

## BELLOTTO'S EYE DRESDEN AT CHRISTMAS

SATURDAY 23 – THURSDAY 28 DECEMBER 2017 (6 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£2225

- **Enjoy Dresden in its Christmas livery**
- **Compare the city as depicted by Bellotto with today's remarkable recreations**
- **Discover the insatiable patronage of the art-mad Electors of Saxony**
- **See some amazing pictures & the world's finest collection of Meissen porcelain**
- **Festive programme of opera, ballet & concerts**
- **Gentle pace with time to explore independently**
- **We stay in the city's finest hotel & eat well**



Dresden, The Frauenkirche Dome

### OVERVIEW

Christmas is celebrated in style in Dresden, the wonderful architecture of Saxony's capital the perfect backdrop to a traditional German Christmas. Jolly street markets, festive decorations, culture and music in abundance await us, plus a light dusting of snow as the perfect festive complement?

The Dresden we see today is a remarkable sight, little changed from when captured by one of Europe's greatest view painters, Bernardo Bellotto, who accepted an invitation from a genuine 'connoisseur' ruler, the Elector of Saxony, to come to his capital. When Bellotto arrived he found Saxony ruled in a most unusual way. The ruler was a Catholic, yet the ruler's ancestors until a generation before had been the firmest supporters of the Reformation, indeed they had given Martin Luther aid and comfort.

The Saxon lands were ruled at the turn of the seventeenth century by a charismatic leader, Frederick Augustus I, 'Augustus the Strong'. He was both hereditary Elector of Saxony and the elected King of Poland. To gain this second role, the Lutheran Elector converted to Catholicism, an astonishing decision given his nation's history, not appreciated by his Saxon subjects.

The Elector-King's fame lay in his role as a great patron of the arts. He founded the famous porcelain works at Meissen and began the transformation of his capital at Dresden. He and his successors built some remarkable palaces and collected magnificent works of art - all aspects of their activities which we shall see in the city's museums and treasuries, including the celebrated Green Vault.

Augustus's son, Frederick Augustus II (also King of Poland as Augustus III) continued his father's lavish patronage of the arts, inviting Bellotto to Dresden. The artist memorably captured the city's evolution in a series of limpid paintings and these mostly remain in the city's Gemäldegalerie, which we visit several times.

In recent times Dresden has taken on an added layer of significance due to its destruction during World War II and its rise, phoenix-like, bears remarkable testament to the triumph of human forbearance over adversity. This too, will add a poignant descant to our main theme as we celebrate this city of architecture, art and music.

Indeed, music will be an important part of our visit: The Semper Opera will stage Tchaikovsky's enchanting ballet, *The Nutcracker*; *Hansel and Gretel*, a fairy-tale opera by Humperdinck; and *Eugene Onegin*, Tchaikovsky's tragic opera. The Frauenkirche will present choral services and recitals over our stay. Subject to availability, tickets can be pre-booked for most of these performances and concerts.

We shall stay at the 5\* Kempinski Taschenberg Palace Hotel, the city's finest, close to all the major sites and a short walk to the Opera House.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Saturday 23 December – We fly from Heathrow to **Berlin** and on arrival transfer by coach to **Dresden** and check into our hotel, the **5\* Kempinski Taschenberg Palace**. Later that evening there will be a group dinner at a local restaurant. Wine, water and coffee are included with all group meals.

**Day 2:** Sunday 24 December – The centre of **Dresden** offers a remarkable overview of the city's history. It is full of fine historic buildings, many destroyed during World War II and left derelict for much of the communist period. These have now almost all been fully restored and offer us once again a city which its creators, Augustus the Strong and his son, Frederick-Augustus II, would recognise. We spend the morning exploring this **Altstadt** (wonderfully decorated for Christmas) on foot, to include the **Altmakt** and several important churches such as the famed **Hofkirche** and **Frauenkirche**. You will also have free time to enjoy the famous Christmas Market. Lunch is not included today and we shall have our Christmas Eve Dinner in our hotel.

**Day 3:** Monday 25 December – This first part of the morning will be free for independent explorations and some may wish to attend one of the Christmas Services? There will then be a gentle, mid-morning guided stroll through the historic centre, including the **Zwinger Palace** complex, designed by Matthaeus Daniel Pöppelmann and built for festivals and tournaments and one of the great architectural jewels of the city. We continue for our Christmas Day lunch, followed by some free time before an evening performance of Tchaikovsky's enchanting ballet at 6 pm, *The Nutcracker*. Tickets in the First Sector are £94.00. Should you wish to book, please contact the office.

**Day 4:** Tuesday 26 December – The morning will be devoted to a first visit to the city's most important gallery, the **Gemäldegalerie**. This has one of Europe's greatest collections of paintings, including Raphael's Sistine Madonna, not to mention a truly stunning group of view paintings of Dresden by Bellotto. After some free time for lunch, not included, we return to the Zwinger Palace to see the fabulous **Collection of Meissen and Oriental Porcelain**. The evening will be free and dinner is not included tonight. Tonight's performance is *Hansel & Gretel*, a fairy-tale opera by Englebert Humperdinck at 7 pm. First Sector tickets are £90.00.

**Day 5:** Wednesday 27 December – The **Residenzschloss** or Royal Palace is a modern recreation of the mostly Renaissance building lived in by the Wettin Electors and Kings over many centuries. The quality of the restoration is amazing, as is the justly famed historic **Green Vault** where we shall find displayed some truly astonishing items from the Wettin family's Treasury. After some free time for lunch (not included) we return for a further visit to the **Gemäldegalerie**. The evening will be free and dinner is not included tonight. *Eugene Onegin*, Tchaikovsky's tragic opera, begins at 7 pm, and First Sector tickets are £81.00.

**Day 6:** Thursday 28 December – This morning we drive to **Meissen**, a delightful place round which we shall be guided. The Medieval centre is well preserved and we also visit the famous Meissen **Porcelain Museum and Factory** after which we have our final group lunch. We continue to Berlin for the return flight to Heathrow.

**Opera & Music in Dresden:** We have left most evenings free so that participants can enjoy the city's rich musical life. The Semper Opera will host several performances to include *The Nutcracker* on the 25<sup>th</sup>, *Hansel & Gretel* on the 26<sup>th</sup> and *Eugene Onegin* on the 27<sup>th</sup> December. Tickets are held in the First Sector for each performance and can be added to your booking via our office.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £2225    **Deposit** £300    **Price without flights** £2070    **Single Supplement** £275 Double for Sole Use

**Room Upgrades** £375 (Double for Sole Use in a Superior Room)

**Hotel** 5 nights with Breakfast at the 5\* Kempinski Taschenberg Palace

**Flights** British Airways

Outward: **BA982** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1010**, arrive Berlin **1305**

Return: **BA995** Depart Berlin **1740** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1840**

**Price includes** 2 dinners & 2 lunches with water, wine & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, all local transfers, services of Tom Duncan & local guides

**Not included** Travel to/ from Heathrow, 3 dinners & 3 lunches, Opera, Ballet & Concert tickets



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