

128 artists petition PM against roofless theatre



128 artists from across the cultural scene have written to the Prime Minister telling him they oppose his decision to have a roofless theatre on the former opera house site.

The signatories include Peter Serracino Inglott, Joseph Calleja, Felix Busuttil, Carmine Lauri and Alison White.

Actors, musicians, dancers, singers, directors, choreographers, producers and crew involved in the performing arts and the music scene in Malta signed a letter they presented to Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi this evening.

The letter says:

"We are also disappointed that the arguments presented and statements issued by numerous theatre practitioners have not been taken into consideration during the alleged consultation period.

"May we reiterate that the an open-air theatre in its proposed location is operationally challenging due to security measures imposed by any Parliamentary building, limited by weather conditions and also prone to noise pollution: both that which it produces, which can disturb people living in the neighbourhood, and the noise produced around it, such as fireworks, outside festivities, and other factors which can be a severe hindrance to performances."

The artists said that theatre history has demonstrated that the open-air concept has evolved from an acoustically perfect natural environment to a built arena that still managed to create a complete immersive and cathartic experience in a beautiful setting.

"We fail to see how the surrounding environment of the current space can retain this principle. This project also throws up a number of logistical and financial problems which will make the use of the space as likely and as successful as the use of our other open air theatre in Ta' Qali."

They said that contrary to what the Prime Minister stated, open-air theatre was not a new concept to Malta and with a tradition of open-air stage productions dating back 100 years, Maltese theatre practitioners had vast knowledge and experience in the pitfalls and opportunities of open-air experiences.

"Yet, this advice seems to have been totally ignored."

They said Malta still needed a fully-fledged purposely-built space for the performing arts that can cater for the needs of artists, which are not being addressed in the existing theatres such as poor acoustics, backstage facilities and modern amenities.

In the same manner in which new sports complexes, schools, hospitals or parliament buildings were no longer considered a luxury for developed countries, the same should be said for a purposely built public space for creative expression.

It would have been more logical, useful and appropriate if any investment went towards a proper multifunction performance space, they said.

The artists argued that although the proposed project was interesting, it did not contribute to solving the huge shortcomings found in other state theatres but repeated shortcomings and created others of its own.

They said that investment in the professionalisation of artists, technicians and producers should be running parallel to the construction of any space.

"Only in this way can we guarantee that this provides the high-quality performances that Malta, and any performance space, aspire to.

"We urge the Prime Minister to engage in an immediate discussion with theatre practitioners and refrain from acting singlehandedly on behalf of future users of the space.

"We look forward to a time when Renzo Piano's unstinting efforts to save the space from the hands of politicians can be fully explored and developed not as an afterthought or in competition with parliamentary sittings, housing estate facades or a bus terminus but treated with respect, conviction and expressed as an integral part of Malta's cultural vision," they said.

They said that ultimately, the performance space should not be seen as a monument, but as a dynamic cultural focus, essential to the successful development of the City Gate Project and the culture led regeneration of Valletta.

THE SIGNATORIES

Francesca Abela Tranter	Artistic Director / choreographer
Jean Pierre Aguis	Actor
Francesca Aquilina	Soprano
Toni Attard	Actor & Theatre Director/ creative industries advisor
Sharon Attard	Actor
Antonella Axisa	Performer
Mario Azzopardi	Theatre Director
Mario Philip Azzopardi	Film and Theatre Director (Toronto)
Dorothy Baldacchino	Soprano & Actor
Andrew Barberi	Singer & Musician
Tanya Bayona	Classical Ballet Teacher and Choreographer
Mark Mifsud Bonnici	Designer
Coryse Borg	Actress and Drama teacher
Elaine Borg	Singer
Frank Bowman	Painter and Designer
Adrian Buckle	Artistic Director & Producer Unifaun Theatre Productions
Maria Buckle	Actor
Albert Buttigieg	Opera Singer
Alfred Buttigieg	Playwright
Felix Busuttil	Director, YADA Dance Company
Vince Briffa	Video and Performance Artist
Nanette Brimmer	Actor & Theatre Director
Narcy Calamatta	Theatre Director, Actor and Founder of Zararti Foundation
Joseph Calleja	International Tenor
Robert Calleja	Musician and Choir director
Barry E Calvert	Actor/Director
Julia Calvert	Actor
Monica Calvert	Backstage Crew
Florinda Camillleri	Dancer

