JOURNAL FOR MALTESE AROUND THE WORLD

MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER

Editor: Frank Scicluna OAM MQR JP maltesejournal@gmail.com

Thousands of Maltese are proud to call Australia home

AUSTRALIA DAY

26 JANUARY

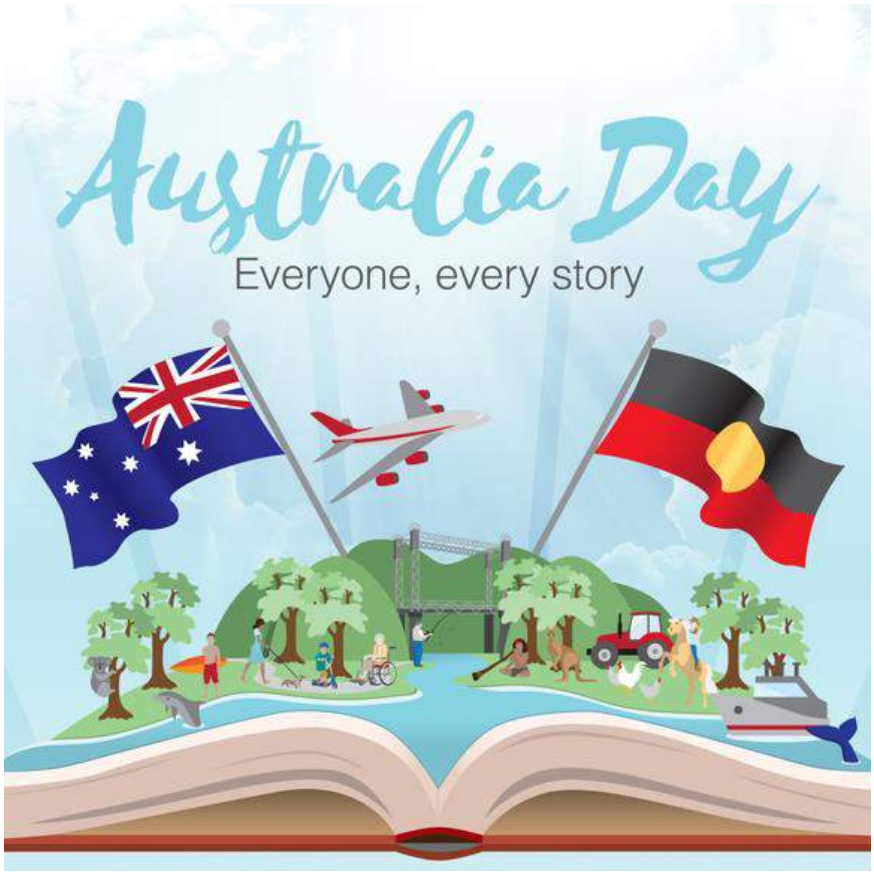
The historical re-enactment at Fort St Elmo

Miss Antoinette Spiteri 100 000th migrant to Australia in 1965

National Library NSW

AUSTRALIA DAY 26 JANUARY 2023

We acknowledge and pay homage and respect to the past, present and future Traditional owners of this land



This Australia Day, the community is encouraged to **Reflect, Respect and Celebrate** our nation and our people – especially our strong sense of community as we work towards reconnecting.

Australia Day 2023 is a time to recognise the resilience of all Australians and to focus on what we can achieve when we move forward as a community and a unified nation.

Australia Day means different things to different people and everyone is encouraged to acknowledge Australia Day in a way that's meaningful to them. We acknowledge the significant contribution that everyone makes to our nation, from First Nations people who have lived here for 65,000 years to our newest citizens who call Australia home.

Australia Day is an opportunity to celebrate our cultural diversity and rich migrant heritage, which is very much part of our unique Australian identity and has helped shape a nation proud of its strong and successful multiculturalism.

Regardless of our origins or our past, it's a day for Australians from all backgrounds and communities to come together to share stories, embrace our diversity, and celebrate our unity.

We all belong, and we all contribute to this nation's story and achievements.

On Australia Day our deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is infused into everything we undertake as part of our commemorations. But in doing so we acknowledge that 26 January is a date that, for many, is a reminder of the hurt caused by the arrival of Europeans to this land.

Our desire is that Australia Day is a time for inclusion, as well as an opportunity for greater understanding and reconciliation.

We hope it can be a day when Australians from all backgrounds come together to celebrate the success and optimism of our modern, tolerant and multicultural society; and the strength and resilience of First Nations Australians.

We commit to engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, elders and peoples about Australia Day activities in a true partnership. This includes seeking counsel and permission to draw on this vibrant and profound culture.

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the countries and lands on which Australia Day activities take place. And more than that, we hope to engage all Australians at a deeper level.

We continue to work towards the best expression of our national day activities, ensuring that every aspect of our day is welcoming, inclusive and representative of the enormous diversity of this great country we call AUSTRALIA

MESSAGE FROM H.E. JENNY CARTMILL AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO MALTA TO THE READERS OF THE MALTESE JOURNAL

On Australia Day 2023, sending warm wishes to everyone from the whole team at the Australian High Commission in Malta! It's a day to reflect on what it means to be Australian. We celebrate a modern and diverse Australia, and acknowledge our history and the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to our nation. Together we celebrate our achievements and especially our people, including all those with Maltese ancestry - 234,000 according to the latest census! We're all part of the story. The High Commission will once again be holding an event to mark the day, honoured by the presence of HE President George Vella and Mrs Vella.

Malta and Australia

Malta and Australia's relationship has been a longstanding one for centuries, primarily because of the number of locals who migrated Down Under.

Animated Stats analysed the largest Australian immigrant groups from 1851 to 2019, and Malta is obviously on the list. The numbers of Maltese migrants shoot up in the '40s and climb well into the '70s, maintaining top 10 out of the 100-country list. By 1998, however, we disappear from the on-screen top 20 list. There are 198 989 people with Maltese ancestry in Australia (2021 Census)

History of Maltese migration to Australia

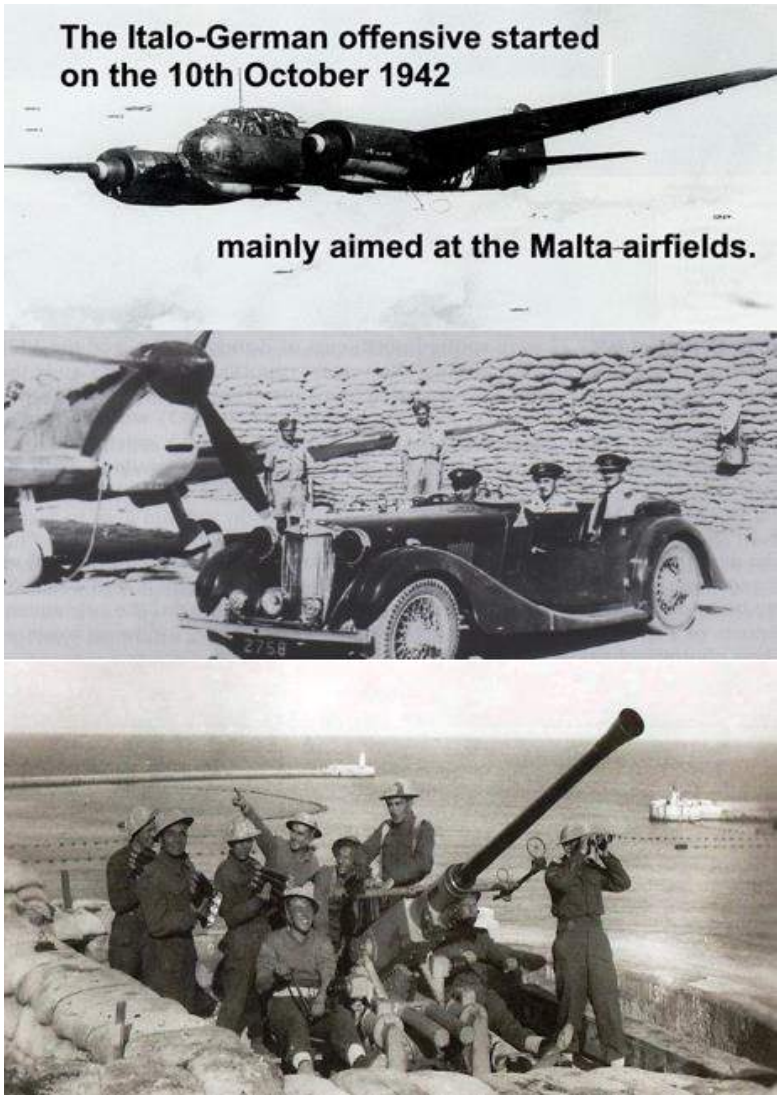
While these stats are reliable and numbers did shoot up after the war, Maltese started immigrating in the early 1800s during the convict period with the first free settler being Antonio Azzopardi who arrived in the late 1830s, according to Malta's Foreign Affairs.

