



BIG INTERVIEW SERIES/GLOBAL

# The vision thing

From a state-of-the-art concert hall to an international court and the murkiest waters of diplomacy, we meet the organisational leaders unafraid to trust their instincts in tricky times.

Edited by Megan Gibson



This year Alan Joyce – Qantas’s down-to-earth, Irish-born CEO – has made headlines. Not just for his AU\$25m (€16m) remuneration package, which made him the first chief executive in Australia since the financial crisis to earn more than AU\$20m (€13m) in a single year but also as a gay man for his outspoken support of same-sex marriage, just as the country takes part in a divisive plebiscite.

Away from the front pages though, Joyce has been working wonders at Australia’s flag carrier since he took over in 2008, overseeing a 350 per cent increase in the company’s share price over the past three years (he has been CEO since 2008). As the airline prepares to launch non-stop Perth-to-London flights on its new Boeing 787-9

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*Alan Joyce*

QANTAS CEO

*The airline boss putting his iconic company’s ethos into action in Australia’s big debate.*

Dreamliner in March, MONOCLE caught up with Joyce at the Qantas headquarters in Sydney. — CSM

**MONOCLE: Why is the 787-9 Dreamliner a game-changer?**

**ALAN JOYCE:** It’s the first time these two continents have ever had a direct service. It will be the fastest way of getting there: if you’re travelling from Melbourne, Sydney or Brisbane it’s actually an hour faster going to

London via Perth than it is going via Singapore or Dubai.

**m: What is different about the plane itself?**

**AJ:** The aircraft is over 20 per cent more fuel-efficient than existing aircraft of its size. And the air quality is better. We’re working with the Charles Perkins Centre from the University of Sydney to figure out how to improve the wellness of our customers. Different modes of light will be used to get people acclimatised to the time zone. Similarly, in the transit lounge the showers will have a low-wavelength white light to reset circadian rhythms. We are the only airline in the world that is doing that type of science-based research.

PHOTOGRAPHER: Derek Henderson

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*Margot Wallström*  
SWEDISH FOREIGN MINISTER  
*The straight-talking diplomat  
bringing a feminist foreign  
policy to the agenda.*

**M: What does industrial designer David Caon have in store for the Dreamliner interior?**

**AJ:** David has worked with a company in Northern Ireland called Thompson Aero Seating on functionality for the seats and come up with a clever tray where you can watch your iPad and eat your meal at the same time. And the crockery is both elegant and 11 per cent lighter. Every little piece on an aircraft matters – it all reduces fuel.

**M: Have you seen growth in Asia?**

**AJ:** Ten years ago Qantas had one third of its capacity to Europe, one third to Asia, one third to the Americas. Today we have more than 50 per cent of our international capacity to Asia. In the past two years we've nearly trebled our capacity to Japan. We've added Beijing as a new destination. We've grown Hong Kong and Singapore. We've added Ho Chi Minh City.

**M: In August you challenged Boeing and Airbus to create an aircraft that can fly direct from Sydney to New York by 2022.**

**AJ:** The executives at Airbus told me it's a bit like the space race. I'd love to believe that by 2022 we'll have an aircraft that will eliminate the last tyranny of distance.

**M: One government minister said you should not use the might of a multibillion dollar business to weigh in on the same-sex marriage debate. Where does Qantas stand?**

**AJ:** We're focused on what we believe is our tagline: the Spirit of Australia. To me it's about that great Australian expression, "A fair go." And a fair go means equality. I'm a gay Irish man. Now I'm the CEO of one of, if not *the*, leading iconic brand in the country. This is the meritocracy. Qantas is a big supporter of making sure everybody in our country is equal and is treated fairly. For our customers, our employees, a lot of our shareholders, this is an important debate. We do stand for certain things and this is one.

Frankness isn't one of the core skills required of a diplomat. In fact, treading carefully and tiptoeing on difficult ground are the bedrock of diplomatic good practice; those who can deftly walk on eggshells often tend to rise through the ambassadorial ranks.

