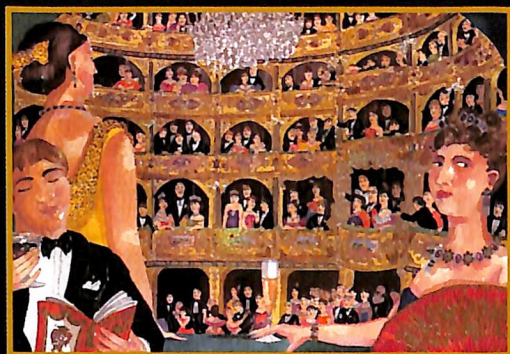




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Director: Mro Dion Buhagiar

Leaders: Mario Bisazza and Sarah Frendo

At St John's Co-Cathedral

Wednesday 22 March 2000 at 6.30 p.m.

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We are pleased to sponsor, for the first time, the Manoel Theatre's Opera Festival. This is a logical development following the successful organisation of the Annual BOV Concert over the past years. The BOV Opera Festival should be a most welcome event particularly amongst those many Maltese opera lovers and should also attract the interest of foreign visitors to our Islands.

I take this opportunity to wish you all a most pleasant and enjoyable evening at the opera. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Manoel Theatre Management Committee for its efforts to sustain the excellent quality of performances staged.

JOSEPH F.X. ZAHRA
Chairman
BOV Group

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Mro. Dion Buhagiar



Between 1959 - 1964 Dion Buhagiar received his early education at the Archbishop's Seminary and between 1965 - 68 followed the degree course in Literature and Philosophy at the University of Malta. In 1970 he followed a course in organ playing at the Royal College of Music in London, U.K., where he obtained the ARCM diploma. In the following year he obtained the LRSM and FTCL. In 1974 he was accepted to follow the degree course in music at the University of Toronto, Canada, where he graduated with the Bachelor of Music in 1978 and the postgraduate B.Ed degree (Music Education specialist) from the Faculty of Education of the same university in 1979. In 1987 he obtained the Master of Music degree (on a Commonwealth Scholarship) from the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada, and in February 2000 he completed his Ph.D. project on the Maltese classical composer Francesco Azopardi (1748 - 1809); this was supervised by Dr. Floyd Grave, Head of Postgraduate Studies in Music at Rutgers State University, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Dion Buhagiar has since 1979 been the chief organist of St. John's Co-Cathedral (Valletta) where he also directs the Collegium Musicum regularly during the morning Sunday High Mass. He is also the founder and director of the Collegium Aureum Choir and the University Vocal Ensemble. All three choirs perform both individually and collectively in public concerts at the Co-Cathedral on special occasions. Works performed on these occasions are *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus* by Handel, *Paukenmesse* by Haydn, *Stabat Mater* by Tucepsky, *Requiem* by Verdi, and other works by Maltese composers such as Camilleri, Pace, Nani, Diacono, and Francesco Azopardi.

Dion Buhagiar is a senior lecturer and co-ordinator of the Music Studies Programme of the Mediterranean Institute of the University of Malta. Recently, he represented the University of Malta at the International Music Competition 'Valentino Bucchi' in Rome. Here, he read a paper on the 'Twentieth-Century Maltese Music for Organ by Charles Camilleri' and acted as a member of the international jury for the International Competition in Composition.

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A Brief Historical Background of the Mass in F Major (1776) Ms. 342

In addition to opera, the Mass was also a very important expressive medium for the Neapolitan composers. The operatic technique (of Pergolesi, Jomelli, Piccinni etc.) that included beautiful melody, colourful harmony, counterpoint, brilliant orchestration, solo arias, and choral writing, was also adopted in the composition of the liturgical Mass. This new procedure, however, did not destroy the sacred element of the Mass. On the contrary, the text (in the hands of the eighteenth-century masters) was greatly enhanced by the more vivid depiction of the text.

