

MANOEL THEATRE

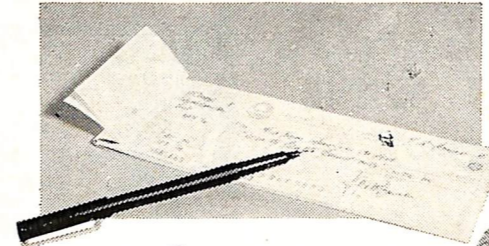


Your first salary in- now use your money wisely

The grown-up way is to have a Mid-Med Bank Cheque Book.

☺ Your Mid-Med Bank Cheque Book is a reliable way of handling your money. ☺ You do not carry with you more cash than absolutely necessary and still buy what ever you may need by cheque. ☺ Once you have a current account you can ask Mid-Med to

pay instalments and other regular payments on your behalf. ☺ You will also receive periodically, or on request, a statement giving you a record of what you've put in, spent and have left in your account.



**Grow up –
use a Mid-Med Bank
Cheque Book.**

Open a Current Account with one of the Mid-Med branches spread throughout Malta & Gozo.



**Mid-Med Bank
Limited**
Reliability and Efficiency



E. BAKALOWITTS SÖHNE



LIGHT FITTINGS
GIFT ARTICLES

GLASSWARE
CHINAWARE

MANUFACTURING PLANT AND
HEAD OFFICE

1171 Viena Halirschgasse 17 Tel 46 56 36-0
Mailing Address P.O. Box 162 A 1171 Vienna

SHOWROOMS Tel. 52 63 51, 52 79 91
1010 Vienna Spiegelgasse 3 Tel. 43 7 06, 42 6 83
5020 Salzburg Mozartplatz 4

Chandeliers, Lanterns and Wall Brackets in the Foyer of and Annex to the Manoel Theatre have been supplied by E. Bakalowits Sohne of Spiegelgasse 3, 1010 Wien-Austria

AFTER THE THEATRE DINE
AT THE



BOLOGNA RESTAURANT

59, REPUBLIC STREET VALLETTA
FIRST CLASS RESTAURANT

ITALIAN CUISINE

FOR TABLE RESERVATION Phone 626149

Associate to:—

THE WINSTON — 16, High Street, Sliema — Tel. 34584

THE GREAT DANE RESTAURANT — Mellieha Holiday Centre, Mellieha Bay —
Tel. 373980

THE CARRIAGE PUB & GRILL — 68, The Strand, Sliema — Tel 33864

THE VICTORIA PUB & GRILL — Medisles Village, St. Andrew's — Tel. 36072

THE MEDINA RESTAURANT — Holy Cross Street, Mdina — Tel. 674004

General Enquires 35800

INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL 1984

THE HON. MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND CULTURE

and

THE MANOEL THEATRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

present an

OPERATIC CONCERT

by

THE ORCHESTRA OF THE MANOEL THEATRE

Leader: GEORGE SPITERI

with the participation of soloists

Miriam Gauci

Soprano

Stefka Mineva

Mezzo Soprano

Redento Comacchio

Tenor

Ivan Konsulov

Baritone

Conductor: JOSEPH SAMMUT

Friday, 3rd August 1984

at St. Paul's Square, Mdina

MDINA- ANCIENT CAPITAL OF MALTA

MDINA IS THE ANCIENT CAPITAL CITY of Malta, its origins lost in antiquity though it is known for certain that it was inhabited even in prehistoric times. To the Greeks and the Romans it was known as the principal town of the Island and was in all probability the oppidum — the fortified city — described by Cicero. It certainly occupied the most advantageous site for the island's main citadel, as it lies almost equidistant from the large shallow bays to the north-west and south-east, and from the natural harbours to the north. The hill on which it was built gave it a natural defensive position and its walls, rising sheer from the ridge, gain additional height from the base of the escarpment below.