Thomas Camilleri	Actor (London's West End)
Sarah Camillieri	Dancer/ Choreographer/ Artist
Edward Caruana Galizia	Actor
Angèle Caruana	Choral Singer
Fiona Cauchi	Singer
Jo Caruana	Theatre Critic and Actress
Irene Christ	Actor, Director, Theatre producer
Josette Ciappara	Theatre practitioner/ Educator
Philip Chircop	Painter
Claire Ciantar	Performing artist
Angele Cristina	Actor and Drama teacher
Norma Cristina	Actor
Tony Cassar Darien	Artistic director/writer
Deedee Clark	Dancer/ Singer/ Actress
Rosetta De Battista	Musician/educator/music therapist
Kate De Cesare	Actor
Edward DeGaetano	Actor
Andre Delicata	Theatre Critic Times of Malta
Christopher Dingli	Actor, Musician (London)
Mark Doneo	Producer and director
Lizzie Eldridge	Theatre artist and writer
Wesley Daniel Ellul	Theatre Director/ Actor
Kathrina Farrugia	Lecturer in Dance Studies, Royal Academy of Dance London
Lino Farrugia	Theatre Director
Gillian Fenech	Choral Singer
Louise Fenech	Actress
Francesca Fenech	Actor, singer, dancer
Karl Fiorini	Composer
Anna Formosa	Actress and applied drama practitioner
Daron Galea	Choreographer and Dance teacher
Marco Galea	academic/theatre historian
Yvette Maria Galea	Freelance pianist and accompanist

Christopher Gatt	Theatre director
Isabelle Gatt	Lecturer - Creative and Expressive Arts, Artistic Director - Teatru Qroqq Projects
Fiona Giambra	Musician
Niki Gravino	Music Artist
Maria Grech Ganado	Author
Noel Grech	Musician
Tyrone Grima	Artistic Director, Theatre Encore
Chiara Hyzler	Actor
Victor-Emmanuel Jacono	researcher in performer-pedagogy, theatre maker and scholar
Theresa Krentzlin	Wardrobe MADC
Carmine Lauri	Musician
Joseph Lia	Opera Singer
Pauline Longo	Soprano
John McDonough	Musician
Deborah McNamara	Dance School Principal & International Examiner for the Spanish Dance Society
Maria Pia Meli	Singer, musician, actress
Joe Meli	Producer
Caldon Mercieca	Theatre practitioner/ creative industries advisor
Edward Mercieca	Actor/ Producer FM Theatre Productions
Mario Micallef	Director Talenti Theatrical Co.
Jennifer Micallef	Classical concert pianist
Ninette Micallef	Actor
Immanuel Mifsud	Writer and Theatre Director
Philip Mizzi	Actor
Marco Montalto	Performer - Groups for Human Encounter
Denise Mulholland	Theatre director/producer; actor; singer; teacher of performing arts
Erica Anne Muscat	Actress
Joe Pace	Actor
Krista Paris	Actress/Singer/Dancer and drama teacher
Mik Pisani	Actor

