AHNA REFUĜJATI

Muzika // Music
Mario Sammut, Richard Merli Brown

Libretto // Libretto
Mario Philip Azzopardi

Direzzjoni Muzikali // Director of Music
Richard Merli Brown

Direzzjoni // Director
Mario Philip Azzopardi

Direzzjoni tal-Arti // Art Director
Antone Farrugia

Produzzjoni // Producer
Marc Cabourn

Shari
Miriam Gauci

Eteq
José Hernández Pastor

Kar
Nico Damamin

Saya
Clare Ghigo

Hamid
Joseph Zammit

Fatima
Ruth Sammut Cassingena

Mirami
Louis Andrew Cassar

Fizziel
Joseph Lia

Divza
Nadia Vella

Darit
Denerica Falzon

Organizzat minn // Organised by

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Bil-kollaborazzjoni tal-Kunelli tal-Floriana, il-Korporazzjoni ghar-Rigenerazzjoni tal-Port il-Kbir, il-Forzi Armati ta` Malta, Mad About Video, Transport Malta // In collaboration with the Floriana Local Council, the Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation, the Armed Forces of Malta, Mad About Video, Transport Malta.
AHNA REFUGJATI:
Opra Maltija // A Maltese Opera

L-Istorja fil-Qosor // Summary


After witnessing the ravages of war in their small Syrian village, Eleja, his wife Shari, and their three children aged 20, 18 and 10, attempt to flee their country in the hope of building a better life in Europe. But the journey proves anything but easy as a violent storm breaks out at sea, sinking the boat they find themselves on and drowning many migrants. This tragic event leads to other deaths, including that of Shari and Darit, the youngest daughter. Exhausted by the journey and grieving for the loss of their loved ones, Eleja, Hamid and Saja summon up the courage to keep forging a life in Europe, in spite of all the obstacles standing in their way.

OPRA MALTIA KONTEMPORANJA // A CONTEMPORARY MALTESE OPERA


Din hija l-vlizzoni kreativi ta’ Ahna Refugjati, opra progressiva li tittra ta’ rilevanza internazzjonali minn lenti kreativi lokali. The story of Ahna Refugjati is both topical and timeless; it is a story woven out of the most basic of human needs. On the one hand the body’s bare necessities. These are basic material resources such as food, water, shelter and medical care. Against the backdrop of a contemporary world that is constantly negotiating how practical material resources can be fairly distributed, the opera never loses sight of other vital needs that humanity never can afford to ignore.

Among these are the most natural of human desires: comfort, friendship, hope, unity, solidarity and community spirit. It is only when these desires and material privileges are fulfilled that communities are able to build a stronger and more prosperous present and future. This opera seeks to express important issues that affect the individual and their society in a clear way. Ahna Refugjati recounts the struggles faced by a family that feels its country of origin in the hopes of carving out a better life away from the war that has torn its homeland apart. Among these struggles are the crossing of borders, the violation of basic human rights, racism, separation and loss.

Ahna Refugjati seeks to raise consciousness about these issues by putting forward a dynamic artistic work that is both emotionally and intellectually moving, and by uniting two elements: the classical form and emotional nature of opera and the current themes that are often portrayed in contemporary genres such as cinema.

These issues are manifested on stage thanks to the impeccable talent of the cast, which complements Mario Sammut and Richard Merli Brown’s accomplished musical score and Mario Philip Azzopardi’s direction.

This is the creative vision behind Ahna Refugjati, a next generation opera that depicts a subject of international concern through a local creative lens.
AHNA REFUGJATI:
Opra Maltija // A Maltese Opera

L-Istorja fil-Qosor // Summary

The story of Ahna Refugjati is both topical and timeless; it is a story woven out of the most basic of human needs. On the one hand are the body’s bare necessities. These are basic material resources such as food, water, shelter and medical care. Against the backdrop of a contemporary world that is constantly negotiating how practical material resources can be fairly distributed, the opera never loses sight of other vital needs that humanity cannot do without.

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Ahna Refugjati hiija atttzazzjoni ewwija fl-proggamm ta’ Valletta 2018, li hija maħsuba biex toħolq diskussjoni fost li-pubbliċi ġenerali.

Ahna fil-Fondazzjoni Valletta 2018, nmnon bih-iżid li l-arts ġiftah il-biblienn fegħ il-Htan, u l-programm taghna qjejgħ dejjem ittixxi ġenerali li unid biex jippromwovi d-djalogu u l-liskämju.

Mirkeija il-mixxi ġdidja li saer ċiniku u indifferenti, xorta waħda m-ne nitgħux nghix l-izolament. Hija ġ-iżiskomibilità ta’ kulli wieħed minn li joffri solidarjietà u li jsib modi biex nahdnu ġikvejkien.


Permez ta’ kast inkredibbli, librett li japplika u nrużika nidda, nikkiepju li mmunju l-tużijuex dwar stwuzzjoniex li li ġspan ġidée ġina jnorjati u li malajż ġrintwe.

Nixtieqikom serata jipjewl li nisaplu li il-opra twassal u filwaqt li bżellat fuq soluzzjoniex li jistgħu jwassul għall-biida.

Ahna Refugjati is another highlight of the Valletta 2018 programme, I trended to create discussion among the general public.

We at the Valletta 2018 Foundation, strongly believe that the arts open doors where there are walls, and our programme is continuously looking at creative and unique ways to promote dialogue and exchange.

Despite living in a world that has become cynical and indifferent, we do not exist in a vacuum. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to offer solidarity and to find ways of working together.

Ahna Refugjati strives to give a face to tragic deaths. It intends to create discussion and challenge the audience to better understand refugees, their motivations to leave their families and homeland in search of solutions amid an international crisis.

The opera will entertain and provoke while providing an antidote to the division and prejudice that shape a large part of contemporary discourse. It is not us versus them because we are all vulnerable to the same moral threats posed by fanaticism and ignorance. And yet there is a shortage of empathy and compassion.