Margot Wallström, Sweden's foreign minister, charts a different course. She has been appreciatively described as the "undiplomatic diplomat": unafraid to speak her mind and plant the flag for Swedish-style liberal attitudes and what she calls a "feminist foreign policy", even if it ruffles a few feathers. In the past she's ticked off the Saudis on policies regarding women, leading to the King of Sweden having to step in to repair business ties. She's also effectively banned from visiting Israel as a diplomat, having pushed through Swedish recognition of a Palestinian state less than a month into the job.

"I just don't have that much time," says Wallström matter-of-factly. "Of

course we need to be diplomatic but we need to be clear about what we want to do and what we want to change. That said, I tell my young diplomats that they have to be both courageous and patient because there are things that will take time."

This was a good year to be frank. As US president Donald Trump addressed the UN Security Council in September with a lectern-banging speech that crackled with threats against North Korea, Wallström caught the eye of the world media as she stood close to the front, arms crossed in obvious consternation and shaking her head. "I was looking around the room and thinking, 'Here are the leaders of the world's countries and we're here because we believe in the charter of the UN. To look for peaceful solutions, co-operation and engagement.'" It was, she says, "the wrong speech to the wrong crowd at the wrong time". Wallström's open disavowal of hell-raising rhetoric was characteristic of her kind of diplomacy.

When there's a loose cannon in the White House, the polite diplomatic world can seem a little trite. "Young people want to hear us act from our basic values," says the minister. "They want us to talk about what leads us and steers us." Hard talk, done well, can be its own kind of soft power. — CL



PHOTOGRAPHERS: Felix Oudil, Jussi Pääkkönen

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*Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi*  
PRESIDENT, THE ICC  
*The judge determined to make  
international justice work  
for everyone.*

As president of the International Criminal Court, Argentinean judge Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi has the task of safeguarding the ICC's credibility in a turbulent world that increasingly seems to thumb its nose at the idea of international justice.

When she took the post in 2015 (the first woman to do so), it was a logical step in her long career on the global stage. She holds a PhD in law and trained as a diplomat, working her way up through Argentina's Foreign Ministry before becoming its director-general for human rights in 2006. She played an instrumental role in formulating the Rome Statute, the ICC's founding treaty, and cuts a figure of steely determination.

That may be precisely what that the court needs as it faces a multitude of criticisms over the extent of its achievements in 15 years of activity. Yet as preliminary investigations get under way in conflict zones from Iraq to Ukraine, the ICC remains a critical international arbiter. — VR

**MONOCLE: Does the ICC face an existential crisis?**

**JUDGE FERNANDEZ:** Not at all. Twenty years ago it seemed impossible that it would even be created. The court has done a lot to improve proceedings and has taken criticism seriously, and we've had good results in a short period of time. My priority as president has been to improve the output of the court.

**M: Yet there have only been nine convictions in 15 years.**

**JF:** I don't think it is fair to measure a court – the international court, in particular, because it's a last-resort institution – by convictions. The court is proving it can address crimes that are not being addressed elsewhere.



"The court is proving it can address crimes that are not being addressed elsewhere"

**M: The African Union released an ICC Withdrawal Strategy in 2017. How do you improve the relationship with African states?**

**JF:** We need to have the facts right. We are going into a serious, constructive dialogue with states to listen to real concerns, including criticisms of proceedings. We also need to explain better what the court is doing and accept that in some cases criticism may be to do with self interest.

**M: Syria is cited as an example of how the UN Security Council doesn't refer every case to the ICC. Where does that leave the court?**

**JF:** That is a perfect example of how the court cannot address all situations equally because of the lack of

universality [in nations signed up to the Rome Statutes]. Yes, the Security Council has failed on the Syrian matter but the UN General Assembly has now passed a resolution to create a mechanism to preserve evidence. That is not enough but it shows the international community expects accountability. This is encouraging.

**M: What changes would you like to see at the ICC?**

**JF:** I'd like more states to ratify the Rome Statute. That's crucial because it will strengthen the court, enhance its legitimacy, increase the chances of co-operation and also consolidate the concept of accountability for these types of crimes. I hope those who come after me will continue on that path.