And it wasn't the easiest of things to do either. "Attempts at group migration from Malta at the end of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth centuries ended in failure. Despite British lobbying for the Australian government to allow Maltese immigration, those encouraged to make the journey received no government assistance towards their passage, and upon their arrival continued to encounter considerable public hostility to their entry into Australia," Malta's Foreign Affairs website notes.

"A softening of official attitudes towards the Maltese can be traced to the 1925 Federal government appointment of the first Maltese commissioner in Australia. This was followed by the granting of financial assistance towards the cost of the passage for wives wishing to join their Maltese husbands in Australia. In a matter of ten years the number of Malta-born persons in Australia rose by almost fifty per cent from a total of about 2,800 in 1929."

The turning point for Maltese migrating fully to Australia was after World War II. "Post-war immigration followed the slogan 'Populate or Perish' and coincided with a great intake of Italian, Maltese and other non-British migrants. Additionally, the heroism of the Maltese people during this conflict made a deep impression on many Australians leading to an improvement in Australian attitudes towards Maltese. Post-war immigration from Malta accelerated during the twelve years between 1949 and 1961. The highest point was reached in the year 1954-55 when some 10,000 Maltese arrived to a new life in Australia."

Fort St. Elmo & The National War Museum

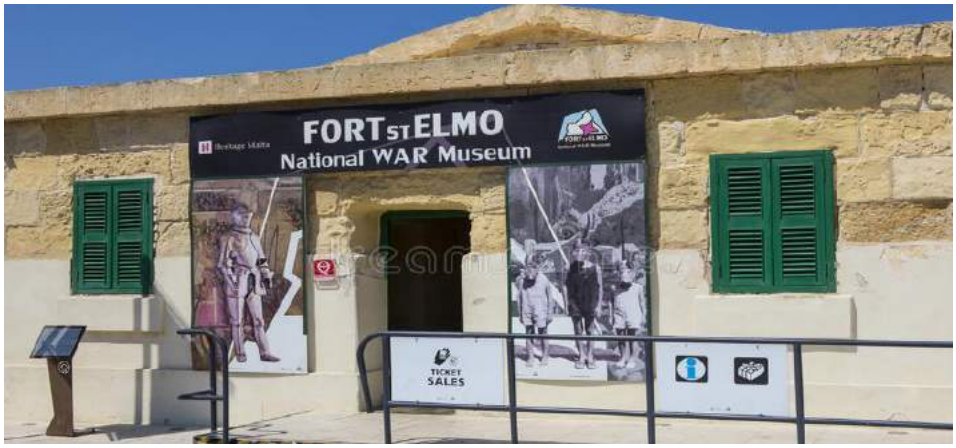


THE OCTOBER BLITZ, 1942

The Italo-German offensive started on the 10th October 1942 with a sharp increase in the number of raids, mainly aimed at the airfields. The Spitfires and anti-aircraft gunners mauled the German and Italian bombers and fighters that hurled themselves in a desperate bid to obliterate Malta's airfields. They failed and the Regia Aeronautica General Giuseppe Santoro admits that no airfield was put out of action for more than half an hour.

Field marshal Kesselring too had confided to Maresciallo Ugo Cavallero, Chief of the Italian General Staff, that any German airman daily engaged in more than one risky sortie over Malta, developed a state of tension defined as 'Maltese sickness'. However these raids caused additional damage to populated and serious loss of life. The Spitfires met the intruders out at sea and the ones that managed to get through had to face more Spitfires and the fury of concentrated anti-aircraft artillery not restricted to a rationed number of rounds.

During the ten-day battle, the enemy flew approximately 2,400 sorties, dropping about 440 tons of bombs. This comparatively low figure reflected the enemy's reluctance to risk losing more bombers over Malta. The insignificant results achieved did not justify the mounting losses and the new blitz came to an abrupt end of 20th October, 1942. The Axis conceded defeat; the Air Battle of Malta had been won.



EVERYONE HAS A STORY TO TELL. WHY NOT SHARE IT WITH OTHERS? SEND IT TO US

THE MALTESE CROSS

The Maltese cross is today ~ synonymous with Malta. Its origins go back to the 11th century when some merchants from Amalfi, who traded with Egypt, obtained from the Caliph permission to construct in Jerusalem a church, a residence forfor themselves and a convent for the monks of the Order of the Benedictines of Monte Cassino. As many Christian pilgrims flocked to Jerusalem, a hospital was also built.

It was then that they adopted the cross of Amalfi and the name of Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem. By 1099, Gerard Tunc, a Frenchman, was master of the hospital and on his request, Pope Pascal II recognised the community as a religious order in 1113. Gerard Tunc became the first Grand Master of the Order and it is generally agreed that he introduced the white eight-pointed cross which was worn on the side of the heart on a black robe and a black cloak. According to the Rule, the Knights had to wear the cross on their robes in honour of God and the Holy Cross.

It served as a reminder for them to follow the Rule, thus protecting themselves from the snares of the devil. The eight points of the cross symbolised the eight beatitudes and every new knight was reminded of these beatitudes during the ceremony of the profession of vows.

Today the eight-pointed cross is represented on most souvenirs of Malta, such as jewellery and stamps. It also forms part of the logo of the national airlin was chosen by the Maltese to feature on the countr euro coins.

From floor tiles to door knockers, jewellery wrought iron gates, flags to Euro coins, and even national airline Air Malta, the eight-pointed cross as ubiquitous as the sun on this Mediterranean isla It is even the subject of an old music-hall joke. T very fact that the symbol has endured for centuries is a reflection of the immeasurable importance of the patrimony we inherited from the Knights of St John.

The eight-pointed cross has been associated with the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta (to give it its full name) since 1567, when it first appeared on the two Tarì and four Tarì copper coins of Grand Master Jean Parisot de Valette . The geometric shape was not exactly a new design, as it can be found in different formats in Byzantine decorations dating back to the 6th century.

The eight points of the cross are not just a clever design feature. They have two symbolic meanings. First of all, they refer to the eight regions, or Langues, where the Knights hailed from: Auvergne, Provence, Aragon, Castille, Portugal, Italy, Germany and England.

They also refer to the eight obligations or aspirations of the Knights:

- to live in truth
- to have faith
- to repent one's sins
- to give proof of humility
- to love justice
- to be merciful
- to be sincere and wholehearted
- to endure persecution

These days, the St John's Ambulance, the Order's main service organisation, has given a secular meaning to the eight points, representing the traits of a good first aider

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The Backbone of Malta during WWII

One of the less researched areas of World War II is the contribution women provided in the social, administrative, operational and logistical fields for Malta's civil and military administration.

During World War II, a number of women worked as telephone operators at Lascaris Operations Room in Valletta.

Mabel Strickland is perhaps the most famous female personage in Malta during WWII. However, there were a lot of other personalities who played an important role during the war. The war also brought along great social change, even if it was in some cases temporary.

Mabel Strickland. Photo Credit.

Since the conscription for military service of Maltese men from the ages of 16 years and upwards had left the workforce on the island depleted. Malta was predominantly Roman Catholic and for them, it was not seen as acceptable for women to go out to work, but the state and the church compromised, with the result that more than 10,000 women volunteered and were employed. These women – in spite of the dangers presented by the incessant bombing, the shortage of necessary supplies, the lack of proper food and the illnesses caused by that lack, together with the long and frightening hours spent in bomb shelters – persevered. These were ordinary, everyday women – the backbone of the nation, the unsung heroines – which kept Malta running while their men were at war.

