

## Save me from Berlusconi, Benigni asks Fenech Adami

Photo: com tam

Tue, 22 April 2008



In a packed church in Valletta, an Italian man kneeled before Maltese President Dr Edward Fenech Adami, begging him to help him as he does not want to return to Italy under the new Prime Minister Berlusconi.

Had the man not been Roberto Benigni, the Italian Oscar-winning director and actor, such a move would have sparked a major diplomatic incident. But for the Italian legendary artist of 'La Vita e' Bella' fame, every word becomes a work of art. The actor mesmerised the guests at the historic Jesuits Church, as he delivered his acceptance speech on receiving an honoris causa doctorate degree from the University of Malta.



Benigni, who soared to international fame with his cinematic masterpiece 'La Vita e' Bella' (1997), is in Malta on a three day visit, and will be delighting Malta with a 'Serata Dantesca', a public recital of Dante Alighieri's Divina Commedia, on Wednesday at 1830hrs on campus. Inside the university theatre, only students and the university's academic staff will be allowed, but outside the hall, at the university's main quadrangle, the public will be able to follow Benigni's performance through a live transmission on a maxi screen.

On Wednesday, Benigni will be sharing the stage with

Professor Robert Hollander, who published over 12 books on Dante. The Professor was also entrusted with a new translation of Paradiso, published in 2007.

### A plan to re-conquer Italy!

Earlier in the day, Benigni thrilled Maltese journalists with a breathtaking press conference, describing Malta as a 'vecchia appena nata' and letting loose his imagination describing a fantastical plot on how to gather an army to re-conquer Italy.

Last week's general elections are still fresh in Benigni's mind. In the run up to the polls he openly supported the Partito Democratico (PD) of Walter Veltroni, the main contender of the newly elected Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. 'I am not here to seek political asylum,' Benigni smiled, as he started answering Maltese journalists' questions. He then explained a medieval-style fantastical plan to march into Italy with an international army, to 're-conquer' the country from Berlusconi's rule. His 'plan' included gathering Maltese knights, and historic warriors from other European cultures, and to ask Maltese Prime Minister Dr Gonzi for weapons and money.



Ironically, both the Maltese President and the Prime Minister stand on the same side of the political spectrum as Berlusconi!

### "Vecchia appena nata"

Malta is like "una vecchia appena nata" [an old newborn], said Benigni, hailing the country's rich history intertwined with its vibrant culture. This is his first time on the island, but he was impressed, he told journalists. "When I was told I will be receiving a degree from Malta, I was so happy I jumped on the table and did cartwheels on the lawn." He even toyed with the possibility of using Malta for one of his films. "I am currently looking for a story for my next film... maybe it will include Malta."

When a journalist asked him if he ever has moments of sadness and tears, he smiled, asked her name, and wittily commented, "What a beautiful name, it almost brings tears to my eyes." He admitted that

many comedians are said to have a very melancholic private life. He recalled an actor telling him he dreaded going to dinner with Charles Chaplain as he was so sad! "I tried to be sad in order to be like the great comedians, but I never managed," he quipped.

He described life as a journey of constant change, where everyone follows a path, a dream, "and the desire to desire life."

### Dante is ahead of us...

In recent months, Benigni's popularity in Italy escalated with the television programme 'Tutto Dante' on RAI, the Italian national broadcaster. The programmes reached unexpected popularity levels, with viewership exceeding 12 million. The climax of the events is when Benigni superbly recites whole 'cantos' of Dante's Divina Commedia by heart.



Commenting on this achievement, Benigni refused to admit that he is doing any effort to spread literature among the people. "I do not want to acculturate the people. I go before the people to do what I love doing, just like a child who discovers something beautiful and wants to tell everyone about it. Wherever I went, I went to learn more on Dante's words from those I meet. I keep learning everyday."

"The love for Dante's works is like a fire that keeps me warm... we do not have to look back to understand Dante's works... he is ahead of us... the first and greatest modern poets... a visionary... when you read Dante you get the urge to make love to the book." Benigni explains that Dante's 'La Commedia' is like an encyclopedia, almost like the Internet, as it deals with everything, with every aspect of life."



Asked on the possibility of making a film out of the Divina Commedia, Benigni said it is almost impossible. Even Federico Fellini wished to do a film on Dante's work, Benigni said as he recalled his friendship with the renowned film director. But they both agreed that the Commedia is perfect in its own right, and when a creation is perfect it is difficult to successfully translate it into another medium. "It is like trying to speak in rhyme."

Benigni has been studying the Divina Commedia, and its interpretation, for years. His first recital was in 1990 at the University of Siena. During the last years he started the recitals in Italian squares, reviving the forgotten Tuscan tradition of reciting literature by heart in public. Even illiterate farmers used to perform some of the Commedia's 'cantos'.

But Benigni goes a step further. Before the recitals, he starts off with commentaries linking Dante's works to contemporary themes. "He managed to give the Commedia modern relevance, and he did it in an extraordinary way," explained Professor Dominic Fenech, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Dr Gloria Lauri Lucente, the Deputy Dean of the same faculty, when announcing Benigni's visit to Malta, a few weeks ago. Dr Lauri Lucente and Professor Fenech organised Benigni's visit to Malta on behalf of the university's Faculty of Arts.

## 04.23\_maltastar



Id-Direttur, attur u komiku popolari Taljan ta' fama internazzjonali, Roberto Benigni, il-bierah wara nofsinar inghata l-Honoris Causa mill-Universita' ta' Malta bhala rikonoxximent ghax-xoghol tieghu u l-imhabba li ghandu lejn id-Divina Commedia ta' Dante Alighieri. Fir-ritratt jidher Roberto Benigni bit-tghannija tipika tieghu mal-President ta' Malta, Eddie Fenech Adami wara li ircieva d-Dottorat. Aktar kmieni hu itaqi wkoll mal-gurnalisti fl-Aula Magna, il-Belt. Ara pagina 32 (Ritratt: Guido Farrugia)

## 04.23\_nazzjon





Roberto Benigni (lemin) jindirizza lill-gurnalisti u (xellug) id-direttur u awtur Taljan ta' fama internazzjonali f'mument waqt iċ-ċerimonja qiegħed jingħata d-Dottorat Honoris Causa fil-Letteratura mill-Prof. Juanito Camilleri, ir-Rettur ta' l-Università ta' Malta

## Il-komiċità ta' Roberto Benigni fl-aqwa tagħha

Rapporti: Annette Vella u Fabian Demicoli — Ritratti: Guido Farrugia u Michael Ellul

**Waqt ċerimonja fil-Knisja tal-Gizwiti, il-Belt li matulha Roberto Benigni, direttur u awtur Taljan ta' fama internazzjonali, ingħata d-Dottorat Honoris Causa fil-Letteratura mill-Università ta' Malta, ma naqsitx il-komiċità li hu magħruf għaliha dan l-attur rebbieħ ukoll ta' l-Oscar.**

Wara li iċ-ċerimonja bdiet bl-Innu Nazzjonali Malti mill-Orkestra ta' l-Università ta' Malta, kien imiss li iġġidha l-messagg tagħha Gloria Lauri-Lucente, Senior Lecturer fl-Università ta' Malta. Wara, l-artist ta' fama internazzjonali, Roberto Benigni issejjaħ biex imur quddiem il-Professur Juanito Camilleri, ir-Rettur ta' l-Università ta' Malta biex jipprezentali l-Grad tad-Dottorat fil-Letteratura.

F'mument minnhom ma naqsitx ukoll it-tgħanniga tipika tiegħu lill-President ta' Malta, Eddie Fenech Adami, u saħansitra f'hin minnhom niżel għarkubtejx quddiem il-President waqt li lissen li hu kien għe Malta "bħala refuġjat jitolb l-għajnunata wara l-elezzjonijiet parlamentari fl-Italja" li saru dan l-aħhar.

Roberto Benigni kellu reazzjoni ta' skantament hekk kif wasal il-mument li jingħata d-Dottorat, hekk kif bil-lingwa Maltija qal, "Il-lallu, il-lallu!" Fil-bidu tad-diskors, hu stqarr bil-Malti li kellu qalbu qed tħabbat u kellu b'żonn tabib.

Kontinwament Benigni irringrazzja lill-poplu Malti bil-lingwa Maltija waqt li refera għas-buhija tal-għejjer Maltin.

Wara, hu ta bidu għal diskors deskritt passjonali dwar Dante.

Aktar kmieni wara nofsinhar, il-karattru ta' Benigni hareġ aktar fil-bereh f'laqgħa personali mal-gurnalisti. Hu fisser il-hajja minnha bis-sabih u l-ikrah tagħha. Izda, għal Roberto Benigni, il-hajja hi kummiedja kontinwa, fejn jimmexxlu jsid dik il-haġa pożittiva li jista' jibqa' jicċajta dwarha u biha.

Din hi l-ewwel darba li Roberto Benigni zar Malta; izda fi kliemu stess

isib li l-pajjiż hu mill-isbaħ b'lingwa li tigbor fiha l-isbaħ affarijiet tal-lingwi kollha li jgħawruha. Dan wasallu biex fil-fitt sığħat li kien ilu Malta tgħallim fitt mill-vokabularju Malti, tant li meta dahal fis-sala fejn kienu qed jistennew il-fotografi u l-cameras tat-televiżjoni, kif ukoll diversi gurnalisti, huwa laqqa' lil dawk ta' quddiemu, "Bongu habib". Minnufih beda jagħmel is-soltu mossi komiċi li hu magħruf għalihom, u kwazi jukellem mal-lenti li kellu quddiemu. Fitt wara nstema' jgħid "grazzi hafna" u beda jsemmi diversi ruħa u bliet li hawn fil-pajjiż, fosthom San Pawl il-Baħar, Bormla, il-Birgu, is-Siġġiewi, B'Kara.

Roberto Benigni jinsab Malta wara stedina li saritlu mill-Fakultà ta' l-Arti, fl-Università ta' Malta, li kienet hi stess li pproponiet u resset it-talba biex hu jingħata l-Honoris Causa għax-xogħol tiegħu u l-imħabba li għandu lejn id-Divina Commedia ta' Dante Alighieri. Tant, li qed jimmexxlu jwassal il-kapulavur ta' dan il-kittieb famuż Taljan fost il-pubbliku, u b'hekk id-Divina Commedia ma tibqax kapulavur letterarju li jtgħawda biss mill-istudju u l-istudenti li xi darba jew oħra kellhom jistudjawha.

Mistoqsi minn In-Nazzjon liema hu l-proġett li qed jahdem fuqu issa u fiż-żmien li għej, Roberto Benigni qabad ma' suġġeriment li kien għadu kemm sar mill-Professur Robert Hollander biex Benigni stess jahdem il-parti ta' Dante Alighieri f'kummiedja dwar Dante Alighieri. Meta kien mistoqsi jekk jithajjarx jagħmel film f'Malta, huwa qal li jekk isib storja adatta għal film għid jikkunsidra lil Malta, dejjem jekk din tinkwadra fil-kitba.