PHOTOGRAPHER: Sean Marc Lee

*The former diplomat keeping the island state's allies on side in the face of China's growing influence.*

An arresting photograph of Mount Yu, Taiwan's snowcapped tallest peak, takes pride of place in the reception room of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This cold, solitary vista here in humid Taipei is an apt symbol for the country's current predicament: since the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive party (DPP) swept to power in 2016, relations with China have gone downhill and the island of 23 million people looks increasingly isolated. Fortunately for Taiwan it has some cool heads to call upon. David Lee, a career diplomat of 35 years, became foreign minister last year, taking on one of the trickiest jobs in international politics just as it was about to get even tougher.

"Taiwan's international relations are very, very difficult because we have faced so much pressure over the

the WHO and the UN's International Civil Aviation Organisation.

At the ministry the flags of Taiwan's diplomatic allies are displayed like trophies (or targets to be knocked down in a coconut shy). "My job is to keep all 20 of them with us," says Lee, who signed a series of grants and loans totalling €50m during a recent visit to Belize. The foreign minister has made it clear that Taiwan will no longer engage in a bidding war because it cannot compete with China's resources. "We have very solid relations with most of the 20, although a few can be relatively naughty," says Lee. By his own admission state-owned Chinese enterprises have offered to build multibillion-dollar harbours for Taiwan's allies.

Being thrust into the middle of this diplomatic tug-of-war with Beijing came as a bit of a surprise for the

government has launched an initiative to develop closer relations with its regional neighbours to the south. The New Southbound Policy is another stab at weaning Taiwan off its dependence on Chinese trade and tourism. "This is a practical strategy because we need to diversify and over the past decade we've seen high economic growth in the region," says Lee. Rising costs in China are already encouraging Taiwanese manufacturers to move to cheaper locations and relaxed visa requirements are bringing record visitors the other way.

China is handing out gifts all over Southeast Asia (including arms to the Philippines) so Taiwan has to play to its soft-power strengths. "Our policy is clear: this is not a competition with China's Belt and Road strategy and there's no way we can compete with

### Beijing has wasted no time in picking off Taiwan's diminutive list of diplomatic allies since Lee took office, reducing Taipei's official friendship group to 19 countries and the Vatican

decades," says Lee, who started in the foreign service in the 1980s just after the US, a key ally, established formal ties with the People's Republic of China. This ended the Taiwanese claim to be a government in exile, which began after defeat by Mao Zedong's communists in 1949 and a forced retreat across the Taiwan Strait. Since then China has viewed the island as a wayward province with which it will one day be reunited.

The DPP's return to power ended the previous administration's unofficial eight-year truce with China and Beijing wasted no time in picking off Taiwan's diminutive list of allies. Since Lee took office the tiny African island of São Tomé and Príncipe has swapped allegiances, quickly followed by Panama, reducing Taiwan's official friendship group to 19 countries and the Vatican. Scenting blood, China has been frustrating Taiwan's other diplomatic missions, targeting overseas trade offices in countries where it has influence and shutting Taipei out of

