

THE MANOEL THEATRE

APRIL/MAY
 1986
 Issue 2

FRIENDS OF



• *LAST week an ad hoc committee met for the first time at the Boardroom of the Manoel Theatre. Its number one priority was to steer the revival of the Friends of the Manoel Theatre.*

It is made up of five personalities whose names need no introduction for lovers of the stage

and of the arts. They are: Mrs Josephine Burns De Bono (Chairperson) and Mr Richard England, Dr Edwin Craig, Dr Joe Micallef Stafrace and Mr Clive Pearsall, as members.

Ever since the announcement was made in the Theatre's gazette, the committee has been inundated with letters of

welcome and support for the project.

By joining the club, patrons will not only be assisting the National Theatre but also enhancing the quality of their own lives. They will be kept up to date with the Theatre's various activities and enjoy, at the same time, the benefits of booking in advance for

any performance organised by the MTMC.

Club facilities will include the use of the Theatre's excellent library, which contains a wide selection of books on the arts, and a comprehensive music library as well. In the near future, if sufficient support is forthcoming, a relaxed bar and coffee room is planned, which will provide members with a convenient - and very central place - to meet and talk. Lectures, recitals and exhibitions are bound to follow in this new and exciting cultural Mecca in the heart of Valletta.

"Friends" shall certainly discover the most glittering and glamorous clubhouse on the island; the recently and dazzlingly restored Bonici Palace Foyer, with its Carrera marble staircase, mirrors and chandeliers. A clubhouse that without a doubt will rapidly establish itself as a cultural and a social tour de force.



HAVE YOU VISITED THE NICOLO ISOUARD ROOM in the foyer? Once the kitchen of the Palazzo Testaferrata Bonici, the entrance is in Old Bakery Street; as you enter you will find on your left an Italian painted showcase filled with memorabilia of the Teatro Reale and the Manoel.

What strikes the eye is a programme inscribed in French, **Musique de Malte** donated by the Imperial library in Paris where, incidentally, there is a street named after the famous composer. Close by is the great iron stove decorated with 18th century Sicilian tiles, it has three large hobs and a tiny one on the flat top and two large ovens apart from the coaling-holes below.

Take note of the lamps in the old design. On the white walls hang watercolours depicting the scenery for the opera that were produced at the Royal Opera House (built in 1863).

On a low table is a model of that building donated to the Theatre by the Hon. Mr. L. Sant Minister of Works with a plan above showing the full details of the construction of soffits and porticos, donated to the Theatre by the present Chairman.

A bust of Isouard surveys the Grand piano built by Franc X. Fest in Vienna circa 1850. This piano is an earlier version of today's Grand; it has a wooden frame and the strings are horizontal in line with the finger keys to the end of the harp-shaped piano. The action of such a piano has a different touch, less sonorous than the English type. Viennese and English pianofortes were two competing types, this in turn led to two different schools of performers and even different composers; sadly it is in need of restoration... Have a look at the food lift in the facing corner which was used to carry wine and delicacies to the reception rooms high above.

Whatever you do, do not miss the *toqba tal-Qattus* (cat door) on the way in.



**JOSETTE
PORTELLI**

This portrait of Josette Portelli should be headed 'no need for shorthand.'

Josette was first enlisted by the present Chairman in 1970, her official title was assistant booking clerk, a role she rarely plays.

Today, 16 years later this vivacious girl is in total charge of the Registry which means she has control of every file of which there are hundreds; every problem that crops up, every enquiry has to go to her first. This is added to the daily correspondence, the telexes and phone calls to artists and artisans at home and abroad.

Josette admits that after all the typing she has done in the last 16 years she still makes mistakes — but it is doubtful that she is often mistaken in other matters. Someone was overheard to remark 'The Manoel Theatre has that wonderful Secretary.'

She works eight hours a day and has recently been asked to take charge of the newly arranged library which when it is open would involve her in working for two hours in the early evening indexing and cataloguing all books donated to the Theatre from embassies, individuals, other associations and local firms.

For the past two years Josette has been studying French at the Alliance Francaise with considerable success.

She is also a keen pianist, she studied with the well-known Miss A. Hare and did not give up until she reached and completed grade 7. She does Keep Fit and goes jogging.

All these activities take place in the evenings and at weekends but Josette needs the relaxation because the problems at work can be severe — only recently tripods ordered for the foyer from Cebrum Ltd. of Surrey went missing, no one knew it they had been sent via Air Malta or British Airways... The bill number was incorrect and it was only after endless phone calls and telexes that the correct airway bill number was finally traced.

