



# BAROQUE

## Routes

issue 9 - 2013

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### FEATURES:

Mattia Preti  
4th centenary

The city-fortress of  
Valletta in the  
Baroque age

The beginnings of  
the Manoel Baroque  
festival

The passport to  
eternal life

Journal of Baroque  
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2013



newsletter

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## International Institute for Baroque Studies website

The website of the International Institute for Baroque Studies can be accessed at [www.um.edu.mt/iibs](http://www.um.edu.mt/iibs). It contains detailed information about the Institute's aims and objectives, its members of staff, as well as an overview of its past and on-going projects, programmes and courses. The website also contains information on the seminars, study tours, research, and consultancies undertaken by the Institute as well as information on the publications, dissertations, and long essays produced by the students who attended IIBS courses.

Visitors to the website can now also download issues of the Baroque Routes Newsletter in PDF format directly from the site.

The new website also offers detailed information on the various postgraduate and undergraduate courses offered by the Institute and provides facilities for online applications.



# Foreword

## Prof. Denis De Lucca

The publication of this newsletter happens at a time of rapid growth of the International Institute for Baroque Studies at the University of Malta at both teaching and research levels. Work has started in earnest on implementing an International Masters Programme in Baroque Studies in 2015 and a 2-7 June 2014 Summer School Programme on the military architecture of Baroque Malta entitled *Hospitaller Malta –*

The International Institute for Baroque Studies (IIBS) at the University of Malta was set up to promote the pursuit of interdisciplinary, academic studies on various aspects of Baroque culture. It organizes symposiums, public lectures, exhibitions and other activities leading to a greater appreciation of Baroque culture, with particular reference to Malta, and liaises with other centres for similar studies overseas. It is currently engaged in research projects concerning Baroque art and architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Institute organizes MA courses on Baroque studies and short courses on the Baroque heritage of Malta and its conservation, and is also engaged in giving assistance to various bodies concerned with the restoration of Baroque buildings and artefacts. It also organizes a pre-tertiary Certificate course and a Diploma course in Baroque architecture.

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*Bastion of the Christian World*, has already been widely advertised, together with the ongoing MA in Baroque Studies and diploma in baroque architecture courses which will hopefully be again starting in 2014.

In addition, a series of public lectures, graduate seminars and a short course on Baroque Palatial Residences will aim at disseminating knowledge of the Baroque age in Malta to a wide spectrum of interested participants.

On a research level, a prestigious album of the fortification drawings of the Hospitaller Order of Malta is being produced and the director and staff members of the institute will be presenting papers in diverse international conferences and contributing publications to various journals, including the peer-reviewed *Journal of Baroque Studies* edited by Professor Frans Ciappara and published by the IIBS, the second volume of which is due to be published by the Institute early in 2014.

Perhaps an important highlight of the international scenario of Baroque studies in 2014 will be an inter-disciplinary conference on "Society and Culture in the Baroque period" to be held in Rome in March 2014, organised by the European Network of Baroque and Cultural Heritage – ENBaCH – which is composed of the Universitat de Barcelona, the Technische Universität Dresden; the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, the Università "La Sapienza" in Rome, the *Università degli Studi di Teramo*, the Uniwersytet Warszawski and the Medizinische Universität in Vienna.

The International Institute for Baroque Studies will be contributing a paper in this conference, where useful contacts are also expected to be made to enhance the profile and content of the International Masters Programme being prepared by the Institute in collaboration with a number of overseas institutions that are concerned with the study of the Baroque age.

# Mattia Preti events

## 4th centenary celebrations in 2013

Mattia Preti was born in 1613 in Taverna in Calabria, Italy. He worked in Rome and Naples as a painter, and in 1658 he visited Malta where he painted important works for the Knights of the Order of St John. Preti became a Knight of Magistral Grace within the Order of St John under Grandmaster Nicholas Cotoner. He continued to paint and received many ecclesiastical and private commissions for his work in Malta, until his death in 1699. The 4<sup>th</sup> centenary of the birth of this accomplished 17<sup>th</sup>-century artist was marked in Malta in 2013 by an international exhibition, publications, lectures and other initiatives.

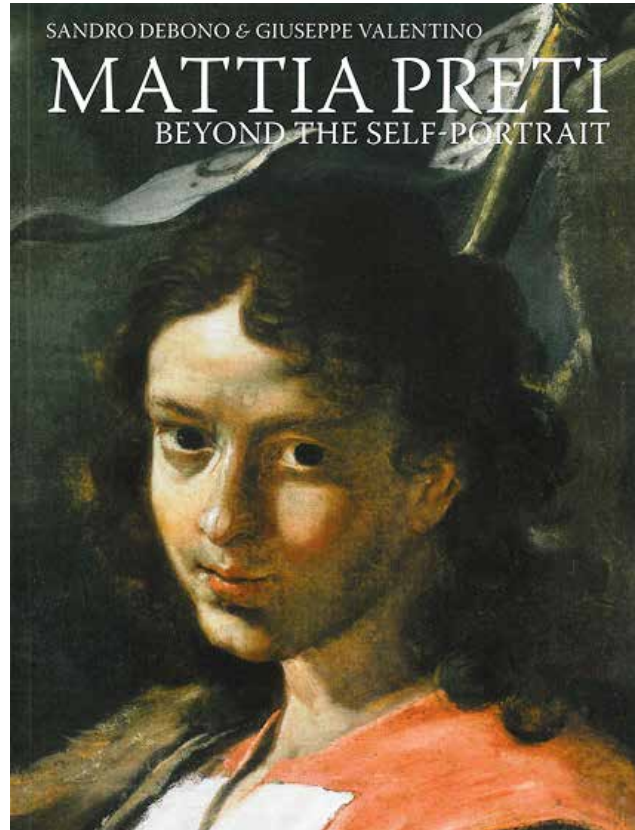
### **Exhibition – ‘Mattia Preti - Faith and Humanity’**

An international exhibition featuring important works by Mattia Preti was organised in 2013, to mark the 4<sup>th</sup> centenary of Preti's birth. The exhibition was set up jointly by Heritage Malta and the *Museo Civico* of Taverna, Preti's birthplace in Italy. The exhibition opened in Taverna in February 2013, and then moved to Malta in May where it was hosted at the Palace of the Grand Masters in Valletta. A series of lectures, tours and workshops were organised during the exhibition, which included loans from various European institutions, as well as works from the collection held by Heritage Malta. The exhibition was curated by Sandro Debono (National Museum of Fine Arts, Malta) and Giuseppe Valentino (*Museo Civico*, Taverna).

### **Mattia Preti: Beyond the Self Portrait**

By Sandro Debono and Giuseppe Valentino, published in 2013 by Midsea Books.

This volume was published to accompany the international exhibition ‘Mattia Preti – Faith and Humanity’ which took place in Taverna and Valletta in 2013, to celebrate the 4th centenary of Preti's birth. The volume includes essays by the curators of the exhibition, Sandro Debono and Giuseppe Valentino, and a foreword by Giorgio Leone from the *Soprintendenza Speciale per il Patrimonio Storico Artistico ed*



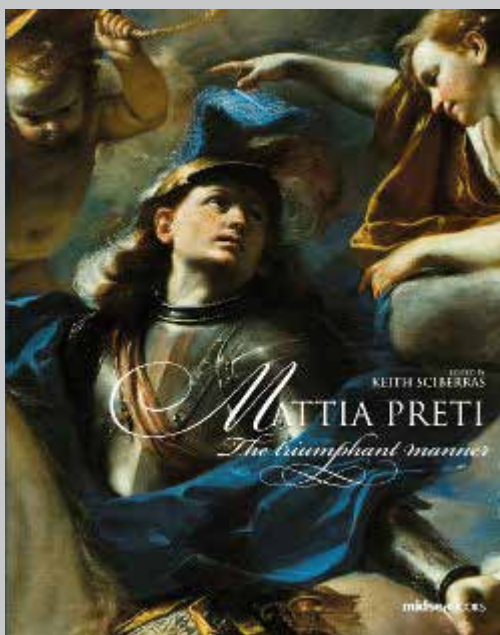
*Etnoantropologico e per il Polo Museale* of Rome.

The authors examine Preti's position as a painter of holy images within the Sovereign Military Order of the Knights of St John in Malta, paying attention to the artist's self-portraits, his personality and the society and culture within which he lived.

This publication was also published in an Italian edition *Mattia Preti: oltre l'autoritratto*, translated by Virginia Ciccone.

### **Public Lecture – ‘Beyond Faith and Humanity’**

A lecture by Sandro Debono, Senior Curator at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Valletta, was held on 26 October 2013 at the Chamber of Commerce in Valletta. The lecture reviewed the research questions that the international exhibition ‘Mattia Preti – Faith and Humanity’ set out to answer, and reviewed recent research methodologies on Preti.



### **Mattia Preti: The Triumphant Manner**

Edited by Keith Sciberras, published in 2013 by Midsea Books.

