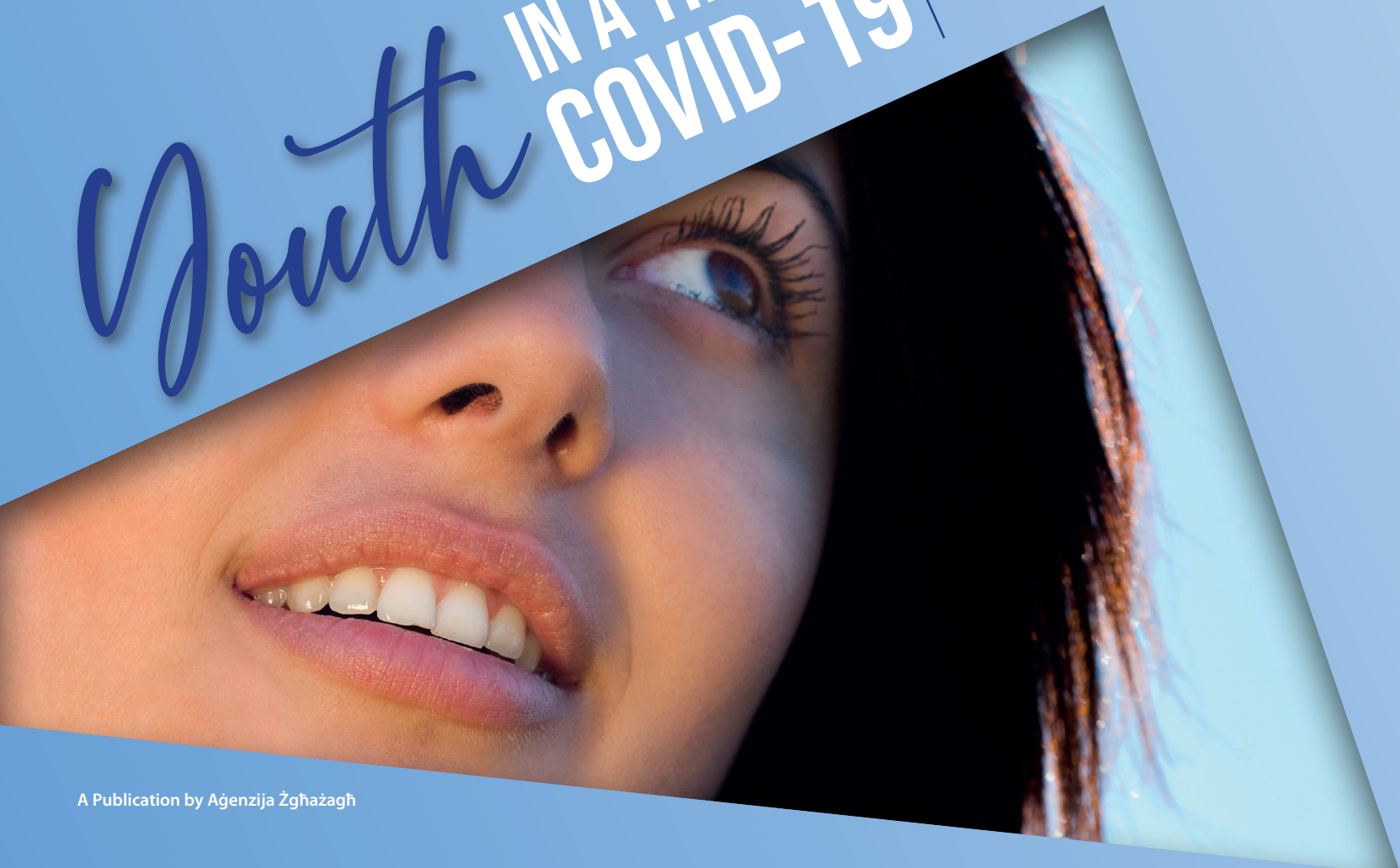


Youth IN A TIME OF COVID-19

CREATIVE PURSUITS
OF YOUNG PEOPLE
IN GOZO



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Published by

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Website: youth.gov.mt

ISBN: 978-9918-9507-0-6 / July 2020

Photos: Provided by the participants (some taken pre-Covid-19)

Design: Aġenzija Żgħażaġh



This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal. I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge – even wisdom. Like art.

Toni Morrison

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The advent and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a difficult and painful time for people across the world. While here in Malta we have been successful in managing and mitigating the effects of the pandemic; nonetheless, are all too aware of how it has impacted on the lives of our families, friends, and communities: how it caused hardship, distress and uncertainty.

However, the crisis has also provided an opportunity for young people to contribute to community and social solidarity through their creativity and innovation. Aġenzija Żgħażaġh saw the opportunities as well as the challenges resulting from the crisis and took steps to support young people and youth organisations in exploring and developing new ways, particularly through digitalisation and social media, of furthering social and inter-generational solidarity.

New services and opportunities for young people have been introduced by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, while others have been adapted to meet the changing circumstances. As a result of social distancing and isolation, reassuring and supporting young people through listening to their voices, experiences, emotions and concerns in these challenging times has taken on a new meaning and urgency.

One of the initiatives undertaken by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, was Youth in Gozo, which focused on providing an online platform for young people in Gozo who are pursued a wide range of cultural and artistic activities during the partial lockdown, involving dance, singing, musical instruments and crafts.

This publication is both a recognition and a celebration of young people in Gozo and how they dealt with the challenges of the partial lockdown and the resulting social distancing and isolation. It is also a historical record of the lives of young people during a pandemic.

The picture that emerges of our young people in Gozo during a time of Covid, is one of fortitude and resilience and a quiet confidence and assurance in themselves, their community and their future.

Dr Clifton Grima
*Parliamentary Secretary for Youth,
Sport and Voluntary Organisations*



Introduction

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt across the world. For young people, as well as for everyone, it has resulted in a more restrictive lifestyle, limited access to education, work and services, and self-isolation and social distancing.

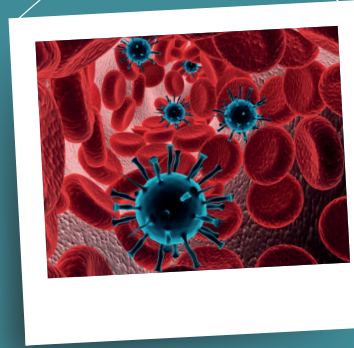
While regular youth services, programmes and initiatives in Malta, as elsewhere across Europe, were adversely impacted by the partial lockdown, it also provided us with a unique opportunity for working with and reaching out to young people online and through social media. At Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, we continued to work and provide support and encouragement to young people during the partial lockdown while further developing and expanding our capacity for digital youth work. We also continued to digitalize our services and supported youth organisations to re-design and adjust their programmes and projects.

Despite social distancing and isolation, social media opened up new ways for young people and youth workers to engage with each other. Numerous online sessions were conducted that provide safe spaces for young people, enabling them to discuss topical issues, engage in online activities and socialise with their peers, assisted by professional youth workers. Many of the sessions have enabled young people from different social backgrounds to establish new relationships and share and discuss their values, ideas, aspirations and concerns.

Aġenzija Żgħażaġh also undertook specific initiatives during the pandemic in support of young people. *Stories from young people during Corona-virus*, was a campaign that encouraged young people to share online their everyday experiences of life under the partial lockdown; from keeping fit, to preparing meals, talking with friends and engaging in cultural and artistic pursuits as well as voicing their feeling and emotions.

The *Give Back Award* was a project that invited young people to use their creativity and innovation to give something back to their communities to support and encourage them. Young people were asked to submit a solidarity proposal to be implemented during the pandemic. The best proposal which was called 'The Sea of Time' received a financial award following its implementation while a number of other interesting proposals were assigned a youth worker to coach them on how to further develop and promote their proposal.

Youth of Gozo was another project that focused on providing an online platform for



young people on the island of Gozo who were pursuing a wide range of cultural and artistic activities during the partial lockdown we had in Malta, involving dance, singing, musical instruments and crafts.

This publication, *Youth in a time of Covid-19 - Creative pursuits of young people in Gozo*, is a visual record and commentary, in their own words, of how young people participating in the project responded to the challenges as well as the opportunities of lockdown. The campaign sought to support and encouraged young people to further develop their creative skills by providing them with an online platform where they could not only demonstrate and share their talents and skills with others, but also share their emotions, concerns and hopes for the future.

In all, 68 young people participated in the campaign and were featured on the Facebook page of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh's Gozo Youth Service between March and June 2020. Their ages ranged from 12 to 35; they were pursuing a wide range of creative activities and different career paths.

What they all have in common however, in addition to their being from Gozo, is youth and vigour, initiative and creativity, self-worth and communal solidarity, and common humanity.

What this publication also demonstrates is the positive power of youth work through social media and how it can enhance and strengthen the voices of young people and help them shape and determine their own future.

I want to thank the young people of Gozo for sharing their lives and experiences with us during the partial lockdown, the youth worker Jennifer Cauchi who managed the project and Isabelle Mallia (The Gozo Youth Service Manager) for facilitating this. As with everyone else, these past months have been a challenging time for Aġenzija Żgħażaġh; but it has also been a time of innovation, creativity, renewal and reinvention. Learning from negative events in life can often be more fruitful than learning from positive ones.

