



Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Radiant Triumph: La Traviata at the Vienna Opera Summer

Vienna Opera Summer 2025, 16.07.2025 [ENA]

As an opera enthusiast and critic, I am delighted to reflect on the Vienna Opera Summer 2025's open-air staging of Verdi's *La Traviata*. Under the shimmering summer sky of Heumarkt and framed by the luminous façade of the Vienna Konzerthaus, this production stands out as a cultural tour de force—blending musical excellence, visual spectacle, and audience engagement in an unforgettable festival atmosphere.

Artistic director and conductor Joji Hattori leads with a vision that marries high-level musicality with approachable storytelling. Having successfully launched the festival in 2024 with *Don Giovanni*, Hattori's return this year continues to raise the bar. The relocation to Heumarkt brings its own magic: the transformation of the Vienna Ice Skating Club into an enchanting summer arena with the Konzerthaus façade serving as a dramatic projection canvas. The festival's commitment to being "low-threshold yet high-quality" shines through—Hattori and stage director Dominik am Zehnhof-Söns craft a production that is a joy to both newcomers and seasoned opera lovers alike.

A particularly inspired innovation is the presence of Karl Markovics as Verdi's ghostly presence and narrator, guiding audiences through Violetta's tragic arc. His cohesive and gracious narration bridges the emotional gap between Italian libretto and audience, striking a careful balance between insight and dramatic flair. This storytelling touch enhances accessibility without undermining authenticity. The Vienna Chamber Orchestra, positioned beside the stage, delivers Verdi's lush score with clarity and vitality. Critics note the improved auditory experience in 2025: seating arrangements and sound design ensure that the orchestra and chorus are fully immersed in the summer air, creating both intimacy and grandeur.

Romanian soprano Cristina Pasaroiu, cast as Violetta, proves to be the evening's musical star. Heralded by the *Financial Times* for her "extremely intense stage and musical presence," she brings together haunting lower tones, a radiant upper register, and remarkable stamina. On opening night, her *Sempre libera* and *Addio del passato* crystallized into moments of emotional transcendence—heartbreaking, yet hopeful.

Supporting Cast Excellence

- Liparit Avetisyan and David Kerber both excel as Alfredo, each bringing distinctive warmth and lyrical sincerity.

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- Thomas Weinhappel and Stepan Drobit deliver compelling portrayals of Giorgio Germont, providing the emotional depth and moral gravitas vital to Verdi's drama.
- The Philharmonia Chorus Wien adds weight and texture, grounding the production in communal richness.

The visual design by Manfred Waba elevates the spectacle to new heights. His cohesive approach—spanning both sets and costumes—creates a timeless yet flexible atmosphere that bridges historic grandeur with modern sensibility. The minimal, tasteful sets allow the Konzerthaus projection facade to shift from salon to ballroom with seamless elegance. Lighting and projections remain understated yet evocative, complementing without distracting.

Waba's costume designs are nothing short of brilliant. The careful blend of period authenticity and contemporary sensitivity creates visually arresting tableaux:

- Violetta's gowns streak with evolving color symbolism—blossoming pastels in Act I, coral-rich splendor in Act II, and understated mourning in the finale.
- Germont family attire exhibits quietly powerful restraint—austerity in gray tones, delicate tailoring echoing moral conscience.
- Alfredo and chorus bring color and romantic flourish—springtime hues and flowing silhouettes that reflect youthful passion.

Each costume serves as a silent narrator of emotional landscapes, reinforcing the performers' storytelling with visual depth. Together with projections, they transform the space into sequential tableaux, effortlessly guiding the audience through emotional transitions.

The Opera Summer delivers more than a performance—it delivers an experience. Hospitality services begin as early as 18:30, offering a convivial ambience with food, wine, and casual elegance. The casual seating allows a relaxed approach, with many choosing blankets and picnic-style comfort under the stars.

The inclusion of multi-language subtitles and an app-based system promotes inclusivity and understanding—a bridge between tradition and accessibility.

This approachable setting does not dilute artistic quality—it enriches it. From young opera enthusiasts in casual attire to seasoned connoisseurs, the event cultivates a genuine spirit of shared cultural celebration.

Highlights and Moments of Resonance

- Opening Night Magic (July 1): A sold-out première set the tone for a festival season characterized by energy, elegance, and emotional poignancy.
- Community & Walk-ons: Chorus and ensemble members fully integrate into the architecture and

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ambiance, and ambient effects—birds, night sounds—lend a breathing life to the production .
- Narrative Pacing: Hattori’s pacing, through music and stage direction, delivers a cohesive narrative arc without sacrificing musical integrity or dramatic pacing.

The Vienna Opera Summer 2025’s staging of La Traviata is a triumph in every respect. It’s an exquisite blend of:

- Musical brilliance—Joji Hattori and the orchestra lead with soulful sensitivity.
 - Vocal artistry—Cristina Pasariou, Karl Markovics, and supporting cast shine.
 - Visual elegance—Manfred Waba’s design melds architecture, costume, and projection into poetic unity.
 - Cultural accessibility—Accommodating yet refined staging invites new audiences to experience opera without dilution.
- This production stands as a landmark in Vienna’s summer cultural scene: a celebration of Verdi’s masterpiece wrapped in modern warmth, dramatic clarity, and communal joy.

For those inspired by this year’s brilliance, mark your calendars:

The Vienna Opera Summer returns on 1 July 2026 with Georges Bizet’s Carmen, promising another season of open-air magic under the stars. With its sultry melodies, fiery characters, and gripping drama, Carmen is set to ignite the summer stage with passion and spectacle. Audiences can once again expect world-class voices, stunning visual design, and the unique charm of opera under Vienna’s twilight skies.

Here’s to more unforgettable summer nights in Vienna’s cultural heart.

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