



Herbert von Karajan

(1908-1989)

1908 Herbert von Karajan was born on 5 April in Salzburg, the second son of senior consultant Ernst von Karajan and his wife Martha, née Kosmac. Their elder son, Wolfgang, was just twenty months old at the time.

1912 First piano lessons with Franz Ledwinka.

1916 First musical studies at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. His teachers were Franz Ledwinka (piano), Franz Sauer (harmonic theory) and Bernhard Paumgartner (composition and chamber music).

1926 March: passed the final examinations (Matura) at the Salzburg grammar school specialising in the humanities. Subject of his written project: “Thermodynamics and International Combustion Engines”.

Autumn: enrolment at the High School of Technology in Vienna and at the Vienna Academy of Music and Performing Art: major study piano, under Josef Hofmann, and conducting in the class of Alexander Wunderer.

1929 22 January: first public performance as a conductor at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. Karajan’s father hired the Mozarteum Orchestra especially for the occasion. In the audience was the artistic director of the Stadttheater in Ulm, who invited Karajan to audition as a conductor at his theatre. Karajan was appointed principal kapellmeister at the Stadttheater in Ulm.

1933 In the summer Karajan made his official debut at the Salzburg Festival, where he conducted the incidental music composed by Bernhard Paumgartner for Goethe’s Faust directed by Max Reinhardt.

1934 Karajan’s contract with Ulm came to an end.

June: invited to audition as a conductor at the Stadttheater Aachen which led to his appointment as principal kapellmeister.

21 August: first artistic encounter with the Vienna Philharmonic during a private soirée in Salzburg in which works by Debussy and Ravel were performed.

1935 Karajan appointed General Music Director of the Stadttheater in Aachen, making him the youngest general music director in Germany.



- 1937** 1 June: debut at the Vienna State Opera conducting Wagner's Tristan und Isolde.
- 1938** 8 April: first musical encounter with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.
26 July: married the operetta singer Elmy Holgerloef in Aachen.
30 September: conducted at the Berlin State Opera for the first time (Beethoven's Fidelio).
The performance of Wagner's Tristan on 21 October marks Karajan's international breakthrough.
First recording contract (valid until 1943) with Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft.
- 1939** The Berlin State Opera appointed Karajan as State Kapellmeister and conductor of symphony concerts by the Prussian State Orchestra. At the same time Karajan was still active in Aachen.
- 1940** 9 May: first concert at La Scala, Milan.
- 1941** 7 March: first tour by the Berlin Staatskapelle with Karajan in Rome.
16 March: first appearance at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.
24/25 May: guest performances by the Berlin State Opera with Karajan in Paris.
- 1942** Divorced from Elmy Holgerloef.
22 October: married Anita Gütermann in Berlin.
October: recordings with the RAI Orchestra in Turin (Mozart symphonies).
- 1943** September: concerts and recordings with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam.
- 1944** Karajan conducted the George Enescu Philharmonic Orchestra in Bucharest (January) and the Paris Radio Symphony Orchestra in (April/May).
- 1945** 18 February: last concert with the Berlin Staatskapelle.
Karajan spent most of the time in Italy (Milan, Como, Trieste). After the end of the war he was mainly in Milan.
Concerts with the Teatro Verdi Orchestra in Trieste.



