



AIX-EN-PROVENCE OPERA FESTIVAL: MUSIC IN A MEDITERRANEAN SETTING with Robert Gay

*Participate in France's premier music festival,
enjoying operas and vocal recitals from the baroque era
to contemporary premieres in outdoor venues
and historic theatres*

HIGHLIGHTS

- Unpack for a long-stay tour with 10 nights in the centre of Aix, just minutes from Festival venues
- Delight in a diverse program of 7 performances, including five fully-staged operas and solo recitals
- Discover historic venues, including the courtyard of the Archbishop's Palace and the eighteenth-century Jeu de Paume Theatre, as well as the modern Grand Théâtre
- Traverse the charming streetscapes of Aix, the seat of the rulers of medieval Provence
- Follow in the footsteps of Paul Cézanne and other painters
- Explore historical Arles, and visit areas of outstanding natural beauty such as the Luberon and the Calanques near Cassis

IN A NUTSHELL

DATES: 11-21 July 2024

ITINERARY: Aix-en-Provence
(10 nights)

PRICE: \$11,700pp twinshare

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:
\$2,290 for sole use of a
double room

FITNESS: Moderate: late
nights, summer weather

GROUP SIZE: max. 20 places



Limelight Arts Travel Pty Ltd
Level 1, 183 Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000
(02) 8599 2401
www.limelight-arts-travel.com.au

LIMELIGHT
ARTS — TRAVEL

OVERVIEW

Each year in July, the epicentre of France's musical life moves from the theatres and concert halls of Paris to sunny Aix-en-Provence. The elegant medieval capital of Provence provides a beautiful and relaxing environment for the three-week Festival, dedicated to lyric music, with repertoire ranging from the baroque period to contemporary works commissioned by the Festival. Performances take place in indoor and outdoor venues, ranging from a charming eighteenth-century theatre to the purpose-built Grand Théâtre de Provence, inaugurated in 2007.

Limelight Arts Travel's 11-day tour includes two weekends, so we can be sure that all major performances are included. Accommodation is in a central 4-star hotel with swimming pool. As well as the Festival performances, there is a program of excursions to nearby sites of historical interest and natural beauty.

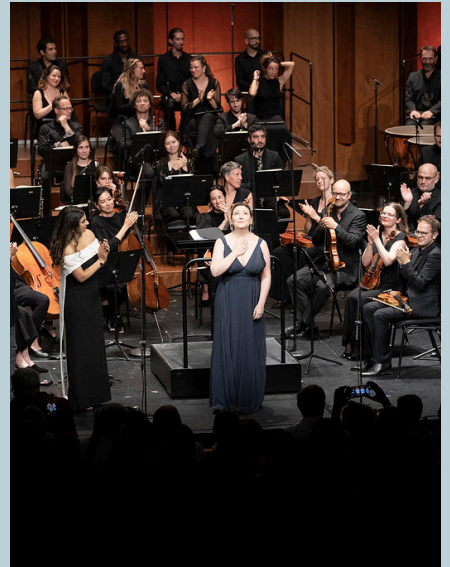
TOUR LEADER

Robert Gay has significant expertise as a music history educator and tour leader, having designed and led more than 100 tours to the great musical cities of Western and Central Europe and North America.

Known for his popular music history courses, offered at the University of Sydney's Centre for Continuing Education for more than 30 years, Robert's musical expertise extends from the Baroque period through to the great composers of the modern era. He trained as a lyric baritone and was President of the Sydney Schubert Society for many years. Robert is regularly invited to present talks on opera and music history for organisations such as the Wagner Society NSW.

The breadth of Robert's knowledge, the infectious passion of his love for great music, and his attention to and care of members of his tour groups are legendary. Robert led our highly successful inaugural tour to the Festival in 2023.

Cover image of the open-air Théâtre de l'Archevêché courtesy Festival d'Aix-en-Provence © Vincent Beaume



From top to bottom: still life inside Cézanne's atelier; a performance in the Grand Théâtre in July 2023, courtesy Festival d'Aix-en-Provence © Vincent Beaume; tour leader Robert Gay



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AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY TOUR LEADER ROBERT GAY

Two outstanding early-music orchestras are featured in Aix-en-Provence's just-released 2024 festival program – Pygmalion, conducted by Raphaël Pichon, and Le Concert d'Astrée, conducted by Emmanuelle Haïm. The former will accompany Rameau's 'newly-recreated' *Samson*, and the latter a remarkable double-bill of Gluck's two operas based on the Classical myth of the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

In addition to these stellar ensembles, the fine local early music group Cappella Mediterranea will accompany the new production of Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* by festival director Pierre Audi, performed in the tiny, jewel-like Théâtre du Jeu de Paume. During our stay, we also hear the Orchestre de Paris conducted by their new music director, the 27-year-old Finnish maestro **Klaus Mäkelä**, and the orchestra of Opéra Lyon, conducted by **Susanna Mälkki**, which will be in the pit for the much-anticipated revival of Katie Mitchell's extraordinary 2016 production of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* in the Grand Théâtre de Provence.

