

musicissimo

French Fantasia

When Jane Rutter is not touring Australia, she is enlivening the Parisian salon scene, writes **Ruby Boubakou**.



Jane Rutter beside the Seine in Paris.

It's just before dusk and we're gathered in La Sainte Chapelle, a 13th-century Gothic chapel in Palais de la Cite in the centre of Paris, between Chatelet and St Michel. Blue-bejewelled stained-glass windows and exquisitely breathy high ceilings encourage us to exhale and relax. An angelic figure appears with thick blonde curls. She is side lit creating a halo and dons a full-length oyster-hued satin gown, art deco shimmering silver shawl over one shoulder ... and a gold flute.

Fifteen minutes of blissful, harmonic and comforting Baroque music ensue and taste of pure freshness. The angel opens her mouth and cracks a joke in French – then in Australian. “I share a birthday with Marie Antoinette. She worshipped here before she was carted off – I'm not planning the same destination.”

Australian flautist superstar Jane Rutter flashes a cheeky grin and resumes her pure demeanour breathing into Vivaldi's *Concerto in G Minor*, beautifully accompanied on harpsichord by Catherine Lenert and Marc Olivier De Nattes on violin.

“I'd only rehearsed with them for a couple of hours on Sunday,” confides Rutter over a mint tea at Follies café in Belleville the next morning “but it's part of the job.” The only moment we could have noticed this was a tiny false start from the violinist half way through the concert at the beginning of a piece. The playful Frenchman jumped in with a ‘c'est ma fault!’ (‘it's my fault’). Rutter, although faultless, politely mentioned jetlag and we all laughed and warmed more to the charismatic performance and fine rendition, appreciating the subtle theatrics and listening even more intently. Not that we weren't paying attention. If anything, the jetlag must have added to the angelic glow and captivating sounds.

I met Jane Rutter last summer in Sydney with the chance of collaborating in a cabaret show, but while I saw that she pulled off the whole vaudevillian-star cameo role brilliantly, I was too busy with the production to actually listen.

Sitting in the Gothic church in Paris, I fell into a trance





Rutter performs in Paris.

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in a state of meditative freedom along with the rest of the audience. Within an addictively jazz-soaked Paris, I'd almost forgotten classical music existed and a fresh sweetness overtook me.

“Now I will play *Fantasia in A Major* by Telemann – a Baroque fantasy gives the player the ability to play with rhythmic integrity – but with flexibility using *ritardandi* and *accelerandi* ‘almost as if you are improvising.’ ” And the angel turns into a bird and the sounds of freedom, fun, flight and indeed fantasy encompass us.

Having trained under Jean-Pierre Rampal and Alain Marion, she plays ‘Bel canto’ in French-style meaning the instrumentalist imagines he or she is singing through the instrument.

To suit the Gothic venue, Rutter is asked to play a program titled *Les Plus Belles Sonates Baroques* with works by Vivaldi, Telemann, Corelli, Couperin and Bach, including Vivaldi's *La Follia* and Concerto in G Minor, Bach's *Trio Sonata in G major* and Couperin's *Le Rossignol en Amour (The Nightingale in Love)*.

When Rutter lived and studied flute in Paris (the subject of her show *An Australian in Paris*), her world-renowned flute teachers gave recitals in the chapel. “It was a lifelong dream to follow in the paths of my teachers and play there. Four years ago it happened,” she says.

Rutter has been invited back regularly since and plans to share her time between Australia and Europe. She is

negotiating an extended season in Europe and will teach a summer flute school in the south of France.

But I still want to know why the music I heard in the chapel resonated so powerfully. “There is a very pleasing harmonic integrity with Baroque music,” Rutter explains. “This harmonic structure takes the listener on a narrative journey. There are surprising steps but also the music takes you where you want to go. In this day and age, fine music is a hidden language that speaks to people on an entirely different level than spoken (language).”

“With so much conflict in the world, people long for a type of resolution that comes from another place, another world. The ‘hidden’ world of music is one that most people understand. Fine music keeps the emotional portholes open. When we are exposed to music that is played in a way that is communicative and generous, it is refreshing as it reminds us of the best of who we are.”

Rutter’s latest album *French Kiss*, takes the listener deep inside the passionate world of the Parisian salons: seductive melodies by Fauré, Saint-Säens, Massenet, Chopin and Debussy, with exotic fragrances of the East and the light-hearted tease of cabaret.

“I called the album *French Kiss* because the title implies not only a sensual lovers’ kiss but also has connotations of the French way of kissing on either cheeks,” she says. “It’s very inclusive. In my playing I like to gather everyone up and draw them in, to include them in the musical journey.”

French Kiss can be ordered online at shop.abc.net.au/products.

Rutter’s Australian performances in 2014 include:

- Newcastle, Friday, January 17 at 8:30pm.
 - Tasmania, Friday, February 14 at 7pm.
 - Gippsland, Victoria, Opera By The Lake, Sunday, March 23 at 1pm.
 - Chatswood, NSW, Saturday, May 3 at 7pm
 - Chatswood, NSW, Sunday, May, 2014 at 2:00pm
- See janerutter.com.



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