



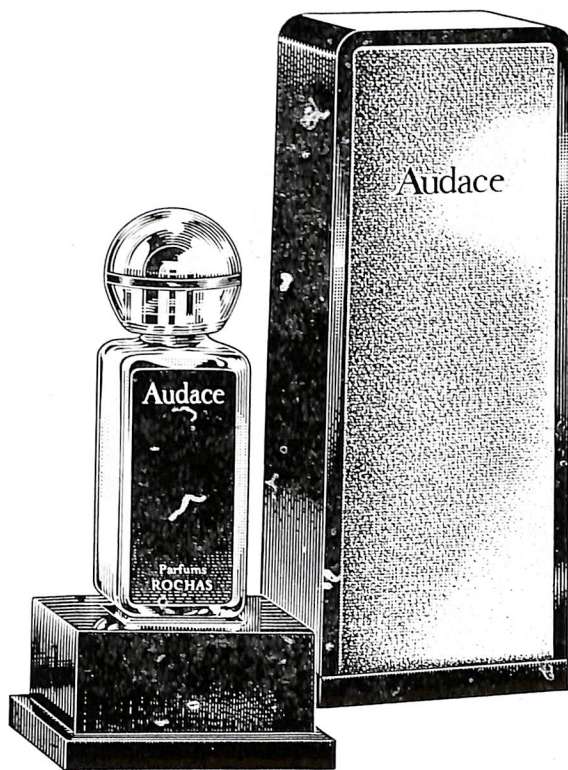
1732

Le Vie Parisienne
by
The Services Church & Bureau of the South
17/21 March 1916

589

**MANOEL
THEATRE**

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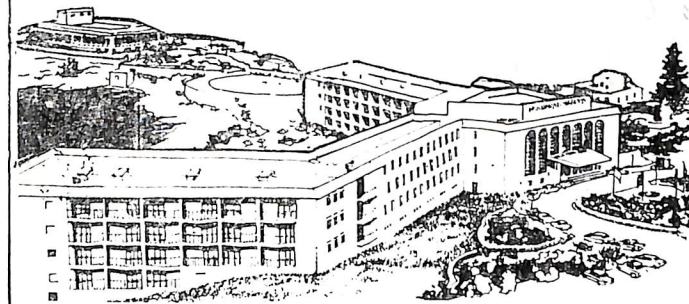
Every Wednesday and Saturday
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Music by the Black Sorrows

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Daily in the Grapevine
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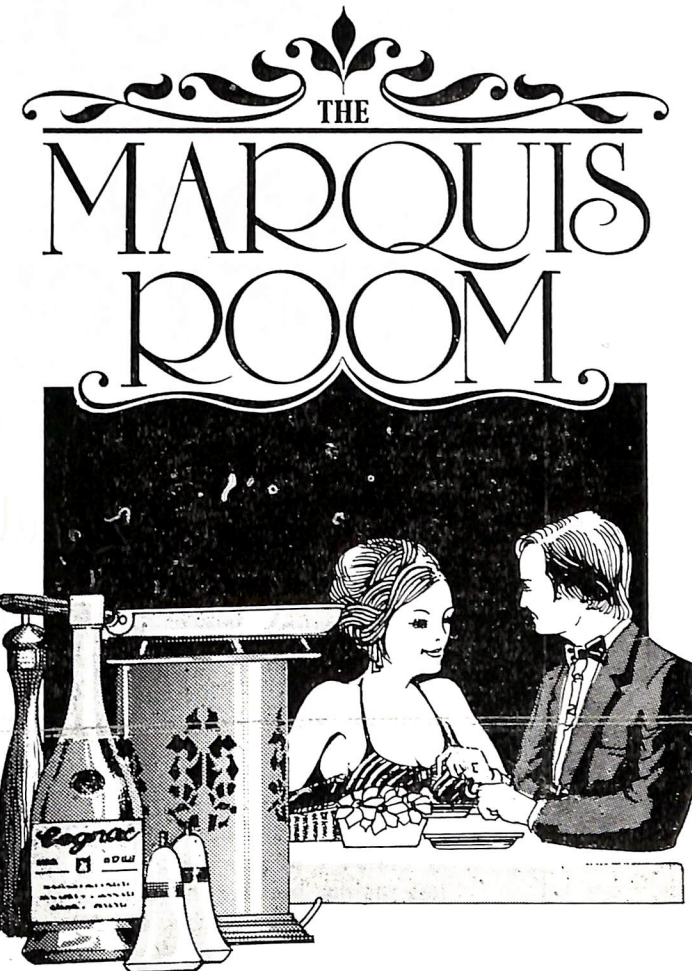
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PRESENTS

