

Sinnhoffer Quartet

18 Oct 77

**MALTA INTERNATIONAL
ARTS FESTIVAL 1977**



MANOEL THEATRE

663

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The International Arts Festival 1977

is organised by the

Manoel Theatre Management Committee

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INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL 1977

THE MANOEL THEATRE
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

proudly presents

THE SINNHOFFER STRING QUARTET

INGO SINNHOFFER — *Violin*

ROLAND METZGER — *Violin*

HERBERT BLENDINGER — *Viola*

FRANZ AMANN — *Violincello*

with the participation

of

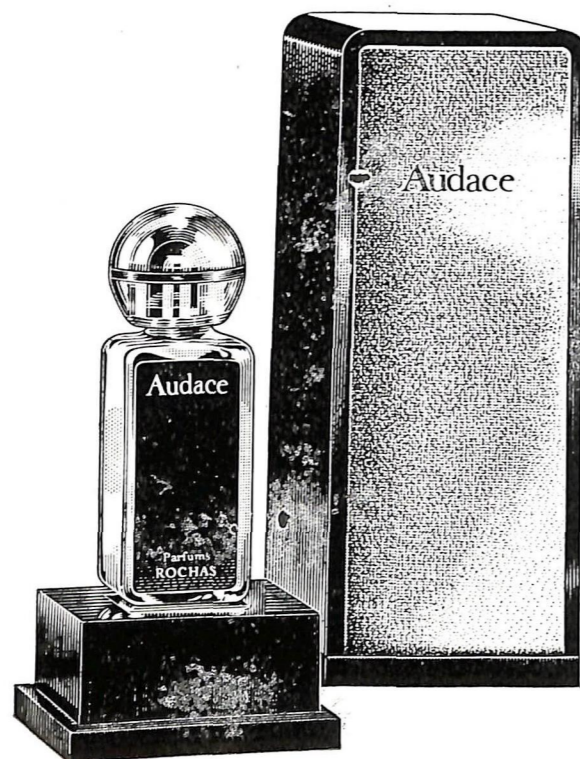
Clarinetist: FREDDIE MIZZI

at

THE MANOEL THEATRE

Tuesday, 18th October 1977 at 7.30 p.m.

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Freddie Mizzi
18-10-77

Freddie Mizzi is Malta's best known soloist, and certainly the most versatile. He is equally at home playing modern dance music or the great classics and has broadcast frequently here and abroad, and often appears on television. As a student he received several diplomas from the London College of Music and became a professional when he was still in his teens. In 1967 he went to Ireland to give a recital at the Belfast Arts Festival. In October 1971 he joined the World Symphony Orchestra as Malta's representative on a tour of the United States, under the well known conductor Arthur Fielder. A year later he performed two new works at the Wigmore Hall in London. In 1973, during Malta's first International Arts Festival he was the soloist with the Salzburg String Quartet. In June of this year he went to Bucharest to represent Malta and give a recital at the European Festival of Friendship Among Nations. In Malta he has introduced many old and new works written for clarinet.

PROGRAMME

Quartet in C Major, Opus 59, No. 3

L. VAN BEETHOVEN

Count Andreas Kyrillovich Rasumovsky, a man of great wealth came from Russia as ambassador to Vienna in 1802. He was a violinist and keen on quartets. From the first he admired Beethoven but they did not meet immediately. In 1805 he commissioned three quartets, each to contain a Russian theme.

Rasumovsky maintained a musical staff including Forster as his teacher, a pianist and a librarian and in 1808 he formed his own quartet, shortly to become the leading quartet in Europe. Schuppanzigh was the leader and Rasumovsky himself played second violin whenever possible. In 1814 his Palace was destroyed by fire, and in consequence this quartet was disbanded. In 1815 Rasumovsky became a prince. His friendship with Beethoven was warm and lasting.

Tonight the Sinnhoffer Quartet will play the third of this group of quartets. In a short introduction there are reminders of the earlier quartets until the lively main theme is launched by the first violin. The two previous quartets have Russian themes and in this one Beethoven appears at times to have consciously adopted a Russian style. The third movement is explicitly marked as a minuetto grazioso, similar to the cheerful minuet in the 8th Symphony.