With a stellar cast: an outstanding libretto and a rich musical score, we want to raise consciousness about situations that are often ignored and soon forgotten.

I wish you all an enjoyable evening and may this opera lead us to reflect on solutions towards change.
KELMTEJN TA’ QABEL // FOR WORDS:

Jason Micaleff

Cermon tal-Fondazzjoni Valletta 2018 // Chairman
Valletta 2018 Foundation


Nistgħilkon serata pjacevoli u nwguraw li din l-opra twassalna biex n riflettu fuq soluzzjoniż li jistgħu jiwasslu għall-bidla.

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Mario Sammut

Kompożitur // Composer

Ahna Refugjati hija opra kontemporiesa miktuba bil-Malti li tespjura t-tema tal-kritiżiż tat-refugjati.


Ahna Refugjati is a contemporary opera written in Maltese that explores the theme of refugee crises. Two years of integration workshops for refugees and migrants have made us aware of the suffering that refugees experience. Before they get on that boat, for which they pay dearly, they go through many inhumane situations; slave labour, torture, imprisonment, rape, being used as human currency, and death. In fact, most of them don’t make it to this said boat of salvation.

It has been an honour to compose the music for this opera and to collaborate with Richard Mellit Brown. The result of this collaboration is a truly dynamic, dramatic – yet touching – work that captures some of the trials and tribulations faced by the characters as they embark on their journey in search of a better life.

On a more technical note, we are not using a live orchestra. While Richard and Geoffrey Thomas are directing the music nuring rehearsals with singers, I am found in my studio among a little army of servers and music equipment, programming all 144 virtual instrumentalists, note by note, bow by bow, and breath by breath. Thanks to the wonders of audio engineering, you will experience the acoustics as though you were seated at sites like the Saga Gateheard or the Pernegg Monastery.

While hoping that you enjoy the performance, we also hope that this opera will offer an insight into the challenges experienced by refugees, while inspiring new thoughts and perspectives on the refugee crisis.
Richard Merrill Brown

Music Director

Director tal-Mużika //

B’qalbi kollha accettat li nikkollhara fil-holqen ta’ opra ghal Valletta 2018, il-librett drammatiku ta’ Mario Philip Azzopardi huwa wieheb li jgaqpal li’hsieb, u li provda opportunita’ eccellenti ghal nissigjet musikalik mIEWA u eccitanti.


L-‘aktar haga li tanzi pjazir fil-projett kien li-proces ta’ ‘hidna ma’ xi whud mill-ijied figuri Maltin maravljużi, kif ukoll ma’ kontratennur Spanjol ugwahom maravljużi. B’kast eccellenti bħal dan, mimil vuċċjet operatik u drammatik, risperaw li se jittqaqqju li’udenza l-emozjonijiet li johraj dan is-sugjet serju u kontemporanjju.

I was delighted to be asked to collaborate on the creation of an opera for Valletta 2018. Mario Philip Azzopardi’s dramatic and thought-provoking libretto has provided an excellent opportunity for colourful and exciting musical textures.

It has been an interesting collaboration with Mario Sammut since our music styles complement each other well. Mario’s use of electronics, which create dramatic, filmic soundscapes, have been a great complement to my more conventional orchestral and choral style. We both share a passion for early choral music, particularly the ‘Palestrina’ style, and this has become an influence in our collaboration.

My greatest joy on the project has been the process of working with some wonderful Maltese figures and one equally wonderful Spanish countertenor. With this excellent cast, full of dramatic operatic voices, we hope the audience will be moved by this serious and very contemporary subject.

Antoine Farrugia

Art Director

Director tal-Arti //

L-idea originali wara l-projett kienet li noholq fespettiku li jiittitra stejjer umani reali. Ghalhekk, Ahna Refugjat filqabet perfettament mal-qnejnijiet taghna. Id-idirettoro Mario Philip Azzopardi kellu wkoll viżjoni ċara ghal dak l-kollha fil-pall.”

L-ewwel idea kienet tirrorvi l-holqen ta’ xenarju semplici li jibqal lejli ir-reżista, izda, peress li konna qed ir-Raharu jejn sugjeyt ta’ kontemporanjju fil-kunsess ta’ xenarju prevedibbli, hassejti li kien hemm hikkkat aktar biżikli, kreativ bejn il-teema u x-xenarju.

L-x-xenarju ghal-opra Ahna Refugjati huwa r-rizultat ta’ swahekk sendettiv ta’ illustrizzjonijiet, rċerka, laqgħat mat-tmir artistiku, evalwazzjonijiet u xogħol logistiku. Id-dinna inhloq b’mod parallel mal-librett u ml-muzika. Xuxxa xenarju bbdaz fuq kuncett astratt, iżda li xorta mahsub biex jikkomoda r-rekwiziti kollha tad-direttur, inklużi tmien obeliski lijar li jinprezentaw in-natura kumplessa u serja tal-suqjenn.

The original idea behind the project was to create a show that speaks about actual human stories. Thus, Ahna Refugjati automatically fitted into our plans. Director Mario Philip Azzopardi also had a clear vision of what he wanted on stage.

The first idea was to create simple scenes that remains loyal to the story, but with a contemporary subject and predictable scenery, I was feeling that it was an unbalanced set.

The scenes vary from a town square to a shipwreck, from a post terminal to a refugee camp. I don’t like obvious elements, so, after hours of brainstorming with the director and composer, I came up with a totally different idea: a set that is part of the cast, with its own movements, its magic moments and a script that allows it to follow scenes and cues.

There were other factors that had to be established, too. The most challenging one was the fact that we were creating an open theatre, with all its disadvantages. It was hard to find the right positions for the set without disturbing the lighting design. The stage is quite wide due to some scenes that needed more space to express the reality and artistic concept.

