



Music in Berlin at New Year

Art, architecture & music in the German capital

28 December 2023–3 January 2024

(MJ 155)

7 days • £4,320

(including tickets to 4 performances)

Lecturer: Tom Abbott

Deutsche Oper Berlin: *La Traviata* (Verdi) and *Hansel and Gretel* (Humperdinck).

Philharmonie: Overture and Venusberg from *Tannhäuser* and *Die Walküre: Act I* (Wagner), Kirill Petrenko (conductor).

Staatsoper Unter den Linden: *Der Rosenkavalier* (Strauss).

Numerous excellent collections of fine and decorative arts and first-rate architecture. Day excursions to Charlottenburg and Potsdam.

Elegant 5-star hotel close to Unter den Linden.

Berlin possesses some of the finest art galleries and museums in the world and offers the highest standards of music and opera performance. It is endowed with a range of historic architecture and is also the site of Europe's greatest concentration of first-rate contemporary architecture.

Once again a national capital, it is also one of the most exciting cities on the Continent, recent and rapid changes pushing through a transformation without peacetime parallel.

One of the grandest capitals in Europe for the first forty years of the last century, it then suffered appallingly from aerial bombardment and Soviet artillery. For the next forty years it was cruelly divided into two parts and became the focus of Cold War antagonism, a bizarre confrontation between an enclave of western libertarianism and hard-line Communism.

Since the Wall was breached in 1989 the city has been transformed beyond recognition. From being a largely charmless urban expanse still bearing the scars of war, it has become a vibrant, liveable city, the very model of a modern major metropolis. The two halves have been knitted together and cleaning and repair have revealed the patrimony of historic architecture to be among the finest in Central Europe.

The art collections, formerly split, dispersed and often housed in temporary premises, are now coming together in magnificently restored or newly-built galleries. Berlin possesses international art and antiquities of the highest importance, as well as incomparable collections



Berlin, Staatsoper, copper engraving c. 1750.

of German art. The number and variety of museums and the quality of their holdings make Berlin among the world's most desired destinations for art lovers.

With three major opera houses and several orchestras, Berlin is a city where truly outstanding performances can be virtually guaranteed.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly in the morning from London Heathrow to Berlin (British Airways). Take an orientation tour by coach: Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, Pariser Platz and Unter den Linden. Visit the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church.

Day 2. A morning walk passes some fine 18th-century buildings including the arsenal, opera house, royal palaces and cathedrals, en route to the 'Museums Island', a group of major museum buildings. Visit the Alte Nationalgalerie which superbly displays European painting of the 19th century including the finest collection of German Romantics. After lunch visit the Bode Museum, home to a splendid, comprehensive collection of European sculpture, including works by Riemenschneider, as well as Byzantine art. Evening performance of *La Traviata* (Verdi) at the Deutsche Oper Berlin with Dominic Limburg (conductor), Götz Friedrich (director), Orchestra

and Choir of the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Aida Garifullina (Violetta Valéry), Pene Pati (Alfredo Germont), Thomas Lehman (Giorgio Germont), Arianna Manganello (Flora Bervoix), Lexi Hutton (Annina), Ya-Chung Huang (Gaston), Michael Bachtadze (Baron Douphol), Dean Murphy (Marquis D'Obigny), Gerard Ferreras (Doktor Grenvil), Chance Jonas-O'Toole (Giuseppe).

Day 3. Drive to Schloss Charlottenburg, the earliest major building in Berlin, an outstanding summer palace built with a Baroque core and Rococo wings, fine interiors, paintings by Watteau, extensive gardens, pavilions and a mausoleum. Evening performance of *Hansel and Gretel* (Humperdinck) at the Deutsche Oper Berlin with Dominic Limburg (conductor), Andreas Homoki (director), Orchestra and Children's Choir of the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Joel Allison (Peter, the broom-maker), Maria Motolygina (Gertrud), Karis Tucker (Hänsel), Lexi Hutton (Gretel), Patrick Cook (Witch), Sua Jo (Sandman/Dewman).

Day 4, New Year's Eve. Excursion to Potsdam which in the 18th century developed into Brandenburg-Prussia's second capital and acquired fine buildings, parks and gardens. Sanssouci, created as a retreat from the affairs of state by Frederick the Great, is among the finest 18th-century complexes of gardens,

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continued

palaces and pavilions to be found anywhere. Visit his single-storey palace atop terraces of fruit trees, the Chinese Tea House and the orangery, and see the city centre with its Dutch Quarter and Neo-Classical buildings. Return to Berlin for an *early evening performance at the Philharmonie: Overture and Der Venusberg from Tannhäuser, and Die Walküre: Act I (Wagner) with Kirill Petrenko (conductor), Vida Miknevičiūtė (soprano), Jonas Kaufmann (tenor), Georg Zeppenfeld (bass).*

Day 5, New Year's Day. Free morning before a visit to the Jewish Museum in the celebrated and expressive building by Daniel Libeskind.

Day 6. Return to Museums Island to visit the Neues Museum, the stunning new home to the Egyptian Museum (among others), restored and recreated by British architect David Chipperfield. Visit also the Humboldt Forum, a cosmopolitan museum about history, art, and culture. *Early evening concert at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden: Der Rosenkavalier (Strauss) with Joana Mallwitz (conductor), André Heller (director), Staatskapelle Berlin and Choir of the Staatsoper, Julia Kleiter (The Marschallin Princess Werdenberg), Günther Groissböck (Baron Ochs auf Lerchenau), Marina Prudenskaya (Octavian), Roman Trekel (Herr von Faninal), Golda Schultz (Sophie), Anna Samuil (Marianne Leitmetzerin), Karl-Michael Ebner (Valzacchi), Katharina Kammerloher (Annina).*

Day 7. Visit the Gemäldegalerie, one of Europe's major collections of Old Masters. Potsdamer Platz, for 50 years an even greater expanse of wasteland, became in the 1990s Europe's greatest building project with an array of international architects participating. Lunch in the rooftop restaurant in the Reichstag, with the opportunity (without queuing) to walk around Foster's dome. Fly from Berlin Brandenburg, arriving at London Heathrow in

the late afternoon.

Lecturer

Tom Abbott. Specialist in architectural history from the Baroque to the 20th century with a wide knowledge of the performing arts. He graduated in Psychology and Art History from Carleton College, Minnesota and studied at the Louvre School of Art History in Paris. Since 1987 he has lived in Berlin and has organised and led many academic tours in Germany. Tom has a particular interest in the German and American architectural and artistic modern including the Bauhaus and Expressionism.

Practicalities

Prices, per person. Two sharing: £4,320 or £3,930 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £5,060 or £4,670 without flights.

Included: air travel (economy class) on scheduled British Airways flights (aircraft: Airbus A320 and A321); private coach for the excursions and airport transfers; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 2 lunches and 3 dinners with wine, interval canapés at one performance; all admission charges; all tips for waiters, drivers; all taxes; the services of the lecturer.

Music: tickets to 4 performances are included. First category for all performances except the two at the Deutsche Oper. Tickets for these performances are second category as only the first five rows are first category at the Deutsche Oper.

Accommodation. The Regent Berlin (www.ihg.com/regent): elegant 5-star hotel decorated in Regency style, close to Unter den Linden. Rooms are of a good size and excellent standard.

How strenuous? There is quite a lot of walking and standing around in art galleries. Average distance by coach per day: 12 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.