

# MCAST, Johann Strauss School of Music and Malta Philharmonic Orchestra Academy to collaborate

On Wednesday, 26 October MCAST, the Johann Strauss School of Music and the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra Academy signed a collaborative agreement which will provide an accessible, long-term educational pathway for young musicians so that they may have the opportunity to become professional musicians.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed at MCAST Main Campus in the presence of Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment and Dr Owen Bonnici, Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government.

The collaboration between the parties will continue to strengthen and develop the provision of music education on the Maltese Islands between MCAST, the Johann Strauss School of Music and Malta Philharmonic Orchestra Academy in order to ensure a sense of continuity from the early years of music making to the music professional world in music performance, music education and technical fields. The three entities will liaise with each other so that all parties will con-

tribute and young musicians will gain to the maximum.

Dr Bonnici congratulated MCAST, the Johann Strauss School of Music and the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra Academy for this important collaboration for the arts sector in Malta. Minister Bonnici emphasised on the importance of having professional musicians in our country, creating a sustainable arts and cultural sector. This collaboration, he said, will ensure that Maltese talent is cultivated and developed, reducing the need of importing foreign musicians.

Mr Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment stated that the signing marks a very special moment for the future of Malta's music education. This collaborative agreement, between these three entities, is the first step towards a long-term educational pathway for Malta's young musicians. A pathway which we hope will encourage and motivate young musicians on their long career towards becoming professional musicians.

Dr Silvio De Bono, President of the Board of Governors welcomed



this initiative and stated: "MCAST is proud to contribute by providing professional opportunities for Malta's up-and-coming young classical musicians. We believe that the emerging musicians who come into our programme deserve the very best chance to succeed and we are committed to making this success a reality. With this collaboration we are showing our unerring dedication to artist development and believe that the programme will continue to grow from strength to strength in the future."

Sigmund Mifsud, MPO executive chairman stated: "Through our joint collaboration we are offering music students in Malta the opportunity to attend MPO orchestral rehearsals and a selection of MPO concerts for free, as well as to participate in professional masterclasses with our visiting international musicians. We are also providing them with an opportunity to have a hands-on experience working in the professional music world as interns with our admin and logistics teams, which

are fundamental aspects needed for the smooth running of any professional cultural organisation. At the MPO we believe that it is crucial for Malta's young musicians to be given exposure to the workings of the professional musical world, for students to experience the level of musicianship that they are aspiring towards, and for them to witness the dedication and professionalism that is required in order to achieve these standards. It is our hope that this collaborative pathway will provide students with the encouragement, motivation and inspiration needed for them to become Malta's future professional musicians."

Mary Ann Cauchi, Centre administrator, Johann Strauss School of Music Malta stated: "Johann Strauss School of Music is the place to be if you want to learn music but first and foremost it is an educational institution. It is the school's duty to educate society at large from a young age and create educational opportunities and this is a big step in helping society to grow in music and the arts."

## Education Malta launched

The provision of private educational services in Malta has over the past years grown dramatically. Education is now being considered as a potentially new economic service growth area in line with the already varied economic services activities, contributing to Malta's economy and job creation.

This sector was also identified by the Malta Chamber in its Economic Vision for Malta 2014-2020 as one of the 11 sectors to contribute to Malta's economic growth during the set period.

Following government's endorsement of the Chamber's Economic Vision, it was only natural that the Chamber and government through the Ministry for Education and Employment initiated discussions in 2015 on the establishment of an entity that will promote investment in this sector.

"The newly established Education Malta will primarily harness this

economic potential and provide a structure to promote investment and support to stakeholders in this sector," said Anton Borg, president of the Malta Chamber as he was addressing the media during the launch of Education Malta.

Mr Borg said that Education Malta follows in the Economic Vision of the Chamber for Malta which promotes the cooperation between government and the private sector in a way that best capitalises on the strategic strengths of each. Education Malta shall witness the Chamber strengthening its position in a sector which is ripe with potential for investment and which has an exciting future ahead of it.

Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education said that Malta was seeing substantial interest from international educational entities seeking to establish here to attract foreign students to study locally. Malta should endeavour to attract quality

institutions. Education Malta should complement the Ministry for Education and Employment as the legislator, while the National Commission for Further and Higher Education will continue to rigorously see that the set high standards and levels in education are retained. "We will not compromise quality for quantity" Minister Bartolo added.

This new initiative is another proposal, part of government's wider programme for education delivered in this legislature. More opportunities will be created for academics and students. Education Malta will continue to build on the success of the English Language teaching which has gained a good brand over the years.

