

# A Grand Tour

## a musical rail journey through central Europe

### Grand Tour Destinations

The main aim of what became known as my 'Grand Tour' was to take some photos – documenting the trip as well as trying to make some 'arty' pictures. Its overall theme was a musical one, visiting some of the centres of 18th and 19th century music and the classical composers. This is a summary of the towns and cities I visited, in the order in which I visited them.

#### **Bonn** Germany

I travelled from London to Brussels on an early Eurostar, then by Thalys to Cologne [Köln], spending a couple of hours around the huge cathedral before the short journey to Bonn. Bonn is where **Ludwig van Beethoven** was born in 1770, and where he played in the court orchestra (among other things) until his move to Vienna in 1792. **Robert Schumann** died here in 1856, and is buried – with **Clara Schumann** – in the old cemetery. /



#### **Mannheim** Germany

Mannheim was critically important in the music scene in the early to mid 18th century – the '**Mannheim School**' was a group of progressive German composers connected to the Mannheim Court. Among other things they laid the foundations of the symphony and its orchestration before it was later developed by Haydn and Mozart. The huge palace still exists, with most of it now used by the university. /



#### **Munich** Germany

Munich was the birthplace of composer **Richard Strauss** in 1864, but there's little to commemorate him apart from the *Richard-Strauss-Brunnen* in front of the *Alte Akademie*. My other musical interest was the *Cuvilliés-Theater* in the *Residenz*, where Mozart's opera **Idomeneo** had its first performance in 1781. Plus the red-brick *Frauenkirche* with its legend of the Devil's footprint, and the charming carillon in the *Neues Rathaus* in *Marienplatz*. /



#### **Salzburg** Austria

Salzburg was the birthplace of **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** in 1756, and his home base until his move to Vienna in 1781. It was also where **Michael Haydn** – younger brother of Joseph Haydn – worked for 43 years from 1763 after moving from Vienna. It's a fabulously attractive city, with outstanding churches and other buildings, all overlooked by the remarkable *Hohensalzburg* fortress; it was the setting for the film *The Sound of Music*. /



#### **St Florian** Austria

The Augustinian Monastery at St Florian – about 12km from Linz – was built in the Baroque style on the site of earlier Norman and Gothic churches. My musical interest was the composer and organist **Anton Bruckner** (1824-1896), who was a pupil here from 1837-1840, returned as a teacher in 1845, and finally moved to Vienna in 1868. For me, a day trip from Salzburg. /



#### **Klagenfurt** Austria

Klagenfurt is near lake *Wörthersee*, in southern Austria. From 1900-1907, composer and music director **Gustav Mahler** spent two summer months here each year, in a house at *Maiernigg* on the southern shore of the lake. In the single room 'composing cottage' in the woods above the house he worked on the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th symphonies, and this was the main reason for my journey to Klagenfurt. /



#### **Vienna** Austria

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** moved to Vienna from Salzburg in 1781, marrying Constanze Weber in 1782; he died here in 1791. **Joseph Haydn** had a house here, after moving from Eisenstadt, from 1796 until his death in 1809. **Ludwig van Beethoven** lived here from 1792 until his death in 1827. **Franz Schubert** was born here and lived all his short 31-year life here, until his death in 1828. **Johannes Brahms** was here for 35 years from 1862 until his death in 1897. **Johann Strauss**, father and son, were born and died here (1804-1849 and 1825-1899). **Gustav Mahler** was director of the Court Opera 1897-1907, and died here in 1911. An important destination! /



#### **Eisenstadt** Austria

**Joseph Haydn** worked as a court musician for over 30 years at *Schloss Esterházy* in Eisenstadt, starting here as assistant music director in 1761, and being appointed *Kapellmeister* in 1766. He moved to live in Vienna in 1795, following the death of his patron Prince Nikolaus Esterházy in 1790 and his successful visits to London. For me, a day trip from Vienna, to visit the Esterházy palace and to see Haydn's house in the old town. /



