

# Redefining Spaces with the SPACE Project: Bringing the Arts into the Hearts of Communities

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This year, the School of Performing Arts at UM has launched an initiative designed to break the conventional boundaries between performing arts and surrounding communities. Through the SPACE project (School of Performing Arts Community Engagement), their goal is to create social impact by bringing the arts into personal and communal spaces, including hospitals, elderly homes, migrant centres, correctional facilities, youth centres, and schools.


In a recent interview, Prof. Philip Ciantar, Director of the School of Performing Arts, emphasised the need for performing arts to extend beyond traditional creative spaces like theatres. He noted that the arts are often confined to predefined venues, making them less accessible to marginalised or isolated communities. By taking performances into more personal and familiar settings, SPACE aims to bridge this gap, ensuring that more people can experience the therapeutic qualities of the arts. This approach not only enriches the cultural landscape but also addresses social isolation by creating an inclusive environment where people from all walks of life can participate.

The most recent SPACE initiative took place at the St Vincent de Paul Long Term Care Facility and was directed by Mr Douglas Comley. Titled *Collectively for Others*, the event involved students from the theatre, music, and dance departments performing both in the main hall and across

various wards, ensuring accessibility for all residents.

The project focused on making performances accessible and enjoyable by including historical pieces and familiar Maltese songs. This approach engaged their target audience, who were from a different generation than the students, allowing the students to connect with an age group they might not usually interact with.

In addition to providing real-world settings for students and having a direct impact on communities, the SPACE project includes public lectures with educational benefits. These lectures are intended to foster a deeper appreciation for the performing arts and their therapeutic benefits. Ciantar believes that through such initiatives, students can realise the significant impact their artistic talents can have on others, preparing them for varied professional roles and enhancing their practical skills. He also mentioned that the general Maltese public still perceives the arts as merely a 'hobby', an antiquated idea that must continue to be challenged to open up the arts world further.

By integrating performing arts into the fabric of our daily lives, the SPACE project can help redefine how and where art can exist. It is transforming ordinary spaces into places that uplift and provide connection. It serves as a necessary reminder that art does not need to be confined to stages or galleries; *it can thrive wherever there is human spirit.* 



***Collectively for Others*** outreach event at the St Vincent de Paul Long Term Care Facility, directed by Mr Douglas Comley as part of SPACE project

Photo by  
Camille Fenech