



Press Release

Hamburg, July 2, 2025

A New Artistic Beginning: Omer Meir Wellber – Designated General Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg – to Begin His Tenure in Hamburg with Concerts at the Elbphilharmonie on September 14 and 15, 2025

The 1st Philharmonic Concert marks the beginning of a new chapter for the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg: Omer Meir Wellber will give his first concert as General Music Director on two consecutive dates – in the morning of September 14 and in the evening of September 15 – marking the launch of the newly developed *ZeitSpiele* series, which will accompany all philharmonic concerts moving forward. Under the title *ZeitSpiel One*, the program brings together a seminal work of music history with a contemporary composition, launching a series of ten Philharmonic concerts that rethink the dialogue between past and present.

Quote by Omer Meir Wellber:

I am truly delighted to begin this first season with the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg and to share with our audience the original program we have developed over the past months with great enthusiasm. I am especially excited to explore our musical 'games' with the orchestra – and to share the joy of them in the concert hall.

ZeitSpiele – Breaking Traditions

The designated General Music Director Omer Meir Wellber, together with the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg, invites audiences to the **ZeitSpiele** series in the **ten Philharmonic concerts** – inspiring musical puzzles between past and present. The concept transcends the ordinary and goes far beyond merely performing new works loosely connected to “classics” – it involves a direct intervention in the original works of great masters. For this purpose, contemporary composers were commissioned to create a new movement that is woven into a classical work in place of an original movement. The rules of the game require that the new movement follows certain conceptual, aesthetic, or stylistic principles of the original piece. This creates a conscious dialogue in which **ten contemporary composers** from various countries engage with their musical role models: **Stephen Hough, Aziza Sadikova, Ella Milch-Sheriff, Detlev Glanert, Mikhail Pletnev, Giorgi Gigashvili, Sally Beamish, Richard Dubugnon, Daniela Terranova, and Barbara Assiginaak.**

Stephen Hough & Beethoven – A Dual Performance

For the first Philharmonic concert, Omer Meir Wellber has chosen to collaborate with British artist **Stephen Hough**, who will interpret Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 – both as **pianist and composer**. The second movement will be replaced by a newly composed piece by Hough, inspired by Beethoven's original. Beethoven appears in our time as a mirror of the past – and, through Hough, also as part of our present.

This musical *ZeitSpiel* without inhibitions opens up new perspectives on our musical culture, our thinking and being, and our way of experiencing music.

"Through his music, Beethoven has become one of my closest friends. (...) From the beginning of his output, there are specific traits in Beethoven's work that persist throughout until the end. One of them is the search for a kind of ecstasy – a goal beyond the notes. I want to let a little of that ecstasy resound in my composition." – Stephen Hough

The second part of the concert features Anton Bruckner's Symphony No. 7 – a work of great symphonic power and spiritual depth that spans the programmatic arc from a radical opening to the present to contemplative monumentality.

Dates & Lineup

1st Philharmonic Concert – ZeitSpiel Eins

Sunday, September 14 | 11:00 a.m. – Elbphilharmonie Introduction: 10:00 a.m. with dramaturg Janina Zell and artists

Monday, September 15 | 8:00 p.m. – Elbphilharmonie Introduction: 7:00 p.m. with dramaturg Janina Zell and artists

Ludwig van Beethoven / Stephen Hough

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. *Con gran espressione* (intervention by Stephen Hough, world premiere)
- III. Rondo. Allegro

Anton Bruckner

Symphony No. 7 in E major, WAB 107

Piano: Stephen Hough

Conductor: Omer Meir Wellber

Orchestra: Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg

Concert Season Opening – Inaugural Concert on September 14

To mark the festive opening of the concert on September 14, Dr. Carsten Brosda, Senator for Culture and Media of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, will speak at the beginning of the concert to inaugurate the first official concert of Omer Meir Wellber in Hamburg. The audience will then also get a short introduction into the program by the designated music director himself.

About Stephen Hough

Stephen Hough is one of the most important pianists of our time. The British artist is internationally renowned for his technical brilliance, musical depth, and stylistic versatility. As a soloist, he regularly collaborates with leading orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, and the London Symphony Orchestra. In addition to his concert career, Hough is also a composer and writer – a rare combination for which he has received numerous awards.

