

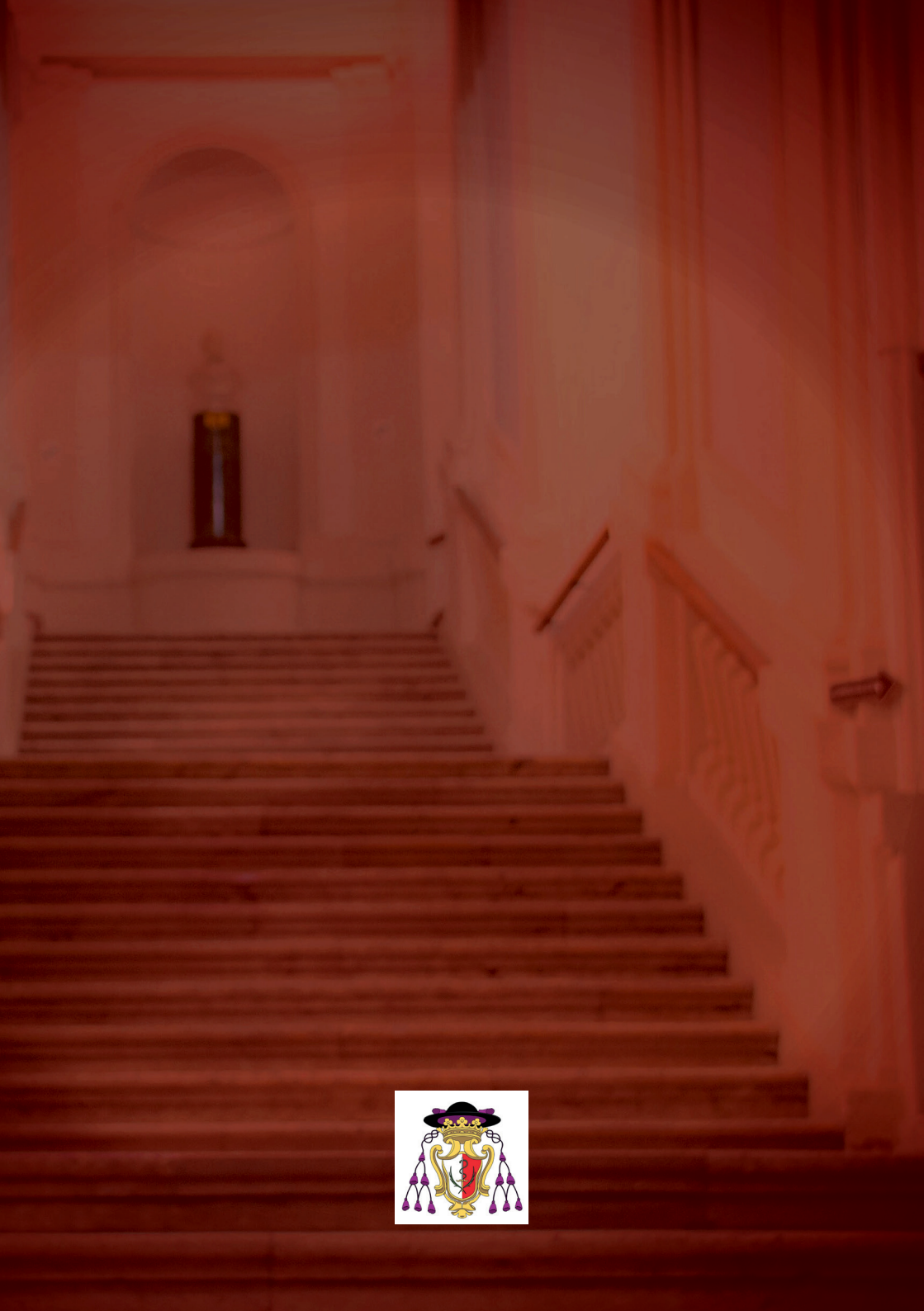


# Gawhar Misjub

## Discovered Gems

From Maltese composers of the 17<sup>th</sup> till 20<sup>th</sup> Century

10<sup>th</sup> December 2022  
National Library  
Republic Square Valletta



# The Programme

**Overture to the opera Achille in Sciro (1738)**  
by **Giuseppe Arena**

**Se d'un Amor Tiranno** from the opera **Artasersere (1741)**  
by **Giuseppe Arena**

**To Vuoi che Io Viva o Cara** from the opera **Artasersere (1741)**  
by **Giuseppe Arena**

**Non è ver che sia Contento** from the opera **Artasersere (1746)**  
by **Girolomo Abos**

**Overture to the opera Cimarosa (1808)**  
by **Nicolò Isouard**

**Per Quel Paterno Amplesso** from the opera **Artasersere (1794)**  
by **Nicolò Isouard**

**Duet Regina ed Ugo** from the opera **I Cavalieri di Malta (1877)**  
by **Antonio Nani**

**She was Once So Demure** from the opera **The Orphan of Geneve (1850)**  
by **Francesco Shira**

**Oh What Joy to Hear** from the opera **The Orphan of Geneve (1850)**  
by **Francesco Shira**

**Piero's Aria** from the opera **Monna Bianca (1936)**  
by **Giuseppe Camilleri**

**Ugo's Aria** from the opera **Monna Bianca (1936)**  
by **Giuseppe Camilleri**

**Christmas Quartet** from the opera **Monna Bianca (1936)**  
by **Giuseppe Camilleri**

# Mr. Victor Galea

Executive Producer,  
Head of Mikiel Anton Vassalli College Network

## Ġawhar Misjub : Discovered Gems



These are discovered gems indeed! It gives me great pleasure to be able to present yet another College production with the efforts and contributions from the specialised schools of the visual and performing arts (schools of Drama, Dance, Music and Art) through the artistic platform Belt il-Bniedem and this time with the collaboration of the Metropolitan Chapter of the Mdina Cathedral.

Following the production of the first Opera-Film in Maltese *BLAT – The Island Fortress*, premiered in June of 2022, we are now presenting the project *Ġawhar Misjub*, literally meaning *Discovered Gems*, which focuses on the operatic music of late Maltese composers. Today's concert is the first part in this project and presents some of the pieces in this production in concert form with 5 professional performers. Since most of these pieces have not been performed in modern times, we are doing this as a taster for the second part of the production which will be in May 2023. This will see the pieces fully staged with costumes, set, lighting, a chamber orchestra, a choir and all the elements needed for a full production.

# Dr. Reuben Pace

The Producing Artistic Director

Malta has a long history of composers of operatic music. Although most of these composers studied abroad and a significant number took up residence abroad (mainly due to the limited opportunities their homeland provided during their times), they still remained essentially Maltese in spirit. As this booklet details, each composer was very much in touch with the international arts scene which was contemporary to that period and also worked with the top musicians and institutions of their day. Today's concert is a celebration of these Maltese artists whose music has remained stagnant in several archives for far too long.