Another very important activity for Josette is the involvement with the Orchestral Concert held yearly at Mdina — in August.

This means sending out all invitations. Her work is endless, (she loves it). Another job is to type up the list and index the scores for the Music Library run by Mr and Mrs Bond who kindly give up a great deal of time sorting and caring for the valuable manuscripts belonging to the Theatre.

Dancing on Saturday night at St. Julians completes the week for this versatile young woman who lives with her parents and helps to care for her 93 year old grandmother.

But do not question her about Carnival — she hates it — Why? Because people roll into the Theatre to hire their costumes for this jolly occasion and it is Josette who does the administrative work involved and checks them in and out. The Manoel charges a small fee for the loan of these costumes but it is well worth it.

On your next visit to the Theatre go up to Josette's office. I am sure she will be pleased to show you round, but please avoid the hour between 8 and 9 in the morning when she is already at her desk impeccably dressed ready for the Chairman's pile of correspondence which, believe me, has to be seen to be believed.

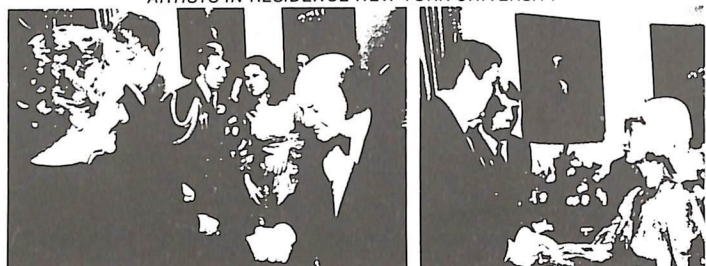
**FORTHCOMING
EVENTS**

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New York Harp Ensemble

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE NEW YORK UNIVERSITY



Photos, clockwise: Mrs. Reagan congratulates the director after the Ensemble's performance at the White House in December 1982. Barbara Pniewska with President Reagan on the same occasion. The director and Vice President and Mrs. Bush December 1982. King Baudouin of Belgium and President Carter congratulate the director after the Ensemble's performance at the White House in 1980.

The New York Harp Ensemble has distinguished itself on all continents of the world with its unique programming and superlative musicianship. Founded in 1970 by the world-famous harpist Aristid von Würtzler, the Ensemble consists of four virtuosi harpists. Through its hundreds of concerts and more than a dozen recordings, the New York Harp Ensemble has been instrumental in introducing the wealth of harp literature and the instrument's extraordinary resources to delighted listeners.

"One of the most uniquely exquisite concerts ever to be heard here — the amazing and admirable versatility of the harp." — Manila, Philippines Daily Express
 "Perfect harmony, great clarity and vivacity... enormous fascination." — Rome, Il Messaggero
 "Harpist's program proves surprising... scores high point." — New York Times
 "Works were sensitively nuanced and rendered with firmness and precision." — Bombay, The Times of India
 "A brilliant group... perfect technique and togetherness." — Porto Alegre, Brasil, La Nacion
 "Ideal performance... rare and precious at the same time... indeed a musical delight." — Hannover (Germany), Allgemeine Zeitung



**AT THE MANOEL THEATRE
on SUNDAY 27th APRIL at 7.30 p.m.**



**MICHAEL
LAUS
plays
LISZT's
piano
concertos
1 & 2
on Tuesday May 6**

**Guest Conductor
CESARE
ALFIERI
(La Scala)**

WHEN THE KING OF SPAIN JUAN CARLOS TRAVELS TO ROME NEXT MONTH ON HIS WAY TO DAMASCUS HE WILL TAKE WITH HIM, AS USUAL, HIS CIUDAD DE SEVILLA TROUPE WHICH NUMBERS ELEVEN ARTISTS. WHENEVER THE KING GIVES A BANQUET THEY ENTERTAIN. ON THIS OCCASION THEY HAVE RECEIVED HIS MAJESTY'S PERMISSION TO ACCEPT THE MANOEL THEATRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE'S INVITATION TO GIVE A PERFORMANCE IN MALTA BRINGING THEIR OWN COSTUMES AND MUSIC



THE DATE OF THIS PERFORMANCE IS FRIDAY 9TH MAY AT 7.30

SYNOPSIS

LA TRAVIATA

First produced in Venice, March 6th. 1853. First performance in London on May 24th. 1856.