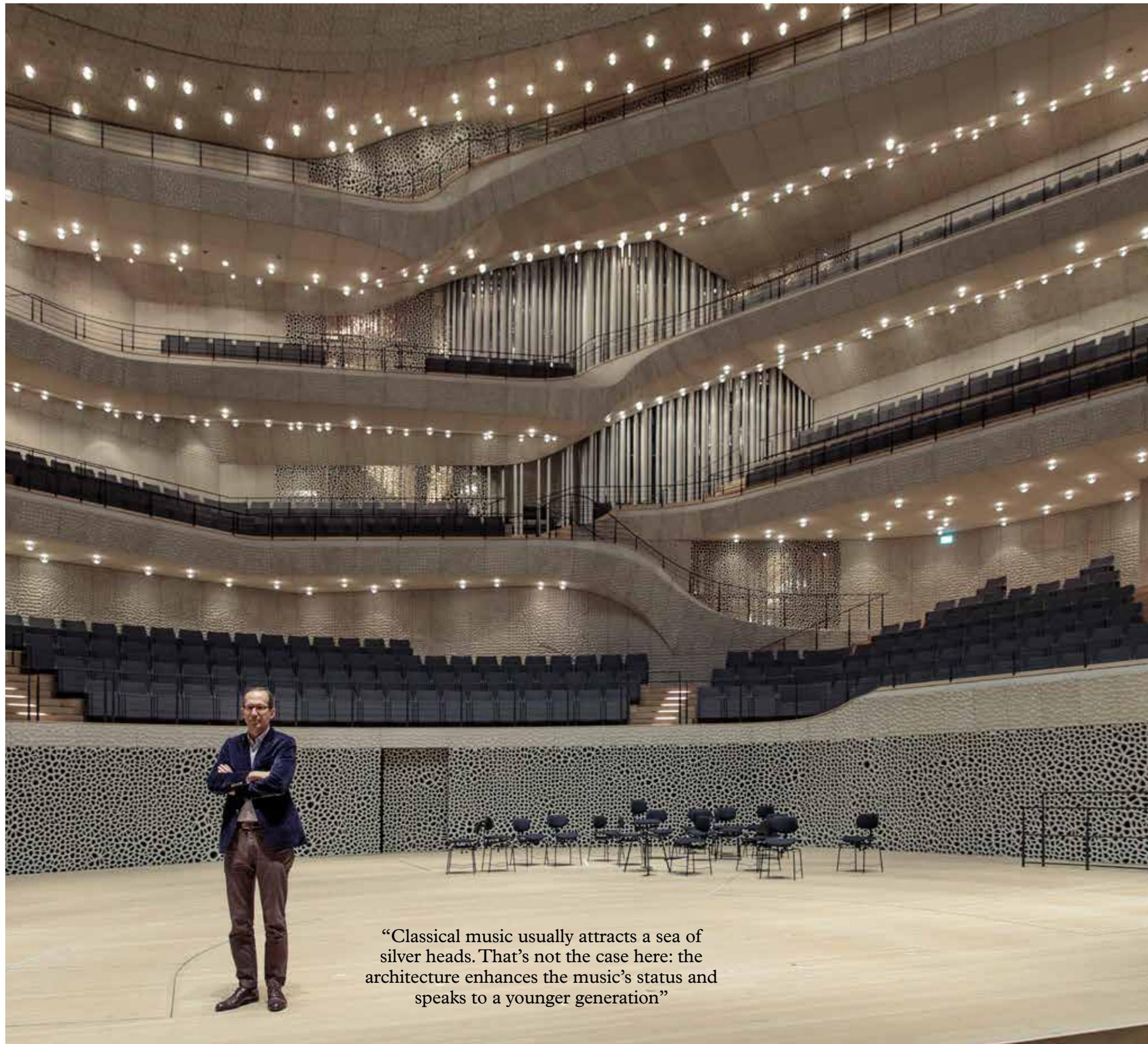
68-year-old. One year into his final posting, at Taiwan's quasi-embassy in Canberra, Lee was summoned home. His appointment, cutting across party lines, is testament to his stints in Washington and Boston, and the importance of Taiwan's special relationship with the US – the key bulwark protecting it from invasion.

"We have strong bipartisan support on Capitol Hill and US popular opinion generally supports us because we share common values," he says. Lee is yet to meet the 45th president but a Trump medallion sits on his shelf, a gift from a Republican friend in Washington. Lee is assured of US support despite fears within the Tsai government that Taiwan will be used as a bargaining chip during the US president's visit to Beijing. "China certainly will try its very best to get what they want from President Trump and his delegation," he says with a knowing smile.

As Taiwan's window on the world narrows, accepting the status quo is no longer an option. The Tsai

their investment bank. We are working with these countries on a mutually beneficial basis in areas such as modern agricultural techniques, public health, vocational training and scholarships to study in Taiwan."

