

**Press Release**

Hamburg, 21 August 2025

“Seid uns willkommen, seid uns begrüßt” – The Hamburg State Opera opens its first season under the new General Director Tobias Kratzer and the new General Music Director Omer Meir Wellber with Schumann’s *Das Paradies und die Peri*

With a three-day festival entitled *3 Days Awake*, the Hamburg State Opera will open its first season under General Director Tobias Kratzer and General Music Director Omer Meir Wellber from 26 to 28 September 2025 – marking the beginning of a new artistic era. The opening premiere and a second premiere will deliberately set programmatic accents: On 27 September, the house will present Robert Schumann’s oratorio *Das Paradies und die Peri* in a staged reinterpretation by Tobias Kratzer, conducted by Omer Meir Wellber and featuring the internationally acclaimed Vera-Lotte Boecker in the title role. With this rarely performed work, Kratzer and Wellber are making an artistic statement that exemplifies their joint vision: socially relevant themes, musical excellence, scenic innovation, and a strong sense of ensemble will shape their approach to a contemporary, vibrant opera culture. On 28 September, this will be followed by *Die Gänsemagd* by Iris ter Schiphorst – a children’s opera that Kratzer is establishing as a permanent part of the main program, directed by Kratzer himself and conducted by Claudia Chan.

Quote – Tobias Kratzer:

“*Das Paradies und die Peri* is, on several levels, paradigmatic of what we plan for the Hamburg State Opera in the coming years: bringing socially relevant themes to the stage with the highest musical excellence and a joy for surprise. I consider it one of the central key works of the 19th century – as significant as Strauss or Wagner. Although it is not an opera in the classical sense, for me this oratorio is Schumann’s most profound work of musical drama. Precisely because it is so rarely staged, it offers enormous potential – it poses questions about the aesthetic handling of the great crises of our time: war, pandemic, and climate change. And about the role of empathy – in life as in art.”

Quote – Omer Meir Wellber:

“I am very delighted to open my first season with *Das Paradies und die Peri*. It is a very delicate work, full of warmth and sensitivity – Schumann at his best – challenging the orchestra, choir, and singers to breathe together and create music on a very fine line between delicacy, beauty, drama, and virtuosity. It’s a perfect opening for our five-year adventure in the beautiful city of Hamburg.”

Opening Premiere: *Das Paradies und die Peri* – Yearning for Redemption

Premiered in Leipzig in 1843, *Das Paradies und die Peri* represents Schumann’s search for a new form between opera and oratorio. Inspired by Thomas Moore’s *Lalla Rookh*, the three-part work tells of a heavenly being’s longing for redemption. The Peri witnesses acts of sacrifice, love, and compassion – but only the tear of repentance opens the gates of heaven to her. Schumann’s composition eschews conventional dramaturgy, weaving musical motifs and voices into a flowing, visionary soundscape. For Kratzer, the work is “Schumann’s most profound piece of musical drama” – on a par with Wagner or Strauss and more topical than ever.

A Resonance Space for Our Present

With Robert Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*, General Director Tobias Kratzer has chosen a work of profound relevance to open his first season at the Hamburg State Opera. Together with General Music Director Omer Meir Wellber, he sees this rarely performed oratorio not only as a musical masterpiece of the 19th century but as a highly topical resonance space for central social issues. The three parts of the work – heroic death, love's death, and empathy – reflect existential experiences that have gained a new, urgent relevance in times of war, pandemic, and climate crisis.

Kratzer's production goes far beyond a purely musical presentation. It focuses on compression, shifts in perspective, and a collective theatrical understanding. The traditional separation between stage and auditorium will be dissolved: an open stage aesthetic and the deliberate breaking of the so-called "fourth wall" will directly involve the audience in the action. Viewers will not only be observers but participants in an emotional and intellectual exchange that extends from the stage into the space and back.

At the heart of the work is not the individual solo performance, but the power of the collective: chorus, ensemble, and staging intertwine to form a multi-voiced, complex, and living theatrical body – a collective organism that narrates and reflects together. Kratzer understands this form of music theatre as a political practice: "The Peri shows how art, through immediate shared experience, can foster empathy – not only for individual destinies but also for social contexts." Theatre is not a place for solutions but for resonance – and therein lies its strength.

