

The World's Best Classical Music Venues – Part 1

**Presented by Margaret Marsh, 07-281-2408
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Striking the right note

Choosing the world's best classical music venues was no easy feat, I have scoured East to West, exploring the concert halls and theatres which make these classical music hotspots unique.

Here is a bucket list of the most important venues in classical music history.



Vienna, Austria

Vienna is arguably one of the world's leading cultural centers. The city holds live classical music for around 10,000 people per night and its concert schedule consists of more than 15,000 events. Making up its musical alumni are **Schubert** who was born in the city, **Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn**.

The Wiener Musikverein

Opened in 1870, there are six concert halls named: Gold, Brahms, Glass, Metal, Stone and Wood. It is the home of the **Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra**.

Other venues include:

the **Vienna State Opera (Wiener Staatsoper)**, the **Theater an der Wien**, and the **Volksoper**.



Vienna, Austria – Links & Music Notes

Vienna - Tour of the Musikverein 4.24

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-YxBv09yWA>

Vienna – Musikverein. **Radetzky March**, Strauss 3.05

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsoAK2Qyhze>

*A march composed by **Johann Strauss Sr.** and dedicated to **Field Marshal Joseph Radetzky von Radetz**. First performed on 31 August 1848 in Vienna, it soon became popular among regimented marching soldiers. It has been noted that its tone is more celebratory than martial; Strauss was commissioned to write the piece to commemorate Radetzky's victory at the Battle of Custoza.*

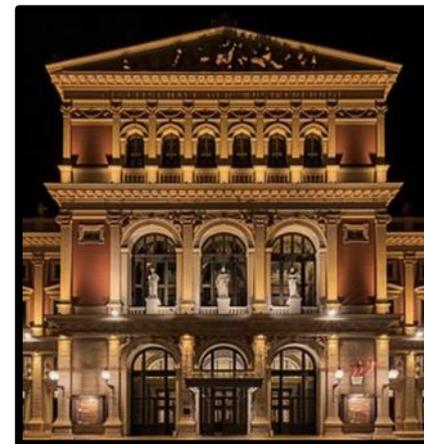


About the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

This historic orchestra is based at the **Musikverein** and seeing them play here is a highly sought after experience as there is a **6 year wait list** for a weekday performance and a **13 year wait list** for a weekend performance.

In 2023, the orchestra was listed as #1 in the world. The members are all selected from the orchestra of the **Vienna State Opera**, where they must play for a minimum of 3 years before they can request a lengthy application to move up to the VPO, a highly renowned orchestra with an illustrious history.

The VPO sound is unique because their instruments are made in Vienna, and are tuned at a different pitch to other orchestras, giving them a slightly unique and different sound to other orchestras worldwide.





About the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra – Links & Music Notes

Vienna State Opera Tour 3.25

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEeYCe0Doj8>

Vienna State Opera – Art & Architecture Tour 5.20

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTfdfdcgVuA&t=249s>

Vienna Philharmonic – Musikverein - New Year's Concert
2019 (Highlights) 2.39

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAxfmbjqrKQ&t=1s>

“Remembering some of the favorite moments from the 2019 New Year’s Concert with the Vienna Philharmonic and Christian Thielemann and wishing we didn’t have to wait a whole year for the next one!”



Salzburg, Austria

Großes Festspielhaus (Large Festival House)

Salzburg is the birthplace of the prodigal son of classical music, **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**. But a tradition of classical music was strong in the city before his arrival, being the place where the first opera was performed outside of Italy in 1614.

This concert house hosts the annual Salzburg Festival which continues to fly the flag for the city's classical music heritage.





Salzburg, Austria – Links & Music Notes

100 years of Salzburg Festival. A journey through history. 5.30

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1ujP3VtyYM>

Tip: The above link contains text inserts which flash onto the screen rather quickly ... to read – stop the video.

Salzburg Festival 2006:

Mozart – Overture Die Zauberflöte – The Magic Flute. 6.30

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_lmQMjmr7w&t=192s

The Magic Flute follows the adventures of Prince Tamino and Papageno on their search for the Queen of the Night's daughter, Pamina. To help conquer the trials and tribulations faced on their quest, the duo are given magical musical instruments including a magic flute.



Berlin, Germany

Staatsoper Unter den Linden

(State Opera under the Lime Trees)

With one-seventh of the world's opera houses located in Germany, it's inevitable that some of the most prestigious classical music venues are situated there.

A favourite with connoisseurs, this opera house dates back to 1741, and was built by order of King Frederick the Great in the Palladian style. It was damaged by Allied bombing in World War II, and was rebuilt in 1951.

It is famous for its outstanding performances of **Wagner's** operas.





