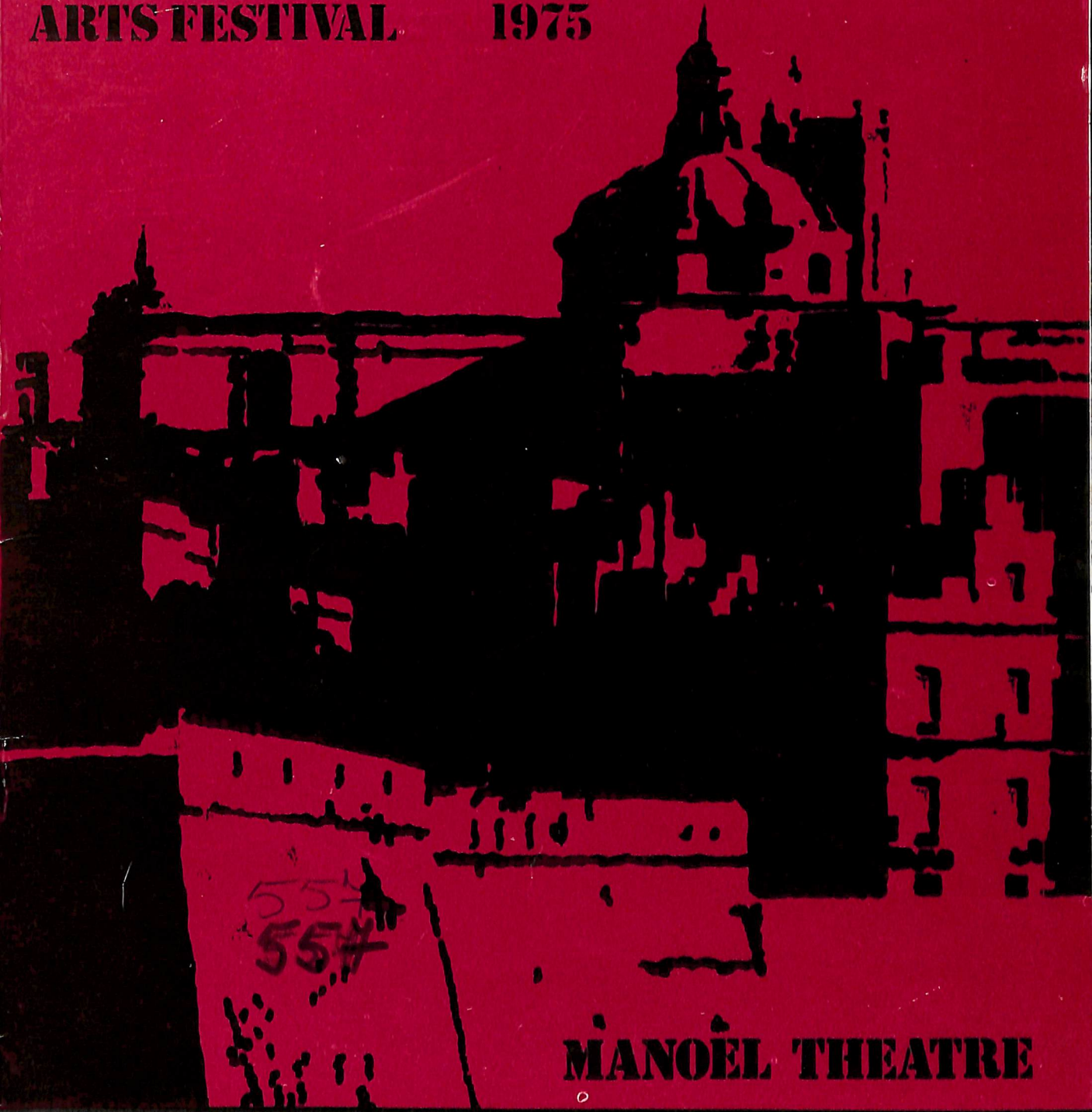


Folger Tuo  
22/10/75

**MALTA INTERNATIONAL  
ARTS FESTIVAL 1975**



**MANOËL THEATRE**

The International Arts Festival 1975

is organised by the

Manoel Theatre Management Committee

on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture

Management Committee: Hon. President, G Muscat-Azzopardi

Chairman, A Agius Ferrante

Hon. Treasurer, Miss M L Bonnici, LRSM L.Mus.LCM FLCM

Consultants: Richard England, Michael Ellul and

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Festival Director of Publicity: Victor Lewis FIPR (Tel 73912)

Programme cover design by Richard England.



