



FONDAZIONE
MASCARADE
OPERA

THE FLORENCE CHORAL COURSE
30 JUNE - 7 JULY 2024



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Giardino Corsini al Prato

ABOUT

FLORENCE CHORAL COURSE

The **Florence Choral Course** is an intensive week of advanced choral training in the heart of the Italian Renaissance, Florence, Italy. Aspiring professional singers attend an immersive programme of rehearsals, workshops and individual vocal lessons, alongside tours and lectures in Italian Renaissance history, culminating in performances in some of Florence's most iconic buildings.

Based in the beautiful Palazzo Corsini al Prato, home of the prestigious **Fondazione Mascarade Opera**, singers learn the art of Italian polyphony, perfecting skills of ensemble musicianship, phrasing, pronunciation, historically informed performance, vocal production and choral technique. Alongside this, historians lead lectures in Renaissance history and musicology, supplemented with visits to famous historical monuments and archives.

ABOUT

FLORENCE CHORAL COURSE


The **Florence Choral Course** is led by professional singers whose experience includes the Papal Choir of the Sistine Chapel, international opera companies and world-leading vocal ensembles, as well as Masterclasses by major celebrated artists- which in previous years have included soprano and early music pioneer Dame Emma Kirkby, and Director of Milan Cathedral Choir, Maestro Massimo Palombella.

The Florence Choral Course is the **only course in the world devoted exclusively to the music of Italian Renaissance**.

As such it is a unique opportunity for aspiring singers to broaden their musical horizons and deepen their cultural understanding of this monumental repertoire.



Performance at Santissima Annunziata



*Motets by Josquin des Prez,
Milan Cathedral Archive*

WHOM IS THE COURSE FOR?

This course is open to anyone aged 18 or over as of the first day of the course (June 30, 2024) with a passion for choral singing, in particular:

- Those looking to enrich their university or choral scholarship applications.
- Aspiring professional singers who wish to improve their ensemble skills, Italian pronunciation, stylistic awareness and/or general musicianship.
- Those interested in the relationship between music and its history in Renaissance Italy - our course offers a rare opportunity not only to study and sing the music, but also to gain an insight into its wider historical context.

We welcome applications from singers from all over the world (last year's course included singers from twelve different countries).
Course language: English



WHAT DOES THE COURSE COST?

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, all participants will be offered a full scholarship; there is no fee charged to participants for the course.

However, please note that flights and accommodation are not included.

In concert, Palazzo Corsini al Prato

ABOUT

HOW DO I APPLY?

Please e-mail us at sacredmusic@mascaradeopera.com with the following information:

1. **Voice type:** soprano/cantus, alto, tenor or bass (please select only one).
2. **CV/bio:** an outline of your vocal and musical experience to date (approx 200 words).
3. **Personal statement:** tell us why you would like to be selected for this course and what you would hope to gain from the experience (approx 200 words).
4. **Referee:** the name and contact details of an appropriate referee (i.e. a music teacher or music professional with whom you have worked recently).
5. **Recording** or link to a youtube recording. Smartphone recording is acceptable.

APPLICATIONS CLOSE MAY 1ST

Successful applicants will be informed on, or shortly after, this date. Late applicants may be considered



Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence Cathedral



COURSE DIRECTOR

MARK SPYROPOULOS

Mark Spyropoulos read Music at Trinity College Dublin and then trained as a singer in London at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama under Laura Sarti and later at English National Opera. He has performed with several ensembles in London and France including with William Christie at the Opéra Royal de Versailles, Opera Holland Park, the Philharmonia Chorus and the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court. In 2015 he became the first British singer to join the Papal Choir of the Sistine Chapel. With the Sistine, Mark has recorded four albums with Deutsche Grammophon including several world-première recordings, winning the Echo Klassik Prize for Cantate Domino in 2015. He has toured extensively across Europe, South Korea, the USA and Canada, appearing as both a chorister and a soloist. Mark has also made several TV and radio appearances discussing choral music, including interviews on RAI, Sky Arts, CBS 60 Minutes, Fox News, BBC Breakfast, the BBC World Service and BBC Radio 3's 'In Tune'. He has lectured in London at the China Exchange and at Eton College in addition to contributing to articles for the Independent on Sunday, Early Music Today, The Tablet and The Guardian. In 2020 he starred in the BBC documentary Inside the Vatican.

In November 2018, Mark established the Sacred Music Programme with a mission to research the sacred choral music of Medici Florence. To facilitate this, he founded Vox Medicea, a bespoke choir of Renaissance specialists based in London. As Music Director of Vox Medicea, Mark has directed concerts in London and Florence, and an extended broadcast feature for the CBS Sunday Morning programme. In July 2022, he launched the Florence Choral Course, offering advanced choral training in Renaissance repertoire.

SENIOR VOCAL COACH

KRIS BELLIGH

Originally from Belgium, Kris studied at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London and the Royal Scottish Academy in Glasgow. Since making his debut as the Count Almaviva at the Longborough Festival, Kris performs regularly in Europe's leading opera houses and concert halls, including English National Opera, De Nederlandse Opera, Royal Opera La Monnaie, Opéra de Rennes, Opera de Rouen, Opera-Ballet Flanders, Palais des Beaux Arts Brussels and the Erkel Theatre Budapest. Recent appearances include three productions at the Royal Opera La Monnaie: *Eugene Onegin*, *The Nose*, and the world première of Howard Moody's new opera *Solar*; Hector Pàrra's opera *Les Bienveillantes* for Opera-Ballet Flanders; and a series of Bernstein Centenary concert performances of *West Side Story* with the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome conducted by Sir Antonio Pappano.

