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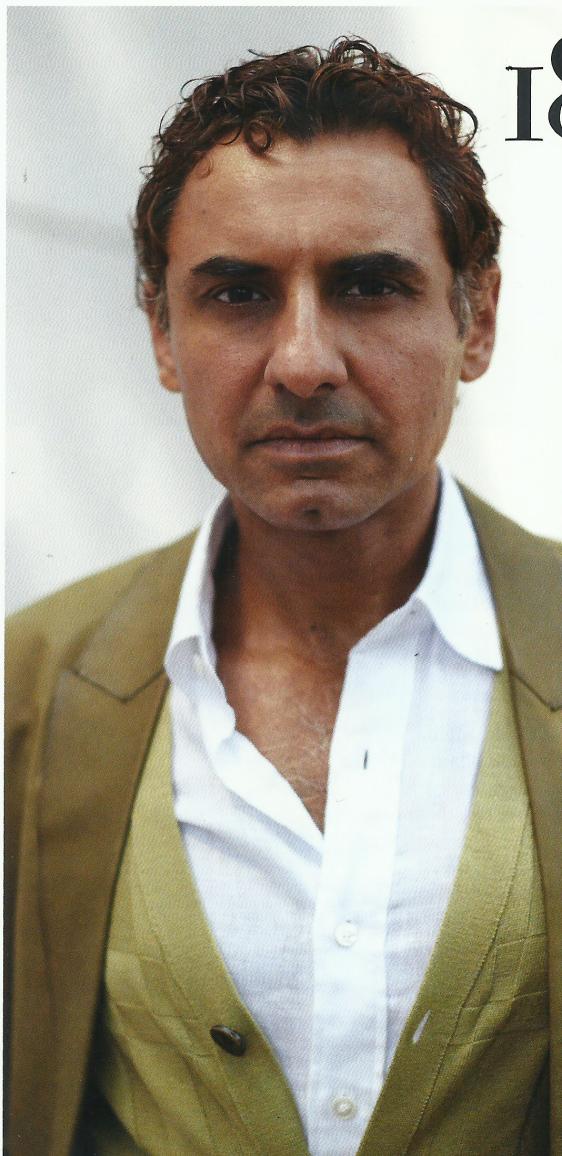
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SINGAPORE TATLER

# JULY

LIFE. EXTRAORDINARY



I82

## FEATURES

### I82 Eye on The Prize

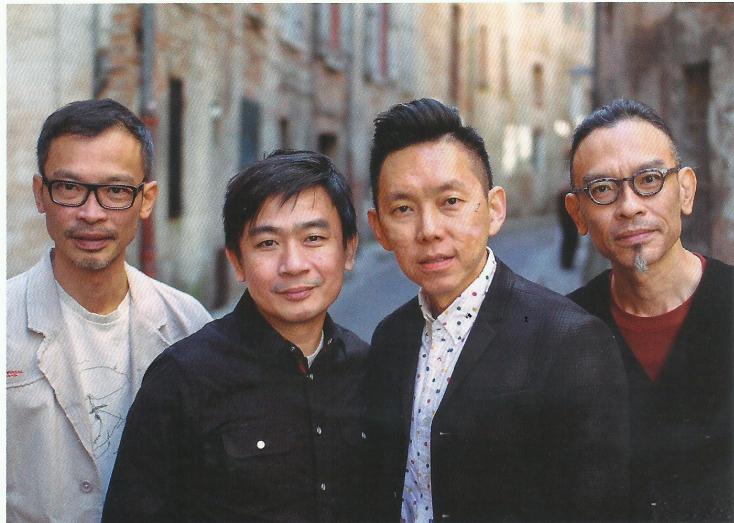
He's found success in both IT and property development. What's next for Satinder Garcha? Hospitality, it seems, with the launch of his first luxury boutique hotel before the year's end and three others in the pipeline

### I88 Tribute to Toulouse

Cathedrals, chapels and concerts. T'ang Quartet tours Toulouse and the guys share their travel journals



CONTRIBUTORS



TRAVELLING NOTES

The T'ang Quartet is known for many things. Groundbreaking. Cutting edge. Artistically impeccable. Underlying that patina of acclaim is a lot of hard work—constant innovation, steady reinvention and regular updates. For the past 20 years, the group's musical dexterity has surprised and delighted audiences in Singapore and the rest of the world. Their creative output is an artful blend of East and West, seamlessly reinterpreting classical work for contemporary fans while appealing to traditional audiences. The T'ang Quartet is (from left) Lionel Tan (viola), Ang Chek Meng (2nd violin), Ng Yu-Ying (1st violin) and Leslie Tan (cello). This issue, they share excerpts from their travel journals to Toulouse in France where they performed two concerts in April (p.188).



