



## Leipzig Bach Festival

J.S. Bach's 50 best-loved cantatas

**11–18 June 2026 (MM 986)**

8 days

Lecturer: Professor John Butt OBE

Top category tickets for twelve concerts featuring Bach's 50 best-loved cantatas, as voted in advance by the festival audience and announced on the day.

Artists from around the world including some of the leading specialists in Bach and the Baroque: The Constellation Choir & Orchestra, Vox Luminis, and Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir led by Ton Koopman all appear.

Concert are at the Thomaskirche and Nikolaikirche, the churches where J.S. Bach was director of music.

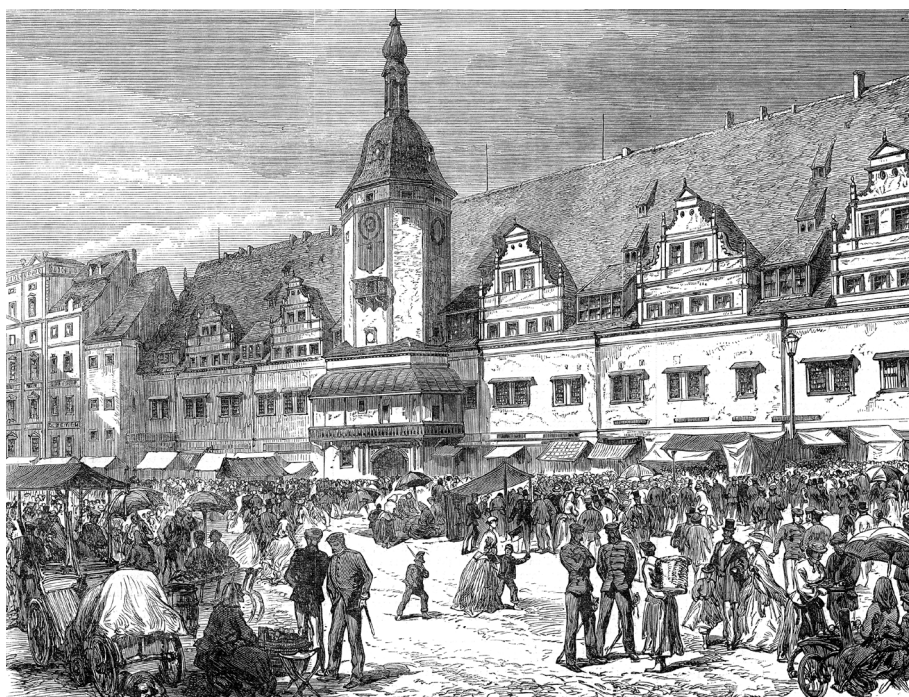
Centrally-located hotel within easy walking distance of the concerts and restaurants.

Guided walks to explore the architecture and musical heritage of this historic and lively city.

Over 80 members of the Bach family are listed in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. For two centuries the Bachs, Johann Sebastian among them, plied their trade in the employ of courts, churches and free cities in Thuringia and Saxony. Though geographically in the heart of Germany, these places were not among the major political or cultural centres of Europe. And their location on the other side of the Iron Curtain in the later 20th century enveloped them further in obscurity.

There was no star system in the Bachs' time; genius was an alien concept. The tradition the family worked in was one of sheer dogged professionalism, with ability generally recognised and rewarded. Really exceptional once-in-a-century talent was beyond the comprehension of the city burgers, however; Johann Sebastian was the third choice for the post of Cantor at St Thomas's Church in Leipzig, and for the remainder of his life he was constantly chafing against the indifference and high-handedness of his employers.

The Bachfest Leipzig has become established as one of the major items in the calendar of European festivals. The venues most used are the parish church of St Thomas (the Thomaskirche), which was Bach's principal auditorium during the 27 years when he was effectively the city's director of music, and the Nikolaikirche, another church for which he had responsibility.



Leipzig, Altes Rathaus wood engraving from *The Illustrated London News*, 1866.

Leipzig is now, again, a handsome and lively city, following an almost miraculous transformation during the 1990s and beyond. Cleaning, restoration and rebuilding went hand in hand with the emergence of cafés, smart shops and good restaurants. Located at the heart of this ancient trading city is the large market place and the renaissance Town Hall, and around is a beguiling network of alleys, courtyards and arcades.

Guided walks investigate this heritage and the musical history of the city, which encompasses not only the Bach family but also Telemann, Robert and Clara Schumann, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Mahler and Kurt Masur. There is time also to enjoy the excellent museums – the Fine Arts Museum in spectacular new premises, the radically refurbished Museum of Musical Instruments, or the rejuvenated Bach Museum.

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Fly from London Heathrow to Berlin at c. 11.00am (British Airways) with onward travel to Leipzig (c. 3 hours) by private coach. Time to settle into the hotel before dinner in the hotel restaurant.