Interval

Quintet for Clarinet and Strings, Opus 115 in B minor JOHANNES BRAHMS

It was his friendship with Richard Muhfeld the clarinettist that inspired Brahms to continue his output of chamber music. For different reasons the clarinet had an important part in the last years of Mozart and Brahms, and both composers wrote music of a singularly rich, autumnal beauty. This quintet was written in 1891 and for emotional intensity and beauty of tone-colour it may claim the topmost place in Brahms' chamber music.

The first movement is predominantly elegiac in mood, and this is suggested with curious subtlety by the vague tonality of the opening bars. In the adagio the thematic connection between the very serene first melody and the passionately rhapsodical central section well illustrates Brahms' seemingly endless power of germinating new ideas from old. In the third movement there is an equally spontaneous transformation of the melody of the introductory section to the restless theme of the "presto non assai". The finale is a quiet set of variations and the return, in the coda of the theme of the first movement rounds the work off perfectly.



INGO SINNHOFFER was born in Berlin in 1936 and studied at the Munich Conservatory for Music with Wilhelm Stross from 1954 to 1961. He played the viola in the Stross Quartet during the years 1960-64 and became Leader of the Bavarian State Orchestra in 1967. He has also taught the violin at the Munich Conservatory.

ROLAND METZGEN was born in 1944 in Heilbronn and studied at the Munich Conservatory from 1964 till 1970. He has made many solo appearances and toured in several chamber music ensembles. He joined the Bavarian State Orchestra in 1970.

HERBERT BLENDINGER is the same age as Ingo Sinnhoffer and comes from Ansbach. He was a student at the Nuremberg Conservatory with Willy Honvath (violin) from 1951-57, then the Munich Conservatory with Georg Schmid (viola), Wilhelm Stross (chamber music) and Franz X. Lehner (composition) until 1961. He has won many awards for viola and as a composer at Edinburgh, Nuremberg, Dusseldorf and Munich. He became a soloist (viola) with the Bavarian State Orchestra in 1967.

FRANZ AMANN was born in 1938 in Marktobendorf and studied with Kurt Engert (cello) in Munich from 1953. later with Pierre Fournier. He was a medallist at the Geneva competition in 1959 and since then has been in many concert tours both as a soloist and in chamber music ensembles in various countries. He has also broadcast. He became a soloist (cello) with the Bavarian State Orchestra in 1969.

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THE MANOEL THEATRE

Between the years 1530 and 1798, twenty eight Grandmasters ruled in Malta. Few of them are remembered today. The greatest was La Vallette (1557-1568), the hero of the Great Siege and founder of the City of Valletta.

After him, the best remembered is Antonio Manoel de Vilhena, a Portuguese Knight, from the Langue de Castille. de Vilhena left much to serve as memorials to him here in Malta — Sir Harry Luke called him “that elegant and ubiquitous builder” and it is our good fortune that so many of his works have survived. There is the Vilhena Palace in Mdina, Casa Leone in Santa Venera, Fort Manoel on the Island which now also bears his name, the Banca Giuratale in Rabat, Gozo and the Manoel Theatre.

Manoel de Vilhena deserves to be remembered, not only for his fine buildings, for he was (unlike many Grandmasters) popular with the Maltese people during his reign. Alone among the Grandmasters he was known in his lifetime to everybody simply as “Manoel”.

It is clear that de Vilhena appreciated the esteem of the people, for the theatre was his idea, and the building was financed mainly out of his own pocket. It was started in 1731, and built very rapidly. A marble plaque above the main entrance records in Latin that the Grandmaster built it “for the honest recreation of the people”. The Manoel Theatre is the third oldest in Europe.

Construction started on the day that the sale of the site was completed, and took only ten months. In shape it is typical of the eighteenth century theatre, with a narrow deep stage, permitting elaborate scenes with vistas through cut-out scenery. The auditorium too is narrow, so that all may have a direct view of the stage. This shape has sometimes led to difficulties with modern operatic presentations.

The people of Malta have always enjoyed their festas and processions, and amateur dramatics were sometimes performed by the knights in their auberges. Professional operatic companies had also visited Malta, so the idea of a theatre was welcomed.

The Public Theatre (its original name) was opened on 9th January 1732 with an amateur performance by the knights of a classical styled grand tragedy called “Merope” by Scippione Maffei. Francois Moudion, architect to the Order of St. John designed the scenery.

