



BALTIC  
OPERA  
FESTIVAL



20.-25. JULY 2024  
GDAŃSK - SOPOT

BEETHOVEN • HUMPERDINCK • PUCCINI • WAGNER

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## THE BEGINNINGS

Inaugural Baltic Opera Festival was held from 14 to 17 July 2023. The event was an enormous success, both artistically and in terms of attendance. The festival attracted over 8,000 spectators to two performances of Richard Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* at the Forest Opera in Sopot and the world premiere of Karol Szymanowski's operetta *Lottery of Husbands or Fiancé No. 69*. The excellent reviews in the domestic and foreign media made the festival one of the most important festivals in Poland and the large audience immediately asked for the opportunity to order tickets for the next year.

## THE SCHEDULE

In 2024, the Baltic Opera Festival will once again be a unique event in Poland and this part of Europe, providing an opportunity for opera lovers to meet their stage favourites. The idea of the festival is based not only on the participation of world opera stars, but also on the creation and presentation of new directorial concepts. Due to the multidimensional aspect of the Baltic Opera Festival, focussed on the participation of outstanding artists, this event will become a permanent feature in the calendar of the most prestigious musical events of international standing in Poland. The Festival is honoured to accept the invitation of the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra (UFO) conducted by Keri-Lynn Wilson (wife of Peter Gelb, Director of the New York Metropolitan Opera and member of the Baltic Opera Festival's Honorary Committee). The Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra will perform during the performances of Giacomo Puccini's *Turandot* at the Forest Opera in Sopot.

## THE FUTURE

It is with great pleasure that we announce the largest international cultural event in Poland, the Baltic Opera Festival. World-renowned bass-baritone, Polish opera singer Tomasz Konieczny, continues his project and today, together with the event organising team, invites you to the second edition of the Baltic Opera Festival in July 2024.

## THE VENUE

Splendidly renovated and prestigious, offering space for 5047 spectators and excellent acoustics, the Forest Opera in Sopot is a venue that was specially designed in 1909 for the performance of stage works in the open air. This year's Baltic Opera Festival will continue this tradition while creating a new one. Throughout the festival week, particularly at the Forest Opera, but also at the Baltic Opera in Gdańsk and other locations in the Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia Tricity, ideal conditions will be created for the establishment and expansion of international exchange of ideas and artistic cooperation. Various organisations, associations and foundations for opera lovers from Germany and abroad have expressed their willingness to participate in the Baltic Opera Festival 2024. With the participation of outstanding soloists, conductors and ensembles from Poland and around the world, the Baltic Opera Festival addresses an audience that is one of the largest in Europe.



## **Die Welt**, Manuel Brug, 17. July 2023

*Marek Janowski is enamoured of the magic of this place, but also of its glorious history: "Erich Kleiber and Herbert Knappertsbusch conducted here, Frida Leider and Lotte Lehmann used to perform. Apart from 'Tristan und Isolde', they presented all the Wagner operas from Bayreuth, including 'Rienzi'! That was naturally very tempting for me, especially as I had never conducted the 'Holländer' in the pit before ..." [...] The favourable festival orchestra sounded well-rounded and was held together by Marek Janowski. In the first year, the decision was made to slightly enhance the acoustic level of the singers so that it also sounded powerful in the background and simply because continuous volume is customary today. However, it was not necessary. Mature voices, including the Polish singer Andrzej Dobber in the title role, and singers of Bayreuth calibre, such as Ricarda Merbeth (Senta), Franz Hawlata (Daland) and Stefan Vinke (Erik), confidently navigated their way through the sound and the cliffs of the roles alongside the Polish Helmsman and Frau Mary. The audience in the almost full auditorium was thrilled. Likewise Krzysztof Penderecki's widow Elzbieta, who congratulated Janowski.*

## **The Times**, Oliver Moody, 2. July 2023

*In the 1920s and 1930s, it was one of the most important opera events in Northern Europe, attracting singers and musicians from Berlin, Vienna, Cologne and even the New York Met. Renowned as the "Bayreuth of the North", it was modelled on the Wagner Festival in the Bavarian city. The tradition will be revived next month for the first time since July 1944, when a hastily assembled cast of Wehrmacht soldiers sang Wagner's "Siegfried" as the Red Army approached the Polish border. However, a lot has changed since then: Sopot has long been part of Poland and most traces of German history have been forgotten. Yet despite and precisely because of the historical baggage, Polish bass-baritone Tomasz Konieczny, who is known for his Wagner interpretations, persuaded the otherwise German-sceptical government in Warsaw to give the project its blessing. "I told the officials that this is a valuable opportunity to build bridges, and I think they recognised that," said Konieczny, "Politics is one thing, but culture and shared heritage is something else."*

*"The Sopot Opera Festival does indeed have a problematic history," said Konieczny, "but for me it is very important that we convey this history to people and learn to forgive each other." [...] "I am a Polish singer who gives many performances in Germany and Austria, so it is very important for me to present Polish culture abroad, but also to present German culture and its importance in Poland, as there is sadly not a great deal of it in Poland at the moment."*

## **SWR 2, Treffpunkt Klassik**, Regine Mueller, 18. July 2023

*The venue is particularly mesmerising and creates its impressive atmosphere through the art form of opera. Undeniably, Tomasz Konieczny is not about to turn the Baltic Opera Festival into a cult centre for eternal Wagnerians. Instead, it will be a vibrant revitalisation of a unique place. With or without Wagner.*

## **Franz Hawlata**

**opera singer, after his performance at the Forest Opera**

*I am absolutely stunned by how many people attended the performance. So far in my career, this is the second biggest audience I've performed in front of. As for the first, it was the audience at the concert in Central Park (New York). I am very pleased that Tomek Konieczny dared to organise such an impressive event.*

## THE PROGRAMME



Giacomo Puccini ***Turandot***

20 July 2024 / 9:30 pm

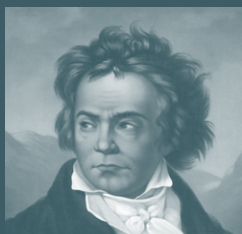
25 July 2024 / 9:30 pm



Engelbert Humperdinck ***Hansel and Gretel***

21 July 2024 / 6:00 pm

22 July 2024 / 6:00 pm



Ludwig van Beethoven ***9th Symphony (concert)***

23 July 2024 / 6:00 pm

The concert is performed under the patronage  
of President Lech Wałęsa



Richard Wagner ***The Flying Dutchman***

24 July 2024 / 9:00 pm

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### Organiser



SAMORZĄD  
WOJEWÓDZTWA POMORSKIEGO



Ministerstwo Kultury  
i Dziedzictwa Narodowego

Dofinansowano ze środków  
Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego

### In cooperation with

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The festival was organised with the support of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in Poland.  
Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra operates under the patronage of the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska.

## WE KINDLY INVITE YOU TO ATTEND THE EVENT!