



## Verona Opera

Lyric spectacle in the Veneto

**30 July – 3 August 2025 (ML 749)**

£3,530 • 5 days

(Including tickets to 3 performances)

Speakers: Dr Bruno Bower and Dr R. T. Cobiانchi

Three operas in the incomparable setting of a Roman amphitheatre, the most famous of open-air opera festivals.

*Nabucco, Aida, La Traviata.*

Accommodation in a 5-star hotel in the historic centre within walking distance of the operas – though there is the option of a minibus.

Accompanied by a musicologist, and an art historian who leads walks and visits during the day.

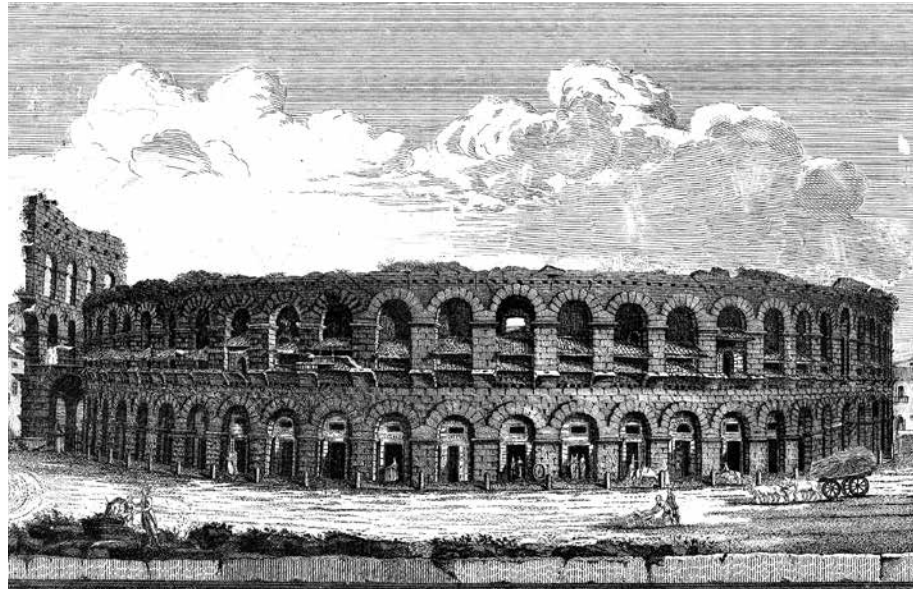
The first magic moment comes well before the conductor raises his baton. Unless you have led a team onto the pitch at Wembley or won the New Hampshire primaries, you are unlikely to have experienced anything quite like the wall of heady high spirits which hits you as you emerge from the entrance tunnel into the arena.

Filling the vast ellipse of the almost 2,000-year-old Roman amphitheatre are 14,000 happy people, bubbling with joyous expectation of the spectacle to follow. Even the most dour of dusty-hearted opera purists cannot help but be uplifted.

Then the floodlights go down, the chaotic chatter quiets to a reverential whisper, and the enveloping dusk is pierced only by flickering candle flames as uncountable as the stars above. Magic again; for these special moments the Verona Festival remains without rival.

The list of unique assets continues. There is the inestimable advantage of the stage and auditorium, one of the largest of ancient amphitheatres which, though built for rather less refined spectacles ('arena' is Latin for sand, used in quantity to mop up the consequences of lacerations inflicted on animals and gladiators) provides miraculously sympathetic acoustics. The elliptical form also seems to instil a sense which can best be described as resembling an embrace, bonding the audience however distant or disparate the individual members might be.

Then there is the benefit of being at the heart of one of the most beautiful of Italian cities. Verona is crammed with magnificent architecture and dazzlingly picturesque streets and squares. Surprisingly, the city seems



Verona, the Arena, late 18th-century copper engraving.

scarcely deflected from a typically Italian dedication to living well and stylishly by the annual influx of festival visitors.

Enough of the spectacle, what of the music? Most performances reach high standards, with patches of stunning singing. For the (largely Italian) casts, to perform at Verona is still a special event. The younger singers know that they will be judged by more agents, casting directors and peers in one performance than usually would see them in a season.

Opinions vary concerning the best place to sit. All the seats we have booked are numbered and reserved (no queuing for hours and elbowing to seize the best of what remains), and a proportion are *poltronissime gold*, cushioned stalls seats, which we offer for a supplement. The rest are on the lowest tiers, the *gradinate numerate*. While there are excellent sight lines, and plastic seating is mercifully interposed between you and the marble, by comparison with the *poltronissime* there is less leg room and you are further from the stage.

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Fly at c 12 noon. from London Heathrow to Venice (British Airways). Drive to Verona where all four nights are spent.

**Day 2.** Take an introductory walk in Verona, passing through the beautiful streets and

squares at the heart of the city, and visit the Romanesque church of San Fermo. In the afternoon, visit the church of San Zeno, a major Romanesque building with a Mantegna altarpiece. The performance in the Arena this evening is *Nabucco* (Verdi).

**Day 3.** Another art history walk leads to the well-preserved Roman theatre, then crosses the River Adige to the Romanesque cathedral. Alternatively, there are bus and train services offering the opportunity to see more of the region, perhaps Lake Garda or Venice. The opera in the Arena this evening is *Aida* (Verdi).

**Day 4.** Visit the church of Sant'Anastasia with its Pisanello frescoes, and the spectacular medieval tombs of the ruling della Scala family. Lunch is at a privately owned villa in the countryside (by special arrangement). There is some free time before the final opera of the tour. *La Traviata* (Verdi).

**Day 5.** Visit the Castelvecchio, a graceful medieval castle and fortified bridge now housing an excellent art museum. Fly from Aeroporto Marco Polo Venice, arriving London Heathrow c. 6.00pm.

Verona Opera continued.

## Lecturers

### **Dr Bruno Bower (FRSA, FHEA).**

Musicologist, oboist, composer, and music editor, with research specialisms in Victorian print culture and operetta. He has written and presented on subjects as diverse as Gilbert and Sullivan, John Cage, and Victorian polymaths, and he is the General Editor for critical editions of music by Peter Gellhorn and Norman O'Neill. He currently teaches at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and runs adult courses in classical music and opera for Imperial College London and for a range of private institutions across London.

**Dr R. T. Cobianchi** is an art historian and researcher specialising in Italian art and architecture of the Renaissance and Baroque. His interests range from the iconography of the late Middle Ages to the sculpture of Neoclassicism.

## Practicalities

**Price, per person. Two sharing:** £3,530 or £3,110 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,250 or £3,830 without flights.

**Included:** flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation; breakfasts; 1 lunch and 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of two lecturers, a musicologist and an art historian.

**Supplement for *poltronissime* gold seats:** £420.

**Music:** Tickets to 3 performances are included, costing c. £370.

**Accommodation.** **NH Hotel Palazzo Verona, Verona** ([www.nh-collection.com/en/hotel/nh-collection-palazzo-verona](http://www.nh-collection.com/en/hotel/nh-collection-palazzo-verona)): a modern 5-star situated a c. 10-minute walk from the Arena. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

**How strenuous?** To participate fully in the itinerary, a fair amount of walking is involved. It is often very hot in Italy at this time of year. Average distance by coach per day: 18 miles.

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