In Roman times its walls extended over a much longer perimeter than they do today, for Mdina was reduced to its present size, for defence purposes, by the Arabs after 870 AD. The ditch which today defines Mdina's southern boundary was dug by the Arabs; the rest of the city's boundaries are delineated by fortifications which follow the contours of the Mdina hill itself. Some of the existing walls date from the Middle Ages but extensive modifications and additions to Mdina's fortifications were carried out during the period of the Knights of St John in Malta.

The street plan of Mdina is most interesting and dates from early mediaeval times. Most of the present buildings were constructed during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries but earlier buildings can be seen.

1. **THE CATHEDRAL.** The present Cathedral stands on a site hallowed by time and tradition. According to that tradition the first Christian church in Malta was built on the site of the house where Publius, 'the chief man of the island', lived and was converted to Christianity by St Paul. One of the first acts of Roger the Norman after his landing in Malta in 1090 was to reconstruct, on the same site, a new cathedral. The eminent Maltese architect Lorenzo Gafà (1639-1710) was responsible for the present building, which is one of the best examples of Baroque art in Malta.
2. **THE CATHEDRAL MUSEUM.** In a charming little square on the left of the Cathedral is a magnificent building erected in 1733 as a seminary. The facade presents a distinct departure from the previously static Maltese Baroque; the centrepiece, with its open stone balcony supported by Atlantes, and the concave recess above are particularly interesting. Today this building houses the Cathedral Museum and contains paintings,

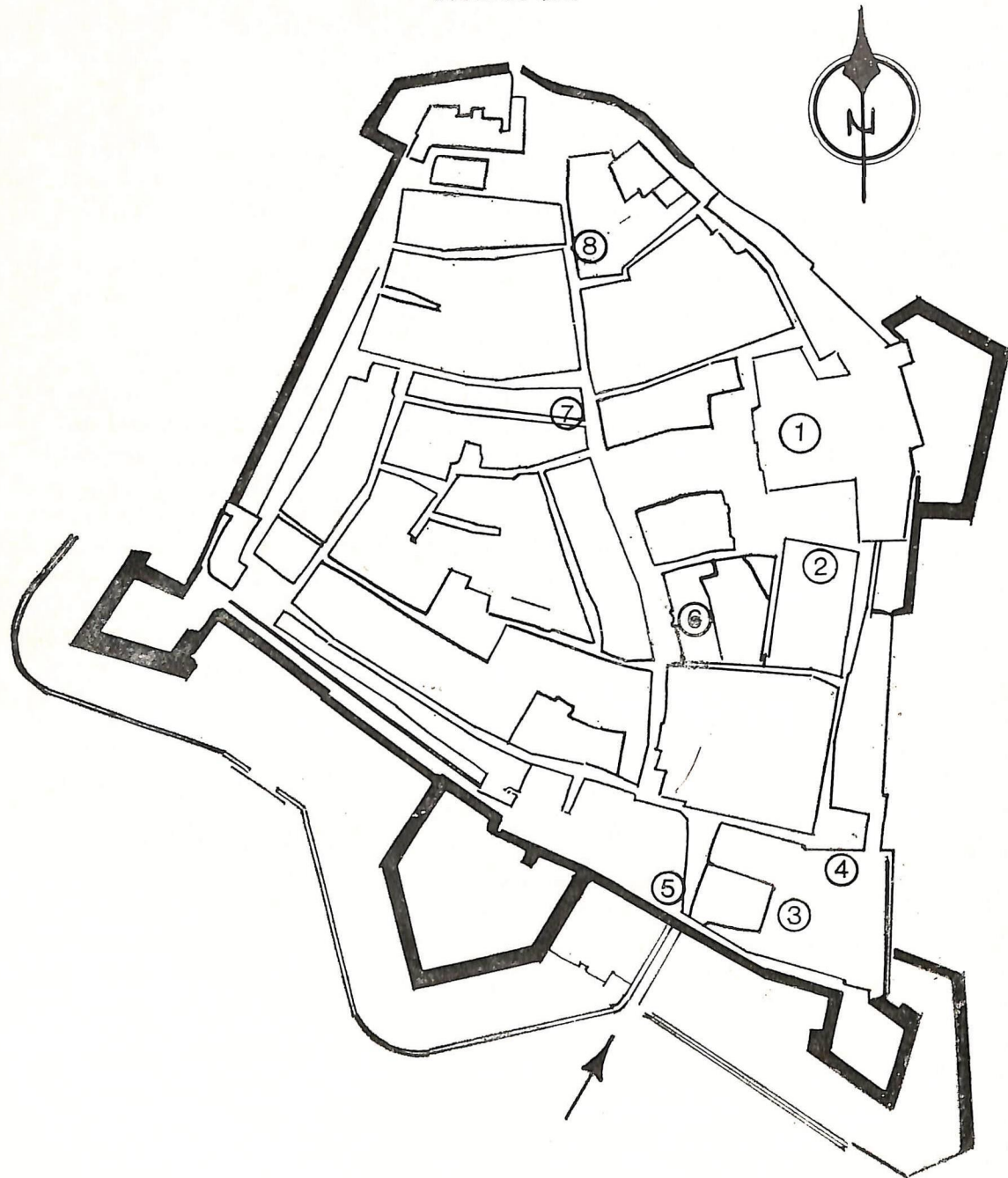
silverware and sculpture of high artistic value, as well as an extensive Dürer collection and other valuable items. It is also the repository of the Cathedral Archives and of the Inquisition records.

