



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.

Following her acclaimed debut, Okka von der Damerau returns to La Scala in Milan this season as Fricka (*Rheingold*, *Walküre*) and will also perform the role in concert with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia under Daniel Harding in Rome. One focus of the season is the work of Gustav Mahler: at the Musikfest Berlin, she will sing *Das Lied von der Erde* with the orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin, followed by performances of the *Symphony No. 2* with the Czech Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra under Karina Canellakis. She will perform Mahler's *Symphony No. 3* in Warsaw with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra under Christoph König and in Munich with the Bavarian State Orchestra at the gala concert celebrating Zubin Mehta's 90th birthday.

Okka von der Damerau was a troupe member of the Bavarian State Opera for many 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 *Rheingold* and *Walküre* as Fricka. In addition, she can regularly be 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, the Semperoper in Dresden, and the Bayreuth Festival.

Okka von der Damerau has made several highly acclaimed role debuts in recent years. Her repertoire has been expanded by two interesting roles: Brünnhilde (*Walküre*), which she sang for the first time at the Stuttgart State Opera under the musical direction of Cornelius Meister, and Ariadne (title role), which she debuted with overwhelming success at the Bavarian State Opera. She also made a very successful debut at the Bavarian State Opera in the role of Venus (*Tannhäuser*).

Another important role in her extensive repertoire is Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*), which she debuted in 2017 – acclaimed by audiences and press alike – under Simone Young at the Bavarian State Opera. She reprised the role in a new production in Munich in 2021, this time under the baton of Kirill Petrenko. Gustavo Dudamel conducted her performances as Brangäne at the Paris Opera and in semi-staged performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

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Besides her various opera engagements, also concert are an important component of her artistic work. Okka von der Damerau works with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic, the Berlin Staatskapelle, the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, and the KBS Symphony Orchestra Seoul. In 2018, the mezzo-soprano made her Cleveland Orchestra debut as Brangäne under Franz Welser-Möst.

Other important concert engagements have taken her to the Concertgebouw Amsterdam with Lili Boulanger's *Psalm CX* under Edward Gardner and to the Salzburg Festival with Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* under the baton of Daniel Barenboim. In 2024, she was invited by the Tokyo Spring Festival to sing Buckner's *Mass No. 3* there and appeared at La Scala with Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* (as the Waldtaube). Her extensive concert repertoire also includes Mahler's *Rückertlieder* and *Das Lied von der Erde*, as well as Verdi's *Messa da requiem*.

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.