On the concert stage, Kris has worked with William Christie and Christophe Rousset in concert tours of Lully's *Armide* and Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie*, and toured Germany with Frieder Bernius and the Stuttgart Kammerchor performing the integral *Psalmen Davids* by Schütz and Penderecki. Other highlights include *Zatopek!*, an opera created for the London Olympics and BBC Radio 3, and a concert tour of new works written for him by Belgian composers with both the Malibrán String Quartet and Musiques Nouvelles.

This season Kris will sing Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Brussels Philharmonic and will be returning to Opera-Ballet Flanders in *Die Fledermaus*, and the world première of *Le Rapport de Brodeck* by Daan Janssens.

As a vocal coach and singing teacher, Kris is in high demand across Belgium and the Low Countries. He is also an affiliate of the Flemish Koor & Stem Choral Foundation and a senior vocal coach at the Louvain-La-Neuve University Summer School and the Florence Choral Course.





CHORAL TECHNIQUE

TOM HAMMOND-DAVIES

A leading specialist in choral conducting, Tom studied music at the University of Oxford before honing his skills under the tutelage of Paul Spicer at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Since then, he has gained global acclaim as one of the top choral conductors in the world.

In 2017, Tom founded the Oxford Bach Soloists (OBS) with the mission of performing the complete works of Johann Sebastian Bach chronologically and programmed in real-time. The ensemble aims to provide an authentic experience by emulating the original liturgical, ecclesiastical, instrumental, and choral settings of Bach's music. Under Tom's leadership, the baroque ensemble and singers have performed concerts that are celebrated worldwide, capturing the hearts of both seasoned and new Bach enthusiasts while nurturing the next generation of soloists.

Beyond OBS, Tom has appeared at the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall, the Three Choirs Festival, and the Oxford International Song Festival. His other roles include serving as a Trustee of the Sir George Dyson Trust, Director of Music at the City Church of St Michael at the North Gate, Oxford, and as a faculty member for the Oxford Cultural Leaders programme.

In September 2023, Tom was appointed Director of Music at Wadham College, Oxford. The college is known for its strong musical tradition, particularly through the Holywell Music Room, the oldest purpose-built concert hall in Europe, and Wadham's highly regarded chapel choir.

LAST YEAR'S COURSE TIMETABLE (2024 COURSE WILL BE ONE DAY LONGER)

July 10-16 - FLORENCE CHORAL COURSE TIMETABLE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday <i>Duomo di Milano</i>	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8.30	<p>1pm Rhys 1.30pm Jelena 2pm Martin</p> <p>WELCOME drinks and introductions</p> <p>FULL CHOIR First rehearsal</p> <p>Walking tour of Florence and gelato</p>	8.30 Cappuccino bar Sapienti					9.30 Cappuccino Piazza Santo Spirito
9.15		9.15 Vocal warm up – Kris Belligh		7.30am meet SMN 7.55-9.50am train (Firenze SMN-M. Centrale)			9.45am meet outside BASILICA DI SANTO SPIRITO
9.30		9.30 FULL CHOIR	9.30 FULL CHOIR				
10.00					10am Cappuccino bar Sapienti		
10.30					10.45am Vocal warm up		
11.00			break	break	11am FULL CHOIR	11am <i>What is Gregorian Chant?</i>	
11.30			CONSORTS	Consorts	11am MASTERCLASS Maestro Massimo Palombella	Break	10.30am HIGH MASS
12pm			lunch		short lunch	12.30pm <i>What is Church Music?</i>	
12.30					1pm lunch break	Break	12pm Arrivederci drinks and course ends
1.00			FULL CHOIR	lunch	2pm Tour of Milan Cathedral	2.30 <i>Where next? Group discussion</i>	
1.30					3.30pm change	Break	
2.00			break	2pm Tour of Florence Cathedral -Vanozza Corsini	4pm rehearsal in Crypt	4pm FULL CHOIR	
2.30			CONSORTS	break			
3.00			FULL CHOIR		5pm CONCERT 5.30pm SUNG MASS		5.15pm meet 6pm SUNG MASS – BASILICA SANTISSIMA ANNUNZIATA
4.00		Change and andiamo a..		8.10-10.04pm Train (M. Centrale-Firenze SMN)	7.30pm <i>in position</i>	Pizza	
4.30					8pm CONCERT PALAZZO CORSINI		
5.00							
5.30							
6.00		6.30pm Palazzo Tornabuoni Visit and short performance					
6.30							
7.00							
7.30							
8.00							



*Sung Mass at Santa Maria Novella, attended by
HRH Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands*

TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS

"I'm so happy to be here in this fantastic city. It is an intense week and a very special opportunity."
Kanae from Japan

"I've enjoyed every day that I've been here. It's been challenging, educational and I think my favourite part is learning to be a better musician."
Benjamin from USA

"People from all over the world and all different sorts of backgrounds, everyone involved with this project is so passionate, so hard-working and most importantly so kind to share their expertise and experience."
Frankie from England

"Such an enjoyable experience, I would definitely recommend it!"
Flora from Scotland



CONTACT

For further information please contact

SACREDMUSIC@MASCARADEOPERA.COM