The situation closer to home is not about to get any easier, however. New prime minister William Lai is the first holder of the office to publicly express support for independence. Meanwhile, China's nationalistic president Xi Jinping has begun his second term. Are relations with Beijing at an all-time low? "We are still far better compared with the Cold War era," says Lee, who was born two weeks after Mao Zedong declared the formation of the PRC in 1949. With the 70th anniversary of the split fast approaching, it helps that the foreign minister can take a long view. "At least now the basic strategy of China is peaceful unification. Very few people in Beijing are talking about force and on the diplomatic front it has been a competition all along." — CL



“Classical music usually attracts a sea of silver heads. That’s not the case here: the architecture enhances the music’s status and speaks to a younger generation”

PHOTOGRAPHER: Felix Brüggenmann

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*Christoph Lieben-Seutter*

DIRECTOR, ELBPHILHARMONIE

*The classical-music artistic director reinvigorating Hamburg’s cultural life with a long-awaited architectural marvel.*

The foundation stone for Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie had just been laid when former Wiener Konzerthaus director Christoph Lieben-Seutter arrived in 2007. The plan was that the controversial concert hall in HafenCity, by Swiss firm Herzog & De Meuron, would be completed by 2010; it ended up taking a decade to build at a cost of €789m, requiring immense patience on Lieben-Seutter’s part. Yet the wait was not in vain. With the Elbphilharmonie the German port city has acquired a new landmark, which is introducing a new generation to classical music.

“It may have taken seven years longer than expected but the Elbphilharmonie has exceeded my expectations,” says Lieben-Seutter, whose visits to the harbourfront building site during moments of despair convinced him to stick it out. “It has already changed Hamburg. It has brought the city forward in many ways; we’re increasingly acknowledged as an international metropolis.”

The managing director of London’s Barbican is one of many seeking out Lieben-Seutter for advice on planning a similarly ambitious concert venue. “Everyone who is interested in building a concert hall around the world comes to see the Elbphilharmonie,” he says, while noting how the building has set a new international standard. Not only is the hall an architectural feat – fusing an old red-brick harbour warehouse with a tent-like glass façade – but its acoustics are also world-class thanks to acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota.

Music is Lieben-Seutter’s lifelong fascination. “I grew up in a musical family,” says the Vienna native. “I used to earn pocket money by helping out at concerts by the likes of Frank Zappa. I spent it all on records.” Despite a passion for music his career took him into IT; it was only a fortunate coincidence that brought him to the Wiener

Konzerthaus in 1988, where he stayed – interrupted only by a sojourn in Zürich – until he moved to Hamburg.

Before the Elbphilharmonie, Lieben-Seutter headed Hamburg’s original classical-music venue, the Laeiszhalle. He now directs both but his focus has naturally shifted to the austerity-defying Elbphilharmonie, which has been sold out since day one. The profile of audiences attending his ambitious concert programme has shifted too. “Classical music usually attracts a sea of silver heads,” he says. “That’s not so at the Elbphilharmonie. The architecture enhances the status of classical music and speaks to a younger generation.”

Lieben-Seutter famously said “we could be playing the recorder” and still sell out the venue. Instead of resting on his laurels, however, he is pushing the artistic line-up. “High demand means we can schedule an exciting programme and add performances at short notice,” he says. Everyone wants to take the stage, from the resident NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra to classical legends and popstars. During the G20 summit, chancellor Angela Merkel invited other leaders to the venue to hear Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*.

The attention garnered by the Elbphilharmonie has also increased audiences at the Laeiszhalle, which Lieben-Seutter plans to revamp in 2018. “Before the Elbphilharmonie opened the Laeiszhalle was almost never sold out; that’s different now. The two cross-pollinate.” Whether that is a temporary effect remains to be seen but he is optimistic: “The location, the architecture, the harbour: the fascination will endure even if it’s not to the same extent.”

One year, four million visitors and more than 400 concerts later, Lieben-Seutter is glad he persisted. “I could not have lived with myself leaving the half-finished Elbphilharmonie in someone else’s hands.” — MSS

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*Bill Peduto*

MAYOR OF PITTSBURGH

*The politician recasting Rust Belt governance in a riposte to Trumpian tropes.*

Bill Peduto is doing something right. In May 2017 the mayor of Pittsburgh defeated his rivals in the Democratic primary with nearly 70 per cent of the vote. And in a fiercely blue city, no Republicans were keen to contest his re-election bid. But Peduto has also used his position to show that the Rust Belt isn't as uniformly destitute and pro-Trump as the president likes to suggest, and has proved a powerful voice on the national stage.