The set for the opera Ahna Refugjati is the result of almost two intensive weeks of sessions, research, meetings with the artistic team, evaluations and logistics. The design was created in parallel with the libretto and the score. It is based on an abstract concept, but one that is still capable of accommodating all of the director’s requirements, including eight huge obelisks that represent the complex and weighty nature of the subject matter.
Richard Merrill Brown

Direttur tal-Mużika //
Music Director


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Antoine Farrugia

Direttur tal-Arti //
Art Director

I-xeni jvariaw minn pjazza go belt ghal nahrhażju, minn terminal tal-port ghal kamp tar-refugjati. Ma rihobbix nuzja elementi ovvju, għażelink, wasa siggiet ta’ brainstorming mod-direttur u l-kompozittur, hrinja b’dieza totalment differenti; dikk li jekkollu ċxanju li huwa wkoll parti mill-kast, b’movimenti unikli, il-numenti magiċi tiegħu u skripit li jahdem id-Fi max-xen li d-direzzjonijiet teatrali.


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Local opera productions still operate under the influence of the classical tradition. With the release of this work, I hope to propose a change in the appreciation of the artform in Malta, to introduce contemporary opera — and, above all — in the way we are opera gifted back to the people.

I chose very difficult subject matter. Politics, religion, war, the past, beliefs and faith; all these elements have contributed to shaping one of the biggest tragedies of our time: the plight of refugees. For this opera, I have moved away from these issues and focused on an unassuming family, whose members, through no fault of their own, find themselves caught up in the eye of the storm. The grief of a man who loses his wife, the pain of a youth who watches his people suffer, a young woman who cannot stand to see more injustice; these are all profoundly touching themes because we are, after all, made of the same flesh and blood, the same pain, the same joys and hopes.

It is not only worth noting that the music you're about to experience is the work of Mario Sammut and Richard Merrill Brown but also the fact that every note emanating from each instrument was created by Mario Sammut, who used specialised computer software to recreate the effect of various musical instruments. A task which has been in progress for three years. I'll let you be the judge of the quality, relevance and originality of what you're about to hear. I believe it is the work of genius. Take note of this young man. You will be hearing more about him.

On my end, this is the first libretto I've ever written — but I intend to write many more. I have discovered a deep affinity with this writing style and wish to take it further; the possibilities are endless. I would like to write about things that are relevant to people in the here and now, just as the giants of the classical opera world wrote for their time. There is never a shortage of subject matter in this increasingly chaotic world. This is just the first step. To many more!
Local opera productions still operate under the influence of the classical tradition. With the release of this work, I hope to propose a change in the appreciation of the artform in Malta, to introduce contemporary opera — and, above all, to wish for a new opera gifted back to the people.

I chose very difficult subject matter. Politics, religion, war, the past, beliefs and faith; all these elements have contributed to shaping one of the greatest tragedies of our time: the plight of refugees. For this opera, I have moved away from these issues and focused on an unassuming family, whose members, through no fault of their own, find themselves caught up in the eye of the storm. The grief of a man who loses his wife, the pain of a youth who watches his people suffer, a young woman who cannot stand to see more injustice; these are all profoundly touching themes because we are, after all, made of the same flesh and blood, the same pain, the same joys and hopes.

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Richard Merrill Brown

Direttur tal-Mużika //
Director of Music


Richard has worked extensively in theatre and television. He was London Music Director for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), working on over 200 productions with actors including Derek Jacobi, Judi Dench, Kenneth Branagh, Ralph Fiennes and Mark Rylance. He has composed and arranged many RSC scores and his BBC TV music ranges from Bergerac, to the Playdays signature
Mario Sammut
Composer

Mario Sammut was a musician, composer, sound designer and music producer working within his Silent Studio and is signed with Universal Records in France. He studied classical piano, later adding electronic instruments to his repertoire.

Under the project name Cygna, Mario composed a series of symphonic compositions that merge contemporary ambient sound with classical instrumental styles. In 2011, he launched his internationally distributed album, Opus Era, at the National Museum of Fine Arts.

As composer and sound designer, he has collaborated on several feature films, TV series, documentaries, theatre productions, dance projects, visual and interactive art works, and live cinema performances. Sammut participated in numerous international art festivals around Europe, such as the Festival in the UK, Aurora Festival in Greece, SUN Festival in Hungary, Hadia Trance Festival in France, Shanka Festival in Switzerland to name but a few. In 2012, he held a unique, silent concert with wireless headphones in front of the UNESCO recognized World Heritage Site, the Hagia Qim Temples in Malta.

When he is not composing music, Mario is designing circuits and programming homemade devices. Such experiments lead to inventions like “The Lepidophone” – a large scale instrument that uses bell towers of churches in Valletta. The audience could play the bells wirelessly from a dedicated controller in the square below.

He is currently preparing for another release entitled Music for Theatre, which incorporates a selection of soundtracks he composed for theatre, while also working on a research project that will be revealed soon.

Richard Merrill Brown
Director of Music

Richard had the privilege of working on a project that involved the creation of a suite of symphonic music for a theatre production. He was part of the team that brought the work to life in its original form.

Recently, Richard has been involved in the production of a new piece for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in London, which featured an impressive ensemble of international musicians.

Richard is also responsible for developing new ideas and concepts for future projects.

Richard has a deep passion for music and theatre, and he is dedicated to creating innovative works that engage audiences from all walks of life.
tune, a vocal arrangement which he has also recorded in Maltese.

Richard musically directed the stage production of Lord of the Rings and conducted the West End show at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. He recently relinquished his post as Head of Music at a top English acting conservatoire, to compose full time.

Recent projects include: Murder Mystery Musical with Shaun McKenna, which premiered at the Edinburgh Festival, and House Wives based on Aristophanes’ Lysistrata with Maz Evans. His choral work, which is regularly performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra with a mass children’s choir includes Zambesi Tales, Dreamtime Tales, Fire and Battle of Britain. His Anthem for Peace was played at Buckingham Palace to HRH Prince Edward this year. Historical works include Agincourt and Hereward which premiered at Ely Cathedral.

