

Lifestyle & Culture



Music can heal, too

A poster on Facebook caught my eye a couple of weeks ago. It was posted by the *Associazione Mozart Italia Malta* and announced an event, a comedy-concert, *The Return*, in memory of the first concert in Italy by W.A. Mozart in the church of San Marco in Rovereto, on 26 December 1769. Maestro Paolo Curatolo was going to play Mozart's *Sonata KV 331* as well as *Sonata KV 330* and Hamal Baroni her own compositions.

This was happening within walking distance, at St Patrick's School Hall. Donations were going to support the projects of the Salesians. So off I went with one of my sisters.

The scene was set.

Soon, three girls entered the 'stage' dressed in Mozartian costumes, complete with wigs.

When Leopold Mozart realised just how gifted his two children, Amadeus and Maria Anna, a pianist, were he decided to take them on a tour of Europe. It was an epic journey that lasted four years. Amadeus was just six when the tour began and by the end he was a star, having played in front of the most influential people wherever he had been.

As a child, Mozart learned fast how to wow an audience and could do all sorts of tricks at the piano. One of his favourites was to play fiendishly difficult pieces with his hands hidden under a cloth so that he was unable to see any of the notes. But he didn't just excel at perform-



Pianist/composer Hamal Baroni received a bouquet once the concert ended

ing; by the time he was 12 years old, he had already completed two operas.

Joseph Haydn was one of the great musical influences on Mozart's career, and each man was an unashamed fan of the other's work. Haydn told Mozart's father: "I must tell you before God and as an honest man, that your son is the greatest composer I ever heard of."

Sir Thomas Beecham, also a lover of Mozart, is known to have advised: "If I were a dictator, I should make it compulsory for every member of the population between the ages of four and eighty to listen to Mozart for at least a quarter of an hour daily for the coming five years."

So after a short scene, the young Hamal Baroni sat at the piano and played for us her own compositions. They are charming and pleasant, played with freshness and spontaneity. I wasn't sure if Hamal was a boy or a girl. The



Socialising, just as Mozart would have done, after the concert



Maestro Curatolo gave a sun-lit performance of Mozart's two sonatas

name Hamal did not mean anything to me. She later explained that it is the name of a star and it is her stage name. When she eventually removed her wig and her hair came cascading down I said to myself: It's a girl.

Deborah Comper, who organised this concert, Hamal's mother, told me that 15-year-old Hamal grew up in a stimulating musical and artistic environment. In just four years she managed to pass her eighth grade exams of Trinity College London, and is now preparing her diploma in piano. She has been composing music since she was only 12-years-old and is following the *Advanced Diploma in Performing Arts* at MCAST.

On the 'stage' the young 'Mozart' having finished playing her own compositions, then encouraged her "father" to sit at the piano and play and Maestro Paolo Curatolo did just that. He played Mozart's *Sonata KV 331* which I love. It is a standard for practicing hand crossing. Full

of Mozartian sensibility, it looks so simple and is so beautiful. The third movement *Alla Turca* is one of Mozart's best known piano pieces and often played on its own. When I was in my early 20's I was studying it with my piano teacher but I never managed to play it well. I still have the score with her markings reminding me of her: Miss Yolanda Abela, an excellent pianist, as well as teacher but she did give me a smack when I got the notes wrong and banged our heads together when playing duets with a friend or a sister. It certainly encouraged to practice more.

Maestro Curatolo gave us lovely interpretations of Mozart's two sun-lit sonatas. He played the *Alla Turca* movement with clean precision. His was an elegant performance, without affectation and mannerisms.

Maestro Curatolo is the Founder of *Il Centro del Sorriso* from which he operates by spreading his music therapy

and training teachers in Italian schools and abroad. He is called *The Pianist of Angels* for his love for disabled children to whom he continues to dedicate most of his life. He composed among other compositions *Hymn to the Disabled* and *Hymn to Kindness* which are often played by renowned orchestras.

Deborah told me: "The Maestro met Hamal three years ago and with generosity sometimes he takes care of her musically."

He loves to bring his message through music with a series of concerts: *A Piano for the Angels*, which he also held in Malta on 21 October as part of the AMIM concert season. It is a piano recital with images dedicated to children, an exciting journey into the world of childhood, a common thread linking the many looks, hopes, sufferings... a journey lived through his wonderful compositions.

The Maestro is also the holder of the *Guinness Book of Records* for setting the record for having played Mozart for more than 25 hours at one go.

The girls who participated in this delightful evening all study in Malta. All are Deborah's students from Rovereto, attending an artistic annual formation with Great Oak Malta Association where they are studying drama, dance, music.

Why Rovereto? It is located on the border between Germanic and Latin culture, and was the first stop on the journey to Italy that the young Mozart undertook with his father in 1769. Since 1987 it has hosted the Mozart Festival, an annual series of concerts and meetings dedicated mostly to the great master from Salzburg.

The next event will take place at St Patrick's School Hall in Sliema on 24th February 2024 at 7pm when Maestro Tito Ciccarese and Maestro Pierluigi Di Tella together with the Great Oak Theatre Group will perform scenes from *The Magic Flute*.

Associazione Mozart Italia Malta wish to inform the public that for reasons beyond their responsibility the next concerts will be performed at St. Patrick's School Hall, rather than at Teatru Salesjan as indicated in the previous brochure. For information email m Mozart.malta@gmail.com or call Ms Debora Comper 7940 1969.



Maestro Paolo Curatolo has words of praise for Hamal