

BAYREUTHER FESTSPIELE



2026

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ONLINE INSTANT PURCHASE

Begins on Sunday,
30th November at 2 p.m.

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Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung
für Kultur und Medien




BAYREUTH



Dear Audience



Katharina Wagner

150 years of the Bayreuth Festival – this moment is more than just an anniversary. It is a moment to pause, reflect and look ahead. When Richard Wagner first raised the curtain in Bayreuth in 1876, he brought to life not just a vision – he created a space for art, for intellectual exchange and for artistic boundary-crossing. This place has endured, evolved and moved with the times – and yet has remained true to its origins.

Across the decades, generations of artists, staff members and supporters and a globally unique audience have helped shape this Festival – each era leaving its mark, as both a challenge and an opportunity.

Today, 150 years later, we once again find ourselves at a turning point: in a time when the arts must hold their ground, reinvent themselves and constantly reassert themselves. And Bayreuth embraces this task with the same passion, the same resolve and the same steadfast belief in the power of theatre as ever.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this story – and those who continue to write it. Because Bayreuth lives through its people. It lives through your curiosity, your critique, your enthusiasm.

So let us not only celebrate the past – let us celebrate the future of the Festival. May the spirit of Bayreuth continue to inspire the next 150 years: challenging, captivating, and free.

Yours,

Katharina Wagner

Welcome

PAGE 1

Myth and Masquerade – 150 Years of the Bayreuth Festival

PAGE 4

Once Upon a Time – Ground-Breaking Productions

PAGE 8

2026 Productions

PAGE 20

Ceremony with Symphony No. 9 by L. v. Beethoven

PAGE 22

Rienzi

PAGE 24

Ring 10010110 – From Myth to Code

PAGE 30

Der fliegende Holländer

PAGE 34

Parsifal

PAGE 38

Brünnhilde brennt

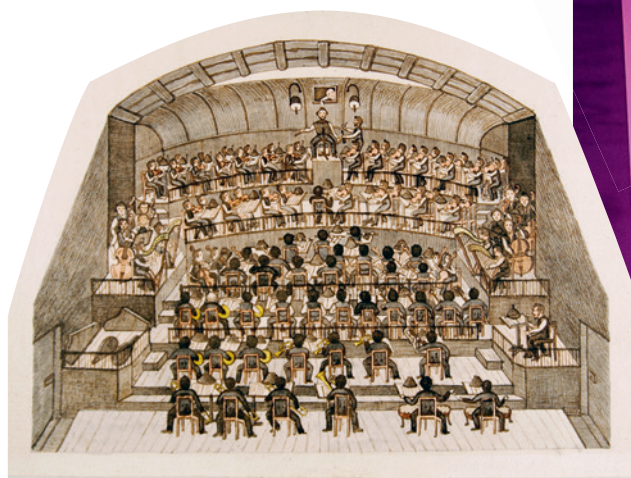
PAGE 42

The Who's Who of the Festival Season

PAGE 44

Programme

PAGE 46





About the Unique Acoustics in the Bayreuth Festival Theatre

PAGE 48

Instruments Designed by Wagner for his Operas

PAGE 54

1876: Inventions in the Festival's Founding Year

PAGE 56

A Portrait of Festival Fans

PAGE 58

Walking in Wagner's Footsteps and Supporting Programme

PAGE 60

Bon Mots: the Composer's Most Witty Remarks

PAGE 66

Tickets, Prices, Seating Plan

PAGE 68 + COVER





Fr. Erdinger, München.

150 Years of the Bayreuth Festival

MYTH AND MASQUERADE

Text: Dr. Sven Friedrich
Director of the Richard Wagner
Museum with the National
Archive and Research Centre
of the Richard Wagner
Foundation Bayreuth

“To Bayreuth...!” – For 150 years, music and theatre lovers have answered the question about their summer destination in an almost conspiratorial whisper, their chins lifting meaningfully, their eyes opening wide in rapt anticipation. The anacrustic “Bay-” on the outward breath, evoking a blue-and-white Bavarian sky, is allowed to hover momentarily before giving way to the mythically murmured “-reuth” – which, here in Germany, rolls richly off the tongue in red and white, echoing the colours of Franconia, where Bayreuth lies. No one pauses to consider the etymology, which tells us that the -reuth, denoting a clearing, is one that is distinctly Bavarian – not the -rode found in the Harz region, nor the -ried common south of the Danube, but the -reuth typical of Franconia. And yet this was always a distinctive one: as early as 1194, it appeared in records as “Baierute”. So, strictly speaking, the name ought to be spoken with a short and unceremonious emphasis on the first syllable: Bay-reuth!

The question of pronunciation already reflects the divide that first emerged 150 years ago with the première of the “Stage Festival Play for Three Days and a Preliminary Evening, The Ring of the Nibelung”, which Friedrich Nietzsche described as the “first circumnavigation of the world in the realm of art”. At that moment, the spotlight of international attention unexpectedly fell – to the considerable astonishment of the town’s residents – on the peaceful, inward-looking life of the small town. The event, launched by the composing genius of a “dilettantism driven to the monumental by the highest force of will” (Thomas Mann), suddenly transformed Bayreuth into a kind of sacred site – a kind of Oberammergau elevated to opera, imbued with the intellectual ambitions of Weimar. For the Wagnerians, this transformation was sealed by the 1882 première of the quasi-religious “Stage Consecration Festival Play Parsifal”. For the local population, by contrast, the Festspielhaus and Wahnfried remained both geographically and mentally more like distant curiosities on the town’s periphery – subjects for mealtimes conversation, perhaps, shared over the blessed gifts of beer and “Brodwärschd” consecrated by the blessed Jean Paul. That has remained essentially unchanged. And yet, despite its provincial stubbornness, it is precisely this that makes up no small part of the town’s charm.

With the Festspielhaus, Richard Wagner achieved not merely the construction of a theatre whose functional austerity, already externally, stood in deliberate contrast to the imposing pomp of contemporary theatre architecture – and which, in that respect, was thus remarkably well suited to its setting. Rather, with a venue designed solely for the performance of his own works, Wagner both fulfilled a deeply personal longing – one he had carved into the façade of his home Wahnfried in the lilting, Saxon-tinged trochaic line, “Here, where my delusions found peace...” – and established a veritable Mecca for his followers and admirers.

*“HERE,
WHERE MY
DELUSIONS
FOUND
PEACE”*

HOMESTEAD AND SYMBOL OF AN AESTHETIC WAY OF LIFE

Wagner’s choice of Bayreuth as a location was already rooted in his belief in the supremacy of art above all else, pursued for its own sake. The “lovely solitude, far from the smoke and the industrial stench of our urban civilisation”¹ lifts Wagner’s work out of the everyday cultural machinery of the great cities and places it in the splendid isolation of a “locus amoenus”. At the destination of a pilgrimage, far removed from the everyday world, the audience is called upon to devote itself entirely to Wagner’s work. In this way, Bayreuth becomes both the homestead and the emblem of an aesthetic way of life. Yet from the very beginning – and now for 150 years – the “Bayreuth myth”

has also harboured a darker side: the doubts and abysses of the “human, all too human” (Nietzsche), along with the coincidences and unforeseen twists that have continually driven the enterprise along a narrow ridge between predictable failure and often unexpected success. Wagner himself – who loved Kasperl and, in his final days, would hum the song “Harlequin, you must die” – played the gambler’s game of risk and blackmail time and again, and more daringly than almost anyone else. He revelled in the masquerade and self-dramatisation of atlas and brocade, a practice that continued in the carnival of vanities both on and off the stage – the Grand Guignol of political, social and almost Buddenbrooks-like family theatre enacted by his descendants – always teetering between the dubious and the comic, between amusement and horror.

Did Wagner still believe in a future for his theatre after the “Ring” première had gone awry and, in the aftermath of the debacle, he had managed to inaugurate only his “farewell-to-the-world work”, “Parsifal”, here six years later? Where Wagner may still have harboured doubts, it was his widow Cosima – elevated to the status of the “High Lady” – who, following his death in Venice, fulfilled the unwritten testament of the now-monumentalised “Master” with authoritarian pathos. It was she who gradually sanctified all his stage works from “Fliegenden Holländer” onwards on the Green Hill. Thus it was foretold to us: the institutionalisation of the Festival, just as Wagner had wished in his letter to his royal admirer and patron, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, dated 18th November 1882.

ROOTED IN BROWN SOIL

Meanwhile, the apostles of the new Bayreuth religion of art succeeded in aligning Wagner’s metapolitical cultural theory and aesthetics with the national-chauvinist and antisemitic spirit of the age, both socially and politically. The unpleasant ideological undertone grew louder after the rupture of the First World War and, following a ten-year hiatus in the Festival, became the dominant tone from 1924 onwards. With the end of the supposedly “good old days” of Imperial Germany, what had once been a distinguished cultural hub for the European elite now took root in brown soil.

A still largely unknown lance corporal, who claimed to have received his “mission” during a performance of *Rienzi* in Linz, came to Bayreuth in 1924 for a “German Day” organised by his fledgling National Socialist Party. There, he was warmly welcomed by his enthusiastic contemporary Winifred, who – living in Wahnfried and surrounded by the elderly – had been selected as the wife of Siegfried, the Master’s son, 28 years her senior and deeply insecure due to his homosexual inclinations. Captivated by the lance corporal’s submissive devotion and steely blue eyes, she greeted him with great warmth and soon made him a close friend, almost a member of the family.

With his – and it must be emphasised now more than ever – election as Führer and Reich Chancellor in 1933, the Festspielhaus became “Hitler’s court theatre” (Thomas Mann) and a compliant instrument of the Nazi state’s self-image and propaganda, even enlisted in the profoundly paradoxical concept of “war festivals”. No longer burdened by criticism or financial difficulty, Wagner’s warning of a *Götterdämmerung* (Twilight of the Gods) could now be all too easily dismissed – as could Isolde’s near-prophetic cry: “A degenerate race, unworthy of its ancestors!”²

But when an American incendiary bomb, during the first of three air raids on Bayreuth on 5th April 1945, destroyed the very place where Wagner’s “delusions” were meant to “find peace”, and thus came crashing down – with potent symbolism – upon one of the ideological flashpoints of the National Socialist “fire spectacle”, the near-total destruction of Wahnfried in the global conflagration once again became a portent of German history – this time signalling Germany’s loss of face in every sense: its cities and its honour, though now without proscenium, orchestra pit or curtain.

Ashamed and silent, many hoped to cast off this past. Yet beneath the veil of Wieland Wagner’s impressively staged aesthetic revolution – which sought to liberate the work from fascist appropriation and reinterpret it through the lens of Greek classicism and Jungian psychology – unsettling continuities continued to simmer. Despite the proclaimed rupture with a tainted legacy, it would take another thirty years for these undercurrents to begin to ebb.

ETERNAL REBIRTH OF THE MYTH

After the monomaniacal era of “New Bayreuth” and the early death of his brother in 1966, few ideas could have appealed more to the passionate tinkerer Wolfgang Wagner than that of the “Bayreuth workshop” – a space where material is continually reworked, re-examined and reassembled by a range of craftspeople, often to the dismay of the Wagnerians. And yet – despite everything – the eternal rebirth of the myth was achieved: within a German history whose darker shadows remain ever present, and in constant dialogue with the sociopolitical spirit of the age.

BETWEEN TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

Each year, the roughly 50,000 visitors who descend on Bayreuth in July and August not only shape the town’s image but also represent a lucrative customer base. With the Festival serving both as a major employer and a source of contracts, it has become a significant economic force. The “brand” into which the myth is sometimes reduced – a low-threshold, tourist-friendly “unique selling point” – does little to alter the fact that Bayreuth, despite the town’s self-image as a modest provincial place, is internationally synonymous with the Festival. Amid the striking, sweeping currents of German history, society

and politics and shifting cultural climates, the Bayreuth Festival has thus spent 150 years navigating between triumph and tragedy – without yet being crushed between Scylla and Charybdis. This may come as a surprise, but it also speaks to the Festival’s enduring artistic quality, which could well serve as the basis for its future relevance. It would only need to be allowed.

