

Auditorium of Nibelungen Hall during the concert presented by the US Army Field Band from Washington, D.C.

## European Weeks in Passau

**W**ITHIN ITS picturesque setting at the eastern tip of Bavaria and against a two-thousand-year background as a trade, religious and cultural center, Passau brought within sight and hearing of people behind the Iron Curtain, as well as for the enlightenment of visitors from the West, a panoramic pageant of Western cultural, entertainment and current issues.

Titled "European Weeks," the program, lasting from Aug. 30 to Sept. 21, presented forty events, featuring a Mozart opera, band and organ concerts, symphony and chamber music, choral singing, a classical play, a folk festival, and political speeches on current issues of national and international significance.

"The unique and singular musical experience for us in the European Weeks was Mozart's 'Marriage of Figaro' which had been promised in its Passau setting," wrote Josef Wizina, music critic of the *Passauer Neue Presse* after the first of five performances.

**T**HE PRESENTATION of this Mozart opera was in the same theater in which the first German performance was staged in 1789, but technical difficulties prevented use of the original German version of the text. However, nothing was lost in artistic value and expression, and the atmosphere was left undisturbed, stated the newspaper review.

The individual performances of Willi Domgraf-Fassbaender as "Figaro," Hanni Loeser as "Susanne," Gerola Moewes as "Cherubim" and others, including Gertrude Hopf, Stefan Zajedans and Inge Weinzierl, won praise from the critics and applause from the audiences.

Working with the opera in all five performances was the US Seventh Army Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Cpl. Sam Adler. The orchestra's amiable

cooperation and efficient playing led the *Passauer Neue Presse* to say the premiere revealed an "unusually interesting and arresting profile," and to comment on the fact that "the instrumental tasks" were entrusted to "an American military orchestra which had had little practice in opera music."

The Passau critic added: "While this uniformed but undeniably well-informed orchestra played . . . one listened in amazement to the great deal of severe and unmistakably peculiar poetry in the sound emanating from the orchestra's direction. All the deviations from traditional style were accepted willingly. After the brilliantly played overture, the 'new style had taken', and Sam Adler can claim for himself and his musicians a great share of the tremendous applause which followed the D-major finale."

**T**HE SEVENTH Army Symphony Orchestra participated in the festival's opening day events by giving a concert of its own, featuring the Schumann Piano Concerto, with George Hodjinikos of Greece as soloist. The soldier orchestra accompanied the Dutch Ballet from Amsterdam, which the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* of Munich noted approvingly danced "in front of the Iron Curtain."

Among the numbers were parts of Tschaiikowsky's "Sleeping Beauty" and an original work "The Street of Dreams" by the director of the ballet. This was a difficult work lasting 45 minutes, and even the most optimistic in the army orchestra were apprehensive about its rendition. But the performance was excellent and drew praise for the orchestra, not only from the audience, but from the cast of the ballet, the first ballerina, Mascha Stom, calling the music the best she had danced to.

Other orchestral groups which played later during the festival weeks were the Bavaria orchestra, which the US cultural office brought in to replace the renowned RIAS symphony orchestra when the latter could not come due to transportation difficulties, and the Augsburg Chamber Music, which delighted an appreciative audience with a lovely and precise rendering of the 18th century music of Scarlatti, Marcello, Locatelli, Telemann and Haendel.

**A**DDITIONAL US representatives on the European cultural program were the US Army Field Band and the Winged Victory Choir of the 43rd Infantry Division. According to the *Passauer Neue Presse* the 123-piece military band's performance met with a "tremendously enthusiastic" reception. The Winged Victory Choir gave a repeat Labor Day performance after its previous well-received rendition on Sunday.