In this concert you shall be entertained to a wide variety of styles, idioms and musical epochs, starting from the Baroque till the Twentieth century. The range of subjects dealt with in the different arias covers a wide range of topics from ancient Kings and Emperors as in **Artasersere** by the librettist Metastasio to urban legends as in **Monna Bianca** by Giuseppe Camilleri whose libretto is essentially based on the myth of the white lady. Naturally love and all the complications brought about with it does not fail to feature as in Antonio Nani's **I Cavalieri di Malta** and Francesco Schira's **The Orphan of Geneve**.

Today's concert is only the first in the production 'Ġawhar Misjub' which is brought to you through the artistic platform 'Belt il-Bniedem (City of Humanity) now fully endorsed by the Mikiel Anton Vassalli College. The main aims of this artistic platform is

to serve as an artistic-educational environment where students of the visual and performing arts can take part in the actual productions alongside professionals in the sector.

In fact on the 26th and 27th May 2023, we shall see a fully staged production of the music included here during this concert version of the musical pieces, alongside some other discovered gems. Putting up a staged operatic performance is no mean feat as it involves several professionals besides the music performers. To mention but a few; one requires a stage director, a stage manager, a set designer, a costume designer, a lights designer – and the list goes on. Along with these professionals we have a substantial number of students who shall be taking part in the production by assisting and working alongside the professionals. The roles taken by students range from solo singers to backstage hands. By working and being mentored by professionals in different fields the students will master the leap from the classroom environment to the entertainment industry. The college has also gone further than this and has designed an *MQF Level 3 certificate in Practical Multi-Disciplinary Studies in the Visual and Performing Arts* – a qualification accredited by the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority, in which students can gain further knowledge and skills in their prospective career as artists, whether they intend to become full time artists or intend to take an artistic career on a part-time basis.

# Giuseppe Arena (1707-1784)

Giuseppe Arena was born in Valletta in 1707. Around 1724 he began furthering his musical studies in Naples at the *Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesu Cristo*. Arena's musical talent was immediately recognised and he was also Francesco Durante's assistant ( a major Italian composer of the time). Although information regarding his life in Italy is quite unknown, we know that prominent singers such as soprano Francesca Cuzzoni and Castrato Anton Hubert, nicknamed Porporino, eagerly accepted to sing his music.

Around 1738, he premiered six of his operas. These include his first opera *Achille in Sciro* and a secular cantata named *Il Vello d'Oro*, both premiered in Rome. Other works included *Tigrane*, *Artaserse*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Alessandro in Persia*, and his groundbreaking comic opera *Il Vecchio Deluso*. Arena was always recognised as a Neapolitan composer and not as a Maltese one however in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the certificate of his birth stated that he was born in Malta.