TOUCH THE SKY

Rupert Walker is an award-winning financial journalist, editor and conference moderator who covers a broad range of issues for several financial publications and organisations in Asia. He has been based in Hong Kong since 2007 and has a background as a fund manager and investment banker. He scuppered his career in debt capital markets by becoming a whistleblower. This month, Rupert explores vintage planes as an avenue for investment (p.220).

PRESS CLICK

Lionel Lai was a mere child when he first held a camera up to peer through its lens. His passion and dedication to this art has since propelled him to greater heights. Swift and decisive, he encapsulates the heart and soul of his subjects into his pictures. This month, he photographs Lim Koon Park, founder of Park + Associates in Close-Up (p.64) and Yeo Shuiy in Profile (p.97).

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THE RIGHT NOTE *The picturesque Chapelle des Carmélites was one of two concert stops on the T'ang Quartet's tour of Toulouse*

IMAGE: OLIVER CRUCIATA

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# FEATURES

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## Eye on The Prize

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## Tribute to Toulouse

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# TRIBUTE

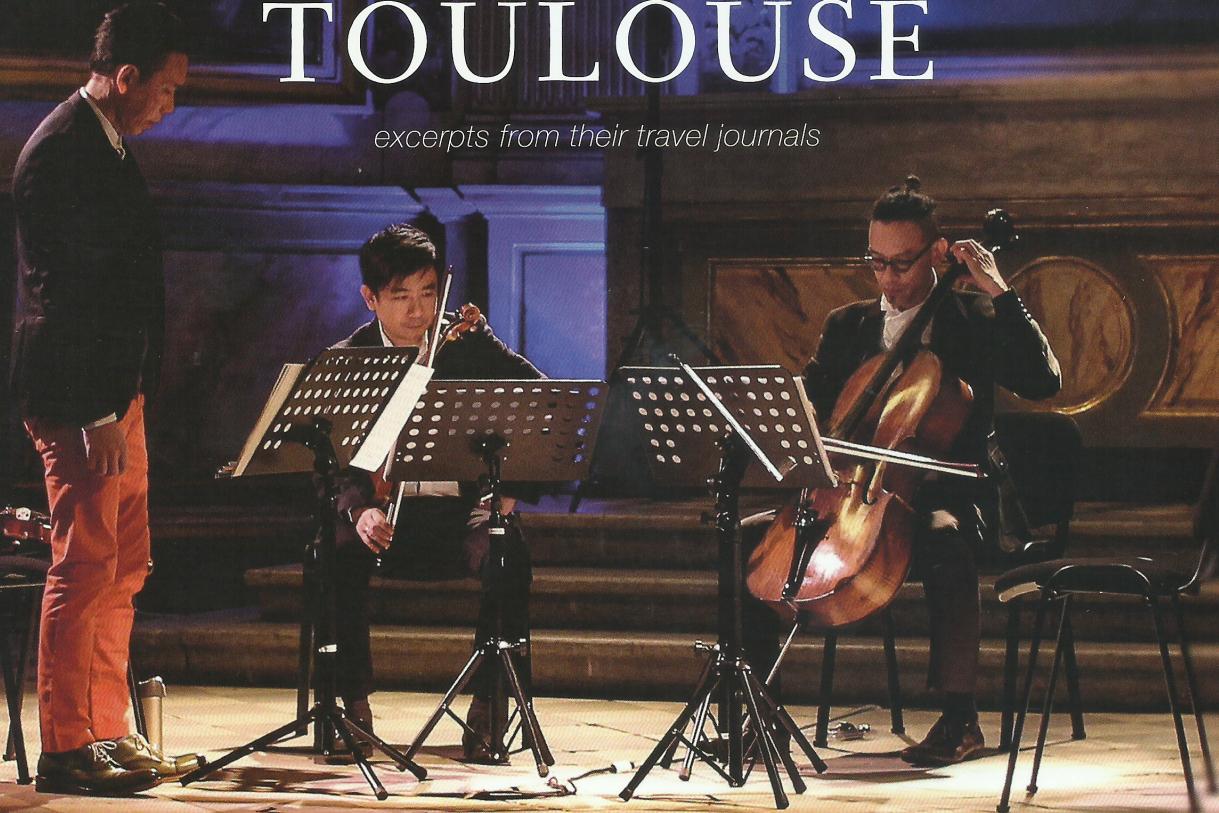
*The T'ang Quartet members explore their host city*

