



CONSULATE OF MALTA IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2013 FRANK L SCICLUNA - HON CONSUL - FULL OF HISTORY AND CULTURE OF MALTA

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Maltese embassies to use briefcase to capture biometric data

Spanish firm Indra boasts biometric capture briefcase for Maltese visas



Indra Sistemas SA has made a system for capturing biometric information for Maltese embassies and consulates that's mounted in a briefcase.

According to the company, the new system captures fingerprints, signatures and facial features into the EU information system and the briefcase system weighs 9 kilograms. Indra will deliver nearly 500 of the mobile stations to the Maltese foreign ministry.

The briefcase system includes a laptop, fingerprint scanner, digital camera and tablet for recording digital signatures. Indra says the system also complies with IATA requirements for carry-on luggage, which means

embassy authorities can issue visa permits away from physical embassy locations. The system is based on Indra's SIBED software, which has reportedly been used to generate over 30 million identity documents and cards already

The Honourable Mr Speaker Angelo Farrugia



Angelo "Anġlu" Farrugia (born 29 December 1955) is a Maltese politician who is currently the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malta. Previously he served Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelo_Farrugia - cite note-1 a Member of Parliament and Shadow Minister for work, workers' rights and parliamentary affairs. Dr. Farrugia was born in Mosta and is married to Carmen née Zammit and they have a daughter, Caroline, also a lawyer.

Please be informed that the Honourable Mr Speaker Dr Anġlu Farrugia will be paying an official visit to Australia, between the 6 and 13 September 2013.

MALTA NATIONAL DAY - September 8

September 8 recalls some of the most important historic events from the glorious and eventful history of the Maltese Islands. The main celebration, apart from the religious feast celebrated in Mellieha, Naxxar, Senglea, and in Xaghra, Gozo, is the commemoration of the victory of the Knights of St John and the Maltese in the Great Siege over the Ottoman Turks in 1565. In fact, a commemorative ceremony is still held annually in Valletta, by the Great Siege Monument in front of the Courts. Nowadays, September 8 is considered as one of the five National Holidays on the Maltese Islands.

On September 8, other historic events like the capitulation of the French in 1800, and the siege of the Axis powers in 1943 are commemorated. September 8 is also linked with a particular tradition: the colorful and keenly contested boat race or regatta, which is held at the Grand Harbour in the afternoon, with many Maltese people crowding the nearby Grand Harbour area to watch this event.



Il-Vitorja: One of the most important national holidays in Malta

Great Siege of Malta monument located in Republic Street in Valletta

Il-Vitorja (meaning Victory Day) is *one of five national holidays in Malta*. It is celebrated on the 8th of September and commemorates important events for the Maltese Islands.

The events that are commemorated on this day are the:

- Victory of the Great Siege of Malta by the Knights of Malta and the Maltese people on the Ottoman Empire. This happened in 1565.
- Victories against the Italians. These victories occurred during the Second World War, specifically in 1943.
- The Maltese people's rebellion against French troops in Malta which happened in September 1800.
- The 8th of September also has a religious significance since it is

connected to the nativity of Mary (this day is remembered universally by the Catholic Church). Religious feasts are in fact celebrated in Senglea, Mellieha, Naxxar and Xaghra on this special day.

Victory Day Celebrations and Events

Celebrations on Victory Day include the laying of wreaths at Fort St. Angelo (Vittoriosa) and on the Great Siege of Malta monument in Valletta. In the afternoon, thousands of people head to the Grand Harbour to watch and follow the traditional Regatta races. Races usually start at around 2.00pm. These boat races are very competitive and participants would have been preparing and training for them all year long.

If you're visiting Malta around this time and love boat races, then the Vitorja Regatta races are a definite must see for you! In the evening *Misraħ l-Assedju* in the capital of Malta, Valletta is usually transformed into a cultural centre of musical and literature performances.



Maltese Culture: Religion in Malta

Malta is **predominately Roman Catholic**. The country acknowledges freedom of religion but according to the constitution of Malta, Roman Catholicism is the state religion.

Although some 98% of the population profess that they're Roman Catholics, only about 50% of the population attend religious services on a regular basis.

There are **over 350 churches** on the Maltese islands - that's almost 1 church for every 1000 inhabitants.

Each town and village has its own parish Catholic church which is the focal point, with most localities having multiple churches scattered across the locality. Most of the churches were built in the 17th century and are fine Baroque architecture examples.

A large percentage of the Maltese population takes an active part in the local **village festa**. The festa marks the feast day of the patron saint of the town or village.



8 SEPTEMBER - The Regatta (Boat Race)!!

The 8th September is known as Victory Day in Malta. It's a catch-all day because this particular public holiday has several roots, not one clear-cut raison d'être for celebration: it marks the end of the Great Siege of Malta in 1565 and the end of French occupation on Malta in 1800, as well as the armistice of the Fascist regime in Italy in 1943, which saw the close of the Italian bombardment of the Maltese Islands.

Every nation has its hour of glory in battle. The Regatta

is held on September 8th in Grand Harbour to celebrate Malta's victories during the Great Siege of 1565 and the Second World War. The magnificent Fort St Angelo provides an imposing backdrop to the sleek and colourful Maltese boats. Band marches, water-carnival, boat races and display of colourful fireworks are the main features attracting large crowds to the capital city, Valletta, and the Grand Harbour.

