



Opera in Munich & Bregenz

Bellini, Handel, Janáček, Verdi

19–25 July 2026 (MM 115)

7 days

(including tickets to 4 performances)

Lecturer: Dr Bruno Bower

Four opera productions – *Norma*, *Alcina* (Munich), *The Excursions of Mr Brouček* and *La traviata* (Bregenz).

The Nationaltheater in Munich is one of the world's most dependable houses, and the Prinzregententheater has Jugendstil charm.

Bregenz offers the most spectacular productions of any open-air festival, with a lakeside setting to match.

We begin in München's Nationaltheater for Jürgen Rose's striking production of Bellini's *Norma*. The star-crossed romance in the ancient world of Druids and Romans is here reimagined in a stark and almost timeless vision of the clash of cultures. Conductor Giacomo Sagripanti leads a powerhouse cast of huge voices, including Najmiddin Mavlyanov as *Pollione* and Elena Stikhina as *Norma*.

We then move to the Prinzregententheater for Johanna Wehner's new production of Handel's *Alcina*, a modern retelling of the story of a queen and sorceress who has yet to find her true love. Expect vocal pyrotechnics from soprano Jeanine De Bique and countertenor John Holiday, conducted by Stefano Montanari, fresh from his work on *Ariodante* at Covent Garden.

In Bregenz, we begin with a performance at the Festspielhaus: a rare opportunity to see Janáček's *The Excursions of Mr Brouček*, where our humdrum, stolid hero finds himself embroiled in the strange worlds of the moon and 15th-century Prague. The surreal subject matter is a perfect fit for director Yuval Sharon, internationally in demand for his colourful and inventive stagings, while conductor Robert Jindra brings a Czech perspective to the music.

Finally, award-winning director Damiano Michieletto brings 1920s glamour to Verdi's *La traviata* on the famous Seebühne. 2026 will be the first time that Violetta's tragic clash with social convention has played out on the extraordinary mid-lake stage.



Munich, opera house, wood engraving c. 1880.

Itinerary

Day 1: London to Munich. Fly at c. 10.45am from London Heathrow to Munich (Lufthansa). Tour the city by coach to see much of the best of Munich's historic architecture: Neo-Classical Königsplatz, historicist Ludwigstrasse, Jugendstil houses and the modern Gasteig Arts Centre. The first of three nights in Munich.

Day 2: Munich. After the daily talk, there is a walk to see more of the city's treasures, including the vast Gothic cathedral and the Asamkirche, a Baroque masterpiece. Free afternoon. At the Nationaltheater: *Norma* (Bellini), with Giacomo Sagripanti (conductor), Jürgen Rose (production), Najmiddin Mavlyanov (*Pollione*), Michael Butler (*Flavio*), Roberto Tagliavini (*Oroveso*), Elena Stikhina (*Norma*), Aigul Akhmetshina (*Adalgisa*).

Day 3: Munich. In the morning a second walking tour which culminates in a visit to the Alte Pinakothek, one of the world's greatest Old Master galleries. The afternoon is again free, though a visit to the Residenz with its exquisite Rococo Theatre by Cuvillies is recommended. At the Prinzregententheater: *Alcina* (Handel), with Stefano Montanari (conductor), Johanna Wehner (production), Jeanine De Bique (*Alcina*), John Holiday (*Ruggiero*), Jessica Niles

(*Morgana*), Avery Amereau (*Bradamante*), Carine Tinney (*Oberto*), Julian Prégardien (*Oronte*), Gerrit Illenberger (*Melisso*).

Day 4: Ottobeuren, Bregenz. Leave Munich and journey by coach through the lovely landscape of Upper Bavaria, skirting the Alpine foothills before entering the Vorarlberg region of Austria. Break the journey at the little town of Ottobeuren to see the magnificent monastery, whose church is one of the greatest achievements of German Baroque. Arrive in Lochau, (4 km from the centre of Bregenz) for the first of three nights here.

Day 5: Bregenz. Strung out along the edge of Lake Constance, Bregenz is the attractive little capital of the Vorarlberg, the western-most province of Austria. A guided walking tour in the morning begins in the historic Upper Town and then descends to the lake and the museum. The afternoon is free. Evening opera at the Festspielhaus: *The Excursions of Mr Brouček* (Janáček) with Robert Jindra (conductor), Yuval Sharon (production) Prague Philharmonic Choir, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, cast to be confirmed.

Day 6: Bregenz. Optional boat excursion to Lindau, a charming medieval town set on an

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continued

island. Final evening opera at the Seebühne, the open-air opera house with a stage on the lake and with seats from which hills in three countries can be seen: *La traviata* (Verdi), with Kirill Karabits, Pietro Rizzo (musical direction), Damiano Michieletto (stage director), Wired Aerial Theatre, Bregenzer Festspiele Extras, Bregenzer Festspiele Choir, Prague Philharmonic Choir, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, cast to be confirmed.

Day 7: Zurich to London. Drive to Zurich and fly to Heathrow, arriving at c. 4.15pm.

Lecturer

Dr Bruno Bower (FRSA, FHEA).

Musicologist, oboist, composer, and music editor, with research specialisms in Victorian print culture and operetta. He has written and presented on subjects as diverse as Gilbert and Sullivan, John Cage, and Victorian polymaths, and he is the General Editor for critical editions of music by Peter Gellhorn and Norman O'Neill. He currently teaches at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and runs adult courses in classical music and opera for Imperial College London and for a range of private institutions across London.

Practicalities

Included: accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 4 dinners with wine; private coach for the excursions and transfers; admissions; tips for waiters, drivers and guides; all state and airport taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Music: tickets (top category) for 4 operas are included. The tickets will be confirmed in December 2025. In the event of bad weather in Bregenz, the performance will take place indoors in a nearby theatre.

Accommodation. Platzl Hotel, Munich (platzl.de): 4-star hotel located in the heart of the old city, a 5-minute walk from the opera house.

See Hotel am Kaiserstrand, Lochau (seehotel-kaiserstrand.com): spacious 4-star hotel on the shores of Lake Constance, 4 km from the centre of Bregenz, and a short boat journey to the Festival stage. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*

How strenuous? The tour involves some walking in the town centres where vehicular access is restricted, and should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Average distance by coach per day: 37 miles, primarily on 3 days of the tour.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.