3. **VILHENA PALACE.** One of the greatest patrons of the arts among the Grandmasters, Manoel de Vilhena constructed this palace for his own use in 1730. Built on three floors around three sides of a courtyard, it is screened from the street by a high wall with a fine gateway. The timber gate itself is of first class workmanship and a very good example of the local craft of the early eighteenth century. The courtyard is of the cloister type with open arcading, the arches becoming flatter as one proceeds upward. The main door is one of the finest in Malta.
4. **OLD COURTS OF LAW.** Known also as the Corte Capitanale, this building formed part of the Municipium, or seat of the Municipality of Mdina, which had control over most of the internal affairs of the commune. In one of the halls of the upper floor can be seen the coat-of-arms of what was known as the Captain of the Rod, who presided over the Courts of Law. The facade is a mixture of styles and is undoubtedly the work of different architects of different periods.
5. **TOWER OF THE STANDARD.** This is the first building on the left as one enters the city of Mdina. It was built by Grandmaster Manoel de Vilhena during the reconstruction of the fortifications and was the main City Gatehouse. As the name implies, it flew the Standard of the Order. It replaced a much older tower which, along with the Cathedral bell tower, was visible from most of the coastal towers.
6. **TESTAFERRATA PALACE.** This is a magnificent building and a very important link in the history of the development of palace architecture in the Old City. One of the later palaces to be built, it was the house of the Marquis of St. Vincent Ferreri. Its facade is one of the most restful and elegant in the whole of Mdina.
7. **PALAZZO SANTA SOFIA.** Reputed to be the oldest surviving building in Mdina, a tablet gives the date as 1233, but this almost certainly refers to an earlier building on the same site, as the present palazzo belongs to a later period. The first floor is a recent addition constructed in 1936.
8. **THE NORMAN HOUSE.** One of the best known buildings in Mdina. Although much restored, it still retains its mediaeval character. The string course, a double row of inverted triangles with balls as pendants, is typical of the period, as are the pointed windows, hood moulds and double windows separated by slender circular columns.

Michael Ellul.

A map on page 6 shows the position of the principal features of Mdina as numbered in this article.

