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## Lortzing's Works Undine and Wildschütz in June 2023 at Oper Leipzig



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Almost 180 years ago, Gustav Albert Lortzing had to leave the city of music. Lortzing was a German composer, librettist, actor, singer and conductor. He is considered the most important representative of the German Spieloper, which is a German-language variant of the Opéra comique. But despite his departure his compositions are inextricably linked with Leipzig and are now returning full of poetry and power - in a countdown to an anniversary year and festival of his works.

Oper Leipzig, together with its special venue for operetta and play opera, has a long tradition in Leipzig. The venue has been known as the Musikalische Komödie (Musical Comedy Theatre) since 1968, where various plays are performed. In 2026, Lortzing's 225th birthday will be celebrated there and an extensive anniversary program is planned. On the weekend of 10 and 11 June 2023, there will already be a foretaste of his romantically diverse range: *Undine* and *Wildschütz*, two central works by the theatre genius who was misjudged during his lifetime.

It is time for a revival of the declared "outsider of the repertoire". The Gewandhausorchester under the baton of music director Christoph Gedschold and the Orchestra of the Musikalische Komödie under chief conductor Tobias Engeli will convey audibly their delight in Lortzing's wonderfully soothing music from the entire sound world of the Romantic period. To the delight of fans and experts the performances will be largely unabridged, ranging between jubilation, deep melancholy and wild exuberance.

#### Undine – a Romantic Magic Opera in Four Acts

Albert Lortzing was firmly convinced of the success of his *Undine*: "This opera must please. I assure you that there are pieces of music whose effects I would not have guessed". Many composers have dedicated themselves to this mysterious water creature from an art fairy tale by Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué, but probably no one has made the story sound as human and affectionate between family life, drinking bouts and jealousy scenes as Lortzing. At the opera house on Leipzig's Augustusplatz, director Tilmann Köhler, together with Karoly Risz (stage) and Susanne Uhl (costumes), has staged the tragic love between Undine and Knight Hugo simply, but on a grand staircase of life. Undines, female water creatures, can only attain an immortal soul by marrying an earthly man. But what price is to be paid for this? What constitutes a soul? The experiment of the powerful water spirit Kühleborn, who has given Undine to a couple of fishermen as their foster daughter, threatens to fail as soon as it has begun. Undine is already whispering a warning to her newly wedded husband: "O hold fast to your faith and remain true to your oath that I am your happiness, your everything!", for if Undine's love is betrayed, as the old fairy tale says, she must kill the faithless husband and return to the water from which she once came.

#### Wildschütz – a Comic Opera in Three Acts

The mood of Albert Lortzing's comedic *Wildschütz* is quite different. A roebuck is the corpus delicti that transports the cranky

village schoolmaster Baculus into the world of the blue-blooded. Baculus is caught red-handed poaching in the count's realms. This is the beginning of a slippery confusion of identities and gender roles. Here everyone seems to be after everyone else. Yet everything just follows the voice of nature – a feast for the ensemble of the Musikalische Komödie who enjoy playing and dancing and who have already brought an audience favourite to the stage with Lortzing's best-known work *Zar und Zimmermann*.

### Background Albert Lortzing

Albert Lortzing was not very successful during his lifetime - neither as an actor, singer, composer nor impresario. He died impoverished in Berlin at the age of just 50. But half a dozen of his operas were premiered in Leipzig, and he usually sang in them himself. In 1833 he made his debut at the Stadttheater (City Theatre). Here Albert Lortzing also became a member of the artists' club, and in 1834 he joined the freemasons' lodge *Balduin zur Linde*. In the Leipzig ensemble, Lortzing seems to have been extremely popular, shining above all in Nestroy comedies, in which he excelled with improvisations that often got him into trouble with the theatre police. In 1844 he even became Kapellmeister at the Stadttheater.

### Further Information

For those who want to follow in the footsteps of Albert Lortzing in Leipzig, you can ask Leipzig Tourismus und Marketing GmbH for travel offers or book individual tickets at the Oper Leipzig.

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### Medieninhalte



Performance of *Undine* at the Leipzig Oper © Kirsten Nijhof

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