Miriam Teuma
Chief Executive Officer
Aġenzija Żgħażaġh

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GOZO



Location: South of Sicily, Mediterranean Sea

Archipelago: Maltese islands

Area: 67 km² (26 sq mi)

Length: 13.34 km (8.289 mi)

Width: 7.15 km (4.443 mi)

Largest settlement: Victoria (pop. 6,901)

Demonym: Gozitans

Population: 32,723

Languages: Maltese



Name: Jennifer Cauchi

Age: 30

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: I am passionate about youth work, Gozo and the Church. I have always been active with different church entities and youth groups and am also a member of Kummissjoni Djoċesana Żghażaġh Ghawdex. It was this voluntary work that led me to choose my career path as a youth worker. I work with Aġenzija Żghażaġh and am privileged to do this through the Youth Service in Gozo. When I am not studying or working I'm usually (mentally or physically) wandering around Rome's cobblestone streets with a gelato in hand, lost in the magical world of Harry Potter or seeking refuge at Ta' Pinu. Pope Francis' document *Christus Vivit* is my source of regeneration when I need to rise from the ashes.



From my bedroom-turned-office, my primary concern was how to continue maintaining contact with young people, and how to encourage them to make the best use of their time while they were at home. Youth of Gozo was born and as I started to make this dream become a reality, I hardly found time to reflect on the constraints imposed on me personally during this period. My gratitude towards the young people whose talents filled my life during Covid-19 is immeasurable.



Name: Luke Vella

Age: 13

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: I am a Form 3 student at the Gozo College Secondary School. I am very active and enjoy hands on activities. My favourite subject is Design and Technology. I like learning by experimenting and trying out new things, especially with electrical materials. At home I spend time watching tutorials on YouTube and trying out experiments. I am always discovering new things and I hope that when I grow up I become an electrician. I also enjoy riding my bike and watching television.



Because of Covid-19 I have to stay at home as much as possible. However I have more time to carry out different experiments and also to watch television.



Name: Michael Cutajar Zahra

Age: 30

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: From a young age, I was fascinated with the works of art which my father, Joseph Cutajar Zahra produced in his studio. I am a full-time self-employed sculptor in my studio in Kerċem. I have made lots of sculptures, especially for private commission, and statues in clay (terra-cotta), papier-mache and bronze. I worked on several festa-related decoration artworks which can be seen all over our islands during festa period. At present, I am working on three-dimensional pieces, accepting commissioned work for private residences. I aspire not only to continue in this line which my father had built, but also to undertake important art commissions.



Due to Covid-19 I have managed to live a proper artist's life as I am working on artistic pieces with more accuracy and calmness.

A quote which I would like to share is: 'Love of beauty is taste. The creation of beauty is art.'





Name: Michael Joe Cini

Age: 22

Location: Żebbuġ

Short Bio: I have been producing music for the last 8 years. I mainly produce electronic dance music but lately I have been exploring other genres as well. Weirdly enough, I wasn't into music before I started producing. It all started when I heard about Avicii and I heard his music. I instantly wanted to find out how he was making his songs and before I knew it, I ended up producing as well. I learnt everything at home by watching tutorials and experimenting. We are so lucky to be living in a time where we can learn a lot of things alone at home.



“*Apart from producing, I also DJ at several events. Covid-19 has directly affected me as all events were cancelled. Luckily, I can still produce music at home. However, I had several projects planned with different artists, which had to be postponed. I think that everyone is affected by the situation, but we cannot react like it's the end of the world. We need to adapt to the situation and make the most of it. In my case, I'm spending most of my time working on things which I never had time for before the pandemic.*”



Name: Brian Refalo

Age: 30

Location: Xaghra

Short Bio: I am the owner of 2 restaurants, Oleander in Xaghra and La Trattoria, Marsalforn Gozo. I have a passion for food and we do our best to provide our customers with the best dining experience. I also enjoy music and used to play the drums. I took part in the 2007 and 2008 Eurovision song contest with Klinsmann Coleiro which was an enjoyable experience. Right now because of business I do not have much time to practise, however during Covid-19 I assembled my drums again and had a go after a very long time. I believe it's going to require time, practice and patience to reach the desired level of playing.



“*Due to Covid-19, business had to be shut down but in life not everything is about work. For me it was an opportunity to have a break. During this time I experimented with more cooking and shared videos on social media to encourage others to try out different types of food.*”



Name: Tyler Grech

Age: 23

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: Upon graduating from University, I left Malta for Ireland 6 months prior to the Covid-19 outbreak to work in Business Development. My move could be explained as a mix of adventure seeking coupled with the existential crisis that sometimes hits when one graduates from University and is faced with a disorienting overload of choices. When I was younger, I used to dabble on the guitar. I wasn't any good, but I enjoyed it nonetheless. I sold my guitar and after a while began to regret that decision every time I would hear a good guitar melody. Last year I bought my second guitar, mainly as a way to procrastinate and avoid doing schoolwork and grew an attachment to it. I returned to Malta due to the pandemic. During the 2 weeks I spent in quarantine, I rediscovered the pleasure of plucking chords on my guitar.



Time slowed down. There was nothing to do except look inwards and reflect, a well needed reboot. But even when all the natural forces conspire to put to question the context that humanity exerts over the world, we manage to thrive nonetheless. Close our pubs and our bars and our restaurants, we'll find other ways to pass the time. As I write this, I have no idea how this chapter will end. But i do have a feeling, that this period will be strongly remembered by generations to come as one of those poetic episodes where people of all sorts came together in the face of adversity and pushed on.



Name: Angie Said

Age: 16

Location: Sannat

Short Bio: From a young age I used to love reading lots of books, especially in Maltese. Around 2 years ago, I discovered the beauty of writing and started writing poems and short stories which included a lesson or message. I do not write frequently, it is not something that I do when I have to but only when I am in the mood.



I have to say that I found much more time to write because I was in the mood. The experience of Covid-19 taught me a lot, especially to appreciate life more and all that we are surrounded with. After all we only live once.





Name: Albert-Lauren Agius

Age: 14

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: Singing is my passion. I like to make others happy while I sing. I have been vocally coached since the age of 4. I took part in various singing festivals. Locally I won a TV show called 'Anke Jien Ghandi x'Nuri' and also Sanremo Junior Malta, where I won the right to represent Malta at Sanremo Junior in Italy. This was a dream come true since I sang with the Sanremo Orchestra on the Ariston stage and won 'Il Primo Premio Internazionale di Sanremo'. I was also a finalist of 'The Entertainers Singing Challenge' and in 2018 I was a finalist of the Malta Junior Eurovision. I sing during Holy Masses and I am part of a band, in which I sing and play the base guitar. I play and study the piano and sit for the Trinity Guildhall College of London piano exams.



“ Covid19 has made me think of those people who live alone in solitude. It also made me realise how I longed for things, which normally I took for granted! ”



Name: Charles Buttigieg

Age: 20

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: I started singing from a very young age. In 2011 I joined Chorus Urbanus under Mro. John Galea. I sang under the auspices of the President of Malta, for the Patrons of the 'BOV Joseph Calleja Foundation', at Teatru Manoel, and with the Malta Youth Orchestra. I've sung abroad in Caltagirone, La Bohème in Gela and Agrigento, in New York in the presence of the Chairman of the Metropolitan, at the Curtis Institute of Music, and the Curtis Gala. In 2019, I debuted at the Opera Philadelphia, having attained a leading role at 20 years of age as the youngest baritone of all time. My vocal studies started under Juliette Bisazza and I am currently studying at the Curtis Institute of Music under Mro Jack LiVigni.

“ During the pandemic I spent my time studying at home and preparing for my next performances abroad. I did some live concerts from home and shared my songs with fans around the world. I practise my vocals everyday, at least 30 minutes with some voice exercises and breathing. I also did some workouts to keep my body in shape. I am still continuing my studies online via Skype with my teachers from around the globe and especially from America. It is hard for us as opera singers to study like this but we try our best. ”





Name: Felicienne Mercieca

Age: 30

Location: Xaghra

Short Bio: From a young age I have always been involved in sports. I used to practise basketball and football for several years. Six years ago I took up running as a sport. I had a coach who was a triathlete and he used to encourage me to start this sport. Being a triathlete requires lots of hours of practice as it includes 3 different disciplines which are swimming, cycling and running. I love this sport as it keeps me motivated to continuously give my best to achieve my desired results.



“ Covid-19 did not really impact my training as it is an individual sports so I could continue with my training. The only two things that I missed were socializing with friends during training and pool access, which I made up for by training in the sea. ”



Name: Benjamin Attard

Age: 11

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I started my first piano lessons in January 2017 and afterwards I started singing lessons in August of the same year. I practise every day and it involves lots of determination. I participated in various local song festivals and activities. In November 2018 I was chosen to represent Malta in an international festival which was held in Budapest, Hungary. My best opportunity by far, was when I took part in the first edition of 'Kanta Maghna' festival with the D Capitals Big Band, where I was placed 2nd in my category and was also awarded the Distinct Talent Award. My dream is that in the near future, I take part in The Voice or X-Factor Malta.



