

OPERA AROUND THE WORLD 2012



Great Opera Companies of Europe

with Christopher Lawrence

AMSTERDAM • BRUGES • BRUSSELS • PARIS

16 June – 1 July 2012 (16 days)



opera
australia



Renaissance
Tours



Tour Leader
**Christopher
Lawrence**

Christopher Lawrence is one of Australia's best-known broadcasters and commentators on classical music. In some of his hundreds of interviews on ABC Radio National Christopher discussed cooking spaghetti with Stéphane Grappelli, Bach's eye operations with Professor Fred Hollows, and the problems of singing while running up a mountain near Salzburg with Julie Andrews. The Swoon Collection CDs that evolved from his popular breakfast program on ABC Classic FM achieved Platinum status and continue to keep the peace in hundreds of thousands of homes. He has also been a guest conductor of all the Australian capital city symphony orchestras, much to their amusement.

Christopher's work as a record producer has earned him three ARIAs (Australian Recording Industry Awards) for Best Classical Recording, and an International Emmy for Performing Arts. His first book, *Swooning: a classical music guide to life, love, lust and other follies* (Random House Australia, 2001) became an instant best-seller. Christopher also writes for the international magazines 'Opera' and 'Opera Now'. In 1999 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Communications from Central Queensland University.

Great Opera Companies of Europe

On this delightful two week journey from Amsterdam to Paris, discover three of Europe's most respected opera companies - the Netherlands Opera, Belgium's La Monnaie and the Paris Opera - and enjoy performances by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, the National Orchestra of Belgium and the Orchestre de Paris.

The wonderfully rich operatic repertoire ranges from the opera buffa of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*, to the heavyweight masterpieces of Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, Wagner's *Parsifal* and Richard Strauss' *Arabella*.

See and hear some of the great musicians of our era, including conductors Iván Fischer, Marc Minkowski, Marco Armiliato, Phillippe Jordan and Paavo Jarvi; singers Renée Fleming, Marina Poplavskaya, Joyce di Donato, Karine Deshayes, Petra Lang, Misha Didyk, Scott Hendricks, Kurt Rydl and Falk Struckmann; and violinists Vadim Repin and Lorenzo Gatto.

As well as the superb opera and music, enjoy stays in three of Europe's most charming smaller cities – Amsterdam, Bruges and Brussels – and unpack your bags for a full week in Paris.



Orchestre de Paris Credit Jean Baptiste Pellerin

ITINERARY

Fri 15 June 2012

Depart Australia

Suggested departure from Australia on Singapore Airlines via Singapore. Overnight in flight.

Sat 16 June

Arrive Amsterdam

Early morning arrival in Amsterdam. Make your way to the Ambassade Hotel (pre-booked shuttle service available on request, EUR15 pp). This 57-room boutique hotel is comprised of ten 17th-century canal-side houses on the distinguished Herengracht in the historic centre of Amsterdam, within walking distance of museums, restaurants and important places of interest.

This evening join Christopher Lawrence and opera lovers for a welcome briefing and dinner. (D)

Sun 17 June

Amsterdam

Dubbed the 'Venice of the North', Amsterdam is made up of more than a hundred kilometres of canals, about 90 islands and 1,500 bridges. Today will begin with a canal cruise which will introduce you to the history and culture of Amsterdam which dates back to the 13th century but which enjoyed its 'Golden Age' in the 17th century as the capital of a vast international trading network. Cruise along tree-lined canals lined with 17th century houses, pass the Montelbaanstoren, built in 1512 and one of the few remaining sections of the medieval city wall, and see the exciting contemporary architecture such as the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ ('Amsterdam's Concert Hall of the 21st Century'). Following the cruise, enjoy a walking tour of the historic centre, passing the Nieuwmarkt, Grimburgwal, Oudemanspoort, Staalstraat, the Zuider Church and the Munt tower, to finish at the Bloemenmarkt, the world's only floating flower market.

Following a break for lunch on your own and time to change, transfer to the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam's historic concert hall, for an afternoon concert (2.15 pm) featuring the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Marc Albrecht, with Alice Coote (mezzo-soprano) and Burkhard Fritz (tenor).