Simon Cusens, who has researched and written extensively on the role and liberation of women in Malta during the war, highlighted a few notable women who served the Maltese people during this difficult period in the country's history. At the office of the Times of Malta, and most unusually for the time, there was a woman in charge. Mabel Strickland was bent on keeping the people of Malta properly informed and uplifted while ensuring that the newspaper would maintain their morale – vitally important to people undergoing such very difficult times. Mabel must have been a formidable lady, for to run not just one, but two newspapers (the sister publication was the Maltese Language Il Berqa) successfully, required stamina, perseverance, good judgement and very hard work. Mabel managed to keep both newspapers going throughout the siege – and was in her offices at all hours – regardless of the time. At considerable risk to herself, she often ignored the air raid sirens, in order to get her papers out on time. Mabel was awarded the OBE for the work she undertook in order to keep these two most important information systems going – in spite of the shortages of supplies and food and in spite of the dangers of the constant bombing.

Italian bombing of the Grand Harbor.

Dr. Irene Condach, one of a very few female doctors, managed – in spite of the danger and with no means of transportation– to both examine and inoculate more than 20,000 schoolchildren. During the time of the Siege of Malta she managed to hitch or walk to the various government schools and is credited with eradicating scabies from them, as well as being instrumental in starting a school medical service – and that in spite of the lack of sufficient food for the children and the heavy and constant wave of bombing raids – a real unsung heroine.

'Mary the Man' –a name, by which Mary Ellul was known, was a woman with truly remarkable strength. She worked as an air-raid warden which, considering the massive waves of the almost non-stop

bombing which took place during the siege, was no easy task. Cusens reports that a number of people recall being rescued from under rubble by a strong, white-haired lady in uniform.
The Maltese people ended the war with the distinction of being the only entire population to be awarded the George Cross, which is Britain's highest civilian honour for bravery. It is a fitting thank-you to all the civilians – deserved by all – but probably even more so, by its women.

In 1935 women started being recruited and engaged for a possible conflict and were being employed in a Civil Defence service. Prior to this, women were under the influence of a strong Catholic Church from cradle to grave, with the Church believing that those who were employed were expected to resign their position upon marriage to be at home seeing to their husband's and family's needs. Such was the Church's influence over women, that they employed a Religious Inspector in schools to check up on female schoolteacher staff to find out if they attended church every day.

The Colonial Authorities envisaged many men would be required for conscription, so they had to find ways to recruit many housewives and young women for the impending war effort or relief work, without raising the ire or wrath of the Church. As the threat of war loomed, both the Government and Church actioned a rally call for men and women, which succeeded in drawing thousands of women to join a Passive Civil Defence Force, renamed Passive Defence Reserve in 1938. In this, women assisted with first aid and rescue, eventually evolving into regional protection officers, air raid precaution (ARP), district committees, and women's auxiliary reserve (WAR). At the same time, there were foreign women working for Malta from other countries raising huge amounts of funds, to contribute to the plight of Malta.

There were several female protagonists. Some women stood above the rest, sometimes in Malta or in friendly countries abroad. Mabel Strickland was one such person as seen above , being the voice of the media in WWII, was perhaps the most famous female personage in Malta during that time. However, there were a lot of other personalities large and small who played an important part, one being Mary Ellul, who pulled victims out of the rubble of collapsed buildings destroyed by bombs in Valletta.

From a kid in the kitchen

ByLiza Power

WHEN Julian Meyrick was trying to persuade his friend Paul Capsis to write a play about his grandmother, he invited him to join a workshop at Sydney's Griffin Theatre. He promised that if they ventured into territory too personal or painful, he could leave.

Capsis arrived on the first day with his childhood scrapbook, his grandmother's photo albums and slippers, and the two set to work. One of their first exercises involved Capsis sitting with his eyes closed, remembering what it was like to be in his grandmother's Surry Hills kitchen: "Everyone was always in the kitchen. The lounge room, no one hung out there; I mean, all the furniture was covered in plastic. I said to Julian, 'My mother would sit here, my grandfather always sat there, my brother there and my grandmother never sat down'. Julian said: 'Now, for the next half an hour I want you to become everyone. Talk to each other the way you remember everyone talked.'"

Paul Capsis created and performs the story of his Maltese grandmother's life in Surry Hills.

So he did. He took on the heavily accented English of his Maltese grandmother, who was born in the northern town of Naxxar, grew up during the Depression, survived the German air raids of World War II and in 1948, aged 30, boarded a ship to Australia with her five children. Six weeks later, she joined her husband, who had found work as a wharfie in Woolloomooloo and, unable to speak English, or even read and write in her native Maltese, she made a new life.

Capsis then became his grandfather, his mother, and brother and so on until he reached his own chair at the table. Capsis plays several members of his family in the production.

Meyrick recorded Capsis' animated trance and translated it into a script. Called *Angela's Kitchen*, the one-man show premiered in Sydney in 2010 and enjoyed two sell-out seasons before touring regionally. "When my brother saw [the play] he was speechless," Capsis says. "My mother couldn't really talk after, either. But in a good way."

The production takes on an intimate note for Capsis, a two-time Helpmann Award winner who is better known for channelling stars such as Janis Joplin and Judy Garland; playing Riff Raff, the servant to Dr Frank-N-Furter in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*; and transsexual drag queen Agrado in the Melbourne Theatre Company's *All About My Mother*. Given to sartorial extravagance, he appeared in *The Burlesque Hour* in 2010 as Brother Capsize (a high priest of love who saunters in a black, gold and red-sequinned kaftan) and Melissa Bonamie (a trash-wearing transsexual prostitute with a fancy for songs by Garbage).

Capsis still keeps a photo of himself with Angela on his dining table. It shows them hugging in front of a Hills Hoist pegged with washing in her backyard two years before she died in 2007. The two had a close relationship: she raised him, he lived in her home until he was 20 and when he left, he moved to a house only three blocks away. "She taught me a lot about her life, the importance of work and the importance of not sitting around waiting for someone else to give you what you want. That was the most powerful message she passed on: 'No one will ever give you anything, and don't expect them to.'"

He describes her as a "very down-to-earth lady who loved bingo and hated to waste things: money, food, electricity, water". She needed to be frugal - Angela was eight when her mother died and she was sent to live with a cousin who promptly enslaved her as a domestic servant. She married at 16, had her first child at 17, and when World War II ended and there was no work in Malta, she watched her husband sail away on the promise of discovering a real life. She followed him and never returned.

Despite more than 80,000 migrants leaving Malta for our shores in the half-century after the war, Capsis says he had never seen a migration story told from a Maltese perspective. Neither had the Maltese immigrants who attended the show's Sydney run in droves. They arrived on buses, sang along to the songs and nodded and

sighed with recognition when Capsis placed his feet in Angela's slippers and described life from her perspective. They wept when he portrayed the resilience of Maltese people, whose island was all but destroyed during World War II.

"I think her experience was very common," Capsis says. "She was poor, she was from a small village (Naxxar) , she was uneducated and that affected everything in her life, even the way she spoke her own language. So did her fear and passion for religion; the power of the church and the influence it had on people at that time. She grew up with no running water, no electricity, no telephone, no television. Her philosophy was that [in life] no one will ever give you anything: you have to do it yourself, make it yourself, find it yourself. That's what she drilled into me. It's the reason I've been able to do what I've done."

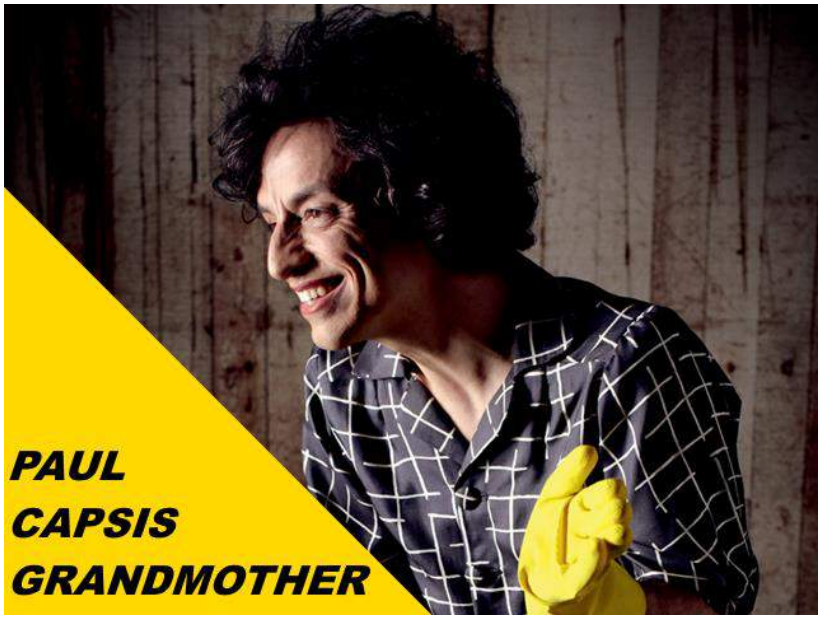
Capsis plays almost every member of his family in the production, which also traces his own journey back to Malta to see the landmarks and places from Angela's stories. He describes the trip "as a dream, like walking into an imaginary world. The stories were so strong in my imagination and everything was exactly as she had described it." He found the house where his mother was born: "She told the story of the air-raid sirens starting just minutes after she'd given birth, so she had to pick up the baby, wrap it in a blanket and run to the shelter. The bombing had already started but they made it to the shelter … still both covered in blood."

