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# Tristan & Isolde

Opera by  
**Richard Wagner**  
15 to 27 September 2024

# *Tristan und Isolde*

Opera by Richard Wagner

Libretto by the composer

First performed at the Königliches Hoftheater  
und Nationaltheater in Munich on 10 June 1865

Last performed at the Grand Théâtre  
de Genève in 2004/2005

New production

Coproduction with the Deutsche Oper Berlin

**15 September 2024 – 5pm**

**18, 24 and 27 September 2024 – 6pm**

**22 September 2024 – 3pm**

Sung in German with French and English surtitles

Duration: approx. 5h15 with two intermissions

Sponsored by



UNION BANCAIRE PRIVÉE

Partenaire de l'ouverture de saison

**Musical Director**

Marc Albrecht

**Stage Director**

Michael Thalheimer

**Set Designer**

Henrik Ahr

**Costumes**

Michaela Barth

**Lighting**

Stefan Bolliger

**Dramaturgy**

Luc Joosten

**Choir Director**

Mark Biggins

**Tristan**

Gwyn Hughes Jones (15.09, 22.09, 27.09)

Burkhard Fritz (18.09, 24.09)

**Isolde**

Elisabet Strid

**King Marke**

Tareq Nazmi

**Brangäne**

Kristina Stanek

**Kurwenal**

Audun Iversen

**Melot**

Julien Henric

**A sailor, a shepherd**

Emanuel Tomljenović

Chœur du Grand Théâtre de Genève

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande

# The fiery passion of Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan & Isolde* as directed by Michael Thalheimer, opens the Grand Théâtre's “Sacrifices” season.

The Grand Théâtre launches its 2024/2025 season with one of the most beautiful love epics, *Tristan & Isolde* by Richard Wagner, a Celtic poem lapped by the sea and encircled by forests. This monumental work is brought to life by director Michael Thalheimer, who returns to Geneva after his acclaimed production of *Parsifal* in the 2022/2023 season. The German stage director will emphasize the profound humanity of the characters, using his signature minimalist and expressive style. His skilful interplay of shadow and light will deepen the intense drama of the ill-fated lovers.

Former principal conductor of the Dutch National Opera in Amsterdam and a prominent figure on the international stage, particularly in the post-Romantic German repertoire, Marc Albrecht will conduct the Orchestre de la Suisse romande. Albrecht will navigate Wagner's endless sea of melody, hoisting the voices and orchestra up to the work's hypnotic climax, Isolde's *Liebestod* with a compelling clarity that comes from his deep understanding of Wagner's music.

The cast is led by distinguished Welsh tenor, Gwyn Hughes Jones, a pre-eminent Wagnerian who has also shone in the Italian repertoire at the Royal Opera House in London. He will portray Tristan, pairing with Swedish soprano Elisabet Strid, who recently delighted audiences as Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* and as Brünnhilde in the new *Ring des Nibelungen*, both also at the Royal Opera House. Joining them are the talented mezzo-soprano Kristina Stanek (Brangäne), who was celebrated last season for her role in *Carmen* at the Staatsoper Stuttgart, and bass Tareq Nazmi as King Marke, noted for his powerful portrayal of Gurnemanz in Thalheimer's *Parsifal* at the GTG.

The creation of *Tristan* is undeniably intertwined with Wagner's own tumultuous love life. He began composing the opera in 1857, in Zurich, while staying at the estate of his patron, the wealthy banker Otto Wesendonck, where he fell in love with Wesendonck's wife, the beautiful Mathilde. Eight years later, he entrusted *Tristan*'s premiere to conductor Hans von Bülow, whose wife Cosima had just given birth to a daughter named Isolde, Wagner's child. Through *Tristan & Isolde*, Wagner sublimates his forbidden loves into a timeless Celtic legend, which medieval literature has elevated to the myth status.





**MARC ALBRECHT**  
Musical Director

Highly sought after on the international scene for the German post-Romantic repertoire, from Wagner and Strauss to Zemlinsky, Schreker and Korngold, conductor Marc Albrecht seamlessly blends analytical precision with deep emotional expression in his performances. From 2011 to 2020, Albrecht was the principal conductor of the Dutch National Orchestra and the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra. His exceptional skills have led him to work with many of the world's leading opera houses, earning him numerous accolades. In 2020, he was appointed Knight of the Order of the Lion of the Netherlands and received the "Prix d'Amis" from the Friends of the Dutch National Opera. That same year, he was awarded an Opus Klassik for the "Best Opera Recording of the 20th–XX1<sup>st</sup> Century" for the DVD of Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. In October 2021, he was named "Conductor of the Year" for his recording of Zemlinsky's *Die Seejungfrau* with the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra (Pentatone).



