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TEATRU  
MANOEL

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1732

The Manoel Theatre

presents

## STONE CAN SING

a multi-media interpretation

of Malta's heritage

as recorded in stone and music

on the occasion of

the official visit to Malta

of the Secretary General of the United Nations

His Excellency Mr Javier Perez de Cuellar

16 April 1988

# STONE CAN SING

Music by **Giuseppe Balzano, Domenico Balzano, Aloysio Mataron, Nicolò Isouard, Charles Camilleri, Carmelo Pace**  
Text and Montage by **John J. Schranz**

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## The Musical Numbers

1. a) **17th Century Maltese Church Music**  
(manuscripts edited by Joseph Vella)
    - i) **Beatus Vir**(1652) **Giuseppe Balzano**  
(1616 - 1700)  
Tenor — Joseph Huber  
Tenor — Brian Cefai  
Bassus — Mauro Scerri
    - ii) **Venite Omnes** (1683) **Domenico Balzano**  
(1632 - 1707)  
Cantus — Maria Frendo  
Altus — Antoinette Frendo
    - iii) **Dulcis Amor** **Aloysio Mataron**  
(active mid 17th century)  
Cantus — Maria Frendo  
Altus — Antoinette Frendo  
Tenor — Joseph Huber
    - iv) **Curre ad Virginem** **Anon (17th Century)**  
Cantus — Maria Frendo
  - b) **Minuet** **Anon (18th Century)**  
Danced by: Il-Kortigjani  
Choreography by: Anna La Rosa  
Manoel Theatre Orchestra conducted by Joseph Vella
- 

2. **Music from the Operas of Nicolò Isouard (1775-1818)**
    - i) **Jeannot et Colin** — Overture (edited by Dion Buhagiar)
    - ii) **Jeannot et Colin** — Aria “Ah, pour moi, quel pain extreme”  
(edited by Dion Buhagiar)  
Soprano — Antoinette Miggiani
    - iii) **La Cimarosa** — **Overture** (transcribed by Charles Camilleri for modern orchestra)  
Manoel Theatre Orchestra conducted by Joseph Sammut
- 

3. **Fire** — ballet movement specially composed for this occasion. **Charles Camilleri**  
Danced by: Tanya Bayona Dance Ensemble  
Choreography by: Tanya Bayona  
Manoel Theatre Orchestra conducted by Charles Camilleri
- 

4. **Ghanja Maltija** **Traditional Maltese song** (arranged for violin solo by Charles Camilleri)  
Antoine Frendo, Violin
- 

5. **L-Imnarja** **Carmelo Pace**  
St Julian's Choir conducted by Rev. John Galea
- 

Direction	<b>John J. Schranz</b>
Narrators	<b>Marlene Psaila Charles Arrigo</b>
Stage Management	<b>Tony Cassar Darien</b>
Photography	<b>Mario Mintoff</b>
Lights	<b>Vanni Laus</b>
Visuals' Projection & Sound Effects	<b>Joe Debono</b>
Hair Design for “Fire” ballet	<b>Alfie</b>
Stage Carpenters	<b>Emmanuel Dalli, Francis Mifsud</b>
Stage Hands	<b>Vanessa Attard, Simon Bezzina Ernest Camilleri, Joanna Cefai Jeanette Debono, Mariella Delmar Joseph Gatt, Peter Gatt Grace Hedley, Moira Muscat Dorriane Ruffini, Charles Sammut (members of MTADA)</b>
Booking Clerk	<b>Michelle Muscat</b>

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## STONE CAN SING

The beliefs, thoughts, aspirations, customs of a people have often been passed down from one generation to another with the vehicle of sound — deep-felt song, haunting melody, throbbing rhythm....Africa....Asia.... the Pacific....

Other peoples have orchestrated the written word — on clay tablets, papyrus, paper....Gilgamesh, the Odyssey, the Iliad, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Vedas....

Malta has carved hers in *stone*.

The Hypogeum. Not built — but dug out of solid rock. Perfectly imitating refined architecture.



Deep in the bowels of the Earth. Painstakingly hewn out with the most primitive of tools....over 4000 years ago.

And in these man-made caverns, in the most intimate of recesses.... the Oracle Hole.

How many whispered yearnings, how many anguished sighs, how many words of wisdom must have been sought right here.