(From Dumas celebrated Novel "Le Dame aux Camelias")

The scene in the first act is laid in the house of the coquettish Violetta Valery, a leading-light in the demi-monde of Paris, who, affected with consumption and feeling that her life is ebbing fast, determines to quail the cup of pleasure to the dregs. Alfredo Germont, a young man from Province who is earnestly in love with her, is introduced to Violetta at a dance given by her. He persuades her to give up her life in Paris and retire with him to a country cottage.

Here they spend some time together in perfect happiness. But Alfredo's father seeks Violetta secretly, and tells her that his son's life is being ruined because of this liaison; and further, that his daughter's chance of marriage is prejudiced. The big-hearted Violetta decides to sacrifice herself for her lover's sake. Fearing to say good-bye and explain, she leaves the cottage and returns to Paris.

The illness with which Violetta has been affected from the first has been intensified and, in order to forget the genuine love she tested for so brief a spell, she throws herself into the old life of gaiety.

Alfredo, not knowing the real reason of her desertion, follows her to Paris, and, seeing her at a ball surrounded by a court of admirers, publicly insults her.

Too late, he discovers the unselfish love which has led her to throw away her happiness with him. He finds her dying. A tender reconciliation takes place at her bedside.

AT THE MANOEL ON SAT. 24 & SUN. 25 MAY

ATEATRU
fimkien mal-Bank of Valletta jipprezenta

L-Opra tat-Tliet Habbiet ta' Bertolt Brecht
Migjuba ghall-Malti minn Guzi Gatt
Muzika ta' Kurt Weill
Arrangamenti ta' Pawlu Abela
Direzzjoni ta' Michael Fenech

Fit-Teatru Manoel
3 u 4 ta' Mejju, 1986.

Artistic poster designed by well-known graphic artist Luciano Micallef for ATEATRU'S forthcoming production of the Brecht/Weill musical 'THE THREPENNY OPERA'. An opportunity not to be missed by theatre and music lovers.

THEATRE TALK

THE MANOEL THEATRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE extends a warm welcome to all foreign cultural attachés who would like a tour of the Theatre. Recently Miss Yolande Vernon Sullivan who has newly arrived in Malta to take over all cultural activities at the U.S. Embassy called on the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman who together showed her all our treasures.

Mr. Glazebrook, the senior technical Director of Steinway in London will shortly be paying a routine visit to the Manoel Theatre to check out our Concert Grand.

When the Chairman was recently in London he invited the distinguished Conductor Sir Charles Groves to conduct the Manoel Theatre Orchestra on May 6, when Michael Laus will play Liszt's Concerti No. 1 and No. 2. Sadly Sir Charles cannot make it but we can rely on the Chairman to succeed in finding another important personality. Keep your fingers crossed....

Rumours are afoot that a revival of the British Council in Malta is in the air.

Rehearsals by the Manoel Theatre choir for the opera *La Traviata* are in full swing; casting for the leading parts is still being negotiated.

The great news of the return of *the happiest man in the world*, Aristid Würtzler, with his world-famed New York Harp Ensemble on Sunday April 27 at 7.30 p.m. will surely bring great pleasure to those of you who were fortunate enough to attend the highly successful performance they gave at the Manoel in April 1983.

There have been numerous visitors to the Theatre this month. Forty-four ladies, members of the Ladies International Society with their president Mrs Olive Bloomer were given an extensive tour both back-stage and of the auditorium as well as the beautifully decorated foyer on March 13. They greatly enjoyed the finale, coffee and cake in the courtyard... One member to another on the telephone: "You don't know what you missed today — it was a winner".

From Exeter University came thirty or so professors here in Malta on a business management course they also took in a tour of the Theatre and, to add beauty to this delectable outing 120 well chaperoned young ladies from the Sacred Heart Convent turned up on an educational tour. A tour of the Manoel Theatre is very much the IN thing.

Diane de Nimes was The Secretary Bird.

Periwinkle and David Unwin visited the Theatre four times in as many weeks. Here for the winter, both writers, they loved Malta. David, who is also a Director of the well-known publishing firm Allen & Unwin promised the Chairman to help augment our Theatre Library... Management never misses an opportunity...

When is Aaron Spelling bringing the Love Boat to Valletta? Just for the record: Nancy Calamatta was the first Maltese Mime to appear at the Manoel after Israeli, Samy Molco (1965 & 1975). French, Pradel (1983) Roger Simmonet, better known as Sime the Mime (1985) and American born Darius also in 1985. A memo to Nancy... The audience was nearly in tears when you buried the beautiful bird. *Born*

Hunter. Nancy's daughter was perfect as the *Herald*.

