

2015

A Survey of the Career of Baritone, Josef Metternich: Artist and Teacher

Diana Carol Amos
University of South Carolina

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd>



Part of the [Music Performance Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Amos, D. C. (2015). *A Survey of the Career of Baritone, Josef Metternich: Artist and Teacher*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/3642>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.

A SURVEY OF THE CAREER OF BARITONE,
JOSEF METTERNICH: ARTIST AND TEACHER

by

Diana Carol Amos

Bachelor of Music
Oberlin Conservatory of Music, 1982

Master of Music
University of South Carolina, 2011

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in

Performance

School of Music

University of South Carolina

2015

Accepted by:

Walter Cuttino, Major Professor

Donald Gray, Committee Member

Sarah Williams, Committee Member

Janet E. Hopkins, Committee Member

Lacy Ford, Senior Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

©Copyright by Diana Carol Amos, 2015
All Rights Reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the help of my professor, Walter Cuttino, for his direction and encouragement throughout this project. His support has been tremendous. My sincere gratitude goes to my entire committee, Professor Walter Cuttino, Dr. Donald Gray, Professor Janet E. Hopkins, and Dr. Sarah Williams for their perseverance and dedication in assisting me.

A special “thank you” goes to USC Distinguished Librarian Emerita Nancy Washington for her invaluable assistance as editor and for her support and encouragement. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Ute Wachsmann-Linnan for editorial help with the German transcription. Thank you, Michael LaRoche, for hours of patient assistance with the format. I could not have completed the process without all of you.

My thanks go to my aunt, *Kammersängerin* Carol Malone, for introducing me to Professor Metternich all those years ago. Carol, you have been my mentor and role model. I am grateful to my father, Dr. C. Nelson Amos, for his encouragement and advice and for originally suggesting that I write about my teacher, Josef Metternich. I would like to thank my children, Catherine and James Walker, and my brother, David Amos, for their constant support. Lastly, I acknowledge the amazing support and encouragement of my mother, Betty Malone, who has lived through the entire process with me. We have made this journey together!

ABSTRACT

Joseph Metternich, (1915- 2005) a prominent, internationally acclaimed opera singer of the mid-twentieth century, distinguished himself primarily in Italian baritone *bel canto* roles. In a career that spanned four decades, he performed in the major opera houses of the world, becoming one of the premiere operatic recording artists while portraying the heroes and villains of the operatic repertoire. At the height of his career, from 1946 to 1952, he was contractually bound to five opera houses at the same time, including theaters in Vienna, Austria as well as in East and West Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich in Germany.

From 1952 until 1959, Josef Metternich was a member of the Vienna State Opera, La Scala in Milan, Covent Garden in England, the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, and several major German opera houses. He debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City in 1953 as Don Carlos and performed regularly with the Met until 1957. The Bavarian State Opera in Munich became his home base from 1957 onward. Metternich's work has been preserved in numerous recordings.

Metternich's success was largely due to the fact that he possessed the vocal timbre and *verismo* (realism) style of the Italian *Fach* (voice category). The major baritone roles of Verdi, Richard Strauss, and Wagner were among

Metternich's key repertoire. After retiring from the stage, Metternich turned to teaching and taught at the Cologne Conservatory of Music in Germany for twenty-five years. He had a number of famous pupils and was one of Europe's most prominent vocal pedagogues.

This document will survey Metternich's operatic career after WW II and his subsequent career as a master teacher of singing. By researching and translating numerous recorded German interviews, articles, performance reviews, and recordings, this document will examine the history of his life and career, his *bel canto* style of singing and his teaching. The author has obtained selected recordings of Metternich's vocal instruction from his pupil, *Kammersängerin* Carol Malone. These recordings, as well as recordings of the author's own voice lessons with Professor Metternich in Cologne, Germany, have facilitated the presentation of a first-hand analysis of Josef Metternich's vocal pedagogy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2 EARLY LIFE: A CAREER BEGINS.....	5
CHAPTER 3 AN INTERNATIONAL CAREER.....	16
CHAPTER 4 THE METROPOLITAN OPERA.....	29
CHAPTER 5 THE TEACHER.....	44
EPILOGUE.....	49
REFERENCES.....	51
APPENDIX A- ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF 1995 RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH JOSEF METTERNICH.....	54
APPENDIX B-TRANSCRIPTION OF 1995 RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH JOSEF METTERNICH.....	93

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a historical record of Josef Metternich's operatic career. It focuses on his vocal technique and pedagogy through an investigation of his recordings, reviews of his work, recorded interviews and recorded lessons with professional opera singers. This document provides an overview of his long and exceptional career.

Need for the Study

This dissertation contains the first analysis and research of Josef Metternich's operatic and teaching career. The study begins with his early life in Hermühlheim near Cologne where he was born in 1915, his survival of World War II and the bombing of Berlin, and ends with his gradual retirement from the stage in 1971.¹ Metternich's subsequent engagement at the Metropolitan Opera represents a key moment in the operatic history of the 20th Century. An extensive

¹ Einhart Luther. Liner notes for *Dokumente einer Sangerlegende*. MONO 93449, 2006. Compact disc.

recorded interview in German with Herr Metternich has been transcribed and translated by the author and included in two appendices. The interview was located by the author in the archives of the *House of Opera* company in Atlanta, GA. Although the name of the person who conducted the interview in 1995 is unknown to the author and *House of Opera*, it is the most comprehensive interview available to the public. This is the first translation of the interview available in English.

Scope of the Study

The study is a survey of the major milestones of Josef Metternich's career, focusing on his important debuts, performances, and important life events. This study does not include a complete listing of the numerous performances throughout Metternich's lifetime; however, the document is unique, as no other published biographies or dissertations on this outstanding performer and teacher yet exist.

Related Literature

An important resource for this study was an extensive recorded interview with Josef Metternich in which he speaks at great length about his life, career, and vocal pedagogy, as were recordings of his instruction at the Cologne Conservatory. Articles about Metternich can be found online at *Cantabile-Subito*

and *Papageno*² at ursroesli.wordpress.com.³ Information about Josef Metternich can also be found in the compact disc liner notes of *Legenden des Gesanges: Josef Metternich; Rare and Unreleased Recordings: Josef Metternich; Dokumente einer Sängerkarriere: Josef Metternich*; and *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen* with the Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin. The author has consulted a number of autobiographies that reveal aspects of Josef Metternich's life, including *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: A Biography, Fifty-Five Years in Five Acts*, and *Richard Tucker: A Biography*.⁴

Design and Procedures

The study is organized in five chapters, an epilogue, a bibliography, and appendices. Chapter one is an introduction. Chapter two presents Josef Metternich's early life and career. Chapter three focuses on his success as an operatic baritone following WWII and his European career. Chapter four

2 Andrea Suhm-Binder. "Metternich, Josef". www.cantabile-subito.de/Baritones/Metternich__Josef/Metternich__josef.html (accessed January 2, 2014)

3 Urs Rösli. "Unterricht bei Ks Prof. Josef Metternich". www.ursroesli.wordpress.com/2012/09/22/unterricht-bei-ks-prof-josef-metternich-i/

4 Christoph Zimmermann. Liner notes for *Legenden des Gesanges* vol. 10. ARS 38 710, 2010, Compact disc.; Thorsten Schneider. Liner notes for *Rare and unreleased Recordings: Josef Metternich*. JGCD 0064, 2008, Compact disc.;

Clemens Höslinger. Liner notes for *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen*, performed by the Radio-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, conducted by Leopold Ludwig. MONO 90536, 2002. Compact disc.;

Hans A. Neunzig, *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: A Biography*. (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1998).;

Astrid Varnay and Donald Arthur. *Fifty-Five Years in Five Acts: My Life in Opera*, (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2000).;

James A. Drake. *Richard Tucker: A Biography*. (New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc), 1984.

describes his tenure at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Chapter five discusses Metternich's vocal technique, pedagogy, and teaching.

CHAPTER 2

EARLY LIFE: A CAREER BEGINS

Josef Metternich was born in the village of Hermühlheim near Cologne, Germany on June 2, 1915. His father, a civil servant with an exceptional voice, earned his diploma at the Cologne Conservatory of Music. As a child, Josef Metternich enjoyed singing, playing the violin, and listening to his father sing. He became familiar with the art songs of Hugo Wolf as well as many arias from the operatic repertoire. Metternich eventually became a member of the village church choir, the men's chorus, and the local amateur orchestra. At the age of seventeen he performed in small concerts in the village, singing popular music and playing the violin. In 1934, Metternich received his *Abitur* diploma from the Brühl *Gymnasium* near Cologne. He graduated with honors and hoped to attend the Conservatory of Music in Bonn, but his association with an anti-Nazi clique prevented him from continuing his studies after graduation. Metternich belonged to a group of students who spoke out against Adolf Hitler, the new German Chancellor and leader of the National Socialist Party (Nazi party). As a result, Metternich's application to study at the conservatory was refused.

With no immediate opportunity for study, Metternich was advised to register for six months of German Military Labor Service near Cologne in 1934.

His early days at the camp were spent doing manual labor. In the evening, Metternich would sing and play his violin for the men as they sat together in the underground vaults. In exchange for this nightly entertainment, he was eventually relieved of manual labor and given a desk job in the office. As Metternich worked in the office one day, one of the officers arrived with a copy of the newspaper, *Der Westdeutschen Beobachter*. The officer was eager to show Metternich an announcement in the paper about coming auditions for the auxiliary chorus at the Cologne Opera. Nineteen year old Metternich was “ordered” to take advantage of this golden opportunity. He put on his dress uniform, rode his bicycle to the audition at the Cologne Opera, and was hired as a member of the auxiliary chorus in Wagner’s *Lohengrin*. It was August 1934 and Metternich was thrilled to be a part of the production.

That autumn of 1934 Metternich was also hired to sing with the Cologne Radio Chorus. The Cologne Radio Concerts were big events that took place in the Convention Center in Köln Deutz. In this era before television, well-known soloists and an orchestra performed on radio broadcasts for audiences of up to six thousand people. Although he was grateful to be a member of the radio chorus, in time, Metternich became determined to audition as a soloist for the broadcasts. He repeatedly asked the music director, Gustav Kneip, to give him an audition. Kneip refused him three times, but nineteen-year-old Metternich continued to badger the director until he was finally allowed to audition. When the day of the audition arrived, he found himself in a group with twelve other young

singers who appeared to be accomplished and experienced. Metternich recalled the audition:

They wore bow ties, and wide hats, whereas I looked like a 'nobody'; young, skinny, and hardly impressive. When it was my turn, I announced that I would sing "Cortigianni" from Verdi's *Rigoletto*. I knew the aria well, as my father had often sung it. The director thought that I was crazy. 'That's ridiculous!' he exclaimed, 'You can't possibly sing that. Where did you learn it?' When I told him that I had learned it by myself, he nearly cancelled my audition. 'Just let me sing a few bars,' I suggested. Kneip finally agreed to give me a chance, accompanying me himself. When I got to the high G, he stopped. 'Just a moment,' he said. 'Do that again.' I sang the whole aria and then a second aria before he said, 'Do you expect me to believe that you've never had a teacher?' I said, 'My father; I listened to him sing.' 'I've never heard anything like it,' he admitted. 'I'll make you an offer. They may think I'm crazy, but I'm going to put you on the program.'⁵

On May 12, 1935, exactly one year after his "failed attempt" to be accepted into a conservatory, Metternich sang the Prologue from *Pagliacci* and Count di Luna's aria from *Il Trovatore* in a live broadcast at the Cologne Convention Center. He received fifty reich marks for the performance with which he bought a new suit, a pair of shoes, and a shirt. This marked the beginning of Metternich's singing career. The radio programs were broadcast every Sunday afternoon from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Metternich performed with two well-known singers in his second radio broadcast: Dutch tenor Henk Noort and a young mezzo-soprano, Elisabeth Höngen. Noort and Höngen were amazed that the young baritone had received no formal vocal training. Before long, Metternich was hired as a full-time chorus member at the Bonn Theater. He also had the

⁵ Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.

opportunity to perform secondary solo roles in the operas and earned a diploma at the Bonn Conservatory of Music as a chorus singer.

In 1936, German young men born between 1914 and 1915 were to be drafted into the army. Metternich received notification to enlist. At the same time, fearful of losing his job at the theater, he ignored the symptoms of an increasingly severe case of pleuritis and was eventually hospitalized with a diagnosis of tuberculosis. The illness was life-threatening; there was no cure in 1936. Thoughts of a career had to be put aside as Metternich spent two years in hospitals in the Black Forest and Switzerland. Initially, he was not expected to live, but managed to make an astonishing recovery by 1938. Metternich returned to Cologne where he had heard of the voice teacher Paul Neuhaus whose training was based on a specific type of breath compression. This concept was controversial and was criticized by some as being “too forceful,” but it appealed to Metternich. Three months after Metternich’s arrival in Cologne, Neuhaus decided to move to Berlin. Metternich followed him there, found a place to live, began to work in a shoe store, and continued to study voice.

The German army invaded Poland in 1939 and World War II began. Regulations required that all customers at the shoe store be registered. As he checked the list of customers one day, Metternich came across the familiar name, Noort. Could this be the singer, Henk Noort, who had performed with him in 1935 in the Cologne Radio Concerts? Metternich learned that Noort had since moved to Berlin and was employed at the Deutsches Opernhaus in Berlin. When Noort appeared one day at the shoe store with his two sons, he barely

recognized Metternich from Cologne. Noort remembered him as the skinny kid who had had no formal vocal training. Eager to hear Metternich sing and hear about his new voice teacher, Noort invited him to his apartment for the following Sunday.

Noort offered Metternich a glass of wine when he arrived and then asked to him to sing Valentin's aria from Gounod's *Faust*. As soon as Metternich had finished singing, Noort rushed to the telephone to call the opera house. He reached the secretary, Frau Bernhardt, and left a message for the *Intendant* [general manager] about the wonderful singer that he had just heard. Frau Bernhardt contacted Metternich with an audition time four days later. She explained that the *Intendant* held monthly auditions for young singers from the conservatory of music. Metternich was scheduled to join them at the next audition. He accepted the invitation although he had had only three months of vocal study. Thirteen young singers came to the audition that day. Metternich was the last singer to audition. The *Intendant*, Wilhelm Rode, could be heard speaking in the auditorium when it was his turn, explaining that this was the young baritone who had been recommended by Henk Noort. Metternich described the audition:

'What will you sing?' asked the *Intendant*. I replied, 'I'd like to sing "Cortigianni" from *Rigoletto*.' 'How old are you? Aren't you a bit young for that aria? We certainly don't recommend singing such a difficult piece at your age.' 'I'd like to try,' I said, and proceeded to sing the entire aria. There was silence and then I heard them whispering amongst themselves. 'Can you sing anything else for us?' they asked. I told them that I had the Prologue from *Pagliacci*. 'What? You're able to sing that? Alright then!' Drenched in sweat, I finished the audition with a section of Renato's aria from Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*. I didn't actually have the strength at

that age to perform three such demanding arias in a row, but I succeeded.⁶

When Metternich finished singing, Rode invited him to his office and instructed the secretary to draw up a contract. Metternich was to be engaged at the Deutsches Opernhaus in Berlin from 1940 to 1942 as a lyric baritone, and would earn 500 reich marks a month. This was only a starting wage for a soloist at the opera, but the young Metternich could hardly believe his luck—five hundred marks a month! Rode explained that he would not be scheduled to perform in his first season, but would instead be expected to attend all of the performances. He would learn how to move on stage, how to follow the conductor, and would receive at least one hour of musical coaching every morning.

Metternich's first assignment as a new singer at the Deutsches Opernhaus was to observe the rehearsals for the new production of Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin*. The director was the *Intendant*, Rode, who also sang the role of Telramund. Metternich studied the role of Heerrufer. After one month, Rode invited him to his office to ask how he was progressing with the role of Heerrufer. Metternich assured him that he was ready to sing the part. Rode brought Metternich to the rehearsal stage where the opera chorus members waited and announced that this youngest member of the solo ensemble would sing the role of the Heerrufer for the second part of the stage rehearsal. The chorus members looked on as Rode showed Metternich where to stand on stage

⁶ Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.

and where to take his place near the king's throne when he had finished singing. This stage rehearsal was followed by his first orchestra rehearsal. Both rehearsals were successful and Rode decided that Metternich would make his debut at the opening night of *Lohengrin*. It was 1940, and after only a few weeks at the Deutsches Opernhaus in Berlin, Metternich was singing the role of Heerrufer with none other than Henk Noort as Lohengrin. Konstanze Nettlesheim was Elsa, and Wilhelm Scherp performed the role of the King.

Metternich's next role was Silvio in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. His female partner was to be the well-known singer and German film star Resi Rudolf. Rudolf, who held the title of *Kammersängerin*, did not intend to rehearse with a young newcomer like Josef Metternich, so a beginning soprano was scheduled to rehearse with him in her place. Without an orchestral rehearsal before his first performance, Metternich went on stage feeling petrified and afraid to move. He was anxious about the love scenes with Resi Rudolf. To the amusement of the other colleagues the next day, Rudolf could be heard jokingly referring to the 'passionate lover' she had had on stage the night before. Metternich later recounted how he nearly died of embarrassment and how he attempted to explain:

'I wasn't sure how to do the kiss on stage, but I'll do it properly next time,' I assured her. Rudolf retorted, 'Young man, only my husband is allowed to kiss me properly and don't forget it.' Everyone laughed. I was still angry at the next performance, so I just grabbed her and kissed her. She didn't mind. Never said a word. From then on, I believe I was a convincing Silvio.⁷

⁷ Ibid.

The majority of Metternich's performances with the Deutsches Opernhaus between 1940 and 1942 were on concert tours for the German troops who were stationed throughout Europe. He may have been the youngest and most inexperienced singer on tour, but his appearances proved to be every bit as popular as those of his more established colleagues. The opera tour took him to Poland, Germany, Spain, and Switzerland. Metternich was able to return to the hospital in Switzerland during the tour where he had recovered from tuberculosis in 1938. He was happy to give a special performance for the patients and staff at the sanatorium and to demonstrate that there was hope of recovery after all. The patients were amazed at his ability to sing and at the extent of his recovery.

After two successful seasons at the Deutsches Opernhaus, Rode renewed Metternich's contract for two more seasons (1942-1944). This meant an increase in pay and the opportunity to sing the leading role of his choice. He chose Count di Luna in Verdi's *Il trovatore*. The *Intendant* agreed that this was a wise choice, as only two of the eight other baritones in the opera house had Count di Luna in their repertoire. Metternich also tackled the role of Amonasro in Verdi's *Aida* before learning the role of Renato in *Un ballo in maschera* with only two weeks notice for a special performance for German officers, soldiers on leave, and university students. A young Elisabeth Schwarzkopf made her debut that evening in the role of Oscar.

As World War II drew to a close in Europe in 1944, Wilhelm Rode was forced to resign his position as *Intendant* at the Deutsches Opernhaus. Rode had

been a favorite of Adolf Hitler but Josef Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda, fired him in Hitler's absence. Frederic Spotts refers to the cultural and political situation in Germany and Wilhelm Rode's position in *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*:

In the end the most immediate way Hitler influenced musical life was by raising the quality of performances to the highest possible standard. His primary means was through liberal financing of orchestras, soloists, instrumentalists, and opera productions. His munificence put him on a level with some of the patrons of history. He undoubtedly had an excellent ear for conducting talent- he considered Busch, Furtwängler, and Clemens Krauss the best of their time- and selected conductors with as much care as he chose military commanders. Though disgusted by their childish vanity, he largely ignored personal and political considerations in deciding appointments. He disliked Knappertsbusch, who was politically reactionary, admired Fritz Busch, who was on the left, and promoted Krauss despite his not belonging to the party or Nazi organizations. His concern was to match his favorite conductors with the orchestras and opera that were of the greatest interest to him. After Berlin, these were Dresden, Bayreuth, Munich, and following the incorporation of Austria in the Reich, Vienna. He also watched over the careers of concertmasters and the quality of orchestral playing, constantly comparing the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics based on newly developed tape recordings. He was apparently a good judge of voice and did not allow his judgement to be swayed by politics or personal feelings. When he felt that Bockelmann, von Manowarda, and Rode- good friends and good Nazis all- had passed their prime, he wanted them to retire.⁸

Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt replaced Rode. Rode remained temporarily at the theater to help with the transition but then disappeared. He and Metternich didn't meet again until after the war. The new opera director, Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt, sent word that he would be attending Metternich's next performance

⁸ Frederic Spotts. *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*. (New York: Overlook Press, 2002), 287-288.

of Verdi's *Il trovatore* and that an appointment would be scheduled to discuss his future at the Deutsches Opernhaus. Metternich recalled the meeting:

Schmidt-Isserstedt scheduled a meeting with me and said, 'Herr Metternich, you have a fantastic voice, but you are baritone number nine in this theater. We have nine baritones. The others are older and more established than you are. Do you plan to wait until they all die off? Wouldn't you rather work at another opera house where a baritone like you is needed for the big Italian roles? It wouldn't have to be a small theater. You could get a job in any large opera house with your voice. I'll make a deal with you. See what you can find. If you find something else, accept it. If not, you can always stay here in Berlin with me. We can afford to keep you. You don't have to leave Berlin, but feel free to look for something else in the meantime.'⁹

Metternich took Schmidt-Isserstedt's advice. Only four weeks later, he signed a four-year contract to be the premiere baritone with the Wiesbaden State Theater. Unfortunately, Metternich sang only two performances at the end of the 1943-44 season before the Wiesbaden Theater had to close and his contract became invalid. Goebels was forced to close the German theaters in the autumn of 1944 and once again, Metternich faced the draft. American troops were closing in on the city of Aachen, near Wiesbaden. Schmitt-Isserstedt advised Metternich to return to Berlin in order to avoid the draft. He discovered that the theaters in Berlin were also closed. His theater colleagues were employed in factories, working for the war effort.

Metternich managed to find a job at a bank near Potsdamer Platz in Berlin for the last six months of the war. He took cover in air raid shelters as the Allies bombed the city by night. His apartment and the rest of Berlin were burned

⁹ Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.

in the devastation. He witnessed the arrival of the Russian troops as well as the other Allies. When the war ended, a new era began for Josef Metternich in Berlin.

CHAPTER 3

AN INTERNATIONAL CAREER

At the end of 1944, Berlin lay in ruins. The Deutsches Opernhaus was destroyed. As part of the post-war settlement, Berlin was divided into four sectors, controlled by the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. Metternich found himself in the part of the city that was the British sector. The theaters slowly reopened and members of the former Deutsches Opernhaus and Volksoper came together to form what would become the Städtische Oper. Hans Neunzig describes the post-war situation in Berlin in his book, *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: A Biography*:

The Allies found the machinations of the Cold War much more important than an examination of Germany's past, and the conquered Germans were looking above all for food, that is, survival, but also for the food of culture.¹⁰

Performances took place in the only opera house left standing: the former Volksoper (now called the Theater des Westens). The new *Intendant* of the Städtische Oper Berlin was the former opera singer and actor, Michael Bohnen. Russian and British “theater officers,” who were officially in charge, took part in the process of hiring new singers. The new bosses were looking for singers with

¹⁰ Neunzig, Hans A., *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: A Biography*. (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1998), 49.

the best voices without regard for past titles or achievements and all singers were required to audition. The new *Intendant*, Michael Bohnen, remembered Metternich well from an excellent performance of *Lohengrin* in Berlin before the war. Bohnen was impressed with his voice. He and the theater officers engaged Metternich as the premiere baritone at the new Städtische Oper Berlin. This was a fine opportunity for the young baritone in post-war Berlin.

Metternich also met his future wife, coloratura soprano Lieselotte Losch, at that time. Losch had sung at the Volksoper Berlin before the war. Great singers had become rare in post-war Berlin. Losch and Metternich appeared in many of the first concerts at the new Städtische Oper Berlin. In the early days after the war, audience members opened umbrellas in the winter as rain poured through the roof of the unheated theater. Conditions were somewhat better at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in the eastern sector of Berlin. That company was able to use the Admiralspalast theater which had good acoustics and a beautiful stage. Both the Städtische Oper and the Staatsoper lacked great singers, however, during this post-war period in Berlin. Many of the more mature singers who had performed during World War II lacked the strength to continue performing after the war. Metternich regretted that tenor Franz Völker's attempt to return to the stage after the war was unsuccessful. Völker had been a legendary Lohengrin of the 20th century. Beethoven's *Fidelio* was the first post-war production at the Städtische Oper Berlin with Metternich performing the role of the Minister. The *Intendant*, Bohnen, appreciated Metternich's exceptional

voice and believed in his potential to become an exceptional actor. Bohnen worked with him to achieve that goal. Metternich described a coaching with him:

Bohnen took me aside and told me to lie on my back on the grand piano. He said, 'Now sing the Prologue from *Pagliacci*.' I said I couldn't, to which he replied, 'Yes, you can. You just have to want to do it. Sing!' Ambition spurred me on. I was indeed able to sing while lying on my back on the grand piano. Bohnen said, 'Now you see. You won't necessarily have to do that on stage, but you need to learn how to not only move freely but also to be still, depending on what is required of you. It isn't enough to simply look straight ahead and sing like a concert singer.' Bohnen worked with me on each individual role. 'You have to do it like this,' he would say, 'Grab the knife. It has to be like a Hollywood film. Quickly. Do it with conviction.'¹¹

Bohnen helped Metternich prepare the role of Tonio in *Pagliacci*, showing him how to portray the character of Tonio even without the clown costume and fake hunchback. Metternich learned how to portray the role convincingly and passionately as he stood in front of the curtain in the prologue. Bohnen worked with him to develop his acting skills. Throughout his career, Metternich had his greatest successes portraying the coarser characters of the operatic repertoire rather than the more refined roles such as the Count in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*. The rehearsals with Michael Bohnen gave Metternich a new confidence and ability to move about convincingly on stage. Metternich gave Bohnen credit for his dramatic training while he built his repertoire at the Städtische Oper Berlin. After successfully performing Alfio in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Tonio in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, and Iago in Verdi's *Otello*, he sang not only the title role in Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* but also the role of Amonasro in Verdi's *Aida*. In 1947, Michael Bohnen eventually lost his position as General Manager during

¹¹ Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.

Germany's denazification period. He was replaced by Heinz Tietjen who had served as Artistic Director for Winnifred Wagner at the Bayreuth Festival ¹² and had been the General Manager at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden.¹³

In the meantime, a new production of Verdi's *La Traviata* was in rehearsal for the 1948-1949 season at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in the eastern sector of Berlin. The cast included such well-known singers as soprano Erna Berger and tenor Peter Anders. The *Traviata* production was, however, in jeopardy just two weeks before opening night when the baritone who was to sing the role of Germont had to drop out of the piece. The chorus and orchestra members had already prepared their parts at that point and the set and costumes were ready, but the company had no baritone for the role of Germont. Matters were complicated by an unwritten rule that the two opera houses, one in the east and the other in the western part Berlin, would not "steal" each other's singers. The two houses had always functioned separately, but Berlin was now isolated. It could take up to three days for a substitute singer to reach the city. News had spread to the Staatsoper Unter den Linden about the new number-one baritone at the Städtische Oper. Metternich received a telephone call from the Staatsoper, asking him to help them out of the difficult situation. Would he consider taking over the role of Germont in *La Traviata* at such short notice? Metternich had always dreamed of singing at the Staatsoper. Although he had never sung the role, he agreed to learn it and completed the trio of three main characters. The production became one of the

¹² Brigitte Hanaan, *Winnifred Wagner: A Life at the Heart of Hitler's Bayreuth*. Orlando, (Florida: Harcourt Inc, 2005), 148-149.

¹³ Frederic Spotts: *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*, (New York: The Overlook Press, 2002), 294.

most memorable successes in Berlin. He remained good friends with Peter Anders and Erna Berger for years to come. *La Traviata* was the first of many productions for Metternich at the Staatsoper in Berlin. Within three years he was singing twenty evenings a year at the Staatsoper in addition to his twenty evenings at the Städtische Oper. The administration at both theaters, as well as the Allied forces, worked together to make it possible for Metternich to go back and forth between the two sectors of the city. At the Staatsoper Unter den Linden he sang Amfortas in Wagner's *Parsifal*, his first official *Un ballo in maschera*, and Mandryka in Richard Strauss' *Arabella*. Peter Heyworth reported on the state of opera in post-war Berlin in the November 1953 issue of *Opera*:

It would be idle to pretend that opera in Berlin is more than a pale shadow of the legendary days of the Weimar Republic, when at one moment Kleiber, Klemperer, and Walter were musical directors of the city's three opera houses. Today, Berlin can no longer offer all the enticements, social and cultural as well as financial, of a metropolis. It is forced to compete for artists with the larger opera houses of Western Germany, and to do so at considerable disadvantage, for few people are willing to exchange the comparative security of, say, Munich or Hamburg for the tense atmosphere of a city whose only sure link with the West is an aeroplane. But if Berlin is no longer one of the great centres of opera, the degree to which the Städtische Oper has shared in this resilient city's general recovery since the blockade of 1948 was amply demonstrated during the September festival, when in the course of twenty-eight days it put on no less than twenty-five productions. The opera is still administered from its bombed home on the Bismarckstrasse, but it is housed in the Theater des Westens, a prim and nondescript building near Bahnhof Zoo, put up in the days around the turn of the century when even the Germans were beginning to have qualms about the inflated baroque of the new empire.¹⁴

¹⁴ Peter Heyworth, *Opera* 4, no.11 (November 1953): 680.

