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**In his six series of broadcasts
Kai Luehrs -Kaiser
portrays detailed
the Hungarian conductor.**

Who was Ferenc Fricsay? From 1946 a steep success bestowed him in Salzburg, Berlin and Munich. Composers as Dvorák, Bartók and Kodály, hardly anyone ever conducted better than he did. With his aim of audio emphasis and transparency he has influenced probably the aesthetics of all radio symphony orchestras of Germany. What is the merit of Fricsay in our days?

Commemorating the 100th birthday of Ferenc Fricsay

Broadcast no. 2 (August 5th 2014):

More than just “a military bandleader”:

The rise of Fricsay in Austria-Hungary

*Musikbeispiel: Audite LC 04480 95.629 Johann Strauß II / “Tic-Tac” / Polka schnell op. 365
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1950*

“In our series to honor the 100th birthday of Ferenc Fricsay – our interest to day points to the origin of the conductor descended of the imperial world Austria-Hungary. (The music of Johann Strauss, example: “Tic-Tac” and “Polka” belongs to the mentioned epicenter). And by questioning, what else originates that period, on can realize the content of the essential repertoires Fricsay conducted during his life.

Consequently, first of all: Mozart, Mozart, Mozart and Haydn. And only secondly in addition the new comers to Vienna: Beethoven and Brahms. Bartók and Kodály, the professors of the music Academy of Budapest, are not to neglect, because of being firmly rooted and teaching in the hometown of Fricsay.

Fricsay also liked Viennese Waltz, which he presented noteworthy with an orchestra of Berlin delivering as the snappiest and most inspiring interpretations ever existed.

Theoretically Mahler also could have been performed; but did not happen by the reason that his music, only by making the detour over the United States of America, appeared intensively in the concert programs of that time.

Verdi followed by necessity, the composer, to whom one gave preference even though the world watched respectfully the imperial and royal society. The work of Wagner was hardly noticed in the glance in Budapest, Vienna, Prague and Olomouc. His compositions were not as dominant prevailed as anywhere else.

Fricsay felt an aversion toward Wagner. - Why? – It is to suppose by the militant anti-Semitism of Wagner, Fricsay might have taken it personally, rather not by the military sound intensity of Wagner, never the less Fricsay himself had started 1933 as military bandleader in the Hungarian garrison town of Szeged. – One might hear in the Haydn - recordings of Fricsay the Viennese humor, but for sure his determined personal desire of the military band leader appearance.

*Musikbeispiel: Audite LC 04480 95.584 Joseph Haydn
Symphonie Nr. 44 e-Moll Hob / "Trauer - Symphonie" / IV. Finale: Presto
Kölner Rundfunk-Orchester / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1952*

With almost soldierly enthusiasm, but at least furious and of remarkable striking power!! the final movement: "Presto" from Symphony No. 44 in E minor, the "Funeral Symphony" by Joseph Haydn.

That Ferenc Fricsay had the characteristic colors of the Austrian – Hungarian imperium in his soul, shows his repertoire. - And it is clearly resigned by his biography.

Born in Budapest, he was the son of the Hungarian military bandleader Richard Fricsay. He received his first instruction from his father. At age of six, he was inscribed at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, with the target of an extensive instrumental study. Fricsay learned to play all sorts of orchestral instruments and studied also composing. It was a substantial study of music, which seems like a trip around the world compared with the modern, actual snap-shot – studies.

Of course specialization was aimed, but equipped with emphasis and thoroughness, as if the young Ferenc from the very beginning of his life was aligned to a world-career. In fact by the training the fifteen-year Fricsay was able to represent his father as conductor. -

According to this mentioned debut just having 15 years- he was already deeply rooted in his twenties that 1933 he refused an employment as singing-coach at the Opera of Budapest- the most important institute of Hungary. He followed rather, - the footsteps of his father -, the offer to become military bandleader of Szeged. An astonishing, almost incomprehensible decision by today's field of vision, but the perspective of daily life has changed. - Music and military were for him inseparable poles of interest in perfect balance.

*Musikbeispiel: Audite LC 04480 21.407 Béla Bartók / Tanzsuite, BB 86, II. Allegro molto und III. Allegro vivace
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1953*

Mouvement 2 and 3 of Béla Bartók's Dance Suite: by all means bubbling, boiling and deadening can't be denied at the performance. - But these popular gripping attributes never escort coarsening at Fricsay's interpretations.

Fricsay remains single-minded analyst of musical information. Dull and academically is not his style.

Herewith we might have already discovered the secret of this personality, whose success in Austria-Hungary was impetuous.

Just a year after he had started as military bandleader in Szeged, the responsible office entrusted him the leadership of the Philharmonic Concerts of the local Symphony Orchestra. –

In 1938 Fricsay marries his first wife Martha; she gives birth to three children: Ferenc (1940, hotel management), András (1942, theater and film management) and Marta. The family remained until 1944 in Szeged. –

Fricsay gathered incredibly fast speed and achieved already in a laps of time his target: the combination of motivation, determination and persistence remained characteristic for the amazing career of this conductor.