LA VIE PARISIENNE

Operetta in three acts

Music by

JACQUES OFFENBACH

Original libretto by

H. MEILHAC and L. HALEVY

New Book and Lyrics by

PHIL PARK

Music Arranged and Adapted by

RONALD HANMER

at the **MANOEL THEATRE, VALLETTA**

MARCH 17th to 21st, 1976

LA VIE PARISIENNE

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

GABRIELLE — A glove-maker CAROLINE LONGLANDS
 BARONESS GONDREMARCK — A visitor to Paris *Cherry Jones* CHERRY JONES
 METELLA — A fashionable cocotte *Win Tomlinson* WIN TOMLINSON
 PAULINE — A housekeeper *Gill Ricketts* GILLIAN RICKETTS
 JULIE —] Domestics *Ann Leonard* ANN LEONARD
 LOUISE —] *Linda Collins* LINDA COLLINS
 RAOUL —] Men about Paris *Dick Chew* DICK CHEW
 BOBINET —] *Paul Millard* PAUL MILLARD
 BRAZIL — A millionaire holidaymaker *Trev Ricketts* TREV RICKETTS
 BARON GONDREMARCK — A visitor to Paris *Barry Brennan* BARRY BRENNAN
 PIERRE —] Menservants *Mike Graham* MIKE GRAHAM
 JACQUES —] *Chris Medicott* CHRIS MEDLICOTT
 MARCEL — Maitre d'hotel *Ken Wollaston* KEN WOLLASTON
 STATION MASTER *Robert Woollams* ROBERT WOOLLAMS
 JOSEPH *Paul Goss* PAUL GOSS
 ALPHONSE *Hugh Ritchie* HUGH RITCHIE

Producer

TREV RICKETTS

Musical Director

BARRIE MENHAMS

Stage Director

BRIAN LEONARD

CHORUS OF PARISIANS, RAILWAY STAFF, TOURISTS,
 GUESTS, SERVANTS, etc.

LADIES: Rosemary Addis, Christine Bonner, Marjorie Clarke, Jo Dicks, Anne Dobbs, Jean Easton, Helen Harvey, Anne Holland, June Lattimer, Sylvia Lock, Judith Mellody, Lesley Minter, Christine Ritchie, Bernadine Ryan, Janet Smith, Judith Stott, Julie Stubbings, Marjorie Taylor, Cynthia Turner, Jenny Urquhart, Patricia Walker, Mary Williams, Dorothy Wilson, Helen Wilson.

GENTLEMEN: Mike Blackham, Bill Clarke, Gordon Dolman, Paul Goss, John Holland, Peter Paskell, Mike Smith, David Taylor, Robert Woollams.

DANCERS: Rosemary Addis, Angela Griffith, Frances Hall, Lesley Jeram, Issy Kennedy, Gill McCormick, Cath Porter.

SPECIAL DANCE ROUTINES by JUDY SHERLOCK.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I Scene 1. Western Railway Terminus.
 Scene 2. Raoul's house in the Champs Elysées.
 ACT II The Salon Fonténue.
 ACT III Café des Anglais.

Place: PARIS.

Time: The 1890's.

There will be an interval of 15 minutes between each of the Acts.

For the SERVICES CHORAL AND DRAMATIC SOCIETY.

Assistant Stage Manager

Patsy Graham PATSY GRAHAM

Set Designer
Set Painted by

NEVILLE TURNER
ELSPETH BROWN, JANET SMITH,
BARBARA McCLURE

Wardrobe Mistress
Assisted by

Sheila Biles SHEILA BILES
JAN FREEMAN, JUDY DYER,
CHRIS DAVEY, HEATHER LAING
JOAN METCALF, SUE FINNIS, JEAN RUSSELL
and Ladies of the cast

Property Mistress
Assisted by

Marion Paskell MARION PASKELL
MARGARET KNIGHT, JEAN PALLAS

Make Up

HEATHER LUDGATE, SUE FINNIS
SHEILA ANN BONELLO, DENISE DAVIES,
SUSAN GRIMES

Stage Crew

Robin Beck
IAN HESKETH, PETER RUSSELL
ROBIN BECK, ERIC BONELLO, PAUL BONELLO

Publicity

ANN LEONARD

Front of House

MIKE BRITCHFIELD, DENIS HASTE
MARJORIE TAYLOR

Orchestra Leader

JOSEPH GALEA

For the MANOEL THEATRE.

Booking Clerk
Electrician
Stage Carpenters

Martese Vassallo MARTHESE VASSALLO
VANNI LAUS
EMM. DALLI, FRANCIS MIFSUD,
JOE AZZOPARDI

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Our thanks are due to the following:—

NANETTE DRAKE and JOE GALEA NAUDI for loan of antique furniture.
DOLPHIN FORGE for loan of wrought iron furniture.
MICHAEL of Valletta for Lady Principals Hairstyles.
M.A.D.C. for loan of props and costumes.
P.A.D.S.
MALTA HILTON.

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 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 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 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.

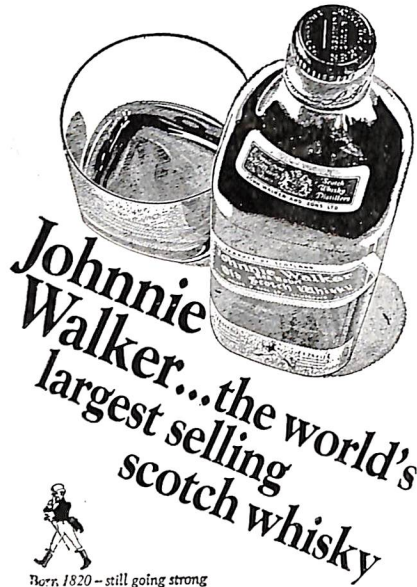
All sorts of technical improvements were made on stage and back stage, with the lighting and an enlarged orchestra pit. Comfortable stalls replaced the old wooden seats and there was a rearrangement of boxes. But, in particular, the once lovely decoration of the auditorium was restored from behind the 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'.

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