- 1946** 12/13 January: first post-war concerts with the Vienna Philharmonic at the Musikverein in Vienna.
Karajan is prohibited from conducting because of his membership of the German Nazi party (NSDAP).
In autumn Karajan started to work with Walter Legge, music producer of Columbia Records and the founder and managing director of the newly created Philharmonia Orchestra London.
First recordings with the Vienna Philharmonic for Columbia.
- 1947** October: conducting ban lifted.
26 October: Karajan conducted the Vienna Philharmonic in a performance of Anton Bruckner's Eighth Symphony in the Musikverein in Vienna and thus marked his official return to concert life after the ban prohibiting him from conducting was lifted.
20 December: first concert with the Singverein der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna (Beethoven's Ninth Symphony).
- 1948** The Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (Society of the Friends of Music) in Vienna engaged Karajan for a series of concerts named after him, and later appointed him as Concert Director (he was the last to hold this post, until 1964).
Appointed artistic director for life of the Singverein der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde.
21 February: first concert with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, marking the beginning of a close cooperation that lasted many years.
11 April: first concert with the Philharmonia Orchestra London.
First engagements at the International Music Festival in Lucerne (and every year afterwards until 1988, except for 1980). Director there of courses for conductors.
- 1949** March to May: conducts the Orquesta Filarmónica de la Habana and the orchestra of the Teatro Colón during a tour of South America.
- 1950** 28 May: conducts at Bayreuth for the first time (guest performances by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra).
- 1951** August: first engagement at the Bayreuth Festival (Wagner's Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg and the second cycle of the Ring).



- 1953** 8 September: first concert with the Berlin Philharmonic since the end of the war.
- 1954** April/May: Karajan's first tour of Japan (with the NHK Symphony Orchestra).
This is followed by a long tour of Europe with the Philharmonia Orchestra London.
When Wilhelm Furtwängler died on 30 November, Karajan was requested to conduct the concerts by the Berlin Philharmonic on the first tour of the United States planned for 1955.
- 1955** February: as successor designate to Wilhelm Furtwängler, Karajan went on tour with the Berlin Philharmonic to the United States.
25 May: Karajan signed a contract to become artistic director and principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic for life.
- 1956** March: Karajan is appointed artistic director of the Salzburg Festival (initially for four years).
5/6/7 June: Karajan conducts the Berlin Philharmonic in Vienna for the first time.
12/14/16: guest performances by La Scala, Milan, (Lucia di Lammermoor) at the Vienna State Opera. On the day after the premiere Karajan's appointment as artistic director of the Vienna State Opera was announced (from 1 September).
- 1957** 2 April: Karajan celebrated his debut as artistic director of the Vienna State Opera with a performance of Wagner's Die Walküre.
Autumn: first tour of Japan with the Berlin Philharmonic.
- 1958** Divorced from Anita Gütermann.
6 October: married Eliette Mouret.
October/November: European tour with the Berlin Philharmonic; invitation to conduct the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. In October Karajan signed a five-year contract with Deutsche Grammophon. The first major project was the complete recording of the Beethoven symphonies.
- 1959** In the autumn Karajan went on a world tour with the Vienna Philharmonic (India, Philippines, China, Japan, United States).



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- 1960** 25 June: birth of his first daughter Isabel. The Vienna Philharmonic designated as her godparents.
26 July: Karajan inaugurated the newly built Grosses Festspielhaus (Large Festival Hall) in Salzburg with a performance of R. Strauss's Der Rosenkavalier.
- 1963** 15 October: inaugural concert in the newly built Philharmonie in Berlin (Beethoven's Ninth Symphony).
- 1964** 2 January: birth of Karajan's second daughter Arabel. This time the Berlin Philharmonic are the godparents.
May: Karajan announces his resignation from the Vienna State Opera.
August: Karajan is appointed to the board of directors of the Salzburg Festival.
- 1965** Karajan starts to work intensely as a director and conductor of operas and concerts on film, in close cooperation with the French stage director Henri-Georges Clouzot and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra (for Cosmotel, later Unitel).
First negotiations about setting up an Easter Festival.
- 1966** 24 March: the Osterfestspielges.m.b.H. (Easter Festival Company Ltd) is registered in the Salzburg Trade Register.
- 1967** 19 March: Karajan opened the first Easter Festival in Salzburg with Wagner's Die Walküre.
Besides the opera production the programme of the Easter Festival also included three orchestral concerts by the Berlin Philharmonic.
20 May: Karajan conducted the RAI Orchestra in Rome in a festive concert in honour of Pope Paul VI.
November: Karajan conducted at the Metropolitan Opera in New York for the first time (Die Walküre in the Easter Festival production).
- 1968:** 4 March: Karajan awarded the Honorary Ring of Land Salzburg.
4 April: Karajan became an honorary citizen of the City of Salzburg.
8 April: Karajan received the "Golden Gramophone" from Deutsche Grammophon.
14 August: appointed Honorary Senator of the University of Salzburg.
Karajan set up the Herbert von Karajan Foundation in Berlin.



