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First Engagement 1962

He must have heard me in Mozart's *Figaro* and in such roles as *Leporello* and *Entführung*. He approached me directly, and then one day enquiries came from Heinz Geisel. He was very friendly and jovial, "Mr. Kammersänger (Concertsinger) he said, "Mr Richter would very much like to have you for such and such a role" – I think at the time it was Samson, it was early days-and that is how we got together (July 1962, Handel Festival in Munich.)

Rehearsals

There were never many rehearsals just one or two before the dress rehearsal itself and then I had to plunge in. After that though enquiries came every year, mostly for Mozart's *Requiem* and then later for the *Passions*, with their wicked men and their arias. Almost every year Keith Engen was Christ and I was either Pilatus or Petrus. It was amazingly interesting. It must have been the beginning of the sixties, 1961/1962 and as in the case of the *Matthäus Passion*, very regularly. One thing I can remember very well was the first rehearsal of Mozart's *Requiem*. It took place in the academy and we, all the soloists were all together, it was an unbelievable experience.

Richter on the Cembalo

What fascinated me was the way the music played around the recitative. It was something new for me both as musician and singer That somebody could so characteristically let the music flow around everything, I had never experienced anything like it before. And it was fascinating. He made music the way others talked! One always had the feeling, that he followed no particular concept, but played, just as he felt, spontaneously, off the cuff.

In the opera *Figaro* was the well known figure standing there on stage. It had to be like that even in such a huge group of performers. And every one was used to rehearsing. Richter simply had a special perception for anyone well-versed in music and able to transcribe their ideas. He could sense it intuitively and then there were no long rehearsals needed over and over again, just slight corrections and everything was alright, In the evening when it was time for the performance something else took place that I had never experienced before: a current flowed between conductor, singers and artists, something impossible to describe and that's what made all the difference.

Haydn, The Four Seasons

I always loved singing it, because the musical pitch and range is lovely, although I could never bring more depth because it was not demanded. It is different in the *Schöpfung* where you could show what was going on down in the depths by way of the undulating pitch. In the *Four Seasons* it was somehow more naïve. I enjoyed singing *Simon*.

Italien 1964

The week in Montreale fascinated me. First of all the gold mosaic, together with the Basilica's special dimensions. My attention was attracted to the audience in the front row opposite to me, The mothers sat with their babies at their breasts as though it was the most natural thing in the world to do.

L'Aquila

This wonderful old town in Tuscany was an incomparable experience – *Die Schöpfung* – The Mass in B-minor – and then Vicenza! That was for me the most dominant and the most well remembered journey of them all.

Karl Richter was in the train during the journey through Italy. There was a continual to and fro from one compartment to the next. Everyone had of course their own place to sleep. One could eat in the train too. Lunch packets were provided by "TOUROPA" and distributed in the train. There would be whole or a half chickens and there was always 1/4 L. wine, we were at all events well looked after and provided for. As far as lodgings were concerned everything was one hundred pro.

Vicenza

This very last Concert on the Italian tour in Vicenza was uncanny. I sometimes had the feeling that he could feel death's proximity. After the concert he was rather quiet, he sat down and drank his red wine. Seeing him like that, it was almost impossible to imagine that on the next day he would be full of life again. But the way he would sit there after a Concert as he did in Vicenza, the impression it left was incredible. A genius. Here was a music genius at work. That was the difference between Richter and other good conductors, here was a Genius at work. Absolutely flawless.

Ensemble Singing

Ensemble or group singing was something every singer had to learn, because in every opera there are so and so many groups and the singer has to learn to come to grips with this situation. An Opera house with it's own Ensemble no longer exists these days. It's not needed anymore. The role is chosen, a choir is there, an orchestra is at hand and everything else is second nature. With us it was something different, made special due to men such as Hartmann and Keilberth, something fundamentally different.

To get back to Richter, he had here a reservoir out of which he could help himself at all times; and that applied to the male voices, that applied to the tenors too, he did not need heroic tenors, he needed lyrical tenors like Fritz Wunderlich. That applied to everything else as well. We never had to produce a complete Wagner, a complete Mozart, a complete Strauß. That was how the opera was in Munich.

