

# THE SALZBURG FESTIVAL

## CENTER STAGE

PRESENTED BY



### AUGUST IN SALZBURG WHERE MUSIC AND MAESTROS MEET



MATTHIAS BAUS

For almost a century, the Alpine city of Salzburg, Austria, has been home to the Salzburg Festival, one of the most prestigious celebrations of opera, symphony and theater. Established in 1920 by five artistic luminaries (including the composer Richard Strauss, the playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the director Max Reinhardt), the festival has become synonymous with great musical performances and innovative operas.

Small wonder — this is the hometown of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

From serenades in the courtyard of the Alte Residenz in the historic center of the bustling city to massive operas performed on the panoramic stage of the Festspielhaus, the Salzburg Festival has long provided rich offerings for music lovers.

Its reputation extends far beyond Austria. In April, Salzburg won the Opera Festivals prize at the International Opera Awards in London, considered the Oscars of the opera world. "This award marks one of my happiest moments in my presidency of 18 years," said Helga Rabl-Stadler, president of the festival. "It is a huge recognition for more than 3,600 employees and artists who turn the small city of Salzburg into the cultural capital of the world for six weeks every year."

All of this art is framed in the quaint, picturesque Altstadt, where the winding, cobbled streets and sweeping plazas linking the venues convey the sense of being transported back in time.

Says the German tenor Jonas Kaufmann, who is singing the title role in Verdi's "Don Carlo" this year: "I think that the atmosphere of festivals like Salzburg will often have a certain influence on your performance." As the English baritone Christopher Maltman, who sings the title role in the opera "Gawain," tweeted: "Wonderful to be back in Salzburg!"

This year's festival, which runs until Sept. 1, opened with the Overture Sprieltreue, a series of concerts featuring works of a spiritual or religious nature. In addition to the traditional performances of Mozart's Mass in C

### JONAS KAUFMANN AS DON CARLO ‘ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE ROLES’



SCHUTZSCHOTT/PEOPLE

In this new century, the German tenor Jonas Kaufmann has emerged as one of opera's great leading men. This year at the Salzburg Festival, the tenor takes to the stage in the title role of "Don Carlo," the complex protagonist of Verdi's darkest opera. This new production is by the German director Peter Stein.

This is the last of three operas Verdi wrote for the Opera de Paris. In this enormous, grandiose work, Carlo must battle his father, King Philip II of Spain, and his burning lust for his former fiancée, Elisabeth de Valois. The problem: Philip has married Elisabeth.

The libretto plays fast and loose with history, but there really was a Spanish prince named Don Carlos, prince of Asturias, who died at the age of 23. "The historic Carlos has been described as a sort of retarded human being," says Kaufmann. "In Verdi's drama and Verdi's opera, he is not retarded, but emotionally labile."

He adds: "Carlo is a very demanding part. There are so many aspects in him, which you have to bring out convincingly."

His suffering, his love for Elisabeth, the conflict with his father, his friendship to Posa, his physical inability, his lack of self-confidence.

"I see him as a victim," Kaufmann says, "a victim in the battle of humanity against the power of state and church. Of course, there are many different approaches to this role, but for me one thing is for sure: Carlo should be a person with whom the audience can sympathize and empathize."

While Salzburg provides a splendid backdrop against which to perform, for Kaufmann, the main influence on his performance will be his director, conductor and partners. "I'm very lucky in Salzburg," he says. "If you think of all those exciting performances I've shared with Antonio Pappano in the pit and with my colleagues Niki Seifert, Matti Salminen and Thomas Hampson, it seems almost like a family reunion."

### A SUMMER BALL DECKED IN ROSES

The Salzburg Festival is more than just a series of concerts and operas that bring this musical city to vivid life. One of its social highlights is the second annual Festival Ball, a full-on extravaganza with dancing, debonair and party music as only Austria's greatest composers can write it.

This year's ball falls at the end of the festival, on Aug. 23, and the theme is "The Rose." Designers have drawn visual inspiration from the French writer Pauline Piere. Josephine Redouté, former companion to Marie Antoinette, Redouté, whose work features a cod Old World elegance, has been described as "the Raphael of flowers."

Salzburg has more than a few

rooms that glitter, and the ball will be held on the double-wide stage of the Felsenreitschule. This former quarry (the name means "rock riding school") was made into the archbishop of Salzburg's own equestrian school following the excavation of granite for the Salzburg Cathedral. Built in 1693, it became the primary theater venue of the festival in 1926.

A flurry of auditions, fittings and rehearsals have been taking place before the ball as young people from Vienna, Graz and Vorarlberg demonstrate their skill in dancing the quadrille and the right-turning waltz. At the festival ball, the gentlemen will wear a frock coat and the ladies dinner dresses. The traditional Austrian dress made famous by "The Sound of Music." This year's dresses are the work of the festival's costume director, Dorothea Nicolai. The dirndl will also feature the Redouté rose.



