



1732

An Evening with Ngari

Piano Duets
by

David Ward & Neil Skinner

16.2.76

50A

**MANOEL
THEATRE**

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present

AN EVENING WITH MOZART

a recital of music

for piano duet and two pianos

by

DAVID WARD

and

NOEL SKINNER

at the MANOEL THEATRE

MONDAY, 16th FEBRUARY 1976.

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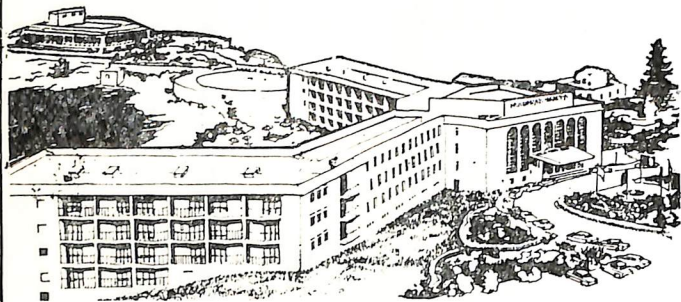
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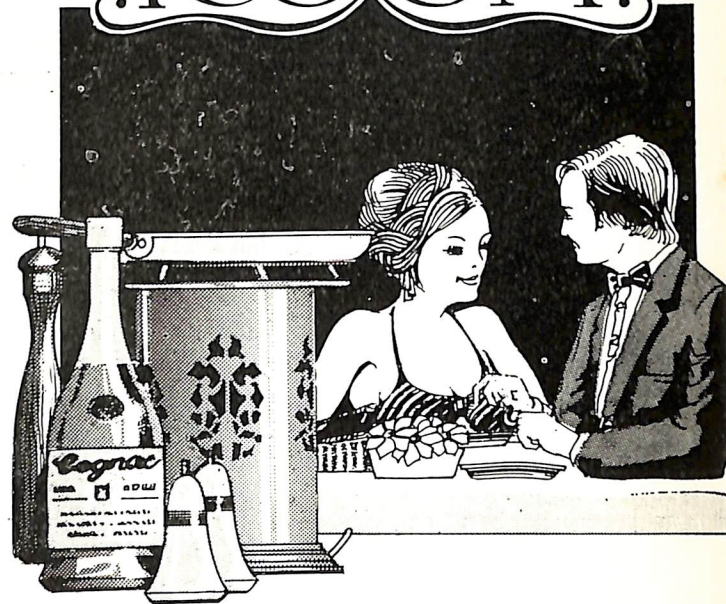
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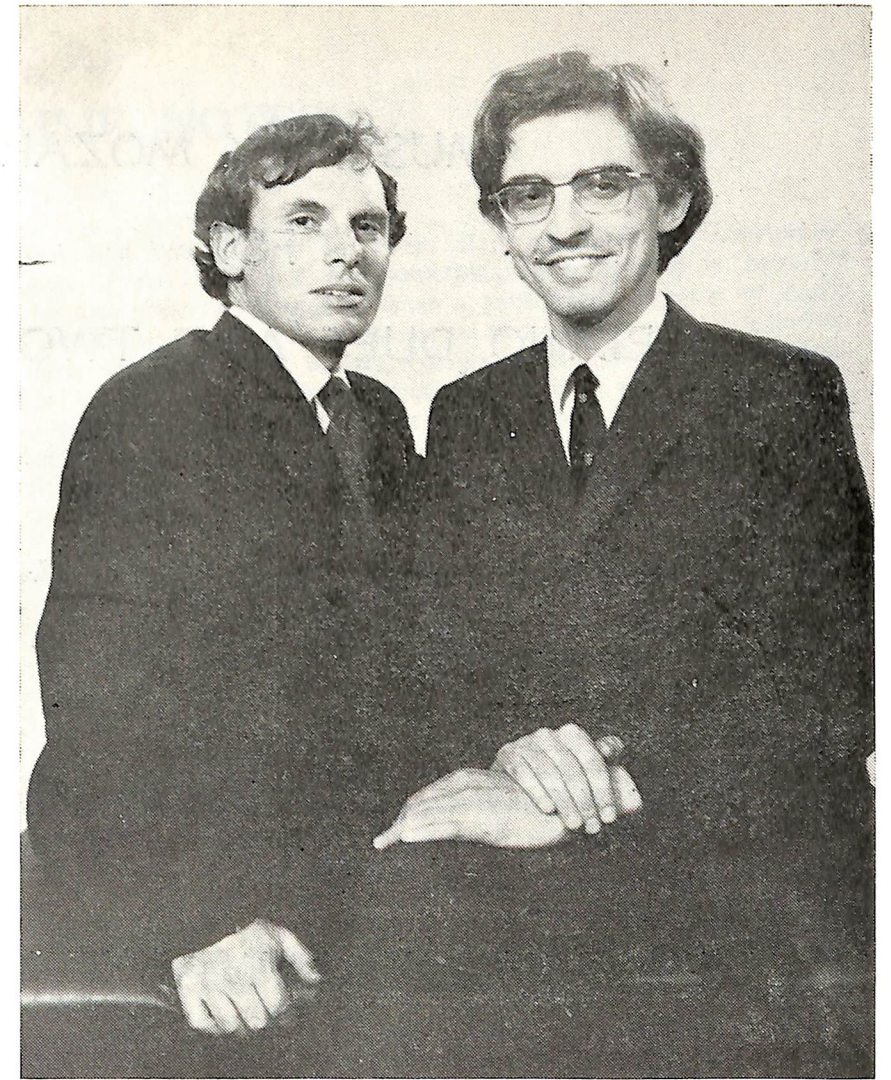
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Noel Skinner
David Ward