The new *Intendant* in the west at the Städtische Oper, Heinz Tietjen, brought Metternich “down to earth” again. Hans Neunzig mentions Tietjen, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau’s mentor in *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: A Biography*:

Tietjen, then sixty-seven, a pupil of the conductor Arthur Niekisch, had been *Intendant* of the Städtische Oper from 1925 to 1927, and then *Intendant* of the Prussian State Theater through 1945. His work with the stage designer Emil Preetorius is seen as particularly significant in their development of new ways of staging Wagnerian operas. Since 1933, Tietjen had been the artistic director at Bayreuth and was producing Wagner there as early as 1931. Although his steadfast loyalty to Bayreuth, and later his position as *Intendant* in Berlin during the Nazi period, had been controversial, his abilities as a theater director were not.²²

Metternich and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau were two of the five highest-paid singers at the Städtische Oper but as time passed, Tietjen gave Metternich fewer and fewer roles to sing. When Metternich broached the subject with Tietjen, the *Intendant* replied, “What more do you want? You have the highest salary. When the right role comes along for you, we’ll cast you.” Tietjen’s attitude towards Metternich was likely the result of his own past. Metternich explains in his interview that Heinz Tietjen and Michael Bohnen were enemies in the business. Metternich was Bohnen’s protégé. Furthermore, in *Winifred Wagner: A Life at the Heart of Hitler’s Bayreuth*, Brigitte Hamaan reveals the history of the animosity between Tietjen and Metternich’s other important mentor, Wilhelm Rode:

In April, 1933, a press campaign was launched against Tietjen, the most powerful representative of the ‘old theatre system.’ It was run from behind the scenes by the Reich Propaganda Ministry under Goebbels. His aim was simultaneously to strike a blow at his rival Goering, who as Minister-President of Prussia was Tietjen’s boss. The prime mover of the campaign was State Commissar Hans Hinkel, Prussian regional head of the Fighting League for German Culture. His ambition was to cut down to size the cosmopolitan, progressive cultural life of Berlin, to fit the dimensions of

Nazi Aryan-racist ideology. The baritone, Wilhelm Rode, who hated Tietjen, served Hinkel as a keen informer.¹⁵

In 1950, Metternich received an offer from Covent Garden in London to sing Wagner's *Der Fliegender Holländer* in English. It was unusual at the time for a German singer to sing a role in English in London, but Metternich accepted the challenge. His relationship with the Heinz Tietjen had gone from bad to worse. Metternich noticed that Tietjen's wife would leave her box at the theater just before his arias. He was also told that Frau Tietjen had said, "I just can't stand this impertinent, forced singing!" When Metternich learned of this, he felt compelled to confront Tietjen about the matter in a letter, whereupon the *Intendant* demanded that Metternich name the colleague who had made the claim. Tietjen threatened to take Metternich to court when he refused to reveal the colleague's name. It was at this point that Metternich got word that the Covent Garden production of *Der Fliegender Holländer* was to be directed by none other than Heinz Tietjen. Metternich recalled:

I smiled to myself. The theater agent was the English officer, Mr. Linch. He knew me and loved my voice. I said, 'Mr. Linch, this is a problem. You need to call Webster [the boss at Covent Garden] and tell him that it won't work out. Only one of us can do Covent Garden.' I then wrote a letter to Tietjen, saying, 'I cannot agree to your demands in the matter that we spoke of. If you feel that you must take me to court, then so be it. This is regrettable, as I have just been informed that we are to work together in London in *Der Fliegender Holländer*. I cannot expect for us to work together under such circumstances. I'll cancel Covent Garden. Sincerely, Josef Metternich.' I soon heard from Mr. Linch, who said, 'Mr. Webster has sent word that the director is not important. We want Metternich.'¹⁶

¹⁵ Hanaan, Brigitte, *Winifred Wagner: A Life at the Heart of Hitler's Bayreuth*. Orlando, (Florida: Harcourt Inc, 2005), 191.

¹⁶ Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.

It was just as Metternich had hoped. As he put on his make-up before the next performance of *Aida* at the Städtische Oper, he received his very first visit from the *Intendant* in his dressing room. Tietjen began, “Herr Metternich, I’m sorry to bother you right before the performance, but I knew that I would find you here. We’ve let this whole matter get out of hand. I’m older and should be the wiser one. What do you say? Let’s forget the whole thing.” Metternich replied, “That would be fine. As you wish. Thank you and goodbye.”¹⁷ Metternich and Tietjen proceeded to have a fine time working together in London. An article in the British publication *Opera* in 1950 read:

STÄDTISCHE OPER, BERLIN. Since Heinz Tietjen became Intendant of this house, the standard of its personnel and performances has been improving. The early part of the present season has been marked by the premiere of Bodart’s *Spanische Nacht*, chronicled merely for the sake of completeness as the work achieved little success. This was followed by a new production of *Carmen* which the veteran, Leo Blech, returning to Berlin for the first time since Hitler days, conducted and produced.....DEUTSCHE STAATSOOPER Joseph Keilberth of Dresden has assumed the leading conductorship; he led the revival of *Ballo in Maschera*, with Christel Göltz (another Dresden recruit), Erich Witte, and Josef Metternich.¹⁸

Maestro Georg Solti became the successful new general music director at the Munich Opera in 1949. The Berlin audience was also eager to see him conduct, and performances with the Berlin Philharmonic were scheduled. Flights to Berlin were still scarce in post-war Germany, but the Allied forces arranged a flight for Solti’s debut with the Philharmonic. The first performance was followed

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Harold Rosenthal, *Opera* I, no.1 (February 1950): 43.

by a second due to popular demand, giving Solti a free evening between performances in Berlin where the streets were still lined with rubble. He attended the Städtische Oper that evening and heard Metternich sing a small but impressive role in Tchaikovsky's *Die Zauberin*. The next morning, Metternich's phone rang and Solti asked to meet him at his hotel. Metternich recalled the conversation:

I hurried to the hotel. Solti said, 'I had a free evening yesterday and saw an awful opera. The production was miserable until you came on stage with your amazing voice. It would be perfect to have you in Munich with us. I have two tenors who would perfectly match you in temperament and stature. Hans Hopf and Lorenz Fehrenberger. I simply don't have a baritone that matches them at the moment. Would you like to come to Munich?' I acted as though I were considering his offer before replying, 'Jawohl. Jawohl.' Solti said, 'I'll take care of everything.'¹⁹

A few months later in 1950, Metternich was invited to sing *Il trovatore* in Munich where he eventually became a member of the Münchner Staatsoper. His contract was to last for twenty-one years until 1971. In 1950, Günter Rennert, the General Manager in Hamburg, also contacted Metternich and wrote: "Dear Herr Metternich, everyone is talking about you. It's high time that you sing here in Hamburg. I would like for you to sing *Rigoletto* in April." Metternich sang the performance and accepted a contract in Hamburg. His tenure lasted for thirteen years. A November 1951 article in *Opera* announced the 1951-1952 season:

HAMBURG. The 1951-52 season at the Staatsoper opened on September 2 with a performance of d'Albert's *Tiefland*. Aga Joesten as Martha, Caspar Bröchler as Sebastiano, the conductor was Horst Stein. ...The repertory further includes Ibert's *Angelique*, *Electra*, and *Fra Diavolo* as well as the obvious favorites. Singers include Clara Ebers, Hedy Gura,

¹⁹ Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.

Gusta Hammer, Lore Hoffmann, Maria von Ilsovay, Ilse Hoffweg, Ilse Koegel, Kathe Maas, Martha Mödl, Anneliese Rothenberger, Erna Schlüther, Elfriede Wasserthal, Helene Werth, Martina Wulf, Mathieu Ahlersmeyer, Peter Anders, Gottlob Frick, Fritz Gollnitz, Theo Hermann, Josef Metternich, und Rudolf Schock.²⁰

A review of Metternich's performance in *Arabella* at the Hamburg State

Opera can be found in the October 19, 1953 issue of *Opera News*:

Strauss' *Arabella* was distinguished by Lisa Della Casa's justly famed portrayal of the title role, Josef Metternich's fine vocalism, (with traditional stage deportment) in the role of Mandryka, and the excellent settings of the talented designer Helmut Jürgens.²¹

The magazine *Opera* reported on the following 1951 productions in Berlin:

Berlin: The Staatsoper began its season with a performance of *Meistersinger* with Tiana Lemnitz, Jaro Prohaska, and Erich Witte in the cast. The season's first new production was Verdi's *Macbeth* with Martha Mödl, Josef Metternich, Theo Hermann, and Alfred Hülger. Joseph Keilberth was the conductor and Wolf Völker the producer.²²

Berlin: In addition to *Albert Herring*, the season at the Städtische Oper has included performances of *Tristan und Isolde* conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler, with Paula Buchner, Johanna Blatter, Josef Metternich, Ludwig Suthaus, and Josef Greindl.²³

Berlin: At the Städtische Oper, Meyerbeer's *L'Africana* made its re-appearance after over a quarter of a century's absence. Elfriede Wasserthal was the Selika, Hans Beirer the Vasco and Josef Metternich the Nalusko; the cast further included Irma Beilke, Josef Greindl, Wilhelm Lang, und Helmut Krebs. Leopold Ludwig was the conductor, Julius Kapp the producer and the scenery and costumes were designed by Josef Fenneker.²⁴

²⁰ Harold Rosenthal. *Opera* 2, no.12 (November 1951): 654.

²¹ Paul Jaretzki. *Opera News* 18, no. 1 (October 19, 1953):18.

²² Harold Rosenthal, *Opera* 2, no 2 (January 1951): 75

²³ Patrick Lynch, *Opera* 2, no. 4 (March 1951): 192.

²⁴ Harold Rosenthal, *Opera* 2, no. 9 (August 1951) 471.

The directors of the large record companies Electrola and Deutsche Grammaphone were based in Berlin in the 1940s and 1950s. It was, of course, convenient for these major companies to hire singers from the large Berlin opera houses. Tenor Rudolf Schock paved the way with a soft, lyric voice that was ideally suited for the recording studio. Metternich was contacted by the director of the Electrola studio, Fritz Gans, who was looking for a baritone to record with Schock. Metternich recorded a couple of solo records to test the public's reaction, followed by recordings with Schock. This was the beginning of Metternich's affiliation with Electrola. His first recording was a 78 rpm of Figaro's aria from *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Valentin's prayer from *Faust* on the flip side. While under contract with Electrola, he was given permission to record with Deutsche Grammaphone as well.

In 1952, Metternich recorded the role of Donner in *Das Rheingold* with conductor, Wilhelm Schüchter, who had been assistant conductor to Herbert von Karajan. Von Karajan was on tour in Hamburg with the Wiener Symphoniker at the time of the *Rheingold* recording. Metternich recalled Von Karajan's visit to the radio station on the Rothenbaum Chausee:

Von Karajan made his entrance. Everyone was excited to see him there. Herr Schüchter announced, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, the maestro!' I happened to be recording my segment at the time [the role of Donner]. When we finished, Karajan approached me. 'Herr Metternich, I had heard your name, but I had not yet had the pleasure of meeting you. I must say, what you just sang was unbelievable! Your voice is exactly what I need. Wouldn't you like to come with me to La Scala? We're going to perform *Lohengrin*, and you could be my Heerrufer.' I said, 'If necessary, I'll walk there!' ²⁵

²⁵ Interview with Josef Metternich, House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005

The encounter with Herbert von Karajan led to Metternich's *Lohengrin* debut at La Scala in Milan and to many other appearances in Italy. Metternich continued to study the Italian *bel canto* technique during his stay in Italy and became involved in discussions with the Italian professors. They said, "You have a phenomenal voice but you can't sing like that in Italy. You have no *passaggio*. [bridge] You must learn to cover. You sing too 'openly'." ²⁶ Metternich explained that he was happy with his "open technique". He maintained that was not ruining his voice and was not "blasting" the bright tones. Metternich knew that he had his technique under control. He and his wife continued to listen to master classes in Italy over the years. He and the Italian teachers often discussed the *passaggio* and "covering" when passing from one vocal register to another.

Metternich worked with eighty-year-old conductor Leo Blech for the first time at the Städtische Oper in 1951. A new production of Verdi's *Forza del Destino* was planned with *Intendant* Heinz Tietjen directing. General music director, Ferenc Fricssay, was to conduct. Popular young baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, cast as Rodrigo, eventually decided that the role was too heavy for him. Without Fischer-Dieskau, Heinz Tietjen and Ferenc Fricssay lost interest in the production. Replacements needed to be found as the orchestra, chorus, set and costumes were ready for production. Metternich was the obvious candidate to take over the role, although his relationship with Tietjen continued to be problematic. Tietjen and Metternich once again disagreed when the *Intendant*

²⁶ Ibid.

insisted that Metternich sing the part of the dwarf, Alberich, in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* at the Städtische Oper. Metternich flatly refused the role of Alberich on the grounds that it could harm his voice. When Fischer-Dieskau dropped out of *La forza del destino*, Metternich received a letter from the Tietjen, informing him that he was needed for the role of Rodrigo. Metternich replied, "Nothing would please me more." Maestro Leo Blech conducted the piece. The production was a great success and received rave reviews in the press.

CHAPTER 4

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA

In 1951, Rudolf Bing, the newly appointed director of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, traveled to Europe to visit the major opera houses. He attended performances at La Scala and the Wiener Staatsoper. Bing, an Austrian, had worked in the administration of the Deutsches Opernhaus in Berlin in the 1930's, hiring guest singers, planning rehearsal schedules, and making sure that performances ran smoothly. He was eventually forced to flee Germany. "Many people had to escape when the Nazis took over. Since that time, Herr Bing had demonstrated abroad that he could do more than just put together a rehearsal schedule. He had founded the Glyndeborne and Edinburgh Festivals and had become famous."²⁷ Bing planned a visit to Berlin in 1951 to visit the opera house where he had once worked.

Heinz Tietjen prepared for Bing's visit. The Städtische Oper's best productions were to be presented. Wagner's *Tannhäuser* would showcase Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* for soprano Elisabeth Grümmer, and Verdi's *La forza del destino* would be conducted by Leo Blech. Blech met with Metternich before Bing's arrival, and told him that he needed to

²⁷ Rudolph Bing, *5000 Nights at the Opera* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 142-143.

be in good voice for the next performance. Blech was certain that Rudolf Bing would engage Metternich at the Metropolitan Opera when he heard him sing. Metternich thought that he was joking, but Blech explained that he had worked with Bing before the war and knew his tastes. Blech predicted that Bing would choose to attend the performance of *La forza del destino* with Metternich. He remembered that Bing didn't care for Wagner, was bored by Mozart, but loved Verdi.

It happened just as Leo Blech had predicted. The morning after the performance, Metternich's telephone rang. He was told that Mr. Bing would like to meet him at his hotel before he checked out. When Metternich arrived, Bing said, "Herr Metternich, I was amazed last night. I have finally heard a real Italian voice in my travels across Europe. You are a German singer with an absolutely Italian sound; the first one that I have heard."²⁸ Bing told Metternich that he planned to engage him at the Metropolitan Opera. It was to be the first time in the history of the Met that a German singer would debut in an Italian role. Metternich would have to be patient, though, as Bing could not hire him immediately. The American Theater Union (AGMA) would not approve a visa for a German singer hired to sing Italian repertoire. Bing explained that he would need some time to figure out a way to bring Metternich to New York. James A. Drake's account in *Richard Tucker: A Biography* may reveal an additional reason for Bing's interest in finding a new baritone for the Met in 1951:

²⁸ Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.

By the end of his first season as general manager, Rudolf Bing had firmly established himself, in the words of critic Howard Taubman, as “the Lord and Master of that Thirty-Ninth Street temple of temperament as well as art, the Metropolitan Opera House.” Taubman might have added that the new Lord was distinctly biblical –he gave, and he also took away. In Bing’s second season, 1951/1952, Tucker was the benefactor of the giving, and Robert Merrill the object of the taking away. Late in March 1951, when Bing was preparing for the Metropolitan’s annual spring tour, Merrill received word from Paramount Pictures that he should plan to be in Hollywood from April through July, shooting his first motion picture. Unfortunately for Merrill, Rudolf Bing expected him to be on a train to Atlanta and points West for Met tour performances in April and May. As he watched a case of conflicting contracts develop before his eyes, Merrill regretted his hasty decision to sign a contract with Paramount. The whole affair had begun rather as a lark with a screen test leading to a contract in 1950. Naively, Merrill had signed a lucrative contract without realizing that Paramount would demand his services so soon. Bing’s harsh reaction led Merrill’s management to issue an ultimatum, essentially demanding to be released from most of the tour. At a press conference on April 8, 1951, Bing publicly answered the ultimatum. Over a breach of contract, he said, he had just fired Robert Merrill.²⁹

In the meantime, Metternich continued to be in demand at major European opera houses. The magazine *Opera* reported on 1952 productions of *Tannhäuser* and *Rigoletto* at the Städtische Oper in Berlin and *Fidelio* at the Hamburgische Staatsoper:

Horst Kogler sends the following report from Berlin: *Tannhäuser* has been refurbished at the Städtische Oper: this theatre has for some time been presenting a version of this work which combined the best aspects of both the Dresden and Paris versions. The present revival is now entirely the Paris version of this work with the extended Bachanal and shortened Sängerkrieg. The casts have included Ludwig Suthaus and Hans Beirer as Tannhäuser, Fischer-Dieskau and Josef Metternich as Wolfram, Gottlob Frick and Josef Greindl as the Landgraf, Martha Musial as Elisabeth and Margarete Klose as Venus. Leopold Ludwig was the conductor and Heinz Tietjen the producer.³⁰

This season’s production of *Fidelio* at the Hamburgische Staatsoper is sung by the cast that will be appearing at Edinburgh later this year, Martha

²⁹ James A. Drake. *Richard Tucker: A Biography* (New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc, 1984),127-128.

³⁰ Horst Kogler, *Opera* 3, no.2 (February 1952), 99.

Mödl, Lore Hoffmann, Peter Anders, Josef Metternich, Theo Hermann, Mathieu Ahlersmeyer, and Kurt Marschner; the conductor is Leopold Ludwig, the producer Günter Rennert, and the settings are designed by Alfred Siercke.³¹

Rigoletto was given a new production by Georg Reinhardt; this was quite conventional from the stage point of view, but musically with Ferenc Fricsay in charge of the orchestra, the work sounded fresh and thrilling. Josef Metternich sang the title part, Rudolf Schock was the Duke, Rita Streich the Gilda and Margarete Klose the Magdalena.³²

In addition to his contracts in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and Milan, Metternich was engaged at the Wiener Staatsoper in Vienna. The April 1953 issue of *Opera* magazine reported:

Following the new production of *Alceste* the Vienna Staatsoper has mostly concentrated on repertory pieces during the last few weeks. The seventieth anniversary of Wagner's death was commemorated on February 13 with a performance of *Lohengrin* conducted by and sung by Zadek, Höngen, Gostic, Kamann, Frick, and Metternich. On February 15 and 17, Furtwängler conducted scenes from *Götterdämmerung* with Anny Konetzni, Hilde Konetzni, Höngen, Metternich, and Frick. The new soprano, Teresa Stich-Randall has been heard as Violetta with Roswaenge and Metternich.³³

The May, 1953, issue of *Opera* included these notifications:

Austria: Verdi's *Macbeth* was the most recent new production at the Vienna Staatsoper with Elisabeth Höngen and Josef Metternich in the leading roles, and Gottlob Frick, Laszlo Szemere, Anny Felbermeyer, Erik Majkut, and Adolf Vogel in the smaller parts. Karl Böhm was the conductor and Oscar Fritz Schuh the producer. John Prichard was in charge of a refurbished *Rigoletto*, which was produced by Domgraf-Fassbänder with Metternich in the title part, Lipp as Gilda, and Dermota as the Duke.³⁴

³¹ Horst Koegler, *Opera* 3, no. 3 (March 1952): 165.

³² Horst Koegler, *Opera* 3, no. 4 (April 1952): 229.

³³ Harold Rosenthal, *Opera* 4, no. 4 (April 1953): 226.

³⁴ Harold Rosenthal, *Opera* 4, no. 5 (May 1953): 292-293.

The July 1953, issue of *Opera* includes a review of Metternich's Macbeth in Hamburg which reads: "Josef Metternich, who is considered one of the finest German baritones for Italian opera, sang Macbeth. As is usual with this artist, his interpretation of the part was highly intelligent and there was much to admire in his singing."³⁵ The August, 1953, issue of *Opera* documents the Vienna State Opera's 1953 "Cycle of Austrian Operas":

During the Vienna Festival weeks, the Staatsoper gave a cycle of performances under the title "Zyklus Österreichischer Opernwerke", The Staatsoper mustered their best artists for these performances which were as follows: *Die Zauberflöte* with Lipp, Jurinac, Loose, Schock, Weber, Kunz, Poell, conductor Böhm; *Fidelio* with Goltz, Seefried, Hopf, Weber, Schoeffler, Metternich, Schock, conductor Böhm; *Figaro* with Reining, Güden, Jurinac, Anday, Schöffler, Kunz, Pernerstorfer, Klein, conductor Böhm; *Don Giovanni* with Welitsch, H. Konetzni, Seefried, London, Koréh, Dermota, Kunz, conductor Moralt.³⁶

Following his success in *Lohengrin* at La Scala, Metternich was scheduled to perform Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* there with Herbert von Karajan in the autumn of 1953. Karajan, however, refused to do the production without a new stage set and cancelled. Metternich was disappointed at the cancellation, but his spirits lifted two weeks later when a telegram arrived from Rudolf Bing at the Metropolitan Opera. It had been two years since Bing's conversation with Metternich in Berlin. Bing's telegram read: "Offer Wolfram in *Tannhäuser*. Arrive in October. November premiere. Letter will follow." The letter arrived a few days later: "Herr Metternich, the time has come. Prepare *La forza del destino*, *Trovatore*, and *Aida* in Italian. I cannot reveal details at this point, but learn the

³⁵ Wolfgang Nölter, *Opera* 4, no. 7 (July 1953): 410.

³⁶ Harold Rosenthal, *Opera* 4, no. 8 (August 1953): 495.

Italian text. In the meantime, you will be under contract to sing Wolfram in *Tannhäuser*, double cast with George London. Please destroy this letter.”³⁷

In the 1950s, operas in Germany were performed in German. The offer from Bing gave Metternich limited time to learn the Italian texts. He arrived in New York in October 1953 and met with Bing, the Met chorus director, and colleagues from the administration. The group looked concerned as Bing explained that the premiere of *Tannhäuser*, for which Metternich had been engaged, would have to be postponed until December. Metternich was still under contract and Bing explained that he needed to schedule performances for him in the meantime. Then he asked Metternich if he might be able to sing the role of Carlos in *La forza del destino* in Italian. Metternich replied that he had never performed the role in Italian. When he told them that he had once studied it in preparation for a radio broadcast, Bing exclaimed, “Do you think you could do the entire opera? Could you take it over in a week and a half? Leonard Warren isn’t in New York at the moment and we’re unable to schedule the opera when he is out of town. *Forza* is our most popular piece. We would be relieved if you would step in.” Metternich said, “I would be glad to. I’ll do my best.”³⁸

The other colleagues beamed. As Bing accompanied Metternich to the elevator after the meeting, he muttered, “If this goes wrong, I’ll lose my job and so will you.”³⁹ Metternich assured him that he had come prepared. He sang two

³⁷ Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

orchestra rehearsals before his debut with tenor Richard Tucker, soprano Zinka Milanov, and bass Jerome Hines. It was an all-star cast. Metternich was nervous at his first performance but felt vocally in great form. The debut at the Metropolitan Opera was a success with good reviews for Metternich. The *New York Times* reported:

La Forza del Destino was performed at the Metropolitan Opera on November 21, 26, and December 4, and 14 with Milanov in the role of Leonora. Richard Tucker was Don Alvaro, Lubomir Vichogonov played the Marquis, Josef Mettemich was Don Carlo, Jerome Hines portrayed the role of Padre Guardiano, and Maestro Fritz Stiedry conducted the orchestra.⁴⁰

Metternich was introduced to the American public in the following article from the January 18, 1954 issue of *Opera News*:

Josef Metternich, who made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Don Carlo in the first *La forza del destino* of the season, was born in Cologne between the first and second world wars. His family was musical: from his father he inherited both voice and musicality, for there was much music-making in the Metternich home. At the age of ten, the boy was playing violin in an amateur orchestra but soon he came to a decision: singing was the profession he longed for. In order to earn money for singing lessons, he seized every opportunity to play the violin in dance orchestras. He was just fifteen. Still in his teens, Metternich applied for an audition with the Cologne Radio and was permitted to sing once with a full-size orchestra. Without any preparation, he found himself in the opening measures of the *Pagliacci* Prologue. This was his first success as a singer and aroused the impulse for further study. With his first earnings, the youth went to Berlin at the beginning of the war as a student just as soon as he could leave Cologne. He made rapid progress and after a short apprenticeship was invited to audition before Wilhelm Rode, the director of the Municipal Theater. From the first aria, Rode was so amazed that he asked the lad where he could keep such a voice, and promptly engaged him for his

⁴⁰ N., Worobj, (1996). *The legacy of zinka milanov* (Order No. 9623155). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text. (304295538). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304295538?accountid=13965> pg 111.

theatre. Such modest roles as Silvio gave him an opportunity for further study between performances.

In 1945, at the end of the war, the great baritone Michael Bohnen (Metropolitan, 1922-1932) himself as renowned an actor as singer, took over the direction of the Municipal Opera House. Recognizing Metternich's talents, which extended from the delicate lyric style to the high dramatic repertory, the older man took the younger under his wing. With Bohnen, Metternich studied *Rigoletto* and *Iago* and was promptly cast in Verdi revivals. Early successes spurred the young baritone to master the entire dramatic Italian repertory. In 1949, he was engaged by Hamburg and Munich. In 1950, eight performances of *The Flying Dutchman* followed in Convent Garden. Then came an engagement in Vienna where his *Jochanaan* enjoyed a tremendous success. Next, Metternich was invited to Milan to sing Telramund in a performance of *Lohengrin* under Herbert von Karajan, followed by a *Kurvenal* at La Scala. In the summer of 1952 he sang Pizarro with the Hamburg Company at the Edinburgh Festival. By this time, the baritone had thirty leading roles to his credit.

His voice has been recorded both in such full length operas as *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and *Salome* and in single arias by Elekrola, Columbia London, German Grammophone and Philips. Soft and warm in timbre, noble in projection, both lyrically tender and heavily dramatic, his voice is constantly disciplined to the nuances and characterizations required. A tireless worker with an inexhaustible vitality, Metternich prefers as his hobbies the sports of football, automobiling, and funny stories, which he loves to relate by the hour, gladly exchanging his own supply for those of his friends.⁴¹

Metternich understood that it was difficult for many of the American singers at the Met to welcome the arrival of a German colleague so soon after the war. Although his colleagues were polite, he could overhear them referring to him as "the German." Even the stage doorman looked the other way when he arrived at the theater, so Metternich was particularly moved and surprised when Richard Tucker's wife came by his dressing room on the evening of his Metropolitan Opera debut:

⁴¹ Liesel Mueller. *Opera News* (January 18, 1954): 10.

I was putting on my make-up. It is important to know; Richard Tucker was Jewish and a cantor in the synagogue. His wife was also Jewish. That was a difficult situation for us Germans. Hans Hopf had also found it very difficult. He sang at the Met before I did. On the evening of my premiere, there was a knock at the door. An elegantly dressed woman entered, asking, 'May I come in for a moment?' I said, 'Of course. Please, come in.' She said, 'I'm Mrs. Tucker. I've just come by to wish you good luck.' Of course Richard Tucker knew that she would stop by. That meant a lot to me. She was Jewish, but had gone out of her way to wish me luck for my premiere.⁵⁰

Metternich felt fortunate to be vocally in top form for his Metropolitan Opera debut. He was accustomed to singing a large repertoire and felt that his voice was still "warmed up" from his European performances. Metternich's debut at the Met went well and he took his curtain call together with Richard Tucker and Zinka Milanov as a trio. Even the great opera stars did not take solo bows at the Met. Milanov and Tucker stood on either side of Metternich as he bowed deeply. When he looked up, he saw that they had disappeared into the wings, leaving him alone onstage for a solo curtain call.

