

# EXPERIENCE VERDI BICENTENNIAL IN ITALY



*You are invited to join*  
**Opera Volunteers International**  
for its 2013 trip to  
**ITALY**

to celebrate Verdi's Bicentennial  
**Parma - Milan – Mantua – Cremona**  
**Busseto – Soragna – Fontanellato**

Premiere of "Don Carlo" at La Scala featuring superstar **Rene Pape as King**  
**Phillip** plus

**Bicentennial Gala Concert at the Teatro Regio** and two additional  
performances at the Verdi Festival in Parma/Busseto  
*plus* visits to Verdi's birthplace in Roncole and Villa Verdi and Teatro Verdi in  
Busseto; **great opera, great company, great food and *much more!***

Opera Volunteers International is pleased to announce a spectacular **trip to Italy**  
from **October 8 through October 15, 2013**, to celebrate the Bicentennial of the  
great Giuseppe Verdi in the heart of Verdi country in Parma and Busseto. We will  
attend the black tie optional premiere of Verdi's masterpiece, "Don Carlo" at La Scala  
featuring the sensational Rene Pape and also Ekaterina Gubarova (applauded as  
Jane Seymour in the Met's Anna Bolena); Martina Serafin (who just made her  
critically acclaimed debut at the Met as Sieglinde and will take on the role of  
Marchallin in "Der Rosenkavalier" during the 2013/14 season); a gala concert on

the date of Verdi's birth; "Simon Boccanegra" at the **Verdi Festival** in Parma and an exciting, private piano recital of Verdi Transcriptions by Liszt performed by Liszt and Rachmaninoff prize winner, Wonmi Kim; plus visits to all the important Verdi landmarks in the area. This trip will also include extensive touring of cities in the surrounding area: Mantua, Cremona, Soragna, **Fontanellato** and spectacular dining as well as free time on your own to explore these historic and bustling locations.

Parma, our base of operations, is one of the most important gastronomic centers in Italy, home of both Parmesan cheese and prosciutto (Parma ham) so don't expect to fit into that little black dress when you get home. Art expert, Rob Seaver will share with you the art and architecture of Parma, where the Baptistery is perhaps the greatest Romanesque building in northern Italy, and whose 11th-century Cathedral is acclaimed for its stunning frescoes by Correggio. The town's imposing Palazzo della Pilotta houses paintings by Correggio, Parmigianino, Leonardo, Canaletto, and many more. Arturo Toscanini was born in Parma and his birthplace houses a fascinating museum about the great conductor.

Our trip will be led by Rob and Barbara Seaver of "Request Italy," who have spent their adult lives living in Italy and have the inside track on wonderful hotels, restaurants and ticket opportunities. Rob is the son of the late, great Jim Seaver of the KU faculty in Lawrence, Kansas, and half-century host of the public radio program "Opera is My Hobby." For the fashionistas among us, Barbara has spent her career as part of the Milan fashion industry. Rob and Barbara led last summer's Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild's sold-out and memorable trip to the Puccini Festival (ask any of the travelers who went and they will rave about it).

Below is our planned itinerary. Please keep in mind that the trip will definitely include four performances, including "Don Carlo" at La Scala and the Bicentennial Gala Concert, but details may change between now and our departure.



***Tuesday, October 8.*** We depart from the United States on our flight to Milan, Italy. Please arrange your own travel plans. At the present time we find that Air Berlin offers a good rate from New York's JFK through Dusseldorf and American Airlines has a non-stop from New York's JFK to Milan. Both arrive within reasonable time of each other.

***Wednesday, October 9.*** Arrive at Malpensa Airport, Milan and transfer by Mercedes Minivan to the charming, newly renovated Palace Maria Luigia Hotel conveniently located in the center of Parma within easy walking distance of Teatro Regio. We will have time to unpack, relax, have a snack. This afternoon at 3:00 p.m. there will be a walking orientation tour of the center of historic Parma. Among the buildings we will be seeing during the walking tour are the Romanesque Baptistry of Parma as well as the nearby Duomo with its famous fresco of the Assumption by Correggio, one of the great feats of artificial perspective created during the High Renaissance. On our way to visit the Duomo we will pass the Teatro Regio, Parma's famous opera house built by Maria Luigia of Austria (better known as Napoleon's second wife) in the 1820's when she ruled Parma. During our walk we will also pass the Palazzo della Pilotta, the vast never completed Farnese palace complex, which includes not only the National Gallery of Painting in Parma but also the Farnese Theater, the late Renaissance wooden theater modeled in part on Andrea Palladio's Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza. This evening we will have a very special welcoming dinner. Being home to two of Italy's most famous foods, Parmesan cheese and Parma ham, it is not surprising that Parma is known throughout Italy as the city where you eat well, which is saying something in a country which is a gastronomic wonderland.

***Thursday, October 10.*** This morning we will be visiting the birthplace of Giuseppe Verdi in Roncole, a tiny hamlet between the small towns of Soragna and Busseto in the countryside northwest of Parma. We will continue on to the town of Busseto to see the Teatro Verdi **and then visit Villa Verdi in Sant'Agata where Verdi lived with his second wife, Giuseppina Strepponi.**



The villa has a magnificent park, a veritable arboretum and a great testimony to Verdi's lesser known accomplishments as an agronomist. We will continue on to the town of Soragna where we will have a wonderful lunch before enjoying a private tour of the Rocca, castle-fortress, of Soragna, which, after nearly 800 years, is still home to the princely Meli-Lupi family. The Rocca of Soragna houses the greatest collection of Baroque furniture in public or private hands in Italy. For those interested in Western decorative arts this will be a real treat. This evening we will be attending a gala concert at Teatro Regio in honor of the great maestro's 200th birthday! The concert will include dance and musical excerpts from "Macbeth", "Otello", "La Forza del Destino" and the full Act II of "Aida."