Perhaps surprisingly, our opening performance of Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Samson* is listed as a 'création mondiale', with **Raphaël Pichon** responsible for the musical concept, and gifted director **Claus Guth** responsible for stage direction, concept and scenario. The fact that this 'newly created' opera is being given on the spacious stage of the open-air Théâtre de l'Archevêché, with Guth's regular collaborator Etienne Pluss as designer, raises hopes that the production may be appropriately spectacular.

To see both of Gluck's *tragédies lyriques* based on the story of Iphigenia's sacrifice in a single evening is a rare treat indeed. *Iphigénie en Aulide* (in Aulis) will be followed, after an extended interval, by *Iphigénie en Tauride* (in Tauris). **Corinne Winters** sings the title role in both, with Véronique Gens as Clytemnestre in the first, and Florian Sempey and Stanislas de Barbeyrac as Oreste and Pylade in the second. This ground-breaking double-bill is directed by **Dmitri Tcherniakov**.

To mark the 100th anniversary of the death of Puccini, a new production of *Madama Butterfly*, starring Albanian soprano **Ermonela Jaho** as Cio-Cio San, will also be presented in the spacious Théâtre de l'Archevêché. Jaho is a major star in the *verismo* repertoire and excels in the roles designated as 'piccola donna' in the Puccini oeuvre – namely Mimì, Butterfly and Liù. Importantly, the opera is directed by a woman, Andrea Breth.

Rounding out our festival experience, there will be a recital in the Grand Théâtre by Latvian star mezzo-soprano **Elīna Garanča**, accompanied by pianist Malcolm Martineau. This is sure to be a very special evening.

“One of the best Festival experiences I have ever had.”
– June D., Festival d'Aix-en-Provence tour, 2023

“We are fairly new to opera and Robert made it so interesting and accessible.”
–Participants, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence tour, 2023



DETAILED ITINERARY

THURSDAY 11 JULY – ARRIVAL IN AIX (Canapés)

Group members arrive during the day. As well as private transfers, there are regular coach services from both Marseille airport and the Aix-en-Provence TGV station, which is located outside the town. In the early evening, meet your fellow tour participants, the tour leader and tour manager for drinks and canapés in the Aquabella Hotel.

FRIDAY 12 JULY – IN AIX – PERFORMANCE 1 (B, L)

This morning, a local guide orients us to the **history and architecture of Aix**. We stroll along the elegant Cours Mirabeau, often described as one of Europe's most beautiful boulevards, appreciating the fine, aristocratic mansions and public spaces which adorn the city. After a welcome lunch in a local restaurant, the early afternoon is free to relax before a talk on this evening's performance, followed later by the performance itself. Each year, the Festival presents at least one spectacular performance in an unusual venue such as the Théâtre de l'Archevêché. The courtyard of the archbishop's palace has been converted into a fully-equipped theatre, with open-air performances beginning at 9.30pm, after sunset. Tonight, we enjoy a new production by the gifted Claus Guth of **Rameau's *Samson***. We discuss our impressions afterwards over drinks in our hotel.

Performance details

Venue: Théâtre de l'Archevêché

Program: Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Samson*

Performers: Claus Guth (director), Raphaël Pichon, Pygmalion Orchestra and Choir

SATURDAY 13 JULY – HÔTEL DE CAUMONT – PERFORMANCE 2 (B, L)

This morning, we visit one of the most prestigious historic residences in Aix. The eighteenth-century **Hôtel de Caumont**, located just off Cours Mirabeau, is approached through a Cour d'Honneur and boasts more than 1,000 square metres of private gardens. Today, most of the building functions as an art gallery, hosting outstanding exhibitions of leading French artists, but you can also visit its beautiful salons, relax in the garden, and watch a short film on Cézanne. We have lunch in the elegant restaurant after our visit. The afternoon is at leisure.



