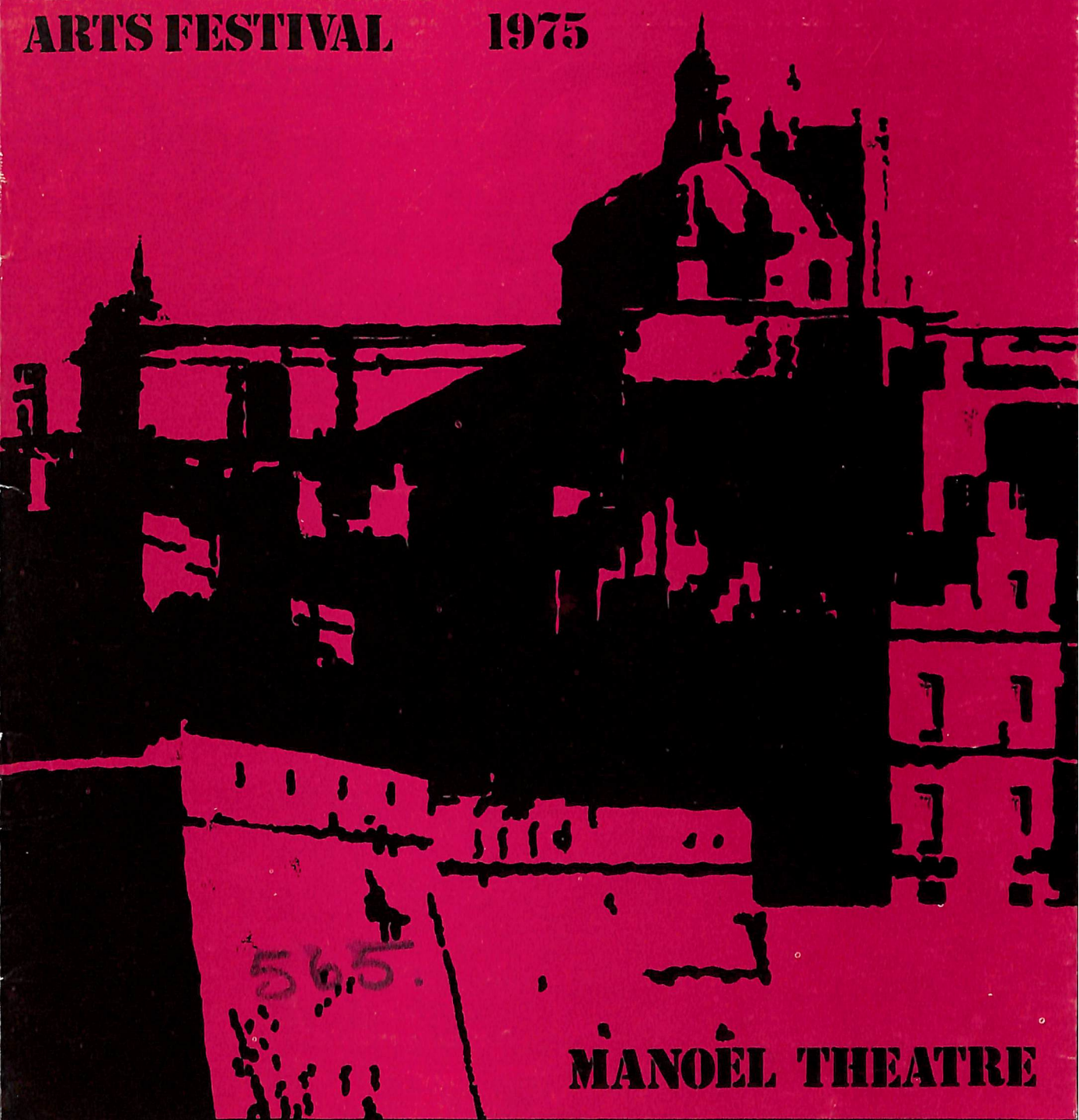


Rob Van Reign  
24 and 25th Nov 75

**MALTA INTERNATIONAL  
ARTS FESTIVAL 1975**



565.

**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  
Victor Castillo

Festival Director of Publicity: Victor Lewis PIPR (Tel. 73912)

Programme cover design by Richard England.

# THIS WEEK AT THE DRAGONARA

## Curry Luncheon

Every Sunday in the  
Mediterranean Room  
12.30 p.m. — 2.30 p.m. £M1.75 per person  
Spiro will entertain you  
on the Grand Piano

## Dinner Dancing

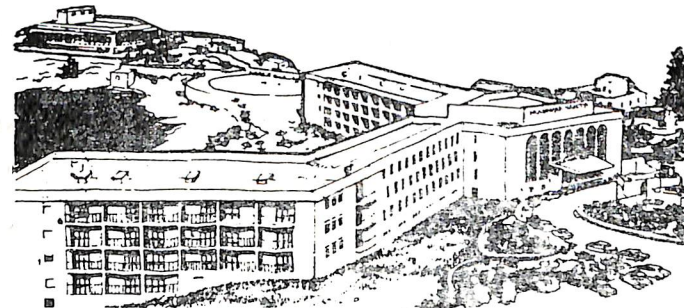
Every Wednesday and Saturday  
in the Mediterranean Room  
Music by the Black Sorrows