He was the first classical musician to be honored with the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship and holds the title of Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE). Hough's repertoire ranges from Beethoven, Brahms, and Chopin to contemporary compositions – often his own.

About Omer Meir Wellber

Born in Be'er Sheva, Israel, Omer Meir Wellber studied conducting and composition in Jerusalem. He assisted Daniel Barenboim and made his early debut at renowned opera houses such as La Scala, the Bavarian State Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Until the end of 2024, he served as Music Director of the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, where he garnered attention with productions such as *Le Grand Macabre*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and Verdi's *Vêpres siciliennes*. During his tenure as Music Director of the Volksoper in Vienna, Omer Meir Wellber conducted Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* and *The Nutcracker*—a new creation directed by Lotte de Beer—as well as numerous revivals, including *La Traviata*, Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and Richard Strauss's *Salome* (a re-creation of Luc Bondy's timeless 1992 production). In the 2024/25 season, he was responsible at the Volksoper Wien for the production of Ella Milch-Sheriff's opera *Alma*, the new staging of *Le Nozze di Figaro* directed by Lotte de Beer, as well as the *KaiserRequiem*, a project he conceived musically."

Wellber regularly appears as a guest conductor with renowned orchestras such as the Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Swedish Radio Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris and the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen.

In addition to his conducting career, Wellber is also a composer, author, and chamber musician. His CD recordings include, among others, Sally Beamish's Piano Concerto, *Mandolin Seasons* featuring works by Piazzolla and Vivaldi, as well as compositions by John Tavener and Paul Ben-Haim. Furthermore, he has released DVD recordings of major operas, including Boito's *Mefistofeles*, Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. In 2022, he was artist in residence of the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival. Wellber is an ambassador for the organization "Save a Child's Heart" and is committed to music education and the promotion of young conductors.

Starting with the 2025/26 season, Omer Meir Wellber will take over the position of General Music Director of the Hamburg State Opera and the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg—bringing an artistic profile characterized by crossing boundaries, openness, and bold shifts in perspective.

About the Orchestra – The Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg

The Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg, with roots dating back to 1828, is Hamburg's oldest and largest orchestra. It was formed in 1934 through the merger of two long-established ensembles and has since shaped the sound of the Hanseatic city as a concert, opera, and ballet orchestra. It is one of the oldest and most traditional orchestras in Germany with an international reputation. Great artists such as Brahms, Mahler, Strauss, and Telemann, as well as conductors like Karl Muck, Wolfgang Sawallisch, and conductor Simone Young, have significantly influenced the orchestra. Since 2015, the orchestra has been led by Kent Nagano, who serves as General Music Director and chief conductor. Under his leadership, the orchestra has undertaken international tours to Japan, Spain, South America, and made its debut in 2023 at New York's Carnegie Hall. With around 35 concerts per season and over 240 performances annually at the State Opera, the Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg is the most active orchestra in the city. It maintains a broad repertoire ranging from historically informed performance practice to contemporary works and is strongly committed to music education, including school projects and family concerts.

Starting with the 2025/26 season, **Omer Meir Wellber** will take over as the new General Music Director, bringing fresh artistic impulses. In the **“ZeitSpiele”** series, he initiates musical dialogues between past and present with contemporary composers: classics such as Beethoven are deliberately interrupted and supplemented with new movements. In the new **“Blaue Woche”** the orchestra explores transformation and innovation through special concert formats – ranging from Boulez to Vivaldi and Piazzolla. The **Philharmonic Chamber Concerts** also cover a wide spectrum from rarities to modern sound experiments. Special projects like **“Peter and the Wolf from St. Pauli”** combine classical music and a crime story at the Schmidts Tivoli, a renowned Hamburg theater on the Reeperbahn, while the participatory program **CLICK in** and the renowned **Orchestra Academy** open the world of classical music to young people.

Season Preview 2025/2026:

[Die Hamburgische Staatsoper – Vorschau Spielzeit 25/26](#)

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