



*Time and Space II: Tour 2015  
France and Spain  
Concert Schedule*

Tues. May 12	8:30 p.m.	Église Saint-Barthélémy, Cahors
Wed. May 13	5:00 p.m.	Monolithic Church, Aubeterre
Thurs. May 14	5:30 p.m.	Château de Bonaguil, Fumel
Sat. May 16	5:00 p.m.	Basilique Saint Nazaire, Carcassonne
Tues. May 19	5:00 p.m.	Basilica de la Sagrada Familia, Barcelona
Thurs. May 21	8:30 p.m.	Église Saint Julien, Arles
Fri. May 22	9:00 p.m.	Église de Saint Quentin la Poterie
Sat. May 23	8:30 p.m.	Temple Protestant, Uzès

Day zero

Monday, May 11, 2015



This was arrival day for most with the first activity an initial rehearsal scheduled for 5:00 pm.

The weather is perfect. Sunny skies with temperatures in the mid 20s – for the next three days anyway. It is early summer with everything in full leaf and the roses in full bloom. Cahors is a lovely old town with a population of 20,000 nestled in turn of the River Lot, the shape approximating, not inappropriately, a wine skin. For much wine is inexpensive – quelle probleme for a beer drinker!

Maybe 25% of the choir were in Cahors a day early while many others broke the journey with a night or more in London, Paris or Toulouse. So when well over half the choir arrived this afternoon by train from Toulouse, the local taxi service (of one it would appear) was somewhat overwhelmed. While it is a 20 minute walk from the station to the hotel, it is not to be attempted towing a suitcase!

As a consequence, the scheduled two hour “ugly” rehearsal/briefing was delayed until 6:30 pm and finished by 7:15 pm for dinner. Few were upset!

So day zero is complete. No people photos today – a long journey by air, bus, train and taxi, a nine hour time difference and little sleep does not a pretty face make and this editor does not want enemies on Day One!



Day One – Tuesday, May 12, 2015

Our first full day started with a rehearsal, of course. Scheduled for two hours starting at 10:00 a.m., everyone showed up on time and we were finished by 11:30. It was unclear whether this was because the quality of singing was so high or that the men's choreography in Babethandaza badly needed attention. Anyway, the ladies were sent away and the men were given personalized dance lessons by the soloists!

We were given the afternoon off to study our music and everyone went off to either catch up on sleep or do some sightseeing.

The concert in the evening was at l'Église Saint-Barthélémy located in the centre of Cahors. The church dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was built and rebuilt over the years. Note the combination of brick and stone in the photo at the bottom of the page as we wait for the concert to start (the traditional ten minutes late.



The concert itself went very well with a standing ovation by the small but very enthusiastic audience. The acoustics were as promised – wonderfully clear with very long reverberations. The format of the concerts is identical to the one performed at WVUC in April with the choir doing three sets and the soloists performing two. A very satisfying start.



Day Two – Wednesday, May 13, 2015

Today was a busy day. 9:00 bus departure on our way to Chateau Clauzauroux. We stopped half way for a break – as the photo shows. No, this is not the sopranos and altos paying obeisance to the Music Director but a semi-organized yoga session.

Castle Clauzauroux is was built in the mid- sixteenth century and has been registered as a historic monument since 1947.



Then on to Aubeterre for a concert in the Monolithic church. This is a subterranean church hewn from solid rock, dug out by Benedictine monks in the 1100's. It is 89 feet long, 52 feet wide and 66 feet high, one of the largest underground religious edifices in Europe with gorgeous acoustics.

The concert went very well.



The PSC had sung here three years ago and there was a degree of expectation from the full house (of about 120). We did not seem to disappoint for the standing ovation at the end was immediate and without hesitation.

Afterwards, there was lots of positive comment. Here we give an impromptu performance of Shenandoah to those who gave us a reception and those refreshing themselves outside.

Then the bus back home around 10:30 p.m.



Day Three – Thursday, May 14, 2015

After a long day yesterday, today was a sleep in for some and for others a chance to further explore Cahors. Then off to Chateau de Bonaguil. Although the skies were clear when the bus left at 2:30 p.m. the clouds were beginning to build up and the forecasted rain threatened.

Chateau de Bonaguil dates from the 13th century, but was entirely rebuilt at the beginning of the 16th century. A marvel of military architecture covering 7500 m<sup>2</sup>, it incorporated the latest developments in artillery. It was never attacked and was obsolete by the time it was completed. Some things never change! It was classified as a historic monument in 1862.