Roberto Benigni fi tmiem iċ-ċerimonja, u fl-isfond il-Professur John Rizzo Naudi, il-Kanċillier ta' l-Università ta' Malta, u l-Prof Dominic Fenech, id-Dekan tal-Fakultà ta' l-Arti

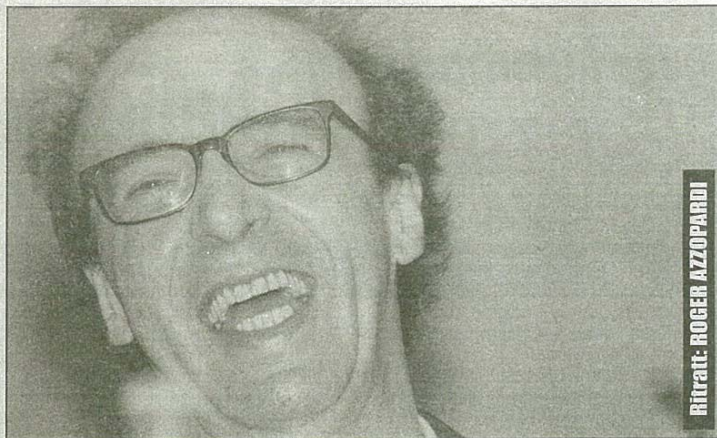
Kull min isegwi sew lil Roberto Benigni jafu bħala bniedem dejjem jicċajta. Izda mistoqsi jekk il-hajja għaliha hix ċajta kontinwa, hu qal li bħal kull bniedem iehor jgħaddi minn mument emozzjonali; imma dejjem ifittex xi haġa komika biex tkompli tmexxi 'il quddiem.

Fil-konferenza ta' l-aħbarijiet, il-komiku Taljan ma naqasx li jagħti botta lill-politika Taljana u qal li filwaqt li Malta għandha ordni tal-kavallieri, fl-Italja hemm biss Kavallier wieħed, Silvio Berlusconi. Hu żied li kieku jista' jigbor armata ta' kavallieri u jagħti s-salt biex inehhi lil Berlusconi min-nofs. Ma naqsitx ukoll il-battuta

kontra Walter Veltroni, issa Kap ta' l-Oppożizzjoni fl-Italja, li skond Benigni dan ressaq il-kandidatura tiegħu meta ma jifhem xejn fil-politika.

Il-lejla, intant kull min iħobb il-letteratura Taljana m'għandux jitlef l-okkażjoni li fis-6.30pm imur l-Università fejn ikun jista' jisma' lil Roberto Benigni jirreċta partijiet mid-Divina Commedia, u wara jkun hemm diskussjoni dwar Dante bejn Benigni u l-istudju ta' Dante, Robert Hollander. Min ma jilhaqx post fis-Sala Temi Zammit ta' l-Università se jkollu l-opportunità xorta jsejwi l-attività fuq maxi-screen li se jittella' fl-Atriju Vassalli.





# Jispikka fostna l-istil ferrieħi ta' Roberto Benigni

Minn CHARMAINE CRAUS

● Ftit siegħat biss qabel ma nġhata l-Grad ta' Duttur tal-Letteratura (Honoris Causa) fil-Knisja ta' l-Università l-Belt Valletta, l-attur komiku Taljan Roberto Benigni indirizza konferenza ta' l-ahbarijiet fl-Augla Magna, li matulha spikka s-solitu stil ferrieħi tiegħu li jwaqqa' kollox għaž-żufett.

Matul is-siegħa u nofs li Benigni dam jikkellem mal-gurnalisti, dawn ma tawx każ iżjed innoti li kien qegħdin jiktbu fuqhom, iżda qagħdu jегwu l-ispettaklu li hareg minn fomm.

Qabel poġġa fuq il-mejda flimkien mal-Professor Robert Holland, li huwa l-awtur tal-traduzzjoni ta' 'La Divina Commedia', Roberto Benigni ċċajta wkoll mal-fotografi u tahom opportunità ta' baxx jiegħdu diversi ritratti jippoż. Roberto Benigni, li din kienet l-ewwel zjara tiegħu f'Malta, qal li din kienet gurnata speċjali hafna għalih. Huwa fahhar lil Malta, u qal li jinsab emozzjonat f'din il-gżira antika bi storja u lingwa għalija. "Si respira una bellezza", zied jgħid Benigni, fil-waqt li kkummenta li

l-lingwa tagħna hija tant sabieħa li jkollu aptit jaqbadha u jiftagħha fi platt biex jikolha! Hafna drabi, Benigni beda jikkellem fuq kollox minbarra fuq il-mistoqsija li sissirli u l-ahhar parti tal-kumment tiegħu tkun mistoqsija oħra biex ifakkruh fuq xiex kellu jwieġeb!

Diffiċli tiddistingwi jekk Benigni jkunx qiegħed jikkellem bis-serjetà jew le, għax narawh kull fejn narawh dejjem bl-istil uniku tiegħu. Dwar dan l-**orizzont** staqsieħ jekk hemmx mument matul haġu li jgħiegħtuh jibki bid-dwejjaq u mhux b'emozzjoni. Għalkemm Benigni kkummenta li din kienet mistoqsija kommoventi hafna u li mis-silfu qalbu, xorta mexxielu jdah-haq lil dawk kollha preżenti bil-kummenti tiegħu. Il-ftit mument li fihom isserja wkoll imexxielu jdawwarhom f'ċajta, anke bil-mod kif beda jipprova jippronunzja l-ismijiet ta' gurnalisti li għamlulu l-mistoqsijiet.

Mistoqsija jekk il-hajja għalih hijet sabieħa biss, iżda wkoll ċajta, Benigni qal li kemm-il darba f'haġu, bħal kullhaqq, jgħuh mument koroh, iżda huwa dej-

jem jipprova jsib xi haġa komika f'dawn il-mument biex iżom-muh għaddej.

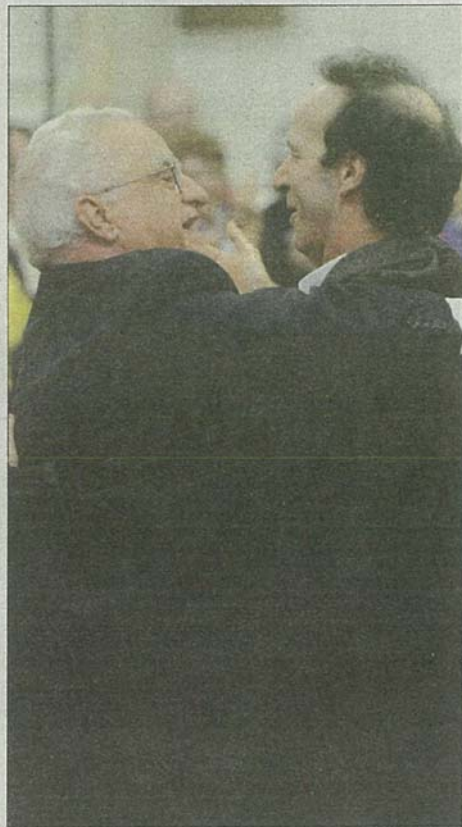
Benigni pprova jippronunzja wkoll ismijiet ta' lokalitajiet f'Malta biex jistieden lill-pubbliku jaltendi għal serata 'dantesca' li fiha llejja se jinterpretasiltiet minn 'La Divina Commedia' kif ukoll għal diskussjoni bejnu u bejn Robert Hollander, laqgħa li se tkun miftuha għall-pubbliku mingħajr hlas.

Matul il-konferenza ta' l-ahbarijiet, ma naqsux ukoll botti dwar il-politika Taljana. Benigni qal li ma jiddejjaq xejn ikun wieħed mill-Kavallieri Maltin peress li fl-Italja hemm biss kavallier wieħed, b'referenza ovvja għal Silvio Berlusconi.

Mistoqsija fejn jara lilu nnifsu f' 'La Divina Commedia', Benigni wieġeb li probabbilment ikun fl-infern, fil-waqt li kkummenta li jistgħu jifgħuh fejn iridu basta jkun 'il bogħod minn Silvio Berlusconi. Ma naqsax ukoll kumment dwar il-Kap ta' l-Oppożizzjoni Taljan Walter Veltroni, li skond Benigni ma jifhem xejn fil-politika!

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04.23\_orizzont



President Eddie Fenech Adami was not spared the trademark bear hug and antics of the affable Oscar-winning actor and director Roberto Benigni during the conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Literature (*Honoris Causa*) by the University of Malta on the passionate Dante scholar, who added more than a touch of humour to the solemn event. *Story on page 4* Photo: Matthew Mirabelli

04.23\_times



# University honours 'refugee' Benigni

Fiona Galea Debono

Oscar-winning actor, director and screenwriter Roberto Benigni added more than a dose of comedy to the otherwise formal atmosphere at the Jesuits' Church in Valletta when he accepted the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature, conferred on him by the University of Malta yesterday.

The "neo doctor" – as he proudly described himself later – indulged in his fair share of trademark bear hugs during the solemn event and not even President Eddie Fenech Adami was spared his public display of affection, which Mro Benigni is renowned to embark on in the most daring and unexpected of situations.

Mro Benigni scrambled off the podium, where, in a dig at Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, he had just said he was a refugee in Malta, following the recent elections in Italy, going down on his knees at the President's feet and calling out: "*Ghinnu, ghinnu!*" (help me, help me).

None of the distinguished guests could keep a straight face in the presence of the slapstick comedian and his comical expressions, which recalled his hilarious roles in *Johnny Stecchino* and *Il Mostro*, for example.

Mro Benigni (or doctor) was honoured by the doctorate *Honoris Causa*, sponsored by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, on whose initiative he was brought over, in recognition of his "indefatigable vibrancy and enduring versatility as film director and actor that has won him broad and deserved international acclaim."

"Benigni has revived with compassion, wit and rigour the ancient art of recitation through his *Lecturae Dantis*, to which he also brings impeccable scholarship and a critical insight that is as incisive as it is sensitive, and which has resulted in making Dante's *La Divina Commedia* once more accessible to the public."

"His contribution to Dante scholarship, to the study of literature and to the humanities generally is complemented by a unique exploration of the emotional range possible in cinema," the University said.

Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Gloria Lauri-Lucente, who was instrumental in bringing Mro Benigni to Malta, and was on the receiving end of his affection too, described him in her oration as having "brought to the arts and the humanities a tragicomic genius, which has been uniquely able to communicate the bearable, as well as the unbearable lightness of being, winning us over to the view that *la vita è bella* (life is beautiful)."

