

Operas I went to my first year in Vienna (1988)

This was in the days before Ioan Holender became director when Abbado was Music Director and the great singers all came to the Staatsoper, even though they earned less there than at the Met, for example. There was a strict division between the Staatsoper and the Volksoper so that, actually, wherever the title is in German one automatically knows that the opera was at the Volksoper, except, of course, for the German-language operas. Then one has to know the genre—the lighter stuff (operettas and musicals) was invariably at the Volksoper. (Or should I revise my stereotype? I've just seen that the “Così” I went to on November 28 was at the Volksoper. But I'm sure it was sung in German. It's just that this title is almost never translated.)

The prices for standing room (and I saw these performances almost exclusively from standing room) were either ATS 15 or ATS 20 (a little over a dollar at that time).

It is possible to get the full casts for the Staatsoper performances at: <http://db-staatsoper.die-antwort.eu/> I was just too lazy to get them for all the performances where I hadn't made notes.

Date	Which house	Opera	Cast (where known)
5 Aug 1988	Staatsoper (SO)	Die Zauberflöte?????	In those days there was something called “die Volksoper in der Staatsoper.” This was so that tourists could experience opera the Staatsoper, even though everyone connected with the Staatsoper was in Salzburg! My mother got us tickets (2. Rang - Loge 11 Links, ATS 300 or about EUR 22). There may be a program hanging around somewhere, but I can't find any information about this online.
5 Sept 1988	Staatsoper	Il Barbiere di Siviglia	I believe: Abbado conducting, Frederica von Stade as Rosina, Bob Gambill as Almaviva, and Thomas Hampson as Figaro. [I've since checked the archive and see that Ion Marin was conducting. Otherwise I was right about the cast although I forgot to mention that Nicolai Ghiaurov was Basilio.]
16 Sept 1988	SO	Ein Abend mit José Carreras (his comeback concert)	José Carreras ;-)
23 Sept 1988	SO	Pélleas et Mélisande ¹	I believe Frederica von Stade sang Mélisande.
30 Sept 1988	SO	Le Nozze di Figaro	The wonderful Ponnelle production. (I hadn't yet learned the trick of writing the cast on the back of the ticket so can't remember who sang.)
1 Oct 1988	SO	L'Italiana in Algeri	I believe Agnes Baltsa was Isabella(?).

Date	Which house	Opera	Cast (where known)
4 Oct 1988	SO	Simon Boccanegra	
15 Oct 1988	SO	Maria Stuarda	
12 Oct 1988	Volksoper (VO)	My Fair Lady	Is it possible I had the honor ;-) of seeing Dagmar Koller as Eliza??? Can't remember.
16 Oct 1988	VO	Der Mantel / Gianni Schicchi (I actually sat down for this one.)	
22 Oct 1988	SO	Carmen	Is it possible I saw Baltsa as "Carmen" in this production? Sadly, José Carreras was not Don José.
26 Oct 1988	SO	Fidelio	
28 Oct 1988	SO	Le Nozze di Figaro	(This was where I learned the trick of writing the cast on the back of the ticket. ☺) Conductor: Ion Marin; Count: Bernd Weikl; Countess: Gundula Janowitz ² ; Figaro: Manfred Hemm; Susanna: Sona Ghazarian; Marcellina: Margarita Lilowa; Cherubino: Margareta Hintermeier.
4 Nov 1988	SO	Tosca	Conductor: Boncompagni; Tosca: Gwyneth Jones; Cavaradossi: Franco Bonisolti; Scarpia: Robert Holl; Angelotti: Robert Kerns.
6 Nov 1988	SO	MacBeth	One of the few operas I have ever walked out of in the intermission.
9 Nov 1988	SO	La Traviata	Conductor: Boncompagni; Violetta: Sona Ghazarian; Flora: Waltraud Winsauer; Alfred: Alberto Cupido; George Germont: Wolfgang Brendel; Gaston: Peter Jelosits.
16 Nov 1988	SO	Der Fliegende Holländer	Conductor: Peter Schneider; Daland: Kurt Rydl; Senta: Dunja Vejzovic; Erik: Thomas Moser; Mary: Margerita Lilowa; Der Steuermann: Heinz Zednik ³ ; Der Holländer: Simon Estes
18 Nov 1988	SO	Die Zauberflöte (this was when I discovered that the Galerie standing room was better than the Balkon)	Conductor: Nikolaus Harnoncourt; Tamino: Kurt Streit; Pamina: Patricia Schumann; Papageno: Manfred Hemm; Papagena: Eva Lind; Sarastro: Jakko Ryhänen; Queen of the Night: Luciana Serra.
28 Nov 1988	VO	Cosi Fan Tutte	Interesting is that Thomas Lander, a baritone I was very into at one time, was Guglielmo. John Dickie was Ferrando. The other names on the ticket mean nothing to me now.
3 Dec 1988	SO	Le Nozze di Figaro ⁴ (Third time already - do you get the feeling I love this opera?)	Conductor: P. Schneider; Count: Ruggiero Raimondi ⁵ ; Countess: Margaret Price; Susanna: Barbara Hendricks; Cherubino: Ann (I'm assuming) Murray ⁶ ; Figaro: Manfred Hemm