The ensemble of *Forza* met for a morning rehearsal after the second performance. As he rehearsed the duet with Richard Tucker, Metternich had the feeling that Tucker was not comfortable with his position on stage and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Tucker. Would you like for me to come from the right or from the left?" Tucker answered, "That's absolutely no problem. It makes no difference. And by the way, call me Richard."⁴² The other members of the company took note of the gesture and word quickly spread throughout the theater that Richard

⁴² Interview with Josef Metternich, House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005

Tucker had given his German colleague the seal of approval. When Metternich left the theater that day, even the stage doorman acknowledged him.

Metternich sang at the Metropolitan Opera from 1953 to 1957, appearing in Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, *Aida*, *La forza del destino*, *Un ballo in maschera*, and Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* as Tonio. He also sang Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, *Parsifal*, and *Tristan und Isolde* from the German repertoire during his time at the Met. These productions were cast with the world's most famous opera singers. The following review of *La forza del destino* and cast lists of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Tannhäuser* at the Metropolitan Opera and a review of *Aida* at the Hamburg State Opera were published in the magazine, *Opera*, for the 1954-1956 seasons:

La forza del destino, in the Eugene Berman settings new last year, returned with Zinka Milanov again superb as Leonora, Richard Tucker in fine voice as Alvaro, and Josef Metternich making his American début as Carlo. Mr. Metternich, an erect, imposing figure and satisfactory actor, disclosed a middling-large voice, so bright and free that it seemed legitimately Italian in quality-almost a big lyric baritone rather than the burly type usually associated with this role.⁴³

Rudolf Kempe has conducted *Tristan* (Astrid Varnay and Margaret Harshaw; Blanche Thebom; Svanholm and Bernd Aldenhoff; Josef Metternich; Jerome Hines), *Parsifal*, and further performances of *Tannhäuser* (Harshaw, Thebom, Svanholm, Metternich, Luben Vichey).⁴⁴

On the musical side the performance was dominated by Maria von Ilosvay as Amneris... Only Josef Metternich as Amonasro came up to her standard, with Ernst Wiemann an honorable third as the High Priest.⁴⁵

⁴³ James Hinton, Jr, *Opera* 5, no. 4 (April 1954): 214.

⁴⁴ James Hinton, Jr, *Opera* 6, no. 6 (June 1955): 372.

⁴⁵ Wolfgang Nölter, *Opera* 6, no. 12 (December 1955): 758.

The following announcement appeared in the February 7, 1955 issue of *Opera News*: “Josef Metternich, making his first appearance of the Metropolitan Opera season on January 19, sang his first local Tonio in a performance of *Pagliacci* which with *Cavalleria* was substituted for *Tannhäuser* when Ramon Vinay was indisposed.”⁴⁶

The cast lists for *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Parsifal* at the Metropolitan Opera can be found in 1955 issues of *Opera News*:

Friday, February 25, 8:00 p.m. *Tannhäuser* (249th performance) Jerome Hines is the Landgrave; Bernd Aldenhoff makes his debut as Tannhäuser; Josef Metternich is Wolfram; Giulio Gari, Walther; Clifford Harvuot, Biterolf; Paul Franke, Heinrich; Norman Scott, Reinmar; Brenda Lewis is Venus; Margaret Harshaw, Elisabeth; Heidi Krall, a Shepherd. Rudolf Kempe conducts; production designed by Rolf Gérard; staged by Herbert Graf. Zachary Solov, choreographer.⁴⁷

Thursday, March 3, 7:45 p.m. *Tristan und Isolde* (274th performance) Set Svanholm is Tristan; Astrid Varnay, Isolde; Jerome Hines, King Marke; Josef Metternich, Kurvenal; Blanche Thebom, Brangaene; James McCracken, Melot; Calvin Marsh, a Steersman; Paul Franke, the Shepherd; Albert Da Costa, a Sailor’s Voice. Rudolf Kempe conducts; Dino Yannopoulos director.⁴⁸

Wednesday, March 23, 7:15 p.m. *Parsifal* (150th performance) Josef Metternich is *Amfortas*; Nicola Moscona, Titurel; Deszo Ernster, Gurnemanz; Bernd Aldenhoff, Parsifal; Lawrence Davidson, Klingsor; Margaret Harshaw, Kundry; Jean Madeira, a Voice; Albert Da Costa and

⁴⁶ *Opera News* 19, no. 14 (February 7, 1955): 3.

⁴⁷ *Opera News* 19, no. 16 (February 21, 1955): 1.

⁴⁸ *Opera News* 19, no. 17 (February 28, 1955): 1.

Osie Hawkins, Knights; Vilma Georgiou, Rosalind Elias, Paul Franke, Gabor Carelli, Esquires; Mmes. Hurley, Leone, Glaz, Krall, Fenn, Roggero, Flower Maidens. Fritz Stiedry conducts; Herbert Graf directs.⁴⁹

Metternich recalled his experience at the Metropolitan Opera, rehearsing *Tannhäuser* with conductor, George Szell:

There was a rehearsal one day for *Tannhäuser*. George Szell conducted a few performances. Szell was a Jewish emigrant from Hungary. He was a wonderful conductor and he knew the piece backwards and forwards. Szell had conducted *Tannhäuser* in Germany years before. The rehearsal was in English, of course. Szell stopped to correct many spots, but said not a word to me. Not a syllable to me. Nothing. We rehearsed my sections in the second act before the rehearsal break, and then he tapped his baton. 'Mr. Metternich, please...' Then he spoke German, 'I would just like to tell you that I'm one hundred percent behind you. What you're doing is wonderful. I have nothing to correct.' The Met orchestra members tapped on their music stands. Things like that can happen from a Jew to a "child of the Nazis."⁵⁰

Soprano Astrid Varnay, who appeared with Metternich in the Metropolitan Opera production of *Tristan und Isolde* in 1955, describes the contrasts in European opera activity and opera in the United States in *Fifty-Five Years in Five Acts*:

Our European seasons shed a different light for us on operatic activity in the United States. While America was still enjoying the rather stodgy productions of yesteryear, great on singing and long on tradition but short on imagination, the European theatres were actively re-assessing and restudying the old classics, while spawning a number of interesting new works to challenge the talents of their ensembles. On top of that, the rather tyrannical approach of Rudolf Bing to the business of operatic

⁴⁹ *Opera News* 19, no. 20 (March 21, 1955). 1.

⁵⁰ Interview with Josef Metternich, House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.

management was frankly not to many people's liking, including my own. Added to this was the fact that I was now beginning to get offers from all over for prime per-performance fees, while I continued to work at the Metropolitan on a weekly salary.⁵¹

Metternich had sung for four seasons at the Metropolitan Opera by 1957, dividing his schedule between New York and Munich. As the years passed, he began to feel that he was becoming less well known in Germany. At the same time, the renowned Hungarian conductor, Ferenc Fricsay, became general music director of the Munich Opera. Fricsay was planning a new production of Verdi's *Otello* for the coming season. He offered Metternich a five year-contract at the Munich Opera on the condition that he give up his contract at the Metropolitan Opera. It would be the first five-year contract for a soloist at a German opera house since World War II. Metternich's wife also encouraged him to accept the contract in Munich and he began by performing in the production of *Otello*. The first five-year contract in Munich was eventually followed by a second five-year contract. In the meantime, Metternich renewed his contract at the Hamburg State Opera with *Intendant* Günther Rennert, unaware that Rennert was to be replaced by his "old friend," Heinz Tietjen. When he learned of the change of General Manager, Metternich informed the administrative director in Hamburg that he would not perform in Hamburg after all. Metternich had left Berlin because of Tietjen and did not intend to work with him again. As his name continued to appear on the schedule of performances in Hamburg, Metternich cancelled one performance after another, claiming to be too ill or too busy to sing. The

⁵¹ Astrid Varnay and Donald Arthur, *Five Years in Five Acts* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 178.

administrative director pleaded with him repeatedly to sing the scheduled performances, pointing out that it would be best to avoid a court case. Metternich eventually agreed to honor his contract. As he approached the stage for his first entrance in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, he noticed Heinz Tietjen standing in a dark corner off-stage. Metternich knew that Tietjen often listened to performances in the wings without being noticed. The next morning, the administrative director, Herr Paris, requested that Metternich come to his office. Metternich related the encounter:

Herr Paris said, 'Herr Metternich, please come to my office to discuss the schedule.' I reminded him that my flight left at 12:00 and followed him to the office. 'Herr Metternich, your performance was wonderful', he said, 'I'm so glad you're back!' It got later and later. I wondered what was going on until the door opened and in came Herr Tietjen. He said, 'Good morning, Herr Metternich. I must say, you sang a wonderful *Holländer* yesterday. That was excellent. What an achievement! Herr Paris, what do you pay Herr Metternich?' Paris replied, 'Herr Metternich gets 800 marks for regular parts and 1,000 marks for *Holländer* and *Frau ohne Schatten*.' Tietjen exclaimed, 'That's impossible. A *Holländer* like this is worth much more. I suggest an increase of 25%: One thousand for regular roles and twelve or fourteen hundred for larger ones.' Herr Paris didn't know what to say, and replied, 'Well, if you say so!' Tietjen said, 'Yes, I insist. By the way, Herr Metternich. I'm glad you're back. Are there any problems that you would like to discuss with me?' 'No', I replied, 'With this raise in pay, I don't have any problems at all to discuss with you.' That was the last time that I shook his hand. I never saw him again. I am glad that we parted on that note.⁵²

Metternich continued to appear in major European opera houses in the years that followed, including guest appearances in France, Japan, and Korea.

⁵² Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005

He appeared at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and Hamburg Opera until 1963 and the Munich Opera until 1971. A new phase in his professional life would soon begin.

CHAPTER 5

THE TEACHER

Distinguished professor Clemens Glettenberg retired from the Conservatory of Music in Cologne, Germany in 1970. He asked Metternich to help him find a replacement. Metternich spoke with his colleagues, Hans Hotter and Astrid Varnay, but neither of them was interested in accepting a teaching position. Metternich was reticent about embarking on a career in teaching himself, but was eventually persuaded by Glettenberg to join the faculty at the Conservatory. Metternich's wife once again managed to "steer him in the right direction" with words of wisdom. "How long do you plan to continue to sing? You already have thirty years behind you and you've sung everywhere. You are allowed to get a little older and to be a bit more tired now. This is a great offer. You'll have something to do and you won't be bored. Do you just want to sit around like your colleagues? Go ahead and accept it. If you don't like it, you can always reconsider."⁵³

Metternich took her advice and agreed to teach for two trial semesters. He appreciated the encouragement he received from colleagues at the conservatory,

⁵³ Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.

including the famous pianist, Alfred Schöder, who thanked him for joining the music faculty. Metternich's conservatory students presented their first matinée performance in his third semester of teaching. The voice professors arrived at the auditorium expecting to hear Schubert or Wolf art songs, but were instead treated to the first act of Beethoven's *Fidelio*. The student cast of that afternoon performance included Soto Papulkas, Eike Wilm Schulte, and Carol Malone.

Thus began Metternich's twenty-five-year tenure at the Cologne Conservatory. The list of his students who were to become successful professional singers is a long one. It includes the following names: Carol Malone, Mechthild Gessendorf, Eike Wilm Schulte, Soto Papoulkas, Michael Ebbecke, Katerina Ikonou, Ludwig Baumann, Raimund Nolte, Sophia Larson, Stella Kleindienst, Matthias Hölle, Ruthi Engert, Wicus Slabbert, Oskar Hildebrandt, Philip Kang, Guido Götzen, Wolfgang Koch, Gerd Grochowski, Jonas Kaufmann, Christoph Strehl, Cornelia Kallisch, Donald George, Michael Volle and many others.⁵⁴

When listening to private recordings of Metternich's vocal instruction, it is possible to glean insight into his approach to vocal technique and musicality. The following quotes originate from voice lessons with Professor Metternich: "Always maintain the legato line... The tone must be focused at points when the voice has to carry over both the orchestra and chorus. Don't force at such points. The tone can only carry with good forward placement." In Zerlina's aria, 'Vedrai,

⁵⁴ (www.frankschneiders.de/Metternich/personal-thoughts.html. accessed 7/5/13, 1:00 pm)

carino,' measures 60 to 63, (*Don Giovanni*): "It is important to keep the intensity when singing." "The phrases at the end of the Countess/Susanna duet, (*Le nozze di Figaro*) measures 43 to 61 are classic vocalises. They should sit softly and beautifully in the 'head,' with the feeling of 'letting go.' In ascending phrases, sing from above, but at the same time, be 'planted' in the body. Maintain good head resonance without singing too heavily." "When singing fast triplets in Mozart, support well and sing a good legato line." "The opening of a surprised 'ah' when singing doesn't involve the jaw." (No jaw tension.) "Keep the breath moving and maintain the intensity in the duet 'Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen.' Keep the tone 'elegant,' so that the voice is not taxed."

When Thomas Voigt asked Metternich in his interview to discuss what qualities a young singer must have to portray an exciting character on stage, he replied that a strong dramatic performer must first have a fine voice. Metternich explained that a singer who naturally possesses a good instrument and a large vocal range should have the ability to develop stamina. Great performers on the opera stage need both vocal skill and acting ability to achieve the necessary dramatic element. Metternich discussed the Italian tradition of vocal instruction:

Julia Varady is a prime example. I believe she studied in Romania. She took two lessons a day. Not once a week. What a difference that made. The Italian singers studied for eight years; six or seven at the least with a lesson every day. Benjamino Gigli had a voice lesson every day of the week for nine years. These lessons were not just coachings with a conductor, but lessons for vocal technique. They worked on the onset and

had breath support like an athlete. This is important. One must learn the rules of *bel canto* and Italian breath support.⁵⁵

Metternich had an instinctive feel for the Italian technique himself as a young man and was most comfortable singing the arias of Count di Luna, Renato, and Rigoletto. He wasn't interested in singing the repertoire that a young baritone would normally study, such as Papageno in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Recordings of the great baritones were difficult to find in Germany in 1933, but Metternich had the opportunity to hear live performances in his youth. Singing a concert in the ruins of Leipzig shortly after the war in 1946, he was thrilled to hear his first recording of the great Italian baritone, Titta Ruffo. Metternich felt that although his own vocal timbre was a bit bright for Wagner's *Holländer*, he was able to sing it well with an Italian *bel canto* technique.⁵⁶

His student, Urs Rösli, describes Metternich's approach to vocal technique:

Of course, as with any technique, one must understand how to employ it. Metternich's technique was based on the *Stauprinzip* [breath compression]. I take a breath and compress the air in the lungs. This is like taking a breath and then "groaning" or having the feeling in the lungs of blowing up a balloon. It is also important not to collapse like a balloon that suddenly loses air, but to get bigger and bigger. This is simply a theory. Josef Metternich's teacher, Paul Neuhaus, worked extensively with people who had diseases of the lung.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Legenden des Gesanges: Josef Metternich, Bariton*. ARS 38710. CD. 2010.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ ursroesli. Wordpress.com/2012/09/22/unterricht-bei-ks-prof-josef-metternich-i/

Rösli recalls visiting Metternich at his home near Munich for voice lessons. They began with uncomplicated, practical vocal exercises. Metternich's vocal technique was at times controversial. Some believed that it could be harmful to the voice, but Metternich had countless students who sang successfully with this technique for decades. Rösli wrote that he might be slightly hoarse after an hour session. At that point, he felt as though the voice was under a 200% strain as opposed to the usual 90% when he practiced at home. This was similar to muscle ache after exercise. The vocal folds are a bit swollen and there is intensive blood circulation. The next day, however, his voice would be fresh again as Rösli worked on opera arias, arias from oratorio, and German *Lieder* with Metternich. When working on *Lieder*, Metternich stressed that it was important not to try to "hold the voice back," but to sing a good *mezzo forte* to *forte*. There would sometimes be a particular spot that presented difficulty and it took time, patience, and guidance to eventually "get it in the voice."⁵⁸

Metternich taught at the Cologne Conservatory for twenty-seven years. During his tenure, sixty-eight of his students (including the author) became professional opera singers. He also had many private students who had international careers. Josef Metternich leaves an indelible legacy through the successes of his students and an extensive recorded repertoire.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

EPILOGUE

When I arrived in Germany as a young singer in 1983, I found Professor Metternich waiting for me in his studio at the Cologne Conservatory. My audition was scheduled by my aunt, Carol Malone, who had been one of his very first students. She was a leading soprano in Europe at the time and also appeared at the Metropolitan and San Francisco Operas. Carol continued to study with Professor Metternich throughout her career. Professor Metternich was pleased with the training that I had received with Helen Hodam at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio. He took me into his studio that autumn. After just a few months of study with him, I received my first contract at the Bielefeld Theater in 1984. He was in the audience as I tackled my first leading role in Germany: *Zémire* in Ernest Gretry's *Zémire et Azor*. Professor Metternich's method of teaching promoted an effortless vocal production through efficient breath support and focus. Three things immediately come to mind when I recall my lessons with him: The first element is the importance of a relaxed feeling of "cold air on the back of the throat" when taking a breath. It is the feeling of a surprised "ah." A second element is low breath support produced with vitality. A third element is the sensation described by Professor Metternich as "the vocal folds closing," (*Die Stimmbänder schliessen*) to achieve the correct vocal onset.

A breathy vocal onset or an overly forceful glottal onset were avoided. His students and his audience adored him. I was fortunate to be his student.

REFERENCES

- Bing, Rudolph, *5000 Nights at the Opera*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1972.
- Drake, James. *Richard Tucker: A Biography*, New York: E.P. Dutton, INC, 1984.
- www.frankschneiders.de/Metternich/personal-thoughts.html. accessed 7/5/13, 1:00 pm.
- Hanaan, Brigitte, *Winifred Wagner: A Life at the Heart of Hitler's Bayreuth*. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Inc, 2005.
- Heyworth, Peter, *Opera* 4, no. 11 (November 1953): 680.
- Interview with Josef Metternich. House of Opera CD86874. CD. 2005.
- Jaretzi, Paul. *Opera News* 18, no. 1 (October 19, 1953): 18.
- Koegler, Horst, *Opera* 3, no. 2 (February 1952): 99.
- Koegler, Horst, *Opera* 3, no. 3 (March 1952): 165.
- Koegler, Horst, *Opera* 3, no. 4 (April 1952): 229.
- Koegler, Horst, *Opera* 3, no. 2 (February 1952): 99.
- Koegler, Horst, *Opera* 3, no. 3 (March 1952): 165.
- Koegler, Horst, *Opera* 3, no. 4 (April 1952): 229.
- Legenden des Gesanges: Josef Metternich, Bariton*. ARS 38710. CD. 2010.
- Lynch, Patrick, *Opera* 2, no. 4 (March 1951): 192.

Mueller, Liesel. *Opera News* (January 18, 1954): 10.

Neunzig, Hans A. *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: A Biography*. Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1998.

Nölter, Wolfgang. *Opera* 4, no. 7 (July 1953): 410

Opera News 19, no. 14 (February 7, 1955): 3.

Opera News 19, no. 16 (February 21, 1955): 1.

Opera News 19, no. 17 (February 28, 1955): 1.

Opera News 19, no. 20 (March 21, 1955). 1.

Rosenthal, Harold, *Opera* I, no. 1 (February 1950): 43.

Rosenthal, Harold, *Opera* 2, no.2 (January 1951): 471.

Rosenthal, Harold, *Opera* 2, no. 9 (August 1951): 471.

Rosenthal, Harold. *Opera* 2, no. 12 (November 1951): 654.

Rosenthal, Harold, *Opera* 4, no. 4 (April 1953): 226.

Rosenthal, Harold, *Opera* 4, no. 5 (May 1953): 292-293.

Rosenthal, Harold, *Opera* 4, no. 8 (August 1953): 495.

Spotts, Frederic. *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*. (New York: Overlook Press, 2002), 287-288.

ursroesli. [Wordpress.com/2012/09/22/unterricht-bei-ks-prof-josef-metternich/](https://www.wordpress.com/2012/09/22/unterricht-bei-ks-prof-josef-metternich/)

Varnay, Astrid and Donald Arthur. *Five Years in Five Acts*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2000.

Worobij, N. (1996). *The legacy of zinka milanov* (Order No. 9623155). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text. (304295538). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304295538?accountid=13965>

APPENDIX A

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF 1995 RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH JOSEF METTERNICH

I graduated from school with a liberal arts diploma. This was during the Nazi time, if I may call it that. I received the diploma with the distinction, "Gut." It was a rigorous *Gymnasium* in Brühl, near Cologne and the Augustusburg Castle. Receptions for heads of state are held there today. My final grade was Two. There were three of us who were buddies. Josef Krahe, who later became a well-known theologian and pastor at the Friedland Camp, eventually found his way to the Vatican. I've seen photographs of him, accompanying German ministers of state on papal visits. He was one of my buddies. All three of us graduated with the distinction, "Gut". We belonged to a clique that spoke out openly against the Nazis, because we didn't realize how dangerous it was at the time to have the courage to do so. We were black-listed. "They are ones who won't cooperate." I soon found out what that meant. When my diploma arrived in the mail, so did a letter from the *Regierungspresident* of the Rhine Province. That's what it was called back then. Today, it belongs to North Rhine Westfalia. The office was in Koblenz. I was informed that I would regrettably not be recommended for study at the conservatory. I couldn't study at any German conservatory. I had hoped to

study in Bonn and become a school teacher. My parent's financial situation wouldn't have allowed anything else. It would have taken seven semesters, after which I most likely would have become a teacher in the Eifel region.

This path was now denied to me. In desperation, I joined the Labor Service. The men from our village advised me to bridge the time in Voluntary Labor Service. They were National Socialists in the Village where I was born. I was told that service would become obligatory the next year and would last an entire year. "This way, you'll only have to do six months. We'll do our best to smooth things out for you. We know you better." I let them believe as much and joined the Labor Service. Luckily, I took my violin with me. I was an amateur violinist and a member of a very good amateur orchestra in Hürth, Mühlheim. It's called the City of Hürth today. Back then, there were villages with a population of only 2,000. That's where I learned to play the violin. When I was about 17 or 18 years old, I appeared in local concerts, singing popular hits and playing dance music. It was later publicized that I played with a French dance band, but that wasn't so. This might have been because French troops were stationed there at one time. My teacher was Mathieu Dumonlain. He was my first teacher. Maybe that was why it was later printed that I played in a French dance band. My second teacher was a young student who was an extremely talented violinist. He was from Koblenz but lived in our little village with his uncle so that he could attend the Cologne Conservatory. It was one-half hour away. Of course we looked up to him in the village. People said, "He studies at the Conservatory of Music. He'll be a famous violinist one day." He helped us out now and then at our

concerts. A special solo performance. I remember how he once played the Bériot Scène de Ballet in our tiny village. He became my second teacher. He was a year older than I and a bit more streetwise and we were both young upstarts. His name was Ludwig Buhs and he later became concert master at the Südwestfunk Orchester and then Professor of Violin at the Conservatory in Saarbrücken. So you see what became of him. The cellist, Paul Zingel, who also came from our village played with the Bremen Philharmonic.

At that time, people said to me, “You have a voice like your father.” My father was known as the civil servant with a fantastic voice. He had been told that he should become a professional singer, but he had six children to raise. He was grateful to be a civil servant with a secure job and would never have considered giving that up. But one day, when I was around twelve years old, my father decided to study voice just for the sake of it. We lived near Cologne and he had heard about a well known private teacher there. He auditioned, was immediately accepted, and studied for over two years. His voice teacher presented his best students once every two years at the Conservatory of Music in Cologne on the Wolf Strasse. Many singers performed for the committee that day. The committee chairman was Richard Trunk, a well-known composer of very beautiful art songs. My father presented himself for the final, having studied for two and a half years. He sang a few songs by Hugo Wolf, Schubert, Richard Strauss and a few opera arias. Then he was formally presented with a diploma. He had passed the exam before the panel on that day, earned his degree, and was officially qualified to be a concert singer.

We always listened to him practice when we were children. My older brother and I both sang “Wer in die Fremde will wandern, der muss mit der Liebsten gehen” und “Wandern lieb’ ich für mein Leben”. Hugo Wolf songs. We also listened to opera arias and knew the Prologue from *Pagliacci* and “Das Heimatliche Land” from *Traviata*. We could do that by memory. Our young voices could be heard bellowing as we ran around the neighborhood. Like all young men, my voice changed when I was about sixteen and before I knew it, we were members of the church choir. One or two years later, we joined the local men’s choral society. That was more demanding, but we kept up vocally. Never held back! We sometimes became hoarse, but we developed the throat muscles and vocal apparatus at the same time, even if it was a bit risky. As a result, I was able to perform proper arias in the auditorium as a school boy and was allowed to conduct the school orchestra at the final concert.

These were the memories that I took with me when I began the Labor Service. I took my violin with me and played music in the evenings after work. There were underground vaults where the voice carries and sounds wonderful. It was freezing there, though. There was a young man with an accordion there also and one evening I sang an operetta aria. There was thunderous applause and after that I no longer had to do manual labor with a shovel. Shoveling is really tiring. They said, “You can have a desk job if you’ll sing for us in the evenings.” It was the first step in my career.

One of the officers walked into the office one day and said, “Look at the newspaper”. There was a large ad in the *Westdeutschen Beobachter*. “The

General Director of the Cologne Opera, Alexander Spring, is looking for vocally talented men to help out in the auxiliary chorus of Wagner operas.” Audition dates followed. My commanding officer was very insistent. “You’ll put on your dress uniform and ride your bike to the audition.” I followed orders, auditioned, (with great anticipation, I must admit) and was immediately accepted into the auxiliary chorus. My work with the Labor Service lasted a few more months, but I was eventually granted leave. I started rehearsals for the opera, *Lohengrin*, in August, 1934. At the age of nineteen I experienced the miracle of a Wagner production under Alexander Spring. He was the General Director and the right hand of Siegfried Wagner in Bayreuth. This made a great impression on me. I realize today that the Cologne Opera had an incredibly high standard, as did other “city” opera houses of the same size like Frankfurt, Hannover, and Leipzig. These theaters were a step below the “state” opera houses like Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich. The standard in Germany at that time was so high that the Cologne Opera could double cast *Lohengrin*, with members of their own ensemble. They had two excellent Lohengrins and two ladies who could sing Elsa. There were two dramatic sopranos who were excellent Ortruds. It would be hard to find a single one of that quality today in Germany. Telramund was also double cast. There might be two good Telramunds today in Europe. The Cologne Opera had that. Even the King was double cast. If one Lohengrin was ill and the other happened to be away, there would be a tenor in Frankfurt, Hamburg, or Hannover who could step in. Every house had a tenor who could sing Lohengrin. Where can one find a good Lohengrin today? Looking back, that’s an interesting

question for me. We had a very different standard. We young singers were influenced by the top singers of that era. We were familiar with their style of tone production and we tried to emulate it. We said, "That's the way to sing". That worked without a voice teacher. Those of us who were in the auxiliary chorus of *Lohengrin* were also called upon to help out in the Cologne Radio Chorus in the autumn of 1934. These were the days before television and radio shows with live audiences were very popular. Concerts with orchestra and chorus were presented in Köln Deutz. Famous singers sang for five or six thousand people in live broadcasts and additional chorus members were occasionally needed in the Convention Center. A microphone was enough for small numbers, but not for big concerts in front of an audience. We got the opportunity and the ones who were chosen to take part earned a decent salary. We were as poor as church mice and were glad to get the money. At the same time, I couldn't keep myself from pestering the event's director to let me audition for him as a soloist. I kept bothering him even after he had thrown me out twice. I told him that I had a voice like the famous people who sang there. He agreed to let me come to the radio station on a Friday just to get rid of me. I found myself in a crowd of older, more accomplished singers that day. One could tell. They wore bow ties and wide hats, whereas I looked like a 'nobody'; young, skinny, and hardly impressive. When it was my turn, I announced that I would sing "Cortigianni" from Verdi's *Rigoletto*. I knew the aria well, as my father had often sung it. The director thought that I was crazy. "That's ridiculous!" he exclaimed, "You can't possibly sing that. Where did you learn it?" When I told him that I had learned it by myself,

he nearly cancelled my audition. "Just let me sing a few bars", I suggested. Kneip finally agreed to give me a chance and accompanied me himself. When I got to the high G he stopped. "Just a moment," he said. "Do that again." I sang the whole aria and then a second aria before he said, "Do you expect me to believe that you've never had a teacher?" I said, "My father. I listened to him sing." "I've never heard anything like it," he admitted. "I'll make you an offer. They may think I'm crazy, but I'm going to put you on the program." On May 12, 1935, one half year after my inglorious *Abitur* when I had been told that I was not good enough for a Conservatory, I appeared in the Cologne Convention Center. The opera program took place from four to six o'clock and every good and bad tone was broadcast live. I sang the *Pagliacci* Prologue and the Luna aria. The pay was fifty reich marks. My parents were generous and allowed me to buy a suit, a pair of shoes, and a new shirt. The money was worth a lot to me. My life had taken the first step in a new direction.

