

AM SYLLABUS 2026

THEATRE & PERFORMANCE

AM 32

SYLLABUS

**Theatre and Performance
Syllabus****(Available in September)**

Paper 1 – Theatre Events, Practitioners, and Theories (2 hours 30 minutes)
 Paper 2 – Theatre and Live Performance (1 hour 45 minutes)
 Paper 3 – Theatre Making and Devising (½ hour)

1.0 Introduction

The Theatre and Performance Syllabus gives candidates the opportunity to explore theatrical events as phenomena which involve communities. As an area of study and research, theatre studies investigates the performative nature of these events, how communities express themselves through performance, the contexts and structures within which they operate, and the reasons and outcomes of this behaviour. The field of theatre studies investigates how people relate to their immediate social, political, and religious contexts, and how these in turn inform the performance of events. Theatre studies therefore bridges daily with extra-daily activity, in a process which deals with the aesthetics and ethics of performance.

2.0 Aims

The course in Theatre and Performance should promote:

1. an understanding of theatre practice through performance;
2. a critical understanding of theatre events and the work of theatre practitioners and playwrights in different historical periods;
3. a general understanding of contemporary theatre practices;
4. writing, analytical, and reflective skills;
5. a proactive disposition;
6. individual expressivity, interpretation, and decision making;
7. evaluation skills;
8. group dynamics;
9. engagement with and evaluation of live theatre performances.

3.0 Assessment Objectives

Candidates will be assessed on:

1. a comprehensive knowledge of Western theatre history;
2. the ability to work in a collective and collaborative environment;
3. the ability to create solo performance work;
4. individual creative skills;
5. the ability to document (i) individual, and (ii) group performance progress;
6. the ability to interpret a given text and/or develop original material for performance;
7. the ability to develop informed analysis and evaluation of live theatre performances.

4.0 Subject Content

The Subject Content is determined by the Aims and Assessment Objectives of the syllabus. This is achieved through:

1. knowledge of the development of theatre history;
2. underlying implications of historical development;
3. sensitivity to contemporary theatrical practices;
4. the ability to work with others in a collective environment;
5. the ability to develop solo performance work;
6. awareness of meeting an audience within a performance situation;
7. the ability to engage with, reflect on, and analyse live theatre performances.

5.0 Scheme of Assessment

The A-level Theatre and Performance examination consists of **three** papers:

Paper 1: Theatre Events, Practitioners, and Theories – 35% of the final mark

Paper 2: Theatre and Live Performance – 25% of the final mark

Paper 3: Theatre Making and Devising – 40% of the final mark

Candidates can qualify for Grades A-E ONLY if they satisfy examiners in Papers 1, 2 and 3 of the examination.

5.1 Paper 1: Theatre Events, Practitioners, and Theories

Paper 1 consists of a written paper of two and a half hours (2½ hours) addressing theatre events, the work of practitioners, and theories developed throughout history. It carries 35% of the global mark. There will be four questions of which candidates will be required to answer **three**, in essay form. All questions carry equal marks. Each essay will be marked out of 100 according to the following marking scheme:

Knowledge of theatre history	40 marks
Synoptic level of answer	20 marks
Analytical and reflective skills	15 marks
Use of appropriate terminology	10 marks
Structure and presentation	15 marks

5.2 Paper 2: Theatre and Live Performance

Paper 2 carries 25% of the global mark and consists of a written paper of one hour and forty-five minutes (1¾ hours) dealing with:

- (a) Live Theatre Evaluation
- (b) Text-to-Stage Realisation

Paper 2 is divided in two sections as follows:

Section A: Live Theatre Evaluation will be assessed out of 100 using the following marking scheme:

Understanding of how contemporary theatre conventions and techniques are used.	40 marks
Understanding of how performers, designers, and directors use production values to communicate ideas and meaning to an audience.	40 marks
Knowledge, understanding and appropriate use of specialist vocabulary and terminology related to theatre and performance.	10 marks
Structure and presentation.	10 marks

There will be two questions in Section A, of which candidates will be required to answer **one** in essay form.

Section B: Text-to-Stage Realisation will be assessed out of 100 using the following marking scheme:

Creative decisions and theatrical choices	20 marks
Knowledge of production techniques	20 marks
Use of space, staging, light, and sound	20 marks
Use of costumes and props	20 marks
Use of appropriate terminology	10 marks
Structure and presentation	10 marks

Candidates will be provided with a choice of three extracts, one from each playtext listed in 6.2.2. Candidates are required to choose **one** extract and answer the respective question in essay form.

5.3 Paper 3: Theatre Making and Devising

Paper 3 consists of:

- (a) a Solo Performance, carrying 20% of the global mark; and
- (b) a Devised Collective Performance, carrying 20% of the global mark.

The Solo Performance will be assessed out of 100 using the following marking scheme:

Physical and vocal approach to the work	40 marks
Clarity of structure	15 marks
Content: appropriate use of material/s in performance	15 marks
Use of performance space	10 marks
Interview	5 marks
Logbook	15 marks

The Devised Collective Performance, with global mark 100, will be assessed following the marking scheme below:

Physical and vocal approach to the work	35 marks
Clarity of structure	10 marks
Content: appropriate use of material/s in performance	15 marks
Use of performance space	10 marks
Interaction between performers	10 marks
Interview	5 marks
Logbook	15 marks

The examination for Paper 3 will take place as indicated hereunder. All candidates involved in the same group for the Devised Collective Performance will be called for Paper 3 together. The various components of the exam for Paper 3 will take place in the following order:

- (a) the Solo Performance;
- (b) the Devised Collective Performance;

The performances will be followed by an individual interview with each member involved in the Solo and Devised Collective Performances.

6.0 Syllabus Content

6.1 Paper 1: Theatre Events, Practitioners, and Theories

Paper 1 addresses the development of theatre events, the context within which these developed, and the work of playwrights and theatre practitioners behind these events in different historical periods. Candidates will be expected to be knowledgeable about:

- a. The different contexts within which theatrical events developed, including the social, political, and religious contexts.
- b. The organisation of theatrical events.
- c. The development of spatial structures and techniques involved, including theatre architecture and scenography.
- d. Theories that foreground theatre practice.
- e. Key players involved in the development of theatrical activity, including actors, playwrights, theatre managers, directors, and theorists.

The following areas will be examined:

6.1.1 Theatre and the Community

- a. Organisation of performance – Ancient Greek Festivals as the context of organisation.
- b. The development of dramatic forms in Ancient Greece: tragedy and comedy.
- c. The relevance of democracy in relation to the development of theatrical activity.
- d. Spatial structures in Ancient Greece and their development in relation to the needs of the community.
- e. Religious drama in Europe during the Middle Ages.
- f. The spatial dimension of medieval theatre.
- g. Reference to contributions by key playwrights (see 6.1.4).

6.1.2 Theatre of Rediscoveries and Scenic Developments

- a. Rediscovery of the classics and their impact on theatre.
- b. The development of space and scenery.
- c. *Commedia dell'Arte* as a performance phenomenon.
- d. The development of the *Teatro all'Italiana* during the eighteenth century and the way this spatial dimension is established as *the* space for theatrical activity.
- e. Reference to contributions by key playwrights (see 6.1.4).

6.1.3 Modern Theatre and Popular Entertainment

- a. Naturalism and Realism in theatre – the reproduction of life on stage.
- b. Reactions to realism and naturalism.
- c. The turn of the twentieth-century and the rise of the actor.
- d. Theatre and the Avant-Garde.
- e. Konstantin Stanislavski and the development of the 'system'.
- f. Bertolt Brecht and Epic theatre.
- g. Jerzy Grotowski's Poor Theatre.
- h. Spaces for performance – formal spaces and alternative dispositions of space.
- i. Theatre as popular entertainment – musicals and commercial theatre production.
- j. Digital media and its impacts on performance.
- k. Reference to contributions by key playwrights (see 6.1.4). Reference to key performances by major twentieth-century theatre makers. Reference to musicals and other popular theatre performances.

6.1.4 List of Playwrights

Candidates are expected to study complete play-texts by playwrights relevant to the areas outlined in 6.1.1, 6.1.2, and 6.1.3. At least **one** play from each of the three areas is to be studied and discussed in relation to the respective area.

1. Theatre and the Community: Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Euripides, Sophocles, and reference to medieval religious dramas.
2. Theatre of Rediscoveries and Scenic Developments: Pierre Beaumarchais, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Carlo Goldoni, Molière, and William Shakespeare.
3. Modern Theatre and Popular Entertainment: Edward Albee, Samuel Beckett, Edward Bond, Bertolt Brecht, Anton Chekhov, Federico Garcia Lorca, Henrik Ibsen, Arthur Miller, Harold Pinter, Luigi Pirandello, George Bernard Shaw, and August Strindberg.

The above list is meant to serve as an indication of possible playwrights. Additional reference can also be made to other playwrights not mentioned above in order to deepen the discussion about the areas covered in Paper 1.

6.2 Paper 2: Theatre and Live Performance

The two sections of Paper 2 give the opportunity to students to reflect on live performances as members of an audience and as theatre practitioners.

6.2.1 Live Theatre Evaluation

Live Theatre Evaluation requires candidates to reflect, in writing, on their experience as live

audience members. This will enable them to demonstrate their knowledge of performance through analysis and evaluation and will allow them to relate and react to the work of contemporary theatre practice.

When choosing a performance for this part of the examination, candidates are expected to consider the following criteria:

- a. A live theatre performance is when the performers and audience share the same performance space. Theatre performance presented through other media, including TV, cinema, and online media, should **not** be considered.
- b. The chosen performance should **not** be a music concert or dance production, although musicals, operas as well as music-theatre and dance-theatre productions may be chosen.
- c. The performance should demonstrate an appropriate combination of theatrical elements that will allow the candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of theatre making procedures. These include costumes, sets, sound, and light as well as the use of performance space, the actors' physical and vocal work, and the relationships between actors and audience.
- d. The performance should give space to the candidates to apply appropriate theatre- and performance-related terminology.
- e. Only **one** performance can be used for the purpose of this examination.

6.2.2 Text-to-Stage Realisation

Text-to-Stage Realisation requires candidates to reflect, in writing, on how they would deal with a given extract from a play-text and communicate it to an audience through performance. Candidates are expected to consider how, as performers, they would use theatrical elements to realise ideas from the page to the stage.

Candidates will choose **one** of three extracts from a play-text that will be published with the examination paper and discuss how theatrical ideas may be implemented in practice to perform the given excerpt.

Candidates should take into account the following aspects as appropriate:

- a. The physical and vocal characteristics of key roles, characters, or personage
- b. Visual and non-verbal elements of the text
- c. Design aspects and staging strategies
- d. Mood and atmosphere generated by the text
- e. Performance style and theatrical devices
- f. Relationship between actors and audience

Extracts will be between 80 and 120 lines long including dialogue and stage directions. Candidates will prepare **one** text from the list below from which extracts will be chosen and published with the examination paper.

List of plays:

Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot* (1953)

Alfred Buttigieg (trans. Marco Galea): *The Priests' Revolt* (1986)

Caryl Churchill: *Love and Information* (2012)

6.3 Paper 3: Theatre Making and Devising

There will be two to three examiners for the assessment of the Solo Performance, the Devised Collective Performance and the interview which each candidate will be required to sit for about his/her Solo Performance and/or Devised Collective Performance.