By the time we reached the Chateau de Bonaguil one hour later, we were experiencing a torrential shower.

We sang here in 2012 and experienced the same problem, rain. So, once again, instead of singing outside in a courtyard of the chateau grounds, we sang in the chapel. However, that year, the concert was such a success that they asked us to come back. And we have. And the weather is just as bad. And we sang in the chapel again. That was not anticlimactic as the acoustics are wonderful.

It was a great concert and we sang extremely well according to the packed house of about 70 – another standing ovation. This concert reinforced the knowledge that we have an incredibly talented group of soloists with us. Tonight they were superb. Here they are singing - with an intruder on the right adding some extra reinforcement.

It was a pity about the weather. Maybe we should eliminate the Famine Song from our repertoire. It seems to have worked too well.



Day Four – Friday, May 15, 2015

After three busy days, this morning was relaxing with nothing organized until the bus left at 2:30. Today was a travel afternoon and the choir had the morning to sleep and/or sightsee – and pack. Then we said au revoir to Cahors and went to Carcassonne.



We travelled on freeways (although they weren't free!) some of the time but more time was spent getting to and from them.



While the scenery is was always of interest as our camera buffs took hundreds of pictures of old chateaux, the most memorable part was our driver, Ron, guiding our huge 48 foot long coach down narrow streets and extraordinarily tight corners in the towns or being forced to divert when a bridge with a load limit suddenly appeared on our route. But we made it safely to the L'Aragon in Carcassonne.

There, after a quick change, we all went to another hotel, Hotel Les Oliviers, for dinner. We descended on the dining room where 20 or so young men were having a quiet dinner. They turned out to be the England U18 rugby team in Carcassonne for a game the next day. They were then regaled with a rousing rendition of Loch Lomond led by Risa, who then, somehow, managed to find herself at the rugby table. Sadly (?), they had a game the next day (which they lost by one point) and they all departed somewhat bemused to loud applause.





Day Five – Saturday, May 16, 2015



This is what the tourist literature tells us that Carcassonne looks like. Maybe it does!



This is what it did look like when we were there. Shown between the inner and outer walls. What you cannot see are the gale force winds that accompanied the 15 degree temperature. This photo shows the 1:30 English tour. Our guide tried her best but the wind often took the words out of her mouth and tossed them away! But it was still an interesting visit though very crowded by the many French day-trippers celebrating this Saturday of a holiday weekend, despite the weather.

The Basilique Saint-Nazaire was a different experience. A large part Roman, part Gothic building with magnificent stained glass windows and very clear acoustics. As a choir, we once again enthused our audience of about 80 though it was difficult to judge as, being a free concert in a church that welcomes tourists, some were just passing through. Here we are performing Babethandaza in front of those superb eastern windows.

We must be careful to guard against overconfidence for three of the audience did not join in the standing ovation!



Day Six – Sunday, May 17, 2015

This was a day for travel. We said goodbye to a windy, overcast Carcassonne and headed off to Barcelona via Figueres.

Figueres is the home of Salvador Dali and the Dali Museum, built by Dali for Dali, and while his best and/or his most famous works are in international galleries, this museum still contains a considerable volume of work.

And then on to Barcelona. Check in at the Chic and Basic Ramblas Hotel within walking distance of most things – which everybody did as dinner was DOYO.



Day Seven – Monday, May 18, 2015

There were no organized choir functions of any description. It was a BOYO, LOYO and DOYO day (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner On Your Own). Not that the OYO really applied as people formed informal, interchangeable clusters and dispersed throughout the city to walk, sightsee and shop – and, of course, eat and keep hydrated.

Nothing related to singing.

Well, maybe there is something, for Karin, our tireless organiser/host/source of all information, was out shopping and took this photo. A somewhat different interpretation of one of the pieces that we are singing.





Day Eight – Tuesday, May 19, 2015

Today was a highlight day of the tour as we sang in Gaudi's La Sagrada Familia. The morning was for sightseeing the things that were never seen yesterday but by 4:00 we were on the bus and taking the short hop to La Sagrada in a light drizzle. I will not go into the history and Gaudi's design concepts. We had a half hour tour that touched on all the main points that be read in numerous places on the web



The outside and inside today of La Sagrada Familia. The photo above is what we were looking at when we sang.