Sources:

- 1 – Richard Wagner to Franz Liszt, 30th January 1852, *Complete Letters*, vol. 4, p.
- 2 – Richard Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde*, Act I, *Complete Writings and Poems*, vol. 7, p. 3.

ONCE UPON



DNA TIME

in Bayreuth

150 years ago, Richard Wagner redefined in Bayreuth what opera at the forefront of its time could be. Since then, many renowned directors and conductors have created memorable productions on the hill – bold, imaginative, radical, imposing, humorous and visionary. A look into the family album

1950s

SIEGFRIED

As part of the “New Bayreuth” programme initiated by Wieland in 1951, “Der Ring des Nibelungen” was staged in a radically abstract production. The entire set was reduced to a circular stage – Wieland’s so-called “disc of worlds”, symbolising the universe. This production became a paradigm of Wieland’s ground-breaking style – modern, pared-down and intensely focused on the musical and mythological essence.

1962

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

Wieland Wagner relied on his characteristic spartan, psychologically focused stage design – reduced, almost abstract – consistently directing attention to the inner worlds of the characters.



1973

PARSIFAL

Wieland Wagner staged a ground-breaking re-interpretation of Parsifal for the Bayreuth Festival. This production became a defining work of the so-called "New Bayreuth", which, in the post-war era, signified both aesthetic and ideological renewal. It shaped global perceptions of Parsifal for decades and influenced countless other directors.



Götz Friedrich's Parsifal was marked by visionary direction – a dystopian, geopolitically charged approach to the Grail legend, musical mastery under James Levine, and a tension between innovation and tradition. A milestone of director's theatre in musical performance, it remains a subject of discussion to this day.

1984

PARSIFAL





1991

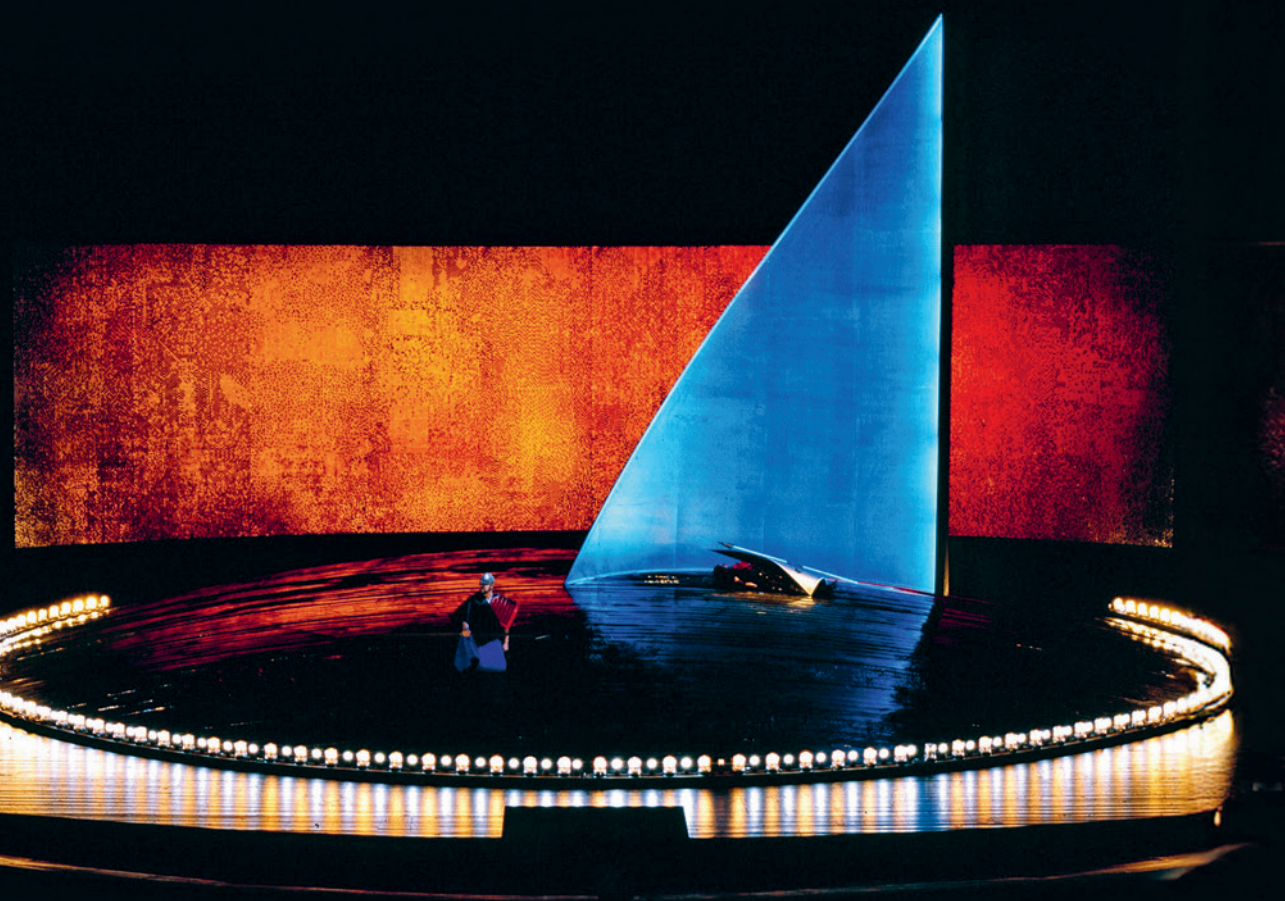
DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER

Dieter Dorn brought Wagner's dark redemption opera to the stage as a psychologically intense, symbolically charged journey of the soul, shifting between inner turmoil and existential yearning. Set designer Jürgen Rose crafted a dreamlike visual language with his understated, elegant design. A production that continues to resonate with quiet intensity.

1998

DIE WALKÜRE

Alfred Kirchner's Ring des Nibelungen was defined by modern, aesthetically restrained and partly abstract stage designs, with a clear emphasis on spatial presence and atmospheric lighting. This bold visual concept lent the new "Ring" a distinctive identity.





2001

DIE MEISTERSINGER

Wolfgang Wagner's production of "Die Meistersinger" embraced a carefully balanced blend of tradition and psychological nuance. His interpretation remained romantically rooted in convention, concentrating on psychological character study rather than political or aesthetic innovation.

Neuenfels' Lohengrin breaks with sentimental romanticism, confronting the audience with secularised love, failure and the search for redemption in a cold, analogue universe. Visually radical, musically arresting and psychologically multi-layered, it is a modern, mythic-allegorical experiment shaped by Neuenfels' provocative artistic vision.









Tobias Kratzer's "Tannhäuser" – still part of the Bayreuth Festival repertoire – is considered one of the most radical and emotionally powerful reinterpretations of the work in recent years. An exuberantly intelligent interplay of comedy and tragedy, video and stage, it boldly brings Wagner's themes into the present – supported by a strong cast, acclaimed musical direction and visionary staging.

PRODUCTIONS



WORKS & PRODUCTIONS

Our performance database includes all productions from 1951 to the present, with details of the conductors, directing teams and full cast lists. Almost all names are accompanied by additional information.

2

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CTIONS



BUY 2026 TICKETS ONLINE

The quickest way to tickets: Scan the QR code shown above with your phone to be taken directly via a link to the online ticket sales for the 2026 anniversary year.

2026

CEREMONY

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

SYMPHONY

No. 9

in D minor with final chorus on Schiller's
"Ode To Joy", op. 125

**"IT IS THE HUMAN GOSPEL
OF THE ART OF THE FUTURE."**

Richard Wagner, "The Artwork of the Future"

MUSICAL DIRECTION
Christian Thielemann

SOPRANO
Elza van den Heever

ALTO
Christa Mayer

TENOR
Piotr Beczala

BASS
Georg Zeppenfeld

DATE
Sat 25/07,
starting time 6 p.m.

Ceremonial event
with festive speeches

Fascination and Identification – Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony played a more special role in Richard Wagner's life than any other musical work. At the age of 17, Wagner created a piano reduction of the symphony, and a performance he attended in 1839 at the Paris Conservatory left a lasting impression on him. In 1846, he conducted the Ninth in Dresden for the first time — a performance that was met with great success; to aid understanding, Wagner had published an introduction for the audience beforehand. This performance was subsequently repeated annually for several years.

To celebrate the laying of the foundation stone of the Bayreuth Festival Theatre on May 22, 1872, the Ninth Symphony was performed under Wagner's baton at the Margravial Opera House. Over the years, the symphony continued to be performed at the Festspielhaus on various occasions: on the 50th anniversary of Wagner's death under the direction of Richard Strauss; in 1951, as the opening of the revived Bayreuth Festival under Wilhelm Furtwängler, who conducted it again in 1954; in 1953 under Paul Hindemith, signaling a connection to the composers of New Music; in 1963 by Karl Böhm on Wagner's 150th birthday; and in 2001 by Christian Thielemann, marking both the 125th anniversary of the Festival and the 50th anniversary of the founding of the "New Bayreuth."



RIENZI

**MUSICAL
DIRECTION**
Nathalie
Stutzmann

**PRODUCTION,
SET DESIGN,
COSTUMES**
Alexandra
Szemerédy
and Magdolna
Parditka

DRAMATURGY
Markus Kiesel

DATES
Sun 26/07
Mon 03/08
Sat 08/08
Fri 14/08
Mon 17/08
Wed 19/08
Sat 22/08
Mon 24/08
Wed 26/08

Start time: 4 p.m.



Rienzi
Andreas Schager



Irene
Gabriela Scherer



Adriano
Jennifer Holloway

ORIGINS

Rienzi – der letzte der Tribunen, Wagner's third completed opera, is based on the historical novel *Rienzi: the Last of the Roman Tribunes* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Unlike the novel, Wagner skilfully enriches the plot with a love story between Rienzi's sister Irene and the young nobleman Adriano. Even in later years, Wagner recognised how essential this romantic subplot was to the operatic form, set against the backdrop of historical and political events: "That's still a vestigial tail-bone from the French tragedy, which always had to include an amour; [...] my *Rienzi* lacked this amour for the French – and yet, even there, I had this vestige." On the surface, *Rienzi* follows the conventions of French grand opéra – the most refined genre in European musical theatre – but only outwardly. By selecting a historical subject and adopting a five-act structure, Wagner aimed to fulfil the expectations of the genre. The expansive material also allowed him to explore many of his favourite scene types, including large-scale processions and dramatic spatial sound effects. *Rienzi* was Wagner's first major success and marked his breakthrough as an opera composer with its première on 20th October 1842 at the Royal Court Theatre in Dresden.

RECEPTION DURING THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST ERA

Since the 20th century, the reception of *Rienzi* has been largely overshadowed by the frequently discussed influence it allegedly had on Hitler and by its appropriation during the Nazi era. Hitler's self-stylised, autobiographical portrayal of himself as a tribune of the people rising from humble origins was, however, based on two fundamental misconceptions. Firstly, while Cola di Rienzo did indeed come from modest circumstances (and may have been the illegitimate son of Emperor Henry VII), he was above all an educated intellectual, a brilliant Latin stylist and – as a friend of Petrarch – a distinguished man of letters. Secondly, *Rienzi*'s decision to become a political leader was driven by personal tragedy: the murder of his younger brother by a member of the aristocratic factions. Both of these aspects – his intellectual stature and the biographical trauma – fundamentally set the historical Cola di Rienzo, as well as Wagner's operatic character, apart from Hitler's myth-making.

