

SLICE OF LOCAL FOLKLORI

CARNIVAL IN MALTA 1928



"Carnival in Malta 1928" was the sole effort of Alfred Vella Gera (1901-89), an amateur cine enthusiast, than in his twenties. If not the earliest, it was certainly one of the earliest locally produced films by a Maltese and the first to transmit on screen the salient events of our local carnival.

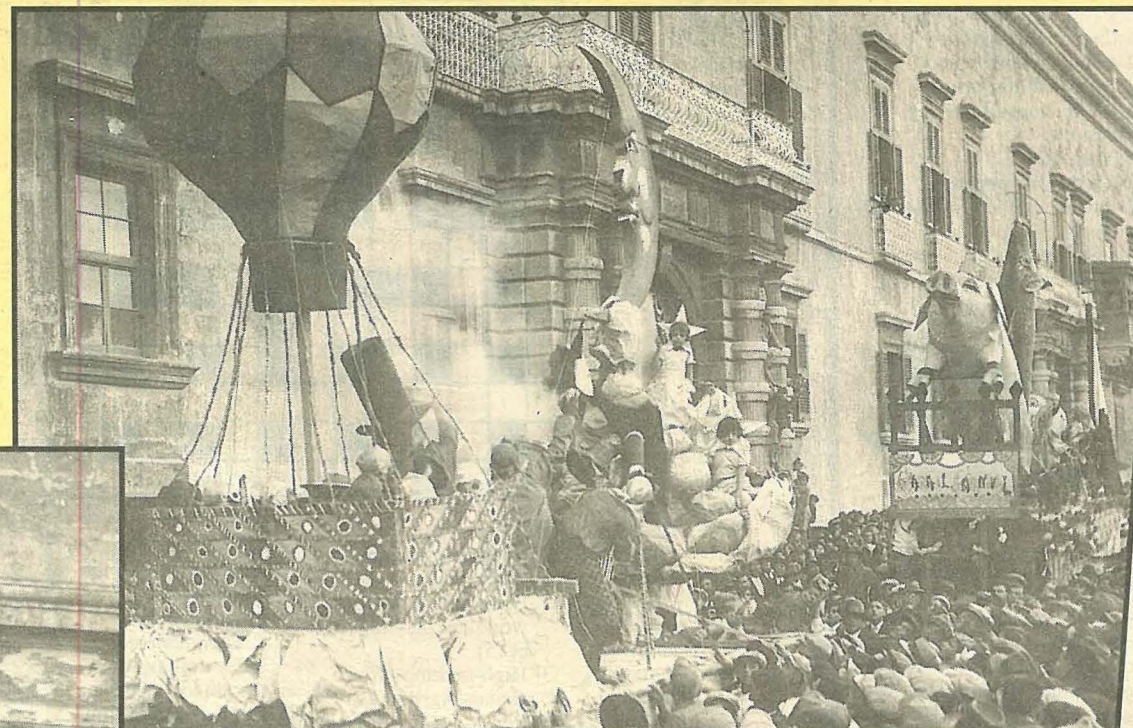
The film was originally produced during the "silent era", before the development of sound, "talkies".

In those pioneering days an orchestra or a band in the cinema itself provided the required "sound" by emphasizing in music highlights of the film whether dramatic or comic. In addition, occasional captions in the film helped the audience to follow the story line.

"Carnival in Malta 1928" was a considerable success. It was first shown in June

1928 at the "Cinema Internazionale", then part of the Auberge D'Auvergne, now the Civil Law Courts; and the "Cinema Commercio", now Cafe Cordina, apart from numerous other local cinemas, receiving favourable press comment. It was also shown to the Maltese community in New York.

As expected, the film concentrates on the defile of grotesque masks, decorated floats, the various companies in costume,



and the dance competition on Palace Square.

However, one cannot but feel a twinge of sadness at the sight of companies in costume coming out of the Royal Opera House, than affectionately known as "Il-Real", still in all its imposing magnificence, and a centre of the island's cultural life, now just a memory and an empty space.

One outstanding feature of pre-war carnival, and eagerly awaited by the crowd, was the presence of political satirical floats mounted by the various political parties or factions lampooning the shortcomings of their adversaries.

It is amusing to note that subsequent press comment on both sides of the political divide had a decided slant, both claiming that the crowd applauded when the satire favoured their party and boomed when the contrary was the case.