“ During this pandemic, everyone has to make sacrifices and it is important that we listen to the government and health directives so we will get out of this situation soon. ”



Name: Damjan Zahra

Age: 16

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I am a student at Sir MA Refalo Sixth Form in Gozo. I am currently studying to enter the International Relations Sector. Becoming a DJ had been a dream since I was young as I always loved dance music. My brother who at that time had just started his djing career inspired me to give it a go. At the end of 2018 I decided to take DJing to the next level. Building on the basics of what my brother had taught me earlier on, I started to progress and get better. My first gig then came around in February 2019 kicking off my DJ career.

“ Since we have been staying at home due to the pandemic I'm only able to play in my bedroom and stream virtual sets to my audience. Because of the virus all the parties were cancelled to lessen the spread, which of course is a very good thing but I really do miss the vibe and the connection I have with the people during my sets. I just hope this all passes away quickly so we can get back to our usual routines! ”



Name: Jonathan Vella

Age: 28

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: In 2005, I started music theory at the local band club starting with the very basics such as beats and time signatures. After a year I started the clarinet which I played for 4 years. In 2009 I decided to switch to brass. It was a huge leap for me as they are very different instruments and required more studying and practice. I did not give up and practised as much as I could at home. I have now been playing for 15 years and do my best to keep improving. The most important thing is that when you practise a new piece you have to take it bit by bit until you perfect it all. This commitment to music requires that you love what you do so you do it from the heart, feel better and enjoy it!

“ Covid-19 left me with negative feelings because I could not practise my hobby and profession due to the fact that many events were cancelled including feasts and activities. However I still continued to practise at home and also searched for pieces online to practise them. Music helps me feel more positive. ”





Name: Martha Grima

Age: 29

Location: Kerčem

Short Bio: It has taken years of hard work, studying and sleepless nights, but I will soon be a specialist in family medicine, after graduating as a Doctor in 2014. I've also been dancing ballet since I was seven, and last December I successfully passed the Advanced level exam. As an art, ballet has helped me in various ways; it has been a means of relaxation during stressful times, an opportunity to meet great friends and a space to learn about the world. Apart from my profession and dancing ballet, I design handmade cards. I also try to make time to appreciate the company of loved ones. Last but not least, prayer has always been an important part of my life and I thank God for being my shepherd and guide throughout my daily challenges.



“ Covid-19 has been a blow and my life has changed dramatically. I haven't seen my family in Gozo for two months since my profession poses health risks. But the secret is to adapt and make the most of what is possible. I've been dancing by following online classes, I cook, listen to music and I've also adopted Hazel, a sweet kitten who has given me the love and company that I was missing. I could have been negative, but I chose to work hard to better myself. I wasn't sure it would work out but it was worth a try. Belief in oneself is key! ”



Name: Joseph Attard

Age: 34

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: I started taking electric guitar lessons at the age of thirteen. I really liked to listen to rock music especially heavy metal at that time. Once I mastered the guitar basics, I started experimenting on my own. In fact, later I bought a bass guitar, two violins, a synthesizer piano and a harmonica. I really feel the music and like to play the music I like most, ranging from classical music to rock music. Through music, I relax especially after a day at work.

“ In this current situation of Covid-19, I honestly found more time to practise what I really like most. Music helps me to take the worries and anxieties off my mind. ”





Name: Christian Debono

Age: 30

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I was drawn to the art of gilding when I started frequenting “il-Mahzen”, our local village feast enthusiasts’ hangout. After which I attended a course at Ghajnsielem School of Art. From there I learnt different methods of gilding, using aluminium leaf, gold leaf and gilding with bole. I do lots of voluntary gilding work in honour of our patron - St. George. This involves gilding with gold leaf on our statues as well as gilding pedestal decorations. The latter are usually covered with layers of aluminium leaf, before a final coat of shellac is added. I have also gilded a number of miniature statues, pedestals, clocks, frames and candle holders for private collections. If I had to pinpoint the job closest to my heart, it would definitely be the processional statue of St. Joseph in St. George’s Basilica, Victoria. This was gilded with bole.



“During this ongoing epidemic, I have much more time to practice my hobby, since we are mostly staying at home. Most of the work that I used to do at the ‘mahzen’ I am now doing it at home. This is a worrying situation, but if everyone follows the directives that are issued, we can return to normal life in a few months.”



Name: Ruth Portelli

Age: 31

Location: Qala

Short Bio: I started singing at a relatively young age, and the first time I stepped onto the stage was during Primary School. From then onwards, there were several who encouraged and helped me to take part in festivals in Gozo. I started singing in the Parish Choir, and enrolled in singing lessons. Today, my manager acts as my moral compass and guide in music, apart from also looking after my social media presence. Whenever I need to practice, I shut myself up in a quiet room, in order to have maximum concentration. I am a bit of a perfectionist so it does take a while to convince myself that a song is good!



“Due to Covid-19, everything was cancelled or postponed. I had several plans for 2020. Together with two others, we had been planning to hold our first classical music concert, apart from numerous opportunities with the choir I form part of. For the very first time ever, I will have a summer without some form of singing, and I would like to use it as an opportunity to breathe, and spend quality time with my daughter and my family.”



Name: Amy Rapa
Age: 24
Location: Ghajnsielem
Short Bio: I started studying the piano at the age of six, with Ms. Jennifer Grech. I obtained the ATCL Diploma in Piano Performance in 2012 and perform as a pianist with orchestras and ensembles, and also accompany various singers, choirs and instrumentalists. I have also played in various musical productions, most recently in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat at Teatru Astra and Sound of Music at the Oratory Don Bosco. I am currently the resident pianist of the local band – Brasstubes and also the director of the Xewkija Parish Children's Choir - Kor Uljed il-Battista. In 2018 I graduated as a Mechanical Engineer from the University of Malta.



“From daily rehearsals and a very hectic schedule, suddenly all rehearsals and performances were cancelled due to Covid-19. We had to find new ways to sing, perform and make music together. The first idea was to join the children of Kor Uljed il-Battista to virtually sing together from their homes, with the help of my brother Simon who took care of the video editing. That was the first of many videos put together with different singers. Due to the current situation, I am spending a lot more time at home and using this time to plan and prepare for when we eventually play, sing and perform together again.”



Name: Maria Mifsud
Age: 25
Location: Kerċem
Short Bio: I feel blessed to have graduated with a Masters Degree in Scoring for Film, Television and Video Games from Berklee College of Music (Valencia). As a pianist and violinist I have performed both at a national and international level and as a composer I have received awards in international competitions. I feel honoured to have conducted and professionally recorded my compositions with film orchestras at AIR Studios, Palau de les Arts and East Connection. Complementing my music background, I am a holder of a Masters Degree in Teaching and Learning Music, BA(Hons) in Music, PG(Cert) in Online and Distance Education, LMusLCM, ATCL and AMusTCL.



“The COVID-19 situation has taken every sector by surprise, not least the music and education sector. Since schools closed, I have been creating music resources and uploading them for my students online. This situation has given me the opportunity to embrace technology and all it has to offer for teaching and learning. Moreover, I have continued to work on my current and upcoming music projects. This situation gave me the opportunity to spend more quality time with my family whilst appreciating the work of all health care professionals. Rather than waiting for a special occasion to celebrate, I consider every day a blessing and a reason to celebrate life.”



Name: Pierre Louis Attard

Age: 26

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I graduated as an Ian Tomlin scholar with first-class honours from Edinburgh Napier University, also receiving the Hebberts Prize for strings. As a BOV Joseph Calleja Foundation scholar, I recently graduated with a Master of Music degree with Distinction in violin performance at the Royal Welsh College of Music.

In 2010, I made my foreign debut and in 2012, I debuted as solo violinist with the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, of which I am also a member. I also used to be a member of the Mediterranean Youth Orchestra, a leader of the Malta Youth Orchestra and the Royal Welsh Chamber Orchestra. I currently teach the violin at the Gozo Visual and Performing Arts School.



Covid-19 brought a drastic change to my lifestyle. My work as a violinist within the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra has come to a standstill. However, new means of performance, using online platforms and social media, are being explored, with musicians asked to record some individual video projects or join small chamber groups to contribute to the orchestra's 'new ways' of connecting with its audience and beyond. On the other hand, in my capacity as a violin tutor, lessons are still being delivered to students through 'online-teaching'. In my opinion, face-to-face teaching ensures a stronger connection, with students tending to be more engaged and focused. However, one must be thankful for the technological means available nowadays: while, of course, the world somehow abruptly changed, it did not stop (completely) either.



Name: Andrew Portelli

Age: 27

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I graduated in Fine Arts from Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology. I have been involved in many artistic ventures since my teens. I love designing and constructing stage sets which range from opera to party props. I was also obsessed by street decorations since I was of a very young age. Mr Joseph Cauchi was the one who introduced me to the marbling technique, and since then I have been producing works for the village feasts around Malta and Gozo.



I am a bar owner and had to close my premises due to Covid-19. However this has given me much more time to practise my hobbies.



Name: Amadeo John Cassar

Age: 15

Location: Xewkija

Short Bio: I am currently learning how to play different types of string instruments including ukulele, bass and guitar. I am taking formal guitar lessons with Joseph Azzopardi. Whenever I find the time, I practise on my instruments. My favourite musicians are Rob Scallon, Flea, Brian May and Jaco Pastorius. For me music was not really the path I wanted to choose. It just somehow came out of the blue and now it fulfils my life. I also hope to learn other lesser-known instruments like the kalimba and the theremin. My message to all other young people is to heed that little voice inside their head because it could be calling upon them to open up a new road in their future careers.



