

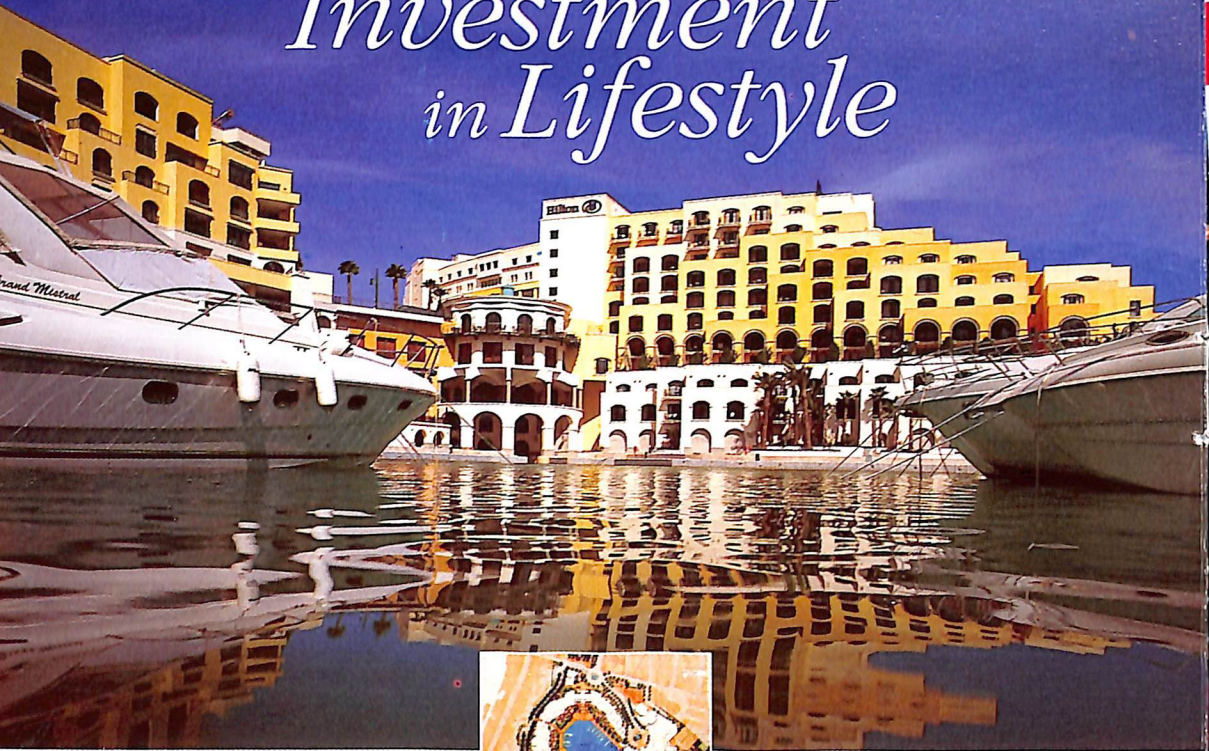


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Conducted by MICHAEL LAUS

and

Soloists from the National Orchestra

Marcelline Agius, Federico Comoli, Alfred Fenech, Stephen Galea, John McDonough, Alfred Spagnol, Emanuel Spagnol, Stephen Zammit