This evening, after a talk, we return to the Théâtre de l'Archevêché for a new production of *Madama Butterfly*, marking the 100th anniversary of Puccini's death. The production features two accomplished women: Andrea Breth directing, and *verismo* star Ermonela Jaho as Cio-Cio San. Afterwards, we return to our hotel for post-performance drinks.

Performance details

Venue: Théâtre de l'Archevêché

Program: Giacomo Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*

Performers: Andrea Breth (director), Daniele Rustioni (conductor), Ermonela Jaho (Cio-Cio San), Opéra de Lyon

SUNDAY 14 JULY – BASTILLE DAY, PERFORMANCE 3 (B, L, D)

This morning we venture a little way out of Aix to explore **sites associated with Paul Cézanne**. The artist's strikingly original response to the countryside of Aix laid many of the foundations for Modernism, making Cézanne a revered figure. We visit the landscapes where he worked and painted. [*NB Restorations of Cézanne's atelier in Aix-en-Provence are scheduled during our tour.*] There will also be time for a **visit to a Provençal winery** to sample the delicious rosé, which is characteristic of the region, and to enjoy an informal lunch together. The afternoon is free before a light Bastille Day dinner together and an evening performance at the comfortable Grand Théâtre de Provence. The **Orchestre de Paris** is conducted by 27-year-old Finnish maestro **Klaus Mäkelä**, with two illustrious works representative of Late German Romanticism, a continuation of the Festival's 'Mahler cycle' and a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Schönberg.

Performance details

Venue: Grand Théâtre de Provence

Program: Arnold Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht* (*Transfigured night*) and Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 4

Performers: Klaus Mäkelä (conductor), Christiane Karg (soprano) and the Orchestre de Paris

MONDAY 15 JULY – COASTAL PROVENCE (B, L)

Today's excursion takes us to a pretty corner of the Mediterranean, just to the south of Aix. Nestled between France's highest cliffs at Cap Canaille and the deep inlets of Les Calanques, the fishing village of **Cassis** has attracted artists and travellers for more than a century. After strolling through the village and enjoying a coffee at the port, we take a **short cruise to three of the calanques**, or creeks, to learn a little about their formation and history. After lunch together in a restaurant overlooking the sea, we drive to a series of high vantage points along the famous Route des Crêtes, where the views in all directions are sensational. The evening is at leisure.



TUESDAY 16 JULY – FREE TIME – PERFORMANCE 4 (B, SUPPER)

The day is then free to relax or to explore Aix, before we meet for a pre-performance talk in the late afternoon. This evening we return to the modern, air-conditioned Grand Théâtre de Provence, for a highlight of our tour: the rare treat of seeing both Gluck's *tragedies lyriques* in a single evening. The ground-breaking **double-bill of *Iphigénie en Aulide* and *Iphigénie en Tauride***, directed by Dmitri Tcherniakov, includes an extended interval for supper and is a new production. Afterwards, we discuss our impressions over drinks at our hotel.

Performance details

Venue: Grand Théâtre de Provence

Program: Christoph Willibald Gluck, *Iphigénie en Aulide* and *Iphigénie en Tauride*

Performers: Dmitri Tcherniakov (director), Emmanuelle Haïm (conductor), Corinne Winters (*Iphigénie*), Véronique Gens (*Clytemnestre*), Florian Sempey (*Oreste*), Stanislas de Barbeyrac (*Pylade*) and the Concert d'Astrée

WEDNESDAY 17 JULY – CHÂTEAU LA COSTE – PERFORMANCE 5 (B, L)

This morning we head to a valley about half an hour's drive north of Aix to visit **Château La Coste**. This extraordinary property is the vision of entrepreneur Paddy McKillen who, apart from growing and producing wine, has commissioned leading architects to create pavilions dotted around the estate, where paintings and sculptures by equally famous artists are displayed. On arrival, we tour pavilions by Richard Rogers, Oscar Neimeyer and Andy Goldsworthy, before lunch in the elegant Tadao Ando-designed restaurant, where we are surrounded by artworks by Louise Bourgeois, Alexander Calder and others. After lunch, we return to Aix for time at leisure before a keenly awaited revival at the Grand Théâtre of Katie Mitchell's 2016 production of **Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande***. Susanna Mälkki is in the pit conducting the orchestra of the Opéra de Lyon. Returning to our hotel, we enjoy a post-performance drink together.