1969 The Herbert von Karajan Foundation set up a research institute for experimental music psychology at the University of Salzburg.
At the Salzburg Festival Karajan conducted the Orchestre de Paris, of which he was appointed musical advisor.

31 August: awarded the Art Prize of the City of Lucerne.

September: the Herbert von Karajan Foundation held its first International Competition for Conductors in Berlin.

1970 March: Karajan concluded Wagner's Ring at the Easter Festival with performances of Götterdämmerung.

May: another tour of Japan with the Berlin Philharmonic, again performing the complete Beethoven Symphonies, this time in Osaka. Concerts with different programmes followed in Tokyo.

June: Karajan conducted the nine Beethoven Symphonies with the Berlin Philharmonic at the Vienna Festival.

August: new production of Verdi's Otello in Salzburg.

1971 3 April: after the Ring, Karajan presented Beethoven's Fidelio at the Easter Festival.

1972 Founding of the Orchestra Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic.

March: Karajan staged Tristan und Isolde at the Easter Festival.

The summer programme included Le Nozze di Figaro in a production by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle.

1973 June: Karajan inaugurated the Whitsun Festival in Salzburg, conducting four concerts in three days. The programme included Bruckner's Fourth, Fifth and Eighth Symphonies as well as the Te Deum.

20 August: world premiere of Carl Orff's De temporum fine comoedia in Salzburg.

24 November: Karajan made an honorary citizen of Berlin.

1974 Karajan conducted Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg at the Easter Festival.

In the summer he conducted Die Zauberflöte in Salzburg a staging by Giorgio Strehler.

November: tour of the United States with the Berlin Philharmonic.



- 1975** December: due to an acute slipped disc, Karajan had to have a major operation on his back.
- 1976** 10 April: Premiere of Lohengrin at the Salzburg Easter Festival.
13 April: first appearance of José Carreras in a concert with Karajan (Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*)
- 1977** 13 April: Karajan awarded the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize.
8 May: Karajan returned to the Vienna State Opera, conducting the premiere of *Il Trovatore* with Luciano Pavarotti as Manrico and Leontyne Price as Leonora. This was followed by *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *La Bohème*, with José Carreras as Rodolfo and Mirella Freni as Mimi.
At the Salzburg Festival Karajan staged *Salome* with Hildegard Behrens in the title role.
September: after several postponements, Karajan finally recorded Mahler's Sixth Symphony.
- 1978** 12 May: Karajan awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Salzburg.
21 May: awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Oxford (together with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau).
21 September: Karajan suffered a stroke during rehearsals in Berlin.
- 1979** For all the new recordings made in 1978 Karajan was awarded the Grand Prix International du Disque of the Académie Charles Cros by the French president Giscard d'Estaing.
October: guest performances by the Berlin Philharmonic in Tokyo and for the first time also in Beijing.
Karajan received an honorary doctorate from Waseda University in Tokyo.
- 1980** 5 April: 25th anniversary of the appointment of Herbert von Karajan as principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic.
April: Karajan made his first digital recording (*Die Zauberflöte*, in Berlin).
After the Easter Festival Karajan worked in Courchevel with the European Community Youth Orchestra, founded by Joy Bryer in 1976, whose music director was Claudio Abbado.
7 December: official celebrations for the 25th anniversary of Karajan's appointment as principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic.