MDINA

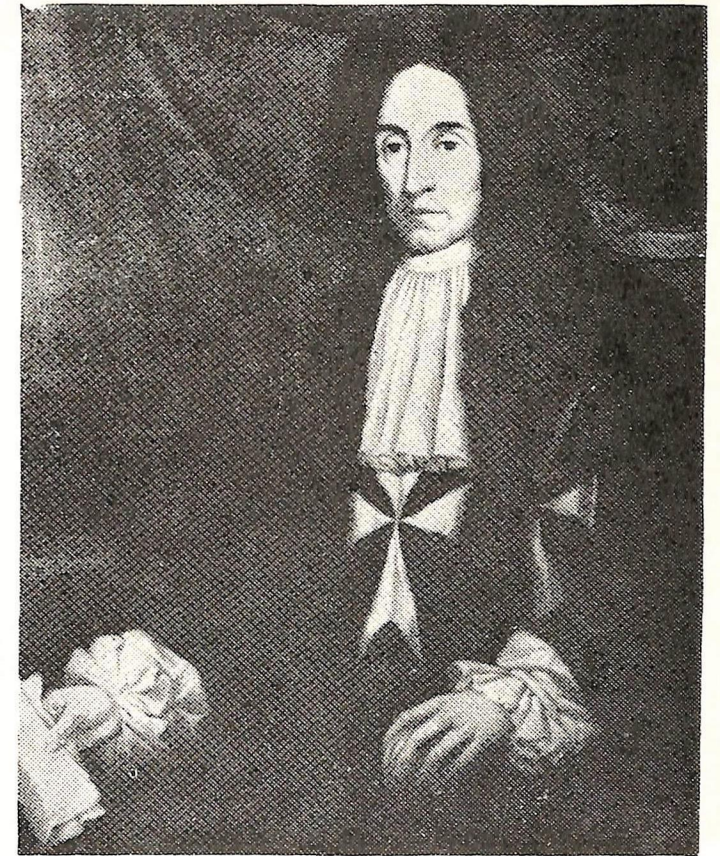


LEGEND

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Cathedral | 5 Tower of The Standard |
| 2 Cathedral Museum | 6 Palazzo Testaferrata |
| 3 Vilhena Palace | 7 Palazzo Santa Sofia |
| 4 Old Courts of Law | 8 The Norman House |

Antonio Manoel

De Vilhena



Grand Master *Antonio Manoel de Vilhena*, a Portuguese, was elected Grand Master in 1722. A man of great intellectual qualities, he was popular with all, and his "savoir faire" earned him everyone's love.

At the beginning of his reign, fearing a second Turkish invasion of Malta, he promptly took steps against such an eventuality, and the enemy, seeing his preparedness, sailed away without even attempting a landing.

Having fortified the Island, he began to find ways and means of encouraging civil enterprise, and in the political field he managed to negotiate a treaty of peace with the Sultan of Constantinople.

As a befitting gesture towards the People of Malta, he built in 1732 the Manoel Theatre which is a living monument to his achievements. It keeps his memory fresh and glorious in all those who cultivate the Arts and all those who seek an honest recreation, as is implied by the Theatre's motto: "*Ad honestatem populi oblectationem.*"

PROGRAMME

PART ONE :

NORMA	Sinfonia	BELLINI
✓ ANDREA CHENIER	Nemico Della Patria Baritone: IVAN KONSULOV	GIORDANO
✓ ADRIANA LECOUVREUR	Aria Della Principessa Bouillon Mezzo Soprano: STEFKA MINEVA	CILEA
✓ TOSCA	E Lucevan Le Stelle Tenor: REDENTO COMACCHIO	PUCCINI
✓ LA BOHEME	Mi Chiamano Mimi Soprano: MIRIAM GAUCI	PUCCINI
✓ CARMEN	Habanera Mezzo Soprano: STEFKA MINEVA	BIZET
✓ IL TROVATORE	Ah Si Ben Mio Tenor: REDENTO COMACCHIO	VERDI
✓ LA TRAVIATA	Madamigelle Valerie Soprano: MIRIAM GAUCI Baritone: IVAN KONSULOV	VERDI

PART TWO :