The first performance was followed by a second. It was called *Nette Sachen aus Köln*, [Nice things from Cologne] and was broadcast every Sunday afternoon from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. The Dutch tenor, Henk Noort, a star tenor from the Düsseldorf Opera was on the program as well as a young mezzo soprano with a beautiful voice. Her name was Elisabeth Höngen. They wanted to know which voice teacher had enabled me to sing so wonderfully at such a young age. They couldn't believe that I hadn't had a teacher. I sang a third performance before I was hired as a chorus singer at the Bonn Theater and began a course of study at the Bonn Conservatory of Music. This was a requirement, as the chorus

director at the Bonn Theater was also the director at the Conservatory. After a two year course of study, one was officially qualified to work in a professional opera chorus. That was perhaps one of the useful things that the Nazis managed to do. Theater agents had to follow rules with young singers who were required to first appear before a commission and demonstrate vocal capability. Only then were they allowed to audition through an agent. I met with my voice teacher twice, but didn't get along with him. I did, however, enjoy music theory and aural skills. I understood what a legato phrase meant from playing the violin. Of course I knew that E major has four sharps, A minor has no sharps or flats, etc; things that can take conservatory students years to learn. I concentrated on building my voice. After two lessons with that teacher, I stopped going and just wangled my way through. After three weeks, the chorus director explained that there had been a discussion. I was to take the final singing exam the next week with the class above me. I sang half of an aria at the Kölner Schauspiel (which was later destroyed in the war) before they said that I was qualified to audition for the opera chorus. That's how I became a member of the opera chorus in Bonn. I had been told to get a job in the chorus at a small theater, as there weren't as many soloists in Bonn and I would have the opportunity to sing small solo roles. The first opera was *La bohème*. Of course they had a baritone in Bonn who sang Marcello but they didn't have a Shaunard. I got to sing it. That's how it all began.

Fate then took a turn for the worse. I found out that I would be drafted into the army. All young men born in 1914 and 1915 were to be drafted. At the same time, I became seriously ill. I had ignored the symptoms of pleuritis for fear of

losing my chorus position and continued to rehearse until I was told, "Go home. You look terrible. Can't you tell how sick you are? You're completely pale." I fainted, was hospitalized, and was diagnosed with tuberculosis at the top of the right lung. My life was in danger and all thoughts of a career had to be put aside. I spent many months in various hospitals in the Black Forest and in Switzerland and prayed that I would make it, as there was no remedy. I had to be strong enough to recover on my own. I always believed in the power of the breath, although the doctors said, "For heaven's sake. Don't tire the lungs." I secretly did, though, and after many highs and lows, I made an unexpected recovery in 1938 and 1939. They checked me every month, then every three months, every six months, and eventually never again. It was a miracle, as patients rarely recovered from the illness back then. I'm now taking the wind out of the sails of those who have since claimed that vocal study damaged my lungs. Well-known colleagues have spread that rumor; even to my face. The fact is; I was ill, recovered, and then began to study voice. And not before. I made a friend in the hospital who lived in Berlin and had a shoe shop. At the same time, I met my future voice teacher in Cologne who offered unique instruction in breath compression for vocal production. This was often decried as being too forceful and as an exaggerated "bottling up", etc. I found it fascinating, though, and was impressed with the concept. He moved to Berlin, so I had to follow him. That was Paul Neuhaus in Berlin. Thanks to my friend from the hospital, I had the opportunity to live in Berlin. I helped him out in the shoe store.

War broke out in the autumn of 1939. I had been studying voice for about four or five months when everything became regulated. For example, the customers at the shoe store had to be registered in order to save material and labor. One was only allowed to register at a single store; not at four! I was responsible for the list and discovered the name, Noort, one day. That was not a common name, so I figured that it couldn't be anyone other than Henk Noort. In the meantime, I found out that Henk Noort from the radio concert was now the premiere tenor at the Deutsches Opernhaus in Berlin. He happened to come to the shoe store a few days later with his sons who played soccer. Their shoes were in bad shape, so I took them to be repaired. I asked, "Herr Noort, do you recognize me?" I had gained thirty pounds in the meantime. The skinny kid was now a stockier fellow with glasses. "I'm not sure," he said with his Dutch accent, "But you do look familiar to me." Then I said, "Do you remember '*Nette Sachen aus Köln*'?" He said, "Aren't you the baritone who had never studied voice?" I told him that I was. "You must come to my apartment. Do you have a teacher now?" I told him that I did indeed. A good one. "You have to sing for me and show me what you can do. I want to hear your voice." I visited him the next Sunday. He offered me a glass of wine and I sang Valentin's Prayer for him. He immediately grabbed the telephone and called the opera house. "Is the boss there?" "No, today is Sunday. Only the secretary is there, Herr Noort." "Give me the secretary. Frau Bernhardt, this is Noort. Please tell the boss that I called. I've heard a voice and the boss must hear it too." "Yes, Herr Noort. I'll be happy to do that for you." (He was the star tenor and had influence.)

Three days later, I received a phone call from Frau Bernhardt. She said, “Herr Metternich, Herr Noort has highly recommended you and we happen to have an audition date. The General Manager holds an audition once a month for students from the conservatory. You are also invited to audition.” I told her that I would be there. It didn’t occur to me that I had only been studying voice for three or four months. I didn’t even warm the voice up much. I arrived at the audition and joined twelve or thirteen other young singers. Each one sang an aria. (Or part of an aria, depending on how much the panel liked them.) I could hear the panel’s comments after each aria, “It’s too soon. You mustn’t sing that yet.” “You have a good voice. Audition again in a year. We’ll look forward to hearing you.” “We don’t recommend that you continue with vocal instruction. Your voice doesn’t have what it takes to develop and have a career.” Then it was my turn. I was the last one on that Saturday afternoon at 12:30 p.m. I heard Wilhelm Rode say to the other members of the panel, (I later realized who he was) “This young singer is said to have an amazing voice. Noort recommended him. What will you sing?” he asked. I replied, “I’d like to sing “Cortigianni” from *Rigoletto*.” “How old are you? Aren’t you a bit young for that aria? We certainly don’t recommend singing such a difficult piece at your age.” “I’d like to try,” I said, and proceeded to sing the entire aria. There was silence and then I heard them whispering amongst themselves. “Can you sing anything else for us?” they asked. I told them that I had the Prologue from *Pagliacci*. “What? You’re able to sing that? All right then!” Drenched in sweat, I finished the audition with a section of Renato’s aria from Verdi’s *Un Ballo in Maschera*. I didn’t actually have the strength at that

age to perform three such demanding arias in a row, but I succeeded. Rode then walked onto the stage and said to me, "Come with me. What do you do?" "I work in a shoe store", I said. "You'll have to stop that right away. You need to be under supervision." I went into his office. "Belli, call the Administrative Director. He's probably sitting in the pub with a Pilsner Urquell." He was summoned. "Draw up a contract for Josef Metternich. We'll give him a contract for two years as a lyric, character baritone starting at five hundred reich marks." That was as much as a young lawyer earned at the time. It was certainly enough to pay the rent. It was a small sum compared to what the more well-paid singers earned at the Deutsches Opernhaus, but I was suddenly a person who would earn five hundred marks. I couldn't believe it. I was thrilled. Rode told me, "You won't sing anything at first. You'll sit right there in that box in the third balcony every evening and observe your colleagues. You'll observe how the conductor gives cues, how your colleagues stand, how they cross the stage. You must learn from them. You'll have an hour of coaching everyday where you'll study small and large roles. That will be your job. We have eight baritones and you're the ninth, so you see what your chances are!" I began in August, 1940, and attended the opera in the evenings. I spent the mornings studying the role of the Heerrufer. It's good to begin with a short but challenging part. Then I learned Morales from *Carmen* and many other smaller roles. We also rehearsed Wolfram's "Abendstern."

I was aware that preparations were underway for a new production of the opera, *Lohengrin*, a piece that played a significant role in my destiny. I had been there for about four weeks when Rode summoned me. "I see that you're

rehearsing the Heerrufer. How far along are you with it?" I said, "I have it ready." "Well prepared? Then come downstairs with me." It was lunchtime. 11:30 a.m. Rode was directing the opera and singing the role of Telramund as well. The chorus members were waiting and he introduced me, "This is our youngest member, Herr Metternich. He'll be rehearsing the Heerrufer today for the second half. Hans Ansnissen, you take a break and listen. You've sung often enough!" "Yes, of course, boss." I was handed a club and placed at the front of the stage. "Go to this chalk circle when it's time for you to sing. When you've finished, go back to the other circle near the king's throne." Of course I was nervous, but I did well. The chorus observed me intently, thinking, "Here comes another one." After an orchestral rehearsal, Rode came to me and said, "You know what, you'll sing the premiere. I'll see to it." Having hardly begun at the theater, I sang the Heerrufer with Noort as Lohengrin. I remember that Konstanze Nettessheim was the Elsa and Wilhelm Scherp, a wonderful bass, sang the King. Rode himself sang Telramund.

I sang Silvio after that with Resi Rudolf, a famous *Kammersängerin* and film actress. Rudolf said, "I won't rehearse with a beginner. It's out of the question." She felt that she was too important, so I rehearsed with a beginning singer. I was just a nervous a boy from a village with no idea how to play love scenes on stage. I went on stage that evening without an orchestra rehearsal and did my best. The next day, the "*Frau Kammersängerin*" came to the theater. As the other colleagues listened, Rudolf jokingly referred to the "passionate lover" she had had on stage the night before. Everyone laughed. I nearly died of

embarrassment, and explained, "I wasn't sure how to do the kiss on stage, but I'll do it properly next time," Rudolf retorted, "Young man, only my husband is allowed to kiss me properly and don't forget it." Everyone laughed. I was still angry at the next performance, so I just grabbed her and kissed her. She didn't mind. Never said a word. From then on, I believe I was a convincing Silvio.

In the third year of my career, Herr Rode told me that I was improving and scheduled me for many concert performances. I may have been young and inexperienced on the opera stage, but with my voice and a tuxedo I was as impressive as my famous colleagues. We went on tour, performing for the troops in cities like Breslau and Munich. I was the only singer without the title of *Kammersänger* for the performance at the Deutsches Museum, but I got just as much applause as the other singers. The majority of my performances at the time were in concert. Wilhelm Rode renewed my contract for two more years. I would earn 850 marks a month in my third year and 1,000 in the fourth year. That's what Adenauer got when he was the mayor! "And you may also choose a major role," Rode said. I chose Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore*. Baritone Hans Reinmar was the only other baritone in the theater who was a real Count di Luna. He was our famous baritone at the Deutsches Opernhaus who sang those roles. We also had Karl Schmidt-Walter, the "Hermann Prey of the day." He sang the cavalier and light-dramatic baritone roles, but I think that he and Prey were vocally different. They can be categorized but not really compared. Reinmar was only ever in Berlin for a few months at a time. Schmidt-Walter was there, but he gave many recitals. Rode told me that I had chosen the role wisely. They needed

another Luna. Later, I dared to sing Amonasro. Everyone said, "Are you crazy? You're too young for the role," but I was able to do it. One day, Rode said, "If you like, you may sing Renato. You've observed all of the rehearsals." It was part of my job to watch the rehearsals of new productions. He said, "You know how to do it. You enter stage left and exit stage right. The rest is up to you. There's a matinée in two weeks for university and conservatory students; an extra performance for army officers and soldiers on leave. You can try the role out." I said, "With pleasure!" Soprano Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, who was just my age, performed the role of Oscar for the first time at that note-worthy performance.

Things changed at that point for Rode. He was politically no longer a favorite. Goebels didn't like him. Hitler loved him, but Hitler was in Königsberg, Stalingrad, and no longer in Berlin. The war was about to be lost, and Goebels seized the opportunity to get rid of Rode. At first it was reported in the press that a new opera director, Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt, would be hired to "assist" the *Intendant*. He brought the young, not-yet-well-known artistic director, Günter Rennert with him. These two men were the new bosses who had a say in my future. I wrote a letter to Schmidt-Isserstedt, telling him that I would like to meet with him to hear his plans concerning me. He sent word that he would meet with me after my next performance of *Il Trovatore*. Schmidt-Isserstedt said, "Herr Metternich, you have a fantastic voice, but you are baritone number nine in this theater. We have nine baritones. The others are older and more established than you are. Do you plan to wait until they all die off? Wouldn't you rather work at another opera house where a baritone like you is needed for the big Italian roles?"

It wouldn't have to be a small theater. You could get a job in any large opera house with your voice. I'll make a deal with you. See what you can find. If you find something else, accept it. If not, you can always stay here in Berlin with me. We can afford to keep you. You don't have to leave Berlin, but feel free to look for something else in the meantime."

I received an offer within three weeks from the Wiesbaden State Theater. It was a four-year contract at 1600 to 1800 marks monthly. The mayor of a big city earned as much! In those days, young singers were well taken care of and given time to develop. How different it is today! I sang two performances in Wiesbaden and rehearsed Renato and *Trovatore* before the theaters closed down. That was in the autumn of 1944. The contract began and then it was over. The *Intendant*, Max Spilcker, who had been a very good baritone at the Leipzig Opera, said, "Herr Metternich, this is the Prussian State Theater Wiesbaden, so if you return to Berlin where our administration is located, your contract will be honored there by the Prussian Government Bank. You have nothing to gain by staying here in Wiesbaden. The Americans are already near Aachen and you'll be drafted if you stay here. Perhaps you can make it back to Berlin." I took his advice and returned. My colleagues from the opera were working for Siemens and other factories. They didn't know what to do with me at the employment office, so they just told me to let them know when I found a job. I called all of the banks, saying, "I'm an opera singer and I want a job at a bank." The Teltow Savings Bank took me on. Their headquarters was on Potsdamer Str. in Berlin, near Potsdamer Platz. I calculated and recorded savings accounts, the most

unappealing and useless job at the end of the war. I had a job, though. I told them, "I'll come at 8:30 a.m. and leave at 3:00 p.m. You won't need to pay me, because I get a salary from the theater. I just need to work." They agreed, but eyed me suspiciously. "A young man like that who isn't a soldier. He should be ashamed to hang around here." That's what they thought of me. I got through the inferno that was Berlin at the end of the war and ran for shelter during the bombings. My apartment was bombed. I was there when the Russians marched in. They didn't exactly behave like gentlemen. This was the road to the end of the war and the beginning of my career.

Nearly all of the buildings were destroyed after the war. The Deutsches Opernhaus had been burned, but the administrative section was still partially intact. The only theater remaining was the building that eventually became the Theater des Westens. (Volksoper in the Third Reich) It was in West Berlin. The British occupying forces covered the missing roof with tarpaulin and performances began for those of us who were still there. Singers and orchestra members from the former Volksoper and Deutsches Opernhaus were combined. And so it happened that Josef Metternich, who had made it through the end of the war, was at the right place at the right time. The young baritone who had been mentored and nurtured by Wilhelm Rode.

He met an excellent, young coloratura soprano, Liesalotte Losch from the Volksoper. (That's a good beginning for the second half.) We sang together in pieces that the theater managed to cast with the remaining singers. In the beginning, we gave concerts in the cold autumn and winter. When it rained, the

taupaulin would sag and begin to leak. It was quite something to see the audience sitting on the lower level with open umbrellas. Circumstances were the same in the Eastern Sector. That was the part of the city with the more famous opera house; the Staatsoper Unter den Linden. The building was destroyed but they had a wonderful temporary home. The Admiralspalast was still intact. They had their own program, but also lacked singers. Great singers had become rare. Many were old (fifty and older) and devastated. They had lost their homes, their money wasn't worth anything anymore, and they simply didn't have the strength to carry on. I remember a tenor whom I idolized. He had the most beautiful Lohengrin voice of the twentieth century. Franz Völker. There's nothing more beautiful than his 1935-36 recording of *Lohengrin* from Bayreuth with Maria Müller. It's so fantastic! He tried to sing again but gave up. He just couldn't do it. There was another famous tenor, Gotthelf Pistor, who had sung at the Deutsches Opernhaus. I knew him from my days in Cologne. He literally starved to death. He was such a strong man and a noble person, but couldn't survive on the black market. He became malnourished, lost too much weight, became ill and died as a result.

The time had come for the young people who had survived. We all had to audition in order to determine the number of singers. What else could we do? The Allies sent their "officers of culture" to express their views. I was told by another English officer that our officer of culture was actually a representative of a tooth paste company in his home country. He now had a say in the casting of the operas, giving his opinion and taking part in the process. When we

auditioned, he pointed to me and said, “We definitely want to hear him.” He was told, “That’s a young singer without much stage experience. He has a good voice, but we have *Kammersänger* so and so...” The officers said, “We’re not looking for singers with titles. We want the ones with the best voices”. That was the ice-cold decision of the Allies. Bohnen became the General Manager. We had sung together once in *Lohengrin* and he remembered me. Bohnen had sung King Heinrich, a role that Wilhelm Scherb otherwise sang. After I had sung my third entrance off-stage and then returned to my circle of chalk with a great gesture, he summoned me. I went to him (like a devoted officer to a king) and he said, “Come to my dressing room.” This was during the performance. He said, “I haven’t heard your voice. It’s amazing. You have a vocal technique that the others don’t have. Do you have a voice teacher here?” “Yes, Paul Neuhaus.” “I’ve never heard of him. We must talk.” That was the end of it. He didn’t sing any more performances and the war changed everything. Now he was the new *Intendant* of *Städtische Oper* and remembered me right away. When he saw me, he said, “Metternich, you were the Heerufel! Yes, come, you must audition.” He agreed with the Allies that I should be put forward. My first piece was the Minister in *Fidelio*. Then came *Cavalleria* and *Pagliacci*. They needed an Alfio and a Tonio. Bohnen made it all possible for me. He told the others, “Anyone who can sing like that will also be able to act.” He was determined. Bohnen took me aside and told me to lie on my back on the grand piano. He said, ‘Now sing the Prologue from *Pagliacci*.’ I said I couldn’t, to which he replied, ‘Yes, you can. You just have to want to do it. Sing!’ Ambition spurred me on. I was indeed able

to sing while lying on my back on the grand piano. Bohnen said, 'Now you see. You won't necessarily have to do that on stage, but you need to learn how to move freely and also how to be still, depending on what is required of you. It isn't enough to simply look straight ahead and sing like a concert singer.' Bohnen worked with me on each individual role. "You have to do like this," he would say, "Grab the knife. It has to be like a Hollywood film. Quickly. Do it with conviction." He had me play Tonio as an idiot, holding my shoulder like a hunchback without a fake hunchback. I had to carry it off myself. I went before the curtain without a costume, singing the Prologue and playing the role passionately in front of the audience. Later on, I realized that these big, coarse roles are actually the easiest to portray. It was much more difficult for me to play Mozart's elegant Count, for example. Bohnen put me through the wringer. By the time I had sung Tonio ten times, I would have been willing to undress completely on-stage, if necessary, and sing a happy tune at the same time!

I now saw things from a completely new perspective. I had learned how to cross the stage properly, climb stairs, and sing at the same time. It was all thanks to Michael Bohnen. He didn't teach me my vocal technique. I learned that from my teacher, Paul Neuhaus, and the mentorship of Wilhelm Rode. This is not well-known. I am most indebted to Rode, as well as to Bohnen, but reports that Bohnen gave me voice lessons were just rumors. He often asked me, "How do you sing that high note?" and I would explain how my teacher and I had worked on it. I explained how to sing high notes, and not the other way around. But I do thank him for putting me through the wringer and for giving me a repertoire that I

wouldn't have had anywhere else. After Alfio and Tonio came Iago. My success was sensational because he turned me into a fantastic Iago. I sang the role at different times with tenors Günter Treptow and Ludwig Suthaus. I sang *Simon Boccanegra* that season as well and *Aida* the following year. I should also mention Pizarro. I was supposed to do *Salome*, but didn't sing it after all. I made a name for myself with this repertoire in Berlin when I was thirty years old in 1945. It continued until 1947 when Bohnen was forced to leave. There was something in his past; maybe politically. I don't know. They advised him to go. There was a transitional period with the administrative director Robert Heger. Then came Heinz Tietjen as general manager. He had automatically been banned for being a privy council member after the war. (Furtwängler was also.) The title didn't mean anything, but it was a Nazi title, and those who had it were banned. The British pardoned him, though, in 1948 when the new monetary currency came into effect.

Conductor, Leo Blech, was one of the great maestros. He and Kleiber led the opera world in Berlin for decades as the two most important and versatile conductors at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden. I considered them the two greatest names of all time. I'm mentioning this because I eventually developed a strong connection with the old maestro Blech. The Staatsoper slowly got up and running again, and the British repaired our roof at the Städtische Oper. Opera was being performed again in Berlin but they lacked singers at the Admiralspalast (Staatsoper) where they were preparing a new production of *Traviata*. Johannes Schüler was the conductor. He was a very good

Staatskapellmeister. A certain Erna Berger and Peter Anders were cast, as well as Fassbender. Those are impressive names. Wolf Völker was the director; a slender, austere, outstanding opera director at that time. He was in a car accident later on which ended his career. He seemed old after the accident and worked for only a little while longer.

Then something happened. It was only two weeks before the premiere and for some reason, Fassbender had to drop out of *Tannhäuser* at the Staatsoper. I don't know what happened or whether he was accused of anything. I suspect that it might have had something to do with his past. Purely political. In any case, he was gone and they were left in a lurch. The chorus was prepared but they had no Germont. This was the end of the old boundaries in Berlin. Up until then, the Deutsches Opernhaus and the Staatsoper had avoided engaging each other's artists; keeping everything separate. The war changed that. Now that Berlin was closed off, it could take a guest artist up to 2 ½ days to travel from Hamburg. It just wasn't possible. They took the step of contacting that young, hot-shot baritone who everyone was talking about. It was said that an amazing voice had taken over the number one spot at the Städtische Oper in the West. They called me and asked, "Could you help us out here?" I answered, "Why not?" I had always dreamed of singing at the Staatsoper. And Germont! What could be better? I hadn't ever sung the role but I decided to complete their trio. I must say, it was one of my greatest successes and favorite memories, together with my time at the Deutsches Opernhaus. Erna and Peter. We were such good friends. I stayed in close contact with Peter Anders. He eventually moved to Hamburg in

the West and we often met. My Germont was a great success. Ernst Legal, the *Intendant*, and a lovely person, begged me to come to the Staatsoper. A certain Herr Keilberth came to Berlin from Prague via Dresden and brought Gottlob Frick with him. Keilberth was conducting a wonderful *Don Giovanni* at the time with Rudolf Schock, who was in great form. When Keilberth heard one of my performances of Germont, he said, "What piece can I do with him?" We did Amfortes together in the East, as well as my first real Renato. We also did *Arabella* in early in 1950 or 1951. I hadn't ever seen it, but they said, "You must do Mandryka here." Krista Göltz was my partner and Legal was the director. His concept was elegant if a bit antique. It was wonderfully 19th century. Schlemm was Zdenka. I received a recording of this production five years ago for my birthday. SFB [Sender Freies Berlin] televised it at prime time, 8:45 p.m. in honor of my 75th birthday. This is a recording of the first performance anywhere of *Arabella* after the war. The recording is excellent; particularly because the microphone picked up the singers well. The orchestra wasn't picked up as well as we were, but you can really understand the text. The television station got the recording from the East Germans and broadcast it here in the West on SFB. That was a lovely gesture that would otherwise only happen in Berlin or Vienna. They didn't take any notice of me in Munich, even though I sang the largest roles there for twenty-one years.

After Bohnen left Berlin, Tietjen came and brought me back down to earth. I had been having a great run but he showed me that I wasn't indispensable. I thought they couldn't do without me. After all, I sang the whole repertoire. This is

how he did it: One piece would finish a run and I'd have one less role. Then a new one would come, and he would cast someone else. One year later, I was disappearing from the line-up but still got the highest salary. He was such a diplomat, giving five singers the highest pay. They were the young Fischer-Dieskau, Josef Greindl, Josef Metternich, Elisabeth Grümmer, and Josef Hermann. (He was the heroic tenor from Dresden, who sang at both the Staatsoper and Städtische Oper.) When I mentioned it to Tietjen, he'd say, "What more do you want? You get the highest salary." I'd say, "Yes, but I want to sing," and he would reply, "When the right repertoire comes for you, you'll be cast." I knew that he and Bohnen were arch enemies, so Tietjen's logic must have been: Metternich is Bohnen's protégé, so he's my enemy, too.

In the 1950-51 season, I got an offer from Covent Garden in London. "Herr Metternich, would you be willing to sing *The Flying Dutchman* here in English? I considered it and thought to myself, "I'll do it just for the challenge and demonstrate my best Oxford English!" It was pretty unusual to invite a German singer to sing Wagner in English. It would be even more unusual today when operas are sung in the original language. At the same time, Tietjen and I had a confrontation. I let him know that I could see his wife leaving her box when it came time for my arias. I was told that she had said, "I can't stand this arrogant, pushy singing." Tietjen demanded that I tell him who had made the claim, but I refused. He said, "Then we'll have to go to court," to which I replied, "It's up to you. You're not getting anything out of me. I'm just letting you know how I feel." Just as the situation was getting out of hand, I found out that he had been asked

to direct the *Holländer* at Covent Garden. I smiled to myself. The theater agent was an English officer, Mr. Linch. He knew me and loved my voice. I said, 'Mr. Linch, this is a problem. You need to call Webster [the boss at Covent Garden] and tell him that it won't work out. Only one of us can do Covent Garden.' I then wrote a letter to Tietjen, saying, "I'm afraid I can't accommodate you in the matter that we spoke of. If you feel that you must take me to court, then so be it. I regret this very much, as I have just been informed that we are to work together in London in *Der Fliegender Holländer*. We cannot be expected to work together under such circumstances. I'll cancel Covent Garden. Sincerely, Josef Metternich." I soon heard from Mr. Linch, who said, "Mr. Webster has sent word that the director is not important. We want Metternich." It was just as I had hoped. Before the next performance of *Aida*, (at the Städtische Oper Berlin) as I was putting on my make-up, Heinz Tietjen paid me a visit in my dressing room for the very first time. Tietjen began, "Herr Metternich, I'm sorry to bother you right before the performance, but I knew that I would find you here. We've let this whole matter get out of hand. I'm older and should be the wiser one. What do you say? Let's forget the whole thing." I replied, "That would be fine. As you wish. Thank you and goodbye." Tietjen and I proceeded to have a fine time working together in London. He could be dangerous and often made matters worse for himself. Not long after that, he wanted me to sing Alberich in his production. I could have handled it dramatically, but I wrote to him and explained that it would be wrong for me vocally. I couldn't risk not being able to sing Count di Luna. He answered my letter, saying, "The role would not damage your voice.

You would have had a great success but I'm aware that you take other advice. This is regrettable." That was our last correspondence. After that, I let him know that I would not be renewing my contract.

I had the contract in East Berlin. Georg Solti was conducting the Berlin Philharmonic at the same time and I received a telephone call from him one morning. "Herr Metternich, do you know who I am?" I said, "Yes, I believe you are the new General Music Director of the Munich Opera." He said, "I'm here conducting the Philharmonic at the moment. I attended an awful opera yesterday. *Die Zauberin* by Tchaikovsky. The piece was terrible and the performance standard was low. You sang a small but impressive role, however, and I enjoyed it very much. I have two tenors in Munich who are just your age and size and are full of temperament like you. Herr Hopf and Herr Fehrenberger. I need a baritone like you. What do you say?" He offered me a guest performance. I sang *Trovatore* and received a contract from the Munich Opera in April 1950. At the same time, a letter came for me from Günther Rennert. "Herr Metternich, you seem to be in great demand. It's high time that you appear here in Hamburg. I suggest that you sing *Rigoletto* in April. Then we can talk." I sang *Rigoletto* in Hamburg and left with a contract that lasted for thirteen years. I was under contract in Munich for twenty-one years.

In the meantime, I met Leo Blech, who took over the musical direction of *La forza del destino* when he immigrated back to Germany. Herr Tietjen had planned to direct *Forza* himself with his new star baritone Fischer-Diskau as Carlos and the new General Music Director Ferenc Fricsay. I was second cast.