TRANSMISSION HISTORY

Wagner's original score of *Rienzi* is lost. No copy or complete set of performance materials from the première has survived. A definitive version of the work only emerged during the course of the production process and was fixed in the form of a first edition published following a series of successful performances. *Rienzi* was not printed until two years after its première, in 1844, and then in only 25 copies. Although this edition provided a performable version of the opera, it diverged in several key respects from Wagner's original conception. It is therefore likely that Wagner initially envisaged something different, but accepted a version that proved workable on stage. In any case, *Rienzi* remained Wagner's most successful opera during his lifetime and was performed in numerous adaptations. Wagner earned considerable income from these performances and showed little interest in producing a definitive revised edition. This changed only in 1871, when he began to re-engage with the work in a more intensive fashion. For the first (!) volume of his "Collected Writings and Poems", Wagner included a revised libretto for *Rienzi*, featuring extensive cuts, alterations, rewritten passages and even restorations from the original version. Whether this revised libretto was intended to serve as the basis for a final authorised edition of the score remains an open question.

RIENZI AND BAYREUTH

A new edition of the score and piano reduction – the so-called "Cosima" version – was not published until 1899, after Wagner's death. Yet even when Siegfried Wagner considered staging *Rienzi* at Bayreuth in 1930, he regarded this version with a degree of scepticism: "Ah yes, *Rienzi*! – I'd love to stage it one day! [...] The main obstacle for us: there are no authorised cuts in the scores! [...] But then the question is: What should be cut? – My father indicated quite different cuts for the various



Only glimpses so far – the new production of *Rienzi* by Alexandra Szemerédy and Magdolna Parditka will première in 2026



theatres. [...] Which cuts should we make in Bayreuth? Which ones would most likely reflect my father's intentions? [...] My mother [...] undertook an adaptation of the work in the 1890s [...] with carefully considered cuts. [...]

THE VERSION FOR BAYREUTH 2026

The Bayreuth version for 2026 is based on the premise that, had a "final authorised version" of *Rienzi* been completed in around 1871, the opera would very likely have secured its place within the Bayreuth canon of works "from *Der Fliegende Holländer* onwards". After all, the ten works of the so-called "Bayreuth canon" are not based on any testament or definitive stipulations in the founding charter of the Richard Wagner Foundation Bayreuth, but solely on excerpts from Wagner's letters to King Ludwig II of Bavaria from 1882.

The creative team has set out to produce a version that carefully considers the various layers of transmission outlined above, along with the opera's complex reception history. It draws on the extensive philological research on *Rienzi* conducted in recent decades, while the team has also attempted to identify new sources and reconstruct parts of the score previously thought lost.

As Siegfried Wagner's reflections already suggest, the structure and scope of the work inevitably raise questions about cuts and sequencing. In addressing these, the team has been guided by principles of musical dramaturgy and by Wagner's own assessments – including later ones – of the opera. In the pivotal year of 1871, Wagner wrote: "They should at least behold the fire in *Rienzi*; I was a music director and wrote a grand opera. That this same music director later gave them such hard nuts to crack should surprise them." From these words, we can see the significance of that "fire" – the same fire that was as indispensable to his later, more complex "nuts to crack" as "every finale like a frenzy, a drunken madness of suffering and joy" (1878). But the new version also takes into account Wagner's more self-critical observations, such as: "The empty spaces you unscrew when nothing comes to mind." (1879). In shaping this version, the team prioritised not only a coherent dramatic progression but also the internal structure of the individual musical numbers. Central to this is the "unhealthy" relationship between *Rienzi* and his sister Irene – not only for its foreshadowing of the later incest motif in „*Die Walküre*“, but also because it forms the emotional and thus musically developed core of the love triangle between *Rienzi*, Irene and Adriano. The guiding question for the directorial concept was where Wagner uses music to explore the psychological and emotional depths of his characters. It seemed more compelling to ask what politics does to people – rather than what people do to politics – and to locate the points in the score where Wagner's musical-dramatic treatment engages with this question. It is these emotional constellations, set against the backdrop of political history, that give the opera's individual numbers and scenes their extraordinary quality.

Even if Wagner had composed only *Rienzi*, it would still stand as a unique masterwork *sui generis* – a work that would have secured its place in the history of European musical theatre even without the authorship of the later master of Bayreuth.

MARKUS KIESEL FOR THE BAYREUTH FESTIVAL



Richard Wagner, *Rienzi*, Act I (No. 1, bars 306–313) with handwritten annotation: "The Nobili must quickly throw cloaks over their costumes, like those worn by the people, in order to reappear on stage straight away, where they must in any case support the coda of the overture. Thus they remain on stage in the chorus of the people during the finale of Act I." Excerpt from the 1844 first edition for the première at the Court Theatre in Coburg
Source: Landesbibliothek Coburg 1860 (TB Op 212)



Richard Wagner, *Rienzi* (Finale of Act III, No. 10, bars 977–982) In the wind parts, bars 980/981, shown here – and long believed lost – were reconstructed for the Bayreuth performance. Excerpt from the handwritten score used for the Karlsruhe première (Felix Mottl u. Cosima Wagner) 1893
Source: Staatstheater Karlsruhe





RING

10010110

FROM MYTH TO CODE

**MUSICAL
DIRECTION**
Christian
Thielemann



CURATOR
Marcus Lobbes

Wotan/Wanderer
Michael Volle

**ARTISTIC AND
TECHNICAL
CONCEPT**
Marcus Lobbes
and Nils Corte



DRAMATURGY
Andri Hardmeier

Loge/Siegfried/
Siegfried
Klaus Florian
Vogt

**DIGITAL & AI
STORYTELLING**
Roman Senkl



**CREATIVE CODE
/VISUAL ART**
Nils Corte and
Phil Hagen
Jungschlaeger

Brünnhilde
Camilla Nylund

SET DESIGN
Wolf Gutjahr



COSTUMES
Pia Maria
Mackert

Fasolt/
Hunding/Hagen
Mika Kares

THE "RING" IN MOTION – AN EXPERIMENT. AN INVITATION

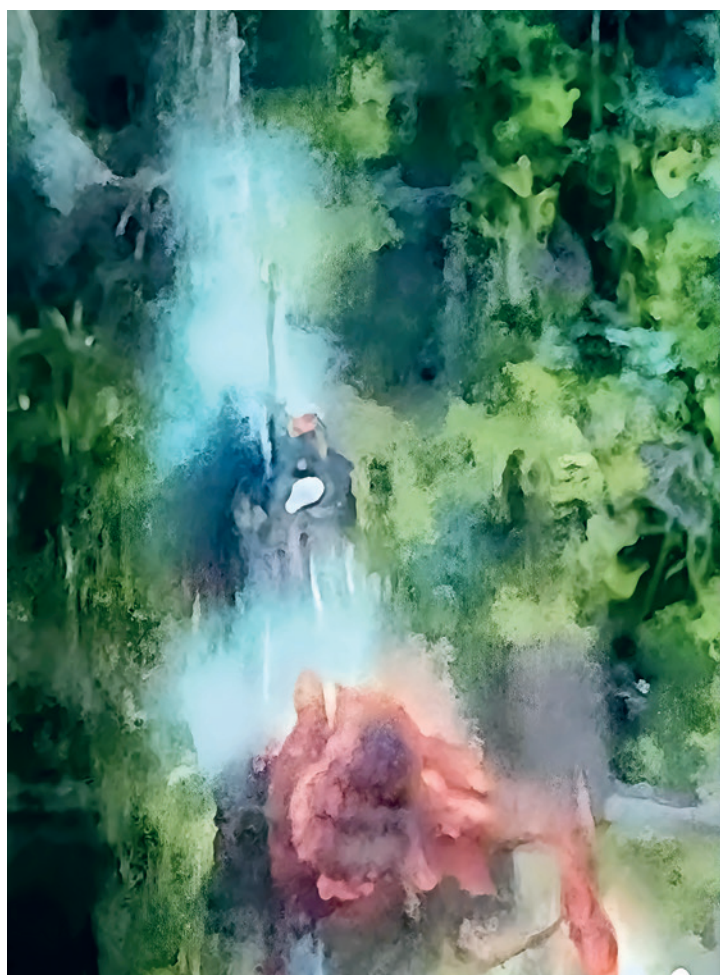
In summer 2026, a new chapter of "Ring des Nibelungen" will open in Bayreuth. A monumental tetralogy – a world of power, love, betrayal and downfall – and at the same time, a space of constant transformation. For 150 years, the "Ring" has been reimagined, reinterpreted and re-experienced in Bayreuth. But what happens when the stage itself begins to think?

To mark the 150th anniversary of the Bayreuth Festival, audiences can expect an experiment of visionary scope: a production that not only stages Wagner's music drama but places its entire reception history at its centre – through a visual dimension that evolves, expands, recomposes and even contradicts itself. For the first time in Festival history, artificial intelligence will take part on stage – not as a character, but as a creative, visual force.

BETWEEN PRESENCE AND PROJECTION

At the heart of the performance stand the singers – calm and almost sculptural in their presence. Their bodies become fixed points in a visually volatile cosmos of light, texture, history and association, surrounded by projections that fracture, permanently shift and merge. What remains real? What is illusion? Where does memory begin – and where does interpretation end?

The projections go beyond traditional stage design – they become a reflective surface for a 150-year discourse. The AI generating them has learned from countless images, voices, documents and productions. It does not present a single "Ring", but many: the national myth,



the socio-political rupture, the explosive artistic force, the romantic utopia, the deconstructed shadow. Each performance will be unique – because the images and associations are never static.

THE “RING” AS A RESONANCE CHAMBER

This project views the “Ring” as an open resonance chamber – a work to be retold again and again, not despite its history but because of it. AI becomes a mirror of collective memory – and a projection surface for the questions of our time: Who tells history? Who creates images? And whom do they belong to? Thus, the timeless essence of Richard Wagner converges with the fleeting nature of digital transformation. Sound meets code, myth meets machine, and Festival meets future. The stage becomes a laboratory of perception – a space where music theatre is not only performed, but explored. This “Ring” challenges us. It invites contemplation, disorientation and curiosity. It is a “Ring” of questions, not answers. And it is a “Ring” that seeks to cast Bayreuth – this place so rich in history and projection – in a new light.

Experience a music theatre of past and future, a “Ring des Nibelungen” that questions itself – and perhaps also us.

CHATGPT-4 IN DIALOGUE WITH ANDRI HARDMEIER

DATES

CYCLE

Mon 27/07 Das Rheingold
Tue 28/07 Die Walküre
Thu 30/07 Siegfried
Sat 01/08 Götterdämmerung

CYCLE

Tue 04/08 Das Rheingold
Wed 05/08 Die Walküre
Fr 07/08 Siegfried
Sun 09/08 Götterdämmerung

CYCLE

Wed 12/08 Das Rheingold
Thu 13/08 Die Walküre
Sat 15/08 Siegfried
Sun 16/08 Götterdämmerung

Start time: 4 p.m.

“Das Rheingold”: 6 p.m.

The visual dimension of “Ring 10010110” is generated by AI – see “Walküre” on previous page, “Siegfried” above, “Götterdämmerung” to the right



DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER

The description of the Dutchman in Senta's Ballad ("the pale man") is borrowed from Marschner's opera *Der Vampyr*, where it refers to the main character. Wagner's Dutchman inherits the motifs of German gothic romanticism but extends far beyond its traditional archetypes. The Dutchman's entrance monologue is around one and a half times longer than Lord Ruthven's aria in *Der Vampyr*, often viewed as a precursor to *Der fliegende Holländer*. Yet the distinction lies not only in length, but in the emotional complexity and nuance. Wagner situates the Dutchman within a densely layered emotional realm – a space of frustration, solitude and longing – qualities rarely found in similar works of German Dark Romanticism. This psychological depth becomes a defining feature of the character, which the composer explores masterfully throughout the opera.

While the Dutchman's curse drives him across the waves, the motif is internalised: the pursuit is expressed through spatial imagery, but it unfolds in the hero's inner life, where the compulsion to flee first arises. The sea is not only his environment, but a metaphor for his psyche – an "ocean of boundless yearning". The ocean's traits (deceptive, changeable, bottomless, hopeless, unbounded) reflect the Dutchman's own. The work is not about changing locations (from sea to land) or lifestyles (from wanderer to settler) but about the reasons behind those choices.



