



Opera in Vienna

Wagner, Strauss & Strauss

20–25 April 2023 (MJ 696)

6 days • £3,290

Lecturer: Dr John Allison

Salome (R. Strauss), *Lohengrin* (Wagner), *Der fliegende Holländer* (Wagner), *Die Fledermaus* (J. Strauss II).

Productions of the highest quality in both the Staatsoper and Volksoper.

Based at a venerable and very comfortable five-star hotel perfectly located beside the Staatsoper.

Not content with being the most important city in the history of western music, Vienna continues to nurture an exceptionally active cultural life of a high level of excellence. Music and opera are cherished (and paid for) by government and citizens perhaps more than anywhere else in the world.

Vienna is notoriously wedded to tradition, but the Staatsoper's productions are now more likely than ever before to reflect international currents in stage direction. As ever, stagecraft, stage design and dramatic portrayal are of the highest order, and the house continues to attract the world's finest singers and conductors. And of course it enjoys the supreme skills and sumptuous sound of the Vienna Philharmonic, the orchestra in residence. Highly sophisticated audiences and critics give no quarter to complacency or laziness; opera at the Staatsoper is a fairly safe bet. The Volksoper, one of the city's other great institutions and the spiritual home of operetta (though it stages a wide repertoire), has a new artistic director this season, and is once again an exciting venue.

We see two Wagner operas and one each by the Strausses Johann and Richard, spanning a crucial six decades in the history of musical Romanticism. Just as *Der fliegende Holländer* (1843) was Wagner's third opera but his breakthrough success, so Richard Strauss's *Salome* (1905), also his third opera and an agreeable scandal at the time of its premiere, was the first of his operatic masterpieces never to have left the repertoire. As for *Die Fledermaus*, it is by far the most popular and enduring of Johann Strauss's stage works.

All will be introduced during the daily session of talks and discussions about the evening's opera. There are also guided tours on foot to a choice selection of Vienna's art and architecture and musical heritage, as well as



plenty of free time for rest, recuperation and preparation for the next performance.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 12.30pm from London Heathrow to Vienna (British Airways). Arrive at the hotel in time to settle in before dinner.

Day 2. A talk on the music is followed by a visit to the Hofburg, the sprawling Habsburg palace where we see inter alia the splendid library hall and the imperial apartments. Free afternoon. Evening opera at the Volksoper: *Der fliegende Holländer* (Wagner), Aron Stiehl (stage direction), Frank Philipp Schließmann (set design), Franziska Jacobsen (costume design), Holger Kristen (choir director). Further cast to be announced.

Day 3. The daily talk precedes a visit to the Kunsthistorisches Museum, one of the world's greatest art galleries. Free time in the afternoon. Evening operetta at the Volksoper: *Die Fledermaus* (J. Strauss II), Carsten Süß (production), Pantelis Dessyllas (set design),

Doris Engl (costume design), Lili Clemente, Susanne Kirnbauer (choreography). Further cast to be announced.

Day 4. The daily talk is followed by a morning walk through the centre of the inner city includes the Stephansdom, the great Gothic cathedral. After lunch there is free time followed by an evening opera at the Staatsoper: *Lohengrin* (Wagner), Omer Meir Wellber (musical direction), Andreas Homoki (production), Tareq Nazmi (Heinrich der Vogler), Piotr Beczala (Lohengrin), Camilla Nylund (Elsa of Brabant), Tomasz Konieczny (Friedrich of Telramund), Nina Stemme (Ortrud), Clemens Unterreiner (The King's Herald).

Day 5. A visit to the excellent Museum of Applied Arts, especially rewarding for Secessionist (Art Nouveau) furniture and design. Free afternoon followed by an evening opera at the Staatsoper: *Salome* (R. Strauss), Philippe Jordan (musical direction), Cyril Teste (production), Jörg Schneider (Herodes), Michaela Schuster (Herodias), Malin Byström

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(Salome), Iain Paterson (Jochanaan), Hiroshi Amako (Narraboth), Isabel Signoret (Page).

Day 6. Journey to the airport. The flight to Heathrow arrives at c. 1.00pm.

Lecturer

Dr John Allison. Editor of *Opera* magazine and music critic. He was born in South Africa and completed his PhD degree while playing the piano and working as assistant organist at Cape Town cathedral. Since moving to London in 1989 he has written for publications around the world, authored two books and served on the juries of many international competitions. He co-founded the International Opera Awards in 2013. He reviews for the *Daily Telegraph* and has previously held positions as music critic on *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Times*.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,290 or £3,150 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,790 or £3,650 without flights.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 2 lunches and 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer, tour manager and local guide where required.

Accommodation. Hotel Bristol, Vienna (bristolvienna.com): 5-star hotel in a superb location on the Ringstrasse near the Staatsoper opera house, traditionally furnished and decorated. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

Music: tickets (first category) to 4 performances are included, costing c. £560. Tickets are subject to confirmation.

How strenuous? This tour involves a lot of walking in the town centre, and should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Public transport (metro or tram), is used on some occasions. Average distance by coach per day: 6 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.