

MACERATA - JULY 2011

In July a group of members travelled to Italy to visit the Sferisterio Opera Festival in Macerata. Jessie Gibber was among this group and kindly agreed to write-up the visit for us. This is her report. Bryan Suitters.

The recent visit of The Music Club of London to Macerata turned out to be rather richer than just an opera festival. We were nine ladies in the care of Bryan Suitters, which was a recipe for a very good experience in spite of the capricious weather. The hotel was really excellent, set high in Recanati with glorious views over the delightful landscape, which was very green and luscious.



View from the Gallery Hotel, Recanati
(Photograph by Ann Archbold)

On the first day we had a group excursion to Ascoli Piceno, a city developed from a 9th century BC settlement and nowadays an important centre and capital of the Province, worthy of an extended visit in its own-right, full of exquisite buildings and interesting sites. Then we went on to Offida, a quiet town where the main industry was the making of bobbin lace. Sadly, we were rained off on the first night in the Sferisterio and we lost Rigoletto, but have since been reimbursed for our tickets! On the following day we amused ourselves discovering the town of Recanati and in the evening we enjoyed a delightful performance of *Così fan tutte* in the Teatro Lauro Rossi in Macerata.

One benefit of being a small group in a small bus was that we were able to enter the narrow medieval streets of Macerata by bus to arrive in the piazza just outside the theatre. Large coaches cannot do this and I well remember the quite arduous climb through steep streets from the coach park below the town. Macerata is an interesting medieval town and we all enjoyed being there.



Dinner at the Gallery Hotel, Recanati
(Photograph by Bryan Suitters)

The following day, after a very good dinner in our hotel in Recanati, we left for the performance of Un Ballo in Maschera at the Sferisterio. It wasn't raining and it wasn't cold either. The performance was very unusual, having been translated from its classical courtly period to present-day New York! There was a giant red Cadillac on stage and also a very dark drugs scene set in downtown New York during the performance. But the miracle was that it all worked very well in this new translation (well, it was new to me!) and we all enjoyed it.

One of the high spots during our stay in Recanati was the discovery of the Beniamino Gigli Museum, which we all managed to find independently. It was interesting to review his life story, which was enhanced by a short video, and to hear again his wonderful pure voice. We were moved to tears by his rendering of Cielo e Mar.

This was, as usual, a very well-organised tour and well-chosen hotel which was enjoyed by all of us. We were sorry to have missed Rigoletto but there was much which made up for that. Thank you, Bryan.

Jessie Gibber