Covid-19 did not affect either my playing or my learning. It rather gave me more time to practice and to improve my playing. I am also having online guitar lessons as well as attempting to record an album. ”



Name: Steve Buttigieg

Age: 16

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: I started learning the piano at the age of 7 with Ms Maureen Zerafa. I admit that throughout the years there were several times when I almost gave up and wanted to stop, but thanks to my mother's support and with God's help I continued with my piano studies. I am very happy with the progress I have made so far. I am also determined to pursue my music studies at University. Currently I am waiting to sit for the first Piano Diploma exam which was postponed due to Covid-19.



Ironically, Covid-19 had a positive impact on my piano studies. Since I have been spending more time at home I have more time to practise and experiment with my talent. ”





Name: Fr Mario Curmi

Age: 30

Location: Xaghra

Short Bio: After 7 years of studying at the Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Gozo I was ordained priest on 20th May 2016. I continued my studies in the city of Salamanca in Spain where I obtained the Licentiate of Sacred Scripture. After those 2 years I started a new adventure as a missionary in Guatemala, Central America. I have been serving at the parish in Izabal for 2 years, where together with another Gozitan priest, I take care of children and youth groups, the children's choir and a music school. The parish is spread over a jungle where I visit around 28 more villages to celebrate mass and other sacraments as well as to visit the poor.



“ Covid-19 has also affected our parishioners. The number of cases is low but the economic consequences are dire. Jobs have been lost. Families are unable to buy food and are living hand to mouth. As a result, we are running a food bank for about 100 families, but we rely heavily on donations to keep it running. Financially, we depend on the generosity of Maltese and Gozitan people, and it is through the funds that we receive from them that we can continue this service. Food bags usually last 15 days. We wish we could help more people, but sadly we do not have the means to satisfy all the demand. But with God's help and our benefactors' we will continue striving to help those in need. ”



Name: Loredana Agius

Age: 16

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: From the age of 4, I started my vocal coaching. Growing up I learnt various singing techniques and the beauty of the voice. I participated and won various singing festivals both locally and abroad. I won the Trixie International Festival in Bulgaria and the Tra La La Festival in Macedonia. I placed 2nd at the Carpathians Star Festival in Romania and in the Prishtina Kids Festival in Kosovo. Locally I was a finalist in Sanremo Junior Malta and in the Entertainers Singing Challenge, which were shown on local TV stations. Every weekend I sing during Holy Mass. I also play the piano and soon will be completing my theory and practice exams with the Trinity Guildhall College, London.

“ The Covid-19 situation made me appreciate the little things that normally I took for granted. I missed my singing during masses, my local gigs and most of all I missed school and my friends. ”





Name: Jean Carl Muscat

Age: 16

Location: Munxar

Short Bio: I have been playing the piano for the last 8 years. I started learning this instrument at the Gozo Visual and Performing Arts School. I have always loved music and it was my wish since I was very young to learn the piano. Since piano lessons are held once a week I found that it was important to practice daily at home for a number of hours so I can improve my skill. Apart from the piano I also play the trombone, which I have been playing for almost 3 years.



“ Because of Covid-19, I have been finding more time to play and also to create small projects and share them on social media to express my talents on a digital platform. ”



Name: Joseph Azzopardi

Age: 32

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: Although I started playing the guitar at 16 years of age, music is an integral part of my life. Not a day passes that I don't pick up my guitar or try to create a new melody. Music gives me satisfaction and helps me confront beautiful experiences as well as less pleasant ones. Through music I gained confidence and managed to build a circle of friends and contacts also from abroad. I am currently very anxious to release my first album with my band Upper Lip as well as to work on new music projects.



“ The Covid-19 situation worked well in certain aspects since I am finding more time to practise due to spending more time at home. However I feel that music involves collaboration and playing with other people, something that is not currently possible. I believe that this situation helped us appreciate art more and how much art provides comfort to those who are going through difficult challenges. ”



Name: Mark Laurence Zammit

Age: 28

Location: Sannat

Short Bio: My work entails serving in different capacities, as a journalist, TV producer, presenter, writer and composer. My work is focused on creating a free and safe space in a democracy where people can voice their opinions and discuss the present and future of their country, a place where people are able to ask questions and hold elected authorities to account. It is also a space where we fight for social justice.



If it weren't for the constant underlying fear that I or someone from my family or friends might get sick, it was wonderful. I spent more time with my family, read more books, wrote more and prayed more. Personally, it was all a very peaceful experience. Work was slightly more difficult though. Social injustices and inequities are through the roof and we felt responsible to answer questions and voice people's concerns more than ever during this tough time. At times we managed, at other times, we felt helpless and defeated. Overall, it was a huge lesson for us all.



Name: Eve Elizabeth Cassar

Age: 11

Location: Xewkija

Short Bio: I started drawing and painting at a very young age after being inspired by my father who is also an artist. I like to experiment with various media including acrylic paint, watercolour and fabric paint. I participated in various art competitions and won various prizes. I am lucky to have my own studio area at home and I already had my first mini personal exhibition thanks to Gozo College Middle School, where I attend. Art for me is an expression of my feelings. My favourite artists are Claude Monet, Vincent Van Gogh and Leonardo da Vinci. I especially like Northern American landscape painting in the style of Bob Ross. I hope to continue studying art and become a professional artist or an interior designer.



Thanks to Covid-19, I have more time at home. I learnt a lot of new things that I did not know before and have produced several landscapes and portraits that I post on social media. I had very positive feedback and this encourages me to move forward in my search for new techniques and ideas.





Name: Charlene Attard

Age: 31

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: From a young age I wanted to become a teacher. I used to play with my dolls, pretending that I am their teacher. When I grew older, I became more fascinated by the teaching profession. I discovered the German language in Secondary School and was soon attracted to the beauty of the language as well as the country's culture.

Covid-19 instantly put a halt our normal daily life and that of the school. Instead of meeting our students face to face, we are now meeting virtually. It was not an easy change as it came upon us suddenly and unexpectedly. We had never used the online digital tools before, but we were guided and trained. Today we can communicate with our students during online lessons as well as track their progress. Thanks to technology, the lessons are still going on in the same way as if they were being held in school.



Name: Daniela Spiteri

Age: 16

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: I am a student and will be starting my first year at 6th Form in October. I plan to continue my studies in science subjects. I play the clarinet and my journey as a musician started when I used to see my sister playing the flute with Soċjetà Filarmonika Mnarja - Nadur. In 2011 I started studying music theory with the same band with Mro Dr Joseph Grech. I then started practising the clarinet for the first time with my teacher Marvin Grech. I have been learning this instrument for around 6 years now. It wasn't an easy journey but as with all things, with commitment and courage, everything is possible.

The Covid-19 situation affected many individuals. As a bandswoman, summer does not seem to be looking as usual. Since feasts were cancelled because of the pandemic it won't be possible to play. I used to go to several feasts with different bands to play during processions and marches. Lessons are currently being done online so we can continue practising our instruments.





Name: Fiona Formosa

Age: 25

Location: Gharb

Short Bio: I am passionate about music. At 6 years of age I started learning theory with Soċjetà Filarmonika Mnarja – Nadur. I decided to study the clarinet. Two years later I started playing with Mnarja Band. I also play with other Gozitan bands which fills up my summers. I participated in several programmes and concerts as well as with orchestras under different bandmasters. I also took part in a local opera in Gharb. For 2 years I formed part of an orchestra for this opera which is part of a yearly festival 'Make Music Great'. These are all experiences which help me in my musical journey and build my self-confidence. I highly encourage people of all ages to join local bands through which they will also be contributing to the local communities.



“ It is not a nice situation that we found ourselves in during this pandemic. At one point we were moving at a fast pace when suddenly we found ourselves living a tranquil life. I always used to be occupied with rehearsals for feast programmes or recordings, so I was practising frequently. Currently, with chores and everyday work I don't find that much time to practise at home. However I teamed up with 2 other clarinet players and our teacher gave us pieces of music. We then recorded ourselves and joined them in videos which we shared on social media. This way we continued practising and felt satisfied with our results. It wasn't an easy change in life, however we can now appreciate the beauty of life more. ”



Name: Marielise Abela

Age: 23

Location: Gharb

Short Bio: Music was always present in my life since my father was also a musician, so I started loving music from a very young age. At age 7, I attended the Gozo School of Music and later started playing the clarinet with Ghaqda Mużikali Viżitazzjoni Gharb where I've been involved for 15 years. I started studying the clarinet under the direction of Mro. George Debono, continued with Mro. George Apap. and finally with Mr. Marvin Grech. It is a hobby which requires a lot of responsibility, determination and practise. I try to practise every day even if only for a few minutes. It always fills me with satisfaction when I manage to play a new piece or when I play in concerts.



“ The Covid-19 situation came unexpectedly and my life completely changed both in my profession as a teacher, and other planned commitments with local bands. I try to look at it in a positive way and with more free time, I found myself practising more. I connected with other band mates by playing different pieces, each one of us from the comfort of our homes. It's a great satisfaction when you see the pieces that we were studying finally merged together as one successful piece. Of course, nothing beats meeting in person in the band clubs to rehearse but we still tried to keep a positive mind set. I believe that this situation helped us as musicians to focus on our own skills, to be better and this shows us that music can still connect us the way it did before, no matter what the situation is. ”



Name: Darren Cassar

Age: 16

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: Since my dad is a photographer, I was always fascinated by cameras and the gear he uses. I helped him a lot when I was young, setting up lights and testing them on me. One day in 2015 we went to the now dismantled Marsa Power Station. He brought along a simple camera and I loved taking photos that day. I then got interested and started helping him out. He would take me along to his shoots/events and teach me. I would also spend every free minute I had on YouTube looking up information and teaching myself. I now form an active part in our family business, assisting my dad and even shooting my own events and managing my own clients.