Vera-Lotte Boecker, named Singer of the Year 2022 by the specialist magazine *Opernwelt*, will appear in the title role, combining vocal virtuosity with emotional depth. The premiere will be accompanied by a high-profile panel discussion expanding the work's context to broader societal themes – between aesthetics, ethics, and social responsibility.

With this production, Kratzer and Wellber are redefining the oratorio as a music-theatre event of high contemporary relevance – sensuous, reflective, and moving. A season opener that proves: opera can be a resonance space – for what moves us today.

Second Premiere: *Die Gänsemagd* – Children's Opera as an Integral Component

Already on 28 September comes the second premiere: with Iris ter Schiphorst's children's opera *Die Gänsemagd* (*The Goose Girl*, libretto by Helga Utz after the Brothers Grimm fairy tale of the same name), Kratzer is sending a clear signal for a contemporary opera landscape. The production is directed by Kratzer himself, with musical direction by Claudia Chan. In doing so, Kratzer establishes opera for young audiences as an integral part of the main program – not as a side event, but as an equally valid form of artistic expression.

A princess sets off to meet her bridegroom – accompanied by her maidservant and the talking horse Falada. But along the way, she is forced into the role of goose girl when the maid compels her to abandon her identity. Only through the intervention of the king and Falada's help is her true heritage revealed at court. This fairy tale of betrayal, courage, and self-discovery inspired composer Iris ter Schiphorst and librettist Helga Utz in 2009 to create a modern children's opera. The music is characterised by great sonic variety – from melancholic accordion to electronic soundscapes and ironic parody.

Opera for All Generations

With *Die Gänsemagd*, General Director Tobias Kratzer is not only launching his first season but also making a statement: children's and youth works are an equal part of the repertoire at the Hamburg State Opera. His decision to direct the work by Iris ter Schiphorst and Helga Utz himself is deliberate: "It's a spirited, well-composed piece with two strong heroines – full of melody, wit, and depth."

The fairy tale addresses major themes such as self-discovery, role models, and identity – accessible to today's children. The princess loses her mother's handkerchief in order to find her own path – "it has something almost archetypal," explains Kratzer. He also portrays the characters with deliberate complexity: the maidservant is not purely evil but carries within her an understandable longing.

For the stage design by Rainer Sellmaier, an immersive spatial concept has been developed that makes the action tangible from various perspectives – with the children right in the middle, on the goose meadow. "We wanted to create a magical world that does justice to the way children experience things – like in a circus, except here music, voice, and emotions strike directly," says Kratzer.

With the new education program *CLICK in* and further productions such as *Alleine!* for children from the age of three, or *Michaels Reise* after Karlheinz Stockhausen, Kratzer is consistently expanding opera for young audiences throughout his tenure.

Program, Programme, Cast, and Performance Dates at a Glance

Friday, September 26, 2025

House Warming Concert & Late Night

Popular German artist **Ina Müller** – known as a singer, musical cabaret performer, author, and TV host – will host this special evening, where the new artistic leadership team introduces itself to the Hamburg public, showcasing how opera and music can be multifaceted and full of surprises. Unusual ensembles and unexpected guest artists promise an evening beyond classical conventions. The Hamburg Philharmonic State Orchestra will play a central musical role. Afterward, the entire front-of-house area transforms into an open space of experiences, with performances across multiple levels and stages lasting into the early morning hours.

6:00 PM - Vernissage for the newly designed foyers - Hamburg State Opera

Entrance Foyer

Exclusive tour of the redesigned foyers by **THE STUDIOS** and **Rainer Sellmaier**, featuring **Jorinde Voigt's** work.

