



Tour Itinerary for:

First Methodist Chancel Choir

Mansfield, Texas

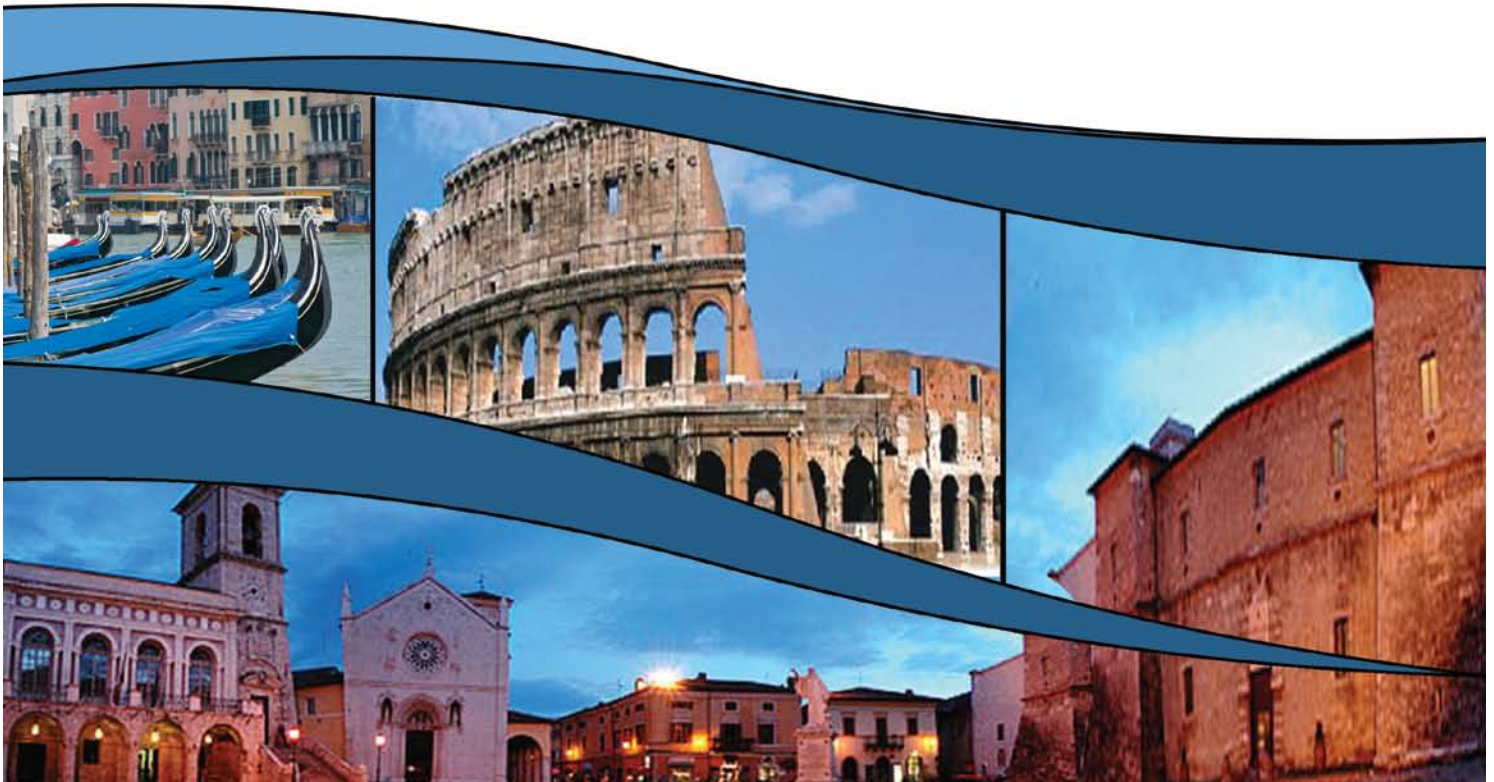
Dr. Scott Ferrell, Director

Performance Tour of Italy

June 14 – June 24, 2013

11 Days/9 Nights

Itinerary #3



TRC PERFORMANCE TOURS

Tour Details:

First Methodist Chancel Choir

Mansfield, Texas

Dr. Scott Ferrell, Director

Performance Tour of Italy

11 Days/9 Nights, June 14 – June 24, 2013

Itinerary #4, Edition #1

Date of this Itinerary: February 20, 2012

Suggested Itinerary:

Day 1 – Friday, June 14: Depart for Rome

Check in for flights at to Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (transportation to the airport not provided by TRC). Our international flight departs for Europe this afternoon, with a connecting flight on to Rome. Dinner and entertainment provided in flight, with a light brunch provided before arrival. **Note:** For those wishing to depart earlier in the week and arrive in Rome prior to the rest of the group, TRC will assist you with the reservations for any early arriving nights in the hotel.