## Afternoon Teas

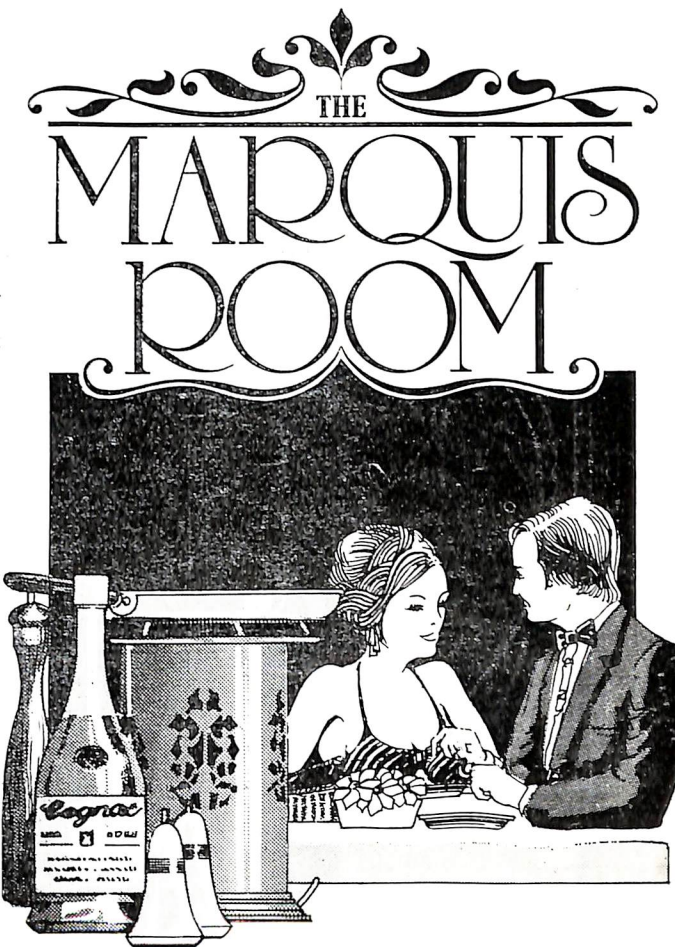
Daily in the Grapevine  
between 4 and 5.30 p.m.

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Music by The Val Valente Quartet  
International Cabaret Nightly



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MALTA  
INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL 1975

THE MANOEL THEATRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

*presents*

HOLLAND'S FAMOUS MIME

ROB VAN REIJN

*in*

'EXEGESIS'

THIS IS THE 37th EVENT IN THE ARTS FESTIVAL 1975

*The Manoel Theatre  
Monday & Tuesday  
at 7.30 pm  
24 & 25 November 1975*



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# ROB VAN REIJN

*After graduating from a secondary school, was refused by the Drama School because of a speech defect. So he cultivated another talent. For five years he studied sculpture and during that time he revealed himself as a clown and a mime — at the expense of his teachers and fellow students.*

*He took part in experimental theatrical performances and discovered he had the power to captivate people without saying a word. Gradually he developed his personal form of pantomime.*

*He studied people — and taught expressive movement in the Academy — and thus a star was born.*

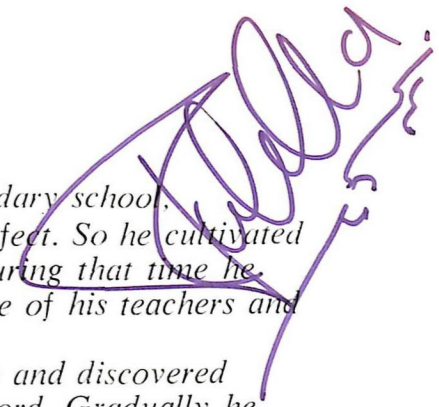
*Rob Van Reijn was with Ole Olsen in the show 'Helzapoppin', worked as a variety turn in the Paris Crazy Horse Saloon, joined many international groups and gradually developed his own full length mime programmes.*

*He has played all over Holland, in Venezuela, the Antilles and Surinam, in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, West Germany and Poland; in the German Democratic Republic, England, France, Italy and Denmark. His television appearances have been countless.*

*His professional career started in 1949 when he joined the 'Nederlandse Pantomime groep' and later was artistic director of the Pantomimetheatre Carrousel. In 1972 he founded his own troupe.*

*'Exegesis', the programme he presents tonight, has been his most important development — a presentation of tales from the Old Testament. His mime is accompanied by tape recorded musical effects and spoken texts.*

*Two characters he has created — 'Makkus' (the Little Man) and 'Padenepsky' (World Famous Pianist) are known everywhere and his versatility allows him to play characters from traditional Commedia dell'Arte to spacemen, and from Goldoni to Thurber.*



# EXEGESIS

## THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

Genesis 1

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the earth.*

## EVE

Genesis 2

*And the rib, which God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.*

## CAIN AND ABEL

Genesis 4

*That Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not; am I my brother's keeper.*

## THE ARK OF NOAH

Genesis 6, 7, 8

*And God said unto Noah. The end of all flesh is come before me; and make thee an ark of gopher wood;  
And every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort, shalt thou bring into the ark; they shall be male and female.*

## THE OFFERING OF ISAAC

Genesis 22

*And he said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of.*

*Isaac said, behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?*

*And Abraham said, my son, God will provide himself a lamb.*

## ESAU AND JACOB

Genesis 25

*And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with the same red pottage; for I am faint. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am to the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me?*

## INTERVAL

## SAMSON AND DELILAH

Judges 13, 14, 16

*And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up to her, and said, Entice him and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.*

## JONAH IN THE WHALE

Jonah

*For the sea wrought and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.*

*Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*

## SOLOMON'S JUDGMENT

I Kings 3

*And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And the king said, Bring me the sword; divide the living child in two, and give half the one, and half to the other.*

## DAVID AND GOLIATH

I Samuel 17

*And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred Shekels of iron.*

# 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 theatre — 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 the French occupation of Malta 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 white-wash 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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