**MICHAEL THALHEIMER**  
Stage Director

Michael Thalheimer, initially trained in theatre and experienced as an actor, turned his focus to directing and went on to create acclaimed productions at the Schauspiel Frankfurt, Vienna's Burgtheater and Berlin's Schaubühne, to name a few. From 2005 to 2008, he was director of the Deutsches Theater Berlin. Since the 2017/2018 season, he has been the Berliner Ensemble's resident director and a member of its artistic team. Thalheimer's work has featured frequently at prestigious festivals like the Salzburger Festspiele and the Wiener Festwochen earning him several awards, including the Friedrich-Luft-Preis in Berlin, the Golden Mask in Moscow, and the Nestroy prize. His minimalist yet powerful opera productions have captivated audiences at the Staatsoper Berlin (*Der Freischütz*) and Hamburg (*Les Troyens*, *The Flying Dutchman*), the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf (*Macbeth*, *Eugene Onegin*), and the Opera Ballet Vlaanderen in Antwerp (*Macbeth*).



**HENRIK AHR**  
Set Designer

Henrik Ahr began his professional journey training as a chef before transitioning to study architecture in Leipzig. In 2000, he embarked on a career as a freelance set designer with "Neue Szene" in Leipzig, and then with Theatre Jena the following year. Ahr has worked on numerous projects with Michael Thalheimer, including *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* by Bertolt Brecht at the Thalia Theatre in Hamburg, and *Rigoletto* at Theater Basel. These collaborations paved the way for further creations on stages in Hamburg, Antwerp, and Düsseldorf. Recently, Ahr designed the set for Philip Glass's *Satyagraha*, directed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. During the 2022/2023 season, he renewed his successful collaboration with Thalheimer in a production of Wagner's *Parsifal*, and worked with Tatjana Gürbaca on *Katja Kabanova*, following their previous season's *Jenufa*. Ahr is also a professor at the Mozarteum University Salzburg.



**MICHAELA BARTH**  
Costume Designer

Born in Munich, costume designer Michaela Barth, grew up in Algeria, Saudia Arabia, and the Bergisches Land region of Germany. After completing her secondary education, she trained as a ladies' tailor. She then moved to Berlin for her fashion studies at the University of Arts. Since then, she has lived in Berlin, where she has been involved for many years with the productions of the homeless theatre group Ratten 07 and the prison theatre group AufBruch at the Tegel Penitentiary. Since 1994, Barth has worked as a costume designer with notable figures such as Herbert Muraier, Philipp Stölzl, Marcel Keller, Elisabeth Rauner, Hans Neuenfels, Armin Petras, Enrico Lübbe, Karoline Gruber, Johannes Schütz, Wilhelmine Bauer, Christof Loy, Andres Veiel, and David Hermann. Since 2000, she has regularly collaborated with Michael Thalheimer. At the Bayreuth Festival in 2007, she created the costumes for Katharina Wagner's production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.



**STEFAN BOLLIGER**  
Lighting Designer

Born in Zurich, Stefan Bolliger began his career as a freelance lighting technician before joining the Thalia Theatre in Hamburg in 1995. He later became assistant lighting supervisor at the same institution until 2006, and then served as the head of the lighting department at the Staatstheater Stuttgart from 2006 to 2010. During his tenure in Stuttgart, he was responsible for the lighting of countless productions, particularly in collaboration with Andreas Kriegenburg. As a lighting designer, Bolliger has showcased his work at prestigious venues including the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich, the Semperoper in Dresden, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the New National Theatre in Tokyo, the Norske Opera in Oslo, and the Festspiele in Salzburg, as well as at the Theater an der Wien. In 2024, he is scheduled to work on *La Fille du Far West* at the Opéra de Lyon. Since 2019, Bolliger has also been teaching lighting design, technology, and colour theory at the Mozarteum University Salzburg.



