

'I will sing in Piano's opera-house development'

Tenor Joseph Calleja says he would be happy to be the first artist to perform on the site of the opera house ruins once the Renzo Piano project is complete even though he would have preferred to see it being transformed into a roofed national theatre.

In an interview with Steve Mallia today on timesofmalta.com and The Sunday Times, the tenor says: "I'm very heartened to see that the government has decided to keep (the opera house site in Valletta) for cultural use. It's not the best solution... but at least it leaves the option to do it properly one day, so I'm very happy about that."

Calleja, speaking after his penultimate performance as Alfredo in La Traviata at the Royal Opera House in London, was universally praised by international critics who watched the sold-out shows.

In a wide-ranging interview, the tenor speaks about the ups and downs of life as an opera singer, comparisons with Pavarotti and his July 19 concert with Michael Bolton at the Luxol Grounds.

Comments

P. Bonello (4 days, 4 hours ago)

We keep going round in circles. The site of the Royal Opera House is too small to contain a modern opera house like we find abroad. The stage alone would take almost half the space leaving very little space for it to be viable. On the other hand I've been waiting sixty years to be rid of those ruins bombed out during the last world war. I say it's time to clear the space and rebuild; maybe not another opera house (if they could deepen the stage at MCC it would serve just fine) but any building compatible with Valletta architecture would do just fine. That way we would be making best use of the site and enhancing the entrance to our capital city. Maybe we could have a concert hall with an adjoining music academy instead!

Jeffrey Mallia (4 days, 11 hours ago)

Thanks for your offer Mr Calleja and well done.....But would you still be singing when you reach 90, cos this project might take 50 years to complete !!

M Gauci (4 days, 13 hours ago)

@Ronald Cauchi

...the philistine midgets asked for it. They still happily flock to vote for their Lord King and the Court of Midgetland.

Joseph Calleja is too right to express his shock at the lack of mobilisation from the people. No one seemed to notice the other options mentioned for a proper centre of the

performing arts.... and neither has the government or anyone else uttered a word about this.

Francis Attard (4 days, 13 hours ago)

What would have been the opinion of those Master Maltese Craftsmen who build that Wonder?

g.c.Forte (4 days, 18 hours ago)

@ R. Scicluna... I think that you have made a BIG Gaffe, because you do not have to be an expert to give an opinion, just as you are doing. So , you are suggesting to have an open " teatro dell` opera " for the summer season, obviously we need one for winter season too. Are you considering the limitation of space we have to built a theater for opera, how can we have an arena like they have in Italy. In my OPINION (which I have the right to, like you after all) we will built the Opera House like it was before, and if there will be the need to have an open air opera, no problem, we use ta Qali, Luxol, or another place.

Ronald Cauchi (4 days, 18 hours ago)

..... and a mighty king rose in the land of the philistines. He walked into their city and saw an empty plot of land. The populace were clamouring for a musical centre forgetting, ungrateful wretches that they were, that every year he was giving them the Eurovision Song festival. Instead he announced that he needed a talking shop where His voice and the voice of the other Princes of the land could be heard with ease and comfort. So He sent for a Master Builder who designed Him a parliament that outpassed the hanging gardens of Babylon for its magnicence. And the Lord king was well pleased. Now he knew that his name would be written in stone and last till the end of time.

R. Scicluna (4 days, 18 hours ago)

I think we have to find a compromise...yes, would be great to have it all and nostalgia does count.....but at the same time, this is an idea generated by a world famous arch. who seems to appreciate what we have.... I will trust his proposal and I'm sure it will be a unique site...