We listened in on rehearsals and Fischer-Dieskau seemed to be having some difficulty with the role. Then one day, we heard that he had given up it up. He said, "It would ruin my voice." At that point, Tietjen lost interest in directing the piece and Fricssay dropped out as well. The production had been prepared, however. The orchestra had begun to rehearse, the set was built, and the chorus was ready to go. I received a letter from Tietjen at this point: "You're an Italianate baritone so you have to take over the role." I replied, "Nothing would please me more." Maestro Blech said, "Of course I'll do *La forza del destino*," and the Opera Director of the Cologne Opera was engaged to direct it. A tenor, Sauerbaum, came from the *Komische Oper*. The piece was a triumph with Leo Blech and it was a great success for me personally. Old Blech liked me. After opening nights, he would call the ones who he thought had done well. The others got a letter. I got a large letter after the premiere, and thought, "But the audience loved me!" (He was over eighty and only made small movements when he conducted.) I opened the letter. It contained only a paper with a rhythmic phase on it. I pondered it, and after a while, my wife asked me what I was humming. It was familiar. I finally figured it out. In the opening chorus scene of the German version of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, the soloist sings, "Bravo, bravissimo, redet kein Wort." (Bravo, bravissimo, don't say a word.) That was Leo Blech's style. His praise was disguised in a riddle. He was a delightful person.

Then came the next event that involved *La forza del destino*. It had to do with a Viennese theater agent. I met him in Ernst Legal's office in the East. Legal said, "Come in, Herr Metternich," and the old agent from Vienna said, "Are you

Kammersänger Metternich?" "I'm Herr Metternich, but I'm not a *Kammersänger*." He said, "My dear Sir, you must sing in Vienna." I said, "I don't think that Böhm... I auditioned at the end of the war. He didn't even say goodbye to me." The agent said, "I wasn't there. I heard you performing yesterday with my old friend, Leo Blech. We worked together years ago. *La forza del destino* is playing in Vienna. It opened with Böhm two months ago and we don't have a baritone like you. You must come!" I said, "Do whatever you like, but I'm not interested in coming to Vienna." He returned to Vienna and a telegram arrived four days later: Offer guest appearance in *Forza*. The director is looking forward to it. My wife said, "Don't be like the others. Go ahead and go." (They're always wiser, aren't they?) I went to Vienna and came back with an offer to sing for three months a year at the Vienna State Opera. That marked the end of my time with Herr Tietjen. Tietjen's offer of Alberich had already caused a tense situation and now he was deeply insulted that I wanted to be let out of my contract for three months. I didn't need to renew my contract with him. I was under contract at the opera houses in East Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, and Vienna. What more can one ask for? Five opera houses. One can't handle any more than that when you consider that I still had to finish the season in West Berlin. That was the beginning of my international career.

Herr von Karajan heard me at a recording session for *Rheingold*. We were recording *Rheingold* at Rothenbaum Chaussee. Willi Schüchter conducted. Schüchter was a former assistant to Karajan. Karajan was conducting in Berlin, so he showed up at the radio studio to listen to Schüchter's recording sessions in

between his own concerts. Karajan made his entrance. Everyone was excited to see him there. Herr Schüchter announced, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, the Maestro!' I happened to be recording my segment at the time. (The role of Donner) When we finished, Karajan approached me. 'Herr Metternich, I had heard your name, but I hadn't yet had the pleasure of meeting you. I must say, what you just sang was unbelievable! Your voice is exactly what I need. Wouldn't you like to come with me to La Scala? We're going to perform *Lohengrin*, and you could be my Heerrufer.' I said, 'If necessary, I'll walk there!' That's how I was engaged to sing guest appearances at La Scala. During that time, I sang in other theaters in Italy and argued about vocal technique with old professors. They said, "You have a phenomenal voice, but you can't sing like that in Italy. You have no *passaggio*. You must learn to cover. It's too open. You'll ruin your voice." I said, "No, not with my technique. I've got it under control. I'm not blasting. The bright tones are supported." We couldn't agree, but they invited me to master classes that my wife and I continued to attend over the years. We also continued to discuss the *passaggio* (covering the voice when transitioning) and agreed on many points.

I received an offer to do *The Tales of Hoffmann* with Karajan at La Scala. He wanted to do it with four different baritones, and I was to sing the act with the Mirror Aria. I told him that I was happy as long as I got to sing the big aria! Then the production fell through. Karajan didn't get the set that he wanted and refused to do it with a set from an old production. The agent let me know that it was cancelled. What luck! I finally heard from Bing at that point and received an offer to sing Wolfram in *Tannhäuser*, double cast with George London from October

1953 to January 1954. The Met contracts lasted for twelve weeks with a paycheck every week.

Two years before, I happened to make a wrong musical entrance during *Forza* with Leo Blech. I was otherwise always precise, but we were fooling around on stage and I wasn't concentrating. This made things difficult for Blech, because it caused the chorus to come in wrong. I thought, "I'll get a letter tomorrow." Instead, I received a phone call. He said, "I know that mistakes happen on stage, and I'm prepared for that, but when someone dependable like you just messes around on stage...It's a shame. That makes me angry. I insist that you come an hour early before the next performance with your score. We'll rehearse that section." I tried to explain myself, but he said, "There's no excuse." Then came the next performance. People were talking about the new boss at the Metropolitan, Rudolph Bing, who was coming to Europe. Bing would attend performances in Milan, Vienna, and Berlin. The *Kultursenator* in Berlin wanted the best productions to be presented, so Herr Tietjen scheduled *Tannhäuser* with Fischer-Dieskau, *La forza del destino* with Leo Blech, and *The Marriage of Figaro* with Elisabeth Grümmer.

Bing had worked before the war in the main office at the Deutsches Opernhaus in Berlin under Carl Ebert. Leo Blech conducted there. That was the time of the Depression, from 1930 to 1932, when both operas house were in danger of closing. Blech knew Bing from that time. I arrived an hour early with my score to find Blech waiting in the rehearsal room. He said, "You don't need to bother with the music. I know that you'll come in right today. You must be careful.

You're young and unruly but you sing well. You'll have to sing well for the next performance, because a certain Herr Bing will be here from America. If you perform as well as I know you can, he'll hire you at the Metropolitan Opera." I said, "*Herr Generalmusikdirektor*, you mustn't joke about such things." "You'll see that I'm not joking. He'll hire you at the Metropolitan. I know exactly what Herr Bing is like." I said, "We don't even know whether he'll come to our performance." Blech said, "I know that he will. He doesn't like Wagner but he does love Verdi." Blech also said, "You know that I personally don't really care about Bing's visit. I don't want to leave here. I've returned to spend my last years here. I'm German. My parents were German and I want to be buried here. I'm not as excited about his visit as you are. After all, I knew him before he became so important." Blech was a great man.

He was right. Bing came to see *La forza del destino* and my telephone rang the next morning. His agent, Dietz, called and said, "Herr Metternich, Herr Bing heard you yesterday. Could you stop by the hotel quickly?" I drove right over. Bing made a wonderful impression; very charming and refined. He really was the Grand Seigneur. That was a great era at the Metropolitan. He said, "Herr Metternich, I was amazed yesterday. There really is a German singer with an absolutely Italian voice. And that's you! You're the only one I know. You would be a hit at the Metropolitan. I can't engage you yet, because you have to have a visa with a stamp from AGMA. [American Guild of Musical Artists.] That's the labor union, and they'll never give a German a stamp to sing Italian repertoire. Wait

until I have a piece for you and then you can come. Once you're there, I'll work something out. Would you consider it?"

That was the telegram that I received two years later in 1953 just after the *Hoffmann* production at La Scala fell through: Offer Wolfram. Letter will follow: Then, "Herr Metternich, the time has come. Prepare *La forza del destino*, *Il Trovatore*, and *Aida* in Italian. I cannot reveal details at this point, but learn the Italian text. In the meantime, you will be under contract to sing Wolfram in *Tannhäuser*, double cast with George London. Please destroy this letter." I studied those roles like a parrot. Although I know many words and phrases, I don't speak Italian fluently, so it took a lot of work. I made the trip and was asked to come to Bing's office right away. The Chorus directors were also there with concerned expressions. It was 1953. Bing said, "Welcome, Mr. Metternich. We have a problem. We can't bring *Tannhäuser* until December, shortly before Christmas. There won't be any performances of it in November, but I have to pay you. You have a contract. I have to give you a check every Saturday, and we can't afford to do that unless you perform. We depend on sold-out houses to survive financially. We've considered the problem and I have a question. Have you ever sung *La forza del destino* in Italian?" "No, I haven't," I replied. "That's a shame!" he said. I said, "I have studied it, though, in preparation for a radio broadcast." Then he said, "Do you think you could do the whole opera?" "I think I could!" I replied. "My goodness, do you think you could possibly to perform it in ten days?" he asked. "I need to do it anyway," I said. He said, "That's a great relief. Leonard Warren isn't in New York. When he's away, we can't bring the

piece, and it's our most popular production." The chorus directors beamed. "That would be a wonderful solution for both of us," said Bing. I said, "I'll do my best" As we walked to the elevator, he said, "Herr Metternich, if this goes wrong, I'll lose my job and so will you! I said, "I'm well prepared."

I got two rehearsals. My partners were Richard Tucker and Zinka Milanov, with Herr Siepi and Jerome Hines. When all was said and done it was a success and I got wonderful reviews. On the evening of my premiere, there was a knock at the door of my dressing room. A lady entered as I was putting on my make-up. "Mr. Metternich, excuse me. I'm Richard Tucker's wife. I would like to wish you luck this evening." That was remarkable. Tucker was Jewish; a cantor opposite a "child of the Nazis." We sang together but he was always reserved. Tucker was in top form at the time. He sang other singers off the stage. Milanov sang like a goddess. That was a magical voice. There were no solo curtain calls at the Met. A gentleman gave directions on the evening, "These three here. Now these four." There were three of us: Tucker, Milanov, and I. As we took our bow, the other two signaled to each other and disappeared off-stage. Before I knew it, I had a solo curtain call on my opening night. They did that for me.

I was surrounded by many young Jewish people at the Met and I could hear them referring to me not as "Metternich", but as "The German." The stage door man wouldn't even greet me. He acted as though he didn't notice me. Richard Tucker and wasn't that way, though, and neither was his brother-in-law, Jan Peerce, who was also Jewish. (I sang with Jan Peerce later on.) A musical rehearsal was scheduled for *La forza del destino* with the entire cast after the

second performance. I stood on Tucker's right side during the duet but had the feeling that he wasn't comfortable with that, so I said, "Excuse me, Mr. Tucker. Would you like for me to come from the right or from the left?" Tucker answered, "That's absolutely no problem. It makes no difference. And by the way, call me Richard." Everyone froze when they heard that, and the news spread through the Met like wildfire. When I left the theater that day, even the stage doorman acknowledged me. I had some very moving experiences during my time there.

In addition to *La forza del destino*, I also sang *Un ballo in maschera*, *Aida*, *Pagliacci*, and *Il Trovatore*, as well as *Tristan und Isolde* with Set Svanholm and Astrid Varnay. (A recording of my Kurvenal appeared later in Germany.) Then I sang Amfortes. The New York Times wrote: "We haven't heard an Amfortes like this since the heyday of Friedrich Schorr." I couldn't believe that! I mentioned *Tannhäuser*. George Szell conducted a few times and we had a rehearsal one day. He was a Jewish immigrant from Hungary and a wonderful conductor who knew the piece well. He had conducted it in Germany. He conducted the rehearsal in English, making many corrections, but said nothing to me. Not a syllable. Nothing. He rehearsed my "Blicke umher" and "O Himmel" before the break. Then he tapped his baton, saying, "Mr. Metternich, please," and then spoke German, "I'd like tell you that I'm in total agreement with you. What you're doing is wonderful and I don't have anything to correct." The orchestra musicians tapped on their stands. It was amazing. Yet again, a Jew to a "Nazichild."

Those were great experiences: My first, second, third, and fourth seasons. Things had come full circle. Fricsay had done a wonderful *Holländer* with me in

Berlin and liked working with me. I had said to him at the time, "You need a bass baritone, not me!" He said, "But you sang it at Covent Garden." I said, "I only did that to prove a point because it was in English but I shouldn't do it here." He said, "Sing it with the same technique as Count di Luna but stylistically different without *portamenti*. If you sing classic Wagner that is vocally like Luna, you'll be a wonderful Holländer." I said, "If you say so!" We did the piece. Have you heard the CD and how I was able to sing in the low register? He was the only conductor I knew who understood the voice and vocal technique. He would tell the singers, "You're pushing." I once got carried away and he looked at me and said, "Support!" Those were great days. Then I got word from Munich in 1957: "Fricsay will become the new boss and will be doing *Otello* here in the meantime. Could you do Iago? Herr Fricsay would like you to know that if you agree to sing here next year instead of at the Metropolitan, you'll be the first German to be sign a five-year contract at an opera house." That had never been done before. I consulted my wife on the matter, who said, "You've sung everywhere and had success. It won't get any better. Your next success in New York won't be such a sensation. Is it really worth it?" I didn't renew my contract at the Met. I accepted Fricsay's offer instead and signed a five-year contract. Then came another five-year contract with Rudolf Hartmann, followed by four more years in Munich before I retired. By that time, I had begun to teach at the conservatory. I had sung for twenty-one years in Munich by 1971. My thirteen-year run in Hamburg had also come to an end a few years earlier. I wasn't interested in working there

with Liebermann. The worst thing about Hamburg was that I ran into Tietjen again.

Rennert had convinced me to renew my contract in Hamburg when we were in Edinburgh. He didn't tell me that he was leaving. I heard, "You've signed already? Rennert has quit." I said, "That's outrageous! I just sent the contract in last week." They said, "Yes, he's going and do you know who will be taking over? Herr Tietjen." I wrote to the the administrative director, Paris, and said, "Don't count on me." I left Berlin because of him. I will not work with him anymore." Paris continued to schedule me at the opera. I said, "I'm sorry. I don't have time. I'm sorry. I happen to be ill." I cancelled from September to February. Herr Paris would say, "Herr Metternich, don't be foolish. You can't afford to have this matter taken to court." My wife said, "Don't go too far. How much longer will the old man be there? You'll never see him." Tietjen was known to make himself scarce. I finally told Paris that I would sing *Holländer*. He said, "Herr Metternich, thank you! You won't regret it." I showed up for *Holländer*. I didn't see Tietjen, but when it was time for me to go on stage, I nearly tripped over something. It was Tietjen, standing in the corner in the dark. That was what he liked to do. He would secretly listen without bothering anyone. I pretended that I hadn't seen him. After I had sung and before my flight out Herr Paris said, "Herr Metternich, please come to my office to discuss the schedule." I reminded him that my flight left at 12:00 and followed him to the office. "Herr Metternich, your performance was wonderful", he said, 'I'm so glad you're back!' It got later and later. I wondered what was going on until the door opened and in came Herr Tietjen. He said,

“Good morning, Herr Metternich. I must say, you sang a wonderful *Holländer* yesterday. That was excellent. What an achievement! Herr Paris, what do you pay Herr Metternich?” Paris replied, “Herr Metternich gets 800 marks for regular roles and 1,000 marks for *Holländer* and *Frau ohne Schattnen*.” Tietjen exclaimed, ‘That’s impossible. A *Holländer* like this is worth much more. I suggest an increase of 25%: One thousand for regular roles and twelve or fourteen hundred for larger ones. Herr Paris did know what to say and replied, “Well, if you say so.” Tietjen said, “Yes, I insist. By the way, Herr Metternich. I’m glad you’re back. Are there any problems that you would like to discuss with me?” “No,” I replied, “With this raise in pay, I don’t have any problems at all to discuss with you.” That was the last time I shook his hand. I never saw him again. I am glad that we parted on that note.

Time went by, and I was eventually talked into teaching at the conservatory. Against my will! I had never taught. They were searching for a big name in the city that I came from; someone to take over for Professor Glettenberg. My wife said, “You don’t have to keep singing. How long do you plan to? You’ve been doing it for thirty years. You’ve sung everywhere. You’re allowed to slow down a bit now. They’ve made you a great offer and you would have something to do. You wouldn’t be bored. Do you plan to sit around like your colleagues? Go ahead and if you don’t like it, you can always quit.” So I told them, “I’ll try it out. Three semesters. (At first it was two but we added one.) Alfred Schröder, the famous pianist was there. He said, “Herr Metternich, thank you so much. You won’t regret it.” After three semesters I presented a student

performance. They thought, “Ah, it will be nice to hear some Schubert *Lieder* or Hugo Wolf *Lieder*. (Afternoon matinée) I said, “No, we’re performing the first act of *Fidelio*.” They couldn’t believe it. I presented the first act without chorus. The Leonore was a Turkish singer in her third semester who became very well known. She had a wonderful voice. Carol Malone, who sang Marzeline, was in her second semester, as was Soto Papulkas. I borrowed Eike Wilm Schulte from Glettenberg to sing Pizarro. He continued to study with me throughout his operatic career.

That was my start. I took over my role at the conservatory and embraced it with my way of teaching. In my twenty-seven years of teaching, sixty-eight of my students became professional opera singers and that doesn’t include my private students. I had a large number of private students. Many of them are international singers today. Papulkas just stepped in for Herr Gedda again in Switzerland in a big concert. He also sang the tenor part in *Entführung* four times for him in Athens and is a professor at the Volkwang Conservatory in Essen. Stella Kleindienst is at the Hamburg Opera. Carol Malone is fifty-four years old, and just had great success again as Martha in Berlin. And Oscar Hildebrandt. They were all with me at the Conservatory back then. They sing all over the world. Mechthild Gessendorf sent me a letter four weeks ago, saying that she had just sung the Marschallin in *Rosenkavalier* with Levine at the Met. She was also at the conservatory. Dozens of singers attest to my twenty-seven years of teaching; a large number of young people, many of whom have grown older.

There is also a vast recorded repertoire where one can hear the results of my teaching throughout the years.

Interviewer: And eighty years young. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and to wish you continued good health. Thank you very much, Professor.

APPENDIX B

TRANSCRIPTION OF 1995 RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH JOSEF METTERNICH

Ich habe ein humanistisches Abitur gemacht. Das fiel schon in die Nazizeit. (Wenn ich das so nennen möchte.) Und ich habe das Abitur mit „gut“ [bestanden]. Das war an einem strengem Gymnasium in Brühl bei Köln, wo Schloss Augustsburg ist, und wo heute die Staatspräsidenten Empfänge machen. Wir waren zu dritt. Wir haben „gut“ gemacht. Wir gehörten noch einer Clique an, die eindeutig gegen den Nationalsozialismus war. Ich habe die Note „zwei“ bekommen. Wir waren zu dritt. Einer wurde später ein berühmter Theologe, der lange Zeit ein sehr bekannter Friedland Pfarrer war und seinen Weg bis in den Vatikan gefunden hat. Ich habe später Aufnahmen von ihm gesehen. Wir ahnten nicht, wie böse das werden kann, wenn man mutvoll etwas dagegen spricht. Aber wir waren abgestempelt. „Das sind welche, die nicht mitmachen.“ Ich habe das dann prompt auf die Rechnung bekommen. Ich bekam nach der Abitur mein Zeugnis zugesandt und einen Brief des damaligen Regierungspräsidenten der Rheinprovinz. So hieß das damals, was heute ein Teil von Nordrheinwestfalen ist. Der saß in Koblenz, und er teilte mir mit, daß er zu seinem Bedauern mir nicht die Hochschulreife attestieren kann. Ich konnte

nicht an einer deutschen Hochschule studieren. Ich wollte nach Bonn. Die sparsamen Mittel meiner doch sehr wirtschaftlich beschränkten Eltern hätten etwas anderes gar nicht zugelassen als daß ich Volksschullehrer werde. Das dauerte damals sieben Semester. Dann wäre ich vielleicht in die Eifel gekommen und wäre ein braver Schullehrer geworden.

Diese Karriere war mir nun verwehrt. Ich bin dann aus Verzweiflung in den Arbeitsdienst gegangen. Man hatte mir geraten, „Überbrücke diese Zeit. Geh' in den freiwilligen Arbeitsdienst.“ Das waren Nationalsozialisten in meinem kleinen Dorf bei Köln, wo ich geboren bin. „Im nächsten Jahr wird das Pflicht. (1935) Dann dauert es ein ganzes Jahr. Jetzt kommst Du mit einem halben Jahr davon. In der Zwischenzeit werden wir alle Hebel in Bewegung setzen, daß dieses getilgt wird. Wir kennen dich besser.“ Ich habe die in ihrem Glauben gelassen, und ich bin in den Arbeitsdienst gegangen. Ich habe klugerweise meine Geige mitgenommen. Ich war ein Liebhabergeigenspieler und hatte es zu einem geachteten Mitglied in einem sehr guten Liebhaberorchester in Hürth, Mühlheim, gebracht. Heute heißt die Stadt Hürth. Die haben ja Stadtrecht bekommen. Damals waren das Dörfer mit höchstens 2.000 Einwohnern. Dort habe ich das Geigenspiel gelernt. Ich habe auch gelernt (ich war inzwischen dann siebzehn oder achtzehn Jahre alt geworden), bei öffentlichen Konzerten leichter Art die plötzlich entdeckte Stimme per Mikrofon (per Megafon viel mehr) auszuprobieren und Refrains zu singen bei schlagerartigen Sachen. Ich habe auch Tanzmusik gemacht. Mein erster Geigenlehrer war Mathieu Dumonlain. Der zweite Lehrer war ein junger Student; einer der ganz

hervorragenden Geigenbegabungen. Der wohnte in unserem kleinen Dorf und ging nach Köln zur Hochschule. Das ist nur eine halbe Stunde entfernt. In unserem Dorf wohnte sein Onkel. Er selber war aus Koblenz. Der war natürlich eine Grösse bei uns im Dorf. Da sagte man, „Der ist an der Musikhochschule. Das wird mal ein berühmter Geiger!“ Bei grossen Konzerten, die wir gemacht haben, hat er uns ein bisschen geholfen. Solistische Attraktion. Ich weiss noch; einmal spielte er die berühmte Szene des Ballet von Bériot in unserem „Kuhdorf“! Der wurde dann mein zweiter Lehrer. Der war etwas gewiefter und ein Jahr älter als ich. (Wir waren beide also junge Schnösels.) Er hieß Ludwig Bus. Der wurde Konzertmeister am Südwestfunk Orchester und später Professor für Geige an der Hochschule in Saarbrücken. (Damit man sieht was aus diesem Orchester geworden ist.) Nach Bremen in die Philharmonie ist auch ein Cellist namens Paul Zingel gegangen, der auch aus unserem Dorf war.

Das war also mal die Zeit. Da hatte man festgestellt, „Mensch, Du hast eine Stimme wie dein Vater!“ Mein Vater war berühmt als kleiner Beamter, daß er eine fantastische Stimme besaß, der oft solistisch wurde, und dem man geraten hat, „Du mußt Sänger werden!“ Aber in den damaligen Verhältnissen (der hatte sechs Kinder zu erziehen) war er selig, daß er Beamter war und nicht mehr entlassen werden konnte. Der hat solche Gedanken nicht einen Moment verschwendet. Aber eines Tages, als ich ungefähr zwölf Jahre alt war, ist er hingegangen und hat Gesang studiert. Der hat das aus Liebhaberei gemacht. Man hat ihm gesagt, „In Köln ist einer von den ganz bekannten privaten Gesangslehrern. Du bist ja schnell da.“ Die haben seine Stimme gehört und

haben ihn sofort angenommen. Das hat er über zwei Jahre gemacht. Sein Gesanglehrer pflegte seine besten Sänger alle zwei Jahre vorzustellen an der Kölner Musikhochschule, die damals in Köln in der Wolfstrasse war. Dann wurden sie vor ein Gremium geführt. Das machten mehrere am selben Tag. Das Gremium hatte eine Jury, (sagt man wohl heute) dessen Vorsitzender Richard Trunk war. Richard Trunk ist ein bekannter Komponist von sehr schönen Liedern gewesen. Ein sehr bekannter Musiker. Mein Vater hat sich dort präsentiert in dem Abschluss nach zwei Jahren Studium und hat einige Lieder von Hugo Wolf, Schubert, und Richard Strauss gesungen und ein paar Opernarien. Dann kriegte er mit Bravour ein Diplom überreicht. Er hatte vor dem Ausschuss seine Prüfung abgelegt und durfte sich Konzertsänger nennen.

Wir haben als Kinder immer zugehört, wenn er übte. Wir, mein älterer Bruder und ich, (der leider schon tot ist) sangen mit 12 oder 14 Jahren um die Wette „Wer in die Fremde will wandern, der muß mit der Liebsten gehen“ und “Wandern lieb ich für mein Leben.” Hugo Wolf Lieder. Dann hörten wir natürlich auch Opernarien, und wir kannten alle den Prolog aus Bajazzo, den Text, und auch „Das heimatliche Land“ von Traviata. Das konnten wir auswendig! Wir brüllten das auch manchmal durch die Gegend ein bißchen mit Kinderstimmen. Ich bekam dann zur rechten Zeit wie alle guten jungen Männer den Stimmbruch. Danach stellte sich als sechszehnjähriger dann langsam mein späteres Organ heraus. Im Handumdrehen waren wir Mitglieder im Kirchenchor, und ein, zwei Jahre später, eine Stufe höher im Männergesangverein. Dort wurde schon mehr verlangt. Wir haben immer die Stimme hingehalten. Nie geschont! Wir wurden oft

stockheiser, aber wir hatten doch den Mut, irgendwie mit der körperlichen Entwicklung im allgemeinen, auch speziell gesehen, die Hals und Stimmuskulatur, wenn auch in waghalsiger Art und Weise, doch voran zu treiben. Das Ergebnis war, daß ich als Abiturient in der Aula in der Lage war, ganz anständig Arien zu singen. Aus Dankbarkeit durfte ich dann auch das Schulorchester dirigieren in einem Schlusskonzert. Das waren die Erinnerungen mit denen ich in den Arbeitsdienst gegangen bin. Ich nahm meine Geige mit und abends nach Feierabend habe ich ein bißchen musiziert. Das war bei Köln. Da sind so unterirdische Gewölbe in denen eine Stimme wunderbar klingt und trägt. Eiskalt ist es da! Es war ein junger Mann mit Akkordion auch da. Ich habe auch mal ein Operettenlied dazwischen gesungen. Sofort erntete ich Riesenbeifall und wurde befreit vom Schaufeln. Die Arbeit mit der Schaufel strengt wahnsinnig an. Man hat gesagt, „Wenn Du Abends für uns singst, kannst Du tagsüber Dienst in der Schreibstube machen.“ Das war der erste Weg der Karriere!

Eines Tages kam ein Officier herein, und er sagte „Lies mal hier die Zeitung!“ Da stand eine große Annonce im *Westdeutschen Beobachter*. Der Generalintendant der Kölner Oper, Alexander Spring, sucht stimmbegabte Männer zur Verstärkung des Chores bei Wagner Opern. Ich wurde „gezwungen“ von den Oberen im Arbeitsdienst: “Du ziehst deine Ausgehuniform an, und Du setzt Dich jetzt aufs Fahrrad, und Du fährst dahin!” Ich habe dort vorgesungen auf Befehl (aber auch voller Erwartung, da bin ich ganz ehrlich!) und wurde sofort genommen für den Extrachor. Ich habe den Arbeitsdienst noch ein paar Monate mitgemacht, aber dann kriegte ich immer Urlaub. Ich fing an im August 1934 (ich

war gerade mal 19 Jahre alt), Proben zu der Oper Lohengrin mitzumachen. Ich erlebte das Wunder einer Inszenierung einer Wagner Oper unter Alexander Spring, dem damaligen Generalintendanten, der die rechte Hand von Siegfried Wagner in Bayreuth war.

Dieser Eindruck war für mich gewaltig. Heute weiß ich zu recht, daß die Kölner Oper --und nicht Köln allein (Frankfurt, Hannover, Leipzig)-- und ähnliche sogenannte Städtische Opernhäuser, die eine Stufe unter den Staatsopern rangierten wie Berlin, Hamburg, München und Wien ein hervorragendes Niveau hatten; daß das allgemeine Niveau in Deutschland um diese Zeit so gewaltig war, daß die Kölner Oper im festen Vertrag eine Doppelbesetzung der Oper *Lohengrin* hatte. Sie hatten zwei hervorragende Lohengrin. Mann hatte drei Damen, die die Elsa singen konnten. Sie hatten zwei ganz hervorragende Ortrud Sängerinnen (hochdramatisch bis unter die Haarspitzen), wo es heute vielleicht in ganz Deutschland nicht eine einzige dieser Qualität gibt. Telramund war zweimal besetzt. (Es gibt in Europa vielleicht zwei gute Telramunds, wenn wir Glück haben.) Das hatte die Kölner Oper. Auch der König war zweimal besetzt. Wenn der eine krank war und der andere zufälligerweise abwesend, dann war in Düsseldorf auch ein Tenor für Lohengrin -und in Frankfurt, und in Hamburg und in Hannover! Die hatten alle einen Tenor, der die Oper *Lohengrin* singt. Wo gibt es heute einen Tenor, der Lohengrin singen kann? Das ist, im Rückblick, für mich eine wahnsinnig interessante Frage. Wir haben ein ganz anderes Niveau gehabt. Wir jungen späteren Sänger, wir waren beeinflußt von den Spitzensängern dieser Ära. Den Stil, den die in der Produktion eines Tones

pfliegten, der war uns geläufig, und den haben wir versucht, uns zu eigen zu machen. Wir haben gesagt, "So mußt du singen." Das ging alles ohne Gesangslehrer.

