

# WAGNER 22 – A Gesamtkunstwerk

*International Richard Wagner Festival with all 13 music dramas  
from 20 June – 14 July 2022*

*Honoring initiator and former opera director **Gustav Brecher** (1879-1940)*

In summer 2022, the Oper Leipzig will both close out the season and bid farewell to General Music Director and Intendant Prof. Ulf Schirmer by presenting all 13 of Richard Wagner's completed music dramas. This festival titled WAGNER 22 will take place from 20 June to 14 July 2022. It is the central classical music event in the musical city of Leipzig, and will present all of Wagner's operas in chronological order – with the exception of the *Ring* cycle whose four parts will follow each other directly. In addition to his more familiar works, such as *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Parsifal*, the Oper Leipzig will also present Richard Wagner's early works: *Die Feen*, *Das Liebesverbot*, and *Rienzi*. The Gewandhausorchester will play for all of the performances, under the musical direction of Ulf Schirmer and others.

WAGNER 22, this celebratory and ground-breaking event is Ulf Schirmer's special thanks to his audience and to the city. At the same time, the Oper Leipzig commemorates former General Music Director Gustav Brecher. Brecher was the first to come up with the idea for this musical-romantic *Gesamtkunstwerk*. He also brought international attention and recognition to the Oper Leipzig in the 1920s, by presenting avant-garde music and by creating a new spirit for the ensemble. Following in the tradition Brecher created, the cast of singers will come both from the Oper Leipzig's capable and experienced soloist ensemble and from a roster of regular guest artists known the world over for their Wagnerian interpretations. To date, the list of confirmed guests includes Evelyn Herlitzius (Kundry), Jennifer Holloway, Lise Lindstrom, Daniela Sindram, Manuela Uhl, Markus Eiche, René Pape, Iain Paterson, Andreas Schager (Tristan), Stefan Vinke, Klaus Florian Vogt, and Michael Volle (Wotan in *Das Rheingold*).

WAGNER 22 will be accompanied by a scholarly and artistic supporting program, organized in cooperation with the Institute of Musicology at the Universität Leipzig and other partners. The

festival's principal sponsor is Porsche Leipzig GmbH. Porsche's commitment to culture will also make possible a two-day public viewing event and open-air cultural festival, set to take place on the Augustusplatz directly in front of the Opera House. WAGNER 22 will add an exceptional highlight to the schedule of summer festivals commemorating the great musicians who once called the »Musikstadt :Leipzig« home.

»Some 800 years of musical history resonate in Leipzig, and it is this that will come alive during more than three weeks of operatic performances, encounters, discussions, and concerts. For Ulf Schirmer, WAGNER 22 is both musically and personally a crowning achievement of his successful era of artistic direction,« says Dr. Skadi Jennicke, Deputy Mayor for Cultural Affairs for the City of Leipzig.

## INITIATOR GUSTAV BRECHER (1879 - 1940)

WAGNER 22 is dedicated to Gustav Brecher, a musician, composer, and conductor. Brecher held the position of General Music Director and opera director from 1923-1933 shaping Leipzig's musical life. He first had the idea to perform all of Richard Wagner's completed musical dramas in chronological order. Brecher was in the process of planning this mammoth project when the Nazis forced him out of his position in 1933 because of his Jewish heritage and his support for »entartete Künstler,« or »degenerate artists.« His »Brecher Edition« of the *Fliegender Holländer* piano-vocal score is still remembered today for its high degree of difficulty. Like Otto Klemperer at the Kroll Opera in Berlin, Gustav Brecher was known as one of the most important innovators in music theater. His time at the Oper Leipzig was marked by the consistent development and cultivation of the ensemble system, the expansion of the repertoire to include contemporary works from the periphery, and the world premieres in Leipzig of works by avant-garde composers the likes of Ernst Krenek and Kurt Weill. Gustav Brecher saw in Richard Wagner's musical dramas the representation of the ideal union of music, text, and drama. That is why he wanted to present the composer's complete works in Leipzig, the city of his birth. Gustav Brecher's dismissal and expulsion from Leipzig took place immediately after the premiere of Kurt Weill's *Silbersee* in 1933. His vision of an artistic Wagner festival was ideologically seized upon by the Nazi's unjust state, and five years later, the project was realized for the first and only time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in celebration of the composer's 125<sup>th</sup> birthday. The antisemitic dismissal, the exile that followed, and

fear cost Gustav Brecher his life: Brecher, along with his wife and mother-in-law, committed suicide while fleeing Germany in 1940.