And how many answers to aching hearts must have rung out, reverberating awe-inspiringly through these caverns, how many solutions to bewildered minds, ringing in stentorian tones, bouncing from one massive wall of solid rock to another, in seemingly never-ending rhythmic spirals of sheer sound, but carrying the precious eagerly sought reply of sagacious advice.

Yet this is one of the latter works of the people who lived on these islands at the dawn of civilisation.

The visionary qualities of the minute community which thrived here some 6000 years ago drove it to concretise its beliefs in stone for posterity — an eternal testimonial to a singularity of purpose energised by a strength which must have been exceptional.

Their work had no precedent. Incredibly enough they were the pioneers, the visionaries, the



originators. For these are the World's first free-standing stone monuments. Preceding the Pyramids of ancient Egypt.

What words did they speak, these Master Temple Builders?

What rhythms did they beat?

What songs did they sing?

Little evidence has remained of their daily activity. Vestiges of what must have once been a hive of intense activity. Vestiges of their language might still be present in the language spoken by the Maltese today...and, maybe, vestiges of song....one or two fragments....a spirit of song, really....a

song, like the language, rooted in its semitic past....

....but blossoming European now....a song coming out of the shrouding mists of the past....haunting....plaintive.... throbbing with yearning....defyingly timeless....a song which would echo well in the stone paved yard of a humble farmhouse, or along the rugged flanks of granite hills, or through the massive walled chambers of ancient temples....



The earliest music written by a Maltese was discovered in the archives of the Cathedral Museum in Mdina — this Medieval Citadel, a legacy of Arab occupation, as its name clearly implies.

Here sundrenched stone spreads cool blue shadows in complicated harmonies, rhythms, counterpoint.... solid mass and fleeting detail, sinuous curves and hard cold lines, sensuous penetration of whispering planes, somnolent walls eschewing intruders and tortuous alleys enticing him deeper in.

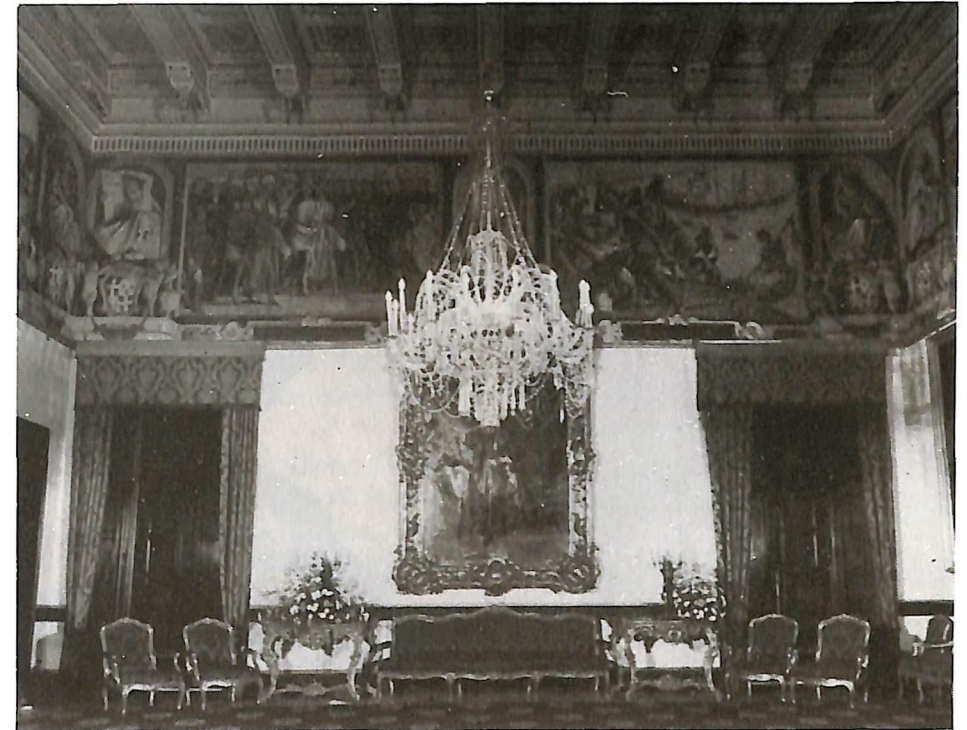
This hushed city....where footsteps echo even at the height of the day. Here silence has been given texture and form.