6.3.1 Solo Performance

The duration of the Solo Performance must be between 3 and 5 minutes long. Candidates will be asked to stop if their performance exceeds 5 minutes. A maximum of 15 minutes will be allotted for the candidate to prepare for the performance, including the setting up of space, if applicable. Each candidate is expected to present an individual logbook outlining the progress of his/her work on the performance.

Note: This section is deliberately entitled 'solo' not 'monologue' so as not to limit candidates to base their work on a script. Although candidates may wish to opt for an interpretation of a script, they can also decide to work on original texts and other non-scripted material.

6.3.2 Devised Collective Presentation

Groups for the Devised Collective Performance must consist of a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 candidates. The duration of the performance must be between 8 and 10 minutes long. Candidates will be asked to stop if their performance exceeds 10 minutes. A maximum of 15 minutes will be allotted for the candidates to prepare for the performance, including the setting up of space, if applicable. Each candidate is expected to present an individual logbook outlining the progress of his/her work on the performance. Interviews after the group performance presentation will be conducted individually with each candidate involved in the group performance. Each interview will take approximately 5 minutes.

The candidates may opt for any of the following:

- performance of a play or sections of it;
- an original devised performance (not necessarily based on an established text).

The different layers which constitute theatre performance should be distributed among the candidates. These include:

- actors / actresses;
- light person / s;
- costumes, scenery, props;
- music and other layers constituting the performance.

7.0 Private Candidates

Private candidates are expected to cover the same syllabus as candidates presented by post-secondary schools and colleges. In the case of the Devised Collective Performance in Part 1: Theatre Making and Devising, the candidate may choose one of the following options:

1. To team up with other private candidates who will work together and present the performance as a group. Groups in this case must consist of a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 candidates.
2. To team up with extra performers (i.e. performers that will not be assessed) to a maximum of 3 performers. The group shall therefore include 1 assessed private candidate and either 1 or 2 extra non-assessed performers. The assessed private candidate and the extra non-assessed performers must be identified before the start of

the performance.

With regard to both option 1 and option 2, when selecting a venue for the performance, the candidate/s need/s to liaise with one of the institutions where Theatre and Performance is being offered. Alternatively the candidate/s can liaise with MATSEC at the time of registration for the use of the MITP theatre for the performance. All expenses related to the MITP theatre are to be borne by the candidate/s.

8.0 Further Notes

8.1 Notes on the Solo and Devised Collective Performances

Candidates need to be self-sufficient in both performances, that is, no outside help will be allowed during the performances.

Three important aspects of performance that help candidates construct a solid presentation should be tackled:

- **structure** – the basic foundation supporting the material and work;
- **content** – the material the student will be working with, which may include texts, music, lights, costumes and other props needed for the performance; and
- **working process** – the process of construction throughout the duration of studies based on the structure and content.

Lights to be used in the performances should be kept at a basic level. One space, not exceeding 10m by 10m, is to be used for all the performances.

8.2 The Logbook

A logbook is to be downloaded from the MATSEC website for each of the two performances. The candidate is required to use the logbooks to record the work / preparation done for the performances. In both the Solo and the Devised Collective Performances, each individual candidate should have his / her own record.

The logbooks should include notes about the progress of work, problems arising during the working process and possible solutions. The logbooks need to be presented during the performance examination.

8.3 Notes on the Interview

Following the performances, each individual candidate will discuss his / her performances with the examiners' panel. The panel can ask any question relating to the aspects mentioned in 8.1 and 8.2.

Appendix

THE PRIESTS' REVOLT a play in two acts and twenty six scenes

ALFRED BUTTIGIEG (1986)
(Translation by Marco Galea)

Characters

BISHOP LABINI, a spectator to the play within the play
RECTOR, author and director of the play
GEJTANU MANNARINO, twenty years after the revolt
ČETTA, a cook in the convent who acts a part in the play
KARMENA, a labourer in the convent who also plays a woman in the play
FRANCESCO PANZAVECCHIA, a seminarian who plays Pellerano and the Vicar
FEDELE SULTANA, a seminarian who plays Grandmaster Ximenes
GEJTANU GATT, a seminarian who plays Gejtanu Mannarino
ĠUŽEPI GRECH, a seminarian who plays a priest
TONI BUHAGIAR, a seminarian who plays a priest
ĠUŽÈ BAJADA, a seminarian who plays a Knight
SPIRU CARDONA, a seminarian who plays a Knight
LELI ATTARD, a seminarian who plays a lay man
GIRGOR XERRI, a seminarian who plays a lay man
SALVU ZARB, a seminarian who plays the piano
ČENSU FARRUGIA, a seminarian who plays the violin
ĠILORMU CAMILLERI, a seminarian who plays the clarinet

ACT 1

When the curtain goes up, many of the actors are already on stage. These include two priests as well as Gejtanu Mannarino; two knights and Grandmaster Ximenes; Bishop Pellerano and two lay men.

The stage is bare except for a few chairs to one side and another couple centre stage back. One of the chairs on the right is more beautiful than the others. At the back of the stage left there's a platform with a piano, a violin and a clarinet. The three musicians are already in place.

1. RECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

The Rector introduces the play that they are presenting. Initially, none of the actors speak. While the Rector is speaking they rearrange each other; put on make up just like they were in the dressing room and put each other's clothes in order. From time to time they make a reaction, either collectively or as individuals.

RECTOR: Honourable audience, as Rector of the Seminary I'd like to invite you to an evening of entertainment. (*patronising*) When their exams are over, our young seminarians have the habit of making a very large mask, unfortunately in my image, and later to thank God for a year of studying completed successfully, they carry it around the streets of Mdina, ridiculing me in front of all the town's people.

This habit had to stop; not only because I was invariably the victim of their excesses but also because a lot of energy and precious time were being wasted on a mask that would end up burnt in the town square amid shouting and infantile laughter. There must be better ways of making use of our time. (*The actors laugh. The Rector turns to look at them.*) They all agree.

Since the Seminary for the training of the clergy was opened, ignorance has been eradicated from among us priests. It is no longer true that many priests are almost illiterate, although we have always been respected. We have now all become experts in theology; we can all speak Latin fluently.

Thanks to the reforms enacted by our beloved Grandmaster De Rohan (naturally in agreement with Pope Pius the Sixth, God rest his soul), the theology student intake is now half what it used to be, and this has given us the opportunity to improve our standards. The work you will see today is evidence of how much our standards have improved. (*The actors applaud*)

Can you hear how enthusiastic they are? (*He stops them*)

Together, myself and the novices who you will be watching today, have taken the event that took place exactly twenty years ago in 1775, when, I remind you, things were different from what they are now; when our colleagues the priests, with the support of the Maltese people, revolted against the leadership of our dead but never forgiven (*the actors laugh, except for Ximenes who is pushed centre stage*) I'm sorry, the dead but never forgotten Grandmaster Francesco Ximenes de Texada. (*The actors boo.*)

XIMENES: But I'm not to blame. I had to put up with the disaster I inherited from my predecessor.

ACTOR 1: That's not an excuse.

ACTOR 2: You shouldn't have accepted the appointment.

ACTOR 3: As if! Power is always accepted.

The Rector stops them.

RECTOR: The actor who will play the part of Ximenes was referring to Grandmaster Manwel Pinto de Fonseca, who, just like all the aristocrats of his time, ignored the people's lamentations. During the thirty years that he ruled Malta, things went from bad to worse. There might be some of you here tonight who still remember him. Was there anyone whom Pinto did not hurt? But that's another story. Enough said about Pinto for now. (*Pause*)

Your honours, for this occasion it is my pleasure to inform you that we have the company the present Bishop, Monsignor Labini, who was so kind to accept our invitation to be among us tonight. Grandmaster De Rohan was also invited, but unfortunately he could not attend as he is having talks with very high officials in Russia. From here we all wish him success in his mission. We are confident in the wisdom that he has always shown, even though we all know how miserly these Russians are. However, the Grandmaster has sent us his best wishes. We have also sent an invitation to the Inquisitor Monseignor Carpegna, but he answered politely that he prefers to stay in his comfortable bed in his palace in Birgu than travel all the way here. He also said he doesn't like travelling at night. But we're not offended. We were not expecting that every invitation would be accepted. After all even the devil invites many people to sin, but not everyone accepts.

The actors smile. By now the actors are almost ready, and start dividing themselves into groups: priests, knights, and lay people.

We have prepared a special place for his Excellency Monsignor Bishop Labini, right here on stage. As our distinguished guest, he will be able to follow us more closely. I now invite Monsignor Vincenzo Labini to come out and take his seat on the throne that we have prepared for him.

Ceremonial music. Bishop Labini makes a ceremonial entrance and sits down. The actors bow before him.

Your honours, today you will be entreated to a very varied spectacle: Acting, singing, dancing...

LABINI: Dancing!

RECTOR: (*ignoring him*) One last thing. I remind you that the actors you're going to see today are not Italian professional actors, like the ones that the Grandmaster brings to the island from time to time, to treat us to their talents and give us reason to marvel. None of these actors has ever acted before; none of them has ever been on the Manoel Theatre Stage; I ask you not to be too harsh on them if they're not very technical.

2. THE RECTOR INTRODUCES THE CHARACTERS

It's now time to introduce you to my actors. The two novices in the middle, who look a bit like lovers, holding hands (*the actors centre stage let go of each other hands, ashamed of themselves*) are Francesco Panzavecchia and Fedele Sultana. Francesco, being of noble blood, deserved to play the part of Bishop Pellerano, and we'd like to thank Monsignor Labini for lending us the costume that the actor is wearing. Sultana, a coarse person by nature, could not have been more suited to play the part of Grandmaster Francesco Ximenes de Texada.

XIMENES: I'm warning you, Pellerano, hare hunting is prohibited. Whoever is caught hunting will be prosecuted. We must give them time to breed or their population will dwindle and we'll have no meat to feed the poor. Our duty is to ensure that the law is obeyed, and we'll let no one break it.

PELLERANO: Law or no law, I'm not obeying it, Ximenes. These hares are destroying my crops, and I'll never permit it.

They stop suddenly and take each other's hands again.

RECTOR: As you can see, these two leaders were not on very good terms, they addressed each other without referring to each other's titles, simply by surname, just like a parish priest calling his pupils' names in class; they insult each other, threaten to report each other to the Pope...

Now they're quiet, holding each other's hands; not because they love each other; but as a symbol of the desired permanent unity between Church and State that we are now enjoying; always thanks to our beloved grandmaster Manoel de Rohan Polduc ...

Bishop Labini coughs.

And needless to say, thanks also to the foreign bishop, the present Monsignor Labini who helped improve the situation by keeping silent.

Pause.

Now let's go on to three other characters, three novices who will play the parts of priests. I ask them to come forward so that we can see them better. One of them, Gejtano Gatt is a worker's son, but who isn't these days? Gejtano comes from a poor family; they have suffered greatly from hunger during Pinto's and Ximenes's times.

MANNARINO: We won't let them fool us anymore. It's time we rose against them, brothers, and fought for our rights.

Some of the actors applaud.

