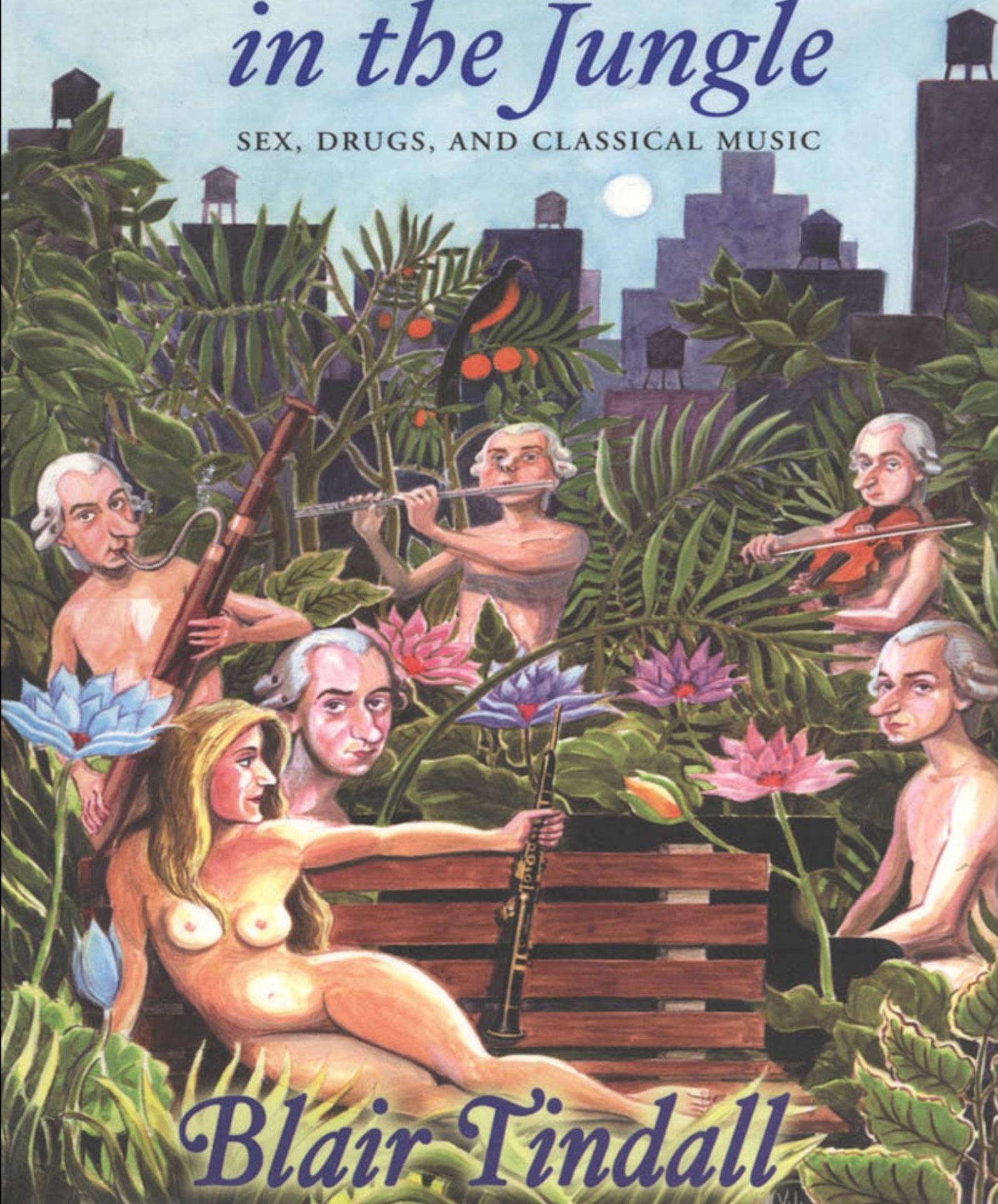


"The most candid and unsparing account of orchestral life ever to see print . . .
Blair Tindall tells it how it is."—Norman Lebrecht

Mozart in the Jungle

SEX, DRUGS, AND CLASSICAL MUSIC



Blair Tindall

Praise for *Mozart in the Jungle*:

“Blair Tindall crams two books into one, mixing a tell-all narrative about the classical music world’s seamier side with a history of the economics of postwar American arts. Classical-music admirers might think that its performers are sensitive, refined intellectuals, but Tindall sets out to puncture this precious assumption with gusto.... The sections that trace classical music’s history and point to where it should go reveal that Tindall has a true passion for her subject.”