Placido Domingo at the Manoel in the near future?

Marthese your good friend who helped you out so often in the Booking Office in the past gave birth to Keith earlier this year — felicitations.

"I have such fond memories of my visit to Malta" writes Richard Mapp, the young New Zealand Pianist who gave us such an entertaining evening in the Foyer has arrived back in his own country via Tahiti... He is now in the throes of giving five concerts; three of which will be within four days!

mta

● L-esperiment mholli għall-Gimgha l-Kbira u Sibt il-Ghid halla l-frott. IS-SERP mhux biss imliet vojti kulturali f'dawn il-jiem, imma offriet mezz biex l-istudenti kollha, ta' kull talent u eta jahdmu ma xulxin. Ghenet biex l-istudenti tal-M.T.A.D.A., jifhmu u japprezzaw il-valuri ta' **teamwork** fi produzzjoni bhal din. Offriet opportunita ta' karatterizzazzjoni u żvilupp ta' teknika moderna tal-palk. Sar enfasi shih fuq l-ipproġġettar tal-lehen, l-użu tal-maskra tal-wiċċ, iċ-ċaqliq u l-movimenti ta' l-idejn, is-swaba u l-gisem kollu. Il-valur ta' dan l-eżercizzju jkompli jitwessa' meta niftakru illi kienu l-istess studenti illi hadmu fuq id-djalogar illi wara ġie pperfezzjonat mill-istudenti fuq il-kors ta' li Scriptwriting.

L-istudenti ta' li Stage-management għall-ewwel darba sabu ruhhom fil-qalba ta' l-azzjoni meta hadu hsieb jibdlu l-Foyer f'teatru, biex imbaghad wara, mexxew ir-rappreżentazzjonijiet fih.

Is-sehem illi taw il-LIONS CLUB (Sliema) kien ta' min ifahhru l-aktar meta wiehed jifhem illi d-dhul kollu mar b'risq il-Caritas Drug Induction Centre.

Il-pubbliki seta' wkoli isegwi u japprezza il-progress kbir illi sar fl-Akkademja f'dawn l-ahhar snin.

● Wara d-dehriet illi l-M.T.A.D.A. ghamlet fuq it-Television, fi programmi bhal **ARZELLA** u **SIBTIJET**

FLIMKIEN, bhalissa qed jinhadem feature mahsub biex jidher f'**MALTA U LIL HINN MINNHA**.

● **APPLIKAZZJONIJIET ĠODDA GHALL-KORSIJIET TA' ACTING, SCRIPTWRITING u STAGEMANAGEMENT QEGHDIN JINTLAQ-GHU MATUL IX-XAHAR TA' MEJJU.**

Dawn il-korsijiet jibdeu f'Ottubru li ġej meta jinghata bidu għal Syllabus ġdid.

Il-Junior Course jġibor fih studenti minn 15 sa 17-il sena waqt li s-Senior Course ilaqqat studenti minn 17-il sena 'l fuq. Il-hlas huwa ta' Lm5 darba biss. Kull min hu mhajjar għandu jkteb lill-Principal, M.T.A.D.A., Teatru Manoel, il-Belt, Valletta.



Iż-żjara illi għamlu fit-teatru The David Kirk Productions ta' Londra kienet waħda tassew memorabbli. Il-livell tal-produzzjoni ġie apprezzat ferm kemm mill-pubbliku numeruż illi b'entużjażmu kbir kiser kull rekord ta' box office, kif ukoll mill-kritiċi tal-ġurnali. Min-naha tagħhom, l-artisti u l-kru tekniku baqgħu mistagħġba bl-organizzazzjoni perfetta u bl-ospitalita' sinċiera illi sabu f'pajjiżna. Fl-ahhar rappreżentazzjoni ta' jum il-Hadd, l-attur prinċipali, Trevor Bannister, f'indirizz spontanju fisser il-fehma ta' kulhadd dwar is-suċċess ta' din il-kollaborazzjoni Anglo-Maltija. Fir-ritratt, mehud waqt 'reception' li nżammet fil-Boardroom tat-Teatru, in-nutar A. Sciberras Trigona flimkien ma' Mrs Joanna Sceberras Trigona (missier u l-mara tal-Ministru tal-Kultura rispettivament) jidhru qeghdin jikellmu ma' l-atturi prinċipali, Trevor Bannister u Virginia Stride. Fit-tarf fuq il-lemin tidher Kate Evans.