This volume examines Mattia Preti's artistic output in Malta. Researched and edited by Professor Keith Sciberras, who is also the author of the two critical essays which comprise the first part of the book, the book contains over 150 catalogue entries co-authored by Prof. Sciberras and Jessica Borg. The book includes over 270 paintings photographed by Joe P. Borg.



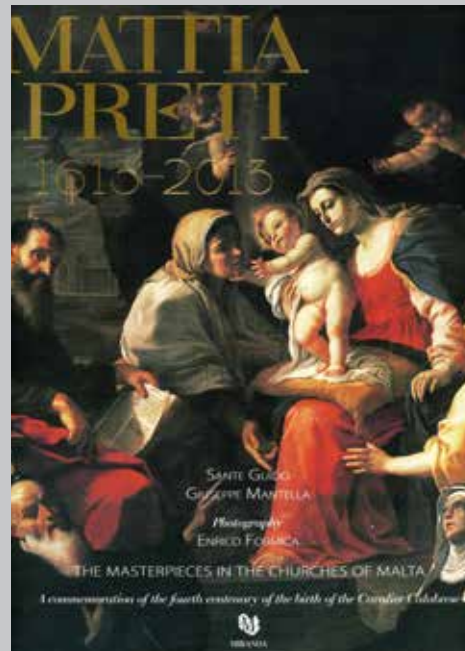
### **Seminar – 'Mattia Preti, Gregorio Carafa: Due Cavalieri Gerosolimitani tra Italia e Malta'**

On 12 June 2013, a day seminar on Mattia Preti and Gregorio Carafa was held in Valletta, organised by Sante Guido, Giuseppe Mantella and Maria Teresa Sorrenti together with the Istituto Italiano di Cultura. The morning session was moderated by Judge Giovanni Bonello and included papers by Cecilia Parri, John Spike, Denis De Lucca and Theresa Vella. The afternoon session was moderated by Salvatore Schirmo and presentations were delivered by Arthur Saliba, Maria Teresa Sorrenti, John Azzopardi, Sante Guido, Giuseppe Mantella and Alexander Debono.



### **Mattia Preti: Faith and Humanity**

Edited by Sandro Debono and Giuseppe Valentino, published in 2013 by Midsea Books. This book was published to accompany the exhibition organised by Heritage Malta and the *Comune di Taverna*, in order to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Mattia Preti's birth. It includes entries on the 49 artworks that formed part of this unique exhibition, as well as nine papers by Craig Felton, Giuseppe Valentino, Giorgio Leone, Luigi Tassoni, Kristina Hermann Fiore, Devin Therien, Robert Cassar, Sandro Debono and Caterina Bagnato.



### **Mattia Preti 1613-2013: the Masterpieces in the Churches of Malta**

by Sante Guido and Giuseppe Mantella, published by Miranda Publications in 2013. This book commemorates the 4th centenary of Mattia Preti's birth. The Italian text was translated into English by Dr Theresa Vella. This volume focuses on paintings by Mattia Preti in Maltese Baroque churches.

# The beginnings of the Manoel Baroque festival

**Petra Caruana Dingli**

It is encouraging to see that in January 2013 the Manoel Theatre successfully revived the idea of organising a Baroque Festival on a regular basis, the Valletta International Baroque Festival. As one of the founding organisations of a similar, albeit smaller, festival organised between 2001 and 2005, the International Institute for Baroque Studies fully supports this initiative.

In 2000, Rev Professor Peter Serracino Inglott and Professor Denis De Lucca, as chairman and director of the Institute, had collaborated with the chairman of the Manoel Theatre, Comm. John Lowell, and its artistic director Tony Cassar Darien, to organise a festival focusing on the Baroque age.

They formed a committee and the festival was named the 'Manoel Baroque Festival', with the majority of events planned to take place at the Manoel Theatre in Valletta. Yet from the outset the idea was to spread the festival wider than Valletta, and to organise events in other Baroque buildings and churches in Malta and Gozo. The organising committee also included Dr Paul Xuereb and Maria Ghirlando, and Mgr Joe Farrugia provided his assistance. Support was obtained from the Embassy of France, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, the British Council, and the German-Maltese Circle.

The idea was to organise a series of artistic and cultural events to highlight and celebrate

Malta's rich Baroque heritage, as well as to contribute to the development of cultural tourism in Malta. Baroque festivals are held in Europe each year, mainly in France, Italy and southern Germany, and the committee aimed to establish a presence within this network of festival-goers.

Writing about the launch of the festival in the Sunday Times on 22 April 2001, Maria Ghirlando had said, "It is so fitting that a Baroque festival be held at the Manoel Theatre, the epitome of baroque theatres cradled in one of the finest of baroque cities bursting at the seams with baroque tradition. When baroque music is making a comeback in Europe, it is so appropriate for the Manoel to be poised on the crest of this new wave, luring local and foreign music lovers to the island, and giving a boost to its cultural tourism."


The Manoel Baroque Festival was initially planned as a biannual event and the first edition of the Festival was held in May 2001. I had joined the team in the summer of 2001 and coordinated the second and third editions of the Festival, which were held in 2003 and 2005.

The first edition of the Manoel Baroque Festival was held over seven days in 2001 and received positive reviews in the local newspapers. It was well received and encouraged as a worthwhile and enjoyable initiative. The performances included two operas, a concert on period instruments, an organ recital at St John's Co-Cathedral and a concert of sacred music performed at the Basilica of St George in Gozo.


As part of the festival, the International Institute for Baroque Studies organised an international symposium on Baroque theatre called 'The Baroque *Theatrum Mundi*', and participants included Denis De Lucca, Vicky Ann Cremona, Elena Tamburini, Peter Serracino Inglott, Annabel Vassallo, John Galea, and John Azzopardi. The Institute also organised a walking tour of Mдина and Valletta, and a small exhibition on the architect Romano Carapecchia.

Apart from various musical concerts, the second edition of the Festival in 2003 featured






3RD EDITION • 9 to 14 MAY 2005



TEATRU MANOEL  
FESTA BAROKKA 2005  
*in collaboration with the Malta Tourism Authority*

*The baroque era began in around 1600 and stretched over 150 years. Some of the greatest works of music, architecture, painting, sculpture and literature of all time were created during this period. Baroque culture was flamboyant, ornate, exuberant and confident. It was a time of spectacular experimentation in all art forms.*

*While baroque styles can vary from one nation to another, the baroque imagination developed into a way of thinking which crossed all boundaries, and its influence and ideas spread all over Europe. The excellent events which form part of the Manoel Theatre's Festa Barokka are an attempt to rediscover the spirit of the baroque.*



the play *The Knight of Malta* (1646) by Philip Massinger, John Fletcher and Nathaniel Field, staged by Theatre Anon (Malta) and directed by Jes Camilleri. This proved to be quite a challenge to perform. The play is set in Malta and revolves around a fight between Grand Master de Valette and the Turks, based on a story adapted from Boccaccio's *Filicolo*.

Highlights of the 2003 edition of the festival included an acclaimed production of the opera *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell (1659-95), conducted by Petr Wagner from Prague. Emma Kirkby and the London Baroque Ensemble (UK) performed a vocal concert, and an organ recital by Marco Fornaciari and Francesco Finotti (Italy) was held at the Mdina Cathedral. The *Ensemble Baroque de Nice* (France) performed a vocal concert of cantata by Michel Pignolet de Monteclair (1667-1737). The *Laudete Pueri* choir conducted by Mro Joseph Vella gave a performance at St John's Co-Cathedral, and walking tours of Mdina, 'Baroque Gozo', and 'Baroque churches of Valletta' were organised and well attended.

The 2003 edition also included a seminar called 'Triumph over Death: a Baroque Celebration', held at St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity in Valletta. Peter Serracino Ingloft spoke about Baroque philosophy and death,

while Denis De Lucca focused on the Baroque *Festa Funebre*. Mgr John Azzopardi described the revival of Maltese Baroque music in the latter half of the 20th century, and Professor Mario Buhagiar gave a presentation on 'Images of Death in Maltese paintings of the Early Modern Period'. Dr Keith Sciberras gave a lecture on 'In Memoriam Principis: Dying Well in the Late Baroque', and Shirley Cefai went over the history and documentation of Carapecchia's *Cappella Ardente* at St John's Co-Cathedral. At the time, the *Cappella Ardente* was in a poor state of repair – it is good to note that since then this wonderful sculptural piece is being restored. The papers were eventually gathered and published in an initial volume of the *Journal of Baroque Studies* in 2003.

In 2005, the third edition of the festival was referred to as the 'Festa Barokka', and included a performance by the British period instrument ensemble Florilegium, led by Ashley Solomon. The festival also hosted the *Ensemble European William Byrd* and the Institute organised a symposium on the theme 'Baroque Connections'. This included a paper by Mro Joseph Vella on Maltese music of the Baroque age, with recorded examples of musical works by Maltese composers illustrating local practices and standards.

