

THE MUNICH OPERA FESTIVAL

Saturday, July 20th through Saturday, July 27th



The Bavarian State Opera: 2023 Opera Company of the Year

International Opera Awards

“Munich’s Opera Festival, a mix of brand-new productions, stagings from the past season and immaculately cast revivals, has become perhaps the most dependably, densely exciting presentation of opera in the world... Opera is hardly ever perfect. But in Munich these days it comes closer, consistently, than anywhere else I know.”

NY Times

As in most recent years, Munich’s traditional summer Opera Festival in 2024 will offer an undeniable plethora of major operas. With superlative casting, our program is highlighted by four works by two of opera’s foremost composers – Giacomo Puccini and Richard Wagner. Within a compact **six-night period**, we will attend performances of Puccini’s **Tosca** and **La Fanciulla del West**, and Wagner’s **Tannhäuser** and **Parsifal**. A fifth opera will be Claude Debussy’s **Pelléas et Mélisande**, “a masterpiece of musical impressionism”. *(All operas are sung in the original language with English surtitles.)*

Saturday, July 20th, departure from New York’s Kennedy Airport at 5:25 pm on Lufthansa flight #411, scheduled to arrive in Munich at 7:30 am on the 21st. Or independent travel to Munich.

Accommodations for **six nights** at the deluxe **Vier Jahreszeiten** (‘Four Seasons’) Hotel, with a grand European **buffet breakfast** included. The Vier Jahreszeiten ranks as Munich’s finest, offering a wide variety of services in an old-fashioned Bavarian atmosphere. The hotel’s cuisine is renowned throughout Europe, and an indoor pool is situated on the penthouse floor with an open balcony for sunbathing. The ideal location is only two blocks from the opera house and a short walk from the central Marienplatz shopping area. *You may wish to arrive a day early to adjust to the time change. We will be happy to reserve your room for the additional night of July 20th.*



Anja Harteros



Jonas Kaufmann



Sabine Devieille



Ben Bliss

National Theater, home of Bavarian State Opera

On Sunday, July 21st, a **cocktail reception** will provide an opportunity to meet other members of the Tour. Our party will be in a private entertainment suite of the hotel. *No performance this evening.*

Monday afternoon, July 22nd, a two-hour **walking tour** will introduce you to the historical center of Munich, encompassing the Gothic Frauenkirche (‘Church of our Lady’), the Hofbrauhaus, Odensplatz with the Field Marshall’s Hall, and the Residenzplatz. Our walk will conclude with a stop at the **Café Luitpold** for the German tradition of afternoon **coffee and cake**.

At 7:00 pm on Monday, our first performance - Claude Debussy’s only full-length opera, **Pelléas et Mélisande** –will be in Munich’s **PrinzregentenTheater**.

The libretto is taken from Maurice Maeterlinck’s eponymous play, a landmark of French symbolist literature. In capturing the dream-like pivotal love-triangle between the fragile Mélisande, her husband Golaud and his half-brother Pelléas, Debussy’s Impressionist palette achieves “an evocative language whose sensitivity extends into music and into the orchestral backcloth” (*Wikipedia*). The title roles will be ideally portrayed by American tenor **Ben Bliss** and French soprano **Sabine Devieille**. with **Christian Gerhaher** as Golaud, **Franz-Josef Selig** as King Arkel, and **Sophie Koch** as Geneviève. **Mirga Grazinyté-Tyla** is the conductor, and the *new production* is directed by **Jetske Mijnsen** with scenery designed by **Ben Baur**.



English Garden

Tuesday, July 23rd, is left free during the day (before the very long opera) for independent activities. During our several free mornings and afternoons, you should spend some time strolling through the woods and fields of the spacious **English Garden**, where the local population enjoys nude swimming and sunbathing along the fast-running waters of the Isar River. Also not to be missed are the **Alte Pinakothek's** priceless collection of European masters, re-opened in 1998 after extensive renovation; the **Neue Pinakothek**, in a modern circular gallery of unusual architectural beauty; and the **Glyptothek** museum of classical antiquities. Munich also offers a wide variety of international boutiques and designer shops.

Early Tuesday evening, we will return to the National Theater for the 5:00 pm performance of Richard Wagner's **Parsifal**, first performed at Bayreuth in 1882. In this production by director **Pierre Audi** and set designers **Georg Baselitz/Christof Hetzer**,



Franz Marc painting, Die Blauen Fohlen in the Buchheim Museum



“Wagner’s final musical drama addresses wounds which fester both within individuals as well as in society as a whole, before proffering miracle remedies with the ability to ease the pain”. The international cast of seasoned Wagnerians is headed by American heldentenor **Clay Hilley** in the title role, Swedish dramatic soprano **Nina Stemme** as Kundry,

Canadian bass-baritone **Gerald Finley** as Amfortas, and German/Egyptian bass **Tareq Nazmi** as Gurnemanz. The conductor of the Bayerischer Staatsorchester is **Adam Fischer**.