✓ I GIOIELLI DELLA MADONNA	Suite	WOLF FERRARI
✓ CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA	Addio alla MADRE Tenor: REDENTO COMACCHIO	MASCAGNI
✓ MANON LESCAUT	"Sola Perduta, Abbandonata" Soprano: MIRIAM GAUCI	PUCCINI
✓ LA FAVORITA	O MIO FERNANDO Mezzo Soprano: STEFKA MINEVA	DONIZETTI
✓ UN BALLO IN MASCHERA	Eri Tu Che Macchiavi Quell'Anima Baritone: IVAN KONSULOV	VERDI
✓ LUISA MILLER	"Tu Puniscimi, O Signore" Soprano: MIRIAM GAUCI	VERDI
✓ TURANDOT	Nessun Dorma Tenor: REDENTO COMACCHIO	PUCCINI
✓ LA FAVORITA	Quando Le Soglie Baritone: IVAN KONSULOV Mezzo Soprano: STEFKA MINEVA	DONIZETTI
✓ RIGOLETTO	Quartetto Rigoletto — Atto Finale Soprano: MIRIAM GAUCI Tenor: REDENTO COMACCHIO Mezzo Soprano: STEFKA MINEVA Baritone: IVAN KONSULOV	VERDI

THE MANOEL THEATRE

IT IS VARIOUSLY CLAIMED that the Manoel Theatre in Valletta, is 'the third oldest theatre in Europe' and 'the oldest theatre in the Commonwealth'. However that may be, the fact is it dates back to the earlier decades of the eighteenth century, when the Grandmaster of the Knights of St John of that time, Antonio Manoel de Vilhena, decided one March day of 1731 to build a public theatre — mostly out of his own pocket — 'for the honest recreation of the people', a purpose which is recorded to this day in a Latin inscription above the main entrance.

That there was a demand for such an institution was certain, for drama and opera had flourished — and continued to flourish — through the years of the Sovereign Military Order's rule over the island. The vows of charity and chastity to which the Knights were committed did not prevent them from indulging in theatrical activities and it is on record that at the various Auberges (headquarters), and in the open, pageants, operas and dramatic offerings were put on by amateurs and professionals and a love for the theatre had spread throughout the population.

Grandmaster de Vilhena wasted no time and the building of the theatre started the very day the deed of transfer for the site was signed. In ten months the job was finished. The original interior, constructed entirely of wood, was similar in design to the Palermo theatre of that time and is generally believed to have been modelled on it, being semi-circular with straight sides projecting to the stage. There have, of course, been many alterations through the years, bringing the auditorium to its present effective oval shape.

Originally it was called, prosaically, 'Public Theatre'. Later it bore the title 'Theatre Royal' but eventually and rightly, in 1866, in tribute to its founder, it became and has remained the Manoel Theatre.

The first night of all first nights was on 9th January 1732 with a presentation of 'Merope', a grand tragedy in the classic style, by Scipione Maffei. The setting was designed by Franco's Moudion, who was the architect of the Order of St John, and it was played by the Knights.

The theatre was run by a Senior Knight of the Order, who bore the title of 'Protettore' and managed the house generally, approved each season's programme of plays (in the main lyric opera and French tragedy), acted as censor and dealt with 'difficulties' which arose from time to time between impresario, performer and subscriber. Maltese playwrights and opera composers gradually earned their place alongside foreign authors and it was a Maltese — Nicolò Isouard, also known as Nicolò of Malta — who eventually became a Commissioner (new name for Protettore) during the French occupation of Malta in the last two years of the eighteenth century.

Despite his great faith in the power of the stage Isouard was fighting a losing battle. For a time the theatre carried on notwithstanding the near starvation of the garrison and the besieged population, and 'despite the occasional shots from the Maltese mortars that passed over the roof of the building'. But there came the time when the players could no longer bear the strains of war as their dwindling wages proved insufficient for survival, let alone for the rigours of singing and acting. An amateur group, fired by the desire to keep up morale, took over and 'the show went on' until the siege was raised. But dark days followed for the Manoel.

With the arrival of the British, the Theatre came to life again and throughout the first half of the nineteenth century there was a nine-month season of opera each year from September to May. There were nights of splendour, like the fourth of December 1838, when this jewel-box of a theatre shone in all its pristine glory as Queen Adelaide, widow of King William IV, came with cheers, anthems and a guard of honour to see a performance of 'Lucia di Lammermoor'.