Gustavo Dudamel, a product of Venezuela's music-education program El Sistema, conducts the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra.

### CECILIA BARTOLI TAKING 'NORMA' BACK TO ITS ROOTS

Cecilia Bartoli is revolutionizing "Norma."

The mezzo-soprano returns to the Salzburg Festival in August in the title role of Bellini's bel canto masterpiece, the story of a Gallic priestess whose illicit affair with a Roman military commander ends in tragedy and flames.

The Salzburg Festival performances are a second run for Bartoli's Norma. She introduced the role earlier this year at the Whitsun Festival, a May extension of the Salzburg Festival, where her role as artistic director was recently extended to 2016.

Said Helga Rabl-Stadler, president of the Salzburg Festival, at the time of the announcement: "Cecilia Bartoli's brilliance and her endless dedication cast an irresistible spell on our audience. To me, as the president and financially responsible officer of this organization, it is a joy to report on the increase in attendance just over the past three years: In 2011, we counted 7,600 festival visitors at Whitsun. One year later, the number had risen to 10,520."

Says Bartoli: "I am looking forward to realizing so many ideas I have been dreaming of for years at the Whitsun Festival. And I am also deeply grateful that such a large and interested audience should follow us on our adventurous tours with so much enthusiasm and excitement."

Of "Norma," she added: "I am proud and grateful that here in Salzburg we had the opportunity to present a new vision of Bellini's 'Norma' with a great team. The unusual sound, based on a critical new edition of the score and an orchestra playing on historic instruments, allows the work to appear in a completely new light."

"Norma" is one of the most difficult roles in the repertoire, written in 1831 for Maria Malibran, the legendary singer who inspired some of Bellini's greatest work. In the mid-20th century, the role was associated with the singers Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland, sopranos capable of floating the high notes of the aria "Casta diva" and dive-bombing through the tricky duets and ensembles.

In her introductory essay to the new Decca recording of the opera, Bartoli explains her back-to-basics approach. The



Cecilia Bartoli as Norma, with John Osborn  
HANS JORGENSEN

neglected for many years. Bartoli's own "Norma" revolution does something similar, enabling the listener to hear Bellini without prejudice.

"When we read Bellini's manuscripts," she writes, "it becomes clear that the conventional casting of the main roles in 'Norma' does not accurately reflect the vocal character of the parts. The tendency is to carry on the misguided tradition of the 1950s."

"It seems to me that today our assessment of the music, especially that of the first half of the 19th century, is still subject to a serious error," she continues. "Our perceptions of interpretation and sound have been informed by technical achievements and aesthetics of the 20th century."

She points out that concert and opera goers hear music through a "misunderstood realist style, based on a misconception. That is, an excess of volume, a sound 'shouted' or disjointed, sobbing notes, a large vibrato and imprecise and variable pitch notation."

"In order to meet the changing requirements of the modern orchestra's irresistible power and ever higher pitch, the voice today is exposed to unhealthy, exorbitant pressure. Its flexibility and ability to create different colors becomes compromised. More and more often there are cases in which the voices, consequently, are ruined, and a vulnerable career is cut short."

The performances at Salzburg use the new critical edition of Bellini's score, created in collaboration with the musicologist Maurizio Bindi and the conductor Giovanni Antonini. Taking this historically informed approach to opera is like stripping Linseed varnish from a great painted masterwork: the original colors of the work spring back to vivid life.

Says Bartoli: "One thing is certain: You should adopt an approach that is always correct in terms of history. Not from the vantage point of a rather crude naturalism that characterized the early years of the 20th century, but directly back to its roots. Only then can we appreciate the true magic, the colors and the emotions that this music is able to transmit."

"Giovanna d'Arco" (Joan of Arc), Plácido Domingo sings Giacomo, father of the title character, continuing his exploration of Verdi's baritone roles. Schiller will also be celebrated with a theatrical performance of his play "Die Jungfrau von Orleans," which inspired the Bellini version of the Joan of Arc story.

Of course, there's Mozart. "Così Fan Tutte" is the first entry in a new cycle of the Mozart/Da Ponte operas, conducted by Franz Welser-Möst. The festival also offers "Lucio Silla," with the Mexican tenor Rolando Villazon in the title role, written when Mozart was just 16. A filmed-for-television production of Mozart's "Die Entführung aus dem Serail" will be broadcast live from the city's Hangar-7 aircraft museum on Monday, Aug. 26, at 8:15 p.m. on ServusTV.

