



Opera in Munich & Bregenz

Debussy, Wagner, Puccini, Weber

21–27 July 2024 (MK 368)

7 days • £4,820

(including tickets to 4 performances)

Lecturer: Patrick Bade

Four opera productions – *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Parsifal*, *Tosca* (Munich) and *Der Freischütz* (Bregenz).

Top conductors (Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Ádám Fischer) and star soloists (Sophie Koch, Ben Bliss, Christian Gerhaher, Gerald Finley, Jonas Kaufmann, among many more).

The Nationaltheater in Munich is one of the world's most dependable houses, and the Prinzregententheater has Jugendstil charm.

The city is the most enjoyable in Germany, and walks and visits are led by the lecturer who is an art historian as well as opera historian.

Bregenz offers the most spectacular productions of any open-air festival, with a lakeside setting to match.

Munich is perhaps the most attractive of Germany's cities, and has always been a major centre for opera. The Nationaltheater is at the moment enjoying a reputation as one of the finest houses in Europe: 'La Scala may be grander...., Vienna more stately, the Metropolitan more prestigious... but for all-round excellence in pretty well every department, Munich's Nationaltheater has the edge, both in matters of creature comforts and sheer dedication to the art'.

Opera apart, Munich is widely considered to be the most agreeable city in Germany in which to live, and rivals Berlin for wealth of art and historic architecture.

The thrilling eccentricity of the Bregenz Opera Festival is that the main stage, the Seebühne, sits on an island a few yards from the shore of one of Europe's largest lakes. From a seat in Austria, the *mise-en-scène* is framed by the vast expanse of Lake Constance from which rise hills in Germany and Switzerland as well as Austria.

Even though night gradually shrouds this backdrop, it requires performances of exceptional potency to compete with nature's spectacle. In recent years this requirement has been amply fulfilled, for Bregenz has developed a tradition of immensely exciting productions unconstrained by the conventional limitations of walls and roof. Musical quality is not



Munich, opera house, wood engraving c. 1880.

sacrificed to visual effects, however. Indeed Bregenz has been the summer venue of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra since 1946.

The investment necessitates that each production runs for two successive seasons. The offering for 2023 will be the first year of *Der Freischütz*.

Itinerary

Day 1: London to Munich. Fly at c. 12.45pm from London Heathrow to Munich (British Airways). Tour the city by coach to see much of the best of Munich's historic architecture: Neo-Classical Königsplatz, historicist Ludwigstrasse, Jugendstil houses and the modern Gasteig Arts Centre. The first of four nights in Munich.

Day 2: Munich. After the daily talk, there is a walk to see more of the city's treasures, including the vast Gothic cathedral and the Asamkirche, a Baroque masterpiece. Free time in the afternoon. At the Prinzregententheater: *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Debussy), Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor), Jetske Mijnsen (production), Franz-Josef Selig (Arkel), Sophie Koch (Geneviève), Ben Bliss (Pelléas), Christian Gerhaher (Golaud), Sabine Devieille (Mélisande), Soloists Tölzer Knabenchor (Yniold).

Day 3: Munich. Drive out to Nymphenburg, summer retreat of the ruling Wittelsbachs. Set in an extensive park, there is a spreading Baroque palace and several delightful garden pavilions, the apogee of Rococo. Free time in the afternoon, opportunity to visit more of Munich's many outstanding art collections. At the Nationaltheater: *Parsifal* (Wagner), with Adam Fischer (conductor), Pierre Audi (production), Gerald Finley (Amfortas), Bálint Szabó (Titirel), Tareq Nazmi (Gurnemanz), Clay Hilley (Parsifal), Jochen Schmeckenbecher (Klingsor), Nina Stemme (Kundry).

Day 4: Munich. In the morning a second walking tour which culminates in a visit to the Alte Pinakothek, one of the world's greatest Old Master galleries. The afternoon is again free, though a visit to the Residenz with its exquisite Rococo Theatre by Cuvillies is recommended. At the Nationaltheater: *Tosca* (Puccini), with Andrea Battistoni (conductor), Kornél Mundruczó (production), Anja Harteros (Floria Tosca), Jonas Kaufmann (Mario Cavaradossi), Ludovic Tézier (Baron Scarpia), Milan Siljanov (Cesare Angelotti), Martin Snell (A Sacristan), Tansel Akzeybek (Spoletta), Christian Rieger (Sciarrone).

Day 5: Ottobeuren, Bregenz. Leave Munich and journey by coach through the lovely

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continued

landscape of Upper Bavaria, skirting the Alpine foothills before entering the Vorarlberg region of Austria. Break the journey at the little town of Ottobeuren to see the magnificent monastery, whose church is one of the greatest achievements of German Baroque. Arrive in Lochau, (4 km from the centre of Bregenz) where two nights are spent.

Day 6: Bregenz. Strung out along the edge of Lake Constance, Bregenz is the attractive little capital of the Vorarlberg, the western-most province of Austria. A guided walking tour in the morning begins in the historic Upper Town and then descends to the lake and the museum. The afternoon is free. At the Seebühne, the open-air opera house with a stage on the lake and with seats from which hills in three countries can be seen: *Der Freischütz* (Weber), with Enrique Mazzola, Erina Yashima (musical direction), Philipp Stölzl (stage director), Wired Aerial Theatre, Bregenzer Festspiele Extras, Bregenzer Festspiele Choir, Prague Philharmonic Choir, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, cast to be confirmed.

Day 7: Zurich to London. Drive to Zurich and fly to Heathrow, arriving at c. 4.15pm.

Lecturer

Patrick Bade. Historian, writer and broadcaster. He studied at UCL and the Courtauld and was senior lecturer at Christies Education for many years. He has worked for the Art Fund, Royal Opera House, National Gallery, V&A. He has published on 19th- and early 20th-century painting and on historical vocal recordings. His latest book is *Music Wars: 1937–1945*.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £4,820 or £4,550 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £5,610 or £5,340 without flights.

Included: air travel (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus A319); accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 5 dinners with wine; private coach for the excursions and transfers; admissions; tips for waiters, drivers and guides; all state and airport taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Music: tickets (top category) for 4 operas are included. The tickets will be confirmed in late autumn 2023. In the event of bad weather in Bregenz, the performance will take place indoors in a nearby theatre.

Accommodation. Platzl Hotel, Munich (platzl.de): 4-star hotel located in the heart of the old city, a 5-minute walk from the opera house. **See Hotel am Kaiserstrand, Lochau** (seehotel-kaiserstrand.com): spacious 4-star hotel on the shores of Lake Constance, 4 km from the centre of Bregenz, and a short boat journey to the Festival stage. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*

How strenuous? The tour involves a lot of walking in the town centres where vehicular access is restricted, and should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Average distance by coach per day: 37 miles, primarily on 3 days of the tour.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.