



## Valletta Baroque Festival

Music & history in the heart of the Mediterranean

**20–25 January 2025 (ML 615)**

£3,090 • 6 days

Speaker: 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 2025 festival extends to surrounding towns including Buskett and Naxxar.

Among the artists: Les Arts Florissants, La Petite Ecurie, Bruno Procoprio, Concerto de Cavalieri.

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 venues to host concerts during the festival include Verdala Palace, Buskett, the summer residence of the Maltese president, and Palazzo Parisio, with Sicilian Baroque interiors.

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 (KM Malta Airlines) from London Heathrow. Drive to Valletta, a peninsula flanked by fine natural harbours and once the most strongly fortified city in Christendom. An introductory lecture before dinner. All five nights are spent here.

**Day 2: Valletta, Buskett, Tarxien.** A morning walk to introduce the city: survey the massive fortifications protecting the landward



Valletta, steel engraving c. 1850.

approach and view the Grand Harbour from the ramparts. Drive to Buskett for a midday concert at Verdala Palace: *La Petite Ecurie: No Strings Attached*. Return to Valletta for an early dinner before an evening concert at Tarxien Parish Church: *The Abos Project & Consort: French and Brazilian Baroque*.

**Day 3: Valletta.** A morning lecture precedes a 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. Midday concert at the Oratory of the Onorati: *Bruno Procoprio and Friends: Rameau Pièces de Clavecin en Concert*. Afternoon guided tour of the Teatru Manoel before returning for an evening concert: *Concerto de Cavalieri: L'Estro Intelligente*.

**Day 4: Valletta, Naxxar.** Lecture followed by a short drive to Naxxar for a midday recital at Palazzo Parisio: *Justin Taylor (harpsichord): Bach & L'Italie*. In the afternoon an optional visit to MUZA, the National Museum of Art housed in the Auberge d'Italie. An early dinner then evening concert at the Teatru Manoel: *Concerto de Cavalieri & Samuel Mariño: Samuel Mariño - My Voyage to Italy*.

**Day 5: Valletta.** A private tour of the Casa Rocca Piccola, a 16th-century palazzo owned by the Marquis de Piro, providing insight to the Maltese nobility of the last 400 years. A free afternoon is followed by a lecture and early dinner then a concert at Teatru Manoel: *Les Arts Florissants: William Christie 80th Birthday Concert*.

**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.

*Casa Rocca Piccola can only be visited by special arrangement and is subject to confirmation in late 2024.*

Valletta Baroque Festival  
continued

## 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:** £3,090 or £2,940 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,590 or £3,440 without flights. **Supplement per person for a harbour view room,** two sharing: £185; single occupancy: £370.

**Included:** flights (economy class) with KM Malta Airlines (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 1 hour. 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: 12 miles.

**Group size:** between 10 and 20 participants.