Richard was pleased to compose music for the Valetta Pageant of the Sea and the opera Ahna Refugiaj, which are both part of the Valetta 2018 cultural programme.

As founder of Stagur Teatru Matti, Mario gave new life to original Maltese theatre, producing in original plays in Maltese at Teatru Manoel over a span of nine years. Six of them were own original scripts, which he also directed.

In 1978, Mario and his wife emigrated to Canada, where they stayed until 2016. In Toronto, Mario soon became one of the leading film and TV directors. In all, he produced and/or directed over four hundred hours of US TV and feature films, most notably his award-winning feature Savage Messiah and the multi-nominated and award-winning series ZOS, among others.

His interest in film started at an early age, when at age 21 he wrote, produced and directed Malta’s first feature film in Maltese, Gagga, based on Frans Sammut’s best-selling novel.

In Malta, Mario produced and directed three films with a Canadian co-production, one being Saul: The Journey to Damascus, aired during prime-time on RAI 1 on Easter Sunday 2015.

In 2015, Mario was hired by the Valetta 2018 Foundation as Artistic Director of Special Events for the European Capital of Culture programme, which included the direction of the opening ceremony, Ebe PJazze, two editions of the ‘Valetta Pageant of the Sea’, the feature film Maldan iż-Nibbli (which he also produced and wrote), and the original Maltese Opera, Ahna Refugiaj, for which he also wrote the libretto.

Mario is developing the next season for Stagur Teatru Matti, where in 2019 he will be directing his own play, Ave Maria għall-spettur Bonnici, the third instalment of the “Spettur Bonnici Trilogy” and his next feature film: Irbaħ il-Lottu.

Mario Philip Azzopardi
Librettist u Direttur //
Librettist and Director


L-interess tieghu fil-film beda’ ta’ età żgħira, mete’ ta’ 21 sena kibeb, jipproduċa u hadem bħala direttur fuq l-emwej film twil Matti, Gagga, il-kibeb li ħaġqat fuq ir-romanx popolari ta’ Frans Sammut.


Antoine Farrugia
Direttur tal-Arti //
Art Director


Mario Philip Azzopardi
Librettist u Direttur //
Librettist and Director


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Antoine Farrugia
Direttur tal-Arti //
Art Director


Antoine started his artistic journey as a student at the Lyceum, then at the School of Art, where he experienced and experimented with various art forms. He went on to study at the University of Malta and continued to study and develop his artistic focus in figurative painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna.

He also forms part of the creative team behind Nocte Illanca and the Valletta 2018 Special Events team. This was the key to amalgamating creativity and event production. Antoine also designed and set up many theatrical sets at prestigious venues in Valletta: The Phantom at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, Faith Hope u Charity at Fort St Elmo, various productions at Teatro Manoel, and recently, the set for the musical il-Manxun Maddalena at Piazza Teatro Iqal.

Antoine also took part in various collective and solo exhibitions like J-Ruh ta Mtaabb. He is currently preparing an ambitious project titled Temporary Past permanent, as well as experimenting with artistic installations. One of these installations – an important piece titled Crossroads – has won the prestigious title of "Gieħ l-Antigjarat Malt 2017".

Marc Cabourdin
Produttur Kreativ //
Creative Producer

Marc Cabourdin huwa professjonist indipendenti fil-qsam teatra l'Malta, direttur artistiku, kif ukoll mesjeq u produttur ta' inizjattivi kulturali. Marc irriġidwa mill-East 15 Acting School fl-Londra fejn kiseb il-grad ta' Masters fil-Teatro u r-Rectar fl-Università ta' Essex.

Marc jiproduċi, jezegwixxi u jimpilmenta flna wieshja ta' progetti: minn festivals fil-triq, sai-izvilupp ta' progetti artistici multidisciplinari li jifluhaw fuq zvilupp socijal u li jsisodiflaw in-narrativi ta' istituzzjonijiet nazzjonali u korporativi. Huwa jahdem ukoll ma' diversi NGOs u organisazzjonijiet tat-karla b'hihi Fondazzjon BOV Joseph Calleja.


Marc Cabourdin is an independent theatre arts practitioner, artistic director, cultural manager and producer. He graduated from East 15 Acting School London and read for his Masters in Theatre and Acting at the University of Essex.

Marc produces, executes and implements a diverse range of bespoke projects – from street festivals, to developing and curating multi-disciplinary, capacity-building and community outreach art projects that suit the narrative of national and corporate institutions. He also works with diverse NGOs and charitable organisations such as the BOV Joseph Calleja Foundation.

Marc’s most recent notable production credits include A Stradivarius Among Us (2015), Rock of Ages (2016), and the annual topical satirical show The Comedy Knights.
Marc Cabourdin

Produttur Kreativ //
Creative Producer

Marc Cabourdin huwa professjoniż indipendenti fit-qasam teatraż f’Malta, direttur artiżiku, ill ukoll mesqaj u produttur ta’ inizjattivi kulturali. Marc iggraviaż mill-East 15 Acting School L’ondra fejn kiesb il-grad ta’ ‘Masters fit-Teatra’ u ‘Rectar fit-Università ta’ Essex.


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Marc’s most recent notable production credits include A Stradivarius Amongst Us (2015), Rock of Ages (2016), and the annual topical satirical show The Comedy Knights.
Miriam Gauci
Soprano // Soprano


One of the most renowned singers of her generation, Miriam Gauci started her first singing studies with her aunt, soprano Hilda Mailla Tabone. She later graduated in vocal technique at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi of Milan and at the Accademia Di Perfezionamento per Artisti Lirici at La Scala theatre.

