

Act React
presents

WILLY RUSSELL'S
BLOOD
Brothers



with international guest artists

The Manoel Theatre
May 2004

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Act React
presents

BLOOD *Brothers*

A Musical
Book, Music and Lyrics by
Willy Russell

Under the Patronage of
Janatha Stubbs

Produced and Directed by
Ray Mangion

Co Director
Alison McFarlane

Musical Director
Paul Abela

Set Design by
Saviour Camilleri

Sound by
Digital Magic

Lighting Design by
Anton Borg Olivier

A warm welcome from the Director

This year will be the ninth year since Act React started producing shows in Malta. The first musical we staged was a fund-raising event for our son Oliver Henry who as most of you know was born with severe deformities on all four limbs. The success of 'Jesus Christ Superstar' triggered a desire from our audiences to see more of our productions and so we continued, our many musicals since have included The Sound of Music, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Evita, Fiddler on the Roof, Les Miserable in Concert, Godspell, Nunsense and a string of concerts, all of which were a huge success.

And now Willy Russell's hugely successful Blood Brothers. As there are so many theatrical companies now in Malta, it is getting more difficult to choose shows and in contrast to what has been produced so far this season, we promise you that this one was chosen to finish with a flourish. With its twenty year success Blood Brothers, originated in Liverpool, then moved to the West End and now it is staged all over the world, now it's here in Malta and Act React are honoured to premiere such a modern classic as this. Blood Brothers is the tragic tale of twin brothers Mickey and Edward who are separated shortly after birth, following their stories into two completely different worlds with tears and humour throughout. Many memorable tunes punctuate this poignant tale, giving you goose bumps and bringing a tear to your eye. It

will send you on a journey so realistic, you will have to adjust your thoughts before you go back home.

For this production we are proud to have with us four excellent young professional actors from England who have come over to play some of the very demanding leading roles. This decision was made so that we can give you the highest standards in this complex and difficult piece which requires excellent liverpudlian dialect together with superb acting and singing skills. Lucas Rush (Mickey), Daniel Turner (Edmond), Josh Reynolds (Sammy) and Simon Turner (playing several characters throughout the show), were chosen from eighty applicants during an audition held at Her Majesty's Theatre in London's West End. We are thrilled to have them all here and sincerely hope they have enjoyed the production and their visit to Malta.

We hope that you will enjoy your evening and the wonderful experience of Blood Brothers.

RAY MANGION



The Story of BLOOD BROTHERS

A short History of the Show

Blood Brothers, one of the longest running musicals in the West End and a massive success all over the world from Broadway to Australia began.

The author Willy Russell, fresh from the success of Educating Rita, was commissioned to write a seventy minute piece for Merseyside Young People's Theatre Company, a small touring company who visited schools in the area, with a company of five actors and only minimal props.

That version of Blood Brothers had only one song in it – the Marilyn Monroe refrain – but the day it opened, Russell started to work on the full-length piece that would eventually sweep the world. It also so happens that a West End producer, Bob Swash (who was one of the team behind Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's last full-scale musical, Evita) went to see it at one of the

schools where it was being presented, and loved it.

"He'd been badgering me for a long time to write a new musical" explains Russell, who earlier in his career had already had a hit in the West End with John, Paul, George, Ringo... and Bert, but that musical (written while Russell was still a schoolteacher) had used the Beatles catalogue rather than an original score.

Briefly, the question came up of who would compose the score for what would become Blood Brothers. "I wondered whether to approach another composer, but eventually I thought why? I was itching to do it myself, though I was also frightened. But I finally thought I should risk falling on my face".

In the event, he landed on his feet. Reunited with Barbara Dickson – one of the discoveries of Russell's John, Paul,

George, Ringo... and Bert – starring as Mrs Johnstone, the full-length, fully scored version of Blood Brothers opened at the Liverpool Playhouse. It was an instant success and, after its twelve week run there, Bob Swash transferred it immediately to the Lyric Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue, where it opened on April 11, 1983.