Mike Magri (4 days, 19 hours ago)

@.. Mr. R. Scicluna.. I`m sorry, but your argument does not hold at ALL Sir... You yourself is saying that these opera theatres mentioned, are good for the summer season only. So what about the rest of the year..?? In Italy, such LUXURY of having open air theatres AS WELL could be afforded. But i am sure you know very well as well, that in Italy there are tens of very well known and famous, `Enclosed` Opera Theatres.. Like, Teatro Alla Scala, La Fenice, San Carlo, Massimo, Cominale di Bologna, Verdi, to mention just a few.. On the contrary, i strongly feel, that in Malta we should start by AT LEAST, having ONE PROPER OPERA HOUSE right..?? Then, in another 30 years time, we could think of going for an open-air theatre at ta Qali, for example.. BUT... At the moment, what Malta needs is a Proper Opera House in that Proper Place of Valletta, and not a halve-baked arena..!! AND YOU DON`T HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT TO COME TO THAT CONCLUSION, ALSO... IT`S JUST COMMON SENSE, THAT`S ALL..

Anne Marie Kissaun (4 days, 20 hours ago)

Mr. Scicluna, it would be nice to have options i.e. seasonal theatres, like in Rome. However, Malta has neither at this point in time. Therefore, I would prefer to start off with what was had "A NATIONAL OPERA HOUSE" as it was before it was bombed. I think Valetta deserves this especially being a World Heritage. Opera Houses are found world wide, therefore, why not MALTA.

R Scicluna (5 days ago)

Do any of you know that the open air project is not that unique after all? Why are you making all the fuss? The idea of open air might not be to everyone's tastes but it's a great option which some of us less 'cultured' people actually like!

quote "Teatro dell'Opera in Rome holds its summer opera and ballet season at the Baths of Caracalla (Terme di Caracalla), where you can enjoy opera under the stars in the open air" unquote!

http://www.inspirediversions.com/eventfeature.cfm?id_eve=991

or maybe : arena di verona?

quote "He nostalgically recalls that, singing the famous aria "Nessun dorma", while looking up at the sky enlightened by the silvery Moon" unquote

<http://www.arena.it/>

Just complain about everything giving the impression that you are experts in everything!

Alex Spiteri (5 days, 2 hours ago)

I never thought for an instance that such a cultured person would ever endorse such a farce!

There's nothing cultural in this project. The project is only about building a house of parliament.

Mike Magri (5 days, 2 hours ago)

Dear ALL... This is Mr. Calleja as reported by Ms. Cynthia Busuttil, on the Sunday Times of Dec. 7th, 2008.

Quote.. Mr. Calleja who has performed in many of the world's major theatres, believes that Malta NEEDS A PROPER OPERA HOUSE.. " I do not think it is in the national interest of Malta to be one of the few countries of the world which does not have an opera house.." Pointing out that even Gozo is equipped with two opera houses, Astra and Aurora, which can stage big productions. Mr. Calleja believes that the site should be developed into a multi-purpose STATE-OF-THE-ART auditorium suitable for musicals, opera, theatre, ballet and even special conferences to make it more financially feasible.. Unquote

Now in the above article, Mr. Calleja seems to have back-tracked from his original beliefs, by saying that he still would be happy to sing in Piano's opera house development. I think that an opera tenor of his calibre, should refrain from singing to the stars in the sky..!! Also, He is happy that we can do it properly one day...!!! When Mr. Calleja.... in another 60 years...??

Solution.. DON'T do Parliament.. Spend it on THE THEATRE instead..

Francis Attard (5 days, 5 hours ago)

I suggest to Joseph Calleja that when the event will happen he will include Enzo Guzman's 'It-Teatru' in his program.

That song will remain popular forever. What would be needed is a periodical adjournment to the number of years it would have been in ashes.

Stanley Cassar Darien (5 days, 11 hours ago)

Newspaper headline 2013 : Joseph Calleja brought the roof down with an amazing performance.

Joe Fenech (5 days, 12 hours ago)

Every person who gets a nice cheque would sing!!