Music by

J.S.Bach, Mozart, Vivaldi, Schubert

The Manoel Theatre
Tuesday 6 April 2004

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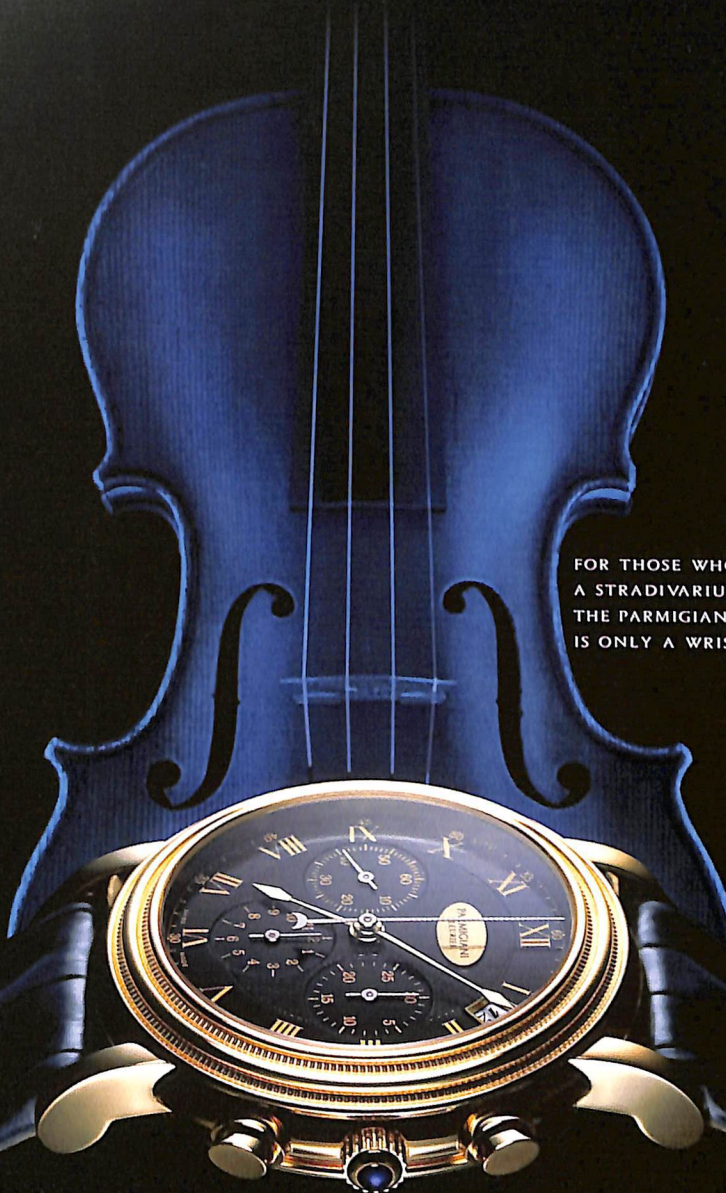
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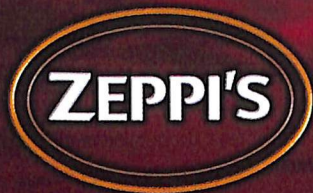
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L-Orkestra Nazzjonali was formed on the 1st April 1968 when musicians from the C-in-C Orchestra regrouped as the Manoel Theatre Orchestra, under the baton of Joseph Sammut until 1992 and then Michael Laus until 1997. It performed public concerts and operas and 'concerts of honour' for visiting dignitaries.

In September 1997 the Manoel Theatre Orchestra became independent and known as the Orkestra Nazzjonali, the national orchestra of Malta, with a policy of inviting guest conductors and performers. It performs symphonic concerts and operas at the Teatru Manoel, the Dar tal-Mediterran and elsewhere, including Gozo. It regularly performs state concerts and has toured abroad.

In 2003 the Orkestra Nazzjonali had a new Board appointed, currently made up of Rosette Fenech, Marlene Schranz, Emy Scicluna, Alfred Thewma [Secretary] and Mario Tabone-Vassallo [President]. Michael Laus was appointed music director for four years.

This Board promotes Maltese composers and performers and the development of a more intense dialogue with the general public. Described as a family working together towards the same aims, our belief is that "flimkien nistghu", 'together we can' realise them.



MICHAEL LAUS, *Conductor*

Born in 1960, Michael Laus is a conductor and concert pianist. A scholarship from the Italian Cultural Institute enabled him to continue his studies in piano, harpsichord, composition and conducting at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi of Milan. He later took masterclasses in conducting under George Manahan in the United States. He made his debut as a concert pianist at the Sala Grande of the Milan Conservatorio Verdi, while his debut as orchestra director was at Bergamo.

Since then he has performed widely in Malta and abroad, having appeared as a pianist in Milan's Sala Verdi and in the Teatro San Carlo in Naples. As conductor he has worked with the Orchestra Filarmonica di Parma, the Youth Orchestra of the Moscow Conservatoire, the Primavera Ensemble, the New Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. He has conducted opera productions like *Madama Butterfly*, *Adriana Lecouvreur* and *Otello* at the Berne State Theatre, and *Werther*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *L'Amico Fritz* at the Manoel Theatre. He has recorded various CDs which have been released on 'Discover International' and 'Unicorn-Khanchana' labels.

