



INTUNE *with history*

It's a city where Mozart is still the main man. So it's entirely fitting that Salzburg revolves around a series of renowned classical-music festivals

By GUY WOODWARD

If Mozart were alive today, the Salzburg branch of his image-rights team would have a field day. From chocolate bars and fridge magnets to keyrings and golf balls, silhouettes of the Austrian city's most famous son are impossible to avoid.

One feels that the great composer may have balked at such commercialisation – among the souvenirs available at Mozart Wohnhaus (a former family residence) are snowglobes, tea strainers and rubber ducks. But if that's the quid pro quo for being able to see the actual piano on which the young Wolfgang composed his first works, or read the surprisingly touching letters that he sent to his new wife while wowing audiences on a European tour, then it's a small price to pay.

Those artefacts are shared between Mozart Wohnhaus and a second museum – in the

house where Mozart was born. (Its ground floor is now a convenience chain store; something of an aberration but, as with every Salzburg emporium, it does sell delectable pastries.) This is a city, then, in which Mozart is ubiquitous and, for the most part, the tasteful rendering of his legacy means it's easy to cast oneself back in time. Whether taking a horse and carriage around the cobbled streets, or ordering a coffee in an 18th-century café where the great man himself had breakfast, unspoiled old-world charm abounds.

But Salzburg's cultured, sophisticated vibe isn't just down to the man who gave us *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Musical events take place throughout the year, and are as varied as the Mozart memorabilia. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Easter Festival (highlights

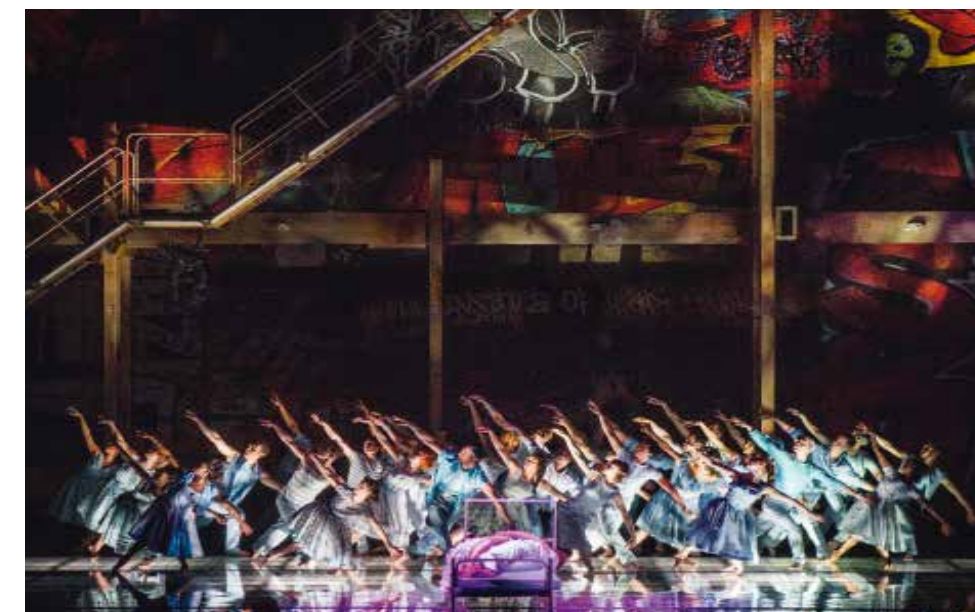


include Sir Simon Rattle's marshalling of the Berlin Philharmonic), followed in June by the four-day Whitsun festival under the creative direction of venerable Italian mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli. But the most overt demonstration of the city's virtuosic repertoire takes place over six weeks in the summer at the renowned Salzburg Festival, first realised close to a century ago.

Almost 200 performances, spanning theatre, concerts and opera, attract spectators from all over the world at what is now roundly considered the foremost festival of its kind. In 2016 it included a revival of the classic Mozart/Da Ponte cycle of *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan Tutte* and *The Marriage of Figaro* (complete with period staging), as well as a reprise for Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim's intoxicating *West Side Story*, energised by the



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT
A panoramic view across the Salzach river to Salzburg's old town; the ground-breaking staging of *West Side Story*; crowds at Kapitelplatz's big screen, home to the "Free Festival"; Ildebrando D'Arcangelo (left) and Luca Pisaroni in *Don Giovanni*, summer 2016



hyperactive baton of Venezuelan maestro Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra. Premiered at last year's Whitsun festival, the production was viewed sceptically by Salzburg purists – not least when Bartoli herself took to the stage to sing the part of Maria. It proved, however, to be the summer's hottest ticket, with organisers having to open up the dress rehearsal to the public to satiate demand.

A similarly eclectic programme is in place for 2017, from the baroque harmonies of Claudio Monteverdi to the disturbing atonality of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*. Verdi's sprawling epic *Aida* will be directed by legendary conductor Riccardo Muti, while superstar tenors Plácido Domingo and Juan Diego Flórez are lined up to appear.

During the festival, the city is an intoxicating place to be. There are cafés abuzz with amateur critiques of the performances; after-show cast gatherings in bars; costumed performers giving impromptu performances as they parade through the streets; even open-air big-screen showings of standout shows from previous years (with pop-up bars and restaurants on hand). For an art form that can, on the surface, seem snooty and elitist, this is a notably inclusive affair, which helps alleviate any self-consciousness while walking down the street in black tie or cocktail dress – or indeed, in the case of the locals, dirndl and lederhosen – en route to a 2 o'clock matinee.

There is, however, much more to Salzburg than music. It's small enough to be easily navigable, with pedestrian-friendly streets and pristinely preserved architecture – befitting its UNESCO World Heritage List status, vested 20 years ago. On the old-town side of the river you'll find St Peter's Cemetery, with its maze of 12th-century catacombs, hewn out of the rock; the imposing Baroque Salzburg Cathedral; and a wealth of elegant squares.

Small, characterful hotels such as the quirky Goldgasse – its rooms decorated with murals from notable operas – add to the bohemian feel.

Outside the city, Hellbrunn Palace, built for Archbishop Markus Sittikus in the early 1600s, is a study in Renaissance splendour, with its whimsical trick fountains and ornate grottos. And just 20 minutes away, a cable car into the mountains opens up taverns, hikes and

amazing views. Cue a raft of Julie Andrews impressions – *The Sound of Music*, filmed in and around Salzburg, is the only serious rival to Mozart when it comes to tourist appeal, with plenty of tours and events celebrating the ultimate singalong feel-good movie. So whatever your preferred musical genre, the hills – and the city – are most certainly alive. ■

For information on the Salzburg Festival and the city, go to salzburgerfestspiele.at or salzburgerland.com. Double rooms at Hotel Goldgasse start from €252 per night; hotelgoldgasse.at

"The festival is an inclusive affair... which helps when wearing lederhosen"

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