



LIFE & LOVE TRANSFORMED WAGNER'S RING CYCLE IN LEIPZIG

TUESDAY 30 APRIL – MONDAY 6 MAY 2019 (7 DAYS)

LECTURER: PETER HILL

£2770

- Experience Leipzig's wonderful production of Wagner's 'Ring Cycle', conducted by Ulf Shirmer
- Pre-performance lectures with exploration via piano of the complex leitmotif structures of each opera given by Peter Hill
- Explore how Bach & other composers lived & worked in the city
- Day spent in the court city of Weimar in pursuit of Bach, Goethe & other luminaries
- Discover the art collections of Leipzig
- We stay in one of Leipzig's finest 5* hotels close to all the major sites



St Thomas' Church, Leipzig

OVERVIEW

As Vienna is to Austria's musical history, so Leipzig is to Germany's – not only was it the long-term home of JS Bach; Felix Mendelssohn, Robert and Clara Schumann all worked there and it is where Richard Wagner was born and received some of his early musical training. So, what better place to experience one of the pinnacles of the western musical tradition, Wagner's mighty 'Ring Cycle'? The Leipzig *Opernhaus* will mount their celebrated production of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring de Niebelungen* in Spring 2019 and we are delighted to offer members of our mailing list the opportunity to experience this unique dramatic and musical event. The production will be conducted by Ulf Shirmer and directed by Rosamund Gilmore. The cast (subject to change) will include Tuomas Pursio and Vladimir Baykov as Wotan, Kathrin Göring as Fricka, Christiane Libor and Katherine Broderick as Brünnhilde, Simon O'Neill as Siegmund and Thomas Mohr and Michael Weinius as Siegfried.

Wagner was born in Leipzig in 1813 and after his early musical training he established himself as a composer of works similar to those of Weber and Meyerbeer. However, he revolutionised opera through his concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the 'total work of art', a synthesis of poetic, visual, musical and dramatic elements, with music as the servant of the drama. Unique for his time, Wagner wrote the librettos for his operas and his ideas are most fully realised in his four-opera cycle, *Der Ring des Niebelungen*.

Before this great music-drama emerged, plagued by debts, a tempestuous love-life and an uncertain future, Wagner went to Dresden in 1842 to conduct his early opera, *Rienzi*. He remained in the city until 1849 and it was there he premiered both *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser*. Appointed Court Composer, he mixed in cosmopolitan circles but his involvement in the Uprising of 1849 precipitated his flight from Saxony into exile. Indeed, these connections with Saxony will provide us with many links to explore during our visit.

This great musical journey will be supported by a wonderful series of guided visits round Leipzig and Weimar. The patronage of both the Electors and Kings of Saxony and the Dukes of Saxe-Weimar will loom large and we shall have the opportunity to explore many of the major sites and collections. There will be ample free time and the operas will all be fully introduced to participants through a series of lectures interspersed through our stay.

Twenty-two tickets for the four operas have been secured in stall seats in Row 8, offering, we believe, the best view of the stage. We anticipate that demand for these tickets will be high, so you are strongly advised to confirm your booking with us as soon as possible. Seats will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

The visit will be led by Professor Peter Hill. Peter taught at Sheffield University and now devotes his time to lecturing and his distinguished career as a keyboard recitalist. A recording artist, he is known particularly for his acclaimed recordings of Bach, Beethoven, Stravinsky and others. He will be supported by Anna-Sylvia Goldammer, who is our preferred Leipzig guide. We shall stay at the excellent, central 5* Steigenberger Hotel Handelshof.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Tuesday 30 April – We fly mid morning with BA from Heathrow to Berlin Tegel and transfer by coach to **Leipzig**. There will be a ‘comfort’ break mid journey. We check into the **5* Steigenberger Hotel Handelshof** for a six-night stay. The hotel could not be better placed as it is just beside the city’s historic Naschmarkt Square and Old Town Hall and a 550 meter walk from the Opera House. Prof Peter Hill will give an introductory lecture on **Wagner and The Ring**, followed by a group dinner in our hotel. Wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners. NB that formal group dinners will not be included on days when there is an opera performance.

Day 2: Wednesday 1 May – Today we explore **Leipzig** and its remarkable religious and musical traditions. This is the city where Johann Sebastian Bach, Mendelssohn and the Schumanns all worked, and where Richard Wagner was born and received some of his early musical training. We visit **St Thomas Church** where Bach is buried and also the nearby **Bach Museum**. After a group lunch and some time to rest, Peter Hill will give a lecture on Wagner’s *Das Rheingold*, followed by tonight’s performance, which begins at 5.00 pm.

Day 3: Thursday 2 May – We continue exploring **Leipzig** and begin at the **Museum of Fine Arts** which is a handsome modern building with works from the medieval to modern periods in its collection. After an early lunch (included), we continue to the *Alte Nikolaischule* to see the exhibition ‘**The Young Richard Wagner**’. On our return to the hotel Peter will lecture on Wagner’s *Die Walkure*, followed by tonight’s performance, which begins at 5.00 pm.

Day 4: Friday 3 May – **Weimar** captures all that is central to the German enlightenment: a series of intelligent ducal rulers, a flourishing court which employed musicians such as Bach, graced by intellectuals of the stature of Goethe and Schiller. Then there is the city’s post World War I role in the evolution of modern Germany. All of these themes will be explored when we spend today in the city, broken by a group lunch and to include an afternoon visit to the **Anna Amalia Bibliothek**, with its famed oval Rococo hall. We return to Leipzig and the evening will be free.

Day 5: Saturday 4 May – This morning we remain in Leipzig and visit the **Mendelssohn House Museum**, an enchanting environment which captures the sophisticated intellectual atmosphere of this gifted composer and his family. After a group lunch we return to our hotel and Peter will lecture on Wagner’s *Siegfried*, followed by tonight’s performance, which begins at 5.00 pm.

Day 6: Sunday 5 May – Today can be either a ‘rest’ period (you might like to attend a service at St Thomas?) or join our guide for a walk to the **Grassi Museum** where we shall see two collections, the Applied Arts Collection and also the Collection of Musical Instruments. Lunch is not included today and we meet mid afternoon when Peter will lecture on Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung*, followed by tonight’s performance, which begins at 5.00 pm.

Day 7: Monday 6 May – We leave the hotel by coach after breakfast and travel to Berlin Tegel Airport for the mid afternoon return BA flight to Heathrow. There will be a ‘comfort’ break mid journey between Leipzig and Berlin.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2770 **Without Flights** £2595 **Deposit** £350

Single Supplement £295 (Double/Twin Room for Sole Use)

Hotels 6 nights with breakfast at the 5* Steigenberger Grandhotel Handelshof, Leipzig

Flights British Airways

Outward: **BA992** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1050**, arrive Berlin Tegel **1340**

Return: **BA985** Depart Berlin Tegel **1645**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1740**

Price includes 1 dinner & 4 lunches with wine, water & coffee, opera tickets, all local transfers, City Tax, entry fees & gratuities, services of Peter Hill and our local guide and tour manager, Anna-Sylvia Goldammer

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 5 dinners & 2 lunches



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