The façade of the Church of Santa Maria della Colonna, once the Conservatorio del Poveri di Gesu Cristo (Naples)

*Achille in Sciro* and *Artasersere* are two operas written by the famous 18<sup>th</sup> century librettist Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782). Metastasio was one of the prominent opera seria librettists and composers such as Hasse, Vinci, Gluck, Handel and Mozart all made use of his literature. Most of the plot lines revolve around historic Kings, Emperors or heroes, such as the story of the Greek hero Achilles and the Persian King Artaxerxes.

Arena's first opera written in 1738 is an epitome of the Neapolitan Baroque style of writing. The plot line of *Achille in Sciro* is based on Achilles who dressed up as a girl to be able to enter the court of King Skyros and whilst being there he fell in love with one of the princesses. This part of Achilles's story seems to be omitted from Homer's Iliad but is later recorded by the Roman poet Statius.

In 1741 Arena wrote the three-act opera *Artaserse* on the famous libretto which deals with the Persian King and the son of Serse the first. This opera dwells on love, betrayal and antagonistic events. In the aria *Se un amor tiranno*, Mandane (one of the characters) cannot believe that her beloved turned out to be such a cruel man. Arena's appoggiaturas and trills seem to suggest the tormented lover and they almost mirror her sobs. In the duet *Tu vuoi ch'io vivo o cara* both characters are pleading, creating a melody as if by question and answer.



*Duetto del Sig<sup>a</sup> Arena*

Visconti  
Carestini  
p  
rallento  
Col Basso  
Se non chi io uicco s' Casa ma

D. 15425

Part of the score of *Artaserse* (1741) by Giuseppe Arena  
(Bibliothèque Nationale de France)

# Girolamo Abos (1715-1760)

**Girolamo Abos** was born in Valletta in 1715 to French parents who set up permanent residence in Malta. Due to Malta's political connection with Italy, Girolamo went to Naples to further his studies. He went to The Conservatorio di Sant Onofrio and in 1742 he premiered his first opera *Le due Zingarelle*. Apart from numerous comic operas such as *La Moglie Gelosa*, *Il Geloso* and *La Serva Padrona*, Abos was also interested in opera seria.

*Artaserse* is Girolamo Abos's first opera seria and he used *Metastasio's* libretti for most of his opere serie. Abos became a popular composer; his most celebrated work was *Tito Manilo* which ran not only in Italy but even in other European Theatres. Apart from operas, Abos also wrote liturgical works, such as *Dixit Dominus*, *Magnificat* and *Stabat Matèr* and instrumental works.

In the opera *Artaserse* the aria *Non e Ver che sia contento*, the character Visconti realised that insulting his beloved has not made him feel better but even more tormented. This aria's musical mood suggests his realisation and his inner torment.

It is interesting to note that Maltese born composers such as Giuseppe Arena, Girolamo Abos and Niccolò Isouard all wrote works which made use of Metastasio's works. This signifies that the Malta born composers were in touch with current operatic traits and literature. However, one must not forget that although these three composers were born on the island, yet they all furthered their studies abroad.



*The Conservatorio di San Onofrio a Porto Capuana (Naples)*

No. 1. buona *Artasersere*

*Aria*

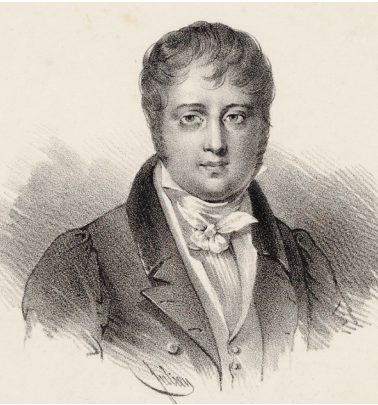
*Relig. Abos.*

*Andante.*

Mus. 1-F-28,1

Part of the score of the opera *Artasersere* (1746) by Girolomo Abos,  
Metropolitan Chapter, Mdina

# Nicolò Isouard (1773-1818)



Isouard who was nicknamed Nicolò de Malte was born in Rabat where he studied with Francesco Zerafa (another prominent Maltese composer of the time). Isouard then continued his studies in Palermo and later moved to Paris, where he became friends with notable composers such as Kreutzer. Isouard, having French descendants and being prominent in Malta during the French rule found an easy connection by moving to Paris.

Isouard composed frequently for the Théâtre de Opéra Comique and he wrote over thirty theatrical works, some of which are now lost. Some of his lost works include *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *I due Avari* and *Artaserse*. The only surviving fragment of the opera *Artaserse* is the aria *Per quel Paterno Amplesso*. This aria deals with Arbace (one of the main characters)'s torment as he is being condemned by his own father because he is fighting against his father's will and is written in a classical style and stylistically differs from that of Abos or Arena.

