

QPO, MDR Radio Choir enthral audience at Katara



An orchestra performs a piece during the event at Katara, in Doha, on Sunday. (HANSON K JOSEPH)

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THE Qatari audience got to enjoy famous Lebanese composer Marcel Khalife's Arab Spring-inspired suite *Orientale* and his son Rami Khalifé's *Requiem* at Katara Opera House as the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO) and the MDR Radio Choir of Leipzig, Germany, thrilled the audience with choral music on Sunday.

QPO's Music Director Michalis Economou directed the show which had over 170 musicians and vocalists on stage. The MDR Radio Choir Chorus Director Howard Arman directed the cho-

rus which was sung in Arabic.

The one-and-a-half hour show began with the world premiere of Rami Khalifé's *Requiem* in which famous Korean coloratura soprano Whal-ran Seo thrilled the audience with the some of the highest notes.

When the famous composition *Orientale* followed, the crowd enjoyed melodies from the orchestra and the choir.

Marcel Khalifé said after the performance, "All of tonight was a glorification of life." Describing the MDR Choir as "fantastic", he said "It involved a lot of hard work for them to be able to do the Arabic Vocals."

"It took me about a year to com-

pose *Orientale*. I hope it will be played again," he said, adding that when one writes/one's own music and sees it being performed, the feeling is wonderful, especially seeing how the audience reacts.

Whal-ran Seo, for whom it was the first occasion to work with Rami Khalifé's compositions, said that the music was sad because it was about conflict in Lebanon. "When Rami explained to me about this composition, I knew it was all about the conflict that is why I put myself in the shoes of those people. I felt sorrow. It took me one month to rehearse for this composition. For one month, I

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ►►

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

studied this piece which is very difficult. I really worked hard for this piece," she said.

Rami Khalifé, who said he composed *Requiem* during the Arab Spring, said that the piece was based on his emotions during the period of the uprising that engulfed Arab countries. It was composed of four parts.

The first part depicted where the shadows of death are cast. The second part represented conflict. Sounds of gun shots and screams marked this part and the orchestra and choir were locked in a battle over damnation.

The third movement depicted the road to purgatory. Here the coloratura soprano shouted and cried in fear of the final judgment.

The final part depicted tears on the final day as the guilty men are judged.

Here the orchestra, choir and soprano provided a powerful melody as they build towards the final liberation.

The Philharmonic's next concert is Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, also with the MDR Radio Choir of Leipzig, on Friday, February 8, at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) theatre.