
IRELAND: THE WEXFORD FESTIVAL & DUBLIN

Prize-Winning Opera House (Vivaldi, Rossini, Massenet)

Sunday, October 27th through Monday, November 4th



Wexford harbour



"In Wexford, Ireland has long been blessed with one of the greatest – and friendliest – of all opera festivals."

Opera, March '18

"In the past decade, Wexford Festival Opera has attained a remarkably high level of performance, and the quality of the obscure operas has been very high, too... Of all the international festivals I have attended, this is the warmest, most welcoming, and the one that provides the greatest sense of discovery."

Brian Kellow, Features Editor, Opera News

David Agler (Artistic Director) is doing something right. Since his arrival, I have found the general artistic level at Wexford higher than it had been in many seasons."

Opera News

"Fortunately at the Abbey Theatre there is no conflict between being true to tradition and being innovative. The Abbey's tradition is to be bothersome, passionate, argumentative, adventurous and, at times, downright contrary – the tradition, in other words, of the theatre itself. In continuing to live up to that tradition, the Abbey will continue to have a lot to show a changing world."

The Abbey Theatre

"The Gate Theatre has been, artistically and architecturally, a landmark building for over 250 years... The Gate continues to represent Ireland at the very highest level of artistic endeavor, receiving numerous invitations each year to major festivals on every continent."

The Gate Theatre

The catalyst for our annual fall visits to Ireland is the exhilarating **Wexford Festival Opera**. Our Tour members have been unanimous in their praise of the new **Wexford Opera House**, which opened in 2008. This widely heralded event earned a number of prestigious awards – including the Royal Institute of British Architects European Award, the Irish Times Theatre Award, the Bank of Ireland's

foremost Architecture Award, and the 'Best Cultural Building Award' of Ireland's Royal Institute of Architects. Now we are strongly encouraging opera enthusiasts to discover the astonishing acoustic, the comfortable seats (in marked contrast to the

restricted leg room of the 'old house'), and the aesthetic design of this intimate jewel of an opera house. The discerning Wall Street Journal's review of last season dubbed Wexford's festival "one of Ireland's greatest cultural destinations" and "one of Europe's key international music events".

Wexford has traditionally attracted opera 'aficionados' searching for the thrill of adventurous repertoire rather than another 'Bohème' 'Traviata' or 'Carmen'. For the 2019 season, however, **the operas are from the pen of several mainstream composers**, albeit their relatively unfamiliar works. In chronological order, we will enjoy Antonio Vivaldi's 18th century rarity, **Dorilla in Tempe**; Gioacchino Rossini's 19th century 'bel canto' comedy, **Adina**, on a double-bill with Irish composer Andrew Synnott's **La Cucina**; and Jules Massenet's early 20th century French opera, **Don Quichotte**.

The combination of Vivaldi, Rossini and Massenet promises to be melodically friendly for opera enthusiasts who have not previously chosen Wexford's unknown rarities.

The Wexford Festival has achieved the deserved reputation of being Ireland's most prestigious musical event. Set in the small and hospitable fishing village of Wexford on the southeast coast of Ireland, the Festival has specialized in offering three imaginative new productions every fall since 1951. The noted British writer Bernard Levin chose Wexford as his favorite European Festival in his *Conducted Tour*, reflecting the combination of the luxuriant Irish countryside, the welcoming attitudes of the open-hearted local population and everyone connected with the Festival, and the high standards of operatic presentations.

We will attend all three of the 2019 *new productions* as well as **two Lunchtime Recitals** showcasing the Festival's young operatic talents. These Recitals add an intimate element to the Festival and are held in Wexford's St. Iberius Church in the center of town. *All of our tickets are confirmed.*

Our emphasis in Wexford is on the Festival's busy program and on relaxed dining in the area's inviting coastal restaurants, rather than on museums and other institutions. An excursion to a nearby seafood restaurant in an unspoiled village has always added immeasurably to the informal camaraderie which continues to attract Mainopera-lovers to our Irish Tours.



Main street, Wexford



The Lobster Pot restaurant

ances at the Abbey and the Gate during all of our recent Irish Tours.