DAVID WARD was educated at Bryanston, Cambridge, and the Royal College of Music, London. He studied with Cyril Smith, Katharina Wolpe and in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. Only two years after he left the R.C.M. he was invited to join the staff there and in 1971 he was voted one of the Greater London Arts Association's 'Young Musicians '71'. In addition to his record of Russian piano music, he has recorded for the B.B.C. and French radio, and he has a wide concert experience, both as accompanist and soloist; he has performed in many parts of England, as well as on the continent. He has played concertos by Mozart, Beethoven, Weber and Schuman with, among others, the English National Orchestra and the Thames Chamber Orchestra. His activities are not only confined to the piano; in 1969 he produced a new opera at the first Newcastle Festival, and since 1971 he has conducted amateur groups in London, he now directs La Spiritata Chamber Orchestra.

NOEL SKINNER began his studies with Miss Jane Jack in South London; in 1964 he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music where he became a pupil of Leslie England. He won a number of prizes at the Academy including the McFarren Prize and the Harold Samuel Bach Prize; he also gained his Recital Diploma. During this period he represented the Academy at concerts in Frankfurt, Prague and Amsterdam. He has played in Music Clubs round the country and in London at the Purcell Room.

MUSIC BY MOZART
 FOR
 PIANO DUET AND TWO PIANOS

1. *SONATA IN B FLAT MAJOR, k. 186, FOR PIANO DUET.* (1774)
Allegro, Adagio, Molto presto.

2. *FUGUE IN C MINOR, k. 426, FOR TWO PIANOS.* (1783)

3. *FANTASIE IN F MINOR, k. 594, FOR PIANO DUET.* (1790)

INTERVAL

4. *ANDANTE WITH VARIATIONS IN G MAJOR, k. 501,*
FOR PIANO DUET (1786)