RECTOR: As you see, as an actor, he has little to offer. Too melodramatic and emotional. It's enough to tell you that since we started rehearsing he's talking like him, he even believes he's Mannarino, although he's not even half his size. If he had not been so insistent, I would have given the part to Ġużeppi Grech, who in my opinion would have brought out the character better.

MANNARINO: And what do they think they are, just because they are ruling? They think they can insult us and humiliate us as they like, just because they know we're small and in our position we depend on them and are powerless against them. Brothers, we have to show them we will not be pissed on. We won't permit them to say whatever they like about us.

The actors applaud and whistle at the Rector. Bishop Labini laughs. The Rector frowns, knowing that the words were addressed to him. He rushes through the rest of his introduction.

RECTOR: Along with Mannarino we can see two novices, Ġużeppi Grech, who I already mentioned, and Toni Buhagiar. These two novices were reluctant to take part as they said they did not have time for studying and rehearsing. I think whoever is hard working finds time for everything. But I approached them sweetly and was able to win over their services. So as not to frighten them off I gave them minor parts of two priests...

Bishop Labini calls the Rector, who approaches.

PRIEST 1: To get things straight, we did not want to take part because I like the idea of running around the streets of Mdina wearing a mask with his face on it better than this waste of time.

PRIEST 2: And the reason we took part was that he threatened he would fail us in our exams and not because he approached us sweetly.

RECTOR: *(returns to mid-stage)* Excuse me. I'd like you now to meet Ġużè Bajada and Spiru Cardona who will play the parts of two knights, who at the time were anti-clerical, wicked, rude, arrogant, fornicators and Maltese-haters. The armour-plates they're wearing really belonged to two knights who lost their lives during the Siege.

Pause.

Now let's move to the seculars, who will play many parts, amongst which friends of Mannarino, farmers, poor people, conspirators, enemies, the Grandmaster's bootlickers, prostitutes...

LABINI: What's this?

RECTOR: Don't worry, monsignor, there are no raunchy scenes. So, gentlemen, tonight we also have Leli Attard and Girgor Xerri who will play the men's parts, and in the women's parts...

LABINI: Women! God all mighty!

RECTOR: Put your mind at rest, monsignor. The two women we'll see tonight are employees in this convent. I can vouch for their good behaviour, as can every good soul that lives in this convent. I have never had any reports about them. Nobody ever told me that they tempted him or seduced him to sin. Besides, these two women are so old that no man will lose his wisdom because of them.

The two women enter, shy and fearful of the audience.

Gentlemen, I introduce you to Ċetta the cook and Karmena the char-woman.

The actors whistle; Ċetta and Karmena bow for the applause.

These two women, who are old enough to be our mothers, kindly accepted to take part in tonight's play without any ambitions or pretensions. So, gentlemen, I ask you to be patient with them if they make mistakes.

Pause.

Finally, I would like to introduce you quickly to the three novices who will provide the music. Gentlemen, on the piano there's Salvu Zarb who's been playing the piano since he was born. (*Salvu Zarb plays a couple of notes on the piano.*) On his left we have Ċensu Farrugia on the violin (*Ċensu Farrugia plays his violin out of tune.*) who, as you can hear, is still at the beginning of his musical career; and finally we have Ġilormu Camilleri on clarinet. (*Ġilormu Camilleri plays a tune on the clarinet.*)

Pause.

RECTOR: Now that I have introduced you to all the players in tonight's play, it is time to start. I apologise if my introduction was a bit too long, but I felt that without it you wouldn't have understood anything. So now I will join you so that we can enjoy this work together. Although technically it might be a bit weak, it is nonetheless a product that we offer you with all our heart. Thanks.

The rector bows, awaiting applause. Then sits down. Holds script in hand.

3. THE POVERTY OF THE MALTESE

MANNARINO: (*addressing Pinto who is not present*) Grandmaster Manoel Pinto de Fonseca, how can you remain silent when faced with all this. Take a walk out of your

luxurious palace and walk around the streets of Valletta; walk a bit further, go into the villages and hear with your own ears the grumbling that's going on about you.

MAN 1: *(pulling his leg)* Don't let your head grow too big, your majesty, 'cause it will explode.

MAN 2: You could almost be a French Emperor.

WOMAN 1: Be careful where to tread, o great king, or you will get your shoes dirty in this mud.

WOMAN 2: Walk carefully, or you might tread into some pothole and ruin your clothes.

WOMAN 1: Don't go out in the streets too much or a cloud of dust might get into your eyes...

WOMAN 2: *(vulgarily)* Then you will not see me properly, lying in front of you, waiting for someone like you to keep me happy in his wrinkled arms ... and with a little money.

Bishop Labini grimaces; the actors smile.

WOMAN 1: Look at my poor sister, she was a most beautiful girl, now she's ended up selling her body.

The actors' voices become harsher.

MAN 1: We're sick of this poverty, eating barley and carobs...

MAN 2: And you enjoying the crystal chandeliers and the paintings you stole from the Jesuits.

MAN 1: We drown in the mud and you feast on Malta's coffers.

MAN 2: We're tired of sending our wives to forage in the rubbish bins outside the Knights' houses.

MAN 1: You're living off the earth's riches, and we have to beg for a piece of bread.

WOMAN 1: I wish I could belong to one man and not to every knight who roams the streets *(lets herself fall into the arms of Man 2)*.

MAN 1: We want back all the money you squandered.

MAN 2: We want back every penny we had saved in the grain bank.

WOMAN 2: We want food for our children.

WOMAN 1: We want work for our husbands.

WOMAN 2: We want decent houses to live in.

MAN 1: We want to buy grain at a reasonable price.

MAN 2: We want a reduction in taxes.

MAN 1: We want to have a say in ruling our country.

MAN 2: We want you to step down to make place for a younger grandmaster.

WOMAN 1: We want that country's wealth to be shared amongst us all.

WOMAN 2: We want Ximenes.

PRIEST 1: *(joins in, shouting as much as the others)* We want equality 'cause we're all God's offspring; we're all created in his image.

Everyone suddenly stops to look at him. Priest 1 continues; he thinks the others are approving.

PRIEST 1: *(angrily)* As far as we're concerned, Pinto, you can drown in all the wealth of the world. That won't sadden us or break our strong will. We are workers' sons and

daughters, we were all brought up in poverty, so poverty will not frighten us. We are hopeful because we trust in God, because he feeds us the bread of life and does not give us sorrow to drink, as you do. *(The secular characters applaud half-heartedly. Then they gather around him.)*

Man 1: You don't look as if you're suffering much.

WOMAN 1: *(massaging his belly)* God bless you, how has all this fat come about?

WOMAN 2: When was the last time you slept on an empty stomach?

MAN 2: Friends, do you remember how St. Stephen ended up?

Priest 1 retreats; he starts getting afraid; blesses them.

PRIEST 1: May God be with you. *(As he is walking backwards, he bumps into Priest 2.)*

PRIEST 2: What's the matter with you? Why are you so excited?

PRIEST 1: It looks as if everyone is losing their head, they almost wanted to stone me.

PRIEST 2: *(laughingly)* And we entered the priesthood so that they would look badly on us. The days when they would rush to kiss a priest's hand in the streets and ask him to bless them must be over. *(They go out.)*

MAN 1: How can you consider yourselves part of us when you don't know what suffering is? You're not fighting for us but for your own interests. You don't give a damn about us. Look who you've got on your side, a bunch of rich people; there is no one amongst us, one like us, who you would accept with open arms. You're all made in the same mould; you're no better than Pinto and the knights. *(in Labini's face)* I'm talking of you as well, honourable bishop... *(Labini is taken aback. The rector signals to the actor that the actor playing Pellerano is somewhere else)* Pellerano. *(Labini sighs with relief).*

ALL: *(singing)*
We want the rich to pay all the taxes we pay
And do their watch like us, and fight wars like us
To save their skins and their privileges
They join the priesthood to hide themselves
Under the large umbrella, that's the Catholic Church.

LABINI: *(on hearing the word "Church")* What was this about the umbrella? I don't know how you could, as Rector of the Seminary, permit such words about the Church to be said?

The actors stop suddenly.

RECTOR: *(standing up)* You have misunderstood, honourable bishop. They are naturally referring to those who, in order to avoid taxes and military service, join a religious order by paying a small sum of money. We can't pretend that something is right when it's wrong. Is that not so, monsignor? But that's now a thing of the past. Thanks to the agreement between the present Grandmaster and the Pope, these abuses are all a thing of the past. *(to the actors)* Continue.

MAN 1: I don't know how the bishop can permit ...

RECTOR: Enough! *(to the audience)* I think he'd better omit that line. *(The actors stop suddenly, not knowing where to continue.)* Continue with ...the idea to organise a revolt. *(to Labini)* Look what you've done with your interruption, monsignor. You confused them.

MAN 1: Now we've had enough. We'll no longer let the foreigner piss on us.

MAN 2: This is our land, we have the right to enjoy its fruit.
WOMAN 1: We will no longer let anyone exploit us.
WOMAN 2: So let's rise friends, let's rise and fight, for if we don't we'll remain swimming in the mud.
MAN 1: We won't let them piss on us anymore, we won't let them hit us and we won't remain silent.
MAN 2: Pinto, you'll have to make way, by hook or by crook.

4. XIMENES TRIES TO CALM DOWN THE CROWD

Ximenes intervenes. He stops them. The secular characters start applauding him.

MAN 1: Hail to Ximenes. You're our saviour.
MAN 2: You're our light. Deliver us from this wasteful ruler we're stuck with.
XIMENES: Not so fast, my friends, not so fast. Take everything calmly. Don't risk your lives in a revolt against a man who's already half dead. Don't let anyone use you. Don't fight other people's battles.
MANNARINO: *(in the midst of the secular characters)* If you're referring to our beloved bishop, you're mistaken my dear Knight. Monsignor Bishop Pellerano has Maltese blood running through his veins so he can understand us better than you can. I know how he loves the poor and the needy. He has told me himself how his heart aches when he sees them suffering.
XIMENES: No, no. I was speaking of the Russian ambassador, Marquis Cavalcabo who's been amongst us for three years. I know for sure that he's been whispering in your ears against us knights in order to sow division and gain advantages. Do not play his game. Don't risk your life for him. He's been trying to find a way to let the Russian fleet into our harbour. But that will never be. We will never let the Russians into our waters...
RECTOR: Naturally, our relations with Russia are no longer what they were. Not that they were ever bad. But more importantly we cannot condemn Russia because of one person's behaviour. Mr Sultana, I'd like to remind you that at this very moment our beloved grandmaster De Rohan is conducting talks with the Russian government, talks that may yet be fruitful. Go on, and be careful what you say about Russia.
XIMENES: *(changes history a little bit; continues where he left off)* ... but if the need arises, we'll welcome them with open arms, because we have seen nothing but good from them. Czarina Caterina has always tried to help us and we therefore consider her as our sister. We intend to maintain our good relations with Russia in spite of Cavalcabo's attempt to cause trouble.
MAN 1: But what do we care about Malta's relations with Russia?
MAN 2: What we want is a more decent life.
WOMAN 2: We want work for our husbands. It's not right that you use them for your building projects and when you don't need them anymore you just throw them out.
WOMAN 1: We've ended up walking the streets, sleeping with men to earn a living.
(embraces a Knight, and the two exit together)
MAN 1: You've reduced us to beggars.