Strangely it was the very prosperity of the latter years of the nineteenth century which brought the eclipse of the Manoel Theatre. The large garrison, the fleet, and an increasing number of tourists, rendered the theatre inadequate. In 1861 it became private property. With the proceeds of the sale a new Opera House was built and Grandmaster Antonio de Vilhena's little house fell into disuse. For a period it was a doss-house for beggars. And then, suddenly, some of the old glory returned when the Royal Opera House was destroyed by fire in 1873. Grand opera replaced the evicted beggars until the Opera House was reconstructed and then the once loved little place in Theatre Street looked to be on its deathbed. It served, fitfully, as dance hall and, in this century, as a cinema.

But then, once more, the fate of the Opera House brought revival to the Manoel. The former was completely destroyed in the Second World War. Dreams of bringing the Manoel back to life turned to reality when the Malta Government acquired the building in response to public appeal. Experts from Britain and Italy were called in and under their supervision and with their aid the delicate process of restoration was carried out by Maltese artisans.

All sorts of technical improvements were made on stage and back stage, with the lighting and an enlarged orchestra pit. Comfortable stalls replaced the old wooden seats and there was a rearrangement of the boxes. But, in particular, the once lovely decoration of the auditorium was restored from behind the grime and whitewash and even paint which had for so long hidden the theatre's beauty. Inch by inch the great ceiling with its 22 carat gilding was restored; the dozens of tiny attractive panels and paintings which decorated the tiers of boxes were brought to life again. This jewel box of great warmth and beauty glowed with radiance deeply moving to those who had seen their theatre in distress. More than two hundred thousand pounds sterling were spent on re-acquisition and restoration.

Came one splendid December night in 1960 and a grand opening performance — the famous Ballet Rambert company's presentation of 'Coppelia'. From all sides there were gasps of delight as the audience walked in to find this new and shining jewel in Malta's national heritage.

'The Manoel' is now officially Malta's National Theatre. The duties of the early Protettores are now entrusted to a Management Committee which runs the theatre on a non-profit basis. Under its guidance the theatre has maintained a very high standard. International celebrities who have graced its stage include Yehudi Menuhin, Rostropovitch, Boris Christoff, Leon Goosens, Richter, the Berlin State Opera Ballet; Sir Donald Wolfitt, Margaret Rutherford, John Neville, Louis Kentner, Moura Lympany, John Ogdon, Ram Gopal, Vienna's English Theatre, Vienna Operetta Company, The Theatre Nationale D'Opera et de Ballet, Sofia, Steven Isserlis, Cristina Ortiz, The New York Harp Ensemble, Vladimir Ashkenazy, The Gruppo Fiati dell'Associazione 'Musica Aperta' di Bergamo Fou Ts'ong and a host of others to say nothing of a great deal of local talent. The resident orchestra of the Manoel Theatre gives many important concerts.

The only reward of the members of the Manoel Management Committee is their satisfaction in the furtherance of that enterprise first created by Grandmaster de Vilhena for the honest recreation of the people'.

THE ORCHESTRA OF THE MANOEL THEATRE

Conductor: Joseph Sammut

Leader: George Spiteri

Sub-Leader: Joseph Galea

1st Violins

Ronnie Pisani
Stephen Zammit
Walter Abela
Marcelle Bartolo
Andrew Borg
George Curmi
Raymond Abela

2nd Violins

Victor Micallef
Mario Micallef
Maria Piscopo
Marcelline Agius
Joseph Zammit
Doris Alden
Sarah Spiteri