Day 2 – Saturday, June 15: Vatican City (D)

Flights arrive this mid-morning. We transfer together by private motorcoach to Vatican City where we have a guided tour of the Vatican Museums and St. Peter's Basilica. As part of the tour we will visit the Vatican courtyard which houses the famous Bronze World sculpture by the artist Pomodoro. We will continue inside the museum, passing through long corridors lined with relics and sculptures from the ancient world. One of the most interesting passages is the Map Room. The walls are lined with ancient Roman maps depicting regions of the empire. We eventually will enter the Sistine Chapel, with plenty of time to concentrate and reflect on Michelangelo's most famous painted work. As we exit the chapel, we walk through an interior passage that allows us to skip the line and enter St. Peter's Basilica for the remainder of our tour. We will see Michelangelo's sculpture of the *Pieta*, the altar designed by Bernini, and marvel at the height of the dome. After the tour we will have free time for lunch in the area. Transfer and check into our Rome city center hotel and relax before we have dinner together this evening at a local restaurant. Benvenuti in Italia!

Day 3 – Sunday, June 16: Rome (B)

This morning we have a **Service Participation** and **Brief Concert** to follow. Return to the hotel. After free time for lunch we have a guided tour of the Coliseum and Pantheon. Within the Coliseum our guide will lead us to several vantage points for taking photos, describing the scenes of gladiators, games and mock naval battles in the arena. We walk together past the Forum, passing several noted historic site on our way to the Pantheon. Built in the 1st century BC, the Pantheon today is a functioning church as well as the buried place of Italian royalty. It is a fascinating example of the efficiency and excellence of Roman engineering! Return to the hotel. Dinner on your own this evening.

Day 4 – Monday, June 17:**Assisi/Spoleto****(B)**

Check out of the hotel this morning. In our travels by bus in the city these past two days we will have seen some of the important sights from St. Paul's time in Rome, and we will visit the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls this morning to see his tomb. Depart for Umbria, two hours away, arriving into Assisi in time for lunch. Mid-afternoon we have a guided tour of the Basilica of St. Francis and the amazing frescoes of the Upper and Lower Basilica. We will see how over the course of two centuries, the human and sacred figures depicted in the frescoes change dramatically, leading the way for masterworks of the Italian Renaissance. After the tour we will continue on to Spoleto, checking into the 17th century Spoleto Convent. Through the centuries this historic building has had several purposes: 1) a monastery, baking bread for all of the other monasteries and convents in the city 2) a school, lead by the Sisters of Clare 3) a daycare center, staffed by young sisters from around the world and 4) a welcome home for pilgrims and musicians visiting Umbria. In the past 15 years the convent has undergone extensive renovations, converting former classrooms into en suite apartments and rooms. It is not a hotel. There are no telephones in the rooms, or televisions or computers. However, the beds are comfortable, the ancient thick walls keeping out the day's heat, and over the past decade our traveler feedback tells us that the stay in the convent was their favorite of the tour. Since the convent is located within the inner walls of the old city, it is short walk to numerous restaurants. Enjoy dinner on your own this evening, and if the opportunity presents itself, try the Umbrian truffles!

Day 5 – Tuesday, June 18:**Spoleto/Norcia****(B)**

Tuesday is market day in Spoleto, so enjoy the chance this morning to buy local products, from truffles to pottery. An optional informal tour today will be offered, walking up to see the 4th century Roman Aqueduct, views of the Fortress (once the home of the unstable Borgia family), and finishing with a visit inside the 13th century Spoleto Duomo. In the rear of the Duomo is another famous work of art, Lippi's triptych on the life of Mary. The tour will finish back at the market square, with its wide variety of restaurants, a vendor selling freshly roasted pork sandwiches, and the best pizzeria in town (they say the secret to the crunch crust is the use of sunflower oil in making the dough!). Return on your own to the Convent. In the late afternoon we have an excursion to nearby Norcia, and the fantastic acoustic of the Basilica of San Benedetto. St. Benedict founded the Benedictine religious order here in 563 AD. Committed to a strict regimen of Gregorian chant, prayer, work and periods of silence throughout the day, the Basilica today is staffed by young monks from North America that are keeping the tradition alive. We will have our acoustical rehearsal in the late afternoon, after which some of you may choose to attend the Vespers service, chanted by the monks in the Basilica's crypt. Please note that incense will be used, so those who may find the smoke to intense may attend the service in the sanctuary of the Basilica upstairs, as the chanting of the monks reverberates throughout the building. We then present our **Evening Concert** in the Basilica, with dinner provided after the concert in one of Umbria's best known restaurants, the Blue Grotto. Return to Spoleto.