Wir verstärkten also in meiner Zeit, wo wir dann diesen Lohengrin machten, (das war im Spätsommer und im Herbst 1934) plötzlich auch den Rundfunkchor von Köln. Damals gabs kein Fernsehen. Da waren Rundfunkveranstaltungen, und zwar öffentliche vor Publikum, ein großer Hit, wie man heute sagen würde. In der Messehalle in Köln Deutz, wurden Konzerte veranstaltet mit Orchester und Chor. Berühmte Soloisten sangen vor fünf, sechstausend Zuschauern. Das wurde natürlich auch übertragen. Wenn die Chorstärke für die Messehalle reichen musste, musste der Chor verstärkt werden. Für intime Dinge, die nur gesendet werden, ist das Mikrofon hilfreich genug, aber nicht für große Konzerte vor Publikum. Wir bekamen die Chance. Die Auserwählten, die dorthin geschickt wurden, verdienten ein Geld dabei. Das war das Wichtigste, weil wir arm wie die Kirchenmäuse waren. Wir haben das Geld dankend entgegen genommen.

Mir juckte es, den Leiter dieser Veranstaltung so lange zu belästigen und ihm abzutrotzen, nachdem er mich zweimal rausgeschmissen hat, ihm einmal vorsingen. Ich habe ihm gesagt, ich habe eine ähnliche Stimme wie berühmte Leute hier. Um mich los zu werden, hat er mich an einem Freitag ins Funkhaus kommen lassen. Ich war eingereiht in eine grosse Schar von arrivierten, schon älteren, Gesangsbeflissenen. Man sah es Ihnen schon äußerlich an. Sie trugen Fliegen mit dem Hemd und breite Hüte. Ich sah wie ein Nobody aus; dünn wie

ein Hering, jung und nichtssagend. Ich habe vorgeschlagen (ich war neunzehn Jahre inzwischen), ihm die Cortigianni aus Rigoletto vorzusingen. Die sang mein Vater immer. Deshalb kannte ich sie gut. (Feile Sklaven! Ihr habt sie verhandelt!) Er glaubte im Moment, ich hätte den Verstand verloren. („Das ist irrsinnig. Das kannst du nicht. Und wo hast du es gelernt?“) Ich sagte, ich habe das selber einstudiert. Da wollte er schon abbrechen. Ich sagte, „Dann lassen Sie mich ein Paar Takte versuchen.“ Dann hat er mich selber begleitet, bis ich zum ersten hohen G kam. (“Verzweiflung die Kraft Verleihen”) Er sagte, „Moment! Jetzt mach’ das noch einmal!“ Ich habe die ganze Arie singen dürfen und eine zweite Aria und dann sagte er, „Und Sie wollen mir einreden, Sie haben keinen Lehrer?“ „Ja“, sag’ ich, „mein Vater, und ich habe immer zugehört.“ „Das ist mir noch nie passiert! Ich mache Ihnen einen Vorschlag. Selbst wenn mich die Leute für verrückt erklären. Ich nehme Sie für ein Programm!“ Ein halbes Jahr später, (ich weiss genau: Am 12. Mai 1935) genau ein Jahr nach meinem ruhmlosem Abitur, das ich als unreif verlassen mußte, sang ich in der Kölner Messehalle in einem Opernprogramm von 4:00 bis 6:00 Uhr, live. Jeder guter Ton aber auch jeder schlechte wurde blank und frei gesendet. Volkstümliche Opernmusik. Ich sang den Bajazzo Prolog und die Luna Arie und bekam 50 Reichsmark für die Sendung. Meine Eltern waren großzügig. Aus Stolz durfte ich mir davon einen Anzug, ein paar neue Schuhe, und ein neues Hemd kaufen. So wertvoll war das Geld! Damit war eigentlich der erste Schritt in eine neue Himmelsrichtung meines Lebens getan.

Aus der einen Sendung wurde eine zweite. Die hieß „Nette Sachen aus Köln,“ und wurde immer Sonntagnachmittags von 4:00 bis 6:00 Uhr gesendet. In diesem Programm wirkte ein Tenor mit; Henk Noort, ein Holländer, der ein Startenor in Düsseldorf an der Oper war. Und dort war eine jüngere Mezzosopranistin mit schöner Stimme; damals noch nicht sehr bekannt: eine gewisse Elisabeth Höngen. Diese wirkten in dem Programm mit. Sie fragten mich, welchen Lehrer ich hätte, das ich mit so jungen Jahren so wunderbar singen könnte, und glaubten mir nicht, das ich keinen Lehrer hätte.

Es kam eine weitere Sendung. In Handumdrehen hatte ich ein Engagement als Chorsänger in Bonn am Theater. Ich war allerdings (das hat man mir geraten) in die Opernchorschule der Musikhochschule eingetreten. Das ging Hand in Hand mit dem Chordirektor der Oper, wo wir Lohengrin machten. Der war der Leiter. Das war eine Formsache. Ich habe das dann mitgemacht. Die Ausbildung sollte zwei Jahre dauern. Dann macht man den Abschluß. Dann bekam man ein Papier, das man vermittlungsfähig ist. Das war bei den Nazis vielleicht eine der guten Seiten, die sie zu Wege gebracht haben, denn kein Agent durfte wild mit einer jungen Stimme machen, was er wollte. Die müssen erst vor einem Gremium bewiesen haben, was sie können und ein Papier haben. Ich bin dann zweimal zum Gesangunterricht gegangen, habe aber sofort einen Krach mit dem Lehrer gehabt, weil der mir nicht zusagte. Aber ich bin sehr gerne in die Theorie gegangen; Gehörbildung. Ich wusste natürlich durch mein Geigenspiel, was ein Legato in einer Phrase ist. Ich hatte selbstverständlich eine Ahnung, daß E-Dur, 4 Kreuze hat und A-moll überhaupt kein Vorzeichen, und

daß punktiert und Triolen verschiedene Dinge sind; was die Studenten jahrelang an der Hochschule lernen müssen. Das konnte ich alles. Ich konnte mich ganz auf die Stimmbildung konzentrieren. Nach zwei Wegen zu diesem Gesangslehrer habe ich das bleibenlassen, und habe mich durchgemogelt.

Nach drei Wochen Mitgliedschaft kam der stellvertretende Chordirektor und sagte, sie hätten das besprochen. Ich müsste nächste Woche die Abschlußprüfung der Jahrgänge vor mir mitmachen. Ich bin dann im Kölner Schauspiel (zerstört im Kriege) auf die Bühne geschickt worden und habe eine halbe Arie gesungen. Dann haben sie abgebrochen und haben gesagt; ich bin vermittlungsfähig für den Chor. Ich war dann sofort Chormitglied in Bonn. Man hat mir geraten, „Nimm ein kleines Theater. Die haben wenig Solisten. Dann wirst Du im Handumdrehen auch Solopartien singen.“ Und das kam auch so. Die erste Oper, die wir machten, war Bohème. Sie hatten natürlich schon einen Bariton in Bonn. Der sang den Marcel aber keinen Schaunard. Im Handumdrehen hatte ich diese Partie. So hat das Ganze seinen Anfang genommen.

Dann kam das Schicksal. Man teilte mir mit, das ich demnächst Soldat werden musste. Damals wurden die Jahrgänge 1914 und 1915 sofort eingezogen. In derselben Zeit brach bei mir eine grauenvolle Krankheit aus. Ich hatte eine nasse Rippenfellentzündung nicht beachtet. (Aus Angst, wenn ich die Proben nicht mache, kommt ein anderer und nimmt dir den Job weg.) Ich habe bis zum Umfallen weitergeprobt. Man hat mir gesagt, „Du verschwindest! Du siehst aus! Merkst Du nicht, das Du krank bist? Das Wasser läuft Dir von dem

Gesicht." Ich habe dann einen Schwächeanfall gehabt und landete im Krankenhaus. Dort stellte man eine frische Tuberkulose an der Spitze der rechten Lunge fest. Damit war das Leben in Gefahr und natürlich jede Karriere erstmal zu Ende. Ich habe viele Monate in diversen Heilstätten zugebracht, (im Schwarzwald, in der Schweiz) und habe auf Gott vertraut, denn was anderes gab es nicht. Heilmittel gab es zu der Zeit nicht. Man musste aus eigener Kraft die Krankheit überwinden. Ich habe immer an die Kraft meines Atems geglaubt, obwohl die Ärzte sagten, „Um Gottes willen! Nicht die Lunge anstrengen." Ich habe im Geheimen immer ein bißchen gemacht. Und wer es nun schuld ist, und was und wer eingegriffen hat, nach Höhen und Tiefpunkten war ich überraschend im Jahre 1938-39 plötzlich einwandfrei gesund geworden. Ich hatte diese Krankheit überwunden. Ich wurde alle Monate nachgeprüft; später alle Vierteljahre, dann alle Halbjahre, und dann nie wieder. Es ist ein Wunder geschehen, denn das war zu dieser Zeit ganz selten, das man die Krankheit überwand. Ich nehme auch allen anderen Märchenerzählern über meine Krankheit damit den Wind aus den Segeln. Die alle behaupteten, ich hätte Gesang studiert, und das Gesangstudium hätte mir geschadet, und daraufhin hätte ich einen Schaden an der Lunge bekommen. Das wird von berühmten Fachkollegen verbreitet. Ich habe das selber erleben müssen. Einwandfrei steht fest: Erst war ich krank, dann war ich gesund, und danach habe ich erst angefangen, Gesang zu studieren. Und nicht vorher.

Ich traf einen Bekannten, mit dem ich dann befreundet war, in einer dieser Heilstätten. Der lebte in Berlin und hatte ein Schuhgeschäft. In derselben Zeit

hatte ich meinen späteren Lehrer in Köln getroffen, der ganz spezifisches Training bei der Ausbildung der Stimme über Atemverdichtungen machte, die nicht üblich waren. Die -im Gegenteil- oft verschrien wurden als Gewalt, übertriebenes Stauen, und wie man das alles nennt. Mir hatte das eingeleuchtet und wahnsinnig imponiert. Der verzog sich leider nach Berlin, also musste ich ihm nachreisen. Das war Paul Neuhaus in Berlin. Zu dem bin ich dann gekommen, und dank des Bekannten aus der Heilstätte hatte ich die Möglichkeit in Berlin zu leben. Ich habe dort in dem Schuhgeschäft ein bisschen geholfen.

Dann brach der Krieg aus. Das war im Herbst '39. Ich war gerade drei Monate am trainieren. Dann wurde alles reglementiert. Zum Beispiel, im Schuhgeschäft mussten sich alle Leute eintragen lassen die Schuhe wollten, denn das brauchte Material; Arbeitskräfte. Man durfte nur einmal dort sich eintragen lassen, nicht bei vier Geschäften. Ich habe immer die Listen vervollständigt, entdeckte den Namen Noort, und denke, das ist ein so seltener Name. Das kann nicht sein, daß das ein anderer ist. Inzwischen hatte ich erfahren, das Henk Noort, der im Konzert mitgewirkt hatte, erster Tenor seines Faches am Opernhaus Berlin geworden war. Einige Tage später betrat er den Laden mit seinen jungen Söhnen, die draußen Fußball spielten und deren Schuhwerk grässlich aussah. Er brachte die Schuhe zur Reparatur. Ich habe ihn gefragt, „Herr Noort, kennen Sie mich? Können Sie sich erinnern an mich?“ Ich war inzwischen dreissig Pfund dicker und schwerer. Aus dem Spindeldürren war ein kräftiger, etwas verfetteter junger Mann geworden, der eine Brille auch trug, die ich vorher nicht hatte. „Ich weiss nicht so recht,“ sagte er in seinem

Holländisch, „Aber irgendwie kommen Sie mir ein bisschen bekannt vor!“ Dann sagte ich, „Wissen Sie, wie Sie nette Sachen aus Köln gesungen haben?“ „Sind Sie der kleine Bariton, der keinen Lehrer gehabt hat?“ Sag' ich, „Der bin ich!“ „Du musst in meine Wohnung kommen. Hast Du einen Lehrer?“ „Ja, ich habe einen Lehrer -einen guten.“ „Du musst mir zeigen, was Du machst. Ich will deine Stimme hören.“

Am nächsten Sonntag war ich bei ihm. Er hat ein schönes Glas Wein aufgefahren und ich habe ihm *Valentins Gebet* vorgesungen. Dann stürzte er zum Telefon und rief die Oper an. „Ist der Chef im Hause?“ „Nein, heute ist Sonntag. Nur die Sekretärin ist da, Herr Noort.“ „Geben Sie mir die Sekretärin.“ „Frau Bernhart, hier ist Noort. Du musst dem Chef sagen, der Noort hat angerufen. Der hat eine Stimme gehört. Der Chef muss die Stimme hören!“ „Ja, ja, Herr Noort! Ich will alles tun für Sie.“ (Er war Startenor und konnte Wünsche äußern.) Ich bekam vier Tage später einen Anruf. Da sagte dieses Fräulein Bernhart, „Herr Metternich, der Herr Noort hat Sie so empfohlen. Wir haben zufällig ein Vorsingen. Der Generalintendant macht einmal im Monat ein Vorsingen für junge Sänger von der Hochschule. (Die von Lehrern gesiebt und getestet sind, werden vorgestellt.) Wenn Sie mögen, dürfen Sie dazu kommen.“ Dann sagte ich, „Ich komme!“ Das ich erst drei, vier Monate am studieren war, habe ich mir keinen Gedanken gemacht. Ich habe mich nicht mal groß eingesungen. Ich bin hingegangen und traf zwölf, dreizehn junge Sänger und Sängerinnen. Die haben dann der Reihe nach auf der großen Bühne des Deutschen Opernhauses (dort war damals eine märchenhafte Akustik) eine

halbe Arie, eine ganze Arie; je nachdem was dem Gremium unten gefiel. Dann hörte man immer, „Das ist zu früh, das dürfen Sie noch nicht singen!“ „Sie haben eine schöne Stimme. Sie müssen in einem Jahr wieder vorsingen! Wir sind interessiert, Sie zu hören.“ „Ihnen wurde geraten, nicht weiter Gesang zu studieren. Die Stimme ist nicht berühmt genug, um sie zu entwickeln und ein Karriere zu machen“ (am laufenden Band).

Und dann bin ich heraus. Ich war der Letzte -Samstagmittags. Das war halb eins ungefähr. Dann hörte ich wie Wilhelm Rode (später wusste ich, das er das war) sagte, „Das ist eine junge Stimme. Der soll eine verrückte Stimme haben. Noort hat ihn uns empfohlen.“ „Was singen Sie?“ „Ja, ich dachte, Cortigianni, Rigoletto.“ „Wie alt sind Sie?“ „Ich bin schon 24.“ „Ja, ist das nicht ein bißchen früh? Glauben Sie das wirklich?“ „Ja, ich glaube schon. Ich kann ja versuchen.“ „Wir würden aber doch raten, zu überlegen, ob Sie so etwas singen.“ „Ich darf versuchen?“ „Ja, versuchen Sie mal!“ Ich habe die ganze Arie gesungen. Dann war Schweigen. Dann flüsterten Sie. „Kannst Du noch was?“ „Ja. *Bajazzo* Prolog.“ „Was? Singst Du das?“ „Ja, ja.“ „Na, dann mal zu!“ Und dann mußte ich ein Stückerl René singen. Ich war patschnass! Ich war nicht gewöhnt und hatte auch damals nicht die stabile Kraft, um hintereinander auf so einem Podium drei solche Arien fast unpräpariert durchzuhalten, aber es ging einigermaßen.

Dann kam Herr Wilhelm Rode auf die Bühne und sagte zu mir, „Geh' mal mit. Was machst du?“ „Ich bin in einem Schuhgeschäft.“ „Das mußt du sofort aufhören. Du mußt sofort kontrolliert werden. Das wäre schade um die Stimme.“

Geh' mal mit." Dann bin ich in sein Zimmer gegangen. „Belli, ruf' den Verwaltungsdirektor. Der sitzt bestimmt in der Gaststätte beim Pilsner Urquell." Man hat ihn dort geholt. „Mach' mal einen Vertrag fertig. Schreiben wir hinein: Josef Metternich. (Die Formulare waren vorgedruckt.) Wir geben ihm einen Vertrag für zwei Jahre. (1940 bis 1942) Schreiben wir: lyrischer, junger Spielbariton, leichter Charakterbariton. Geben wir ihm 500 R-Mark." (Reichsmark) Das war so viel wie ein junger Stadtsanwalt am Gericht verdiente. Also, um die Miete zu zahlen, reichte das. Für eine Gage am Deutschen Opernhaus war es um diese Zeit ein Trinkgeld, aber ich war auch plötzlich ein Mensch, der 500 Mark haben sollte. Ich konnte das gar nicht fassen. Ich bin dann glücklich nach Hause gegangen. Rode hat mir noch gesagt, „Du wirst natürlich erstmal nichts singen. Du gehst jeden Abend im dritten Rang; diese Loge dort. (Hat er mir gezeigt.) Dort wirst du sitzen und wirst deine Kollegen beobachten. Wirst sehen wie der Dirigent Einsätze gibt. Du wirst sehen wie deine Kollegen aufstehen. Wie sie schreiten über die Bühne. Das mußt du dir alles einprägen. Dann kriegst Du jeden Tag eine Stunde Korrepetition. Da lernst du kleine und grosse Partien. Das ist im ernsten Teil deine Arbeit. Wir haben acht Baritonisten. Du bist der Neunte. Du weisst, also, wie deine Chancen sind!" Ich habe 1940 im August angefangen. Ich bin Abends in die Oper gegangen. Ich habe morgens Heerrufer studiert. Man fängt immer mit einer nicht so riesengrossen aber doch schon schweren Partie an. Dann haben wir ein bißchen Carmen (Morales) gemacht. Alle möglichen kleinen Sachen. Abendstern haben wir probiert.

Dann sah ich die Vorbereitungen für die Oper *Lohengrin* auf der Bühne. Die brachten eine neue *Lohengrin* Inszenierung heraus. Das Stück ist für mich Schicksal geworden. Nach ungefähr vier Wochen wurde ich zum Intendanten gerufen. (Wilhelm Rode) „Ich habe gelesen, Du machst immer Heerrufer Proben .Wie weit bist Du damit?“ Ich sagte, „Ja, das kann ich.“ „Gut?“ „Ja.“ „Dann gehst Du mit herunter.“ Es war Mittagspause gewesen, 11 Uhr 30. Er selber war Regisseur der Oper, führte unten Regie, und sang selber den Telramund. Dort wartete der Chor, und er stellte mich vor, „Das ist unser jüngstes Mitglied: Herr Metternich. Er wird jetzt für den zweiten Teil der Probe den Heerrufer machen. Hans Ansnissen, du hast Ruhe. Kannst zuhören. Du hast das ja oft genug gesungen!“ „Ja, selbstverständlich, Chef!“ Dann kriegte ich einen Knüppel in die Hand und wurde vorne an die Rampe gestellt. „Dort gehst du hin (zum Kreidekreis), wenn du singst. Und wenn du nicht singst, wenn du fertig bist, gehst du zurück an den anderen Kreidekreis in der Nähe vom Königsthron.“ Ich war natürlich aufgeregt, aber es ist ganz gut gegangen. Der Chor; die haben mich natürlich von allen Seiten angeguckt. Da kommt schon wieder einer. Ich durfte auch eine Orchesterprobe machen, und nach einer Weile kam der Rode zu mir, „Weiss du was, du singst die Premiere. Ich mache das.“ Ende Oktober, Anfang November habe ich die Premiere gesungen. Ich war kaum am Theater und habe den Heerrufer gesungen mit Noort als Lohengrin. Ich weiß noch; Konstanze Nettessheim war die Elsa. Wilhelm Scherp (ein wunderbarer Bass zu dieser Zeit) sang den König. Rode selber war Telramund.

Danach habe ich Silvio singen dürfen mit Resi Rudolf, eine berühmte Kammersängerin und Filmschauspielerin, die sich beschwert hat, "Mit einem Anfänger mache ich keine Probe! Ich denke nicht daran!" Sie, als Kammersängerin, lehnt das ab. Also, gab man mir irgendeine junge Anfängerin. Ich hatte eine Heidenangst. Ich wußte nicht, wie man eine Liebesszene auf der Bühne spielt. Ich kam vom Bauernlande. Ich habe keine Armbewegung gewagt. Und so bin ich abends auf die Bühne. Ich habe keine Orchesterprobe gehabt. Entweder machst du das oder du kannst heimgehen. Also, ohne die Orchesterprobe heraus. Am anderen Tag kam die Frau Kammersängerin in die Oper. Die Kollegen standen herum. Dann erzählte sie, „Gestern hat meine Aufwartefrau gesagt, "Frau Kammersängerin, Sie hatten sich aber einen feurigen Liebhaber angelacht!" Alles lachte. Ich wurde rot vor Scham. Dann sagte ich, „Ich weiß, weil ich Sie falsch geküsst habe und so, aber ich wußte nicht, wie ich mich verhalten soll. Ich kann Sie auch richtig küssen, wenn..." Dann hat sie gesagt, „Junger Mann, richtige Küsse nehme ich nur von meinem Ehemann entgegen! Merken Sie sich das einmal!" Und alle lachten mich aus. Beim nächsten Lohengrin hat mich der heilige Zorn gefasst. Ich habe sie genommen und habe sie geküsst! Und sie hat mich nicht geprügelt. Sie hat keine Silbe mehr verloren. Dann konnte ich auch einen guten Silvio darstellen. Dann habe ich noch Morales gemacht.

Im dritten Jahr meiner Laufbahn, sagte Herr Rode, „Du hast dich gut entwickelt." Ich wurde viel eingesetzt bei Konzerten, denn die wußten; der ist jung und unerfahren auf der Bühne. Aber wenn er einen Frack anhat, ist er

genau so gut wie die berühmten, denn er hat die verrückte Stimme und kann singen. Soldateneinsätze bei Breslau: Ich bin auch nach München geschickt worden. Im Deutschen Museum, da waren lauter Kammersänger. Ich war der einzige ohne Titel, aber ich habe mindestens so viel Beifall wie die bekommen. Ich habe schön gesungen, nur auf der Bühne selten. Wenn *Lohengrin* kam, und so weiter. Dann kam Wilhelm Rode, und sagte, „Du kriegst einen neuen Vertrag. Wir verlängern um zwei Jahre. Deine Gage wird 850, und im vierten Jahr kriegst Du 1000 Mark im Monat.“ Da kam ich in die Gegend, wie Adenauer als Oberbürgermeister verdient hat. Das näherte dem schon bedenklich. „Und du hast jetzt einen Wunsch: eine grosse Partie.“ Ich habe mir den *Troubadour* ausgesucht. Von den acht Baritonisten, den Luna schafften nur Hans Reinmar (das war unser berühmter Bariton am Deutschen Opernhaus für solche Partien) und Karl Schmidt-Walter, der damalige Hermann Prey. (Kavalier-bariton, bis zu den leicht dramatischen, mit dem Unterschied, daß er für mich eine ganz andere Stimme hat als der Prey.) Auch von der Stimmgestaltung. Man kann sie nicht vergleichen. Man kann sie nur katalogisieren aber nicht miteinander vergleichen. Der Reinmar war immer nur ein paar Monate da. Schmitt-Walter sang wahnsinnig viele Liederabende. Ich hatte also genau richtig geraten. „Da haben wir Bedarf dafür.“ Ich durfte den Luna singen und habe später tollkühn auch den Amonasro gewagt. Alle sagten, „Bist du irrsinnig? Du bist viel zu jung für diese Rolle,“ aber ich habe es trotzdem geschafft.

Dann hiess es eines Sonntags, „Wenn du Lust hast, darfst du dich als René versuchen. Du hast ja alle Proben mitgemacht.“ Das gehörte zu meiner

Arbeit. Ich mußte alle Neuinszenierungen im Zuschauerraum bei den Proben dabeisitzen. „Du weißt, links kommst du rein, und rechts gehst du ab. Das Andere mußt du alleine machen. In vierzehn Tagen ist eine Nachmittagsaufführung. Die ist für Studenten der Universität und Musikhochschule, wenn es die noch gibt, und für Offiziere und Kriegsurlauber und allsowas. Eine eingelegte Aufführung. Dort kannst du dich ausprobieren.“ Ich sagte, „Ich mache das mit Wonne.“ In dieser Aufführung kam eine genauso junge und aus demselben Jahrgang Sopranistin und versuchte sich auch einspringenderweise als Oskar. Sie sang zum erstenmal Oskar und ich zum ersten mal René. Ein gewisses Fräulein Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. Das ist eine denkwürdige Aufführung gewesen. Später durfte ich ein paarmal noch Escamillo singen.

Dann kam ein Einschnitt für den Rode. Er fiel, vermute ich, politisch in Ungnade. Goebbels mochte ihn nicht. Hitler liebte ihn. Hitler war nicht mehr da. Der war in Königsberg, Stalingrad. Der Krieg war auf der Kippe. Die Gelegenheit hat der Goebels beim Schopf gefaßt. Es hieß in der Presse, der Überlastung des Generalintendanten zuliebe wird ihm ein Operndirektor beigegeben. Dann kam ein gewisser Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt und wurde Operndirektor am Deutschen Opernhaus. Der brachte einen jungen, noch nicht bekannten Oberspielleiter aus Königsberg mit, ein gewisser Günther Rennert. Das waren dann meine direkten über mir Befindlichen, von denen mein Wohl und Wehe der Zukunft abhing. Schmidt-Isserstedt habe ich einen Brief geschrieben. Dann ließ er mir mitteilen, er wird den nächsten *Troubadour* abwarten und mich anhören. Danach wurde ich

zu ihm gebeten, und er sagte zu mir, „Lieber Herr Metternich, ich rate Ihnen, suchen Sie ein anderes grosses Haus. Wollen Sie warten, bis all ihre Kollegen hier wegsterben? Das sind berühmte Leute, Schmidt-Walter, Reinmar. Sie können sie nicht alle verdrängen! Aber sie haben eine so richtige verrückte, italienische Opernstimme. Hannover, Frankfurt am Main, Wiesbaden. Sie wären glücklich, wenn Sie so einen Bariton hätten. Ich mache Ihnen einen Vorschlag. Versuchen Sie es. Wenn es nichts wird, wenn sie kein Angebot kriegen, bleiben Sie bei mir. Ihre Gage ist bescheiden. Unser Haus trägt das leicht.“

Ich war innerhalb von drei Wochen mit einer Einladung des Staatstheater Wiesbaden konfrontiert. Ich bin hingefahren. Sofort kriegte ich einen Vierjahresvertrag angeboten mit 1600-1800 Mark im Monat. Das war also Ober-, Oberbürgermeistergehalt. Damit man heute weiß, was das für einen jungen Sänger bedeutet; wenn man sich entwickelt, und gepflegt nach oben gebracht wird. Wenn man ihm Zeit lässt. Heute sieht das anders aus. Ich habe zweimal auch gastiert; René, *Troubadour* vorbereitet. Dann wurden die Theater geschlossen. Was war 1944 -im Herbst. Es lief der Vertrag an und dann war Schluß. Mir sagte der Intendant, Max Spilcker (ein ehemaliger guter Bariton der Leipziger Oper), der dort Chef war, „Herr Metternich, wir sind Preussisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden. Wir gehören verwaltungstechnisch, gagenmäßig nach Berlin. Gehen Sie nach Berlin zurück. Der Vertrag ist einfach nicht in kraft getreten. Die Gage wird Ihnen von der Preussischen Regierungshauptkasse so oder so überwiesen. Sie büßen nichts ein. Wollen Sie hier warten?“ Die Amerikaner näherten sich Aachen. Er sagte, „Ich kann Sie nicht halten. Sie

werden eingezogen. Vielleicht gelingt es Ihnen in Berlin davonzukommen.“ Ich bin auf seinen Rat nach Berlin zurückgekehrt. Meine früheren Kollegen waren bei Siemens und überall in Betrieben tätig. Ich habe vom Arbeitsamt... Sie haben gesagt, „Wir wissen nicht, was wir mit Ihnen anfangen sollen. Suchen Sie einen Job, und rufen Sie uns an.“ Ich habe bei den Banken angerufen. „Ich bin Opernsänger, aber ich möchte gern an eine Bank. Ich muss arbeiten.“ Die haben immer gesagt, „Wollen Sie uns auf die Schippe nehmen?“ Eine hat angebissen. Die Sparkasse des Kreises Teltow bei Berlin. Die hatte ihren Hauptsitz an der Potsdamer Straße in Berlin, in der Nähe vom Potsdamer Platz. Dort bin ich Mitglied geworden. Ich mußte eiserne Sparkonten ausrechnen, und die in Sparbücher gutschreiben. Das war die unattraktivste und auch die wertloseste Sache. Bei Kriegsende war das Makelatur, aber ich hatte einen Job. Ich habe denen gesagt, „Ich komme gerne um halb neun, wenn es Ihnen recht ist, und gehe um halb drei. Sie brauchen mir kein Gehalt zahlen. Mein Gehalt kriege ich von der Bühne. Ich muss nur arbeiten.“ Da waren die einverstanden. Sie haben mich argwöhnisch beguckt. „So ein junger Kerl und nicht Soldat. Sollen sich was schämen.“ So waren die Blicke immer. Ich habe das überdauert. Habe das Kriegsende mit allem Inferno in Berlin erlebt -auch am eigenen Leibe. Nachts in die Splittergräben gesaut. Ausgebrannt. Wohnung verloren. Alles mitgemacht. Ich habe auch den Einmarsch der Russen erlebt, die auch nicht sich wie Gentlemen benommen haben. Das ist der Weg meiner Anfängerzeit bis zum Ende des Krieges.