# The city-fortress of Valletta in the Baroque age

Denis De Lucca

The Baroque age is generally considered to have begun in the last third of the sixteenth century and to have ended in the mid-eighteenth, covering the period of time between the Italian Renaissance (and its Mannerist sequel) and Neo-classicism. In Europe, the Baroque architectural expression was an integral component of an aristocratic culture incorporating art and architecture, religious and philosophical attitudes, political, military and social structures, geographical and scientific discoveries, literary achievements and ceremonial and theatrical displays. Towards the end of the sixteenth century these different aspects of human endeavour started interacting together to form the basis of a new Baroque lifestyle

This happened at a time when Catholic Europe was vigorously reacting to the Protestant reformation and to the threat of Muslim infiltration posed by the Sultans of the Ottoman Empire, which reached its maximum expansion in 1606. In these troubled times, the islands of Malta, precariously positioned between Catholic Europe and Muslim North Africa, were not spared the turbulences that were shaking Europe. The Hospitaller Knights who arrived here in 1530 were soon faced by two Turkish attacks in 1551 and 1565. Pestilence, desolation of the countryside, acute water supply problems and the unexpected appearance of Protestant 'heresy' from southern Italy added to the woes of Malta in that unhappy century, the latter taking the form of a married priest called Gesualdo who, it is recorded, was publicly burnt at the stake in the main square of Birgu. Eager to apply to the book the militant spirit of the Counter Reformation, it was by no accident that the Latin cross plans of the first large parish churches built in Malta in the beginning of the seventeenth century were inspired by S. Carlo Borromeo's *Instructiones fabricae*

*et Suppellectillis Ecclesiasticae* formulated at the Council of Trent. It was also by no accident that the building of the magnificent city-fortress of Valletta, the new abode of the Knights "facing Jerusalem," was undertaken just after the Great Siege of 1565 to create a heavily fortified focal point overlooking the *Grande Porto di Malta*, which contained the precious war galleys and arsenal of the 'Religion of Malta'. According to the astrolabe of a mathematician from Siracusa called Giovanni Antonio Inferrera, the foundation stone of the new city-fortress of Valletta had been ceremoniously laid by Grand Master Jean de la Valette (1557-1568)<sup>1</sup> at forty-two minutes to noon on 28 March 1566. This historic event had been held at the end of a long ceremony that had seen de Valette and his retinue of Hospitaller dignitaries leaving Birgu and advancing in a truly Baroque procession to the site of the present church of Our Lady of Victories where, it is recorded, a High Mass had been celebrated by *Fra Giovanni Pietro Mosquet*, when all the cannon mounted on the fortifications of the Grand Harbour had fired a royal salute during the elevation of the Holy Host. An emotionally-charged sermon delivered by the famous Augustinian orator *Padre Spirito Pelo Angusciola* and the blessing of the site of the new city-fortress of the Knights, had concluded the festive occasion.

This very Baroque ceremony had taken place within sight of a massive Turkish basilisk that had been abandoned by the retreating Ottomans and subsequently dragged into the main gate area as a victory trophy. After 1600, the arrival of Baroque in Valletta coincided with the aspirations of Grand Masters Antoine de Paule (1623-1636) and Jean Paul Lascaris Castellar (1636-1657) to introduce the new architectural and artistic attitudes that were then becoming so fashionable in



Europe. Baroque was perceived as a passionate expression of hope for the future, of great artistic achievements, of powerful rhetoric and of celestial inspiration ablaze with a blind faith in a triumphant Catholic Europe and a triumphant Catholic God.

Built amidst great fears of a renewed Turkish attack, the orderly gridiron plan of Valletta had been conceived in the same utopian spirit of Giulio Savorgnan's Venetian outpost of Palmanova, of Baldassare Lanci's Terra del Sole, of Biagio Rossetti's Ferrara and of Pedro di Prado's Carlentini in nearby Sicily. The Italian military engineers Gerolamo Genga and Baldassare Lanci had originally intended Valletta to have an Italian-type asterix plan hinged on a large central plaza. But Francesco Lapparelli, sent out by Pope Pius IV de' Medici in November 1565 and subsequent pressures from Gabrio Serbelloni and from the Spanish Viceroy of Sicily Don Garcia de Toledo, had changed all this. As a result of the heated debates that followed Laparelli's arrival, Valletta emerged as a city-fortress of gridiron streets anticipating the town-planning system which was formalised in the *Real Ordenanzas para Nuevos Poblaciones* issued by King Philip II of Spain on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1573.<sup>2</sup> Unlike previous settlements, Valletta was a place of new foundation designed to provide a cosmopolitan urban experience that had no precedent in Malta. In political terms, the city-fortress reflected the decision of the Knights to remain permanently in Malta. In post-tridentine religious terms, it evoked the resurrection of Rhodes and Jerusalem, providing a new 'City of God' which would enable the former crusaders to renew their sacred vows to resist the Koran.

In military terms, Valletta was intended to form the strategic hub of a defensive network calculated to protect the war galleys of the Knights berthed in the Grand Harbour, also to create a place of refuge for the entire population of the island. Well before the great siege of 1565, a delegation had been sent out





Above, View of the main facade of the *Auberge d'Aragon* in Valletta.

to Duke Guidobaldo II of Urbino to request the services of Bartolomeo Genga to bring him to the Maltese islands *'where the Knights wanted to build some very powerful fortifications as a protection against the Turks and also two cities so as to replace the many scattered villages of the countryside with two strongly fortified nodes'*<sup>3</sup>.

The artillery fortifications of Valletta were subsequently elaborated by military engineers who were brought to Malta for the purpose. These *'opere di perfezionamento'* included the building of an elevated cannon platform flanking the ditch of St Elmo by the Grand Prior of France Alexandre de Vendome in 1614; substantial height modifications to the S. Andrea, S. Barbara and S. Cristoforo bastions by the Knight Giovanni Battista Vertova in 1635-1636; the addition of massive counterguards by the Italian military engineer Don Giovanni de' Medici in 1640; the addition of orillon batteries to the landfront fortifications by the Comte de Pagan in 1645; the deepening of the ditch in 1659; the building of a great girdle wall around St Elmo by the Flemish military engineer Don Carlos de Grunenbergh in 1687 and, finally, the building of the ravelin of S. Maddalena in

front of the main gate, designed by Charles Francois de Mondion in 1732.<sup>4</sup> The 'miraculous' discovery of a fresh water spring in the area of *Strada della Fontana* in Valletta in 1567 had represented an early landmark in the efforts of the Knights to provide their new city-fortress with an adequate water supply which would enable it to resist a Turkish siege for up to two years. This was followed up by the regulated provision of an elaborate system of public cisterns and private wells which became fully operative towards the end of the sixteenth century. The supply of water received a much needed boost in the early seventeenth century when water from the high ground of Rabat was channelled to Valletta by means of an aqueduct built by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt (1601-1622) on the advice of the Jesuit Tomasucci so that *'Grand Master de Valette gave to the new city its body while Grand Master de Wignacourt breathed life into it by providing it with fresh water, so necessary for a fortified town.'*<sup>5</sup>

By 1650, most of Grand Master de Valette's new city-fortress had been built up. The approach towards would have created very much the same kind of pleasure as that derived from reading a beautiful poem, of watching the performance of a great actor or even looking upon a marvellous sunset yet little would one have realised that the very Baroque spectacle created by lines and angles of the

vast arrays of fortification walls resulted from complicated calculations using the knowledge of Euclid and trigonometry which was then being disseminated by so many Jesuit colleges all over Europe. A rare view of Valletta at this time was that provided in a plan annotated by the military mathematician Giovanni Battista Vertova. This plan gives us a clear idea of contemporary street names and the disposition of the principal administrative and religious buildings of the new city-fortress: a magisterial palace, a conventual church, eight auberges belonging to the different Langues of Knights, a slave prison, a munitions factory, a hospital and, finally, a ring of impressive fortifications stiffened by two cavaliers of an impressive scale.<sup>6</sup>