MAN 2: You've even refused us the pittance you used to give us in return for our hard work in your projects.

XIMENES: I understand you. But now it's enough. You won't have to put up with much more. Pinto is now old. He's more than ninety years old. He doesn't have long to live.

MANNARINO: And when you're ruling, how will you treat us?

XIMENES: You are the apple of my eyes; you only have to wait a little bit and you'll see how I'll relieve you of all this hardship. But things take time. You cannot build in a minute what has been destroyed over thirty years. We will need to work together and make some sacrifices as well...

WOMAN: As if we haven't made enough sacrifices. What more do we need to do, go out naked, eat the dung left by your horses?

XIMENES: Small sacrifices. Trust me. You know I've always helped you. You found me whenever you needed me, and I always welcomed you with open arms. *(on his way out)* Trust me. Try to resist a bit longer. You'll soon have me ... *(The others exit with him)*.

5. A SHORT DISCUSSION BETWEEN LABINI AND THE RECTOR

When the actors exit, Bishop Labini calls the Rector.

LABINI: Don't you think your students are letting their tongues get too loose? I'm not saying anything, but I've heard the word piss about four times.

RECTOR: Three times.

LABINI: Whatever. If you could control them a bit it would be better for everyone. I don't mind because I'm open-minded and can take a joke, but the Inquisitor...

RECTOR: Put your mind at rest about Monsignor Carpegna. He didn't even bother to accept the invitation to join us. And above all, you know as well as I do that Inquisitors have lost much of the power they had in the past.

LABINI: I don't agree with you. If he can find an excuse he'll start writing letters to Rome and create trouble for me.

RECTOR: *(jokingly)* So I ask you to forgive them, Monsignor Bishop if their enthusiasm is getting the better of them.

LABINI: Don't let me use my power. Don't let me stop this.

RECTOR: Of course not. And if the Grandmaster gets to know of this, he surely won't like it.

LABINI: After all we're here this evening to enjoy ourselves and do something different. So don't let things get out of hand.

RECTOR: As you say, Monsignor. I'll talk to them at the end of the first act. *(Leaves without waiting for an answer)*.

6. PINTO'S FUNERAL

The two knights carrying Pinto's coffin enter; Grandmaster Ximenes is in front, alongside Bishop Pellerano. The secular characters perform a mime and singing during the funeral.

SECULAR CHARACTERS: In Malta there was a grandmaster

You've never seen anyone spend faster
He lived a life of absolute luxury
The people had nothing but poverty

Pinto thought he was King Louis of France,
The Maltese workers with him had no chance,
They all suffered hunger, says the story,
While he was all wrapped in his glory.

With unemployment there was soon destitution
Not to mention that plague, prostitution
Robbery, fighting, murder, begging, we had it
Not even the rich were in credit

The priests closed both eyes to injustice
Many even joined in some bad practice
They got in debt to furnish their churches
But never had money to pay any purchase

So grab what you can, comrades, and skip work
Unite and live easy, don't be a jerk
Don't worry about screwing the government
You won't go to hell, this is just empowerment

*The Knights drop the coffin to the ground. Bishop Pellerano gives the last rites and leaves.
The Knights exit as well. Only Ximenes is left.*

SECULAR CHARACTERS: *(going round Pinto's coffin)*

We've been more than thirty years in your clutches
Hoping you'll get sick, to see you in crutches,
We prayed for some sign, liked hearing you coughing
And we're really glad that you're in that coffin.

7. XIMENES BECOMES GRANDMASTER

The secular characters take out Pinto's body from the coffin. They are about to drag him across the floor when Ximenes stops them.

XIMENES: *(speaking calmly)* By dragging him across the street you won't achieve anything. Pinto is dead and with him his kingdom is gone too. Let him rest in eternal peace. He cannot harm you anymore. Now that I will have the responsibility of being grandmaster I want to repeat to you the oath that I've always given you, to help you and to dedicate my life to improve your lives. From this moment I want to show you that I don't give much importance to luxury or beautiful clothes. *(He takes off his*

luxurious coat and hands it to the people.) So, friends, let's work together and you'll see how we'll manage to build a new Malta.

The secular characters applaud, carry him on their shoulders and walk offstage shouting "Hail to Ximenes".

8. A CELEBRATION IN HONOUR OF GRANDMASTER XIMENES

Festive and happy scenes to celebrate Ximenes' appointment as grandmaster.

9. THE EDICT

Ximenes enters. All stop suddenly.

XIMENES: As a measure to increase food products, as from today the 14 of February 1773, I'm prohibiting hunting for wild rabbit and doves. This prohibition is valid for every person in Malta, of whatever, rank, state or condition. I repeat. This prohibition is valid for every person in Malta, of whatever, rank, state or condition. So that this order on hunting is observed I am prohibiting anyone keeps to guns or carry doves' nests or break their eggs, or destroy the vegetation that these animals eat. We remind you that this prohibition is valid for every person in Malta, of whatever rank, state or condition. Let no one break these rules because the punishment could be up to three years of hard work on the Order's galleys. Yet again, in case anyone didn't hear me, this prohibition is valid for every person in Malta, of whatever, rank, state or condition.

Exits. All the others exit behind him complaining.

10. PELLERANO'S REACTION TO THE EDICT

Pellerano enters in rage, followed by a clerk.

PELLERANO: Did he have to repeat that the prohibition applies to everyone four times? He did that to spite us; to hit at our religious immunity; he wants to challenge my authority.

CLERK: He's also buying large quantities of rabbits from Sicily, breeding them and setting them free.

PELLERANO: Oh no! He'll destroy all the crops in my fields.

CLERK: What will you give the poor if the rabbits destroy all your crops? They'll have nothing to eat. They'll starve. And for us, there's no more rabbit stew.

PELLERANO: And how will I be able to continue with my Christian mission if the rabbits destroy all my products? Where will I get the money I used to make from selling them? How will I feed my priests? How will I pay them? And after a whole

day preaching the word of God and ministering to the poor and needy, how will these poor priests relax if they won't be able to spend an hour hunting?

CLERK: And now when they need it most. Everyone knows how thefts, swearing and prostitution have increased.

PELLERANO: You're right. With this edict, Ximenes is jeopardising our holy mission. These rabbits are a pest; if you don't keep them in control you've had it. Then, I'll be impoverished because they'll destroy everything I have. How can I go on with my Christian mission without money? Write this down. I won't let this Ximenes interfere with my affairs. Write down.

Ximenes enters, stays on one side of the stage talking to a knight. After a while Knight 2 enters, giving him a letter. Ximenes checks the sender, reads it quickly and tells Knight 2: 'Throw it into the rubbish bin.' The clerk writes.

PELLERANO: Dear Grandmaster Ximenes. I am writing to show you that the edict you have just made public has not been met with approval; not by me and not by my subjects. There is no need to tell you that the rabbit is a destructive animal and if we don't control it, it will do me great damage. This is good. It will surely touch his heart.

Ximenes laughs.

I cannot let them multiply on my property without controlling them. Therefore I am informing you that I will use my own priests to continue keeping my fields free of these damned rabbits. While I feel sure you will accede to my request, I send my best regards. Forever yours, Monsignor Pellerano, Bishop of Malta. *(to the clerk)* Did you write down everything? Now make sure he gets it immediately. *(All exit.)*

11. WE WANT OUR LICENCE

The Knights, Priests and Secular characters enter singing.

SECULAR CHARACTERS: What if the rabbits destroy every field?
What will we eat in times of need?
For you hunting is just for fun
For us it is something to eat with our bun.

ALL: Grant us a licence, before we lose our patience.
We need a permit, we need it, damn it.

KNIGHTS: Now how will we kill our time
Without ever resorting to crime?
How will we see the time go by,
If killing rabbits we can't even try?

ALL: Grant us a licence, before we lose our patience.
We need a permit, we need it, damn it.

PRIESTS: If you made public this edict in order to spite us

It's to no avail, 'cause nothing will bite us
Our rights and privileges you just cannot touch,
None have succeeded, though many tried much.

ALL: Grant us a licence, before we lose our patience.
We need a permit, we need it, damn it.

They continue singing the refrain. Suddenly the Knights exit. Only the Priests and the Secular Characters are left singing in the background. The Rector stands up to speak.

RECTOR: You remember what Grandmaster Ximenes had said when he himself announced his edict. He said that the prohibition on hunting for wild rabbit applied to everyone. It was not long before the prohibition was no longer universal. The weak grandmaster soon gave in to pressure; not from the people because he is not bothered about that, but from those around him, those who could cause him a lot of trouble if they were to turn against him. Therefore, some exceptions were created, and naturally these were all knights. But, although Ximenes did not care what the people thought he still did not want to lose face and so used his falconer to issue these hunting licences. Naturally it was just his signature. He gave the licences to whoever he wanted. What could the poor man do? The power to grant licences was not his but the falconer's. If it had been up to him he would either have granted it to everyone or to no one. And let me tell you, it wasn't cheap to obtain a licence. Now that some knights had been granted a licence to go out hunting again, they stopped complaining, because it suited them that way. What did they care that the peasants and the priests had to swallow their pride and watch them going hunting.

Pause.

Excuse me, gentlemen. Maybe it's not my job to speak in this manner. After all, I would not want you to think that I'm taking over from the actors. But, when I remember how egoistic the knights were, I can't bear to remain silent.

The actors take up the refrain again. At a particular moment the priests walk out and the secular characters realise they are singing alone.

WOMAN 1: *(shouting)* What about these lot? Aren't you going to say anything? Didn't they abandon us as well?

RECTOR: *(taken aback)* These lines are not in the script. Cetta, what are you saying?

WOMAN 1: I'm saying that we've now really had enough; we're swimming in shit and you stuff yourselves on rabbit stew. Don't play the defenders of religion with us, because we know what you're worth. We know why you incite us to revolt. You're using us because you know that your privileges are at risk and so you push us into the front line so that we take the punches instead of you. When you start welcoming us with open arms, maybe we'll start to believe you. Look who you keep company with: those who can pay, those who can fill your pockets, those who can finance you.

RECTOR: *(dumbfounded)* But what is she saying? These are not even her words.

The novices start laughing in the background.

WOMAN 1: We don't need words of comfort from you. Words won't help us fill our stomach.

RECTOR: (*angry*) Cetta, if you don't shut up I'm sacking you from this convent, immediately. I'll look for another cook...

WOMAN 1: (*ignoring him, approaching Labini*) And what can we say about you, Monsignor Labini? Have you ever taken a walk around our villages to see the poverty we live in? No. You would be lowering yourself too much if you were to do this. And just to get it off my chest, I have to tell you I have proof that you're befriending certain French knights and that you're plotting with them to get rid of the Order and bring the French here.

LABINI: (*stands up in a rage*) This is too much, Rector. You have to check her.

RECTOR: (*approaching Woman 1*) That's enough. I want you to ask for pardon immediately and to renounce all that you've just said.

WOMAN 1: (*falling to her knees in front of Labini and kissing his hand*) Pardon me, Monsignor, I didn't know what I was saying.

LABINI: That's not possible. You offended me too much.

RECTOR: (*bullying him*) Come on, Monsignor. She's kneeling before you asking for mercy. Won't you forgive her?