Rowing teams from the cities bordering Grand Harbour such as Valletta, Vittoriosa, Senglea, Kalkara, Cospicua, Marsaxlokk and Marsa, participate in a number of very exciting races, marked by extreme rivalry between participating teams and their respective supporters. For weeks on end, the competitors prepare for the races with fanatic zeal and rivalry. In the afternoon of Regatta day thousands of people crowd the waterfront and the surrounding bastions and craft of every description converge to the Grand Harbour to watch the races.

The first 3 winners in each race are awarded prizes and the club with the highest overall points wins the Aggregate Shield. Each year the different regatta clubs do their best to win the shield, which is strongly contested.

The Regatta is a great fun event and a source of great local pride. If you're in Malta on the 8th of September make sure you don't miss attending.

Time to celebrate- Victory Day!

The 8th September is one of the most important national holidays in Malta. The day 'Victory Day' or 'Il-Vitoria' commemorates several different important events from Malta's history.

Although Malta is only a small island, its central Mediterranean location has resulted in it being susceptible to several nations trying to take advantage of its strategic location. Victory Day celebrates victories in the following battles...

The Victory of the Great Siege of Malta (1565) and Victory against the Germans and Italians in the Second World War (1943)

There is also a religious significance to the 8th September as it is the Nativity of Mary which is a day that is universally celebrated by the Catholic Church. Churches all over the islands are elegantly decorated for this event with beautifully garlands and flowers inside, and magnificent light displays outside. Senglea, Mellieha, Naxxar and Xaghra all hold their village festas on this day.

On Victory Day there are many celebrations including laying wreaths at Fort St. Angelo (Vittoriosa) and across the Great Siege of Malta monument in Valletta. In the morning there are several State Ceremonies, one of which is a parade by the Armed Forces of Malta. By 2pm, thousands of people have gathered at the Grand Harbour to watch the very traditional Regatta races. These races are very competitive and practice and training for the big event goes on all through the year. All of the boats are decorated in at traditional Maltese style. In the evening of Victory Day, Valletta holds many musical and literature performances.

If you are lucky enough to be visiting Malta on the 8th September then you will more than likely see some of these celebrations!

The Mosta Church – Feast Day – 8 September

The gigantic dome of Mosta's parish Church (St Marija Assunta - Assumption of the Virgin Mary), is said to be the 4th-largest church dome in Europe (Note: Some say 3rd largest!). Built from 1833 to 1871 on the site of a previous church, it was designed by Giorgio Grognet, whose plans were closely based on the Pantheon in Rome.

On April 9, 1942, during an afternoon air-raid, a 200kg Luftwaffe bomb pierced the dome (two others bounced off) and fell among a congregation of more than 300 people awaiting early evening mass. It did not explode. A replica of the bomb is now on display in the sacristy, where the gift shop is.



The Mosta Church

Malta wasn't at all prepared for the Second World War. She had no aircraft but British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain said, "this is a time to show strength, not weakness." Aircraft pilots were not trained or ready for battle.

In January 1941, the Luftwaffe (the German air force) came to Malta on bombing missions from Sicily and then in November they started using Stukas (dive bombers). In order to win the air battle, Malta needed Spitfires. Forty-seven had flown in on 20th April but they were monitored on radar and bombed as soon as they landed. In what became known as the "glorious 10th of May," sixty-three German aircraft were damaged or destroyed.



During the Second World War, Malta was the most bombed place on earth. More than 14,000 bombs were dropped, destroying about 30,000 buildings but Malta still fought on. More than 1,500 civilians were killed in Malta during the Second World War.

However, the devout Maltese Catholics, were convinced Malta wouldn't fall to the enemy. In 1942 a bomb fell right down through the roof of Mosta church. This was one of the biggest churches and reputedly there were over 250 people attending a service at that time. No one was killed and this was considered as a miracle.

A replica bomb is now in the church.

A replica of the bomb The George Cross

On April 15th, 1942, King George VI awarded Malta for bravery during the Second World War. King George wrote a letter saying:

The Governor of Malta

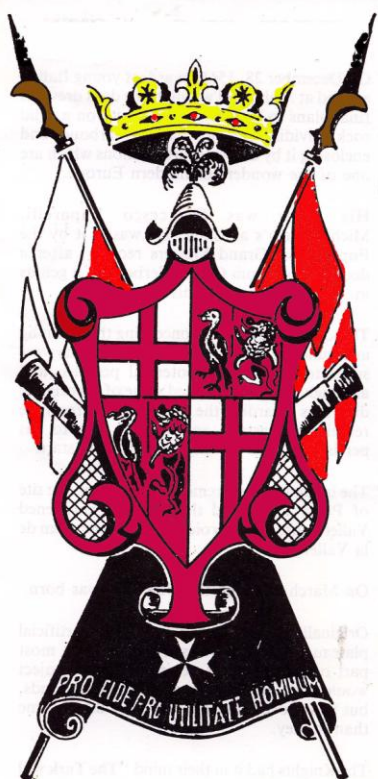
To honour her brave people I award the George Cross to the Island Fortress of Malta to bear witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history.