# The Friendly Way to Fly

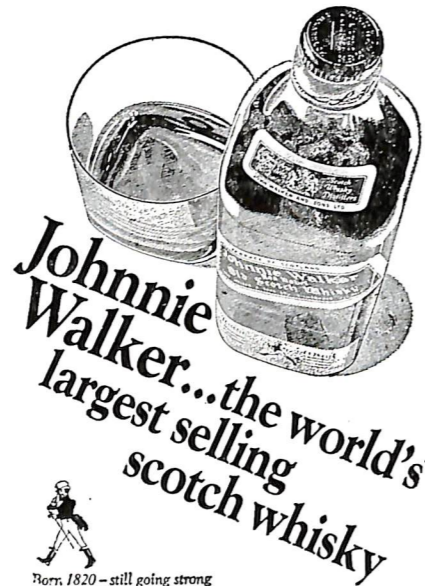


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# MALTA INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL 1975

*THE MANOEL THEATRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE*

*has pleasure in presenting*

CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S CELEBRATED

## FOERSTER TRIO

ALES BILEK:  
Piano

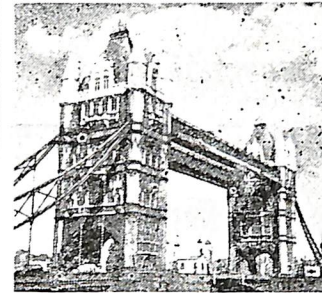
VACLAV JIROVEC  
Cello

FRANTISEK POSPISIL  
Violin

THIS IS THE FIFTEENTH CONCERT IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

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at 7.30 pm.*





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## THE FOERSTER TRIO

**T**HE FOERSTER TRIO comes to us from Czechoslovakia, the land of such great composers as Dvorak, Smetana and Martinu and the land which has a phenomenally large number of chamber music ensembles, among which the Foerster Trio holds pride of place.

The Trio is composed of Ales Bilek, a distinguished pianist, Frantisek Pospisil, a violinist of high quality, and Vaclac Jirovec, a 'cellist who has been described as 'a temperamental artist with a marvellous sound'.

Each is a soloist with the Carlsbad Symphony Orchestra and five years ago they had a season as the residential ensemble of Los Andes University in Merida, Venezuela.

Apart from giving a great many concerts and recitals all over their native land, they have toured many countries, playing in several of the most musically sophisticated cities such as Vienna, Salzburg (where they gave recitals at the Mozart Castle) and Washington.

The Foerster Trio has been in existence for some 19 years and one of Auustria's most distinguished music critics wrote, after the Trio's performances in Salzburg, '... the Trio is a well harmonised ensemble which, in the spirit of chamber music, interprets music with sensibility of style and exceptional purity'.



*Ales Bilek  
Frantisek Pospisil  
Vaclav Jirovec*

# PROGRAMME

## TRIO IN C MINOR. Op 1. No 3

Allegro con brio: Andante cantabile con variazioni:  
Minuetto; Finale

The introductory theme of the first movement, given out by the three instruments in unison, firmly establishes the key of C Minor and is closed by a cadenza-like flourish of the violin. The pianoforte then takes up a melody with lively staccato figures, which is passed over to the other instruments and developed, interwoven with figures of the introductory theme, in the characteristic Beethoven manner.

The second movement, mainly in E Flat Major, consists of a theme and five variations followed by a 'coda' which brings the movement to an end in C Minor. The theme can be considered as a dialogue between pianoforte and violin, the cello taking up mainly a sustaining function.

In the first variation the pianoforte has the leading part, the violin and cello alternating in punctuating the melody with short semi-quaver figures.

In the second variation the theme is played out by the violin, the cello providing, so to say, a running commentary by semi-quaver passages.

The pianoforte again takes the lead in the third variation, the other instruments providing a pizzicato punctuation; and in the fourth variation, where the key changes to E Flat Minor, the theme is proposed by the cello and later taken up by the violin.

In the final variation the violin gives out the theme in double stops, the cello providing a counter melody while the pianoforte indulges in staccato passages in triplets.

The third movement consists of a Minuet in C Minor and a trio in the tonic C Major.