This does not mean that the project is successful! There has been too much political interference and on top Piano was not the best man for an urban conversion projects (this is not his speciality!).

v.pulis (5 days, 18 hours ago)

In the event that Joseph Calleja gets to sing in the roofless theatre. Can I stand outside in front of Palazzo Ferreria and listen to him from there?! Or better still, can I go up and watch him from beneath the block of flats? I don't suppose I will have to pay! :-)

Sandro Pace (5 days, 18 hours ago)

I share with all the views that a closed theatre is much better than the cage presented today as a theatre. No great performer as Joseph Calleja would prefer open-air performance over a closed one. Inside a good acoustically designed closed theatre the sound is effortlessly fuller and much more beautiful. This holds even for plays.

But a theatre is no ordinary building. And it would have costed. Our politicians decided to be the prima donnas and came with a parliament instead. An unrequired one for that matter, for to produce laws, the present building would have sufficed. You dont need much. Its all waste of money. UK parliamentarians meet back in Westminster, which is primarily a Chatedral.

And please stop the rhetoric. Parliaments are not all symbols of democracy. Even Hitler and Stalin convened in them.

My opinion is that a nice proper theatre would have added more value, even economic, than a parliament. Perhaps a case of opportunity cost gone wrong.

Ronnie Gauci (5 days, 18 hours ago)

But let's admit it, Piano came up with brilliant ideas; leave the theatre almost as it is, demolish the City Gate, build up Pjazza Helsen and plant some trees in the ditch, ideas worth 4.5 millions, only a genius could have come up with them. What worries me is that both political parties seem happy about it.

Daniel Azzopardi (5 days, 18 hours ago)

The design for the "opera house" looks more like a subateo pitch to me.

Where do you want to sing my dear Joseph?

P Debono (5 days, 18 hours ago)

Joseph Calleja and Kevin Borg are the jewel in Malta's crown.

It's a pity that most of the media fails to recognise their outstanding achievements in favour of some Eurovision wannabees.

v.pulis (5 days, 19 hours ago)

It's not the best solution... but at least it leaves the option to do it properly one day, so I'm very happy about that."

Sorry but don't think so.

Now if the parliament had not taken up Freedom square that would have been possible but can you envisage another large building almost touching parliament?

When the designs to the entrance of Valletta were changed to include another huge structure the project took a different twist and since parliament is seen as more important than art and culture Piano was constrained to choose. To top it all instead of a much needed museum of contemporary art we are to have a political museum. That feels like rubbing salt in the wound.

Anne Marie Kissaun (5 days, 19 hours ago)

Well, well, well, I never expected to hear the above comment from Joseph Calleja saying that he would be proud to be the first one to sing in Renzo Piano's future plan for the Opera House. How can we call it an Opera House without a roof . As far as I know a house would have an overhead cover. In that case, we will have to change its name. But then, the majority of the public does want AN OPERA HOUSE. One other point, we must make sure that this will be financially viable making sure that it will be an all seasons building and not to be used in the summer months only. So, I hope, that the public will keep hammering about this unwelcome idea.

charles zammit (5 days, 19 hours ago)

i once saw a football match on big screen at the royal opera house ruins while i was in valletta...i believe it was italy vs croatia ... so what i bet the organisers spent only a few quids to make this event happen and now we the maltese public have to fork out 80 million euros and thats only an estimate to maybe watch a similar match...or hear our world renound tenor at that but its a buy one get two free with piano we will be also getting a hole in the bastion and a new parliament where maybe flowers will grow after all.

Lewis Ellul (5 days, 20 hours ago)

An open-air tennis court in our capital that could double as an open-air theatre if necessary. Now that's what the genius is all about.

Pamela Hansen (1 hour, 51 minutes ago)

Correction; We live in a country of philistines.

Exactly

L-ixkubetta fiha l-grillu u l-malti jaghmel kif jaqbillu!

Pamela Hansen (5 days, 20 hours ago)

I have no problem with an open air theatre, Mr Bugeja. I love the idea of keeping the ruins and had a great time watching the Louis Murray dance company under the stars in the open air theatre at the Lincoln Centre in New York.

I was just pointing out our summer hazards to the enjoyment of good theatre.

