives the musicians a certain security. In Munich, I sense a greater openness, people question themselves more as

musicians or as an orchestra: Are we on the right track? This, too, has ensured the incredibly high quality of Munich's cultural institutions.

Looking at your very artistically oriented family: Did you even have the chance to become something other than a musician?

There were a few months in my biography when I thought about studying physics or chemistry. I was completely fascinated by it when I was ten or eleven years old. There was only a short excursion. Art is simply part of the family's DNA. Just like politics. It was normal for us to be musicians and to protest against the military dictatorship. My father was in active resistance. At that time, music was also a means of expression to communicate in other ways. You could dare more as an artist because music encrypts statements. In Argentina, this occurred mainly in the folk music scene. This has a very high level there. All protest songs were sung to the rhythm of folk music. And even if the text was no longer allowed to be recited, the rhythm alone was protest enough.

When did your family leave Argentina?

After the dictatorship, I went to Germany, then to Vienna. And it wasn't until my son was born that my parents came to us.

There is an almost frightening parallel between you and Nikolaus Harnoncourt. He, too, has founded an ensemble, and you, like him, have married a violinist.

But there are also big differences. Harnoncourt comes from a very aristocratic family, I come from a working-class family on the outskirts of the city. I avoided contact with Harnoncourt in Vienna. Out of respect. In our culture, elderly people are approached in two ways. Either you push them a little to the side – or you turn them into an icon. It was precisely because of the latter that I thought: why should I bother him with questions? Musically, I didn't always agree with him either, that's normal. But what I learned from him is that you have to have your own well-founded opinion on every note.

As a trained cellist, do you have an easier time standing in front of the orchestra?

For me, the eye level with the musicians is actually extremely important. The safety distance between the maestro and the orchestra no longer fits into our time at all – precisely because the musicians are so well trained. It helps me that I know what a musician needs. This applies not only to the interpretation, but also to the everyday life of the orchestra. In early music, there is also a great deal of knowledge about what each instrument needs in order to be able to produce a sound at all. A lutenist, for example, needs so much prior knowledge that a conductor cannot have. This means that a conductor has great respect for such skill. And this automatically puts you at eye level. Which doesn't mean that you don't lead as a conductor. But you have to justify your work differently.

Does your Munich position also mean that you are discovering a new repertoire for yourself? More musicals, more operettas?

I'm doing two German operas next year. I have already conducted Mozart's "Magic Flute", Nicolai's "The Merry Wives of Windsor" are totally new to me. As a cellist, I played who knows how many "bats" in Vienna and also got to know a lot from Mahler to contemporary music. It will be exciting for me to

approach the repertoire of the 19th and 20th centuries with the same standards as a Bach cantata. I also want to present South American folk music at Gärtnerplatz, together with violist Nils Mönkemeyer and my Bach Consort Vienna. I will play different stringed instruments, guitar, lute, cello... By the way, I love the Basso continuo game.

In other words, you accompany the recitatives of "Figaro" yourself?

Oh, as a cellist, I don't even know how to open a piano.