## TO

*from their recent concert in France and share*

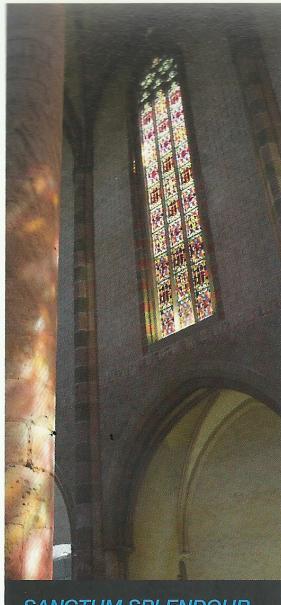
# TOULOUSE

*excerpts from their travel journals*



Violinists Ng Yu-Ying and  
Ang Chek Meng, with Leslie Tan on the  
cello, in Chapelle des Carmélites

With its Mediterranean clime and laidback vibe, Toulouse in south-western France is both bustling metropolis (the fourth-largest in France, in fact) and heritage hotspot. Homegrown string ensemble T'ang Quartet performed two concerts there in April at the Made in Asia Festival, the eighth annual event that seeks to build bridges between the East and West and foster better understanding of contemporary Asia among the locals. The quartet has performed several times in France in previous years, but it was the first visit to Toulouse for all four. They share their thoughts and photographic souvenirs of this special experience with *Singapore Tatler*.



**SANCTUM SPLENDOUR**  
*Kaleidoscopic colours light up Les Jacobins convent when the light hits the stained glass windows (above); the stunning vaulted ceiling of Chapelle des Carmélites (below) where T'ang Quartet performed*



*Violist  
Lionel Tan*

## ANG CHEK MENG

### VIOLINIST

Toulouse in France is a new destination for us, although we have been to several other cities in this major European country and made many friends from among the warm audiences.

The journey to Toulouse took a gruelling 27 hours (Singapore–Abu Dhabi–Paris, with extra time due to a strike), but our spirits were not dampened, as we were excited to be in this capital city of Haute-Garonne. Right after our hotel check-in, I wasted no time and set out to discover what this city had to offer.

Strolling down the main boulevard, there were the usual major retail stores, the majestic capitol square and lots of beautiful young people gathered together. It was a surprise to stumble upon a Louis Vuitton boutique nestled in quiet Rue Croix Baragnon, refreshingly tranquil without long queues and crowds like in Paris! I bought a beautiful wallet for my wife's upcoming birthday and that made a very nice introduction to this city.

We had a great time enjoying the wonderful food of the region, the many watering holes, like the rooftop bar above J'Go—it serves over 50 gin mixers and has a rum bar serving the best mojito from a true-blue Cuban mixologist—and the beautifully restored churches.

Our first performance was at one such chapel, and what a pleasure it was for us to perform at Chapelle des Carmélites! The stone floor posed a challenge acoustically, but it was well balanced by the beautifully painted wooden ceilings.

The highlight for me has to be the venue of our second concert on this short trip: Abbaye de Belleperche, Musée des arts de la table. The restored Cistercian abbey, situated in the Gascony region, is about an hour's drive from Toulouse. In its long history, it has been a monastery, where some parts of the grounds were used to bury fallen knights. It was also an army garrison during the First World War. The special touch with the restoration of this ground into a modern museum is that all the

carvings on the walls by individuals who have passed through have remained untouched.