The George Cross is made of silver and is shaped as a cross. In the centre is a circle with St George riding his horse to find the dragon. Round the circle are the words "For Gallantry". At the back of the George Cross is engraved "To the Island of Malta, 15 April 1942"



Malta: The hospital of The Knights of St. John

The National Trust of Malta- Din I-Art Helwa



When I was in Malta last year, I looked up at a sign in the building I was about to enter– at the Mediterranean conference center – formerly the hospital of The Knights of St. John. The plaque reads in Maltese “The anatomy and surgery school was started in this building by Grand Master Cottoner 19th December 1676”.

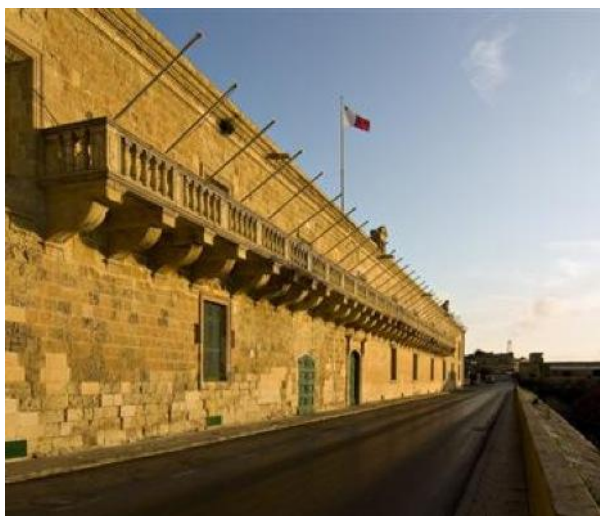
The Knights of St. John, also known as the Knights Hospitallers or Knights of Malta were set up primarily to provide care for the sick.



They came to Malta in 1530 after they had been driven out of Rhodes by Suleiman the Magnificent. Following the Great Siege of Malta (1565) which, though a decisive victory of the knights over the Ottomans saw them almost driven out of Malta, Grand Master Jean Parisot de La Valletta set the wheels in motion for the building of a fortified city. He laid the first stone in Our Lady of Victory Church in 1566 (Incidentally that same church is now being lovingly restored to its former glory by our organisation). Sadly he was not to see the city built as he died in 1568 and was buried in that same church and later moved to the magnificent St. John's Co-Cathedral (completed in 1577). That city was called Valletta in his honour and became the capital city of our country. It was built on a hilly peninsula at the tip of

which was Fort St. Elmo. This was land the Ottomans had used to attack the opposite side of Grand harbour, where the Knights were posted during the Great Siege. The city was built with wide, straight streets, palaces and fortifications (some as high as 47m).

Getting back to our hospital, that hospital was built right there across from Fort St. Elmo at the lower end of Valletta. The first building was started in 1574 but the hospital was extended several times. The main ward was extended during the rule of the Cottoners (1660-66) to an amazing 155m in length – at the time “one of the grandest interiors in the world”. The hospital was also considered to be one of the best in Europe and could accommodate over 900 patients in an emergency.



One of those same Grand Masters founded the School of Anatomy and Medicine in this building in 1676 which was the forerunner of the Medical School at the University of Malta. This same hospital was used by the British Military forces 1800-1920 and Sir David Bruce discovered the germ responsible for Brucellosis here. During World War about a third of the building was destroyed. Finally in 1979 it was reborn as a state of the art conference center which it remains today. It is open to the public and right across from it one can visit the War Museum, The Malta Experience, and soon, Fort St. Elmo which is being restored. But in Valletta one can barely walk 50m without encountering a historical site, church or monument. The city still feels like the city of the knights in spite of all the offices and shops.

VALLETTA – MALTA'S CAPITAL CITY

Valletta, Malta's capital and a World Heritage site, is nothing short of an open-air museum. It is a living experience of Baroque architecture, a monument donated by the Knights of St John nearly five centuries ago. Throughout the years,

Valletta has welcomed emperors, heads of state, artists and poets and is now the permanent seat of the Maltese government.

Dotted with quaint cafés and wine bars, the city is today one of Malta's main tourist attractions, hosting among others, the majestic St John's Co- Cathedral, the imposing bastions and a treasure of priceless paintings. It also provides a stunning snapshot of Malta's Grand Harbour, often described as the most beautiful in the Mediterranean.

The city's unique setting nowadays plays host to a series of cultural events, from theatre in English, to concerts by leading opera singers. A hive of business activity during the day, the city switches to a slower gear for the night. Use it to your advantage to get away from the noise and take a stroll to admire the magic of the fortified capital amplified by the gentle lighting. Admire the bastion walls, the dense clusters of worn limestone buildings, the timber balconies, and imposing Churches.

Red Arrows for Malta Airshow



The Malta International Air-show will be held on September 28 and 29.

A private air charter company, airX, has teamed with the Malta Aviation Society, organiser of the Malta International Air Show, for this year's event. Addressing a press conference on Wednesday MAS president Joe Ciliberti said the Royal Air Force Red Arrows display team would be the star attraction at this year's air-show.