A senior knight was appointed “Protettore”, an office which combined the duties of manager and censor with sorting out the tantrums of actors and any disputes between the presenters of plays and the theatregoers.

After the knights departed, Nicolo Isouard became Commissioner of the theatre during the French occupation. The Commissioner had the same duties as the former Protettore.

Even after the Maltese uprising against the French had successfully forced them out of the countryside and back into Valletta, Isouard carried on. The garrison and the civilian population of Valletta were near starvation and occasional shots from Maltese mortars passed over the building. Still the theatre stayed open, and when no money remained to pay the actors, an amateur group took over. When the siege was raised, the Public Theatre could claim, as one in London did a hundred and forty years later, that "We never closed".

Isouard, a Francophile, left his native Malta when the French surrendered in September, 1800 and went to Paris. He became well known as the composer of several charming and tuneful chamber operas, which regrettably are mostly forgotten today.

The new (19th) century saw the start of sixty glorious years for the theatre. Every year there was a nine months season of opera (the theatre being closed during the summer months of June, July and August). Opera is a much loved art form, and many people today regret that financial considerations make full operatic performances almost impossible at the Manoel Theatre.

The Public Theatre was renamed Theatre Royal, and the Dowager Queen Adelaide attended a gala performance of "Lucia di Lammermoor" on the 4th December 1838.

Sir Hannibal Scicluna, in one of his books on Malta, states that the plan of the theatre was modelled on the theatre at Palermo, semicircular with straight sides. The original interior had been entirely constructed of wood. It was altered and remodelled into its present oval shape in 1844, when more substantial (and less combustible) materials were used.

In 1861 the theatre was sold and became private property. The money realised was spent on building the much larger Opera House. Five years later the new owner renamed it The Manoel Theatre.

Malta prospered in the nineteenth century, and so did the new Opera House, but Valletta is not big enough to support two theatres, and the Manoel Theatre closed and became a dosshouse. The Opera was burnt out in 1873 and the Manoel Theatre at once regained its glory, only to lose it again as soon as the Opera was rebuilt. It became a dance hall, a store house and later, a cheap cinema.

The Opera House was completely destroyed in the Second World War. Afterwards the Government of Malta bought the theatre and restored it. Today everybody admires the plasterwork, the paint and the gilding and artistes appearing on the stage pay tribute to the acoustics which are partly dependent on the sound absorbing qualities of the decoration. The old wooden seating in the stalls was replaced with modern upholstered seats and an enlarged orchestra pit was constructed.

A great many technical improvements were incorporated at this time including a complete new lighting system and much work backstage.

The theatre reopened in December 1960 with a performance of "Coppelia" by the Ballet Rambert from London.

The Manoel Theatre is Malta's National Theatre. The Management Committee runs it commercially, charging renters sufficient to cover costs and to put a small profit to reserves. This policy has enabled the Committee to spend considerable sums in recent years on further improvements. It may seem strange that the theatre never had, until 1975 a scenery dock and even the biggest sets for grand opera had to come in through the front door.

The box office was little more than a cupboard under the stairs until the shop next door could be acquired. The bar and the Committee Room above were inadequate until the tenant of living accommodation in the corner moved out and these could be extended. In 1977 old offices next to the stage door in Old Mint Street were also acquired. The extra space has enabled rearrangements to be made backstage, with considerable improvements to the facilities. An emergency exit is an addition to the second tier. During the summer of 1977 extensive redecoration of the upper tiers was also put in hand.

The School of Music now stands next door to the theatre in Old Bakery Street. Between the two is the old Testaferrata Palace, once a lovely building, but derelict since the last war. It is now in course of reconstruction and will eventually house the new Drama School, like the School of Music under the control of the Manoel Theatre Management Committee.

SOME OF THE GREAT ARTISTES WHO HAVE APPEARED AT
THE MANOEL THEATRE SINCE ITS RESTORATION IN 1960

Yehudi Menuhin	Rostropovitch
Boris Christoff	Leon Goossens
Berlin State Opera Ballet	Ballet Rambert
Sir Donald Wolfitt	Margaret Rutherford
John Neville	Louis Kentner
Moura Lympny	John Ogdon
Ram Gopal	Alberto Lupo
Nicanor Zabaleta	Alirio Diaz

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