



Since this time last year, things have certainly returned to normal. Reflecting on my article ‘*Business As Usual*’ in last year’s magazine, it is amazing how vulnerable our engagements and choir members were. Since then, we have been quite busy as everybody now takes the opportunity to perform like never before. Our main concert on the 2nd of September went very well and the ladies enjoyed performing a range of musical styles, from Proud Mary with keyboard, drum kit and guitar to a call and response song in Xhosa (one of South Africa’s four main languages) beautifully led by Mark Anthony Bartolo.

After a small, well-earned rest, we started to work on our pieces for the Christmas season; having been a teacher, both primary and peripatetic, Christmas music rehearsals always start in September! In November we sang at the Remembrance Sunday service, accompanied by the band, and later in the month we sang our usual mass at St Catherine’s Monastery in Valletta, which was officiated by Monsignor Charles Scicluna, Archbishop of Malta. Christmas was business as usual, with a joint concert with the band at the Imperial Band Club, concerts at the Solana and Paradise Bay Hotels and we also took part in the Milied Mellieħi, performing outside in the Sanctuary courtyard (on a very cold evening) next to the live crib, complete with donkey! We were helped for this event by soprano, Eleanor Vella, who enjoyed it so much that she joined us for our final Christmas performance for the guests at the Maritim Hotel on the 26th of December.

A new event for us in March was singing a mass at Manikata church where we received a warm welcome from both the congregation and the priest. For our Palm Sunday concert with the band at the Parish Church at the beginning of April, we enjoyed singing some rousing hymns together with one or two old favourites. We had another surprise concert later that month as part of Mellieħa’s contribution to the Malta Fireworks Festival, singing popular Maltese

Looking Good!

Julie Thomas

Director of the Imperial Choir



pieces with the band on Triq Ġnien Ingraw, watching the sunset overlooking the beautiful valley and sea below. Slightly chilly and windy, but well enjoyed by the crowds.

As the weather warmed up, and boy did it warm up this year, we were asked to sing again at the festa of Il-Madonna tad-Duttrina in Ħal Tarxien. Again, we performed popular Maltese pieces accompanied by the Imperial Band. At the end of July, we performed as part of the Iljieli Melleħin planned by the Mellieħa Local Council. This year we sang outside in the courtyard which was slightly more comfortable than last year, despite the oppressive heat and humidity. Due to illness, and short notice, we were down to our bare minimum in terms of singers, but the Romans, peasants, visitors, and birds of prey seemed to enjoy it.

Which brings me to my topic this year. Maybe this should have been in last year’s magazine, however, it was a nice surprise for the audience to see our new choir uniforms, which had their debut at our main concert on the 2nd of September. It was decided that our choir uniforms needed a bit of rethinking. The beautiful dresses which we wear on the festa week concert look very smart, but they are heavy and it’s like wearing a mini-sauna. To be fair, and keep this a secret, many of the ladies have ‘reshaped’ over the years and this also causes problems with the two blouses that we wear for informal concerts or concerts during the winter.

Now it is not a small thing for a choir to choose a new uniform. A ladies choir will talk about clothing and concert dress for ages and not do a lot of singing! So how did we choose our new uniform? Luckily, discussions took place at the end of rehearsals. We decided to replace the formal dresses first. A decision was made to keep the black trouser bottoms and go for a single colour formal top.

For this we needed:

- A simple, yet practical and smart style to suit all ages and body shapes;
- To use an easycare fabric which would not wrinkle and would travel well if we went on tour;
- Something that would be comfortable and breathable to wear during the warm festa performances;
- A colour that would suit everybody, not too bright as to dazzle the audience yet not too sombre as we would be using the top for the festa as well as church performances.

Basically, we needed something that the singers were comfortable in but also felt dressed up for the occasion. Pictures of ideas were brought in and discussed. Material swatches were produced and prices were sought from various sources. Gradually a design for a blouse in royal blue was agreed upon. Material was bought and a local seamstress was asked to make up the pattern and sew up the blouses.

We were very excited as we went for our measurements and fittings to La Sartoria di Stefy Sewing Services in Mellieħa and finally our blouses were ready for Festa 2022. They looked beautiful and classy at our concert on the 2nd of September and if the uniform of a choir is there to set the first impression and tone of the choir

even before they sing, I think we achieved our goal. Thank you to those who organised the buying of the material and the coordination of fittings with Stefy.

Of the other uniforms, we have adapted the turquoise blouses by pairing them with a black camisole vest underneath which looks smart but casual: useful for warmer weather outside or inside concerts. Our next uniform makeover will be to replace the striped, white blouses used for Christmas and some church services. We cannot replace these with the same. Perhaps a simple white blouse would work as we normally wear these with a black blazer, and at Christmas, complete the look with a bright red scarf. Discussions obviously pending.

I'm very proud of my ladies and what they achieve during the year, even when some events are taken on at short notice. I would like to welcome Graziella Azzopardi to the choir. She joined the soprano section after our Palm Sunday concert and she seems to be enjoying the challenge very much.



Ladies, you are lovely people who put up with my more adventurous ideas with great enthusiasm. I can't wait for the audience to hear you singing in Welsh at this year's festa and performing an exciting selection from The Hunger Games films.

Thank you for your dedication, ladies, and I wish you and your families and all who support us *il-festa t-tajba*.

Interested in joining the Imperial Choir?

New Members Welcome!

Contact us on

info@imperialbandclub.com



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20, Triq il-Għasel, il-Mellieħa

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