Violas

Guido Mamo
Mariam Cauchi
Alfred Serge
Anna Zammit

Violin cellos

Alfred Tonna
Mario Psaila
Monica Attard
Ronnie Sultana

Double Basses

Lino Cremona
Victor Miggiani
Spiridione Xuereb
Patrick Xuereb

1st Flute

Joseph Corrado

2nd Flute

Silvio Zammit

3rd Flute

Laura Falzon

1st Oboe

Orazio Cachia

2nd Oboe

Pierre Grech

1st Clarinet in Bb

Joseph Camilleri

2nd Clarinet in Bb

Charles Abela

1st Bassoon

Archibald Mizzi

2nd Bassoon

Mario Micallef

1st Horn in F

Philip Psaila

2nd Horn in F

Alfred Spagnol

3rd Horn in F

Emmanuel Spagnol

4th Horn in F

Nazzarenu Spagnol

1st Trumpet in Bb

Joseph Agius

2nd Trumpet in Bb

Henry Attard

Timpani

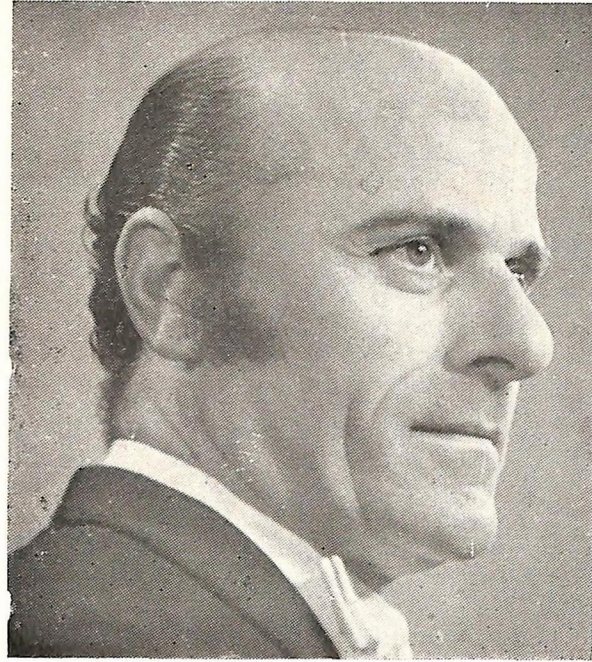
Joseph Curmi

Percussion

John Fenech

Pianoforte

Tony Sammut



Mrs. Joseph Sammut



*Soprano
Miriam Gauci*



*Mezzo Soprano
Stefka Mineva*



*Tenor
Redento Comacchio*



*Baritone
Ivan Konsulov*

THE MANOEL THEATRE FOYER

The Bonici Palace on the corner of Old Bakery Street, acquired by the Manoel Theatre two decades ago, has been completely restored and now constitutes its foyer. It can be approached from the auditorium, the level of your box, or from the original courtyard. Climbing the staircase with its shallow steps of white Carrara marble you see at every turn shell-shaped niches in one of which you may find the bust of your favourite composer. Further up, double doors inset with bevelled-edged mirrors lead to impeccable cloakrooms.

There are wall brackets and chandeliers from Vienna, heavy silk curtains in blue/green and gold, a pair of candelabra once the property of the Messina family.

You will see engravings characters and scenes from famous operas and showcases in which are to be found *memorabilia* of the Theatre collected throughout the years. An antique mirror hangs above the eighteenth century mantelpiece. Beautiful furniture has been collected from the Auberges and carefully restored. The ceiling is a particular delight, the newly hand-painted beams, so near in colour to the curtains, are decorated with the Maltese Cross and small crowns picked out in gold.

Keeping guard over all this splendour stands the bust of Grand Master Antonio Manuel de Vilhena which was recovered from Manoel Island.

A visit to the Manoel Theatre Foyer is a must for every art lover, this splendid old house, restored to its pristine glory, makes a marvellous venue for any art Exhibition. The setting and acoustics are perfect for recitals and poetry reading.

