



## The Ring in the Alps

Wagner in the Austrian Tyrol

22–29 July 2024 (MK 370)

£4,120 • 8 days

Lecturer: Barry Millington

Performed in its entirety in the Passionsspielhaus in Erl for the first time in over five years.

Stay in Kufstein in the Austrian state of Tyrol, a scenic town surrounded by mountains, a short drive from Erl.

Day excursions to picturesque towns and cities, including Innsbruck and Salzburg, with consistently beautiful scenery.

Talks on the operas by Barry Millington, chief music critic for London's Evening Standard and editor of *The Wagner Journal*. Walks and visits with local guides.

What could be more aesthetically pleasing and spiritually rewarding than to experience Wagner's epic Ring cycle in the tranquil setting of a verdant Tyrolean valley surrounded by breathtaking Alpine scenery? When the conductor Gustav Kuhn established the Tyrol Festival of Erl in 1997, his aim was to create musical art free from commercial influence and pressure. The parallels with Wagner's own theatre on the Green Hill at Bayreuth, less than 200 miles away, are striking.

The cognoscenti have been making the pilgrimage to Erl for several years now and reports of the new Ring initiated in 2021 under Erik Nielsen, the chief conductor of the festival, have been auspicious. The production by the former mezzo-soprano Brigitte Fassbaender tells the story in a straightforward manner but with arresting visual coups and thought-provoking theatrical ideas. The British bass-baritone Simon Bailey (Wotan/Wanderer), the American tenor Clay Hilley (Siegfried) and the German soprano Christiane Libor have all been garnering praise in their roles.

The glorious mountain setting of Erl could not provide a more fitting or atmospheric backdrop for the unfolding of Wagner's monumental saga as the gods move into Valhalla, their palatial, but ill-fated, home in the clouds.

There will be lectures on each instalment of the Ring by Barry Millington, the Wagner specialist and editor of *The Wagner Journal* and walks or excursions on most days with local guides. However, plenty of time is allowed to rest and to prepare for experiencing the greatest achievement of music drama.



Innsbruck, aquatint c. 1830.

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Fly at c. 10.45am from London Heathrow to Munich (Lufthansa). Drive to Kufstein in Austria, where all seven nights are spent. An evening lecture is followed by dinner in a local restaurant.

**Day 2. Herrenchiemsee.** Morning excursion to the German countryside northeast of Kufstein. Surrounded by a park, woodland and a great lake, Schloss Herrenchiemsee is a copy of Versailles. Early dinner in the hotel is followed by the *first opera at the Passionsspielhaus Erl: Das Rheingold*, Erik Nielsen (conductor).

**Day 3.** Morning lecture on the music, before departing for an introductory walk. The Kufstein Fortress, first mentioned in a document in 1205, was of great strategic importance in battles between Bavaria and the Tyrol. The Kufstein Heroes' Organ, the largest free-standing organ in the world, can be seen here. *Late-afternoon opera at the Passionsspielhaus Erl: Die Walküre*, Erik Nielsen (conductor).

**Day 4. Innsbruck.** All-day excursion to Innsbruck, with its spectacular natural setting and joyously picturesque historic centre. Visits

include the astonishing tomb of Emperor Maximilian (d. 1519) with 28 larger-than-life bronze statues, the 18th-century Habsburg state apartments in the Hofburg and the Baroque cathedral. Free evening.

**Day 5.** Morning lecture. The rest of the day is left free for independent exploration or relaxation. *Late-afternoon opera at the Passionsspielhaus Erl: Siegfried*, Erik Nielsen (conductor).

**Day 6. Salzburg.** The episcopal city-state once played a major role in European culture and politics, and the old town centre has scarcely changed since the days of its greatness two centuries ago. Among the places visited are the gardens and stair hall of Schloss Mirabell, churches by the greatest master of Austrian Baroque, Fischer von Erlach and the mighty cathedral, the first major Baroque building north of the Alps.

**Day 7.** Morning lecture is followed by some free time. *Final opera at the Staatsoper: Götterdämmerung*, Erik Nielsen (conductor).

**Day 8.** Fly to London Heathrow from Munich, arriving at c. 3.45pm.

The Ring in the Alps  
continued

## Lecturer

**Barry Millington.** Writer, lecturer and broadcaster specialising in Wagner. He is founder/editor of *The Wagner Journal* and author of eight books on Wagner including *The Wagner Compendium* and *Richard Wagner: The Sorcerer of Bayreuth*. He is Chief Critic for the Evening Standard. He has also acted as dramaturgical adviser at opera houses internationally.

## Practicalities

**Price, per person. Two sharing:** £4,120 or £3,860 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,370 or £4,110 without flights.

**Included:** flights (Euro Traveller) with Lufthansa (Airbus A320); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 3 dinners, with wine, as well as interval fingerfood and drinks at 3 of the performances; all admissions; tips for restaurant staff, drivers and guides; state and airport taxes; the services of the lecturer and local guides.

**Music:** tickets (second category) for 4 performances are included. Second category tickets are centrally located in the stalls. *Please note that the Passionsspielhaus Erl does not have air conditioning.*

**Accommodation:** Hotel Stadt Kufstein ([www.hotel-stadt-kufstein.at/en/](http://www.hotel-stadt-kufstein.at/en/)): a comfortable 4-star hotel located in the pedestrian area of Kufstein. Rooms are decorated in a traditional alpine style and are of a good size and standard. The bathrooms are all with walk-in showers. *The hotel does not have air conditioning.*

**How strenuous?** Quite a lot of walking is involved, some of it uphill and over roughly paved paths. It should not be undertaken by anyone who has difficulties with everyday walking and stairclimbing. There are also some long coach journeys. The coach transfer to and from the performances takes c. 20 minutes. Average distance by coach per day: 65 miles.

**Group size:** the tour will operate with between 10 and 22 participants.