



simply Munich

Destination Information



Classical – Jazz – Avant-garde Munich – The Music Metropolis

(29 July 2020) Extraordinary soloists from all over the world are an everyday event in Munich. Musical luxury is a very familiar and much-loved feature of the state capital. A wide range of orchestras, including some of the best in the world, put on captivating programmes.

Munich and music: a close relationship

Orlando di Lasso, one of the most important composers of the High Renaissance period spent decades in Munich, very successfully leading the Hofkapelle orchestra. Extraordinary operas by Richard Wagner were premiered here (“Tristan and Isolde” in 1865, and “Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg” in 1868). Richard Strauss was born in Munich. The first time Mozart’s “Idomeneo” stepped into the limelight was here in the state capital in 1781. Mozart also came close to becoming a Munich resident – he applied for a position as director of the Hofkapelle orchestra, but no vacancy arose for him. Mozart’s efforts to secure a position on the Isar river makes it clear that the Munich cobblestones were highly desirable to extraordinary musicians, even 200 years ago.

Three stars of the baton in neighbourly competition

Munich is home to three world-class orchestras with internationally renowned conductors at the top of their field. The **Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen**

Rundfunks (Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra) with Chief Conductor Mariss Jansons who died in January 2019, the **Münchner Philharmoniker** (Munich Philharmonic) with Valerie Gergiev, also the Chief Conductor, and the **Bayerische Staatsorchester** (Bavarian State Orchestra) from the season 2021/2022 with Vladimir Jurowski as General Music Director: these three orchestras are the flagships of classical musical life in Munich. In addition to its current status as a globally renowned opera orchestra, the Bayerische Staatsorchester also has a far-reaching history: Its roots reach back to the 16th century; in 1563, composer Orlando di Lasso replaced Albert V, Duke of Bavaria, as director of the Hofkapelle orchestra – the predecessor to the Bayerische Staatsorchester. In 1778, the Münchner Hoforchester (Munich Court Orchestra) was put together with 33 musicians from the Mannheimer Hofkapelle (Mannheim Court Orchestra) – as Charles Theodore, Elector of Bavaria, came into his administrative inheritance in Munich. The musicians he brought with him were highly regarded throughout the world of music, and at that time were representative of an avant garde orchestra culture. Mariss Jansons, Valerie Gergiev and Vladimir Jurowski continue an impressive list of conductors who shaped important years and decades of music life in Munich. To name just a few: Hans von Bülow, Hermann Levi, Hans Knappertsbusch, Bruno Walter, Sir Georg Solti, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Zubin Mehta, Carlos Kleiber, Rafael Kubelik, Christian Thielemann, Kent Nagano, and not least Sergiu Celibidache, who lead the Münchener Philharmoniker to create its very own sound for 18 years, from 1979 to 1996. He was followed by James Levine. The celebrated Bayerische Staatsballett (Bavarian State Ballet) is also worth a mention, with Igor Zelensky taking over as director for the 2016/2017 season.

Kammerorchester, Münchner Symphoniker and Münchner Rundfunkorchester (Chamber Orchestra, Munich Symphony Orchestra and Munich Radio Orchestra)

Another orchestra which enjoys a leading position on the international stage is the **Münchener Kammerorchester**. The ensemble has built a striking profile since the 1990s. It sets new standards with its bold programme spanning classical and modern music. Münchener Kammerorchester has been recognised by German music

publishers on multiple occasions, for offering the best concert programme in a season. Composers such as Wolfgang Rihm, Jörg Widmann and Iannis Xenakis write the works commissioned for this orchestra.

At the start of the 2016/2017 season, Clemens Schuldt took over from Alexander Liebreich as principal conductor.

The **Münchner Symphoniker** also plays an important role in musical life in Munich. This was previously the orchestra of composer and conductor Kurt Graunke. Today, it is led by Kevin John Edusei, with Philippe Entremont and Ken-David Masur as guest conductors. “HörBar Schmelztiegel” is a new series of after-work concerts. These concerts last one hour without a break, meaning there is still opportunity to while away the rest of the evening after the concert. Being able to experience this large orchestra close-up and in an intimate environment is particularly special. The venue expressly specifies that guests should come as they are and take drinks into the hall with them!