LABINI: Stand up, my girl. (*Patting her on the shoulders*) Go and recite the rosary every day for a year as penance, and in your prayers remember to pray for the person who made you say these awful words about our Church and about me, maybe he'll repent and refrain from these deeds.

Woman 1 stands. Before exiting she looks at the Rector, who winks at her. The secular characters exit as well.

RECTOR: (*artificially emotional*) And then they say that the Church is not merciful. (*Pause*) Again I apologise for that incident; I apologise to you, members of the audience, and mostly, to you Monsignor Vincenzo Labini. I give you my word that tonight, as soon as this is over, I'll do my best to find out the identity of the vile person who used that innocent woman to say such disgusting words, and if I find out it was one of our students, he'll be punished accordingly.

12. AN UNHAPPY INCIDENT

RECTOR: And now, that that unhappy incident is over, we go on to another unhappy incident. Although the hunting dispute had died down, the quarrels between Bishop Pellerano and Grandmaster Ximenes went on. In August 1774 there was an incident near Cospicua wharf which did not help a little bit to alleviate the tension already existing in the country. A bishop's employee and a knight quarrelled on the quay, and the captain of the fleet ordered that if any other employees of the bishop were seen on site, they were to be beaten. And that's what happened to the first one who came along. As he would not move from the quay, he was beaten almost to death. This incident created a ferment among the priests because they felt their privileges threatened. Bishop Pellerano was of the same opinion and instead of informing the Grandmaster of what had happened, he took the law into his own hands and arrested three of the culprits. The Grandmaster asked that they be handed over to him so that he

could punish them. However the bishop was adamant; and the three suspects were freed after a gang of about twenty knights stormed the bishop's prison in Senglea. The Grandmaster arrested them again but had to liberate them after the knights protested strongly. Meanwhile, the Bishop locked himself in his palace because he was afraid the knights would attack him. The members of the clergy were shocked and disgusted at these events and so they agreed to send a representative from every parish to protest against the knights' behaviour in front of the Bishop's palace in Mdina. Their aim was to show solidarity with the bishop and at the same time to press him to convene the General Chapter so that their ecclesiastical immunity would be safeguarded.

13. IN FRONT OF THE BISHOP'S PALACE

The priests start congregating.

RECTOR: The priests began arriving. You can hear the noise. You hardly believe they are priests. But you can understand how they're feeling.

PRIESTS: We want the Bishop. Hail the Bishop. We want the Bishop. Hail the Bishop.

(Pellerano comes out to greet them. The priests sing.)

How can you let them, Monsignor, beat your clerk,
When he was trying to do his work?
How can our privileges be ignored,
If we are servants of the Lord?

Until we're treated with due respect
We'll carry arms with us, we've made a pact
We're only doing it for the clergy's defence
You'd do it also if you had some sense

They tell us that taxes we have to pay,
But we'll never do this, come what may.
No one will move us from our intent
Why should we pay taxes if we are exempt?

Bishop Pellerano stops them.

PELLERANO: My beloved brothers in the priesthood, I understand your anger at this moment and maybe I don't blame you because I know that you're like me, when you see one of your brothers being beaten, you cannot bear to remain silent and do nothing. But you know as well as I do that that violence must not be answered by violence. Even though our privileges are continually being threatened, we must imitate the Lord, carry our cross patiently and suffer a little, until hopefully the Grandmaster opens his eyes and starts respecting our dignity. So I am pleading with you to go back to your parishes in order to avoid further trouble. I am sorry to say that I don't agree with demonstrations such as these, because they serve no purpose except to increase the tension in the country.

Bishop Pellerano exits. The Priests exit after him.

14. XIMENES INCITES THE PEOPLE AGAINST THE CHURCH

Rector: The demonstration that took place outside the Bishop's Palace was not very well received by Grandmaster Ximenes. The Grandmaster accused the Bishop of calling the meeting himself, and although he denied it, he was not believed.

Ximenes enters. He is followed by the Secular Characters and the Knights who from time to time prompt the people to applaud the Grandmaster and hiss Bishop Pellerano.

XIMENES: I have called you here today to brief you about the present situation in Malta. I know that in the past you might have been a little angry with me because of the measures I had taken on wild rabbit hunting. I understand you and maybe I don't blame you that much. But I have to explain that this law was enacted for your own good. It wasn't thought out to put a burden on you as some have led you to believe. And let's be clear about this; you know whom I'm referring to. I'm referring to Bishop Pellerano, who through his provocation has fomented quite a lot of trouble, not only with you, but even with the Pope. He has not told you, as he should have done, that you had to be patient until the number of wild rabbits grew so that we could have enough food products for the future. No, he chose to sow hatred towards me in your hearts by saying things against me and encouraging his friends to do likewise. Very recently he organised a meeting of representatives from every parish in Malta in front of his palace in Mdina and permitted them to say horrible lies about me, if he didn't instigate them himself. It's no use him telling us that it was a spontaneous demonstration because we won't believe him. Do you know when we'll start to believe Pellerano? We'll start to believe him when he starts to help and co-operate. We tell Pellerano that if he continues acting the way he is acting, I will personally ask the Pope to remove him from his position as Bishop of Malta and replace him with someone who really has your and the country's interests at heart. Don't let him be so naïve as to believe that just because he is Head of the Church in Malta, the Pope will take his side. The Pope will side with whoever is right, and he's so convinced that I'm right that he's even sent me a letter authorising me to proceed against those priests who try to cause trouble in the country without anyone's interference. So we're telling those priests who are always conspiring, not to give themselves so many airs, and not be so stupid.

And you would be stupid as well if you let anyone use you. Why did you think the Bishop reacted when I made the edict public? Did you think it was because he felt this measure would hit you badly? He reacted because he was afraid the rabbits would ruin his crops. I repeat: His crops! If he really had your interests at heart he would share the tax burden with you and not hide behind privileges and immunities. We know that the Church in Malta is filthy rich. And we also know that there are priests who run their own businesses. How can these people speak on your behalf when it is because of them that you have to contribute a large proportion from the little you have, while they're loaded with money and do not contribute anything and have never contributed anything.

So don't take heed when he tells you that you should stand up to me because I'm eating away at your privileges.

One last thing. A word of warning. Don't listen to what Pellerano is saying. Don't believe him when he tells us that he's talking on behalf of Christ. We'll start believing Pellerano when he tells us what Christ really said and not what he's saying himself. Let me tell you what Christ said. Christ said, feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty and clothe the naked. And who can accuse me of not having done this?

Shouting. The Secular characters, the Knights and Ximenes exit.

15. PELLERANO CALLED TO ROME

Inquisitor Monsignor Lante and Bishop Pellerano enter from opposite sides. They meet in the middle.

LANTE: Monsignor Bishop Pellerano, you are called to Rome immediately by order of Pope Clement XIV himself.

PELLERANO: I was expecting this. So finally the Pope has given in to Ximenes' demand.

LANTE: He had great pressure from the Order's ambassador...

PELLERANO: That conspirator.

LANTE: ...and ministers in Spain and France to remove you from here.

PELLERANO: The bunch of bootlickers.

MANNARINO: Monsignor Lante, tell the Pope that he'll never take Bishop Pellerano away from us.

Enter the Priests and the Secular characters singing.

PRIESTS/SECULARS: No, you won't take our bishop away,
He's our true bishop, and he will stay,
God bless our bishop and Naples' king
They are our friends in everything.

LANTE: Grandmaster Ximenes has already put a galleon at your disposal.

PELLERANO: He's certainly keen to get rid of me, is Ximenes. But I'm afraid I'll have to disappoint him a little bit because I don't feel fit to travel. I've grown old, I'm really feeling sick ...A trip like this will surely kill me. I'm not up to it.

PRIEST 1: I came to announce the death of Pope Clement XIV. A new pope has been chosen, Pope Pius VI.

PELLERANO: Good. He's a good man, well loved, big-hearted, tolerant. I don't think he'll object to my staying here and continuing with my mission...

LANTE: I'm sorry, Monsignor Bishop, but Pope Pius VI is of the same opinion. You have to leave Malta as soon as possible.

MANNARINO: We have to do something quick. We must write to Rome, tell the Pope that we want Bishop Pellerano. We'll prepare a petition, sign it, and send it to the Pope...

SECULAR CHARACTERS: We're illiterate, we cannot sign it...

PELLERANO: So there's nothing else to do. With tears in my eyes, I must leave this island that I have come to love with all my heart. I have only one regret. When I'm no

longer here, Ximenes and the knights will put on more airs; they'll find it easier to treat everyone like...*(to Labini)* excuse my word, Monsignor ... dung.

The Priests and the Secular characters start singing again. Two knights mingle with them.

PRIESTS/SECULARS: No, you won't take our bishop away,
 He's our true bishop, and he will stay,
 God bless our bishop and Naples' king
 They are our friends in everything.

KNIGHT 1: *(swinging his sword)* Too much noise gives me headaches. Stop.

The Secular Characters and the Priests stop.

LANTE: The Pope tells you that he'll welcome you with open arms and will give you the title of Archbishop of Rhodes and a pension amounting to seven thousand scudos a year. Naturally, the diocese of Malta will make good for these expenses. LABINI: The devil take him, not even I make seven thousand scudos a year. PELLERANO: Before leaving Malta, I'd like to nominate Monsignor Teodoro Grech as Vicar-general, and if the Lord God calls him to Heaven, I ask that his brother, Monsignor Gejtanu Grech takes his place.
RECTOR: *(while the action is going on)* The actor playing the part of Bishop Pellerano expressed his wish to play the Vicar-general as well. So as not to disappoint him, I made up this short scene where Bishop Pellerano is symbolically changed into the Vicar-general.

Inquisitor Monsignor Lante starts helping him take off his clothes. He is undressed slowly until he is only in his underwear; Lante makes some adjustments to his make-up, and starts dressing him as Vicar-general. During all this, the Secular Characters, the Priests and Mannarino try to stop Lante from undressing him while they're singing. The Knights intervene to restrain them. Little by little they all abandon their quest, except for Mannarino. Bishop Pellerano is now changed into the Vicar-general.

RECTOR: *(angrily)* Ximenes will one day be sorry for what he's done. The Maltese people will not stop here. They will revenge themselves. They will revenge themselves for sure.

LABINI: Take things calmly, Rector. Don't forget that this is just a play. *(laughs)*

16. MALTA IN THE PAST

RECTOR: Naturally, Bishop Labini is right. This is only a play and our aim is to have fun and not to take things seriously. So let's forget for a while this historic episode and take a look at Malta's past. The actors will now join in to sing you a song I wrote called 'Malta in the Past'.

While the Rector is talking, all the actors take their place on stage, ready to sing.

ALL: We were still naked, living in caves

Feeding off wild fruits, riding the waves.
We had no rulers or rules
And we needed no schools
We were heathens, we just couldn't choose.

That was before we had a visit from St. Paul
We hadn't heard of Christianity at all.

Time went by and along came the Phoenicians
Before long they were Carthaginians,
Who taught us how to spin,
And built temples to adore their gods in
They even introduced overseas business.

All this was worthless, as we hadn't had Saint Paul
And we knew nothing of Christianity at all.