However, Isouard's main operatic topics revolved around light-hearted stories and less historic libretti. The opera *Cimarosa* was written with the librettist Jean-Nicolas Bouilly (1763-1842). The overture is based on the French Galant operatic overture style and sets the uplifting mood for the opera.

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for the Overture to *Cimarosa* by Nicolò Isouard. The score is arranged in ten staves, each labeled with an instrument. The instruments and their staves are: Violini (two staves), Clarinetti in Basso (two staves), Corni in Faja (one staff), Fagotti (one staff), Violen (one staff), Arace (one staff), and Fango (one staff). The notation includes clefs, time signatures, and musical notes. The paper is aged and shows some staining.

Part of the score of the Overture to *Cimarosa*, by Nicolò Isouard (1808),  
Biblioteca Palatina, Sezione musicale - Parma

# Francesco Schira (1809-1883)



Another Maltese born composer that was a resident composer and vocalist in foreign theatres was Francesco Schira. Schira was born in Valletta in 1809 to a musical family and he was the youngest of four brothers. Schira was enrolled at the Milan Conservatory at the tender age of 9 years. He was a well-known teacher for voice performance at the Royal Academy of Music and a resident conductor of London's Drury Lane Theatre and Lisbon's National Theatre San Carlo.

Apart from being a prominent voice performance teacher, he was also known for his operatic works. His most famous to date are the *Ear-Ring*, *Lia* and *La Selvaggia*. One of his successful romantic operas is *Thérèse, the Orphan of Geneve*. The opera deals about Thérèse's unknown past and the jealousy of lovers. The character of Levine sings an aria taken from the same opera *She was Once so Demure* is written in a romantic style, and quite in an Italianate way. The quartet *Oh What A Joy To Hear* is sung by Thérèse, the Countess, the Count and Picard deals with the celebration of the engagement of Thérèse and Picard (these are all characters in the opera).

# AH! WHAT JOY TO HEAR.

AIR AND QUARTETT.

Words by CHARLES JEFFERYS.

Music by F. SCHIRA.

6

COUNT. *pp dolce.*

LARGHETTO. Ah! what joy to hear

*cres.*

From the lips I love, Words of wel... come

*dim.* *pp*

sweet as thine; . . . . . Words now doubly dear,

Since to me they prove, All, all I hop'd for

Ah! what joy to hear.

Another Edition in C.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 6/8. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp dolce*, *cres.*, *dim.*, and *pp*. The tempo is marked *LARGHETTO*. The lyrics are: "Ah! what joy to hear / From the lips I love, Words of wel... come / sweet as thine; . . . . . Words now doubly dear, / Since to me they prove, All, all I hop'd for / Ah! what joy to hear." A note at the bottom indicates "Another Edition in C."

Part of the score of *The Orphan of Geneve* by Francesco Schira (1850),  
The Public Library of the city of Boston, USA

## Antonio Nani (1842-1929)



Antonio Nani was born in Valletta in a prominent family of musicians. He studied in Malta under the tutelage of his father and furthered his studies shortly in Naples where he started composing his *Laudate Pueri*. Nani wrote a variety of sacred works, one of which describes the Shipwreck of St Paul (*Messa del Naufrago*).

He only wrote three operas, *Zorilla*, *I Cavalieri di Malta* and *Agnese Visconti*. Both the opera *I Cavalieri di Malta* and *Agnese Visconti* were performed at the then Royal Opera House, Valletta (Teatru Rjal) and Nani's compositions were quite historical because it was the first time that Teatru Rjal produced a work by a Maltese composer.

Although Nani composed these operas during the British reign, the thematic notion of the Knights of Malta, suggested the island's devotion to the Catholic church as if to suggest the Italianate political stance. The premier of this work was a triumphant success due to the beautiful melodies and well executed plot. The duet written for the characters Ugo and Regina is a clear indication of Nani's Italian musical influence as it seems to remind the listener of the duet from Verdi's *La Traviata* and the *Rigoletto's* famous quartet.



6

re - a nunzia di mor - te do - vra su le nunzia di  
 mor - te do - vra su le

*Duetto Regina e Algo*  
 Moderato

Regina  
 Algo

7

Pregho inson l'alma smari - ta  
 chiedo in - vano al ciel a - i - ta un fan - ta - sma il suo fan -  
 ta - sma sri - go - gno tra il cie - lo e me

Part of the vocal score for *I Cavalieri di Malta*, (1877), by Antonio Nani,  
 Metropolitan Chapter Mdina