Sunday, October 27th, departure from New York's Kennedy Airport at 10:10 pm on Aer Lingus flight 108, arriving at Dublin Airport at 8:25 am on the morning of the 28th. (Or independent travel). **IMPORTANT: Our bus will meet this flight** and transfer you directly to Wexford, about two hours from the airport. For later independent arrivals, your transfer to Wexford must be by independent taxi (*expensive*) or by train from the center of Dublin (*reasonable*)

WEXFORD: OCTOBER 28TH – 31ST

Accommodations for **four nights** with **full Irish breakfast** included at Wexford's **Talbot's Hotel**, for many years the leading traditional hotel in Wexford. Talbot's friendly staff is always solicitous for the comfort of our travelers. Conveniently located on the waterfront and about a ten-minute walk from the Theatre Royal opera house, Talbot's is always our first choice. The main restaurant (**The Oyster Lane**) serves hearty Irish menus before and after the operas, and afternoon tea/coffee is available every day in the **Ballast Bank Bar** as well as the lobby. For health enthusiasts, an upscale fitness center and swimming pool are easily accessible in the adjoining building. Talbot's is also the site of the annual **Wexford Antiques Fair**, which this writer enjoys browsing through for unusual bargains. *The hotel offers complimentary round-trip shuttle service to the opera each evening.*

Monday evening, October 28th, a genial **dinner** is planned to meet other members of the Tour. Our party will be in a quiet area of the hotel's main dining room. (*No performance this evening. Today is a Bank Holiday, when you can quietly recover from jet lag at Talbot's.*)

On Tuesday, October 29th, a morning **walking tour** along the shops and cafés of the High Street will introduce you to the history and charm of central Wexford. The new **Wexford Opera House** has risen in the same location as the Festival's old Theatre Royal, and it has immediately become the primary focus of the area. After passing the facades and towers of the town's several leading churches, we will conclude our walk with a brief **welcome to the new opera house** (depending on the company's rehearsal schedules).

At 1:05 pm on Tuesday, the centrally located **St. Iberius Church** is our venue for one of the Festival's **Lunchtime Recitals**. This popular series of one-hour concerts provides an opportunity to hear the visiting young stars of the operas in solo performances in an intimate and historic setting. The Recitals are always sold out far in advance.

At 8:00 pm Tuesday evening, our first opera in the prize-winning **Wexford Opera House** will be the *new production* of Jules Massenet's **Don Quichotte**. Premiered in Monte Carlo in 2010 but not often encountered today, 'Don Quichotte' is a charming lyrical work based on the picaresque adventures of Cervantes' literary Spanish hero. "Massenet threw himself into the composition of this opera with inspired abandon and created a loving portrait of a tattered idealist who is either a fool or a saint... He turned the legendary knight into one of the great bass roles in all of opera." (*Washington Opera*). On recent Tours to Chicago and Toronto, our travelers have been delighted to discover Massenet's sensitive portrait of Cervantes' unforgettable knight-errant. *Sung in French with English surtitles.*

All Wexford casts and production credits TBA.

Wednesday and Thursday mornings are left free for you to shop for Irish woolens and antiques in Wexford, and to enjoy the friendly atmosphere of the town. Talbot's Hotel is also the chosen site of annual **Arts & Crafts Exhibition** just behind the main lobby and throughout the first-floor corridors. Nearby Wexford are **Johnstowne Castle** with an extensive park ideal for walking through autumn foliage; and the **National Heritage Village** for an introduction to the anthropological history of Ireland.

On Wednesday, October 30th, a **lunch** of local seafood is arranged at **The Lobster Pot** in the village of Carne, about three quarters of an hour south of Wexford. Carne is a peaceful town with rolling sand dunes on the southern coast of Ireland, off the beaten track of most tourists. No visit to Wexford is complete without experiencing the Irish hospitality of this warm-hearted, intimate restaurant. The fresh seafood attracts discerning travelers who invariably rave about the imaginative Festival Menus.

At 8:00 pm on Wednesday evening, we will return to the **Wexford Opera House** for the *new production* of Antonio Vivaldi's **Dorilla in Tempe**. First performed in Venice in 1726, this florid melodic work is set to a plot which mixes heroic and pastoral elements, with an important element of choral and ballet music. The God Apollo disguises himself as a shepherd and fall in love with Dorilla, daughter of Thessalonia's King Admeto. In the final 'dénouement', Apollo reveals himself and unites Dorilla with her true love Elmiro (another shepherd, sung by a 'trouser' soprano), thereby saving her from being sacrificed by her father as an offering to a sea-serpent. (*A typical Baroque convolusion of events!*) *Sung in Italian with English surtitles. Quotes from Wexford Festival.*

Thursday afternoon, October 31st, the second of our 1:05 pm **Lunchtime Recitals** will feature the Festival's young artists).