**LUC JOOSTEN**  
Movement

After studying philosophy at the Catholic University of Leuven, Luc Joosten worked as a dramaturge for various theatres and companies, including Toneelhuis in Antwerp and the Opera Vlaanderen. Since 1993, he has closely collaborated with directors such as Peter Konwitschny, Jan Fabre, Guy Joosten, Luk Perceval, David Hermann and Michael Thalheimer, contributing to productions at the Opera Vlaanderen, Theater an der Wien, La Monnaie in Bruxelles, Staatsoper Hamburg, and the English National Opera. Joosten is currently head of dramaturgy at the Dutch National Opera.



**GWYN HUGHES JONES**

Tenor

Tristan (15.09, 22.09, 27.09)

Originally from Wales, Jones made his debut at the Welsh National Opera performing roles such as *Faust*, Canio (*Pagliacci*), Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*), Manrico (*Il Trovatore*), the Duke of Mantua (*Rigoletto*), Don José (*Carmen*), Pinkerton (*Madame Butterfly*), Mario Cavaradossi (*Tosca*), Riccardo (*Un ballo in maschera*), and Des Grieux (*Manon Lescaut*). He also appeared at opera houses in San Francisco and Santa Fe, as well as the English National Opera, Royal Opera House in London, Opéra national de Paris, and Washington National Opera, singing roles such as Rodolfo (*La Bohème*), Ismaele (*Nabucco*), Radames (*Aida*), Don Alvaro (*La forza del destino*), Calaf (*Turandot*), and Walter von Stolzing (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*). In addition to his opera performances, he has performed recitals at London's Wigmore Hall and the Auditorium du Louvre in Paris.



**BURKHARD FRITZ**

Tenor

Tristan (18.09, 24.09)

Born in Hamburg, Fritz trained at the Johannes Brahms Conservatory in Hamburg. Alongside his vocal training, he pursued medical studies at the University of Hamburg. From 2004 to 2010, he was a member of the ensemble at the Staatsoper Berlin. Since then, he has performed at the Staatsoper Munich, the Bayreuth and Salzburg festivals, Teatro Real in Madrid, La Monnaie in Brussels, the Frankfurt Opera, as well as in China, Japan, Tel Aviv, and Chicago. Fritz has taken on roles such as *Parsifal*, the Emperor (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), Florestan (*Fidelio*) under Zubin Mehta at the Maggio Musicale in Florence, Lohengrin and Bacchus (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), the lead role in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and Paul in *Die tote Stadt* at the Staatsoper Dresden. He has also sung Wagner's *Siegfried* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Parsifal* at the Staatsoper Munich, and then Stolzing in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at the Staatsoper Berlin. At the inauguration of the new Staatsoper Berlin, he performed Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in an outdoor concert under Daniel Barenboim's direction.



**ELISABET STRID**

Soprano

Isolde

Swedish dramatic soprano Elisabet Strid is particularly renowned for her interpretations of Wagner and Strauss, performing at international opera houses and festivals including the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Semperoper Dresden, the Royal Opera Houses in London and Copenhagen, the opera houses in Madrid, Oslo, Helsinki, Antwerp, Tokyo, and Mexico City, as well as the Bayreuth Festival, Baltic Sea Festival, Ravello Festival, Hong Kong Festival, and the Wagner Days in Budapest. She has portrayed such roles as Elisabeth, Venus, Sieglinde, Brünnhilde, and Senta in the Wagnerian repertoire, Dvorak's *Rusalka*, Giorgetta in Puccini's *Il tabarro*, and Chrysothemis in *Elektra* and Salome in Strauss's *Salome*. Her performance as Salome has enraptured audiences in Leipzig, Bologna, Stockholm, Tel Aviv, and the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. Her debut CD *Leuchtende Liebe* (Wagner and Beethoven) was released by OehmsClassics. In 2024, she will appear as Isolde (*Tristan und Isolde*) in a new production at the Royal Danish Opera and as Senta (*The Flying Dutchman*) at the Royal Opera House.

**TAREQ NAZMI**

Bass  
King Marke

After training at the Opera Studio and being part of the Ensemble of the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich, Tareq Nazmi made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in the role of Spreche in *Die Zauberflöte*. He also portrayed the Hermit in a new production of *Der Freischütz* directed by Dmitri Tcherniakov at the Bayerische Staatsoper. In concert, Nazmi has performed under the baton of Riccardo Muti in Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, debuted with the New York Philharmonic, and sung Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Vienna and Lisbon under Manfred Honeck and Lorenzo Viotti. He first appeared in the roles of Filippo II in *Don Carlos* at the Theater St. Gallen, Banquo in *Macbeth* in Antwerp, Sarastro at the Cleveland, and Ferrando in *Il trovatore* at the Munich Opera Festival. In January 2022, he performed as Gurnemanz in Michael Thalheimer's *Parsifal* at the Grand Théâtre de Genève.