Programme

Beethoven

Symphony No. 8

Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde

Following the concert, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant. (BD)

Mon 18 June

Amsterdam

Following a pre-performance talk on this evening's opera, depart the hotel for the Rijksmuseum. On the way pass through 'The 9 Streets' area, a delightful area of unique shops, small bars and restaurants. At the Rijksmuseum, enjoy a tour of 'The Masterpieces' from its collection currently housed in the Philips Wing of the museum during the restoration of the main building.

Following the visit to the Rijksmuseum, the rest of the day is at leisure to further explore Amsterdam and its famous museums. The Rembrandt Museum is situated in the house where Rembrandt lived from 1639 until 1659. For impressionism, visit the Van Gogh Museum, which houses some 200 paintings and 550 sketches showing Van Gogh in all his moods.

Late afternoon transfer to the Amsterdam Music Theatre for Wagner's *Parsifal* by the Netherlands Opera (5.30 pm). Featuring the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Iván Fischer, the production stars Alejandro Marco-Buhrmester (Amfortas), Kurt Rydl (Titurel, Klingsor), Falk Struckmann (Parsifal) and Petra Lang (Kundry) in a new production by Pierre Audi. (B)

Tue 19 June

Amsterdam – Antwerp – Bruges

Depart Amsterdam for a morning drive to Antwerp (170 km, approx 2 hr 30 min). The second largest city of Belgium and a major European port, Antwerp is indelibly associated with the painter Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) and is the worldwide centre of the diamond trade.

Begin with a visit to the Rubens House, an Italian-style villa built by Rubens and where he spent most of his life. In the adjacent studio he and his students executed many of the works for which Rubens is famous. Continue to the Grand Place with its traditional old guild houses, Brabo fountain, beautiful City Hall and Our Lady's Cathedral – featuring



Amsterdam



Porte de Hal Hallepoort in Brussels © J.P. Remy

two masterpieces by Rubens: 'The Elevation of the Cross' and 'The Descent of the Cross'. Witness some diamond cutting, showing the various stages of the transformation of the rough stone into the diamond itself. After a break for lunch on your own, continue to Bruges (90 km, approx 1 hr 30 min), arriving late afternoon. Dinner at your hotel. (BD)

Wed 20 June **Bruges**

After a leisurely breakfast, enjoy a morning walking tour of Bruges beginning with the Lake of Love, then the old interior harbour, followed by the Almshouses, also called 'God's houses' – originally built by the guilds for widows. Continue to the Burg Square, the Basilica of the Holy Blood, the City Hall and the Belfry on the Grand Place, built between the 13th and 16th century. Visit the Notre Dame Church which houses the 'Madonna with Child' statue, made from white marble carved by Michelangelo. Your morning will finish with a boat tour on the beautiful canals.

After lunch at a local restaurant, the afternoon is at leisure to further explore Bruges on your own. (BL)

Thu 21 June **Bruges – Ghent – Brussels**

Depart Bruges for the nearby city of Ghent (54 km, approx 1 hr). Often overlooked in favour of the larger cities of Antwerp and Bruges, Ghent is a charming historic city of quaint cobbled streets, winding canals and more listed buildings than any other Belgian city. A very wealthy city in medieval times, having been Europe's largest cloth producer and the continent's largest city outside Paris, Ghent survived the World Wars pretty much intact. During a walking tour discover the 'Three Towers of Ghent' - St Bavo's Cathedral, the Belfry and St Nicholas' Church – which all form a line pointing towards St Michael's Bridge.

After a break for lunch on your own, continue to Brussels (60 km, 1 hr 30 min) arriving mid-afternoon.

After time to settle in and refresh, depart the hotel for dinner, followed by a concert by the National Orchestra of Belgium, conducted by Walter Weller, with Lorenzo Gatto (violin). (BD)

PROGRAMME

André Christen	<i>Las cataratas de Iguazú</i>
Mendelssohn	Concerto for violin and orchestra
	No. 2, op. 64
Schubert	Symphony No. 9, D 944



Marina Poplavskaya



Bruges



Joyce di Donato
Credit Sheila Rock

Fri 22 June **Brussels**

Following a pre-performance talk, depart the hotel for a comprehensive morning tour of Brussels, the capital of Belgium and of the European Union, the home of the European Parliament and the headquarters of NATO.