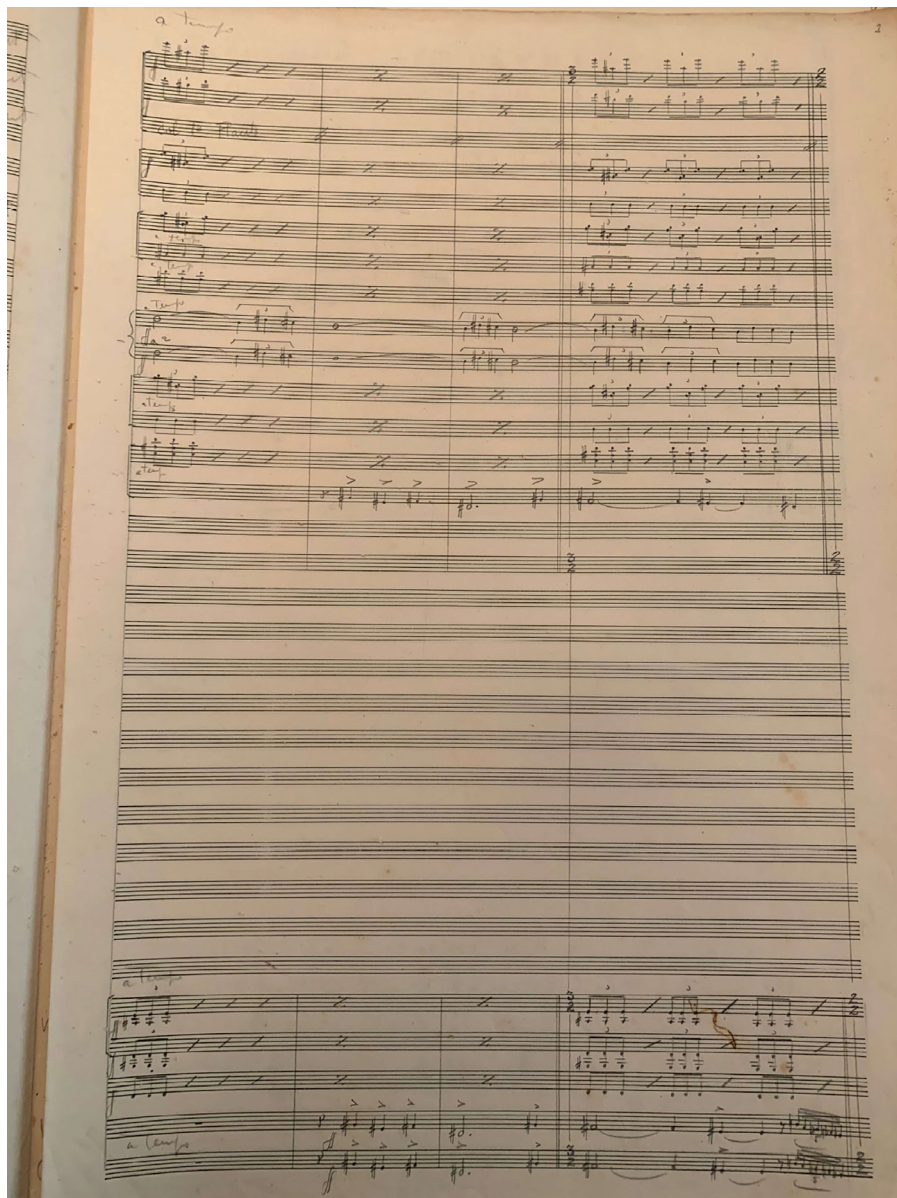
# Giuseppe Camilleri (1903-1976)



Giuseppe Camilleri was born in a prominent musical family. He studied under his father's tutelage, Ferdinando Camilleri (1859-1942), who founded the *Cappella Camilleri*, which was mainly the musical provider of two of the Sliema Parishes (*Stella Maris* and *Sacro Cuor*). Giuseppe Camilleri was a gifted pianist and a prominent conductor, and he was the band master for the *La Vallette band* and noticeably he was to be one of the best bandmasters ever.

At the age of 22 he was appointed to be the *Maestro del Coro* at the Teatru Rjal, Valletta There, he conducted operas and even met prominent composers such as Zandonai, Respighi and even celebrated singers such as Maria Caniglia. Giuseppe Camilleri's compositions were also praised by these same composers.

Camilleri's composition style is that of a modern Puccini. He wrote a variety of Sacred works, an operetta *Shalti Nar* and his only opera *Monna Bianca* which was never performed until today! The few selected numbers that will be part of this concert, have been chosen to celebrate Camilleri's beautiful melody line and his appreciation for the vocal melody.



Part of the score for *Monna Bianca*, by Giuseppe Camilleri (1936),  
Private Collection

# The Performers

## Soprano - Kimberley Grech



Kimberley Grech, 29, who is a doctor by profession specializing in Clinical Oncology, has always shown passion for music and art. At the early age of 12, Kimberley won a scholarship in Musical Theatre at the Margaret Howard Theatre College in the UK which then led to the discovery of her classical voice and her study of the Bel Canto technique.