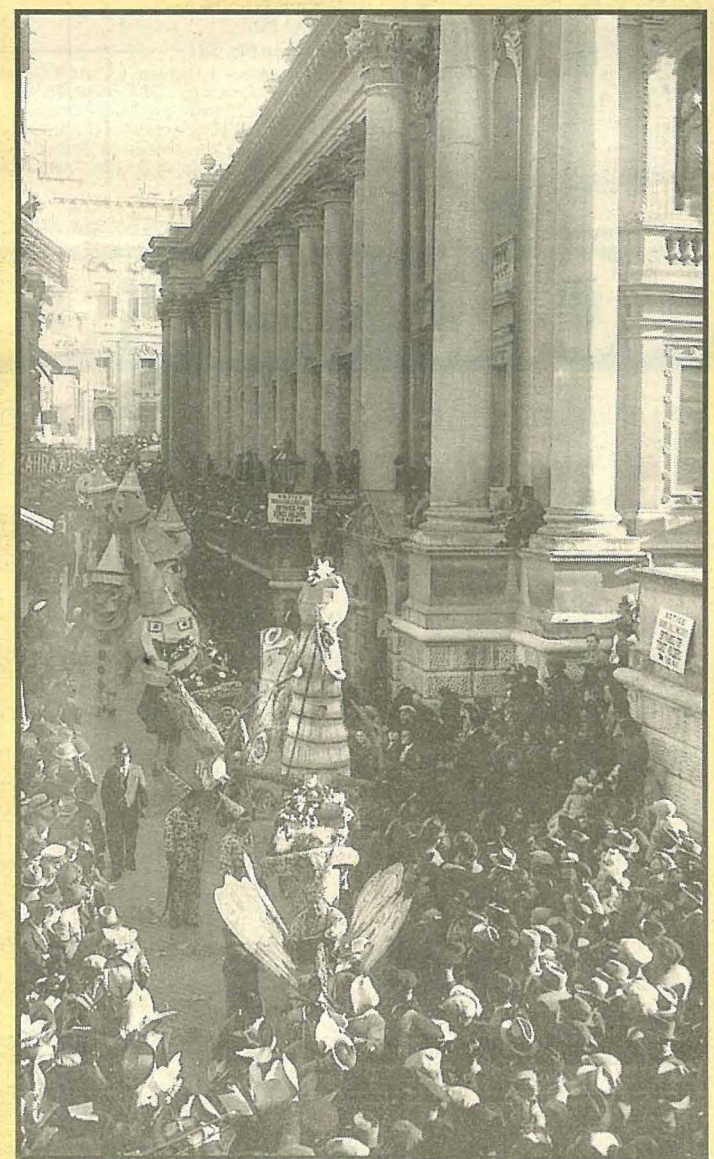
Among the political

personalities of the time featured in the parade were Enrico Mizzi and Sir Ugo Mifsud of the Nationalist Party and Lord Strickland and Sir Augustus Bartolo from the Constitutional Party. The present president's father, Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, known as "Il-Gross" was also parodied by an actor, gesticulating towards the jeering crowds.

"Carnival in Malta 1928" was re-edited and reissued in 1972 with a commentary in English by the late Dr Wilfred Sultana, former president of the Malta Amateur Cine Circle. Background music and sound was recorded from period gramophone records.



Same old story



CARNIVAL IN MALTA 1928...



Nhar il Gimgha li ghaddiet saret fil-Cinema Internazionale il pellicola b'dana l-isem maghmula mid dilettanti Alfred Vella Gera. Dina il pellicola giet mehuda u sviluppata hafta Malta u nisghu nghejdu li hija l-edizzjoni xoghol cinematograficu sura ta nies li deher s'issa fostna. F'ha ahna osservajna dual-carri, dicitari amuristici tajbin u coordinazioni perfetta.

Min ma chienx jaf li hija ta dilettant chien jghejd li hija maghmula barra regolament u tara dana is-success ahna jidrinha li, ghandna nissuggerixxu lil Gvern sabiex jara hux il cas li jincoraggixxi b'sussidju lil dana id dilettant. halli jaghmel pellicola li teun ta reclam ghal Malta u li teun vista issir l'Inghilterra u f'pajjisi ohra sabiex turi lil li strangerieri x'ghandna fil g'zira taghna. Dana teun l'actar mezz efficac biex nadvortajasja Malta.

Il pellicola chienet milkugha minn cullhatt u, naturalment chella li consegjonzi tahh.

Utehed ragel li chien kat lil mara li fil Carnival mar ghal irtir San Catelidonu tara il pellicola marret tiggrafah ghalix lembitu diehei il veljuni tal-fal.

Zeg nisa ohra bdeu jitzghajru chomm jiflithu ghax uahda minnhom kalet li rat lil'ohra tuaddab il cosbor lil zeuga.

Il protagonisti tal film chieunu bosta, fosthom insemmu lil Piu, lil Giljan il, pulizia lil Sapien tal gazzetti, id-chief tal Parata rid il hmar li jirreca fil *Pagliacci*, etc., etc.

Ohrajn milli deher fil pellicola speci ta sthau u bil chemm il chemm ma riedux jipprotestau. Ohraja bhal Gigi Pač, li jirreca fil prosa, chien thajjar jaghmel citazoni ghad-danni lil sid il pellicola talli, bhala artist, ha parti fil film. Xi dilettanti ohra, chieunu jakighu sebahom id-zghajr u jiegliu jidru, ghalix chien fi hstebhom jiehdu l'ocasioni biex jaghmlu dak-xejn ta xena amorusa hafifa, hafifa.

Insomma, fil uakt li ahna nifirhu u natu prosit lis-Sur Alfredo Vella Gera, nisperaui illi il kuddiem icollna occasioni naraui xi xoghol ihor tighu.

Ir-Reporter.

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