But he never abused this success to accelerate the speed of his career nor to move on immediately, neither away.

He remained - being a successful artist - on the spot. – A method of success from which one may still learn today:

Not convert success in megalomania, but to ascend – for higher perspectives. Ferenc Fricsay conducts Johannes Brahms, who shortly arrived in the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy.

*Musikbeispiel: DG LC 00173 00289 477 5289 Johannes Brahms
Klavierkonzert Nr. 2 B-Dur op. 83 / II. Allegro appassionato
Geza Anda, Klavier / Berliner Philharmoniker / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1960*

Not too ponderous, not too voluminous, but clear and even sparkling
Ferenc Fricsay alternates the piano concerto no. 2, B flat major op. 83 - 2nd movement, allegro appassionato of Johannes Brahms.

The soloist Géza Anda, Hungarian Pianist, was over many years a musical companion of Fricsay. By the way: also Géza Anda died too early in 1976 - of his mid-50th

Similar facts apply to other soloists of preference by Fricsay: as example Gioconda de Vito (violinist), who ended her career already in 1961 and for Margrit Weber, working subsequently as piano teacher.

The favorite singers of Fricsay such as Maria Stader and the tenor Ernst Haefliger naturally had not the expectation of a career as a bass-baritone. The programs of Fricsay reinforce the impression that he was descended of a drifted world, a false conclusion to be granted immediately.

Till today the records of Fricsay seem surprisingly topical. Despite of his origin concerning the last days of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy Fricsay was not older, but six years younger than Karajan. - And only four years older than Leonard Bernstein.

The success Fricsay experienced was not by his symphonic repertoire, as being recognized primarily today, - but as an opera conductor.

In 1945 he conducted at the Budapest Opera – among other operas "La Traviata" of Verdi. About the End of 1946, quite a time after the end of the Danube monarchy, he moved to Vienna - and Salzburg. At the Salzburg Festival, he succeeded a sensational coup with Gottfried von Einem's "Danton's Death".

*Musikbeispiel: DG LC 00173 474 383-2 Gottfried von Einem
Zwischenspiel (Interlude) zu "Dantons Tod": Im Tempo des französischen Geschwindmarsches
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1949*

At that time Fricsay was already established in Berlin

We should not hide that a period of persecution and subsoil preceded the rise of Fricsay in Hungary - and later in Austria and Germany. These political happenings in the 50s were little discussed corresponding typically the handling of the Nazi era.

However the fact is, that not only in 1942 military court proceedings were opened in Szeged versus Fricsay, who himself was Jewish extraction on one's mother side. Reason: he had engaged Jewish artist. - In 1944 he escaped the detention by the Gestapo because of been warned by friends in time. - Together with his wife and three children he escaped. They disappeared to Budapest.

Due to the relatively late moment of his prosecution (the capitulation of Germany only nine months later happened) — Fricsay and his family remained hidden, otherwise deportation would threatened them.

Not unusual of that time is to find very little evidence in retrospect of the contemporary history as also biographical abysses by looking at the production of the artist when you look at his work. Fricsay was not peddling with these details.

Apparently he had no significant concerns to travel just after 1945 to Germany - not even to work there. – Perhaps this is the most amazing of his career. He was in a sense one of the last, who had to face the reality of persecution. - And subsequently he was almost the first being creative in Germany.

*Musikbeispiel: Audite LC 04480 95.593 Ludwig van Beethoven,
Symphonie Nr. 7 A-Dur op. 92 / II. Allegretto
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1953*

As first director of today's DSO, as well as the first music director of the Deutsche Oper in Berlin, he is regarded deservedly as a legendary, unattainable celebrity. Any of his successors at the Deutsche Symphonie-Orchester (former RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester), up till nowadays speak with highly esteem about the initial conductor.

At the Deutsche Oper encounters the name of Fricsay surprisingly rare. Before we get into the next drift with exactly this fact – thus Fricsay as “head of the Bismarck Street” - that first of all emphatic indication we maintain to perceive him today differently, Fricsay was an important conductor – equally of the symphonic repertoire as well as the opera.

Perhaps the opera corresponded to his eruptions of temper even more than the emotionally balanced concert repertoire (in fact even before he became 1961 the director of the German Opera).

*Musikbeispiel: Documents LC 12281 232116 Giuseppe Verdi
"Jeder Knabe kann mein Schwert mir entreißen" aus "Otello" / 4. Akt
Peter Anders, Tenor (Otello) / RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1951*

*"Any boy can snatch my sword," the monologue from Verdi's Othello, Opera, Act 4:
With this statement we have almost reconciled the topic of our next Fricsay sequence:*

*The sequence of Fricsay as Verdi-anian - but especially as Mozart-ian:
This means as the first principal of the Deutsche Oper Berlin.*

*Musikbeispiel: Als Ausklang LC 12281 233361 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Ouvertüre zur „Hochzeit des Figaro“
RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester / Ltg. Ferenc Fricsay 1954*