But, despite outstanding reviews and public acclaim from those who saw it, it was slow to catch on in London. "We just didn't do enough business for the first six or seven weeks", admits Russell. The theatre managers, nervous about its prospects, booked another production to follow it. By the time the show started catching on, much helped by radio play of Barbara Dickson's rendition of 'Tell Me It's Not True', it was too late to reverse the decision to shut the show to make way for its replacement. But the run ended on a high, with sellout houses and extraordinary disappointment by everyone involved that it had had its life unfairly cut short. As a result, says Russell, "It always felt like unfinished business to me".

Blood Brothers, however, refused to die. The rights were released to repertory companies and many productions followed around the country, as well as abroad.

Enter now, Bill Kenwright, the prolific presenter of West End and touring productions, like Russell himself a native Liverpudlian although they did not know each other. Bill acquired the rights to produce a national tour, and he and Russell finally met when they drove together to see it. "During the drive", remembers Russell, "we started to get to know each other better, and found that we had a lot in common."

Together they got to work on improving a production that Russell had immediately recognised as being terrifically well cast – "and if you cast well, you can always sort everything else out," he adds.

But Russell was wary of seeing it return to the West End: "I didn't want to diminish the memory of the original – there'd been such a warm feeling towards it in 1983."

So another national tour was booked. "I was still haunted by the fear of breaking the spell of what it had been." Finally, he was persuaded after a visit to the show in Manchester: "I took a mate of mine who hadn't seen it before. We booked the tickets in his name, so no one knew I was coming, and he was spellbound, and so were 2,000 other people in the auditorium. I sat there thinking, 'What am I doing denying it lifeblood in the West End?' So I contacted Bill that night and agreed that it could go back to the West End. I was ultimately so grateful to him: not only because it was such a terrific production and a massive hit, but also because it finally allowed me to let go of it."

Now it was Bill Kenwright's turn to inherit the responsibility for it, and British musical history was made when, for the second time in the same decade, it was acclaimed all over again by the press, and in turn the public, when it opened at the Albery Theatre in St. Martin's Lane on July 28, 1988. This time, however, it would not have its life cut short. Instead, it would see its life constantly renewed by the dedication of its production team and the hugely talented casts that

have performed in it.

In the West End, Kiki Dee (who had led the production on the national tour and at the Albery) would eventually be succeeded by Angela Richards and then Stephanie Lawrence, Stephanie in turn led the show to Broadway, together with Con O'Neil as Mickey, Warwick Evans as the Narrator and several other British cast members joining an American Company. On Broadway, the show opened at the Music Box Theatre on West 45th Street on April 25, 1993 where it would run for over two years. Petula Clark, Helen Reddy and Carole King later starred as Mrs. Johnstone. At one time the twins were played by the brothers David and Shaun Cassidy. Together with Petula, David also led an American national touring production. Adrian Zmed (from the TV series T.J. Hooker) did an extended run as the Narrator on Broadway.

Meanwhile this show also went to Australia, where local star Delia Hannah played Mrs Johnstone in a cast that also included David Soul as the Narrator and Stefan Dennis as Eddie.

Back in Britain, demand for Blood Brothers was so great that in 1991 it moved to a larger theatre, The Phoenix, where it is still being performed today; and to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the show's writing, Barbara Dickson returned to the role of Mrs. Johnstone for the summer of 1993. The West End Lights of Blood Brothers continue to burn undimmed even as the show continues to play throughout the world.



The Cast



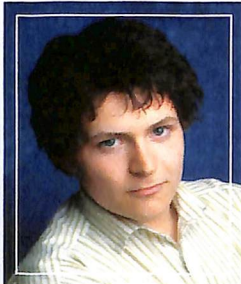
JULIE JAMES
Mrs Johnstone

Born in Leicester, England, Julie started training as a dancer from the age of four. Early on she discovered her ability to sing and developed that alongside the dancing. During her first few years in Malta she formed part of a close harmony trio. She then went solo and still continues to work the hotel circuit performing a variety of popular and musical theatre songs in cabaret. She has taken part in a number of concerts including "The songs of Andrew Lloyd Webber", "A tribute to Hollywood Musicals" and "Thank-you for the Music". In 1997 she was approached by Act React Theatre Company to play Maria Rainer in "The Sound of Music". A role she has since repeated in 2003. Other performances include; Evita (Eva Peron), Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream coat (Narrator), Les Miserables in concert (Fantine), Fiddler on the Roof (Golde), Godspell, and Nunsense (Sister Mary Hubert). Playing "Mrs. Johnstone" will be a challenge but one she will relish! She first saw "Blood Brothers" in London in 1998 and immediately fell in love with the show. After seeing tonight's performance she hopes you will all feel the same way.