Without a tie and wearing a V-neck under his suit, hanging on a thin frame, Mro Benigni



Mro Benigni during the conferment of the honorary degree by University Rector Juanito Camilleri. On Prof. Camilleri's right is Domènec Fenech, Dean of the Faculty of Arts.  
Photo: Matthew Mirabelli

waved frantically, with childlike enthusiasm. During the initial part of the ceremony, he sat uncharacteristically still and calm, building up to the actual conferment of the *Honoris Causa*, which saw him playing the fool in his typical, humorous manner and acting confused and lost during the dignified procedure.

Behaving as though he was taken aback when he was made to wear the toga, he proceeded to play around with its dangling sleeves, shaking them in the air, and visibly panicked when the cap was placed on his head.

But words cannot describe the comedian's expressions, or his acceptance speech, which broke out in Maltese. Exaggerating his emotions and acting overwhelmed, he told the audience that "*qalbi thabbat hafna*" (my heart is beating fast), calling for a doctor and repeatedly yelling "*illallu!*", the Maltese version of Italian "*mamma mia*".

The true orator that he is spoke for 20 minutes, almost without a pause for breath, about Dante and his *La Divina Commedia*. His words hovering between the comic and the serious,

they were not short of political and religious innuendos.

His passionate speech, in which he put poets, and Dante in particular, on a pedestal, and said that divinity did not necessarily have to be reached through God, resounded through the church and had him frequently wiping the sweat off his brow.

Mro Benigni said he would be eternally grateful to the Maltese for the unforgettable experience and concluded with a recitation of two of Dante's sonnets for which his tone of voice changed drastically, before he walked out of the church to the soundtrack of his Oscar-winning *La vita è bella*, which saw him pleasantly surprised.

Mro Benigni then progressed to the Italian Cultural Institute where he inaugurated an exhibition of illustrations by the artist Monika Beisner that embellish a unique and luxurious translation into English of *La Divina Commedia*.

The limited-edition publication in three volumes is by the eminent Dante scholar Robert

Hollander and his wife Jean, who are also in Malta, and have worked with Mro Benigni on the dissemination of knowledge about Dante worldwide.

At the preview, Mro Benigni, who prefaced the Hollanders' publication, marvelled at the illustrations, some of which were painted by Ms Beisner in Gozo, saying he wanted to buy a house there.

"If you paint like that in Gozo, it is an island of artists," he said during his third, equally energetic and hilarious "performance" of the day.

During this "*settimana Benignosa*", he is also treating the University to a *scruta dantesca* on the lines of his successful series of *Tutto Dante* performances on Italian TV. It is being held at the University's Sir Temi Zammit Hall at 6.30 p.m. today. A maxi-screen at the campus main quadrangle is being set up to project the performance for the public.

The event is a one-off opportunity to witness Mro Benigni interpret and comment on Dante's *La Divina Commedia* and carry out his recitation by heart of the last *canto* of the *Paradiso*.

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## Benigni's *canto* on anything from Dante to Berlusconi

Fiona Galea Debono

Roberto Benigni immediately broke the ice and had journalists in fits of laughter, unwilling to miss a single word, or gesture, at a press conference yesterday.

Notebooks and pens were put aside to watch the spectacle as the irrepressible actor never directly answered questions, veering off on a humorous but intelligent tangent that would almost invariably return to a question on what the question was.

Referring to the journalists by name, Mro Benigni took the Mickey out of everything, cracking up the

floor. He babbled on, ten to the dozen (throwing in the odd Maltese word and even village name), claiming to have lost his train of thought – but never the attention of his audience.

The few instances in which he appeared serious inevitably turned into a joke, although there was a deep meaning hidden in everything he said.

The press conference, prior to the University's conferment of the honorary degree, was dominated by the eternity of the 14th-century poet and his *La Divina Commedia*, with interventions by the eminent international Dante scholar Robert Hollander. Mro Benigni's passion was expressed in the fact that he wanted to "jump on" Dante and "make love" to the book.

The actor/director spoke about the possibility – or impossibility – of making a comedy out of it, also with himself in the role of Dante. "I am the same age as he was in his last years of life. It could be entitled: *The Last Days of Dante*," he said, taking the credit for a "personal and original" idea that had just been proposed by Prof. Hollander.

Mro Benigni compared his reaction to the conferment of the honorary degree to the time when he was nominated for the Oscar for the movie *Life Is Beautiful*, but insisted that the latter was by no means the highlight of his life.

Asked where Dante would have placed him – in heaven, purgatory, or

hell – he joked that he had never been asked such a question and could not answer, but would have expected to be asked where he would have put Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

"Hopefully, in the *girone* furthest away from me," he yelled – in hell, but at a great distance.

Mro Benigni is an outspoken critic of the newly-elected Prime Minister and media tycoon and did not hesitate to refer to him at the press conference, saying Malta had the Knights of the Order of St John but Italy only had one "*cavaliere*".

He said it would be extraordinary to shoot a film in Malta but went off on another colourful tangent before

it could be understood whether he had serious intentions.

Acting out *La Divina Commedia* with the late Massimo Troisi, with whom he had starred in (1985), would have been a "spectacle par excellence", he said, adding that he really missed the actor, and breaking into a recitation of a *canto* as it would have sounded had the two been performing it.

Mro Benigni has embarked on a quest to bring Dante, and poetry, to people through his immense popularity, but he insisted his was by no means a "mission" to "culturalise" the man in the street and that he was simply doing what he loved.

04.23\_times



# Benigni's debut in Malta: A gift to us

ANNALIZA BORG

"Sura' la mia prima volta a Malta. Inhobbkom Hafna!"

This was Benigni's opening address to the *Serata Dantesca* during which the Italian scholar yesterday evening entertained a large audience at the Sir Temi Zammit Hall, University of Malta.

President Edward Fenech Adami attended this performance together with several members of Parliament, Members of the University Senate, lecturers and students. All those who did not make it into the University Hall could watch the show by means of a maxi-screen set up at University's Main Quadrangle.

The show kicked off after a brief introduction by Faculty of Arts Deputy Dean Gloria Lauri-Lucente, followed by several film excerpts highlighting Benigni's work. The audience resorted to a standing ovation as Roberto Benigni jumped ecstatically while making his way onto



Roberto Benigni discussing a point with Professor Hollander at the University yesterday

Photos Ben Borg Cardana



the stage.

The show was performed in three parts: An introductory dialogue between Benigni and Professor Robert Hollander, Benigni's one-

man show explaining the *Divina Commedia* and his recitation of *L'Ultimo Canto del Paradiso*.

Professor Hollander and his wife Jean Hollander are the authors of the new illustrated translation of Dante's *Divina Commedia*.

Prof. Hollander said that he was going to test Benigni in order to conclude whether he truly merited the *honoris causa* Doctorate of Literature Degree conferred to him last Tuesday. The duo resorted to an intelligent dialogue during which Benigni widely interacted with the audience.

Yesterday's examiner did not take the usual role but presented himself as the Inquisitor of Malta. Benigni was constantly asking Carmelo the cameraman to help him answer the questions posed to him, even

though it was utterly clear the actor had no difficulty in answering them. The actor habitually resorted to question Prof Hollander on the actual question without giving direct answers.

During the evening, Benigni explained how difficult Dante's writing was to be understood. Lines from *La Divina Commedia* are, "most famous, most grand and most memorable in world poetry because they are impressive," Benigni said.

Benigni's clear recitation of *L'Ultimo Canto* in Dante's *Paradiso* made even those who do not understand the language realise the nature of the poetry. It includes all aspects of literature at large.

"La bellezza nasce terribilmente," Benigni said. "The beauty of life that comes from God is instilled in everyone. The Holy Spirit is

God's breath of love. This is the breath of life", Benigni said while explaining the beautiful concept.

Such notions surely set off trains of thoughts in all those present at the *Serata Dantesca*. Words cannot express the meaningful performance. This really amusing person can surely reach people and teach literature in most modern ways.

Unfortunately, not all present adhered to the rules that did not allow photographs, videos clips or recordings to be taken. During the performance, ringing mobile phones and camera flashes were a sure disturbance to all those deeply interested in the subject, if not to Benigni himself.

Benigni was again commended with a rather long standing ovation at the end of the show.

04.24\_themaltaindependent

# Roberto Benigni f'La Divina Commedia fl-Università

**L-Artist Taljan Roberto Benigni l-bieraħ filgħaxija ta wirja mill-aqwa fin-Notte Dantesca li ppreżenta fl-Università ta' Malta fost applawsi kbar u twal li jtarrxu.**

Benigni kien milqugh minn applaws kbir hekk kif tela' fuq il-palk, mill-mijiet li kien hemm jistennewh fis-sala fl-Università, u mill-folla kbira li kienet qed issegwi l-ispettaklu minn barra fuq *big screen*.

Fil-bidu ta' ċerimonja ntwer *feature* qasir bl-aħjar mument i ta' ċinema ta' l-attur Taljan, fosthom siltiet minn *La vita e' bella*, il-film li bih rebah il-prestigjuż *oscar*.

Roberto Benigni tella' interpretazzjoni ta' *La Divina Commedia* ta' Dante, flimkien ma' Robert Hollander, l-attur rinomat għall-imhabba tieghu għax-xogħol ta' Dante.

Roberto Benigni, bħalma għamel tul il-gurnata ta' nhar it-Tlieta, għażel li jicċajta ma' kulhadd, jizzufjetta bih innifsu, jaqbez u jżifen fuq il-palk.

Ma naqasx ukoll li jsemma lil kulhadd il-hafna kliem bil-Malti li tghallem sa issa f'din l-ewwel żjara tieghu f'Malta.

L-attur Taljan li f'Malta wkoll iċċieva mill-Università ta' Malta d-Dottorat Honorias Causa fil-Letteratura, ha sehem ukoll f'diskussjoni ma' l-istudjuż ta' Dante Robert Hollander.



L-attur Taljan Roberto Benigni flimkien ma' Robert Hollander, l-attur rinomat għall-imhabba tieghu għax-xogħol ta' Dante (Ritratt: Michael Ellul)

**04.24\_nazzjon**



04.24\_nazzjon





Students and scholars were yesterday treated to a lesson of a lifetime when Roberto Benigni combined clowning with culture, linguistics with body language and laughter with silent awe as he took to the University's stage to share his passion for Dante's *La Divina Commedia* in a spectacle that captivated the audience. *Story on page 13*  
*Photo: Matthew Mirabelli*

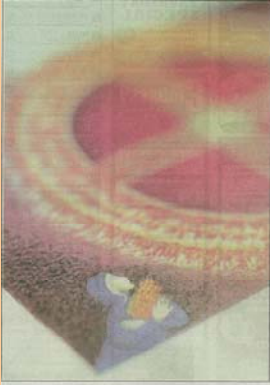
**04.24\_times**



Roberto Benigni working on artist Mimka Benner's illustrations at the Italian Cultural Institute.