Ancient Craft - Cane Work



Wicker has been documented as far back as ancient Egypt, made from indigenous "reed and swamp grasses." Egyptian middle-class families could only afford a few pieces, such as small tables. Archaeologists working on the tombs of the wealthy pharaohs have uncovered a wider variety of wicker items, including "chests, baskets, wig boxes, and chairs."

The popularity of wicker passed from Egypt to ancient Rome. Wicker baskets were used to carry items in Pompeii. Furniture was manufactured out of wicker in the Roman style. The use of wicker presumably spread throughout Europe as the Roman Empire expanded. It has been proposed that the extensive use of wicker in the Iron

Age (1200 BC – 400 AD in Europe) may have influenced the development of the woven patterns used in Celtic art. By the 1500s and 1600s, wicker was "quite common" in European countries like Portugal, Spain, and England.

Wicker received a boost during the Age of Exploration, when international sea traders returned from southeast Asia with a species of palm called rattan. Rattan is stronger than traditional European wicker materials, although the rattan stem can be separated so the softer inner core can be used for wicker.

The 1800s brought immense popularity for wicker in Europe, England, and North America. It was used outdoors as well as indoors. People in the Victorian Era believed it to be more sanitary than upholstered furniture, it was inexpensive, wicker resisted the elements, and the material was adaptable to many styles. In the United States, Cyrus Wakefield began constructing rattan furniture in the 1850s. He first used rattan that had been offloaded from ships, where it was used as ballast, but his designs soon caught the attention of the population and he began importing the material himself. Wakefield's company became one of the leading industries in wicker furniture; it later merged with the Heywood Chair Manufacturing Company (a wooden chair company that had invented a mechanical process for weaving wicker seats) to form the Heywood-Wakefield of Gardner, Massachusetts, one of the oldest and most prominent North American wicker manufacturers.

In recent times, its aesthetic was influenced heavily by the Arts and Crafts movement at the turn of the 20th century. Wicker is still a popular material. Antique wicker products are highly sought after by collectors. Reproductions of furniture and accent pieces are also sold for indoor and outdoor use.

Wicker can be made from natural or synthetic materials, or a combination. In furniture, often a frame is made of stiffer materials, after which more pliant material is woven into the frame to fill it. In a smaller piece such as a basket, a strengthening frame is not needed so the entire piece is woven from the wicker material.



Natural wicker is well known for its strength and durability, and for the high level of beauty and comfort that an expert craftsman can produce. Materials used can be any part of a plant, such as the cores of cane or rattan stalks, or whole thicknesses of plants, as with willow switches. Other popular materials include reed and bamboo. Natural wicker requires maintenance to keep it in good shape.

Basket-making in Malta is an old craft developed for the needs of the fishing industry, agriculture and for households. Wicker furniture in Malta is also a flourishing craft industry today; many workshops export

their goods.



Fishing traps (nases) were traditionally made with disa, a fine reed-like material, but these days they are made out of nylon, which is virtually indestructible – but less attractive. Traps, used to catch bogue (vopi) and picarel (arznell), are usually set in the afternoon and they are pulled out of the water after four or five hours. Normally, about 15 of these pots are set at a depth of 15 to 20 metres and kept some one metre above the seabed.

Bait consisting of bread mashed with finely powdered dried beans is placed hanging on the side of the pot and the fish enter through the bottom constriction attracted by the bait. This kind of fishing takes place all the year round and the fish caught in the traps are fried, if big enough, or for fish soup. The nases tal-arznell are only used in Gozo. They are employed in the same manner as the traps for bogue but no bait is required because it is thought that the fish enter the pot to spawn. This kind of fishing takes place from March to mid-May.

No longer waiting for tomorrow | Singer - Dr. Gianluca Bezzina

His infectious smile and harmless brand of strummy pop won over hearts and minds all across the continent, but is former Eurovision hopeful Gianluca Bezzina ready to embrace a musical career? We try to get behind the singing doctor's ever-present smile.



Will Gianluca Bezzina follow in the footsteps of fellow Eurovision hopeful Ira Losco by continuing to be an active musician in his own right?

There's a reason why everyone assumes Gianluca Bezzina is a nice guy. The reason is refreshingly simple: it's because he is. The former Eurovision hopeful - scoring 8th place at the pan-continental song contest last May with 'Tomorrow' (the best result Malta has had in years) doesn't appear to have a formula for his always-smiling, always-beaming demeanour.

It's a feature of his public persona that hasn't gone ignored. In fact, you could argue that it endeared the entire European continent to him ("I even got feedback from Venezuela!" he

enthuses). Apart from his disarming charm, his 'story' is such a perfect blend of goodwill and overachievement that you'd be forgiven for assuming that it amounts to nothing more than a calculated PR fantasy.

In fact, the 23-year-old doctor-turned-singer has been the butt of a few jokes ever since he was catapulted to national - and, for a brief while during the Eurovision ruckus, international - attention. But it's telling that even those who make fun of him can't help but do so with a light touch.



Brikkuni Teatru Rjal - venue problems

Folk-pop act Brikkuni came to the verge of cancelling a September concert at Valletta's Teatru Rjal due to high rental fees, in a reminder of the challenges local bands face in securing concert venues.

