



Hamburg: Opera & 'Elphi'

Music, art and architecture in Germany's second city

28 February–4 March 2025 (ML 631)

5 days • £2,960

(including tickets to 3 performances)

Lecturer: Dr John Allison

The Hamburg Philharmonic performs Ravel, Eötvös, and Rachmaninoff at the spectacular Elbphilharmonie.

Also included are *The Tales of Hoffmann* (Offenbach) and *Mitridate, re di Ponto* (Mozart) at the Staatsoper Hamburg.

Based at a historic hotel, beautifully situated on the Außenalster lake.

Hamburg is a city of industry, of exchange, a Hanseatic powerhouse. Yet its position as a gateway between Germany and the rest of the world, alongside its financial success and prestige throughout much of German history, has made it a creative city, home to a rich musical and artistic heritage.

The first public opera house in Germany, the *Oper am Gänsemarkt*, was established in Hamburg in 1678. While the current theatre of the Staatsoper Hamburg reopened in 1955 after its destruction in 1943, the sense of continuing a long-standing tradition still remains.

Enter, then, the Elbphilharmonie – or 'Elphi' – an architectural, cultural and civic masterpiece by Herzog & de Meuron that dominates, and lifts, the city's harbour and its image. Yes, it ran over budget and over schedule, but the fact remains that Hamburg believed in it and built it. The acoustic is almost 'digital' in its clarity and tickets are hard to come by.

This 21st-century hall is where we hear the most modern programme of the tour, a combination of Ravel, Rachmaninoff and the Hungarian composer Péter Eötvös. *Daphnis et Chloé* was written for Diaghilev's Ballet Russes but found success on the concert stage; Eötvös, once a drummer himself, 'teaches the drums to speak', with rhythmic spoken text gradually transferring to the instruments in *Speaking Drums*; and we return to the dance theme with Rachmaninoff's final major work, *Symphonic Dances* No.45.

At the Staatsoper, superstar conductors Kent Nagano and Adam Fischer take on Jungian fantasy *The Tales of Hoffmann* and 14-year-old Mozart's *Mitridate, re di Ponto* respectively.

Our tour also includes a daily session of talks and discussions about the evening's performance. There are guided walks and visits



Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, courtesy of Hamburg Tourism. Photo ©Malte Flechner.

to a further selection of Hamburg's architecture and sites of musical heritage, but also plenty of free time for rest and preparation for the next event.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at midday from London Heathrow to Hamburg (British Airways). Arrive at the hotel in time to settle in before dinner.

Day 2. The morning talk is followed by a walk through the Speicherstadt, the old warehouse district and centre of Hamburg's industrial past. Continue to Hafencity, the commercial and cultural development surrounding the harbour by the river Elbe. Lunch, then some free time. *Opera at the Staatsoper: The Tales of Hoffmann* (Offenbach): Kent Nagano (conductor), Daniele Finzi Pasca (director), Bernard Richter (Hoffman), Elbenita Kajtazi (Antonia, Stella), Caroline Wettergreen (Olympia), Alessandra Di Giorgio (Giulietta, Stella), Angela Brower (La Muse, Nicklausse), Giorgi Manoshvili (Lindorf, Coppélius, Dr Miracle, Dapertutto), Andrew Dickinson (Andrès, Cochenille, Frantz, Pitichinaccio), Katja Pieweck (La Mère), Tigran Martirosian, (Maitre Luther, Crespel) Seungwoo Simon Yang

(Nathanaël), Jürgen Sacher (Spalanzani), Aaron Godfrey-Mayes (Wilhelm, Wolfram), William Desbiens (Le Capitaine des Sbirres), Nicolas Mogg (Schlémil, Hermann). Performed in French with German surtexts.

Day 3. Visit the Komponistenquartier, a charming row of small museums commemorating composers including Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Mahler. There is some free time before a late-afternoon talk and early dinner. *Opera at the Staatsoper: Mitridate, re di Ponto* (Mozart): Adam Fischer (conductor), Birgit Kajtna-Wönig (director), Robert Murray (Mitridate), Nikola Hillebrand (Aspasia), Olivia Boen (Sifare), Adriana Bignani Lesca (Farnace), Kady Evanyshyn (Ismene), Seungwoo Simon Yang (Marzio), Ida Aldrian (Arbate). Performed in Italian with German and English surtitles.

Day 4. Visit the Kunsthalle, Hamburg's largest art museum, established in 1869 with an excellent collection of Old Masters and 19th-century paintings. The afternoon is free for independent exploration; a visit to the Museum of Applied Arts is recommended. Afternoon talk and early dinner. *Concert at the Elbphilharmonie* with Thomas Guggeis (conductor), Alexej Gerassimez (percussion) and

Hamburg: Opera & 'Elphi'
continued

the Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra: Ravel, Daphnis et Chloé, Suite No.2; Eötvös, Speaking Drums, four poems for solo drums and orchestra; Rachmaninoff, Symphonic Dances, Op.45.

Day 5. The final morning is free before the journey to the airport. The flight to Heathrow arrives in the afternoon.

Lecturer

Dr John Allison. Editor of *Opera* magazine and music critic for the *Daily Telegraph*. 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, contributed chapters to several other volumes and served on the juries of many international competitions. He has also held positions as music critic on the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *The Times*.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £2,960 or £2,820 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,350 or £3,210 without flights.

Included: air travel (economy class) on scheduled British Airways flights (Airbus A319); travel by private coach throughout; breakfasts, 1 lunch and 3 dinners with wine; all admissions to museums and sites visited with the group; all gratuities for restaurant staff, drivers, guides; all airport and state taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Music: tickets (first category at the Elbphilharmonie; second category at the Staatsoper) for 3 performances.

Accommodation: Hotel Atlantic Hamburg (brhhh.com/atlantic-hamburg): 5-star hotel in a beautiful location on the Außenalster lake. Traditionally furnished and decorated, with a long nautical history. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? There is quite a lot of walking on this tour, and a reasonable amount of standing around in museums. Average distance by coach per day: 5 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.