Mimka Benner



## Heaven's gateway

Fiona Galea Debono

Some of the most beautiful illustrations of the *Divine Comedy* have been created by German artist Mimka Benner, whose work is now on display at the Italian Cultural Institute in Valletta.

The artist, who is currently in Malta on a visit, has been working on the illustrations for the past few years. She has been inspired by the work of the Italian Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli, and her style is a blend of the two.

The illustrations are a series of 100 small paintings, each depicting a scene from the *Divine Comedy*. They are arranged in a grid, and each one is a masterpiece of art.

Benner's work is a masterpiece of art, and it is a pleasure to see it on display in Malta.

Although Benner's work is a masterpiece of art, it is not the only reason why it is so popular. The illustrations are also a reflection of the artist's own life and experiences.

Benner's work is a reflection of the artist's own life and experiences, and it is a pleasure to see it on display in Malta.

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Benner's work is a reflection of the artist's own life and experiences, and it is a pleasure to see it on display in Malta.



By the artist, Benner.

04.24\_times

# Outstanding performance

We are all unique, but some people are more unique than others.

Italian actor Roberto Benigni was in Malta this week to be bestowed with the doctorate of literature (*honoris causa*) by the University of Malta. And, true to his fame, his public appearances were characterised by funny and hilarious moments, interspersed with others that brought out the intelligence of a man who is inimitable in all that he does.

His reaction when he won the Oscar for the film *La Vita e' Bella* (Life is beautiful) is, and will remain, one of the most remembered moments in the history of the cinema. Well, the film itself is one of the best ever to be produced, as the way Benigni plays with the public's emotions on such a sad subject as World War II is something that can only be described as extraordinary.

Likewise, those who had the chance to be present for Benigni's performance during the *Serata Dantesca* held at the University theatre last Wednesday – both in his conversation with Dante expert Professor Robert Hollander and in his monologue afterwards – will treasure those two hours for the rest of their lives.

The man has the ability to make others laugh in whatever he does. Each time he is on stage – and Italian personalities like Pippo Baudo and Raffaella Carrà have had their fair share of his stunts – he manages to captivate his audiences with a behaviour that is outside the norm.

Nobody ever knows what Benigni will come up with, although something unexpected always seems to happen when he is around. His facial expressions, the way he plays around with his arms and his body language are all part of a character that always manages to bring about a smile.

Who would have the guts to act the way he did during the graduation ceremony last Tuesday? Who would kneel down in front of President Eddie Fenech Adami and plead for political asylum? Who would then publicly embrace the President the way Benigni did?

But there is another side to Benigni which emerged at the University last Wednesday. And this is the skill of an actor who simplified a complicated work of art such as Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia* in such a way as to make it more down to earth to those hundreds that gathered inside and outside the Sir Temi Zammit Hall

at Tal-Qroqq, before reciting, by heart and from his heart, *L'Ultimo Canto* in an outstanding performance.

It is no wonder that he was granted a standing ovation by a mesmerised audience.

Literature is often thought to be annoying and boring, but people like Benigni can bring it to life. The way he explained each and every verse could be transposed into images that made Dante's work so easily understood. No effort needed to be made to literally imagine what Dante wanted to explain through what Benigni was saying.

He was alone on stage, but it was like watching a film.

What was unfortunate is that some of those present did not adhere to the rules as explained before the evening started, and kept on taking photos throughout and left their mobile phones switched on, often disturbing the actor, and this even after they were reprimanded by the ushers.

It was yet another example of how undisciplined we can be, and we must be thankful that Benigni did not just walk off the stage as the cameras kept on flashing and mobile phones kept on ringing.

04.25\_ themaltaindependent





04.26\_times

# Benigni in paradise

It started as the day was ending. The public sat or stood outside the lecture theatre in the light of the setting sun and the beginnings of an evening breeze. Coloured photocopies of Italian verse and its translation were distributed to the audience outside who watched a large screen hopefully and to the other guests ensconced within who watched the stage for the emergence of the Italian actor and filmmaker.

After a dynamic introduction to the evening, pronounced by Gloria Lauri Lucente, the audiences watched clips of Roberto Benigni's films and his performances. Nothing, however, prepared the viewers for the emergence of the poet-artist who provided first a burlesque show in Maltese, Italian and English as he enacted the role of stumped scholars with the venerated Dantean scholar Robert Hollander and then swiftly donned the cap of an erudite impassioned lecturer enunciating Dante's verse and vocabulary.

The explanation embraced philosophy, Greek mythology, theology, the role of women and the Mother of God, the obscure and the obvious; a microcosm in a microcosm of the carefully selected word or phrase – apparently experienced and deeply understood by Mr Benigni himself.

Just as minutes earlier he had the audience riveted by his use of Maltese, humorous improvisation (although quoting Balzac's admonition of never joking with poetry), the drawing in of Carmelo, the cameraman, into his *mise en*

Catherine Sinclair Galea

**'... through (Roberto) Benigni's recitation, scholarly interpretation and Dantean inspiration merge.'**

*scène* and the dramatisation of a student cleverly attempting a cover-up of an overt lack of study, now the contrast emerged as starkly as the night sky.

As the birds vociferously recited their retirement to their beds in the trees lining the campus, the inspiration of the medieval poet played its God-given verse through its humble but capable Italian instrument who delivered a melodious rendition of the *canto* from Dante's *Paradiso*. After the critique of the verse, much of it sounded familiar and pleasant to follow.

God (pronounced by Dante himself as being the author of the *cantos*, though the gods and muses had inspired it) is described by Mr Benigni as an unseeable, untouchable great being who dwells among us all, omniscient (and seeing a range of things; the great mechanism of an insect's wings as well as aons of existences and contemporary happenings), has His name uttered by newborn babes in their innocence and becomes palpable by those in love and those on a journey such as the poet's to find themselves.

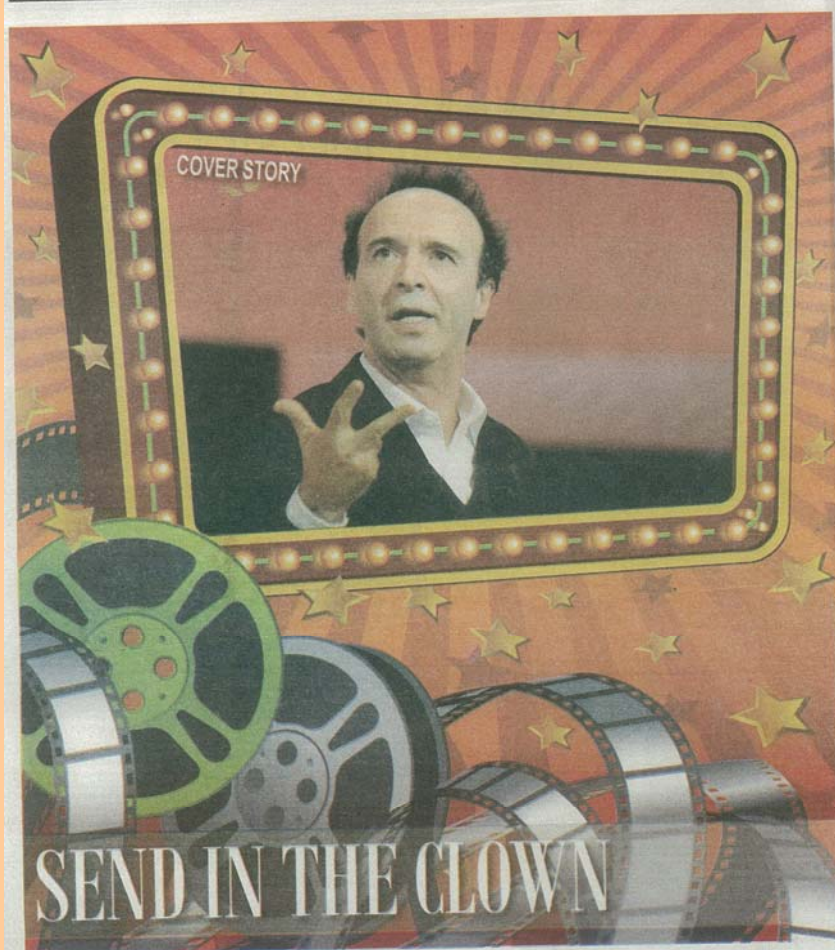
In a moment, through Mr Benigni's recitation, scholarly interpretation and Dantean inspiration merge. All Summa, all saints, all beings, all desires, cease. There is, as St Augustine describes, that great cessation of searching when the true meeting takes place. The audience, along with Mr Benigni and Dante, taste an epiphany. The coloured fairy lights perched in the Malta University trees sparkle. Realisation shines. A sense of paradise dawns. A thunderous applause follows.

While following the rule of not recording or filming the delivery, for most of us among the audience this was a memorable evening.

The sound of Mr Benigni speaking Dante left an indelible resonance in the hearts of the Maltese present at the University on April 23, 2008.

04.26\_times





Italian comedian, actor and director Roberto Benigni was in Malta this week, during which time he received an *honoris causa* in recognition of his 'indefatigable vibrancy and enduring versatility as film director and actor that has won him broad and deserved international acclaim'. However, as always, he indulged in his trademark antics and clowning, as **TONY CASSAR DARIEN** witnessed first-hand

In the tradition of the great clowns and jesters who existed way back in the ancient Chinese dynasties, in the empires of Egypt, Greece and Rome and even in the days of the Incas, Roberto Benigni first hit the news by shocking the public.

It was on RAI's *Onda Libera*, hosted by the popular musician Renzo Arbore, that he interpreted his *L'Inno del corpo sciolto* (anthem of the melting body), a satirical monologue dedicated to defecation. Soon after, Enrico Berlinguer, the then respected national leader of the Communist party, of which

Benigni was a fully paid up member, was unexpectedly dangled like a marionette at a public political demonstration after being surprised in an embrace by the comedian. Benigni was also censured for calling Pope John Paul II, *Wojtyla*, meaning a bad *Wojtyla*, during an important television show.

In October 2005, he performed an impromptu striptease on Italy's news programme, removing his shirt and draping it over the newscaster's shoulders. Prior to this incident Benigni had already hijacked the programme's

opening credits by jumping behind the newscaster and shouting in apparent glee "Berlusconi has resigned!". The day before, in Rome, he led a crowd of thousands in protest at the government's decision to cut the arts funding budget by 35 per cent.

Throughout this permeating series of irreverent and iconoclastic behaviour, there is something that is very reminiscent of his compatriot, that other clowning jester, the Nobel prize winner Dario Fo. After all, they are birds of the same feather!