Nach dem Kriege waren die Häuser zerstört. Das Deutsche Opernhaus war abgebrannt aber die Verwaltung blieb heil mit starken Schäden, aber das ging einigermaßen. Das einzige Theater in West Berlin, wo ich dann dazugehörte, nach Einteilung der Stadt in vier Bezirke der Alliierten, war das Theater des Westens. Die ehemalige Volksoper im Dritten Reich. Da war nur oben das Dach weg. Die englischen Besatzungsmächte haben dann aus Heeresbeständen Planen angeschleppt und haben oben das Loch geschlossen. Dort fingen wir dann an, Programme zu machen mit den vorhandenen Kräften. Mann hat die beiden Häuser, Volksoper und Deutsches Opernhaus, zusammengeschlossen. (Was an Orchesterleuten und Sängern noch da war.) So ergab sich zum Beispiel das Josef Metternich das Kriegsende dort erlebte und zur Stelle war. Der ehemalige junge Anfänger; von Wilhelm Rode wunderbar geführte und langsam empor gebrachte Bariton.

Der traf sich mit einer ebenso jung und in der Entwicklung hoch geführten Koloratursopranistin, Lieselotte Losch. Die kam von der Volksoper. Das ist ein ganz schöner Anfang für die zweite Hälfte, denn wir sangen dann zusammen Stücke, wo das möglich war; das „der“ und „die“ beide Verwendung fanden, ohne Hintergedanken, natürlich, sondern rein von dem vorhandenen Sängerpotential. Wir hatten auch hier und da einen Tenor; hier und da noch ein Sopran, aber es war sehr wenig vorhanden. Wir haben dann die erste Zeit Konzerte gemacht und haben das Publikum beobachtet. (Eiskaltes Ding im Herbst und Winter.) Wenn es regnete, senkte sich die Plane immer tiefer, und dann fing es an zu tropfen. Das Publikum sass im Parkett und hatten

Regenschirme geöffnet. Das waren die ersten Eindrücke. Ähnlich war es im Osten. (Es hiess für uns immer „im Osten.“) Das ist eigentlich die Gegend, wo das noch berühmtere Haus, Die Staatsoper unter den Linden ihr Dasein pflegte. Die Oper war zerstört, aber die hatten ein wunderbares Ausweichquartier; den Admiralspalast. Der war heil geblieben. Ein schönes Haus, schöne Bühne, gute Akustik, usw. Die machten auch eigene Programme, aber man merke, wir hatten nicht viel. Die grossen Sänger waren rar geworden. Viele waren alt. (Fünfzig und mehr) Sie waren restlos am Boden zerstört. Sie hatten ihr Haus verloren. Ihr Konto war nichts mehr wert auf der Bank. Viele hatten nicht mehr die Kraft, noch einmal anzufangen. Ich erinnere mich an einen Tenor, vor dem ich gekniet habe; für mich die schönste Lohengrinstimme, die ich in meinem Jahrhundert kennengelernt habe: Franz Völker. Es gibt nichts Schöneres für mich als *Lohengrin*, wenn man den 1935-36 Mitschnitt aus Bayreuth mit Maria Müller hört. Das ist so schön! Völker hat den Versuch unternommen und hat dann resigniert. Er konnte es einfach nicht. Gotthelf Pistor, der berühmter Heldentenor, der bei uns am Deutschen Opernhaus war, den kannte ich aus meiner Kölner Zeit. Der ist am leibhaftigen Leib verhungert. Dieser kräftige Mann und so feiner Mann. Das war kein Typ für den Schwarzmarkt. Der wurde immer weniger und dann wurde er krank. Der ist fast verhungert und an diesen Dingen weggestorben.

Es war also die Zeit der jungen Leute, die am Leben waren gekommen. Wir mussten alle vorsingen, damit man feststellte was vorhanden war. Die Herren Alliierten sendeten ihre Kulturoffiziere, und sie äusserten ihre Wünsche. Ich weiß, das unser Kulturoffizier (das hat mir ein Engländer gesagt) in Wirklichkeit in

seiner Heimat Vertreter einer Zahnpastagesellschaft war. Der entschied nun, welche Stücke mit wem zu besetzen seien. Zumindest gab er seiner Meinung kund und versuchte einzuwirken. Wir sangen alle vor, und dann zeigte auf mich, „Den wollen wir vor allen Dingen hören!“ „Ja, das ist ein junger Sänger. Der ist noch unerfahren auf der Bühne. Er hat eine schöne Stimme, aber wir haben doch noch Kammersänger so und so.“ Dann haben Sie gesagt, „Wir wollen nicht die mit den höchsten Titeln. Wir wollen die mit den schönsten Stimmen!“ Das war das kalte Urteil der Alliierten.

Michael Bohnen wurde Intendant. Bohnen erinnerte sich. Wir hatten einmal in meinen vier Jahren Lohengrin zusammen gesungen. Er war König Heinrich, was ja immer Wilhelm Scherb sonst sang, aber der Scherb war nicht da, und da sang einmal Bohnen; der war damals schon über seine Zeit etwas hinweg. Ich erinnere mich, daß er nach dem dritten Ruf, den ich draussen gesungen habe und mit einer herrlichen Geste auf meinen Kreidekreis zurückkam, mich zu sich befahl. Als ich dann zu ihm kam wie ein devoter Offizier zum König, sagte er, „Komm' nachher in meine Garderobe!“ (das, während der Aufführung). Dort erzählte er mir, „Deine Stimme kenne ich gar nicht! Du hast eine verrückte Stimme. Du hast eine Gesangstechnik, die die anderen nicht haben. Hast Du hier einen Lehrer?“ „Ja, Paul Neuhaus“. „Kenne ich überhaupt nicht. Da müssen wir uns darüber unterhalten!“ Dabei ist es geblieben. Der sang nicht mehr bei uns und der Krieg brachte das auseinander. Der erinnerte sich sofort als Intendant der von den Alliierten wiederernannten Städtischen Oper. Als er mich sah, „Metternich, Sie sangen doch damals den Heerrufer! Ja, kommen

Sie, Sie müssen vorsingen!" Er war auch der Allierten Ansicht. Den wollen wir herausstellen.

Also, das erste Stück war *Fidelio*. Ich sollte den Minister singen. Dann sagten sie, „Mensch, wir haben noch den und den. Die müssen auch etwas singen. Hans Bock. Der war noch da. Der kriegte den Minister. Hans Ansnissen hat den Pizarro gemacht. Jetzt kommt *Cavaleria* und *Bajazzo*. Da brauche ich Alfio und Tonio." Und das hat Bohnen dann mit mir gemacht. Er hat seinen Kollegen gesagt, „Wer so singt, der kann auch spielen!" Dem hat man nicht gezeigt wie das geht. Der nahm mich beiseite und er legte mich mit dem Rücken auf den Flügel. Er sagte, „Verschränk' die Arme hinter dem Flügel. Entspanne dich. Jetzt singst Du *Bajazzo* Prolog!" Ich sagte, „Das kann ich nicht!" „Du kannst es. Du brauchst es nur zu wollen. Sing' es mal! Fang' an!" Mein Ergeiz packte mich. Ich habe das tatsächlich auf dem Rücken liegend auf dem Flügel singen können. Er sagte, „Siehst Du wohl! Das musst Du ja nicht auf der Bühne aber Du musst lernen, den Körper in Bewegung zu bringen oder ihn still zu stellen, je nach dem was verlangt wird, und trotzdem in jeder Phase singen zu können. Nicht immer wie ein Konzertsänger dich nur gerade ausstellen". Dann hat er mir die Partien angelegt, und hat mir gesagt, „Den musst du so machen. Plötzlich zieht er das Messer! Wie im Hollywood Film muss das sein. Zack, zack! Und da musst du dahinter stehen." Als Tonio hat er einen Cretin aus mir gemacht. Ich musste die Schultern wie ein Buckliger machen. Aber nicht einen künstlichen Buckel. Ich musste halten. Ich ging nicht im Bajazzokostüm, sondern wie ein Cretin habe ich den Prolog vorm Vorhang gesungen und dabei ihn ausgespielt.

An die Rampe gegangen, voll Leid. „Ein Gaukler!“ So zum Publikum. All die Dinge. Im nachhinein habe ich festgestellt, daß diese große, derbe Sache eigentlich das Leichte der Darstellung ist. Viel eleganter; einen Grafen in Mozart darzustellen. Das ist mir viel schwerer. Er hat mir die Knochen gebrochen. Als ich diesen buckligen Tonio zehnmal gesungen hatte, hätte ich mich pudelnackt ausgezogen, wenn es die Regie verlangt hätte, und hätte dabei ein frommes Lied gesungen.

Auf einmal hatte ich eine ganz andere Einstellung zu den Dingen bekommen. Ich konnte auch schreiten, Treppen hoch gehen, und trotzdem dabei singen. Das verdanke ich alles Michael Bohnen. Ich verdanke ihm aber nicht die Ausbildung der Stimme. Die verdanke ich Paul Neuhaus, meinem Lehrer, und der grossen Einsicht von Wilhelm Rode, der immer viel zu viel verschwiegen wird nach meiner Beurteilung. Dem verdanke ich das meiste, aber Bohnen auch einen unheimlich großen anderen Teil. Daß er mir Gesangunterricht gegeben hat, ist nicht wahr. Der fragte mich oft, „Wie machst Du das mit dem hohen Ton da oben?“ Das musste ich ihm genau erklären, was mein Lehrer und ich da machten. Ich habe ihm gesagt, wie man solche hohen Töne singt und nicht umgekehrt. Aber das ist nicht das Allerwichtigste. Dank an ihn, er hat mir die Knochen gebrochen. Und er gab mir ein Repertoire, was mir nie einer sonst gegeben hätte. Nach diesem Alfio und Tonio kam Iago. Er hat aus mir einen solchen grandiosen Iago gemacht, daß ich ein Sensationserfolg hatte. Ich habe ihn mit Günter Treptow gemacht, der aber dann krank wurde. Später, wie er gesund war, haben wir zusammen gesungen. Im letzten Augenblick wurde

Ludwig Sulthaus als letzte Rettung gerufen. Wir haben dann den Iago gemacht. Danach habe ich im selben Jahr *Simon Boccanegra* gemacht und im nächsten Jahr kamen Partien wie *Aida* und so etwas dazu. Das ganze Repertoire. Da müssen wir noch Pizarro dazu nehmen. *Salome* wurde mir angetragen, aber ich habe es doch nicht gesungen. Es ist ein wunderbares Repertoire was weitgehend auf mich aufgestempelt wurde. Ich war damals dreißig Jahre alt in 1945. Das ging bis 1947 und dann musste Bohnen gehen. Irgendwas mit der Vergangenheit. Ob es Politik war, das weiß ich nicht. Es wurde ihm nahegelegt zu gehen. Wir hatten eine Zwischenzeit mit Robert Heger, der so eine Art Verwaltungsdirektor war. Und dann kam schließlich Heinz Tietjen, der nach dem Krieg als Staatsrat automatisch verboten war. (Furtwängler ja auch.) Der Titel besagt gar nichts. Das war der Nazititel, aber wer den bekommen hatte von den Nazis, der war erstmal draußen. Die Engländer haben Tietjen dann in Gnaden aufgenommen in 1948, als es neues Geld gab. Ich möchte über Leo Blech berichten -einer der ganz großen Meister, er und Kleiber. Die haben das musikalische Opernleben Berlins Jahrzehnte bestimmt. Sie waren gleichgeschaltete Staatskapellmeister an Unter den Linden und waren für mich zwei der größten Namen, die es gegeben hat. (Die vielseitigsten auch.) Ich erzähle das aus dem Grunde, weil ich später zu dem Altmeister Blech einen wunderbaren Draht gefunden habe.

Es war etwas dazu gekommen. Die Staatsoper drüben hatte auch langsam wieder angefangen. Die Engländer hatten bei uns das Dach repariert, und es ging wieder ein richtiger Opernbetrieb los. Im Admiralspalast hatten Sie nur das

Problem, daß sie nicht genügend Sänger hatten. Sie bereiteten eine wunderbare *Traviata* vor mit Johannes Schüler als Dirigent (ein sehr guter Staatskapellmeister). Eine gewisse Erna Berger und ein Peter Anders waren die Besetzung und der Fassbender. Vom Namen aus kann sich das sehr blicken lassen. Wolf Völker war der Regisseur. Der war damals noch nicht mit dem Auto verunglückt und war ein schlanker, asketischer, hervorragender Oberspielleiter. Nach seinem Unfall später war seine tolle Zeit vorbei. Er hat noch ein bißchen gearbeitet aber der war auch alt geworden. Da passierte etwas. Die waren vierzehn Tage vor der Premiere. Aus irgendeinem Grunde musste der Fassbender weggehen. Ich weiss nicht, was vorgefallen ist; ob man ihm was vorgeworfen hat. Ich vermute, daß vielleicht aus der Vergangenheit rein politisch irgendetwas war, was plötzlich hieß: Der Fassbender bleibt nicht. Nun war er weg und sie saßen da. Chor und alles war präpariert, aber sie hatten keinen Germont. Da hat man auch aufgehört mit der alten Begrenzung. Nie sollte Deutsches Opernhaus und Staatsoper sich die Leute wegengagieren. Das sollte immer getrennt bleiben. Der Krieg veränderte das. Berlin war eine eingeschlossene Stadt. Ein Gast von Hamburg hätte zweieinhalb Tage benötigt, um in Berlin anzukommen. Das ging einfach nicht mehr, also hat man den Schritt getan. Da war so ein junger schnöseliger Bariton, der in aller Munde war. Es hieß, dort ist eine neue verrückte Stimme Numero eins geworden. Dann hat man den angerufen und hat gesagt, „Können Sie, würden Sie uns nicht aus der Verlegenheit helfen wollen?“ Ich habe geantwortet, „Warum nicht?“ An der Staatsoper zu singen war mein größter Traum. Und Germont! Was kann mir

besseres passieren? Ich hatte Germont noch nie gesungen, aber ich habe das *Traviata* Terzett vervollständigt. Ich muss sagen, das war eine der schönsten Erfolge und schönsten Eindrücke neben meiner verrückten Zeit im Deutschen Opernhaus. Mit Erna und mit Peter. Wir waren nachher kollegial so befreundet. Mit Peter Anders habe ich ganz großen Kontakt behalten. Der ist bald ganz in den Westen übergesiedelt nach Hamburg, wo wir uns später wieder trafen. Ich habe also diesen Germont mit einem riesen Erfolg gesungen. Ernst Legal, der Intendant, ein goldiger Mensch, flehte mich an.

Dann tauchte Herr Keilberth auf. Der war inzwischen aus Prag über lange Wege in Dresden angekommen. Auf der Flucht gewissermassen. Er hatte in Dresden eine neue Heimat gefunden. Keilberth kam dann plötzlich nach Berlin und brachte einen Gottlob Frick mit, der dann auch bei uns in Berlin war. Keilbert machte einen wunderbaren *Don Giovanni* mit Rudolf Schock, der damals in märchenhafter Form den Ottavio gesungen hat. Der Keilberth war in der Vorstellung, hat mich gehört als Germont und hat gesagt, „Was kann ich mit dem machen?“ (die wollten ihn natürlich drüben behalten). Also haben wir zusammen einen Amfortes und meinen ersten Renato mit Inszenierung drüben gemacht. Dann die Oper *Arabella*. Das war Anfang 1950 oder 1951. Worum es sich dreht im Stück, das wußte ich alles nicht. Das hatte ich alles nie zu sehen bekommen. Also hat man gesagt, „Sie müssen bei uns den Mandryka machen!“ Krista Gölz war die andere. Legal war der Regisseur. Sehr fein. Ein bißchen antik, seine Auffassung. Er passte herrlich ins 19. Jahrhundert. Keilberth hat dirigiert. Die Schlemm war Zdenka. Ich habe einen Einschnitt dieser Oper geschenkt

bekommen vor fünf Jahren bei meinem anderen runden Geburtstag. Da hat der SFB zur besten Zeit um 20 Uhr 15 gesendet zum Anlass des 75. Geburtstages von Josef Metternich: einen Mitschnitt der Premiere der Oper *Arabella*, die erste Arabella Aufführung nach dem Kriege. (Irgendwo) Der ist ausgezeichnet. Vor allen Dingen, die Sänger sind gut im Mikrofon. Das hat ja irgendwo gehangen, das Mikrofon. Orchester ist manchmal zu kurz gekommen, aber wir sind wunderbar. Man versteht den Text herrlich. Es gab im Osten auch einen Rundfunk, glaube ich. Aber irgendwie, die haben das von drüben (damals waren die Kommunisten da). Die haben das von denen bekommen und hier im Westen SFB haben sie es gesendet. Ich fand die Geste fantastisch! Die gibt's nur in Berlin oder in Wien. In München hat man keine besondere Notiz von mir genommen, obwohl ich 21 Jahre die tollsten Sachen gesungen habe.

Plötzlich war ein Herr Tietjen da, der mich wieder auf den Teppich brachte vom Höhenflug. Er zeigte, das geht auch ohne Herrn Metternich. Ich dachte, der kann doch gar nicht ohne mich. Ich singe doch das ganze Repertoire. Er machte das so: ein Stück lief aus, hat ich eine Partie weniger. Dann kam ein neues Stück. Das war mit einem anderen besetzt, nicht mit mir. Nach einem Jahr verschwand ich immer mehr vom Theaterzelt. Ich bekam aber die höchste Gage. Er war ein solcher Diplomat. Er gab die höchste Gage an fünf Sänger. Das war der junge Fischer-Dieskau, der Herr Greindl, der Metternich, die Grümmer und Josef Hermann. (Der Heldenbariton von Dresden, der viel an der Staatsoper und auch später in Westberlin gesungen hat.) Wenn ich etwas sagte, sagte er, „Was wollen Sie? Sie haben die Spitzengage hier!“ „Ich möchte aber singen.“ „Ja,

wenn das richtige Repertoire für Sie kommt, werden wir Sie schon einsetzen.“

Ich wußte, der und Bohnen waren Todfeinde, und die Logik bei Herrn Tietjen musste sein: der Metternich ist ein Kind von Bohnen. Bohnen ist mein Feind, also ist Metternich auch mein Feind! Wir haben uns dann zusammengerauft.

Im Jahre '50, '51 kam ein Angebot plötzlich von der Covent Garden London. „Herr Metternich, wären Sie bereit, den *Fliegenden Holländer* bei uns zu singen? In englischer Sprache.“ Ich habe überlegt, und nachher habe ich gedacht, „Das machst Du der Unverschämtheit wegen. Das mache ich aus diesem Grunde, und ich werde denen mein bestes Oxford Schul-Englisch unterjubeln!“ Das ist doch unverschämt, einen Deutschen zu fragen, ob er in Englisch [singt] erstens Wagner in Englisch! Selbst heute gibt es das nicht, wo man alles in der Komponistensprache singt. Aber sie waren so...sie saßen so von oben herab. “The term is past, and once again are ended the seven long years.“ Nicht? „Die Frist ist um.“ So ging das los. Ich habe Herrn Tietjen geschrieben, „Ich habe beobachtet, daß ihre Frau die Loge verläßt, wenn ich eine Soloarie zu singen habe. Die soll sich geäußert haben, „Ich kann dieses Impertinente, sich mit der Stimme vorzudrängen, nicht ertragen!“ Dann hat Tietjen mir gesagt, ich müsste ihm den nennen, der diese Gedanke ausgesprochen hätte (der wäre nicht von mir). Ich habe geantwortet, „Ich werde das nicht tun.“ Dann sagte er, „Dann müssen wir vor Gericht gehen. Dann werden Sie es müssen.“ Ich sagte, „Müssen Sie wissen. Ich sage ihnen nichts zu dem Punkte. Ich habe ihnen nur meine Empfindung mitgeteilt.“

Die Situation war hoffnungslos verfahren. Jetzt bot man ihm die Regie dieses *Holländers* an -in dieser Situation. Und ich habe mir eins gegrinst. Da kam der Agent, ein bekannter englischer Offizier, der in meine Stimme verliebt war, Mr. Linch. Ich sage, "Mr. Linch, da gibt's ein Problem. Sie müssen Webster anrufen (er war damals der Boss). Sie müssen sagen, das geht nicht zusammen. Irgendeiner muss bleiben. Ich habe dann dem Tietjen einen Brief geschrieben. „Auf ihre letzten Sachen kann ich nicht eingehen. Wenn Sie glauben, vor Gericht zu gehen; das müssen Sie tun. Ich bedaure diesen Schritt sehr, zumal ich erfahren habe, das ich mit Ihnen eventuell in London *Holländer* machen soll. Es ist klar, daß unter diesen Umständen, ich Ihnen nicht zumute, mit mir in London zu arbeiten. Ich werde den Leuten mitteilen in London, daß ich zurücktrete und auf diese Inszenierung verzichte. Mit freundlichen Gruss, Josef Metternich." Da kam der Linch, und sagte, „Ich habe mit Webster telefoniert. Er sagte, der Regiseur ist nicht so wichtig. Wir wollen den Metternich!"

Da ich das wußte, war ich sehr ruhig. Bei der nächsten *Aida* Aufführung saß ich und schminkte mich. Auf einmal verschwand der Friseur. Dann verschwand der Kleidermacher und gab mir ein Zeichen. Da kam Herr Tietjen - das hat er nie gemacht- in meine Garderobe. Er sagte, „Herr Metternich, es ist nicht gut, Sie vor der Vorstellung so mitzubehelligen, aber hier erwische ich Sie. Irgendwie sind wir, habe ich das Gefühl, beide über's Ziel hinausgeschossen. Ich bin der Ältere. Ich müsste der Klügere sein. Ich mache Ihnen einen Vorschlag. Wollen wir den ganzen Kummer vergessen?" Ich sagte, „Das ist ihr Angebot. Bitte sehr, wenn Sie meinen.“ „Ja, ich schlage Ihnen vor, wir vergessen alles mit

dem heutigen Tag und versuchen, uns zusammenzuraufen.“ „Okay“, sagte ich, „von mir aus. Ich danke Ihnen. Auf Wiedersehen!“ Und dann haben wir eine wunderbare Zeit in London verbracht. Er war ein Gefährlicher (sich selber oft im Wege und sowas.)

Er wollte mir später den Alberich andrehen. Der brauchte einen tollen Alberich. Ich wäre vom Typ der Darstellung natürlich richtig, aber damals habe ich gesagt, „Um Gottes willen!“ Ich habe ihm geschrieben, „Es tut mir sehr leid. Das traue ich meiner Stimme nicht zu. Ich habe Angst, daß ich Luna nicht mehr singen kann.“ Dann kriegte ich einen Brief. Sie hätten sich meinem Urteil anvertrauen können. „Sie hätten sich nicht ihre Stimme geschädigt. Ich hätte Sie zu einem Weiterfolg geführt. Aber ich weiß, das Sie von anderer Seite beraten werden und ich bedaure das sehr.“ Das war das Letzte, was wir geäußert haben. Daraufhin habe ich ihm mitgeteilt, „Das hat keinen Sinn. Ich werde den Vertrag auslaufen lassen und nicht mehr verlängern.“

Inzwischen hatte ich einen Vertrag auch in Ostberlin. Herr Solti war dort gewesen und hatte die Philharmoniker dirigiert. Er rief mich bei diesem Anlaß morgens an. „Herr Metternich, mein Name ist Solti. Wissen Sie wer ich bin?“ „Ja, ich glaube, Sie sind doch der neue Generalmusikdirektor der Münchner Oper.“ „Ich habe hier die Philharmoniker dirigiert. Ich war gestern in einer Aufführung und habe diese furchtbare Oper *Die Zauberin* von Tschaikowsky gesehen. Das war ein furchtbares Stück und ein schlechtes Niveau. Sie haben allerdings darin eine kleine aber grandiose Partie. Das hat mir so toll gefallen! Ich habe in München zwei Tenöre, die genauso alt, genauso figürlich, und genauso

temperamentvoll sind wie Sie, Herr Hopf und Herr Fehrenberger. Ich bräuchte einen Bariton wie Sie. Hätten Sie Lust?" Ich bekam ein Angebot zu gastieren und habe *Troubadour* gesungen. Im April, 1950, bekam ich einen Vertrag an der Münchner Oper. Fast mit derselben Post war ein Brief von Herrn Günter Rennert gekommen. „Herr Metternich, langsam reißt man sich um Sie. Es wäre doch allerhöchste Zeit, daß Sie sich mal in Hamburg bei uns vorstellen. Ich schlage Ihnen vor, Sie kommen und singen im April bei uns den *Rigoletto*. Dann reden wir." Ich habe den *Rigoletto* gesungen und ging dann mit einem neuen Vertrag in Hamburg, der dreizehn Jahre gelaufen ist. Der Vertrag in München lief einundzwanzig Jahre.

Ich hatte inzwischen Herrn Leo Blech kennengelernt. Der sprang in eine verunglückte Vorbereitung von *Macht des Schicksals* in der Städtischen Oper ein, als er aus der Immigration zurückkehrte. Herr Tietjen wollte *Macht des Schicksals* bringen. Er wollte Regie machen. Fischer-Dieskau, sein Star, ein neuer Bariton, sollte den Carlos singen. Sein neuer Generalmusikdirektor, Ferenc Fricsay, sollte dirigieren. Ich war vorgesehen eventuell als zweite Besetzung. Dann sind wir immer da herumgeschlichen, hörten den Dieskau proben und immer wieder abbrechen. Eines Tages hieß es: Der hat die Partie zurückgegeben. Der schaffte das nicht. Er sagte, „Ich ruiniere mir die Stimme.“ Daraufhin verlor Herr Tietjen das Interesse an der Regie. Als Herr Tietjen die Regie abgab, sagte Herr Fricsay, „Das war abgemacht: wenn Sie Regie führen, dirigiere ich. Ich habe auch kein Interesse jetzt.“ Jetzt war das Stück aber vorbereitet -im Orchester schon ein bißchen. Die Dekoration war fertig, die Chöre

waren studiert. Dann kriegte ich einen Brief von Herrn Tietjen, „Sie sind ja ein Italienischer Bariton. Sie müssen diese Oper übernehmen.“ Ich habe geschrieben, „Nichts, was ich lieber täte!“

Der Altmeister Leo Blech sagte, „Selbstverständlich mache ich *Die Macht des Schicksals*.“ Ein Herr Bohrman, Oberspielleiter der Kölner Oper wurde engagiert. Ein Tenor, Sauerbaum, kam von der Komischen Oper und wir haben mit Leo Blech einen Triumph aus dieser Oper gemacht. Ich hatte persönlich einen Riesenerfolg! Der alte Blech hat mich geliebt. Der schickte mir mal ein Briefchen. Nach der Premiere schickte er immer Briefchen. Seine Freunde, die ihm gefallen hatten, rief er an. Die ihm nicht gefallen hatten, die kriegten ein Briefchen. Nach der Premiere kam ein Riesenbrief! Ich dachte, „Mensch, die haben doch getobt, die Leute!“ (Der machte nur noch kleine Bewegungen. Der war schon über achtzig.) Ich mache den Brief auf. Nichts. Nur ein Notenblatt. Kein Text, nichts. Nur eine rhythmische Phrase. Meine Frau sagte, „Was summst Du da? Das ist was Bekanntes.“ Ich habe überlegt, überlegt, überlegt.... Nach einer ganzen Zeit ist es mir eingefallen. Der Beginn von *Barbier von Sevilla* in deutscher Sprache. Die kommen und singen ein Chorständchen. Der Anführer der Chorleute singt leise: „Bravo, bravissimo, redet kein Wort!“ Das war der Stil von Leo Blech: Er gab mir noch eine Aufgabe um sein Lob entgegen zu nehmen. Das war seine reizende Art.