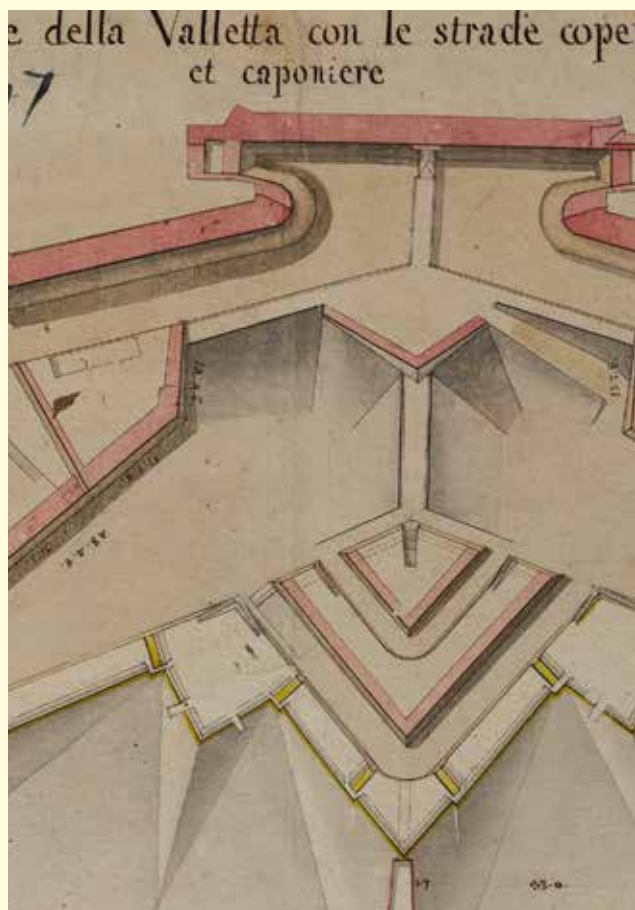
In 1624, Johann Freidrich Breithaupt recorded that: *The Grand Master's palace is a big and very distinguished building, the highest in the whole city, detached on all sides from other buildings. In front of it and behind it there are two beautiful squares, on each of which there stands a round fountain...Upstairs, among the many princely rooms and chambers, one finds a large hall where the Consilium Ordinarium is regularly held. There is here the Grand Master's tribune including a throne with a crimson-brown canopy having a golden fringe. Here too, the great siege of the island of Malta by the Turks is painted on twelve different panels....At the back of the Grand Master's palace and in a particular square, on every day one can see captured Turks and serfs being publicly sold, some for thirty, forty, fifty, some for one, two, three or more hundred crowns according to whether the captive is young, hard-working, healthy, good-looking and strong. These infidel captives are driven together like animals. For in Valletta there are Turkish slaves in almost every household where their job is to carry out all heavy duties for the owner of the house and his family, in particular to tend to the horses.*<sup>7</sup> In 1664, soon after the Jesuits started running a well-attended course in military mathematics in their *Collegium Melitense* in emulation of similar initiatives of the Society of Jesus in Spain, Portugal, Italy and France,<sup>8</sup> Albert Jouvin de Rochefort described Baroque Valletta as “one of the best fortified towns in the universe” having “a position which is immensely strong because the peninsula which it occupies is a massive elevated rock resembling the faces of bastions, which are impossible to climb” to which “fortifications have been added on the highest parts, well equipped with an infinite number of huge cannons” not to mention “the



Above, Detail of the portal sculpture on the main facade of the Auberge d'Italie, Valletta. The crest is surmounted by a bronze bust of Grand Master Gregorio Carafa.

*invincible courage of the 2000 knights who live here and the ample provisions for waging war (on the Turks) on both land and sea” all this implying that “this place is so strong that it is invincible.”*<sup>9</sup>

The gradual mushrooming in Valletta of new residential quarters in peripheral areas that had not been previously available for development in de Valette's city, led to the appearance in the post-1650 period of the so-called Manderaggio, Ghetto, Arsenal, St Lazarus and St Anthony slums creating in the process a hitherto inexistent classification of the formerly unified urban landscape enclosed within the fortifications into ‘high’ and ‘low’ areas, respectively sporting architectural treatments which reflected the degree of affluence of their respective residents. The demographic situation in Valletta became so bad at the dawn of the eighteenth century that the Knights had to adopt a policy of building new residential suburbs outside them, such as that of Floriana. It was perhaps to balance the detrimental effects caused by emerging social problems that three architects, well versed in the fashionable Baroque idiom, were asked by the Grand



Above, Brig. Rene' Jacob de Tigné's additions to Valletta's fortifications in the early 1700s. (Image source: Courtesy of the National Library of Malta)

Masters to respond to the new winds of change with their embellishment projects. They were Francesco Buonamici,<sup>10</sup> Mattia Preti<sup>11</sup> and Mederico Blondel des Croisettes.<sup>12</sup> They can be considered to have been the pioneers of the first Baroque architectural transformations that happened in Valletta after 1650.

A citizen of the town of Lucca where he was born in 1596 to Antonio Buonamici and Anna Pistelli, Francesco Buonamici arrived in Malta in September 1635 after studying at the famous *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome. He came to Malta as a '*maestro di pennello*' in the entourage of the pope's military engineer, Pietro Paolo Floriani. Well connected to Cardinal Francesco Barberini in Rome who had pushed his case to visit Malta, Buonamici had originally planned to stay here for only a few months but he ended up by staying on the island for nearly twenty five years as the resident engineer of the Knights. As such, he was largely responsible for introducing Rome's Baroque architecture into Valletta and disseminating its magic all over the island through a number of Maltese apprentices

employed in his Valletta office. Buonamici also seems to have been heavily involved in the early Baroque building of neighbouring Sicily, having visited that island on at least two, possibly more, occasions in the 1650's. He here carried out extensive alterations in Bishop Giovanni Antonio Capobianco's medieval palace in Siracusa and also found time to design the exquisite *Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento* in the adjoining Duomo and the church of *S. Maria della Immacolata Concezione* better known as *S. Maria delle Monache*. Buonamici was also involved in design activity in other Sicilian towns – the courtyard of the Jesuit *Collegio Massimo* in Palermo, the façade of the Jesuit church in Trapani and the interior of the church of *S. Giovanni di Malta*, attached to the priory of the Knights of Malta in Messina.

Buonamici was in 1637 asked by the Jesuits to continue supervising the large building operation involving their church and adjoining college in Valletta. These buildings had been damaged by an explosion of the Order's *polverista* in 1634. The intention was to transform the dark and austere spaces of the Jesuit church into an illuminated contraption of vaults and domes betraying the opulence of the new Baroque style. The altar chancel was now deeply recessed to accommodate a beautifully designed altarpiece and a splendid facade was created to define the interface with Merchant's street, then known as *Strada S. Giacomo*. Compared to the earlier Spanish flavour of buildings in Valletta before 1600, Buonamici's façade presented a rich Roman Baroque flavour, displaying a superb form of carved decoration introduced at pre-determined points to highlight the compositional qualities of the façade and produce a rich *chiaroscuro* effect.

Not surprisingly, Buonamici's Jesuit church, when completed in the late 1650's, served as a model and a goad for the many subsequent Baroque transformations that happened in Valletta. Before leaving the island in 1659 to take up an appointment as *architetto primario* of his native town of Lucca to there re-model the interior of the Mediaeval Dominican church of San Romano and the theatre of San Gerolamo, Buonamici was commissioned by Grand Master Lascaris to design the layout, the entrance triumphal arch and the two Baroque fountains of his private garden overlooking the Grand Harbour. This garden was described by Albert Jouvin de Rochefort as '*one of the most pleasant gardens in Malta since it contains*

a large quantity of beautiful lemon trees, orange trees and other fruit trees which are evergreen.<sup>13</sup> Other descriptions of this place mention the two fountains in this charming garden, the larger one of which had sculptures of mythological nymphs and satyrs blowing water from their musical horns on unsuspecting visitors while frolicking around a large statue of *Europa* being abducted by the God Zeus who here assumed the semblance of a bull – a favourite theme of representation at the *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome with which Buonamici had been so closely associated before coming out to Malta.

At this time the famous *Cavaliere Calabrese* Mattia Preti Preti was engaged by the Knights to paint the truly wonderful fresco which transformed the barrel vaulted ceiling of nave of Grand Master de Valette's Conventual Church of St John the Baptist into a fantasia of Baroque form and colour which must surely be regarded as one of the landmark contributions of Malta to European Baroque culture. Like Caravaggio before him, Preti was seduced to come to Malta from with the hope of bettering his position. It was for this reason that he gladly accepted the commission to transform the bland stone interior of St. John's into a masterpiece of Baroque design. Preti lost no time to start working on the job which, to his credit, he managed to finish off within five years, between 1661 and 1666. The work seem to have moved forward at a rapid pace since in 1664, Rochefort was in a position to describe the interior splendour of the church of the Knights in glowing terms: '*The floor of the church is of marble, the walls are gilded and the ceiling vault is decorated with the most beautiful paintings representing the life and beheading of St John the Baptist at the request of Herodias*' adding that the church was '*beautifully adorned with paintings, gilding and ornamental chapels, not very large but having an architecture which is truly admirable.*'<sup>14</sup>

Preti also found time to supervise many Maltese and Italian artists and artisans who had been engaged to apply marble claddings, gilding and relief decoration soon transforming the bland stone walls of the church into a fantasia of polychromatic design, completed when that renowned '*Principe*' of the *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome Giovanni Battista Contini was in the 1680's asked to design the magnificent main altar. Marble intarsia tombstones marking the resting place of the flower of Europe's nobility, magnificent



Above, Carapecchia's Baroque churches in Valletta. Top, Santa Caterina d' Italia.