Benigni's Tuesday's *fuori programma* performance at the Jesuits' Church in Valletta, during the conferment ceremony of the Doctorate of Literature (*honoris causa*), was transformed into improvised theatre featuring pure *commedia dell'arte* techniques, better known as *fatti*. As was the unexpected involvement of Malta's highest ranking citizens, President Eddie Fenech Adami and Archbishop Paul Cremona, who found themselves drawn like pawns into the comedian's comical impromptu sketch, targeting among others, his pet hate of old, the newly elected Italian Prime Minister, Silvio

As is the clown's wont, the hilarity reached its acme, when in front of the ceremoniously clad, rector and chancellor, Benigni unfolded more of his *fatti*, drawing loud guffaws from the academical crowd present, the majority of whom were clearly amazed at the clown's desecration, albeit in jest, of a sacred ritual whose tradition spans five centuries.

On Wednesday, for the Dante's do at the Assembly Hall, at Tal-Oroq, Prof. Bob Hoflander, and the until then unobtrusive Carmelo, the cameraman, stood in for some of the blanks which invariably need to be addressed in any *commedia dell'arte* scenario. All along one is amazed at the incredible energy unleashed throughout, it resonates in the voice, it dictates the ever shifting movement of the actor, and it formulates the backcloth aura on which rests the artist's charisma.

And once you chance to look, you end up well and truly hooked: for these clowning jesters have the ability to mesmerise their audiences until the latter could literally eat out of their hands.

*A magical and beautiful film.*

works without involving his beautiful wife Nicoletta Braschi, until his Oscar-winning *La Vita è Bella* (*Life is Beautiful*) came along. Benigni was quite unknown internationally. His American films, namely, *Down by Law*, *Night on Earth*, *The Son of the Pink Panther*, and *Coffee and Cigarettes* were not hot box-office stuff.

His Italianate phase is characterised by his long-lasting collaboration with scriptwriter Vincenzo Cerami, whose series of successful films include *Il Piccolo Diavolo* with Walter Matthau, *Johnny Stecchino* and *Il Mostro*.

Of course Benigni became internationally known with *La Vita è Bella*. The film earned seven Academy Award nominations in 1999. It won best foreign language film, best musical score (Nicola Piovani) and best actor for Benigni. Again the film received a certain amount of criticism aimed at Benigni's 'laughing at everything' syndrome, which this time round, affected the dreaded Holocaust.

If Benigni minded such criticism, he certainly refrained from showing it when, giddy with delight, he marched

not able to repeat his *Vita* success with either *Asterix and Obelix vs Caesar*, his latest release *Le Tigre e la Neve* and *Pinocchio*, which was coldly received by the critics who gave it the ultimate zero per cent rating on the influential Rotten Tomatoes site.

Of course this will not deter Benigni from doing what he does best, that is emulating the jesters of yore in scouring authority and upholding the dignity of the downtrodden. For like all the great comedians before him, Benigni does much more than make us laugh. He hints at the hope of achieving the impossible.

When faced with starvation, these evergreen jesters find food, even if it's a dirty shoe, and like Chaplin, they turn it into a banquet. In the face of humiliation they find dignity (which is what the *Vita* Academy Award is really all about).

When faced with tyranny they find poetic justice. Benigni's type of virtuosity, witnessed from close range during his Malta sojourn, gives him the flexibility to defy the laws of logic, hardship and gravity. That is why these wonderful clowns, Benigni-like, manage to not run from fate.

04.26\_times

# Benign homage to the beauty of the human

A SCRAMBLING audience fought its way in to take a seat in Sir Temi Zammit Hall at the University of Malta where Roberto Benigni, now Dr Benigni, was to perform in a literary evening on Dante alongside eminent Dante scholar, Prof. Robert Hollander from Princeton University, described by Benigni himself as the person who knows most about Dante in the whole world.

Benigni walked in after an energetic introduction by Gloria Lauri-Lucente and a viewing of a montage of clips from various films of his. Stage centred, with open arms and a translucent smile, Benigni took on the position that best personifies him: an open, life-loving, outward-reaching actor, or, rather than actor, person who manages to transmit those qualities even in his acting. "Inhobbkom (I love you)," he repeated in Maltese, affectionately warming up the audience with his use of the language. "I send you back the love you send me centipied," he joked reverting back to Italian.

His playfulness moved between different realms of the comic: the sexual as well as the scholarly. As he himself stressed, however, he was playing, not joking. I wonder if he was pointing to much of the press coverage surrounding his visit this week that seems to have missed this important distinction. He does not take life as a joke: rather he plays with the nuances and juxtapositions of the emotions that life evokes, a theme that is recurrent in his work.

His dialogue with Prof. Hollander used Benigni's freshly bestowed *honoris causa* to create a comic structure where the professor was testing the worthiness of the student in his knowledge of Dante. While allowing for the audience to learn some light-hearted trivialities about

Dante, it provided a comic background to the more serious, as well as beautiful, theme of their conversation drawn from "the greatest poem of humanity", Dante's *Divine Comedy*: in invoking beauty, true freedom is to be found. This theme, crafted through the poetic images he created, made Dante the visionary that Benigni truly believed him to be. "I'd like to know what he took," he joked; "today we take ecstasy, but I'd like to know what Dante ate to have such an imagination".

Always playful, yet toned down from his comic exuberance, Benigni again took solo stage to give a most detailed commentary of the last canto from *Paradiso* (Heaven). He moved through the canto, describing the emotions and bewilderment he felt in the face of its nuances at different stages in life. The complexities of the contradictions it implied that are inherent in religious belief made it awe-inspiring to him. He took on a child's energy as he pointed to the ease with which children believe, and the joy he felt as a child to read his name in the poem that described the Madonna as "benign".

He then moved to imitate child speak, showing us the child we become in the face of God as depicted in the poem. It was with awe that he showed us what Dante made him see: he performed the all-sightedness of God who sees Caesar, and the horse he rode on, and the nail of the horse's shoe, and the grass on which this horse trod, and such detail at every instance of space and time; he performed the eternal fixation that God has with Our Lady, showing us that from the beginning of time God saw the beauty of this woman from whom he wanted to be made but in trepidation waited to ask her for this possibility, giving her the freedom to choose even though he knew that "women sometimes say no".



The beauty of the images woven out of the contradictions of faith were portrayed alongside the love for life, the overview of life that the view from Heaven allowed, as well as the realisation that when we are born, the only thing we have is life. It was on these foundations that he ended "the trivialities through which we show our affection to each other", to move to "the fact of the poem", rendering

its musicality to an audience whose experience of recited Dante cannot be a common occurrence.

Thus, through his homage to Dante, Benigni paid homage to the Madonna, to life, and to the beauty of the human.

Louise Ghirlando



Wednesday, 23 April, 2008  
**Benigni steals the show in Malta**

Students and scholars were treated to a lesson of a lifetime when Oscar-winning actor and director Roberto Benigni combined clowning with culture and linguistics with body language and laughter with silent awe as he took to the University's stage to share his passion for Dante's 'La Divina Commedia' in a spectacle that captivated the audience. It was a one-off opportunity to watch the divine comedian in action. Sir Temi Zammit Hall was packed with Faculty of Arts students, who had first preference for tickets, but also academic staff and others, while those who did not manage to squeeze into the hall spilled out into the university's Campus to watch the show on a maxi screen. On Wednesday, Benigni was awarded an Honoris Causa doctorate by the University of Malta for his contribution to the arts, particularly his study of the grand Italian poet.

**04.27\_maltatoday**

# Illallu!! Inħobbkom ħafna !!



Roberto Benigni on stage

Hundreds of people gathered at the Msida University campus last Wednesday to celebrate the Italian Oscar winning actor, comedian and director Roberto Benigni who was given an Honoris Causa by the University of Malta in recognition of his contribution to the cultural world and the arts. MaltaToday joined the crowd taking in Johnny Stecchino's Dante.



Raquela Dalli Gonzi, Michaela Smith La Rosa, Melanie Miceli Demayo, David Gonzi, David Mansfield, Jean Paul De Lucca, Cedric Mifsud, Michael Camilleri and Antonio Gauci



Jonathan Dalli, Jeannine Rizzo, Annalisa Schembri, Daniela Grech and Karl Galea



Deborah Borg, Francesca Ramerino, Priscilla Musumeci, Crystelle Cortis, Maria Pia Pace, Rene Colin Magri and Abigail Camilleri



Dr Michael Zammit and wife Maria



David Grech and Elizabeth Ganado



Martha Vassallo, Melchior Farrugia, Josianne Micallef and Adrian Borg

04.27\_maltatoday



# A night in paradise



KARL SCHEMBRI

AS expected, Roberto Benigni shook the islands last week when he stormed from the land of Dante to recite the last canto from the 700-year-old masterpiece.

Wherever this Oscar-winning director and comedian goes, his presence is always a spectacular circus-like event. Exuberant, and unpredictable, the maverick Italian who touched the world with his film *La vita è bella* made Malta dream on his short stay here.

His arrival here is the result of the relentless work of Dr Gloria Lauri-Lucente, expert of Italian and deputy dean of the Faculty of Arts. Upon learning that the authoritative Dante scholar Robert Hollander from Princeton University was about to come here for an exhibition of images from the *Divine Comedy*, she did all she could to get the professor to convince Benigni to accompany him here.

The rest is history, as we all witnessed it last week, from Benigni's bubbly press conference to

his crazy graduation, calling on the President to grant him political asylum from Berlusconi and to make him a Knight of Malta as in Italy there is "only one" and he happens to be back in power.

The night dedicated to Dante was the cherry on the cake. His versatility meant he could switch from slapstick to the serious recital and explanation of the last canto from Dante's paradise in his impeccable way.

Benigni has managed to popularise the largely inaccessible poem to the masses as his verse by verse exposition explains its universal humanity.

As Hollander put it, Benigni was risking losing his newly earned honorary doctorate after he failed to answer some of his pressing questions about one of the greatest works of literature. So he either recited it well, or he would revert back to Mr Benigni.

With the help of Karmenu, the cameramen closest to him under the stage who inadvertently found himself giving him crucial hints to pass the Hollander test,



Benigni promised us all to export our language to Italy, most notably our widespread exclamation that can be used in any context, 'illallu'.

Never mind it's a corruption of the name of God, a euphemism used by saints and sinners alike; we will be waiting with bated breath for Benigni's internationalisation of our great word of surprise.

Meanwhile, we will keep savouring in our memory that impeccable night with the master of comedy, and of the *Divine Comedy*, which ends with "the Love that moves the sun and all the other stars". Illallu!