Pierre Portelli	Set Designer
Franica Pulis	Actor
Andrea Pullicino	Designer
Neville Refalo	Actor, Singer and Musician
Mariano Said	Actor
Paul Sebastian Saliba	Musician - Big Band Brothers
Stefan Scerri	Stage Manager
Terry Shaw	Theatre director, Actor and opera singer
Hannah Schembri	Performer
Karl Schembri	Author & journalist
John J Schranz	Director-Pedagogue, Groups for Human Encounter/ Professor of Theory and Philosophy of Theatre in the MSPC Programme of the University of Malta/ Director - ActionBase Studio for Researching Performative Processes/ Co-Director of the Joint European Master's Programme in the Science of Performative Creativity.
Gabrielle Scicluna	Dancer
Alexandra Scicluna	Mezzo- soprano
Peter Serracino Inglott	Opera Librettist and Theatre Studies Coordinator University of Malta
James Spiteri	Actor
Sarah Spiteri	Musician, Music and Visual Arts Co-ordinator
Sharon Spiteri	Director
Simone Spiteri	Actor, playwright, Artistic Director Du' Theatre Group (Malta)
Kristian Spiteri	Musician
Albert-G. Storace	reviewer/critic and broadcaster
Gabi Sultana	Pianist
Erin Stewart Tanti	Theatre producer, director and actor
Marcelle Teuma	Theatre Director/Performer/Educator
Rachael Tedesco Triccas	Performing artist
Jospeh Vella Bondin	Dramatist and Musicologist
Alexander Vella Gregory	Composer & Musician
Deborah Vella	Singer

Joe Vella	Lighting Designer
Joe Quattromani	Actor/ Theatre Director
Michael Quinton	Music Production Spooky Monkey
Alison White Micallef	President Dance Council Malta representing the majority of dance schools in Malta and Gozo Dance Teacher and entertainer
Abigail Williams	Actress
Paul Xuereb	Drama critic and author
MariaElena Zammit	Performer - Groups for Human Encounter
Pia Zammit	Actor & Director Unifaun Theatre
Darrin Zammit Lupi	Performing arts photographer/ actor/ director
Kenneth Zammit Tabona	Performing arts critic

Comments

David Staines (7 hours, 1 minute ago)

@ Raymond Sammut

But that's where you're mistaken dear Raymond Sammut. The easy downhill path is giving-in to government pressure, joining the pro-Piano propaganda machine, and going with the flow.

It never ceases to amaze me how different people manage to interpret the same objective truth in diametrically opposing subjective ways. Goes to prove that either our brains are wired-up in very different ways or that some individuals have very biased ulterior motivations: Motivations or conflicts of interest which they don't wish to disclose.

Raymond Sammut (11 hours, 2 minutes ago)

Self-importance is never too far away, and entrenchment is the biggest blinder, constantly suffocating new ideas and killing them. The Maltese people in general should not be victims of those who suffer from these weaknesses and of whom, unfortunately, there are many in Malta --often holding positions of trust and influence. It is not in our character, us the Maltese, but if we are not cautious we could easily be misled. It is far riskier to do what is easy and refuse Mr Piano's proposal than to accept it as is and commence the project. I have strong faith in Mr Piano. He will not budge --not even to those who affirm that they are Mr Piano's "personal friend".

George Manduca (23 hours, 44 minutes ago)

As the quick-witted Mario Azzopardi noted, this latest Renzo Piano proposal has now degenerated into a veritable "Opera Buffa" of megalithic proportions. All we get are, a bunch of complementary front-row tickets to watch this contemptible, politically-infested show unfold. This may be the first and, I fear, the last show to be held AT - or I should say - AT THE EXPENSE OF our beloved Royal Opera House.

What started off as the exquisitely exciting prospect of having our Theater (and city) back on the national agenda, is increasingly growing into an injurious debacle at the expense of Maltese National Pride. As time passes and hope fades, deep dismay and disgust fills the space left in the hearts of the Maltese.

I pride myself for being a respected patron of Opera at many theatres all over the world. If this charade keeps going any further in all the wrong directions, the only urge I get, is to dissociate myself from it as far as I possibly can. You will NEVER see my face in that Roof-less and Soul-less Theater - EVER AGAIN! You can also kiss my vote GOOD-BYE!