Begin with a walk on the Grand Place, the central market square of Brussels. Said to be the most beautiful square in the world the Grand Place is dominated by the magnificent 15th century Town Hall, and surrounded by splendid 17th century buildings. Continuing by coach, see St Michael's Cathedral, the Congress column, the botanical gardens, the Royal crypt, the Atomium, the Chinese Pavilion and the Japanese Tower. Return to the city passing the Royal Residence and the Sablon district with its countless antique dealers and the beautiful garden of the Petit Sablon.

The tour continues past the Palace of Justice, Louise Square, the Royal Square, the Royal Palace and the Houses of Parliament to arrive in the Cinquantenaire district, renowned for the Triumphal Arch, exceptional museums and splendid Art Nouveau houses. Finish with a drive past the imposing EU buildings housing the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

Afternoon at leisure before this evening's performance of Verdi's *Il trovatore* at Le Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie ('la Monnaie') by the National Opera of Belgium. Conducted by Marc Minkowski, this new production by Dmitri Tcherniakov stars Scott Hendricks (Count di Luna), Misha Didyk (Manrico), Sylvie Brunet (Azucena), Marina Poplavskaya (Leonora) and Giovanni Furlanetto (Ferrando). (B)

Sat 23 June **Brussels**

Enjoy a full day at leisure to further explore Brussels on your own. Amongst the many museums are the Royal Museums of Ancient and Modern Art (with a special section on the well-known Belgian surrealist Magritte), the Museum of Natural History with its collection of dinosaur skeletons, the Museum of Art and History, Autoworld (the largest collection of old and new cars in the world) and the Museum of Comic Strips, housed in a beautiful Art Nouveau building. (B)

Sun 24 June

Brussels - Paris

Depart Brussels for a full day's drive to Paris (approx 320 km). En route, stop at the Australian War Memorial near Villers-Bretonneux.

In WWI, on April 1918, the small town of Villers-Bretonneux was the site of the world's first battle between two tank forces: three British Mark IVs against three German A7Vs. The Germans took the town, but that night and the next day it was recaptured by the 4th and 5th Division of the AIF at a cost of over twelve hundred Australian lives.

The people of Villers-Bretonneux continue to express gratitude to Australia to this day. The Australian War Memorial in France is located just outside Villers-Bretonneux and in front of it lie the graves of over 770 Australian soldiers, as well as those of other British Empire soldiers involved in the campaign. The school in Villers-Bretonneux was rebuilt using donations from school children of Victoria and above every blackboard is the inscription "N'oublions jamais l'Australie" (Never forget Australia). The annual ANZAC Day ceremony is held at this village each year.

After lunch in nearby Amiens, continue to Paris, arriving late afternoon. (BL)

Mon 25 June

Paris

This morning start your exploration of Paris with a tour of western Paris. From the Palais de Chaillot with its spectacular view of the Eiffel Tower, you will see the Arc de Triomphe and drive along the Champs Elysées to the Place de la Concorde, Jardin des Tuileries, past the Louvre and the Palais Royal. Continue via the Grands Boulevards to the Hotel de Ville, Place des Vosges and the Marais. The morning will finish with a tour of the Palais Garnier, the sumptuous 'Paris Opéra' building designed by the architect Charles Garnier and inaugurated in 1875.

Following an afternoon at leisure return to the Palais Garnier for an evening performance by the Opéra National de Paris of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. French mezzo-soprano Karine Deshayes revives her virtuoso and sensitive portrayal of Rosina, accompanied by Antonino

Siragusa (Almaviva), Maurizio Muraro (Bartolo) and Tassis Christoyannis (Figaro) in this production by Coline Serreau conducted by Marco Armiliato. (B)

Tue 26 June

Paris

This morning journey to the east of Paris. Begin with a visit to the Opéra Bastille, second home of the Opéra National de Paris. Opened in 1989, the Opéra Bastille is the work of the Canadian-Uruguayan architect Carlos Ott, who was chosen in November 1983 after an international competition that attracted entries from some 1,700 architects. Its architecture is marked by transparent façades and by the use of identical materials for both the interiors and the exteriors.

