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Biography - Okka von der Damerau, Mezzo-soprano

Okka von der Damerau has established herself as one of the leading mezzo-sopranos of her generation. Whether in roles by Richard Wagner, Giuseppe Verdi, or in the songs of Gustav Mahler or Arnold Schönberg: with her powerful, nuanced mezzo-soprano and her clear, natural diction, the Hamburg-born singer senses the authentic tone in every character, which connects her with her audience.

In the 2026/27 season, Okka von der Damerau will appear as Klytämnestra in Strauss's *Elektra* at Deutsche Oper Berlin, she will make her house debut as Fricka (*Die Walküre*) at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, and return as Erda (*Das Rheingold*) to the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona and as Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*) to the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.

Okka von der Damerau was a member of the ensemble at the Bavarian State Opera for several years and was celebrated as Waltraute (*Götterdämmerung*), Erda (*Rheingold*, *Siegfried*), and Charlotte (*Die Soldaten* / Bernd Alois Zimmermann) under Kirill Petrenko, as well as Azucena (*Il trovatore*).

From Munich, her international career took off. After her debut in 2015, she has appeared several times at La Scala in Milan, most recently in new productions of *Rusalka* as Ježibaba and in *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* as Fricka. In addition, she can regularly been seen at most important international opera stages, such as the Opéra national de Paris, the Vienna State Opera, the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, the Teatro Real in Madrid, Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, the Lycic Opera of Chicago, the Hamburg State Opera, the Semperoper in Dresden, and the Bayreuth Festival.

A central role in Okka von der Damerau's extensive repertoire is Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*), which she debuted to great critical and public acclaim at the Bavarian State Opera in 2017 under the baton of Simone Young. She returned to the role in a new production in Munich in 2021, this time under the musical direction of Kirill Petrenko. Gustavo Dudamel conducted her performances as Brangäne in Peter Sellars' and Bill Viola's acclaimed *The Tristan Project* at the Opéra Bastille in Paris and with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. She has also appeared as Brangäne at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples.

In recent years, Okka von der Damerau has celebrated a number of highly acclaimed role debuts. She made her debut as Brünnhilde (*Die Walküre*) at the Stuttgart State Opera under Cornelius Meister, followed by performances at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples under Dan Ettinger. She sang the title role in Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* to overwhelming acclaim at the Bavarian State Opera, where she also made her debut as Venus (*Tannhäuser*). She has appeared as Ortrud (*Lohengrin*) in Stuttgart, Hamburg, and Barcelona.

Besides her various opera engagements, also concert are an important component of her

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artistic work. On the concert stage this season, she will perform Mahler's *Symphony No. 2* at the Tsinandali Festival and with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin at the Berlin Philharmonie, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* with the Bochum Symphony Orchestra, Mahler's *Symphony No. 3* with the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* in Kraków and Warsaw.

She has worked with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic, the Staatskapelle Berlin, the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia (most recently as Fricka in *Die Walküre* under Daniel Harding), and the KBS Symphony Orchestra Seoul. In 2018, she made her debut with the Cleveland Orchestra as Brangäne under Franz Welser-Möst.

Further important concert engagements have included Lili Boulanger's *Psalm CXXX* with Edward Gardner at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam and Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* under Daniel Barenboim at the Salzburg Festival. In 2024, she was invited to the Tokyo Spring Festival to perform Bruckner's *Mass No. 3* and returned in 2026 with Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder* (as the Wood Dove) and as Mary (*Der fliegende Holländer*). She also performed *Gurre-Lieder* at Teatro alla Scala in Milan. Recently, she sang *Das Lied von der Erde* with the Orchestra of Deutsche Oper Berlin, Mahler's *Symphony No. 2* with the Czech Philharmonic and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra under Karina Canellakis, and Mahler's *Symphony No. 3* with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra.

Her extensive concert repertoire also includes Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Mahler's *Rückert-Lieder*, Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*, and many other major works.

Okka von der Damerau is also passionately dedicated to lieder singing. In her current recital program, which she last performed at the Tokyo Spring Festival 2024 to great acclaim from the audience, she interprets songs by Johannes Brahms, Gustav Mahler, Alban Berg, and Richard Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*. Her 2017 recording of Frank Martin's song cycle *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke* with the Philharmonia Zurich under Fabio Luisi was highly acclaimed.

At the International Singing Competition for Wagnerian Voices in Venice, Okka von der Damerau was awarded the Special Jury Prize in 2006. In 2013 she received the Festival Prize of the Munich Opera Festival.

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