Der Holländer
Nicholas
Brownlee



Senta
Asmik Grigorian
(6th and 18th
August)



Daland
Mika Kares

**MUSICAL
DIRECTION**
Oksana Lyniv

**DIRECTION
AND SET
DESIGN**
Dmitri
Tcherniakov

COSTUMES
Elena Zaytseva

DRAMATURGY
Tatiana
Werestchagina

DATES
Wed 29/07
Thu 06/08
Tue 18/08
Sun 23/08

Start time:
6 p.m.









PARSIFAL

MUSICAL DIRECTION

Pablo Heras-Casado

DIRECTION

Jay Scheib

SET DESIGN

Mimi Lien

COSTUMES

Meentje Nielsen

LIGHTING

Rainer Casper (†)

VIDEO

Joshua Higgason

DRAMATURGY

Marlene Schleicher

DATES

Fri 31/07
Mon 10/08
Thu 20/08
Tue 25/08

Start time:
4 p.m.



Parsifal
Andreas Schager



Kundry
Miina-Liisa
Väre



Gurnemanz
Georg
Zeppenfeld



Amfortas
Michael Volle

Deep craters scar a lifeless landscape, water forces its way to the surface, and the machines stand silent. This was once the site where the future was to be shaped – now, only an apathetic present remains. In Jay Scheib's production, Richard Wagner's Parsifal becomes a story of endings – a meditation on how hope might still arise.

MARLENE SCHLEICHER, DRAMATURG







Bernhard Lang/Michael Sturminger

BRÜNNHILDE BRENNT

EIN SPIEL MIT DEM FEUER

MUSICAL DIRECTION
Jonathan Stockhammer

DIRECTION
Neil Barry Moss

WITH Catherine Foster

PERFORMED BY
Dortmunder Philharmoniker

DATES
Sun 02/08 (World premiere)
Tue 04/08
Thu 06/08

Start time: 7.30 p.m.,
in the Friedrichsforum

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THE SOCIETY
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Brünnhilde dreams. She is tormented by restless sleep, haunted by the fire encircling the Valkyrie's rock – the very place where Wagner's Ring, that eternal work, has confined her for all time, condemned to play the same sacrificial role again and again. She awakens – Hermine, the opera singer, drenched in sweat in her hotel room. Two women – in truth, one and the same – at war with themselves in their endless struggle with the Ring, caught in eternal conflict with the other characters in Wagner's pantheon of figures, and yet filled with passion and devotion to one goal alone: the stage, which is life. Brünnhilde burns. In 2026, the year of its 150th anniversary, the Bayreuth Festival will once again present the world premiere of a commissioned work with "Brünnhilde brennt". Composer Bernhard Lang and librettist Michael Sturminger have created a dreamlike piece that invites audiences to reflect on the layers of reality and the ongoing struggle with our cultural inheritance. Brünnhilde brennt is a co-production between the Bayreuth Festival and Dortmund Opera – a company that, under the artistic direction of Heribert Germeshausen, has emerged in recent years as one of the leading institutions for contemporary Wagner interpretation outside Bayreuth, particularly through the festival format Wagner Kosmos. **DANIEL C. SCHINDLER**

IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH



SUPPORTED BY
THE NEW MUSIC THEATRE FUND

Ministerium für
Kultur und Wissenschaft
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen



NRW KULTUR



WHO'S WHO

1 Nicholas Brownlee The bass-baritone sings the title role in "Der fliegende Holländer"

2 Andreas Schager The Austrian tenor appears in the title roles of "Rienzi" and "Parsifal"

3 Miina-Liisa Väre The Finnish soprano performs as Kundry in "Parsifal"

4 Michael Volle The German baritone sings Wotan and the Wanderer in "Der Ring des Nibelungen" and Amfortas in "Parsifal"

5 Christian Thielemann The General Music Director of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden conducts Beethoven's 9th Symphony" and "Der Ring des Nibelungen"

6 Asmik Grigorian The Lithuanian soprano takes on the role of Senta in "Der fliegende Holländer" on 6th and 18th August



THE 2026 FESTIVAL SEASON

7 Gabriela Scherer The Swiss soprano takes on the role of Irene in "Rienzi"

8 Georg Zeppenfeld The German bass performs as Gurnemanz in "Parsifal" and sings the bass part in Beethoven's 9th Symphony

9 Nathalie Stutzmann The French conductor leads the new production of "Rienzi"

10 Pablo Heras-Casado The Spanish conductor takes to the podium for "Parsifal"

11 Klaus Florian Vogt The German tenor sings the roles of Loge, Siegmund and Siegfried

12 Oksana Lyniv Ukrainian conductor is responsible for the musical direction of "Der fliegende Holländer"

13 Mika Kares The Finnish bass appears as Fasolt, Hunding, Hagen and Daland

14 Camilla Nylund The Finnish soprano performs the role of Brünnhilde in "Der Ring des Nibelungen"



PROGRAM

24TH JULY

OPENING

CEREMONY

WITH SYMPHONY NO. 9 BY LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

MUSICAL DIRECTION **Christian Thielemann**

NEW PRODUCTION

RIENZI

MUSICAL DIRECTION **Nathalie Stutzmann** PRODUCTION, SET DESIGN, COSTUMES **Alexandra Szemerédy und Magdolna Parditka**
DRAMATURGY **Markus Kiesel**

RING 10010110 FROM MYTH TO CODE

MUSICAL DIRECTION **Christian Thielemann** CURATOR **Marcus Lobbes**
ARTISTIC AND TECHNICAL CONCEPT **Marcus Lobbes und Nils Corte**
DRAMATURGY **Andri Hardmeier** DIGITAL AND AI STORYTELLING **Roman Senkl**
CREATIVE CODE / VISUAL ART **Nils Corte und Phil Hagen Jungschlaeger**
SET DESIGN **Wolf Gutjahr** COSTUMES **Pia Maria Mackert**

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER

MUSICAL DIRECTION **Oksana Lyniv** DIRECTION **Dmitri Tcherniakov**
SET DESIGN **Dmitri Tcherniakov** COSTUMES **Elena Zaytseva**
DRAMATURGY **Tatiana Werestchagina**

PARSIFAL

MUSICAL DIRECTION **Pablo Heras-Casado** DIRECTION **Jay Scheib** SET DESIGN **Mimi Lien**
COSTUMES **Meentje Nielsen** DRAMATURGY **Marlene Schleicher**

BRÜNNHILDE BRENNT












MUSICAL DIRECTION **Jonathan Stockhammer** DIRECTION **Neil Barry Moss**
PERFORMED BY THE DORTMUND PHILHARMONIC

The Festival Orchestra, The Festival Choir

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **Prof. Katharina Wagner**

RAMME

26TH AUGUST

FRI	24/07	FESTIVAL-OPEN-AIR	8 P.M.
SAT	25/07	CEREMONY with festive speeches and Symphony No. 9 by L. v. B.	6 P.M.
SUN	26/07	RIENZI	4 P.M.
MON	27/07	 DAS RHEINGOLD	6 P.M.
TUE	28/07	 DIE WALKÜRE	4 P.M.
WED	29/07	DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER	6 P.M.
THU	30/07	 SIEGFRIED	4 P.M.
FRI	31/07	PARSIFAL	4 P.M.
SAT	1/08	 GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG	4 P.M.
SUN	2/08	FESTIVAL-OPEN-AIR	5 P.M.
SUN	2/08	BRÜNNHILDE BRENNT (FRIEDRICHSFORUM)	7.30 P.M.
MON	3/08	RIENZI	4 P.M.
TUE	4/08	 DAS RHEINGOLD	6 P.M.
TUE	4/08	BRÜNNHILDE BRENNT (FRIEDRICHSFORUM)	7.30 P.M.
WED	5/08	 DIE WALKÜRE	4 P.M.
THU	6/08	DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER	6 P.M.
THU	6/08	BRÜNNHILDE BRENNT (FRIEDRICHSFORUM)	7.30 P.M.
FRI	7/08	 SIEGFRIED	4 P.M.
SAT	8/08	RIENZI	4 P.M.
SUN	9/08	 GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG	4 P.M.
MON	10/08	PARSIFAL	4 P.M.
TUE	11/08	- NO PERFORMANCE -	
WED	12/08	 DAS RHEINGOLD	6 P.M.
THU	13/08	 DIE WALKÜRE	4 P.M.
FRI	14/08	RIENZI	4 P.M.
SAT	15/08	 SIEGFRIED	4 P.M.
SUN	16/08	 GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG	4 P.M.
MON	17/08	RIENZI	4 P.M.
TUE	18/08	DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER	6 P.M.
WED	19/08	RIENZI	4 P.M.
THU	20/08	PARSIFAL	4 P.M.
FRI	21/08	- NO PERFORMANCE -	
SAT	22/08	RIENZI	4 P.M.
SUN	23/08	DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER	6 P.M.
MON	24/08	RIENZI	4 P.M.
TUE	25/08	PARSIFAL	4 P.M.
WED	26/08	RIENZI	4 P.M.

LEGEND:  Der Ring des Nibelungen

O F F A M E

No one knows the soundscapes of opera houses better than the emeritus acoustics professor Karlheinz Müller. He also advised the Bayreuth Festival for many years.

Mr Müller, when did you attend your first opera at the Bayreuth Festival Theatre?

In 1978 or 1979. It was Tannhäuser, and at the time I neither understood the piece nor appreciated how unique the acoustics at the Festspielhaus are. First, I had to experience many other opera houses.

From today's perspective: What makes the Festspielhaus's acoustics so special?

Wagner's Festspielhaus is a total work of art, both acoustically and visually. It was designed to ensure that all 2,000 seats offer excellent visibility and sound. Both were of utmost importance to him.

How was the Festspielhaus built to achieve this?

It all begins with the geometry of sound: Wagner based the auditorium on a square measuring 33 by 33 metres – something you only notice when closely studying the plans. Within this square, he carved the auditorium at a 45-degree opening angle, measured from the centre of the stage. His model was the ancient amphitheatre – an extremely unusual choice for the time. The Vienna State Opera and the Opéra Garnier in Paris, built in the same period, are beautiful, traditional tiered theatres, full of boxes, balconies and velvet drapes. Wagner, by contrast, envisioned a large space where the entire audience sat on a rising incline. Structurally, the Festspielhaus was the first truly grand people's theatre.

Despite the size of the building?

Wagner had teasers installed in the auditorium – side-on partitions that not only focused the audience's line of sight but also reinforced the acoustic connection with the stage. These open, lateral spaces on the left and right function as resonators: rather than letting sound dissipate immediately, they preserve it in the space and give the audience the feeling that something is lingering – a mystical sound I've never experienced in any other theatre.

What part do the materials play?

Much of the interior consists of masonry with plaster and gypsum textures – materials that reflect sound rather than absorb it. The floor is made of wood, while the ceiling is covered with five-centimetre-thick historical gypsum plaster supported by a substructure. This prevents sound from vanishing upwards and instead gently reflects it back down to the audience.

Let's move from the auditorium to the orchestra pit – the so-called "mystical abyss".

Wagner didn't want the light from the music stand lamps in the pit to be visible from the audience. To solve this, he installed a visual screen – the familiar semi-circular barrier between the pit and the hall. He had already experimented with this kind of acoustic and visual screen during his time as chief conductor at the opera house in Riga.

"THE FESTSPIELHAUS IS AN ACOUSTIC MASTERPIECE"

– KARLHEINZ MÜLLER

A visual measure, but one that had an acoustic effect above all.

The function of the visual screen is largely to redirect the orchestra's sound energy into the stage space, from where it is then transmitted into the auditorium. Within this stage space, the orchestra's sound blends with the singers' voices. The second screen, positioned between the stage and the orchestra pit, was introduced by Richard Wagner only in 1882, during the second Festival season. Before that, the violins sounded too faint, while the woodwind and brass instruments came across too forcefully. The second screen restored the orchestra's acoustic balance.

What effect does this indirect sound have?

