

**Client:** Gallery Hotel Art  
**Source:** The Telegraph Magazine  
**Date:** 4 May 2019



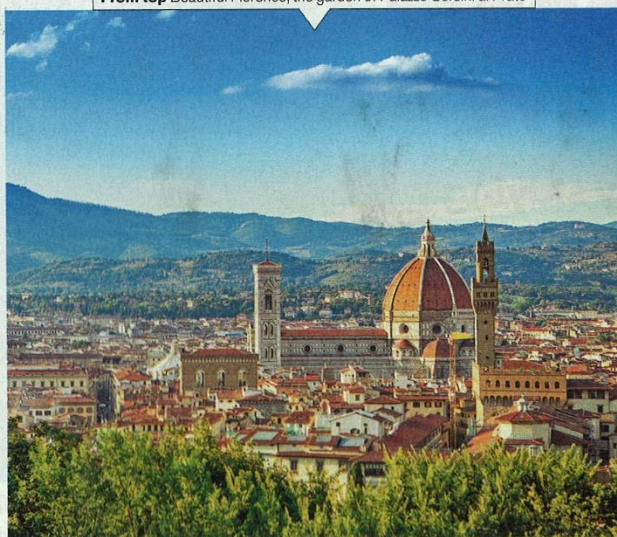


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## The Cut // Travel

Benjamin  
Secher

From top Beautiful Florence; the garden of Palazzo Corsini al Prato



# Tuscan fun

New talent shines in a festival set amid Florence's Renaissance splendours

IT'S THE LAST WEEKEND in August, and in the centuries-old gardens of the Palazzo Corsini al Prato in Florence a statuesque Englishwoman hands her companion a glass of pink prosecco, taps his panama and, smiling, says, 'Now you can stop being a miserable sod.'

Nearby, a father in a red velvet jacket weaves a Bugaboo containing a screaming child between the fairy-lit citrus trees. And an elderly lady with a cut-glass accent, who might have escaped from the pages of EM Forster, leans over to the young man in seersucker beside her to promise, 'I can introduce you to all sorts of nice young girls.'

Corks pop, glasses clink and, from a temporary 500-seat amphitheatre constructed around the palace's loggia, drifts the sound of an orchestra tuning their instruments. It's like a Martin Parr photograph of the upper classes at leisure, come to life.

Yet if the crowd, here for the second

annual New Generation Festival, represents both youth and seniority – Maximilian Fane, one of the event's three young founders, will later tell me that the audience spanned a 90-year age range – every one of the creative team, from the cast of that evening's spirited production of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, to the 70-strong orchestra that accompanies the action with William Walton's score (composed for the 1944 Laurence Olivier film), is under 35.

Established in collaboration with the resident Corsini family – a Florentine clan whose Tuscan vineyards supply the superior chianti served in the interval, alongside a pasta supper – New Generation aims to provide through its programme of opera, theatre and concerts what 25-year-old Fane describes as 'world-class opportunities to up-and-coming performers'. If occasionally the spirit of youthful adventure brings with it a hint of amateurism,

more often – as in the following night's rousing *Don Giovanni* – it translates into the thrilling sensation of witnessing a new generation of stars being born.

The festival takes place over four nights, leaving ticket holders free during the day to make the most of this city's charms. Florence at the end of August swarms with tourists – queues for the Uffizi gallery stretch out like spaghetti; locals make a beeline for the beach – but there are still many opportunities for a transporting encounter with great art, or a life-affirming lunch.

From our comfortable base in the central Gallery Hotel Art, we headed to the tranquil Bargello museum for an audience with Donatello's bronze *David* (c. 1440s) which, notwithstanding helmet and boots, is said to be the first free-standing male nude created since antiquity. Alone in the cool hush of Santa Felicita church, we spent a magical moment in the presence of Pontormo's candy-coloured *Deposition* altarpiece, painted half a millenium ago.

Then, when a downpour struck, we ducked into the unflashy 1960s interior of Ristorante Cafaggi, a proper trattoria all but untouched by the tourist hordes, for zinging *spaghetti alle sarde* and a bowl of *peposo*, a dense beef stew.

Back at the Palazzo Corsini that night, as Mozart's playboy was hauled, singing, to hell, and bats swooped oblivious overhead, I glanced around me at the flamboyant outfits and rapt faces of this idiosyncratic crowd. There was not one miserable sod among them.



### THE DETAILS

The 2019 New Generation Festival will take place on 28-31 August, at the Palazzo Corsini al Prato, Florence ([newgenerationfestival.org](http://newgenerationfestival.org)). Benjamin Secher was a guest of the Gallery Hotel Art, which has double rooms from £185 per night ([lungarnocollection.com/gallery-hotel-art](http://lungarnocollection.com/gallery-hotel-art))

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