THE SOLOISTS

Marcelline Agius started her violin tuition at an early age at the School of Music under the supervision of Mr. Guido Mamo. Later she continued her studies under the guidance of Mrs. Mario Bisazza L.R.S.M. with whom she obtained her L.T.C.L. diploma. Meanwhile she was ably coached by her uncle the late Mr Joseph Galea, who was the sub-leader at the Manoel Theatre Orchestra. In March 1984 she joined the MTO as a full time member. In December 1993 she was appointed Leader of the orchestra, a position she has retained since then. This post was confirmed on the establishment of the Malta National Orchestra. Later she extended her studies with Professor Joachim Atanassov. She also attended various seminars abroad. Marcelline has been very active throughout her career, performing in Malta and abroad, both with orchestras and ensembles, under well known conductors. In April 1996 she obtained her F.L.C.M diploma.

Stephen Galea started playing the violin at the age of seven. He first studied with Stephen Zammit and went on to study with Mario Bisazza. After joining the Manoel Theatre orchestra at the age of 17 he furthered his studies with Joachim Atanassov. Whilst playing violin with the National Orchestra, Stephen actively pursues his interest in Chamber Music playing both the violin and viola. He has performed with various music ensembles in Malta. In 1999 he studied and performed chamber music in Aberdeen, Scotland. Summer 2003, Stephen performed Bach's Violin Concerto in A minor and participated in various chamber music in Cambridge, England. He also led the orchestra in a performance of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. This was so successful that he has been asked back to give a further recital.

Federico Comoli was born in 1976 in Torino, Italy, studied at the Conservatorio 'G. Verdi' of the same city with Mrs. B. Oddenino and obtained the maximum distinction. Following this, he completed his studies in Switzerland under the tuition of Mrs. H. Elhorst. Federico won prizes in various international competitions including the 'Rovere D'Oro' in San Bartolomeo (I prize), 'Tulio Macoggi' in Varenna (I prize) and the 'Ponchielli' in Cremona (III prize). Federico has worked in various orchestras such as the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, Orchestra dell'Opera di Savona, Orchestra da Camera Italiana 'G.G. Ghedini' and the Orchestra 'Stefano Tempia' di Torino. Between 1998 and 2002 he was the second oboe and English horn with the 'Orchestra Filarmonica di Torino', with whom he performed both in Italy and abroad (France, Spain and Switzerland). He also played the English horn in Rossini's *Guiljelmo Tell* at the Avenches Opera Festival (Switzerland) in 2002 and Dvorak's *New World Symphony* at the Lingotto Auditorium, Torino, in 2002. Federico is currently the second oboe and English horn with the National Orchestra of Malta.

John McDonough was born in 1972 and began his musical studies in violin, clarinet and piano. Studying at the London College of Music, he changed to oboe and received tuition from the principal players from the Royal Opera House and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras. He obtained his diplomas and graduated with honours in 1993. John was awarded a scholarship and followed a postgraduate course winning several prizes including the Henry Bromley-Derry prize for all round musicianship. John has been principal oboe with the National Orchestra of Malta since 1995. As a soloist, he has performed several concertos including the Bach double concerto with violinist Marcello Canci and also the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante. John has also transcribed over 40 works. *The Capriol Suite* and *Mozart Serenade No10 K361*, both for wind quintet, have been published by Crame Music, London.

Alfred Fenech started his musical studies at the age of ten with his father Saviour. He pursued his studies at the Johann Strauss School of Music under the guidance of Mrs. Orazio Cachia, Pierre Grech and Noel Beck. Later he furthered his musical knowledge under the guidance of John McDonough, principal oboist at the National Orchestra. Alfred is first oboist of the Johann Strauss School of Music where he has performed as soloist on different occasions. He has also played with the National Orchestra under the direction of renowned conductors such as Prof. Michael Laus, Prof. Joe Vella and Peter Stark among others.