After winning a number of international competitions, she performed at some of the world’s main opera houses. She is the only Maltese soprano who sang leading roles at La Scala in Milan, the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, the San Francisco Opera, the Santa Fe Opera, the Opera Bastille of Paris, the Berlin State Opera, the Munich State Opera, the San Carlo of Naples, the Liceu of Barcelona and Santiago del Chile. Her repertoire includes the main roles in La Traviata, Don Carlo, Otello, Madama Butterfly, La Bohème and Manon Lescaut. She has collaborated with Claudio Abbado, Zubin Mehta, Franco Zeffirelli and Paciolo Domingo. Alongside Riccardo Muti, she sang the roles of Margherita and Elena in Bolo’s Mefistofele at the Vienna State Opera and Verdi’s Requiem in Salzburg and Tokyo.

She has recorded for RCA, Naxos and Discover International. Miriam Gauci is a member of the National Order of Merit and a Cavaliere of the Italian Republic.
Miriam Gauci
Sopran // Soprano


One of the most renowned singers of her generation, Miriam Gauci started her first singing studies with her aunt, soprano Hilda Malta Tabone. She later graduated in vocal technique at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan and at the Accademia di Perfezionamento per Artisti Litici at La Scala theatre.

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She has recorded for RCA, Naxos and Discover International. Miriam Gauci is a member of the National Order of Merit and a Cavaliere of the Italian Republic.

José Hernández Pastor
Kontratenor // Countertenor


José is a musicologist, conductor and performer who has not only sung Baroque opera, (Monteverdi in Teatro Real Madrid and Liceu Barcelona, Teatro Champs Elysées but has also premiered several important contemporary operas. These include Maurizio Sotelo’s Dulciea (Teatro Real, Madrid, 2005) and Luis de Pablo’s Lin Parque (Teatro del Canal, Madrid, 2011), directed by important stage directors like Bianca Li, Akis Gojola, and Gustavo Tambascio. He has also taken part in contemporary music performances.

As an expert on Renaissance and Baroque music, José has delivered courses in music theory and singing interpretation in conservatories and universities in Spain, as well as given concerts and recitals at the most important music halls in Europe, America and Africa. He has more than 30 recordings for EMI, Arcana, Alia Vox, Harmonia Mundi, the last awarded with the Spanish National Music Prize.

José is also the recipient of a Five Star mention in the newspaper ABC due to his personal approach to ancient music. His last personal programme this season was the enthusiastically-received “On the Wings of the Spirit”, where he was the only musician who performed an a cappella contemplative Gregorian solo chant.
Nico Darmanin: Tenor

Nico Darmanin is a tenor known for his wide range of operatic roles. He has performed with several notable opera companies and has made successful debuts in prestigious venues. His repertoire includes roles from the Baroque to modern operas, showcasing his versatility as a tenor. Darmanin has studied at the Royal College of Music and the Welsh National Opera, where he developed his skills as a performing artist. His ability to captivate audiences with his powerful voice and stage presence has earned him critical acclaim.

Clare Ghigo: Mezzo Soprano

Clare Ghigo is a mezzo-soprano singer known for her versatility and emotional depth in her performance. She has recorded with leading orchestras and has appeared in major opera productions. Ghigo has studied at several prestigious institutions, including the Royal College of Music and the Welsh National Opera. Her dedication to her craft and her ability to connect with the audience have made her a beloved figure in the opera world. She is also a passionate advocate for music education, inspiring young performers through her mentorship and public appearances. Her commitment to excellence and her love for music make her a role model for aspiring singers.
Nicola Darmanin
Tenor

Nico Darmanin is from Malta. He has performed in various opera houses in Europe and the Americas. He attended the Royal College of Music and the National Opera Studio. He has appeared in several prestigious operas, including "Die Fledermaus" and "Cosi Fan Tutte". He has also performed in the Madagascar Opera Festival and the Royal Opera House in London.

Clare Ghigo
Mezzo Soprano

Clare Ghigo is a mezzo soprano from Malta. She has performed in major opera houses, including the Royal Opera House in London and the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. She has also appeared in various film and TV productions, including "Shrek" and "Mama Mia!"

Both Nicola Darmanin and Clare Ghigo have made significant contributions to opera and music in the Maltese cultural scene.
Joseph Zammit
Tenor
Hamid

Ruth Sammut Casingena
Soprano
Fatima


Maċek, ġewwa il-voci animate u fil-piano studies ta Trinity College u fil-Royal Academy of Music u in musicology from the University of Malta, Ruth farrett ix-xinijiet di’n voce u piano fil-de SSR Muzikarit Konvener in Antwerp, Belgju. Sijonella jebbien ekkvalent career aħħi kollha prinċipali roles fi servizju ta’ produzzjoni: Nicolaus de’ Cooper, Jocodni u Jeanett et Colin, Mozart g’u biżness de’ Figaro fil-opreptali Cin-cie-Là, il-Paesi dei Campanelli, La Scapinella, La Vedova Allegra, il-musicali Seven Brides for Seven Brothers u Sissi of Saturday Night, u Carlo Goldin’s play, La Vedova Scialta.

Ruth has appeared in a variety of local and international performances – in Portugal, Wales, London Belgium and Vienna. She has been a special guest during events organised by the EĽCA and Ferromoda at Le Meridien, the Hilton, the Exequion, the Radisson and the Mediterranean Conference Centre. She has collaborated with high-profile organisations such as the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, and Il-Tangjisi Manoel. More recently, she sang alongside Mino Vincenzo Sorrentino, the director of the San Remo, RAI and Mediaextra organisations. She has also produced and directed diverse artistic events, mainly in aid of charity. Among these are the talent showcases titled ‘Journey and Journey Evolution’, which were held at the Hilton.