No one will ever give you anything.

He explored the island's bomb shelters, churches and ancient temples. In the show, he visits the Surry Hills post office Angela cleaned every night and the bingo halls she loved. He sings traditional "ghana", which he describes as "an early version of folk and rap" with impromptu funny verses accompanied by guitar.

Meyrick had met Angela several times before he successfully cajoled his friend into writing the play; he'd been regaled by tales of her "life lessons" and seen Capsis devastated when she died. He suggested the show might be a way to honour her spirit. It's since become Capsis' most powerful performance. "It's hard to explain how much I care about and have invested in this work. It's in my blood, my bones - really, I breathe and live it. To see people respond to it the way they have has been extraordinary."

PAUL CAPSIS' GRANDMOTHER



In 1948, Angela left Malta. Having gathered up five children, she sailed out on the Strathnavar, leaving poverty and the war behind. Her destination: Australia. In Surry Hills, she could build a bright new life. If only she could first learn the language, finish shoring up their dilapidated house, find new friends, get the racist neighbour off her back and keep her son away from sly grog queen Kate Leigh's kids. Back in Malta, someone else has made a journey. Making his way along Kalkara's glistening harbourside, a young man with flowing black hair has returned to claim his past. Paul Capsis is walking home. A journey that begins at a kitchen table becomes a sprawling family history and a fitting tribute to a much-loved matriarch. Told simply and truthfully, *Angela's Kitchen* is an astonishingly evocative piece of autobiographical theatre from one of Australia's most versatile performers. For this intimate and incredibly personal new work, Paul Capsis is joined by director Julian Meyrick *(October)* and associate writer Hilary Bell *(The Falls)*.

Lunar New Year celebrations around the world, but COVID-19 grief lingers in China

As communities around the world mark Lunar New Year, residents in Wuhan are celebrating the start of the new year with fireworks, flowers and offerings to loved ones lost to COVID-19., people around the world are ushering in the New Year according to the traditional lunar-solar calendar, as the Year of the Rabbit and the Year of the Cat begins.

While celebrations of the Lunar New Year can be traced back in Chinese history - as early as the period of legendary Chinese ruler Emperor Yao (2356-2255 BC) - this annual festival is now marked by more than a quarter of the world's population from different cultural backgrounds.

Although different cultures share the same New Year's Day, people around the world mark the occasion very differently with distinctive traditional practices.In China, anxiety and loss persist after the recent spike in COVID-19 infections while officials attempt to paint a brighter picture of the health situation.

The Year of the Rabbit or the Year of the Cat?

In Chinese mythology, the rabbit — the fourth of the 12 signs of the zodiac — stands for harmony and longevity. In China, the Year of the Rabbit started at midnight on Saturday.

Lunar New Year Explainer 2023: Rabbit or Cat?

Vietnamese communities celebrate the Year of the Cat rather than the Rabbit. According to the twelve zodiac signs in Vietnamese culture, 2023 is the Year of the Cat, rather than the Rabbit. The first day of the Lunar New Year is called *Tết Nguyên Đán*.

First new year without COVID-19 restrictions in China

This is the first New Year celebration since China's government lifted the country's strict coronavirus measures, allowing millions of families to reunite in person this weekend for the first time in three years. Authorities expect nearly two billion passenger trips during the total 40-day travel season, which is still about 70 per cent of the pre-pandemic travel volume.

People pray at the Chinese temple during the Lunar New Year celebrations in Bangkok's Chinatown. Source: AAP / Sipa USABut despite the festive mood in the country, the New Year celebration is again overshadowed by the pandemic.

While the coronavirus situation in major cities like Beijing and Shanghai has already largely returned to normal after December's swell in infections, the test of endurance in the provinces is yet to come. Local health care in these areas is only very rudimentary, and modern hospitals are often several hours away by car.

Rural areas are also home to mainly older population groups who have so far received inadequate vaccination protection: according to state media, 25 per cent of people over 60 are unvaccinated.

Three years after a once-mysterious virus plunged the Chinese city of Wuhan into a terrifying lockdown, residents are celebrating the new year with fireworks, flowers and offerings to the loved ones they have lost to COVID-19.

But while many stocked up Saturday on colourful blooms at the bustling flower market to welcome the new year and enjoy the Spring Festival, others had a more sombre reason: to mourn loved ones lost in the most recent wave of cases.

People select decorations in Wuhan City in central China's Hubei Province for the festivities. Source: AAP / AP

"I have friends and family who passed away during this time," a 54-year-old who would only give his surname, Zhang, said as he clutched a bunch of chrysanthemums, which symbolise grief in Chinese culture.

He explained that the New Year's custom in Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the capital, is to visit the homes of people who recently died to give flowers and burn incense as an offering.

At the stroke of midnight, many residents did just that, as street vendors did a brisk business of selling chrysanthemums and other offerings into the early hours of Sunday.

Myanmar military chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing (centre right) and other officials watch the lion dance performance in Yangon, Myanmar, on 21 January 2023. Source: AAP / EPA

At the same time, fireworks and sparklers popped and glittered in the darkness, despite a ban in place.

The Beijing government lifted its stringent zero-COVID-19 policy in December, but a surge in infections has since ripped through the country, killing thousands.

Wuhan, a metropolis on the banks of the Yangtze River now synonymous with COVID-19, reported the first cases in late 2019 of what was then an unidentified killer virus. Authorities imposed a strict shutdown just two days before the Year of the Rat in late January 2020 to stop the spread of the virus.

Deprived of New Year's Eve festivities, its 11 million inhabitants were cut off from the world for 76 days while Wuhan became the epicentre of an epidemic that inexorably became global.

WWI incident for Maltese immigrants in Australia in 1916

Emanuel Attard was one of about 300 others travelling Down Under in search of work

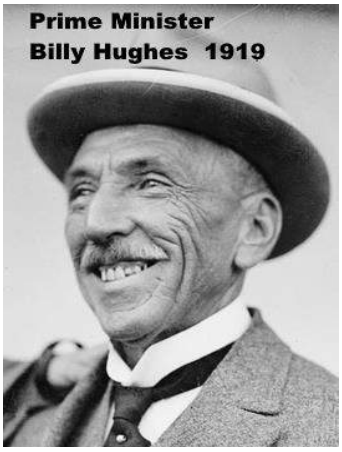
An excerpt from an ABC Lifeline interview dating back to 2003 has recently been posted online and it reveals the difficulties one group of Maltese immigrants faced when attempting to build a new life abroad.

During the World War I years, the Maltese islands were referred to as the Nurse of the Mediterranean for the role they played in nursing the wounded back to health. Many Australian soldiers were treated in Malta, with one member of the Australian Imperial Force, a certain H. Wordly reported as saying: “We will carry back to Australia undying gratitude which time can never erase.”

Having been in service himself during the War, Emanuel Attard could find no work in Malta upon his return to the island and decided to migrate to Australia, a place which he believed would promise better prospects: “People had mentioned Australia was a prosperous country, and I said to myself, I’ll take my chance,” he is quoted as saying in the clip. Naturally, Emanuel’s mother did not take kindly to the news and his determination to see his decision through rendered him an orphan, a word which Emanuel uses to describe himself.

Back then, such long-distance travel was done by boat, and journeys were estimated to last between 30 to 45 days. Emanuel was one of about 300 other legal migrants (most of whom were Gallipoli veterans and deeply in debt for paying the full fare) to make the crossing, but their welcome was nothing like they could have expected. The men were split between two boats, with the first one carrying 97 Maltese immigrants sailing into Sydney harbour on October 28th, 1916.