Raymond Sammut (1 day, 11 hours ago)

"First, when digging underground, space is rather unlimited."

It amazes me how for more than two days no-one reacted to this statement. We are talking here about "digging" within the Valletta walls, just a few metres away from the Saint James Cavalier structure. No-one seems to care or realise the implication. It's only the genius of Mr Piano that seems to offend. Presently, we also have the so-called ex-adviser of PM Gonzi, overflowing with "credentials", calling Mr Piano's most creative idea as "useless". Truly sickening, and Immensely tragic for Malta. If Dr Gonzi were to give in to this pressure, it would be the more tragic. But what would Mr Piano do then? When Jørn Utzon was in a similar situation in 1966, he didn't budge. Ultimately it would be the lobbyists and the politicians who will make the changes and bring about the disfigurement -- just like the one on the other side of the entrance.

Aaron Cavalazzi (4 days, 2 hours ago)

@ Raymond Sammut

First, when digging underground, space is rather unlimited.

Secondly, what are your credentials, Raymond Sammut? What do you know about geothermal heat pumps? The installations I've surveyed are being used in massive shopping complexes in Devon, UK, Bavaria Germany and in New Jersey. They are rated at around half a megawatt each and are remarkably compact and silent. They are perfectly adequate for this theater and all other buildings in Valletta.

Yes I contend that nobody (in his right senses) wants to be distracted by SJC (or anything else) while trying to enjoy Opera. I speak on behalf of those who would have spent €25 to€100 per ticket to WATCH Opera and not stare at St James Cavalier.

People who share your passion of gazing at the Cavalier, can do so anytime, and for FREE - On the outside!

Raymond Sammut (4 days, 4 hours ago)

@ Aaron Cavalazzi

"In line with Piano's proposals for the Parliament, all air-conditioning equipment can go underground so it poses no space or noise issues."(Cavalazzi)

Parliament will house 65 members and, say, 200 people in the public gallery. The

theatre will house 1200+ people. You are going to need five times as much equipment for the theatre in a much more limited space.

"And nobody wants to be distracted by SJC while enjoying Opera."(Cavalazzi)

Nobody? What makes you so sure? On whose behalf are you making this claim?

Raymond Sammut (4 days, 4 hours ago)

@ Aaron Cavalazzi

"The proper place to locate a National Opera House is not in some lost corner in Birzebbugia or Ta'Qali..."(Cavalazzi)

So? What is your point? Who is the commenter on this comments board that made this suggestion?

"...or some other obscure place in Valletta."(Cavalazzi)

Since when Valletta had places which are obscure? Where are these obscure places in Valletta? How can Valletta be a UNESCO World Heritage city if it had places which are obscure?

"The Opera House deserves the foremost spot in the Capital City - at the entrance."(Cavalazzi)

Has anyone ever disagreed with you on this point? Have you ever been overseas and saw first hand what a 21st century international standard opera house is like? Do you have any idea how large these structures are?

"Fort St Elmo would not [be] a bad idea had there not been the historical obligation to re-use the Royal Opera House site."(Cavalazzi)

There is no such thing as a "historical obligation". This is just your allegation.

"Another disadvantage of Fort St Elmo is that it cannot be modified significantly due to its historical value as a fort."(Cavalazzi)

So? Unfortunate.

Aaron Cavalazzi (4 days, 7 hours ago)

@Raymond Sammut

The proper place to locate a National Opera House is not in some lost corner in Birzebbugia or Ta'Qali, or some other obscure place in Valletta. The Opera House deserves the foremost spot in the Capital City - at the entrance.

Fort St Elmo would not a bad idea had there not been the historical obligation to re-use the Royal Opera House site. Another disadvantage of Fort St Elmo is that it cannot be modified significantly due to its historical value as a fort.

Grandiose need not be Grotesque. It is only in the hands of Renzo Piano that we run this risk.