04.27\_maltatoday



# Roberto Benigni f'Malta

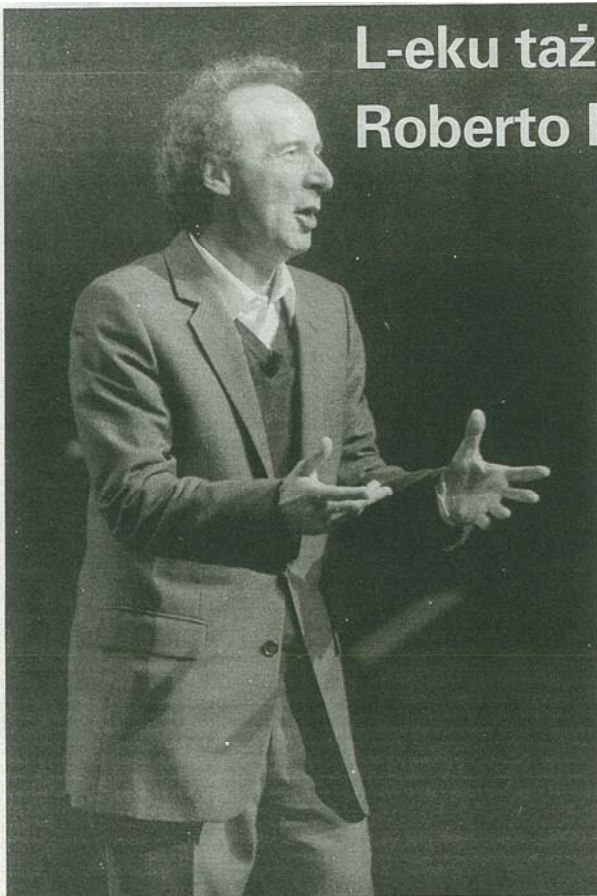
Il-komiku ċelebri Taljan Roberto Benigni matul din il-ġimgħa kien f'Malta fejn ingħata d-Dottorat *Honoris Causa* fil-Letteratura mill-Università ta' Malta. Nhar l-Erbgħa li għadda Benigni ta spetaklu mill-aqwa bl-interpretazzjoni ta' 'La Divina Commedia', flimkien ma' Robert Hollander, studjuż famuż għall-imħabba tiegħu lejn ix-xogħol ta' Dante Alighieri. Il-ġesti komiċi ta' Benigni ferrhu lill-udjenza kbira li attendiet mhux biss għall-ispettaklu ta' nhar l-Erbgħa imma anki għaċ-ċerimonja ta' ġurnata qabel li matulha ngħata d-Dottorat.

(ritratt: Michael Ellul)

• Ara wkoll paġni 26 u 48

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# L-eku taż-żjara ta' Roberto Benigni f'Malta

Kummenti miġbura minn Doris Azzopardi

## Prof. Juanito Camilleri Rettur ta' l-Università ta' Malta

Meta l-Università ta' Malta, fuq l-inizjattiva tal-Fakultà ta' l-Arti, stiednet lil Maestro Roberto Benigni biex tonorah bl-*Honoris Causa*, għamlet dan bħala rikonoxximent għax-xogħol li wettaq tul il-karriera tiegħu.

Iżda l-Università xtaqet li tkun hi ukoll strument biex l-imhabba li Benigni għandu għax-xogħol ta' Dante tinfirex fost l-istudenti, kif ukoll mal-pubbliku Malti iġġenerali.

Kien għalhekk li permezz ta' din iż-żjara ta' Benigni, l-Università fethet il-bibien tagħha berah u sawritħa

f'gimgha ta' attivitajiet marbuta ma' l-istudju ta' Dante. Qasmu magħna l-għerf tagħhom il-Professur Robert Hollander u Dr Jean Hollander, li huma fost l-aqwa studjużi ta' Dante fid-dinja. Monika Beisner esprimiet il-hsibijiet ta' Dante permezz ta' l-illustrazzjonijiet kreattivi tagħha.

Jiena nemmen li l-Università ta' Malta għandha tippovdi l-oportunitajiet kollha biex l-istudenti jsibu l-milja tagħhom, biex jikbru fil-personalità u fil-karattru, u biex ikabbru l-għerf.

## Prof. Oliver Friggieri

Il-laqgħa mill-isbāh li nġhatat il-hin kollu lil Roberto Benigni hi eżempju iehor ta' kemm il-poplu Malti japprezza dejjem l-arti.

Malta hi pajjiż li, imqabbel mal-bqija ta' l-Ewropa, jagħti prominenza kbira lill-arti u lill-kultura ġenerali. Dan jidher regolarment fil-mod kif il-Maltin jagħtu s-sehem attiv tagħhom għas-suċċess tal-hidma artistika fil-forom varji tagħha, fil-livell parrokċjali daqskemm nazzjonali.

Il-teatru hu wiehed mill-forom ewlenin, u l-preżenza ta' attur ta' klassi għolja bħal Benigni kella tabilfors thalli dan l-effett speċjali.

L-entuzjażmu professjonali ta' Gloria Lauri-Lucente, id-Deputat Dekan tal-Fakultà ta' l-Arti fl-Università, kien ippremjat kif kien xieraq.

Kull min ilu jsejwi lil Roberto Benigni jaf li l-mertu tiegħu jinsab fil-fatt li qabel ma hu attur, huwa hu nnifsu. Kważi l-attur ma għandux għalfejn jeżisti ladarba t-teatralità hi don naturali, inkella ma tista' qatt tkun hila miksuba. Għal Benigni l-arti tar-reċitar u l-arti tal-kliem, u l-arti tad-diskors kritiku u akkademiku huma bħallikieku ferġat ta' zokk wiehed, komponenti ta' haġa unika.

Hu l-privileġġ rari ta' l-innoċenza li ma tintilfix bl-esperjenza, id-don ta' adulezza li ma tixjehx, il-kapaċità ta' attur li hu attur billi ma jirreċtax hliet parti wahda: tiegħu nnifsu stess. Il-messaġġ tiegħu, serju taht iċ-ċajt, imhasseb taht l-idea li l-hajja hi traġikament sabiħa; jekk ma ssirux bħat-fal zġħar... ma tidhux.

## Prof. Joe Friggieri Kap tad-Dipartiment tal-Filosofija

Għall-istudenti, il-professuri u l-pubbliku ġenerali, Roberto Benigni offra esperjenza unika poetika, spiritwali u profundament reliġjuża permezz ta' l-analizi testwali u r-reċitazzjoni ta' l-aħhar kant tal-*Paradiso*.

Bil-mod kif fisser il-hsibijiet ta' Dante fuq Alla, il-Madonna, il-viżjoni beatifika, il-gmied tal-holġien, it-Trinità u r-Reżurrezzjoni, Benigni għaraf jippreżenta l-qofol tat-twemmin u tat-teoloġija Nisranija b'mod li seta' jifhem kulhadd.

Id-*Divina Commedia*, anki minhabba li għaddew kważi seba' sekli minn fuqha, m'hijex test faċli. Il-qarrej irid ikollu għalliem li jiggwidah. Meta l-għalliem ikun xi hadd bħal Roberto Benigni, l-eżerċizzju jinbidel f'meditazzjoni li terfa l-hsieb u thenni l-qalb u r-ruh.

Dawk li kienu direttament responsabbli għal dan l-avveniment, għandhom tasew iħossuhom sodisfatti bis-suċċess ta' din iż-żjara, li ressqet liż-zgħażaġ u lill-pubbliku ġenerali lejn il-kobor u l-gmied tad-*Divina Commedia*.

## Anna Maria Di Marco

Direttriċi ta' l-Istituto Italiano di Cultura

Konvinta li hafna se jibqgħu jiftakru fil-ftit jiem, iżda intensi, li Benigni qatta' Malta fit-tul u bi tbissima. Mhux qed nġhid dan għax hu Taljan bħali iżda għax Benigni hu tasew persuna speċjali u imprevedibbli: hu raġel ta' l-ispettaklu famuż u forsi diffiċli biex tilgħu iżda meta mbagħad ikun fost in-nies issib li hu persuna sempliċi u thossok familjari miegħu tant

li jissorprendik.

Nemmen li l-ghotja tad-dottorat *Honoris Causa* lil Benigni għandha sinifikat importanti għalina t-Taljani u l-Maltin. L-entuzjażmu li bih intlaq' minn folla kbira, l-attenzjoni li biha smajna l-*Lectura Dantis* fl-Università u l-interess biex tinxtrara kopja illustrata tad-*Divina Commedia* li kienet esposta fl-Istitut juru li bejn it-Taljani u

l-Maltin, ir-rabtiet storiċi u kulturali għadhom hajjin u għandhom għeruq fil-fond.

Benigni għandu l-kapaċità jfiehem bi kliem sempliċi l-attwalità moderna ta' sitwazzjonijiet u passjonijiet li jamminaw il-personaġġi ta' din il-kitba. B'dan il-mod jagħmel ċari u aċċessibbli l-hsibijiet filosofici u teoloġici li bosta drabi fanstu lill-qarrejja.

## Prof. Dominic Fenech

Dekan tal-Fakultà ta' l-Arti

Kollox beda bil-*launching* tat-traduzzjoni għall-Ingliż tad-*Divina Commedia* minn Robert u Jean Hollander, ktieb li hu illustrat minn Monika Beisner. Roberto Benigni ktieb id-dahla ta' dan il-ktieb f'forma ta' ltra lil Dante. Billi Beisner kien se jkollha wirja fl-*Istituto Italiano di Cultura* hsbina li nlaqgħu dawn l-attivitajiet.

Gloria Lauri-Lucente, id-Deputat Dekan tal-Fakultà ta' l-Arti fl-Università, kienet ilha tahseb dwar il-possibbiltà li Benigni jiġi Malta. Il-kapaċità ta' Benigni fil-*Lectura Dantis* hi magħrufa. B'dew il-kuntatti ma' Hollander u l-agenzija ta' Benigni biex dawn jiġu Malta. Ta' min jgħid li dawn huma żewġt iħbieb antiki. Aċċettaw li jiġu u b'dew il-preparamenti.

Benigni mhux biss kien interessat li jiġi iżda anki li jagħmel lettura. Hawn hsbina li jkun xieraq li nirringrazzawh tal-ġest sabih tiegħu u nirrikonoxxu l-karriera tiegħu fil-letteratura u ċ-cinematografija billi nagħtuh id-Dottorat *Honoris Causa*.

Iż-żjara tiegħu fostna kienet għalina unur kbir.

# Daħħakna bis-serjetà

M'ghandna bżonn ebda interpretu biex nitpaxxew u nitqanqlu bl-ispettakli tal-komiku Taljan, Roberto Benigni. Il-ġenju tiegħu hu appuntu li, b'mod immedjat, għandu l-hila jdaħħalna f'qoxrina u johroġna minna nfusna fl-istess waqt; jidhol f'basla hu biex jurina kif nohroġu mis-saram tagħna.