By the age of 19, she obtained her ATCL Diploma in Singing with Distinction.

Highlights of her career include singing roles of: Dorabella in *The Three Little Pigs*, Bubikopf in Ullman's *Der Kaiser Von Atlantis*, Mrs Jaffet in Britten's *Noah's Fludde* and Fiordiligi from excerpts of Mozart's *Cosi Fan Tutte*.

She has also performed as a soloist in concerts held at the President's Palace, the Office of the Prime Minister, MUZA, in various Notte Bianca editions, The Hybrid Festival, Spazju Kreattiv and as part of the Strada Stretta Concept amongst others.

She has also performed solo works of Nicolò Isouard accompanied by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Mro. Brian Schembri. In 2019, Kimberley together with well-known Czech Baritone Filip Bandžak featured in the 7th edition of 'Classics under the Stars' at the Girgenti Palace yet again accompanied by the MPO under the baton of Mro. Charles Olivieri Munroe.

Early on in 2020, Kimberley sung the solo soprano section of one of Prof. Oliver Friggeri's well known Cantata *Hodon Fjuri Lil San Publiju* composed and directed by Mro. Ray Sciberras. In 2021, accompanied by Ensemble Télémaque under the direction of Mro. Raoul Lay, Kimberley sang the role of the oppressed Bubikopf from *Der Kaiser Von Atlantis* which was the closing opera for the International Spring Opera Festival under the direction of Karl Fiorini.

Internationally, Kimberley participated in recitals held in Scotland, Italy and Bethlehem, Israel. She has also attended masterclasses lead by: Mariella Devia, Prof. Laura Sarti, Prof. Patricia Macmahon and Dr. Matteo dalle Fratte.

She owes her musical knowledge and technique to vocal coaches including; Ms. Arleen J Barlow and Dr. Andriana Yordanova. Currently, she is under the artistic guidance of Madame Juliette Bisazza and working on extending her operatic repertoire to suit her Lirico-Spinto soprano voice.

## Mezzosoprano - Clare Ghigo



Clare Ghigo is a theatrically and musically versatile mezzo soprano. Her operatic roles include Cherubino in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, Annio in Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*, Madrigale in Puccini's *Manon*, Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, the Third Lady in Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, the old Gypsy Woman in Rachmaninov's *Aleko*, Speranza and Proserpina in Monteverdi's *l'Orfeo*, Carmen in Bizet's *Carmen*, Angelina in Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, Maria in Piazzolla's *Maria de Buenos Aires*, and Rosina in Rossini's

*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Clare also performed contemporary works such as works by Schoenberg, Morten Feldman, Luciano Berio, Reuben Pace, Karl Fiorini, Euchar Gravina, and Veronique Vella. In the 2021 Malta International Spring Orchestra Festival, Clare directed the semi-staged opera and performed the role of the Trommler in Ullmann's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*.

This coming April Clare will perform the role of Zerlina in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the Camera Bardi in Syros, Greece and will understudy the role of Mercedes in Bizet's *Carmen* at the Longborough Festival.

Apart from operas Clare performed a number of recitals internationally in cities such as San Francisco (United States), London, Cardiff, Edinburgh (United Kingdom), Paris, Dijon (France) Karlsruhe, Berlin, Frankfurt (Germany), Pesaro, Lanciano (Italy), Yerevan (Armenia), Bethlehem (Israel), and La Mancha (Spain), and Luxembourg.

*Photo Credits – Ken Scicluna*

Clare's recent performances also include video productions such as an adaptation of Beethoven's *Fidelio/ Leonora* with The Strada Stretta Concept, *Trouser Girl* - a superhero film with the Teatru Manoel Toi Toi project for Ziguzajg, chorus in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* with Virtual Opera. Together with the Gozitan visual artist Joseph Calleja, she created the Stabat Metric project funded by the Malta Arts Council.

Clare participated in various operatic competitions, she won the Malta International Singing Competition, was a semifinalist of the Alfredo Kraus Vocal Competition, a finalist in the Hans Gabor Belvedere competition, and a semifinalist in the London Handel Competition 2016.

Clare performed for acclaimed singers such as Joseph Calleja, Bryn Terfel, Anna Tomova Sintova, Nelly Miriciu, Monserrat Caballé, Daniela Dessi, Richard Bonyngé, Luciana Serra, Jennifer Larmore, Anna Bonitatibus and worked with various ensembles, such as the Jeune Orchestre Atlantique, Guildhall Consort, Karlsruhe duo, Rossini Ensemble, the Ensemble Télémaque, La Mancha Philharmonic, Re: Orchestra, and the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra.

Clare forms part of the English National Opera chorus, is an ENOA (Aix en Provence) and a Solti Accademia Del Bel Canto scholar.

