

MUSICAL DESTINATIONS

GRAND DESIGNS ON THE ELBE

Hamburg: Germany

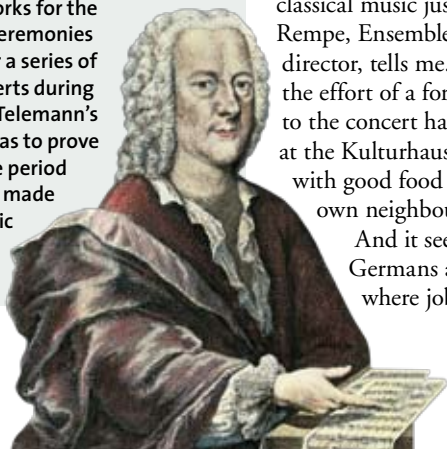
Annie Reece explores a vibrant city where a generation of young music enthusiasts eagerly awaits the long-delayed arrival of one of Europe's most exciting concert halls

On a ukelele-led Beatles tour of the Reeperbahn (Europe's largest red-light district), just a stone's-throw away from the home-ground of notoriously raucous football club St Pauli, one would be excused for forgetting that Hamburg is also one of the few cities that can rival Vienna as classical music capital of the world. Brahms and Mendelssohn were both born in this German city, CPE Bach, Telemann and Mahler had close associations with it, Steinway & Sons has its European factory here and, until last year, Deutsche Grammophon, the famous 'Yellow Label', called it home. Today, Hamburg actively maintains its reputation for musical excellence by beginning its music education young... very young.

LOCAL HERO

GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN

Moving to Hamburg in 1721 to be musical director of the city's five largest churches, Georg Philipp Telemann remained there for the rest of his life. In his post, Telemann composed two cantatas a week, an annual Passion for Lent, works for the churches and civil ceremonies as well as pieces for a series of weekly public concerts during the winter season. Telemann's time in Hamburg was to prove his most productive period of composition and made him the most prolific composer of his time.

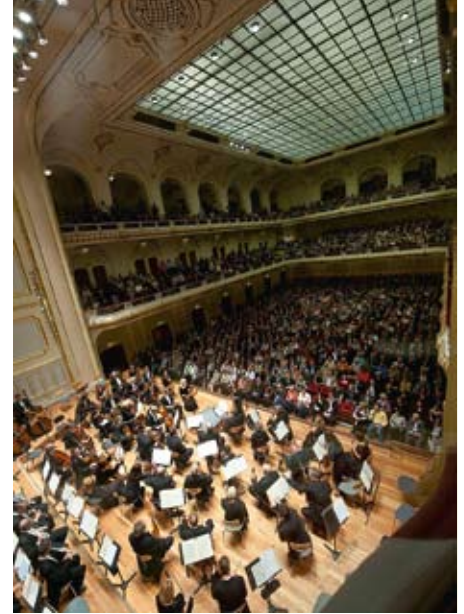


The Musikkindergarten Hamburg, sister to the Berlin branch started by conductor Daniel Barenboim, introduces children from as young as eight months to instruments, and lists musicians of the State Opera and Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra among its teachers. And so Hamburg is breeding young, enthusiastic musicians, eager to perform to a young, enthusiastic audience. Foremost among these is the chamber group Ensemble Resonanz: currently ensemble in residence at the Laeiszhalle, Hamburg's

A forbidden question to ask is 'When will it be finished?'

elegant 1908 concert hall, they've been making waves with their high quality music-making and laid-back style. When not at the Laeiszhalle, they can be found performing free, hour-long concerts in the relaxed bar environment of Kulturhaus III&70, a club in the artistic Schanze district. 'We hope to attract an audience who want to listen to classical music just for the fun of it,' Tobias Rempe, Ensemble Resonanz's managing director, tells me. 'People can be put off by the effort of a formal concert: the distance to the concert halls, the smart dress code... at the Kulturhaus they can enjoy good music with good food and good company in their own neighbourhood.'

And it seems to be working. Young Germans are flocking to Hamburg, where jobs are plentiful, culture



CULTURE CLUBS:
Ensemble Resonanz gives
concerts in a bar setting



is casually cool and quality of life is high. Every available building seems to have been renovated, rebranded or refurbished to make room for the booming economy, including the construction of an entirely new district in the harbour area: HafenCity. Two years ago, this area was desolate, the old warehouses used in the harbour's heyday having fallen into disrepair – a sad monument to a bygone era. Now HafenCity includes a primary school, apartment blocks, offices, restaurants and the jewel in the crown: the new Elbphilharmonie concert hall.

Make that potential jewel in the crown – on a tour of the construction site, I learn that the one forbidden question to ask is 'When will it be finished?' A dispute with the building contractors has pushed the opening of the new hall from 2011 towards the 2013 mark and has so far cost €324m (£272m), a sum that, with

PORTS OF CALL:
the regenerated 'HafenCity';
(left) Hamburg's neo-baroque
Laeiszhalle, built in 1908



RISING HIGH:
a computer image of
the new Elbphilharmonie

legal fees ensuing, is only set to rise. Yet, even in its incomplete state it's an impressive sight. Soaring over the Elbe river, the hall consists of two parts: the old, brick Kaispeicher warehouse, which has been converted to house the Klingende Music Museum, rehearsal rooms and ample parking, and, on top of it, a new, impressively stylised glass façade, designed by China's 'Bird's Nest' Stadium architects, Herzog & de Meuron. Behind the new façade will sit a five-star hotel, private apartments, a restaurant, café, and three concert halls, the largest of which will seat over 2,000 people.

No expense has, or will, be spared here. The cost and wait, however long that may be, will be well worth it. In a few years time, those same children currently turning up to the Musikkindergarten Hamburg will surely be making their way through the doors of

HAMBURG

5 MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Hamburg State Opera Aside from Verdi's *La traviata* and *Aida* and Gounod's *Faust*, from the end of Jan through Feb Simone Young conducts Wagner's *Ring* cycle with a line-up including Falk Struckmann, Catherine Foster, Christian Franz and Simon O'Neill. hamburgische-staatsoper.de

Elbphilharmonie Some way from completion it may be, but the Elbphilharmonie, which will eventually become home of the NDR Symphony Orchestra, is still fascinating as a work in progress. See the plans and developments at elbphilharmonie.de

Laeiszhalle Hamburg Hamburg's main concert hall (until the opening of the

Elbphilharmonie at least), the Laeiszhalle Hamburg is home to the city's orchestras and regularly hosts world-class soloists and ensembles. Visitors in the coming months include pianist Grigory Sokolov (below left) and the Leipzig Gewandhaus under its current music director Riccardo Chailly. elbphilharmonie.de/laeiszhalle.en

Kulturhaus III&70 With a young, cool clientele, the Kulturhaus III&70 hosts club nights, classical and acoustic concerts and poetry slams in a café-bar environment. dreiundsiebzig.de

Heisse Ecke Hamburg is home to more musicals than any other German city and even has its own musical, *Heisse Ecke*, dedicated to the infamous Reeperbahn, which is staged at the Schmidts Tivoli theatre. tivoli.de