—Brian Wise, *Time Out New York*

“A raucous, ribald and often raunchy romp ... She spares no one and nothing.... The cymbal-crashing of these two disciplines [music and journalism] is the exact double whammy needed to bring this story to life.... She tells a tale that is at once frightening and redeeming.... Any artist who’s ever tried to make it as a purist in a world where the rent’s forever past due will undoubtedly find solace and familiarity in Tindall’s scathing, intimate look at the classical musician’s world. All others will enjoy *Mozart in the Jungle* because it’s an exhilarating, albeit often excruciating, ride. B+.”

—Cathie Beck, *Rocky Mountain News*

“Wonderfully poignant and powerful... Blair Tindall writes so well. I think the average classical music listener will find much of her story compelling and come away with a good understanding of not only the life we lead, but also the difficulties we face in finding a career in music that is creatively satisfying and yet provides us a living.... Tindall has a real and human story to tell.”

—Alan Black, *The Charlotte Observer*

“Exploding the stereotype of classical musicians as overcultivated fops in formal wear, Tindall chronicles her sex life with candor and lusty flair.... Laced with sordid stories that debunk the prim and proper image of classical musicians ... her memoir of the freelancer’s harried, marginal existence is a valuable reality check to the glamorous myth of classical music.”

—John Fleming, *St. Petersburg Times*

“Tindall’s central complaint, ‘that the classical-music world has created a crisis by training too many musicians and supporting a culture of exorbitant pay for a few fortunate stars,’ is difficult to refute.”

—*The New Yorker*

“[This] tattling memoir is full of scandal, indulgence and the musical life.... An accessible primer... With sharp powers of observation, she captures revealing details of her times and surroundings.... Tindall’s writing is excellent and clear; she maintains the reader’s interest with clever twists of phrase and plot.... [Her] insightful analysis of this insular world’s overindulgence and misdirection should be heeded by all in

positions of influence.”

—Mick Scott, *Winston-Salem Journal*

“It’s a hoity-toity version of VH1’s *Behind the Music*.”

—*Entertainment Weekly*

“Her description of life in the famous Allendale building... is delightful, as are her portraits of fellow musicians and her stories of life in the pit.”

—Susan Salter Reynolds, *Los Angeles Times*

“Tindall succeeds at a more ambitious goal: presenting a surprisingly thorough analysis and scathing critique of the classical music business.... This is a fascinating examination of a peculiar culture that provides so much joy while breaking so many hearts.”

—Anya Grundmann, *Newsday*

“Chronicles her life ... with a candor meant to set tongues clucking.”

—Charles Ward, *Houston Chronicle*

“Blair Tindall gives us what we’re looking for.”

—Valerie Scher, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*

“Yes, there’s plenty of titillating smut here.... This is also a jeremiad on the dangers of fantasy lives.... She suggests that the American classical-music establishment is overdue for some reality checks. She’s right.”

—Scott Cantrell, *The Dallas Morning News*

“This ‘Behind the Classical Music’ memoir lays bare the unexpectedly steamy and sordid world of professional symphonies. Who knew?”

—Jennifer Ceaser, *Hamptons*

“Fascinating... Begins as a lilting fairy tale, segues into opera, and evolves into a dissonant, postmodern work—unflinching autobiography, bitter cautionary tale and riveting exposé of the classical-music business.”

—Helen Sheehy, *Opera News*

“The strongest moments are found in passages where Tindall is so overcome with emotional memory.... Her writing feels unforced and alive. No matter how much you do or don’t know about classical music, in these moments you care about Blair Tindall.... Her perspective as a rank-and-file freelancer is an all-too-rarely-heard voice in the larger cultural debate surrounding the future of classical music in America.... There is much to absorb vicariously through this walk in Blair Tindall’s shoes, especially for those who have never experienced the thrill of reacting to a conductor’s

downbeat or sat in a cramped orchestra pit playing the same show for the fortieth time.”

—Molly Sheridan, *Symphony*

“Written with pop culture-savvy flair... *Mozart* is a delightfully unlikely pageturner... It’s sure to instill... an unprecedented admiration of this deviant art.”

—Alii Marshall, *Mountain Xpress*

“No other writer has better described the realities of the music business.”