Brikkuni frontman Mario Vella: "I honestly hope that changes take place, for the sake of all musicians on the island". Photo: Noel Tanti.

Though most of the island was probably away from their computers last Thursday in favour of a spot of the sunny outdoors on the occasion of the feast of Santa Marija, a section of Malta's social networking web was alight with sound and fury, as the folk-pop act Brikkuni announced that they will be cancelling their concert at Valletta's Teatru Rjal

in September owing to allegedly sky-high rental fees.

Eleventh hour discussions with the concerned parties may lead Brikkuni to reconsider their decision, though no official confirmation was forthcoming by the time of going to print.

Taking to Facebook to vent his frustration, Brikkuni frontman Mario Vella revealed that the venue - the restored Old Opera House - would cost €2,000 to rent, a figure that, according to Vella's calculations, would balloon up to €3,940 when all expenses (including sound engineering, security and other concert necessities) are taken into account.

"Nobody can afford such terms, except for those few bands who have the necessary social connections to win sponsorships and those cultural prostitutes who are ready to affiliate any sort of product or service to the arts just to sell tickets," Vella said on his Facebook wall.

Helping Maltese citizens to become translators in EU institutions by Ian Borg



When speaking to foreign friends of mine about the Maltese language I am very often told how remarkable it is for a population of less than half a million people, to have managed to preserve their mother tongue. Apart from the inhabitants of the Maltese Islands and several thousands of first and second generation emigrants scattered all over the world, and in spite of the many threats from several foreign languages, primarily English and Italian, we still speak to each other in the vernacular.

One of the most important elements of our national identity is precisely the Maltese language. Perhaps few are aware that apart from being the national language, Maltese, alongside English are both official languages as laid down in the Maltese Constitution. This is the reason why, for example, the Government Gazette is published bi-lingual. Both languages are equally authentic.

In my view, a very important boost to the survival of the Maltese language came about following Malta's membership to the European Union, because today our mother tongue has official status alongside 23 other recognized languages. This development has given a new lease of life to the Maltese language apart from opening up new opportunities for Maltese translators and interpreters in EU institutions.

Unfortunately not enough Maltese candidates for these posts make the grade. I came to know recently that due to the fact that not enough Maltese-speaking translators are available, the legal requirement that all EU legislation is simultaneously published in all official languages has been suspended.

One would expect that after having achieved this breakthrough, the Maltese Language would be used more frequently by Maltese MEPs during debates in the European Parliament. However, this has not been the case as evidenced by figures recently made available by the European Parliament office in Malta.



VISIT THE MALTESE SCHOOL WEBSITE – www.page4.me

MALTA NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Site: www.maltaorchestra.com

The Orchestra was founded on 1st April 1968 and was originally known as the Manoel Theatre Orchestra. It comprised a number of musicians who previously formed part of a chamber orchestra in the employ of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Navy (Malta), better known as the C-in-C Orchestra that was disbanded one day earlier. It was the orchestra in residence at the homonymous theatre and regularly performed operas and symphonic concerts under the direction of its resident conductors Joseph Sammut (1968-1992) and Michael Laus (1992-1997).



In September 1997 the orchestra became an independent body and became officially named as the National Orchestra of Malta. Michael Laus became the resident conductor, a post he still occupies to date. The Orchestra currently enjoys a nucleus of forty-five full-time musicians that form the Orchestra's backbone. Most of the performances are however

supplemented by a number of professional Maltese musicians augmenting the Orchestra to 55/60 members to offer its demanding audiences a varied and challenging repertoire.

During the season 2001-2002 the National Orchestra toured for the first time. In Belgium the orchestra performed at the City Hall in Brussels under the direction of Michael Laus, while in Sicily the National Orchestra, in collaboration with the Manoel Theatre (Malta) and Operalaboratorio (Palermo), took part in a five-performance production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* at Palermo's Teatro Orione. In June 2003 the National Orchestra of Malta participated in the production of Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* at Rome's Teatro Argentina and also performed a symphonic concert in the evocative ruins of Villa Adriana in Tivoli.

The predominant influences of the various cultures in the Mediterranean Region has not only affected the Maltese way of living but left indelible marks on the development of the National Orchestra of Malta, or *Orkestra Nazzjonali* as it is known in Maltese. The demanding repertoires by Italian, English, German, French, Austrian and Russian composers among others, so much imbedded in local music tastes, has often seen the Orchestra performing as a large symphony orchestra thanks to the excellent co-operation that *Orkestra Nazzjonali* enjoys with important Orchestras in Europe. Since January 2005 we have seen the orchestra performing Grand Concerts on a number of important occasions with the participation of musicians from the Czech Republic, Italy, Germany, England, Austria, Russia, and Ukraine.

The Orchestra's extensive calendar of events consists mainly of symphonic concerts at the Manoel Theatre, the Mediterranean Conference Centre and other venues apart from opera productions in Malta and Gozo. The National Orchestra is frequently invited by the President of the Republic of Malta to perform in state concerts in honour of the various distinguished visiting Heads of States.

