

THE MALTESE FOLKLORE SCENE  
IN CANADA

Angelo Dougall

From time to time we get news of Maltese folkore activities by Maltese communities in Canada. It is a great pleasure to hear about these events and publish such interesting items of activities by our compatriots in these far-off lands.

The Maltese Community of London - Ontario is certainly a very active one among other ethnic immigrant communities in the vast Province of Ontario. The city of London (Ontario) happens to be in what, in Ontario is generally called the "snow belt". However, the cold weather prevailing in that area does not hamper our compatriots from keeping kindled and alive in their warm hearts the folklore and folk life of their island home in their adopted country.

The Maltese community in London (Ontario), with professional efficiency, runs "The Maltese Canadian Club" at No. 70, Charter House Crescent of that city. It is a very spacious, purposely-built, beautiful and well equipped premises. The club also publishes its newsletter.

Recently we got some information about a variety of folkloristic activities organised by the club from one of its active members who has served for some years on the committee, Mr. Emanuel Pavia. Originally Mr. Pavia hailed from Żabbar, and settled in London (Ontario) since the mid 50's.

In L-Imnara Vol.4 No.1, 1990, we commented about the Troupe of folklore dancers that was formed in that London (Ontario) club, and about its successes and shows throughout the Province of Ontario. The Troupe is frequently invited to perform during various ethnic festivals. Its members perform Maltese national folk dances, including the *Kuntradanza*. Mr. Pavia informs us, that in September, coinciding with Malta's National Day, the Club annually holds a three-day *Cavalcade*, a festival of activities, during which, a variety of folk-life and folklore activities and representations are shown, especially more so in Maltese traditional foods and cousine.

During Eastertide, and for Good Friday, an amateur theatrical company from Toronto is invited to perform on the club's stage, the traditional Passion Play, in typical Maltese folk presentation. This annual performance is very well attended by the Maltese community of London (Ontario) and outlying places. Those in the audience who do not speak or understand Maltese, could still follow the Passion Play and understand the performance without difficulty.

Preceding the Passion Play a *Ravioli Dinner* is held in grand manner at the Club; the ravioli are prepared in the traditional Maltese way, following the shape and size of the old days in Malta. They are greatly relished by all those attending the

dinner at this ethnic event, and it seems that the Maltese in that ethnic community, on certain occasions forget to watch their diet! At his point, one could stop to comment about ravioli. They have an exact European counterpart only in Poland, and if I remember well, they are there called *pyrogi*.

Mr. Pavia also informs us that the late Johnnie Catania is very sadly missed by the Maltese emigrants of that community. He was a great promoter of events and presented many a show at the club. Other frequent visitors to the Maltese Canadian Club of London (Ontario) are Maltese folk singer groups (*għanneja* and guitar players, where they have a great following among the Maltese migrants, The Namru Station group of Detroit, led by that veteran of Maltese *għana* the ocrtoegenarian and excellent folk singer Karmnu Xuereb *in-Namru*, and other groups from Toronto. They perform in summer at open air gatherings and at the Club, and they have always a full house.

As one could see, with these activities, Maltese folklore is still very much alive among our compatriots in London (Ontario), Canada.

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#### Nota Dwar Folklor Malti f'Detroit, Michigan

Fil-ħarga ta' L-Imnara Vol.3 No. 2 & 3, 1989, konna ktibna dwar il-mewt tal-ħabib tagħna Salvu Vella *l-Puwta*, prim kitarrist tal-grupp tan-Namru Station ta' Detroit. Bil-mewt tiegħu, Salvu kien ħalla vojta kbira; kien kitarrist imħarreg tajjeb fid-daqq tal-kitarra u tal-"prejjem". Sirna nafu, li issa, il-post tiegħu ta' prim kitarrist imlieh il-ħabib tagħna Ġanni Buħaġiar minn Hal Luqa, li ilu f'Detroit sa mill-1969. Konna nafu li kien dilettant tal-mużika, u li kien idoqq ma' waħda mill-baned tar-raħal tiegħu, imma dik il-ħabta ma konniex nafu li kellu namra daqshekk kbira għall-kitarra u għall-għana folkloristiku Maltija. U mgħagġbin kemm hu tajjeb għall-"prejjem"! Dan it-tip ta' daqq jintgħogob minn kulħadd. Nifirħu lin-Namru Karmnu Xuereb; nixtiequ lilu u lill-grupp ta' għanneja u daqqaqa tan-Namru Station, kull gid u suċċess, u li jkomplu jzommu ħajjin it-tradizzjonijiet Maltin fin-Nord Amerika. U nixtiequ lil Ġanni Buħaġiar kull suċċess fid-delizzju sabiħ tiegħu!

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