Azopardi's Mass incorporated all those elements then prevalent in the compositions in eighteenth-century Naples: polychoral writing, solo arias, colourful orchestration, and counterpoint. In the Mass, Azopardi sets only the first two main sections of the whole text: the KYRIE and the GLORIA - this type of setting became known as the MESSA DI GLORIA. In fact, the greatest musical emphasis is on the GLORIA with its instrumental *Ritornelli*, choral sections, solo arias and chamber vocal elements. The majestic conclusion (*Cum Sancto Spiritu*), with its homophonic introductory section followed by a double fugue, is an eloquent proof of Azopardi's prolific genius - a classicist *par excellence*.

Kyrie (<i>Allegro</i>)	-	Double Chorus
Christe (<i>Largo</i>)	-	Double Chorus
Kyrie (<i>Allegro</i>)	-	Double Chorus
Gloria In Excelsis	-	Double Chorus
Et in Terra	-	Double Chorus
Laudamus	-	Double Chorus
Gratias Agimus (<i>Solo</i>)	-	Joan Mangion (<i>Soprano</i>)
Domine Deus Rex Coelestis (<i>Duet</i>)-		Joan Mangion (<i>Soprano</i>) Claire Massa (<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>)
Domine Deus Agnus Dei (<i>Solo</i>)	-	Albert Buttigieg (<i>Bass</i>)
Qui Tollis (<i>Octet</i>)	-	Rosemary Falzon (<i>Soprano</i>) Claire Caruana (<i>Soprano</i>) Joan Said (<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>) Claire Massa (<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>) Frans Mangion (<i>Tenor</i>) Charles Vincenti (<i>Tenor</i>) Jonathan Mohnani (<i>Bass</i>) Albert Buttigieg (<i>Bass</i>)
Qui Sedes (<i>Solo</i>)	-	Joan Mangion (<i>Soprano</i>)
Quoniam Tu Solus (<i>Solo</i>)	-	Claire Massa (<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>)
Cum Sancto Spiritu	-	Double Chorus

Choir: Caroline Attard, Fabiana Borg, Vivienne Buhagiar, Claire Caruana, Rose Ciantar, Lorraine Debono, Maurin Drago, Rose M. Falzon, Nichola Farrugia, Catherine Gauci, Miriam Micallef, Anita Saliba, Agnes Scicluna, Yvonne Young (*sopranos*); Sandra Farrugia, Claire Genovese, Cynthia Genovese, Claire Massa, Helena Micallef, Josephine Murray, Joan Said, Doris Saliba, Maria Scicluna, Rita Scicluna, May Vassallo, Simone Zammit (*altos*); Edward Aquilina, Anthony Attard, Mark Camilleri, Mark Debono, Ray Debono, John Gatt, Frans Mangion, Alfred Micallef, Jimmy Mifsud, Alan Mulligan, Albert Scerri, Charles Vincenti (*tenors*); Mario Attard, Bernard Bezzina, Brian Bonnici, Albert Buttigieg, Joe Debattista, Johann Fenech, Carmel Galea, Jonathan Mohnani, Gino Mulè Stagno, Victor Nescval (*basses*)



THE SOLOISTS

BOV
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JOAN MANGION (*soprano*) started her music studies at a very young age under the tutorship of Mro Carmelo Callus and continued with Maestri Carmelo Pace and Anthony Chircop. She began voice training contemporaneously under the supervision of Antoinette Miggiani, and debuted in the opera *Elisir d'Amore* alongside Miriam Gauci in 1987 when barely 19 years old. In 1988 she was conferred a scholarship by the Italian Institute and studied *bel canto* in the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan, having been recommended by none other than the great Maltese tenor Oreste Kirkop. Joan continued to perfect her voice technique under the direction of Professoressi Mindisova and Blagovesta Dobreva of State University, Bulgaria, and was an automatic choice in leading roles in operas and concerts staged by the Malta Opera Studio. She has featured in operas, oratorios, cantatas, concerts, and has accompanied popular singers on CDs.

