

Carmina Burana



I have waited 17 years for the opportunity to attend a rendition of Carmina Burana and so it was with excitement mixed with great trepidation that I entered the Bahrain Conference Centre at the Crown Plaza.

Would the Manama Singers and the Bahrain Concert Sinfonia manage to pull it off?

Probably one of the lesser well known choral works, Carmina Burana by Carl Orff is sung in Mediaeval Latin, Middle High German and French.

The score is both challenging and hard to control.

The entire programme promised joy for me as I love opera,

choral work and the joy de vie of Carmina Burana.

The programme promised us a masterpiece and a musical extravaganza. That was exactly what we got!

On every level it was a feast for the eye, ears, soul and heart.

The paintings in the foyer under the title of 'O Fortuna' were an inspired idea. They gave a glimpse into the treat that was to come, especially for those who had no idea what was in store for them.

From the moment the lights dimmed and the opening chords of the dramatic Grand March from Verdi's Aida filled the concert hall, the audience was entranced.

This was quickly followed by Tchaikovsky's Marche Slave. An inspired piece of programming that led the audience by the hand into what was to follow.

There is nothing quite like the connection at a live performance between the musicians, singers dancers and their audience. It was palpable and encircled everyone.

Alistair Auld certainly produced a masterpiece, keeping the 118 Manama Singers, 65 members of the Sinfonia, 37 St Christopher School Choristers and three soloists totally under his control, yet allowing them free reign to insinuate their personalities into the performance.

It is unfair to pick out any one person for praise, because it was their collective work that made the evening so awe-inspiring and unforgettable.

Michael De Costa brought all his operatic skills to the pieces he sang with such beautiful resonance and delicious gusto.

Mark Le Brocq captured the quintessential essence of the swan despairing of its fate making my heart clench with emotion.

I watched the lady seated to my left sit straighter and lean towards Beverly Chiat as the soprano balanced her vocal acumen with the challenges of remaining in role.

I heard a soft breath and "Wonderful" to my left as the last notes fell away.

The Visage Dancers were delightful and had put a lot of thought into their choreography.

My one sorrow for the evening is that they had to perform with a backdrop of 65 bobbing heads and arms in the orchestra detracting from their performance.

St Christopher School 5th/6th Form Choristers gave an admirable performance, especially in not being overwhelmed by the audience or the project.

The Manama Singers gave outstanding performances without a 'duff' note between them and the Bahrain Concert Sinfonia were just amazing.

The audience got a BD60 concert for considerably less!

Lastly, Alistair Auld earned his laurels as conductor of the Sinfonia and inspiration behind the performance.

Congratulations to all the performers – they brought magic and perfection to their craft.

Review: Christine Hasan