

# “I AM GRATEFUL FOR MY DESTINY”

CHIEF  
ORGANIZER OF  
THE VIENNA  
OPERA BALL

**In 2008 an economic crisis broke out and swept through the world. You were just starting your work as the organizer of the Opera Ball at that time. To what extent was the crisis noticeable, and how did you feel about that in your work?**

For me this was an extremely difficult period because everything was new. That situation was characterized by a special duality: on one hand the economy was in decline, and we had to take into account that the crisis would crawl into all areas of life. On the other hand, my duty was to try and promote the event in this difficult economic situation. I had to find a way to convince people to come and enjoy the glamorous circumstances of the Opera Ball – and this had to be done in the middle of the economic crisis. Many people cancelled their participation because of it. I took it as a special challenge to find new guests as replacements.

In addition to that, I wanted to introduce a few minor changes in some areas. Considering the bigger picture, I felt that these would be beneficial to the Ball and considering the line of events of the past few years I can say that I am very proud of my choices!

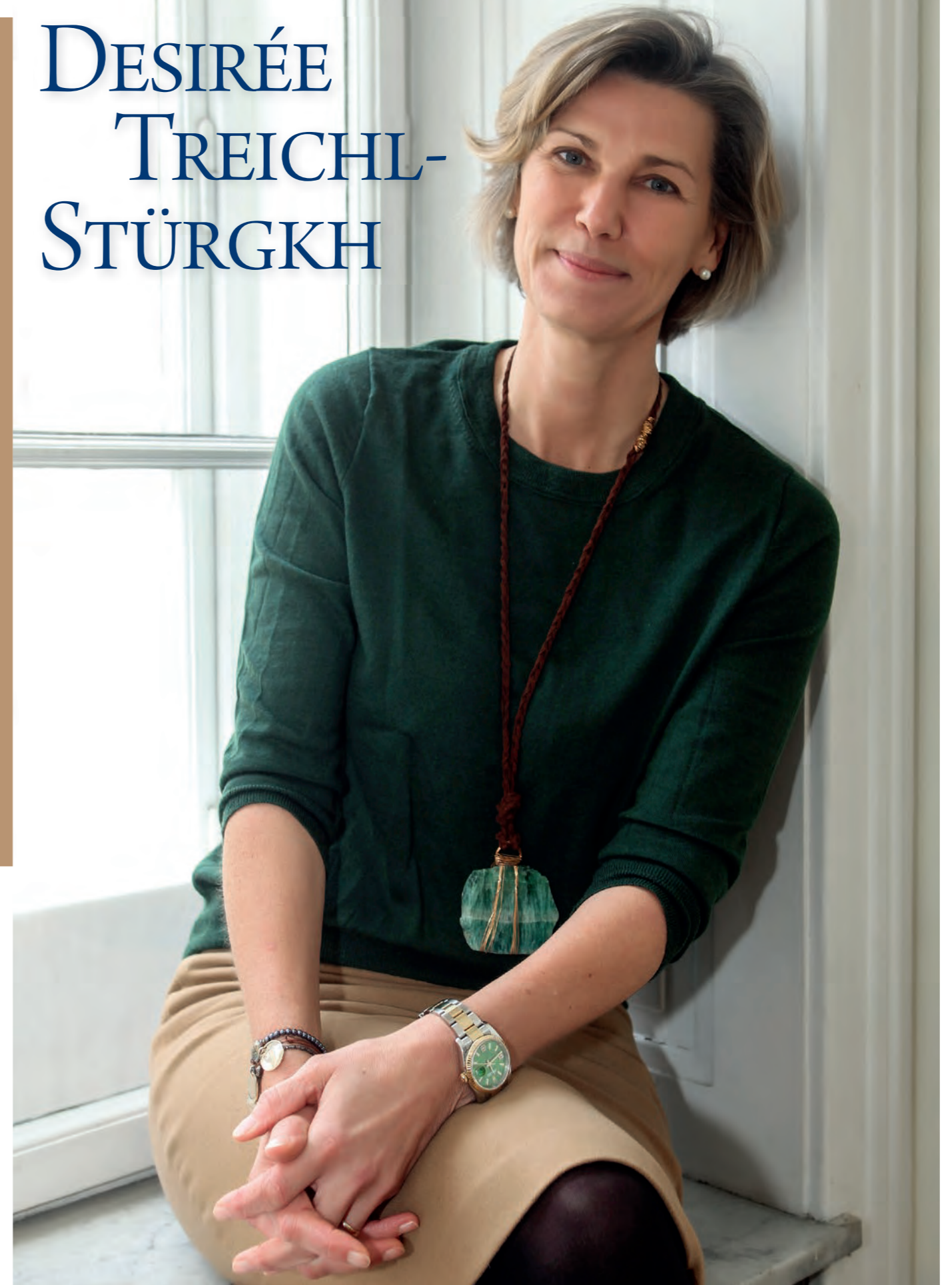
**Six years have gone by since then: what is the situation now, and what has happened in this period?**