The Ensemble was famous. I have only mentioned a few names. If they had not have been here, who else would have been able to produce a perfect Wagner, a perfect Mozart on stage, as it was in Munich? above all, where else could you have experienced Strauss? I was very lucky to have been able to sing almost all of the Strauss pieces which came in question for me. That cannot be found in any other Opera house anywhere, not even in Berlin.

Richter concerts were polyphonic, made up of several harmonised voices. Not as epic as an opera. In an opera you are an individual. You are either King Philipp or you are Figaro or you play a comical role. That is something particular to the so-called "singer-actors", that is what they used to call us. I do not agree with this description, but that was how it was, and we were all rather clever at acting anyway. Richter was something very special, a stroke of good fortune for Munich.

Career

We are a generation that experienced the end of the war, we are a generation that was obsessed with the idea of finishing out studies as quickly as possible in order to begin a career as quickly as

possible. Today's way of thinking is just the opposite: to study as long as possible in the hope of being able to avoid military service. As an example: I had a student in Salzburg who was in his eighth or ninth or tenth semester, I can't remember which anymore. He had a wonderful voice. When I asked him My good friend when are you finally going to carry on with your studies? This is not the proper way of doing things! His reply was to the effect that he was absolutely set on avoiding his military service. I then replied: "As of tomorrow you can go and study somewhere else, but not with me!!" That kind of thing did not take place with our generation. We had experienced the war so to say at close quarters. We had been trained and prepared to take up a profession as quickly as possible and for my part, my ideal was either Vienna or Munich. Then your career would either peter out or you would become famous through this or that Opera. I was very proud of the fact that I had become so well known in Munich.

Bach Choir

The Bach Choir always made the impression on me of being one perfect instrument. I always used to wonder how in God's name the sopranos managed to get up there! He used to demand a lot. From the sopranos he demanded an unbelievable amount. One of the sopranos said to me "I'm glad if will be able preserve my voice, the way he makes us rehearse." That was for me somehow exemplary. The choir, for me, was a fellowship and made a very homogenous impression. It was an instrument in itself, Richter's instrument I would say, with which he was able to do just whatever he pleased. People like Richter are born once in a hundred years, at least that's what I think. Once in a century a man such as Richter appears.

Solo Parts

There is only one Bach sonata named "Ich habe genug" (I have had enough BWV821) that I can sing in my vocal range because it is rather a low range, all the others, even the *Christmas Oratorium* are much too high for me. It's not that a single high tone must be reached but that it demands a continual high range. It was not my voice and that's why I always steered clear of it. He never questioned me about it.

Tour of Russia 1972/Father's death

My father was ill, and we knew he was not going to last very long. but nobody had counted on it happening on my birthday of all days, That really shocked me. It was impossible for me to sing. I spoke to Richter and explained that I was not capable of putting one foot outside the house, never mind singing Even though everyone begged me on bended knee to sing, I said that I wanted to see my father one more time and that I was going home for his burial.

Anecdote

It was not discussed or agreed upon. Due to the fact that Richter, who was as a rule very correct, did not include the aria "*Komm süßes Kreuz*" from the *Matthäus* Passion in the dress rehearsal, I thought it had already been agreed upon that it was not to be performed that evening. Good, I thought, that happens often enough. I had sung the aria with the Frankfurt Song Academie and ther it was usual to come to an agreement about which aria was or was not to be sung, and I thought it was the same here.

I went home, came to the concert in the evening and all of a sudden he gave me the signal to stand up and sing! I truly thought "This is the end!" If only it wasn't this aria. There is another in B-flat major just before the finish: "*Mache dich mein Herzen rein*", which I had always sung, but this süßes "*Komm süßes Kreuz*" is not easy. The Gamba makes it so difficult. One has to sing exactly in accord with the

Gamba, and here he was giving me the signal! Let's go! The introduction came and I sang. I hope without fault or reprimand, but I thought I would never make it. Unbelievable! What a shock I can tell you! Afterwards I said to him "For God's sake Herr Professor, how could you do such a thing?, not to say a word that the aria would come in the evening" "It goes without saying that it comes in the evening!" he replied and that was that!!