Because the orchestra's sound is first channelled into the stage space, a distinctively blended tone is produced. It is diffuse and soft, with the various orchestral voices deeply interwoven. In most opera houses, you can localise the brass section or pinpoint the direction of a trumpet signal. In Bayreuth, this redirection of sound waves always produces a wide, enveloping orchestral sound in which no individual instrument dominates – only the total sound is reinforced.

How does the orchestra's sound blend with the voices on stage?

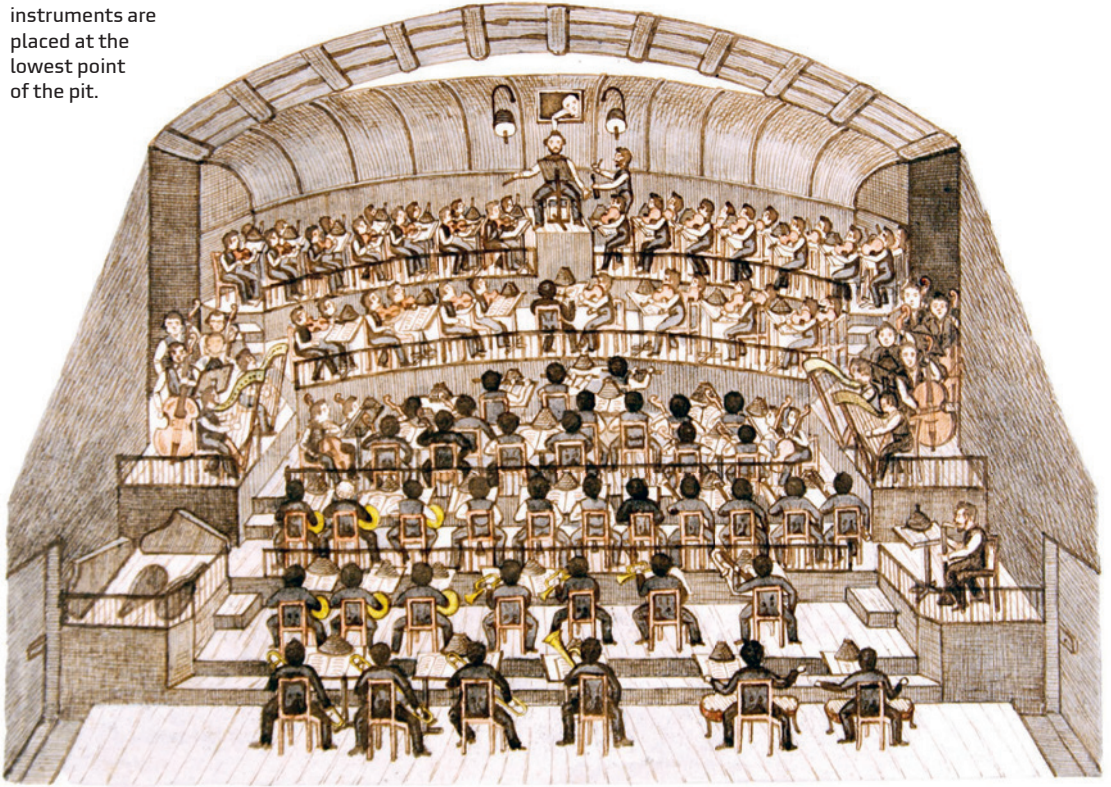
Despite the size of the orchestra, the singers are not overpowered. This is because they have direct visual and acoustic contact with the audience. They sing straight into the hall and, as a result, their voices reach the audience a fraction of a second earlier than does the sound of the orchestra. In other words, the vocal signal arrives first; the orchestral sound follows a few milliseconds later. This too was Wagner's intention. He wrote the libretti for his operas himself, and he wanted the words to come through clearly. Audibility mattered. And with this construction, he succeeded.

Can the audience perceive this minimal delay between voice and orchestra?

No – the listener's brain automatically synchronises the signals. It can only be measured using modern instruments. Nonetheless, the delay has an audible effect. It activates what's known as the "precedence effect", which means our sense of orientation follows the first sound stimulus we perceive.

Did measuring instruments exist at the time to study these effects?

The orchestra is arranged so that the first violins are seated to the conductor's left, while the loudest instruments are placed at the lowest point of the pit.



No. Acoustics as a scientific discipline only emerged in the 20th century.

So how was Wagner able to design such an advanced acoustic system?

I've studied his notes, and I believe that even if he couldn't describe these acoustic effects in scientific terms, his deep experience as a conductor and composer – combined with remarkable musical intuition and insight – allowed him to realise this acoustic masterpiece.

Is conducting in Bayreuth different from in other opera houses?

Yes. For instance, the first violins sit on the right rather than the left – which takes some getting used to. Also, the blended orchestral sound can initially be hard for conductors to evaluate; it requires a process of familiarisation and constant adjustment. But most manage it very well.

Can the conductor hear the singers clearly?

Yes – in Bayreuth, the conductor often has a better auditory and visual grasp of what's happening on

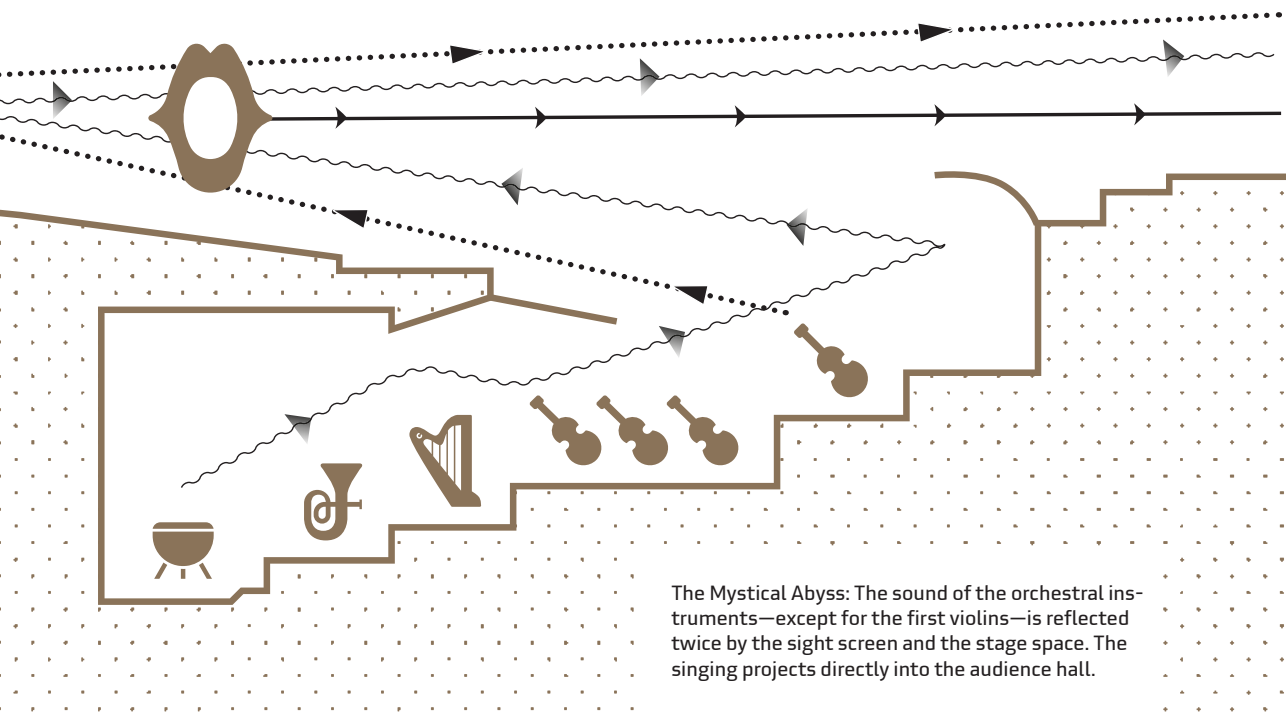
stage than in many other opera houses. The conductor's head height is nearly level with the stage. Wagner was himself a conductor; he composed the works and staged them in Bayreuth. Naturally, he wanted to see and hear for himself how each scene worked in performance.

You've been advising the Bayreuth Festival on acoustics since 1990. What has that involved?

Wolfgang Wagner, who was manager and artistic director at the time, contacted me, and I travelled to Bayreuth. It began with consultations on large set designs and scenic elements. Stage sets and scenery can significantly affect acoustics, both on stage and in the hall. These projects always required close collaboration with the musicians and the entire production team.

Did your work also include structural interventions?

During the off-season, the Festspielhaus undergoes ongoing renovation and modernisation: new workshops, new dressing rooms, and new rehearsal spaces for the artists. In the 2000s, the



first major renovation in the auditorium and the area in front of the stage was then carried out. The entire auditorium was scaffolded, the seating was removed, and extensive adjustments had to be made to materials and structural elements. Throughout the process, continual checks were performed to ensure that all new materials were acoustically compatible with the space and that the Festspielhaus's exceptional sound quality remained intact.

So, the renovation had to ensure that the building's sound-reflective properties were preserved, down to the smallest detail?

Exactly – the geometry and composition of the materials, their reflective and absorptive characteristics, their diffusivity – everything was examined and tested. The renovation was a great success; many visitors didn't even notice it at first, apart from the space appearing fresher. The exceptional acoustic impression remained entirely unchanged.

Is there a particular moment from your time working in Bayreuth that has especially stayed with you?

I always found Wolfgang Wagner a very pleasant client – but he could lose his temper. Once, we were due to carry out acoustic measurements

during a dress rehearsal in front of a full audience. For the measurements to be accurate, the invited guests had to remain absolutely silent for ten minutes. That didn't work though – there was too much chatter in the hall, and the interference level was too high. Elsewhere, an artistic director might have stepped out and politely asked the audience to keep quiet so the measurements could proceed. Wolfgang Wagner, however, stepped in front of the curtain, took a deep breath and shouted a single sentence into the hall: "If you're not silent immediately during the measurement, I'll throw the lot of you out." That was Wolfgang Wagner, the strict master. We were then able to conduct the measurements in total silence, quickly and successfully.

Renovation and refurbishment will continue to be necessary at the Festspielhaus in the future. Is that sustainable in the long term?

Yes – because the Festival's management and team take a considered and responsible approach to every stage of the renovation process. Each decision is examined carefully and placed in context. That said, many of the tasks involved are extremely craft-intensive, leaving little room for cost reduction. But it is undoubtedly worth the effort to preserve the Bayreuth Festival Theatre and its unparalleled acoustic experience.

*'... so that you
can still greet this dear hall
in future too ...'*

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THE GOLDEN SOUNDS

VALVE HORN

Today, they are an indispensable part of the orchestra pit: valved horns. But they have only existed for just over 200 years; before that, tones were produced without the detours of valves and keys. Wagner was the first major German composer to integrate valved horns into the opera orchestra.

BECKMESSER-HARP

In "Die Meistersinger", Wagner felt that the comic character Sixtus Beckmesser should not play a full-size harp but rather a lute. However, such a small instrument would have been barely audible alongside an opera orchestra. So, Wagner devised the "Beckmesser harp" – essentially a lute enlarged to orchestral proportions.

ANVIL

How does a composer create the impression that dwarves are forging metal in the orchestra pit? Quite simply: by writing a hammer and anvil into the score. That's exactly what Wagner did in *Das Rheingold* – and it's why you can genuinely hear the Nibelungs forging the ring of Rhine gold in *Nibelheim*.



Richard Wagner not only designed a festival theatre specifically built for his works, but he also created custom instruments for his operas



GRAIL BELL PIANO

Richard Wagner had this enormous instrument built especially for the première of *Parsifal*. It resembles a cross between an upright piano and a broom cupboard. For the transformation scene in his mystical "stage consecration festival", Wagner was determined to include the sound of tolling bells – however, real bells were too heavy for the wooden structure of the Festspielhaus orchestra pit.

WAGNER TUBA

Although it bears his name, Richard Wagner did not invent the Wagner tuba. This instrument, which acoustically falls somewhere between a horn and a tuba, plays a prominent role in the *Ring*.