RAY MANGION
Narrator

Ray Mangion was born in Malta, but has spent most of his life living and working in England as a singer, dancer and actor. Ray's credits in the West End, Provinces and National Tours in the UK include Zangara in Sondheim's 'Assassins', Tim in 'Elegies', Pepe in 'West Side Story', Tony in 'The Boyfriend', Wizard/Scarecrow in 'The Wizard of Oz', Jesus/Judas in Jesus Christ Superstar, Paul San Marco in 'A Chorus Line', Frank Schultz in The Royal Shakespeare Company's 'Showboat', Valentine in David Essex's musical 'Mutiny', Morris Khan in Adam Faith's musical 'Budgie', Private Glynn in 'Winnie' (a musical about Winston Churchill), Che Guevara in Evita, Bennett in Miss Saigon, Grantaire in Les Miserables. Opera: Jonathan Miller's Tosca and Carmen at the English National Opera. Film and Television credits include: Franco Pedretti in 'All Creatures Great and Small, Hearts of Gold, Juliet, Bravo, Harry's Game, Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Patience', Eastenders. In Malta Ray established The Company Act react and has produced, directed and performed in musicals including Jesus Christ Superstar (Jesus), The Sound of Music (Capt. Von Trapp), Joseph....(Jedah), Fiddler on the Roof (Tevye), Godspell (Jesus), Les Miserables in Concert (Jean Valjean), Evita (Che Guevara), Nunsense amongst others.



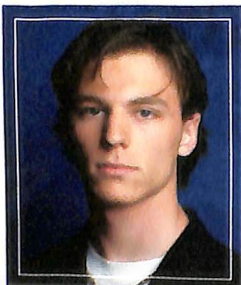
LUCAS RUSH
Mickey

Lucas is 19 years old and is currently training at the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts, London. His credits include: Michael Darling in Peter Pan at the Hackney Empire, Choir Boy in Tosca at the Hackney Empire, Gavroche in Les Miserables at the Palace Theatre and for the 10th anniversary concert at the Royal Albert Hall, Robin in The Merry Wives of Windsor at the Barbican Theatre and Rowan Neville in Meridian TV's Walking on the Moon. Whilst studying, Lucas has been a soloist in the Royal Masonic Gala at Drury Lane and Sadlers Wells. Lucas has played Doc in West Side Storey, Edsel in The Best little Whore House in Texas, Mickey in Blood Brothers and the Emcee in Cabaret. He has also performed in pantomime as Starky in Peter Pan at the Millfield Theatre and Major Domo at the Camberly Theatre. Most recently Lucas has played Claudius in William Shakespeare's Hamlet for the Complete Works Theatre Company. Lucas is thrilled to be playing Mickey in Blood Brothers in this beautiful theatre and would like to thank grandad Brian, mum, and everyone at Italia Conti.



DANIEL TURNER
Edward Lyons

Daniel is 20 years old and is currently in his third year at The Italia Conti Academy Of Theatre Arts in London and will be graduating this summer. Daniel started his life in the theatre at the age of 15 when he appeared in a pantomime in his hometown of Sutton Coldfield in Birmingham. He then appeared in numerous other shows with his local theatre company and also took theatre studies at his school. He was given lead roles in such shows as West Side Story, Guys and Dolls, Barnum, and The Most Happy Fella. After school Daniel went to the Isle of Wight to work for the RNLI, doing Street Theatre all about sea safety, during Cowes week and the Americas Cup. He then joined Italia Conti at 18, whilst training he has appeared in a production of 'Two' by Jim Cartwright, played Eddie in Blood Brothers, Cliff in Cabaret, was cast in an ITV advert, sang in many charity galas at some of the biggest West End theatres, and most recently played the part of Laertes in William Shakespeare's Hamlet for the Complete Works Theatre Company. This is Daniel's professional theatre debut and he is ecstatic to be playing the role of Eddie in this production, although it is rather strange to be doing a production of Blood Brothers when his own brother is also in the cast! Daniel would like to thank his parents for all their help and support because he wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for them.