Thursday evening at 8:00 pm, our final performance in the **Wexford Opera House** will be a double-bill of Gioacchino Rossini's **Adina** and Andrew Synnott's **La Cucina**. 'Adina' is a one-act comedy, premiered in Naples in 1826, with 'bel canto' arias for the young slave-girl Adina, her suitor the Caliph of Baghdad, his servant Mustafà (a buffo bass), and her lover Selimo. "The score is notable for the tender, elaborate music for Adina, the crystal-clear orchestration, and for a mood which is prevaillingly sad." (*New Grove Dictionary of Opera*). This will be a co-production with the prestigious Rossini Festival in Pesaro. 'La Cucina' ('The Kitchen') will be the world premiere of a newly commissioned opera by Ireland's contemporary composer who has recently been named Wexford's Music Director. We look forward to a surprise with Mr. Synnott's one-act opera this evening – **La Cucina ('The Kitchen')**— a one-act farce. The composer hails from Dublin and has already achieved notable success with two short operas based on James Joyce's *Dubliners* which were unveiled at Wexford in 2017. *Both works sung in Italian with English surtitles.*

On Friday morning, November 1st, our private bus will transfer us from Wexford directly to Buswells Hotel in Dublin.

DUBLIN: NOVEMBER 1ST – 3RD

Accommodations for **three nights with full Irish breakfast** included at the old-world **Buswells Hotel**, a charming example of Georgian architecture. Located on a quiet block of elegant Molesworth Street, Buswells is a short walk from St. Stephen's Green, Trinity College, the many shops of Grafton Street. Buswells is across the street from the Irish Parliament and the National Museum, where masterpieces of early Celtic gold work are exhibited. A first-class, four-star rated facility, it offers every modern amenity as well as the **Emily Room** for leisurely breakfasts and the **Carvery Grill Room** for evening meals. There are a number of appealing local restaurants within a few minutes' walk.



Buswells Hotel lobby

Dublin offers exceptional value for linens and heavy wool sweaters, and a wealth of book stores which welcome leisurely browsing. The capital's unusual museums include the **Dublin Writers' Museum**, the **James Joyce Centre**, and the **National Leprechaun Museum**. **Dublin Castle** and **St. Patrick's Cathedral** are also open today. A few blocks from our hotel is the main quadrangle of **Trinity College** and the priceless, ancient **Book of Kells**. Also within walking distance is the imposing **National Gallery of Art**, where art enthusiasts should seek out Michelangelo Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ* as well as a unique Vermeer. The dramatic Baroque Caravaggio has attracted thousands of art-lovers since its recent discovery and was the subject of Jonathan Harr's best-seller, *The Lost Painting*.



Book of Kells
Trinity College



Friday evening, November 1st, we will attend a theatre performance at the **Abbey Theatre**, renowned as Dublin's leading classical company performing the works of such Irish playwrights as Yeats, Sean O'Casey and John Millington Synge. The Abbey also presents modern European productions which are frequently adventurous and controversial, such as 2017's stimulating musical based on a section of James Joyce's 'Ulysses'. *Program not yet available.*

On Saturday morning, November 2nd, our experienced Dublin guide has planned a creative morning of literary and architectural interest. A short walk along Nassau Street will take us to the James Joyce site of **Sweny's Pharmacy**, featured in his now-classic tome 'Ulysses' (with an opportunity to read aloud a passage from one of his ground-breaking novels). Continuing on to Merrion Square, we will pass the **Oscar Wilde Monument** paying tribute to his established position in Ireland's literary heritage, viewing the home of Sir William and Lady Wilde (Oscar's parents) at #1 Merrion Square. Another historical building at #82 was the former resident of the great Irish poet **William Butler Yeats**.

On Saturday evening, our performance will be at the **Gate Theatre**, Dublin's other major classical company besides the Abbey. The Gate has been acclaimed during the past few years for productions of Synge's 'The Playboy of the Western World', Molière's 'The Misanthrope', a stage adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's novel 'My Cousin Rachel', Arthur Miller's 'A View from the Bridge', and an inspired 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf' by Edward Albee. *Program not yet available.*

Sunday, November 3rd, is a final free day for independent activities. In the early evening, we will return to our favorite **Peplow's Wine Bistro** for another gourmet farewell dinner in a traditional Dublin mansion facing St. Stephen's Green.

Monday, November 4th, departure from Dublin Airport at 10:50 am on Aer Lingus flight 105, arriving at New York's Kennedy Airport at 1:40 pm. Or independent departure.



The Gate Theater

Ireland

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| Price per person: | |
| based on double occupancy | \$ 5,380 |
| Single room supplement | \$ 580 |

Airfare NOT included.

Air fare: Prices are subject to change depending on time of booking. Please contact our agent Linda Botros (see inside back cover) for current fares.