

## The facts about unsolicited e-mails

■ For the sake of credibility, aspiring politician Alan Deidun should have at least got his facts right (*The Sunday Times*, February 21).

Dr Deidun did offer an apology but this was only related to the fact that he had answered questions sent to him by the newspaper *Ilum* more than a month after he had received them. Questions were put to him both over the telephone and in writing (as per his instructions) at the end of March. We only got an answer on May 7, 2009, and this happened only after a series of incidents by the same politician as explained hereunder.

In his answer, Dr Deidun tried justifying his behaviour: "I don't want to justify myself but many candidates avoid answering questions posed by journalists."

Incidentally, Dr Deidun is the same candidate who personally lashed out at me with a series of threatening text messages on a Sunday afternoon simply because (before I had published the story about his e-mail behaviour), another newspaper carried a report

saying that his students had complained that they had received unsolicited e-mails from their lecturer.

After the second text message sent to me by Dr Deidun I had politely urged him to stop harassing me as I had no other option but to report this case to the police.

Yet he persisted with a third text message. I filed an official report with PN general secretary Paul Borg Olivier and the Institute of Maltese Journalists. Roderick Agius, personal assistant to Dr Borg Olivier, had proposed a reconciliation lunch with Dr Deidun (which to date has not taken place since I strongly believe that Dr Deidun's intimidating behaviour could have easily been settled with a simple 'sorry').

On a different matter, Dr Deidun should note that the last programme of the daily one-on-one talk show *Wieé Imb'Wieé*, was aired on December 4, 2009—three months ago!

**Julia Farrugia**  
Acting editor, *Ilum*  
San Gwann



## Selfish behaviour when parking

■ It is a real shame that a 'privileged person', holding a special permit to park in the reserved parking place in front of the Paola health centre

chose to park his car illegally at the corner of the building on February 19. The driver blocked the ramp on the pavement to the detriment of

patients with special needs who visited the clinic on wheelchairs.

**Anthony Gouder**  
Senglea

## Telling it like it is?

■ It is not uncommon to watch different local TV stations and get different—and I mean different—versions of facts.

Take the Budget speeches and replies—one would think they are talking about budgets of other countries, and not that of tiny Malta. Take the weather forecasts which are more like predictions, and other matters, all of which differ from station to station.

But what surprises me most is how these TV channels cannot agree about the gender of the same person. Many a time we are told what happened to Mr X and on another channel this becomes Ms X. A case in point was last Sunday when a traffic accident was reported. But what makes it

even more ridiculous is that the TV news team were reporting *live* from the spot where the accident took place.

It is incredible how one reporter saw a male driver whereas the other saw a woman on the same seat. Have men and women become so similar that one cannot tell the difference?

To me, and to many others, this is sheer irresponsibility, carelessness and incompetence, and above all an insult to our intelligence. And this is why I wonder what it really takes to be a TV/radio newscaster, reporter and whatever nowadays. My guess is as good as yours.

**Alfred Brincat**  
Birkirkara

## Top notch hospital

■ I wish to say something positive about Mater Dei. Recently I had a very rare condition, which was quite serious, and had to be hospitalised for around five weeks.

The speed and efficiency with which my case was handled by the different departments was very impressive. I can confirm that we have a top notch facility at our disposal. I am sure many people have waited for long hours in emergency, but I am

also sure many people go there for minor things which could have been dealt with in other facilities.

I can only thank all the doctors and consultants at the Neuro-Medical Ward and all the nurses, physiotherapists and staff there who did their jobs very well and helped me get well quickly, thanks to their positive energy and the love they put in their work.

**Daniel Borg**  
Birkirkara

## Food hygiene on TV

■ When chefs go on TV to demonstrate their exquisite recipes they should wear hats, aprons and gloves.

Colour-coded chopping boards should be used when chopping different types of food such as vegetables, fruit, meat or fish, to avoid food cross-

contamination. If possible, they should move away from the food when speaking to explain what they are doing.