Der Übergang zur nächsten Sache aus dieser *Macht des Schicksals*: Es kam ein Wiener Agent. Den traf ich bei Ernst Legal drüben. Der Legal sagte, „Kommen Sie herein, Herr Mettenich!“ Der Agent sagte, „Sie sind Kammersänger

Metternich?“ „Bin Herr Metternich. Kammersänger bin ich nicht.“ (ein alter Agent von Wien) „Verehrtester, Sie müssen in Wien bei mir singen! Der Böhm wird.....“ Ich sagte, „Ich habe nicht das Gefühl, daß der Böhm....Ich habe mal Endes des Krieges dort vorgesungen. Der hat mich noch nicht mal verabschiedet!“ „Da war ich nicht in der Nähe! Sie müssen. Ich habe Sie gestern gehört mit meinem alten Freund Leo Blech. Wir waren zusammen schon vor Jahren. Wir haben das Stück (*Die Macht des Schicksals*), das hat der Böhm herausgebracht vor zwei Monaten. Wir haben keinen Bariton wie Sie. Sie müssen!“ Ich sagte, „Machen Sie was Sie wollen. Mich interessiert es nicht.“ Er ist abgereist. Vier Tage später kam ein Telegram an: Biete Gastspiel *Die Macht des Schicksals*. Direktion freut sich schon. Meine Frau sagte, „Sei nicht wie die anderen. Fahr hin. Wenn Du es nicht bist, macht es ein anderer. Sei nicht so eingebildet. Fahr hin!“ (die sind immer klüger drin, nicht?) Ich bin dahin gefahren und kam natürlich zurück mit einem Angebot, jedes Jahr drei Monate an der Wiener Oper zu verbringen. Ich habe das Herrn Tietjen untergejubelt. Dann war alles zu Ende. Das war schon gespannt. Das Angebot mit dem Alberich kam noch dazu. Da war er tödlich beleidigt, daß ich von ihm drei Monate aus dem Vertrag haben wollte. So ist das kombiniert! Aber als ich ihm mitteilte, „Ich will den Vertrag nicht mehr verlängern“ hatte ich noch einen Vertrag in Ostberlin, in Hamburg an der Oper, in München an der Oper, und in Wien an der Oper. Was wollen Sie? Mehr kann man nicht machen. Fünf Häuser! Denn in Westberlin musste ich die Saison noch zu Ende singen. Das ist der Einstieg auch in der internationalen Laufbahn.

Bald hörte mich Herr Karajan in Hamburg bei einer Aufnahme von *Rheingold*. Wir haben dort *Rheingold* in der Rothenbaum Chaussee produziert. Willi Schüchter hat dirigiert. Schüchter war früher Assistent von Karajan. Karajan kam in der Pause zwischen zwei Konzerten. Er ist aus Langeweile im Funkhaus aufgekreuzt. Er ließ sich feiern. Kam herunter. Herr Schüchter: „Meine Damen und Herren, darf ich vorstellen. Der Meister!“ Dann sang ich zufälligerweise....Ich hatte nur den Donner zu singen’ „Hedu, heda” -diese Stelle. Nachher kam ich heraus. Der Karajan kam mir entgegen, „Herr Metternich, ich kenne Sie nicht. Ich habe ihren Namen gehört, aber ich kenne Sie nicht. Ich muss sagen, das war unwahrscheinlich, wie Sie gesungen haben! Das ist genau die Stimme, die ich brauche. Wollen Sie zu mir an die Skala kommen? Wir machen *Lohengrin*. Sie sind mein Heerrufer! Ich sagte, „Wenn Sie wollen, gehe ich zu Fuß!“ Wer geht nicht an die Skala!!! So ist dieses Gastspiel gekommen. Nach dem Gastspiel wurde ich herumgereicht in Italien. Ich habe mit alten Professoren gestritten über Gesangstechnik. Sie sagten, „Sie haben eine phänomenale Stimme, aber so können Sie nicht in Italien singen! Sie haben keine Passaggio. Sie müssen decken lernen. Sie singen zu offen.“ Ich sagte, „Ich fühle mich wohl beim „offen“. „Die Stimme ruinieren Sie,” sagten sie. „Nein. Nicht mit meiner Art Technik. Die habe ich im Griff. Ich plärre nicht. Ich habe die hellen Töne gepackt.“ Wir sind da nicht einig geworden, aber die haben mich eingeladen. Ich bin ein Paar Jahre mit meiner Frau immer wieder hin, habe mir Kurse angehört. Wir haben über ihre Passaggio diskutiert, wenn das Dach über die Stimme kommt im Übergang. Die habe ich mir doch dann bei denen langsam aber sicher angeeignet.

Dann kriegte ich ein Angebot, *Hoffmanns Erzählungen* an der Scala zu machen mit Karajan. Der sagte, „Vier verschiedene Baritonisten, aber Sie kriegen das Bild mit der Spiegelarie.“ Ich sagte, „Auf das andere kann ich verzichten!“ Das ist nicht zustande gekommen. Die haben ihm nicht die Dekorationen gegeben, die er haben wollte. Da hat er gesagt, „Bitte sehr. Die alten Dekorationen. Da mache ich heute keinen Hoffmann mit.“ Dann teilte meine Agentur mit: Es wird leider nichts daraus. Ein Glück! Zwei Wochen später kam ein Telegramm von Bing, der mich in Berlin bei seinem Antrittsbesuch als neuer Chef der Metropolitan gehört hat. (Darüber muss ich sowieso noch etwas erzählen.) Ich bekam ein Angebot: „Biete Ihnen Wolfram *Tannhäuser* alternierend mit George London. Beginn im Oktober, 1953 bis January 1954.“ Das waren immer zwölf Wochen, die Verträge. Jede Woche eine Gage.

Ich hatte einmal geschmissen in einer *Macht des Schicksals* Aufführung aus Übermut. Wir haben da 'rumgemacht! Falschen Einsatz. Ich war sonst musikalisch wahnsinnig genau. Der alte Mann, Leo Blech, war in Verlegenheit geraten. Der Chor hat dann auch falsch eingesetzt. Am anderen Tag, dachte ich, kommt der Brief. Es kam kein Brief, sondern ein Telefonat. „Ich weiss. Wenn einer musikalisch schmeißt und unsicher ist, bin ich darauf eingestellt. Wenn aber einer wie Du, der nie schmeißt, dem ich blind vertraue, plötzlich überschnappt auf der Bühne, dann finde ich das höchst bedauerlich. Dann bin ich sehr zornig und sehr böse. Ich bestehe darauf, daß Du in der nächsten Aufführung eine Stunde vorher mit dem Auszug kommst. Dann werde ich mit Dir diese Stelle probieren.“ Dann sagte ich, „Ja, ich wollte, Mensch...“ „Keine

Entschuldigung. Dafür gibt's bei mir keine Entschuldigung." Bums, hatte ich mein Fett weg. Die nächste Aufführung bin ich hin. Da war vorher das Gerede: Dieser neue Boss, Bing. Der kommt. Der geht nach Mailand, geht nach Wien, und er kommt eine Woche nach Berlin. Der will sich Vorstellungen anhören. Der Kultursenator, Tiburtius, von Berlin damals, hat die besten Aufführungen angeordnet. Herr Tietjen hatte dann diesen *Tannhäuser* mit Fischer-Dieskau, *Die Macht des Schicksals* mit Leo Blech, und für Elisabeth Grümmer, *Figaros Hochzeit*. (Gräfin)

Der Bing war früher am Deutschen Opernhaus unter Carl Ebert. Er hatte eine Sekretärstelle im Betriebsbüro -mehr nicht. In derselben Zeit hat oft Leo Blech dort dirigiert. Das war die Zeit der wirtschaftlichen Krisen, Ende 1930, ('31, '32) herum, wo den Häusern der Bankrott drohte -finanziell. Blech kannte Bing aus dieser Zeit und was er gewesen war. Das muss man voraus wissen. Dann kam ich zu ihm mit den Noten. Er saß schon eine Stunde vorher im Probezimmer. Er sagte, „Du brauchst die Noten nicht aufzumachen. Ich weiß, das Du die Stelle kennst und ich weiß auch, das Du sie heute nicht mehr schmeißt. Aber Du musst dich immer im Zaum halten. Du bist jung und ungebärdig, aber Du singst schön. Nächste Woche muss Du besonders schön singen, wenn wir das Stück wieder haben. Da kommt nämlich ein gewisser Herr Bing aus Amerika. Wenn Du schön singst, wie Du es kannst, wird er Dich an die Metropolitan engagieren.“ Ich sagte, „Herr Generalmusikdirektor, mit sowas darf man auch nicht scherzen!“ „Du wirst sehen, daß ich nicht scherze. Du wirst sehen, daß er Dich an die Metropolitan engagiert. Ich kenne den Herrn Bing

ganz genau.“ „Wir wissen auch nicht, ob er in die Vorstellung kommt!“ „Ich weiß das. Er liebt keinen Wagner. Er geht nicht in eine Wagneroper. Und der liebt Verdi über alles! Er wird also in diese Aufführung kommen.“ Blech sagte, „Und ich persönlich, weißt Du, mich läßt das kalt, daß der Bing kommt. Ich will nicht mehr weg. Ich bin zurückgekommen, um hier zu sterben. Ich bin ein Deutscher. Meine Eltern waren Deutsche, und ich will hier begraben werden. Ich gehe nicht mehr weg. Deshalb regt mich dieser Herr Bing nicht so auf wie der Dich aufregt.“ Der Blech war ein toller Mann.

Er hat recht behalten. Er kam in *Die Macht des Schicksals*. Das Telefon ging am anderen Morgen. Sein begleitender Agent, Dietz, rief mich an, „Herr Metternich, Herr Bing hat Sie gestern gehört. Können Sie bitte schnell ins Hotel kommen?“ Ich bin dann hingefahren, und der Bing machte sofort einen wunderbaren Eindruck. So was an fein und nett! Er ist wirklich ein Grand Seigneur gewesen. Das war eine tolle Ära an der Metropolitan. Der sagte zu mir, „Herr Metternich, Ich habe gestern das Staunen gelernt. Es gibt tatsächlich einen deutschen Sänger mit einer absolut italienischen Stimme. Das sind Sie! Sie sind aber der einzige, den ich kenne. Sie könnten Furore machen an der Metropolitan, aber ich kann sie dafür nicht engagieren. Sie müssen ein Visum haben. Das Visum kriegen Sie nur, wenn Sie einen Stempel der AGMA haben. Das ist die Amerikanische Bühnengenossenschaft, und die wird nie einem Deutschen einen Stempel für italienisches Repertoire geben. Sie müssen mir Geduld lassen, bis ich ein Stück für Sie habe. Dann könnten Sie einreisen. Wenn

Sie dort sind, kann man etwas versuchen. Wären Sie damit einverstanden? Ich flehe Sie an!“

Das war das Telegramm, was nach der nicht zustandekommenden *Hoffmanns Erzählungen* an der Scala im Jahre 1953 an mich kam: Anbiete, Wolfram, Brief folgt. „Lieber Herr Metternich, Zerreißen Sie den Brief sofort. Nicht zu den Akten. Bereiten Sie bitte *Troubadour*, *Aida*, und *Macht des Schicksals* in Italienisch vor. Ob und was und wie, das weiß ich nicht, aber wir müssen für einen Versuch präpariert sein.“ Dann habe ich studiert *Macht des Schicksals* wie ein Papagei! Ich kann kein italienisch. Selbstverständlich kann man viele Worte und Begriffe, aber das war schon eine Heidenarbeit! Da bin ich herüber, und wurde von Herrn Bing ins Büro gebeten. Da standen die Chordirektoren da im Oktober 1953 -betretene Gesichter. Da sagte Bing, „Herzlich willkommen, Mr. Metternich, wir haben ein Problem. Wir können den Termin nicht halten für *Tannhäuser*. Das kann frühestens im Dezember, kurz vor Weihnachten sein. Wir können im November das nicht geben. Aber ich muss Sie bezahlen. Sie haben einen Vertrag. Ich muss Ihnen jeden Samstag einen Scheck geben. Wir können uns solchen Luxus nicht leisten -Sänger bezahlen, die nicht singen. Wir leben von den verkauften Sitzplätzen. Wir haben keine Subvention. Wir haben hin und her überlegt. Ich habe mal eine Frage. Haben Sie zufälligerweise die Oper *La forza del destino*? Das singen Sie doch in deutsch, ja? Haben Sie das nie in italienisch gesungen?“ „Nein, das habe ich nicht.“ „Schade!“ „Ja,“ sage ich, „Ich habe es aber jetzt studiert. Präpariert. Ich glaube, eine Rundfunkaufnahme soll geplant sein. Hat man mir nahegelegt, das vielleicht

mal zu präparieren in italienisch.“ Dann sagte er, „Dann glauben Sie, Sie kennen das? Die ganze Oper?“ „Ich denke schon!“ „Ja, um Gottes Willen! Könnten Sie eventuell Ende nächster Woche in zehn Tagen die Oper dann übernehmen?“ „Irgendwann muss ich es mal versuchen!“ „Mensch, da fällt uns ein Stein vom Herzen! Der Warren (Leonard) ist nicht in New York. Der singt das immer, und wenn er nicht hier ist, können wir die Oper nicht geben. Die ist am meisten verkauft.“ Die Chordirektoren, die strahlten auf einmal. „Das wäre ja ein wunderbarer Ausweg für mich und für Sie auch.“ Ich sagte, „da will ich mein Bestes tun.“ Nachher hat er mich zum Fahrstuhl begleitet. Er sagte, „Herr Metternich, wenn das schiefgeht, bin ich meinen Job los, und Sie ja auch.“ Ich sagte, „Ich bin gut präpariert!“

Ich habe zwei Proben bekommen. Meine Partner waren Richard Tucker Zinka Milanov, Herr Siepi, und Jerome Hines. Allen Ungut zum Trotz: es ist ein Erfolg geworden. Ich habe wunderbare Presse bekommen. Ich bin gefeiert worden. Ich habe Humorigkeit kennengelernt, die man nicht erwarten konnte. Am Abend der Premiere klopft es. Ich bin am schminken. Eine Dame kommt in die Garderobe. „Mr. Metternich, excuse me. Ich bin die Frau von Richard Tucker. Ich möchte Ihnen Glück wünschen.“ So was gibt es. Tucker, ein Volljude, Jüdischer Kantor, und diametral zu dem Sohn eines Nazivolkes. Wir haben zusammen gesungen. Er war immer reserviert. Er war in super Form in dieser Zeit. Er sang alle an die Wand. Milanov hat wie eine Göttin gesungen. Das war eine Märchenstimme. Die anderen kennen Sie alle. Es gab kein Solocurtain. Das gab es an der Met nicht. Da war ein Herr, der dirigierte abends. „Diese drei hier,

diese vier." Wir waren dann zu dritt: Tucker, Zinka und ich. Wir hatten uns verneigt, dann hatten sie sich ein Zeichen gegeben und waren weg. Und ich habe das nicht mitbekommen. Ich hatte einen Solocurtain. So sind die.

Um mich herum waren lauter junge Leute. Viele Juden, die immer so.... Ich hörte mal bei den Proben. Die sagten nicht „dieser Metternich,“ sondern „The German.“ Nicht einmal der Pförtner an der Metropolitan hat mich begrüßt. Der tat so, als ob er zufälligerweise nicht hingeguckt hätte. Ich habe das überall gespürt. Nur nicht bei Herrn Tucker. Später bei seinem Schwager, Jan Peerce, auch nicht. Dann eines Tages war wieder eine Probeumbesetzung. Da probten wir neu diese *Die Macht des Schicksals* und da war eine musikalische Probe. Da waren die alle dabei, auch die kleinen Partien. Da fiel mir ein, ich hatte das Gefühl, der Tucker hat sich nicht wohlfühlt. Ich war von der rechten Seite bei „Die Stunde ist heilig“ beim Duett. Ich dachte, „Vielleicht will er, das Du von links kommst. Ist es besser für ihn so?“ Manch einer sagt, „In der Richtung kann ich nicht im Liegen singen.“ Ich habe ihn deshalb gefragt, „Excuse me, Mr. Tucker, should I come from the right side or from the left side?“ Und er sagte mir, „Das macht nichts, wo Sie da kommen. Ich kann das. Das hat überhaupt nichts auf sich. Dort gibt's kein Problem. Im übrigen, my name is for you Richard.“ In dem Augenblick, erstarrte es um mich her. Das war wie ein Lauffeuer durch die Met. Wie ich nach Hause ging, hat mich der Pförtner begrüßt. So schnell. Da habe ich mal Dinge kennengelernt im Leben, die wirklich tiefgreifend sind.

Ich habe dann, das ist ja bekannt, außer *Die Macht des Schicksals*, *Maskenball* gesungen, *Aida*, *Bajazzo*, (Tonio) und *Troubadour*. Daneben habe

ich mit Set Swanholm und Astrid Varnay *Tristan* gemacht. Da gibt's auch einen Mitschnitt von Kurvenal. Der tauchte in Deutschland auf. Dann habe ich Amfortes gemacht. Da kriegte ich zu hören in der *New York Times*, „Seit den Glanzzeiten von Friedrich Schorr haben wir einen solchen Amfortes hier gehört.“ Mich hat das vielleicht vom Stuhl gehauen! Und wie gesagt, *Tannhäuser*. Eines Tages war eine Umbesetzung *Tannhäuser* und George Szell dirigierte ein paar mal -auch ein jüdischer Immigrant von Ungarn. Er war ein wunderbarer Dirigent, und er kannte das Stück in und auswendig. Er hat das früher in Deutschland dirigiert. Wir haben Proben gemacht. Immer englisch, natürlich, und er korrigierte -kein Wort zu mir, nicht eine Silbe hat er zu mir gesagt. Nichts. Und dann auf einmal im zweiten Bild, hat er mein „Blicke umher,“ und „O Himmel“ probiert. Nachher war dann Pause. Da klopfte er. „Mr. Metternich, please,“ dann sprach er deutsch, „Ich möchte Ihnen nur sagen, ich bin hundertprozent mit Ihnen konform. Wie Sie es machen ist wunderbar. Ich habe nichts zu korrigieren!“ Und die Orchesterleute klopfen. Solche Dinge gibt es. Wieder ein Jude zu einem Nazikind.

Das waren also tolle Eindrücke. Die erste Saison, die zweite, die dritte, und die vierte, die ich ja hatte. Danach hat sich der Kreis geschlossen. Fricsay hatte einen Narren an mir gefressen in Berlin. Ich hatte mit ihm einen wunderbaren Holländer gemacht. Gegen meinen Willen! Ich sagte, „Sie müssen mit einer bassbariton Stimme, nicht mich!“ „Sie haben ja in Covent Garden.“ Ich sagte, „Aus Trotz habe ich das gemacht, weil das auf englisch war, aber doch nicht hier!“ Er sagte, „Sie singen bitte mit derselben Technik wie Luna. Nur stilistisch anders. Nicht portamentieren und schleifen. Singen Sie klassisch

Wagner aber mit derselben Stimmbandtätigkeit wie Luna. Dann werden Sie ein wunderbarer Holländer sein." Ich sagte, „Sie müssen es wissen." Wir haben das Stück gemacht. Haben Sie die neue CD gehört, wo ich die Tiefe und alles fand? Das war der einzige Dirigent, den ich kenne, der eine Ahnung von Stimme und von Stimmtechnik, oft den Sängern sagte, „Mensch, Du drückst." Ich war mal übermutig, und dann guckte er und sagte, „stützen!" Das war schon eine tolle Zeit.

Dann kriegte ich von München die Mitteilung: „Der Fricstay wird Chef. Er will aber in der Zeit vorher *Otello* machen. Könnten Sie Iago machen? Herr Fricstay läßt Ihnen sagen; wenn Sie im nächsten Jahr auf die Metropolitan verzichten und dafür bei ihm zusagen, kriegen Sie als erster Deutscher einen Fünfjahreskontrakt an einer Oper." Das hat es vorher nicht gegeben. Darauf hin Beratung mit meiner Frau. Sie sagte, „Du bist überall gewesen. Du hast überall Erfolg gehabt. Der Erfolg wiederholt sich nicht. Beim nächsten Erfolg in New York, das wissen wir ja, da ist keine Sensation mehr drin. Also was willst Du?" Darauf hin habe ich keinen neuen Vertrag an der Met unterschrieben. Ich habe Herrn Fricstay zugesagt und bekam einen Fünfjahresvertrag. Der Fünfjahresvertrag wurde um weitere fünf Jahre wieder, von Rudolf Hartmann verlängert. Dann kamen noch zweimal zwei Jahre dazu, und dann war meine Hochschultätigkeit längst angelaufen. Dann ist das zu Ende gegangen. Da waren plötzlich einundzwanzig Jahre in München entstanden (bis zu 1971) Ich habe dann noch ein paar Jahre vorher Hamburg sein lassen (nach dreizehn Jahren)

mdit Liebermann und so, das reizte mich nicht mehr. Das schlimme war, das mir dort Herr Tietjen noch mal begegnet ist.

In der Zeit hatte mir der Rennert eine Vertragsverlängerung abgeluchst -in Edinburgh. Er hat mir nicht gesagt, daß er geht. Ich habe den Vertrag unterschrieben. Dann hat man mir gesagt, „Du hast schon unterschrieben? Der Rennert geht weg.“ Da sagte ich, „Das ist doch eine Unverschämtheit! Ich habe vorige Woche einen Vertrag abgeschickt!“ „Ja, der geht weg. Weißt Du wer Chef wird? Herr Tietjen.“ Da habe ich dem Verwaltungsdirektor, Paris, geschrieben und habe gesagt, „Sie brauchen nicht mit mir zu rechnen! Ich bin aus Berlin weggegangen wegen diesem Herrn. Den will ich nicht mehr! Das mache ich nicht.“ Ich kriegte immer Termine von der Oper. Ich habe gesagt, „Ich bedaure, ich habe keine Zeit. Ich bedaure, ich bin zufälligerweise krank.“ Immer abgesagt. Bis in dem Februar vom September habe ich die hingehalten. Der Paris immer, „Herr Metternich, machen Sie keinen Unsinn. Es darf keinen Prozess geben. Das können Sie sich nicht leisten.“ Und wieder kam ein Angebot. Mein Frau sagte, „Mensch, treibe es nicht auf die Spitze! Der alte Mann. Wie lange wird er das machen? Den sieht man ja nie.“ Der Tietjen, der war dafür berühmt, daß man ihn nie sieht. Ich habe dann dem Paris gesagt, „Ich komme. Ich mache den *Holländer*.“ Herr Paris rief mich an, „Herr Metternich, ich danke Ihnen! Sie werden es nicht bereuen. Kommen Sie!“

Ich bin dann hingekommen. *Holländer*. Keinen Tietjen gesehen. Ich bin dann auf die Bühne zum Auftritt. Im Dunklen bin ich über was gestolpert. Das war Herr Tietjen. Er stand im Dunkeln, irgendwo in einer Ecke. Das war seine

Art. Er hat immer zugehört. Um die Leute nicht zu irritieren, kriegte keiner was mit. Ich habe so getan, als wenn ich ihn nicht gesehen hätte. Dann habe ich gesungen und musste wegfliegen. Herr Paris sagte, „Herr Metternich, kommen Sie zu mir herauf. Wir müssen Termine besprechen.“ Ich sagte, „Um zwölf geht meine Maschine“ Ich bin dann herein zu ihm. „Herr Mettenich, das war wunderbar. Ich freue mich, daß Sie wieder da sind.“ Er zog das in die Länge. Ich fragte mich, „Was ist hier im Spiel?“ Auf einmal geht die Tür auf. Es kommt Herr Tietjen, „Guten Morgen, Herr Metternich, ich möchte Ihnen sagen, Sie haben einen fantastischen Holländer gestern gesungen. Das war ganz hervorragend. Das ist eine wunderbare Leistung von Ihnen. Herr Paris, was zahlen Sie Herrn Metternich für den Holländer?“ „Ja, Herr Metternich kriegt für normale Partien 800 und für *Holländer* und *Die Frau ohne Schatten* 1,000.“ Der Tietjen: „Das ist unmöglich! Mit dieser Gage können Sie einen solchen Holländer nicht zahlen. Ich schlage Ihnen vor, das sie das sofort um 25% erhöhen. Machen Sie tausend Mark für einfache Aufführungen und zwölf oder vierzehnhundert für solche.“ Der Paris, dem war auch die Sprache verschlagen. „Ja, wenn Sie meinen.“ „Ja, ich bestehe darauf. Im Übrigen, Herr Metternich, ich freue mich, das Sie wieder da sind. Haben Sie irgendein Problem noch, was Sie mit mir besprechen wollen?“ Ich sagte, „Nein, Herr Generalintendant. Bei dieser Gagenhöhe, möchte ich nicht mit Ihnen über Probleme reden.“ Das war das letzte Mal, das ich ihm die Hand im Leben gegeben habe. Ich habe ihn nie wieder gesehen. So bin ich doch froh, daß ich das mit ihm zu einem glücklichen Ende geführt habe.

Die Zeit ist ausgelaufen. Auf einmal hat man mich auf der Hochschule gebucht -gegen meinen Willen. Ich hatte nie Unterricht gegeben. In meiner Heimatstadt suchten sie einen großen Namen; einen Nachfolger von Professor Glettenberg. Meine Frau hat dann wieder.... Die sagte, „Brauchst Du nicht. Wie lange willst Du noch singen? Jetzt hast Du ja schon über 30 Jahre auf dem Buckel. Du hast überall gesungen. Mal musst Du auch älter und müde werden. Dort kriegst Du ein tolles Angebot und da hast Du was zu tun. Du langweilst dich nicht. Willst Du wie deine Kollegen herumhocken? Mach' es doch! Und wenn es Dir nicht gefällt, lässt Du es bleiben.“ Dann habe ich probemäßig gesagt, „Ich will es mal ausprobieren.“ Drei Semester. (Zwei Semester. Dann haben wir noch eins dran gehängt.) Da war der Alfred Schröder, der berühmte Pianist aus einem Trio. Der sagte, „Herr Metternich, ich danke Ihnen. Sie werden es nicht bereuen.“ Ich habe dann im dritten Semester eine Vortragsstunde gemacht. „Ach, das ist schön, das Sie die Leute hier mal 'rausstellen. Ja! Schubert oder Hugo Wolf Lieder?“ (die Kollegen kamen zur Mittagsmatinée) „Nein, wir machen den ersten Akt Fidelio.“ „Wie, bitte?“ Der hat das nicht geglaubt! Ich habe dann den ersten Akt gemacht. Ohne Chor. Carol Malone war bei mir im zweiten Semester. Sie hat die Marzeline gesungen. Im dritten Semester war Soto Papulkas. Dann habe ich bei Glettenberg mir Eike Wilm Schulte geborgt, mit dem Ergebnis, daßer mir den Pizarro übernahm und bei mir hängengeblieben ist, bei mir weiter studiert hat, und bei mir weiter seine Laufbahn an die Oper angetreten hat. Das war meine Besetzung.

Das war mein Einstieg. In dem Stil habe ich die Hochschule dann übernommen und an mich gezogen. Auch meine Art, die Leute auszubilden. Ich habe in den 25 Jahren aus meiner Klasse 68 Leute ans Theater gebracht. Die Privaten ausgeschlossen. Da kommt noch eine große Zahl, die bei mir privat waren noch dazu. Davon sind ein Grossteil heute noch tätige internationale Sänger. Der Papulkas hat wieder den Herrn Gedda in der Schweiz vertreten und für den ein großes Programm gesungen. Der hat erst wieder in Athen viermal den Entführungstenor gesungen. Der hat jetzt eine Professur an der Hochschule in Essen, Folkwang für Gesang angetreten. Die Stella Kleindienst ist in Hamburg an der Oper. Die Carol Malone ist 54 Jahre alt und hat jetzt wieder mit Martha in Berlin einen Riesenerfolg gehabt. Der Oscar Hildebrandt. Die waren alle zu der Zeit bei mir an der Hochschule. Sie singen auf der ganzen Welt. Die sind alle aus dieser Ära von der Hochschule. Um mal schnell ein paar Namen zu nennen: Die Mechthild Gessendorf schrieb mir vor vier Wochen einen Brief: (die hat ja auch an der Hochschule studiert.) „Ich habe vorgestern mit Levine *Rosenkavalier* Marschallin gemacht an der Met.“ Also, das ist alles aus dieser Ära übriggeblieben. Ich habe 27 Jahre durchgehalten. Das Resultat ist Dutzende von Sängern, die heute Zeugnis geben. Eine Riesenanzahl von jungen Leuten, die alle zum Teil auch in die Jahre gekommen sind. Dann doch eine große Anzahl von Repertoire auf Bändern und Platten, wo man hören kann, wie es mal mit mir in dieser Zeit zugegangen ist.

Interviewer: Und 80 Jahre jung. Ich möchte mich bei dieser Gelegenheit ganz herzlich bedanken, und Ihnen noch weiterhin eine gute Gesundheit wünschen. Vielen Dank, Herr Professor.