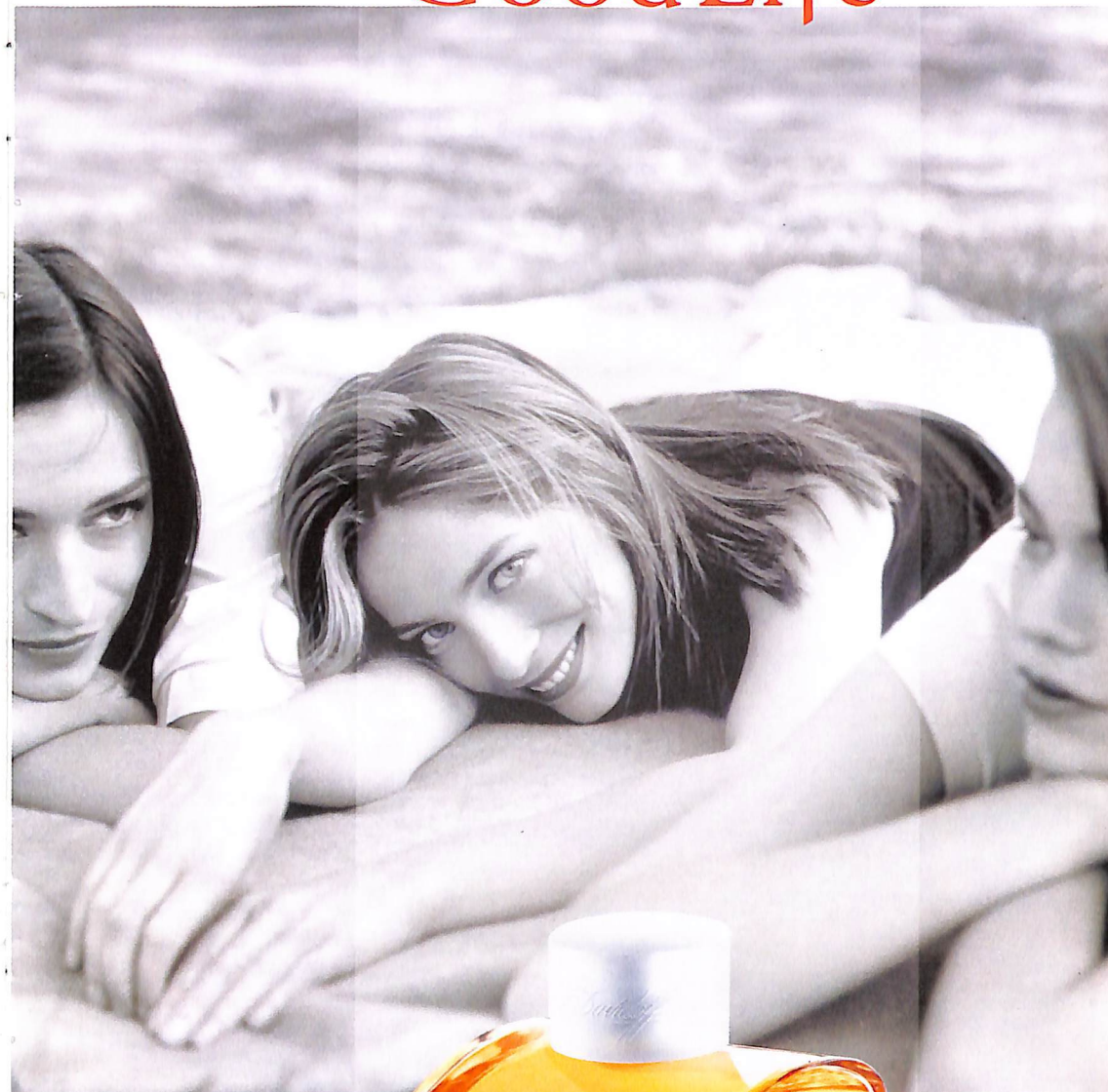


ALBERT BUTTIGIEG (*bass*) began his musical education at the Johann Strauss School of Music and later studied voice under Antoinette Miggiani and Blagovesta Karnobatlova Dobreva. Apart from being a regular performer as a chorister, he has also participated as a soloist during concerts, recitals and operas. He sang a solo part in Rossini's *La Cambiale di Matrimonio* and appeared in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, both at the Manoel Theatre.



