



My Life – a week with Gianluca Marcianò

Lebanon's first female member of parliament and founded the festival in 1994 to revive the country's cultural life after 17 years of war. Over the years, the festival has invited artists such as Evelyn Glennie, Vadim Repin and Gidon Kremer to perform. It's amazing how Myrna has kept this festival going throughout turbulent times in the Levant. The festival takes place at the Emile Bustani Auditorium and in other locations around Beirut.

We have some great plans for 2014, including international soloists and guest orchestras, all centred around the theme of music and nature. I'm delighted to be conducting Beethoven's extraordinary *9th Symphony* during the festival. It's tricky to coordinate everyone from abroad and arrange rehearsal schedules because of the time difference – but I have all the latest technology to help. My phone is often bleeping with emails and calls.

Friday

This evening I have another performance of *Madam Butterfly*, so I arrive in central London around lunchtime and have a bite to eat at an Italian restaurant – I try a new one every time. I take a short walk in the afternoon and stop off for a coffee. I then get dressed for the performance. Before we enter the pit, I wish every musician 'Toi, toi, toi!' for the performance – a ritual of mine.

Saturday

Aside from conducting, I'm also a pianist and enjoy playing when I get the chance. I spend today practising for my debut at the Wigmore Hall with mezzo-soprano Nino Surguladze. It's great to work with Nina – we have performed together many times before with an orchestra, but this is the first

Monday

In a break from the run of Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* at English National Opera, I've come to Georgia, where I am music director and principal conductor of the Tbilisi State Opera and Ballet Theatre. A major renovation is currently underway, so, together with general director Giorgi Jordania, we are busy planning for the reopening in Autumn 2014. We have a gala concert and CD release, *Pearls of Georgia*, lined up to mark the occasion, featuring Georgian opera stars including Nino Surguladze. Giorgi and I discuss ways to encourage co-productions in Tbilisi, as well as auditions for singers and orchestral musicians. Then I head to the airport for a flight to the UK.

Tuesday

Back in London I catch up with Wasfi Kani to discuss the next season at Grange Park Opera in Hampshire, where I've conducted Italian opera since 2010. Next year I'll lead Verdi's *La traviata*, from 31 May to 5 July, directed by Lindsay Posner with a cast that includes Damiano Salerno and Olivia Ray. I will also be conducting a revival of Antony McDonald's production of Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* from

6-12 July, directed by Peter Relton. Wasfi and I talk over dinner about plans for the productions, including rehearsal schedules and orchestral parts.

Wednesday

I'm really enjoying conducting *Madam Butterfly* in the revival of Anthony Minghella's award-winning production at ENO. Everyone has made me feel very welcome. Today I'm rehearsing with the second cast; we have performances until December. I'm working with tenor Gwyn Hughes Jones, who is preparing to take over the role of FB Pinkerton from Timothy Richards for two shows. There's a very positive atmosphere at ENO and I feel comfortable with the music, the performers and the production team – there are lots of smiles.

Thursday

Today I have a meeting in London with Myrna Bustani, president of the Al Bustan Festival in Lebanon, where I am artistic director. We are finalising the programme for next year's event, which takes place from 18 February to 23 March in Beirut. Myrna is an incredible woman – she was

time in a recital. I started my career as a conductor with Nino, so I'm honoured to be accompanying her for her forthcoming Wigmore recital debut – such a prestigious venue, it's very exciting.

This evening I study symphonic scores for Vivacello, the international cello festival in Moscow. I'm conducting the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra on 16 November, which is dedicated to the memory of Daniil Shafran, and features works by Kancheli and Tchaikovsky. Giovanni Sollima will also be performing his new work, *Folktales*, for cello and orchestra, which is a great thrill for me.

Sunday

I'm taking a day off to enjoy London. There are so many wonderful concerts to choose from and I also enjoy going to the cinema to catch the latest movies. I meet up with some of my friends, including the orchestral players who I'm working with, and we enjoy a lovely dinner together before the start of a new week.

MARCIANÒ CONDUCTS AT ENO UNTIL 1 DECEMBER 2013.

www.gianlucamarciano.com