JOSH REYNOLDS
Sammy

Josh is 18 and is about to finish his final year at Italia Conti Academy of Performing Arts. Born in Norwich, he moved to London to further his ambition and has been performing for as long as he can remember. Among his recent credits are: Chorus and Soloist in the "Royal Masonic Gala's"; and the "UNICEF" Charity Gala at Saddlers Wells and "Ernst Ludwig" in "Cabaret". Earlier this year he also played "Hamlet" for the Complete Works Theatre Company production. He wishes to thank his parents for all their undying support throughout the years. Josh is very much looking forward to playing Sammy and hopes you will all enjoy the show.



SIMON TURNER
Mr Johnstone, Policeman, Judge, Teacher, Bus Conductor, Milkman, Gynaecologist and other roles

Simon trained at The Birmingham School of Speech and Drama where he was awarded The Christine Sheldon Prize for excellence in voice. Credits whilst training include: Cliff Bradshaw - Cabaret, Guardiano - Women Beware Women, Evens - The Sea, Cinderella's Prince Into the Woods and Albert- La Rhonde. He has performed at the Edinburgh Festival with the NYMT. He has also appeared in concert with Paul McCartney during his 'Back in The World Tour' in 2003. Since completing his course Simon has played Donald Duck in Blue Remembered Hills and has appeared in a commercial for Selfridges at the New Birmingham Bullring. He now lives in London and is delighted that Blood Brothers marks his first professional musical theatre engagement. Simon would like to thank his mum and dad for the continued love and support.



HANNAH MIZON
Linda

Hannah, 20 has been a member of Act React for 7 years. Born in the UK, Hannah has always had a passion for the performing arts, leading her to join the company at the age of 13. Some of her appearances include: Evita, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Les Miserables in Concert, Godspell, Jesus Christ Superstar as well as some compilation shows. Hannah was also given the responsibility as resident assistant choreographer with Act react. An accomplished dancer, she has also performed in 'Her Majesty's Theatre', London in, 'Into the Limelight'. Hannah is a former Malta Latin American open medallist Champion. This is Hannah's first leading role with Act react. Her aim is to become a professional performer in theatre arts.



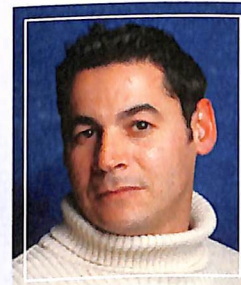
KATHERINE BROWN
Mrs Lyons

Katherine was born in Niagara Falls, New York in the USA to an American father and a Maltese mother. Her debut in theatre started from her primary school years where she participated in stage productions including 'The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. At university in Colorado, she continued to develop her acting and singing skills, integrating Theatre Arts as a major part of her Liberal Arts Degree. Her performances include 'Fools' and 'The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940'. She came to Malta to pursue her vocation as a teacher among her Maltese family, and began to train at the Johann Strauss School of Music, participating in their production of 'The Pirates of Penzance,' but never one to follow the ordinary path, she insisted on being a pirate! Soon after, she joined Act react and appeared in 'The Magic of the Musicals.' Other performances include: 'Fiddler on the Roof' (Yente), Godspell, Nunsense (Sr. Robert Anne), and The Sound of Music (Frau Schmidt)



