

SINGING WITH YOUR HANDS



SATURDAY, 07 MAY 2011

By Mercedes Villegas



Last week, while half of Valencia was holidaying and the whole of Britain was preparing for the royal wedding, the DIVISI CHOIR, - a group of 40 people, aged 16-65, got on a coach bound for Malgrat de Mar, a summer resort near Blanes, a beautiful place this one, by the way, where we visited its gorgeous botanical gardens offering spectacular views of the Costa Brava.

I travelled with the choir just for fun since they had been invited to participate in a competition of choirs in Malgrat. As Mr Jose Vicente de Sousa, the director of the choir put it, Valencia has a long tradition in music bands whereas Catalonia is famous for its many choirs, both regions thus sharing their passion for music in a different way.

The award was actually for a Catalonian group, a very good choir but the best performance of the song "LES MANS" by well-known Valencian singer/songwriter Raimon, was clearly Divisi's. Yes, all the different choirs had to sing this particular song following the same score. The song itself uses simple words that everybody understands but it's food for thought: "When I meet a man, I look at his hands, dirty hands of those who kill people but delicate hands of those that make them kill people".

Foreigners are shocked at the sight of Valencians celebrating everything with fireworks and firecrackers. Well, my impression after joining the choir on this particular tour is that they do the same through singing. They sang on the bus, in the hotel, in the street and, of course, in the church where the venue took place. And they had had special rehearsal sessions before even beginning the trip to get prepared for the concert! They feel music in a different way and as I said they felt every single word their beautiful voices uttered in that song and in the rest of their repertoire.

We also had time for visiting Girona, only 65 kilometres away from Malgrat. We first went to its magnificent cathedral, which has the widest arched span in the world, then to the Arab baths and finally had a walk in the Jewish quarter to end in a typical restaurant near the river. Girona is cosy and quiet and its mediaeval cobbled streets invite you to come back.

And back to the hotel we went, to sing again and get prepared for the next concert. There are teachers, housewives, nurses, clerks, doctors and students in the choir but they always find time to meet every week for a few hours and sing. And they DO look happy to me. Perhaps this is why they sang LES Mans (the hands) so well. Everybody regretted the rain last week. They even looked happy singing in the rain!

Last Updated (Saturday, 07 May 2011)

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