8:00 PM - House Warming Concert (Main Stage)

Moderation: Ina Müller

Musical Direction: Omer Meir Wellber

With: Tobias Kratzer, Nikolaus Habjan, Le Gateau Chocolat, Vera-Lotte Boecker and many others

Hamburg Philharmonic State Orchestra

9:45 PM - House Warming Late Night

Surprising performances in all foyers:

- Stifter Lounge: Chamber music, piano recitals, art song and more

- Balcony Foyer: Percussion, musical theatre and more
- Stalls Foyer: Jazz, vocal performances, brass band and more

In cooperation with: Stage Entertainment, Thalia Theater and others

Saturday, September 27, 2025

Everything opera can be

Saturday focuses on the thematic and aesthetic questions that define contemporary music theatre. A **high-profile panel discussion** in the Grand Hall in the afternoon invites engagement with the potential and limitations of the genre. Moderated by **Prof. Bascha Mika (former editor-in-chief of *taz*)**, participants including **Culture Senator Dr. Carsten Brosda** and **sociologist Dr. Nikolaj Schultz** will discuss the role of art in times of global crises – pandemic, war, and climate change.

11:00 AM - Press Conference (2. balcony foyer) on the 2025/26 Season

With Tobias Kratzer and Omer Meir Wellber

3:00 PM - CLICK in – debate

Opening panel: "Relationship - Art and Crisis"

Moderation: Prof. Bascha Mika

With: Senator Dr. Carsten Brosda, Dr. Nikolaj Schultz and others

7:15 PM - CLICK in – debate

Introduction to the premiere

8:00 PM - Premiere: Robert Schumann – *Das Paradies und die Peri*

(Additional performances: Sept. 30; Oct. 3, 11, 14, 17, 24; Nov. 1)

Secular Oratorio in Three Parts (1843)

Libretto: Emil Flechsig after the poem *Lalla Rookh* by Thomas Moore

Cast:

Musical Direction: **Omer Meir Wellber**, Felix Hornbachner (Oct. 17)

Stage Direction: **Tobias Kratzer**

Set & Costumes: Rainer Sellmaier

Video: Manuel Braun

Lighting: Michael Bauer

Chorus: Alice Meregaglia

Dramaturgy: Christopher Warmuth

Peri: Vera-Lotte Boecker

Soprano/Virgin: Eliza Boom

Mezzo-soprano: Kady Evanyshyn

Alto: Annika Schlicht

Tenor: Kai Kluge

Baritone/Gazna/Man: Christoph Pohl

Angel: Xavier Sabata

Young Man: Eric Lunga Hallam

Hamburg State Opera Chorus

Hamburg Philharmonic State Orchestra

With kind support from the Stiftung zur Förderung der Hamburgischen Staatsoper. The premiere will be streamed live on ARTE. NDR Radio will also broadcast it live.

10:00 PM - Premiere Party for All

Sunday, September 28, 2025

Generation Future

The final day of the opening weekend spotlights young audiences with a vibrant and hands-on family program. Children, families, and curious newcomers are invited to discover the world of opera and ballet through playful experiences.

During the day, the foyers of the opera house host a wide variety of creative children's activities: play zones, arts and crafts, and interactive stations foster joy and exploration. A highlight is an engaging look at the iconic ballet pointe shoe – what makes it special, and how does it feel to dance "en pointe"? These questions will be answered in a hands-on, educational, and entertaining way.

10:00 AM - Doors Open: Music Playground for Kids

11:00 AM - Premiere: *Die Gänsemagd* (opera stabile)

Opera for children (2009) – and everyone aged 6 to 110
Libretto: Helga Utz, based on the fairy tale of the same name by the Brothers Grimm

Cast

Composer: Iris ter Schiphorst
Libretto: Helga Utz after the Brothers Grimm fairytale
Musical Direction: **Claudia Chan**
Stage Direction: **Tobias Kratzer**
Co-Director: Matthias Prio
Set & Costumes: Rainer Sellmaier
Dramaturgy: Michelle Stoop

Princess: Ida Aldrian
Her Mother, the Queen: Katja Pieweck
Chambermaid: Hellen Kwon
King: Tigran Martirossian
Butcher: Peter Galliard
Goose Boy Kurdchen: Aebh Kelly

Afterward: Meet & Greet with singers on stage

With kind support from the Stiftung zur Förderung der Hamburgischen Staatsoper.