Day 6 – Wednesday, June 19:**Siena/Wine Tasting/Florence****(B, D)**

Check out of the Convent after breakfast and we depart by bus for Siena (approximately 2 hours). We walk into the city together with an informal stop at the Duomo and Piazza Del Campo before have several hours free to shop and explore. A traditional rival of Florence, Siena was in the midst of a massive expansion of its Duomo when the Plague arrived, putting a halt to the construction and leaving behind some quirky architecture! In addition to being the home of the world's oldest continuously functioning bank (Monte dei Paschi), the city celebrates its ancient traditions with the running of two pageantry-filled horse races each summer, called the Palio. The Piazza is converted into a type of racetrack, and the winning Siena neighborhood (called contradas) gets to hold the bragging rights until it is time once again to break out the medieval costumes and start the colorful parade for the next Palio! There are museums in each contrada that document the neighborhood's past glory, and they are well worth a visit on your own. We return to the bus in the mid-afternoon, and we have a Tuscan wine tasting and vineyard tour before driving on to Florence. Check into the hotel and dinner provided this evening.

Day 7 – Thursday, June 20: Florence (B)

This morning we have a guided tour of Florence, including a visit to the Accademia (home to Michelangelo's statue *David*), the Duomo and Piazza Signoria. Within the Accademia there are several treasures to see, including a fantastic collection of musical instruments and the series of sculptures by Michelangelo known as *The Prisoners*. Of course, the star is the *David*, for centuries the symbol of the Medici family and of Florence. The tour will continue on to the Duomo, with Brunelleschi's famous dome. We also see the Baptistery in the piazza, and we will have a chance to see Ghilberti's bronze doors depicting the early life of Jesus. We continue the tour to Piazza Signoria, center of political power and the home of the 13th century Palazzo Vecchio. The tour will end here, and nearby is the Uffizi Gallery. It is possible to get a ticket and visit today, as the summer hours on Thursday offers a closing late in the evening. The afternoon and evening are free for you to explore Florence on your own. We recommend those interested in jewelry to visit the Ponte Vecchio, and there is always a bargain to be found in the San Lorenzo Market! Enjoy the rest of the day and evening! For the steak lovers among you, consider Bistecca Fiorentina, a two inch thick steak roasted on an open fire and flavored with rosemary and salt. By tradition the cut of meat comes from one breed of cattle, the Chianina. The meal is intended to be shared by at least two, but a larger cut of steak is often the most succulent and can serve four or more!

Day 8 – Friday, June 21: Florence/Lucca (B, D)

Breakfast and free time to explore Florence. After lunch this afternoon we transfer to Lucca for some free time to explore. Lucca is a medieval walled city, and it is possible to walk upon the city walls. Also a rival of Florence, Lucca was the center of the silk industry in the Middle Ages, and grew wealthy because of it. We recommend you have a snack while in Lucca, as dinner will be provided after the concert. Popular throughout Italy and particularly delicious while in season, it will be possible to find fried zucchini flowers on the menus here – a real treat! Next we transfer up into the Tuscan hills to the small village of Camigliano, the birthplace of Giacomo Puccini. We share a **Concert**, hosted by the Coro Puccini. The local choir will sing a few pieces at the beginning of the program, and we will present the remainder. The serious fun begins after the concert, as our hosts offer us a sumptuous home-cooked dinner.

Day 9 – Saturday, June 22: Venice (B)

We transfer to Venice, stopping for lunch en route. We transfer by waterbus to the Don Orione Artiginelli hotel, checking in mid-afternoon. Don Orione was a priest who dedicated his life to helping orphaned boys learn a skilled trade (as in artisans, or in Italian, *artiginelli*). The former orphanage has been completely refurbished into a modern, air-conditioned, perfectly located hotel with a great breakfast. We have an orientation meeting in the lobby, as we discuss how to navigate in Venice and understand the advantages of our location near the Accademia Art Museum. We encourage you to use the remainder of the afternoon and evening to explore with our 24 hour waterbus pass we have included. Dinner independent this evening.

Day 10 – Sunday, June 23: Venice (B, D)

The waterbus pass is for you to explore the canals of Venice on your own, but it also covers excursions to the Murano and Burano Islands or to the beaches of the Lido. Venice is famous for its blown glass, but in the Middle Ages the furnaces kept setting the city on fire; as a solution all furnaces were removed from the city and banished to the island of Murano. There are numerous factories and showrooms on the island if you are interested in the making of glass. Burano Island is famous for its lace-making. The Lido offers excellent public beaches and changing facilities. Return to the hotel in early evening to change into your concert clothes. This evening we have our **Final Concert** in Venice sponsored by the local choral association. After the concert we have a Farewell Banquet together in Venice. Return to the hotel and pack for tomorrow's departure.

Day 11 – Monday, June 24: Home

Check out of the hotel, load the private launch and transfer to the airport. Check in for our return flights to Dallas, arriving in the late afternoon. Welcome Home!