—Ken Keuffel, *Winston-Salem Journal*

“Fascinating on many levels, and after reading it, you will never look at those prim, black-clad musicians playing Mozart the same way again.”

—Dottie Ashley, *The Post and Courier* (Charleston)

“A provocative blend of no-holds-barred memoir and tough-minded reporting about the state of classical music ... A real eye-opener.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“A fresh, highly readable, and caustic perspective on an overglamorized world.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“A book that raises hard questions about the place of classical music in North American culture ... a remarkable book that ensures you will never see a symphony concert in the same light again.

—*The Globe and Mail* (Toronto)

“Scathing... Its scandalous peek behind the decorous façade of classical music is bound to cause shock waves.”

—Michael Shelden, *Daily Telegraph*

“Tindall almost always comes down on the side of honesty. She is clear-eyed, cool-hearted, and unafraid to bite the hand that has fed her.”

—Edward Smith, *Telegraph* (UK)

“This is the most candid and unsparing account of orchestral life ever to see print. It details both the petty corruptions of power—the cliques that control who plays in orchestras and who doesn’t—and the more sordid corruptions of flesh and cash. Blair Tindall tells it how it is—the sex, the drugs, the influence racketeers. The abuses she exposes begin at high school and persist at the deathbed. But she also illuminates, vividly and unflinchingly, how classically trained musicians have lost their grip on reality and, with it, their place in society. This is a valuable book, a must-read for anyone who cares for the preservation of live performance.”

—Norman Lebrecht, author of *The Maestro Myth* and *The Song of Names*

“Parents of young classical musicians beware. After reading *Mozart in the Jungle* you may want to redirect your children towards more wholesome pursuits, such as playing drums in a speed-metal band.”

—Jacob Slichter, author of *So You Wanna Be a Rock & Roll Star* and drummer for Semisonic (*Closing Time*)

“Blair Tindall blows the lid off the world of classical music in this book that transcends the genre of memoir. While an intensely personal and revealing story, *Mozart in the Jungle* is also fine investigative journalism, with an abiding sense of history. It’s a remarkable multilayered work of nonfiction. Blair entered the sacred temple of classical music—for so long shrouded in mystery, off-limits to critical examination—and emerged with this tale of a nonprofit ‘industry’ bent on self-destruction, conductors feeding at the trough of excess, both monetary and sexual. This book is a must-read for anyone concerned about the arts in America.”

—Dale Maharidge, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *And Their Children After Them*

“Candid and intriguing.”

—*Observer Music Monthly* (UK)

“Busloads of kids arrive in Manhattan daily, driven to make it there.’ But for many, the climb to the top is more often like a trek through a jungle. Blair Tindall brilliantly captures the energy, excitement, and existential angst of it all, including the Allendale Apartments, the place where the lives of so many of us—musicians, artists, and writers—intersected. It took a ‘double threat’ like Blair Tindall—a world-class oboist whose musical talents are matched by her journalistic skills—to tell the story. It makes me long for those days, leaky ceilings and all.”

—Bill Lichtenstein, senior executive producer of public radio’s *The Infinite Mind* and president of Lichtenstein Creative Media

“In her wonderfully eloquent memoir Blair Tindall takes us into the rehearsal rooms and the orchestra pits, the dressing rooms and the bedrooms of the classical musicians who make such beautiful music in some of America’s best-known orchestras. *Mozart in the Jungle* is a remarkably candid and courageous book.”

—Margot Livesey

Mozart in the Jungle

Mozart in the *Jungle*

Sex, Drugs, and Classical Music

Blair Tindall



Grove Press
New York

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All events in *Mozart in the Jungle* are true, and all characters are real. However, the following names have been changed: Sydney, Jayson, Percy, Betty, Mr. Geizhals, Maria, Jean, Frank, Donald, José, Peter Huffine, Jimmy, and “Basically Baroque.”

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For my parents,
Carliss Blossom McGarrity Tindall and George Brown Tindall

You ask my opinion about taking the young Salzburg musician into your service. I do not know where you can place him, since I feel that you do not require a composer or other useless people.... It gives one's service a bad name when such types run around like beggars; besides, he has a large family.