12:30 PM - CLICK in – debate

Composer Iris ter Schiphorst in conversation with Tobias Kratzer and children

3:00 PM - Second performance: *Die Gänsemagd*

Afterward: Meet & Greet with singers on stage

4:30 PM - CLICK in – debate

Composer Iris ter Schiphorst in conversation with Tobias Kratzer and children

Hamburg Ballett

4:30 PM - CLICK in – discussion

Outlook: Deputy Ballet Director Lloyd Riggins and Ballet Operations Director Nicolas Hartmann in conversation about the 2025/26 season

7:00 PM - Die Möwe

Introduction: 6:15 PM

About the Hamburg State Opera

The Hamburg State Opera is one of Europe's leading opera houses. Founded in 1678 as Germany's first civic opera house, it has been a home of innovative music theatre and spectacular world premieres for nearly 350 years.

Under the new leadership of General Director Tobias Kratzer and General Music Director Omer Meir Wellber, the Hamburg State Opera stands for artistic curiosity and a diverse program. The motto "Every evening is a premiere" reflects an expanded understanding of repertoire. The first season features nine new productions – six on the main stage, three in the *opera stabile* – that boldly explore the boundaries of music theatre with unconventional material and fresh perspectives. As a repertoire house, the Hamburg State Opera remains committed to variety as a mission, not a trend. The programmatic series *FRAMING the REPERTOIRE* revisits works in their historical depth while interrogating them through a contemporary lens – artistically precise, socially relevant.

Premieres of the 2025/26 Season – A Spirit of Discovery and Crossing Boundaries

- **Sun, 9 Nov 2025: *Ruslan and Lyudmila*** – Glinka's rarely performed opera in a contemporary interpretation by Szemerédy/Parditka, musically directed by Azim Karimov.
- **Thu, 15 Jan 2026: *Die Unruhenden (The Restless)*** – directed by Christoph Marthaler with music by Gustav Mahler (musical direction: Johannes Harneit) –opening of the series marking the 350th anniversary of the State Opera in 2028.
- **Sun, 1 Feb 2026: *Monster's Paradise*** – world premiere by Olga Neuwirth and Elfriede Jelinek: a political grotesque about an autocratic ruler and the sea monster "Gorgonzilla," directed by Tobias Kratzer, conducted by Titus Engel.
- **Sun, 15 Mar 2026: *Die grosse Stille (The Great Silence)*** – directed by Christopher Rüping, musical direction by Omer Meir Wellber – a music theatre experiment about Mozart, humanity, and the silence of the universe.
- **Sat, 11 Apr 2026: *Stockhausen for Children: Michael's Journey*** – a fantastic world journey for ages 6 to 110, directed by Elisabeth Stöppler.
- **Sun, 12 Apr 2026: *Frauenliebe- und sterben (Women's Love and Death)*** –Kratzer's musical triptych with works by Bartók, Schumann, and Zemlinsky, featuring Kate Lindsey, Annette Dasch, and Marlis Petersen, conducted by Karina Canellakis.
- **Sun, 17 May 2026: *Il barbiere di Siviglia*** – Rossini's comedy as a social mirror, directed by Tatjana Gürbaca, conducted by Teresa Riveiro Böhm.

In parallel, the new program line *FRAMING the REPERTOIRE* will encourage audiences to rediscover and reconsider past productions as autonomous works of art – with accompanying events, artistic interventions, and dialogue formats that keep the wealth and history of the house alive.

Press Invitation

Vernissage for the newly designed foyers - Hamburg State Opera Entrance Foyer

26. September 2025, 18:00

Press Invitation

House Warming Concert

26 September 2025, 20:00 – Main Stage

Press Conference – New Season

27 September 2025, 11:00 – 2nd Balcony Foyer, Hamburg State Opera

With:

- Tobias Kratzer (Artistic Director)
 - Omer Meir Wellber (General Music Director)
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CLICK in – Debate

27 September 2025, 15:00 – Opening discussion: “*Art and Crisis*”

Moderation: Prof. Bascha Mika

With:

- Senator Dr. Carsten Brosda
 - Dr. Nikolaj Schultz
 - and other guests
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Premieres:

- Opening Premiere: *Das Paradies und die Peri* – 27 September 2025, 20:00
 - Second Premiere: *Die Gänsemagd* – 28 September 2025, 11:00
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For accreditation and enquiries, please contact the press office of the Hamburg State Opera:
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We look forward to your visit!

2025/26 Season Preview

Hamburg State Opera – Season 25/26

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

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