Along came the Romans, who made a mess of our lives
Brought us slavery that we all would despise.
Suddenly all we had in life were taxes
It was really a hideous praxis
Eight hundred years treated like lice.

At this moment along came St. Paul
In three months he made Christians of us all.

But the fact that we had become Christians
Didn't make us immune to resistance.
When Islam said Christians would be taxed
Our morals became more relaxed
We were Muslims without need for insistence.

And who gave a damn for St. Paul,
The commandments, sacrifices and all!

We lived with the Arabs without any problem
Until Roger the Norman exiled them
He gave us back our old faith
St. Paul was again our best mate
Islam was soon out of our system.

Our islands and our hearts went back to St. Paul
From then on they wouldn't falter at all.

A feudal lord tried to reduce us to slavery
But had to put up with our bravery
Because of him we suffered much hunger
Till one day we could take it no longer

And we pushed him out in a flurry.

And although we kept our faith in St. Paul
Our swearing did not show it at all.

Finally came the Knights with their might Who
said they would put things all right. But injustice
was all they could offer
And the workers were the worst to suffer
The islands had never been in such plight.

It was only thanks to St. Paul
That we didn't lose our faith at all.

Things have now become much better,
Since De Rohan was elected Grandmaster.
Those bad days are now truly over
We have even had time to recover
Things just couldn't have improved any faster.
Whatever the situation as long as we have St. Paul
Other things just don't matter at all.

17. PROSPERITY UNDER DE ROHAN

RECTOR: As we have just seen, Malta has always suffered at the hands of foreigners. It is only during De Rohan's rule that the Maltese have been respected. As a sign of appreciation, my novices expressed their wish to show you some of the good things that this beloved Grandmaster has done for us.

POOR MAN: De Rohan has intentionally brought down the price of grain. He immediately realised the need to do this. Poor Mannarino and his friends. There was no need for the revolt they had against Ximenes to bring down the price of bread. De Rohan brought it down without our having to ask him. Now the poor and the needy could buy bread cheaply. The poor things had food.

BUSINESSMAN: De Rohan gave us businessmen permission to import goods from abroad without having to pay extraordinary amounts of taxes. Some goods had not been seen on the islands for so long that we had forgotten how they looked like.

CAPTAIN: He also issued licences to traders and seamen and gave them permission to sail not only in the Mediterranean but also in every part of the world. He issued licences to everyone. There was no discrimination against people who did not support him. Everyone profited under De Rohan.

POOR WOMAN: What a difference from Ximenes' times. To issue a licence he would look as if he's having to pay you. We almost had to ask permission to shit. STUDENT:

Do you remember what Ximenes did in his time? Like the lousy bastard he was, he reduced the number of courses at University and to save money he fired all the foreign professors we had in Malta. What did De Rohan do? He returned the University to what it was before and even increased the number of subjects you could study.

PROFESSOR: Now let's say it, in which country is there a University that reduces the number of subjects instead of increasing them.

PRIEST 1: To show you what good relations De Rohan had with the Church, we remind you that he even wanted to have a Maltese Bishop nominated to Malta after Monsignor Pellerano. Unfortunately, this plan failed as in 1780 Malta had to accept another foreign bishop against her wish.

RECTOR: Naturally, he's referring to Bishop Vincenzo Labini, who's present today.

PRIEST 2: For the first time in the history of the Knights in Malta, De Rohan chose Maltese priests instead of foreign ones to preach in St John's Cathedral.

WORKER: And we have not mentioned everything. It's just an idea of the many good things that De Rohan has done. As you could see, from the beginning this Grandmaster tried to be on good terms with us Maltese and wherever he could he involved us in what he was doing. It's no wonder that he's the best-loved grandmaster we ever had.

18. END OF THE FIRST ACT

RECTOR: And that brings us to the end of the first act. Before you go to refresh yourselves during this short interval I'd like to pass on a suggestion that Bishop Labini has just given me. His highness has just asked me to tell you that this year, instead of the great quantity of flowers that are usually offered in front of the statue of our patron St. Paul, donations should be given to buy four mahogany doors for the cathedral. Every donation will be acknowledged by a card that will be placed prominently on the main door of the cathedral. He would also like you to be generous in your donations. Thank you.

ACT 2

19. INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND ACT

RECTOR: *(stands up to speak)* And now after that short interval, we're asking you to sit back and continue following the second part of this work. We hope that the incidents we had during the first act did not put you off, and that you're enjoying yourselves just the same.

Mannarino, the Secular Characters and the Priests start taking their places on stage.

RECTOR: Pope Pius VI called Bishop Pellerano to Rome with the aim of bringing peace to the relations between Church and State in Malta. This idea failed because there was more trouble, not less. The Maltese were still unhappy with Ximenes' rule and the quarrelling between priests and knights increased when the latter, in the absence of a bishop in Malta, put on more airs. But the Maltese were not going to keep quiet and close their eyes while these things were happening. There's a limit to everything...

20. MANNARINO FOMENTS TROUBLE

MANNARINO: Enough is enough, the time has come to stand up and be counted, brothers. We must get rid of this harsh grandmaster and of all the knights.

We got rid of Pinto and got stuck with a worse burden and God knows what will come next. If we don't do something this is the way it will be; one year worse than the one before, one grandmaster worse than the other. Initially we all rejoiced when Ximenes was proclaimed grandmaster; we sighed with relief because we thought he would save us from oppression. But our saviour did nothing except come out with new laws to continue oppressing us. How long did he smile at us in the streets? Till he became Grandmaster; after that he didn't like our smell anymore. He never approached us again.

The Secular characters talk to each other and complain quietly.

He promised you you'd get raises. Where are these raises? Instead of giving them, he reduced salaries! He also promised he'd create more jobs. Where are these jobs? I tell you there are more unemployed people now than ever before. How many people were fired by the Order because they said they were redundant? How many public officials were suspended? And as if this wasn't enough, he burdened us with more taxes. I'll just mention one tax. The one he introduced lately on grain imported from Sicily. And he had told us that he was going to reduce the price of bread.

The grumbling among the secular characters increases.

Tell me, my friends, when were you so desperate that you had to grow your own vegetables? Things were never this bad, not even under Pinto. And then the grandmaster is always boasting about the great amount of money in circulation...the money is only circulating between himself and his knights!

LABINI: *(cynically, to the Rector)* I didn't know that at that time priests used to speak in the manner of French revolutionaries.

RECTOR: *(half-jokingly)* You would be surprised how hot-blooded the priests were at the time. But to be really honest, Monsignor, this scene was written by Gejtanu Gatt himself. I gave him the opportunity to take part in writing this work.

MANNARINO: *(continues)* I call this greed. And if Ximenes thinks that the Order's coffers are in bad shape we remind him that it's not our fault as much as the fault of those who ruled before him. If he really wants to improve the financial condition he should go round his Knights and make them pay taxes like everybody else and not let them do as they like because he's afraid of them; or else because he has something to hide like them.

I repeat; these knights respect no one. How many times have they offended us and got away scot-free as if they were above the law? Have actions ever been taken against them? Let's take Fr. Mikiel Grech. What did they do to him? Just because he remonstrated with two knights who were harassing two Maltese girls, he was beaten up, and to add insult to injury, he was arrested and exiled. You would not know about these things because they hide them from you.

The Secular Characters start getting restless.

How long will we be smiling at them because we're afraid. We're afraid of God only. We'll show them that we're not ready to lick their boots for letting us have their our home, in our island. We must stop thinking that we can live happily when we're at the mercy of foreigners; we don't need to lick our master's boots anymore. So awake, friends, and let's show them that we are Maltese and capable of fighting for our rights.

Applause and cheering from the people.

21. MANNARINO IS BEATEN UP

Shouting against Ximenes. Suddenly two Knights enter, walking unsteadily, half-drunk. Everyone is suddenly silent. The people leave quietly until Mannarino is left alone, standing like a statue. The Knights stop to look at him; they talk to each other about him.

KNIGHT 1: Is this not Gejtanu Mannarino, the saviour of the Maltese?

KNIGHT 2: Usually he's surrounded by a bunch of fools, listening to him. How come he's alone today?

KNIGHT 1: Look at him, he looks worried.

KNIGHT 2: He's probably thinking how he's been left alone, in this hour of need.

KNIGHT 1: Look what's become of the priests these days, they even carry swords. *(he grabs the sword from Mannarino's waist)* How fierce have you become, Mannarino? *(Kicks him in the stomach.)*

KNIGHT 2: I feel that they had been given too many airs by the beloved Monsignor Bishop Pellerano, and now they cannot get used to being brought back to earth.

Punches him in the face.

KNIGHT 1: They behave like this because our Grandmaster is a quiet man. He's too tolerant. Not like me. *(Punches him again. Mannarino falls to the ground. The two Knights ignore him and exit calmly; speaking, laughing, walking unsteadily.)*

KNIGHT 1: If I were Grandmaster, I would hang them all.

KNIGHT 2: They think that just because they wear a cassock we have to bend to all their wishes.

22. A DISCUSSION BETWEEN MANNARINO AND LABINI

Mannarino stands up slowly, walks to the front of the stage.

MANNARINO: *(dramatically)* By beating me up you won't break my will to redeem the Maltese people from your oppression. Your cruelty is strengthening me, and uniting the Maltese people to the same opinion. The people will no longer let you shit on them...

RECTOR: *(correcting him)* Spit on them. *(to Labini)* Pardon him, Monsignor.

MANNARINO: The time has come for the people to wake up, to ... to

LABINI: Revolt.

MANNARINO: Revolt to free themselves from slavery. We need an uprising to show our anger. Maybe finally Ximenes will open his eyes and start treating us better.

LABINI: *(cynically and patronisingly)* Is that all? Is that why you want to revolt, my dear, for better treatment? If that's the case, you can protest. You can put up a few placards, write in large print on them 'We want cheaper bread' or 'We want more

participation' or ... whatever, and then take a few of those people you had with you some time ago and form a protest march in front of the Grandmaster's Palace. For what use is it to have an uprising just to cool down a fire? A fire has to be

extinguished, or else it will leap up again. If you want to revolt, revolt for a complete change. You had Pinto, you wanted Ximenes; you have Ximenes and you want De Rohan. How long will you go on like this? Complete freedom. Changing one grandmaster with another is not the solution ... it's not enough to bring prosperity and peace in the country.

RECTOR: *(to the audience)* Naturally, Monsignor Labini is speaking of the time when the Maltese had had enough of Ximenes' rule and could not know about the years of prosperity and happiness that were awaiting them during the reign of the beloved De Rohan.

LABINI: So be careful. This scheming is playing with fire.

MANNARINO: I'm not afraid of fire. I'm prepared to leap into fire to see better times. I'm prepared to give my life in order to see no more suffering in this country.

LABINI: Do you know why you're speaking that way? Because you think that if your uprising fails, the Church will support you. But you're wrong. Not even the Bishop is here to protect you because those people who were shouting 'Hail to the Bishop' and singing 'you won't take our Bishop', fell silent when he was thrown out of the country on Ximenes' insistence. And these people are the same people who are following you and swearing that they will revolt against Ximenes when the time comes. Do you think that the Vicar-general, Monsignor Gejtanu Grech, can defend you? I tell you that the Vicar is too humble and quiet to intervene in a quarrel with the Grandmaster because of you. And even if he did, he has no power... after all I think you've heard the Grandmaster himself say many times that he has a letter from Pope Pius VI that authorises him to take action without any intervention from the Church against anyone who causes trouble in the country.