And within these walls.... in these rooms.... on these shelves.... amongst these papers.... for centuries on



end.... music lay waiting, silenced, captive, thwarted from being.

Until it was discovered and life was breathed into it once more.



Until midway through the 17th Century the only theatre on record in Malta was the Grand Hall of the Palace then housing the Knights of the Langue of Italy. In 1639, however, following disorderly Carnival behaviour, ladies were prohibited from attending performances therein. Some time later an order was served for the stage to be dismantled. Pressures were however exerted and the hall was 're-opened' as a 'theatre' — and re-provided with a stage! — four years later when, presumably, ladies were rehabilitated and looked upon favourably once more!

The hall of the Auberge d'Italie must at

that time have seen a great to-do....as must other halls of the other Auberges and palaces. For one must remember that the 17th Century saw the birth of Opera and its immediate popularity — Monteverdi, Carissimi, Scarlatti.

But the 17th Century also saw the Minuet sweeping through the Courts of Europe like wild fire. It can't have been much different here — where knights from all the countries of Europe congregated. The period of austerity was over for the Order of St John. The age of gracious living had caught up with them too.

It could wait no longer.

The life style of the 18th Century was too rich and full to allow Malta to remain without a Theatre.

“For the honest recreation of the people.” So decrees its motto.

Manoel de Vilhena. The Grandmaster who endowed Malta so splendidly.

“Constiermos uma fortaleza nesta ilha.” (We shall build a fortress on this Island) [in Portugese]

“Il Gran Maestro ha decretato — si erigeranno nuove fortificazzioni!”

“Um Suburbio a cidade. Bem fortificado” (A suburb to the City. Well fortified.) [in Portugese]

“Il y aura un faubourg à la citè!”

“È Pietro Floriani l’ architetto!”

“Cloisters. Flourmills.”

“El Granmastre ha decretado: Molinos de viento!” (The Grandmaster has decreed: Windmills!) [in Spanish]

“Der Grösmeister verordnet hat: Klöster und Nonnenkloster” (The Grandmaster has decreed: Convents, Cloisters!) [in German]

“And....We shall build a Theatre.”

Within ten months of the purchase of three houses which used to



acomodate the Priory of Navarre, the conversions were ready and the new theatre opened its doors to the public on the 19 January 1732. A splendid baroque jewel in the heart of a splendid baroque city — where the stone work and the music vied with each other as to who could soar highest to the heavens! From then on the theatre bustled and sparkled with activity, with impresarios vying with each other for its management.

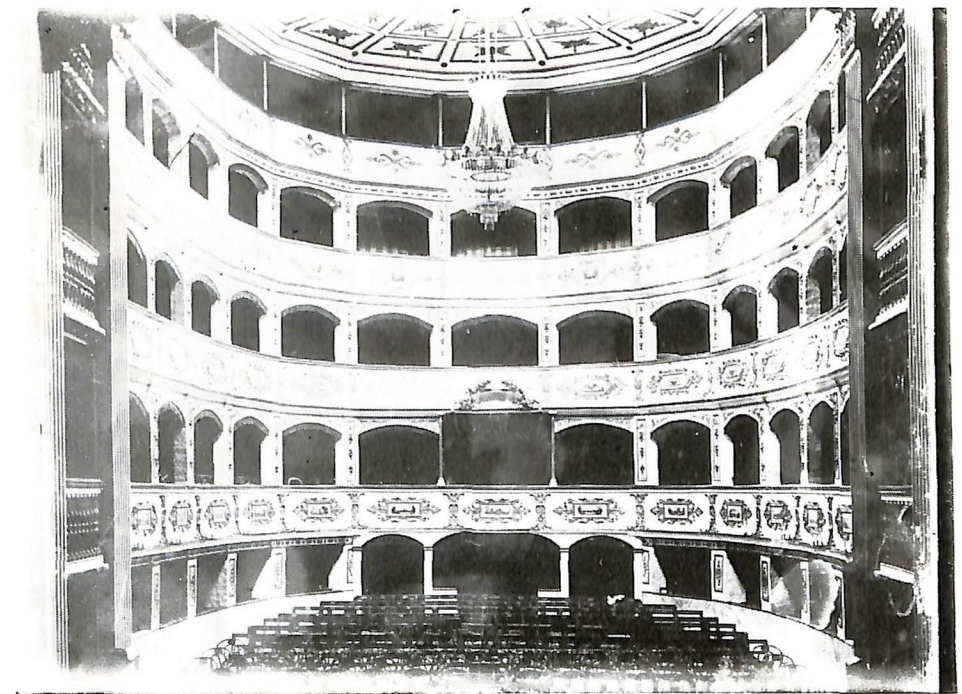
Late in the 18th century, the impresario was none less than Nicolò Isouard — the Maltese composer resident in France, but recalled home by Grandmaster de Rohan. Isouard kept his post under the next grandmaster, Hompesch and under

the French occupying forces when Napoleon took over Malta.