altarpieces placed in the chapels of the Langues, majestic mausolea celebrating in grand style the *feste funebre* of illustrious Grand Masters, world-famous paintings by Caravaggio and fine Flemish tapestries were among the Baroque trappings that within a short time transformed the interior of the Conventual church of the Knights into a splendid Baroque

theatre, an indeed worthy stage setting to publicize that rare combination of temporal power and religious fervour symbolised by the famous 'Religion of Malta.' The powerful Baroque scenography that was introduced in St John's church suddenly presented to a awe-inspired audiences was certainly intended to express the intense religious emotions that inevitably accompanied all Catholic liturgical functions of the Counter-Reformation – emotions that were unleashed by the celestial sounds of choir and organs; emotions that were intensified by the recital of the rosary, by incense, by impressive scenarios; emotions that were climaxed by the deep voices of trained choirs singing the *Hosannah*, the *Te Deum* and the *De profundis*. It was in this church that the joys, the anxieties, the hopes, the laments, the confessions, the contritions and the benedictions that formed such a central part in the life cycle of the Catholic community of Malta in the Baroque age, flowed through the ponderous vaulted spaces which, understandably, soon became a model and a goad for the development of sacred architecture in Baroque Malta. At this time, there were two firmly established *cappelle* of sacred music, one in St. John's in Valletta as the seat of the Grand Master and the other in the Cathedral at Mdina as the seat of the Bishop of Malta. Outstanding musicians enhancing the glory of Maltese Baroque included Aloysio Mataron, Giuseppe and Domenico Balzano, Pietro Grixti and Gerolamo Abos, who in the next century also served as *maestro di cappella* in the cathedral of Naples. Several renowned painters like Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, Stefano Erardi, Pedro Nunez de Villavicencio, Giuseppe d'Arena, Gian Nicola Buhagiar, Francesco Vincenzo Zahra and Antoine de Favray also benefited greatly from the generous patronage of the Knights – one case that comes to mind involved the great Venetian painter Gian Battista Tiepolo who was commissioned to complete the *Consilium in Arena* painting depicting the admission into the ranks of the Order of Count Monsignor Antonio di Montegnacco. The honoured nobleman had obviously commissioned the famous Tiepolo to execute this exquisite painting which can now be admired in the castle museum of the city of Udine.<sup>15</sup>

Two key players entered the scene at the dawn of the eighteenth century. Romano Carapecchia,<sup>16</sup> an architect, arrived from Rome

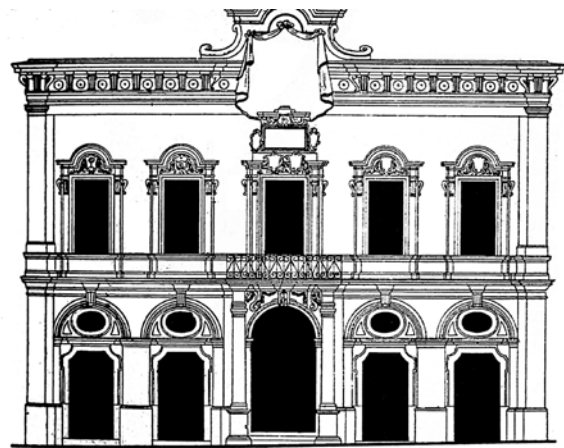
in 1707 while Charles Francois de Mondion,<sup>17</sup> a military engineer, arrived from Paris in 1715. Both reached the zenith of their achievement in Malta when Antonio Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736), a Prince of Portugal, was elected Grand Master on 19 June 1722. The first phase (1722-1725) of architectural development during Vilhena's principate was mainly concerned with upgrading the defences of Malta, this implying the '*perfezzionamento*' by Mondion of the vast arrays of fortifications created in the previous century. The second phase (1726-1733) was marked by a lavish dissemination of elaborate ornamentation intended to shift priorities from military matters to considerations of adornment, amusement and social services. The third phase (1734-1736), just after Mondion's death on Christmas day of the year 1733, was marked by Carapecchia's interventions in the Conventual Church. These projects included the beautiful altarpiece of the chapel of the Langue of Italy and the two elegant annexes which were now added to mask, in a typically Baroque gesture, the unsightly appearance of the bland side walls of the building facing the two main streets of Valletta. Carapecchia also designed three marble tombstones and a magnificent *Chapelle Ardente*. An English traveller to Malta described the overpowering interior of the church of the Knights as '*more overcharged with parade and ceremony than what I have ever observed in any Catholic country.*'<sup>18</sup> And '*Fra Manoel de Vilhena, Grand Master of the Gerosolmitan Order who died in his Magisterial palace on 12 December 1736, was on the fifteenth day of that same month transported in a splendid cortege, according to custom, from the Magisterial palace to the Conventual church of S. Giovanni in the city of Valletta. As soon as the funeral procession arrived at S. Giovanni, the lifeless corpse of the Grand Master was placed in the Chapelle Ardente, raised from the floor of the church to a height of five steps, surrounded by innumerable candles. This Chapelle Ardente was placed opposite to the High Altar, in the centre of the nave. On the side facing the altar and on that facing the main entrance of the church, were placed the two coat-of-arms of the Grand Master, affixed on the upper side of the Chapelle Ardente. On the sides, were placed the two inscriptions. Surrounding the Chapelle Ardente were forty eight torches, each with four wicks.*'<sup>19</sup>

The output of Romano Carapecchia after 1707 posed a fresh approach to the design

challenges of late Baroque Malta. Born in Rome in 1666 to Giovanni Antonio Carapeccchia and Francesca Roveti in the S. Eustachio parish, Romano was a self-made man. Having received his architectural education in the studio of Carlo Fontana, he soon started practising in Rome where he is credited with the design of the church and nearby hospital of S. Giovanni Calibita, the Palazzino Vaini and the Tordinona theatre. In a Rome dominated by the presence of Queen Christina of Sweden, Romano also recorded the highlights of his education experience in a unique document entitled *Compendio Architettonico inventato da Romano Carapeccchia* and drew up several projects for large urban schemes and fountains. He even designed a catafalque for Pope Alexander VIII Ottoboni. All these works collectively reflected the academic discipline and classicizing influences of the famous *Accademia di San Luca*, once described by the great King Louis XIV of France as 'the fount and teacher of the many famous artists who have appeared during this century.'<sup>20</sup> Disappointed with the limited opportunities available in Rome at the turn of the century, Romano Carapeccchia left the city in 1707 to eventually settle in Valletta where he soon managed, as a result of Pope Clement XI Albani's intervention and recommendation, to find favour with Grand Master Ramon Perellos Y Rocafull (1697-1720). Within the context of the island fortress situated on what was still considered to be the very edge of European Catholicism, the newly-arrived architect soon drew up several brilliant projects which all reflected a total commitment to his profession to the extent that rarely has the spirit of the Baroque been more powerfully evoked here than it is in the work of this Roman architect who, according to Pascoli 'disegnava a meraviglia.'<sup>21</sup>

A firm command of a wide architectural vocabulary, an exceedingly pronounced integrative approach, flexibility of thought and a rare control of the design process presupposing the architect's ability to think out every detail on the drawing board, represent the hallmarks of Carapeccchia's works in Valletta. All this can be seen in the churches of St. James, St. Catherine of the Langue of Italy, St. Catherine in lower Republic Street, the Pilar adjacent to the Auberge d'Aragon and St. Barbara in Republic Street. Carapeccchia's successes in Valletta can be best measured by his very detailed *Disegno della facciata o sia il Prospetto*

*della Chiesa di S. Caterina*, which he prepared in connection with his project for the church of St Catherine of the Italian Langue to which he was proud to belong. The Baroque portico which he introduced here, reflected the good optical judgement and the primary-secondary elements relationship qualities that he had listed in the 'Avertimenti' section of his *Compendio Architettonico*. It was also the first projecting structure of its kind to be introduced into the urban fabric of de Valette's city, in blatant contradiction to one of the main town planning regulations that had been drawn up by the *Officium Commissariorum Domorum* of the Knights in the sixteenth century - which had prohibited any sort of projections onto the streets since these had then been considered to be detrimental to the movements of troops and artillery in times of war. It was indeed a sign of the changed times, when the embellishment requirements of Venus now superseded the military dominance of Mars, that Carapeccchia was allowed to introduce architectural features of mature sophistication and studied finesse that went a long way to transform the city-fortress of the Knights into an elegant urban experience.



Above, Carapeccchia, Main facade of the Municipal Palace in Valletta.