Nina Stemme



Gerald Finley

On Wednesday, July 24th, an excursion is planned into the lake-country to the Southwest of Munich. About an hour from the city, **Lake Starnberger** is bordered by grand villas and gardens and is widely known as the site of ‘Mad’ King Ludwig’s drowning. We will visit the lakefront **Buchheim Museum** containing a priceless collection of Blauer Reiter paintings (Kandinsky, Gabriele Munter, Franz Marc). **Lunch** will be included at the Museum’s fine restaurant or at the nearby **Klostergasthof Andechs** before returning to the hotel in midafternoon.

At 7:00 pm on Wednesday evening, we will attend an all-star performance of **Tosca** at the National Theater. Giacomo Puccini’s riveting melodrama is highlighted by Floria Tosca’s celebrated ‘Vissi d’arte’, her lover Cavaradossi’s pair of plangent arias – ‘Recondit’armonia’ and ‘E lucevan le stelle’, and the lascivious Baron Scarpia’s ‘Te Deum’. In the principal roles, we will hear Munich’s favorite soprano **Anja Harteros** as Tosca, today’s leading romantic tenor **Jonas Kaufmann** as Cavaradossi, and French baritone **Ludovic Tézier** as Scarpia. The young Italian

conductor **Andrea Battistoni** will be in the pit, and the staging is directed by **Kornei Mundruczo** with scenery by **Monika Pormale**.

Mid-afternoon on Thursday, July 25th, we will enjoy a pre-opera **lunch** at the **Spatenhaus**, Munich’s popular Bavarian restaurant directly across the square from the National Theater.



Marlis Petersen



Klaus Florian Vogt

At 5:00 pm on Thursday evening, our second Wagnerian opera at the National Theater will be **Tannhäuser**. The solemn prelude and notoriously erotic Venusberg Bacchanal are followed by a seamless succession of Wagner’s memorable scenes – Elizabeth’s entrance greeting (‘Dich, teure Halle’) and her soulful Act III Prayer; Wolfram’s lyric ‘Hymn to the Evening Star’; and Tannhäuser’s agonizing ‘Rome Narrative’ leading into the concluding Pilgrims’ Chorus. The brilliant cast features German tenor **Klaus Florian Vogt** as Tannhäuser, German soprano **Marlis Petersen** repeating her portrayal of Elizabeth from Salzburg’s Easter Festival, **Yulia Matochkina** as Venus, **André Schuen** as Wolfram, and **Ain Anger** as the Landgraf Hermann. The conductor is **Sebastian Weigle**, and the production is attributed to **Romeo Castellcci**.

Friday evening, July 26th, a pre-concert **dinner** will be arranged at **Il Tenore**, our preferred Italian restaurant a short walk from the hotel.

At 7:00 pm on Friday, our final performance in the National Theater is Puccini’s **La Fanciulla del West** (‘The Girl of the Golden West’). Premiered at the MET in 1910, ‘Fanciulla’ is based on David Belasco’s eponymous play. It is a late work with more complex harmony and melodic invention than the composer’s youthful operas. This writer agrees with Opera Magazine’s recent report of a performance by the Cleveland Orchestra: “I left the concert convinced again that *Fanciulla* is Puccini’s most beautiful and impressive score.” (*Opera*, Sept. 23). The plot is replete with a poker game and the threat of hanging the hero, and the title role demands a stentorian soprano capable of melting tenderness. The rich orchestral colors will be delineated under the baton of conductor **Jurai Valcuhe**, and the production is by director **Andreas Dresen** and designer **Matthias Fischer-Dieskau**. Sweden’s **Malin Byström** will assume the histrionic role of Minnie, following her sensational Salome at Covent Garden last season. The male contingent is led by So. Korean tenor **Yonghoon Lee** as the charismatic bandit Dick Johnson and Germany’s Wagnerian baritone **Michael Volle** as Sheriff Jack Rance.



Malin Byström



Michael Volle

Saturday, July 27th, departure from Munich Airport at 12:05 pm on Lufthansa flight #410, which is scheduled to arrive at New York’s Kennedy Airport at 2:55 pm. Or independent departure.

Munich:

Price per person, based on double occupancy: \$ 6,580

Single supplement \$ 980

Airfare NOT included.