Does anyone from the Health Department ever watch these programmes?  
**Emanuel Aquilina**  
Paola

## Bird ringing: trappers can do it too

■ Joe Sultana (*The Sunday Times*, December 27) gave his version of bird ringing, saying that Malta's 40-year bird-ringing scheme netted over 439,000 birds, equivalent to the 15-odd licensed bird-ringers netting about 733 birds each annually, of which only an insignificant few were finches.

By contrast, Malta's 4,000-odd trappers net about 22 finches each per annum (NSO 2004 study). This means that the traditional method of finch capturing used by trappers is much more effective and selective, and the trappers are much better placed to "contribute an invaluable amount of knowledge on bird behaviour and population size".

The new bird-ringing scheme, proposed by the FKNK, involving wild birds netted in the traditional manner, ringed and then released, is based on that factor.

Mr Sultana and Birdlife Malta refuse to acknowledge that the current knowledge about the migrating finch species can be improved only through the trappers' combined efforts.

We welcome Mr Sultana's statement that the EURING organisation coordinates bird-ringing schemes, because his clarification dispels the wrong perception, locally prevalent, that this organisation is some parent bird-ringing scheme itself. The fact is that other bird-ringing schemes have a right to exist, even if not recognised by EURING. There is nothing to prevent such schemes from being scientific and contributing to a better knowledge of finch migration and population dynamics.

The regulations exclude hunters and/or trappers from getting

bird-ringing licences, and guarantee a bird-ringing monopoly to Birdlife. If the Maltese authorities are genuinely interested in enriching our knowledge of bird behaviour, migration patterns and population size of wild finches occurring over these islands, they should take a stand against Birdlife's bird-ringing monopoly.

The FKNK proposals are intended to provide a needed supplement that will fill the lacuna in scientific knowledge of the seven finch migratory species. The local trappers can, and are willing to, contribute substantially to such wild finch studies through the FKNK finch capturing and release scheme. Additionally, the scheme would enable them to retain their life-long traditional passion of finch capturing.

**Lino Farrugia**  
Msida

## Michelangelo Vella's music 'barely known'

■ Joe Vella Bondin (*The Sunday Times*, February 21) disagrees with my observation that Don Michelangelo Vella's music is barely known and gave his reasons for doing so, even though he fails to include Michael Laus, Hans Jürgen Nagel and Mario Frendo among the conductors and musicians who performed Vella's works.

But the fact that Vella's music has been performed in Malta does not mean that it is well known to the public. More importantly, it is only thanks to Divall's work that Vella's music has begun to be appreciated internationally. This can be corroborated by the publication of an independent international review about the edition of the music for three transverse flutes in one of the main journals of musicology, the *Early Music Review*. Divall's work was analysed by Clifford Bartlett in the 2010 February issue.

Bartlett opens his review by stating that he "had never heard of

Michel' Angelo Vella". This is confirmation, if ever one was needed, that Vella's works, to date, are "barely known". Bartlett continues: "I was intrigued by the idea of the flute trios, though rather expected them to be a bit tedious. I was pleasantly surprised. Each sonata is in three movements: quick, slow, and quick. Four of the finales are headed *Fuga*, and much of the writing elsewhere is contrapuntal, with very little *galante* homophony. The three instruments are treated equally. The composer definitely has flair and imagination and the sonatas look rewarding to play".

Such a statement, and the fact that Vella's music is covered by an independent and prestigious international review, confirms the validity of this composer and that his importance transcends our shores. This fact was well understood by Vella's contemporaries and explains why he was the first Maltese composer to have his music published abroad in 1768.

Incidentally, Divall is making history again. While it is true that Mr Vella Bondin published the music of Abos in America, as he himself explains, this publication falls under the category of a critical edition, a fact that is collaborated by the publishing house itself.

In musicology, there are two types of publication. The first is the critical edition and, as rightly explained by Mr Vella Bondin, this type of edition includes an extensive biography of the composer with a critical review of the edited piece of music that is being published. Performance is not excluded but these publications are mainly written for research purposes. The second category of edited works targets only the performers. Divall's editions of Maltese early music fall under this highly specialised category.

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