Pittsburgh has come a long way in recent years to position itself near the top of US city-growth charts but the mayor is keen to ensure it stays true to its roots. "Pittsburghers have embraced change in the city but they still want to make sure it remains real and authentic," he says. "It's a blue-collar town with a good heart."

The city of 300,000 is now home to Google's vast "technology development" campus on Bakery Square; Peduto rolls off a list of industry titans such as Intel and Bosch that have Pittsburgh centres and are heavily invested in how the city has cleaned itself up. Which is why he was vexed when Trump cited his allegiance to "Pittsburgh not Paris" in June as a rationale for pulling out of the climate accord. Peduto denounced the president's move, saying "he's not representing us at all". Protecting the environment has enhanced not hurt Pittsburgh, he says, moving it on from the days when the air was so thick with industrial pollution that street lights stayed lit around the clock.

He wants Pittsburgh to be an example to "21st-century cities throughout the world" and says the city will run entirely on renewable energy by 2035. He's also been vocal on sanctuary cities and human rights. "There comes a critical time no matter what your job is – elected official or not – when you have to speak out if you feel the rights of others are being taken away." — EJS



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*Ricardo Salinas*

FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN,  
GRUPO SALINAS

*The Mexican entrepreneur looking beyond Nafta.*

The earliest manifestation of Ricardo Salinas's entrepreneurial acuity came when he was 10 years old. "I was in my family home very close to here and this big swarm of honey bees showed up," he says. With the assistance of a "crazy uncle" he managed to catch the insects and build makeshift hives for them on the roof of his Mexico City house. "Some months later we had a lot of honey and I sold it door-to-door. It was fun and very interesting."

Today he is the head of Grupo Salinas, a conglomerate that includes appliance retailer Elektra, a bank, Spanish-language broadcaster TV Azteca – with subsidiaries in the US and across Latin America – and Italika, a motorcycle manufacturer. We meet him in his office at TV Azteca, in the Tlalpan district. The wood-paneled room is filled with curios and intriguing decorations, from paintings by 20th-century Mexican artist Doctor Atl to a chunk of meteorite that's more than four billion years old. "I'm a big fan of geology," he says, admiring the football-sized piece of jet-black rock. "It puts you in perspective. We're nothing, just a speck of dust in time."

In this moment Salinas appears pensive, philosophical and eccentric. Yet his success owes much more to decisiveness, rigour and a willingness to take risks and seize opportunities as they arise. It's this approach that has enabled him to transform Elektra – founded by his grandfather in the 1950s as a manufacturer of furniture, TV sets and radios – into what is today the cornerstone of one of Mexico's largest business empires.

Yet Salinas's debut with the family firm was far from auspicious. He returned from working in the US as the 1982 economic crisis hit and Elektra's debts were spiralling. "We had borrowed in dollars to finance the accounts receivable in pesos; that was a bad idea," he says. "When devaluation came, the exchange rate went from 25 pesos to the dollar to 400. We had to file for bankruptcy." He was initially



PHOTOGRAPHERS: Ros Mantle, Lindsay Latchner

drafted in by his father to manage sales and then, in 1987, to run the whole company. "That period from 1983 to 1987: it felt like 40 years, not four. It was so challenging."

Under Salinas's guidance, and partly thanks to the liberalisation of the Mexican economy, the company got back on its feet. "Mexico started to open itself up to imports," he says. Salinas began to source parts – then whole TV sets and radios – from South Korea and sell them in his shops under the Elektra banner.

"My father and grandfather saw themselves as manufacturers," he says. "I said, 'No, we're really in the store business.' I had to convince them to close down the factory. That was a traumatic decision because it cut at the core of what we had started off doing: building radios and TVs."