—Letter from Archduke Ferdinand's mother, upon learning of his interest in
Mozart, 1771

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Prelude

JANET DIRECTED THE taxi driver to stop just past the Manhattan School of Music on 122nd Street, where I heard students practicing violin scales, trumpet études, and clarinet melodies in the inexpensive apartments nearby. The cab stopped halfway down Claremont Avenue, on a somewhat seedy block bordering Harlem, and I followed Janet inside the foyer of a narrow tenement. The front door buzzed open; we passed into a hall's murky light, then out a fire escape exit to a barren airshaft. A bulb lit up an old paint-blistered door. Music was throbbing from behind it.

"It's just me, Donald!" Janet shouted, punching the mechanical doorbell. One, two, three deadbolts unlocked. The door creaked open and music blasted out.

A window shot open up above. "Jesus fucking Christ, will you shut the fuck up?" A Gristede's bag sailed out the window over our heads, just missing me but spraying coffee grounds everywhere else.

A scruffy man in a stained yellow T-shirt pulled us inside, barricading the door with a five-foot pole lock anchored to the floor. Two Virgin Mary candles from a local bodega flickered in the darkness to the beat of music pulsing from huge old Klipsch speakers. I could smell, faintly, gas leaking from somewhere and mildew creeping across the gray walls. Through the metal accordion grate on the windows, mountains of garbage accumulated in the shaft. My heart started beating faster.

How did classical music ever bring me to this place?

Three men I knew howled with laughter on the frayed brown sofa. "Dude, I'll never get over him fucking his sister." Stan choked on his words. "It's so out."

Donald just shrugged and pulled on the fat joint that was making its rounds.

"Yeah, I know. Now their kid's fucking his aunt," Milton chimed in, pushing his stringy blond bangs aside to see the knobs on a large vacuum tube amplifier. "Listen to this riff. Man, you're not gonna believe." The record blared, and they were silent for a moment.

Stan sighed during a lull in the music. "Those cats could really play."

I watched Janet bend over the desk to snort cocaine through a straw. I'd never done coke, but I was feeling pressured to try Donald's stash too. Donald drummed his fingers on the table, regarding me suspiciously. Suddenly, his attention shifted to Milton, who sprang back to the couch to roll a crisp \$100 bill into a tube.

"Miltie's chasing the dragon, man," Billy, the third one, sputtered. "He's totally chasing that shit." He doubled over with laughter, gasping for breath. Confused, Janet looked at Milton and cocked her head, the straw dangling between her fingers.

"You know how it is, man: trying to stay up, get the buzz back, you gotta do more blow. Gotta chase the dragon," said Milton almost defensively, cutting two lines of

coke on the coffee table. He leaned over with his \$100 tube, and the lines disappeared.

“No, man, I meant the real dragon.” Billy chortled, knocking a tin of Szechuan noodles onto the rug. “The one in the opera. It’s *Siegfried*, man. The giant turns into a dragon. Guards the trolls’ gold. Shit. People think *Star Wars* invented this fucking stuff.” An operatic bass wailed through the record’s pops and scratches.

“Goddam, sounds like he’s coming,” said Milton, sneezing violently. “Wagner’s so out. What’s with those Valkyries?” The words tumbled out, and he choked on his own laughter. “Pointy, dude. Torpedo tits.”

Billy got up and switched records, carefully slipping the first one into its faded jacket. He dropped the needle, and brass instruments played a religious tune. “Valhalla, man.” He sighed, folding his hands reverentially. “Castle of the gods. Power. Power and glory, man.” The windows vibrated as the music rose and fell.

Milton took a long swig of Beck’s. “What kind of Wagner tubas they playing, Paxman? Alexander? It’s Vienna Phil: Solti, right? Damn, they’re nailing it.” He was shouting over the din. He wiped his nose and then smeared back a cowlick in a seamless motion.

These guys had fire in their bellies, I thought. I watched Janet hand Donald \$250 and tuck a Baggie of coke into her purse. Young and inexperienced, I wanted this in-crowd of classical musicians to accept me so I would be asked to play with them in the city’s hottest orchestras and chamber music groups. I’d already started playing oboe as a substitute in the New York Philharmonic, even though I was still in school. At twenty-two I was too scared to do coke, though, so I tried to appear nonchalant by propping my black alligator sandals on the coffee table.

“Oooh, nice shoes, Blair. What’d you play at the Phil tonight? No, wait wait wait.” Milton was ogling my feet. With a toothpick, he arranged a cocaine flower pattern on my toenail and snorted through the bill. Everyone exploded in laughter.