MANNARINO: So do you want me to act like a coward?

LABINI: I just want you to open your eyes.

RECTOR: But if we go on like this, always being careful, always afraid, we won't get anywhere.

LABINI: We have enough martyrs. We don't need anymore.

MANNARINO: *(decided)* Enough. I'm sorry, Monsignor Bishop, but whatever you say won't change my mind. I won't even consider betraying my compatriots because of fear. Fear has always been the greatest enemy of the Maltese and many of the abuses that are happening are happening because of this wretched fear. Because fear weakens you. It does not let you fight. After all we're not fighting to rule Malta, but only because we want the Grandmaster to reduce the price of grain. *(Pause)* The day of the uprising has been decided. The ninth of September. The day after the celebrations in memory of the Great Siege, the knights are too tired and certainly will not expect us to revolt on that day. Then we'll signal the uprising and the Maltese will come out in their masses, armed and ready to join us.

LABINI: *(laughing)* And what makes you think that the Maltese will come out of their homes to join you and not to fight you?

MANNARINO: Because they're an unhappy people and they've had enough. Look at the present situation. There's so much hunger and poverty it's unbelievable. There are grave injustices. There are those who have everything and those who have nothing. There's unemployment. Everyone is complaining. When people are desperate they're prepared to do anything to improve their situation.

LABINI: And I tell you that in times of poverty and despair, you'll find many parasites

who are ready to exploit the situation, and are even ready to join the enemy and take up arms against themselves to be in the good books and get something in return, however small. Don't be impressed because you hear people complaining. They do that softly and behind closed doors, where knights cannot hear them, so that in the streets they can still greet them convincingly. And how many people are there shouting and swearing that they'll defend their rights, and your rights ... and our rights ... and the Church's rights. I remind you. How many people were there in your time who swore that nobody would touch Bishop Pellerano; then he was called to Rome and everyone was silent. No protests. The Maltese have a way of retreating after giving their word. When the time comes you'll need a spyglass to see them. There are even Jacobins among them...

RECTOR: (*smiling*) Jacobins? So now even Bishops are speaking in the manner of French Revolutionaries!

LABINI: (*embarrassed*) Anyway, they'll be hypocrites who will befriend the Knights hoping to get a job, or a small promotion, or maybe be given some cash gift. And what do they care if they've done a lot of damage. Remember that it doesn't take much to bribe the Maltese.

RECTOR: (*stands up, very angrily*) Monsignor, shame on you to say that it's easy to bribe the Maltese. I'm ashamed even hearing you say these words in front of all these people. There's nothing wrong in arguing but to insult the Maltese in their own home and to their own face is unforgivable.

MANNARINO: There's nothing wrong in insulting the Maltese in their own home and to their face if you're right. But you're not right. You're saying those words because you know that after Pellerano the Maltese people wanted a Maltese bishop and not you ...

RECTOR: A Maltese bishop that the present Grandmaster De Rohan tried to get so much.

LABINI: I'm saying these words because I've been Bishop of Malta for almost twenty years, long enough to understand how you Maltese think.

MANNARINO: In that case you haven't studied our country's history well enough, because otherwise you wouldn't talk that way about us, but would realise that the Maltese always united and fought to obtain their freedom.

LABINI: The Maltese always united and fought to have better rulers or in order not to fall into the hands of worse rulers, and never for freedom.

MANNARINO: Then what did our forefathers fight for against the Turks in the Great Siege? Was that not to protect their liberty?

LABINI: They fought because they were afraid of falling into the hands of cruel rulers. (*laughingly*) After all, the Turks lost the Great Siege because they never thought of bribing the Maltese, because otherwise history would have taken a different course.

MANNARINO: Monroy's time. What didn't the Maltese do to obtain their freedom? They even sold their crops and their jewellery to get rid of him.

LABINI: That doesn't mean that they were fighting for their freedom. Just like you're not fighting for your freedom. Although they got rid of Monroy, they were still ruled by foreigners, because that's the way they wanted it and the way that suited them. And you too, you're looking for foreign rule because you know that the Maltese are happy with foreigners as their masters. The Maltese have got so used to foreign rule that if they were ever granted freedom they would kill each other. Remember this. From your history we see that the Maltese were always ruled by foreigners and so, as a consequence, you remained with a servile mentality. Besides this, you accept the idea

of being ruled by foreigners because with them you know where you stand more than with your own kind.

MANNARINO: But if the Maltese really have this mentality, the fault does not lie with them but with their rulers who always chose to treat them like children. Besides this, you know very well that if we're not protected by foreigners, we would be overpowered by our enemies.

LABINI: The Maltese will continue to have this mentality because they feel comfortable this way. They feel they don't need to fight, after all they don't have the will to fight...

MANNARINO: They do have the will to fight. All they need is someone to guide them. Did you not see how they were united behind me a few moments ago? Did you not see the fire in their eyes, ready for the signal to fight Grandmaster Ximenes?

LABINI: I saw the fire in their eyes. But where did it all go when they glimpsed the shadows of those two knights?

MANNARINO: The poor fellows were afraid... they were confused. All they need is a little courage, a little encouragement.

The Secular Characters start entering again in one group.

LABINI: Look at them. They're coming back. They're calling you. They're shouting against Ximenes. They wouldn't shout any longer if they were to see Ximenes or one of his knights.

SECULAR CHARACTERS: We want Mannarino 'cause he's a worker like us
With his help we'll be freed from this impasse
Free us from slavery, show us the way
Rid us of Ximenes, so that progress we may.
Malta is ill, Mannarino is its medicine.

MANNARINO: Listen to them, calling me. I feel them filling me with courage. How can I close my eyes and not answer their call? I really feel it's the right time to form a popular movement so that once for all we get rid of these injustices that are suffocating us. I'm sure that the Maltese will not pull back from joining us. After all, even Christ fought against injustice in his time and for this he had to suffer being crucified. He never abandoned his cause. I too must do like him, whatever it is that's in store for me.

LABINI: Now don't confuse issues and compare yourself to Our Lord Jesus Christ. Your mission is not the same...

MANNARINO: The cause is the same: the fight against injustice.

RECTOR: Mannarino, they're calling you. Go.

LABINI: Do you know how many of them are prepared to abandon you when the time comes? Do you know how many of them will use the same arms against you? If at this moment Ximenes had to walk past they would all change their tune.

MANNARINO: I don't believe so.

LABINI: Rector, call him.

RECTOR: Mannarino, they're calling you. Don't take heed of him. He's trying to make a coward of you. Go and guide them, and let's get this over and done with.

LABINI: (*shouting*) Ximenes!

Ximenes enters hurriedly, food in his mouth.

XIMENES: What has happened, monsignor? I'm not on now.

LABINI: I want you to cross the scene as Ximenes and walk past those actors.

Ximenes crosses slowly. The Secular Characters stop shouting against him.

SECULAR CHARACTERS: Hail to Ximenes. Hail to our beloved Grandmaster.

Ximenes exits. They start singing their previous song.

LABINI: Did you see that?

MANNARINO: *(stuttering)* But that's because...

RECTOR: Don't take heed of him. Don't answer him. Don't let him change your mind.
They're waiting for you to guide them in the uprising.

Mannarino moves towards them. They carry him above their shoulders and exit singing.

23. THE UPRISING DOES NOT TAKE PLACE

RECTOR: *(relaxing)* Thank goodness. I thought he was going to change his mind towards the end. Mannarino has now decided. Nothing will dissuade him from leading the revolt now. He has a will of steel. So, dear members of the audience, I invite you to watch the part that you've so eagerly been waiting for – the main part of tonight's work: the revolt. *(applauds)*

The Rector sits down. He waits for some time. Nothing happens. The Rector feels uncomfortable. The actors start entering slowly, faces to the ground. They stop and make no more movement; only sometimes looking at the people and sometimes at the Rector.

RECTOR: What has happened? What is happening? *(to the audience)* Please pardon them. I think something must have happened to them, they must have forgotten their lines or got confused. *(Goes to them.)* What has happened? Come on. The revolt is next. You know this part well. You did it very well in rehearsals.

MANNARINO: *(stuttering)* We've discussed this a little and have decided not to show the revolt.

RECTOR: What? The audience has come here to watch the revolt. Everyone's waiting for it. *(to Mannarino)* Is this your doing, Gatt! Do you want to make fun of me in front of all these people?

MANNARINO: We want to help people forget the violence that was used against us Maltese on the ninth of September, not remind them of it. We don't want to impress anyone with bloody scenes. Above all, what happened on that day should shame us. We can't see a reason why we should show it.

PRIEST 1: We don't want to open wounds from the past.

RECTOR: But now twenty years have passed. That episode has become simply a part of Malta's history.

MAN 1: Twenty years is not enough time for things to be forgotten. Maybe there are people in the audience who took up arms against Mannarino and his friends

on that day and were later sorry for what they had done. We don't want to hurt anyone.

RECTOR: But here we have a mature audience. They will surely understand that this is just a play. *(walks towards Mannarino)* At least, do the scene where some of the rebels, after having taken Fort Cavalier, were suddenly attacked by the Knights and three of them, including the priest Guzepp Velasti, were beheaded and their heads were stuck to three lances.

XIMENES: We're ashamed of doing that. We're ashamed to remember that there was a grandmaster in Malta who could do things like these. We don't want the audience to believe that we still have grandmasters like these.

RECTOR: *(to Ximenes)* So do the scene when Mannarino and his friends took Fort St. Elmo and fired two shots in the air to call the Maltese people to join them.

MANNARINO: *(laughing)* Why? Just to show how cowardly the Maltese were? To see them take up arms against us. After all, Monsignor Labini was right; in situations like these, we Maltese not only never unite, but everyone does what he thinks is good for him, and himself only. Forget it, Rector, this is the scene which should as Maltese shame us most.

RECTOR: But we just cannot not show anything of it. Monsignor Labini, could you convince them? Encourage them to act out a part of it; at least when the Vicar-general was sent to speak to them in Fort St. Elmo to accept their requests. It was not worth all the hassle of transforming Bishop Pellerano into the Vicar-general, if the only scene he had as the Vicar is going to be left out.

VICAR: Don't worry about me, Rector; after all my part in this historical event was very small; I hardly merited a mention.

RECTOR: At least the panic that fell upon Ximenes when you attacked the bastion, something, a bit of the hate he showed; the knights' shout: hang them, kill them all; death to the priests.

MANNARINO: Now that everything is over, I don't see why. After all, Ximenes suffered enough because of the revolt; as you know he was dead within two months. However, the play is not over yet. We are ready to continue with the last scene. Therefore we would like you to introduce it because maybe Monsignor Labini and the members of the audience are tired and would like everything to be over so that they can go home quietly.

The Rector, looking dejected, looks into the pages of his script, reads something, then puts it away.

RECTOR: The next scene is not really the last one. Gentlemen, let's see Mannarino and his friends on trial.

MANNARINO: *(calmly)* Excuse us, Mr Rector, but the trial is not the next scene. The trial is part of the next scene.

RECTOR: Don't you even want to act out the trial?