Il-messaġġ tiegħu nixorbuh bla ebda bżonn li nixtaruh. Kif jgħid hu stess dwar id-*Divina Commedia*: it-tifsira tagħha tista' tthosha kif wiehed iħoss il-mużika; m'għandekx għalfejn, waqt li tkun qed tismagħha, iġġib quddiem għajnejk it-tifsiriet kollha tagħha.

Izda, jekk se nirriflettu dwar għala Benigni għandu l-effett fuqna, jew imqar dwar il-filosofija tiegħu, allura għandna bżonn nikkonfrontaw l-interpretazzjonijiet. Ngħid għalija, ma naqbel xejn ma' xi hwejjeg li ntqalu dwar Benigni wara ċ-ċerimonja universitarja fejn ingħata d-dottorat *honoris causa*.

Fil-fehma tiegħi, il-missjoni ta' Benigni hi li jurina u li jiskopri hu stess x'inhil-vera serjetà. Li qal sewwa sew fil-konferenza stampa kien li meta jhossu mdejjaq jipprova jara l-lat komiku – u mhux li jwaqqa

l-affarijiet għaċ-ċajt.

Għalih, il-komicità toħroġ il-verità serja tal-hajja: li m'għandhiex għalfejn tkun tragedja, jekk naqsmu l-hajja flimkien bħall-ahwa. F'dan is-sens hu veru dixxiplu ta' Dante, li għalih il-hajja kienet kummiedja divina għaliex hi storja ta' ferh, ta' bxara tajba, minkejja l-maltempati u n-nawfraġi tagħha.

Izda hadd ma jista' jiżviluppa dan il-potenzjal tiegħu għall-ferh veru jekk ma jkunx żviluppat il-potenzjal ta' kulhadd. Allura jehtieg li naħsbu dwar Benigni bħala xi hadd ferm iktar riflettiv milli nistghu naħsbu ahna. Irridu nifhem l-isptanjetà tiegħu.

Għax Benigni mhux komiku spontanju fis-sens li johroġ kolox minn żniedu fil-hin li jkun qed jgħidu. Bil-maqlub, il-giġġifogu tad-diskorsi tiegħu hu ppreparat b'mod l-aktar metikoluz. Hu mibni sew fil-hsieb – sa l-ikien kumment u sa l-ikien ġest.

Waqt l-ispettaklu tiegħu jkollu d-direttur isefsiflu (elettronikament) f'widintu – ifakku meta għandu jaqbeż u jxejjer idejha, u meta għandu jifta' it-tali boffa jew kumpliement lit-tali fl-udjenza. (Fis-sit tal-YouTube, taht "Roberto Benigni Arezzo"

wiehed jista' jara x'jiġri fl-ewwel seba' minuti ta' spetaklu, mill-kabina tad-direttur.)

Imma Benigni mhux xi robot, u lanqas xi haġa finta. Dan juri li hu jkun hadem sew fuq id-diskorsi tiegħu, ikun ippruvah flimkien mad-direttur – li jifhem il-komicità ta' Benigni sew.

L-isptanjetà ta' Benigni hi l-isptanjetà ta' l-atleta ppreparat u ddisxiplinat, jew tal-mużiċista kbir li kapaci jipprovva għaliex it-teknika u x-xogħol mużikali jkun saru parti minnu.

Il-hsieb ta' Benigni hu serju daqs il-preparazzjoni teknika tiegħu. Kif qalilna hu stess fid-diskorsi li għamel wara li irċieva d-dottorat: ir-religjon nisranija tiġbdu minhabba l-valur assolut li tagħti lill-hajja kamali tagħna – tant li ma tistax tisthajjel ġenna vera mingħajr ir-reżurezzjoni tal-ġisem haj tal-bniedem.

Din il-filosofija hi, biex ingħid hekk, inkarnata kemm fid-*Divina Commedia* kif ukoll fl-ispettakli ta' Benigni. Dante jgħaqqad il-vulgari (p.eż. il-bass tax-xitan fl-*Inferno XXI*), mas-sublimi. Daqstant iehor, Benigni fid-diskorsi tiegħu jgħaddi mill-farsa (p.eż. iċ-ċajt sesswali),

għall-assurd (is-satira politika), għas-sublimi (id-dinjità essenzjali tal-bniedem f'Dante u fil-Vangelu). F'kull qasam huwa juża l-komicità biex jissorprendi u jġieghelna nħarsu lejn id-dinja bħallikeku għall-ewwel darba.

Din hi vizjoni tal-hajja li tikkuntra l-komicità mhux mas-serjetà izda mas-solennità żejda. Il-bużullotti ta' Benigni fiċ-ċerimonja universitarja ma waqqgħu xejn għaċ-ċajt – anzi, qdew il-funzjoni tagħhom li johroġu solidarjetà u l-fraternità ta' l-okkażjoni.

Nahseb li għal Benigni l-akbar avversarju hu Berlusconi – minkejja li dan hu l-politiku Ewropew li l-aktar iħobb ifaqqa iċ-ċajt – proprju għaliex iċ-ċajt ta' Berlusconi għandu l-iskop li jifred in-nies, mhux iġibhom flimkien; u l-kirurġija kozmetika li jiddilettta biha Berlusconi ma tiċċelebrax il-hajja kamali tal-bniedem daqskemm tistrumentalizzaha.

Fil-qofol tal-komicità ta' Benigni hemm il-vizjoni tad-dinjità ta' kull persuna. Tfaġġkama li l-bniedem taċ-ċajt hu dak li mhux kapaci jidhak bih innifsu; li l-bniedem serju hu dak li jaf jidhak sew.



minn **Ranier Fsadni**  
ranierfsadni@europe.com

**Il-komicità ta' Benigni turina x'inhil-vera serjetà**

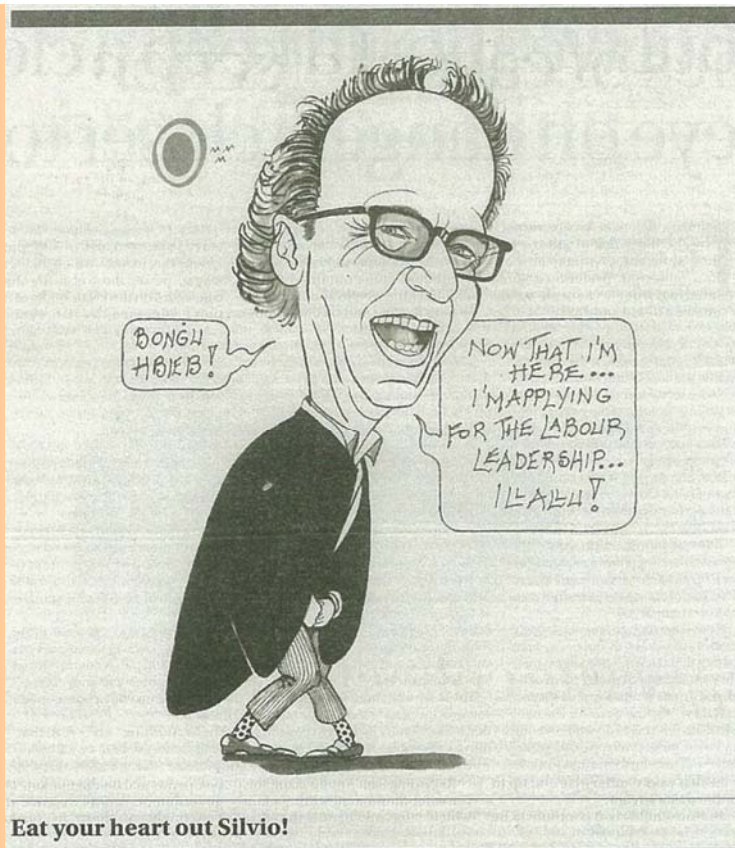
04.27\_mument



Oscar-winning actor and director Roberto Benigni being conferred with the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature by University rector Juanito Camilleri last Tuesday. Benigni took to the University's stage to share his passion for Dante's *La Divina Commedia* in a spectacle that captivated scholars and students last Wednesday. Photo: Matthew Mirabelli

04.27\_sundaytimes





Eat your heart out Silvio!

04.27\_sundaytimes



Lino Spiteri

## Learning to take humour seriously

“  
We hold no idea of the healing powers of laughter, especially when we direct it at ourselves  
”

**R**oberto Benigni came. He glanced. He conquered. He did more than that. He swept off their feet all those who were lucky enough to be present at one or more of his performances. His dynamic vibes were infectious to those of us who only had glimpses of him on television.

His frail build packs within it immeasurable super dynamism. If he had already won his spurs and the acclaim to go with them well before he came to Malta, he added to that plus some more during his short visit.

A superficial recollection of the man may be that of a comic. Humour spills out of him like a river welling out of a deep underground lake. It splits the sides. It is indeed contagious. After the first burst of it, one starts giggling in anticipation of what is coming next.

All that is misleading. Benigni takes his humour seriously. I'm told that, shortly after he landed in Malta, he quizzed those he met to get the Maltese version of a number of phrases. He demonstrated why in the manner he addressed those who opened their arms to him, even in a normally solemn occasion like the conferring of a degree *Honoris Causa* on him by our university.

He projected himself as a *straniero in patria*, a refugee, now that Italy has again been taken over by *il Cavaliere* Silvio Berlusconi. You are an island of the knights, he said. In Italy we have only one knight. In two sentences he made a telling political commentary. He depicted and criticised Berlusconi and fellow Italians for the way the magnate Benigni despises is dominating Italy. That once proud country has many knights, of one order or another. But the only that counts, transmitted Benigni, is Berlusconi.

The actor counter pointed a deeply serious message with apparent humour. He rushed towards the distinguished audience gathered to honour him, throwing himself at the feet of President Eddie Fenech Adami, the symbol of a united nation, pitifully begging one and all to "help me, help me!" in Maltese.

The audience roared in laughing appreciation. We laughed too, watching him on television. On reflection, though, one recognises that this artist with the quicksilver mind, with his tongue that reaches out caressingly but with the jolt of lightning, was only pretending to be funny. He was deadly serious. All his laughter, all the laughter he generates in others, is calculated, programmed to the last gasp.

Benigni is a great artist and film director. I doubt that I've been more moved by film than I was by his *Life is Beautiful*, and like me probably many others too. He is an actor par excellence.

He proved again here in Malta that he is as familiar with Dante and all that he sought to convey as he is with himself.

But perhaps, above all, Benigni is a socio-political commentator. He despises formality, going about his appointments tieless and as casual as can be.

Clearly he sees formality as an impediment, a barrier between him and those with whom he wishes to communicate. He is an example of what an intellectual can be and do if he finds the right metaphors to connect with.