The magical spirit of the grounds definitely rubbed off on the quartet as we played a wonderful concert with a standing ovation from the appreciative audience!

Alas, as with all our concert tours, the time to depart always comes too soon! Certainly hope to be able to return to perform in Toulouse again!

### NG YU-YING

#### VIOLINIST

Home to (aircraft maker) Airbus, Toulouse was, on first impression, a little modern and less charming than I'd hoped. Heading into the city from the airport, the buildings we spotted along the highway looked pretty "refurbished", complete with swimming pools (which we later learned, is a popular feature in many homes). I was slightly disappointed as I had been hoping for old European buildings and charming architecture, like those we had seen in Dijon, Creancey and Auxerre, where we had performed in the past two years.

Thankfully, our five days in Toulouse allowed me to discover the more charming side of the city, from its small alleys with beautiful brick walls and old houses, to the old city of Toulouse.

Besides wandering through Gothic churches such as the Basilica of St. Sernin, I particularly loved the very rustic restaurants where I indulged myself in way too much foie gras (double the portions in Paris and for half the price!). I also liked The Flower's Café, which serves the best desserts.

We performed concerts in two very different venues, the first being Chapelle des Carmélites. The first stone of this small chapel was laid in 1622, and the originality of this monument lies in its vault panelled with thick planks of oak that assure a brilliant acoustic. The oil paintings by artist Jean-Pierre Rivals covering the vault made a picture-perfect backdrop, which is held as a masterpiece of 18th-century paintings of Toulouse.



**WALKABOUT** From top:  
A beautiful spring day  
in Toulouse; the guys  
with a poster publicising  
T'ang Quartet's concert at  
Abbaye de Belleperche;  
cassoulet is touted as a  
must-try when in Toulouse,  
although Leslie's left him  
underwhelmed



As with all our performing venues, we always have to tweak our sounds and how we play together, to work with the acoustics of the venue. We chose to "under-play" in this chapel to create a cleaner and more articulated sound rather than a reverberating effect, to bring out the best of the programme we had prepared for the audience. The effect worked and we were cheered for an encore.

Our second concert venue was even more interesting: Abbaye de Belleperche, a Cistercian abbey turned museum of table art. We were very honoured to be the first to stage a concert here. The natural acoustics of the prison walls on all sides of the performance venue made this a perfect place to play and we received many curtain calls and a standing ovation. Among the warm and appreciative audience was a French lady who spoke to us in perfect Beijing-accented Mandarin and an Englishman who told us he was a soldier in Singapore in 1972. It is always rewarding when concertgoers tell us how a certain piece of music has touched them, when in fact, we are the ones who are thankful for their presence at our shows.

France has always been very special to us, not just for the food or the sightseeing but for the very appreciative audience and the warm reception we always receive. It is a country we are always eager to return to and we are looking forward to our next trip soon.

### LESLIE TAN

#### CELLIST

With one foot in France and the other in Catalonia, Toulouse is a fiercely proud city that is not without its contradictions. Nicknamed La Ville Rosé after the pink terracotta bricks in much of its ancient architecture, it counts two Unesco World Heritage sites: the Canal du Midi and the Basilica of St. Sernin. It is also the centre of the European aerospace industry; Airbus Industrie, among others, is headquartered here. Home to the University of Toulouse, this is also a rugby-crazed town—none of the

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**CHURCH HOPPING**

*The picturesque surrounds of Abbaye de Belleperche (above); inside the Cathédrale St. Etienne (below left); Yu-Ying and the quartet warming up before their concert in Chapelle des Carmélites (below right)*