At the time, Australia was in the middle of its own war, with the opposition bitterly opposing the government’s plans to introduce conscriptions to send even more Australian troops to war. The Maltese on board are quickly branded as ‘cheap labour’ and the Unions enforce the narrative that they would steal jobs from locals who had been forced to go to war.



Prime Minister Billy Hughes did everything he could to delay the boat, the Gauges, carrying the remaining Maltese men, even going so far as to contact the British Colonial office warning that if it were to dock, the referendum would be doomed and the whole affair would be "a national disaster." Adamant not to let the Maltese disembark, he forced those on board to sit for a language test as dictated by the Immigration (restriction) Act.

The test could be applied in any European language, but it was presented to the Maltese in Dutch. British citizens by birth, everyone failed the test, and the Maltese immigrants were sent on to New Caledonia, a collection of islands in the middle of the South Pacific, which had actually been the Gauge's final destination. They were kept in a City Hall at the Australian government's expense for three months, despite the referendum being lost much earlier.

They were eventually transported back to Sydney where they were imprisoned on a ship, but thanks to a Maltese Catholic priest, Fr William Bonnet, the church led a public outcry calling for their liberation. "To exclude such men seems to be a most ungrateful return for the great love and kindness which was shown by the Maltese to our Australian sick and wounded men," read one Sydney newspaper. Caroline Curmi

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Nhar il-Ħamis, 19 ta' Jannar 2023, ic-Chargé d'Affairs fi ħdan l-Ambaxxata tar-Repubblika Popolari taċ-Ċina s-Sur Peng Yigun kien mistieden mill-iskola sekondarja tas-Seminarju Minuri tal-Qalb ta' Ġesù, Victoria għal ċermonja ta' għoti ta' kotba lill-istess skola. Iċ-ċerimonja bdiet fl-10.30 a.m. u nżammet fis-Sala tal-Azzjoni Kattolika maġenb l-istess skola. L-istudent Matthew Camilleri għamel l- indirizz ta' merħba u l-istudnt Laurent Jacques Bishop kanta 'Inti Djamant' ta' Dominic Grech u l-'Ave Maria' ta' Gounod. Imbagħad, d-delegazzjon Ċiniża tellgħet żewġ video-clips qosra dwar il-bidu tas- sena l-ġdida kif miżmuma fiċ-Ċina. Yijun għadda donazzjoni sabiħa ta' kotba lil-librerija tas- Seminarju Minuri mmexxija mis-Sur Paul Galea. Kemm is-Sur Yijun kif ukoll il-Kap tal-Iskola Fr. Charles Sultana għamlu diskorsi tal-okkażjoni. Saru wkoll xi 'performances' ta' stil Ċiniż. Il-laqgħa ntemmet bi żjara fil-librerija tal-iskola. Iċ-ċerimonja kellha bħala compere lill-istudent Giacomo Debrincat.

On Thursday, 19 January 2023, the Chargé d'Affairs within the Embassy of the People's Republic of China Mr. Peng Yigun was invited by the high school of the Minor Seminary of the Heart of Jesus, Victoria for a ceremony of giving books to the same school. The ceremony started at 10.30 a.m., and it was held in the Catholic Action Hall next to the same school. The student Matthew Camilleri did the welcome address and the student Laurent Jacques Bishop sang 'Inti Diamant' by Dominic Grech and the 'Ave Maria' by Gounod. Then, the Chinese delegation uploaded two short video-clips about the beginning of the new year as held in China. Yijun handed over a nice donation of books to the library of Minor Seminar led by Mr. Paul Galea. Both Mr. Yijun and Head of School Fr. Charles Sultana made speeches on the occasion. There were also some Chinese style 'performances'. The meeting ended with a visit to the school library. The ceremony had as compere the student Giacomo Debrincat.

Kav. Joe M Attard

BaRock

Valletta Baroque Festival

The Performers – The Rock Troupers

The **Rock Troupers** are a Maltese Rock troupe made up of musicians coming from various bands who set up live events featuring Classic Rock hits.

Starting off in 2014 the troupe produced events that involved a large number of musicians.

The first event, Freddie For A Day took place in September 2014 and was produced in collaboration with Hard Rock Café Malta This was part of a worldwide initiative from the Mercury Phoenix trust to raise awareness about A.I.D.S. The event was an inevitable success and as a result it paved the way to *The Afterdark Sessions,* which featured a series of 5 concerts spread throughout 2015 also in collaboration with Hard Rock Cafe Malta.

The Rock Troupers also organised the successful Razzett Rocks event at Ir - Razzett L-Aħmar in early 2016 as well as collaborating with Hard Rock Café throughout 2016 with tribute gigs for Metallica, Iron Maiden, ACDC, Freddie for a Day and rounding things off with *The Beatles & Beyond* in December 2016. In the same year, the band closed the night during the day-long memorial gig (Ir-Rock it-Tajjeb) for DJ Lito which featured a record of 25 musicians, the biggest ensemble to date for any Rock Troupers gig.

The Rock Troupers were also invited to perform as the sole supporting act for Rockestra 2016 in an hour-long set. The band featured regularly in the Farsons Beer Festival to great acclaim.

The troupe also featured as the headlining act in the *Gozo Rock Legends* event for the past three editions and was the sole act in the first ever live Rockestra afterparty in 2022.

2022 also marked an historic moment for **The Rock Troupers** when they were invited to be part of a special night at the Teatru Manoel during the **Valletta Baroque Festival**. The troupe teamed up with five classical musicians and presented a programme which paid tribute to great Baroque composers and Rock legends all in one programme entitled BaRock.

The Rock Troupers' line up is made up of Patrick Camilleri on drums, Josef "fofi" Farrugia on piano and keyboards, Robert Galea on bass, Marc Galea and Luke Grech on guitars, Daryl Ebejer on vocals. For this year's edition of the Baroque festival The Rock Troupers will be joined by the **ProMuzika Ensemble**. The ensemble, established in 2004, is made up of leading musicians who are established soloists and chamber musicians. **ProMuzika** has held acclaimed performances in Malta's theatres but also in historical venues, including Villa Bighi, Auberge de Castille, Palazzo Girgenti, Auberge d'Aragon amongst others, thus combining the promotion of music with Maltese cultural heritage. Members of **ProMuzika** represented Malta in the Europa Musicale Festival held in Germany, performed in Berlin at the Berliner Konzerthaus, in Leipzig at the Gewandhaus and in Wiesbaden at the Kurhaus, at Aino Ackté Concert House in Helsinki and at the Theatre of the Estates in Prague. Together, the **Rock Troupers** and **ProMuzika** will once again be fusing Baroque works with Rock elements and vice versa. We are also very pleased to have

KorMalta on board for this year's edition.

The first five female police officers were recruited back on the 4th June 1956 and stationed in Valletta.

Rita Refalo (left) and Joan Cuschieri (right) walking by Valletta's city gate in their smart khaki uniform.

August 1956. Two of the first group of Maltese female police on the beat at Citygate in Valletta. Recruited that year, their salary, lower the male police, was 4 shillings and 7 pence (€1.23) a day that was increased after 2 years. The next policewomen recruitment in Malta took place in 1962. Photo: The National Archives of Malta

Malta's first women police officers patrolling Valletta

Emma Galea

Nowadays it has become a common occurrence to see female police officers in Malta, but it wasn't always like this. The first five female police officers were recruited back on the 4th June 1956 and stationed in Valletta. They used to assist with work at the police station and even help with murder investigations and immigration cases. They in fact, helped in the infamous case of the murder of little Twanny Aquilina.

Even though they used to conduct many patrols, they were never allowed to patrol without any male police supervision. They were not even allowed to leave their home with their uniform but had to change at the police station itself, unlike other male police officers.

Unfortunately, back then they had to stop working if they decided to get married and were paid much less than their male equivalents.

In fact, their pay was only 4 shillings and 4 pence a day, €1.23 by today's currency.

The photo shows Rita Refalo (left) and Joan Cuschieri (right) walking by Valletta's city gate in their smart khaki uniform.

Alongside Rita and Joan, Mary Apap, Maria Cristina and Salvina Attard were also recruited. Both Rita, Salvina and Maria were Gozitan.

Being Gozitan and working in Malta is still somewhat a challenge these days, let alone in the 1950s when travel between the two islands was that much more difficult.

Before they were recruited, they had to sit down for an exam where they were tested in Mathematics, English and Maltese.