Of course, the Manoel Theatre curtain rose on many of Isouard’s Operas — of which some had been premiered in various European cities and some composed especially for this Theatre.

An uprising by the Maltese against the French was followed by an English naval blockade — and the French occupying forces capitulated and left Malta.

Their commanding officer, General Vaubois, enjoined Isouard to leave with them and return to Paris....which he did. And Malta lost one of its most illustrious sons in the field of Music.



During the blockade, the Manoel Theatre was mainly used to entertain the besieged French garrison, very often to the exclusion of the Maltese. With the departure of the French, however, the Manoel Theatre's doors were once more thrown wide-open to the public — and its original name — Teatro Pubblico — was changed to Royal Theatre.

By now the popularity of Opera in Europe was assuming tidal-wave proportions. The fame of Metastasio's librettos and of the many composers who had set them to music — Hasse, Pergolesi, Gluck — had indeed drawn good audiences...but now Italian "Ottocento" opera had come upon the scene: Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti.

The Maltese audience was growing day by day — and it was being augmented by the British colonial administrators and the many British servicemen stationed here.

The Manoel Theatre was proving to be too small.

Two major alterations were carried out, one in 1812 and another in 1844. As a result of these, the theatre could accommodate 850 persons — a good 170 more than it can hold today! But to no avail. A larger theatre was definitely needed.

In 1860 the subject of a new theatre was officially broached — and by 1866 the new Royal Opera House had been

constructed at the very entrance to the city.

It was soon clear that Malta could not afford to run two major theatres — and the obvious thing soon happened: the Manoel Theatre slipped to operetta and to variety programmes... and soon enough it fell into disuse. Not for long, however — for it so happened that in 1873, barely six years after it had been inaugurated, the Royal Opera House caught fire and was razed to the ground. But by 1877 it had been rebuilt...and once more hard times befell Manoel Theatre.

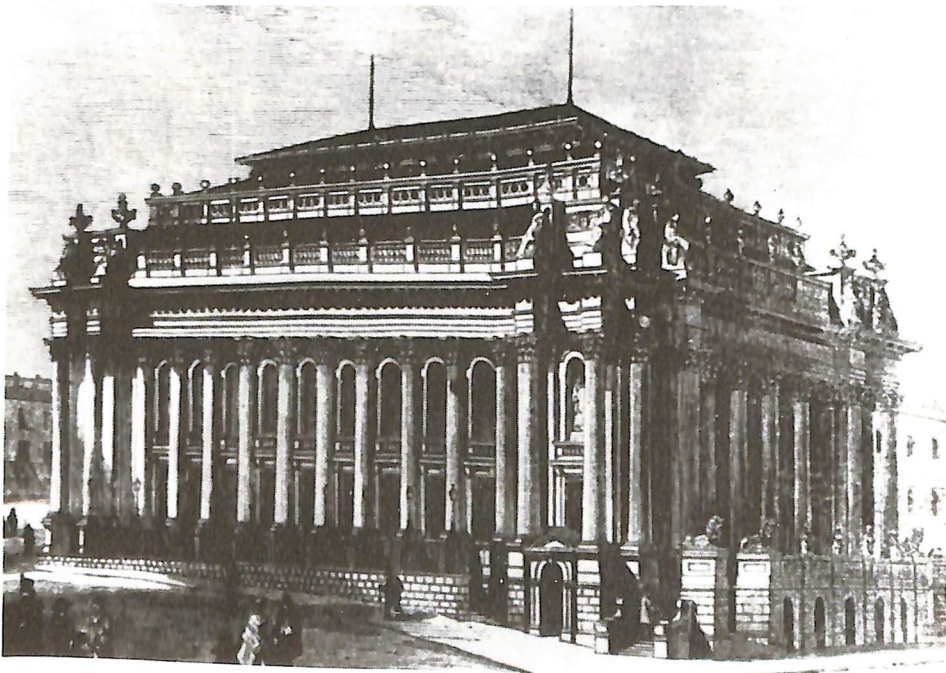
These were its hardest times, perhaps...but maybe they were also its most human. Its boxes were hired out, for one penny each night, as sleeping accommodation for homeless beggars.

