

Hermann Baumann

geb am 1. August 1934 in Hamburg

I was almost 18 when I started to learn to play the Horn-rather a late starter. Before that I played the piano, my mother was a pianist, my grandfather was an organist and my father was a doctor. My father had played the Horn as a student, and it was on this Horn that I made my first attempts. It was however a b-Horn and intended for the right hand, with other words a military instrument. My music teacher had taken note of my attempts and encouraged me "You absolutely *must* learn to play the Horn!" He found me a teacher; he worked for the post office. Well! His horn was intended for the left hand, so for one whole year I only played Naturhorn. My Father then gave me a Doublehorn as a present, By that time I was almost 19 years old. Every day I practiced six to eight hours and then I started at the music Academy, where I was told by Prof. Fritz Huth, "It is not of course as simple as that!" He was impressed though by my diligence. I was a young musician, every week I had three choirs to conduct, two male choirs and a mixed choir and in this way I could keep my head financially above water.

After three semesters I had come so far that Prof. Huth said to me "In Dortmund they are looking for a Horn soloist. You've learnt everything there is to learn, why don't you give it a try!" I travelled to Dortmund and they engaged me, thanks to my youthful c arm. I never really understood why. My knowledge of Literature was not adequate enough and I had only studied three semesters. I was in Dortmund for three years and then a further seven years with the *Süddeutscher Rundfunk*

In 1964 the ARD-Competition took place in Munich, I had prepared for it as had every other professional Violin, Cello and Pianist soloist, without sheet music. When I arrived in Munich, I could play the whole repertoire off by heart. I was the very first ever to have done it like this. After winning the first prize I noticed very quickly however that a Career could not be made with a secure position in a radio orchestra. So after two years I left to go to Essen and teach at the Music Academy.

First Contact with Karl Richter

The fact that I happened to meet Karl Richter was thanks to Maurice André. Maurice André had said to Richter: "Everything in your ensemble fits together very well, the choir, the Orchestra, the Bach-Choir is fantastic, but not the Horn". One day Karl Richter asked me: "Would you like to come to Vienna with me"? I said: "I certainly would". "I will be conducting there and I need a further soloist, they want the second Horn concert from Richard Strauss ". "Why certainly I'd be more than happy to do it, when is it supposed to be"? "The end of April 1967."

It was a long cold winter, in the beginning of April it snowed heavily again. I travelled with my wife and our four children to the Alb to do some sledding. My daughter Johanna fell and I fell over her and broke my carpus just, 18 days before the concert in Vienna. I was put in Plaster from my fingertips to my elbow. And I did not cancel, Thank God. Every night I tried to free my fingers and to move them. I had 18 days time! I drove with my own car and a bandaged hand to Vienna. "What! you're going to play the second Horn-Concert from Strauss with your arm in Plaster?" The people in the audience in the Viennese musical society hall were badly shocked, the applause faded abruptly. But then it was wonderful, all three concerts, the reviews were outstanding. Above all it was unbelievable the way the audience cheered, unbelievable!

First Concert Tour

A few weeks later a tour was scheduled for Italy and Switzerland. We travelled by train, I noticed at

once: Everyone was crazy about Karl Richter. All you could hear everywhere was: where is Richter? is he sitting at the back, or is he sitting at the front?. I thought to myself, he must really be something quite extraordinary this Karl Richter!!

At the first Rehearsal he of course wanted to hear me. I got up and let loose as soloist of course. At the end there was a short silence, I said: "Do you want me to do something else?" "No, No" he said, and laughed so much, that the whole Orchestra joined in and then the Bach Choir as well. They had never heard anything quite like it before.

It was an really lovely time for me, these 15 years, always traveling from Essen to Munich to make music with him.

"Quoniam" in the b-minor Mass

I stood before Karl Richter like a singer. That is how I felt as well, I was always as singer. He always made me stand right in front. The way I played my instrument was the same as singing for me, and that's the way I felt with my singer friends as well. I can't set any special one apart they were all fantastic singers, especially the three (Kieth Engen, Ernst Gerold Schramm and Hermann Prey) who are no longer with us. It was a give and take, we were always a Team, I couldn't have wished for anything better.

