

**FREE
REPUBLIC OF
VIENNA
FESTIVAL**
WIENER FESTWOCHEN
15 MAY TO 21 JUNE 2026

PRESS INFORMATION

75 Years: A Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) Jubilee Edition

26 February 2026

Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna
2026
Republic of Gods – 15 May to 21 June

In its third year, the Free Republic of Vienna declares itself the Republic of Gods. Which old myths – from the Iliad to the Nibelung, from the Arab Banū Hilāl Epic to Wagner's *Parsifal* – still hold a message for us? Are Allah, Yahwe, Thor and co. still relevant at all? Which new gods and goddesses do we need to invent together? The Republic of Gods is proclaiming a 'Holy Spring' in 2026 for the 75th anniversary of the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen): a mythical celebration of questioning and craving the gods.

Of course, the Republic of Gods is one thing first and foremost: radical art! Sales start today: 50,000 tickets are available for 35 productions (including 13 world premieres). Another 21 participatory productions and artistic projects are available free of charge, while 3 exhibitions cast a look back at the history of Europe's largest cross-over festival. The Free Republic can be found at 34 locations throughout Vienna from 15 May to 21 June; find its beating heart, the House of the Republic, aboard the Badeschiff Wien (Vienna Bathing Ship). The grand opening will be celebrated on Vienna's Heldenplatz square – but not until 22 May!

Milo Rau's anniversary production *The Best Piece Ever* brings back memorable moments from 75 years of the Vienna Festival as well as telling stories that were never told about love and death, scandal and beauty, art and rebellion, staged as a wild and enchanting review.

This year's programme is all about new and old belief systems, ecclesiastical, art historical and popular culture gods and goddesses, about images and legends that determine our feelings, our life and our society. It feels close to blasphemy to list all the events, artists and debates of the

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Republic of Gods, but let's try: From the American performance icon Narcissister to Thorsten Lensing's actors' party *Dancing Idiots*, from Rébecca Chaillon's rebellious sci-fi religion to the quiet, spiritual works by Cris Moreira and Kurō Tanino, and finally to the globally celebrated *Chineke! Orchestra* – artists are pouring into the Republic of Gods from all continents!

Vienna's darling Susanne Kennedy is giving a spiritual new interpretation to Wagner's *Parsifal*; there is a solo exhibition about mythomaniac Christoph Schlingensiefel; Vienna's enfant terrible Florentina Holzinger is staging a Pentecost Play, and Romeo Castellucci questions our playing at God over death. While the 'godmother of punk' Patti Smith will take to the stage for no less than three events, the Vienna Festival legend Robert Wilson is making a posthumous appearance at the Republic of Gods with one of his last productions, *The Tempest* – and Inna Shevchenko of the Ukrainian activism group FEMEN holds a feminist performative sermon!

We look into three shocking cases of the dark side of faith in a *Tribunal of Faith*: Where do church and state power form an alliance and pose a danger to the freedom of arts and opinion? What happens when a self-proclaimed theocracy, such as Iran, turns on its own citizens? And where does the opposite happen, when secular society scorns the feelings of the faithful?

Gob Squad create their new show *Doppelgänger/Doppelganger*; Marta Górnicka gives a stage to the chorus of today's seers in *CASSANDRA*; Angélica Liddell stages a radical performance ritual with *SEPPUKU. MISHIMA'S FUNERAL OR THE PLEASURE OF DYING*, and the laureate of Venice and the Berlinale Alice Diop presents a postcolonial retelling of the Venus myth in *The Voyage of the Sable Venus*. Trajal Harrell creates an entirely new 'History of the Theatre' from the songs of his life (*Music Music*), and the two Lebanese artists Lina Majdalanie and Rabih Mroué contribute this year's pièce commune with *The Tragic Fate of Sonata No. 2*, which tours through (almost) all districts. The young Serbian artist Andreja Kargačin leaps straight into the current political battles in Serbia in *DORA or Who's Going To Stitch the Vests*, while choreographers Angjetë Lisičkinaitë and Igor Shugaleev from Lithuania and Belarus reflect on personal and collective responsibility in the intense global situation (*CLAP & SLAP*).

That was just the beginning: From the immortal myth of vampires – reanimated by French star director Philippe Quesne in *Vampire's Mountain* – to Brazilian resistance strategies and myths (*Repertório N.1*), from the legend of the Wild West (*Dark Noon*) and the Arab Banū Hilāl Epic to the Iliad, which gets an utterly new retelling in *The Day Before* by composer Brigitta Muntendorf and director Christiane Jatahy, no myth, no deity, no legendary figure remains untouched. Plus, Thai director Wichaya Artamat deconstructs what is probably the most effective myth of the arts in *Juggle & Hide*: that of the omnipotent director. And what follows the Twilight of the Gods? In *Wallden*, the Viennese group Nesterval creates an entire post-apocalyptic commune. With *Songs of Winter War*, the Kyiv collective Opera Aperta takes the form of a mythological

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journey from the Uzbek Aral Sea via Ukraine's Carpathian Mountains to the winter carnival in Cantabria to ask: how do we make opera and music theatre during a war of annihilation? And Swedish theatre maker Mattias Andersson gifts an entirely worldly epic to the Vienna Festival with *Myths of Everyday Life*: an evening fashioned from the Viennese's own spiritual illuminations and twilights of the gods!

Moreover, the Republic of Gods will spotlight a very special legend in 2026: the Vienna Festival itself! For five and a half weeks, we follow the winding paths of the largest crossover festival in Europe – from its establishment in 1951 and the renewal movements of the 1960s and 1980s to the Free Republic of Vienna. The jubilee production *The Best Play Ever* brings back unforgettable moments as much as stories that have never been told – about love and death, scandal and beauty, art and rebellion. All of that as an extraordinary public revue! We open access to a comprehensive online archive, launch a *Cinema of the Republic* with films and recordings from 75 years of the Vienna Festival.

All of that is completed by a poster exhibition and an entirely new documentary film about the Vienna Festival. And another return is due: the legendary Vienna Festival 'W', globally and syncretically updated for the Republic of Gods! That is still not enough, for in 2026 the Vienna Festival will once again become the discursive hotspot of the season! That includes a debate series (*Holy Spring*) and a performance series (*Mythical Ark*) at the House and Club of the Republic on the Badeschiff, where extremist believers and right-wing as well as left-wing prophets, preachers of the apocalypse and seekers of God share the microphone – and the Vienna Festival band, *Gods Republic*, gives as many as five concerts, from death metal to spiritual folk.

Also, the all-female womxn composers academy, the *Academy Second Modernism*, is once again inviting ten globally leading womxn composers to Vienna and holds a summit meeting to discuss issues around appropriation in music. And finally, the faithful of this world demand their rights in a *Tribunal of Faith*: What are crucifixes and sacred chants doing onstage? Why are a rabbi and a Muslim woman kissing on the Vienna Festival posters? Why do the radical far right adorn themselves with Bible quotes and European museums with colonial cultic objects? Might it be true that our histories and traditions are in fact first and foremost profane and blasphemous, inconsiderate and transgressive?

So the Free Republic is inviting the whole world to Vienna – loudly and (self-)critically. Because even for the 75-year jubilee the Free Republic maintains the republican-anarchic tenet that tradition is not to preserve the ashes but to pass on the flame! It's Time for New Gods – from everyone for everyone!

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The entire Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna programme is available online at <https://www.festwochen.at/en>.

Press photos and information for download

<https://www.festwochen.at/en/press>

Press tickets can be ordered using the order form in the website press area from 26 February

<https://www.festwochen.at/en/press>

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