The Finale in C Minor is introduced by an arpeggio figure by the pianoforte, which is followed by a dramatic, sombre theme which, together with a second subject, appears later, developed to form the basis of the whole movement.

## GRAND TRIO IN C MAJOR. No 3

Bohuslav Martinu was born in Bohemia in 1890. He was a pupil of Josef Suk in Prague and of Albert Roussel in Paris. His music is in a free modern idiom and his compositions show a leaning towards neo-classicism. His biographer, Milos Safranek has summarised the chief characteristics of his music by saying that 'the two pillars on which his work rests are the form

BEETHOVEN

1770-1827

MARTINU

1890-1959

of the concerto grosso and the melody of Czechoslovakia.' There is much of the Czech folk element in his later works.

Apart from his major works he wrote a great deal of chamber music including several piano trios. One the most popular of these is the Grand Trio in C Major, which is in three movements, Allegro moderato: Andante: and Allegro.

## INTERVAL

## TRIO IN D MINOR. Op 49.

MENDELSSOHN

1809-1847

Molto allegro agitato; Andante con molto tranquillo:  
Scherzo; Leggiero e vivace; Finale; Allegro assai  
appassionato

Mendelssohn is essentially a lyrical composer. Of his two pianoforte trios the D Minor Op 49 is reputed to be the best. Composed in 1839, when he was 30 years old, it became immediately popular. Schumann called it the master-trio of its time, a masterpiece which in years to come will continue to delight grandsons and great grandsons.

It consists of four movements, the third being a scherzo without a trio. The pattern throughout the whole work is mainly the same — one instrument playing the theme, followed by the other instruments.

In the first movement the principal theme is given out by the cello, and later taken up by the violin and the pianoforte successively. A second theme is proposed and the two themes are developed together (though not so closely knit as is the case in Beethoven) throughout the movement.

The second movement, in B Flat Major, brings out in full Mendelssohn's lyricism. It is a most charming movement, with the pianoforte proposing the theme which is taken up by the other instruments, and closing with an ascending passage from the pianoforte, on a tremolo accompaniment of the violin and cello, fading away into a pianissimo.

The scherzo in D Major is a crisp, elegant movement which recalls in its mood that of the 'Midsummer Night's Dream', ending again with an ascending pianoforte passage, pianissimo.

The Finale in D Minor follows the same pattern. The pianoforte, after proposing the principal theme, indulges in arpeggios and semi-quaver running passages which bring out the pianist's prowess; and always increasing in speed, the end is brought about by three fortissimo chords.

# THE MANOEL THEATRE

**I**T IS VARIOUSLY CLAIMED that the Manoel Theatre in Valletta, focal point of this International Arts Festival after the opening concerts in Mdina, is 'the third oldest theatre in Europe' and 'the oldest theatre in the Commonwealth'. However that may be, the fact is it dates back to the earlier decades of the eighteenth century, when the Grandmaster of the Knights of St John of that time, one Antonio Manoel de Vilhena, decided one March day of 1731 to build a public théâtre — mostly out of his own pocket — 'for the honest recreation of the people', a purpose which is recorded to this day in a Latin inscription above the main entrance.

That there was a demand for such an institution was certain, for drama and opera had flourished — and continued to flourish — through all the years of the Sovereign Military Order's rule over the island. The vows of charity and chastity to which the Knights were committed did not prevent them from indulging in theatrical activities and it is on record that at the various Auberges (headquarters), and in the open, pageants, operas and dramatic offerings were put on by amateurs and professionals and a love for the theatre had spread through the population.

Grandmaster de Vilhena was no time waster and the building of the theatre started the very day the deed of transfer for the site was signed. In ten months the job was finished. The original interior, constructed entirely of wood, was similar in design to the Palermo theatre of that time and is generally believed to have been modelled on it, being semi-circular with straight sides projecting to the stage. There have, of course, been many

alterations through the years, bringing the auditorium to its present effective oval shape.

Originally it was called, prosaically, 'Public Theatre'. Later it bore the title of 'Theatre Royal' but eventually and rightly, in 1866, in tribute to its founder, it became and has remained the Manoel Theatre.

The first night of all first nights was on 9 January 1732 with a presentation of 'Merope', a grand tragedy in the classic style, by Scippione Maffei. The setting was designed by Francois Moudion, who was the architect of the Order of St John, and it was played by the Knights.