We were here to sing in this magnificent basilica and it was only appropriate that we should dedicate the half hour concert to the memory of Barrie MacLeod who has done so much for the choir. He was President of the PSC for many years and under his leadership the Choir undertook many tours and significant performances.



The concert went extremely well - fabulous acoustics. The echoes did not just die away, they kept coming back – softly coming back – softly coming back. The Sagrada person who was the coordinator told us that they allow three choirs per month and we were the best she had heard.



Day Nine – Wednesday, May 20, 2015

After the excitement of La Sagrada, this was a day featuring a long bus ride from Barcelona back into France and on to Arles.

One of the features of the bus rides has been the lack of rehearsal (if you can have a negative feature). The music does seem to be going rather well. Gerry always seems to have a smile on his face though that was modified to a sickly grin when he had a short spell of tummy trouble!

Apart from Day Zero, we have only had one scheduled practice session. You can tell by the smiles and intense concentration that it was a good one. And, except when Gerry found an organ to accompany a soloist, all



the programmes were entirely *a cappella* – and we had half the programme memorized, i.e. books on the floor! At this stage, even the basses knew the words (well, mostly!)

This bus ride was broken by a stop for lunch in a resort area of France on the Mediterranean not far from Perpignan. A magnificent stretch of sun drenched beach made memorable by the cool, strong wind blowing stinging sand in your face. The place was deserted, and when 50 people descended on one of the restaurants which had minimum staffing (i.e. 2!), lunch was somewhat elongated. It was the first time that anyone was late for the scheduled bus departure time – but so many were late that the Director was forced to waive the euro a minute late fee!



And on to Arles. A town steeped in history and dominated by the Roman arena (90 AD) and smaller theatre situated on the Rhone and home to about 50,000 people though back in Roman times it was much, much bigger. But its narrow streets, and lack of cars makes it very popular with tourists.

But for us, the evening arrival gave us time to unpack and have dinner at the Hotel Arles Plaza. And so to bed. On the morrow, for some, the highlight will be a tour of Arles. For others, the gleam in the eye foretells a full day shopping binge, for, after all, Barcelona was two days ago.



Day Ten – Thursday, May 21, 2015

Woke up in Arles to a bright, clear, very windy day. Unless you know, you think of the Mistral as wafting breezes. Today, it wasn't – closer to a howling gale – and not warm, definitely windbreaker weather!

But that didn't stop the choir splitting into two groups for a guided tour of Arles – home of Van Gogh for the very productive year of 1888. Pity that Arles cannot afford to own any of his paintings.

This is his famous *Café Terrace at Night* – then and now.



Concert tonight was in L'Eglise Saint Julien. This was declared an historic monument in 1941 with a bit of an up and down history. It was first built in 1119, rebuilt in the late 1600s. It was left in virtual ruins by Allied bombing in 1944. Now restored, it is now closed to worship but is room for shows, concerts and exhibitions frequently held there. We stood on a wooden stage which meant that for the only

time on the tour we were able to stamp our feet and create thunder as well as rain in the Famine Song! In a slight change of format, Gerry gave the soloists a chance to sing solos and duets in their two sets (as distinct from a solo part within the small group) and also to conduct the full choir. So we had five performing solos/duets and three conductors in addition to Gerry. It is difficult to describe the emotion and passion that goes into their performances. It is enough to make grown men weep!



Back to the hotel for a late dinner. Few were in bed before midnight and there is a bus to catch in the morning!

Day Eleven – Friday, May 22, 2015

Another long day (but another great day) for we left Arles at 10:00 and did not get back from the evening concert to our hotel in Vaison de Romaine until well after midnight. We are now into wine country with vineyards, everywhere. We passed through Chateau Neuf du Pape but there was no time for a prolonged stay for we were due at our hotel, Le Logis de Chateau, perched above the small town of Vaison de Romaine. At the hotel we had an excellent lunch. Everyone piled into the hors d'oeuvres and then realized that there were two courses to follow. The French do not appear to be great vegetable eaters but here there were tureens with nothing but vegetables in addition to bowls full of meat and fish. Finally, a very good, rich dessert to round out the meal. Round out is an appropriate descriptor as we waddled back to the bus for the trip to the small, old town of Saint-Quentin-la-Poterie.

A repeating episode of just about every day has been a bus ride. Close to 47 feet long, the bus, the biggest that Setra make (Besseling is the name of the Dutch bus company). Streets and, for that matter, parking spaces in cities are not designed for that size of coach.