Date	Which house	Opera	Cast (where known)
7 Dec 1988	VO	Die Fledermaus	Rosalinde: Gertrude Ottenthal (I think, and Wolfgang's comment was, "She doesn't have a high C").
9 Dec 1988	VO	Der Freischütz	Agata was in any case played by Ottenthal in this performance.
10 Dec 1988	Burgtheater	Kaufmann von Venedig (Premiere)	available on DVD; http://www.burgtheater.at/Content.Node2/home/service/shop/39-Der-Kaufmann-von-Venedig.at.php
11 Dec 1988	VO	Kiss me, Kate	Conductor: ? Mogg; Fred Graham: Peter Minich ; Lilli Vanessi : Dagmar Koller (here she is !) ; Mickey Lane : Melanie Holliday
17 Dec 1988	SO	Der Rosenkavalier	
19 Dec 1988	SO	Die Walküre	Conductor: Hans Wallat; Siegmund: Peter Hofmann (yes, the rock star, I believe); Sieglinde: Nadine Secunde; Hunding: Hans Tschammer; Wotan: Robert Hale; Fricka: Helga Dernesch; Brünnhilde: Hildegard Behrens ☺
23 Dec 1988	VO	Hänsel und Gretel	
28 Dec 1988	SO	Salomé	I think this may have been Behrens again, doing the dance of the seven veils herself, right down to a body suit.
29 Dec 1988	SO	Otello	Conductor: Stefan Soltesz; Otello: Wladimir Atlantow; Iago: Bernd Weikl; Cassio: Richard Burke; Roderigo: Wilfried Gahmlich(?); Desdemona: Gabriela Beňáčková-Cáp; Emilia: Margarita Lilowa.
31 Dec 1988	SO	Die Fledermaus'	Silvio Varviso Dirigent; Otto Schenk Inszenierung; Heinz Zednik Gabriel von Eisenstein; Karen Huffstodt Rosalinde; Walter Berry ☺ Gefängnisdirektor Frank; Helga Dernesch Prinz Orlofsky; Thomas Moser Alfred; Hans Helm Dr. Falke; Anton Wendler Dr. Blind; Ulrike Steinsky Adele; Karin Göttling Ida; Otto Schenk Frosch ☺; Karl Caslavsky Iwan
4 Jan 1989	SO	Manon Lescaut	Conductor: Silvio Varviso; Manon: Mara Zampieri; Lescaut: Bernd Weikl; Des Grieux: Giulianan Clanella; Geronte: Kurt Rydl; Edmond: Richard Burke.
8 Jan 1989	SO	Ariadne auf Naxos	Prima Donna: Gundula Janowitz ⁸ ; Zerbinetta: Edita Gruberova; Musiklehrer: Walter Berry; Composer: Ann Murray; Haushofmeister: Hans Christians; Bacchus: James King.

Date	Which house	Opera	Cast (where known)
15 Jan 1989	VO	Don Giovanni	Was this where I first heard Bo Skovhus? He certainly was making a splash in this role at this time. I preferred Thomas Lander. And was this perhaps the wonderful production where Don Giovanni slides down his dining room table into hell?
20 Jan 1989	SO	La Bohème	
23 Jan 1989	Schlosstheater Schönbrunn	?	?
27 Jan 1989	SO	Chowanschtschina	[I have no memory whatsoever what this was or what it was about.]
5 Feb 1989	SO	Iphigenie en Aulide	
8 Feb 1989	SO	Otello	Conductor: Adam Fischer; Otello: Plácido Domingo ⁹ ; never mind the rest. No one really famous.
10 Feb 1989	SO	Werther	Notable in the cast was Alfredo Kraus as Werther.
18 Feb 1989	VO	Don Giovanni	Don G: Thomas Lander; never mind the rest ;-)
22 Feb 1989	SO	Il Barbiere di Siviglia	Conductor: Ion Marin, again; I probably went because Thomas Allen was singing Figaro.
8 Mar 1989	VO	Così Fan Tutte	Guglielmo: Thomas Lander, again; Ferrando: Adolf Dallapozza this time.
11 Mar 1989	SO	Le Nozze di Figaro	Conductor: Ion Marin; I think I went because Hermann Prey was singing Figaro. The wonderful Gabriele Sima sang Cherubino, a great role for her. And Thomas Hampson sang the Count. Not too bad.
15 Mar 1989	SO	Tosca	Pavarotti as Cavaradossi. ¹⁰
29 Mar 1989	SO	Der Rosenkavalier	Conductor: Horst Stein ☺; Marchallin: Lucia Popp(!); Oktavian: Trudelise(?) Schmidt; Sophie: Patricia Wise; Baron: Günther Missenhardt(?)
30 Mar 1989	SO	Il Trovatore ¹¹	I wrote down the cast but don't see any really notable names.
3 Apr 1989	SO	Il Barbiere (again!)	Conductor: Ion Marin (again!); Other than Nicolai Ghiaurov there weren't any big names in the cast. I would like to highlight Marjorie Vance, though, an African-American singer who sang the role of Berta (Marcellina in "Il Nozze") in this and all the other productions of "Barbiere" I saw. In fact, according to the Staatsoper archive she sang this role 42 times between February 1988 and Sept 1996.