MANNARINO: We're going to act out the trial, but not as you planned it. We're not acting out a farce, and the trial, in our opinion, was a farce. Therefore we'll only give the facts.

PRIEST 1: We revolted in the name of truth and justice.

PRIEST 2: What did we get in return? Everyone turned against us. Everyone took the opportunity to be ashamed and surprised at what we had done. Everyone forgot that we were fighting against who was treating us like dirt.

VICAR: Even the Church that we were defending with our deeds treated us like dirt.

MANNARINO: Pope Pius VI, as if it hadn't been enough that he had removed Monsignor Pellerano from Malta to please Ximenes, said that his heart ached when he heard the news of the uprising. And to show how sorry he really was, he authorised Ximenes to use the death penalty against us if we were found guilty.

PRIEST 3: He was not worried that we could be put to death.

PRIEST 1: We have to say that we could be given the death penalty if we were first dismissed from the priesthood. It didn't matter if they killed us, as long as they didn't kill priests.

PRIEST 2: The twentieth of October 1775. The trial started in Fort St. Elmo. Eleven priests were accused.

PRIEST 3: The Inquisitor, Monsignor Lante, ordered by the Pope, asked that there be a Church representative at the trial. The Archpriest of St. Paul's Parish in Valletta and the Parish Priest of Senglea were chosen. Both declined because they felt that they could serve their mission better if they stayed with the faithful in their parishes. They had a golden opportunity to defend those who had fought injustice and they washed their hands of it. The Parish Priest of Mqabba was then chosen, but he did likewise. He was afraid the trouble would give him a stroke.

VICAR: The Vicar-general sent a couple of letters to the Pope to protest because he was not being consulted about the trial. It was not right that he was being ignored. After all he was fulfilling all the duties of a bishop. But the Pope replied that he should make sure that those who had beheaded Don Ġużepp Velasti and the other two priests were absolved from their sins. The Vicar forgot that even the Pope had ignored his protests. He now felt proud that the Pope had given him a direct order, and so made sure that the Pope's wish was fulfilled immediately.

PRIEST 1: He even found a way of controlling some of our colleagues, who during confession, were telling the faithful that those who had taken up arms against us would be excommunicated. What they were doing was not a good thing; it was an abuse; but it gave us some comfort.

XIMENES: But the greatest damage wasn't done by the grandmaster or the Vicar, but by those people, maybe even some members of this audience, who, that day, even though they didn't take up arms against Mannarino, betrayed the cause just the same when they didn't answer his call and instead stayed at home or at work with excuses why they remained silent.

MANNARINO: I think we've said enough about the trial. If he wants to, the Rector can read the sentence himself while we prepare for the final scene.

Pause.

RECTOR: Don Gejtanu Mannarino and the cleric Ġużeppi Dimech, as leaders of the revolt were sentenced to twenty years in prison, and the rest of the insurgents, nine in all, were exiled to Sicily. Now I would like to apologise to you that the novices did not show you the revolt and the trial but maybe they were right. It's true, we didn't have the revolt, but the next scene is better. You'll see. *(to Mannarino)* What's next?

MANNARINO: On Ximenes' tomb.

RECTOR: Members of the audience, on Ximenes' tomb. The next scene. A brilliant scene.

24. ON XIMENES' TOMB

RECTOR: While the trial was going on, Francesco Ximenes died. His inglorious body is buried somewhere in the charnel-house of St. John's Cathedral. We don't know where his tomb is because nobody thought of building a monument or inscribing his name on the tomb. These Maltese people you see in front of you all had some part in the insurrection of the priests but these, luckily, all escaped its consequences. That's why they're all here to give their last regards to the grandmaster before letting him rest in peace forever.

The Secular Characters and the Priests sing together.

ALL: It's a pity that no stone marks your grave,
They didn't even your name engrave.
No one thought they should show you respect
Nobody remembers you, in fact.
We haven't come here with any good intent,
In case you think this a happy event. We
just came here to spit on your tomb To
pay you back for two years of gloom.

And for those who think the revolt was in vain
Bollocks, at least it cut short Ximenes' reign.

He spent the next two months in bed And
before they were over he was dead. His
heart could not stand the anticipation Of
a forthcoming assassination.
But the Maltese didn't want any more mourning
They just wanted to send him a warning.
So all Ximenes needed was to pretend
That he would treat them like a friend.

And for those who think the revolt was in vain
Bollocks, at least it cut short Ximenes' reign.

We can't forget how your words you betrayed
When your false mercy you displayed
First telling the rebels that if they surrender
You'd treat them fairly, give them a pardon
Of those who believed you, some went to jail
For twenty years with no hope of bail
Others were tortured till they bled,
The rest were exiled, now that's very sad.

And for those who think the revolt was in vain
Bollocks, at least it cut short Ximenes' reign.

Three actors holding three heads on three lances.

Ximenes, we've brought three of our pals to your grave
Who you beheaded for being brave.
They came to remind you of times gone by
When you betrayed them and sold them a lie.
You had them beheaded to serve as a sign
For any in future who'd dare cross the line.
But you also had to suffer from all this strife
Because all this trouble took your life.

And for those who think the revolt was in vain
Bollocks, at least it cut short Ximenes' reign.

The actors continue singing the refrain as they go out.

RECTOR: *(standing up to speak)* Many ask if this insurrection, known by the name of the insurrection of the priests, actually achieved anything. Some say that it only served to harden Ximenes. *(emotional)* But we say that the revolt served so that Ximenes saw a symptom of the strong beating of our heart. It served also so that the Knights could know what the Maltese really thought, and so think carefully who to choose as grandmaster. It was for this reason that the beloved De Rohan was chosen to rule over us. It was here that Malta won the insurrection. No wonder that the Maltese people came out to accompany him with shouts of joy from his home to St. John's Cathedral. *(Pause)* We remind you that we're still enjoying Grandmaster De Rohan's rule to this present day.

25. THE PROTEST

RECTOR: Honourable members of the audience, on this last note, we come to the end of our performance. We hope that you've enjoyed yourselves and that you liked tonight's play. Next year, God willing, we'll be able to perform a work of the same kind. In fact, we're already planning a play based on the shipwreck of St. Paul on Malta. Before you go home, I'd like you to remain seated for a while because I have a surprise for you that probably none of you were expecting.

All the actors enter singing. The Rector stops suddenly. The actors surround the Rector while they're singing.

ACTORS: You should be careful what to believe Better
forget everything before you leave. Don't
take any notice of what the Rector says
He's a real bastard in many ways. *(pointing to the Rector)*
His aim was to make friends up above

And he used us students sure enough.
In reality he brought you here
Because he had a belief to share
For him Ximenes brought us hell In
twenty years nothing went well,
While de Rohan who came just after
Saved us quickly from this disaster.
So we decided to call his bluff
Of all these lies we've had enough.

RECTOR: That's not true. They are trying to show me in a bad light. (*nervous, smiling to the audience*) Don't listen to them, gentlemen. They're still young. They like a joke. They don't realise that in future they'll be God's ministers.

Bishop Labini bursts out laughing. The actors turn to him. The Rector tries to stop them.

ACTORS: You should be careful what to believe
Better forget everything before you leave.
And don't take heed of that piece of shit
As Bishop of Malta he's been quite a hit.
We've even given him our best chair
Waiting for the truth we all came to hear
So it's to no avail that he tries
To convince us he's with us, it's all lies
It's clear as crystal from what he said,
That he thinks as a foreigner, he's not Maltese-bred.
It was Ċetta the cook who called his shame
And for this the Rector was to blame.

LABINI: What is this? I cannot continue listening to all this. I'm walking out. (*stands up and starts walking*) But this will not end here, Rector. Tomorrow, I want to see you in my office!

RECTOR: (*walking behind him*) Don't believe them, Monsignor. They're trying to pull your leg... deceive us.

ACTORS: You should be careful what to believe
Better forget everything before you leave.
The present Grandmaster should not be believed
Falsehood is his religion, lies his creed.

RECTOR: Out!

ACTORS: Today he's out begging in faraway Russia
After trying all Europe from France to Prussia.

The Rector goes out.

So forget the impression that the Rector gave
It's just that to the Order he's a slave
The Knights have pushed him to one side
They have no time for him, for all his pride
So we might as well tell him, loud and clear
That his power's over, he need not cheer.

So be prepared to run for cover,
The Knights' rule in Malta will soon be over.

26. MANNARINO ENDS THE PERFORMANCE

The Rector enters with a man dressed as a priest. The Actors stop suddenly as soon as they realise that the priest is none other than Don Gejtanu Mannarino himself, who has now grown old, after twenty years in prison. When they recover from their shock, they start applauding.

RECTOR: Honourable members of the audience, I have the pleasure to present you Don Gejtanu Mannarino himself. Don't be deceived, he's no actor. This is Don Gejtanu Mannarino himself, who led the priests in the revolt. Don Mannarino has kindly accepted to be with us, just a few days after coming out of prison, to bring this performance to a conclusion. Honourable members of the audience, I leave you with Don Mannarino. *(applauds)*

MANNARINO: Honourable members of the audience, twenty years have passed since the uprising of the priests, and had it not been for the efforts made by the Rector and the Seminarists to re-enact this story, maybe everything would be forgotten. However, I wouldn't like to speak about tonight's performance, I leave it to you to judge. Everyone has the right to form his own opinion about it. I'll tell you only what I learned from the revolt. I feel, as a Maltese, that our fight is not against those who rule us, because there's not much to choose between one master and another. I believe that our fight is against ourselves, each one of us against himself. Why are we always insulted, treated like dung, ordered about? Because there's no unity between us, that's why. Because we do not help each other, because we do not consider our brothers' battles as our own, because everyone does what is good for himself only, because there's always someone who takes advantage of the situation... When will we learn that unity gives us force because we would not have to fight alone? It's not enough to say, 'Things will be all right now. We have a kind grandmaster'. However kind the grandmaster is, we still have to show him that we're ready for him if one day he decides to treat us badly. So, if we don't let this change take place inside us and be united, we'll remain as we are; begging for what is ours by right, being thankful for scraps of food that are thrown at us from the masters' table. If we remain like this we can fight a thousand battles: we'll lose them all. Whoever respects himself just a little bit does not sell his principles according to the situation. And if you find some bishop or some grandmaster who tries to frighten you, don't be silent if you know you're right. Use your mouths to speak up and not to make yourselves liked or to betray your friends. One last thing. Don't heed those who remind you of Pinto and Ximenes' times to tell you how bad we were then. Those were different times. Whoever speaks like this, is doing so to make you forget the present. Stop living in the past and dreaming about the future. I end by thanking you for the applause you're about to give me *(applause)* and by reminding you that applauding never changed anything.

The Actors applaud.

RECTOR: And that brings us to the end of our performance for tonight. I'd like to close by thanking Grandmaster De Rohan, who authorised us to perform this work; Monsignor Bishop Labini who accepted our invitation although he was possibly a little disappointed towards the end; I mustn't forget my novices who I believe acted competently in spite of all their limitations; Don Gejtanu Mannarino himself who has remained an idealist to this day and who has showed us that twenty years of prison have taught him nothing because he still has faith in the Maltese people; and finally, I'd like to thank you, members of the audience, for honouring us with your presence. Thank you.

THE END