



The Ring in Berlin

Wagner in the German capital

27 May–3 June 2024 (MK 298)

£5,540 • 8 days

Lecturer: Barry Millington

Wagner's monumental Ring of the Nibelung cycle anatomises the shortcomings of materialistic society – mankind's greed, its lust for political power, its despoliation of the environment – and offers a powerful vision of a better future.

Visits on most days to study the art, architecture and history of Berlin.

First category tickets for all four performances.

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

Described as one of the enduring pinnacles of Western civilisation, to be spoken of in the same breath as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, Chartres Cathedral and Hamlet, Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* is a masterpiece that should be savoured at least once in a lifetime. Whether you are a Ring virgin or witness to dozens of performances, you are unlikely to be disappointed by the Deutsche Oper Berlin production that brings together a stellar cast, a vastly experienced conductor and one of the most innovative directors on the scene today. When the production was first seen in 2021, the American tenor Clay Hilley, singing the role of Siegfried, was acclaimed as "the real thing": tireless, clarion-toned, yet always musical. He returns for this cycle alongside such distinguished names as Ricarda Merbeth and Elisabeth Teige, sharing the role of Brünnhilde, and Iain Paterson and Derek Welton as Wotan/Wanderer. The Deutsche Oper's General Music Director, Sir Donald Runnicles, brings the expertise acquired over the course of his illustrious career to bear on Wagner's stupendous score.

The production by Stefan Herheim was eagerly awaited (with false starts caused by the Covid pandemic) and triumphantly fulfilled expectations. As with other of his stagings it is characterised both by Herheim's engagement with the composer as progenitor of the music and by his unrivalled flair for exploiting theatre's capacity for illusion and visual effect. Herheim's unparalleled stagecraft is deployed to elicit the ever-astonishing riches of both text and music, gripping the viewer with the potency of Wagner's drama.



Lithograph, 1902.

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 a Berlin-based guide. However, plenty of time is allowed to rest and to prepare for experiencing the greatest achievement of music drama.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 11.00am from London Heathrow to Berlin (British Airways).

Day 2. A morning lecture on the music before an introductory morning walk, finishing at the 'Museums Island', a group of major museum buildings. Explore the Alte Nationalgalerie, which superbly displays European painting of the 19th century and German Romantics.

Evening performance at the Deutsche Oper: Das Rheingold: Sir Donald Runnicles (conductor), Stefan Herheim (director), Iain Paterson (Wotan), Thomas Lehman (Donner), Attilio Glaser (Froh), Albert Pesendorfer (Fasolt), Tobias Kehrer (Fafner), Thomas Blondelle (Loge), Jordan Shanahan (Alberich), Ya-Chung Huang (Mime), Annika Schlicht (Fricka), Flurina Stucki (Freia), Lauren Decker (Erda),

Sua Jo (Woglinde), Irene Roberts (Wellgunde), Karis Tucker (Flosshilde).

Day 3. Morning lecture, before departing for a walk that takes in Unter den Linden, Friedrichstraße and the Brandenburg Gate. Finish at the Reichstag dome; lunch at the roofgarden restaurant, Käfer. *Afternoon performance at the Deutsche Oper: Die Walküre:* Derek Welton (Wotan), Tobias Kehrer (Hunding), Michael König (Siegmund), Annika Schlicht (Fricka), Ricarda Merbeth (Brünnhilde), Elisabeth Teige (Sieglinde), Felicia Moore (Gerhilde), Flurina Stucki (Helmwige), Elissa Pfaender (Waltraute), Lauren Decker (Schwertleite), Maria Motolygina (Ortlinde), Arianna Manganello (Siegrune), Nicole Piccolomini (Grimgerde), Karis Tucker (Rossweisse).

Day 4. Visit Schloss Charlottenburg, the earliest major building in Berlin, an outstanding Baroque and Rococo summer palace with fine interiors, paintings (Watteau especially) and extensive gardens. Optional visit to the Berggruen Collection of Picasso and classic modern art. Free evening, or *Optional Concert at the Philharmonie Berlin:* Works by

The Ring in Berlin
continued

Jörg Widmann and Anton Bruckner: *Daniel Barenboim (conductor), Stefan Dohr (horn), Berliner Philharmoniker.*

Day 5. Morning lecture. See Potsdamer Platz, Europe's greatest building project in the 1990s, with several buildings by star architects. Continue to the nearby 'Kulturforum', home to the Gemäldegalerie, one of Europe's major collections of Old Masters, and the Museum of Musical Instruments. *Afternoon performance at the Deutsche Oper: Siegfried: Clay Hilley (Siegfried), Ya-Chung Huang (Mime), Iain Paterson (the Wanderer), Tobias Kehrer (Fafner), Lindsay Ammann (Erda), Elisabeth Teige (Brünnhilde), Jordan Shanahan (Alberich).*

Day 6. Morning walk focusing on 20th century Berlin, followed by a visit to Libeskind's extraordinary Jewish Museum. Free evening.

Day 7. Morning lecture. Drive to Hans Scharoun's original and organic Philharmonie (concert hall) for a guided tour. The rest of the day is left free for independent exploration or relaxation. *Final performance at the Deutsche Oper: Götterdämmerung: Clay Hilley (Siegfried), Thomas Lehman (Gunther), Jordan Shanahan (Alberich), Albert Pesendorfer (Hagen), Ricarda Merbeth (Brünnhilde), Felicia Moore (Gutrune), Lindsay Ammann (Flosshilde), Annika Schlicht (Waltraute), Sua Jo (Woglinde), Karis Tucker (Wellgunde).*

Day 8. Fly to London Heathrow from Berlin, arriving at c. 1.45pm.

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: £5,540 or £5,210 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £6,420 or £6,090 without flights.

Included: flights (economy) with British Airways; travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 2 lunches and 2 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 Berlin guides.

Music: tickets (first category) for 4 performances are included. Tickets for the optional concert are subject to availability, on request.

Accommodation: the Regent Berlin (theregentberlin.de): an elegant hotel decorated in Regency style. Rooms are of a good size and excellent standard. Located within walking distance of the major museums and a 15-minute drive from the opera house.

How strenuous? There is quite a lot of walking and standing around in art galleries and museums. Average distance by coach per day: 15 miles.

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