

Peter Heilker confirmed by Leipzig City Council

Peter Heilker is to become the new Artistic Director of Oper Leipzig, effective from the 2028/29 season

At its meeting on 29 April 2026, the Leipzig City Council confirmed Peter Heilker as Artistic Director (Intendant) of Oper Leipzig, effective from the 2028/29 season. With this decision, the city is setting the artistic course for the future of the institution. In accordance with the original job announcement, the appointment will initially be for a fixed term of five years – from 1 August 2028 to 31 July 2033. Peter Heilker was selected through a recruitment process involving the Department of Culture, cultural policymakers, and external experts. He is currently Deputy Director, as well as Programme and Casting Director of MusikTheater an der Wien, the opera house of the Vereinigte Bühnen Wien. In Leipzig, in addition to the position of Artistic Director, he will also take on the role of Opera Director.

Peter Heilker: *»I am very much looking forward to helping shape the future of Oper Leipzig as Artistic Director from 2028 onward, in dialogue with artists, audiences, and the city. Even under the challenging conditions for municipal cultural funding, I remain confident in the institution's development potential and will work towards a clear artistic profile and stable structural conditions. Leipzig's great tradition as a city of music serves as both my guide and my benchmark.«*

Biography

Peter Heilker is an opera manager with international experience and a wealth of leadership expertise in European music theatre. Since 2022, as Deputy Director as well as Programme and Casting Director at MusikTheater an der Wien, he has been responsible for strategic season planning and international casting policy for a diverse repertoire ranging from Baroque opera to world premieres, which has received wide acclaim from both critics and audiences. Alongside central repertoire works such as *Norma*, *Der fliegende Holländer*, and *Die Fledermaus*, he places particular programmatic emphasis on rediscoveries, including *Ambleto* by Francesco Gasparini, *Kublai Khan* by Antonio Salieri, *Benamor* by Pablo Luna, *Schwanda, der Dudelsackpfeifer* by Jaromír Weinberger, and *Der Idiot* by Mieczysław Weinberg. Under his programme leadership, alongside General Director Stefan Herheim, internationally renowned directors such as Tobias Kratzer, Ilenia Lanzino, Christof Loy, Damiano Michieletto, and Lydia Steier have staged productions there. Among the singers he has engaged for the company are Aigul Akhmetshina, Jeanine De Bique, Pavol Breslik,

Bruno de Sá, Freddie De Tommaso, Joyce El-Khoury, Asmik Grigorian, Nikola Hillebrand, Tareq Nazmi, John Osborn, Raffaele Pe, André Schuen, Carlo Vistoli, and Alina Wunderlin.

Peter Heilker maintains close collaboration with the resident orchestras of Theater an der Wien – the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra – as well as with the Arnold Schoenberg Choir and international partner institutions such as Teatro alla Scala in Milan, the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, and the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin.

Before his appointment in Vienna, Peter Heilker served as Opera Director at Theater St. Gallen from 2008 to 2021, where he oversaw a comprehensive music theatre programme encompassing opera, operetta, musical theatre, and dance. His work was characterised by rarely performed works of the 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as world and first performances. He also established the St. Gallen Festival as an internationally recognised open-air festival for rare operatic works in front of the cathedral and reshaped the St. Gallen dance company through the appointment of Beate Vollaack and Kinsun Chan. Prior to this, Heilker worked as a dramaturge from 1998 to 2008, and as Chief Dramaturge at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich from 2006/07. In this role, he collaborated closely with Sir Peter Jonas as well as the General Music Directors Zubin Mehta and Kent Nagano. During this time, he was also active as a production dramaturge at the Glyndebourne Festival and at Deutsche Oper am Rhein.

Peter Heilker was born in Mülheim an der Ruhr and studied theatre studies, modern German literature, and psycholinguistics in Munich. During his studies, he worked with Hans Werner Henze at the Munich Biennale for New Music Theatre. He has taught at the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich, the Bavarian Theatre Academy, and the University of St. Gallen, and is currently a lecturer at the Institute of Theatre, Film and Music Studies at the University of Vienna. He is also a member of the board of the European Music Theatre Academy and regularly serves as a juror at international singing competitions.

Transition phase and preparatory period until 2028

Until Peter Heilker takes office in the summer of 2028, the Administrative Director of Oper Leipzig, Lydia Schubert, will serve as Managing General Director for two seasons. She welcomes the appointment of Peter Heilker as the future Artistic Director of Oper Leipzig and was the first to congratulate him warmly at City Hall.

Lydia Schubert: *»Given his extensive experience in leadership roles, his comprehensive expertise in dramaturgy, programme planning, and ensemble development, as well as his international network, Peter Heilker brings highly convincing qualifications for the leadership of Oper Leipzig. I am impressed by his passion for the genre and his clear eye for artistic quality – he is a strong appointment for our institution. I am very much looking forward to continuing to develop Oper Leipzig successfully together with him.«*

During the 2026/27 and 2027/28 seasons, Lydia Schubert, together with General Music Director Ivan Repušić and the artistic department heads, will shape Oper Leipzig's programme and manage the municipal institution in a dual capacity. She will therefore also assume responsibility for maintaining an independent artistic profile during this transition phase. Lydia Schubert has been closely connected to the institution for many years and is held in high regard by both the ensemble and staff. This strong connection and her deep commitment to music theatre make it possible to shape the transition over the next two years with great artistic focus and to prepare the way for the new leadership. At the end of this season, current Artistic Director Tobias Wolff will take up the position of a General Director at the Staatstheater Braunschweig. With the Leipzig City Council's decision, an important step has been taken for the future of Oper Leipzig. The early appointment of Peter Heilker provides planning security and enables an orderly transition into the new leadership.



Peter Heilker, Artistic Director of Oper Leipzig from the 2028/29 season

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Photos of Peter Heilker are available online on the Oper Leipzig press site at oper-leipzig.de/presse

Oper Leipzig continues the tradition of more than 330 years of music theatre in Leipzig: the first opera house on Brühl was opened in 1693 as the third civic music theatre in Europe after Venice and Hamburg. Since 1840, the world-renowned Gewandhausorchester has accompanied all opera performances and those of Leipzig Ballet. In addition to the present-day Opera House on Augustusplatz, built in 1960, Oper Leipzig also includes the Musikalische Komödie in the Lindenau district, a venue specialising in operetta and musical theatre with its own ensembles. With more than 720 employees, the city's largest municipal cultural institution comprises five pillars: the Opera, the Musikalische Komödie, Leipzig Ballet, the Young Opera and the 360° Education programme, as well as the costume and theatre workshops, which produce for all the city's stages.

oper-leipzig.de/presse