People usually say that after 7 lean years there comes a good one! Although this is my eighth year in this job, I am still waiting for that good year to come... But all jokes aside, this is not quite the case! I work with an excellent team, which our customers got to know and have accepted. I try to collaborate with as many young artists and creative experts as possible. During the past years I have gained a lot of experience and was able to notice a growth of my reputation and of the esteem the other players of this sector have of my work. I still feel that I have the necessary motivation for the job and that I can really enjoy every bit of it. This is very important to me; I want to make sure that my work never falls into a routine, because that would be unbearable. If that was the case, I would stop!

**Who selected you for the position at the time?**

Many placed their confidence in me, like the Federal Chancellor of that time. My predecessor, Elisabeth Gürtler, also recommended me.

## DESIRÉE TREICHL- STÜRGGKH



I was appointed by the former Director of the Vienna State Opera, Mr. Ioan Holender, and his successor Dominique Meyer asked me to continue my work once he took over.

**How did you start your work, and what provisions did you get from Madame Gürtler?**

The whole situation was absolutely new to me. If I had to summarize, all that Elisabeth said was the following: "Here you are, you have to do it, it is your job now! Good luck!" But seriously speaking, she did not give me any specific advice but much rather kept confirming the quality of my work. It never seemed like I was doing something wrong. I could have turned to her at any time in case I needed help. We were good friends then and we still are.

**You worked together with Ioan Holender, the former Director of the Vienna State Opera who had a great expertise in this field. What was your professional relationship with him?**

Some find it difficult to get along well with Mr. Holender, because of his temper. However, I very much appreciated that he had a good grip of a situation in a matter of minutes and he always knew what the perfect solution was and what had to be done.

**When you were appointed for this job in 2008 you set the goal to fill the events with as much art as possible. How successful were you in your endeavor?**

I think that my expectations are fulfilled. I can see that artists also like it: everybody seems happy about the invite and they are delighted to come. The same applies to the audience as well: the ball is completely sold out each year. Of course I am present at the different thriving activities on the dance floor and on the diverse

locations at the ball and stay there until dawn. I can see that the number of participants and their enthusiasm are not decreasing even in the wee hours. Many people stay and wait for the traditional last dance so as to take part in it. This is also a big change compared to previous balls.

**Has the audience changed during the time since you are in charge? Does the old tradition still prevail, i.e. are there debutantes from families of the aristocracy?**

Sure. And what is even more noticeable is that the number of guests coming from these circles is increasing steadily. Generally speaking, one can say that the company of the guests has "gotten younger". It is getting more and more typical that it is no longer just prominent players of the economy who are featured in the rows of the audience, but also increasingly representatives of art and culture, people from diverse age groups and walks of life.

