



## Leipzig Bach Festival

Music by the Bach family and their Baroque contemporaries

**16–22 June 2026 (MM 987)**

7 days

Lecturer: Dr. Ruth Tatlow

Top category tickets for ten concerts.

Artists from around the world including some of the leading specialists in Bach and the Baroque: The Constellation Choir & Orchestra, Thomanerchor Leipzig, Ton Koopman, Mahan Esfahani and Il Pomo d'Oro all appear.

Concert venues include 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. There are concerts also in the University Church, the Old Town Hall (Altes Rathaus), and in the Evangelical Reformed Church.



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 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 cantatas, announced on the day.** 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 cantatas, announced on the day.**

**Day 3.** After the daily talk, a guided tour of the excellent museum at the Bach Archive. **Late-afternoon concert at the Peterskirche with Voces Suaves and the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin: J. S. Bach, Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr, zu dir, BWV 131; Keiser (Reinhard or Gottfried), St Mark Passion; D. Buxtehude, Jesu, meines Lebens Leben, BuxWV 62.** **Evening concert at the Thomaskirche with the Orchester Wiener Akademie, Martin Haselböck (conductor), Johanna Falkinger, Miriam Feuersinger (soprano), Reginald Mobley, Alois Mühlbacher (alto), Daniel Johannsen, Benedikt Kristjánsson (tenor), Stefan Zenkl, Felix Schwandtke (bass):**

## The Leipzig Bach Festival continued

*J. S. Bach, Sanctus in D major, BWV 241 (after J. C. Kerll); Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten, BWV 214; A. Caldara, Magnificat in C major; J. S. Bach, Schleicht, spielende Wellen, und murmelt gelinde, BWV 206. Optional late-night recital at the Altes Rathaus with Mark Kroll (harpsichord): F. Couperin, Rondeau in B-flat major; Sixième Ordre, from: Pièces de clavecin, Livre 2; Troisième Ordre, from: Pièces de clavecin, Livre 1; J. S. Bach, Französische Suite No. 3 in B minor, BWV 814.2.*

**Day 4.** The morning is free until the **afternoon recital at the University Church with Mahan Esfahani (harpsichord): J. S. Bach, Gigue, from: Partita No. 6 in E minor, BWV 830; Italian Concerto in F major, BWV 971; French Overture in B minor, BWV 831.2; Goldberg Variations, BWV 988.** Dinner is followed by an **evening concert at the Nikolaikirche with La Tempête and Simon-Pierre Bestion (conductor): J. Brahms, Ein deutsches Requiem, op. 45 (selected movements); J. S. Bach, Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich, BWV 150; D. Buxtehude, Herr, wenn ich nur dich habe, BuxWV 39; A. Hammerschmidt, Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen, Herr Zebaoth; H. Schütz, Nacket bin ich vom Mutterleibe kommen, SWV 279, and other works. Optional late-night recital at the Evangelical Reformed Church with Isabelle Faust (violin) and Kristian Bezuidenhout (harpsichord): J. S. Bach, three sonatas from: 6 sonatas for violin and harpsichord, BWV 1014–1019.**

**Day 5.** The morning is free until the **midday recital at the University Church with Lucile Boulanger (viola da gamba) and Pierre Hantaï (harpsichord): J. S. Bach, Sonata in G major, BWV 1027; Sonata in G minor, BWV 1029, and other works.** Afternoon 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. **Evening concert at the Nikolaikirche with Il Pomo d'Oro, Francesco Corti (conductor) and Emőke Baráth (soprano): vocal and instrumental works by G. F. Handel and J. S. Bach.**

**Day 6.** A morning walk with a specialist guide concentrates on Leipzig's musical heritage. **Afternoon concert at the University Church with the Helsinki Baroque Orchestra, Aapo Häkkinen (conductor, harpsichord), Pierre Hantaï (harpsichord), Zefira Valova (violin), Tuomo Suni (violin): J. S. Bach, Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D major, BWV 1050; Concerto for 2 harpsichords in C minor, BWV 1060; Concerto for 2 harpsichords in C major, BWV 1061.2; Concerto for 2 violins in D minor, BWV 1043; W. F. Bach, Concerto for 2 harpsichords in F major, Fk 10 (BR-WFB A 12).** Final dinner after an **early evening concert at the Thomaskirche with Thomanerchor Leipzig, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Thomaskantor Andreas Reize (conductor), Dorothee Miels (soprano), Miriam Feuersinger (soprano), Ulrike Malotta (alto), Manuel Walser (bass): J. S. Bach, Mass in B minor, BWV 232.4.**

**Day 6.** Drive from Leipzig to Berlin Airport and fly to London Heathrow, arriving late afternoon.

## Lecturer

**Dr. Ruth Tatlow.** Lecturer, musician, and writer on the history of ideas in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries in Germany with the music of J. S. Bach as the focal point. She is a visiting researcher at the Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg. Her latest book *Bach's Church Cantatas* (Oxford University Press, 2025) is particularly relevant to the concerts we will hear on the tour.

## Practicalities

**Included:** top category tickets for ten concerts; private coach for airport transfers; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 4 dinners and 1 lunch (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.