“I need more blow, Donald. I got stage band rehearsal tomorrow,” said Stan. “C’mon, how much? Gimme a break. *Meistersinger*, dude. Six hours long, man!” The intercom buzzed and Donald walked to answer it.

“Billy, you got *Götterdämmerung*?” Billy nodded, pulling a box of LPs from a ripped Associated Supermarkets paper bag.

“Twilight of the gods. The end, man. Redemption. Oh, man. Beautiful. Gold. Oh, yeah, magic fire.”

I wiggled my toes, admiring the expensive shoes bought with one of my New York Philharmonic paychecks.

“The gods go up in flames,” bubbled Milton. Billy dropped the needle, and everyone listened hard. As the music grew to its climax, he screamed over the finale.

“Nothing like it!” he shouted. “Don’t you love it when Valhalla finally crashes down?”

First Movement Appassionata Sonata



Looking southeast over New York City, from the Allendale Apartments at Ninety-ninth Street and West End Avenue.

CHAPTER

1

The Magic Flute

WHEN I WAS seven years old, I wanted a magic dress. Our family had just moved to Vienna, Austria, by way of a summer's voyage across the Atlantic, and every corner of my strange and wonderful new world was filled with fantastic stories, beautiful music, and paintings about real kings and queens.

Fairy-princess clothes, like nothing I'd seen back home in North Carolina, were everywhere. The native garb of the Austrian provinces was adorned with pleats and flounces. Museums displayed golden robes from the Hapsburg Empire. Ballerinas at the opera house twirled on point in pink satin shoes and fluffy tulle skirts. Even ordinary girls wore pretty dirndl dresses that looked like costumes.

I'd looked at pictures of Europe in my grandparents' stash of *National Geographies*, and now it all came to life. I'd never seen huge old churches, cobblestone streets, or snow-capped mountains at home. The world's tallest Ferris wheel and the real blue Danube made Vienna into a child's wonderland.

Europe also cast its spell on my parents, who had almost never traveled abroad. Both born in 1921, they were the first in their families with college degrees, and our year in Vienna immersed them in the culture, history, and arts they'd come to love.

My father had just been appointed a visiting lecturer in American history at the University of Vienna. Like many World War II vets, Dad was educated under the GI Bill after returning from duty, in his case earning a PhD in the history of the American South. By 1958, he had settled into a suburban professor's position in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, which aside from the university was a quiet spot. There were occasional concerts, and the Varsity showed first-run films uptown. Dinner out meant the S & W Cafeteria over in Durham.

Before the trip, my mother had exercised her wry humor by naming our toy boats after our ship, the SS *Atlantic*, then sinking them at bath time. She showed me pictures of the vessel, the pier, and the "women and children first" emergency drills, which turned out to be true. Nothing she said could have prepared me for the glamour on board, however.

It was 1967, and people traveling on ocean liners took dressing for dinner seriously. A string trio played as my brother, Bruce, and I checked out the grown-ups in their long gowns and dinner jackets; there was even a top hat like the ones in *New Yorker* cartoons. The captain could have been a movie star in his epauletted whites. As an enormous tuxedoed Arab twirled his cigar, I could not look away from an exotic darkness and blue-black hair I'd never before seen.

On the seventh day, land rose from the horizon. Casablanca! Mosques and minarets. Ancient buildings, fountains, paving stones. I smelled strange things—spices, maybe—and heard bleating goats and shouts from food stalls. Since my idea of good eating meant processed lunch-meat, I gawked at entire animals roasting. Beside a vat of turtle soup, a man wailed like a grieving widow, blowing tunes through his Moroccan *rhieta*, a sort of snake charmer’s reed instrument. Men raced by in white cotton djellabas, tassels bobbing on their red fezzes.

We sailed to Mallorca, Nice, and Genoa. In each strange city, I slung my shoulder bag diagonally across my plain jumper dress for security. At the last port, we transferred to an overnight train bound for Vienna. There, amid loud sirens and clanging trolleys, our sprawling apartment overlooked the cupola of an old wooden food market, which literally sat in the middle of a busy intersection.

Dad soon traveled to Munich, bringing back a white Volkswagen bug he had bought there. In it, we bounced down the Autobahn to weekends in Bucharest, Belgrade, and Budapest. In Thessaloniki, I remember the Aegean’s aquamarine sea, white stucco houses, and ancient ruins. In Capri, the surf had carved the Blue Grotto, a natural vaulted cave accessible only by a tiny opening for boats. On the Hungarian border, I set a toe onto Communist soil and tried to understand the meaning of “Iron Curtain.”