In Valletta, Romano Carapeccchia also designed the Municipal Palace, the facade of the Palazzo Spinola, the annexes of the Conventual Church, the armoury door of the magisterial palace and the Perellos fountain which graces its courtyard. Very important from Grand Master Vilhena's point of view was Carapeccchia's involvement in the design of the Manoel theatre, this inspired by a treatise that

he had written about theatre design entitled *Pratica delle machine de' Teatri*. For Valletta's waterfront, Romano designed and built the Barriera stores which, although now destroyed, can still be admired in a 1707 drawing to be found in the architect's album of drawings now kept in the Conway library in London. This project set a precedent for the Knights to transform the shabby waterfront of Valletta facing the Grand Harbour into an impressive Baroque scenario which towards the middle of the eighteenth century culminated in the building of the impressive Pinto warehouses and the two churches of Notre Dame de Liesse and the Flight from Egypt. Carapeccchia had also been involved in at least four major projects in Sicily. In 1709 or thereabouts he accepted an invitation from the bishop of an earthquake devastated Catania to participate in a competition for the restoration on the *Duomo* of that city, for which purpose he seems to have prepared two sectional drawings which could have been later used by the selected architects of the building, judging by the close design similarities that exist between the present dome of the church and Carapeccchia's work in Malta. At some point in 1715, Romano Carapeccchia again visited Sicily, this time to survey and draw up detailed restoration plans, elevations and sections for an old complex belonging to the Knights (including the two small churches of S. Giovanni and S. Antonio Abate) in the town of Marsala.<sup>22</sup>

The last flowering of Baroque architecture in Valletta occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> One now finds Grand Masters Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca (1741-1773), Francisco Ximenes de Texada (1773-1775) and Emmanuel de Rohan Polduc (1775-1797) patronising with zest a full-blooded Baroque architecture that, together with the widespread use of wooden balconies of decidedly Turkish inspiration that had been first introduced in the mid-seventeenth century,<sup>24</sup> added the final touches to Carapeccchia's transformation of Valletta into an elegant Baroque city-fortress. Among the many large-scale buildings that were erected at this time, one can mention the Auberge de Castille (1741), the Castellania (1748), the Palazzo Parisio (1750) and the beautiful small palace with its superb staircase which now houses the museum of Fine Arts in South Street (1761). Stefano Ittar's fine Biblioteca building, evoking the post-earthquake architecture of nearby

Catania and linked to the Magisterial palace - which was now fitted with two magnificent portals - closes the history of the Baroque architectural experience in Valletta. The achievement which perhaps came closest to fulfilling the Baroque ideal was the Auberge de Castille which can be described as the ultimate expression in Valletta of the spatial dominance, the ornamental magnificence and the communicative force of the Baroque age. It symbolised Grand Master Pinto's great power and prestige, enhanced after his brutal suppression of a Muslim slave uprising. It was created by an unknown architect who was well skilled in the use of compositional principles, shadow play, perspective artifices and an elaborate ornamental vocabulary all calculated to create the dramatic vista effects so much loved by the Knights and the people that mattered.

The 'Religion of Malta' was rudely exiled by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798. The coming of Alexander Ball in 1800 saw vigorous attempts to replace the Baroque architectural and artistic language of the Knights by the fashionable romanticist approaches inspired by British nationalism and by the re-discovered ruins of antiquity, best demonstrated in the several refurbishment projects that were made for the Magisterial Palace and other palatial residences in Valletta. Despite the powerful influence of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton radiating from Palermo, the citizens of Valletta throughout the nineteenth century criticized the neo-Gothic and neo-Classical infiltrations that sometimes appeared in their beloved city-fortress. They continued cherishing Baroque as a loud expression of a 'paradise lost' and as a vivid reminder of the beautiful churches and palaces of Catholic Rome. Considered from this viewpoint, it is understandable that many were those who left no stone unturned to ensure the survival of the Baroque expression. As a result of their efforts, the Baroque of Valletta is still acclaimed by many as a form of expression associated with beauty and with a defunct Baroque aristocracy's love of fine things. The poet Corrado Rizza not long ago wrote that '*Il Barocco e' un inno all'occhio e alla teoria della visione*'.<sup>25</sup> To my mind, there are no better words to succinctly describe the splendid perceptions of the city-fortress of Valletta that have been discussed in this contribution.



## NOTES

1. Born in the Chateau de Labro within the fief of Parisot in Rouergue, the Grand Master signed his name in his native Occidan language as Jehan de Valéte, preferring to use his family's Latin title of nobility in lieu of the more commonly used French title of *de la Valette*. For further details about the 28th March 1566 ceremony see Denaro, Victor., *The Houses of Valletta* (Malta: Progress Press, 1967)10 and Parker, Julia, Stafford, Elizabeth and Vella Bonavita, Roger., *Enarrant Caeli - An Astrologer at the foundation of Valletta, Malta* in 'Casemate' no. 74. (Great Britain: Fortress Study Group, 2005) pp.1-8.
2. Hughes, J. Quentin., *The Building of Malta, 1530-1798* (London: Alec Tiranti Ltd., 1967) p. 26.
3. De Giorgio, Roger., *A City by an Order* ((Malta: Progress Press, 1986) p.46.
4. De Lucca, Denis., Mondion – The achievement of a French military engineer working in Malta in the early eighteenth century (Malta: Midsea Books Ltd. 2003) p.58. See also De Lucca, Denis., French Military Engineers in Malta during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in 'Melita Historica' (Malta, 1980). A good description of the development of the fortifications of Valletta is given in Hoppen, Alison., *The Fortifications of Malta by the Order of St. John, 1530-1798* (Malta: Mireva Publications, 1999) and Spiteri, Stephen., *Fortresses of the Knights*. (Malta: Book Distributors Ltd., 2001).
5. De Lucca, Denis., *A Description of Baroque Malta by Albert Jouvin de Rochefort* (Malta: Heritage Books, 2004) p.10.
6. De Lucca, Denis., *Giovanni Battista Vertova – Diplomacy, Warfare and Military Engineering Practice in early seventeenth century Malta* (Malta: Midsea Books Ltd., 2001) 51-67. Vertova's map is also reproduced in De Lucca, Denis., *Sito, Fortificazione e Tessuto Urbano a Malta nel Cinquecento – La progettazione e lo sviluppo della nuova città fortezza di Valletta* in 'Proceedings of an International Conference on L'Urbanistica del Cinquecento in Sicilia' held in 1997 at La Sapienza University in Rome.
7. Freller, Thomas and Scalpello, Alfred., *Malta – Island of Christian Heroes* (Malta: Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, 2001) p.84.
8. For the involvement of the Society of Jesus in the dissemination of knowledge about military mathematics see De Lucca, Denis., *Jesuits and Fortifications: The Contribution of the Jesuits to Military Architecture in the Baroque Age* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2012).
9. De Lucca, Denis., *A Description of Baroque Malta by Albert Jouvin de Rochefort* (Malta: Heritage Books, 2004) pp.9-13.
10. The contribution of Buonamici to the architectural development of Baroque Malta is discussed in De Lucca Denis., *Francesco Buonamici – Painter, Architect and Military Engineer in seventeenth century Malta and Italy* (Malta: International Institute for Baroque Studies, 2006).
11. A good summary of the work of Mattia Preti in Malta can be found in Mahoney, Leonard., *5000 Years of Architecture in Malta* (Malta: Valletta Publishing, 1996) p.323. See also Costanzo, Salvatore., *Pittura tra Malta e Napoli nel segno del Barocco – da Raimondo "Il Maltese" a Bernardo De Dominici* (Naples: Clean Edizioni, 2011).
12. Mederico Blondel des Croisettes has been the subject of a M.A. (Baroque Studies) dissertation by Elaine Micallef Valenzia (University of Malta: International Institute for Baroque Studies, 1999). See also Mahoney, Leonard., *5000 Years of Architecture in Malta* (Malta: Valletta Publishing, 1996) pp.308-309.
13. De Lucca, Denis., *A Description of Baroque Malta by Albert Jouvin de Rochefort* (Malta: Heritage Books, 2004) pp.11-12.
14. *Ibid.*, p.21.
15. De Lucca, Denis., *An interesting Malta-Udine Connection in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century – A Painting by Gian Battista Tiepolo* in the 15-09-1996 issue of the 'Sunday Times of Malta.'
16. The contribution of Romano Carapecchia to the architectural development of 18<sup>th</sup> century Malta is discussed in De Lucca Denis., *Carapecchia - Master of Baroque Architecture in early eighteenth century Malta* (Malta: Midsea Books, 1999). See also De Lucca Denis., *Master of Baroque Architecture* in the 'Building and Architecture Supplement' of the 24-08-79 issue of the 'Sunday Times of Malta'; Bartolini Salimbeni, Lorenzo., *L'album Londinese di Romano Carapecchia* in 'Il Disegno di Architettura,' n.6 (1992) pp.9-16 and Nobile, Marco Rosario., *Progetti di Romano Carapecchia in Sicilia* in 'Lexicon: Storie e Architettura in Sicilia' n.3. (Palermo: Edizioni Caracol, 2006) pp.62-66.
17. See note 4.
18. This English traveller was Patrick Brydone who recorded his visit to the Conventual church during the last years of Grand Master Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca' principate in his book entitled *A Tour through Sicily and Malta in 1770*, subsequently published in London in 1773.
19. De Lucca, Denis. *The Festa Funebre of Baroque Europe* in 'Journal of Baroque Studies', vol. 1. (Malta, International Institute for Baroque Studies, 2003) p.11. See also De Lucca, Denis., 'L'effimero maltese – La Cappella Ardente di Romano Carapecchia' in the two-volume work entitled 'Atlante Tematico del Barocco in Italia: Le Capitali della Festa Barocca' edited by professor M. Fagiolo (Rome, 2007).
20. De Lucca Denis., *Carapecchia - Master of Baroque Architecture in early eighteenth century Malta* (Malta: Midsea Books, 1999) p.11.
21. *Ibid.*, 31citing Lione Pascoli's *Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti moderni* published in Rome in 1730.
22. Nobile, Marco Rosario., *Progetti di Romano Carapecchia in Sicilia* in 'Lexicon: Storie e architettura in Sicilia' n.3. (Palermo: Edizioni Caracol, 2006) pp.62-66.
23. De Lucca, Denis., *Architecture in Malta* in the book 'Malta - Roots of a Nation' (Malta, 2004) 207-208. See also De Lucca Denis., *Baroque Architecture in Malta* in 'Collected Papers – Collegium Melitense Quatercentenary Celebrations 1592-1992' [Roger Ellul-Micallef and Stanley Fiorini ed.] (Malta: University of Malta, 1993) pp.245-281.
24. The use of balconies in Valletta has been the subject of a study that was made by Malcolm Xuereb. His B.E. & A. (Honours) dissertation was entitled "The Maltese Timber Balcony: Past, Present and Future" (University of Malta: Department of Architecture and Urban Design, 2006).
25. Rizza, Corrado., *Per una teoria del barocco* (Milano: Guido Miano editore, 1985) p. 8.