RALPH MANGION
Mr Lyons

Ralph is 40 years old, happily married and a father of two boys. His main job is a sergeant for AFM. In 1979 he graduated from the Manoel Theatre Academy of Dramatic Arts, while still reading for his academic studies, but left it until late to try his luck in theatre. He joined MADC in 1991 and participated in pantomimes including Peter Pan, Jack & the Beanstalk, Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin and Alison in Wonderland. Comedies: Loot, It won't be Alright on the Night, School for Scandal. Musicals: HMS Pinafore as Ralph Rackstraw and Curly in Oklahoma. Ralph joined Act react in 1998; his debut with the company landed him with the leading role as Peron in Evita. Other engagements include; Thank you for the Music, Fiddler on the Roof, Music of the Night, The Sound of Music as Uncle Max, Nunsense and Godspell.



EDWIN CAMILLERI

Edwin Camilleri was born on 12 August 1968. He started his acting at the age of 9, where he started attending a workshop for actors called Redbridge Drama Centre in the UK. Whilst with the company he took part in various musicals and plays such as Grease, Cinderella, Oliver, The Wiz, Annie, Fiddler on the Roof. Other credits include: Bernardo in Westside Story, Herr Zeller in The Sound of Music. To this date acting is still his main passion, so much that it is his main income! His full time job now is working at Popeye Village doing the one thing he loves best, acting! Although this takes most of his time, Edwin still tries to be more involved in theatre projects.



EMILY JONES
Donna Marie

Emily is 14 years old and a student at St.Martins College. She has appeared in several local productions. Emily is currently studying violin at the Johann Strauss School of music, as well as training vocally under the tuition of Gillian Zammit. Emily's first performance with Act react was The Sound of Music and is pleased that she has been offered the role of Donna Marie in Blood Brothers.



DEBORAH RIDDELL
Mate & Woman

I've had a passion for the theatre since I was 5...especially musical theatre. I joined the school choir and started drama classes at Bretton Woods in the UK until we moved to Malta. I studied classical Ballet for about 9-10 yrs. My first stage play appearance out of high school was in "The Ragged Child" then The "VOICES" choir.



SAMARIA BEZZINA

Samaria was born on 15 November 1987. From a very young age she enjoyed the performing arts and started dancing at the age of 8. She was also one of the original member of 'The Malta Children's Choir', an affiliation to Act react at the age of 10 and later joined the Company with whom she participated in numerous show produced by Act react, including Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Fiddler on the Roof, Some Enchanted Evening, Beatlemania, Jesus Christ Superstar, Music of the Night, Abba-Esque, and most recently, Godspell. Samaria is at present, a student at St Aloysius College, studying architecture, but she still finds time to perform.

WILLY RUSSELL'S **BLOOD** *Brothers*

Act One

Overture

Marilyn Monroe Mrs Johnstone
My Child Mrs Lyons,
Mrs Johnstone

Easy Terms Mrs Johnstone
Shoes Upon the Table Narrator
Easy Terms (reprise) Mrs Johnstone
Kids Game Sammy, Linda, Mickey
& Ensemble

Shoes upon the Table (reprise) Narrator
Shoes upon the Table (reprise) Narrator
Bright New Day (preview) Mrs Johnstone
Long Sunday Afternoon Mickey, Eddie
Bright New Day Mrs Johnstone
& Full Company

