



WIENER STAATSOPER

PRESSEBÜRO

THE VIENNA OPERA BALL

The Vienna Opera Ball is known all over the world as the most outstanding traditional Austrian ball. The ball is a huge musical celebration at the end of Carnival, combining high culture with entertainment. However, it also forges contacts between artists, politicians, business magnates and ball fans – in the world’s most beautiful ballroom: the Vienna State Opera.

HISTORY OF THE VIENNA OPERA BALL

The first balls were organized not by the imperial and royal Court Opera House adjacent to Kärntnertor, but by the artists who appeared on this stage. To some extent, they harked back to the already legendary celebrations at the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815).

In the 1820s and 1830s various balls took place at the many smaller and larger venues in the imperial city on the Danube. However, the artists wanted a more intimate setting for their celebrations and soon came up with the ideal solution of the “Redoutensäle” at the Imperial Palace, which though representative were nonetheless inviting.

By the end of the year of the revolution, 1848, as bloody as it was inglorious, no one seemed very inclined to dance at first. Several years went by before the general joie de vivre reached the point where balls in “Viennese style” were once again conceivable.

In 1862 the Theater an der Wien was given “supreme permission” to organize a ball again. Naturally they modelled their event after the spectacular Paris Opera balls of the day.

When the personnel of the imperial and royal Court Opera House were finally able to move into the new building on the Ring, however, Emperor Franz Joseph I refused to give his permission for any kind of dance festival to be held at his theatre. And so the first ball called “Ball at the Court Opera” did not take place at the opera house on the Ring, but in another new and magnificent building of the “Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde” (“Society of the Friends of Music”).

In 1877, the emperor finally gave his permission for a “soirée” at his opera house. Although no dancing was officially allowed at this festivity the night of the 11th to the 12th of December, the following day the “Wiener Fremdenblatt” newspaper reported: “...the evening started rather cheerlessly, but Viennese spirit and verve won through ... after midnight the first proper dance occurred in the ceremonial hall of our opera house.”



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Following the demise of the empire in 1918, the young republic remembered the imperial celebrations at the opera house remarkably quickly. The first Opera Ball of the Republic of Austria was held as early as 21 January 1921, and in January 1935 the first “Vienna Opera Ball” took place, now also using this name – a magical name whose effect did not dim even in the pallid light of the 1930s.

On the eve of the Second World War, a final Opera Ball took place in 1939 by command of the government of the Reich in an Austria already occupied by Germany.

After the restoration of the Republic of Austria in 1945 and survival of the first famine years in a bomb-gutted Vienna, November 1955 saw the festive reopening of an opera house destroyed during the war.

On 9 February 1956, the magnificent building was transformed into a shimmering opera ball-room for the first time in the Second Republic.

Over the course of the years, 63 Opera Balls have taken place to date at the Vienna State Opera. Maria Großbauer has been organizing the Opera Ball since 2017.

THE 2020 VIENNA OPERA BALL – ORDER OF EVENTS

Wednesday, 19 February 2020 – final rehearsal

- 6.30 p.m. Admission of guests
- 8.00 p.m. Final rehearsal - a complete run-through of the opening ceremony

Thursday, 20 February 2020 – Vienna Opera Ball

- 8.40 p.m. Ball guests admitted
- 10.00 p.m. Opera Ball opening (approx. 50 minutes):
 - Fanfare, Austrian national anthem, European anthem
 - Procession of the young ladies’ and gentlemen’s committee
 - Performances by the Vienna State Opera
 - Opening waltz: Blue Danube Waltz
- Midnight Midnight quadrille
- 2 a.m. Quadrille
- 4 a.m. Quadrille
- 5 a.m. End of the Vienna Opera Ball

Details on the order of events and alterations will be announced at the 2020 Opera Ball press conference on Tuesday, 14 January 2020, 11.00 a.m.