RITTERVIOLA

For Wagner and his *Ring* performances in Bayreuth, the Ritter viola was the ideal instrument: slightly larger (and therefore more challenging for musicians to play) than a standard violin, but with a noticeably broader tonal range, especially in the lower registers. Today, the Ritter viola is rarely used.

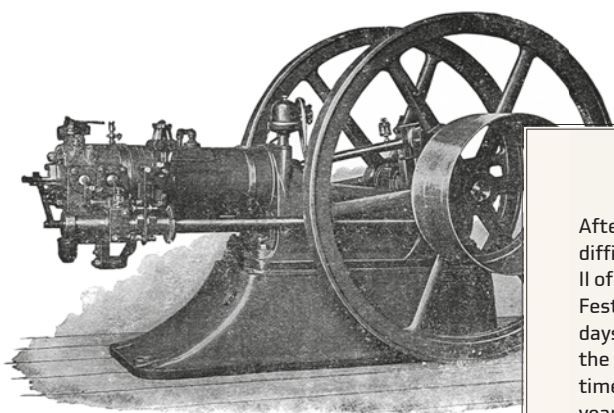
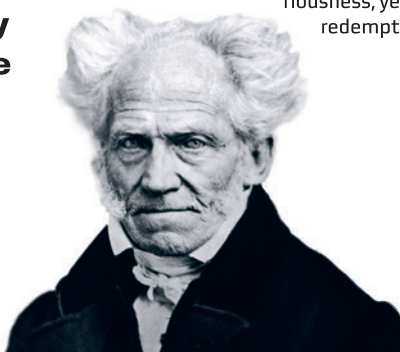


1876

A year in which the world took a giant leap towards modernity – marked by pioneering breakthroughs in science and technology. In music, it was defined by a singular event: the first Bayreuth Festival

SCHOPENHAUER

Although Arthur Schopenhauer had died in 1860, a book published in 1876 by his close confidant Julius Frauenstädt reignited the debate around Schopenhauerian philosophy. Richard Wagner had first read Schopenhauer's principal work, *The World as Will and Representation*, in 1854. Deeply moved, he wrote to Franz Liszt: "His central idea, the final negation of the will to live, is of terrifying seriousness, yet solely redemptive."



NEW ENGINE

Nicolaus Otto developed the four-stroke engine – a ground-breaking innovation that remains the basis for internal combustion engines to this day.



THE PHONOGRAPH

The founding of the Edison Laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey, in 1876 led to two major technological breakthroughs. A year later, Thomas Alva Edison unveiled the phonograph – the first device capable of recording and reproducing sound. In 1879, he followed with the invention of the electric incandescent lamp.

PREMIÈRE ON THE GREEN HILL

After more than four years of construction and many financial difficulties – resolved only through a loan from King Ludwig II of Bavaria, secured after much pleading – the first Bayreuth Festival opened on 13th August 1876. Over the course of three days and a preliminary evening, it presented the première of the complete *Ring des Nibelungen*, which was repeated three times during the festival. It was the musical event of the year – if not the decade. Richard Wagner personally directed the *Ring* as a unified dramatic whole. The audience included a veritable who's who of the musical world: Franz Liszt, Anton Bruckner, Karl Klindworth, Camille Saint-Saëns, Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Edvard Grieg. Also in attendance were Leo Tolstoy, Friedrich Nietzsche, Gottfried Semper, Kaiser Wilhelm I, Emperor Pedro II of Brazil and King Charles of Württemberg. King Ludwig II attended the dress rehearsals, returning for the third and final cycle of performances.



A NEW WAY OF SEEING

The French Impressionists were in the process of revolutionising painting. At the 2nd Impressionist Exhibition in Paris, Auguste Renoir presented his *Bal du moulin de la Galette*.



REGISTRY OFFICE

From 1876 onwards, all German states introduced mandatory civil registration of births, marriages and deaths through registry offices, replacing the church records previously maintained by parish offices.



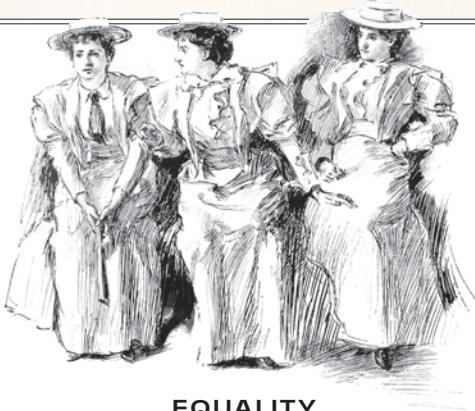
MARINE SCIENCE

24th May 1876: The British corvette HMS Challenger, which had set sail in 1872 under Captain George Nares as part of the Challenger expedition, returned to Portsmouth after circumnavigating the globe. Under the scientific leadership of Charles Wyville Thomson and his assistant John Murray, the expedition yielded a wealth of knowledge about the ocean floor – laying the foundations of modern oceanography.



THE TELEPHONE

Several inventors were working on the development of the telephone in 1876. Alexander Graham Bell was the first to file a patent, on 14th February, and later developed the invention into a commercially viable product.



EQUALITY

On 4th July, a group of suffragettes stormed the centennial celebration of American Independence at Independence Hall in Philadelphia and presented the "Declaration of the Rights of Women".



CURRENCY REFORM

Following the formation of the German Empire in 1871, there were initially 119 different types of gold, silver and token coins in circulation, along with just as many different banknotes. With the founding of the Reichsbank on 1st January 1876, the mark became the standard currency across all German states.

UNIQUELY

The opera experience at the Bayreuth Festspielhaus is unique – and so is its audience. We asked three Wagner fans from very different backgrounds why they return to the Green Hill year after year.

Wagner and heavy metal

"For me, the music of Richard Wagner felt naturally connected to the rock music I grew up with. His music was a discovery – an ear-opener, a doorway to an entirely new musical world, endlessly fascinating.

From the moment that fascination turned into obsession, a visit to the Festspielhaus became inevitable. I first came in 2014 (the rats in Hans Neuenfels' Lohengrin production were my introduction to the festival – the boldness of those productions, and the Festspielhaus's unique acoustics!). Since then, I've always been glad to return. Wagner inspired me to create a website (Wagner & Heavy Metal) where I write about my listening experiences. And it was in Bayreuth – this must be woven into the threads of the Norns – that I met my girlfriend. Alongside Wagner, she also loves heavy metal and tango."



Wouter de Moor,
DJ and music
producer,
Netherlands

BAYREUTH

An elemental
awakening



Monika Beer,
journalist and
Wagnerian
for 50 years

"Anyone who, like me, is about to attend their 400th Festival performance knows that Wagnerians are repeat offenders – because they've understood that with Wagner, the more you've seen, heard and felt, the more you've read, thought and reflected, the clearer it becomes that you'll never stop learning. In this magical world of 19th-century music theatre, you find everything that defines the human condition – timeless and urgently relevant – especially in this authentic venue, with its incomparable acoustics. The Festival is a myth, obsessively revolving around the genius of this one poet-composer, continually cracking it open and reinterpreting it, even in the smallest steps. For me, the turning point was Patrice Chéreau's legendary 1976 Ring – an elemental awakening. As a memento, I have a Brunnhilde helmet from that production – although, sadly, Gwyneth Jones never actually wore it on stage."

Wagner can
be cool

"All I knew of Wagner in India was the Bridal Chorus – I didn't even know who Wagner was. Then, in 2015, I saw my first Lohengrin in Bayreuth – Hans Neuenfels' rat production. When the rat-children sang the Bridal Chorus, I wanted

to join in – unforgettable. Later, I saw Stephen Gould as a feverish Tristan, and eventually Cas-torf's wild "Ring" – like a B-movie: radical and mesmerising. That's when I realised: Wagner can

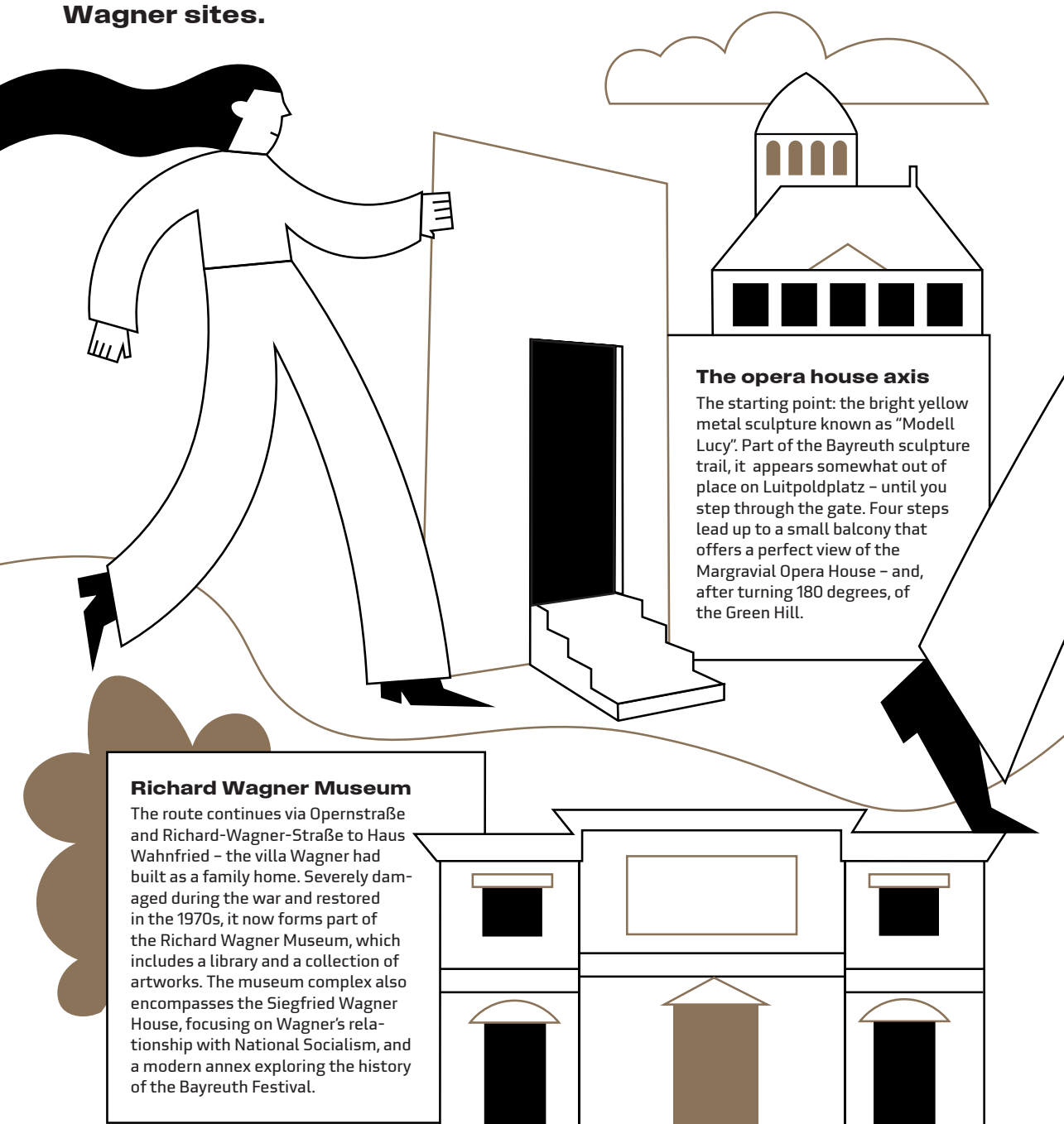
be modern and exciting – even cool. His operas remind me of Bollywood films – sweeping emotions, dramatic clashes, monumental figures. In Indian music education, the focus is usually on Bach; Wagner is often sidelined. Because of this, Bayreuth overwhelmed me all the more – artistically, emotionally, musically."

Dr Jeffrey
Netto, specialist
in laboratory
medicine



IN WAGNER'S FOOTSTEPS

Throughout Bayreuth, you can follow in Wagner's footsteps. A short walk along the important Wagner sites.