It is ironic perhaps, that after the luxurious final years of the Order's

stay in Malta, the Manoel Theatre — which is certainly one of the finest gems of their legacy — should be assigned a role which is so very close to the aims which motivated and inspired the founders of the Order: caring for the sick, the destitute, the aged, for those in need, for those who could not seek help elsewhere.

And the mute song of sadness must have echoed silently in this very same space.

But the spirit of a people is never subdued. The song of sheer joy of living throbs in every man's heart even in the worst of circumstances...and breaks out at the slightest chance. Song, deep-felt song, haunting melody, throbbing rhythm, distilling the beliefs, thoughts, customs of a people passes down from generation to generation, from mouth to ear, from spirit to spirit...and is irrepressible.



#### Photos:

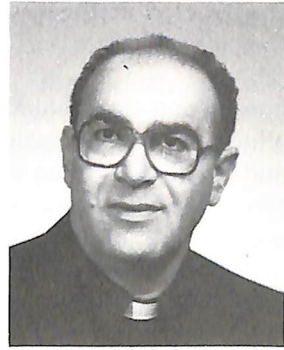
- p. 4 Hypogeum
- p. 5 Haġar Qim  
Maltese farm-house
- p. 6 A street in Mdina  
View of Mdina
- p. 7 A Hall in the Grand Master's Palace
- p. 8 Monument to Manoel De Vilhena
- p. 9 Bust of Nicolò Isouard  
Manoel Theatre in 1844
- p. 10 Royal Opera House



John J. Schranz



Charles Camilleri



Rev. John Galea



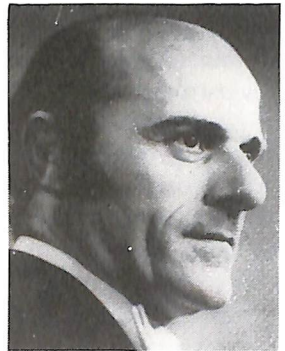
Brian Cefai



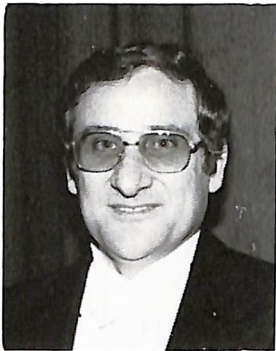
Antoinette Frendo



Maria Frendo



Joseph Sammut



Joseph Vella



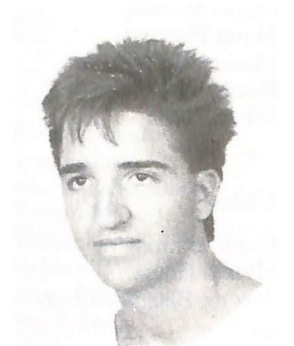
Tanya Bajona



Joe Huber



Antoinette Miggiani



Mauro Scerri



Anna La Rosa



Charles Arrigo



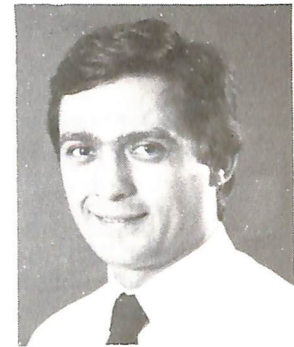
Marlene Psaila



Antoine Frendo



Vanni Laus



Mario Mintoff

## Manoel Theatre Orchestra

### 1st Violins

George Spiteri (leader)  
 Stephen Zammit (sub-leader)  
 Marcelle Bartolo  
 Andrew Borg  
 Walter Abela  
 George Curmi  
 Marcelline Agius