**KRISTINA STANEK**

Mezzo-soprano  
Brangäne

Stanek graduated with distinction from the Royal Academy of Music in London. After being a member of the Ensemble at Theater Basel, she joined the Ensemble of the Staatsoper Hamburg in 2020. She has notably performed as Flora (*La Traviata*), Prince Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*), Olga (*Eugene Onegin*), and Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*). In 2022, her portrayal of Princess Eboli (*Don Carlos*) in Basel earned her a nomination by Opernwelt for "Singer of the Year". Her 2023/2024 season is defined by her performance of *Carmen* at the Staatsoper Stuttgart and her debut role as Azucena in *Il trovatore* in both Stuttgart and Hamburg.

**AUDUN IVERSEN**

Baritone  
Kurwenal

Norwegian baritone Audun Iversen studied at the Norwegian State Academy of Music in Oslo, at Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Leipzig and at the Opera Academy Copenhagen. In 2007, Audun received First Prize in the Queen Sonja Competition in Oslo. Operatic highlights of recent seasons include Figaro (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) in San Francisco, for Glyndebourne and Deutsche Oper Berlin, *Eugene Onegin* for Royal Danish Opera, Norwegian Opera and Bolshoi Theatre; Posa (*Don Carlo*) at Oper Frankfurt, Fieramosca (*Benvenuto Cellini*) at Paris Opera, Zurga (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*) at the GTG (21/22), Germont (*La Traviata*) in Oslo and Prague, Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) with Teatro dell'Opera Roma, Marcello (*La Bohème*) at the Royal Opera House and in San Francisco, Silvio and Tonio (*I Pagliacci*), Alfio (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), Olivier (*Capriccio*) for his debut at the Opera of Chicago, *Wozzeck* in Frankfurt and Oslo, Edwin (*Csardasfürstin*) and Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*). Last season, he performed the title role in *Eugene Onegin* at the Liceu, the CEO in (*The Shell Trial*) at the Dutch National Opera, Albert (*Werther*) in Zürich and Germont (*La Traviata*) in Prague.



**JULIEN HENRIC**

Tenor  
Melot

In 2018, he won three prizes at the Raymond Duffaut Competition in Avignon, and made his stage debut the same year, performing the roles of Paris (*La Belle Hélène*) at the Opéra de Dijon and Alfredo (*La Traviata*) at the Festival Lyrique en Lyonnais. He also performed as Polidoro (*Il Flaminio*) at the TNP de Villeurbanne and Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) in 2019. As an aficionado of German Lieder, he has performed Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and Schubert's *Winterreise*. Henric gained acclaim in the role of Janek Prus (*The Makropoulos Affair*) at the GTG. Since then, he has debuted at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, the Opéra national de Bordeaux, and the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. He has performed at the Ravenne Festival (*Don Ottavio*), the Opéra de Rouen (*Borsa* in *Rigoletto*, Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*), the Opéra Royal de Versailles (*Don Ottavio*), and in concerts in Hamburg and Cologne for *Norma* (Flavio), at the Opéra de Paris in *Hamlet* (Marcellus) and as Alfredo (*La Traviata*) at the Festival d'été des Nuits Lyriques de Marmande. During the 2023/2024 season, he will notably perform the roles Arturo Bucklaw (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) in Bergamo, Ulysses (*Pénélope*) in Athens, Hervey (*Anna Bolena*) in Geneva, and Laertes (*Hamlet*) in Salzburg.

**EMANUEL TOMLJENOVIĆ**

Tenor  
A sailor, a shepherd

A member of the International Opera Studio in Cologne until 2024, Emanuel Tomljenović joined the Jeune Ensemble at the GTG for the 2024/2025 season. He has notably performed the roles of Bastien (*Bastien und Bastienne* by Mozart), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), and Belmonte (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*). His concert repertoire includes works by Bach, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Saint-Saëns. During the 2023/2024 season, he collaborated with the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra as a soloist in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. He also portrayed Tempo in *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* at the Göttingen International Handel Festival. The tenor has worked on several new productions, including *The Siege of Korcula* by S. Arnod and *Ines* by O. Adamek.

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