MANOEL THEATRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

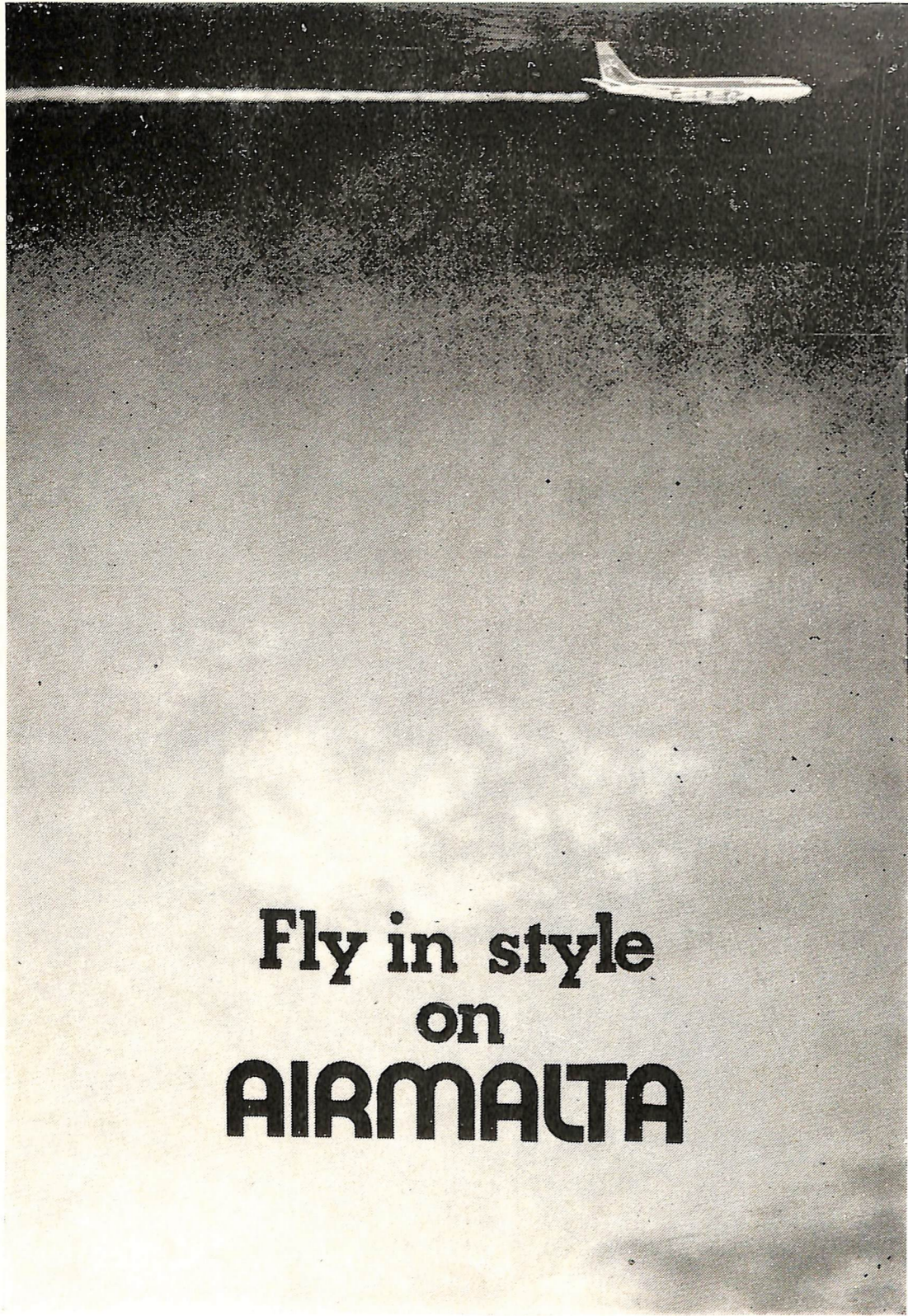
**Chairman
A. AGIUS FERRANTE**

**Deputy Chairman
T. CASSAR DARIEN**

**Hon. Treasurer
M.L. BONNICI**

**Hon. Secretary
D. PISCOPO**

**Members
C. COLEIRO, R. LAPIRA, J. MICALLEF**



Fly in style
on
AIRMALTA