The sixties were a tumultuous period of change around the world, but none of it touched Vienna, which felt locked in the past. We immersed ourselves in Austrian treats, sampling schnitzel at the Augustinerkeller, sugary cream horns at Konditorei, and apricot Sacher torte and cocoa smothered in whipped cream. On Kärntnerstrasse, a string quartet played Beethoven for ten-schilling coins pedestrians threw into an open violin case.

Classical music was everywhere in Vienna. Franz Lehar’s operetta *The Merry Widow* played near our apartment at the Volksoper—the People’s Opera—whose music filled Vienna’s streets. During shopping expeditions at the nineteenth-century market hall on our street, light streamed in from windows far above our heads, and the building’s walls sealed us into everyday local life. The butcher sang arias off-key as he wrapped *Die Presse* around our meat. The old woman who sold us milk clotted with butter hummed a familiar *Merry Widow* tune.

Even the white Lipizzaner stallions at the Spanish Riding School danced to classical music, as they had since 1572. Their arena looked just like a ballroom or concert hall, with chandeliers hanging above riders wearing bicorne hats and tailcoats, guiding their horses through routines of synchronized prancing.

We met other Americans, gathering for parties in the American Embassy and private dinners at home. At Thanksgiving, I played with our hostess’s Christmas doll, Krampus, an Austrian archenemy of St. Nick, and listened to a pretty first-grade schoolteacher from Chicago. She said she’d won a singing contest, and the prize had brought her to Vienna. She only knew two songs and didn’t speak German, but the Vienna State Opera had heard her voice and begged her to sing Mozart’s opera *The Magic Flute*. Her name was Arleen Auger.

My parents talked to Arleen about music, since they both played the piano and

listened to symphonies on the radio at home. My grandmother had played the organ at church, and my grandfather said he played a little violin during World War I. Even though my brother, Bruce, was only eleven, he could already perform some pieces by Mozart on the piano.

I knew a little about Mozart too, after visiting his house in Salzburg. His parents had trotted him around Europe as something of a curiosity. He could play several different instruments and repeat a piece of music blindfolded after hearing it only once. His *Magic Flute*, written just before he died at age thirty-five, captured the composer's childlike imagination in a story of sorceresses and enchanted animals. Music itself was almost a character in the opera, as Prince Tamino could pass through fire and water with the power of his magic flute.

We went to hear Arleen in *The Magic Flute* at the State Opera, an ornate temple to music built in 1869. Busts of conductors who had performed here lined the lobby: Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Herbert von Karajan. I was glad we weren't going to the Musikverein, where I'd already sat through three or four boring concerts. The old men there played symphonies for hours without telling any story at all, leaving me to stare at the naked gold ladies holding up the balcony.

I'd already been to the opera house to see *Swan Lake*. I imitated ballerina Margot Fonteyn's boneless arms and imagined myself wearing her jeweled white tutu and sparkly tiara. Tonight's story would be different. As we walked through the opera house lobby, my mother traced out scenes from *The Magic Flute* that were woven into the foyer's huge tapestries. There was Papageno, dressed like a bird, his lips padlocked by the Queen's ladies-in-waiting. Then Pamina, the sun-cult priestess, in the temple of Isis. And finally Arleen's character, the evil Queen of the Night.

As the usher seated us, I smoothed the skirt of the Austrian dirndl my mother had bought me. It was pink and chocolate-brown, with a lace-up bodice, puffy underblouse, patterned skirt, and fringed scarf that tucked into the neckline. It was the first time I'd worn it, and the dress made me look like an Austrian girl.

I fidgeted during the overture music, but at last our schoolteacher friend came onstage. In her embroidered velvet costume and towering headdress, Arleen had been transformed into something very special. She began ordering Pamina to murder the priest of Isis:

Hell's revenge cooks in my heart,
Death and despair flame about me!
If you do not kill Sarastro
You will be my daughter nevermore.

Suddenly, my dirndl felt ordinary, something that everyone wore. If only I could snap my fingers and become Queen of the Night like Arleen, with all these people watching! I wanted all that attention. I wanted to be a queen onstage, like her. I wanted that magic dress!