To us Maltese, Benigni is an example in another sense. As a people we tend to be rather humourless. We tend to appreciate a good joke, but only so long as we are not the butt at the end of it. Having no idea what the term self-deprecating means, we are hardly ever able to laugh at ourselves.

We resent it bitterly when others seem to be laughing at us, even if with good reason. We hold no idea of the healing powers of laughter, especially when we direct it at

ourselves. Jokes at our expense do not relax us. They stress us. We take ourselves so seriously that it is funny in itself.

It would be a tremendous achievement even for Benigni if, through his bubbling but crafted humour, his talking hands, his marvellous switching from slapstick to seriousness, he has left us with a lesson to take to heart. If he has planted in us, or at least watered the thought that people without a deep sense of humour are insufferable, even to themselves.

The Dean and deputy Dean of the faculty of Arts, Dominic Fenech and Gloria Lauri-Lucente, did us all a favour by creating the opportunity for us to be imbued with the wise humour that is packaged as one Benigni.

If only we had politicians, churchmen, bureaucrats, simple men and women who could boast that, yes indeed, they learned something from the visit of the Italian genius.

If only the political class can get a film of the local appearances and utterances of the Italian genius and play it back over and over again to learn the effectiveness of good humour. We should find a way to give Benigni another *Honoris Causa* degree, and start the memorable process all over again.

04.27\_sundaytimes

Ftit sieghat biss qabel ma nghata l-Grad ta' Duttur tal-Letteratura (Honoris Causa) fil-Knisja ta' l-Università l-Belt Valletta, l-attur komiku Taljan Roberto Benigni indirizza konferenza ta' l-ahbarijiet fl-Augla Magna, li matulha spikka s-solitu stil ferrieħi tieghu li jwaqqa' kollox għaž-żufjett.

#### 04.27\_torca

It was a real shame that some University students who were attending the *Serata Dantesca*, with Italian actor Roberto Benigni as the protagonist, did not obey the instructions given to them before the start of the performance. They were told to switch off their mobile phones and refrain from taking photos, especially with the flash. But some of them just could not be bothered. Mobile phones did ring during the performance, and some students kept on taking photos in spite of being reprimanded by the ushers. A real shame.

The coming over of personalities such as Roberto Benigni to Malta are a major happening in a small country like ours. It was good that the University thought it fit to put up a big screen on campus to allow students who could not get into the Sir Temi Zammit Hall to watch the show anyway. Such occasions are, unfortunately, rather rare and it would be extremely healthy if more people like the Italian actor were to be brought over. They enrich everyone's experience.

#### 04.28\_ themaltaindependent



## Newsroom ? 28th April

4/28/2008 8:27:50 AM

Awtur: *ahbarijietdotcom*

Last week the Commission against Racism and Intolerance, within the European Council published a report about the immigration Malta saying amongst other things that the detention system in Malta is leading to xenophobia and racism among the Maltese public. The government answered in a harsh way to this report and insists that it's a report that doesn't take into consideration the national interest.

Another heated debate which is not easy to solve; Newsroom today will analyse the report and the governments response through the various guests invited in the studio to view this case in depth.



We will be speaking also about the unique experience which some of us had when they met talented Italian actor Roberto Benigni who gave an excellent view of Dante's Divina Commedia the day after he was honoured with an honoris causa in an other unforgettable ceremony.

We'll also discuss the Gozo 1234, a Gozitan experience of which the organisers are saying that we never had anything of this sort; it will be happening during the next weekend in Gozo.

Newsroom is aired every Monday at 21:35, presented by Josianne Camilleri, edited by Vanessa Attard, directed by Claire Muscat and produced by Lourdes Pullicino assisted by Clayton Tanti.

**04.29\_nazzjon**



LEO  
BRINCAT

This is not meant as any offence against the valid candidates who have come forward for the three pivotal leadership posts of the party.

But I am sure that some humour and wry comments at this moment in time will not do anyone any harm.

I always thought that a meal among friends was the best way to unwind after the electoral and post electoral stress, but believe you me nothing beats the experience of the Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Literature (*Honoris Causa*) on Maestro Roberto Benigni at the Church of the University in Valletta.

The oration by Dr Gloria Lauri Lucente, whom I never had the honour to meet so far, was a gem in itself.

Rather than a simple oration it read more like a four and a half page thesis on Benigni that managed to draw parallels in the same breath between Pirandello,

Dante and Pinocchio.

Had more MPs, ministers and people involved in politics attended they would have experienced what Dr Lauri Lucente described as a unique artist who enables us to suspend our disbelief and draws us into a fantasy world where everything is dreadful and everything is joyous, where everything is sad and everything is funny, or as Luigi Pirandello would have put it, where everything is fable and everything is true.

It takes a genius indeed "to make us laugh till we cry and cry till we laugh".

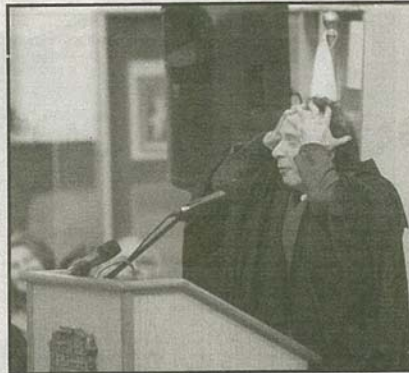
I must confess many of us present did both in less than an hour or so.

If Benigni had to run for leader of a political party he would run roughshod on the following without spilling any blood while keeping everyone rollicking in the aisles.

- He would have ensured that state broadcasting did not take sides as it has already done in the race;

- He would not have accepted staunch supporters of a particular candidate to pose as independent observers or commentators on the same station;

- He would have ensured that his party's machine, electoral commission, media, and structures did not tilt any way either by design, default or through sheer incompetence;



Roberto Benigni

Photo Ben Borg Cardona

- He would have insisted that all his competitors came clean by spelling out their real plans clearly, specific time frames included;

- He would have said stop to any mind games or game plans and dug beneath the surface to ferret out what they really meant by what they said or even worse, refused to say or commit themselves to;

- He would have insisted that they would all bind themselves to confront in a firm, pro-active, reasonable but no-nonsense manner the

present Prime Minister from the parliamentary benches without any undue delay so that all of them can commit themselves to stand up to be counted rather than passing the buck;

- He would have expected all candidates to be eager to have a say in how to react to the government's parliamentary proposals rather than having anyone sitting on the fence, hoping that the hatchet job will be carried out by someone else before he or she takes over;

- Benigni would not have

tolerated any perversions of the truth especially when we have flashbacks to 10 years or more where versions clash, coincide and contrast with one another;

- How would Benigni have reacted had one of the prospective deputy leader contenders claimed that before taking the plunge he wanted to consult his spiritual director while another one suggested that one of the first persons who should address the House of Representatives should be the Archbishop of Malta?

Benigni thanks Dante for having taught him about the paradox of life. The moment he takes up residence in Malta he will forget all about Dante and discover for himself what the paradox of life really means, since we are all living it and experiencing it on a daily basis 24 hours a day.

Even if after all he decides not to run, he can always hang around and stay on in Malta as consultant to the Minister for Broadcasting, the respectable Minister Cristina, who might find that handling the can of worms in certain quarters at PBS might prove to be far more of a poisoned chalice than handling effectively all those who used to try and abuse benefit fraud in her days responsible for Social Services.

Continues on page 7

## There are limits to tolerance — Leo Brincat

Continued from page 6

Every party has its doctors of spin. They have become part and parcel of the game.

But surely State Broadcasting can ill afford to jump on such a bandwagon, especially when people with direct vested interests continue to hone to perfection skills they had when still working in the private sector.

I am all for a media friendly approach. But there are limits to tolerance.

In the oration Pinocchio was described as Dante's "double". We do not need any homegrown Pinochios on our little island, especially when there happen to be enough political currents and cross currents at play.

To end on a positive note Benigni will have surely found comfort in the fact that while one prospective candidate intends to lead by example by involving the other contestants if he wins and helping them if he loses, another front runner stated that he is prepared to serve whoever may be elected leader, in any position or role as the new leader himself may suggest or propose. I am confident and hopeful that the other contestants will do the same.

If only Benigni extended his stay in Malta by a couple of days he could have even marched together with the other contestants as one team on 1 May!

email: leo.brincat@gov.mt  
Leo Brincat is a Labour MP

This article was submitted prior to a tongue-in-cheek Sunday Times cartoon with the same name which appeared two days ago

04.29\_ themaltaindependent

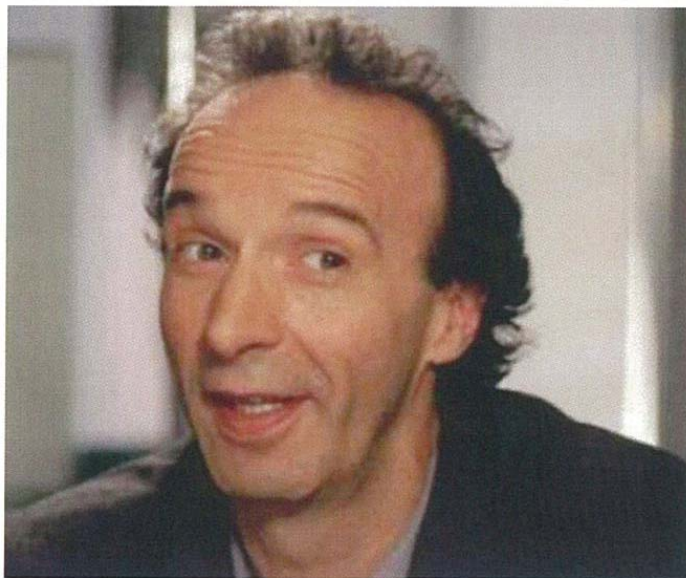




04.29\_nazzjon

## Benigni to lead one-man show in Malta

by Valerie Fenech - valfen@di-ve.com  
Current Affairs -- 31 March 2008 -- 11:20CEST



**Roberto Benigni**  
Italian award-winning actor Roberto Benigni is set to lead a one-man show in Malta, following his acceptance of an honorary degree as a Doctor of Literature from the University of Malta.

The 55-year old actor will be conferred an honorary Ph.D. in literature on April 22<sup>nd</sup> from the University of Malta, and perform in a one-man show on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Entitled "Tutto Dante", the show has drawn more than one million spectators in Italy since it was launched in July 2006.

On the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Benigni will delve into a discussion about the 1<sup>st</sup> century poet Dante Alighieri with scholar Robert Hollander, Professor of European Literature Emeritus at Princeton University and the founding director of the Princeton Dante Project.

This will be followed by a recital of one of Benigni's favourite canti from Dante's Divine Comedy.

During his short stay in Malta, Benigni is also set to launch an exhibition of illustrations of Dante's epic poem by artist Monika Beisner at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Valletta.

LA COMMEDIA È FINITA