### Cellos

Freddie Tonna  
 Mario Psaila  
 Ivan De Gabriele

### Basses

Spiridione Xuereb  
 Joan Cassar

### Flutes

Silvio Zammit  
 Laura Falzon

### Oboe

Pierre Grech

### Clarinets

Joseph Camilleri  
 Charles Abela

### Bassons

Archibald Mizzi  
 Mario Micallef

### Violas

Guido Mamo  
 Miriam Haidon  
 Josette Bajada Abram

### Horns

Philip Psaila  
 Alfred Spagnol  
 Emmanuel Spagnol

### Trumpets

Joseph Agius  
 Henry Attard

### Trombone

Michael Ciantar

### Tuba

Paul Borg

### Timpani

Joseph Curmi

### Percussion

Louis Naudi

### Harpichord

Stephen Attard

## Il-Kortigjani

Daphne Abela  
 Veronica Attard Montalto  
 Victoria Attard Montalto  
 Rachael Pia Formosa  
 Anette B. Gabaretta  
 Paula Gouder  
 Gabriella Grech  
 Anna La Rosa

Peter Paul Bonnici  
 Stephen Buttigieg  
 Fabian De Battista  
 Patrick Dillon  
 Pierre Galea  
 Jo-Jo Grima  
 Damian Stellini  
 Julian Tonna

## Tanya Bayona Dance Ensemble

### Pas de deux:

Deborah Mcnamara  
 Joseph Schembri

### Pas de deux:

Monique Pellegrini Petit  
 Alex Spiteri

### Soloist:

Theresa Lungaro Mifsud

### Flames:

Francesca Abela  
 Katia Borg  
 Ann Gatt  
 Julie Williamson

## Saint Julian's Choir

Director: Rev. John Galea

### Sopranos

Mary Aquilina  
 Beatrice Attard  
 Lynden Attard  
 Frances Axiaq  
 Marie Therese Axiaq  
 Lina Bartolo  
 Myriam Bellia  
 Carmen Borg  
 Irene Borg  
 Rose Borg  
 Maria Brincat  
 Edna Cassar  
 Mariella DeBattista  
 Connie Farrugia  
 Joan Fiorini  
 Marthese Galea  
 Rose Garroni  
 Aida Grech  
 M. Louise Grech  
 Michelle Grixti  
 Agatha Monaco  
 Josephine Montebello  
 Joanne Pace  
 MaryAnne Pace  
 Violet Pace  
 Rose Palmier  
 Alda Pantalleresco

### Carmen Pullicino

Tessa Pullicino  
 Geraldine Said Pullicino  
 Edwige Sapienza  
 Antonia Tanti  
 Iris Vella  
 Lina Zammit  
 Vanna Zarb

### Altos

Vanna Agius  
 Margaret Attard  
 Moira Attard  
 Michelle Azzopardi  
 Emily Balzan  
 Cecilia Barbaro Sant  
 Isabella Barbaro Sant  
 Doreen Bondin  
 Carmen Camilleri  
 Doris Camilleri  
 Scholastica Cann  
 Marie Louise Cefai  
 Maria Dalli  
 Mary Farrugia  
 Carmen Forte  
 Maria Galea  
 Mary Galea

### Marion Grech

Grace Mallia  
 Julia Micallef Cann  
 Doreen Mifsud  
 Gladys Mizzi  
 Barbara Pace Gouder  
 Jenny Psaila  
 Inez Saliba  
 Sylvia Schembri  
 Maggie Scicluna  
 MaryAnne Vassallo  
 Miriam Zammit

### Tenors

Tony Agius (Rev.)  
 Alfred Attard  
 Vincent Aquilina  
 Abraham Borg  
 Eric Borg  
 Lino Bondin  
 Harry Cachia  
 Brian Cefai  
 Geoffrey Dalli  
 Joseph Galea  
 Nicholas Galea  
 Ronnie Galea  
 Paul Kozelka  
 Reggie Schembri

Joseph Scicluna  
Lawrence Wismayer

**Basses**

Lino Attard  
Anthony Azzopardi  
Joseph Azzopardi  
Charles Axiaq

Charles Brincat  
Josef Camilleri  
Raymond Camilleri  
Pio Dalli  
Alfred Fenech  
Stanley Fiorini  
George Frendo  
Joseph Gauci

Henry Gauci  
Joseph Grech  
Carmel Grixti  
Carmel Mifsud  
Anthony Montebello  
Salvator Mousù  
Vincent Vassallo  
Saviour Zammit

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## MANOEL THEATRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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*Vice Chairman:* Comm. Paul Naudi  
*Secretary:* Alfred Micallef  
*Treasurer:* John Gatt  
*P.R.O.:* John Schranz  
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Michael Fenech  
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kind co-operation.

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