The opera house axis

The starting point: the bright yellow metal sculpture known as "Modell Lucy". Part of the Bayreuth sculpture trail, it appears somewhat out of place on Luitpoldplatz – until you step through the gate. Four steps lead up to a small balcony that offers a perfect view of the Margravian Opera House – and, after turning 180 degrees, of the Green Hill.

Richard Wagner Museum

The route continues via Opernstraße and Richard-Wagner-Straße to Haus Wahnfried – the villa Wagner had built as a family home. Severely damaged during the war and restored in the 1970s, it now forms part of the Richard Wagner Museum, which includes a library and a collection of artworks. The museum complex also encompasses the Siegfried Wagner House, focusing on Wagner's relationship with National Socialism, and a modern annex exploring the history of the Bayreuth Festival.



Court Garden

In the garden of Haus Wahnfried lies Richard Wagner's grave, marked only by a plain marble slab without an inscription. "The people will know who lies here," the composer declared. Just behind it begins the Bayreuth Court Garden, laid out in 1580 as a kitchen garden, later transformed into a formal garden, and now the ideal place for a contemplative stroll. An old iron bridge leads to the Great Island, home to the stone Poseidon and his water steed. One can only imagine how the Wagner family might have crossed over the water there. At the western end of the Court Garden stands the imposing New Palace.

The piano maker Steingraeber

From the baroque palace, the walk continues along Bayreuth's promenade, Friedrichstraße, to Steingraeberpassage 1. Here, you'll find the workshop of piano maker Steingraeber, founded in 1852 and still producing handcrafted pianos of the highest quality. The firm has long supplied instruments to the Bayreuth Festival and all members of the Wagner family. At Wagner's request, Steingraeber even developed the grail bell piano specifically for Parsifal. Concerts are held regularly in the workshop, and visitors can take part in public tours to observe the traditional process of building upright and grand pianos by hand.

Franz Liszt Mausoleum at the Municipal Cemetery

The walk continues along Bismarckstraße to Bayreuth's municipal cemetery. Here lies the composer Franz Liszt, who died in Bayreuth in 1886 while visiting his daughter, Cosima Wagner, during the Festival. In accordance with his wishes, he was buried at the place of his death. Sadly, by the time of his passing, he had long been estranged from his son-in-law. Incidentally, before Wagner began working regularly with the Steingraeber workshop, Liszt had commissioned a grand piano from the firm – a piece that can still be admired there today.





Gasthaus zur Eule

Time for a bite to eat while following in Wagner's footsteps at the historic Eule Inn. Wagner himself used to enjoy a beer here, after his former regular haunt, Angermann, was demolished to make way for the new post office building. Since then, Eule has become a cherished fixture for festivalgoers – including Siegfried, Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner, as well as many renowned singers and conductors, whose portraits now adorn the inn's walls. On the menu are regional specialities, such as Bayreuth's "Blaue Zipfel" (Bratwurst cooked in vinegar) – one of Richard Wagner's favourite dishes.



Weihenstephaner Bier

Said to have been Richard Wagner's preferred brew, beer from the world's oldest brewery was always served at gatherings at Haus Wahnfried. Weihenstephan has been brewing beer since 1040 – originally in a monastery, it is now a Bavarian state brewery. Wagner's favourite beer is thus still available to enjoy today.

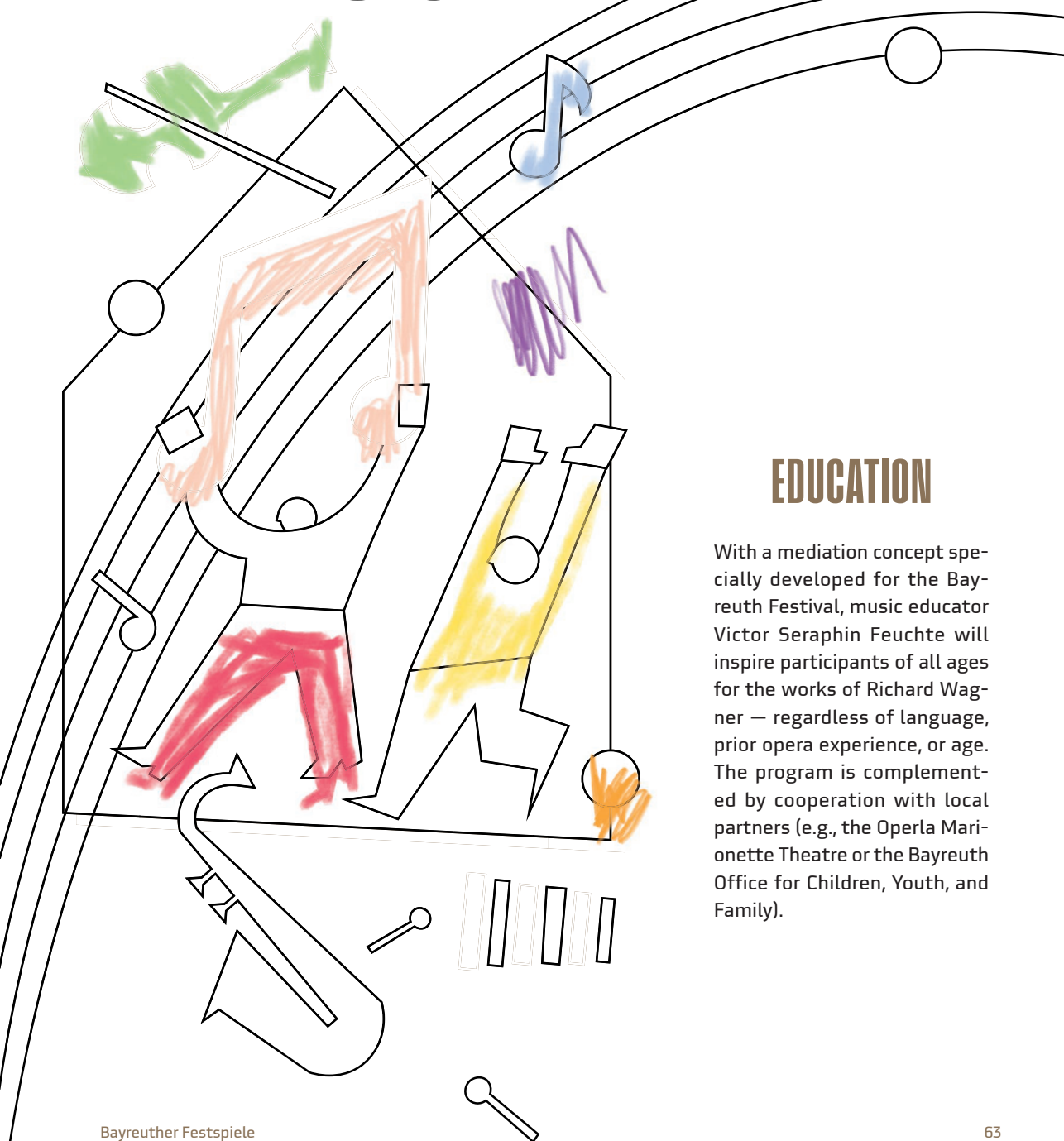


Teufelsloch

For those with a little more time and a desire to escape into nature, a visit to the Teufelsloch, near Bayreuth, is highly recommended. Take a bus or drive to the picturesque village of Oberwaiz, then set off on a short walk through the distinctive Franconian countryside. The Teufelsloch reveals itself as a deep, dramatic gorge with a small stream running through it. Richard Wagner is said to have been fond of visiting this site – and it is quite likely that one or two scenes from his operas were inspired by it.

**Wagner for everyone: with an open programme,
the Open-Air Festival, children's opera and affordable
tickets for young adults**

SUPPORTING PROGRAMME



EDUCATION

With a mediation concept specially developed for the Bayreuth Festival, music educator Victor Seraphin Feuchte will inspire participants of all ages for the works of Richard Wagner — regardless of language, prior opera experience, or age. The program is complemented by cooperation with local partners (e.g., the Operla Marionette Theatre or the Bayreuth Office for Children, Youth, and Family).



FESTIVAL-OPEN-AIR

Following the successful open-air concerts of recent years, the Festival Orchestra will perform twice again in 2026 on the hill in front of the Festspielhaus — free for everyone. Local food and drinks will be available, and picnics are of course welcome.

WAGNER FOR STARTERS

For the 2026 anniversary season, young music fans (up to the age of 25) will also have the opportunity to attend selected performances (Rienzi (3.8.), Walküre (5.8.), Siegfried (7.8.), Rheingold (12.8.), Götterdämmerung (16.8.), Der fliegende Holländer (18.8.) and Parsifal (25.8.)) at a reduced price. Thanks to the generous support of the Society of Friends of Bayreuth, Wagner for Starters tickets cost just €50 this year. Participation by e-mail to: wagnerforstarters@bayreuther-festspiele.de Proof of age required on collection, tickets will not be sent digitally.

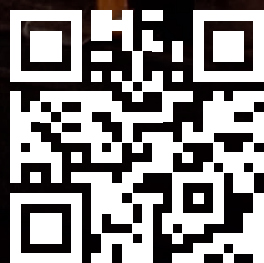


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BON MOTS



Richard Wagner – both librettist and composer – also had a remarkable gift for language, leaving behind many memorable quotes:

*“He who lives loves
change and
transformation.”*

“No individual
can be happy until
we all are, because
no individual
can be free until
everyone is free.”

“Only love
brings us
under-
standing.”

“For the first
time, a theatre
is being built
for an idea and
for a work!”

— Franz Liszt, 2nd August 1873

“This view
beyond the
world – it is,
indeed, the only
one that truly
understands
the world.”

**“It is essential
that the singer
also be a good
musician.”**

“The whole world
agrees that youth grows
and blossoms - but
to stay young in old age,
that is the art.”

*“MUSIC
IS THE
BREATH OF
THE SOUL.”*

**“It remains
true for all time:
where human
speech ends,
music begins.”**

“The oldest, truest and
most beautiful instrument
of music – the instrument
to which our music owes
its very existence – is the
human voice.”

TICKET PRICES

CEREMONY
With speeches and
Symphony no. 9
by L. v. B

RIENZI
New production
RING
Single productions

RING
Cycle

**DER FLIEGENDE
HOLLÄNDER**
PARSIFAL

CENTRAL STALLS

A1	250 €	423 €	1.692 €	352 €
A2	231 €	392 €	1.568 €	325 €
A3	209 €	357 €	1.428 €	295 €
A4	185 €	313 €	1.252 €	260 €
A5	154 €	265 €	1.060 €	217 €

STALLS LEFT/RIGHT

B1	209 €	357 €	1.428 €	295 €
B2	185 €	313 €	1.252 €	260 €
B3	160 €	270 €	1.080 €	225 €
B4	140 €	236 €	944 €	197 €
B5	114 €	197 €	788 €	161 €
B6	114 €	197 €	788 €	161 €

BOX

C1	250 €	423 €	1.692 €	352 €
C2	231 €	392 €	1.568 €	325 €
C3	209 €	357 €	1.428 €	295 €
C4	185 €	313 €	1.252 €	260 €
C5	154 €	265 €	1.060 €	217 €
C6	125 €	212 €	848 €	176 €
C7	64 €	95 €	380 €	90 €

BALCONY

E1	185 €	313 €	1.252 €	260 €
E2	154 €	265 €	1.060 €	217 €
E3	125 €	212 €	848 €	176 €
E4	94 €	159 €	636 €	133 €
E5	62 €	106 €	424 €	88 €
E6	32 €	52 €	208 €	45 €

GALLERY

G1	62 €	106 €	424 €	88 €
G2	32 €	52 €	208 €	45 €
G3 T	22 €	27 €	108 €	22 €
G4 H	11 €	13 €	52 €	11 €



MOBILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, WHEELCHAIR SPACES & STEP-FREE ACCESS

For each performance at the Festspielhaus, up to six **wheelchair spaces** (B3) are available, each with one seat for an accompanying person (free of charge with valid proof). Each performance also offers up to 20 **aisle seats** (B2 and B3) for visitors with limited mobility. Seats in rows 9 to 13 are fitted with an induction loop system to improve sound quality for guests using hearing aids. Step-free access is available only for price categories A1, B1, B2, B3. Please note: legroom is partially restricted in **row 30 of the stalls** (A5 and B6).