Emanuel Spagnol, a fellow of the London University of Music in Horn Playing, began his musical studies with his father Nazzareno and later with foreign horn professors Stephen Roberts and Rachel Reeves. He often premiered music for horn, mostly dedicated for him, and has been recorded on a CD named *Anthology of Maltese Music*. He is the principal horn player of the Malta National Orchestra and has been the resident conductor of the Prince of Wales Own Bank Club of Vittoriosa for the last 15 years and of the Nicolò Isouard Philharmonic Society of Mosta for the last 5 years, with whom he has conducted the band in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

Alfred Spagnol was born in 1954. He received his first Horn lessons at the age of eight under the guidance of his father Nazzareno. In 1968 he joined the Manoel Theatre Orchestra, later Orkestra Nazzjonali. He is much on demand to perform in local cultural activities and he has also been invited to tour abroad with the local bands. During the last couple of years he took part in Horn Seminars with Prof. Stephen Roberts and in Chamber Music with Prof. Stephen Maw.

Stephen Zammit started violin lessons at a tender age, and took lessons at the Malta Society of Arts and later at the School of Music under Mario Bisazza. After obtaining excellent results in violin exams he joined the Manoel Theatre Orchestra in 1979. In 1980 he obtained his L.R.S.M. (performing) diploma. He also took part in various concerts both as orchestra member and soloist. Currently he is occupying the post of second violin section leader with the National Orchestra.

PROGRAMME

J.S. Bach *Brandenburg Concerto No.1*

Stephen Zammit (*Violin*)
John McDonough, Federico Comoli, Alfred Fenech (*Oboes*)
Emanuel Spagnol, Alfred Spagnol (*Horns*)
Simone Attard (*Continuo*)

W. A. Mozart *Sinfonia Concertante K. 364 for violin, viola and orchestra*

Marcelline Agius (*Violin*)
Stephen Galea (*Viola*)

- Interval -

A. Vivaldi *Sinfonia "Al Santo Sepolcro" RV 169*

F. Schubert *Symphony No.4 in C minor "Tragic", D.417*

Members of Orkestra Nazzjonali

1st Violins

Marcelline Agius**, Nadia DeBono, Natalia Filipenko, Andrew Borg, Mario Micallef, Rosanne Dimech, Roberta Attard, Matthew Fenech

2nd Violins

Stephen Zammit*, Susan Borg, Mario Ciantar, Stephen Debattista, Fiona Giambra, Graziella Mizzi

Violas

AnnMarie Chetcuti*, Guido Mamo, Savio Debono, Mario Frendo, Stephen Galea

Violoncellos

Mario Psaila*, Freddie Tonna, Angelica Galea, Yaroslav Miklukho

Double Bass

Carmel Lino Cremona*, Dione Xuereb

Flutes

Rebecca Hall*, Miho Wada

Oboes

John McDonough*, Federico Comoli, Alfred Fenech

Clarinets

Joseph Camilleri*, Tony Galea

Bassoons

Archibald Mizzi*, Mario Micallef

Horns

Emanuel Spagnol*, Alfred Spagnol, Etienne Cutajar, Bernardette Vella

Trumpets

Kevin Abela*, Sigmund Mifsud

Timpani

Joseph Camilleri*

Keyboard

Simone Attard

** *Orchestra Leader*

* *Section principals*

PROGRAMME NOTES

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 in F, BWV 1046

- i. Allegro
- ii. Adagio
- iii. Allegro
- iv. Menuetto – Trio I – Polacca – Trio II

Of the Six Brandenburg Concertos that comprise the entire set, no two are alike in their instrumentation. As a matter of fact, they are six distinct concertos, each a masterpiece in its own right, but never intended to be a unified set. The First, Third and Sixth concertos are thought to have dated from Bach's employment with the Duke of Weimar between 1708 to 1717 while the other three from Cöthen. The First Concerto BWV 1046 is unique among the six in that it exists in two versions. The original version was actually called a *Sinfonia* containing only three movements. Another movement was added when Bach was re-scoring and preparing the fair copy for the Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg. Other additions included a polonaise for strings in the last movement, as well as a new embroidered part for solo piccolo violin.