Date	Which house	Opera	Cast (where known)
7 Apr 1989	SO	Il Barbiere (again???)	Another name that has come up consistently and means something to people who followed the opera scene in Vienna in the 80s and 90s is Peter Jelosits, who sang the role of an Officer.
11 Apr 1989	SO	Eugen Onegin ¹²	Cotrubas, Brendel (Wolfgang), and Ghiurov.
14 Apr 1989	VO	Die Zauberflöte	Tamino: Robert Gambill; Sprecher: Bo (then still Boje) Skovhus
26 Apr 1989	SO	La Forza del Destino	No cast listed on the back. Perhaps the bleakness of the production (if this is already the set of monolithic pillars) put me right off.
27 Apr 1989	SO	Die Zauberflöte	Conductor: Harnoncourt; Production: Otto Schenk; Sarastro: Jakko Ryhaenen; Tamino: Deon van der Walt ¹³ ; Sprecher: Gottfried Hornik; Queen of the Night: Luciana Serra; Pamina: Sylvia McNair (probably the reason I went yet again); Papageno: Manfred Hemm; Papagena: Edith Lienbacher; 1 st lady: Joanna Borowska; 2 nd lady: Gabriele Sima ☺; 3 rd lady: Anna Gonde; Monostatos: Heinz Zednik ☺
30 Apr 1989	SO	Moses und Aron	No cast, but I remember the opera made a bit impression on me.
4 May 1989	SO	Aida	Conductor: Jan Latham-König; König: Goran Simic; Aida: Anna Timowa-Sintow; Radames: Franco Boniselli; Priesterin: Marjorie Vance (who for once got to play something other than Berta! ;-))
11 May 1989	SO	Herzog Blaubarts Burg / Erwartung ¹⁴	I'm pretty sure "Erwartung" was with Jessye Norman. Otherwise I'm not sure I would have gone this evening, suffering at the time from an anti-Bartók prejudice and not being so wild about Schönberg either in those days. (In the meantime I have heard Bartók in Budapest and gotten over my prejudice anyway.)
26 May 1989	SO	Il Viaggio a Reims ¹⁵	I had to go online for this, but it was worth it. Conductor: Claudio Abbado; Director: Luca Ronconi; Madama Cortese: Montserrat Caballé; Lord Sidney: Samuel Ramey; Don Profondo: Ruggiero Raimondi; Further details: http://db-staatsoper.die-antwort.eu/performances/14663
28 May 1989	VO	Eine Nacht in Venedig	
3 Jun 1989	SO	Le Nozze di Figaro (yet again!)	I got to sit down for this one (2. Rang Loge 13 Links, ATS 460) but didn't bother to write down the cast. Odd. Or perhaps I actually splurged all round and bought a program!
6 Jun 1989	SO	L'Elisir d'Amore	?

Date	Which house	Opera	Cast (where known)
7 Jun 1989	SO	Andrea Chénier	This wasn't the time I saw José Carreras in the role. But it was an Otto Schenk production.
13 Jun 1989	SO	Don Giovanni	Conductor: Ivan Fischer; Production: Zeffirelli*; Don G: James Morris; Leporello: Manfred Hemm; Ottavio: Jerry Hadley; Elvira: Sona Ghazarian; Anna: Gruberova*; Zerlina: Susan Quittmeyer; Masetto: Istvan Gátti; Commendatore: Goran Simic. * Some people don't need to be identified by their first names.
21 Jun 1989	SO	Don Giovanni (must have liked it!)	Similar cast to above, I believe, but Elvira was sung by Mariette Kemmer (which may have been a blessing, I was never a great Ghazarian fan) and the Commendatore by Kurt Rydl.
62 performances in one year. (Don't know that I'll ever do that again, but at least I have done it once!) The season ended, as was customary, on 30 June 1989.			