Among the many distinguished conductors and soloists who have performed with the National Orchestra one can mention Peter Stark, Charles Olivieri-Munroe, Paolo Ponziano Ciardi, Rene Clement, Brian Schembri, Jonathan Butcher, Ghena Dimitrova, Alexander Rudin, Miriam Gauci, Sergei Glavatsky, David Campbell, Cecilia Gasdia, Roberto Cominati, Andrea Griminelli, Igor Ardasev, Lukas Vondracek, Mats Rondin, Carmine Lauri, Joseph Calleja and Andrea Bocelli. Later this year, in June 2007 the Orchestra will be accompanying Jose' Carreras.

The Orchestra is a predominant exponent of Maltese Composers and one of its ambitions is to promote Maltese compositions beyond our shores and make them known to important international music centres as well as to a wider public around the world. The recent launch of the *Orkestra Nazzjonali "Live" Label* is a step in this direction. The first CD, printed in the UK, was dedicated to Paolino Vassallo's varied works and has already proved to be a success in Europe and the USA. Other CDs in a series of "live" recordings are in the offing.

The National Orchestra also organises community projects from time to time. Music education programmes bring the orchestra and its music to the widest possible audience through interactive music making, performing for children of different ages and involving them in creative talks and workshops.



The Artichokes - Il-Qaqocc

One of the most common Maltese delicacies which is enjoyed by Maltese families is Malta is **-Il-Qaqocc - The Artichoke.** The artichoke, *cynara scolymus*, is actually a member of the thistle family, although its leaves are bigger, broader and soft rather than prickly. Artichoke plants are quite beautiful, like giant ferns - six feet in diameter and three to four feet high. It's the heart at the base of the flower bud produced by the plant that's prized for its delicate flavor and its versatility at the table.



Artichokes have been a part of Mediterranean cuisine for thousands of years. Some food historians attribute the cultivation of artichokes to the Romans and Greeks, while others insist that those civilizations first used wild cardoon or cardone, the artichoke's thistle-family cousin, and that the artichoke was developed from the cardoon in North Africa by Muslim agronomists. Or, Syria may have domesticated the artichoke, based on a reference from the ninth century.



Whoever was responsible, we can be grateful for their long-ago efforts, and for the hundreds of uniquely wonderful artichoke preparations ranging from Maltese bread-crumbs/olives/anchovies stuffed artichokes to Arabic couscous-stuffed artichokes and Spanish baby artichoke tapas, to Italian carciofi alla Romana, to Syrian artichoke hearts with olive oil.



Artichokes probably came to Europe through Sicily in the twelfth century. Catherine de Medici, when she married Louis of France and moved to Paris in the 14th century, is thought to have brought artichokes, along with many other Italian favorites, to French cuisine.

which Artichokes are available throughout the year in some countries but peak seasons are spring, autumn and winter. Spring artichokes are compact, firm and heavy for their size. Baby artichokes are also plentiful in the spring. Summer artichokes tend to have longer thorns and their leaves are more open in appearance.

Winter artichokes are more conical in shape. Some autumn and winter artichokes may be touched by frost - winter kissed - and have a light bronze to brown tint to the outer leaves. Artichoke fans prefer the winter kissed artichokes for the nutty, rich flavor. The winter artichokes do revert to their grey-green color when cooked.



NEW AND OLD ARTICHOKE RECIPES

I have a great new recipe for you!

Have you ever met a person that doesn't like spinach dip? Well this recipe will change their minds! I even know of people who have had this recipe and didn't realize they were even eating spinach. Remember that camouflage technique moms out there? When you couldn't get the kids to eat their Popeye vegetable? Well, this recipe for SPINACH AND ARTICHOKE DIP goes even one better and is great with toasted or just warmed pita chips. You can do crackers, focaccia bread, or literally anything else you feel like putting with it but do try the toasted pita cut into wedges. ENJOY!



RECIPE: SPINACH & ARTICHOKE DIP

INGREDIENTS: 1/4 cup olive oil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
3/4 cup diced white or yellow onion
1 1/2 tablespoons minced garlic
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups chicken stock
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
3/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons crumbled bouillon cubes
1 1/2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 teaspoon sugar
3/4 cup sour cream
12 ounces frozen spinach, defrosted, drained, & chopped
6 ounces canned artichoke bottoms, drained and cut into 1/8-inch slices
1 cup finely shredded Monterey Jack cheese
3/4 teaspoon hot sauce (such as Tabasco)



DIRECTIONS:

In a large saucepan, warm the olive oil and butter together over medium heat. When the butter has melted, add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until wilted, 3 to 4 min. Stir in the garlic and cook 2 to 3 minutes longer, stirring frequently and stopping before the onion and garlic brown. Sprinkle the flour and continue cooking, stirring continuously, until the mixture turns a golden-blond color, 10 to 15 minutes. Then, whisking continuously, slowly pour in the stock until it is smoothly incorporated. When the mixture begins to simmer, stir in the cream. Let it return to the simmer. Remove from the heat, add the parmesan, chicken base or bouillon cubes, lemon juice, and sugar, and stir until thoroughly blended. Add the sour cream, spinach, artichoke bottoms, Monterey Jack cheese and hot sauce, and stir until the ingredients are thoroughly combined and the cheese has melted. Transfer to a warmed serving bowl and serve immediately with toasted pita chips that have been cut into wedges - makes 8 to 10 servings.