Ron, driver extraordinaire, showed incredible skill manoeuvring this monster with its pivoting twin rear wheels and very good lock. He avoided all the stone walls, trees and gateposts remaining damage free. He was not to blame when we were crunched in the back side in Saint-Quentin-la-Poterie slowly going along a narrow straight section of road having successfully navigated around most of the town looking for a negotiable n access (minor damage and no injuries).



Happily we were able to walk to the church and the tiff did give the shoppers, going through temporary withdrawal, some more window shopping time prior to rehearsal.

Concerts are a joy in small towns for they are an event. We sing to full houses of enthusiastic listeners and this was no exception. They do not know what they are coming to hear. The music programme is so varied and the quality so high that we inevitably take them by surprise

Experiences with the bus were not yet over. It was past midnight and nearly home when we discovered a car parked so badly that not even Ron could get round the last tight corner. But the men demonstrated their moving technique and bounced the front of the car hard up against a wall so the bus could squeeze through.



Day Twelve – Saturday, May 23, 2015

This was the final concert day but first, because we were not moving hotels, we had time to take a



diversion to a local vineyard and check out the quality. The tasting was prefaced with an educational exhibit that related the elements of the winemakers' art to the five senses. For Smell, for example, there were about eight samples – smoke, cinnamon, black cherries, leather, etc. to test your recognition. Then on to the sampling room where, because we were performing that night, they limited us to only seven wines – maybe just as well!

Then, after having lunch, the final blow your shopping (for some), in the small historic town of Vaison de Romaine where we were staying, we were off for our final concert in the Protestant church in Uzès A very different environment from the Catholic churches we had been experiencing for this was wood panelled with very little reverberation - creating a very different and clear sound.

It was perhaps our best of all concerts in terms of singing the notes together. An emotional one, special last of eight concerts on the tour and the last time that Baha and Risa would sing with us as members of the choir. Members or not, we hope that they will sing with us again. We wish them the best of luck and outstanding success as they pursue their careers.



The nine soloists during the last concert

Then – party time. Somehow the soloists had been assigned a large attic room well away from everyone else.

The bus boarding was very quiet the next morning for the drive to Toulouse.



The choir singing the encore *Shenandoah* in the final concert

Day Thirteen – Sunday, May 24, 2015

Sadly, our last full day. The concerts are over and the trip home (or elsewhere) starting to loom. But there are still several hours to go with a long bus ride and the “Surprise” Party in the evening. On the trip to Toulouse we visited the Pont du Gard and saw the highest of all Roman aqueducts anywhere in the



world. It was built in the first century AD with a road bridge built a little later but in similar style. For centuries, it was a toll bridge that allowed both to be kept in good condition long after its use as an aqueduct was over. It was added to UNESCO’s list of World Heritage Sites in 1985. Some great view.

Then on to Toulouse for the Grand final “Surprise” party – a three hour boat trip on the canal that was built 350 years ago and connects the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. Who will forget the lowering of the roof on the upper deck to accommodate some very low bridges.

What gorgeous scenery on a night that was the perfect temperature. Thanks to the soloists their songs that ranged from classical to regal.



An evening of memories revisited, sad goodbyes looming and much laughter. We wondered how we could make these two weeks last longer. Some members of the choir performed individual composed numbers (thanks Lynn and Mary).

With very early flights in the morning, it was time to say thank you to Gerry and Karin (and others) and au revoir and bonne chance to Baha and Risa as they move on to further their careers.



Day Fourteen – Monday, May 25, 2015



From here we all move onwards – most home – others to different parts of Europe.

There are numerous contributions to the success of this tour – too many to identify all.

To Gerry for the inspiration. (our fifth tour) and leadership (especially choral).

To Karin for her organization, perseverance (particularly La Sagrada) and adaptability.

To the tour planning committee for all the preparation which has going on steadily for the past 12 months and more.

To the “roadies” for all their critical activities in the background and always being there to help.

To the photographers (particularly Gary) for making their photographs available for this blog.

To Ron, our bus driver from Holland, for his incredible manoeuvrability skills and getting us safely around two countries.

To the soloists for their magnificent choral contribution and for being an integral part of all aspects of the tour.

To all fellow choir members who all blended together into one big musical and social team.

And to you, dear reader, for following this blog to the very end! Au revoir. Jeremy