

Arts

Songs for the solitary man



PACE: *Ghanjiet ta' Bniedem Solitarju*. Lyrics: Rużar Briffa. Tenor: Charles Vincenti; bass-baritone: Albert Buttigieg; Kor Mirabitur, choir mistress Simone Attard; Junge Philharmonie Brandenburg, leader Anja Schauer; Director: Hans-Jürgen Nagel. Recorded by Gega New/ Tpt. (58 minutes)

Albert Storace

When Albert Pace's work premiered at St John's Co-Cathedral last October, I had titled my review a 'stunningly effective new work'.

Two years previously, it had won Pace first prize in APS Bank's competition for new works by Maltese composers.

It resulted in the work's premiere and later this recording on CD. It is unfortunate that many works written on a large scale, whether by local or foreign composers, only end up being heard once or twice.

Having it available on CD makes up for this, as it preserves on record such worthy compositions for posterity and reference.

Listening to it again confirms my initial impression. This symphonic song cycle is written in a contemporary idiom, a highly approachable one which, after the initial sombre orchestral introduction, flows in a setting of seven beautiful poems by one of Malta's leading romantic poets.

The treatment is direct and clear as voiced by the soloists, both in very good form, with additional choral comments marking various stages in the life of a basically solitary man.

There is this continuous thread in the songs which clearly projects the various moods underlying them.

The recording confirms all too well the balance between voices and chamber orchestra, according both elements their individual importance and blending them very well

when it comes to the crunch. There is anguish and reflection, hope and despair, faith and doubt.

It is very human and I reiterate, without detracting from the other very appealing songs, it is the last two which had the most profound effect upon me, namely *L-Ghanjiet ta' l-Imnikket* and *Wiehed Biss*.

Hans-Jürgen Nagel's handling of the work is very effective and the soloists, choir and orchestra respond very well to his direction and overall concept of the work.

Joseph Vella Bondin's notes are the usual byword for excellence. The booklet sheds light upon the cycle thanks to his general notes, translation of lyrics into English and analytical notes on each song.

All lovers of contemporary Maltese music should add this CD to their collection.

Rome re-lives the Dolce Vita

Two hundred photographs and magazine covers on show at a Rome exhibition depict the golden age of Italian cinema in the 1950s and 1960s, as the country revelled in its Dolce Vita age.

Trajan's Market, a large complex of ruins overlooking the Roman forum in the city centre, hosts on its walls pictures of Italian icons like film-maker Federico Fellini, sitting at the dinner table with actor Anthony Quinn and his wife Giulietta Masina, or foreign stars like Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall on a runway at Rome's airport.

"We didn't want any staged pictures, but natural ones, of stars with their fans or during mundane events," Marco Panella, the curator of the exhibit, told AFP.

Panella believes Rome's golden age for movies began in 1949 with the marriage in Italy of US actors Tyrone Power and Linda Christian, followed by production house MGM's decision to shoot the epic blockbuster *Quo Vadis* in Rome's Cinecittà studios.

La Dolce Vita was a "world of rites and Via Veneto, with its bars and its news-stands, was its centre," Panella said, referring to the central street in Rome home to the largest luxury hotels.

Pictures in the exhibit, open until November 14, capture US actors Kirk Douglas and Joan Crawford signing autographs along the street, while Jack Palance sifts through the international newspapers on display at a kiosk.

Other moments immortalised in the pictures include Claudia Cardinale laughing with Burt Lancaster and Alain Delon at a gala, Audrey Hepburn and her dog stepping off her plane and Ingrid Bergman holding three pillows as she leaves a department store. (AFP)

Life on canvas



Farmsteads dating back to punnic times, flowers, the Nadur carnival and other subjects painted by Pauleen Micallef, using various media, can be viewed on the updated www.pauleensart.eu. Photographer Peter Bartolo Parnis and web designer Andre Micallef Grimaud were contributors to the art web update.

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