

Small stages, big impact: Exceptional cultural venues in Saxony-Anhalt

The stage landscape in Saxony-Anhalt is as diverse and colorful as a rainbow. In addition to the large, well-known theaters in Magdeburg, Halle, and Dessau, there are numerous smaller ones. We introduce some of them – they are as extraordinary as they are unique.

Curtain up! The only stage in the world in a Hundertwasser house, the smallest municipal theater in Germany, or a theater once directed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: superlative stage productions can be found in Saxony-Anhalt even in the smaller towns and theaters. A glance at the schedules reveals that the programs range from classical theater to lovingly produced productions by volunteer ensembles to lavish guest performances.

The Naumburg Theater

In April 2025, the theater in Naumburg opened its new venue. The Old Slaughterhouse now seats 110 spectators. In addition, a modern studio stage, a gallery for exhibitions, and a theater garden with a small open-air performance area have been created. "We are the smallest municipal theater in Germany," says spokesperson Karen Winkler-Scharf. Nevertheless, there are around 180 performances in the current season.

The mini ensemble, consisting of three permanent actors and actresses, performs eight different plays per season with the help of guest engagements. The program includes children's and youth theater, classical and contemporary plays, and comedies. Formats such as the annual "Naumburg Theater Walk" as theater in special locations, the series "Children and Actors Together on Stage," and the summer theater at the Marienort complete the program.

In addition to the theater, the new building also offers art exhibitions thematically related to the respective season. And thanks to the new stage, guest performances such as classical concerts, rock bands, dance theater, and performances by municipal choirs are now also possible. A special tip: Since the opening, the new foyer and the theater bar have hosted the Wednesday event series "Theater zum Angreifen" (Hands-On Theater), featuring small concerts, readings, and lectures. The concept: approachable, personal, and on equal terms with the audience, artists from a wide variety of genres present themselves.

<https://www.theater-naumburg.de/>

The Holzhaustheater Zielitz

The small town of Zielitz is known primarily for its high potash mountains, which can be seen from afar. The Holzhaustheater Zielitz uses these heaps from salt mining for a spectacular event: the Summer Theater on Mount Kalimanjaro. This is the popular name for the approximately 120-meter-high potash mountain. And for 25 years, it has provided the stage and backdrop for the unique festival.

But even outside of the Kaliberg season, a visit to the Holzhaustheater is worth a visit. "We have around 80 club members, about half of whom are children and young people under 20," says theater director Sigrid Vorpahl. Most of them want to and are allowed to perform on stage. "All of them are club members, but not amateurs, trained by professionals at the affiliated acting school or through learning by doing." Some of the volunteers have even been there for 30 years, often for more than half their lives.

The Kilimanjaro Festival is the highlight of every year. But the new theater in Zielitz also offers numerous productions for children and adults outside of the summer. A quick look at the program reveals that there's quite a lot going on for a town with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants.

<https://www.holzhaustheater.de/>

The Village Theater in Gladigau

An entire village puts on theater. This is exactly how it is in Gladigau – a small town in the Altmark region. For 23 years now, a play has been rehearsed and performed there each year. It's always a comedy, and it's always performed in Low German. Gladigau is the only theater with a Low German dialect in Saxony-Anhalt.

Perhaps this is precisely what accounts for its incredible success. Tickets for 18 performances this spring sold out in just one day. Anyone who wanted one had to travel to Gladigau and stand in line. There's neither a telephone hotline nor an online shop. The stage is made up of amateurs from the village. Everything related to the performances is done on a voluntary basis.

The Theater in the Green Citadel Magdeburg

"We are boulevard – right in the heart of Magdeburg." That's what managing director Enrico Scheffler says about the Theater in the Green Citadel in Magdeburg. The stage, which he affectionately calls "Theaterchen" (little theater), is the only one in the world located in a house designed by the artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser. The Green Citadel is one of the last projects the artist helped realize during his lifetime. The program at the "Theaterchen" is as colorful as the building in which it is located, even if it has more rough edges.

For 14 years now, prominent figures from show business have been coming here. Guests include Alfred Biolek and Sky du Mont. Audiences experience a mix of comedy, cabaret, concerts, readings, comedies, and musicals. The program is jam-packed, with essentially an event every day. "You can unwind for a few hours, forget about stress, and enjoy our cozy atmosphere," Enrico Scheffler says, summarizing the aspirations of his stage in this special house.

<https://www.theater-zitadelle.com/>

The Goethe Theater in Bad Lauchstädt

Initially, it was the healing power of the mineral spring discovered in 1704 that attracted visitors to Bad Lauchstädt. The small town in the Saalekreis district became a meeting place for the well-to-do. This increased even further after the theater, directed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, caused a stir in 1791. The building originally built at that time was extensively renovated a few years ago and now offers a stage in a unique historic setting.

A special highlight since 2006 has been the annual "Festival of the German Language." Especially on weekends, the theater hosts plays, readings, and opera productions. A visit to the Goethe Theater can be wonderfully combined with a stroll through the historic spa complex in Bad Lauchstädt.

<https://goethe-theater.com/>

Two special tips at the end

Two special courtyards are our two special tips at the end. The "Grauer Hof" in Aschersleben dates back to the Middle Ages and is considered one of the oldest secular buildings in Saxony-Anhalt. Today, the Grauer Hof art quarter is a vibrant place full of culture, life, and joy with a diverse program. A bistro, farm shop, hostel, and gallery invite you to come and stay.

A similar place is currently being developed in the Hanseatic town of Osterburg in the Altmark region. The Musikmarkthalle is a courtyard in the heart of the old town that most recently served as a car repair shop and stood empty for a long time. Enthusiasts have taken on the task and are breathing new life into the courtyard – with a bar, a varied cultural program, and overnight accommodations that are currently being developed.

<https://www.grauerhof.de/> and <https://www.musikmarkthalle.de/>

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