“ All events are now cancelled due to Covid-19 so the only thing that I am doing is revisiting my archives and re-publishing some of the content. I am also trying to improve my marketing skills, trying to learn more about the software I use, and making sure that I stay inspired as a creative individual. ”



Name: Mark Attard

Age: 14

Location: Xewkija

Short Bio: I am a Form 4 student at the Sacred Heart Minor Seminary. I have always loved our culture and traditions. When I realized that many children and young people do not have knowledge about Maltese and Gozitan legends I started buying books about these traditional stories and reading them. In an effort to keep these stories alive I decided to start a programme on Radju Prekursur, our community radio in Xewkija. As a young person, I feel it is my responsibility to keep all cultural aspects alive and to pass them on to our generation.



“ The Covid-19 pandemic affected my broadcasting since I could not continue with my radio programmes. However it gave me more time to read legends which I still had not read. With the help of the Minor Seminary School and Aġenzija Żgħażaġh I created videos about interesting legends which were showcased online. ”



Name: Matthew Attard

Age: 20

Location: Xewkija

Short Bio: I am a Seminarian, currently in my second year of formation. This pandemic led to the necessity of finding creative ways of communicating with the people around you. My brother came up with the idea of creating videos in which we read an excerpt or book with the aim of promoting the importance of reading, especially during this difficult time. My work in this project consisted of shooting the video and editing it.

“ Covid-19 affected more or less everyone. This pandemic made me more aware of the fragility of the life we are living. From going about our normal routine we suddenly had nowhere to go. From a more positive perspective, this pandemic gave me more time to practice my hobbies especially video editing.”



Name: John Henry Meilak

Age: 27

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I graduated at the Australian Institute of Fitness, achieving Certificate 3 in Fitness (Group Instructor), Certificate 4 in Fitness (Personal Trainer), Master Trainer Certificate and also achieved Punch Fit Certificate (Boxing Basics). I'm also a Men's Physique competitor which helped me further my experience. My goal is to help others achieve their own personal fitness goals, (Fat/Weight Loss, Resistance/Strength Training, Hypertrophy Training/Muscle gain etc.) by offering them a fun, well organized and professional service. My wish is to make them feel part of something bigger and to help them become entrenched in the world of fitness which will hopefully allow them to enjoy their life to the fullest.

“ COVID-19 hasn't really affected me at all, I'm working out at home at the moment, thankfully I have all the gym equipment I need as well, so I'm still on the same training routine. Regarding all my Personal Training clients, some do private online sessions with me and others follow my "Home Workouts" which I post every week on social media. My thoughts on this situation? Its just a fresh start, I'm sure we'll get back to normal some time soon, just hang on in there.”





Name: Maria Camilleri

Age: 20

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: I have been interested in anything artistic from when I was young, I always had Art as a main subject at school, but for the last 3 years, I started experimenting with Digital Art since my B.A degree is mainly based on this type of media. Apart from school assignments, I do multiple freelance jobs, mainly logo creation and branding, posters and Ads, App and Web design and development and so on.



Covid-19 has affected me because I am graduating this year. It will probably be very difficult to find a job; however, since I work a lot with digital media, I am still very busy with creating and designing new material.

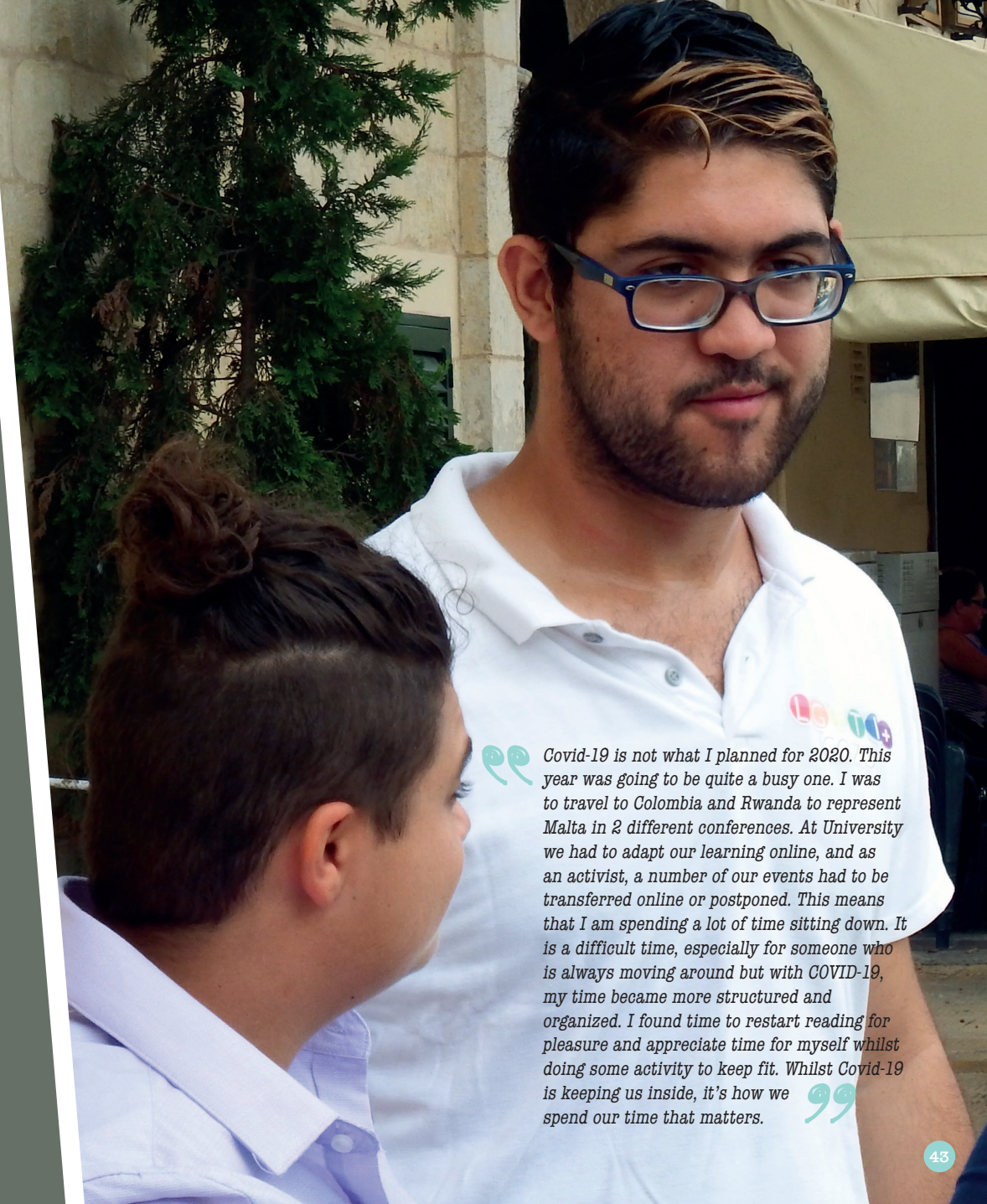


Name: Eman Borg

Age: 25

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I started activism at a young age through broadcasting. At age 15, I co-founded the first Rugby Club in Gozo and 4 years later founded LGBTI+ Gozo. In 2016, I was elected within the National Youth Council of Malta in which I also served as Secretary-General. In 2017, I was awarded the Queen's Young Leaders Award and I had the honour to meet Her Majesty. Through this engagement, I am now a youth advisor within the Queen's Commonwealth Trust and the Maltese Youth Ambassador for the Commonwealth.



Covid-19 is not what I planned for 2020. This year was going to be quite a busy one. I was to travel to Colombia and Rwanda to represent Malta in 2 different conferences. At University we had to adapt our learning online, and as an activist, a number of our events had to be transferred online or postponed. This means that I am spending a lot of time sitting down. It is a difficult time, especially for someone who is always moving around but with COVID-19, my time became more structured and organized. I found time to restart reading for pleasure and appreciate time for myself whilst doing some activity to keep fit. Whilst Covid-19 is keeping us inside, it's how we spend our time that matters.



Name: Fabian Galea

Age: 34

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: I started singing at an early age and took up classical voice studies at the Johann Strauss School of Music with mezzo-soprano Claire Massa and later on with Bulgarian Soprano Andriana Yordanova. I have ventured in various local musical theatre productions. I am a member of Anima Gospel Choir directed by Pamela Bezzina, I am also a member of the Chorus Urbanus Choir under the direction of Mro. John Galea and I am also a resident singer within DCapitals Big Band directed by Mro. George Apap. Practice makes perfect however rehearsals for me are the best experience as you learn a lot from them, you have fun with your singing partners and you also feel part of something great. It gives you a sense of belonging and when a performance is done and dusted, the satisfaction is amazing.

