



PRESS RELEASE

Curtain up: Reopening of the Margravial Opera House Bayreuth, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

After six years of comprehensive restoration and renovation, the curtain will go up on the Margravial Opera House Bayreuth in April 2018. The Bavarian Palace Department is celebrating this exceptional cultural monument and its restoration with an **extravaganza of special events.**

A wedding with a legacy:
an opera house on UNESCO's World Heritage List

In 2012 the Baroque theatre, the only one of its kind in the world, was included in the **UNESCO World Heritage List.** A team of experts under the direction of the Bavarian Palace Department and the State Building Office of Bayreuth then began renovating the theatre building to preserve this monument of European festival and music culture on a permanent basis for future generations.

In **1748** the opera house was inaugurated to celebrate the marriage of Margravine Wilhelmine's only daughter **with a magnificent festival and the Italian operas Ezio and Artaserse.** To mark the **reopening** of the Margravial Opera House, Artaserse will be performed here again **on 12, 14 and 15 April.** For the Prussian king's daughter who was devoted to the theatre and music, **only the very best was good enough.** To design her new opera house she appointed the leading European theatre engineer Giuseppe Galli Bibiena. In less than four years an opulent theatre with tiers of loges was created using only wood and canvas. The auditorium is one of the most spectacular examples of European festival architecture from the Baroque age.



The restoration concept: as bright and colourful as before

The **restoration and renovation** was based on the principle of retaining the original substance and authenticity of this important cultural monument. What this meant with respect to the tiers of loges was preservation of the **original surfaces, complete with their traces of use**. Conservation not restoration was the motto – retention of the original instead of reconstruction. The restorers, at times up to 30 in number, thus concentrated on two main aspects: removing subsequent layers of paint and dirt and retouching – but in moderation and only where the overall impression of the painting required it. Otherwise the restorers had to be unafraid to leave a gap, since a historical monument does not have to look ‘like new.’ And it was not only the subsequent dark paint layers resulting from 20th-century restorations that had to be almost all removed, but also the layer of oily insecticides that had additionally darkened the loges. The tiers of loges are **now much lighter and brighter – as they were in Magravine Wilhelmine’s day**.

The **stage** has been considerably changed. Here a subsequent installation dating from 1935/36 was removed and the stage opening was restored to the size it was in the 18th century. A **new backdrop and a new curtain** have been created on the basis of comprehensive art-historical research by the Bavarian Palace Department. The **reconstructed backdrop designed by Carlo Bibiena for the inaugural opera in 1748** can be seen through the open main curtain and the curtains framing the stage, **which is exactly how the Baroque stage opening would have appeared to the first audiences** The curtain elements were also based on historical models and painted on canvas. The backdrop and curtains, based on intensive research into comparable backdrops in historical theatres, were produced by scenery painters from the Berlin stage service from the beginning of 2016 to November 2017 under the direction of experts from the Bavarian Palace Department.



Reconciling preservation principles with modern theatre usage

The project served not only to renovate the building itself, which included making repairs to the structure, in particular the roof truss, but also to reconcile the **modern requirements of a working theatre**, such as building and stage technology, fire and occupational safety, **with its preservation as a monument**. Special solutions were required because of the outstanding artistic importance of the historical auditorium. A high pressure water mist fire protection system was installed, with which a fire in the roof can be effectively extinguished at its inception with a very small amount of water and without weakening the roof construction or causing water damage. The creation of a stable room temperature in particular was an important contribution to the preservation of the vulnerable monument.

Since the historical stage technology has not been preserved, modern systems were installed so that the opera house can still be used as a theatre today. The main principle governing its use is compatibility with preservation of the theatre as a monument. For this reason, **in addition to its primary function as a museum, the Margravian Opera House can only be used for concerts and stage performances in the summer months**. The Free State of Bavaria invested a total of **29.6 million euros** in this huge building and restoration project, which is designed to preserve the Margravian Opera House for future generations.

Curtain up: an extravaganza of events for the reopening

The special celebrations organized by the Bavarian Palace Department to mark the reopening will begin with the performance of the **opera Artaserse by Johann Adolph Hasse**. This was performed at Margravine Wilhelmine's request at the inauguration of the Margravian Opera House in the year 1748. The Theaterakademie August Everding, together with the Bavarian Palace Department, is now bringing the Baroque opera seria back to the stage of the historic opera house. There will be public performances in Bayreuth on **14 and 15 April 2018**. **The production will then be shown in the Cuvilliés Theatre in Munich on 11, 13, and 15 May 2018**. On Saturday 10 February 2018 from 10am there will be an exclusive opportunity to buy



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tickets for the public performances of the opening opera on 14 and 15 April 2018 at the Theaterkasse (box office) Bayreuth, Opernstrasse 22. Online and telephone sales will begin on 12 February 2018 at 10am, as well as regular sales at the box office on Marstallplatz in Munich and the Bayreuth box office, Opernstrasse 22. Tickets for both venues will also be available at www.theaterakademie.de and under the telephone number 089 21851970. Please note that because of the expected high demand, no more than four tickets can be issued per customer. The opening opera 'Artarserse' is supported by Bayernwerk AG, the Oberfrankenstiftung, BayWa AG, VR Bank Bayreuth-Hof eG and the Johann Adolph Hasse Gesellschaft München e.V. Further information about the opening opera can be found [here](#).

The Margravian Opera House will be open again to visitors from 17 April 2018. Further information on the Margravian Opera House can be found at <http://www.bayreuth-wilhelmine.de/>

With best regards,

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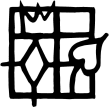
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The opening opera 'Artarserse' is supported by the following:

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The Bavarian Palace Department

The Bavarian Department for State-owned Palaces, Gardens and Lakes is an administrative department of the Free State of Bavaria with a long tradition. Originally the administration at the courts of the electors and kings, it is today one of the largest state museum operators in Germany with 45 palaces, castles, residences and other building monuments. It also looks after a very special historical heritage: the many magnificent court gardens, palace parks, public gardens and lakes. The unique European architectural ensembles with their fine, artistic interiors attract over five million visitors from all over the world every year.