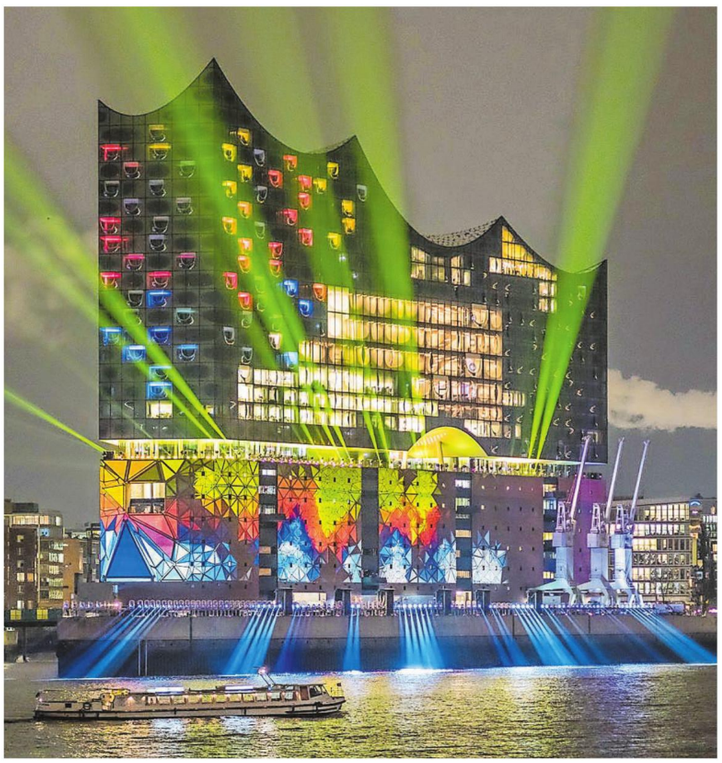

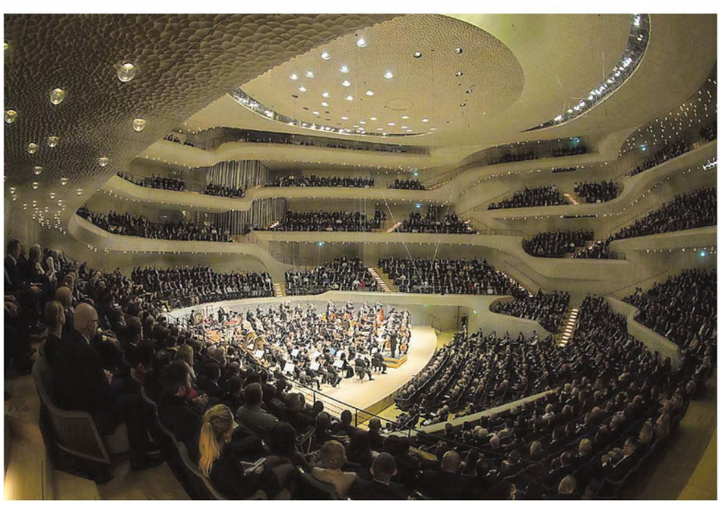

The exterior and interior of the Elbphilharmonie
Photos: Thies Raetzke / Ralph Larmann / Maxim Schulz

days and we can spend hours in a concert hall underground. Here there are big windows backstage."

In the case of those lobbying for a new, state-of-the art concert hall for Britain, there are lessons to absorb from the Elbphilharmonie. The London project has already, as in Hamburg, charted choppy waters. When punches were thrown in the Tories' referendum cat-fight, the fledging Centre for Music was knocked to the ground, a feasibility study stripped of most of George Osborne's promised £5.5m. Its advocates point out that no current concert hall in London can accommodate the vast orchestra and choir called for by some works that are, consequently, compromised or avoided.

Critics ask why London, and even, why a hall, when the NHS is on its knees, when some children are being charged for state school music lessons, and when hundreds of arts institutions are in trouble as the government's austerity chimera spots easy prey?

