



Ambassador's Activities

2011

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Speech given by HE *M. Bernard Emié*,
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom

On the occasion of the Reception - Recital
“Les Troyens”

Thursday, 15 September 2011

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

It is with the greatest pleasure that my wife and I welcome you to the French Residence for this special evening in support of the 2012 production of 'Les Troyens' at the Royal Opera House.

Over the years this building has hosted many memorable events.

You are, in fact, sitting in what was, up until the 1840s, the kitchen garden of Kensington Palace. No. 11 was built in the 1850s and was designed by the architect Sydney Smirke, whose brother was the architect of the British Museum.

The building was used during the Second World War by the RAF balloon unit and as a gentleman's dining club for the Free French and the Royal Air Force. The French Embassy took over the lease in 1947 – in hindsight a good move, providing us with an opportunity to present events such as this.

The epic opera 'Les Troyens' will be performed next June and July, coinciding with the year of the London Olympics – something of a marathon itself!

We are delighted to have in attendance several of those involved with the production, who will shortly give you an overview of the design and concept of the opera: Elaine Padmore, the outgoing Director of Opera, and her successor, Kasper Holten. Also, Es Devlin, set designer for the production, who will introduce the concept for David McVicar's staging.

However, no such opera could take place without a vast cast of chorus and leading artists. It is an absolute treat that we will be regaled by two arias from 'Les Troyens', performed tonight by the wonderful Eva-Maria Westbroek and accompanied by David Syrus, Head of Music at the Royal Opera.

I wish the Royal Opera every success with 'Les Troyens'.