



Dresden Music Festival

Art and music in the Saxon capital

27 May–2 June 2025 (ML 700)

7 days • £3,430

(including tickets to 5 performances)

Lecturer: Barry Millington

Five performances in three venues including the Wiener Symphoniker and Renaud Capuçon at the Kulturpalast.

Daily talks on the music by Barry Millington, chief music critic for London's Evening Standard.

Walks to see the fine 18th- & 19th-century architecture and outstanding art collections from an experienced local guide.

Dresden's greatness as a city of the arts was very much the creation of two electors in the 18th century: Frederick Augustus I ('the Strong', 1694-1733) and his son Frederick Augustus II. (1733-1763). Though founded at the beginning of the thirteenth century, for its first five hundred years it was a minor city of little distinction. This despite having been selected as residence in 1485 by the branch of the dukes of Saxony that gained the electorate in 1547.

Augustus the Strong's pillaging of the state treasury to feed his reckless extravagance was both symbol and to some extent the cause of his dismal record in most areas of statecraft, but his achievements as builder, patron and collector rank him among the most munificent of European rulers. Great architecture, a picture collection of legendary richness, magnificent accumulations of precious metalwork and ceramics (porcelain was manufactured here for the first time in Europe) and a glorious musical life transformed Dresden into one of the most admired and visited cities in Europe and a major destination on the Grand Tour.

If to a somewhat lesser degree, subsequent rulers of Saxony continued the tradition of cultural embellishment (and political ineptitude: they had a tiresome habit of joining the losing side). In the nineteenth century, 'the Florence on the Elbe' acquired buildings by Schinkel and Semper, and Weber and Wagner were directors of the opera house. In the twentieth century, Richard Strauss added to its illustrious musical history.

Then in February 1945 a tragically propitious set of circumstances conspired to make the air raid on Dresden the most 'successful' of Allied bombing missions. Most of the art collections had been removed to safety but 80 percent of the old centre was



Dresden, mid-19th-century lithograph.

destroyed. Under the Communist regime a few of the chief monuments were grudgingly restored, but since unification the painstaking process of rebuilding and restoration has accelerated.

The great dome of the Protestant Cathedral, the Frauenkirche, again dominates the skyline, and the Green Vault in the royal palace again displays the unequalled magnificence of the treasury. Significantly, rank and file buildings are steadily being recreated; the glory of Dresden lay as much in the lesser buildings as in the major ones. Some striking new architecture is being added, notably the all-glass car factory in the historic centre and the Foster & Partners railway station.

The *Dresdner Musikfestspiele* is generally of an appropriate standing, but 2025 is again of high musical standards. The venues, too, are varied – the Frauenkirche, a magnificent nineteenth-century opera house and the city's Bauhaus cultural complex (*Kulturpalast*) with its modern 1,800 capacity concert hall.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly in the morning from London Heathrow Airport (British Airways) to Berlin Brandenburg Airport. An evening lecture is followed by dinner.

Day 2: Dresden. Morning visit of the Residenzschloss to see the wonderful Green Vault and its content, one of the world's finest

princely treasuries, once again displayed in their original venue. There is a free afternoon followed by an evening concert at the *Kulturpalast* with Renaud Capuçon (violin), Wiener Symphoniker, Petr Popelka (conductor): Korngold, *Violin Concerto in D, Op.35*; Richard Strauss, *Suite from 'Der Rosenkavalier', Op.59*.

Day 3: Dresden. In the morning visit the Zwinger, a unique Baroque confection, a pleasure palace, arena for festivities and museum for cherished collections. See the Old Masters Gallery, one of the finest collections in Europe, particularly strong on Italian and Netherlandish painting. *Evening opera at the Semperoper: Roméo et Juliette* (Gounod): Robert Jindra (conductor), Tuuli Takala (Juliette), Liparit Avetisyan (Roméo), Georg Zeppenfeld (Frère Laurent), Danylo Matviienko (Mercutio), Michal Doron (Gertrude), Brian Michael Moore (Tybalt), Jongwoo Hong (Benvolio), Oleksandr Pushniak (Capulet), Gerrit Illenberger (Pâris), Le Duc de Vérone (Tilmann Rönnebeck), Anton Beliaev (Gregorio), Valerie Eickhoff (Stephano).

Day 4: Pillnitz, Dresden. Drive to Pillnitz, a summer palace in Chinese Rococo style, with collections of decorative art and a riverside park. After lunch take a boat trip back along the Elbe to Dresden. *Evening concert at the Kulturpalast* with Lisa Batiashvili (violin), London Symphony Orchestra, Sir Antonio Pappano (conductor): Mozart, *Overture from 'Die Zauberflöte'* and *Violin Concerto No.5 in A*,

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K.219; Berlioz, Symphonie fantastique: Épisode de la vie d'un artiste...en cinq parties, Op.14.

Day 5: Meissen, Dresden. Drive downstream to Meissen, ancient capital of Dukes of Saxony and location of the discovery of hard-paste porcelain. The largely 15th-century hilltop castle overlooking the Elbe, the Albrechtsburg, is one of the first to be more residential than defensive, and within the complex is a fine Gothic cathedral. *Evening concert at the Frauenkirche with Rolando Villazón (tenor), Laitten Compagny BERLIN, Wolfgang Katschner (conductor): 'Viaggio dell'anima', a journey of the soul with music by Claudio Monteverdi.*

Day 6: Dresden. Morning visit of the Albertinum, reopened in 2010 after extensive renovations and home to the New Masters Gallery. *Evening opera at the Semperoper: Saul (Handel): Leo Hussain (conductor), Florian Boesch (Saul), Jake Arditti (David), Jasmin Delfs (Merab), Mary Bevan (Michal), James Ley (Jonathan), Tansel Akzeybek (Abner, High Priest, Doeg), Jake Ingbar (Witch of Endor).*

Day 7. Fly from Berlin Brandenburg to London Heathrow airport, arriving in the afternoon.

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: £3,660 or £3,460 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,080 or £3,880 without flights.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 2 lunches and 3 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Music: tickets (top category) for 5 performances are included costing c. £420. These will be confirmed in October 2024.

Accommodation. Steigenberger Hotel de Saxe, Dresden (hrewards.com/de/steigenberger-hotel-de-saxe-dresden): 4-star hotel in the heart of the Old Town, 10 minutes' walk from the Semperoper and the Zwinger. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? Vehicular access is restricted in the city centre. Participants are expected to walk to the concert venues and there is a substantial amount of walking and standing around in art galleries and museums. Average distance by coach per day: 45 miles (predominantly on the first and last days of the tour).

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.