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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Richard Strauss's Salome A Triumph of Musical Drama

Vienna State Opera, 07.05.2026 [ENA]

The famous Richard Strauss's Salome at the Vienna State Opera stands as one of the most electrifying and intensive experiences in the modern opera repertory, and the current production confirms why this work remains so irresistible to audiences and artists alike. Rarely does an opera so completely fuse psychological intensity, orchestral brilliance, and theatrical shock.

At the Vienna State Opera, Salome becomes not merely a performance but an event of exceptional artistic concentration, shaped by a company with the resources, discipline, and tradition to reveal every facet of Strauss's astonishing score. The production presents Strauss's one-act masterpiece in all its unflinching dramatic power. The plot, drawn from Oscar Wilde through Hedwig Lachmann's German adaptation, centres on Salome's obsessive fascination with the prophet Jochanaan and the devastating consequences of desire, rejection, and corruption.

The Vienna State Opera's staging respects the opera's uncompromising emotional logic while allowing the score to do what it does best: create a feverish world in which every glance, every phrase, and every orchestral shimmer carries dramatic weight. This is one of the great strengths of the work, and it receives the seriousness it deserves here. A major reason for the success of Salome in Vienna is the sheer authority of the musical forces. Strauss wrote one of the most demanding orchestral parts in the repertory, and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra responds with exceptional brilliance, colour, and precision.

The score's gleaming decadence, eruptions of violence, and sudden moments of rapt inwardness emerge with thrilling clarity. Under Sebastian Weigle, the music is shaped with confidence and control, allowing the opera's long arc to unfold with inexorable force. The conductor's grasp of texture and pacing helps the evening feel both monumental and intensely alive. The cast further elevates the performance. Lidia Fridman brings impressive command to the title role, with a voice and stage presence well suited to Salome's emotional volatility and dangerous allure.

Her interpretation captures both the youthfulness and the dark force of the character, making Salome feel disturbingly human rather than merely symbolic. As Jochanaan, Tomasz Konieczny is a formidable presence, praised for the power, brilliance, and expressive authority of his singing. His scenes are among the evening's most compelling, combining vocal grandeur with magnetic dramatic conviction.

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Gerhard Siegel's Herodes adds sharp theatrical bite, while Monika Bohinec brings steadiness and presence to Herodias. Together, the ensemble creates a vivid dramatic landscape in which each character contributes to the opera's suffocating atmosphere of decadence and moral collapse. This is one of those rare evenings in which the secondary roles are not merely functional but essential to the overall impact. The production feels carefully balanced, with every member of the cast serving the drama.

What makes Salome at the Vienna State Opera especially rewarding is the institution's ability to make a notoriously difficult work feel immediate and accessible without simplifying it. The opera's modernity lies in its refusal to soften its extremes, and the Vienna performance embraces that intensity. The result is a staging that feels both luxurious and psychologically acute, inviting the audience into a world of beauty and terror, sensuality and violence, fascination and disgust. This tension is central to the work's enduring power.

The evening also reminds us why the Vienna State Opera remains one of the world's most important opera houses. Its artistic standards, orchestral excellence, and commitment to major repertoire works create the ideal conditions for Strauss's masterpiece to flourish. In Vienna, Salome is not simply performed; it is fully inhabited. That is why the experience resonates so strongly. One leaves the theatre with the sense of having witnessed a work at the height of its expressive possibility.

In the end, this Salome is a vivid affirmation of opera's unique power. It is daring without being reckless, refined without losing edge, and emotionally overwhelming without ever sacrificing musical intelligence. Few operas demand so much from performers and audiences alike; fewer still reward that investment so completely. At the Vienna State Opera, Strauss's masterpiece achieves the kind of radiant, unsettling greatness that lingers long after the final chord.

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