Salinas owes much of his success to globalisation. So how does he feel now that US president Donald Trump has threatened to walk away from the North American Free Trade

**"Regardless of what this maniac in the US does, we cannot control that. It's not in our hands. What we can control as Mexicans is how we respond to that maniac"**

Agreement (Nafta)? "Regardless of what this maniac in the US does, we cannot control that," he says. "It's not in our hands. What we can control as Mexicans is our response to that maniac. And the response should be to open up our country even more. The risk is that we go into a tit-for-tat exchange where, because they closed the market for our products, we close the market for their products. That's a double shooting in the foot."

A trade war, he says, would also impact the Mexican consumer. "Mexico used to be very modest: low-income, low-education and a lack of opportunities. Over the past 30 years we have seen a tremendous increase in quality of life. So it's worrisome to see in some countries, like the US, the rise

of protectionism, which means you as a consumer cannot buy what you want. It's bad news for consumers."

The deadline for renegotiating Nafta has been extended into 2018 but a former Mexican ambassador to China has said that "psychologically, Mexico has already accepted that Nafta is coming to an end". For Salinas it's an opportunity for his country to look beyond the US for growth markets – and maybe even a chance to show its neighbour how much it has come to depend on Mexican goods. "Since they don't want our stuff we should send our avocados to Europe," he says, with a mischievous smile. "It seems guacamole is very powerful all over the world. So Americans won't have their guacamole at the Super Bowl." — MAL

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Patricia Urquiola

DESIGNER

*The architect envisioning the future of everyday objects and the industries that make them.*

Sitting in her Milan office, Patricia Urquiola speaks at a steady clip,

bathtubs for Agape, a luxury kitchen for Boffi and a collection of inventive seating for Moroso, one of which has found its way into the permanent collection at Moma in New York. Her style is both poetic and pragmatic, nurtured under the tutelage of design greats Achille Castiglioni and Vico Magistretti, the latter of which she met while working on new-product development at Italian furniture brand De Padova. Since 2001 Urquiola has operated her own studio. In 2015 she was made art director of

more, not only serving as a light but also as a projector to screen a film on the wall. For Cassina I recently did an installation that reimagines the home of the future where the architectural historian Beatriz Colomina looks at how the bedroom has become more central as people not only sleep but use technology in their beds. Furniture will need to adapt to this.

**M: Do you think it is healthy for design to operate in a seasonable way like fashion, with a calendar of tradeshow each year?**

**PU:** When I go to the Venice Biennale I think to myself that this is the way to do it: present a collection every two years instead of annually at Salone del Mobile. The market puts this idea in our minds and we all suffer a bit. It would be better to introduce a product one year and then have a year to work with the sales team and others to help integrate that piece into a brand's collection. For me, that would be paradise.

“A lamp may soon do more, serving not just as a light but as a projector to screen a film”

**M: Sustainability is a big issue these days. How do you address this in your work?**

**PU:** The way companies speak with designers has changed. When I was young they'd ask me for a drawing or prototype and when it was done they'd say: “Don't worry Patricia, we'll take it from here.” Today companies are interested in the whole process.

**M: How can Italy remain a hub of furniture-making?**

**PU:** The key is to create a new typology of craftsman. I like the German model of design schools, where there is a balance between cultural fundamentals and the design process, the prototyping skills with technologies both traditional and digital. We also need to communicate that for every designer position there are many more positions inside design companies. In every industry a designer can be helpful: eliminating borders and limits, uniting departments and making everyone a part of the design process.



switching from Italian to English to Spanish while discussing a trip to Silicon Valley to meet with technology firms. She gives off a restless energy, her mind constantly churning over new ideas. Yet the Spanish-born architect is most comfortable communicating in the language of design, where she uses colour and rethinks forms and fabrics with playful enthusiasm.

Her output as a designer is remarkable, ranging from boutique interiors for brands such as Santoni and Panerai to products that include

Cassina, where her role is to reinvigorate the 90-year-old furniture brand and its impressive archive of pieces, designed by the likes of Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright. — IC

**MONOCLE: How do you see the furniture industry changing?**

**PATRICIA URQUIOLA:** The idea of property is changing, not only houses but also cars and bicycles – even objects as people share more. Also, just as our phones have become smarter with more functions, a lamp may soon do