Ruth is a Dame of the Knights of the Order of St. John, a committed music tutor, has created and was the music co-ordinator and choir director of Vocal Aid for three consecutive years, has worked in media, where she landed prominent roles in TV Series such as Ghada Jisbath Ukoll, Gżanjejnies, Papi, The Inheritance, Timien Naxa, and D.R.E.A.M.S, and has represented Malta with her own “Crossover” style compositions at the Orlites Project for Mediterranean countries. Over the last five years, Ruth has continued to further her voice studies under the mentorship of soprano Denise Mulholland and is grateful to her consultant and piano professor, Mr. Paulu Grech, under whose mentorship she has acquired a great deal of experience related to the world of music.
Joseph Zammit

Tenur // Tenor
Hamid

Joseph huwa gradwet b’Bacillerat tal-Art fl-ISTorja (Umrul) u jahdem kemm bhalha tenur profesionali mhareg minn Adriana Yarondona, kif ukkoll bhalha attur li li fl-xena teatrali ghat dawn l-ahhar ghasar snin.

Huwa deher f’pijrjet ewlin fl-fidwix opji, fostaħom Pluto f’Orpheus in the Underworld u Vogelsang f’DieSchauspieldektor. Joseph kellu wkoll divwi rwali framusicals u rapprezentazzjonijiet teatrali, bhal Che fl’Evita, Jamie fl’Last 5 Years (Masquerade), Maestro FHUSH (TMTY), Yvan FART (WhatTheTheirNames Theatre), diversi rwali f’When You Hear My Voice (ms Dr Bruce Wall, London Shakespeare Workoutl), u George FA Handbag (Masquerade).


Joseph huwa wkoll wieħed fil-famijiet fil-pantonimi tal-Miied lokali. Tul dawn l-ahhar ghasar snin, huwa gpartijja f’attività edizzjonijiet mwettqa minn Masquerade u ebgħa mwettqa mill-MAD. Apparti minn hekk, huwa kitébe u ha sehem fidwix rapprezentazzjonijiet sitt bureskju.

Joseph Zammit is a B.A. (Hon) History graduate, working both as a professional tenor under the guidance of Adrianna Yarondona, and an actor who has been in the theatre scene for the last ten years.

He has played major roles in operas, playing the role of Pluto in Orpheus in the Underworld and Vogelsang in DieSchauspieldektor. Joseph has also performed leading roles in musicals and theatrical performances, such as Che in Evita, Jamie in Last 5 Years (Masquerade), The Maestro in HUSH (TMTY), Yvan in ART (WhatTheTheirNames Theatre), various roles in When You Hear My Voice (Dr Bruce Wall, London Shakespeare Work) and George in Handbag (Masquerade).

He is an original member of WhatTheTheirNames Theatre and a constant in the ‘Shakespeare at the Pub’ series, with his latest role being Benedick in Much Ado About Nothing.

Joseph, together with Malcolm Galea, stars in the children’s series ‘More or Less’, which performs at local schools as well as internationally – at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh and in Washington DC. Together with Malcolm, Joseph has also written and performed in the TV series LIFT.

As a yearly tradition, Joseph has also played leading roles in ten consecutive pantos, six for Masquerade and four for MAD, while also writing and performing for several burlesque shows.

Ruth Sammut Casingena

Soprano
Fatima


Mother, graduate in voice and piano studies from Trinity College and the Royal Academy of Music, and in microbiology from the University of Malta, Ruth furthered her studies in voice and piano at the delSopran conservatory in Antwerp, Belgium. She has enjoyed a versatile career and has held principal roles in several productions: Nicolò Isouard’s Joconde and Jeanmot et Colín, Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro, the operaetta Cin-c-i-La, il Piace del Campanile, La Scuggnizza, La Vedova Alegria, the musicals Seven Brides for Seven Brothers and Slice of Saturday Night, and Carlo Goldoni’s play, La Vedova Scarna.

Ruth has appeared in a variety of local and international performances – in Portugal, Wales, London Belgium and Vienna. She has been a special guest during events organized by the EULC and Ferrari at La Mainenant, the Hilton, the Excelsior, the Radisson and the Mediterranean Conference Centre. She has collaborated with high-profile organisations, such as the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, and Teatro Manoel. More recently, she sang alongside Mev Vincentzo Sorrentino, the director of the San Remo, RAI and Mediaset orchestras. She has also produced and directed diverse artistic events, mainly in aid of charity. Among these are the talent showcases titled Journey and Journey Evolution, which were held at the Hilton.

Ruth is a Dame of the Knights of the Onix of St. John, a committed music tutor, has created and was the music co-ordinator and choir director of Vocal Aid for three consecutive years, has worked in media, where she landed prominent roles in TV Serials like Ghaḍa Jobsh Ukoll, QalbinNies, Pilpu. The Inheritance, Tinett Nita, and D.R.E.A.M.S, and has represented Malta with her own ‘Crossover’ style compositions at the Onixes Project for Mediterranean countries. Over the last five years, Ruth has continued to further her voice studies under the mentorship of Sopran Denise Muhhuldb and is grateful to her consultant and piano professor, Mro Pawlu Grech, under whose mentorship she has acquired a great deal of experience related to the world of music.
Louis Andrew Cassar
Baritone // Baritone
Mirani


One of Malta’s most acclaimed baritones, Louis has starred in various opera productions including Cavalleria Rusticana, La Bohème, Il Tabarro, Dido & Aeneas, Tosca, Turandot and Nabucco; and has worked alongside international stars such as Juan Pons, Carlo Colombara and Maria Guleghina. He has sung at various theatres and concert venues in Malta as well as in various countries across Europe.

Cassar is also active in sacred music and has featured in works by Mozart, Gounod, Handel, Haydn, Schubert and Rossini and has premiered various locally composed Oratorios. After studies in Italy, he is currently under the coaching of soprano Juliette Bisazza.