The theatre was run by a Senior Knight of the Order, who bore the title of 'Protettore' and managed the house generally, approved each season's programme of plays (in the main lyric opera and French tragedy), acted as censor and dealt with 'difficulties' which arose from time to time betwixt impressario, performer and subscriber. Maltese playwrights and opera composers gradually earned their place alongside foreign authors and it was a Maltese — Nicolò Isouard, also known as Nicolò di Malta — who eventually became Commissioner (new name for Protettore) during Napoleon's siege of Valletta in the last two years of the eighteenth century.

Despite his great faith in the power of the stage Isouard was fighting a losing battle. For a time the theatre carried on notwithstanding the near starvation of the garrison and the besieged population, and 'despite the occasional shots from the Maltese mortars that passed over the roof of the building'. But there came the time when the players could no longer bear the strains of war as their dwindling wages proved insufficient for survival, let alone for the rigour of singing and acting. An amateur group, fired by the desire to keep up morale, took over and 'the show went on' until the siege was raised. But dark days followed for the Manoel.

With the arrival of the British the Theatre came to life again and throughout the first half of the nineteenth century there was a nine-months season of opera each year from September to May. There were nights of splendour, like the fourth of December 1838, when this jewel-box of a theatre shone in all its pristine glory when Queen Adelaide, widow of King

*William IV, came with cheers, anthems and a guard of honour to see a performance of 'Lucia di Lamermoor'.*

*Strangely it was the very prosperity of the latter years of the nineteenth century which brought the eclipse of the Manoel Theatre. The large garrison, the fleet, and an increasing number of tourists, rendered the theatre inadequate. In 1861 it became private property. With the proceeds of the sale a new Opera House was built and Grandmaster Antonio Manoel de Vilhena's little house fell into disuse. For a period it was a doss-house for beggars. And then, suddenly, some of the old glory returned when the Royal Opera House was destroyed by fire in 1873. Grand opera replaced the evicted beggars until the Opera House was reconstructed and then the once loved little place in Theatre Street looked to be on its deathbed. It served, fitfully, as dance hall and, in this century, as cinema.*

*But then, once more, the fate of the Opera House brought revival to the Manoel. The former was completely destroyed in the Second World War. Dreams of bringing the Manoel back to life turned to reality when the Malta Government acquired the building in response to public appeals. Experts from Britain and Italy were called in and under their supervision and with loving care the delicate process of restoration was carried out by Maltese artisans.*

*All sorts of technical improvements were made on stage and back stage, with the lighting and an enlarged orchestra pit. Comfortable stalls replaced the old wooden seats and there was a rearrangement of boxes. But, in particular, the once lovely decoration of the auditorium was restored from behind the grime and whitewash and even paint which had for so long hidden the theatre's beauty. Inch by inch the great ceiling with its 22 carat gilding was restored; the dozens of tiny attractive panels and paintings which decorated the tiers of boxes were brought to life again. This jewel box of great warmth and beauty glowed with a radiance deeply moving to those who had seen their theatre in distress. More than two hundred thousand pounds sterling were spent on re-acquisition and restoration.*

*Came one splendid December night in 1960 and a grand opening performance — the famous Ballet Rambert company's presentation of 'Coppelia'. And on all sides there were gasps of*

*delight as the audience walked in to find this new and shining jewel in Malta's national heritage.*

*'The Manoel' is now officially Malta's National Theatre. The duties of the early Protettores are now entrusted to a Management Committee who run the theatre on a non-profit basis. Under their guidance the theatre has maintained a very high standard. International celebrities who have graced its stage include the like of Yehudi Menuhin, Rostropovitch, Boris Christoff, Leon Goosens, Richter, the Berlin State Opera Ballet; Sir Donald Wolfitt, Margaret Rutherford, John Neville, Louis Kentner, Moura Lympany, John Ogdon, Ram Gopal and a host of others, to say nothing of a great deal of local talent including distinguished concerts by the Manoel Theatre's resident orchestra.*

*By the end of this International Arts Festival a whole gallery of famous names will have been added to those who have graced the Manoel — solo performers and companies from many nations taking part in this Festival organised for the Ministry of Education and Culture by the theatre's Management Committee whose only reward is the satisfaction of their devotion to the furtherance of that enterprise first created by Grandmaster Manoel de Vilhena 'for the honest recreation of the people'.*

*Victor Lewis.*

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