

Festival Launch at St. Mary's Cathedral

Ars Electronica Opening 2025 – It's going to be musical again

From September 3 to 7, Linz will once again become the vibrant center of the international media art scene. The festival week begins on Wednesday, September 3, at 7:30 p.m. with an opening event that will transform St. Mary's Cathedral and its forecourt into stages for contemporary music, orchestral pieces, choral singing, organ music, and unusual performances. Local and international artists will perform, setting the stage for a festival that will take place at various locations in Linz, including POSTCITY for the last time. As a guest performance for this year's Brucknerfest, the Ars Electronica Opening is free of charge.

White Hands Chorus performs on Cathedral Square

Under the title *Visible An die Freude*, deaf musicians from the inclusive children's and youth choir "White Hands Chorus NIPPON" (JP) perform the European anthem together with choir singers under the direction of Johannes Hiemetsberger. Some sing the lyrics, while others wear white gloves and translate the content rhythmically into German sign language. The audience is also encouraged to sing and sign along. In keeping with the 30th anniversary of Austria's accession to the EU, the performance turns international cultural relations and lived inclusion into a shared experience.

Exciting Acts in the Nave

As part of the Ars Electronica Opening 2025, the nave will also become a space for musical experimentation. There will be activity everywhere, with different soundscapes opening up on all levels of the building.

Spotlight on Johann Strauss

A highlight of the Ars Electronica Opening 2025 will be excerpts from the project *Walzersymphonie* (Waltz Symphony) – realized by the Ars Electronica Futurelab in cooperation with four international music universities and commissioned by Johann Strauss 2025 Vienna. Students were invited to submit artistic concepts that critically and creatively engage with the musical legacy of Johann Strauss (son) and the role of Artificial Intelligence in composition.

The composers selected by a jury spent a semester working on their new compositions in collaboration with the AI tool Ricercar (developed at the Ars Electronica Futurelab). The artistic results range from critical reflections to contemporary reinterpretations of the oeuvre of the Viennese Waltz King: one work addresses gender bias and discrimination, while another examines the tradition of dance music in the context of AI and disinformation. The Ars Electronica Opening will now present the first excerpts from these works, including an organ piece and an operetta. The world premiere of the complete *Walzersymphonie* in four movements will take place on November 27 in Vienna. The Bruckner Orchester Linz will perform on both dates.

The work of Johann Strauss continues throughout the evening: the Bruckner Orchester Linz performs the overture to the operetta *Die Fledermaus* and the late Romantic *Traumbild* in St. Mary's Cathedral.

Choral Singing and Organ Music

The choir singers under the artistic direction of Johannes Hiemetsberger will then be asked to perform once again: they will present the a cappella composition *Partita for 8 Voices* by American composer Caroline Shaw, based on Baroque dance movements by Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach's world-famous *Toccatà in D minor* will also be performed on the organ.

Navid Navab (IR/CA) explores experimental approaches to organ sounds in his installation *Organism + Excitable Chaos*, a co-production with Garnet Willis (CA). On the occasion of the Ars Electronica Opening, the Montreal-based artist will present a creative performance with a robot-controlled organ, reflecting on our perception of classical church music. The installation will be on display in St. Mary's Cathedral throughout the festival, and visitors can look forward to further performative interventions.

Ars Electronica Opening

September 3, 2025 from 7.30 p.m.

free entry

Location: St. Mary's Cathedral (Mariendom) and its forecourt
Herrenstraße 26 | 4020 Linz

Johanna Möslinger

Interim Artistic Director, LIVA

„This year, the Ars Electronica Festival will also be a guest at the 'Brucknerfest 2025' with its grand opening in St. Mary's Cathedral and the Grand Concert Night in the Train Hall of POSTCITY. Right at the beginning of autumn, the festival will once again provide strong impetus for artistic experiments in connection with new technologies – and with great international appeal. These two 'guest appearances' can also be seen as a sign of things to come, as mutual exchange between the two festivals can only be beneficial for Linz as a location.“

Meinhard Lukas

Chairman of the Supervisory Board, LIVA

„The fact that two major events with an impact far beyond the region's borders – the Ars Electronica Festival and the International Bruckner Festival Linz – have been running side by side with great success for many years is an impressive sign of the strength and innovative power of Upper Austria's central region. At the same time, this has always been and continues to be a mission to pool creative forces. The joint opening on September 3 in St. Mary's Cathedral—at the intersection of artificial intelligence and Austria's highest musical tradition—is thus much more than an exciting start to this year's packed festival program.“

Roland Geyer

Director Johann Strauss 2025 Vienna

„On behalf of Johann Strauss 2025 Vienna, the Ars Electronica Futurelab is bringing humans and machines into a creative and scientific dialogue with the Walzersymphonie project. For over nine months, students from four music academies (Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, Zurich) have been composing in collaboration with an AI-based composition system. Now, the Ars Electronica Opening offers a first glimpse of the resulting new composition, which will enter into an exciting dialogue with Roland Neuwirth's 'Wiener Walzersymphonie' in Vienna in November. A fascinating experiment between tradition, technology, and innovation.“

Norbert Trawöger

Artistic Director Bruckner Orchester Linz

„The innovative collaboration between Ars Electronica and the Bruckner Orchestra Linz is once again on display: with music by Johann Strauss and parts of a new 'Waltz Symphony,' this creative momentum is carried even further.“

Gerfried Stocker

Artistic Director Ars Electronica

„The St. Mary's Cathedral has been a central and impressive location for Ars Electronica for many years. Together with local and international artists and our partners, we will create a spectacular opening event that will delight Linz residents and international guests alike. There will be singing, sign language, dancing, and music.“