## Tenor - Angelo Muscat



Born in Malta in 2000, Angelo began singing at an early age with the Chorus Urbanus in Gozo under the direction of Dr. John Galea. He later proceeded with his opera and classical studies under the guidance of Juliette Bisazza Zanni and subsequently Dr. Andriana Yordanova. Angelo made his debut performance back in 2012, performing as a soloist with Chorus Urbanus accompanied by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra in a Christmas concert held in Qala, Gozo and in St. Julian's, Malta. Each year, tenor Angelo

Muscat engages himself in a series of concerts where he invites international and local artists to collaborate with him.

Angelo has been engaged in a number of musicals held at The Don Bosco Oratory Theatre in Victoria Gozo. These include the roles of Sasha and the Russian Tenor in *Fiddler on the Roof* in 2017, the role of Young Ebenezer in *Scrooge the Musical* in 2018, and the role of Cardinal Frustenberg in a musical on Pope Wojtyla's life in 2019. An aspiring tenor, Muscat has also been invited to perform the role of Parpignol in the opera *La Bohème* by Puccini, at the Aurora Theatre in Gozo in 2019. September 2021 has seen Angelo performing as Marco in the first ever Opera-Film in Maltese produced by Mikiel Anton Vassalli College 'BLAT – the Island Fortress'. In December of the same year, Angelo was invited to sing in the oratorio *Guzeppi ta' Nazaret* in collaboration with the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, and in the annual MPO Christmas Concert held at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mdina.

Muscat has participated in various international concerts beyond our shores, including the UK, Italy, Austria and Bulgaria. In 2020 Muscat was chosen among ten singers from all over the world to



work and study with renowned singers such as Krum Galabov and Daniela Diakova in Sofia, Bulgaria. Shortly after, he was invited to sing at a recital at the Boris Christoff House Museum. In September 2021, Muscat was invited to perform in a concert with the Kaliningrad Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Mro. Arkady Feldman at the Music Hall Jumeirah Zabeel Saray in Dubai.

Recently, Angelo has been receiving notable international success. In October 2021, he was the winner of the *Audience Award* in the Royal Sound Music Competition, winning also first place. In that same month, Angelo went on to win the *Star Award* for the *Best Vocal Performance of Russian Music* and an overall second place in the *Classical Singing Category* in the *Eighth International Performing Arts Competition - Stars of Albion*. In September 2022, he has won 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Medici International Music Competition in London, UK.

## Ken Scicluna - Baritone



Ken Scicluna has been active in the visual and performing arts scene from an early age, presenting Opera and Film Music radio programmes, as an actor in theatrical and TV productions and later in singing roles and also scripting, producing and directing three short films.

Ken was the first ever Maltese singer to have studied at the Rimsky-Korsakov State Conservatory in St. Petersburg, Russia, accepted in the class of legendary Kirov/Maarinsky tenor, Yuri Marusin. He also attended masterclasses by Cheryl Studer, Sergei Leiferkus, Fabio Mastrangelo and Jennifer Larmore amongst others and worked with Helmut Rilling in Germany.

Apart for countless recitals Ken sang several central roles in Opera and Oratorio alongside singers such as Dessi, Armigliato, Maisuradze, Martinucci, Marton, Guelfi, De Grandis, Gauci, Gallo, Ferrer, Alonso Padin and Interisano and stage directors such as Gandini, Stinchelli, Cheristich, Teperberg, Matheson, Moxham, Castiglione, Schembri Bonaci and Van Eyck these including *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Otello*, *Don Carlo*, *Don Giovanni*, Salieri's *Prima la Musica poi le Parole*, *Nozze di Figaro*, *Carmen*, *Così fan Tutte*, *Elijah*, Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*, Menottis' *Ahmal and the Night Visitors*, *Aida*, *Manon Lescaut* and *Turandot* in theatres in Russia, Italy, France, Germany, Israel, Spain and Malta.

In 2008 Ken premièred Mussorgsky's song-cycle *Bes Solntsa* (Sunless) in Malta, in 2010 organised the Camerata Summer Academy for Chamber Music at Manoel Theatre whilst the following year launched a series of lunchtime recitals at St. Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral, Valletta. Amongst highlights of 2016 and

2017 he has appeared in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in Israel making his debut as the Conte in Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro* and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, performed in a series of recitals and awarded the Special Jury Prize in the second edition of an International Voice Competition in Jerusalem, was invited to the Opera Sostenibile Festival in Madrid, whilst in Malta he appeared as Zuniga in Strada Stretta Concept adaptation of Bizet's *Carmen*, and performed a solo recital in the International Spring Festival.

