

- **Exciting opportunity to attend Cremona's Monteverdi Festival**
- **Monteverdi's *Orfeo* and a number of concerts will be included**
- **The craft of violin-making explored in delightful Cremona**
- **Lectures, private visits & recitals in Cremona & Milan**
- **Splendid monuments & works of art explored in Mantua & Parma**



Cremona's Cathedral in Piazza del Torrazzo

## OVERVIEW

Cremona is one of the most delightful cities in northern Italy, rich with musical tradition. Claudio Monteverdi was born there in 1567, and would find fame as the great innovator in contemporary Italian music, his name forever associated with the emergence of opera and the creator of some of the finest madrigals and sacred music ever composed. Today, Cremona is probably best remembered as the home of the world's finest violin maker, Antonio Stradivarius. The city was renowned for its tradition of making luxury goods but above all, superb stringed instruments. Families of craftsmen such as the Amati, the Guarneri and the Stradivari produced violins, violas and cellos still regarded as the finest of their kind.

Our visit will be the ideal introduction to the twin musical traditions of Monteverdi and Stradivarius, the former celebrated at Cremona's Monteverdi Festival, held annually in June and which we shall enjoy over a number of performances, including his celebrated opera *Orfeo*. We shall also enjoy the visual splendours not only of Cremona but also its handsome northern Italian neighbours – Crema, Mantua and Parma.

Monteverdi developed his early career in the sophisticated ducal city of Mantua, establishing there one of the most exciting musical centres in Italy. The home of the Gonzaga family for centuries, it is perhaps the most surprising of these northern Italian 'courtly' enclaves, with its contrasting masculine city palace and the nearby much more sophisticated villa-like Palazzo Te, both of which we shall visit.

Visual culture is as great a part of Parma's history as are music and food: the medieval era when Parma was ennobled with some of the finest churches of northern Italy; the renaissance and baroque when the Farnese family came to rule it as resident hereditary Dukes; and the nineteenth century when Napoleon's second wife, the Habsburg Marie-Louise of Austria, was given Parma and its Duchy.

The visit will be led by Professor Peter Hill. Peter is a writer and lecturer on music and regarded as one of the finest British pianists of his generation. Peter also regularly leads musical tours for Ciceroni. He will introduce the included opera and two concerts over two lectures, both with piano accompaniment. We shall stay at the comfortable 4\* Hotel Impero, ideally located in the heart of Cremona, just off the Cathedral piazza.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Wednesday 19 June – We fly from London's Heathrow to Milan Malpensa, arriving mid-afternoon. We transfer by coach to Cremona where we stay at the 4\* Hotel Impero for six nights. Later in the evening we have a group dinner in a local restaurant – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

**Day 2:** Thursday 20 June – Our morning will be spent in and around Cremona's **Piazza del Comune**. The piazza presents a rich panorama of medieval and later architecture, dominated by the **Torrazzo**, one of the highest medieval towers in Europe. The adjacent **Duomo** is a wonderful Romanesque church with a very ornate west front, behind

which lies a frescoed interior. The newly restored **Baptistry** is one of Lombardy's finest. After a pause for coffee we visit privately **Palazzo Calciati-Crotti**, an eighteenth century palace where the original interiors, paintings and furniture remain preserved. We have a group lunch in a local restaurant, after which Peter Hill will give the first of two lectures in preparation for our first **Concert** of Monteverdi's music at Cremona's **Church of Sant'Agostino**. Options for an early dinner, not included, prior to our first concert later in the evening will be suggested.

**Day 3:** Friday 21 June – This morning is dedicated to Cremona's distinguished tradition of violin making. We begin at the nearby **Workshop** of a master violin maker and restorer who will take us through the craft of violin making. After coffee, we visit the **Museo del Violino**, an interactive and well-presented investigation of the history of Cremonese lute and violin making. It houses a magnificent selection of historic instruments, including many crafted by **Stradivarius**, one of which will be played for us via a short recital. After our group lunch, Peter Hill gives his second lecture on Monteverdi in preparation for this evening opera, a new production of Monteverdi's very first opera **Orfeo** at Cremona's opera house, the **Teatro Ponchielli**. Dinner is not included this evening.

**Day 4:** Saturday 22 June – We spend the day in **Parma**, south of Cremona. We begin at the **Galleria Nazionale**, which sits within the renaissance **Palazzo della Pilotta**, originally built by the Farnese family, Parma's sometime ruling dynasty. The Gallery's collection includes works by Leonardo, Bernini and many others. The palazzo also contains the **Teatro Farnese**, a huge wooden structure modelled on Palladio's more famous Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza. After a group lunch we explore the medieval centre of Parma, dominated by some splendid buildings. The **Baptistry** is one of the finest medieval examples in Italy and externally has a marvellous sculptural programme. The **Duomo** is dominated by a series of frescoes painted in the sixteenth century by Correggio, the master of renaissance illusionism. His work is also to be found in the nearby church of **San Giovanni Evangelista**. We return to Cremona where later in the evening we attend our second Monteverdi **Concert** at the **Museo del Violino**. Dinner is not included this evening.

**Day 5:** Sunday 23 June – Today we drive over to **Mantua**, perhaps the most sophisticated of all the courtly cities in the Po Valley? Here, the splendours of the Gonzaga Marquises and Dukes of Mantua include the huge semi-fortified **Palazzo Ducale**. This contains rooms frescoed by Pisanello and the remarkable *Camera degli Sposi* by Andrea Mantegna, one of the most influential of the painters working at these courts. After some free time for lunch, not included, we continue to **Palazzo Te** to see Giulio Romano's innovative Mannerist work in architecture and painting. Though born in Cremona, Monteverdi spent his early career in Mantua from 1591 to 1613, where many of his most important musical innovations were developed. On our return to Cremona we have a free evening.

**Day 6:** Monday 24 June – Our leisurely half-day of activities takes us to the delightful town of **Crema**. On arrival we pause just outside to visit the workshop of the famous organ makers and restorers, **Tamburi**. Crema is dominated by a charming **Duomo** which we shall visit. The surrounding area has several places for lunch, not included today. We return to Cremona where the remainder of the afternoon will be free for private explorations. On our final evening we have dinner in one of Cremona's best restaurants.

**Day 7:** Tuesday 25 June – This morning we travel to central **Milan** where we shall be the guests of Signora Fernanda Giulini at her Milanese home. She will introduce us to her astonishing collection of historic psalteries, spinets, harpsichords and *pianoforte*, supported by a recital of Baroque music – an apt finale to our week in Lombardy. Signora Giulini will host us to lunch, after which we travel to Malpensa airport for our early evening flight to London Heathrow.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £2985

**Without Flights** £2795

**Deposit** £435

**Single Supplement** £165 (Double/Twin Room for Sole Use)

**Hotels** 6 nights with breakfast at the 4\* Hotel Impero, Cremona

**Flights** British Airways

Outward: **BA584** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1155** arrive Milan Malpensa **1500**

Return: **BA567** Depart Milan (Malpensa) **1850** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1955**

**Price includes** 2 dinner & 4 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, City Tax, entry fees & gratuities, the services of Peter Hill and James Hill, tickets for one opera and two concerts as above in stall seats

**Not included** Travel to/from Heathrow, 4 dinners & 2 lunches



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