



## Rossini & Puccini

Opera in their home territories, Torre del Lago and Pesaro

**14–20 August 2023 (MJ 827)**

7 days • £3,780

(including tickets to 4 performances)

Lecturer: Rupert Christiansen

Combines the Rossini and Puccini Opera Festivals in one tour.

Top-category tickets to four operas.

Rossini's *Aureliano in Palmira* and *Il viaggio a Reims* in Pesaro, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot* in Torre del Lago.

Visit the composers' homes and museums.

Hotels in Pesaro and Lucca, exceptionally lovely little cities with much art and architecture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Gioachino Rossini is commemorated in his birthplace, Pesaro on the Adriatic coast, by an annual summer festival music. Designed around a single composer in an appropriate location and attaining the highest artistic standards, it well merits its epithet 'the Italian Bayreuth'. The mix of well-known and little-known works from Rossini's vast oeuvre and the participation of some of the world's greatest *bel canto* singers make this festival one of the most significant musical events in Italy.

The historic heart of the little city of Pesaro is still surrounded by its ancient wall, in which Roman workmanship and materials are evident. The beautiful 15th-century ducal palace and the castle of the same era are among the fine buildings lining picturesque streets and handsome squares. This core of the city is virtually untouched by the adjacent resort, for the magnificent beach lies beyond the seaward stretch of the walls.

The other festival on this tour also takes place close to the coast, but this time the waters are those of the Tyrrhenian Sea on the other side of the peninsula. Near the hamlet of Torre del Lago on Lake Massaciuccoli Giacomo Puccini built himself a villa. Here he wrote most of his operas, and sought refuge between the rigorous demands of the worldwide tours which fame and success had thrust upon him.

Here is an open-air theatre where since 1955 there has also been an annual festival to celebrate the local boy who brought to a culmination the most Italian of the arts, lyric theatre. Puccini was born in Lucca, 16 miles away, a dense network of medieval and Renaissance buildings, all within a remarkably



Lucca, watercolour by W.W.Collins, publ. 1911.

complete circuit of ramparts. This is the location of the hotel.

This is an exceptional opportunity to experience two operas by each of the two composers, each the undisputed master of the genre in the periods in which they worked.

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Fly at c. 2.30pm (British Airways) from London Heathrow to Bologna and drive (2 hours) to Pesaro. Arrive in time for a late dinner. Spend the first of three nights in Pesaro.

**Day 2: Pesaro.** Today and tomorrow are spent in the lovely little city of Pesaro. A walk this morning takes you to the major buildings and through the most picturesque streets and squares. Visit Rossini's house, now a museum, and the Museo Civico, which contains works by Bellini and Guido Reni. The afternoon is free. *Evening opera at the Vitrifrigo Arena: Aureliano in Palmira (Rossini), George Petrou (conductor), Mario Martone (director), singers include Alexey Tatarintsev, Sara Blanch and Raffaella Lupinacci.*

**Day 3: Pesaro.** The opera today begins at 11am: *at the Adriatic Arena, Il viaggio a Reims (Rossini), Andrea Foti (conductor)*. A late lunch follows, and in the afternoon there is a private visit to the Tempietto Rossiniano which houses some of the composer's original scores and

posters. There is then the option of visiting the National Rossini Museum where original objects and modern displays lead you through the composer's life and legacy.

**Day 4: Pesaro to Lucca.** Travel by coach from Pesaro to Lucca, stopping twice for breaks at lunchtime and in the afternoon. The first is in Bologna, one of the great historic centres of Italy and one of the most attractive. Pistoia, the teatime stop, is a lovely little medieval city in the valley of the Arno in Tuscany. Lucca is the base for the next three nights.

**Day 5: Lucca, Torre del Lago.** A walk around Lucca, a compact and exceptionally picturesque little city, famous for its Romanesque churches and Renaissance ramparts. Visit the house where Puccini was born and see many of his precious instruments and possessions. Set off in the late afternoon for Torre del Lago and visit Puccini's villa, which retains virtually all the original décor and many mementoes. *Evening opera: Madama Butterfly (Puccini). Cast to be announced.*

**Day 6: Celle, Torre del Lago.** A morning walk includes visits to the 11th/13th-century cathedral, the greatest monument here of Romanesque and Gothic; the church of San Michele in Foro on the site of the Roman forum; and San Paolino where Puccini played the organ. Drive to the tiny hamlet of

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continued

Celle where the composer spent much of his childhood. *Evening opera: Turandot (Puccini). Cast to be announced.*

**Day 7.** Drive to Bologna airport. Arrive London Heathrow at c. 2.15pm.

## Lecturer

**Rupert Christiansen.** Rupert was the Daily Telegraph's opera critic from 1996 to 2020 and remains a regular reviewer there. His many books include *Prima Donna* and the *Faber Pocket Guide to Opera*, and his most recent publication is *Diaghilev's Empire*. Currently dance critic of *The Spectator* and Collaborating Research Scholar at Keble College, Oxford, he is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and a member of the editorial board of *Opera*.

## Practicalities

**Price, per person. Two sharing:** £3,780 or £3,490 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,250 or £3,960 without flights.

**Included:** flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (aircraft: Airbus 319); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 2 lunches and 3 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; city tax; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

**Music:** tickets (top category) for 4 performances are included costing c. £410.

**Accommodation. Hotel Savoy, Pesaro** (hotelsavoypesaro.it): One of the only 4-stars in Pesaro, in an excellent central location. **Hotel Ilaria, Lucca** (hotelilaria.com): an excellently situated 4-star hotel within the city walls, with friendly staff who have been welcoming our clients for over three decades. *Single rooms throughout are doubles for sole occupancy.*

**How strenuous?** The tour would not be suitable for anyone with difficulties with everyday walking or stair-climbing. Some late nights (three of the operas start at 8.00pm and 9.15pm). Daytime temperatures in Pesaro and Lucca can exceed 35 degrees Celsius. Average distance by coach per day: 54 miles

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.