Soprano Arleen Auger in her “magic dress,” as Constanze in Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio*, Vienna State Opera, 1970. (Photo reproduced by permission of the Arleen Auger Memorial Fund)

* * *

One year later, in 1968, we sailed home on the SS *Michelangelo*. New York’s skyline had changed; construction had started on the World Trade Center at the tip of Manhattan. The city felt somewhat European, with French and Italian restaurants crowding side streets near the Taft Hotel, where we were staying. International travelers came and went from the West Side piers. Uptown, fancy cars and fancier people streamed by the white plaza of Lincoln Center—a shopping mall for the arts, bigger and newer than anything in Vienna.

North Carolina had changed too. I was eight now, and my old classmates had grown into third-graders. They asked where I’d gone during second grade. “Austria! Did you see kangaroos?” My classmates bopped along to Beatles songs I didn’t know, so I secretly hummed the *Magic Flute* tunes that reminded me of Arleen’s magic transformation.

Vienna started fading from my memory as I moved back into my old pink bedroom. Mom tried to re-create our European life and its sophistication by spreading out books full of paintings from Austrian museums—she hung up a Dürer print that I liked—and tuning in to Metropolitan Opera broadcasts every Saturday. She found marzipan bunnies and Konditorei pastries at a little shop on Franklin Street, owned by Hungarian Jews who’d fled Austria in 1939 to escape the Nazi occupation.

There was home-grown culture too. The North Carolina Symphony soldiered from Manteo to Murphy on a rattletrap bus with its mission of music education. Founded in 1932 as a Works Progress Administration project, the state’s Horn-Tootin’ Bill of 1945

had funded it ever since. My third-grade class rode the bus with the rest of the elementary school to one of their concerts. First we listened to them play Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*; then we made a horrible cacophony by tweeting along on plastic tonettes the school provided.

My parents enjoyed playing piano for fun and encouraged me to start piano lessons too. After a few months, I found that scales and easy melodies were boring. I wanted to learn the loud dramatic Brahms and Beethoven pieces my now-thirteen-year-old brother could play. I didn't realize how much work he put into learning them.

Sometimes my family drove thirty miles on two-lane roads to see the Philadelphia Orchestra or pianist Arthur Rubinstein in Raleigh's cavernous Reynolds Coliseum. Just one stop on a nationwide "community concert" circuit started in the 1920s, Raleigh brought in culture by selling subscriptions in advance, offering arts managements the fees up front and eliminating middlemen. Over three hundred towns in America had formed these civic music clubs, bidding on whatever artists they could afford. By filling the vast basketball arena's fourteen hundred seats, our series could sell seven concerts for seven bucks.

Even though I knew the concerts were considered a cultural resource since we lived so far from a big city, I found them dull. In addition, the barnlike sports arena couldn't compare to Vienna's elegant State Opera House. The huge stadium's boomy acoustics made it hard to hear the instruments or see performers on the faraway stage. My mind would wander to places I'd rather be: watching tadpoles in the creek near our house, riding my bike to the swimming pool, or canoeing past rhododendrons on the Neuse River.

All through elementary school, my parents urged me to keep taking piano lessons. I hated practicing and wasn't particularly interested in piano, but by sixth grade I had finally advanced enough to play in a local group recital. My mother rewarded me with a fairy princess dress with candy-pink chiffon pleats and a satin ribbon around the waist. I loved walking out in front of the audience in it. Once the applause died, though, I suffered an attack of stage fright. Sitting at the nine-foot Steinway, my hands shook. I had a memory slip and stopped, then started again. I wanted to disappear or run offstage, but I managed to finish my halting performance. Only when I walked away from the keyboard was I transformed back into the fairy princess.

That year, 1971, someone from the music store brought trumpets, flutes, saxophones, and trombones to Estes Elementary. First, the bandleader gave us a music test: Is this note higher or lower? Softer or louder? I got all the questions right. So did Johnny Edwards, a black kid who lived in a house with a dirt floor and an outhouse in rural Orange County.

Afterward, Johnny wandered outside while I stayed behind with other budding musicians. Our schools had been racially integrated for six years, but renting a trumpet for thirty bucks a month would have been a challenge for Johnny's parents.

The bandleader started handing out instruments alphabetically by our last names. Finally I'd get my magic flute! I watched impatiently as Miketa got the last trumpet, Osborne the trombone, and Smith, the last flute. By the time he got to Tindall, my