<b>Brno</b> Czech Republic	I stopped in Brno, on the way from Vienna to Prague, to visit the <b>Leoš Janáček</b> museum. Janáček spent most of his educational and working life in Brno; he founded the Brno organ school around 1890, moving it to its present site in 1910. The museum was originally the organ school Director's house, and Janáček lived here until his death in 1928. /	
<b>Prague</b> Czech Republic	<b>Bedřich Smetana</b> , generally regarded as the founder of Czech music, settled in Prague in 1843 at the age of 19. Later, <b>Antonín Dvořák</b> played under Smetana in the Prague National Theatre orchestra. Dvořák was Professor of Composition at the conservatory from 1891, and later Director, apart from his 3 years in New York as Director of the National Conservatory, where he fixed his reputation worldwide with his 9th Symphony, 'From the New World'. <b>Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart</b> was (and remains) popular in Prague, and premiered his operas <i>Don Giovanni</i> and <i>La clemenza di Tito</i> in the Estates Theatre. A busy city, and a lot to see. /	
<b>Nelahozeves</b> Czech Republic	Nelahozeves is a village by the Vltava river, about 30km north-west of Prague. The composer <b>Antonín Dvořák</b> was born here in 1841, and his parents' house – which they ran as a pub – was first opened as a Dvořák museum in 1951. For me, a day trip (actually a morning trip) by train from Prague, to the station that was being built across the road from the house when he was a youngster; hence his lifelong interest in railways. /	
<b>Dresden</b> Germany	I particularly wanted night-time photos of the Dresden Opera House – known as <b>Semperoper</b> after architect Gottfried Semper. The composer <b>Carl Maria von Weber</b> was appointed Director of the Dresden Opera and court <i>Kapellmeister</i> in 1817. <b>Heinrich Schütz</b> was <i>Kapellmeister</i> 200 years earlier, from 1615-1657. <b>Richard Wagner</b> was Director of the Opera from 1843-1849 following a successful production here of <i>The Flying Dutchman</i> . The other important building for me in Dresden was the <b>Frauenkirche</b> , the iconic Lutheran church which collapsed the day after Allied bombing in February 1945 and was finally rebuilt in 2005. /	
<b>Leipzig</b> Germany	<b>Johann Sebastian Bach</b> was cantor at St. Thomas's church (the <i>Thomaskirche</i> ) from 1723 until his death in 1750, writing the <i>St Matthew Passion</i> , <i>B Minor Mass</i> , the <i>Goldberg Variations</i> , 250 cantatas, and more; his son <b>Johann Christian Bach</b> , 'the English Bach', was born here in 1735. <b>Felix Mendelssohn</b> was conductor of the renowned Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra from 1835 until his death in 1847. <b>Robert Schumann</b> studied in Leipzig and taught at the Conservatoire. <b>Gustav Mahler</b> was second conductor of the Leipzig Opera 1886-1888. <b>Richard Wagner</b> was born here. /	
<b>Weimar</b> Germany	<b>JS Bach</b> was leader of the court orchestra and organist in Weimar from 1708-1717. His sons <b>Wilhelm Friedemann</b> and <b>Carl Philipp Emanuel</b> were born here. <b>Johann Nepomunk Hummel</b> was <i>Kapellmeister</i> a hundred years later, from 1819-1837, followed by <b>Franz Listz</b> , from 1848-1859, who made Weimar into a major musical centre. Weimar was also home to writers <b>Goethe</b> , <b>Schiller</b> , <b>Herder</b> and <b>Wieland</b> , and the philosopher <b>Nietzsche</b> . /	
<b>Eisenach</b> Germany	Eisenach is where <b>Johann Sebastian Bach</b> was born, in 1685; the house is now the <i>Bachhaus</i> museum. The town grew in support of the <b>Wartburg</b> castle, perched on a rocky outcrop over the Thuringian forest – it was <b>Richard Wagner's</b> inspiration for <i>Tannhäuser</i> and the place where <b>Martin Luther</b> translated the New Testament in 1521. A bonus for me, on my trip from Weimar, was the unusual interior of the <i>Georgenkirche</i> in the market place. /	
<b>Halle</b> Germany	I stopped in Halle to visit the <i>Händel-Haus</i> , birthplace in 1685 of <b>Georg Friederich Händel</b> , who went on to become that most English of composers: George Frideric Handel. So I was more than upset to find the house closed for some serious rebuilding and renovation. But considerable compensation was provided by the superb <i>Marktkirche Unser Lieben Frauen</i> , with its Cranach-school altar paintings, in the city centre. /	
<b>Köthen</b> Germany	<b>Johann Sebastian Bach</b> was <i>Kapellmeister</i> in Köthen 1717-1723, moving here from Weimar to work for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, himself a competent musician. Among other works, Bach wrote the six <i>Brandenburg Concertos</i> , the <i>Orchestral and Cello Suites</i> , and the <i>Violin Sonatas and Partitas</i> while he was in Köthen. He was appreciated and well paid. /	
<b>Wittenberg</b> Germany	Now known formally as Lutherstadt-Wittenberg, the town was the home of <b>Martin Luther</b> (1483-1546) and of his friend and colleague <b>Philipp Melanchthon</b> , and the place where the Protestant Reformation started early in the 16th century. It was also the home of the great and prolific artist <b>Lucas Cranach</b> , friend of Luther, whose works, and those of his son and apprentices, had been striking highlights in many of my earlier destinations. / .	

**Warsaw**  
Poland

I made the 1100km train journey from Berlin to Warsaw and back – frivolously perhaps – to visit the birthplace of the pianist and composer **Fryderyk Chopin** (1810-1849) at Zelazowa Wola, 50km west of Warsaw. Effectively the trip was free, as I was travelling in Europe on a rail pass, but the local journey from Warsaw was not without incident... /



**Berlin**  
Germany

There were no particular composer connections in Berlin, but before I left home I'd booked a concert with the **Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra** in the *Philharmonie* as an appropriate musical end to the Tour. My short stay here was intended as a time for winding-down and reflecting on the Grand Tour, with a chance for a quick look at the more obvious sights. In the event I spent a day longer than planned due to last-minute travel problems. /



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