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CURRENT FACTS AND FIGURES ON AND ABOUT THE VIENNA OPERA BALL

- The 64th Vienna Opera Ball (in the Second Republic) will take place on 20 February 2020 – the fourth organized by Maria Großbauer and the tenth and last for which director Dominique Meyer is responsible.
- The Vienna State Opera is in a "state of emergency" during the Opera Ball. This is because the house – one of the foremost in the world – stages more than 300 opera and ballet performances on 300 days of the year, a total of 60 different works. Nearly 1,000 staff (soloist ensembles, ballet, orchestra, choir, stage crew, administration) guarantee the outstanding quality of the performances that some 600,000 visitors enjoy at the Opera House every year.
- In order for the preparations for the Opera Ball to be completed on time, no performances take place at the Vienna State Opera on the two evenings prior to the event. The transformation of the auditorium into a ballroom takes 30 hours, and the final rehearsal takes place the evening before the ball.
- On the day after the Opera Ball, 3,500 children from all Austrian provinces attend the two performances of *The Magic Flute for Children* in the ballroom. Soloists from the Vienna State Opera and children from the Vienna State Opera's opera school perform, accompanied by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.
- Restoring the space for normal operation starts immediately after the ball at 5 a.m. and lasts 21 hours (with a break for *The Magic Flute for Children*).
- The Vienna State Opera generates revenue of EUR 4.7 million from the Opera Ball and has total expenses of EUR 3.6 million.
- With the amendment of the "Bundestheaterorganisationsgesetz" (State Theatre Organic Law) which came into effect on 1 September 2015, the importance and tradition behind the Opera Ball held by the Vienna State Opera was established by the legislature.
- External contractors are engaged to carry out the alterations necessary for the Opera Ball, with a total order volume of around EUR 1.5 million. This expenditure occurs over a period of six months and encompasses general preparations for the ball as well as the production and installation of the decorations.
- Some 50 companies from the provinces of Vienna, Lower Austria, Burgenland, Salzburg and Tyrol and Styria work at the Vienna State Opera during the week of the Opera Ball.
- At peak times during the transformation, some 350 skilled workers and 150 labourers are employed.
- About 80 low-bed trailers have to come to the Vienna State Opera from the warehouse in Petronell (Lower Austria) to remove the stage boxes, parquet floor and various panelling elements.

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- On the evening of the ball, 7,230 people are present at the Vienna State Opera, including 5,150 ball guests.
- The young ladies' and gentlemen's committee is made up of 144 couples who open the Opera Ball as debutants, with 16 understudy couples ready to stand in. The auditions generally take place in September or October after prior registration (details can be found on the homepage of the Vienna State Opera under Opera Ball/auditions). In 2020 there are debutants from 11 different countries.
- On the evening of the ball, the caterers have 320 staff on site to look after guests.
- Some 250 individuals are employed by security.
- About 150 musicians create a festive atmosphere in 12 different ball areas.
- The ballroom is 50 m long (dance area from the standing room section to the grand staircase).
- Thousands of flowers and plants are a key element of the decoration; 171 floral arrangements are placed in the boxes and approx. 500 arrangements on the tables.
- There are about 52,600 glasses, 9,200 pieces of cutlery and 1000 champagne buckets in use.
- Interest in the Vienna Opera Ball around the world grows every year. This is evident not just from the larger number of reservations from all over the world, but also from international coverage in print and online media as well as television reporting throughout Europe, in Japan, and in the USA.
- A total of 2,653 Million viewers (widest circle of viewers) watched the ORF-broadcast of the 2019 Vienna Opera Ball. The opening ceremony was watched by 1,357 million viewers on average (market share of 50%). The entrance of the guests on the red carpet and the main staircase as well as the first impressions from the House on the Ring were watched by 1,154 million viewers on average. The ball event following the opening ceremony was watched by 8272.000 viewers on average (market share of 51%). There was a great interest also from abroad: on average 790,000 viewers watched the opening ceremony on 3sat and 500.000 viewers on Bayerisches Fernsehen.
- A ticket to the 2020 Vienna Opera Ball costs EUR 315, a box costs between EUR 13,300 and EUR 23,600; table seating for two from EUR 210, and a whole table between EUR 420 and EUR 1,260. Standing room tickets for the final rehearsal cost EUR 25, seats cost between EUR 35 and EUR 70.
- The dress code for the Opera Ball (including accredited reporters, photographers and camera teams) is: ladies: long evening dress; gentlemen: tails.



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Accreditation:

Print and online media (reporters, photographers)

Enquiries can be sent to pressebuero@wiener-staatsoper.at until 19 January 2020. You can expect a reply from the Press Office no later than 5 February, and photographers and reports must return a signed confirmation by e-mail or fax to the Press Office no later than 9 February.

TV/radio/video on demand

Accreditation is handled by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation – enquiries should be sent no later than 26 January 2019 to:

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Detailed information with respect to access, location, tickets, etc. will be sent to your after accreditation.

Effective: 13 January 2020

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