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- 1981** 15 April: world presentation of the Compact Disc Digital Audio System at a press conference during the Salzburg Easter Festival, together with the president of Sony, Akio Morita, and vicepresident Norio Ohga.
27 July: Karajan awarded the Cyril and Methodius Order, First Class, in Sofia, for his efforts in promoting Bulgarian artists.
1 December: first concert in the newly built Gewandhaus in Leipzig.
- 1982** To mark the 100th anniversary of the Berlin Philharmonic, Deutsche Grammophon released a Karajan Special Edition.
Karajan founded TELEMONDIAL S.A.M. under general manager Dr. Uli Märkle, with the aim of recording Karajan's musical heritage on video and laser disc.
2 March: for his recordings of Mahler's Ninth Symphony and Wagner's Parsifal Karajan received the Gramophone Award in London.
14 June: Karajan received the Médaille Du Vermeil from the Mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac.
September: Karajan recorded Carmen with Agnes Baltsa in the title role and José Carreras as José.
December: the Berlin Philharmonic voted against the appointment of clarinettist Sabine Meyer for a trial year. The matter caused a severe rift in the relationship between Karajan and the orchestra.
- 1983** 5 April: numerous honours for Karajan's 75th birthday (Deutscher Schallplattenpreis, Goldene Schallplatte).
October: Karajan awarded the International Music Price of UNESCO.
- 1984** Due to the escalating situation regarding Sabine Meyer, Karajan invited the Vienna Philharmonic to perform at the Salzburg Whitsun Festival instead of the Berlin Philharmonic.
As a result the Berlin Philharmonic refused to perform at the Salzburg Festival in the summer.
September: reconciliation with the orchestra, followed by the opening of the Berlin Festival with a performance of Bach's Mass in B minor.
December: Karajan celebrated his 30th anniversary as principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic.
- 1985** At the Easter Festival Karajan only conducted the performance of Carmen and one concert.



Klaus Tennstedt conducted the other performances. As of this year a guest conductor was also invited at Easter: in 1986 Chailly, in 1987 Giulini, 1988 Masur and in 1989 Solti.

29 June: Karajan conducted Mozart's 'Coronation' Mass with the Vienna Philharmonic and the Vienna Singverein in Saint Peter's in Rome for the celebration of the Solemn High Mass of Saints Peter and Paul by Pope John Paul II. The Mass was televised by Telemondial and broadcast worldwide.

August: Karajan received the Honorary Ring of the Salzburg Festival for the 25th anniversary of the Grosses Festspielhaus.

1986 June: Karajan received the Olympia Prize from the Onassis Foundation in Athens, the proceeds from which were used to encourage young artists. Between September and December Karajan was obliged to rest due to illness.

1987 1 January: Karajan conducted the New Year's Concert of the Vienna Philharmonic for the first (and only) time in the Musikverein in Vienna.
1 May: inaugural concert for the celebration of the 750th anniversary of the city of Berlin.

1988 5 April: Karajan celebrated his 80th birthday. Numerous honours were bestowed upon him, including the release of the 100 Masterpieces collection in the Karajan Edition of Deutsche Grammophon.
5 May: Karajan's last performance in Japan.
28 August: Karajan conducted at the Salzburg Festival for the last time (A German Requiem by Brahms). He announced his resignation from the board of directors of the Salzburg Festival but had already agreed to conduct Verdi's Un ballo in maschera at the Festival from 1989 to 1991.
31 December: Karajan conducted what was to be his last concert in Berlin.

1989: January/February: recording sessions for Verdi's Un Ballo in maschera in Vienna.
28 February: last performance in New York.
24 March: last opera performance at the Salzburg Easter Festival (Tosca).
27 March: last concert with the Berlin Philharmonic.
23 April: Karajan conducted the Vienna Philharmonic in a performance of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony – his last public appearance.



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24 April: Karajan announced his resignation as artistic director of the Berlin Philharmonic.

16 July: During the rehearsal period of Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* Herbert von Karajan died of heart failure at his home in Anif.