Mr Bugeja telling us that we could still hear the blasts of the murtali in a bunker's strong room says it all.

Anthony Roberts (5 days, 21 hours ago)

Joseph I often tune in to Classic fm either on the Internet or on Campus fm and it is wonderful to hear your lovely voice on an English radio station. Your talent is awesome, and being Maltese makes us very proud of you. Its a shame that you will not be singing

here in a an opera house that would compliment you. Alas the government feels they are more important.

Pamela Hansen (5 days, 22 hours ago)

Correction; We live in a country of philistines.

George Bugeja (5 days, 22 hours ago)

You could probably hear the blast of murtali taz-zewg hsejjes from the strongroom in Saddam's bunker. Placing a roof on Piano's theatre wouldn't make much difference. It would only spoil the experience of enjoying theatre under the stars.

Mark Vella Bardon (5 days, 22 hours ago)

I paid a little fortune to hear this our shining star sing with Bolton next weekend only to find out that he will be joined by unannounced singers who I wasn't interested in. Is it going to be another Xarabank may I ask? Do we get a refund?

S Axisa (5 days, 22 hours ago)

Mr Gauci .Yes.yes you are a genius. An open air swimming pool in Valletta, albeit in Winter and unheated and a Greco Roman Theatre in Summer.The Maltese are nothing if not original. Now why couldn't the E4.500.000 brain think of that?.

Pamela Hansen (5 days, 22 hours ago)

Just don't do it in the festa season. The Arditti Quartet had to stop playing in the Palace courtyard last night while the bombi were in full flow. What a shame that such an excellent concert had to be interrupted.

The leader Irvine Arditti joked that he thought we were being bombarded. Little does he know that the blitzkrieg goes on all summer long!

We love in a country of philistines. When I went to get my car parked near Hasting Gardens after midnight , "Eviva Espana" was blasting away loud enough to drown the petards, no doubt to please the masses attending the Marsovin festival. Poor residents!

BRIAN MURPHY (5 days, 22 hours ago)

That will be a singing beginning for our Opera House having a Maltese tenor performing at its Grand Opening
Brian Murphy

Tom A, Restall (5 days, 22 hours ago)

BRAVO.....a great tenor who is making MALTA proud.

Mr. Calleja's comments that he is proud to be Maltese should be copied by all of us.

May he continue to delight all the opera lovers all over the world.

May God bless him.

D Grima (5 days, 22 hours ago)

Look you guys,the Prime Minister and those around him wanted a new Parliament and no new Opera House or Theatre and that's precisely what he got. A new Parliament and an open space.Those of us who don't like it,and there are many, will have to lump it.We've been hijacked. for want of a better expression.

Colin Zammit Lupi (5 days, 23 hours ago)

So the politicians will build themselves a new building and never mind what the people want...

E Grima (5 days, 23 hours ago)

I second Carmel Attard's comment re seeing you here at the Sydney Opera House one day soon. What an honour that would be for us Maltese-Australians! If I have to, I will mortgage my house to buy the tickets.

cecil herbie jones (5 days, 23 hours ago)

Joseph I stand in awe at your fantastic achievements and you are a great great performer. You have made Malta proud. It should now be Malta's turn to make you proud, by inviting you to sit down with Sig Piano and 'together' develop a National Theatre at the ex Royal Opera House Theatre site. We owe you at least that much.

Ronnie Gauci (5 days, 23 hours ago)

Hopefully it will not rain. So now it's a development not a theatre anymore, 80 million euros down the drain for the PN to, hopefully, win the next election.

Carmel Attard (6 days ago)

We are so proud of you Joseph. When are we going to see you at the Sydney Opera House??

John Busuttil (6 days, 1 hour ago)

This is a great initiative by the Times. Well done! Joseph Calleja is a great ambassador for Malta and makes us all proud.

Paul A Attard (6 days, 1 hour ago)

Bravo! You're making Malta proud.
