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BACK-TO-SCHOOL



Catholic Travel

MUSIC IN PARISIAN CHURCHES IS NOURISHMENT FOR THE SOUL



The stained glass windows, sculptures and towering arches in Sainte-Chapelle provide an inspirational setting for a classical concert

Notre Dame and many of Paris's renowned cathedrals are settings for musical rehearsals, recitals and concerts throughout the year

Photos by Aaron Leventhal

BY AARON LEVENTHAL

Paris is universally acclaimed as the world's most beautiful and cosmopolitan city. Its classical architecture, broad boulevards, sidewalk cafes, fashionable boutiques, exquisite gardens and public squares, art galleries, museums, and icons such as the Eiffel Tower and Arc de Triomphe are legendary. However, it's Paris's color-

ful, historic neighborhoods that have kept me returning to the "City of Light" for more than three decades.

My wife, Beth, and I had the good fortune to discover a "Paris Walks" brochure in the lobby of the Hotel du Vieux Marais (www.vieuxmarais.com) when we checked into the economical boutique hotel in the heart of Le Marais, Paris's most

lively historic quarter. The company offered two daily walking tours led by professional, English-speaking guides through many of Paris's most fabled neighborhoods.

"Paris Walks" was founded in 1994 by Peter and Oriol Caine, an English couple from Cornwall. They fell in love with Paris and decided to introduce visitors to the history, architecture, major

sights, and off-the-beaten-track neighborhood landmarks in an informative and often humorous manner. All of the walks last about two hours, cost 12 euros (about \$20), require no reservations and usually attract groups of 15 to 20 persons. The guides meet you at the neighborhood Metro entrance, where all tours begin at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., rain or shine, every day of the year.

etted performances are economically priced from \$10 to \$45.

If one can experience a glimpse of heaven here on earth, it might be through listening to extraordinary selections from classical to contemporary music in these acoustically perfect settings, surrounded by brilliant stained glass windows, inspirational sculptures, and soaring Gothic arches.

For example, during our visit in May, Beth and I had an opportunity to experience an homage to Joseph Haydn, part of a regular classical musical series at Eglise Saint-Merry. The program consisted of selections performed by three accomplished pianists. The tickets were priced at 15 euros (about \$22). Flyers and posters all over the city publicized concerts at many of Paris's most famed cathedrals, including Notre Dame, Sacre Coeur and Sainte-Chapelle.

If you go:

- Renowned organ virtuoso Daniel Roth performs every Sunday after the 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass at Eglise Saint-Sulpice. He carries on a 200-year tradition of playing the 6,600 grand pipe organ with 110

PARIS, *continued from Page 5*

stops (wooden knobs that turn the pipes on and off). The organ is reputed to be one of the best in the world. www.danielrothsaintsulpice.org.

- Eglise Saint-Eustache has free organ concerts every Sunday at 5:30 p.m., often performed by noted organist Jean Guillou.

- Eglise Saint-Merry offers free concerts every Saturday at 9 p.m. and Sundays at 4 p.m. Music ranges from classical and baroque to gospel.

- Festival Musique en l'Ile. The annual summer church music festival runs through September at Saint-Lou-

is-en-l-Ile and Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Featured guest ensembles and choirs from around the world play early and baroque sacred music from different religious traditions such as gospel and Gregorian chants. (Tickets range from about \$35 to \$50.)

For more information and concert schedules, log on to www.ampcconcerts.com.

Catholic Times welcomes the return of Columbus-based travel writer Aaron Leventhal, a frequent contributor to these pages in the 1980s. Leventhal is editor and publisher of High Street Neighborhoods, www.HighStreetGuide.net.