5. *SONATA IN D MAJOR, k. 448, FOR TWO PIANOS.* (1781)
Allegro con spirito, Andante. Molto allegro.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Although music had been written for more than one keyboard instrument, music for two players at one keyboard was something of a novelty in Mozart's days, and he was the first great composer to leave a substantial amount of music in this field. His friend Johann Christian Bach, whom he met while staying in London, wrote some piano duets but these were, in fact, composed after Mozart had written a sonata in C major, K. 19. Leopold Mozart wrote to a friend in Salzburg saying 'Little Wolfgang has composed his first sonata for four hands; up till now no four-hand sonata has been composed anywhere! Even twelve years after this sonata appeared, the celebrated music historian Charles Burney presented a duet sonata to the public with this 'apologia':

'As the following sonata is the first that has appeared in print of its kind it may be necessary to say something concerning its utility. That great and varied effects may be produced by duets on two keyboards has been proved by several ingenious compositions, some of which have been published in Germany. But the inconvenience of having two harpsichords or pianofortes in the same room has prevented the cultivation of this species of music. The playing of duets by two performers upon one instrument is, however, attended with nearly as many advantages without the inconvenience of crowding a room, and although at first the near approach of the hands of the different players may seem awkward or embarrassing a little use and contrivance with respect to the manner of placing them, and the choice of fingers, will soon remove that difficulty.'

By the end of the eighteenth century however, the duet was established as a popular form of chamber music. Mozart wrote two large scale sonatas towards the end of his life as well as several shorter pieces, two of which are being played this evening.

THE SONATA IN B FLAT was written in Salzburg when Mozart was eighteen. It was no doubt created for the composer and his sister to play.

THE FUGUE IN C MINOR was composed in Vienna at a time when Mozart became interested in the contrapuntal style as he explains in these letters: 'I go every Sunday at twelve o'clock to the Baron van Swieten, where nothing is played but Handel and Bach. I am collecting at the moment the fugues of Bach . . . ' (10 April, 1782). 'When Constanze heard the fugues, she absolutely fell in love with them. Now she will listen to nothing but fugues, and particularly (in this kind of composition) the works of Bach and Handel. Well, as she had often heard me play fugues out of my head, she asked me if I had ever written any down, and when I said I had not, she scolded me roundly for not recording some of my compositions in this most artistic and beautiful of all musical forms . . . ' — (20 April 1782).

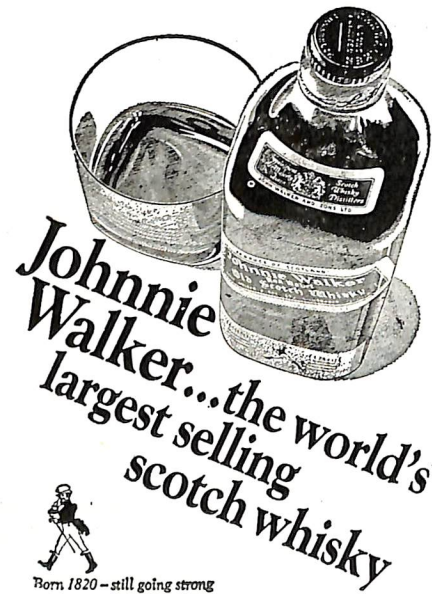
THE FANTASIE IN F MINOR was originally written for a mechanical organ, an instrument which obviously irritated Mozart: 'I have now made up my mind to compose at once the Adagio for the clock maker . . . but as it is a kind of composition which I detest, I have unfortunately not been able to finish it. I compose a bit of it every day — but I have to break off now and then, as I get

bored . . . If it were for a large instrument and the work should sound like an organ piece, then I might get fun out of it. But as it is, the works consist solely of little pipes, which sound too high-pitched and too childish for my taste. Soon after his death the Fantasia was published in a version for piano duet and this may well suit the music better than the limited instrument for which it was written.

INTERVAL

THE ANDANTE WITH VARIATIONS was written soon after *The Marriage of Figaro*. The theme is Mozart's own, rather than one borrowed from another composer and the five variations with a coda are an exquisite example of the composer's combination of originality and discipline.

