

Music



Photos by Emanuel Cauchi

A spectacular concert of cinematographic soundtracks – Movies at the Palace

■ Dr Lydia Buttigieg

On Saturday, 21 April, the Soċjeta' Filarmonika L-Unjoni of Luqa, under the direction of Mro John David Zammit presented yet another outstanding concert held at the courtyard of San Anton Palace. The musical repertoire for this concert was taken entirely from cinematographic soundtrack movies. The event was organised under the distinguished patronage of H.E. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, supported by Creative Communities and Malta Arts Funds, with proceeds going in aid of the Community Chest Fund Foundation.

The fully-fledged orchestra, which not only comprised the resident band members of the Soċjeta' Filarmonika L-Unjoni of Luqa, but also included some unusual instruments which are not normally associated with a brass band, such as the strings and percussion sections that included the harp, bass guitars and two pianos. There was also the participation of Coro Bel Canto choir.

Much of the selected musical repertoire for the evening was purposely arranged for the band and string orchestra by the resident conductor himself, and also by Norbert Camilleri and Neil Zammit. To organise a concert of this calibre involves months of score arrangements, including rehearsal preparations that commenced earlier on this year.

The first part of the concert opened with a fanfare taken from the 1982 film *E. T. the Extra-Terrestrial* written by American composer John Williams and directed by Steven Spielberg. This was followed by *Deborah's Theme*, a serene and subtle piece composed by one of my favourite Italian composers Ennio Morricone from the film *Once Upon a Time in America*. It was sung by the very talented young singer Sebastian Aquilina who made his first debut as a singer during this concert.

In 1998, *The Mask of Zorro* directed by Steven Spielberg was one of the favourite films among cinema-goers, with Antonio Banderas and Catherine Zeta-Jones as the main protagonists. Written by James



Horner, the theme of the film was executed brilliantly and with finesse, presenting the lyrical theme on the strings with some profound effects by the brass and percussion.

Two years after Spielberg's film, an American epic Western film featuring Kevin Costner who was the main protagonist, also directed and produced the film *Dances with Wolves*. Together with the participation of Coro Bel Canto, supported by the band, the piece was superbly executed with assurance and confidence.

The 2006 controversial cinema film the *Da Vinci Code* was composed by non-other than Hans Zimmer. The majestic theme from *Chevaliers de Sangreal* was arranged for the band and choir by Neil Zammit, giving prominence to the strings and brass, while being continuously accompanied by subtle arpeggiated pas-

sages on the harp.

The last two pieces for the first half of the programme were a selection from the film *The Last of the Mohicans* which was originally composed by Trevor Jones and Randy Edelman. This was followed by the science fiction film *Star Wars* were two excerpts were performed – *Battle of the Heroes* and *Revenge of the Sith*.

During the second half of the programme, the assistant bandmaster Norbert Camilleri conducted and also arranged two excerpts from the film *The Missing*. An epic Western film which came out 15 years ago was composed by the American composer, conductor and arranger James Horner. The band performed two contrasting pieces – *Lilly's Fate is in These Hands* and *Profound Loss*.

The band also performed the soundtrack theme from the first film, which was issued in 2007, of the famous science fiction, *Transformers*. Written by the American composer Steve Jablonsky, with the participation of Coro Bel Canto, the band and choir executed the excerpt *Arrival to Earth* with great density, assurance and firmness of tone control.

The latter part of the concert was entirely focused on some of the best films which have emerged so far. *Gladiator* is a 2000 epic historical drama film with its main protagonist Russell Crowe. The Oscar-nominated score was composed by Hans Zimmer and Lisa Gerrard. The majestic principal theme of the film was superbly expressed with great sensitiveness and emotion.

The next two contrasting soundtracks but rather upbeat music in the programme are considered to be the greatest films ever released – *Rocky* and *James Bond 007. Gonna Fly Now* composed by Bill Conti is the most famous theme which was first released in 1977. The band and the Coro Bel Canto performed with great control and dominance. The *Rocky* film was followed by the principal theme of *James Bond 007*, greatly appreciated by the audience.

The concert concluded by two fantasy films – *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Both arranged for the band by the resident bandmaster John David Zammit, the theme from *The Battle* taken from the film *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* was composed by the English composer Harry Gregson-Williams.

Three pieces from the film *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Breaking of the Fellowship*, *May It Be* and *The End of All Things*, with the participation of the Coro Bel Canto and the young singer Sebastian Aquilina, concluded the concert.

The Soċjeta' Filarmonika L-Unjoni of Luqa, under the direction of Mro Zammit presented an outstanding and superb concert which was highly appreciated by the audience. The President thanked the Luqa band, choir and the committee for their hard work in organising this high calibre concert.

A truly memorable concert, which I hope would not be the last to hear from such talented artists.