Joseph Lia
Baritone // Baritone
Fizzjali // Official


Joseph interpreta diversi nolu operistici ewlenin: Germont f’La Traviata ta’ Verdi; Uberto f’La Serva Padrona ta’ Pergolesi; Ebn-Halsi f’Iolantha ta’ Tchaikovsky; Almaviva f’Le Nozze di Figaro ta’ Mozart; Dottor Malatesta fid-Don Pasquale ta’ Donizetti; Loreck fil-Fedora ta’ Giordano; Paris fl-Roméo et Juliette ta’ Gounod; Il-Baruni fl-Traviata; Fiorello u Ufficiali f’Il Barbiere di Siviglia ta’ Rossini; Kommissar Imperiali f’Madama Butterfly ta’ Puccini; u Marullo u Montenero fl-Rigoletto ta’ Verdi.


Joseph Lia graduated in music from the University of Malta. Backed by the Janatha Stubbs Foundation, he furthered his studies at the St Petersburg State Conservatoire, where he received a Masters Degree in Voice Studies. With the aid of a scholarship from MGSS, Joseph read for a PhD in Vocal Pedagogy.

Joseph has held prominent roles in several major operas: Germont in Verdi’s La Traviata; Uberto in Pergolesi’s La Serva Padrona; Ebn-Haki in Tchaikovsky’s Iolanta; Almaviva in Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro; Dottor Malatesta in Donizetti’s Don Pasquale; Loreck in Giordano’s Fedora; Paris in Gounod’s Roméo et Juliette, the Baron in La Traviata, Fiorello and the Official in Rossini’s Il Barbiere di Siviglia; the Imperial Commissioner in Puccini’s Madama Butterfly; and Marullo and Montenero in Verdi’s Rigoletto.

Joseph is also an accomplished singer of Da Camera and Oratorio repertoires. He has performed and participated in many festivals, such as BachFest and the Alien Baltic Festival in Tallinn, Viellienga Zvika in Moscow, the Italian Opera in Taormina, the Ragusa International Organ Festival, VI/AF and Gaulitana in Malta. He also had the privilege of singing alongside Joseph Calleja during the annual festival that the singer’s foundation organises for his patrons. Lia was invited to deliver several masterclasses, among which are those delivered at the Music Academy in Kaunas, the Istituto Universitario di Studi Musicali in Cefalú, and Piceno Classica in Italy.

He is the founder and artistic director of the Malta International Organ Festival, a consultant for the European Choral Association, works for the Arts Council Malta, and is a visiting lecturer at the University of Malta.
Louis Andrew Cassar
Baritonu // Baritone
Mirani

Washed mill-baritoni l-aktar imfattihin f’Malta, Louis deher fil-parti ewlenja f’diversi opri, inklużi Cavalleria Rusticana, La Bohème, Il Tabarro, Dido & Aeneas, Tosca, Turandot u Nabucco, u hadem ma’ stel internazzjonali bhal Juan Pons, Carlo Colombara u Maria Guleghina. Huwa kanta l’diversi lehat u djar tal-kuncerti f’Malta, lek kif wkoll l’diversi pagjiż modwar l-Ewropa.


Cassar is also active in sacred music and has featured in works by Mozart, Gounod, Handel, Haydn, Schubert and Rossini and has premiered various locally composed Oratorios. After studies in Italy, he is currently under the coaching of soprano Juliette Bisazza.

Joseph Lia
Baritonu // Baritone
Fizzjal // Official


Joseph interpreta diversi nuoli operistici ewlenin: Germont f’La Traviata ta’ Verdi; Uberto f’La Serva Padrona ta’ Pergolesi; Ebn-Halabi f’Rondan in f’tchaikovsky; Almaviva f’Le Nozze di Figaro ta’ Mozart; Dottor Malatesta fi’don Pasquale ta’ Donizetti; Loreck fi’don Fedora ta’ Giordano; Paris fi’Roméo et Juliette ta’ Gounod; Il-Baursi fil-Traviata; Fiorello u Uffizzali f’il Barbiere di Siviglia ta’ Rossini, Commissarju Imperiale f’madama Butterfly ta’ Puccini, u Marullo u Mounceona fil-Rigoletto ta’ Verdi.


Joseph Lia graduata in music from the University of Malta. Backed by the Janatta Stubbs Foundation, he furthered his studies at the St Petersburg State Conservatory, where he received a Masters Degree in Voice Studies. With the aid of a scholarship from MGSS, Joseph read for a PhD in Vocal Pedagogy.

Joseph has held prominent roles in several major operas: Germont in Verdiss La Traviata; Uberto in Pergolesis La Serva Padrona; Ebn-Halabi in Tchaikovskys Iolanta; Almaviva in Mozarts Le Nozze di Figaro; Dottor Malatesta in Donizettis Don Pasquale; Loreck in Giordanos Fedora; Paris in Gounods Rameau et Juliette, the Baron in La Traviata, Fiorello and the Official in Rossinis Il Barbiere di Siviglia, the Imperial Commissioner in Puccinis Madama Butterfly, and Marullo and Monterone in Verdis Rigoletto.

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He is the founder and artistic director of the Malta International Organ Festival, a consultant for the European Choral Association, works for the Arts Council Malta, and is a visiting lecturer at the University of Malta.
Nadia Vella
Soprano // Sopranino
Diva

Nadia rcievet it-tahrig taghna fil-Hertfordshire Theatre School fejn iggradwat f’id-Drama u f’id-Teatru Muzikali. Hiha ghandha Licentiate Diploma f’TESOL, (LTCL u tistudja l-vuċċ ma-Soprano Gillian Zammit.

Nadia dejnet fi musikal, drammi u kunserti ta’ success fil-Ingilterra, fil-Germanja u f’Malta. Hiha kollha diversi ruwli prominenti f’dattamenti operistiq populari, fosthom Christine F’The Phantom of the Opera ta’ Andrew Lloyd Webber, Abigail Williams f’The Crucible ta’ Robert Ward, kif ukoll ir-ruwli ta’ Catherine fiil-kummiedja ta’ Shelagh Stephenson, Memory of Water, u Sherrie fil-musical dinamiku, Rock of Ages.