2020 was supposed to be a year full to the brim with performances including a musical, live gigs with my band and lots of travelling, most of which were cancelled due to this pandemic. My biggest disappointment is the postponement of the musical "Sister Act" at Teatru Astra. We had to stop rehearsing just before we entered into production week, which needless to say was a huge disappointment for all those involved. Another disappointment was the postponement of gigs, weddings and the annual concert with DCapitals Big Band due to this pandemic. Whilst staying inside, singing has been my best therapy and it has kept me sane!



Name: Stefan Scerri

Age: 17

Location: Nadur

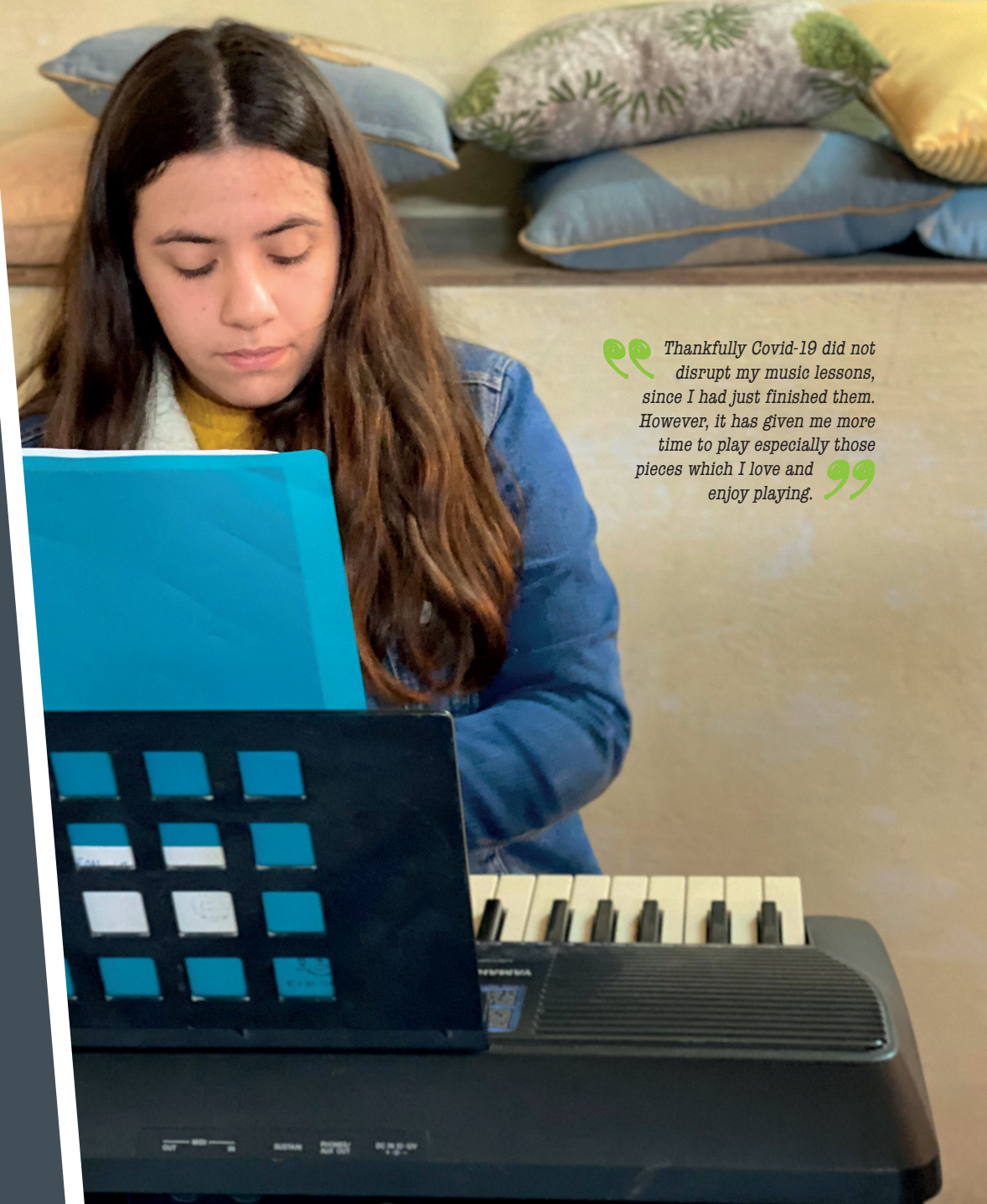
Short Bio: I started cycling training about 3 years ago but since a very young age I always enjoyed riding my bike outdoors just for fun and to meet my friends. I then decided to start training at a competitive level. Today I can say that it was a very good decision I took as I met new people and learned a lot of new things. Apart from cycling I also play the violin. In my opinion it is a very complex instrument to learn to play but really helps you to get more into music and learn about new genres very easily as I have studied a lot of pieces written by different famous composers. Now I am planning to start my diploma in violin studies.

During the Covid-19 pandemic I had more time to train and to practise at home alongside the studying.





Name: Martha Scerri
Age: 17
Location: Nadur
Short Bio: I had driven my mum crazy to let me start piano lessons. I have been playing the piano since the summer I was going into year 2. I was only five years old which means I have been studying theory and practice for 12 years! I have managed to finish Grade 8 in both practice and theory, which was quite challenging, since at times I had to balance studying school material with practising or revising theory. I was really stressed at times, so it was quite difficult for me to finish the grades. Unfortunately, today I do not practise as much as I used to since school work has become so demanding. Practice involves hard work and at times it is quite stressful. However, it is very relaxing when you play for leisure. I enjoy playing pieces of music from movies or popular songs.



“Thankfully Covid-19 did not disrupt my music lessons, since I had just finished them. However, it has given me more time to play especially those pieces which I love and enjoy playing.”



Name: Maria Scerri
Age: 14
Location: Nadur
Short Bio: I started learning to play the piano when I was 6 years old and I'm still learning. I am now studying Grade 8 in theory and Grade 7 in practice. I have a lesson once a week. When I was 8 years old I started noticing that I had a lot of time to spare and decided to start learning another instrument. I chose the cello because I really like its relaxing sound. I am now in Grade 6 of my studies and I am looking forward to taking part in more concerts. I also play in the Gozo Youth Orchestra.

“In this Covid-19 situation, I have lots of time to improve in my studies and find new pieces to play. My theory exam was going to take place on 9th May and my cello exam was going to take place in the last week of March. I have taken advantage of this situation to try to improve my performance. I have piano and cello lessons once a week online. I am taking advantage of social media by playing the cello with my siblings and posting them on Facebook. My friends and I have daily calls together on Messenger, I really miss being around them in person but this is all for the best.”





Name: Simon Rapa

Age: 15

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: I started editing videos around a year ago by producing some features. Editing is a hobby that requires lots of time and patience until you get the hang of it and learn how to be able to create a final product. Apart from this, I have been studying the piano for the last 8 years. I have also been playing the trumpet for 6 years.



For the past 3 months I have had more time to practise my hobby since we were not attending school. Through videos, people, groups and organizations I could create material to be able to share on social media and reach those who follow their music or talents. My first video was for the 'Kor Ulied il-Battista' which was followed by several other videos for singers, musicians and choirs and also some documentaries and interviews for Xewkija Parish.



Name: Joseph Mallia

Age: 22

Location: Żebbuġ

Short Bio: I have been a Police Constable for nearly four years. During this time, I have served as an officer in the community working closely with the public, engaging with them and providing support. These duties define what it means to be a policeman. When I first applied to join the force, my knowledge about police work was rather restricted. Nowadays, I understand how vast it is, and I daresay that perhaps people do not always appreciate what we do. A policeman's job is not always easy, and it can be risky but in spite of this, it carries an element of adventure and every day is a new experience.



Covid-19 affected our work considerably both from a criminal aspect and the filing of reports. We had to ensure that all the measures in force were being followed so as to control the spread of the virus. When going out to investigate a report, we used to be concerned about what we would find, but during the pandemic we needed to take extra precautions because of the virus, while also checking on quarantined people to ensure that everything necessary was being done to control the spread. I would like to express my gratitude to the public for their cooperation during such a difficult time.





Name: Elena Attard

Age: 17

Location: Fontana

Short Bio: I've always loved reading and losing myself in books. However, growing up I realised the world is different from the one I built in my own imagination, yet still vibrant and interesting. I began to branch out into different genres including non-fiction. Through articles and journals I read, I took an interest in social sciences, and recognized the importance of activism. I looked for programs such as MEP Malta, which provides a platform for youth to express their opinions while learning a variety of skills such as debating and public speaking. Words have the power to change us. I write whenever an occasion takes my interest such as prompts, competitions and events around me. I practise by reading all that I can, conversing with different people and asking many questions.



“ Due to Covid-19, I've had the opportunity to take part in Youth of Gozo, an amazing initiative. I have had more time to write, but it has also taken away from me the MEP international session, which I was really looking forward to. It would have been an opportunity to help me project my voice on an international level. I applied for different competitions and joined different organizations to keep myself active and to motivate myself to keep writing. Covid-19 has given me plenty of time alone to question what I want to do with the rest of my life and what I want to dedicate it to. It has certainly made me realise how fragile and precious life and the human race are as well as helping me to understand the importance of physical contact and relationships with friends and extended family. ”



Name: Samuel Farrugia

Age: 23

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: In my art, I've always liked to capture the details of objects, people or living things; their uniqueness and aliveness. I started drawing everything that I could see or touch ever since I held a pencil. Education never worked out for me as I have dyslexia so school was hard, but drawing was the one thing I could feel confident about and actually be good at. I used to like getting detention at school, as I would be able to draw, or secretly carve into the table. At age 8, I attended the School of Art in Ghajnsielem with Vince Caruana. I then took lessons at a studio named Graham Gurr. I'm currently a jewellery-maker and designer at my father's shop at Ta' Dbiegi Jewellery.