The **Münchner Rundfunkorchester** is the second Bavarian radio orchestra, and has been under the musical leadership of Director Ivan Repušić since 2017. His work includes concert opera performances with extraordinary singers as part of the Sunday concerts, and the “Paradisi gloria” series showcasing sacred music from the 20th and 21st century, just as much part as his involvement in concerts for children and young people with supporting educational programmes, themed evenings under the banner “Mittwochs um halb acht” (“Wednesdays at half seven”) and performing music for films. Münchner Rundfunkorchester has its finger on the pulse, as it proves time and time again when it crosses symphonic borders – from jazz to video game music.

Opera paradise with potential to provoke

We know that crime author Donna Leon travelled to Munich for the opera for many years. She loves Handel and values the wide range of Handel productions at the **Bayerische Staatsoper** (Bavarian State Opera) under Sir Peter Jonas (1993 to 2006). During his incumbency, the Bayerische Staatsoper built a reputation for not only being

able to offer the brilliance of Wagner, Verdi and Mozart, but also always being able to surprise patrons. Jonas particularly cultivated baroque opera and a bright and witty style of production, with directors such as David Alden and Martin Duncan, and the musical fire of the baroque specialist Ivor Bolton. Today, Nikolaus Bachler leads the Bayerische Staatsoper, having come from Vienna's Burgtheater. As Jonas did, he prioritises high quality, working with directors such as Christoph Loy and also dares to be provocative, for example with Christian Stückl's production of "Palestrina". This opera is a composition by Hans Pfitzner – a controversial figure on account of his role in National Socialism – and was first performed in Munich in 1917. At the beginning of 2021/2022 season Serge Dorny will take over the directorship. The Bayerische Staatsoper has capacity for an audience of 2,100 and a stage comprising 2,500 square metres – making it the world's third-largest opera stage after the Opéra Bastille in Paris and the Teatr Wielki in Warsaw. In June and July each year, spectacular premieres and the most important running productions can be experienced at the Munich Opera Festival, with an all-star cast.

The **Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz** (State Theatre on Gärtnerplatz) was founded as the Actien-Volkstheater in 1865, and is one of the two major opera houses in Munich. The branches of opera, operetta, musical, dance, and concert are brought together under its roof. Since the 2012/2013 season, it has been under the directorship of Josef E. Köpplinger, who continues to constantly build on the organisation's reputation. After five years of renovation, the establishment moved back to its main location on Gärtnerplatz, which opened with a major gala celebration in autumn 2017. Well over 200 performances, including many special events, are programmed every year. The theatre has won several national and international awards, not least because of its cross-genre ensemble of singers, which is unique in Germany.

Both Munich Opera Houses also stage high-profile productions at the **Prinzregententheater** (Prince Regent Theatre), which reopened under August Everding in 1995, and has been heavily restored. The theatre originally opened in

1901, and is home to the Bayerische Theaterakademie (Bavarian Theatre Academy). It is a particularly beautiful space, based on the model of the Bayreuth Festival Theatre, making it a sought-after place to perform.

Avant garde music is at home in Munich

The **Münchener Biennale für neues Musiktheater** (Munich Biennial for New Music Theatre), launched in 1988, sets the standard for new Opera aesthetics. The composer Hans Werner Henze conceived of and launched this festival long ago; his successor was the composer and director Peter Ruzicka. The **Münchener Biennale** is one of Munich's most avant garde flagship events. It is the only festival worldwide to solely present premieres of works in new music theatre, and has already opened up a huge range of opportunities for young composers to try out their artistic ambitions at the highest level. The two composers Daniel Ott and Manos Tsangaris were artistic directors for the Biennale in 2016.