**Earlier it happened sometimes that people organized demonstrations against the Opera Ball. What is the situation today?**

Those who held the banners then, are welcomed as guests now. The way Opera Balls are looked upon today has fundamentally changed. For the young generation it is a trendy thing to take part in the Ball, rather than demonstrate against it. The event has been extended, rejuvenated and renewed. Those who were against it back then can now see that it is a good promotion for our country, a part of our country's image. They have accepted and embraced the Opera Ball.

**How are the preparations taking place? What is happening behind the scenes?**



“During the past years I have gained a lot of experience and was able to notice a growth of my reputation...”



Mr. Dominique Meyer, the Director of Vienna State Opera, is the "host" and thus the primary responsible for the Opera Ball. He also selects and arranges the artistic programs. Concerning everything else he gives me and my team plenty of rope. For instance, we decide about donations, the official ball gifts, the bars and catering rooms, decoration etc. - and about the dance schools which should be given the opportunity to create the debutants' choreography in any given year. We thought that since there are several excellent dance schools here in Austria, it would be a great opportunity for them to introduce themselves at this very important event.

**How long do you plan on doing this job?**

Who knows? I will do it for as long as I have new ideas and I can invest my passion into this work.

**Are you always so happy and cheerful? Where do you get this energy that radiates from you internally?**

I draw strength primarily from my family. But I also enjoy my work. And if I do something joyfully it is not going to be visible only on me, but it radiates towards those around me. In today's cold and rigid world I think that it is exceptionally important to fill our activities with passion.

**What does family mean to you?**

As far as my family is concerned, I can say that I am very lucky: I have a husband, three children and a wonderful home. Not everyone is in such an exceptional situation to receive all this in life. I am aware of it

and I am grateful for my destiny. My sons are 12, 14 and 16 years old, they are adolescents. I care for them very much, but I also make sure that I do not impose on them. However, they know that if they need me or if they have a problem, I am there and they can rely on me. I am raising them so that they would respect human values and that they stand with their feet on the ground and know that whatever they have, it is something that many people cannot take for granted. I would like to plant a healthy portion of social sensitivity in them – I think that so far I have managed it successfully.

Because of my work, I am busy during the day; I go to places, consultations and meetings. I meet a lot of people who in one way or another are connected to the Opera Ball. In addition, I also have contact with journalists and the media takes a great interest in what I do. This requires a lot of activities and sometimes it is tiring. However, in the evenings I try to keep a low profile and I very seldom go out. I am keen to spend my spare time with my family away from the public. Our day also starts with breakfast that the family has together. It is important that we have time for each other. This is when we talk, sometimes debate if that is necessary and listen to each other. In today's world, unfortunately, this is not typical, although it is needed. We talk a lot as parents – with this, we try to set a good example to our children, something that they can follow.

**Who is your personal role model?**

I don't have a role model - at least not someone that is connected to my work. I rather have goals instead. And for the Opera Ball



my main target is for people to fully enjoy themselves at the ball: I want them to feel that they well invested their money on a unique and unforgettable night in the world's most beautiful ball room.

**Do you also have dreams apart from your objectives?**

Yes, my biggest wish is to be there for my children and to accompany them in their lives for as long as possible and take good care of them. I would love to stay by them and see that they are on the right track.