THE SONATA IN D MAJOR for two pianos was written for Mozart to play with his pupil, Josepha von Auernhammer: 'The young lady is a fright, but plays enchantingly, though in cantabile playing she has not got the real delicate singing style. She clips everything'. Later the composer told his father of a concert at the Auernhammer's house: 'We played the concerto 'a due' and a sonata for two clavier, which I had composed expressly for the occasion and which was a great success.'



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THE MANOEL THEATRE

IT 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 offering 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 Scipione 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 impresario, 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 dosshouse 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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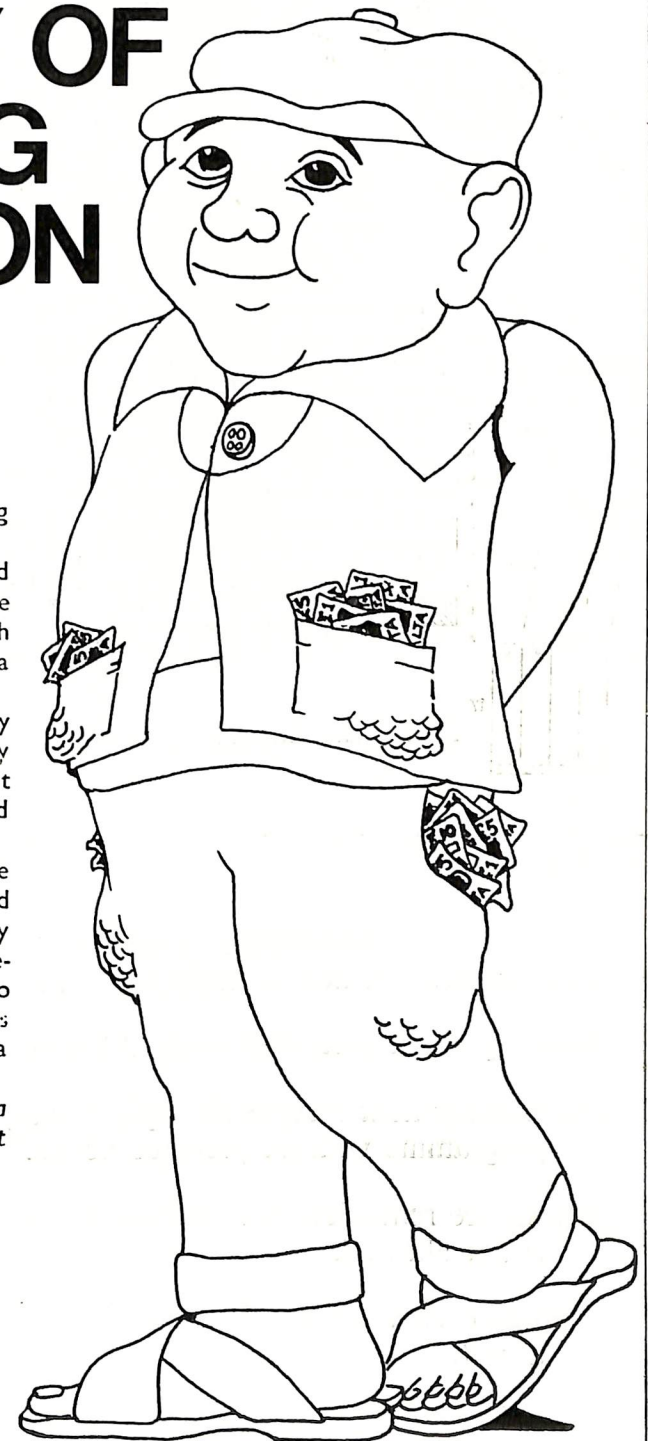
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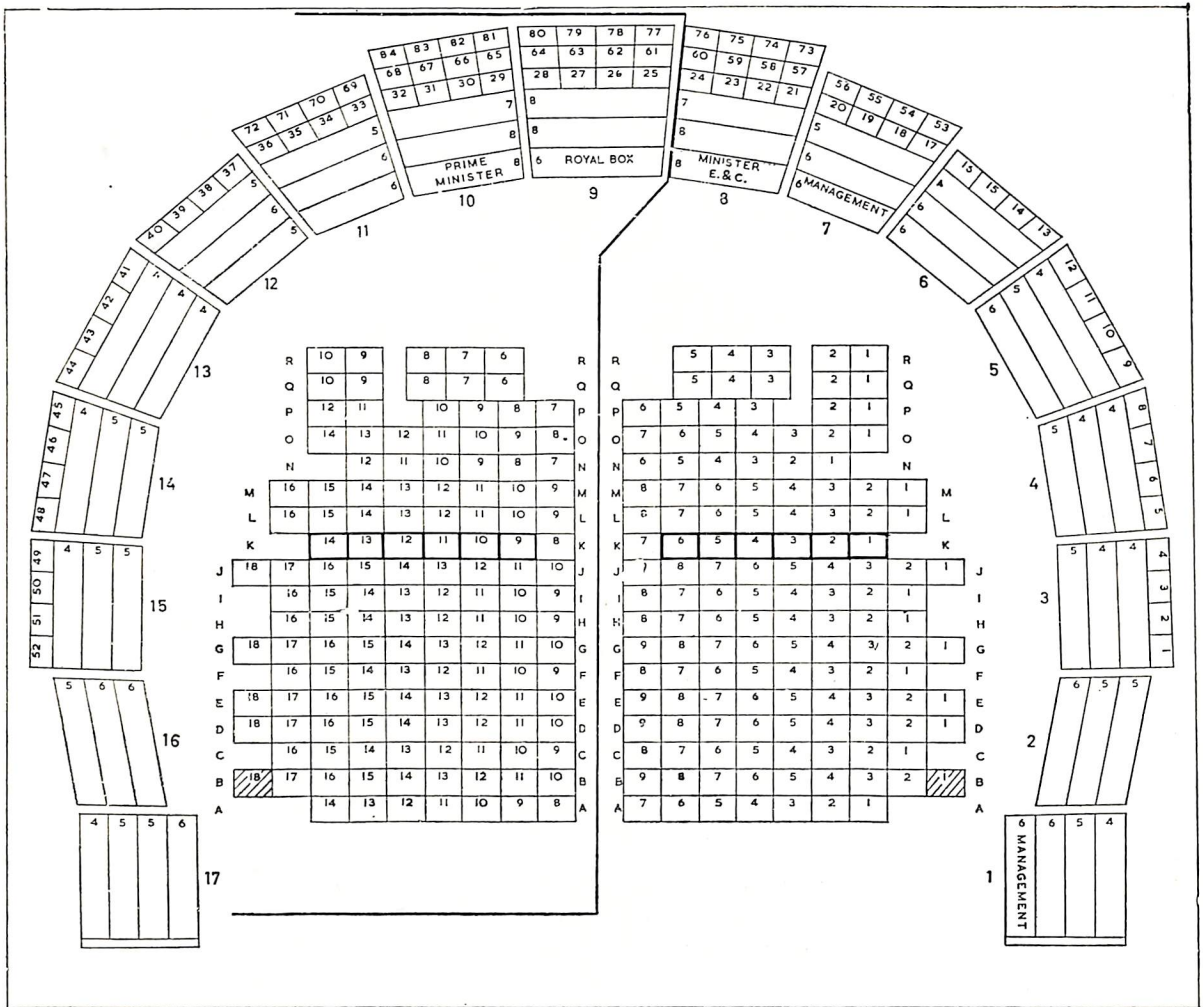
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MANOEL THEATRE BOOKING PLAN

Late comers will not be admitted to the Auditorium.

Smoking is not permitted in the Auditorium, in the Boxes and in the Gallery.

The Management reserve the right to vary or omit any part of the programme without previous notice.

Patrons are reminded that the taking of photographs during the performance is not allowed.

Children even when accompanied by their parents, will be required to occupy a seat.

Handwritten note: *not of seat 17*

