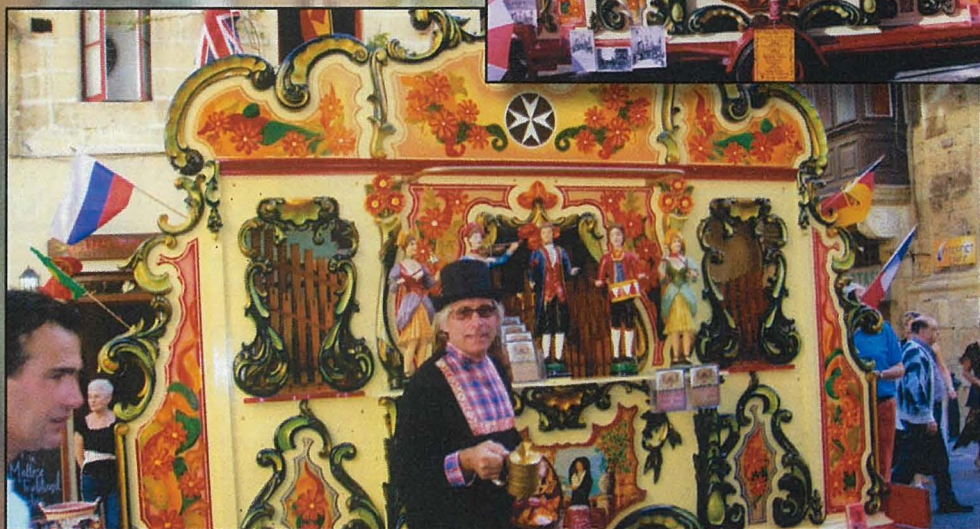
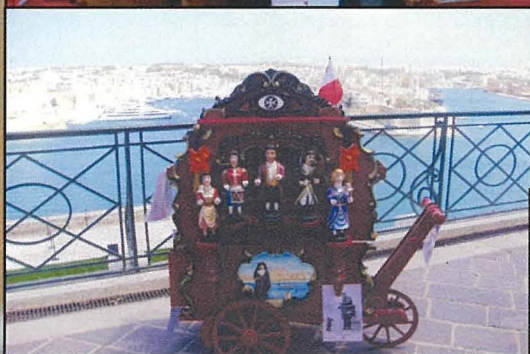


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The Story of the Maltese Terramaxka

You are now looking at the restored System 72 key Carl Frei Terramaxka Music Organ, the only one on the Maltese islands. The terramaxka dates back to 1929. This organ is entirely made of wood, both the decorations and also the instruments. Music is created by means of air passing through different pipes. Music notes will control manually which and how long air will pass through each pipe.

The terramaxka was played as means of entertainment during the village 'festa', especially when was no band playing here. It was indeed a 'magical box', producing piano sounds while no keys were being pressed.

In Malta, the terramaxka was also played in Buskett, limits of Rabat, during the popular local feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, known locally as 'L-Imnarja'. Each time the terramaxka played, it transformed the atmosphere in that village into a more enjoyable one. There were usually two people in charge of the terramaxka: while the owner would wind the rope and play the melodies, the other man would go around the village collecting small donations. There were various shapes of this musical organ on the Maltese Islands. Those terramaxka organs played in the streets relatively large and loaded on a trailer and pulled by an animal, usually a donkey, or else pushed by the owner himself. The terramaxka did not stop in the local square whenever it played in a village 'festa', but rather it stopped at corners and played there. The village people would peep out of their balconies and throw coins to whoever was playing the terramaxka.

There were usually about eight different melodies played on a single terramaxka, and these were generally played one after the other. The waltzes were by far the most popular, however the mazurka was also in demand. There were some terramaxka organ that resembled a piano, while other types were more ornamental in their design. The latter kind had tiny statues measuring approximately 20 inches each that would move with the beat of the melody being played.

These statues were usually made out of wood and were found on the sill of the terramaxka. At the very top, there also were several small flags. This type musical organ was highly attractive to the children in the village. Other examples of terramaxka organs that existed during these times were those found in a wine and spirit shop; these shops were mostly sought after by sailors who stopped at our shores. Those organs could be playing throwing in a coin in an appropriate slot. Besides the terramaxka found in the streets and those in wine shop, there also existed the more luxurious types, found in private homes of the wealthy.

The terramaxka filled up the musical void in the lives of the Maltese and the Gozitans. Infact during these times, local bands were still at an infant stage, thus, the terramaxka was frequently hired out to provide musical entertainment to the village people during the festa and private celebrations.

Half a century has passed and there is just one terramaxka left on the island. Its survival depends entirely on **your kind donations**. So please be generous.

Thank you