This year marks the return of a beloved Salzburg tradition: serenades in the Residenz courtyard. The Camerata Salzburg is the featured ensemble, with a wide range of repertoire including 18th- and 19th-century instrumental works, Schumann lieder and a program of sensuous tangos sung by the Uruguayan bass Erwin Schrott.

Chamber music and piano works are central to any great music festival. This year, Salzburg features the international keyboard luminary Rudolf Buchbinder, Maurizio Pollini and Pierre-Laurent Aimard. The latter will work with Tamara Stefanovich to play "Oliver Messiaen's transcendent 'Visions de l'Amen'" on two pianos, a work that celebrates the act of creation with a mighty crescendo of sound.

Finally, the Hagen Quartet returns with a complete cycle of Beethoven string quartets in the last weeks of August. ■

### CAMP SONGS IN A CLASSICAL MODE

Walk down the Arenbergstrasse in Salzburg and you will see a long, dusky-pink building built in the 14th century as a castle. This is the Arenberg Villa, the summer residence of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and home to the Salzburg Festival Opera Camps program.

The Opera Camps are an intensive one-week training program open to young people aged 9 to 17 from around the world. For one week, these students work with members of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and Richard Wagner with performances of those composers' great comedies: Verdi's "Falstaff" and Wagner's "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg."

greatest moments from the opera they've studied.

This year, the camp celebrates the 200th birthdays of Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner with performances of those composers' great comedies: Verdi's "Falstaff" and Wagner's "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg."

### VIENNA PHILHARMONIC A SOUND LIKE NO OTHER

The Vienna Philharmonic is Austria's national treasure, an ensemble whose traditions and unique sound make it stand alone among the world's great orchestras. From the incredible precision and warm burnished string sound to the brass (led by the players who specialize in the 19th-century style Viennese horn in F), no orchestra sounds quite like the Vienna Philharmonic.

This year's Salzburg Festival concert program features five concerts covering a wide variety of orchestral styles with a constellation of internationally acclaimed conductors. First up: Haydn, the father of Austrian classical music, is represented with his sparkling oratorio "Die Jahreszeiten" (The Seasons.) Niklaus Harnocourt, a specialist in 18th-century music, conducts.

The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra is historically linked to the symphonic works of Mahler and Bruckner. This year, both composers are represented with performances of their respective Fifth Symphonies. Mahler's Fifth (conducted by Zubin Mehta) was written in 1901 as the composer settled into married life and his coveted role as principal conductor of the philharmonic. Despite Mahler's relative happiness, the Fifth is a long, heroic struggle that opens with a thunderous funeral march and trumpet solo that quotes Beethoven's own Fifth. The symphony's course leads to its famous movement: a radiant Adagietto followed by a triumphant close. This program pairs the Mahler with Mozart's "Turkish" Violin Concerto with the soloist Pinhas Zukerman. Bruckner's Fifth (led by the Romantic specialist Christian Thielemann) translates ancient church choral writing into woodwinds and brass, creating a stunning edifice of sound. Because of illness, its author never heard this work performed by an orchestra.

Verdi and Wagner are both represented by the Vienna players. Riccardo Muti brings his explosive interpretation of Verdi's "Requiem" to the Grosses Festspielhaus, with its thundering depiction of the wrath of God and the closing Lachrymosa, among the most triumphant close. This program pairs the Mahler with Mozart's "Turkish" Violin Concerto with the soloist Pinhas Zukerman. Bruckner's Fifth (led by the Romantic specialist Christian Thielemann) translates ancient church choral writing into woodwinds and brass, creating a stunning edifice of sound. Because of illness, its author never heard this work performed by an orchestra.