This work has been thought to have been written as part of the *Hunt Cantata* (BWV 208). As with the common baroque practice of recycling music, the first movement also reappears in the cantata *Falsche Welt* (BWV 52), while the third movement and second trio were re-scored with trumpets and voices in another cantata *Auf, schmetternde Töne der muntern Trompeten* (BWV 207a). The presence of the stylistic court dances in the last movement lends a French flavour to this concerto. There is also an imaginative use of woodwind colours in the trios: the first trio uses a conventional grouping of two oboes and a bassoon with a distinctive contrast provided by two horns and oboe *sol* in the second trio.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Sinfonia Concertante in E flat K.364 for violin, viola & orchestra

- i. Allegro maestoso
- ii. Andante
- iii. Presto

The autograph score of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* in E flat has never been found and the few fragments that have survived bear no clue that can be related to a time of composition or first performance. Nevertheless, musicologists believe that it might have been written in Salzburg around 1779. The term *sinfonia concertante* became commonly used in Mannheim and Paris, and was used for a concerto with two or more soloists. It was after his second visit to those two cities that Mozart produced a number of compositions in this form including this work scored for violin, viola and orchestra in E flat and subsequently catalogued as K.364.

The first of the three movements in this work, *Allegro maestoso*, begins with an orchestral statement notably eloquent and dignified. The full-blown orchestral development of the various musical ideas suddenly evaporates as the two soloists are left alone to make their initial entry in octaves. The soloists equally share the musical material (full of inspired melodic writing) throughout the movement and the two solo instruments partner one another lovingly. The cadenza towards the end of this movement was written out by Mozart himself. The slow movement, *Andante*, presents a unique moment of profound passion as the solo instruments amplify and embellish the elegiac mood with great eloquence. In place of a development section, the subject matter is repeated with even more elaborate ornamentation against a harmonic background of richer textures. The final movement is a lighter, brighter release. Written in rondo form, the first two sections begin with the same theme stated first by the solo violin then by the solo viola. As the movement unwinds, themes are stated and restated by soloists and orchestra alike as the work builds up into a brilliant flourish that concludes this magnificent work.



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PROGRAMME NOTES

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)
Sinfonia "Al Santo Sepolcro" RV 169

The Italian composer and violinist Antonio Vivaldi was born in Venice in 1678. After his ordination as a priest in 1703, Vivaldi embarked on an intermittent career in the service of the Ospedale della Pietà – an institution for the education of orphan, illegitimate or poor girls, with a formidable musical reputation. As a composer, Vivaldi was prolific with some 500 concertos to his credit, in addition to a number of works for the church and for the theatre, Sonatas and Sinfonias for string instruments as well as other shorter works. Of Vivaldi's twenty-three Sinfonias written for string ensembles, the only one to have gained a prominent place in the standard repertoire is the Sinfonia RV 169, dubbed *Al Santo Sepolcro*, probably due to its original use in liturgical services. The first of the two movements of this work is a short, slow movement in minor mode marked *Adagio Molto*. Although it lacks the virtuosic prowess of Vivaldi's other works for string instruments, its intricate harmonies convey an expansive spiritual feeling much suggestive of its own title. Over the years, this first movement has established itself as a composition in its own right, often performed as a short overture to longer works.

Franz Peter Schubert (1797-1828)
Symphony No. 4 in C minor, "Tragic" D. 417
i. Adagio molto - Allegro vivace
ii. Andante
iii. Menuetto (Allegro vivace)
iv. Allegro

The son of a schoolmaster who had settled in Vienna, Franz Schubert was educated as a chorister at the imperial court chapel and later qualified as a schoolteacher. He spent his life largely in Vienna, enjoying the company of friends, but never holding any important musical position or attracting the kind of patronage that Beethoven had twenty years earlier. As a composer, his gifts had been most notably expressed in song but his talent for melody is always evident in his other compositions. However, although Schubert is nowadays regarded as a great symphonist, the symphonies fared the worst during his lifetime. Most of these were written for amateur groups he was able to assemble and, as a matter of fact, all of his orchestral works were intended to be heard once and then forever forgotten.

By April 27, 1816 Schubert had finished composing his fourth symphony (the autograph score of which is now held at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna). Schubert was still nineteen at the time and during this year the young composer worked incessantly and managed to finish two of his most popular symphonies (the 4th and 5th Symphonies) as well as over 100 songs. Scored for relatively modest forces (2 each of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings), the Symphony no. 4 – more commonly referred to as the "Tragic" symphony – is a rather short work written in the expressive key of C minor. Unlike the previous three, written in more exuberant major keys, this work reveals the composer's eternal struggle to convey his personal disquiet.

