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A magnificent rendering



Mro Michael Laus

On January 12, at St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral in Valletta, a packed church sat down to enjoy a magnificent rendering of Handel's greatly loved Baroque sacred oratorio, *Messiah*.

The concert under conductor Maestro Michael Laus with the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, soloists Gillian Zammit, Claire Massa, Juan Gambina and Albert Buttigieg, and the choirs of the University of Western Australia Choral Society and Goldberg Ensemble Malta had most generously given their services to this fundraising concert in aid of Save Valletta's Skyline Restoration Appeal.

To Laus must go the credit for knitting together in just a few days two choirs, who had never sung together before, with the outstanding soloists and the musicians of the MPO.

Like so much else in life, a good conductor has to be an inspiring leader. Of course, he would rightly say that he was fortunate to be dealing with very talented musicians. The soloists – Zammit, Massa, Gambina and Buttigieg – and the members of the orchestra are hugely talented.

Their singing and quality of performance were remarkable. We can be proud in Malta to have soloists and musicians of this calibre, all of whom now deservedly enjoy international reputations.

What was so impressive, however, was the way the two choirs – the Goldberg Ensemble Malta and the University of Western Australia Choral Society – combined so seamlessly in such a short

space of time. They made the most wonderful vocal music together in a cathedral having such excellent acoustics. It was a treat for those of us in the audience to listen to them.

After the concert, several people said that they had been to many performances of Messiah in their lifetimes, but none had heard it sung with such elan and so much feeling.

Immediately the opening notes were sounded, the packed audience in the cathedral listened, stock still. The fortissimo swell and heave of the choirs, especially for the upstanding Hallelujahs, had the most resounding and exciting impact.

That was the measure of the achievement of Laus, the outstanding soloists and the MPO, together with the fine choirs of the Goldberg Ensemble Malta and the University of Western Australia Choral Society.

It was an unforgettable experience which has contributed hugely not only to the Save Valletta's Skyline Restoration Appeal, but also to the already high profile of St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral as a place where great quality concerts may be enjoyed.

A special mention goes to the members of the University of Western Australia Choral Society, and their retinue, who travelled over 12,000 kilometres to Malta to participate in the performance – at their own expense and of their own volition. They were superb ambassadors for Australia: generous, genuine, full of goodwill, interested and engaged in all they found to enjoy in Malta which has such strong historical bonds with Australia.

It was a most rousing and memorable evening. The trumpet shall sound – no doubt, every orchestra and choral society secretly dreams of delivering this hit number to a capacity audience. On January 12, they did.

<https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20180204/arts-entertainment/A-magnificent-rendering.669699>

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