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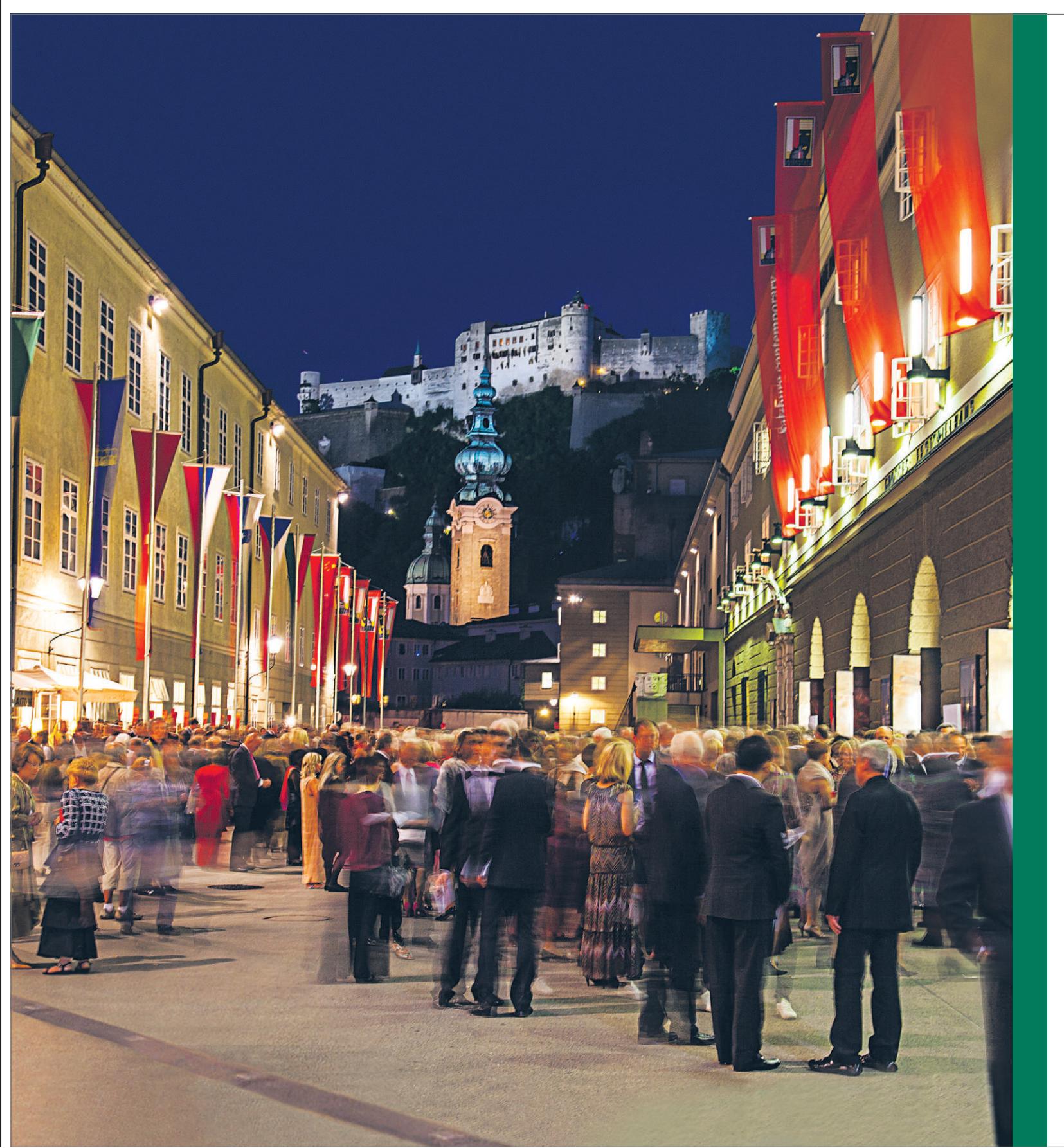
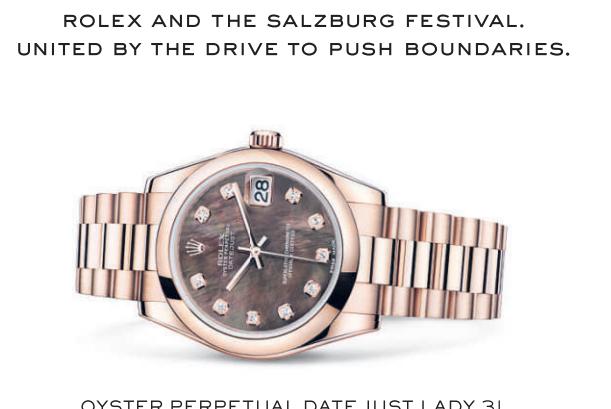
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During the Salzburg Festival, Opera Online will offer a "festival encyclopedia" ([www.opera-online.com/fr/events/festival-det-de-salzburg-2013](http://www.opera-online.com/fr/events/festival-det-de-salzburg-2013), in French) with links to its informative presentations on works and composers. Throughout the event, Opera Online is highlighting the productions and performers of this year's festival to heighten music-lovers' appreciation and understanding. Having kicked off the festival with Harrison Birtwistle's "Gawain," it will continue with "Don Carlo" and a video interview with Jonas Kaufmann in August.

Medici.tv, offering the largest classical music video catalogue online, is broadcasting two exceptional events during this summer's Salzburg Festival. On Aug. 1, Gustavo Dudamel directed the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra in Mahler's Symphony No. 8, bringing together more than 600 musicians onstage. On Aug. 16, the star tenor Jonas Kaufmann performs the title role in Verdi's "Don Carlo," conducted by Antonio Pappano and directed by Peter Stein. For more details, go to [www.medici.tv](http://www.medici.tv).