Continue through the 12th arrondissement, known as Bercy, which has undergone revitalisation in recent years and is now the new, trendy spot in Paris for the younger crowd. Following lunch at a restaurant in Bercy village, the afternoon is at leisure.

Evening recital at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées by Joyce di Donato, the award-winning American mezzo-soprano particularly admired for her interpretations of the works of Handel, Mozart, and Rossini. Accompanied by David Zobel, Ms di Donato will perform works by Vivaldi, Rossini, Fauré and Michael Head's seldom-heard *Songs of Venice*. (B)

Wed 27 June

Paris

Depart Paris for a day in the country, along the Seine River. During the day you will visit sites associated with the Impressionist artists and French composers. Full tour details to be confirmed. (BL)

Thu 28 June

Paris

Following a pre-performance talk on this evening's concert and tomorrow's opera, enjoy a full day at leisure to explore Paris on your own.

Tonight, enjoy a concert at the Salle Pleyel by the Orchestra de Paris, conducted by Paavo Jarvi, with the acclaimed Russian violinist Vadim Repin. (B)

PROGRAMME

Gounod – *Symphony No. 1*

Saint-Saëns – *Concerto for violin No. 3*

Shostakovich – *Symphony No. 1*



Karine Deshayes as Rosina in
The Barber of Seville 2009



Paris



Renée Fleming
Credit DECCA/Andrew Eccles

Fri 29 June

Paris

Enjoy a second day at leisure in Paris.

This evening attend the Opéra Bastille for a performance of Prokofiev's joyful opera buffa *The Love for Three Oranges* by the Opéra National de Paris, conducted by Alain Altinoglu. (B)

Sat 30 June

Paris

Following a pre-performance talk on this evening's performance, go backstage at the Lido, the famous cabaret on the Champs-Élysées. See the ice rink and water features, the Lido's silent, invisible machinery which make its extraordinary shows possible. Your guide will take you through the areas reserved for dancers, wardrobe masters and dressing assistants, as well as all of the technical and stage management teams who bring the Lido's 26th revue, 'Bonheur' to the stage every evening and draw their spectators into the magic of this legendary Parisian cabaret.

Following the visit to the Lido, celebrate the conclusion of the tour with a special farewell lunch cruise along the River Seine, with magnificent views of Paris from every angle.

This evening, return to the Opéra Bastille for Richard Strauss' *Arabella*. Conducted by Phillippe Jordan, the performance stars Kurt Rydl as Graf Waldner, Doris Soffel as Adelaide and Renée Fleming as Arabella. (BL)

Sun 1 July

Depart Paris

Tour arrangements conclude after breakfast.

If returning to Australia, make your way to Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport for midday departure from Paris on Singapore Airlines via Singapore. (B)

Mon 2 July

Arrive Australia

Evening arrival in Australia.



L'Amour des trois oranges Opéra-Bastille 2005, Paris

TOUR PRICES ...

Per person, twin-share	AUD 10,250
Single supplement	AUD 1,990
Tour Code	OA – GREAT OPERA CO'S
Deposit (at time of booking)	AUD 1,000
Final Payment Due	17 April 2012

* *Single travellers may request to share. Please advise at time of booking.*

SUGGESTED AIRLINE: Singapore Airlines
Singapore Airlines flies from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide via Singapore to Amsterdam and Paris as well as many other European destinations.

Please contact Renaissance Tours for flight reservations and current fares.

