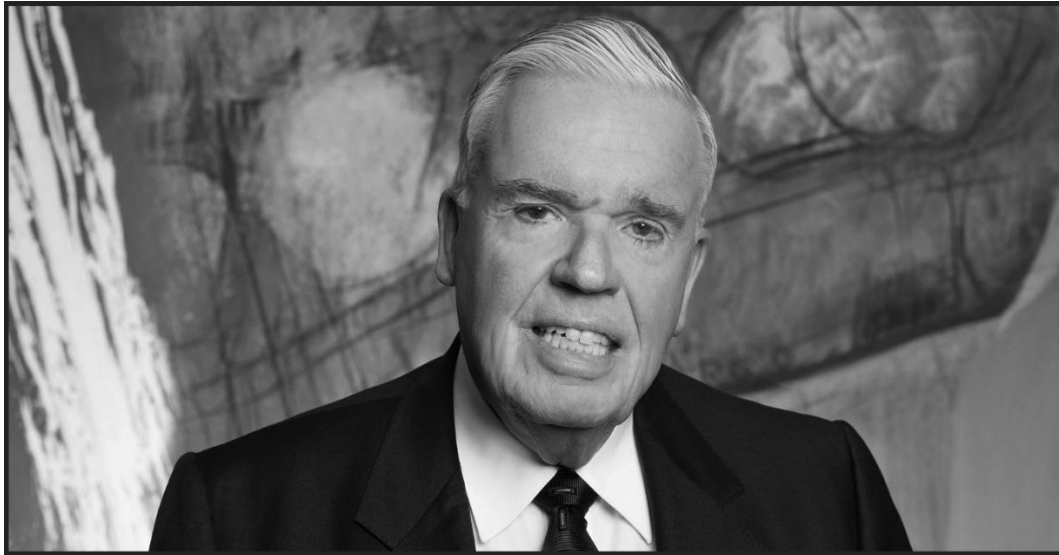




The Salzburg Festival mourns Prof. Dr. h.c. Klaus-Michael Kühne



Prof. Dr. h.c. Klaus-Michael Kühne © 2025 Kuehne+Nagel

(SF, 25 August 2026) The Salzburg Festival mourns Prof. Dr. h.c. Klaus-Michael Kühne, who died on Sunday night at the age of 89.

“In Klaus-Michael Kühne, the Salzburg Festival has lost a great friend and an extraordinary patron of the arts. Our profound sympathy goes to his wife Christine and his family. We are grateful for many years of his friendship, his trust and his conviction that the future of the arts deserves our special attention and support,” said Festival President Kristina Hammer on behalf of the Directorate.

Klaus-Michael Kühne always saw both in the arts: their present and their future. He knew that the great artists of tomorrow are the young talents who deserve our trust, time and opportunities today. This attitude shaped his many years of close association with the Salzburg Festival.

As early as 2013, Klaus-Michael Kühne began supporting the Young Singers Project. Over the years, this fostering of young vocalists developed into a close partnership. Since 2019, the Kühne Foundation has also been one of the main sponsors of the Salzburg Festival. Together with his wife Christine, Klaus-Michael Kühne lent the YSP long-term support, while also backing the Festival’s artistic work.

In doing so, he had a special instinct: he knew that the value of such support cannot be measured in direct terms – and that an encounter, an experience, an opportunity can grow into a great artistic career. Many former participants of the Young Singers Project returned to Salzburg as celebrated artists.

His relationship with the Festival was never an institutional one: from the very beginning, it was personal. Together with Christine Kühne, he followed the young vocalists' development with great interest and human warmth. To him, the annual concert of the Young Singers Project participants on the island of Mallorca and their annual final performance in Salzburg were special moments highlighting this connection, and were dear to his heart. We will dedicate this year's final YSP concert at the Haus für Mozart on 27 August to his memory.

By extending and expanding the partnership in 2023, Klaus-Michael Kühne reaffirmed his trust in the Festival. In times of great social and economic challenges, this was a powerful avowal of his love for the arts – and their future.

"It is with the future that we have to deal," Oscar Wilde wrote. Klaus-Michael Kühne was the living embodiment of this notion: not only did he support the arts of his own time, but he opened paths for young artists into a future of their own.

For this trust, this profound connection and his long-term support, the Salzburg Festival owes a profound debt of gratitude to Klaus-Michael Kühne.

We will remember Klaus-Michael Kühne as a generous patron of the arts and an active partner – but most of all, as a human being who encountered art and its creators with honest interest and great esteem.

Our deepest sympathy is with his wife Christine and his family.