“ This Covid-19 pandemic gave me more time on my hands as my dad had to close the shop for a while. This allowed me to create and do different things that I didn't have time to do before. ”



Name: Josianne Cutajar

Age: 30

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: From a young age I believed in the importance of activism. Whilst still a law student, I successfully contested the local council elections in my village, Nadur, wherein I served as a Councillor and Minority Leader for two consecutive legislatures. I was also active in various roles within the Labour Party throughout the years. My biggest milestone so far, however, was being elected as Member of the European Parliament. As the first Gozitan to be elected as MEP and as the youngest ever elected from our islands so far, I have a motivational message of empowerment to pass on to our young generation.



“During this period of Covid-19, I miss the personal contact with my family, friends, colleagues and constituency. We had to strongly adapt to the circumstances and the work is still ongoing, more virtually than ever. This is essential since we need to be there for our citizens constantly, especially in these challenging times. In the current circumstances, I am appreciating more than ever life’s blessings.”



Name: Christoph Schwaiger

Age: 24

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: I’m currently working as a journalist with Newsbook.com.mt. I started contributing science-related articles in 2016 and moved on to writing full-time. My main areas of interest are local politics, health, and education. I enjoy my job as I get to learn about different subjects and I meet interesting people along the way. The Washington Post’s slogan is ‘Democracy Dies in Darkness’. I think this accurately summarises the importance of good, independent journalism. This year Malta ranked 81/180 in the RSF World Press Freedom Index. It’s not always easy being a journalist here, but it can be satisfying.



“The coronavirus pandemic has been 2020’s biggest global news story so far. The articles I’m writing at the moment are mainly related to the ongoing crisis. In Malta, journalists gained visibility during the daily COVID-19 briefings as people could see and hear them asking questions. During the pandemic I increased the hours I worked from home in order to reduce physical contact with people. The virus had an impact on the media industry as there was a drop in advertising which is a main source of revenue for a number of outlets. I think that journalists played an important role as they could fight misinformation and provide advice to people on how to stay safe.”



Name: Christian Sacco Xerri

Age: 34

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I am a very positive person, always with a smile and love to support and help others. I always seek to involve myself in performing arts as it gives me satisfaction and I feel alive. I started dancing at a young age with different companies. I also represented Malta in different shows abroad. I always felt the need to dance as it gave me the opportunity to overcome challenges in life and boosted my self-esteem and self-confidence whilst releasing my anxieties. Four years ago I founded "3Rio Gozitan Dance Company" that represents my family and Gozo. All these gave me the will power to believe more in other individuals and through dancing I started to support other people that might be going through rough times or suffering from mental health distress, problems or illnesses.



Due to Covid-19 I had to cancel one of the main dance shows that I was going to do together with other Gozitan dance companies to raise funds for a child that I sponsor in India who needs a major operation due to a disability. We had everything prepared so it was very hard. This pandemic also affected me mentally as I am a very hyper person. I continued practising and also focused on my thesis. I reflected more on nature and could see that the world is healing slowly and animals are freer. I am also appreciating the time I am spending with my family.



Name: Sylvana Cardona

Age: 25

Location: Kerċem

Short Bio: The challenges that I was faced with, be it on a personal and professional level, have taught me to be disciplined and perseverant. This has also strengthened my self-confidence, which in my opinion has been pivotal in chasing my dreams. For instance, being able to perform and share my talent in front of an audience, has always been a challenge. Being able to share the love I have for music by overcoming fear and negative thoughts has been of great satisfaction. My message to readers is for them to continue believing in themselves because they are worth it.



Covid -19 has brought with it a drastic global change. This change required adaptation which is not always easy; especially when the 'normal routine' had to be altered abruptly. This pandemic has immersed me into the reality of the different challenges I have to face as a Social Worker. Working in a medical field, in a geriatric ward, close to vulnerable patients has never been easy. I have realized during this period of time that in such difficult times of fear and uncertainty, the challenges you face strengthen you and help you achieve your full potential.





Name: Jonathan-George Grima

Age: 24

Location: Kerċem

Short Bio: I had been studying music theory and playing the piano for about 10 years before I discovered electronic music so I was already familiar with the concepts of keys and tempo which are common to all music styles. I have performed in a number of major clubs in both Malta and Gozo and I was also lucky enough to play in Italy, Slovenia and the UK. There are a lot of factors to consider as a DJ: identifying what the crowd wants, song selection, managing the energy level in a room, and of course, knowing your equipment. Every event is different so djing is as much a combination of practising and building your repertoire of techniques as it is of expecting the unexpected and taking calculated risks. It's a learning curve. Every mistake is also a lesson.



COVID19 has been particularly bad for the music industry in Malta primarily because all music establishments and hangouts are closed due to the social distancing measures. On the upside I do get to spend a lot of time in the studio creating new stuff, but really and truly, nothing beats the feeling of being in front of a crowd and having everyone dance to what I am playing. I also managed to finally set up most of my studio properly given that I am spending a lot of time at home.



Name: AnnMarie Azzopardi

Age: 27

Location: Kerċem

Short Bio: From a very young age, makeup interested me as it was something I felt comfortable doing. I was a self-taught make up artist until 2018, when I decided to follow my dream and continue studying about the skin, face and makeup by doing an intensive course. I am now a qualified Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) professional makeup artist. I am constantly on social media looking for all kinds of inspiration. As a makeup artist, I specialise in special occasion makeup, bridal makeup, natural makeup and more. I try to be as creative and focused as I possibly can. I am extremely professional in my line of work and strive to make my clients happy with the result.



Ever since the Covid-19 pandemic hit, it had an impact on the world of work and many were affected. Salons were closed and I had more free time during the weekends. Applying makeup is something I love to do and even though I had nowhere to go I decided to apply different makeup looks on myself and I thought it is a great idea to record it and share it with others. Tutorials are made to guide others and help them apply the right makeup for the right look. Covid-19 isn't just fear and anxiety, it also gave us time to think and do the things we love to do and share them with others.



Name: Daphne Delicata

Age: 13

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: I started studying piano at the age of 4 with my father, and I loved it straight away. It is hard work and involves a lot of daily practice. I achieved the ARSM diploma at age 10, the LTCL diploma at age 12 and have performed in many countries, including Italy, the UK, Vienna, Russia and Carnegie Hall in New York, both as a solo performer and with an orchestra. I also performed at Teatru Manoel in Valletta and for the President of Malta at San Anton. Last year I auditioned for the Yehudi Menuhin School in the UK and I was very happy when I became the first Maltese ever to be accepted. It is hard being away from my family but the school is a lot of fun and I have met many talented students from all over the world. I want to become a professional pianist. I also love art and I really enjoy drawing.



I study in the UK at the Yehudi Menuhin School, a school for those who want to become professional musicians. School had to close because of the Covid-19 pandemic and I am now attending school online. I miss my friends a lot but I'm happy to know that they are all safe at home. Right now we would have been preparing to go on tour in Scotland to perform in several places but unfortunately this has had to be postponed. This situation can make people feel very lonely, especially our elderly who have to stay home to be safe, so I have been sharing my piano music on Facebook as my way of giving something back to the community.



Name: Daniel Cassar

Age: 16

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: I am currently studying Networking at the Gozo MCAST. I started practising music when I was 11 years old. I first started with a cheap mixer and free programmes in my bedroom. I still practise in my room, but I have updated with a newer setup and better programmes. I search for songs, install and edit them or create new material. I have also started doing gigs at parties. I was attracted to djing because I love music and the role of a DJ always fascinated me. It involves lots of patience but I truly enjoy it.



Covid-19 affected my work as I cannot play in clubs. I can only play from home and have taken the initiative of doing live sessions on social media. This pandemic affected my life since I cannot go out to meet my friends.





Name: Lukas Farrugia

Age: 19

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I started working as a Goldsmith 3 years ago. I used to work during the summer holidays. Last year I stopped attending school to continue this profession like my father. At first I only used to help around a little bit as I was still too young. I used to help my father but then I started learning the craft. The more I work the more I want to try out new things.

My work started improving considerably, and last year I decided to switch to working full time. I work and practise in my father's shop, where he has been doing this work for the past 40 years.



This pandemic of Covid-19 affected me a lot since we had to close our shop. Both my father, my brother and I lost some work. We stopped our daily routine of going to the workshop. My brother and I also missed an opportunity of attending a course abroad. Through this course I was going to invest in my work and myself.



Name: Giuseppina Galea

Age: 22

Location: Xaghra

Short Bio: I have formed part of the Malta Special Olympics Team for the last 7 years. I started training in Gozo then with Maltese athletes. I made lots of new friends through both groups. After 2 years of training I was encouraged to start cycling training to participate in the Olympic Games in Abu Dhabi. It was a big challenge for me as I had to be very disciplined in my training. It was not an easy journey but the experience in Abu Dhabi was fantastic! I competed in the 2K Time Trial in which I won a gold medal, the 5K Time Trial and 5K Road Race. I am proud to have represented my country and we were awarded the Medal of the Republic by the President of Malta.