As a part of the WAGNER 22 festival, the Oper Leipzig will honor Gustav Brecher and his work with a ceremony renaming one of the halls at the Opera House after him. The necessary historical-critical reappraisal of the reception to Richard Wagner's works in his city of birth will form the central scholarly contribution presented during the WAGNER 22 supporting program.

»In the spirit of my brilliant predecessor Gustav Brecher, we are planning WAGNER 22 as a Gesamtkunstwerk and as a unique musical experience. I also regard this as a stand against ideological appropriation,« says Prof. Ulf Schirmer, General Music Director and Intendant of the Oper Leipzig.

## AN ARTISTIC AND SCHOLARLY SUPPORTING PROGRAM

The focus of the scholarly supporting program will be Leipzig's reception of Richard Wagner through the ages. In cooperation with the Institute of Musicology at the Universität Leipzig, a symposium will focus on three phases (»The Beginnings,« »German Empire and National Socialism,« and »The GDR and the Recent Past«) that address how the city received Richard Wagner's stage works from the beginnings to the present. In addition, and likewise in cooperation with the Institute of Musicology at the Universität Leipzig, the Richard-Wagner-Association Leipzig will present a symposium on Wagner's contradictory relationship to the music of composer and Leipzig Gewandhauskapellmeister Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Furthermore, the renowned musicologist and Wagner researcher Laurenz Lütteken from the University of Zurich will shed light on the figure of Richard Wagner in the context of left-wing Hegelianism in an eagerly awaited lecture.

Beyond that, the Oper Leipzig, in cooperation with the Phoniatics and Audiology Section of the University of Leipzig Medical Center, will present a symposium on research into the Wagner voice under the auspices of Prof. Dr. Michael Fuchs. And, together with the Richard Wagner Association Leipzig and the Hochschule für Musik und Theater »Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy,« the Oper Leipzig is planning a masterclass for young Wagnerian artists as a part of the WAGNER 22 festival.

Alongside the large staged works and the supporting program, the festival will present events entitled *Wagneriana I* and *II*, which will showcase Richard Wagner's works for the piano and will

also feature compositions that deal with Wagner's output. And young audience members can enjoy the *Ring for Children* at the Musikalische Komödie. To kick off the countdown to WAGNER 22, the Oper Leipzig will present a »Faszination Wagner« concert May 21, 2022, with superstar tenor Andreas Schager, on the evening before the composer's birthday.

## Cultural Festival and Public Viewing with Porsche Leipzig as Primary Sponsor

The WAGNER 22 festival is supported by a broad base of contributors, cooperations, and partnerships from the city of music, which both enrich the extraordinary overall program and make it possible. An accompanying lounge – complete with its own event highlights and discussion rounds – will be held at the rooftop Felix bar, located just opposite the Alexanderplatz and featuring stunning views of the Opera House, is just one example. The primary sponsor of the WAGNER 22 festival is Porsche Leipzig GmbH. Thanks to the creative collaboration, the Opera House will add an extra-special Wagnerian performance venue for everyone to its roster for one weekend. Both *Tannhäuser* and *Der fliegende Holländer* will be broadcast on to the Augustusplatz, offering open-air seating and top-notch musical performances to a large audience for free – a grand cultural festival for the city.

Dr. Joachim Lamla of Porsche Leipzig GmbH, the Oper Leipzig partner for WAGNER 22: »A commitment to culture has always been of the utmost priority to us. Our goal is to make culture accessible to everyone, and to create unforgettable musical experiences in the heart of Leipzig's downtown.«

Advanced ticket sales for WAGNER 22 begin on 1 October 2020. Alle performance dates and up-to-date information can be found online at [www.wagner22.de](http://www.wagner22.de)

Tickets (61 € – 250 €) are available at the Opera House Ticket Office, at Tel: +49 341 – 12 61 261 (Mon – Sat 10am – 7pm), by E-Mail: [service@oper-leipzig.de](mailto:service@oper-leipzig.de) or online at [www.oper-leipzig.de](http://www.oper-leipzig.de)

The Oper Leipzig is the family name for three different divisions: the Opera, the Leipziger Ballet, and the Musikalische Komödie, and boasts more than 325 continuous years of tradition. Leipzig's first opera house, the Opernhaus am Brühl, was founded in 1693 as the third oldest civic opera house in Europe (after Hamburg and Venice). Since 1840, the world-renowned Gewandhausorchester has performed for every single opera performances and ballet performances. Prof. Ulf Schirmer has been the General Music Director since the 2009/10 season, and became Intendant in 2011. Under his musical direction, the works of Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss have taken a central position in the opera's repertoire, and the collaboration with the Gewandhausorchester has enjoyed new momentum.

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