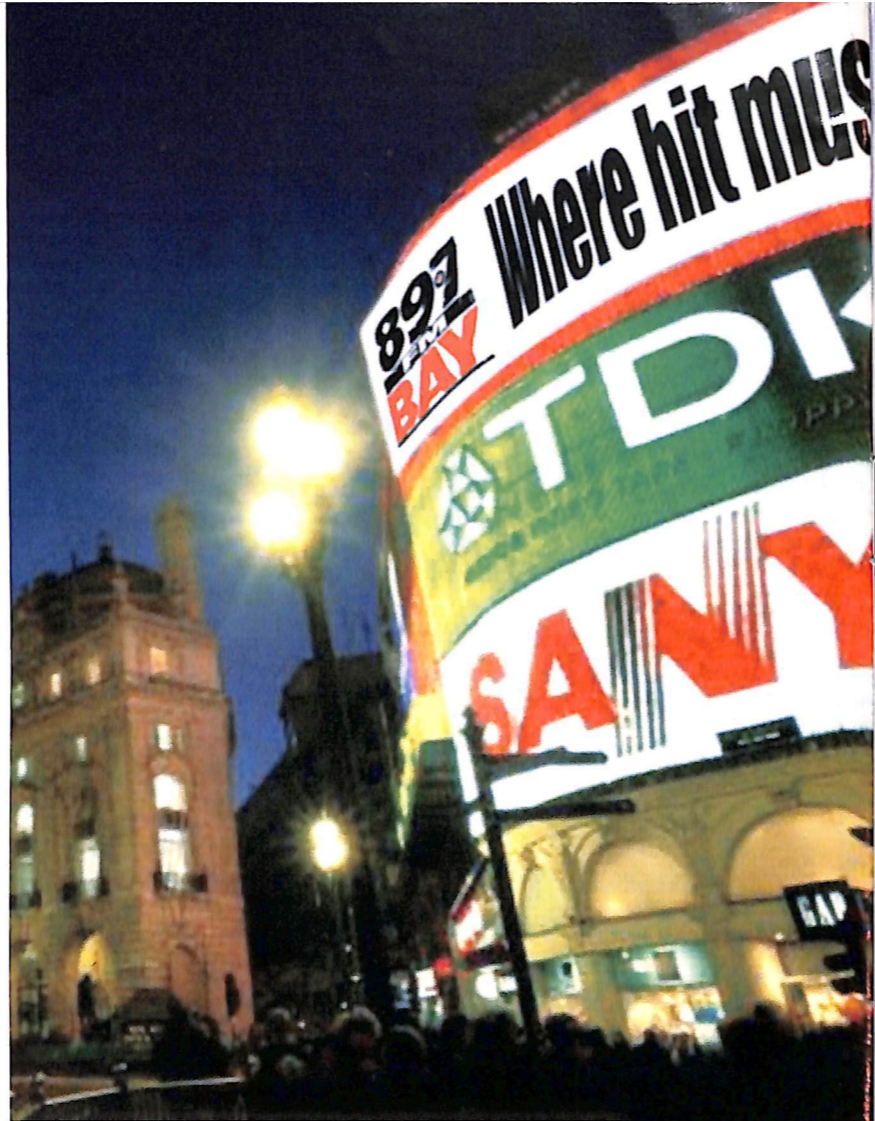


Act Two

Marilyn Monroe Mrs Johnstone
Shoes Upon the Table Narrator
That Guy Mickey, Eddie
Shoes Upon the Table Narrator
I'm Not Saying a Word Eddie
Miss Jones Mr Lyons, Miss Jones
& Ensemble

Marilyn Monroe Mrs Johnstone
Light Romance Mrs Johnstone, Narrator
Shoes Upon the Table/Madman Narrator
Tell me It's not True Mrs Johnstone
& Full Company