Performance details

Venue: Grand Théâtre de Provence

Program: Claude Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*

Performers: Katie Mitchell (director), Susanna Mälkki, orchestra and choir of the Opéra de Lyon

THURSDAY 18 JULY – THE LUBERON – PERFORMANCE 6 (B, L)

Provence is justly famous for its beauty, a beguiling blend of wild landscapes, ancient villages and rolling fields. Today we travel to the pretty district of the **Luberon**, passing through Lourmarin, officially one of The Most Beautiful Villages of France, and Roussillon, famous for the rich red ochres of its soil. We enjoy lunch together before continuing to a nearby village, to enjoy a stroll and explore its cobbled streets, medieval church and tree-lined squares. Returning to Aix-en-



Provence, there is time to rest before an **evening recital**.

Performance details

Venue: Grand Théâtre de Provence

Program: TBA

Performers: Elīna Garanča (mezzo-soprano), Malcolm Martineau (pianist)

FRIDAY 19 JULY – ARLES (B, L)

Many travellers regard **Arles** as Provence's finest small city. Today we explore Arles' Roman and Romanesque heritage, including the great amphitheatre and the church and cloister of Saint-Trophime. We also visit the **Fondation Vincent van Gogh** to see its special summer exhibition. After lunch together, there is time to investigate a few of the city's delightful boutiques or to take a stroll alongside the mighty Rhône. On the return your tour leader will give a talk in the coach about this evening's performance at the intimate Jeu de Paume theatre. This delightful eighteenth-century theatre is used to present baroque opera and new works, for both of which Aix has become renowned, and tonight we enjoy a **new production by festival director Pierre Audi of Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*** with the fine local early music group Cappella Mediterranea. Afterwards, we enjoy farewell drinks in the bar, while reflecting on the experiences we have enjoyed during our time at the Festival.

Performance details

Venue: Théâtre du Jeu de Paume

Program: Claudio Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*

Performers: Pierre Audi (director), Leonardo García Alarcón (conductor), orchestra of the Cappella Mediterranea

SATURDAY 20 JULY – MUSÉE GRANET – PERFORMANCE 8 (B, L)

We commence the day with a visit to **Granet XXe**, the twentieth-century wing of the Musée Granet. It hosts the impressive collection of Jean and Suzanne Planque, who particularly admired works of Impressionists and Post-Impressionists such as Cézanne, Monet, Van Gogh, Degas and Bonnard. Afterwards we continue to the **Musée Granet**, the city's main art museum, for an independent visit. We then enjoy a farewell lunch in a fine local restaurant before an afternoon at leisure ahead of our final performance at the Festival, which celebrates the 40th anniversary of the Orchestre de Jeune de la Méditerranée.

Performance details

Venue: Grand Théâtre du Provence

Program: TBA

Performers: Evan Rogister (Director)

SUNDAY 21 JULY – DEPARTURE (B)

The tour ends after breakfast in the hotel.



INCLUSIONS

- Best available tickets to 8 performances at the 2024 Aix-en-Provence Festival
- 10 nights' accommodation in a 4-star hotel
- All breakfasts, 10 lunches, dinners or suppers, plus welcome and farewell drinks and canapés
- Entry fees and tickets to sites as described in the itinerary
- All ground transport, guided tours and entrances, and tipping
- Talks by music educator Robert Gay throughout
- Services of an experienced tour manager throughout

HOTEL

Hotel Aquabella, 4*, 10 nights

www.aquabella.fr/en

The Hotel Aquabella is the only substantial 4-star hotel with resort facilities located within the old city of Aix-en-Provence. It has large public areas, with open plan bars, lounges and dining areas. The modern rooms are well-proportioned, and bathrooms have a choice of bath or shower. The large swimming pool will be especially inviting in the afternoon heat.

The hotel is within an easy walk of most Festival venues, as well as being close to shops, cafés and restaurants.

TOUR DETAILS

DATES

11-21 July 2024

TOUR LEADER

Robert Gay

ITINERARY

Aix-en-Provence (10 nights)

PRICE

\$11,700pp twinshare

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$2,290 for sole use of a double room

FITNESS

Moderate: late nights, summer weather

GROUP SIZE

Max. 20 places

DEPOSIT

(to hold a place on the tour)
\$1,000pp at the time of booking

SECOND DEPOSIT

(following release of the final program in November 2023)
\$2,500 due 13 March 2024

FINAL PAYMENT DUE

27 April 2024

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By booking on this tour you accept our terms and conditions, which can be found on our website:

<http://www.limelight-artstravel.com.au/terms-and-conditions-tours>