MFSA Warning



The Malta Financial Services Authority ("MFSA") has become aware of SGT Malta - as depicted on the website - <http://sgtmalta.net/eb/> - which claims to be offering financial services including online banking.

The MFSA wishes to alert the public, in Malta and abroad, that the above-mentioned entity is NOT authorised or licenced by the MFSA to provide any type of financial service that requires authorisation or a licence in terms of law. Accordingly, the MFSA warns the public to exercise extreme caution when dealing with this entity.

The MFSA would like to remind investors and consumers of financial services not to enter into any financial services transaction unless they have ascertained that the entity with whom the transaction is being made holds a licence to provide such services from the MFSA or another reputable financial services regulator. A list of entities licensed by the MFSA is available from the Malta Financial Services Authority, and can be viewed at: www.mfsa.com.mt.

NEWS FROM STARS AND STRIPES - MALTA

Why Labor Day

Labor Day is to the US what 1st of May is to Malta. This year this federal holiday comes at a time when the US economy seems to be picking up. With news of companies like GE, Lenovo and Apple in the process of moving manufacturing back to the US, we sincerely hope that this year's Labor Day celebrations... (Rest of the story at <http://starsandstripesmalta.blogspot.com/2013/08/why-labor-day.html>).

L-Ispeaker L-Onorevoli Anglu Farrugia Jircievi Zjara Ta' Kortesia Mill-Konslu Generali Ta' Malta F'San Francisco

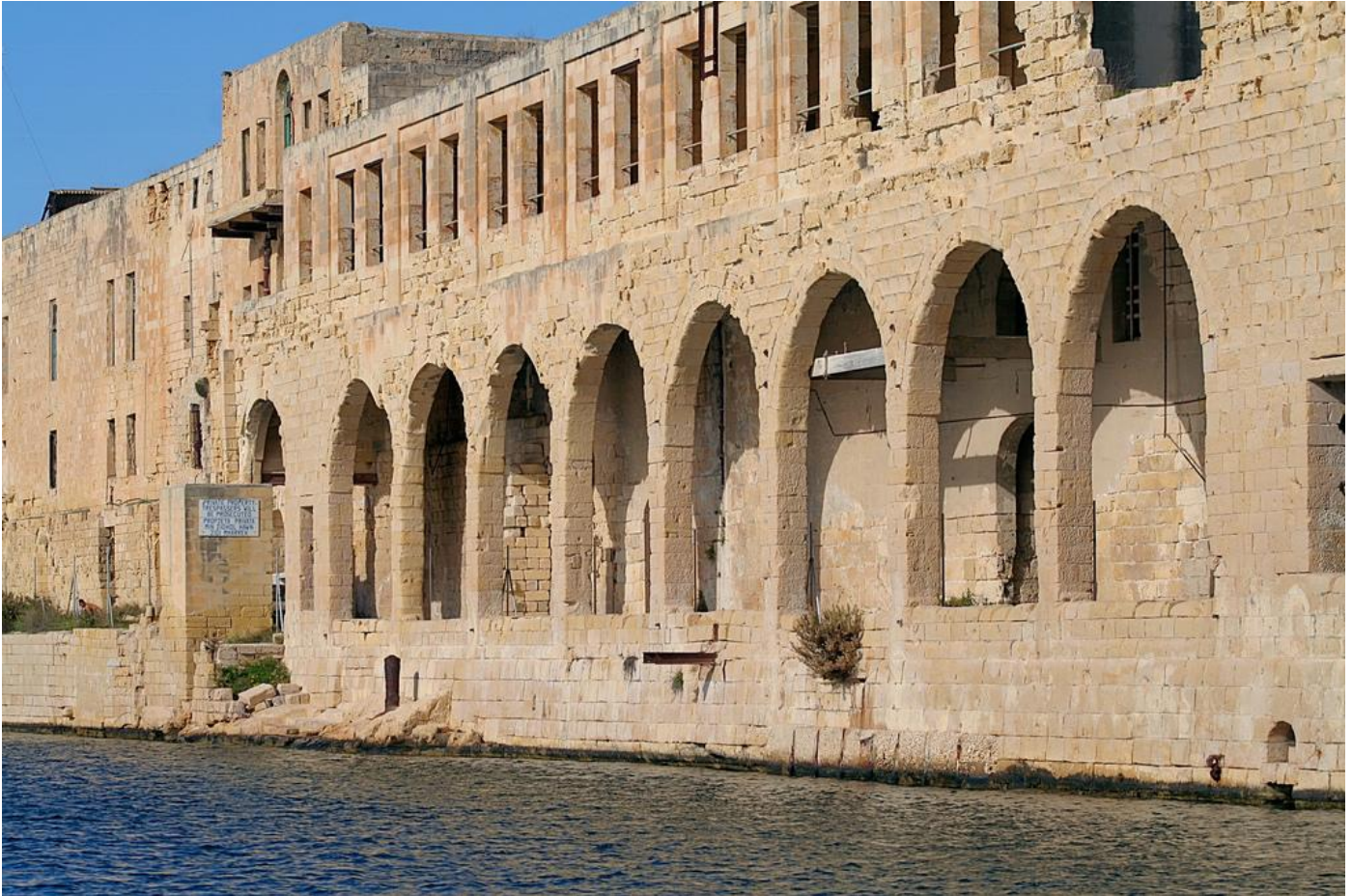
Waqt laqgħa li nzammet dalghodu, l-Ispeaker l-Onorevoli Anglu Farrugia, ippropona diversi mizuri li jistghu jkunu ta' beneficcju għall-Maltin u dioxendenti tagħhom li jinsabu jghixu barra minn xtutna u aktar minn hekk... (Rest of the story at <http://www.starsandstripesmalta.com/News/News201308.html#PR20130822>).