You worry about supplies? Why is that? If we can handle McDonalds in the middle of Valletta with its immense stock and waste disposal requirements - we can just about handle anything else. This is a weak argument. Don't use it again.

In line with Piano's proposals for the Parliament, all air-conditioning equipment can go underground so it poses no space or noise issues. And nobody wants to be distracted by SJC while enjoying Opera. Yet another hollow argument!

Raymond Sammut (5 days, 22 hours ago)
@ Aaron Cavalazzi

The suggestion of including FS has been made several times. Height --and size overall-- would be disproportionate to the surrounding structures (my view). Valletta would end up with something which is as grotesque as it is grandiose. I'm all in favour of "a large world class Opera House" for Malta. But you are first going to have to identify the right location for such a structure and all the other amenities that would have to go with it --think, for example, of the supplies that would have to be delivered to such an establishment while at the same time Valletta needs to get rid of vehicles to protect its heritage. A chance for Valletta, maybe, would be St Elmo --I honestly don't know.

Piano's proposal, in my view, is most suitable. It will not require, for example, air-conditioning equipment. Precious space would be used, instead, where it's most needed, namely, acoustic gear. At the same time, to the best of my knowledge, the SJC would be visible to some, if not most, of the audience. The alternative would have been Dr Gonzi's proposal: "Taħlieta ta' affarijiet". He is on record. These are his own words.

Raymond Sammut (5 days, 22 hours ago)
@ James Pirotta, B.Sc Physics --"So you worry about the flats being an eyesore..."

You are mistaken --totally mistaken. And try not to make more mistakes about what I am saying. Let me repeat to you what I have already said to Mr Camilleri on this comments board: Those flats are an affront to Maltese people of conscience, and the Maltese government has the obligation to remove them.

In fact, whether I am worried or not about something is none of your business, Mr Pirotta. Please do not get personal with me. As to the allegations you have made about the professionalism of Mr Piano and of the firm Piano & Associates in your comments on this comments board, that is entirely your business and I shall have nothing further to say in reference to what you have said.

Aaron Cavalazzi (6 days, 7 hours ago)
@Raymond Sammut

Why do you keep insisting "On the tiny Opera House site"??

If you include Freedom Square, it is actually a very large site - more than sufficient for a large world class Opera House!

Raymond Sammut (6 days, 8 hours ago)
@ j ebejer --"Check your facts if you want to avoid making absurd statements"

Who is making "absurd" statements, Mr Ebejer? Let me say it again: Mr Piano is an architect. Audio engineering is not the role of the architect.

Mr Ebejer, where did I say that the firm Piano & Associates does not employ acoustics engineers? Why you do not read and understand what you read before jumping in?

James Pirotta, B.Sc Physics (6 days, 8 hours ago)

@Raymond Sammut (1 hour, 37 minutes ago)

So you worry about the flats being an eyesore but THEN you seem to close a blind eye to the horrific proposal that Piano intends to impose. I will use you as an example to teach my children of the meaning of the popular idiom: "USING TWO WEIGHTS AND TWO MEASURES"

@ Raymond Sammut (1 hour, 48 minutes ago)

Piano is so lacking when it comes to acoustics that he did not even have the decency of proposing a structure that could ever accommodate any form of Acoustical Engineering.

With a design such as Piano's, no Audio Engineer will bother intervening - It is beyond redemption - beyond hope! There is nothing that an Audio engineer can do improve the acoustics of this building - Largely because of the fact that there is NO BUILDING!

So this gives us new insight on Renzo Piano... He is CLEARLY MYOPIC!

j ebejer (6 days, 9 hours ago)

@ James Pirotta , " Renzo Piano has got very minimal experience in Theater Design and is rather unqualified in the realm of acoustics."

@Raymond Sammut "The architect provides only the structure. And of course Mr Piano may not be "qualified" in acoustics. Mr Piano is an architect. Audio engineering is not the role of the architect."

