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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

## Radiant Operatic Gala Under the Stars

Grafenegg, 22.06.2025 [ENA]

As summer officially dawned in Grafenegg, the storied Sommernachtsgala unfolded in breathtaking splendor on June 20, 2025. This annual celebration marks the start of the open-air season at the iconic Wolkenturm, set amid the lush gardens of Schloss Grafenegg. This year's edition, spotlighting the début of a new Music Director, combined youthful exuberance with artistic maturity, delivering an evening that was nothing short of magical. This review captures the highlights as an opera specialist, awed by the artistry, craftsmanship, and emotional power of this extraordinary event.

From the outset, the stage was set for brilliance. Rudolf Buchbinder, Grafenegg's esteemed festival director and "pianist of the century," opened the evening with effortless grace at the piano. Leading the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich was Fabien Gabel, in his debut as Chief Conductor. Gabel's inaugural Gala promised both warmth and virtuosity. Sharing the stage were two vocal luminaries: internationally acclaimed tenor Michael Spyres, and mezzo-soprano Siphokazi Molteno, making her Grafenegg debut—adding thrilling novelty to an already rich program. The Wolkenturm is a masterpiece of architectural acoustics—an ethereal amphitheatre seamlessly melding landscape and sound.

Nestled among ancient trees and undulating lawns, it offers spectators intimate proximity to performers and a sweeping vista of the summer sky. The weather was perfect—clear skies, a gentle breeze, and the faint scent of meadow flowers enhanced every note. It was a setting worthy of opera's grandeur and drama alike. The programme opened with Johann Strauss's entry march from *Der Zigeunerbaron*, setting a buoyant yet dignified tone. Under Gabel's baton, the orchestra responded with elegant precision—the brass crisp, woodwinds agile, and strings beautifully luminous.

The conductor exhibited confident rapport with the ensemble, delivering both exuberant flourish and introspective nuance effectively. Highlights included intermezzi and overtures from opera and concert repertoire—each executed with refined color and emotional clarity.

### Tenor Showcase – Michael Spyres

Spyres emerged as the early star of the evening. His vocal control—a radiant fusion of steely precision and lyrical sweetness—was on full display in Rossini's florid passages and Puccini's stirring climaxes. His phrasing revealed deep stylistic insight, engaging the audience utterly.

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Mezzo-Soprano Debut – Siphokazi Molteno

Molteno’s debut at Grafenegg proved spellbinding. Her tone shimmered with warmth and depth as she navigated her selections with both technical prowess and emotional resonance. Her solo presence in the open air commanded attention, and demonstrated her growing status as a rising star.

Pianist-Artistic Director – Rudolf Buchbinder

Buchbinder's performance of the opening movement of Schumann’s Piano Concerto in A minor was poetic and deeply heartfelt. His fingers spoke with Romantic sensibility, every chord imbued with clarity and feeling.

The evening was a masterclass in versatility and mood, featuring:

Strauss’s spirited march

Rossini’s “Una voce poco fa” and “Largo al factotum”

Schumann’s Piano Concerto (Allegro affettuoso), performed by Buchbinder

Augusta Holmès’s intermezzo “La nuit et l’amour”

Gounod’s “Ô ma lyre immortelle”

Puccini’s “Nessun dorma”

Mascagni’s Cavalleria rusticana intermezzo

Chapí’s “Carceleras”

Lara’s “Granada”

Massenet’s Werther arias and duet

Each selection built a journey from celebratory brilliance to lyrical reflection, perfectly echoing twilight’s enchantment at Grafenegg.

This Gala captured the essence of beautiful live music in the open air. Roaring applause, spontaneous cheers, and sighs of wonder confirmed the concert’s deep emotional impact. The blend of beloved repertoire and fresh interpretations left the audience nostalgic yet forward-looking. It reaffirmed Grafenegg’s status as a summer music destination of the highest calibre.

Strengths & Unforgettable Moments:

Program Curation: Balanced vocal fireworks and orchestral gravitas expertly.

Artistic Rapport: Synergy evident between Gabel, Buchbinder, Spyres, Molteno, and the orchestra.

Setting: The Wolkenturm’s architecture and natural surroundings elevated every moment.

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Contrast & Cohesion: Dramatic bravura against introspective lyricism—this is gala artistry.

Grafenegg's Summer Night's Gala 2025 was more than a concert—it was a radiant celebration of performance art under the stars. Thanks to Fabien Gabel, Rudolf Buchbinder, Michael Spyres, and Siphokazi Molteno, the evening achieved a perfect blend of grandeur and intimacy. Grafenegg once again proved itself a premier destination for open-air musical magnificence. Bravo to all who brought this unforgettable night to life—and may the echoes of those voices and harmonies linger in memory for seasons to come.

Bericht online lesen:

[https://bsportive.en-a.at/kunst\\_kultur\\_und\\_musik/radiant\\_operatic\\_gala\\_under\\_the\\_stars-91653/](https://bsportive.en-a.at/kunst_kultur_und_musik/radiant_operatic_gala_under_the_stars-91653/)

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