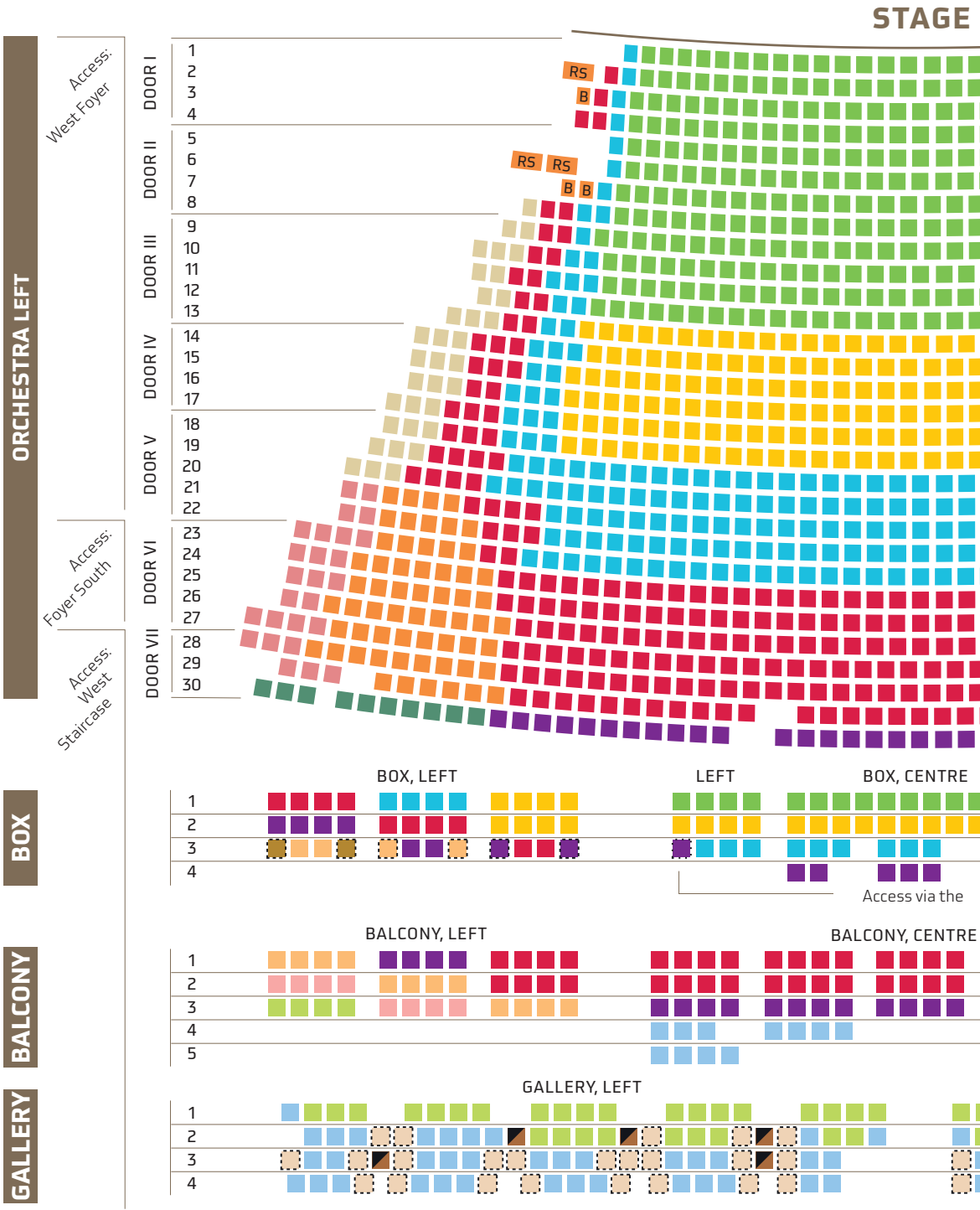


The boxes, balcony and gallery are accessible via stairs or lift.

BRÜNNHILDE BRENNT World premiere at Friedrichsforum

STALLS	P1	39 €	P2	29 €	P3	22 €
BOX	R1	39 €	R2	29 €	R3	22 €

SEATING PLAN

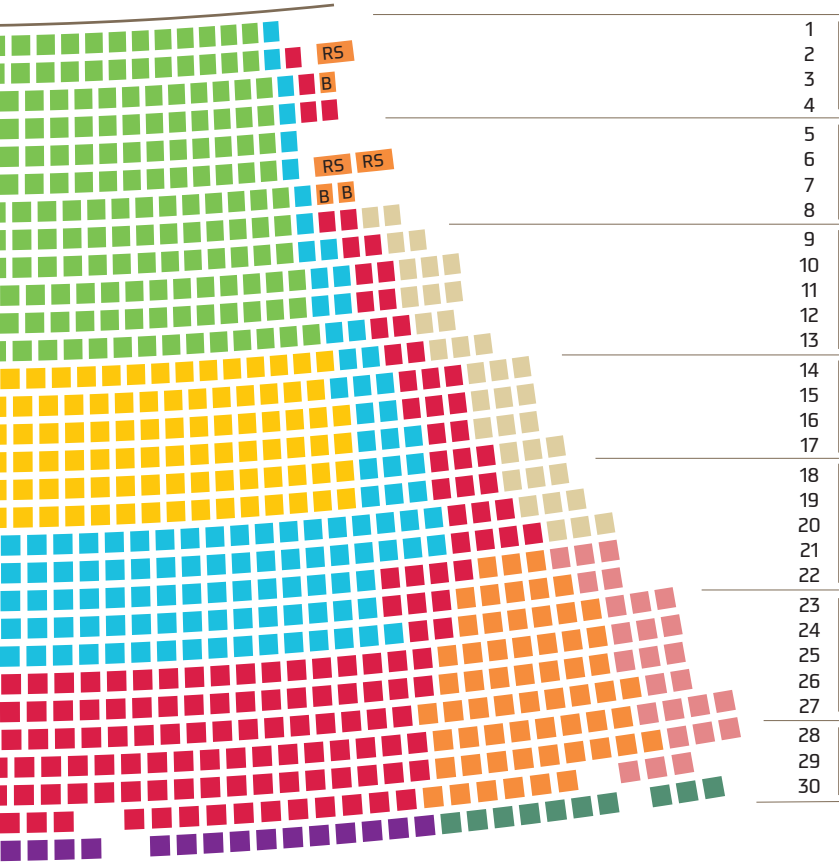


Partial view

Listening seat

Wheelchair space

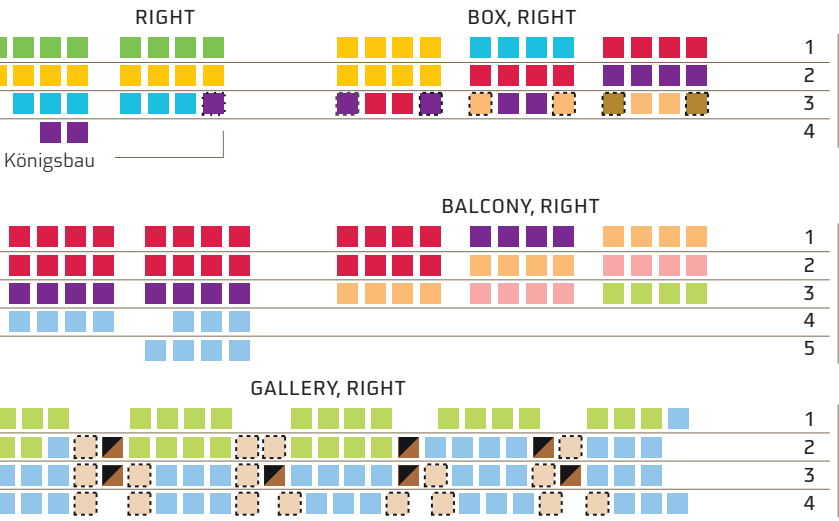
Accompanying person

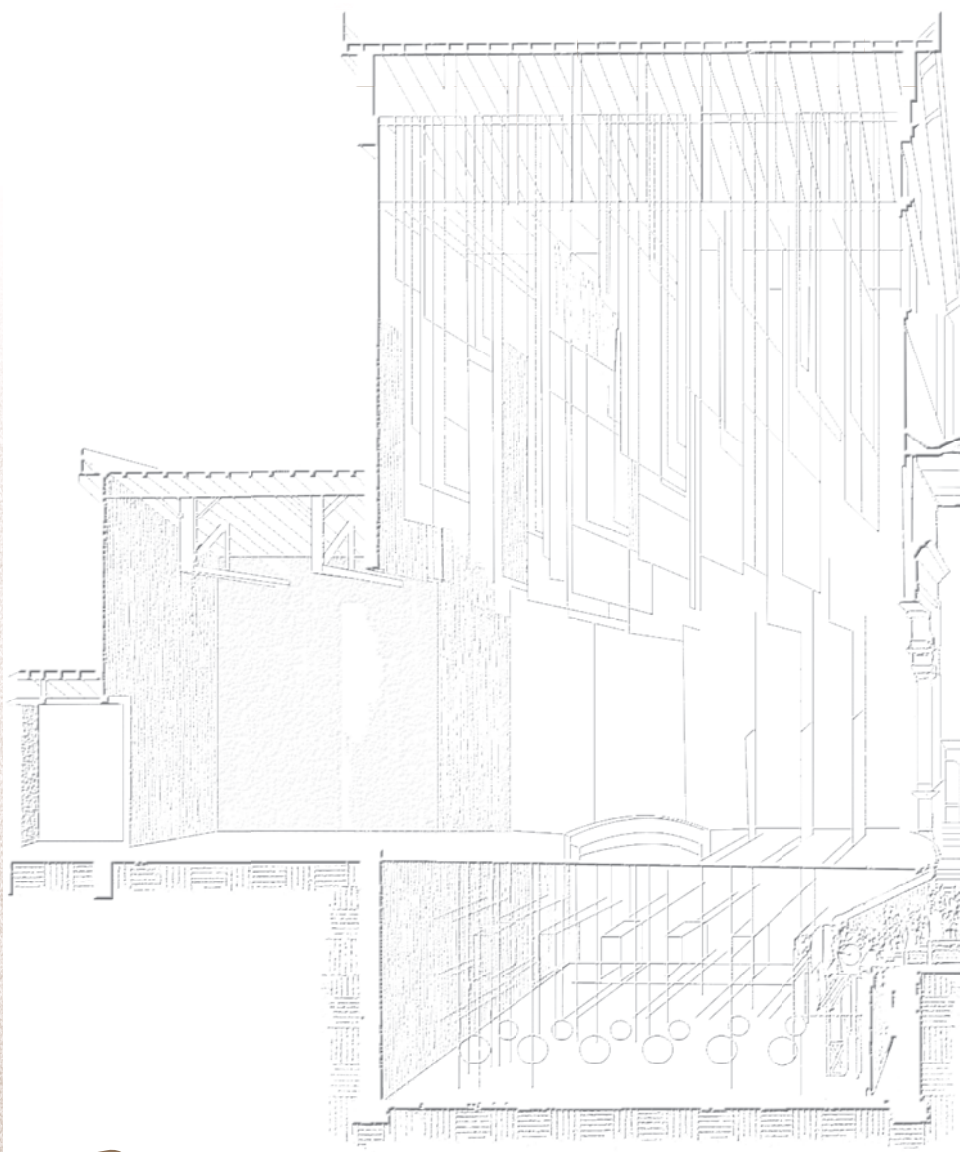


DOOR I
DOOR II
DOOR III
DOOR IV
DOOR V
DOOR VI
DOOR VII

Access:
East Foyer
Access:
South Foyer
Access:
East Staircase

ORCHESTRA RIGHT
BOX
BALCONY
GALLERY





Richard Wagner
BAYREUTHER FESTSPIELE