Production Team

Producer Ray Mangion

Directors Ray Mangion

Alison McFarlane

Musical Director Paul Abela

Staging Ray Mangion

Set Designer Saviour Camilleri

Assistant to Set Designer Lawrence Coleiro

Lighting Design Anton Borg Olivier

Sound Engineers Ian Giordamaina

Alec Massa

Company Secretary Marvic Massa

Stage and Props Manager Frank Tanti

Assistants Frank Vella

Dialect Coach Jackie Farrugia

Costumes Gianella Azzopardi

Assistants to Wardrobe Salvina Azzopardi

Louis Azzopardi

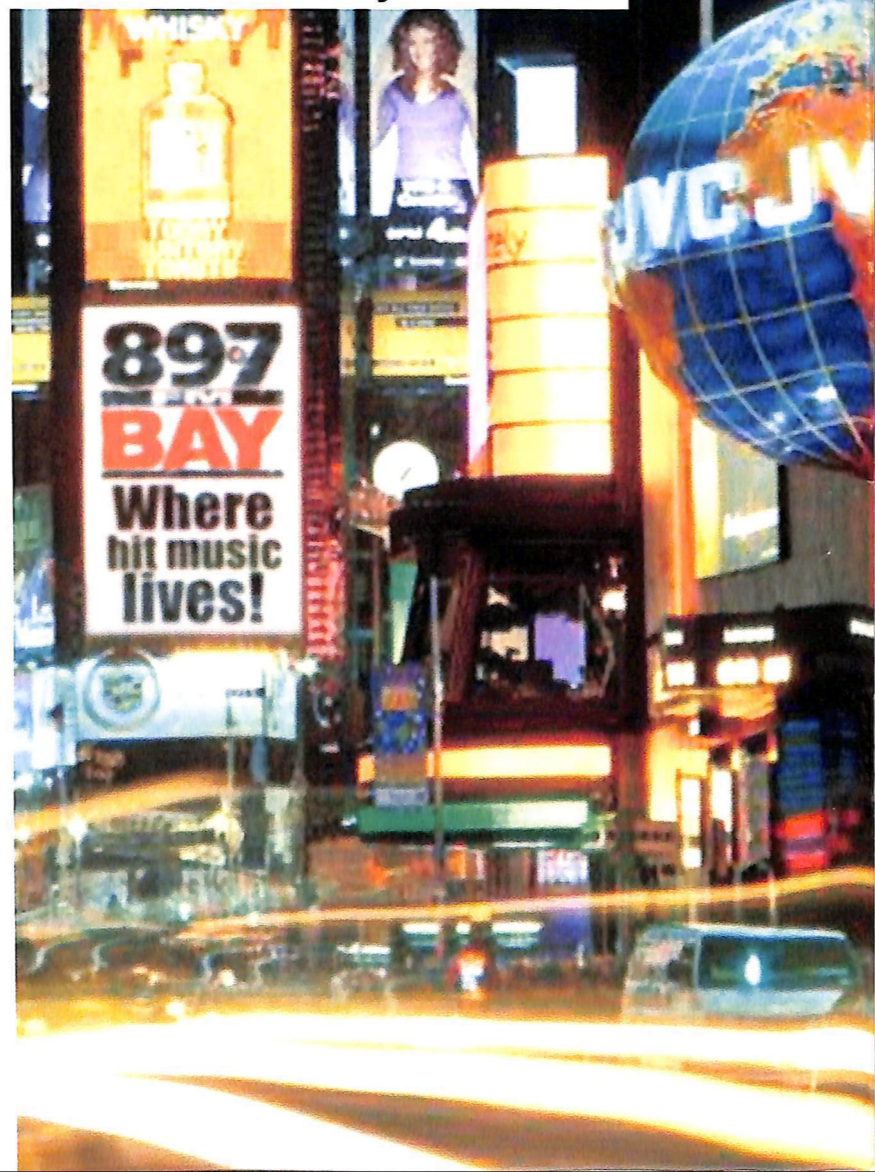
Wardrobe Mistress Gianella Azzopardi

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Programme Photography Foto Classic

Lighting Equipment Nexos

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The Orchestra

Conductor and Musical Director Paul Abela

Trumpet/Flugelhorn Sigmund Mifsud

Soprano/Alto Saxophone Alfred Debattista

Violin/Keyboard Tatyana Chircop

Keyboard 1 Simon Fenech

Keyboard 2 Mark Spiteri Lucas

Guitar Mark Galea

Bass Guitar Joe Vella

Drums Alex Debono

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Acknowledgements

TVM, Net TV and Super One TV, RTK, Radio 101, Radio Malta, The Times, The Sunday Times, The Malta Independent, Malta Today, Il-Gens, Kulhadd, L-Orizzont, It-Torca, In-Nazzjon, Il-Mument, Gwida, Lorrie Collins, Renato Spiteri, Jackie Farrugia, Bibas, James Harrison, St Catherine's Youth Club Zurrieq, St Theresa Junior Lyceum Mriehel, St James Cavalier and others who have contributed towards this production in many ways.

Ultimate for sponsoring the monitors.
Simone from Peter Calamatta Garden Centre and Peter Calamatta for the wedding bouquet and flowers.

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