CLAIRE MASSA (*mezzo-soprano*) graduated B.A. (Hons) in Music Studies from the University of Malta. She is currently reading for a PGCE in music and is a teacher of voice at the Johann Strauss School of Music. She has attended numerous courses in both voice and music education locally and overseas, her most recent being intensive vocal tuition with soprano Eva Andor at the Budapest Liszt Academy. For the past year she has been studying *Bel Canto* and *Arte Scenica* with Juliette Bisazza. Claire takes part regularly in concerts both as pianist and as singer. Her most recent solo performances include a recital at the Presidential Palace at San Anton, in Carmelo Pace's *The Last Seven Words on the Cross* and in Liszt's *Via Crucis* at St. John's Co-Cathedral.

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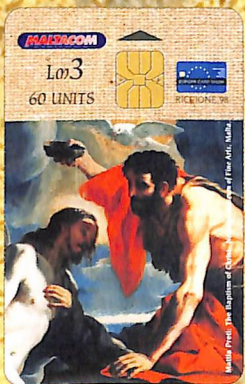
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FRANCESCO AZOPARDI



A Biographical Sketch

by Mro. Dion Buhagiar

Francesco, Giovanni Battista, Agostino Azopardi was born in Rabat on 5th May 1748, and died there on 6th February 1809. The baptismal record reads as follows:

5th May 1748. The Most Reverend Father Peter Attard assistant parish priest baptized in the Church of St. Paul Outside The Walls, the child born today of Salvatore Azopardi and his wife Anna, from the suburb of Notabile, and was named Giovanni Battista, Agostino, Francesco, Giuseppe. His godparents were the most excellent Don Franciscus Mamo and Anna Graziulla Chetcuti.

Francesco Azopardi was the second child of six (four boys and two girls). Little is known about Francesco Azopardi's life in general as is made clear by Paolo Pullicino in the *Notizia Biografica* - a biography of the composer:

Meanwhile, the life of Francesco Azopardi, which does not offer numerous and varied events to talk about, can only be found if summarised (so to speak) in the continuous production of his compositions.

But if Pullicino is reticent regarding Azopardi's early life, Padre Andrea Tanti (a Carmelite, and friend of Azopardi) offers the following information in his *"Elogio"* (Tanti's funeral oration during the composer's funeral).

In studying and in the exercise of piety did our Francesco pass his early years. An intellect thirsty for knowledge, and quickness of mind, a natural genius for music.

Azopardi began his musical training under the guidance of Mikiel Ang Vella, who had established his own private school as was and is still customary in Malta. Eventually, Azopardi asked his parents' permission to be sent to study abroad. According to Tanti:

...the strong and persistent requests that he made to his parents were successful, and he was sent to the famous Royal Conservatory of Sant' Onofrio in Naples. Thus, here, he has launched upon his career and from among a considerable number of students, our Maltese was considered the best.

According to the enrolment register (*rollo dei figliuoli*), "Francesco Azopardi a Maltese entered as a resident fee-paying student in 1763 (15 October), left in 1767." This information from *Il Conservatorio di Sant' Onofrio....* by Salvatore di Giacomo puts straight all the erratic speculation put forth by several biographers including Pullicino. Azopardi stayed at the conservatory for only four years, after which he emerged qualified as Maestro di Cappella.