Programme notes by Christopher Muscat
Programme editor: Victor Fenech

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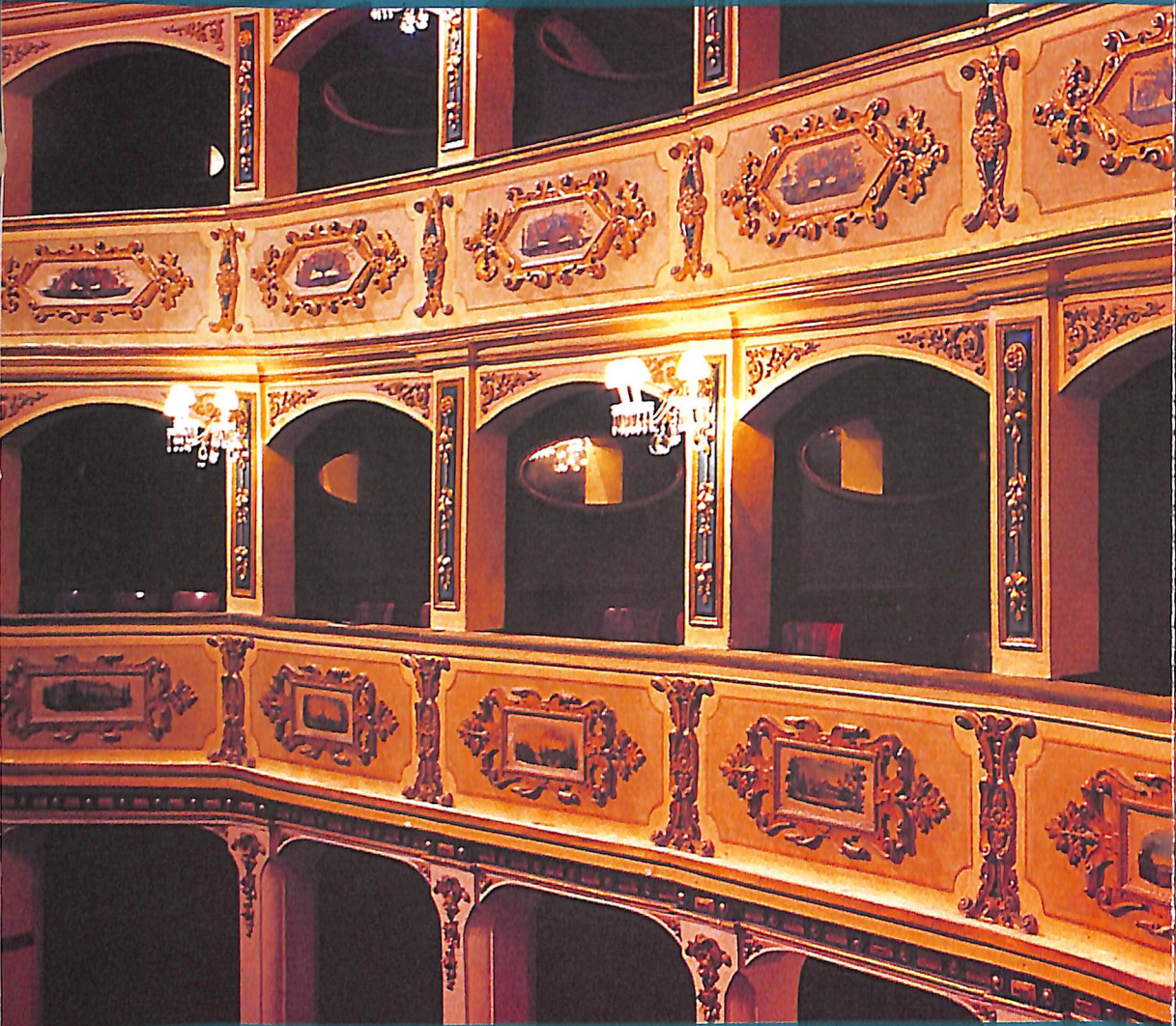


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