¹ This may be the performance where I first experienced the “golden Viennese heart.” In any case, in one performance of “Pelleas et Melisande” a woman in standing room fainted and hit the floor with quite a thud just as Melisande was (very, very quietly) dying. About thirty seconds later the woman who had fainted tried to sit up and said, much more loudly than Frederica von Stade was singing, “Was? Was? Wo bin ich? [What? What? Where am I?]” The people around her shushed her!

² This must have been the performance that I rushed into without having time to check the cast. When the Countess sang “Porgi Amor” I thought, “That is the first time that aria wasn't boring. What a wonderful job!” And then I saw in the break the soprano was one of my heroes, Gundula Janowitz (Pamina on the Otto Klemperer “Zauberflöte”). This was probably also the occasion when I noticed that she didn't come out alone for a curtain call at the end. My dear neighbor, Wolfgang, explained that Janowitz had been booed so often in Vienna she probably didn't want to risk it. This was incomprehensible to me.

³ The greatest „Spieltenor“ I have ever had the pleasure of hearing / seeing. (Sorry, Fredi!)

⁴ Could this have been the famous occasion when Margaret Price, British, singing in Italian, had the presence of mind to say to the prompter, „Entschuldigung, noch einmal (once again, please“ when her Count (Raimondi and not Weikl as I have thought for years?) completely forgot his lines and the whole second act ground to a halt?

⁵ How I loved Ruggiero Raimondi!

⁶ To think I got to see Ann Murray and I didn't know who she was!

⁷ In the days when this was the only performance of an operetta at the Staatsoper. It was also on the occasion when I made my first joke in German. Leopold said, “ich habe Besseres gesehen” and I said, “Wenigstens hast du besser gesehen!” (We had gotten tickets at the last minute and couldn't see very well.)

⁸ I went to hear my favorites Janowitz and Berry, had never heard or heard of Gruberova. What an experience!

⁹ I've had a bit of thing for Adam Fischer ever since I first heard him conduct, but I believe I went to this “Otello” (so soon after the last one!) to hear Domingo. I even still have the “Vormerknummer” (388) from the Staatsoper for this. I must have had to go twice, once to get the number and once to get the ticket.

¹⁰ I went to great troubles to get tickets to this for my mother and myself. We actually sat down (2. Rang Loge 12 Links for ATS 460 or a little over EUR 33, a major, major splurge in those days). Afterwards all my mother could say was she kept wishing the singers would be quiet so she could hear the Vienna Philharmonic (technically the Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera). She is not a big Puccini fan, nor a big Pavarotti fan—as one can perhaps guess from that.

¹¹ I can't believe I had the courage to go to this—in standing room, mind you—after I had seen it in Boston and thought it was just like a Gilbert & Sullivan operetta until the last act when everyone dies. This may be the performance where I overheard some U.S. Americans in the ticket line. (You went at 4 p.m. and waited two or two and a half hours if

you wanted a good place.) One was telling the others the plot and made the mistake of telling the story of “La Traviata”. From my comments above you’ll see that I had no happy memories of “Trovatore” and wanted to spare them sitting through it thinking they were going to “Traviata.” I gathered up my courage and interrupted and explained. The young woman telling the plot said, “Oh, I didn’t know. I don’t speak German. I’m just up from doing a semester abroad in Florence.”(!)

¹² I loved this opera because the kind man wins out. Tatiana has the wisdom to turn her back on Onegin after his awful rejection of her and stay true to her husband. (My interpretation.)

¹³ Thought he was WONDERFUL and was very sad to hear that he was gay ;-). I have just looked him up on Wikipedia and am even sadder to read that he is dead, apparently killed by his father in a argument about how to run the family wine business in South Africa.

¹⁴ One of the exceptions to the Staatsoper at that time always listing the titles in the original language. Probably even the Staatsoper couldn’t rely on people recognizing the original Hungarian title. I can’t remember if the opera was sung in German or Hungarian. Possibly in German.

¹⁵ This was the kind of performance that was quite simply a gift for life. Production (the bathtubs!) and cast were perfect. These days you would have to go to the Salzburg Festival to get such a cast and performance. Later, when my friend J. was visiting, I made her go. She was highly skeptical about standing through what is, after all, a loooong opera. Afterwards she not only said it was well worth it, she said she hadn’t known opera could be funny, which this production was. Exquisitely so.