



Diversity at the Volksoper – a place of encounter

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Diversity is like a beautiful tapestry made up of people, cultures, and perspectives, woven together to form the rich fabric of our society. It includes differences in gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, and age, among others. Diversity means recognizing and valuing these differences in order to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome and respected. Arts and cultural institutions are typically spaces where diversity is embraced, and there is a fundamental openness and receptiveness to the variety of life.

At the Volksoper, we express our diversity through our repertoire: opera, operetta, musical, ballet – as diverse as our program is, so are our people. Our staff includes individuals from 30 nations, on and off stage, in the orchestra pit and in our offices – all working together to ensure that the curtain rises every evening and our audiences are enchanted with love, passion, joy, vitality, drama, and adventure.

But we don't just see this as an artistic commitment – we view it as a social responsibility: To present diversity in such a way that it becomes the norm, and every form of life, love, and gender identity is accepted without limitation.

For us, diversity is not an empty phrase or a box to be ticked.

It is a principle we live by – because it makes us better. From the world of business, we know that diverse teams are more productive, foster richer discussions, and generate more creative solutions. This is even more true in the arts, where exploring different perspectives is at the very heart of what we do.

Living diversity is, therefore, also a self-serving decision for us.

This includes not only people of different backgrounds, skin colors, and sexual orientations, but also people of different ages, body types, and opinions. Especially on stage, it is important to avoid reinforcing stereotypes when presenting characters that audiences identify with.



One expression of our commitment is our collaboration with Vienna Pride. As a partner of the Pride movement, we are making a visible statement in support of the LGBTIQ+ community and for a culture of respect and equality. In the current season, for example, the Volksoper takes a queer perspective on *Die Fledermaus* during Pride Month in June. **Pride is joy!** And joy can also be an act of resistance.

What better work to revisit themes of eroticism, love, and societal expectations during this celebration than Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*?



Cultural participation for all segments of society is a matter of great importance to us.

In particular, the projects of the *Junge Volksoper* aim to make music theatre accessible to – and inclusive of – children and young people from all socio-economic backgrounds, as well as people of all ages with special needs. The core goal of these projects and formats is to offer new opportunities for creative expression and personal development through the experience of music theatre – whether through workshops, special school performances, unique backstage insights, or participatory formats – and to foster a lasting connection with the art form.

Wir sind alle Matilda!

A prime example of this commitment is the project “We Are All MATILDA”:

For 20 years, the Volksoper has been working with children and young people aged 7 to 27, offering them musical training (choral singing and vocal coaching) and the opportunity to perform on stage in various productions.

In the spirit of equal opportunity and educational equity – and to further diversify our children's choir – the **MATILDA** project aims to make this musical theatre experience accessible to children from families in need of particular support. Ten school classes – around 300 children aged 7 and 8 – will receive regular artistic input from the Volksoper over a period of 2.5 years. Particularly motivated children will be given the opportunity to join the **children's choir** and perform in Volksoper productions – especially in the family musical *MATILDA*, which will open the 2027/28 season. In addition, **all** participating students – many of

whom have limited access to artistic education – will take part in their own *Mini-MATILDA* performances at their schools, gaining individual stage experience.

We are convinced that this project will not only discover talent, but also strengthen the confidence and social skills of every child involved. The core aim is to reach a large number of children in a sustainable way and offer them new opportunities for creative development and personal growth through the experience of music theatre.

At the same time, the project seeks to make a broader social statement – one of **integration and inclusion**.

Other key areas of *Junge Volksoper* include regular inclusion projects with hearing- or visually-impaired children and collaborations with special education schools.

We are particularly proud of the fact that the Volksoper is a music theatre for all generations.

25% of our audience is under the age of 30. With a 75% discount for children and our **U30** initiative, we make attending performances especially affordable for young people. The strong response shows us that the Volksoper addresses topics and represents values that resonate deeply with this age group.

At the same time, we warmly welcome audience members **over 60**. Our **Ü60** discount is aimed at a public whose life experience and enthusiasm we see as an enrichment of our artistic work.

A word about children and parenthood:

We affirm our belief that being a parent – whether as a mother or father, whether of a biological or adopted child – should be seen as an added dimension, not a burden.

We actively work against the stigma that is still too often associated with parenthood in the cultural sector.

Volksoper: “We are only as comfortable as the least comfortable person in the room.”

As a theatre, we deal every day with themes like love, hate, sex, and violence.

It would be naive to assume that in doing so, there is no risk of crossing or even violating one another’s personal boundaries. Yet without that risk, no honest artistic process is possible.

Those who go on stage must have **trust** – in their own abilities, and in the people around them.

To bare oneself before an audience, to open up emotionally, and to expose one’s musical performance to judgment requires a sense of **safety and support**.

At the Volksoper, we are committed to providing all employees with a **safe, non-violent, respectful, and fear-free working environment** based on mutual respect and equality.

There is **no hierarchy of human dignity**.

To uphold these values, we provide both internal and external support systems for all staff: equal opportunities officers, intimacy coordinators, regular open ensemble meetings with the management, a whistleblowing mechanism, access to occupational psychologists, and more. Discrimination, unequal treatment, violence, (sexual) harassment, bullying, or attacks on personal dignity are often expressions of distorted power structures – and have **no place** at the Volksoper.

Diversity of Talent: Our Ensemble

The Volksoper is committed to the ensemble — to growing together and developing over the long term. Our ensemble brings together talents from all over the world — artists from a wide range of countries and cultures. This diversity enriches not only our productions but also the creative collaboration behind the scenes. Every artist brings a unique perspective and experience, **making our stage a vibrant space of exchange and openness**. Our ensemble strategy works on two levels. First, we strive to build a **diverse group** with whom we can work closely and sustainably over time. Second, this strong foundation gives us the freedom to cast individual productions beyond stereotypes and outdated ideas of representation. Being part of an ensemble provides **security** — not only economic, but also artistic. One can grow through the challenges of a home stage — and through the opportunity to pursue meaningful guest engagements that support **personal artistic development**. In return, this fosters a spirit of generosity: giving back twice as much, supporting others who need it, and stepping into the unknown for the sake of the team.

Diversity on a Path Toward the Future

The aspects and projects described so far represent only a milestone in our ongoing work to make our stage and all areas of our work a **reflection of society**. This process is never complete for us, as the Volksoper is both a place of **encounter** and of **change**. One constant guides our efforts: the conviction that, as a cultural institution, we can contribute to a society shaped by **mutual respect and openness**.



Lotte de Beer



Mag. Christoph Ladstätter