

Cantamici Choir in Malta

Bryan Lewis

Cantamici, a Choir from the City of Leicester (which conductor David Necklen never ceased to tell audiences at our concerts is renowned for the success of its football team as Premier Division champions, and the final resting place of King Richard III, 630 years after his death at Bosworth Field), hugely enjoyed its visit to Malta in the first week of June. The success was in no small measure thanks to the generous welcome we received from

the Imperial Band Club in Mellieħa, the conductor of the Band Tony Borg, the arrangements made by Delyth's father Geoff Thomas and stepmother Julie (both of whom accompanied us to all our events), the generosity of Mellieħa's Local Government and the effective arrangements made by Deputy Mayor Clayton Bartolo and the thorough and efficient groundwork of John Thawley. Nor do we forget 'Comptroller General' David Piper.

We were privileged to be invited to contribute to the annual Mellieħa International Music Festival. On arrival on Tuesday evening we sat in awe to hear the rehearsal of the Imperial Band of Mellieħa. The Grand March from 'Aida' almost literally one felt might bring the roof down. We were to visit the Band Club more than once. On Wednesday evening we were delighted to join the members of the Band and Choirs there for dinner. On the Tuesday I spotted a restaurant in the square advertising 'Traditional Maltese Food'. I asked John Coles who had come to Malta with Sally two days earlier what 'Traditional Maltese Food' was. He replied 'big helpings'. The meal laid on by the Band Club bore that out!

Participants won't need reminding



that we were worked hard with rehearsals and five concerts in four days, albeit three of them were short programmes. The first was at the Ministry of Gozo Exhibition Hall in Victoria where, totally, unexpectedly it rained – but before we sang, not inspired by our singing. The Thursday evening concert in the strikingly modern, acoustically responsive St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Manikata, was the opening event of the Mellieħa International Music Festival 2016 organised by the Mellieħa Local Council. On Friday we travelled into Valletta by the coast road with an informative commentary from Geoff. In the evening we sang in St Paul's Pro-Cathedral with its lovely acoustic.



The crypt undercroft made for an exceptionally spacious changing area with perilous steps into the nave. On Saturday we sang at lunchtime in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Mellieħa.

In the evening we joined the Imperial Band and Choir and the Sanctuary Choir to perform in the square on a quintessentially warm Mediterranean evening where our familiarity with the programme was fully tested, given there was no back lighting or face-back sound to enable us to read our music or hear what was being sung or played!

So much for the 'business' side of the tour. A few random recollections follow:

- drama at Birmingham Airport where Brian Moore contrived to lose a shoe – for a time – and the keys to his case.
- our unexpected pleasure at the substitution of the planned hotel by The Riviera Resort and Spa in Marfa Bay. Its location and comforts were splendid and coach travel from there to our venues was first rate;
- the handsome settlement of Mdina, wondrously situated;
- red telephone and pillar boxes;
- absence of litter and graffiti (at least where we went);
- modern coaches and buses which have replaced the 'clapped out' vehicles of yesteryear;
- contrasting road surfaces – rough to smooth and back again;
- stunning views of the Grand Harbour in Valletta;
- the baroque splendour of the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Valletta where some of us heard a



Norwegian male voice choir singing a mass by Gounod (though we did not envy them being dressed in heavy morning suits);

- Delyth thanking our host in Maltese;
- Andrew forever taking photographs (thank goodness);
- the participation of our guests, some of whom were former members;
- our loyal and supportive camp followers;
- warm sunshine (after Wednesday);
- greenery back in England – hardly surprising after such a wet June – which contrasted with the vegetation-free much of Malta;
- Brian Moore's Ode.

We all had a thoroughly enjoyable visit (helped enormously by the warm, sunny weather), appreciated the opportunity to explore Malta, welcomed the chance to sing in some lovely buildings and grasped the hands of new musical friends. Thanks again to all those new friends!

George's Bakery

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Jawgura l-Festa t-Tajba lil Kulħadd