They even had to cut their hair to shoulder length as they were not allowed to have long hair. In 1962 and 1967, more female police officers were recruited and by 1967, Malta even had its very own first woman sergeant.

Facebook/The National Archives of Malta

POEMS BY UNA SCHEMBRI

Farewell My Malta

Farewell my beautiful island
The place I loved, still love so much
I did not wish to betray you.
I could never be untrue.

Cruel fate decreed against me
For love I was forced away
I fought against my destiny
But I had to opt for harmony.

Goodbye my dear mother
I had to leave forever
So loving and so kind
You are sad and left behind.

Farewell my generous father
You doted on your daughter
You hid your tears and pain
We would never meet again.

Good bye my friends and neighbours
I am bound for distant lands
Good bye my darling sisters
Farewell my handsome brothers.

Farewell goodbye my country
Farewell my close-knit family
Farewell to haunts I treasured
I will love you faithfully.

A migrant's Lament

Why do I speak a foreign language?
Am I a traitor to my own tongue?
Why did I forsake my native land?
Why am I still far away from it?
Why did I leave my loving parents?
Why am I destitute for friendship?
How can I answer all these questions?

I now speak English with an accent. -
I rarely utter a Maltese word.-
I left my Island with my husband -
Who thought Australia the Promised Land.
I came for love of my own family -
Knowing that destiny pushed me here-
Friends I rediscovered several.

But it cannot ever be the same.
I should have stayed in my land of birth.
I am aware I am complaining;
I know that this vast beautiful land -
Is the place where I would, one day, die -
Was rarely ever unkind to me.
I tried hard to accept, to belong.

Am I the sole migrant to lament?
Yet I am surviving to old Age -
Despite numerous difficulties.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Una Schembri was born in Malta. She dreamt of being a famous poet writing in Maltese. She never realized her dream. Instead, she became a teacher. After five years, she left teaching, married and had two sons. In her mid-twenties she, together with her husband and two very young sons, migrated to Australia. Hating the unpredictable weather in Melbourne, they moved to Brisbane, later she returned to teaching.

It was rather difficult settling down. Attending The University of Queensland in Brisbane, then teaching history and languages in Brisbane high schools, while taking care of a succession of mischievous but loving dogs, all helped her realize that Australia is a good country to live in and still lives in Brisbane.

Una never stopped loving her native country – www.unaschembri.com

JUST TO CHEER YOU UP

A pensioner drove his brand new BMW to 100 mph, looking in his rear view mirror, he saw a police car behind him. He floored it to 140 , then 150, ... then 155, ... Suddenly he thought, "I'm too old for this nonsense !"
So he pulled over to the side of the road and waited for the police car to catch up with him. The officer walked up to him, looked at his watch and said,
"Sir, my shift ends in ten minutes. Today is Friday and I'm taking off for the weekend with my family. If you can give me a good reason that I've never heard before, why you were speeding... I'll let you go."
The Man looked very seriously at the police man, and replied :- "Years ago, my wife ran off with a policeman, I thought you were bringing her back." !!!
The Cop left saying, " Have a good day, Sir".

Paddy says to Mick. "I found this pen, is it yours? "Mick replies " Don't know, give it here" He then tries it and says "Yes it is" Paddy asks "How do you know?" Mick replies "That's my handwriting"

U EJJA, stop whinging.. In ancient Malta I would be whorshipped as a Goddess

First Woman to Receive the George Cross Survived Torture by the Nazis

Odette Marie Céline Brailly was born in Amiens, France, in 1912. Her father died while fighting for their country in World War I. Her grandfather constantly reminded her of the heroism of her father because he wanted her to grow up strong.As a child, she contracted polio and lost her sight for several years. She did not receive any sympathy from her grandfather.

In 1931, she married Roy Sansom, a hotel employee from England. They moved to London and had three daughters. When World War II broke out, the British war office put out the call for photos of the French coastline. Odette sent in a few that she had. Later, she was recruited by the Special Operations Executive (SOE), a group formed in the first year of the war to conduct intelligence, espionage, and sabotage missions throughout Western Europe.

Odette resisted at first because she wanted to stay home to raise her daughters. Eventually, she agreed to start the training, thinking that she would soon show that she was not qualified for the task.

To her surprise, she quickly took to the training in unarmed combat, weapons, Morse code, and sabotage techniques and found herself enjoying the courses. Still, with her husband already serving in the war, she was understandably reluctant to leave her children. She eventually relented and became one of only a few female spies in the Allied forces.

Odette reported to Peter Churchill in Cannes on the Mediterranean coast of southern France. She was charged with forming a spy network in Auxerre, a town 100 miles southeast of Paris. However, not long after she had arrived in Cannes the Italians invaded southern France, making it too dangerous for her to make the journey north to get there.

Instead, she began to work as a bicycle courier. She delivered messages from her spy cell to other members of the French Resistance. She also prepared intelligence reports that were flown to SOE headquarters in London.

One of her principal duties was working as a radio operator. This was a critical task as it was the main way to transmit information between Britain and France. It was also dangerous as the Gestapo monitored the airwaves searching for any unauthorized transmissions.

In 1943, Odette was betrayed by a German officer posing as an SOE operative. She was imprisoned in the Fresnes Prison south of Paris. While in custody, she was tortured by Gestapo officers who ripped off her toenails and press a hot iron to her spine. Despite the abuses of the Gestapo, Odette revealed no information.

While in prison, she managed to save the life of Peter Churchill by convincing the Gestapo that he was her husband and that, although she was indeed working for the French Resistance, Churchill was not involved in any way.

Odette was sentenced to death for two counts of espionage. When convicted, she replied that they would have to determine which count she was being killed for since she could only die once. She was then sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp. There, her guards nearly starved her to death.

As the war was nearing its end and the German soldiers realized they had lost, Odette was handed over to the Americans by the camp commandant, Fritz Suhren. He was hoping that such gestures would influence the Allies in letting him live. However, Odette testified against him at the Nuremberg trials, and he was executed for his war crimes.

In 1946, Odette was the first woman to ever receive the George Cross for gallantry. The George Cross is Britain’s highest non-military award. Violet Szabo and Noor Inayat Khan, two other female SOE operatives, were awarded the George Cross posthumously.

Odette died at home in Surrey, England, in 1995. She was 82 years old.

Odette was once quoted as saying that she was not afraid of being killed by the Nazis and that was the one thing that allowed her to endure. “They would have a dead body but they would not have me,” she said. **Ian Harvey**

Qarabali mimli
Oven-Baked stuffed Marrows

These stuffed courgettes (marrows) are typical fare in the Mediterranean countries including Malta.
As well as lean, minced chicken breast use fresh tomatoes, garlic, onions and herbs for the stuffing mixture, and also pre-baked the courgette shells beforehand to ensure everything was cooked to perfection. If you are lover of red meat, by all means use minced beef, and likewise, if you are vegetarian, omit the meat and add some cooked rice in its place. These make a wonderful light luncheon dish for al fresco summer dining and are just as tasty when eaten at room temperature.
Instead of marrows you can use large beefsteak tomatoes, onions and aubergines too, it's sometimes nice to stuff an assortment of vegetables this way, so your diners have a choice of which vegetable they prefer.
Try wherever possible to source fresh herbs, as dry herbs don't really work in this recipe. Just use regional herbs that are in season – thyme, oregano, basil, rosemary, savory, lavender and marjoram work particularly well.
You can prepare most of this recipe in advance by pre-baking the courgette shells and cooking the filling – this will prove very handy for all busy mums and dads who work. Serve these delicious stuffed veg with a simple side salad, crusty bread to mop up the juices and a glass of wine.