Although Azopardi left Sant' Onofrio after four years, he remained in Naples until 1774, thus spending a period of almost twelve years in that city. There are also differences of opinion regarding the identities of Azopardi's teachers at Sant' Onofrio. Tanti and Pullicino claim that he studied with Nicola Piccinni, while Alberto Ghisalberti names Carlo Cotumacci and Giuseppe Dol as among the composer's (Azopardi) teachers.



FRANCESCO AZOPARDI



According to Pullicino, Azopardi's musical activities (while living in Naples) included giving lessons in prestigious houses and monasteries and composing music which he conducted in various places and on different occasions. In 1768, Azopardi composed his first Mass in F (Mus. Ms. 339). A second Mass appeared two years later (1770), and a third, also in G (Mus. Ms. 340), was composed in 1772. In addition to Masses, Azopardi composed Psalms and a Magnificat, among others.

In the Summer of 1774, Azopardi left Naples permanently for Malta to become the organist of St. Paul's Cathedral, Mdina. The following document attests to Azopardi's installation as organist with the right of future promotion:

This is on behalf of Maestro Azopardi, who is the organist of the Holy Cathedral Church of Malta. By the strength of the signed transcript of the Illustrious and Most Reverend Father John Pellerano, Archbishop of Malta, written in reply to Francesco Azopardi's letter of application, dated December 20, 1773, after the written relation of the Most Reverend music deputies, Canon and Dean Don Paolo Mompalao Apap Depiro and Canon Don Pietro Platamone, inaugurate and instate as organist of the same Cathedral Church, the same Francesco Azopardi, with the usual salary of 120 scudi, and other remunerations, privileges and usual responsibilities, that we are used to, and with future promotion either through the death or the resignation of the Prefect of Music.

The position of Maestro di Cappella was retained by Don Benigno Zerafa (1726 -1804), who, at the time of Azopardi's appointment, had already given 30 years of service at the Cathedral. Zerafa was very jealous of his position, and he relinquished his position only after he himself requested his own retirement in January 1787.

Azopardi's *oeuvre* includes Masses (about 32 including three for 8 voices and two Requiem Masses), Psalms, Antiphons, Hymns, Sequences, and an Oratorio *La Passione di Cristo* (a setting for the Metastasio text). He also wrote two secular cantatas, arias, duets, a sonata for pianoforte, and instrumental music.

To Azopardi's importance as a composer (principally of the sacred genre) one must mention also his great popularity as a teacher, and his significance (worldwide) as a theorist of music. As a teacher according to Pullicino, "Azopardi had many students, several of whom became very distinguished." Two of his most important students were Pietro Paolo Bugeja (1771 - 1828) and Nicolo Isouard (1775 - 1818).

Azopardi's great significance as a theorist is due to the fact that around the beginning of the 1780's, he wrote his famous *Il Musico Pratico (I)*. This treatise, which he wrote in Italian, was subsequently translated into French by Nicholas Etienne Framery and was recommended by André Gretry. It was published in Paris by Le Duc in 1786, and was later re-edited and published by Alexandre Choron in 1824. Towards the last years of his life, Azopardi worked on a new version of the first treatise which he also entitled *Il Musico Pratico (II)*. In this treatise he presents all the new harmonic principles then prevalent during the eighteenth century.

Azopardi died on February 6, 1809, after having served at the Cathedral for 35 years. According to Pullicino, for his funeral, which was attended by a great number of musicians from all over the Island, the Cathedral Chapter, in gratitude for his great services, ordered that the occasion be honoured with grandeur: "He was entombed in the Cathedral Church where he received solemn obsequies."

Programme Editor: Victor Fenech

sona'ta (-nah-), n. Composition for one instrument (e.g. vehicle) *or two* (e.g. vehicle & human), normally with three or four movements (forward, reverse, lateral, control) contrasted in rhythm & speed, but related in key (style & performance designed to the same tune);~ type of composition in which two themes (prestige & safety) are successively set forth, developed & restated (the NEW SONATA). (For adjectives see Hyundai showroom).



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