



# The Ladies Choir



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When I was approached to write my article for this year's magazine I was in the middle of preparing the choir's items for the festas and for the Mellieħa Night's concert. Rehearsal time is always much too short for the choir and I must have looked totally exasperated at this point. Two of the choir merely smiled sweetly at me and reminded me that people don't want to read about my complaints. All our readers want to hear positive comments about the choir and their activities. They are right, of course, and so here are my positive thoughts for the year.

Firstly, we have welcomed some new faces to the choir. These ladies have all settled in incredibly well and have each brought with them different experiences. Some sing with other choirs whilst others are more experienced in other types of music.

It is good to have you with us and I hope that you continue to enjoy your music-making with us in the years to come.

There have been many personal triumphs for members of the choir this year, particularly in an academic sense. It is never easy to cope with work, courses, exams, family and extra-curricular activities and I know that sacrifices have to be made in order for the ladies to fulfill the choir's commitments at times. I am delighted to say that the choir are now getting to be really efficient at letting me know if they will be missing a rehearsal. I hope that this is because they realise that the choir is a team effort and really doesn't function so well if even one singer is missing.

There is never a quiet time of year for the Imperial Choir. They are always preparing for their next function and this year has been just as busy for



us. We continue to get repeat bookings at various venues, and this is most encouraging, but this year we also sang at Ta' Qali at the Grand Culinary and Crafts Christmas Festival and at Mgarr for the village's Council Day celebration evening. This was the first time that I have conducted the choir in Mgarr and it was an enjoyable experience.

We have sung on Boxing Day at the Maritim Hotel for several years now and there was an Irish lady there who was extremely pleased to hear us this year. She had heard the choir in 2011 when on holiday in Malta and so travelled over from Qawra, just in the hope that we might be singing in 2012. She was so happy to see us and must be our number one fan! She said that we made her holiday for her - praise indeed.

Another positive step for the choir this year is the willingness of other singers to take solo parts in the choir's items. Marisa Sammut and Melita Vella are very experienced soloists and can always be relied upon to take a leading role but some new faces will make their debut this summer. I am keeping their names a secret but you will see and hear them very soon. Well done to you all in advance - I am proud of your efforts!

The choir members are always very supportive

of each other in both a musical and personal sense and their cheerful and good-hearted approach ensures that rehearsals are always up-beat and a positive experience for us all. On a personal note I would like to thank those members of the choir who came to support me when I was singing in a recent concert in Birkirkara. I really appreciated seeing their smiling faces in the audience and they certainly seemed to enjoy the evening. Yet again I would like to thank Carmen Schembri for all of the help she gives me with the choir's growing library.

In conclusion, there has been a lot of research recently into the positive effects of singing in a choir. Singing is said to boost our immune system, reduce stress levels, help people cope with chronic pain and counter feelings of sadness and depression. Swedish researchers have found that choristers' heartbeats actually synchronize when they sing together and this brings about a calming effect that is as beneficial as yoga. Singing is an aerobic activity that increases oxygenation in the blood stream and exercises major muscle groups in the upper body. So, in conclusion, singing in a choir is not only fun, it is also healthy for us. As Ella Fitzgerald said « the only thing better than singing is more singing». I couldn't agree more!

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