Berlin, Germany – Links & Music Notes

Richard Wagner - The Ring of the Nibelung -
Ride of the Valkyries. 2.30

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUeSwnmDgYg>

The Valkyrior are warrior goddesses of Asgard who ride winged horses. They took mortally wounded human heroes from German and Scandinavian battlegrounds and brought them to Valhalla, an area of the Asgardian dimension where the astral forms of the dead Asgardians and human heroes eternally feast and compete in friendly battles. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valkyrior>)

Mozart: Overture of La clemenza di Tito (K 621) 5.50

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcJh6q1LFMU>

La Clemenza di Tito is a story of friendship and forgiveness triumphing over jealousy and violence. The new emperor of Rome, Tito, is much loved by the Roman people, with the exception of Vitellia, the daughter of the previous emperor.

(<https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/67232#>)



Berlin, Germany

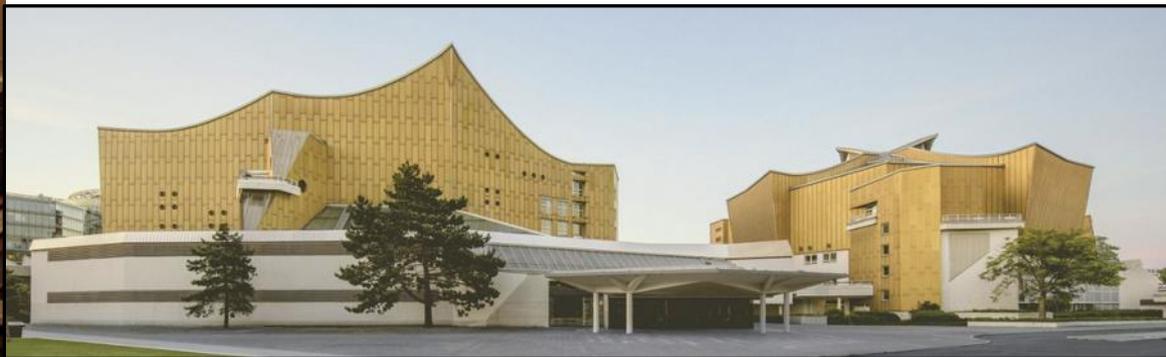
Berliner Philharmonie Concert Hall

*“One person opposite another, arranged in circles in sweeping, suspended arcs around soaring crystal pyramids.”
~ architect Hans Scharoun*

The first **Philharmonie**, a former roller skating rink, was used as a concert hall from 1888 until it was destroyed in 1944.

It was rebuilt and opened in October 1963 with Herbert von Karajan conducting **Beethoven's 9th Symphony**.

It is home to the globally celebrated **Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra**, which was recently voted #2 in the world.





Berlin, Germany – Links & Music Notes

Berliner Philharmonie Concert Hall

Beethoven: Symphony No. 9. Sir Simon Rattle 3.04

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TEAjy2cWrM>

One of the great achievements of European music, it was Beethoven's last symphony; known as the “Choral” Symphony. Its finale is a musical setting of Friedrich von Schiller's “Ode to Joy,” a hymn to the unity and freedom of humanity.

Ukrainian composer - Valentyn Silvestrov's “Evening Serenade” 5.22

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKtqtYjDOzY>

With Valentyn Silvestrov's “Evening Serenade,” the [Berliner Philharmoniker](#) and Kirill Petrenko appeal for donations for Ukraine...

“We are appalled by the attack on Ukraine – and are witnessing a humanitarian catastrophe in the middle of Europe. As UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe ambassadors, we are very happy to support the important work of the UNHCR both on the ground and at the borders with Ukraine and are therefore calling for donations at our upcoming concerts. Help to alleviate the plight of those affected,” says Andrea Zietzschmann, general manager of the Berliner Philharmoniker Foundation on behalf of the foundation's board.”



Leipzig, Germany – Links & Music Notes

Gewandhaus Concert Hall and St. Thomas Church

Bach and **Wagner** were born and educated in Leipzig, while **Schumann**, **Mahler** and **Mendelssohn** all spent time in the city. The legacy left by these famous names lives on through the annual **Leipzig Bach Festival**, held in the **Gewandhaus Concert Hall**, home of the **Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra**. (Gewandhaus means “Cloth Hall”.)

The **Festival** takes place in June, with around 100 individual concerts. The final concert is always a performance of **Bach’s Mass in B minor** in **St. Thomas Church** where Bach worked as the **Thomaskantor**. This was Bach's last completed vocal work as well as the climax of his creativity, revealing the overwhelming wealth of his compositional skills.



Leipzig Bach Festival -
Mass in B Minor (excerpts), St. Thomas Church 5.12

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39Ww50hZoD0>



London, England

The Royal Albert Hall

Purcell was born in the city, and later **Elgar**, **Britten**, **Mendelssohn** and **Bartok** spent time there. **Handel** made it his adopted home; and as a child **Mozart** wrote his first symphony there; **Haydn** wrote a series of “**London Symphonies**”. Composers have tried to capture the essence of the city ... **Elgar’s** “**Cockaigne – In London Town**” and **Vaughan Williams’** “**London Symphony**”.