Nadia trained at Hertfordshire Theatre School, where she graduated in Acting and Musical Theatre. She holds an LTCL and studied voice with Soprano Gillian Zammit.

Nadia has performed in successful musicals, plays and concerts in England, Germany and Malta. She has held diverse prominent roles in popular operatic adaptations, including Christine in Andrew Lloyd Webber’s The Phantom of the Opera, Abigail Williams in Robert Ward’s The Crucible, as well as the roles of Catherine in Shelagh Stephenson’s comedy, Memory of Water, and Sherrie in the dynamic musical, Rock of Ages.

Federica Falzon
Mezzo Soprano // Mezzo Soprano
Darit

Federica ġwiet interess akkamin għall-mużika minn età żgħira u bdiet ikantat meta kellha biss tmiem smn.


Lura f’Malta, Federica kienet l-izghar artista li qatt kantat in-serjent it-tenur Malta ta’ fama internazzjonali, Joseph Calleja, meta giet miśtieha ghal rappresentazzjoni fil-kunsirt arriwwali tiegħu fuq il-Fosos tal-Furjana. Hija akkumpanjat ukoll il-kwiek vokali ta’ Juluc, Marco Vito, it-tenur Taljan Fabio Armigliato u l-kantanta Amerikana, Amii Stewart, f’dversi okazjonijiet oħra.


Minn dakinar ħawn, Federica qatt ma ħarset lura, u qed tkompli l-istudji vokali taghha, taħt it-tutela was-Soprano Maltija Gillian Zammit.

Federica has been interested in music for most of her life, and started singing at age eight.

She has competed in many local and international competitions. At age 11, she was shortlisted as one of the 42 finalists on the Italian talent show Ti lascio una canzone (Tiuc) aired live every Saturday on RAI 1 in 2014. On the show, she was paired with Italian tenor Vincenzo Canni to form a “due lirico”. The pair won the seventh edition of the show, after which Federica had the opportunity to sing with Albanian Carni and soprano Cecilia Gasdia.

Back in Malta, Federica was the youngest artist to sing alongside internationally acclaimed Maltese tenor, Joseph Calleja, when she was invited to perform at this annual concert at the Granaries in Floriana. She has also accompanied Tiuc vocal coach Marco Vito, Italian tenor Fabio Armigliato and US singer Amii Stewart on other occasions.

In November 2014, Federica represented Malta at the Junior Eurovision Song Contest on home soil, with her song “Diamonds”. In the same year, Federica was guest singer on the Italian shows Napoli prima e dopo and Un mondo d’Amore – Porta a Porta, both aired on RAI 1.

Since then Federica hasn’t looked back and is continuing her vocal studies, coached by Maltese Soprano Gillian Zammit.
Nadia Vella
Soprano // Soprano
Diva

Nadia rċewiet it-tahriġ taghha fil-Hertfordshire Theatre School, fejn iġġradwat fid-Drama u fil-Teatro Muzikali. Hiha għandha Lċentrat Diploma f’TEQCN. L’TCL u tistudja l-waqt maż-sopranu Gillian Zammit.

Nadia dejnet fi musicals, drami u kunsċerti ta’ success fl-Ingilterra, fil-Ġermanja u f’Malta. Hiha kkelha diversi nwil promenti l-attażamenti operati popolari, fosthorm Christine F’The Phantom of the Opera ta’ Andrew Lloyd Webber, Abigail Williams F’The Crucible ta’ Robert Wards, kif ukoll l-nwil ta’ Catherine fili-kummiedja ta’ Shelagh Stephenson, Memory of Water, u Shernie fil-musical dinamiq, Rock of Ages.

Nadia t-nareda ħna Hertfordshire Theatre School, where she graduated in Acting and Musical Theatre. She holds an L TCL and studies voice with soprano Gillian Zammit.

Nadia has performed in successful musicals, plays and concerts in England, Germany and Malta. She has held diverse prominent roles in popular operatic adaptations, including Christine in Andrew Lloyd Webber’s The Phantom of the Opera, Abigail Williams in Robert Ward’s The Crucible, as well as the roles of Catherine in Shelagh Stephenson’s comedy, Memory of Water, and Shernie in the dynamic musical, Rock of Ages.

Federica Falzon
Mezzo Soprano // Mezzo Soprano
Darit

Federica wriet interes akkaniż għall-muzika minn età tżgħira u bdiet tkanta meta kellha biss tmien snin.

Hadet semib fidiversi kompetizzjonijiet lokali u internazzjonali. Ta’ 11-il sena, ġiet magħżula bħala finalista fost 42 finalist,


Minn dakinar li ħawn, Federica qatt ma hantet lura, u qed tisqmil l-istudi volkai taghha, taħt it-tiwela tas-Sopranu Maltaċċ Gillian Zammit.

Federica has been interested in music for most of her life, and started singing at age eight.

She has competed in many local and international competitions. At age 11, she was shortlisted as one of the 42 finalists on the Italian talent show Ti lascio una canzone (‘7ulc), aired live every Saturday on RAI 1 in 2014. On the show, she was paired with Italian tenor Vincenzo Cami to form a ‘Su linco’. The pair won the seventh edition of the show, after which Federica had the opportunity to sing with Albanian Cami and soprano Cecilia Gasdia.

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Since then Federica hasn’t looked back and is continuing her vocal studies, coached by Maltese Soprano Gillian Zammit.
AĦNA REFUGJATI

The information in this booklet was correct at the time of going to print. Valletta 2018 reserves the right to amend dates and other event details at any time.

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AHNA
REFUGJATI


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OF THE VALLETTA 2018 FOUNDATION
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THE CHAIRMAN AND THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
OF THE VALLETTA 2018 FOUNDATION
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO A RECEPTION DURING THE INTERVAL OF

AHNA REFUGJATI

AT THE MALL, FLORIANA.

Kindly present this ticket at the entrance.