Education Malta is a not-for-profit foundation whose objective is to promote the internationalisation of education in Malta and attract foreign educational entities to establish a presence in Malta. It will



join other national agencies which form part of the European Union Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture to promote European higher education under the Study in Europe project.

Education Malta will perform promotion and marketing functions to support Malta-based providers of education, training and technology services in the international market. As the national agency it will promote Malta as an ideal location for foreign direct investment in the area of internationalisation of education. These will range from Further and Higher institutions such as

universities and colleges, to international and language schools, to education technology as well as digital and online education providers among others.

Education Malta will work closely with those private educational entities already established and operating in Malta. It will also coordinate with the University of Malta, The Malta College of Arts Science and Technology and the Malta Council for Science and Technology.

Education Malta will also advise and work with government on the formulation of policies in the area of international educational services.

## Open Access and Dissemination of Research

Research work propels the human race forward. Had there been no ongoing research in the areas of science, arts, the humanities and other fields of study, we could not make new discoveries, improve on existing models or enhance knowledge. It is hard to underestimate the importance of conducting research. However, what proportion of this knowledge is actually accessible? Most researchers opt to consult academic journals and monographs but how much of this material is available to students and individuals who are not researchers but who may be interested in a particular subject? Journal subscriptions incur hefty recurrent expenditures, while academic research monographs are significantly expensive. The question arises as to how such research can be widely accessible when there are so many financial barriers.

Nowadays, researchers are encouraged to publish with Open Access (OA) journals. These do not ask for subscription fees from readers. Such journals can be freely accessed online and the research published can be re-used. This is

because open access publishing grants a CC BY license, which allows others to distribute, reuse and build upon previous research, including commercial research, as long as the authors of the original paper are credited. Using OA does not affect the quality of publishing since articles that are accepted still go through a peer-reviewing process. Some journals ask for article processing charges (APCs) to cover the costs of publication, editing and peer-reviewing. Funding agencies and institutions have started to allow for such APCs through their research budget.

OA publishing is not just a choice that the researcher makes while thinking about the publishing options. EU research programmes such as Horizon 2020, the EU Research and Innovation programme, with nearly €80bn of funding available over seven years (2014 to 2020), require that all funded research be published in Open Access. APCs need to be included when applying for research. Beneficiaries of such funds are mandated to deposit a copy of the research in a repository

of their choice and ensure that the publication is made available in OA within six months from publication for the sciences, and 12 months for the arts, the humanities and social sciences. Such measures guarantee that funded research is made freely accessible online and potentially disseminated globally.

As a fundamental believer in the dissemination of knowledge and research, the University of Malta Library offers academics the possibility to upload their research papers on its Institutional Repository – OAR@UoM. This increases the visibility of the research carried out at the University and enhances the Library's collections. Since OAR@UoM is the sole institutional repository on the Maltese Islands, non-university researchers can also upload their material, as long as they have an approval form signed by an academic from the respective field of study.

Uploading academic works on OAR@UoM, provides 24/7 access. Furthermore, since all the works uploaded are harvested by Google and Google Scholar, thereby enhancing dissemination as well as

discoverability and divulging the work to an international audience. This increases the chances of research collaborations with different entities, local and/or international. Having more readers may lead to further recognition. Studies show that research articles published in Open Access are cited by other authors more frequently than comparable articles which have restricted access. In a study published in 2008 by Harnard (The University's Mandate to Mandate Open Access) it was shown that OA can increase citations from 25% to over 250%.

As of September, there are over 10,300 items on OAR@UoM ranging from articles to book chapters, audio recordings, ephemera and dissertations. These items cover over 15,000 different topics and subjects. Such a volume of resources offers OAR@UoM the potential to be very visible online thanks to search engines like Google that retrieve material from the repository in any relevant search. To this effect, the University of Malta Library received a number of requests from researchers from

countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Nigeria and Holland to access dissertations, which meta data is showing online but which are restricted to University patrons. OAR@UoM is also OpenAIRE compliant. OpenAIRE aims to support the implementation of Open Access in Europe. It provides the means to promote and realize the widespread adoption of the Open Access Policy, as set out by the ERC Scientific Council Guidelines for Open Access and the Open Access pilot launched by the European Commission.

OAR@UoM provides a platform for Maltese research to be disseminated and made accessible on a global level. Besides enhancing awareness and reputation, academics who upload their research on the institutional repository, also increase their opportunities of further collaborations with other international researchers and research institutions.

For further information about OAR@UoM one can visit <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/> or send an email [toar.lib@um.edu.mt](mailto:toar.lib@um.edu.mt)