

Q & A

THE BUCKET LIST

Tony Bennett's haunts in London and New York. By *Holly Rubenstein*



Tony would like to visit India to find inspiration for his paintings

What's at the top of your bucket list? Although I have toured in almost every country in the world, I have never been to India. I have always had it in my mind that it would be such a spectacular setting for a concert. And, as a painter, I know that the vibrancy of colour and light would be endlessly inspiring.

You've toured the world many times over. Where was most memorable? London – and I say this not because I am going to be performing at the Royal Albert Hall this month (June), but because the British public have been so good to me ever since I first came to England in the 1950s. It's a second home to me when I perform there and I am thrilled at the age of 92 still to be able to travel and sing for my fans in England.



Tony performs at the Royal Albert Hall this month



Honeymooning at Belmond Hotel Splendido

HAPPIEST HOLIDAY?

Shortly before I perform in London, I will be celebrating my 12th wedding anniversary with my wife Susan. One of my favourite and happiest holidays was our honeymoon trip. We stayed in Saint-Paul de Vence in France and then in Italy just outside of Florence, along with a few days in Portofino at the Hotel Splendido. It was a perfect trip.



The Ritz

Favourite hotel? That's a tough one but I have to say The Ritz in London. I have a favourite suite, the staff and service are fantastic and it's close to the Royal Academy, which I like to visit.

Hidden gem? I am a self-proclaimed museum junkie and my home city of New York is filled with world-famous museums. But there is a not so well-known art destination called the Hispanic Society Museum and Library on 155th Street in Manhattan, which is a beautiful place to visit, especially if you are a fan of the Spanish artist Sorolla – which I am.

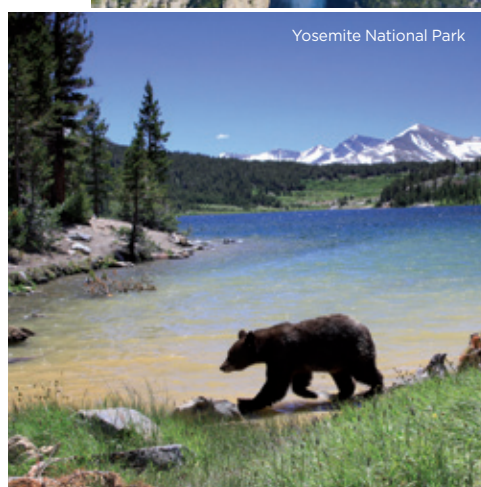
Where do you always eat well? One of my favourite Italian restaurants is just a few blocks from where I grew up in Astoria, New York, where we founded the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts. It's called Piccola Venezia and whenever I go in they just bring me whatever they have cooking. My favourite three foods are pasta, pasta and pasta – but luckily my wonderful wife Susan makes sure I don't overdo it and stay in shape. In London, I happen to love Harry's Bar (who doesn't?) and The Wolseley.



When you need to unwind, where do you escape to? I don't have to go far as I have an art studio in my NYC apartment. Being both a performer and a painter has been a beautiful yin-yang relationship that has enabled me to never get burned out. As a singer, being on stage is a very gregarious endeavour. Painting is the exact opposite as it's just myself and a blank canvas.



Merced River, Yosemite



Yosemite National Park

If you had to recommend one place for us to visit, which would it be? If you are coming to the US then it would have to be any of our national parks: Yellowstone, Yosemite, or the Grand Canyon. There is nothing like the views from these locations and I have said it often but it's true – nature never disappoints.

Where have you learned something new about yourself?

During the making of *Duets II* album, I was in Pisa to record with Andrea Bocelli and took a side trip to Podargoni, where my family is from. I sang *O Sole Mio* on the same hill that my father did, overlooking the town. It was a very powerful experience.



Reconnecting to his Italian roots on a trip to record in Pisa with Bocelli

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COUNTRY OR TOWN HOUSE? TOWN HOUSE.
I WALK OUT OF MY APARTMENT AND HAVE ALL THE RESTAURANTS, JAZZ CLUBS AND MUSEUMS JUST A FEW BLOCKS AWAY IN ANY DIRECTION.

Tony Bennett is performing at The Royal Albert Hall on 28 and 29 June. royalalberthall.com