Listening at Rehearsal

After Rehearsals I wanted to go back to the Hotel, he asked me, "What are you going to do now?" Have supper and then off to bed and off to sleep", I replied. Wouldn't you like to stay and listen for a while, I have to practice". He liked to practice after rehearsals. I had the pleasure of listening to him He played the Cembalo, one hour long. Being so close to him, was a wonderful time, a time in which I repeatedly was given the chance to learn. The case was, very often, that I didn't know what to do after rehearsals .Just to going back to the hotel was sometimes so cheerless, so it often happened that I stayed and listened. I know from myself that you sometimes need someone to just listen, and that's enough! That is what I learnt. It's almost the same as at a performance. The best possible result is achieved for just that moment in time.

Karl Richter's Charisma

Maybe you just can't put it into words, nobody could but everybody knew, right up to Karajan: Everybody found it unbelievable the way somebody could stand in front of a choir and an orchestra and produce such music, that people came from hundreds of kilometres away to listen to it. I know many people who came especially from Cologne to Munich to hear just one Mass in B-Minor or one Weihnachtsoratorium. You can't explain it in words, you could only really grasp it, when you sat there in the audience, even on Television it was only partially felt.

When we had an interval during the Mass in B minor, he used to like to come and have a chat with me. After the interval, I sang in the Choir , sometimes tenor sometimes bass ; and although it was sometimes something of a strain because I no longer had the high notes. I found it very interesting to sing along.

The Bach Choir

I am a professional, I conducted three Choirs in Hamburg and I have played with very many other excellent choirs ;but the Bach Choir still lingers in my ears as was the case with Maurice Andree too.

When Richter began the Mass in b-minor it was unbelievable! After just ten minutes of the choir's input you were thunderstruck and trembling. If only it could be heard like that again today. There are very few conductors with the ability to evoke this feeling in me. And that's a fact.

Weihnachtsoratorium in Salzburg

I flew to Munich in the morning. An awful snow flurry prevented us landing in Munich and we had to land in Nuremberg. There was only one car that I could have hired. A very nice Canadian said to me "If you want to travel to Salzburg to Karl Richter, I can let you have my car. I have time to spare, I thought about it but decided it wasn't a good idea in such bad weather. I would never have been able to make it. I called one of my friends, a well-known Hornist in Salzburg and asked him to Play for me. Karl Richter was of course offended that I was not there. But said I could play another time, anyone else he would probably have thrown out, but not me. Later he said to me "If you have to fly, then one day ahead!"

Montreal 1967

Karl Richter took ill in Rio de Janeiro, just at the time when we were supposed to fly over to Canada. He sent me a telegramme asking me to take over both evening rehearsals (Haydn's "Schöpfung") with the Orchestra in Munich.

I had just moved from Stuttgart to Essen in my new house and was surrounded by cartons etc. First of all I bought the score and read it through it, and a record as well, I can't remember with whom. Then I worked on the two rehearsals with the orchestra. It was only possible because I had made such a good impression on him at the concerts in Vienna and he trusted me

We then flew to Montreal, and everyone who came along will be able to remember how the plane landed with a lurch. It was awful the way we swooped down, we were lucky to get off so lightly. The next day was dress rehearsal and Richter went on and on. After two to two and a half hours some of my colleagues made the suggestion, that I should ask Richter to stop for a break, which I then did. He was very angry, but allowed us the break. Maybe he wanted to show us that he was in the best of health again.

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Stroke 1998

A stroke occurred suddenly! I was in America and had performed two concerts in Buffalo. We had celebrated and then I went to bed. I wanted to fly back the next morning. The stroke took place during the night, and I remember thinking to myself that somebody had put something in my wine. I didn't feel at all well towards morning. I was woken by a phone-call. It was my driver, wanting to take me to the airport. I wasn't able to speak. I'd had my stroke seven hours earlier, a very long interim. The stroke was unfortunately on the right side, the following first year I could hardly speak at all. I'd even forgotten the names of my children and my grandchildren. It took me three years to re-learn German and English, which I had spoken very well before. To date though I have caught up again because for the last seven years I have practiced daily. Today I can say that after seven years I am able to live quite a good life again. In the meantime I've visited 23 countries with my Horn and I am very glad that I have come so far.