The times we are currently experiencing are totally different from the normality we have always been used to. However, I am still managing to train from home, something I usually do when the weather does not permit. Apart from this, I am doing the exercises I used to do at the gym from home now. I also have online training with my friends together with our coach, as we are preparing to hopefully participate in the next Special Olympic games. I hope this pandemic challenge passes quickly, although I will never give up.





Name: Joseph Grech

Age: 18

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I was born in May 2002 and I started learning the piano 9 years ago when I was 8 years old. Music had always been one of my interests and I enjoyed playing with toy instruments. For this reason I then started to attend piano and music theory lessons and since then I have sat for several exams. Like every other musical instrument, the piano requires a lot of practice. Four years ago I also started learning the clarinet with a local band club. Apart from music, my other passions include drawing, travelling and learning about different cultures.



Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I have more time that I can spend playing the piano. I find that music provides a respite from the stressful times, which we are currently living in.



Name: Nicole Portelli

Age: 23

Location: Kerċem

Short Bio: I started dancing and playing the piano at the age of 5, with these hobbies growing with me over the years as I explored several genres. Unfortunately, I had to reduce my time playing the piano over the years as I moved to Malta to further my studies, yet dancing always remained close to my heart and inspired me to choose the university course I am currently enrolled in. My hobbies have provided me with several opportunities over the years, which I am grateful for. It takes a lot of time and energy to maintain these hobbies, but every time I would get on stage to perform, I would realise it was all worth it.



Whilst the current situation of Covid-19 is far from ideal, I have attempted to look at the glass half full during these challenging times. I returned back to Gozo and tried to make the best use of my time at home, realising that this was an opportunity to once again start playing the piano and dance more. My hobbies have been a great way for me to take a break whilst working on assignments as they re-energise me and help me feel better. They have also helped me connect more with my sister who also has similar hobbies, and we have been spending a lot of time choreographing, dancing and playing our instruments together.





Name: Emma Portelli

Age: 12

Location: Kerċem

Short Bio: I started studying music and dance at the age of five. I can play the piano and the violin and dance ballet and jazz. I also practise other sports, like basketball. I form part of a group of young violinists and we practise together regularly. I really enjoy myself when we get the chance to play in front of an audience. Although I normally lead quite a busy life, and have daily extra-curricular activities, I find these help me to manage my time well and I perform better at school.



The current situation of Covid-19 has led me to spend all day indoors. This is very unusual for me and it took some time to adjust. Luckily, my sister who is currently studying abroad got to come back home and continue her studies online. As we share common hobbies, we are spending our days playing music and dancing together.



Name: Peter Aquilina

Age: 18

Location: Nadur

Short Bio: From a young age I loved drawing, so I started attending The Wistin Camilleri School of Fine Arts. I continued studying Art at Ordinary and Advanced Levels. Currently I have taken an interest in clay sculpture and portraiture. I try to find time to practise and read related articles.



The situtaion of Covid-19 helped me to find more time to work on more artistic works which I had in mind and had been longing to find the time to do.





Name: The Travellers

Location: Various

Short Bio: Originally starting as a band between friends, The Travellers got together in 2013 to try and create something different in the local music scene at the time.

The band started experimenting with working on a mix of contemporary music while incorporating brass and Maltese lyrics. With no pointers and footsteps to follow, they set out to release their debut single 'Sempliċità' followed by a number of debut EPs all of which have topped local charts on both radios and the PRS.

Clayton (Bassist), Joseph (Trumpet), Chris (Main Vocals) and Andrew (Guitarist), were the original members who started playing together, while, Sylvano (Saxophone) and Michael (Drummer) joined the rest of the band later on in 2013.



Photo credits:
Outfits: Charles & Ron
Photo: Carlton Agius
Hair Styling: Hair & Co Studios

🗣️ Covid-19 was hard for us as we can't perform in any gigs. Since we have more time on our hands we decided to focus more on the song writing of our new upcoming album. This has allowed us to improve the quality and the number of songs that we could present in this album. We are proud of the work we have been doing with this newfound free time, and we are very hopeful for the future. 🗣️



Name: Katya Muscat

Age: 31

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I started decorating cakes when my daughter was born, as I wanted to do her 1st Birthday cake. I enjoyed it so much that I continued to practise and improve this hobby. There are several cake decorating styles which I have tried and I enjoy them all. However lately I have been focusing more on buttercream covered cakes. I love both the way they look and the taste! As soon as I finish decorating a cake I am already thinking of how I will decorate the next.

🗣️ During the Covid-10 pandemic I had more time to practise. In fact I took the opportunity to enrol in an online course. 🗣️





Name: Ylainia Zammit

Age: 25

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: I have always been interested in photography and everything else related to it. However, my interest developed further when I had my son and I wanted to capture beautiful memories to last a lifetime. I have been practicing photography for over 5 years now, and I am always eager to learn new techniques. I tried exploring different types of photography, however portraiture has always been my favourite, especially when children are featured. It is very satisfying to know that people will be cherishing the photos which I capture for a very long time.



I had scheduled photoshoots, which had to be cancelled due to Covid-19. However, I really enjoyed capturing photos of my own family at home or on countryside walks. It was a well-needed break, and it took me back to my roots. It was a nice reminder of the time when I started taking photos in the beginning.



Name: Daniel Mercieca

Age: 25

Location: Victoria

Short Bio: From a young age I showed interest in art. I have recently finished my philosophical and theological studies in Rome. My interest in art continued to develop with my studies, as art has the power to communicate a religious message to all people and can be used as a path towards evangelization. In Rome, under the instruction of Professor Luca Morelli, I also studied anatomy. I believe that sacred images are a silent form of language, which have the power to speak loudly, touching the soul of men and women leading them to God. Simplicity and colours act in the same manner as harmony in music touching the inner feelings. I believe that simple images will have a greater power to deliver the substance of the religious message.



Returning home from Rome due to Covid-19 presented an unexpected experience leading me to deep reflection. Continuing my university courses by long distance learning was a new experience which presented new challenges. However having more time for myself, during the pandemic I had time to experiment with colours and create new paintings.



Name: Fabian Azzopardi

Age: 30

Location: Xewkija

Short Bio: You're never too old to make kites. I'm 30 years old, and kite making is my hobby. When I was younger, my father, my siblings and I used to make kites, and I used to feel amazed every time we managed to fly a kite. We used to do them differently back then with brown paper and glue made from flour and water. Nowadays, we make more colourful ones. All you need are crepe paper, reeds, tape, scissors and thread, and then let creativity take its course. It takes a lot of time to create just one kite, but in the end, you feel so proud.



Covid-19 struck just like a storm in summer. Never in my life have I ever imagined myself in such a situation. I had to stop working and had plenty of time on my hands. The first thing that came to my mind was the kite. I could not remember the last time I made a kite, all I know is that it was a long time ago. I got the things I needed and started making kites. I sometimes get my father to help as they require a lot of time and I take that as some quality time with my father. I forgot what it felt like making kites and I am really enjoying it. On a positive note, Covid-19 gave me plenty of time to practise my hobby again.



Name: Josef Cutajar

Age: 24

Location: Ghajnsielem

Short Bio: I always appreciated interacting with people. This is partly because of the way I was raised. My parents were very open to everyone. This interaction instilled within me a passion for the media world particularly journalism. When I was around 13, I volunteered at Radju Lauretana, the local community radio of Ghajnsielem. Although it was a small and limited radio it was a space for me where I could experiment and learn from my mistakes. It was in this space that I learnt that dreams can become reality. Currently Gozo is many miles away from me because I am working in Brussels in communications. As much as home can be comfortable one cannot grow hence I encourage young people to experience life abroad.



I was highly affected by Covid-19. The base of communication is interaction and we are currently living rare moments where interactions can be fatal. It is not easy to transfer basic communication elements with a simple webcam or small microphone. The news world is reporting the largest story of our generation. However the journalism industry is at the very edge of existence because many advertisements stopped, which meant that many wages suddenly stopped. It is a very serious problem. There is a need for quality people to keep the elected ones on edge. With social media everyone can share their thoughts and it's not always healthy since many times incorrect information spreads faster than the truth.





Name: Daniel Said

Age: 28

Location: Żebbuġ

Short Bio: I started studying for my Degree in Nursing at the University of Malta in 2010 and graduated in 2015 after spending a semester studying in Florence, Italy. I started my Nursing career in an Orthopaedic Ward in Mater Dei Hospital and two years later I was transferred to the Emergency Department where I started my training to become an Emergency Nurse. The training programme was concluded in mid-2019 after two and a half years. I now attend to all sorts of patients in the pre-hospital and in-hospital setting. My three passions in life are nursing, teaching and travelling. As an Emergency Nurse, I am lucky enough to enjoy the first two passions on a daily basis while at work and I travel whenever I'm not working.



In March, all the plans for 2020 were abandoned and I had to move out of my home to keep my family safe from unintentional transmission of COVID-19. At work, policies and infection control protocols were bolstered and updated on a daily basis. Stress levels at work increased due to the increased physical burden from the extra layers of personal protective equipment and also due to the emotional toll. The support received from the Maltese community gave us the strength to carry on during these difficult times and once again was a testament to the solidarity the Maltese are known for.



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