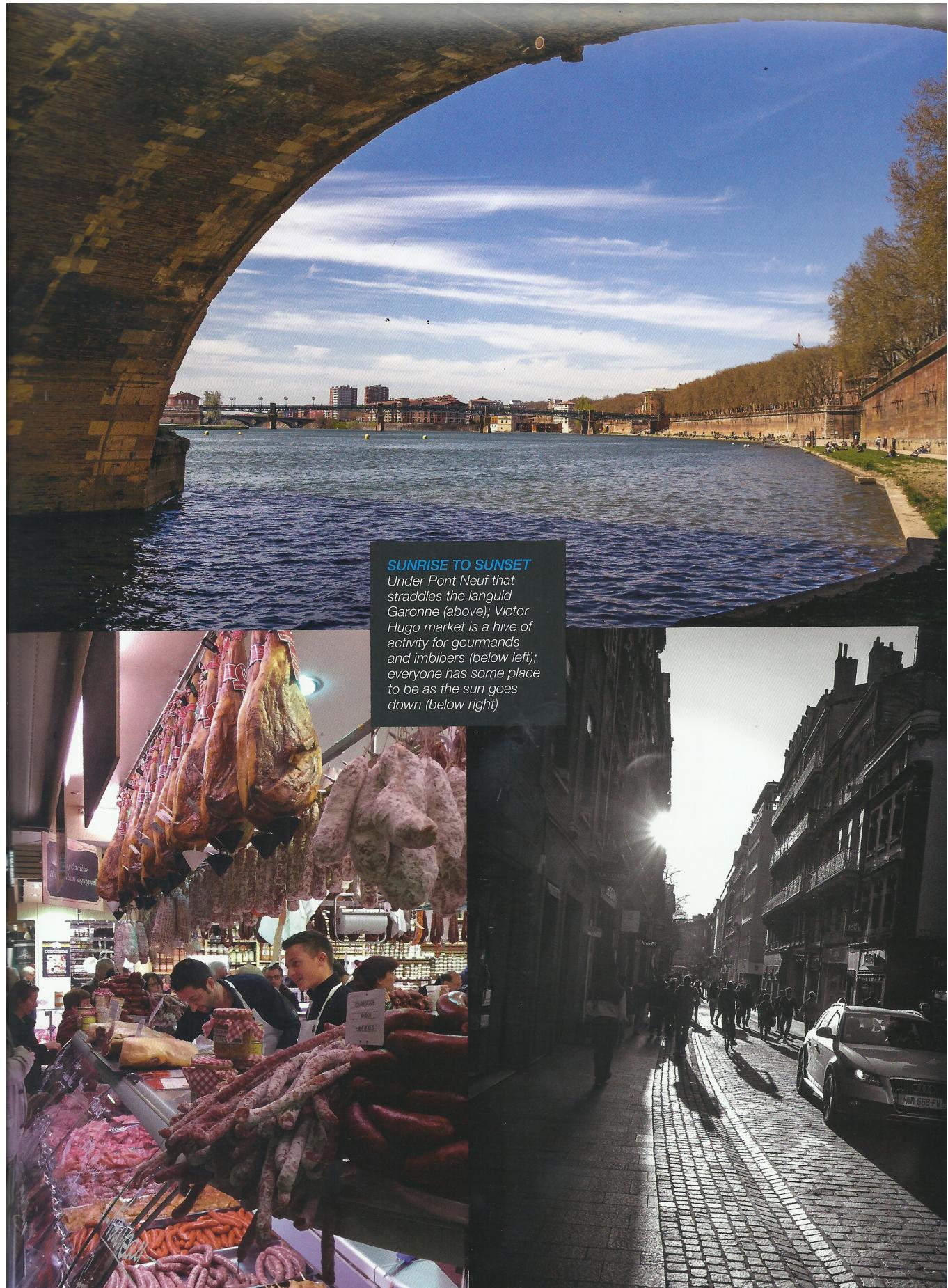
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nonsense with its rounder cousin, the football, that the rest of France is obsessed with.

Then there is its famed cassoulet, that ultra rich stew of haricot beans and cuts of duck, ham and sausage. The locals will think you silly for wanting to try it—they prefer their duck magret or confit de canard. These are not just any ducks, but birds fattened for foie gras; the meat is beefier and covered with a vast layer of fat.

I tried the cassoulet on our first night at Le Bon Vivre, an old family restaurant famous for its traditional cuisine. While the others enjoyed magret de canard, brochettes de coeurs de canard (skewers of duck hearts) and foie gras, I plumped for haricot beans stewed with different cuts of duck meat, ham and sausage—a definitely more proletarian dish. Frankly, it was nothing to write home about, but I enjoyed the delicious French bread used to soak up the salty rich slop.