In late 2017 he made his debut as the Colonel in Gilbert and Sullivan's Opera *Patience* with Teatru Manoel Youth Opera and further on performed in Puccini's *Turandot* in Strada Stretta Concept's unique adaptation, Mendelssohn's *Elias* in Germany apart from a concert entitled Opera's Villians with Malta Youth Opera. Early in 2018 he appeared in a concert dedicated to the the Bernstein Centenary with the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Wayne Marshall. Later on that year, a highlight for the V18 festivities, included the opening of the music season at Malta's National Theatre as Hugo Pratt's famed character Corto Maltese in the World Premier of the Opera *Una Ballata del Mare Salato* by Dutch composer Monique Krus written exclusively for his voice, another TMYO initiative.

The opera *Swar* was the first collaboration with Maltese composer Dr. Reuben Pace where he featured as the revolutionary Monk in the Opera Trilogy *City of Humanity* also written for him by the composer. As part of Strada Stretta Concept programme for V18 he also sang in two concerts one with Spanish Tenor Moises Molin and Mexican Soprano Dolores Granados in a programme of Spanish Operatic Arias and Songs and later with Russian Soprano Maria Chulkova singing film music songs in Songs from the Silver Screen and stepped in last minute as the Page in Menotti's *Ahmal and the Night Visitors* at Manoel Theatre. Later that year he played the romantic figure of Andrea in the centenary of Carlo Diacono's masterpiece in verismo style echoing the works of Mascagni and Puccini, his only Opera *L'Alpino*, in concert version with Brian Schembri as conductor and pianist. Recent appearances have been in *Aida* in Santiago de Compostela, Spain late last year and early this year in a concert dedicated to Verdi in Trieste, Italy.

Ken made significant debuts in 2020/21 including Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* in Northern Spain, Rocco in Beethoven's only Opera *Fidelio* and as the Kaiser in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* by Victor Ullmann which was the closing opera for International Spring Orchestra Festival .

He has recently taken the role of the traditional Monk in the first Maltese Opera-Film *BLAT: the Island Fortress* in Reuben Pace's *City of Humanity II*, where he was also Production Designer and overall consultant.

He premiered one of the title characters in Sullivan's *Cox and Box* at Palazzo Parisio, production of Teatru Salesjan. Scicluna has travelled extensively around the globe and is fluent in six languages.

## Milica Lawrence - Pianist

Dr Milica Lawrence was born in 1981 in Pancevo, Serbia. She started learning piano at the age of five. Her first piano teacher who brought her love for music and this instrument closer was Prof. Xenia Elizabeth Zilli. This was continued by Prof. Davorica Sperac - Polojac. She completed her piano studies with Prof. Marija Djukic and harpsichord studies with Prof. Zorica Cetkovic at the Faculty of Music Arts in Belgrade, Serbia. Here, Milica specialized in chamber music with Prof. Uros Pesic and received her Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree under the mentorship of Prof. Dejan Subotic at the same Faculty. She attended piano and harpsichord masterclasses with many distinguished Serbian and international artists such as Sergei Dorensky, Giorgi Chugaev, Pavel Nersessian, Huguette Dreyfus, Egon Mihajlovic, Olivera Djurdjevic, Yuri Kot, Maria Luisa Baldassari etc.



Milica has won numerous prizes for solo and ensemble performances at domestic and international competitions. She has also held a great number of solo recitals and chamber music concerts both in the country and abroad (Italy, Switzerland, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, Macedonia, Libya etc.). Notably, her recital at the Italian Cultural Centre in Tripoli is noted as the first concert by a Serbian pianist in Africa. She has participated in reviews of modern classical music as well as in festivals BEMUS, OKTOH, Cello Fest, Basomanija and many more. Milica has taken part as an orchestra member in the Faculty of Music Arts Orchestra in Belgrade, and as a guest member in the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, Dusan Skovran String Orchestra, Schlesinger Orchestra, Mokranjac Chamber Orchestra, Zemun Chamber Orchestra.

Throughout her career she has collaborated with many renowned artists Sreten Krstic, Uros Lajovic, Dmitry and Alexander Sitkovetsky, Charles Zachary Bornstein, Milos Petrović. With the Chamber Orchestra Mokranjac, the FILUM Orchestra and the Schlesinger Orchestra, Milica performed as a soloist. She has also recorded for radio and TV. At the First International Competition Beogradski Pobednik in 2005, she was the only pianist who received recognition by the Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Serbia and Montenegro for special artistic participation 'Ruski dom u Beogradu'.

Milica has worked for fifteen years as an independent artistic collaborator at the String Department at the Faculty of Philology and Arts in Kragujevac, Serbia.

In 2019 she became a resident of Malta and after some years teaching pianoforte performance at Mikiel Anton Vassalli College, she eventually opened the Malta Piano Academy while maintaining an active solo career at the same time. In August 2022 she organised the first ever Malta Piano Festival in Gozo. She is currently working on her very first digital and printed magazine, Pianist.mt

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