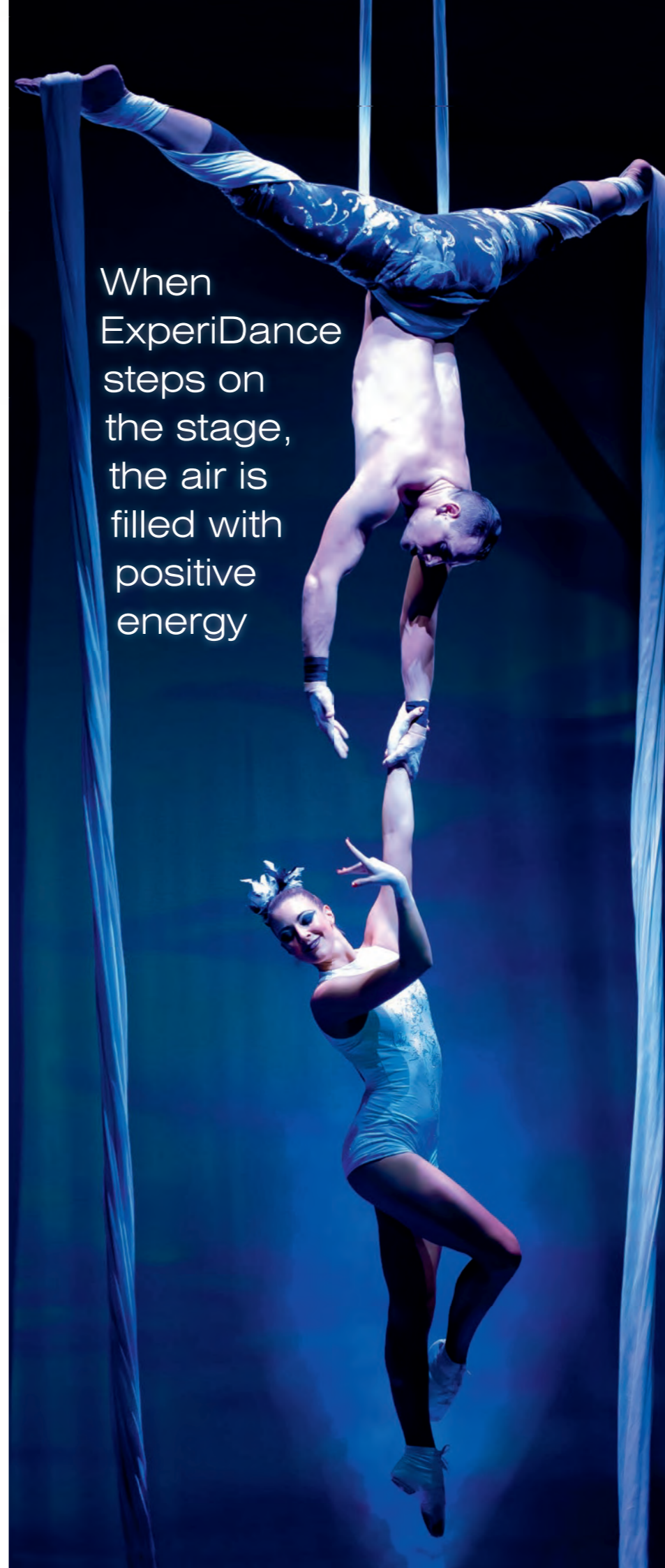
**What do you expect from the 2015 Opera Ball?**

An excellent atmosphere and a fully sold out evening. Actually, in the past years this was always the case. We managed to sell all the nearly 6.000 tickets and the boxes.

**No doubt, that the Vienna Opera Ball attracts fans from all over the world. Can we say that by today the event has become a brand name?**

I think that is absolutely true. We receive many requests from other countries that would like to organize an Opera Ball similar to ours and seek for our help. Unfortunately, I always have to tell them that it is not going to work like this elsewhere, because the most decisive element of the event is the city, Vienna, and the venue itself, the Vienna State Opera. A week before the start of the event the Opera is rebuilt, rearranged and refurbished for this particular purpose. This is what makes this Ball so unique, special and so attractive to everyone. ■

When ExperiDance steps on the stage, the air is filled with positive energy



**The mission of 15-year-old ExperiDance Production**

ExperiDance Production aims at providing the highest level of artistic entertainment and promoting a revolutionized Hungarian dance culture all over the world. The strength of the troupe founded in 2000 is that it tempers fiery Hungarian dances with popular international and contemporary trends – or pushes them to the extreme. By perfectly integrating folklore and modern dance schools, a unique style has been created.

All members of ExperiDance Production are highly qualified professional dancers, who perform spectacularly in the supporting environment of the troupe night after night.



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