**Friday, October 11.** This morning we will be going to Mantua, seat of the fabulously wealthy Gonzaga family and setting for Verdi's masterpiece "Rigoletto." Our walking tour of Mantua will include a visit to the vast Gonzaga Palace to see not only Mantegna's famous frescoes in the Camera degli Sposi, but also to get a sense of the place that Isabella d'Este called home. In addition we will be visiting the Basilica of Sant'Andrea, the most important building designed by Leon Battista Alberti, the great theorist of the early Renaissance. After a fabulous lunch in Mantua we will continue on to the small town of Fontanellato to see the Rocca of Fontanellato and the extraordinary frescoes of Parmigianino, arguably the greatest of all Mannerist painters. This evening we will be attending the second of our performances, "Simon Boccanegra."

**Saturday, October 12.** This morning you will be on your own in Parma. We encourage you to explore the heart of the city, which is within easy walking distance from the hotel. After lunch on your own, around 2:00 p.m., we will be heading to Milan. Upon arrival we will visit the **Casa di Riposo per Musicisti**, the home for retired musicians funded in perpetuity by Verdi. **Verdi and Giuseppina Strepponi are buried in the beautiful chapel in the courtyard.** After an early group dinner

at a fine restaurant near La Scala, we will attend the premiere of "Don Carlo," a major highlight of our trip. Before we take our seats and during intermissions we can explore the Verdi memorabilia in the splendid Verdi Museum inside La Scala.

***Sunday, October 13.*** In the late morning we will be heading off to the lovely town of Cremona to see the Duomo and Bell Tower as well as the Palazzo Comunale where many of the world's most famous violins are on display. Cremona is home to the three greatest dynasties of violin makers: the Amati, the Guarneri and the Stradavarius families. After a group lunch in this charming town, we will return to Parma where you will be on your own for the rest of the afternoon and dinner before meeting to go to our last performance, a very special piano recital of Verdi Transcriptions by Liszt, designed and Performed especially for us by world class pianist, Wonmi Kim, who was the winner of the Liszt competition in Parma and the Rachmaninoff prize at the Cirtis Institute where she studied. Music lovers in the know are astonished by her virtuosity.



***Monday, October 14.*** This morning we will be touring the vast Farnese palace complex in Parma, concentrating on the Farnese Theater and the National Painting Museum where we will see more masterpieces by Correggio and Parmigianino. Both lunch and the afternoon will be on your own. We suggest that you not eat too much as we will be having a memorable farewell dinner.



***Tuesday, October 15.*** Departure time for our group transfer from the hotel in

Parma to Malpensa Airport will be early the morning of Tuesday, October 15, 2013. We leave for home, filled with many memories, arriving back in America and in your hometown airport.

Please see the **reservation coupon** on the next page. Your non-refundable deposit of **\$1,000 per person** is required to reserve a spot on this trip. Please send in your deposit (made payable to Opera Volunteers International), along with the coupon, to "Opera Volunteers International c/o Phyllis Driver at 5833 Briercliff, Knoxville, TN 37918, or pay on the OVI WEB SITE [www.OperaVolunteers.org](http://www.OperaVolunteers.org) via "PAYPAL" .

**Your final payment will be due on July 26, 2013.**

***Tour Cost:***

|                        |         |
|------------------------|---------|
| Land Arrangements..... | \$4,500 |
| Single supplement..... | \$500   |

The land package covers all group transfers, hotel accommodations, full breakfast buffet each morning as well as one additional complete meal per day, and all tickets to performances and museums as well as gratuities for group events. Also included is an approximate tax-deductible donation of \$400 to Opera Volunteers International. After the trip, when all expenses are calculated, you will each receive a letter acknowledging the specific amount of the gift for your tax records.

All group meals will be designed by "Request Italy" in conjunction with the head chef at each restaurant. Preselected red and white wines will be served with each group meal.

Please make your own air travel arrangements targeted to arrive in Milan during the window of time 8:00-10:30 a.m. on October 9, 2013. This may change somewhat once everyone informs us of their arrival time. We will be issuing specific instructions to all participants on where and when to meet at Malpensa Airport for the group transfer as well as optional means of reaching Parma on your own if you wish.

If you have any questions please e-mail OVI's Ann Meschery, at [ameschery@aol.com](mailto:ameschery@aol.com) any time,  
or call her at (917) 880-7130. Thanks!

Because of limited accommodations at our hotel and on our tour Mercedes minivan, as well as limited ticket availability for the performances at La Scala and The Verdi Festival, this trip is *absolutely limited to no more than 15 people*. If you wait too long, the trip will probably be sold out, so please *act quickly* if you wish to join us! Once the trip sells out, you can place your name on a waitlist if you wish.

**RESERVATIONS** (please print legibly)

Full Names (as on passport):

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

[check one] \_\_\_\_\_ Single Room \_\_\_\_\_ Double Room, \_\_\_\_\_ sharing with:

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Do you have any food allergies or preferences? \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

To reserve your spot on this trip, please send this form and a non-refundable deposit of **\$1,000 per person**. The remainder of your payment will be due on July 26, 2013. Payments can be made either by clicking on OVI WEB SITE

[www.OperaVolunteers.org](http://www.OperaVolunteers.org) via "PAYPAL" or mail a check payable to "Opera Volunteers International" c/o Phyllis Driver at 5833 Briercliff in Knoxville, TN 37918".

**We strongly advise everyone to purchase travel cancellation insurance. We do not recommend specific companies but one option you might consider would be would be Travel Guard Insurance. Their website is [www.travelguard.com](http://www.travelguard.com).**

Thank you for joining us!