## A new centre on fortifications in Valletta



Above, *The Biagio Steps premises before and after its restoration and conversion into a Fortifications Interpretation Centre. Below, View of the Centre's reception area with the remains of the original Valletta drawbridge on display, mounted vertically. (Images source: Courtesy of the Restoration Directorate, MOT).*



In February 2013, a new Fortifications Interpretations Centre was opened to the public in Valletta. Located near Biagio Steps in St. Mark's Street, the Centre is housed in a restored sixteenth-century warehouse which was built by Grand Master Hugues de Verdale.

The project was designed and implemented by the Restoration Directorate on the initiative of the then Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs, Arch. George Pullicino, and cost some €1.7 million, with 85% co-financing from the European Union through the ERDF project fund.

The idea behind the creation of this centre was inspired by the need to focus the attention, of both Maltese and foreign visitors alike, on the wealth and diversity of Malta's fortifications and military architecture. In the words of the late Prof. Quentin Hughes, "Malta's fortifications represent one of the finest collections of military architecture to be found anywhere in the world and constitute a monumental heritage for sheer concentration and majesty quite unmatched."

The building housing the permanent exhibition was chosen largely for its vast interior spaces and for its location adjoining St. Andrew Bastion, which is both central and provides direct access to Valletta's bastions. This Centre is not a 'war' museum. Rather, its primary scope is to focus on the architectural aspects of Malta's unique patrimony of fortresses, towers and batteries, particularly on their design features and on the manner in which these structures were constructed – the building methods and techniques, and the role of military engineers, and Maltese masons and craftsmen.

The centre was inaugurated with an exhibition of Francesco Laparelli's original plans for Valletta in 1566, which were loaned to Malta from Cortona specifically for the occasion.

The Centre's spacious vaulted interiors provide excellent exhibition spaces and make use of both traditional displays and computer technology to create a unique learning experience. The Centre also houses an audio-visual theatre and a resource reference library, an administrative annex on three floors and a viewing terrace. The Centre is open to the public from Mondays to Saturdays and entrance is free of charge.

# The passport to eternal life

Catherine Tabone

“Everyone will admit that the art of dying well is the most important of all the arts,” writes St Robert Bellarmine in the preface to his *De Arte Bene Moriendi*, published in the second decade of the 17th century.

Yet, how is a good death ensured? What are the necessary steps and measures that, taken during one’s lifetime, assist the soul’s safe passage to heaven? What are the ways, if any, that ascertain as short a stay as possible in the flames of purgatory?

These are a few of the questions explored by Frans Ciappara, from the University of Malta’s International Institute of Baroque Studies, during a well-attended public lecture delivered at the Inquisitor’s Palace in Vittoriosa, which was introduced by the director of the Institute, Denis De Lucca.

Based on a variety of local sources – namely wills, petition registers at the ecclesiastical court and pious dispositions dictated in extremis – dating from 1750 to 1797, Ciappara’s research took the audience on a journey in time that commenced at the bedside of the moribund and ended six feet under.

In a context where death was only too familiar, with three people dying each day in Valletta, and over 67 burials per year being registered in Naxxar, existence took the form of a continuous preparation for death. The extent to which the art of dying had actually become the art of living is clearly visible in the precautions people took to ensure their salvation.

To quote three examples, as the end quickly approached for Simone Spiteri from Siġġiewi, for Giuseppe Bezzina of Naxxar, for Lucretia Magro of Gudja, and for their contemporaries, a carefully planned insurance against hellfire clearly emerged.

Wills and pious dispositions (the latter being the poor man’s version of the former) played a major part in establishing the spiritual wishes of their testators. A constant concern with easing the soul’s passage and with preparing spiritually and emotionally for life everlasting is clearly

*Below, The deathbed of Cardinal Mazarin (Image Source: Wikimedia Commons).*



discernible in the preamble of such documents, which invariably included an invocation to God, the Blessed Virgin or the saints.

These were more than mere legal documents for the recognition of the testator's state of belongings and the disposal of property. Rather, they served to describe the decisions that had to be taken to assure the salvation of the soul and the repose of the body.

Generally, these included a number of suffrages, namely the distribution of alms. Recipients were, in turn, bound to pray for the soul of the benefactor and sometimes also fast on bread and water.

Offerings to saints, such as candles, jewellery or monetary bequests for the decoration of altars were also customary in hope of acquiring the respective saint's holy patronage.

Masses – at times in perpetuum – on the anniversary of death and other special days, such as liturgical feasts and All Souls Day, were also said for the repose of the testator's soul. Where possible, burial in a favourable spot –



Above, and below, *The deathbed of Cardinal Richelieu* (Image Source: Wikimedia Commons).

such as near the high altar, in the choir, in front of the Marian chapel, near the church door or close to holy water fountains – was also planned for.

Individual efforts were made to secure a place in heaven built on the framework of salvation provided by the Church, which made



available the means by which to defy the devil throughout one's life and during the last moments.

Spiritual exercises, known as *santi esercizi della buona morte*, were organised to prepare participants for the final struggle. Defences against the legions of hell were then reinforced in extremis through confession, communion, the viaticum and extreme unction.

Moreover, in addition to Masses said specifically for a *bonu transitu*, the holy sacrament was displayed for the same purpose and a priest regularly visited the deathbed to comfort its occupant with readings from scripture, the litany of the saints and intercessory prayers.

When the fatally ill expired, the office of the dead was recited and the cadaver was placed in a wooden coffin holding a crucifix and wearing a scapular.

The funeral itself, arrangements for which were at times meticulously laid out in the will itself, was in most cases a simple enough affair, consisting of Mass, followed by the Libera, and a procession to the cemetery. While it was commonplace for priests and confraternity members to accompany the coffin, in some instances additional clergy were recruited from nearby parishes as per instructions laid out in the will. Burial mostly took place in the church, where prime locations were commonly occupied by the better off.

Undoubtedly, bearing in mind all of the above, the art of dying well had been mastered to its highest degrees of excellence in baroque Malta. As a history graduate with an interest in local attitudes towards death, I found Ciappara's detailed exposition leading to this conclusion both instructive and compelling.

His research does not only shed light on the various religious precautions taken to ensure a good death, but also provides outstanding testimony to a strong concern with posterity.

While it is apparent that the poor died for themselves only, in the sense that society was not disturbed by their demise and their memory was lost after the death of their closest friends and next of kin, Ciappara's research highlights an omnipresent fear of obliteration. This is rendered manifest in measures that sought at once to ensure both the salvation of the soul and the perpetuation of memory.

Furthermore, to anyone familiar with the certainly more elaborate funerary ceremonies reserved for the higher echelons of the island's



Above, top, Richard Mead attending Sir Isaac Newton on his deathbed (Image Source; Welcome Library); Above, 'A woman on her seathbed with a vanitas still life on a table on the right', Dutch School, oil on Canvas (Image Source; Welcome Library).



society at the time, Ciappara's research brings the difference to the fore.

In baroque Malta, death was certainly not 'the great leveller'. The extent to which various individuals were in a position to procure a suitable insurance against eternal damnation and the annihilation of their memory differed considerably, and ultimately depended on the material means in their possession.