Ingredients

6 round courgettes, small
3 tbsp of olive oil
1 large onion, peeled and diced
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
4 tomatoes, roughly chopped
1 tbsp of tomato purée
2 tbsp of fresh thyme, or oregano, roughly chopped
200g of lean chicken mince
salt to taste
pepper to taste

Method

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6. Grease a roasting tin or a tian (earthenware dish) with some olive oil

2 Cut the tops off the courgettes, keeping them to use as lids. Using a pointed spoon, hollow out centres of the courgettes, leaving a shell of about 1.5cm thick. Place the courgettes in the oiled tin or tian and bake for about 30–35 minutes, until they are just soft but still retain their shape

3 Meanwhile, roughly chop the courgette flesh. Add a tablespoon of oil to a large frying pan and sauté the flesh until it is soft. Spoon the flesh into a bowl and set it to one side. Add some more oil to the pan and add the onions – fry them until they are translucent and soft, adding the garlic for the last few minutes

4 Add the tomatoes and tomato purée to the onion mixture and fry until the tomatoes are soft and have collapsed. Add the chopped fresh herbs and the cooked courgette flesh, stir and season to taste with salt and pepper. Spoon the mixture into a bowl and set it to one side

5 Add some more oil to the pan and cook the chicken mince until it is lightly coloured and cooked. Add it to the onion and tomato mixture, mix well and adjust the seasoning to taste

6 Spoon the mixture into the vegetables and place the tops back on top of the courgettes. Drizzle a little olive oil over and around the stuffed vegetables and bake for 30 minutes, or until well browned and the vegetables are soft, but still holding their shape

7 Serve tepid or at room temperature, with the cooking liquor drizzled around the courgettes and some chopped oregano or thyme sprinkled over them. All that is needed now is some crusty bread, good wine, good company and maybe some sun!

Maltese Sign Language
Il-Lingwa Tas- Sinjali Maltija (LSM)

Il-Lingwa Tas-Sinjali Maltija or Maltese Sign Language (LSM) is the language of the Maltese Deaf Community.

On 16 March 2016, the Maltese Parliament approved the Bill declaring that the Maltese Sign Language is to be considered **an official language of Malta**.

Following the Maltese Sign Language Recognition Act the Maltese Sign Language Council was founded in November 2016.

The purposes of the Council are:

(a) to advise the Minister in all matters related to sign language;

recognition and expression of Maltese Sign Language.

(d) to promote the dynamic development of such linguistic characteristics as identified by the Maltese Deaf community.

(e) in consultation with the Deaf community, adopt a suitable linguistic policy backed by a strategic plan, and ensure that the same are put into practice and observed in all sectors of Maltese life.

(f) to evaluate and co-ordinate the work done by associations and individuals, in Maltese Sign Language sector and to foster an atmosphere of co-operation through a consensual plan;

(g) to seek to obtain financial resources locally and overseas in order to be able to strengthen its activities, especially such resources as are already accessible to local and international organisations for research purposes.

(h) to co-operate with persons, bodies and organisations in the disability sector in order to increase and augment the recognition and appreciation of Maltese Sign Language and

(b) to support research related to sign language.

(c) to support the development of sign language and motivate and enhance the

cultural activities for the further advancement of Maltese Sign Language.

(i) to prescribe and establish regulations about the standards of competency that a person who is to act as an interpreter of Maltese Sign Language must attain and keep a register of recognised Maltese Sign Language Interpreters.

(j) to undertake such other activities as may be assigned to it by the Minister.

Website - Home (deafmalta.com)

Email Email us at info@deafmalta.com to arrange an appointment

Postal Address

University of Malta P.O. Box 16 Tal-Qroqq Msida MSD2080

The antiporta: a disappearing Maltese architectural characteristic

THE antiporta used to be called 'Il-Boxxla', which means 'Compass' in English! It was the way a private home communicated with neighbours, passers-by, and locals. If temporary entry or a request for a visit is welcome, you'd likely find the front door open, with the antiporta as the only barrier to the inside. During an afternoon siesta, the door would be closed.

The older the antiporta, the more revealing the glass

From conversations with local historians and craftsmen, the team found out that older antiporta had more transparent glasses, whereas, as time passed, homeowners would either put a thin veil over them or opt for opaque glass, obscuring how much an outsider can see of the inside.

40 years ago, an antiporta wouldn't normally be locked.

Like other vehicles for nostalgia, the antiporta revives memories of Malta's more rural, peaceful past. But it's not just that: It reminds us of a time when the private home continuously interacted with neighbourhoods and the community. Be that for the baker to bring in the bread or for a friend to pop in for a can of salsa.

The Antiporta had a role in how we dealt with Malta's climate

The skilled local workers that the antiporta team met expressed a great desire for more appreciation of so distinct a characteristic within a Maltese home. And it's not just because the antiporta looks 'sweet' or because it is 'typical' but rather because it functioned so very well. Beyond the symbolic and the vernacular, the antiporta was also a terrific way to take advantage of Malta's climate, let the light in, keep the summer's warmth moderate, provide an extra layer against Winter's winds and storms, and more.

The Antiporta is not protected as an architectural feature

Currently, the antiporta has no legal protection. Unlike the balcony, the antiporta is not external to a building, and thus can be demolished by any owner and the regulations that protect the Maltese balcony do not apply to the antiporta. This point was raised by Chris Briffa at the Q&A that took place at Spazju Kreattiv, Valletta.

People used to decorate the Antiporta with luxurious fabrics

Lace curtains would be tailor-made to the homeowner's specifications and making decorations for the door behind the door was a bit of an industry of its own.

There may be a reason why the handles are placed so low

And it may have to do with the ratio of the glass to wood. To increase the amount of the width and height of the glass, handles were placed further down. To make it easier for kids to rush in and out may be another influence that led to this characteristic.

ZURRIEQ – A MOST BEAUTIFUL TOWN

Zurrieq, one of Malta's oldest towns, has a vexed question: why do the 100,000 visitors who pass through to visit out-of-town locations annually do not pause in this interesting town. It is a question the local council has turned into a challenge. The challenge, in a sense, is about how they could be spread and held further, for, at present, the main attractions - the Neolithic Temples and the cliff scenery at Wied iz-Zurrieq - draw all the tourist traffic to the town's southern outskirts, bypassing the town. The two temple complexes, within a kilometre apart on a rugged garigue plateau, deserve to be the main allures. The temples' setting, possibly unchanged since the Neolithic, is highly evocative; in this windswept, sun-baked plateau, you can sense the hushed venerability cast by the temples. Both temple complexes were progressively built and used between 3,600 and 2,500BC.

Hagar Qim is a circular complex consisting of four temples and two opposite entrances, an imposing edifice set on the plateau's crest -its heavy facade and the large upright megaliths that survive give you an idea of its former dominance as a landmark. The temple's design departs from the paired-apses template of Malta's other temples; its intricate jumble of chambers present a puzzling spatial arrangement whose understanding is close to nil.

Mnajdra consists of three juxtaposed temples - the East, Middle, and South temples. Only the East Temple's foundations survive, and the bare Middle Temple has, uniquely, twin frontal entrances -there's an original frontal profile of the temple, hailed as the first ever architectural design, carved on one of its passageway megalith. The South Temple is the best preserved and elegant of any in Malta: its two pairs of chambers, with symmetrical apses, are small and intirTi,ate, and the inner lobe and sanctum has three of its altars propped on round tapered stones. The so- called Oracle Hole is in the first chamber on the right, a small opening

that opens into a hidden cubicle that's thought to have been the seat of a hidden oracle.

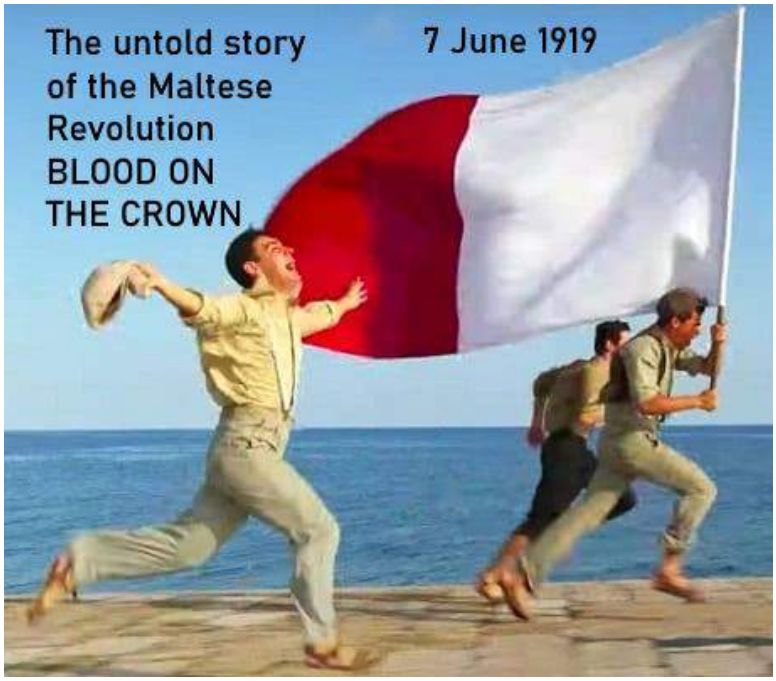
Down the coast, the next stop for visitors, a small gorge meanders down the humpback cliff towards a creek -the boarding point for boat excursions of Blue Grotto. The area was once a fishing outpost; now it has grown into two small blocks of souvenir shops, restaurants and boathouses. There isn't much to do except have a wander to gawk at the cliff scenery, and have a peek at the Wardija Tower, built by the Knights of Malta as one of the chain of coastal towers in 1657, now housing the local police station. The Blue Grotto, a large domed cave with a natural buttress and clear azure water inside, about a kilometre south of the creek, has become something of an over-hyped landmark in Malta. So hyped it is, in fact, that 100,000 take a boat excursion annually, and such intense boat traffic now impinges on the cave's atmosphere and leaves an obnoxious pall of exhaust lingering inside.