Venues include the **Royal Albert Hall** home of **The Proms**, its pipe organ is the largest in the UK.

Also the **Barbican Arts Centre**, home of the **London Symphony Orchestra**, and the **Cadogan Hall**, home of the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**.





London, England – Links & Music Notes

The Royal Albert Hall

Elgar: Overture Cockaigne- In London Town. 2.09

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MReg1ZKxFQ4>

The overture gives a lively and colourful musical portrait of Edwardian London. 'Cockaigne' was a term used by moralists at that time as a metaphor for gluttony and drunkenness, while Britain adopted the name humorously for London. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cockaigne_\(In_London_Town\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cockaigne_(In_London_Town)))

Vaughan Williams - Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis. 2.17

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RCZFwDbFko&t=58s>

The haunting melody comes from the third psalm tune from Tallis's Nine Tunes for Archbishop Parker's Psalter, a collection of vernacular psalm settings being compiled in 1567 for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker.

Purcell's Rondeau from the Abdelazer Suite 1.38

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkF-RYcPdJs>

The rondeau was used by Benjamin Britten as the theme for his variations 'The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra' (1946). It was also used as the closing theme of the TV series 'The First Churchills' (1969), and may be heard as dance music at the Netherfield ball in the 2005 production of 'Pride and Prejudice'. The Britten arrangement is used as a recurrent motif in the 2012 film Moonrise Kingdom.



Amsterdam, Holland

Royal Concertgebouw and the Oude Kerk

The Dutch capital boasts a stunning array of venues, famous with classical music aficionados the world over. Amongst its most beloved concert halls is the **Royal Concertgebouw**, widely regarded as one of the world's best and home to the **Dutch Philharmonic Orchestra**.

Another venue is the **Oude Kerk**, a 13th-century church and Amsterdam's oldest building. The concert season runs from September to June, with free lunchtime concerts held at 12:30 pm every Wednesday.





Amsterdam, Holland – Links & Music Notes

Royal Concertgebouw

Mahler 2nd Symphony Brass Choral. 3.12

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzbsVIG8ips>

Symphony No. 2 in C minor by Gustav Mahler, known as the Resurrection Symphony, was written between 1888 and 1894, and first performed in 1895. This symphony was one of Mahler's most popular and successful works during his lifetime. It was his first major work that established his lifelong view of the beauty of afterlife and resurrection.

The Oude Kerk

Galliard to the Third Pavan - William Byrd (1591).

Organist Matthias Havinga. 1.19

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJX00GqU-HU>

The galliard was a form of Renaissance dance and music popular all over Europe in the 16th century. It is an athletic dance, characterised by leaps, jumps, hops and other similar figures. The galliard was a favourite dance of Queen Elizabeth I of England.

Palais Garnier

PARIS OPERA HOUSE



Paris, France

Palais Garnier

From early church music to the Baroque sounds of the Royal courts, Paris has long been a place where music and political power has co-existed. Composers **Lully**, **Charpentier**, **Salieri** and **Rameau** have all found favour. But from the 19th century onwards, Paris attracted great artists from outside of France – **Franck**, **Verdi** and **Chopin** being just a few. And French composers **Berlioz**, **Satie**, **Debussy** and **Ravel**.

Venues also include:

La Philharmonie de Paris
and the **Théâtre des Champs-Élysées**.



Palais Garnier

PARIS OPERA HOUSE



Paris, France – Links & Music Notes

Palais Garnier

Paris Opera Garnier: A Journey into its Inception and History. 4.26

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiDQAog5Yvl&t=69s>

La Philharmonie de Paris tour. 2.36

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4zQwn121Dw>

‘The Amorous Indies’, an opera by Jean-Phillippe Rameau (1735)

Entrée IV, The Savages, "Peaceful Forests". 4.51

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sPC8HsXxik>

In 1725, French settlers in Illinois sent Chief Agapit Chicagou of the Mitchigamea and five other chiefs to Paris, they met with King Louis XV. Chicagou had a letter read pledging allegiance to the crown. They later danced three kinds of dances inspiring Rameau to compose his rondeau Les Sauvages.

And finally ...

The official music video of the Vienna Philharmonic playing the 4th movement of **Symphony No. 9 'From the New World', Allegro con fuoco. Antonín Dvořák (1893)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGdtkUiKaA8>

*Played at the **Summer Night Concert 2019** in the park of the **Schönbrunn Palace** a magical setting for the concert, which is free of charge for all residents and visitors.*

Composed while Dvořák was director of the National Conservatory of Music of America 1892-95, it premiered in New York City on December 1893. Astronaut Neil Armstrong took a tape recording of the New World Symphony along during the Apollo 11 mission, the first Moon landing, in 1969.