*This article first appeared in The Sunday Times of Malta on 27 January 2013.*

*The event was organised by the International Institute of Baroque Studies at the University of Malta in collaboration with Heritage Malta. The lecture was accompanied by David Ellul who provided short musical interludes on the violoncello, consisting of excerpts by Vivaldi, Schubert and Grieg related to the theme.*

## Summer School on military architecture in Baroque Malta 2–7 June 2014

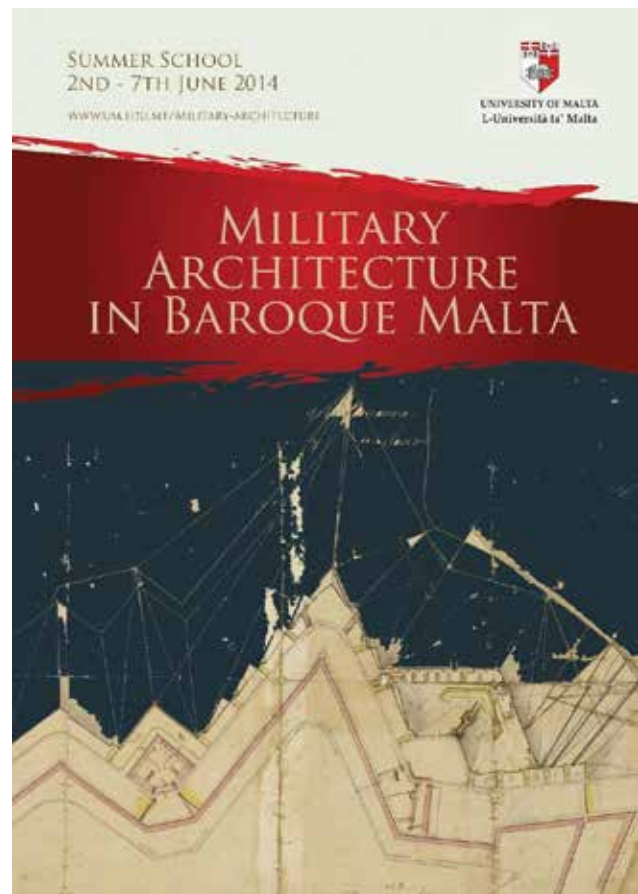
The International Institute for Baroque Studies at the University of Malta is once again organising a Summer School on the military architecture of the Baroque age, entitled *Hospitaller Malta – Bastion of the Christian World*, to be held at the Valletta Campus of the University of Malta from 2nd to 7th June 2014.

The programme is co-ordinated by Professor Denis De Lucca and aims to introduce participants to the theoretical and practical aspects of the splendid early Modern artillery fortifications of Malta, built by the ruling Hospitaller Knights of St John the Baptist during the period 1530-1798.

The lectures will be given by specialists in the field and will also attempt to place these examples of military architecture in their proper historical, philosophical, mathematical, medical, technical and representational context, enabling the course participants to relate the fortifications of Malta to what had been built in the former abode of the knights in Rhodes as well as to what was then being built in the Christian world of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where fortifications were mushrooming everywhere in an age described by the Italian diplomat Fulvo Testi as the 'age of the soldier.'

Although primarily built by a religious order of hardened warrior monks to protect Christendom from the Ottoman threat, the powerful bastions of Malta were also intended to project the prestigious and aristocratic family connections of the Grand Masters who commissioned them and of the formidable military engineers who designed them, in the context of the ever-changing scenario of alliances and wars that characterized the courtly culture of Baroque Europe.

Besides 25 contact hours of lectures and debates, course participants will also have the opportunity to view early modern military architecture during a number of field trips, including an afternoon cruise of the heavily-fortified cities of Valletta, Vittoriosa and Senglea bordering the Grand Harbour of Malta. This course is registered as study-unit BST5100 with the University of Malta carrying 5 ECTS credits.



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Website: [http://www.um.edu.mt/Military-architectureIIBS\\_Summer](http://www.um.edu.mt/Military-architectureIIBS_Summer)

### Summer School programme *Hospitaller Malta – Bastion of the Christian World*

DAY 1 – MONDAY 2nd June

- *The Hospitaller Order of St John the Baptist: Fortifications and Gunpowder armaments in Rhodes before 1530*

Kelly DeVries

- *The Hospitaller Order of St John the Baptist: Fortifications and Gunpowder armaments in Malta after 1530*

Stephen Spiteri

- *Grand Harbour cruise*

DAY 2 – TUESDAY 3rd June

- *The language and grammar of fortification building in the Baroque Europe*

Stephen Spiteri

- *Military mathematics in the Baroque age – The Contribution of the Jesuits*

Denis De Lucca

- *Shaping the Baroque fortress in the Maltese terrain context: Construction methods, techniques and materials*

Stephen Spiteri

- *The Philosophy of War in the Baroque Age*

Jean-Paul De Lucca

- *Site Visit to the Fortifications Interpretation Centre in Valletta*

DAY 3 – WEDNESDAY 4th June

- *Fortifications and the emergence of military urbanism in Early Modern Europe*

Simon Pepper

- *The Italian connection – Italian military consultants in Malta 1530-1700*

Stephen Spiteri

- *Francesco Laparelli and the building of Valletta*

Denis De Lucca

- *Pietro di Prado and the building of Carlentini*

Nicola Aricò

- *Site Visit to Valletta: The land front fortifications, the Conventual Church, the palace of the Grand Masters and the Grand Hospital of the Knights.*

DAY 4 – THURSDAY 5th June

- *Scudi, Ingegneri militari e Capomastri – mobilizing resources for the organization of a fortification cantiere in Hospitaller Malta*

Stephen Spiteri

- *From the classroom to the battlefield - A seventeenth-century Jesuit faculty of fortification instruction in the heart of Valletta*

Denis De Lucca

- *The early modern fortifications of Malta: armaments, food supplies and evacuation considerations*

Stephen Spiteri

- *Wounded soldiers and medical treatment in Hospitaller Malta*

Carmel Cassar

- *Site Visit to the fortifications of Cottonera*

DAY 5 – FRIDAY 6th June

- *Sebastien Le Prestre de Vauban and the dissemination of late 17th century French military engineering practice*

Stephen Spiteri

- *The French connection – French military consultants in Malta 1600-1750*

Claude Busuttil

- *Charles Francois de Mondion: The achievement of a French military engineer working in Malta in the early eighteenth century century.*

Denis De Lucca

- *Monsieur de Montalambert and his polygonal system of fortification.*

Stephen Spiteri

- *Site visit to Fort Manoel and Fort Tigné*

DAY 6 – SATURDAY 7th June

- *The dissemination (and non-dissemination) of bastioned fortification in the Baroque world*

Simon Pepper

- *Reproducing fortresses and fortified cities in landscape paintings*

Theresa Vella

- *The Conservation of the fortifications of Malta*

Hermann Bonnici

- *Conclusion of the Summer School*

Denis De Lucca

- *Site Visit to Mdina – Summer School dinner*

DAY 7 – SUNDAY 8th June

- *Day trip to Gozo*

NOTE: Recommended latest arrival date for participants – Sunday, 01 June 2014. Recommended earliest departure date – Monday, 09 June 2014



## M.A. Dissertations

2012 / 2013

### International Institute for Baroque Studies

The programme of the MA in Baroque Studies at the Institute takes a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of the Baroque age. The academic cohort of the Institute assists students in deepening their knowledge on political, military, religious, social, philosophical, scientific, literary, artistic and architectural aspects of the Baroque age.

Students are required to submit a dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Baroque Studies.

In 2012, Monica Grech Fonk submitted a dissertation on "The Development of the Tabernacle: After the Council of Trent in Baroque Churches in Malta: Late 16th-18th Centuries", supervised by Professor Mario Buhagiar.

A total of four dissertations were completed in 2013, supervised by Professor Denis De Lucca. Joseph Camilleri studied "The Architectural Legacy of Giovanni Battista Montano (1534 – 1621)", and Mario Gauci submitted a dissertation on "The Mdina Cathedral Museum – A Monumental Complex of Maltese Baroque Glory." Keith Hawkesford wrote about "The Technology and the Application of Firearms during the Baroque Era", and Joseph Spiteri's dissertation focused on "The Career and Achievement of Lorenzo Gafa' (1639 – 1703)".

A list of dissertations submitted to the International Institute for Baroque Studies is available online at <http://www.um.edu.mt/iibs/dissertations>.



The International Institute for Baroque Studies is now on Facebook. Visit and 'Like' our Facebook Page to be updated on recent and forthcoming events at the Institute.



## The Journal of Baroque Studies

In 2013, the International Institute for Baroque Studies at the University of Malta published the first issue of *The Journal of Baroque Studies*. This peer-reviewed academic journal is edited by Professor Frans Ciappara. The first issue contains six original articles and three book reviews.

Professor Elizabeth Tingle from the University of Plymouth writes about Sainthood and Politics in the Baroque, focusing on the cult of St Vincent Ferrer in Brittany, France. Professor Patrick Preston of the University of Chichester discusses the terms Counter-Reformation and Baroque, whilst an article in French by Professor Paola Vismara of the University of Milan is titled "*Miracles et prodiges sacres en pays de mission a l'epoque moderne*".

Professor Denis De Lucca, director of the International Institute for Baroque Studies, examines the dissemination of Jesuit military mathematics from the *Collegio Romano* to the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy from 1600 to 1750.

An article by Professor Anne Jacobson Schutte of the University of Virginia is titled "Virtual Voyages to Loreto: How to Visit the Holy House in Spirit (17th-18th Centuries)". Professor Franco Bruni of the *Ecole Francaise de Rome* contributes an article in Italian entitled "*Il Repertorio Musicale della Cattedrale di Mdina (Malta) nel XVII Secolo*".

Prospective contributors may consult the guidelines for publication available at <http://www.um.edu.mt/iibs/journal/guidelines>.

*The Journal of Baroque Studies* may be purchased from leading booksellers and online at <http://www.sierra-books.com/pages/siadart.asp?pid=6733>