TOUR PRICES INCLUDE

- 15 nights accommodation in centrally located four star superior hotels with daily breakfast (B)
- Meals as per itinerary (L=Lunch, D=Dinner). Wines included with dinner and farewell lunch.
- Cat 2 or 3 ticket for Concertgebouw and *Parsifal* in Amsterdam (best available to non-subscribers)
- Cat 1 tickets for seven other performances
- Comprehensive sightseeing with local guides including entrance fees as per itinerary
- Deluxe, air-conditioned coach transportation throughout
- Pre-performance introductions and talks with Christopher Lawrence
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers
- Hotel portorage (1 piece per person)

TOUR PRICES DO NOT INCLUDE

- International airfares
- Airport portorage
- Transfers on arrival and departure
- Items of a personal nature, including telephone, laundry, room service, mini-bar, optional tours etc.
- Drinks with lunches
- Travel insurance

YOUR HOTELS ...



Ambassade
Amsterdam
★★★★



Grand Hotel Casselbergh
Bruges
★★★★



Radisson Blu Royal
Brussels
★★★★



California
Paris
★★★★

NB. Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted

Terms and Conditions

HOW TO BOOK

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form available from Renaissance Tours with your deposit of \$1,000 per person. Upon receipt of your Booking Form and deposit, you will receive confirmation of your place from Renaissance Tours.

DEPOSIT / FINAL PAYMENTS

Deposit (at time of booking) AUD 1,000

Your deposit is used to purchase your performance tickets and is non-refundable in the event of your cancellation. Your final payment is due 60 days before departure. Failure to make your final payment by the due date may result in cancellation of your booking and loss of deposit. We reserve the right to charge a late payment fee in the event of late booking and/or payment to cover additional communication and other expenses.

Payment by cash, cheque, American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa is accepted. A 3% service charge applies for payment by American Express and Diners Club.

CANCELLATION AND REFUNDS

You may cancel the booking at any time. Written notification is essential even if verbal notification of an intention to cancel has been given. Cancellation charges will be applied as shown below, calculated from the day written notification is received by Renaissance Tours. In addition to the charges shown below, airlines may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

60 days or more	forfeit of deposit (includes any flight deposit paid)
59 - 45 days	25% of tour cost
44 - 31 days	50% of tour cost
30 - 15 days	75% of tour cost
Less than 15 days	100% of tour cost

The above cancellation charges include applicable GST.

In addition to the above cancellation charges, the full insurance premium together with any existing administration fees is also payable in the event of a cancellation by the Client. If the reason for cancellation is covered by your insurance policy, you may be able to reclaim these charges.

FORCED CANCELLATIONS

We reserve the right to cancel a tour for any reason (such as failure to reach minimum tour participant numbers). Except for force majeure or the Client's failure to pay the final balance, we will not cancel a tour less than 60 days before departure. Unless the Client fails to pay the final balance, we will return all monies paid, excluding payment for travel insurance and administration fees.

No compensation will be paid in the event of cancellation by Renaissance Tours. A full refund of monies paid for tour costs will be the full extent of our liability. Airlines may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is a condition of travel that you are covered by comprehensive travel insurance. You can make your own arrangements or your travel insurance can be arranged by Renaissance Tours. In either case, all participants must provide the following information no later than 60 days prior to commencement of travel:

- a copy of your travel insurance policy (or details of master policy)
- the emergency telephone number of your insurance company
- next of kin emergency contact

FITNESS AND PARTICIPATION

While our tours do not require a special level of fitness, for the overall benefit of the group, all tour members must possess a moderate level of mobility, including the ability to:

- negotiate airports and railway stations without wheelchair assistance
- use combined shower/bath facilities (it is impossible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities)
- undertake walking tours of 2-3 hours duration, including using stairs, walking over cobblestones and other uneven surfaces
- stand for long periods in museums and other sites
- embark / disembark coaches, trains and other methods of transportation without assistance
- handle your own luggage

If you (or we) have any doubts about your ability to participate in your chosen tour, you may be required to have a doctor's appraisal. This would require a doctor to read the itinerary of your chosen tour and provide you with a written confirmation of your ability to participate.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

You can find a copy of the full terms and conditions attached to the Renaissance Tours booking form. They can also be found on our website or we would be happy to post you a copy on request.



Cover image: Palais Garnier
Back page image: La Monnaie Opera House Credit Johan Jacobs



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