



Dear Members,

As you may perhaps have gathered from the media, in mid-January our Society's Board of Management offered the Bayreuth Festival a special donation for the anniversary year in 2026, which was earmarked for the revivals of the very popular productions of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*.

To our regret, the Festival turned down that special donation for a revival of *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*.

What we wish to stress is that our donation was not meant as a means of interfering in the decisions of the artistic management; rather, it was intended as an offer to help implement the concept for the anniversary year originally developed by the Festival management.

The following background information may be helpful:

As you know, we decided at the end of 2022 that because of the foreseeable cost increases at the Bayreuth Festival, we would not be able to contribute our present share of 29% to finance the deficit in the long term. Even in the years 2020 to 2023, we had already paid or promised more to the Festival in the form of subsidies than we received each year (funding of between 2.5 and 3.4 million euros per year). We are very grateful to you, dear Members, for raising 3 million euros a year for more than 20 years with your membership fees and donations.

We therefore informed the other shareholders (the Federal Republic of Germany, the Free State of Bavaria and the town of Bayreuth) and the Festival management that we would have to reduce our share of the on-going subsidies by Festspiele GmbH in percentage terms. At the same time, we promised our fellow-shareholders and the Festival that we would continue to place any additional revenue at the disposal of the Festival.

In mid-November 2024, the Festival informed the shareholders that escalating costs (above all wage increases, and increased prices for power and materials) meant that the anniversary programme published in the Summer could not be financed. The artistic management had therefore cancelled *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan* and *Meistersinger*. The Festival felt that the reserves built up in the last few years could be put to better use for financing the years 2027 to 2031, rather than for the anniversary. If the reserves were

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used for the anniversary, Festival operations would be jeopardised by 2029 at the latest. The Administrative Council approved this proposal by the Festival management at its meeting on 3rd December, 2024, because the Festival did not put forward any other suggestions

After the reduction of the performance schedule was announced, we received many enquiries from Members. Since our Society's revenue situation had improved considerably from 2.8 million euros at the end of November 2024 to more than 3.3 million euros by the end of the year, the Board of Management resolved in mid-January 2025 to offer a special donation for the anniversary. Based on the documents available from last November, the idea took shape that a revival of the very popular productions of *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* could supplement the 2026 performance schedule.

It goes without saying that we were well aware of the fact that changing the performance schedule yet again would not be easy, and that some of the performers, production teams and other people involved would already have made other plans. Even so, we hoped we would be contributing our share to enabling the Festival management to implement the concept it had originally developed for the anniversary year.

We very much regret that our proposal was turned down and are disappointed by the subsequent reports in the press, which we did not occasion. We shall nevertheless make every effort to support the Festival management in developing an attractive programme for the anniversary year in 2026. We shall continue to discuss the subject with the Festival and shall keep you, our dear Members, informed.

Dr. Georg Freiherr von Waldenfels

First Chairman