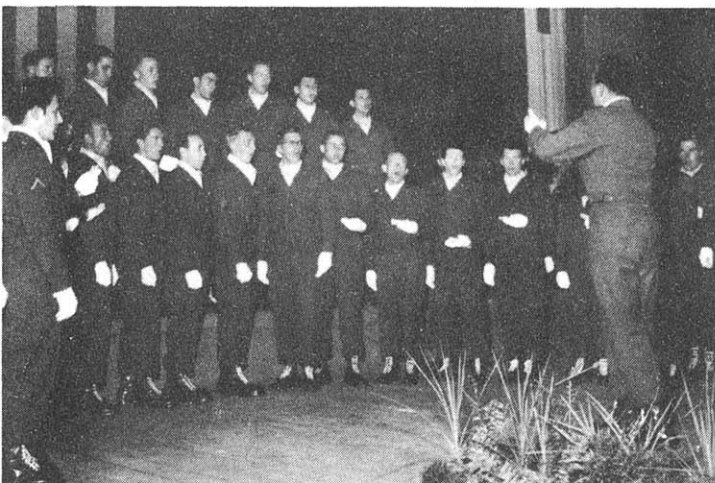
Capacity crowds were drawn by the Vatican Sistine Chapel Choir of all men's voices, which sang mostly Palestrina music; the Marcel Courant choir from Paris and the Regensburg Domspatzen (cathedral sparrows), choir of the Regensburg Cathedral.

Individual performances were given by the American pianist Jacque Abrams, the 23-year old Italian organist Dr. Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, and the Belgian organist Flors Peters. Daily concerts by Max Tremmer of Passau were given on the giant church organ, one of the largest in the world.

The comparing of Passau to Athens by Prof. Eugen Kogon, one of the many lecturers, took on reality when the Classical Theater Group of the University of Sorbonne in Paris played the Greek tragedy "The Persians" by Aeschylus, with its admonition to conquerors that disaster befalls him who would invade another land.

**H**IGH OVER the stage of its spacious civic auditorium, Nibelungen Hall, where most of the performances were held, was the slogan, translated from German as *We Stand for a United States of Europe*. Instead of resenting this political intrusion on a cultural program, the festival visitors heartily welcomed it, surprising even the somewhat skeptical sponsors by turning out 3,000

*Winged Victory Chorus of 43rd Div., led by Sgt. Joseph Baris. (photos by Heiner Duyfjes from America House, Passau)*



*Members of Seventh Army Symphony Orchestra surround Hanni Loeser of Vienna who sang the leading role of Susanne in Mozart opera "The Marriage of Figaro."*

strong to hear Dr. Kogon, president of the European Union in Germany, speak on the Unification of Europe.

In reviewing this highlight of the lecture program, which included mainly speakers from Italy, Switzerland and Holland identified with the European Union movement, the *Passauer Neue Presse* stated Dr. Kogon presented "the ideological, historical and political problems of the movement to unite western Europe" with "great spiritual elan" and with "sustained and impassioned eloquence," and he told the story of the European Union in a "clear and stirring" manner.

In the same issue, the *Passauer* published an article by Beardsley Ruml of New York entitled "America and European Unification" in its front-page editorial space usually devoted to the sometimes critical editorials of H. C. Franz, and of its publisher, Dr. Hans Kapfinger. *The Passauer Neue Presse*, largest newspaper in eastern Bavaria, practically dominates the area with 16 local newspapers under its control.

**C**HIEF PROMOTER of European Weeks in Passau was the city's mayor, Dr. Stefan Billinger, whom the Munich *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* applauded for making the festival possible without financial aid from the German Federal Government and at a nominal expense to the citizens. The city allocated DM 10,000 (equivalent to \$2,380) and HICOG added a substantial financial contribution. Assistance in planning and organizing the festival was given by American officials of the US Public Affairs Field Center in Regensburg and the America House in Passau.

When asked if he thought the festival had been a success and had accomplished its cultural and political mission, Mayor Billinger answered with a resounding "yes" and declared the 1952 European Weeks were now officially referred to as the first annual European Weeks in Passau and every effort will be made to continue the event in 1953.

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