Happy New Ears

Munich is a city of open ears. In addition to the music theatre Biennale, the city hosts important event series such as the avant garde **Musica viva**, founded by composer Karl Amadeus Hartmann after the Second World War (organised by the channel Bayerische Rundfunk), as well as an alternative forum for young composers called **ADEvantgarde**, which over the years has increasingly become known to guarantee extraordinary music. Under the leadership of Udo Zimmermann, **Musica viva** has been a real crowd puller since 1996, and eminent musicologist Winrich Hopp took on its artistic directorship in 2011. Important momentum for the festival comes from composer and co-organiser Josef Anton Riedl, who also organised an experimental music series called **Klang-Aktionen** for five decades, which had a consistently high profile because of its unusual programmes – not least when they featured sound poetry by Bachmann prizewinner Michael Lentz.

Another facet of modern musical life in the city comes from the **Jewish Chamber Orchestra Munich**. The ensemble's programme focuses on playing works by Jewish composers, combined with music from the 20th and 21st century. The orchestra was founded in 2005 as Orchester Jakobsplatz München (Jakobsplatz Munich Orchestra) under the leadership of Daniel Grossmann, who is their artistic director today. Orchester Jakobsplatz München has performed regularly at the Hubert-Burda-Saal at the Jüdischen Zentrum Jakobsplatz (Jakobsplatz Jewish Centre) with a concert cycle since 2007. The concert to celebrate the Jewish New Year has been an established component of the series since autumn 2009. "Happy new ears" – that bon mot from John Cage – would also work here.

A domicile for blue notes

Since the 20th century, many people have believed jazz to be the second form of classical music. Munich has a very lively tradition of this type of music – the "art of blue notes". After the Second World War stars such as Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, and later John Coltrane, appeared as guests in the conference hall of the Deutsches Museum and at other performance spaces in the city. Musicians including Abdullah Ibrahim were among the core artists in clubs such as the famous "Domicile" club – which no longer exists today. Munich was also home to the hottest saxophonist on the German jazz scene in the '50s and '60s, Max Greger, while the saxophonist and film music star Klaus Doldinger settled down near Munich. Jazz is now performed on many stages in Munich, from the Philharmonic at Gasteig to the globally renowned "Unterfahrt" club, which has been running for more than a quarter of a century, is open every day, and received the Music Prize of the City of Munich in 2012. Jazz at the highest level can also be heard at the Bayerischer Hof. The BMW Welt Jazz Award has offered an outstanding series of matinee concerts with free entry since 2009. These are so popular that visitors queue right through BMW Welt to the U-Bahn station on Sunday mornings to grab a spot inside, amid the spectacular double cone architecture. In addition, Munich is home to four extremely successful jazz-focussed record labels which enjoy international recognition: ECM, enja, Winter & Winter and ACT.

Münchner Klassik Open-Airs (open-air classical music concerts in Munich)

At Max-Joseph-Platz in front of the Staatsoper, guests and residents alike can enjoy a free concert and live opera performance broadcast at **Oper für Alle** (Opera for All) as part of the annual Opera Festival. This event is a crowd puller and has a fantastic atmosphere, making it an essential part of Munich's summer music programme.

Klassik am Odeonsplatz (Classical Music at Odeonsplatz) is known for music at the highest level in a unique setting. Since the extraordinary Klassik-Open-Airs was founded in 2000, the Münchner Philharmoniker and Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, together with world-famous stars of classical music, perform on one of Europe's most beautiful squares during a weekend in July. Between 2000 and 2018, percussionist Martin Grubinger, virtuoso violinist David Garrett, soprano Diana Damrau, Chinese pianist Lang Lang, and many other well-known names have taken part in the performance. The event is organised by the Bayerische Rundfunk channel and the City of Munich. A total of 16,000 visitors attend the concerts over the course of the weekend. This summer event has now become an established and exciting feature on the Munich calendar, and one of many exciting aspects of Munich – the music metropolis.

Background

München Tourismus is the city's central tourist organisation and is part of the City of Munich's Department of Labour and Economic Development. München Tourismus works with its business partners in the private sector and the tourist organisation München TIM e.V. to develop marketing and PR campaigns and tourism products in a bid to establish Munich as a destination on the international travel market. The strategy for achieving this aim is defined by the Tourismskommission München, a joint undertaking between the city council and the local tourist industry.

Print-ready photos for use in reports about tourism in Munich are available to download from www.simply-munich.com/photoservice