

## Lifestyle & Culture



# Marie Benoit's Diary



## A Night of Rising Stars: Young Singers Take the Stage

**M**usic lovers were treated to an enjoyable evening at St Patrick's foyer in Sliema last week, as young vocalists captivated the audience with their variety of talents. This was this year's AMIM Singing Festival.

Debora Comper who masterminds AMIM (Associazione Mozart Italia Malta), introduced the evening and announced that there would be six young singers singing 20 songs in all.

Debora was followed by her talented daughter Hamal, who thanked the teachers of singing, Milica Lawrence of the Malta Piano Academy who accompanied the singers throughout the evening, and the sponsors.

The concert, a celebration of vocal artistry, featured a diverse repertoire, ranging from beloved classical arias to contemporary pieces, allowing each performer to shine in their own unique way.

With some voices truly soaring through the hall, the singers demonstrated a varying amount of skill and emotion, breathing life into operatic classics and their musical interpretations. The programme included selections from renowned operas, offering a glimpse into the power and depth of the operatic tradition which has always been strong in Malta, while also embracing other genres to create a dynamic and engaging experience.

As the night progressed, the passion and dedication of these young artists became evident. Whether delivering an intricate aria or a heartfelt ballad, each performance showcased their growing mastery of the art form.

The evening started off with 10-year-old (yes, this is not a misprint) Miktiana Azzopardi singing Giulio Caccini's *Ave Maria*. The young singer with her strong voice gave us another popular aria later on, *Nessun Dorma*.

Puccini created *Nessun Dorma* intending it to be sung by a male but the young soprano dared and managed to rise to the occasion. She gave us a good interpretation of this popular aria. At the end of the concert she came out once more and sang *Wishing you were somehow here again* from *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Maria Victoria Bonello followed with an aria from Handel's *Samson*. She later gave us *Quel Guardo il Cavaliere* from *Don Pasquale* by Donizetti.

Bianca Singer gave us *Nella Fantasia* by Ennio Morricone, the legendary Italian composer renowned for his iconic film scores. His music, spanning over 400 films, earned him two Academy Awards and global recogni-



The singers with Debora Comper



17-year-old Amy Li Staff

tion. I don't know of anyone who doesn't love his music.

Later, another timeless *canzonetta*, Enrico Caruso's *O Sole Mio* was performed by Bianca. Later still she came out in a different dress and another song from the film *Anastasia*.

Amy Li Staff who is only 17, gave us *Empty Chairs and Empty Tables* from *Les Misérables*. We gave her a round of applause for her interpretation of *Reflections* from the film *Mulan* by Matthew Wilder. Finally, towards the end of the concert she sang *Part of Your World* from the cartoon *The Little Mermaid*.

14-year-old Maria Weatherill gave us the popular (and timeless it seems) *Con Te Partirò*. Later on she sang *Think of me* from *The*



Mariaconcetta Calafiore



Maria Victoria Bonello

*Phantom of the Opera*.

Mariaconcetta Calafiore looking every bit a soprano in a lovely green dress, sang *Quando m'en vo'* also known as Musetta's Waltz. It is one of the most iconic arias from Puccini's *La Bohème*. It is both musically and emotionally seductive. No matter how often I listen to it I still get goosebumps as soon as the singer lets out the first few notes.

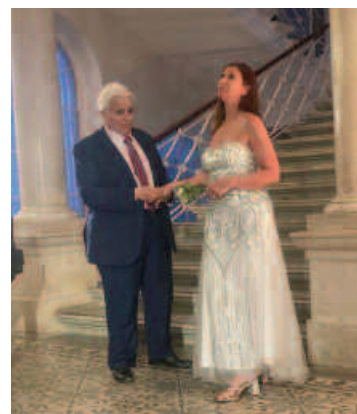
Mariaconcetta also gave us an aria from *Turandot*: *Tu che di gel sei cinta*, the haunting aria sung by the slave girl Liù just before her tragic death. Also, *Mio Babbino Caro* from Puccini's *Gianni Schicci*. The aria is known for its lyrical beauty and emotional intensity, making it one of Puccini's most beloved pieces.



10-year-old Miktiana Azzopardi



Tenor Brian Cefai, pianist Dr Melica Lawrence and soprano Laura Asfaldi



Tenor Brian Cefai and soprano Laura Asfaldi

"The Mozart association directed by Debora Comper is truly a hidden gem. Even in much bigger organisations it is not easy to find such excellence, and such a level of commitment.

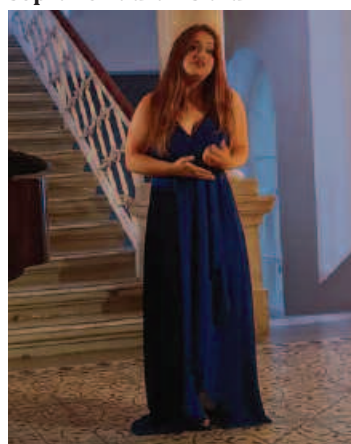
I was very happy to teach the masterclasses. I have a long experience in this field and I can tell you that it is not always evident to find students who have such potential and who are open to challenge themselves with new techniques. In Malta I found amazing young women who trusted the process and were able to achieve amazing improvements in just three days. I am so proud of them all.

The success of the masterclasses and of the final concert was also due to the wonderful pianist Milica Lawrence, whose exceptional talent and sensibility allowed the students to be always at ease and comfortable.

I am also very much honoured for having had the opportunity to perform with the tenor Brian Cefai, a great performer and a wonderful person."

An enjoyable and well-organized evening, showcasing promising talent. I simply wish to add that a few of the singers' attire felt somewhat out of place, as classical performances often carry a visual tradition that enhances the experience. Tattoos, in my view, are best left out of a serious repertoire. Additionally, I truly missed being able to refer to a programme – whether on my iPhone or in printed form – as it would have added depth to the occasion, allowing the audience to follow the repertoire and learn more about each performer.

I wish these young singers the very best as they refine their craft. With the guidance of seasoned professionals like Laura and the invaluable experience of masterclasses, may they grow in confidence and stature, embracing the artistry and presence that elevate a truly memorable performance.



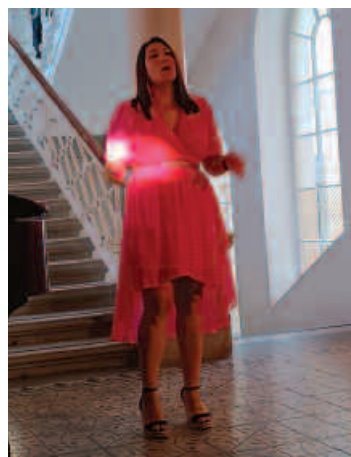
14-year-old Maria Weatherill

We were treated to a duet from *La Traviata* *Un dì Felice Etere*, Verdi at his finest. Laura and tenor Brian Cefai sang from the heart. Brilliant.

Debora later told me that none of this would have been possible without the commitment of Hamal, Maria, Teresa, Francesca and Zoe all studying in Malta, many of them graduates. More about them some other time.

The soprano Laura Ansaldi came to Malta mainly to provide masterclasses. Five of the singers that evening had benefitted from her masterclasses: Mariaconcetta Calafiore, Maria Victoria Bonello, Miktiana Azzopardi, Bianca Singer and Maria Weatherill.

I asked Laura for a comment. Here is what she said:



Bianca Singer