For spiritual sustenance in Toulouse there are the waterways like the 17th-century Canal du Midi that links the river Garonne to the Mediterranean. At the other end, another canal spills into the Atlantic. I did not have time to visit the entire length of the canal but my morning runs along the Garonne were special enough.

Unlike its showier sister River Seine in Paris, the Garonne has an understated beauty and strength, ambling quietly along without tourist traps and stalls. Pont Neuf, the oldest bridge in Toulouse which straddles it, is even older than the one in Paris and more unique. It has seven asymmetrical arches and each of its niches with its stone work represents the lion's head with a full mane. With wonderful architectural wonders languidly spaced along the Garonne, it provides a great refuge from the vigour of the city centre. In the mornings and the evenings, the sun bathes its spacious banks with warmth and light. It feels peaceful, unobtrusive and unostentatious. I can only describe it as organic and reinvigorating for the soul.

## LIONEL TAN

VOLIST

The day after the cassoulet and le coeur des canard, we—or at least I—had the desire and heart to discover more that Toulouse had to offer. After a nice breakfast at the nearby and superb Marché Victor Hugo, we



## TQ ON HOME TURF

T'ang Quartet performs three concerts as part of Singapore International Festival of Arts 2015. Tickets from Sistic

### AUGUST 19 GUTS & STEEL

The warm, rich tones of gut strings meet the crisp tones of a fortepiano in *Guts & Steel*. The T'ang Quartet and pianist Melvyn Ang bring Mozart, Boccherini and Dvorák to life on period instruments including the harpsichord and fortepiano.

**At Victoria Concert Hall**

### SEPTEMBER 12 BLACK ANGELS

A musical exploration of darkness and light, by way of Hildegard von Bingen's 12th-century *3 Antiphons*, to George Crumb's pacy *Black Angels* from 1970, and John Tavener's mystical *The Hidden Treasure* from 1989.

**At Sota Studio Theatre**

### SEPTEMBER 19 CELESTIAL REMNANTS

The quartet performs with young musicians under its The Ensemble Dimension Project, a community and outreach initiative. The repertoire will traverse generations and celebrate the universality of music.

**At Sota Studio Theatre**

explored Toulouse on foot, stopping first at Cathédrale St. Etienne, which has a tall but unimpressive red brick facade with typical Gothic gargoyles.

However, as we entered through the heavy wooden doors, we were utterly surprised at how the music resonated not only in the space, but also with it. It was not what one would normally expect in an ancient European cathedral. The pipe organ from 1612 greets you, hung 17m above ground. Unexpectedly, the modern disjointed sounds that were probably French—I'm thinking Messiaen—suited the very Gothic design. The pews and woodwork, carved from walnut and aged to a luminescent darkness, featured pagan and mythological subjects.

Next, we visited Les Jacobins, a Dominican convent built in 1229. Couvent des Jacobins is the largest monastery complex in France. We arrived with the sun casting a brilliant rosy hue through the stained glass onto one of the many columns of its famous “palm tree vault”, which I thought was utterly impressive. This vault comprises a column that is attached to the ceiling by a series of differently sized ribs. Upon further research, I discovered that two wines were also named Couvent des Jacobins.

On our way back, we stopped once again at the 120-year-old Victor Hugo for lunch. Extremely popular on weekends, this ugly market is actually the ground level of a car park. But, the aesthetics do not matter one bit as the market is famed for its quality and choice of local produce.

It has over a hundred stalls with an extraordinary array of fruits, vegetables, cheeses, meats, wines, foie gras, black pork sausages and fancy ice creams. There are several lively cafes where you can get your caffeine fix or a glass of wine.

I was told that a typical Toulousain would party till 5am, head to the market for a breakfast of oysters and wine, then go home to sleep. If only we had more time to gorge and indulge, rabbit, lamb's head, sweetbread of lamb (*ris d'agneau*) and Fine de Claire oysters (going for €12 a dozen) would have been on the menu. But by providence, the white chardonnay served on our flight home was the Louis Jadot Couvent des Jacobins. ☺