



Valletta Baroque Festival

Music & art in the heart of the Mediterranean

10–15 January 2024 (MK 160)

6 days • £2,910

(including tickets to 7 performances)

Lecturer: Professor John Bryan

Baroque music in one of the most complete and compact of Baroque cities.

The concerts alternate with daily lectures by our musicologist and visits to Malta's principal architectural and archaeological sites.

The 2024 festival extends to surrounding towns including the ancient capital of Mdina.

Among the artists: Vox Luminis, Robin Pharo and Près de votre oreille, Zefiro Ensemble, Holland Baroque and Wu Wei, Alon Sariel.

Malta is a highly apposite setting for the performance of Baroque music. During this period the island was ruled by the Knights of Malta or Knights Hospitaller, Valletta was completely rebuilt and the knights themselves were vigorous patrons of the arts, including music and architecture.

One of Europe's oldest working theatres is the Teatru Manoel, built in 1731 at the behest of the Grand Master of the order, Fra António Manoel de Vilhena. With only 600 seats, the theatre is a masterpiece of carpentry, with three tiers of wooden boxes, gilded and painted, and a trompe-l'oeil ceiling. Opera companies visited Malta regularly, performing works by Hasse, Piccinni and Galuppi. Other buildings which host concerts during the festival include the Collegiate Church of the Immaculate Conception (1732), abundantly rich with superb works of art, the National Library (1776) and the Cathedral Museum in Mdina, a magnificent palace of 1733.

Valletta occupies a beautiful position on one of the world's greatest natural harbours, and has fine buildings that still dominate the city. Our itinerary balances the concerts with lectures from our musicologist and visits and excursions to some of the great sites of the Maltese archipelago led by a local guide.

Itinerary

Day 1: Valletta. Fly at c. 11.30am (Air Malta) from London Heathrow. Drive to Valletta, a peninsula flanked by fine natural harbours and once the most strongly fortified city in Christendom. All five nights are spent here.



Valletta, steel engraving c. 1850.

Day 2: Valletta. A lecture followed by a morning walk to introduce the city. Survey the massive fortifications protecting the landward approach and view the Grand Harbour from the ramparts. Afternoon visit to the Co-Cathedral of St John, one of the most interesting of Baroque buildings with lavish carved wall decoration, ceiling paintings, magnificent tombs and two paintings by Caravaggio. Some free time and an early dinner before the evening concert at St John's Co-Cathedral: *ViBE and KorMalta: St John Passion (Bach)*.

Day 3: Valletta. A morning lecture precedes some free time. Midday concert at the Oratory of the Onorati: *Robin Pharo & Ensemble Près de votre oreille, Marin Marais Project*. An afternoon visit to the National Museum of Art, installed in the Auberge d'Italie. Evening concert at the Teatru Manoel: *Zefiro Ensemble, Alberto Bernardini (director): Follia - Dreams, Nightmares, Madness, The Charme of Disorder in Music*.

Day 4: Valletta, Mdina. Lecture followed by a short drive to Mdina, Malta's ancient capital and centre of the local aristocracy, an unspoilt citadel of great beauty with medieval walls and grand palazzi. Introductory walk then midday concert at Aula Capitolare: *Alon Sariel*

(*mandolinist*): *Plucked Bach*. In the afternoon visit Palazzo Falson, a 13th-century private residence and now a house museum. Return to Valletta for an early dinner and evening concert at the Teatru Manoel: *Holland Baroque and Wu Wei: Silk Baroque*.

Day 5: Valletta. Morning lecture and visit within Valletta. Midday concert at the Basilica of St Dominic: *Lucile Boulanger (viola de gamba): Bach-Abel: an exquisite filiation*. A private tour of the Casa Rocca Piccola follows, a 16th-century palazzo owned by the Marquis de Piro, providing insight to the Maltese nobility of the last 400 years. Early evening concert at Teatru Manoel: *Vox Luminis: Henry Purcell, King Arthur*. Dinner follows the performance.

Day 6: Valletta, Paola, Tarxien. In Paola, the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the only prehistoric underground burial site in the world. The Tarxien Temples site is the most complex in Malta and would have been the most decorative. It was rediscovered by accident in 1902 and is the source of outstanding carved reliefs and statues. Lunch then transfer to the airport for the return flight, arriving at London Heathrow at c. 7.30pm.

Valletta Baroque Festival
continued

Casa Rocca Piccola can only be visited by special arrangement and is subject to confirmation in late 2023.

Lecturer

Professor John Bryan. Emeritus professor of Music at the University of Huddersfield and a practising musician with the Rose Consort of Viols. He founded the North East Early Music Forum, is an artistic adviser to York Early Music Festival and chair of the Viola da Gamba Society. He has been the speaker on many Martin Randall Festivals.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £2,910 or £2,770 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,230 or £3,090 without flights. **Supplement per person for a harbour view,** two sharing: £175; single occupancy: £350.

Included: flights (economy class) with Air Malta (aircraft: Airbus 320neo); private coach; accommodation as below; breakfasts, 4 dinners and 1 lunch with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips and taxes; the services of the lecturer, tour manager and local guide.

Music: first category concert tickets to 7 concerts, costing c.£240.

Accommodation. Hotel Phoenicia, Valletta (phoeniciamalta.com): a 5-star hotel in Valletta, furnished with style and character, the best in Valletta and just outside the city gates. Harbour view rooms are available for a supplement. *Rooms for solo travellers are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? The programme of visits involve walks of up to 30 minutes. Valletta is very hilly and streets are roughly paved with frequent flights of steps. You will need to be comfortable with everyday walking and stair climbing. Average distance by coach per day: 4 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 20 participants.