The town itself, overlooked by guidebooks and tour operators, deserves a closer look. It migttt have an image problem, to start with, as rows of uniform terraced houses -social housing dished out by the government in the 1970s and '80s- form a bland crust around town. But persist towards the town centre, and it becomes obvious why Zurrieq was one of 12 parishes in Malta by 1436. It retains ubiquitous historical detritus: Bronze Age cairns, an Arabic-style turret, towers and sarcophagi from Roman and Byzantine epochs, forts and towers built by the Knights, and layers of mediaeval architecture. The parish church, dedicated to St Catherine, has paintings by some famous artists -Mattia Preti, the Italian artist-at-large courted by the Knights; Antoine de Favray, a French artist also courted by the Knights; and Giuseppi Cali, Malta's most famous artist. The church's ceilings and dome-interior are also exceptionally ornate with baroque sculpturing, a pompousness that is matched during the feast on September 5, renowned particularly for its street decor. The warren of streets around the town, with many squares and many niches of St Catherine, are another illustration of Zurrieq's long evolution: the architecture morphs from mediaeval forms influenced by Sicilian styles to later baroque makeovers.

"We have been actively regenerating the urban centre of the town and its squares," said Adrian Mifsud, the local council's executive secretary, about the council's efforts to draw visitors into the town. "Our present focus for tourism centres on the Xarolla windmill, and after restoration, we are now working on building a permanent exhibition about windmills in Malta in the windmill itself."

Built in 1724, the Xarolla windmill is the only one whose grinding apparatus, a contraption of cogwheels, is still intact. It's weathered to a warm honey-colour, and it's fronted by a farmhouse and (:hapel built in the late 16th century, with the added attraction of the sarcophagi that were stumbled upon during the works which have turned a small area into a garden and pjazza. The shallow jumble of sarcophagi, hewn into the bedrock, many interconnected, were used between the third and seventh centuries during the Roman and Byzantine periods.

Yet the star attraction of Zurrieq is the mediaeval chapel at Hal Millieri on the eastern outskirts of town. The 1450 chapel, dedicated to the Annunciation, is the sole survivor of Casal Millieri -a former hamlet of some 80 inhabitants that was abandoned centuries ago, and whose peasant houses crumbled and disappeared by the 18th century. Now one of Malta's oldest churches, set in a walled garden amid open fields and screened by moody cypresses, the chapel marks an apex in mediaeval architecture in its interior pitched-arches that support the roof. More unique are the 11 excellently-rendered 15th century frescoes of the saints most venerated in Malta at the time. The saints, in singles or pairs, are dressed in colourful vestments and ceremonial Ct)ristian hats, and are depicted in lofty poses as if levitating, a style reminiscent of Byzantine frescoes yet also displaying Romanesque influences. It's more unique than Wied IZ-Zurrieq or Blue Grotto, but it gets just a few hundred visitors every year Zurrieq's vexation, and challenge.



This Maltese film production, "Blood On The Crown" (formerly "Just Noise,") starring Harvey Keitel and Malcolm McDowell is on Amazon Prime, iTunes, Hoopla, InDemand, AT&T, DirecTV and Google Play.

Blood On The Crown presents the concealed account of how Maltese citizens fought for their independence against England in 1919. Over 115 Maltese citizens, mostly teenagers, were blamed for the violence and sentenced to life in jail. This film is Malta's long-awaited triumph to share with the world how a small Mediterranean island took on the British Empire.

The true story of resilience and honour that has been covered up for nearly 100 years, heavily supported by the Arts Council of Malta, was distributed by Los Angeles-based Electronic Entertainment.

Based on actual events, "Blood On The Crown" presents the concealed account of how Maltese citizens fought for their independence against England in 1919. Immediately following the end of World War I, in a plea for their country's independence, Maltese people from all different walks of life, united to lead an uprising against the British. The Army was sent to quell the riots. Blood flowed when unarmed protestors were brutally killed by the British army. Due to its cover up by the British government in the years following, the revolution is not documented and not widely known. The large number of casualties was an embarrassment to the British army. Over 115 Maltese citizens, mostly teenagers, were blamed for the violence and sentenced to life in jail. "Blood On The Crown" is Malta's long-awaited triumph to share with the world how a small Mediterranean island took on the British Empire.

"Blood On The Crown" is produced and written by Jean-Pierre Magro ("Bulgarian Rhapsody"), produced by Pedja Miletic, Aaron Briffa and directed by Davide Ferrario ("After Midnight," "We All Fall Down"). Mario A. Azzopardi, Roland Joffe, Konstantin Ishkhanov, Albert Marshall, Shayne Putzlocher serve as Executive Producers. Music is composed by Alexey Shor.

Producer Aaron Briffa said, "We are immensely proud to tell how a small island nation rose to defy the most powerful empire in the world. This David versus Goliath story has been mostly buried until now."

When screenwriter Jean Pierre Magro was asked where the Malta source material came from, he noted "the British Colonial office did try to cover their tracks and eliminate any photographic evidence, I believe only 3 or 4 pictures survived. However, there were two reports that served as source material and various books written by Maltese historians over the years."

Commenting further, producer Pedja Miletic noted that he was "extremely pleased that this project was embraced by so many great actors who were invaluable in helping the film become a reality." He added that the director, Davide Ferrario, framed the narrative with such beauty. Miletic further made note that "the music of Alexei Shor was sublime in rendering the perfect mood."

In Ethiopia, a new school bears the names of three Maltese People

Rebecca Zammit Lupi, Karl Pace and Jonathan Chetcuti remembered with 1,000-strong school

Children celebrate during the inauguration of the new school. Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi/Facebook

Around 1,000 children in Ethiopia will be educated at a new school dedicated to the memory of three Maltese people.

The school in Jimma Bonga includes kindergarten, primary and secondary school classrooms and was inaugurated on Monday with a ceremony led by local bishop Markos Ghebremedhin.

It was funded through donations, including a crowdfunding campaign and support from the Sigma Foundation, the corporate social responsibility arm of the Sigma Group.

Bishop Ghebremedhin inaugurates the school. Photo: Sigma Foundation/Facebook

The school will bear the names of Rebecca Zammit Lupi, Jonathan Chetcuti and Karl Pace, who all died in tragic circumstances within the past few years.

The school's primary school will be dedicated to Zammit Lupi, who was just 15 when she died due to cancer two years ago.

The kindergarten will bear Pace's name. Pace died in a boat fire at the Mġarr marina in 2020.

The school's playgrounds are dedicated to Chetcuti, an avid volleyball player and sports enthusiast who was just 41 when he died in 2020.

Zammit Lupi's father, Darrin, described the inauguration as "a dream come true, though a dream I wish I never had to have.

"This was a very emotional day - the happiest and the saddest, if that makes any sense. I know Becs would be thrilled, and very proud of what we achieved in her name, especially because she understood and campaigned for the right to an education," he said. Zammit Lupi thanked everyone who supported the project.

"Her family is now so much larger, and she'll continue to touch countless lives. These children will keep her name alive, and because of that, Becs is forever," he said.

Jonathan Dalli, speaking on behalf of Chetcuti, recalled how his late friend "believed that sports was the foundation for life."

"The principles he learned from sports – dedication, determination, discipline, respect, teamwork, and above all, the importance of having fun – guided him throughout his life," Dalli said.

Pace was represented by his cousin Jonathan Galea.

"Karl's dream was to empower children through education. Thank you to all who've helped to make this dream come true today," he said.

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