Large architectural firms normally have their own in-house acoustic engineer. Alternatively, they would engage an acoustic engineer for specific jobs.

Check your facts if you want to avoid making absurd statements

Raymond Sammut (6 days, 10 hours ago)

@ Thomas Camilleri --"And while the government housing is an eye-sore and should never have been built there how would you propose relocating all the residents without a civil-rights uproar?"

This is an allegation which you are making. There was no civil-rights uproar when those flats were being built on top of the city gate, and there will be no civil-rights uproar when they get pulled down. Those flats are an affront to Maltese people of conscious, and the Maltese government has the obligation to remove them.

Raymond Sammut (6 days, 10 hours ago)

@ James Pirotta, B.Sc Physics --"If you did some research into Renzo Piano's legacy you will quickly realize that the man has got very minimal experience in

Theater Design and is rather unqualified in the realm of acoustics."

The role of "theatre design" belongs to people who are trained in scenic creations for theatre art. The architect provides only the structure. And of course Mr Piano may not be "qualified" in acoustics. Mr Piano is an architect. Audio engineering is not the role of the architect.

Raymond Sammut (6 days, 13 hours ago)

@ Thomas Camilleri

2. "It is dormant for the rest of the year" You are talking about the "Regent's Park theatre in London". Malta's rainy season only lasts 2-months annually on average. The rest is mostly sunny. I don't know how large Regent's Park is, but the Opera House site is compact and well suited to a free-standing, light and mobile canopy to ensure that rainy gaps can be dealt with on call.

3. "How do you propose the council reduce the noise levels on Valletta's main thoroughfare?" What thoroughfare are you referring to? Piano's design prohibits vehicle traffic through the city's gate. Council has the authority to re-route local traffic, and/or restrict it to specific time slots, just like councils do in the vicinity of primary schools for safety reasons.

5. Why are you asking? I've already given the answer. You, the artist, should complain only when the acoustic engineer fails to deliver. Please don't judge the engineers before you have given them a chance.

Camilleri--"Malta would do well to have a venue capable of housing international touring productions." International touring productions in the 21st century? On the tiny Opera House site, with limited height?

Thomas Camilleri (6 days, 14 hours ago)

Raymond Sammut,

With regards to your comments below I'd like to add a few thoughts on some of your points.

2. Professional performers ARE fair-weather workers. Could you imagine a play, musical or recital taking place in the rain? The Regent's Park theatre in London has it's annual summer season with a musical and classical play. It is dormant for the rest of the year for reasons mentioned above.

3. How do you propose the council reduce the noise levels on Valletta's main thoroughfare? Open-air theatres are found in parks and secluded areas for obvious reasons.

And while the government housing is an eye-sore and should never have been built there how would you propose relocating all the residents without a civil-rights uproar?

5. If it is not the realm of the artist who will be making use of the space to appreciate the value of the acoustics (or lack thereof), then whose is it?

Finally as a separate note, Malta would do well to have a venue capable of housing international touring productions. Our theatres cannot cater for most of these tours and we are losing out on a valuable source of income.

j ebejer (6 days, 14 hours ago)

Culture is about self expression. Creative performing arts are important but it is not the only form of self-expression.

The theatre/ performing space may not be the perfect venue for all forms of artistic self-expression. There are however countless activities of varying artistic and cultural content which could be held within the proposed performing space.

I am not an art connoisseur nor am I fan of the more populist forms of entertainment. I do find certain comments made by persons who perceive themselves to be artists with a capital A to be patronising to all others.

The discussion should not be about YOU the Artist or YOU the acoustic engineer or YOU the architect. The discussion should be about VALLETTA!

James Navarra (1 week, 1 day ago)

We are with you Mario! 80% of the country are with you. The only thing the country needs is some leadership and you're the right man for this! Please help get this ball rolling!

