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The MozART quartet brings us its unique mix of melody and fun

By BARRY DAVIS **Published:** MAY 18, 2022 22:33



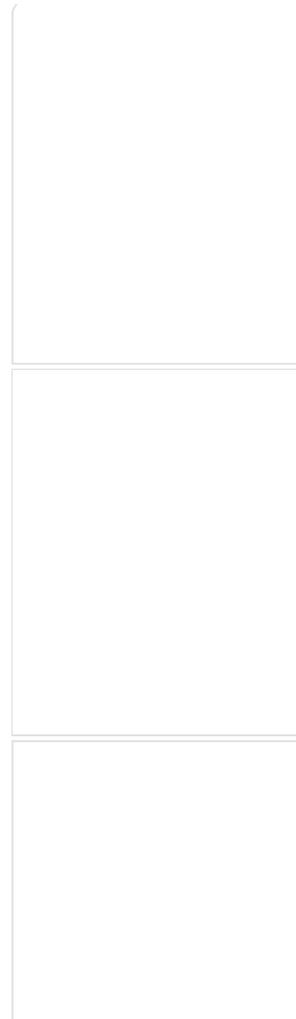
THE POLISH-based MozART Group.
(photo credit: Ottavio Tomasini)

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Be honest. When was the last time you allowed yourself to laugh out loud or even guffaw a little at a classical music concert? The chances are the answer to that is never. And, had you had the temerity to give vent to joyous emotion in such a setting, you would probably have been summarily hushed, if not unceremoniously slung out on your rear end. Members of the audiences at the



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The Polish-based quartet is [due back here](#), bona fide string instruments and laughter-inducing accessories in tow, for four concerts in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa, May 19-21. Basically and unceremoniously put, if you haven't caught the MozART gang on any of its previous jaunts over here, you're in for one helluva entertaining time.

This is classical music meets pop culture meets acrobatics and a fair bit of lampooning into the bargain. But, make no mistake, these gents are fully



of – naturally – Mozart, Bach, Beethoven and Paganini, but also soundtracks from such blockbuster movies as *The Godfather*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, and *The Good The Bad and The Ugly*. Then there are some Beatles hits and, delightfully, the closing song from Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life." Now, if that isn't a varied fun lineup, I don't know what is.

Consider the group's declaration of intent on the quartet's web site and you get the irreverent entertainment picture. "We exist despite the sober formality of great concert halls, despite the boredom of classical musicians' life, despite fanatic lovers of classical music and despite fans of rock, rap or pop who are afraid of classical music. We treat our muse with a humorous irony and we're sure, she will have nothing against it!"

Cellist Boleslaw Blaszczyk feels we should all exercise a decent dosage of disrespect from time to time, particularly at this stage of human evolution. He also feels that helps him and his pals stick together and keep on roaming the



a lot longer and I hope we will talk in another 27 years," he laughs.

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TOGETHER WITH violinists Filip Jaslar and Michał Sikorski, and violist Paweł Kowaluk, Błaszczyk has been merrily giving his all to the original charts, while engaging in all manner of antics that generally have their audiences in stitches. One has Jaslar maintaining strict tempo with a ping pong bat and ball, while spinning out a melody – pizzicato – on his violin. Then, Błaszczyk gets in on the act by somehow regulating the flow of air from a balloon he inflates, to produce the melody from Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling In Love." There really appears to be no limits to the quartet's gag-making combos.

Despite, as yet, falling way short of the Stones' timeline, the cellist feels he and his pals can keep on going for a while. "We have a similar sense of humor. I think humor and music go together." Błaszczyk says that offering the public a healthy mix of popular music and comedy is just the ticket these days, and offers all-round rewards. "That keeps us healthy and helps us stay away from actual problems, like the last two years with the pandemic, and last month's war thing [in Ukraine]. People now, after all these tragedies and drama, need comedy as never before. They need to smile and laugh."



That may not solve all our problems, but it just might help us tackle the tough stuff. He says, "It is not about forgetting everything, forgetting reality. I think it is a matter of being healthy, and being alive. And humor is a very big part of it."

Having crisscrossed the planet umpteen times over the years, the group members have had ample opportunity to get a handle on what makes their audience members tick, and more importantly, what gets them giggling. "The differences between the sense of humor of different nations is very interesting," Błaszczyk continues. "I think it is a great thing for sociologists and psychologists and historians, but also for us."



The quartet has picked up a few tips on merriment making on their rounds. It seems there is far more to their bowing than meets the eye, or ear. “We are kind of sociologists. As we travel around the world, we look at our audience and we very carefully observe their reaction, because observing the reactions is part of our work,” Błaszczuk notes. Fine tuning is the name of the ongoing game. “We want to make our pieces better and better. It is fascinating for us.”

THE QUARTET’S inclusion of the Monty Python number in its current repertoire put me in mind of a tale related by Eric Idle, who said that Germans had asked the British troupe to go to Germany to perform – in German – because, as Idle risibly put it, “Germans have no sense of humor.”

While not entirely concurring with that notion, Błaszczuk says he and his mates are keen to spread the funny word as far and wide as possible. “Also Germans need comedy,” he chuckles. “We performed there quite a lot of times, in different parts of the country, which is also very different.” Still, Błaszczuk can’t



Then again, it is not the MozART quartet way to milk laughs, come what may. On a recent working visit to Northern Ireland, they performed an emotive reading of “Danny Boy,” a traditional local air, in a Londonderry cathedral. That was a typical example of sensing the ambiance and tailoring the show accordingly. “That was our first time in Northern Ireland. It was quite a nice experience. My impression was that people there are quite conservative and old-fashioned,” says Błaszczyk.

Still, the witty stuff went down well enough. “We played “Danny Boy” for the encore and we did our regular comedy program before that and they were quite enthusiastic. They were a bit stiff, also, because it was in this big church, with a very high stage. But, I think they enjoyed it.”

The foursome should have a very different entertainment experience here. “We always think about our audiences in advance,” Błaszczyk observes. “We try to plan our shows. It will be friendly for everybody.” He says he and the rest of the quartet are delighted to be heading back this way. “I think there will be a lot of surprises for people in Israel,” he laughs. “We are so happy to be coming back to Israel.”

The feeling is entirely mutual.

*For tickets and more information, contact the Jerusalem Theater at *6226 and visit www.bimot.co.il, the Israeli Opera - 03-692-7777 and www.israel-opera.co.il, and the Haifa Auditorium – 04-837-7777 and www.barak-tickets.co.il.*

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