

Vocal and Instrumental Recital

German-Maltese Circle
Sala Isouard

Albert-G. Storace, 18 December 2005

Recently, the German-Maltese Circle presented an entertaining and well-attended recital at the Sala Isouard. This was a vocal and instrumental presentation co-ordinated by Ronnie Debattista and featuring pianist Caroline Calleja, soprano Andriana Fenech Yordanova, baritone Joe Huber and clarinettist Godfrey Mifsud. Ms. Calleja has taken top billing here because hers was a marathon task. She was involved in each and every work performed as accompanist. A very good job she did too fulfilling her role in a most sympathetic and supportive manner, all the more admirable because she is also an excellent concert soloist in her own right.

The music performed consisted of a number of works by German and Austrian composers as well as a selection of works by Carmelo Pace the first centenary of whose birth will be marked in 2006. There was an interesting variety of genres where Pace was concerned as he wrote in every imaginable form. The first example this evening was the song Fear no more (after Shakespeare), a rather bleak piece sung by Joe Huber. He also sang Preghiera di Saulo from the cantata San Paolo which does ramble on a bit but this lessened none of the conviction with which it was sung, something which applies to the previous work. Joe Huber sang another Pace song, Lir-Rebbiegha, a charming little piece. All the other pieces which he sang came from Schubert's Winterreise cycle. Starting with Gute Nacht, he continued with Taueschung, then with Fruehlingstraum (one of the best he interpreted), ending with Wasserflut. Joe Huber does have a special feeling for lieder, which he sings with a confident assertiveness based on a solid understanding of the text which he projects with feeling and sensitivity as well as clear diction. Sometimes there is a tendency for the voice to turn a bit nasal especially on some of the vowels like the "a" (and then not always so) but the timbre is generally warm and expressive tending to sound a bit thin only in the highest reaches.

Quite a revelation was Bulgarian-born soprano Andriana Fenech Yordanova. I wonder where she had been "hiding"! She has a lot of personality, is a confident and technically well-endowed singer with a warm, wide-ranging voice that has a pleasant timbre. She is able to adapt easily to style and idiom as witnessed in Brahms' Vergebliches Staendchen, Mendelssohn's Neue Liebe and the taxing Agathes Szene und Arie from Weber's Der Freischuetz. She charmed everybody with her very good interpretation (in good Maltese) of Pace's lovely Nixtieq li kont Ghasfur, Schubert's perennial favourite Die Forelle, and displayed remarkable agility in Rejoice from Handel's Messiah.

The soprano also sang Franz Lachner's Aus Fluegeln des Gesanges, another charming work which is actually a trio for soprano, piano and clarinet. Godfrey Mifsud was his usual accomplished self as he had been earlier on in Pace's Rhapsody for Clarinet and Piano and in Burgmueller's Duo op. 15 for clarinet and piano which immediately followed the Lachner trio. May the Circle present more of these recitals which with their mix of the familiar as well as the unusual make for truly entertaining musical events.