**Day 2.** The morning talk is followed by a walk with a local guide to introduce the layout and main buildings of Leipzig's historic centre. *Afternoon concert at the Thomaskirche with the Choir & Orchestra of the J.S. Bach Foundation, Rudolf Lutz (conductor), Miriam Feuersinger (soprano), Margot Oitzinger (alto), Daniel Johannsen (tenor), Matthias Helm (bass): J. S. Bach, a selection of three cantatas.* Dinner before an *evening concert at the Nikolaikirche with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir, Ton Koopman (conductor), Elisabeth Breuer (soprano), Maarten Engeltjes (alto), Tilman Lichdi (tenor), Klaus Mertens (bass): J. S. Bach, a selection of five cantatas.* *Optional late-night recital at the Salles de Pologne with Mahan Esfahani (harpsichord): J. S. Bach, Partita in B-flat major, BWV 825.2; Partita in G major, BWV 829.2; Partita in D major, BWV 828/2.*

**Day 3.** The morning is free until the *early-afternoon concert at the Nikolaikirche with Vox Luminis: J. S. Bach, a selection of five cantatas.* Free time or *optional afternoon recital at the Gewandhaus with Sir András Schiff (piano): J. S. Bach, French Overture in B minor, BWV 831.2; Italian Concerto in F major, BWV 971; Goldberg Variations, BWV 988.* *Evening concert at the*

## The Leipzig Bach Festival continued

*Thomaskirche with the Collegium Vocale Gent, Philippe Herreweghe (conductor), Dorothee Miels (soprano), Alex Potter (alto), Guy Cutting (tenor), Johannes Kammler (bass): J. S. Bach, a selection of four cantatas.*

**Day 4.** Morning guided tour of the Grassi Museum of Musical Instruments, one of the most important collections in the world. You may wish to stay on for the Grassi Museum of Applied Arts, or visit the Museum of Fine Arts or the apartment where Felix Mendelssohn lived and died. *Afternoon concert at the Thomaskirche with the Choir & Orchestra of the J.S. Bach Foundation, Rudolf Lutz (conductor), Miriam Feuersinger (soprano), Margot Oitzinger (alto), Daniel Johansen (tenor), Matthias Helm (bass): J. S. Bach, a selection of five cantatas.* Dinner before an *evening concert at the Nikolaikirche with the Collegium Vocale Gent, Philippe Herreweghe (conductor), Dorothee Miels (soprano), Alex Potter (alto), Guy Cutting (tenor), Johannes Kammler (bass): J. S. Bach, a selection of four cantatas.*

**Day 5.** A morning walk with a specialist guide concentrates on Leipzig's musical heritage. *Afternoon concert at the Thomaskirche with Vox Luminis: J. S. Bach, a selection of four cantatas.* Some free time before an *evening concert at the Nikolaikirche with the Gaechinger Cantorey, Hans-Christoph Rademann (conductor), and soloists (to be announced): J. S. Bach, a selection of four cantatas.* **Optional late-night recital at the Bach Museum with Mahan Esfahani (clavichord): A. de Cabezón, Diferencias sobre el canto llano del Caballero; J. J. Froberger, Toccata in F, FbWV 110; Tombeau fait à Paris sur la mort de monsieur Blancheroche in C minor, FbWV 632; W. F. Bach, Fantasy in E minor, Fk 21 (BR-WFB A 24); J. S. Bach, French Suite No. 2 in C minor, BWV 813.2; C. P. E. Bach, Fantasy in F-sharp minor, Wq 67.**

**Day 6.** The morning is free until the *afternoon recital at the Nikolaikirche with the Gaechinger Cantorey, Hans-Christoph Rademann (conductor), and soloists (to be announced): J. S. Bach, a selection of four cantatas.* Free time or *optional late-afternoon recital at the Gewandhaus with Sir András Schiff (piano): J. S. Bach: The Art of Fugue, BWV 1080.2.* *Evening concert at the Thomaskirche with The Constellation Choir & Orchestra, Sir John Eliot Gardiner (conductor): J. S. Bach, a selection of four cantatas.*

**Day 7.** After the daily talk, a guided tour of the excellent museum at the Bach Archive. *Afternoon concert at the Thomaskirche with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir, Ton Koopman (conductor), Elisabeth Breuer (soprano), Maarten Engeltjes (alto), Tilman Lichdi (tenor), Klaus Mertens (bass): J. S. Bach, a selection of four cantatas.* The final dinner is followed by an *evening concert at the Nikolaikirche with The Constellation Choir & Orchestra, Sir John Eliot Gardiner (conductor) and soloists (to be announced): J. S. Bach, a selection of four cantatas.*

**Day 8.** Drive from Leipzig to Berlin Airport and fly to London Heathrow, arriving late afternoon.

## Lecturer

**Professor John Butt OBE.** Gardiner Professor of Music at the University of Glasgow and musical director of Edinburgh's Dunedin Consort. He has published several books on Bach, the surrounding culture of performance and the historical performance movement. His recordings with the Dunedin Consort of Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's *Requiem* have received *Gramophone* awards (2007, 2014) and the latter was also nominated for a Grammy Award. He is Principal Artist with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and has been guest conductor with many orchestras across Europe and North America. He has been awarded the FBA and FRSE, the Dent Medal of the RMA and the RAM/Kohn Foundation's Bach Prize.

## Practicalities

**Optional concerts:** option to attend two late-evening concerts, two afternoon concerts OR all four concerts.

**Included:** top category tickets for twelve concerts; private coach for airport transfers; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 5 dinners (with drinks); museum admissions; tips; taxes; lecturer, tour manager and local guide.

**Music:** tickets to be confirmed autumn 2025.

**Accommodation. Leipzig Marriott Hotel** (leipzigmarriott.de): Conforming to its brand, the Marriott is a smart 4-star hotel with lots of marble, pillars, wood, brass and comfortable easy chairs. It is located on a pedestrian street just inside the north-eastern section of the ring road that runs around the city centre, and no more than 10–15 minutes on foot from the venues. Rooms are spacious, with cosy neoclassical furnishings and are equipped to a high standard. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

**How strenuous?** Walking is the only practical way of getting around the largely pedestrianised centre of Leipzig. Most walks will be less than 20 minutes.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.