Hosting a Student

Hosting a U.S. Government-funded international exchange student brings classroom lessons into your home in ways far more effective than any book or teacher could describe. Host families and their exchange students form bonds that can last a lifetime. If you'd like to know more about hosting an international student in the United States, please fill in the form on the web site. If you are living outside of the U.S., contact... (Rest of the story at <http://c2cyouth.org/>).

This Newsletter is published in the Stars and Stripes Website: www.starsandstripesmalta.com/COMISAN

LAZZARETTO HOSPITAL – MANOEL ISLAND, GZIRA, MALTA



Manoel Island in Gzira's Marsamxett Harbour, was originally known as l'Isola del Vescovo or il-Gzira tal-Isqof in Maltese (literally translated as "the Bishop's Island"). In 1643 Jean Paul Lascaris, Grandmaster of the Knights of Malta, constructed a quarantine hospital (lazzaretto) on the island, in an attempt to control the periodic influx of plague and cholera on board visiting ships.

The island was renamed after António Manoel de Vilhena, a Portuguese Grandmaster of the Knights of Malta under whose leadership Fort Manoel was built in 1726. Fort Manoel is considered a marvel of 18th century military engineering. The original plans for the Fort are attributed to Louis d'Augbigne Tigné, and are said to have been modified by his friend and colleague Charles F. de Mondion, who is buried in a crypt beneath Fort Manoel. At one time, the Knights of Malta considered developing a walled city on Manoel Island, but instead they settled on a fort designed to house up to 500 soldiers. The Fort has a magnificent quadrangle, parade ground and arcade, and once housed a baroque chapel dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua, under the direct command of the Order.

During World War II, Manoel Island and its fort were used as a naval base by the Royal Navy, at which time it was referred to variously as "HMS Talbot" or "HMS Phoenicia". The Chapel of St. Anthony was virtually destroyed following a direct hit by Luftwaffe bombers in March 1942.

For several years, Manoel Island has housed a quaint, informal sanctuary for ducks and other waterfowl, created and maintained by a local volunteer, and funded entirely by private donations. As of November 2006, the historic fort was undergoing significant restoration and renovation works, and a new housing development was under construction on Manoel Island. The Manoel Island redevelopment project, however, has been heavily criticized due to its proximity to the island's important historical buildings.

The Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) Board granted a full development permit for the rehabilitation and re-use of the Lazzaretto complex at Manoel Island. The extensive restoration works together with the reinstatement of a second, intermediate floor to certain parts of the building will accommodate a number of residential units, office facilities, a casino and a car park. All the interventions are acceptable and sensitive to the cultural and historic values of this site. Works will include the removal of a number of accretions that are of no architectural, historical or contextual significance. These interventions were mainly constructed in the post war period and are now in a very dilapidated state.

ZEJT IZ-ZEJTUN - Activity Details:



Zejt iz-Zejtun, the event celebrating the olive picking season and olive pressing for oil will be held in Zejtun during the evening of Saturday, 28th and on Sunday, 29th September, 2013. Those wishing to participate are kindly requested to contact us on 21663866.

The event, organized by the Zejtun Local Council, will start on Saturday at around 7:30pm with the BANDU (Banns or Proclamation) that will announce the event. A defile' of village folk and farmers on carts carrying the olive harvest for pressing, will then parade along the streets of Zejtun.

Drummers and flag bearers in medieval costumes, together with folk singers and dancers, will provide the traditional musical input in celebration of a bountiful harvest.

An exhibition of agricultural tools, agricultural products and folk art will deck the village in traditional attire that will come alive in a celebration of colour, music, movement and food. Pride of place will, of course, be given to the olive tree. Maltese ftajjar and bread dressed in freshly pressed olive oil will be distributed for free tasting.

Olive trees and associated products will also be on sale. An audio visual presentation will feature olive tree varieties and techniques for their proper cultivation. The crypt of the Parish Church of St.Catherine will be open for public viewing.

On Sunday morning the Parish will organize the traditional blessing of horses, cattle and pets. This will take place after the planting of trees by children who would have, this year, received their 'Confirmation'. The Church belfries will be open to the public.



Zejtun holds the title of Città Beland, which was given to it by Grandmaster Ferdinand von Hompesch in 1797, Beland (Bylandt) being his mother's surname. Zejtun takes its name from the Sicilian Arabic for "olive"- zaytun. The production and cultivation of olives was an important local industry by the 7th century.

A picture is
worth 1000 words

