

THE CHOIR OF KING'S COLLEGE LONDON, DIRECTED BY DAVID TRENDELL  
TOUR TO ITALY  
JULY 2011

Over lunch on the final day of our tour to Milan, looking back over our trip it was clear that we were in unanimous agreement over the success of all aspects of the week. We had given several hugely enjoyable and exciting concerts; explored some beautiful places; met interesting and kind people, and eaten pizza, pasta and gelato to our hearts' content. None of this would have been possible without the impeccable organisation and warm welcome of our host, Giampiero Innocente, whose insatiable enthusiasm for the English choral tradition made us feel so very welcome and appreciated. It was in fact infectious; we were encouraged by his attitude to put our all into making the most of the opportunities the week presented, and our gratitude to him was expressed effusively by us all as we applauded his hard work and thanked him for his kindness.

From our arrival in Lodi on Tuesday evening it was clear we had a good week ahead of us. We arrived in the college of San Francesco, with the luxury of individual rooms and balconies, much more than we were used to on tour elsewhere! Needless to say we were in good spirits after our arrival, and after a brief wander through the lovely town, we visited a restaurant for our first meal all together on tour, and thoroughly enjoyed our first Italian pizzas and prosecco.

Wednesday was the day of our first concert, at the Università Cattolica in Milan. We were interested and impressed by the atmosphere and architecture of the university, and grateful for the beautiful (and air-conditioned) concert hall. We were amazed to hear of the garden where only women were permitted; at King's we don't even have a garden, let alone one set aside! After rehearsing we were able to explore Milan somewhat, and many of us headed towards the famous Duomo. Unfortunately, we were not all able to go in as some of the girls did not have their shoulders covered, but those who did were amazed by the scale and beauty of the cathedral. Others explored the surrounding area, enjoying the extravagance of the shopping galleries and La Scala. That evening, after an enjoyable meal in the university canteen, where we were able to meet students of the university, we performed our first concert to a packed out hall. We are always amazed and humbled by the large and appreciative audiences we receive in Europe, and this was no exception. We sang a varied programme of Lhéritier, Allegri, Stanford, Cornelius and Bach; The audience seemed to enjoy Allegri's famous *Miserere Mei* in particular, and Marie Macklin's shimmering top notes sent a visible shiver through the audience



We were fortunate enough to have a free day on Thursday, and most of us decided to take the train to Lake Como. However, travelling in a large group, with only one Italian speaker among us, turned out to be somewhat fraught. A couple of hours, and a few extra train changes later we finally made it to Como. Our confusing journey was immediately worth it when we saw the beautiful scenery of the lake, and the mountains surrounding it. At this point our group dispersed somewhat, some stayed in Como to swim, sunbathe and enjoy the pedal boats. A smaller group took a ferry to the exquisite town of Bellagio where we enjoyed lunch on the waterfront, surrounded by stunning views in glorious sunshine. This day was a highlight of the tour for many of us, and we were really able to relax and enjoy being out of London and in the beautiful and peaceful setting of Lake Como.



On Friday and Saturday we gave concerts in Lodi and Crema, in churches with fantastic acoustics and architecture. We noted that these were the kinds of buildings much of the music we sing was written for, and felt that these settings brought something extra to our performances. We again felt privileged to receive large and enthusiastic audiences, and we have Giampiero to thank for this once again, for his work in publicising the events. These two days also enabled us to relax somewhat, exploring the two smaller towns. We drank coffee in the main square of Lodi, feeling very civilised and at ease! We visited boutiques, churches, and of course sampled more gelato. We were delighted by the hospitality shown to us in both towns, and very much enjoyed meeting members of the Collegium Vocale Di Crema with whom we managed to hold some conversations in a mixture of languages over a delicious buffet following the Crema concert.

Our final day in Italy saw us singing Mass in the Basilica San Marco, Milan (the church in which Verdi's *Requiem* was premiered). We sang to a large congregation at the midday

mass, singing Allegri's *Missa Christus Resurgens* and various motets. Afterwards, we all sat down for our final meal together, not just of the tour but of the year. We thanked Giampierro, and our fantastic director, David, of whose tireless hard work we are in great appreciation. We also took the opportunity to celebrate our choir and the fun and hard work we all share, with a series of comical awards. This done, we enjoyed the afternoon wandering around town and drinking cocktails in the afternoon sunshine, before making our way to the airport for home.



We were all in agreement that this tour was the most enjoyable we have had, and for those of us who have finished our degrees, it was an incredibly rewarding way to say goodbye to our time in the choir, which has shaped and been such a huge part of our lives at KCL. The perfect organisation, the welcoming nature of our hosts, David's commitment and the vibrant group of people which make up our choir all contributed to the wonderful time we had making brilliant music and spending time in a very beautiful, interesting and friendly part of the world.