But New York architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro have been appointed, acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota has his engine running, and the project has powerful friends. What everyone will be pressing for is easy access, not the Elphilarmonie's strongest point, with its quayside location and cocoon in the clouds. The classical music world is worried sick about Brexit: seamlessly moving musicians and their kit across borders is essential to the busy concert schedule, and British orchestras currently welcome players from all lands. In this context, expect not a carbon copy of the ethereal Elbphilharmonie in London so much as one big 'welcome mat', over which the people will pass as fluidly as the music flows out.

■ Claudia Pritchard is a freelance arts journalist

LANGUAGE EUROFILE

EUROPE'S ONGOING SHAME OVER THE SILENCING OF LANGUAGES

Europe has an ignoble history of banning, and even killing off, certain languages. And, says **PETER TRUDGILL**, such persecution is still going on

The freedom to use your native language is a fundamental human right, so one of the most shameful blots on the history of our continent is the disgraceful tale of European governments attempting to make it illegal to speak certain languages. This has included British, French, German, Spanish, Italian, and even Norwegian and Swedish governments.

Banning the use of a language might seem to be a highly bizarre and difficult thing to attempt: how can you stop someone from speaking their own language, especially if they are monolingual? But this hasn't prevented governments of many different European nations from trying to do exactly that, sometimes in extremely punitive and unpleasant ways. Such actions have undoubtedly contributed to the death of some of Europe's smaller languages.

A well-known example of a language which has suffered in this way is Kurdish, in Turkey. Since the inept carving-up of the Ottoman Empire by the European powers after the First World War, it has been the fate of Kurdish speakers to find themselves linguistic minorities in Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Turkey.

Kurdish is a member of the Iranian sub-family of Indo-European languages, while Turkish is in origin a Central Asian language which is related to Kazakh, Azerbaijani, and Uzbek, but not to any major European language.

Kurdish was banned in Turkey in 1938, meaning, among other things, that it could no longer be used in print or education, leading to considerable loss of literacy in the language.

In 1961, a new Turkish constitution allowed Kurdish publications to appear again, but after the 1980 military coup, Kurdish was officially prohibited not just in public but also in private: there were cases of people being imprisoned for speaking, writing or even singing in Kurdish.

In 1991, the Turkish government again legalised the use of Kurdish, and from 2006 private television channels began to broadcast a limited amount of Kurdish-language output, although cartoons and educational programmes were specifically forbidden.

It is still not legal to use Kurdish as a language of instruction, even in private schools, in spite of the fact that there are around 14 million Kurds in Turkey, some 18% of the population.

Unsurprisingly in view of this linguistic oppression, by no means all of them still speak Kurdish, though at the most conservative estimate the language has at least eight million speakers in Turkey, with many in rural areas being monolingual.

Since 2012 it has been possible to study Kurdish as a subject in some places, and a few unofficial schools have been opened with Kurdish as the main language of instruction, but they have no state recognition, and at least one was forced to close in 2015.

The fall of the Ottoman Empire also had another unfortunate linguistic consequence: the boundaries of northern Greece were redrawn after the First World War in such a way that large numbers of native speakers of the Slavic languages Bulgarian and Macedonian were left on the Greek side of the border. Since then, there has been a history of Greek governments denying that these Greek Slavic speakers even exist.

When the Greek fascist dictator Metaxas took power in 1938, Slavic speakers were forced to take on Greek-language surnames, and the speaking of Slavic was declared illegal even in their own homes: policemen were sent around villages to listen outside windows and arrest anyone speaking Slavic.

Unsurprisingly, large numbers of Slavic-speakers left Greece altogether. However, today there are still many tens of thousands of native Slavic speakers in Greece, with some estimates going as high as 250,000.

There are radio stations in northern Greece which broadcast in Macedonian Slavic, but even now these are reported to be facing official opposition – something for which there can be no justification in a modern European nation which respects human rights.

TURKEY FOWL-UP

Certain gallinaceous birds of African origin acquired the name *guinea-fowl* when they were imported into Europe by the Portuguese from West Africa. The same birds were referred to as *turkeys* when they arrived via Turkish possessions in North Africa. When the American birds we now know as *turkeys* first came to the attention of English speakers, these were wrongly identified as the same bird and the latter name transferred to them.