

Concert of
CARMELO PACE MUSIC
at Mdina Cathedral

Tuesday, 24th June 2008
at 7.30pm



at the
METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL, MDINA

CONCERT OF CARMELO PACE MUSIC AT MDINA CATHEDRAL

PROGRAMME

The concert is returning to its original venue at the Mdina Cathedral after last having been held at the Manoel Theatre in 2006 on the occasion of Pace's birth centenary. Indeed Pace (1906-1993) had donated all his music, some 500 works or so which cover the whole spectrum of musical genre, to the Cathedral Museum and in 1989 he set up a Foundation for the promotion of his music, under the care of the Cathedral Museum.

Being presented in church, the choice of repertoire is obviously restricted to works with a religious tint. Indeed the concert opens with the music of the one-act biblical ballet, *Ruth*. This ballet in six scenes based on the story from the Old Testament was composed in 1979. Scored for chamber orchestra, the work uses a rather traditional idiom with abundant touches of Middle Eastern / Mediterranean flavour. After being premiered in 1980 on Xandir Malta by the Manoel Theatre Orchestra directed by Joseph Sammut, it is being performed in its entirety for the first time after one movement was played during a similar concert at Mdina Cathedral in 2003.

Almighty Father, you are the Lord of history. The biblical story of your faithful servant Ruth inspires us to be ever thoughtful and ever faithful as we discern your saving presence in all the events of our life, whether they are happy or painful. Instil within our hearts a deep sense of unstinting loyalty and faithful devotion as shown by Ruth to her mother-in-law Noemi. As events unfold, and as we respond to them with love, help us to do your will in all things.

The second work on the programme is completely contrasting. *It-triq* is a cantata for soprano and chamber orchestra. Set to a poem by George Zammit, this work uses a contemporary idiom with the chamber orchestra subtly supporting the voice in illustrating a person's resolution to follow the road leading to the little child of Betlehem notwithstanding the multiple difficulties encountered with in everyday's life. Composed in 1974, this work was premiered in 1997 at Mdina Cathedral and was interpreted and directed by soprano Rita Dimech and Colin Attard respectively. The coming performance will be *It-triq*'s second ever and will again be interpreted by Gozitan soprano Dimech, who will be appearing for the fifth time in a Pace concert.

Loving Lord, we know from experience that our paths are often riddled with difficulty and anxiety. Give us the strength to seek that hidden path which leads us to experience the simplicity and humility of Betlehem. Make us aware of the incessant promptings of your Spirit in our hearts, and help us to overcome the hurdles which separate us from your peace and your call to Christian commitment.

The third work on the programme is a very early work by Pace dating back to 1929. *Meditazione*, composed in a rather simple reflective religious mood in purely romantic style, was premiered in 1948 at the Catholic Action's auditorium under the composer's direction. Several arrangements of it are extant. The version being performed during the coming concert is that for string orchestra (edited by Colin Attard) which was last performed in 1999 also at Mdina Cathedral.

Eternal Father, amidst the bustle and bustle of the tensions marking our life on earth, we often long for moments of peace and quiet. It is only when we find our rest in your abiding presence that we can really savour the true meaning of life. As we thirst for you, increase our love for you. As we contemplate your tenderness, endow us with the joy of your presence. Lead us, Lord, to these peaceful oases of true rest and enduring serenity.

The concert ends in grand style with Pace's Easter cantata, *The Eternal Triumph*. Set to a text compiled by the composer himself from the Bible and other liturgical sources, the cantata is based on some episodes of and reflections on Christ's resurrection from death. This cantata, composed in 1966 and premiered that same year at the MCI by the Jesus of Nazareth Choir and Orchestra directed by Fr. Salv Galea, is arguably the most accessible of Pace's grand choral works. Scored for soloists, choir and full orchestra it somehow compromises between a romantic and 20th century idiom resulting in a style which is easily communicable to the audience and at the same time fresh and full of poignancy. This cantata will be performed by Gozo's *Gaulitanus Choir*, which has been regularly featuring in the Pace concerts since 1997. The soloists taking part are also members of the choir, namely soprano Rita Dimech (Mary Magdalene), tenor Joseph Calleja (Jesus), baritone Joseph Buttigieg (St. Paul), soprano Margaret Plant (1st Angel) and alto Stephanie Buttigieg (2nd Angel) with Rob Ricards as narrator.

Victorious and Risen Christ, your encounter with Mary Magdalene filled her with joy and zeal to spread the glad tidings of your new life in glory. Open our hearts to the new life of Easter that we too may proclaim with the Apostles our firm conviction that your resurrection has indeed transformed our darkness into light, and our fear into courage. Cleanse us of the old leaven of sin that we may truly be the Alleluia people while proclaiming – with conviction – that Alleluia is our song and our witness to all.

Gaulitanus Choir Orchestra led by Tatjana Chircop will be in attendance. The conductor is Gozitan Colin Attard, who is very closely associated with the Pace concerts having directed all such concerts since 1997.

Thanks for the thoughts prepared by Fr Dr Hector Scerri on the items of this programme.