James Pirotta, B.Sc Physics (1 week, 1 day ago)

If you did some research into Renzo Piano's legacy you will quickly realize that the man has got very minimal experience in Theater Design and is rather unqualified in the realm of acoustics. The science of acoustics demands a bit more than stretching a few white drapes and steel poles around an empty space... and then hoping for the best. It takes an accurately modeled sound chamber of millimetric tolerances with specially shaped surfaces and curved ceilings which reflect the sound in very precisely controlled ways. If the NAIVE among us want to believe that the proposed design fulfills these criteria - be my guest. Saying so here, only advertises your utter ignorance in the science of acoustics... This theater will be the laughing stock of an entire generation of Acoustics Engineers. For me, Piano's proposal is a smoke screen to cover-up the utter incompetence of his studio when it comes to designing a technically complex structure with the finesse of an acoustically perfect Opera House. Piano is merely shying away from the job... I don't blame him - a lot is at stake!

j ebejer (1 week, 1 day ago)

@Margot Galdes If you are really an architect, which I doubt, you would have done a little research on the project to understand it better. You would appreciate that architecture is about understanding the context of the site including the vitality of the urban spaces around it. Piano's design team explained the open air theatre as follows; "A new, very light skin or façade will define the space, supported by a surrounding alignment of steel masts and columns. These will carry removable walls, lighting systems, acoustic and sound equipment, and shall give the space its specific identity during the staging of performances." "..... performances can be held in the most extraordinary scenery of some of the city's best buildings. This "open air opera", if correctly equipped will be very rare in the Mediterranean world and offer to many art groups an outstanding place to perform." I would have thought that an architect would have the vision to understand and appreciate these words. You prove me wrong.

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 1 day ago)

@ Kathy Elliot Let's re-visit what they are complaining about: (1)security measures imposed by Parliament building, (2)weather condition limitations, (3)prone to noise

pollution: both that which it produces, which can disturb people living in the neighbourhood, and the noise produced around it, such as fireworks, (4)other factors which can be a severe hindrance to performances. (5)We fail to see how the surrounding environment of the current space can retain this principle (=the open-air concept evolving from an acoustically perfect natural environment). But the reality is: (1)The fact that the theatre is next to Parliament means it will enjoy greater flow-on security. In marketing it's called "leveraging". (2)Professional people are not fair-weather-only performers. (3)If there is noise in Valletta, that's up to the Valletta council to fix. We don't hem ourselves in because the Valletta council don't know how to fix a problem. And if there are "flats" in the proximity of the city's gate, these should never have been built there, and the government has an obligation to the general public to remove them. (4)What are these "other factors"? (5)It's not the realm of artists to try and figure out the engineering that goes on behind acoustics.

Kathy Elliot (1 week, 1 day ago)

Margot Galdes

Without splatting my degree anywhere, I would really like to respectfully disagree with your opinion. While socialisation does in fact determine a number of choices, two different people can have the same upbringing and differ completely within the fields of taste and preference.

Not to mention, progress is not always all it seems. These people protesting are not pointing out the shape or decor of the planned building they are against; they are arguing its practicality and, pardon me if perhaps you don't agree, they have more right than any to speak up, since they will be the ones using it and know what is needed most in their profession. While Architecture is another form of art, it should, especially in this case, bend to accomodate that which it is serving; if the artists say they need one thing, giving them another isn't going to cut it.

Joe Micallef (1 week, 1 day ago)

Margot Galdes, B.Arch.(Hons)

The more I read the more I understand the source of the opposition to the project and why we as a people are a people of adopters and reproducers.

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 1 day ago)

@ Margot Galdes, B.Arch.(Hons) - Society for the Built Environment

You are perfectly right. Through conditioning, people as adults will come to like a theatre which is either indoor or outdoor, even if it looked like a pink igloo. This is the very reason why criticism of the Piano theatre design is unfounded because it's based on what we had been used to as Maltese children with baroque churches and baroque buildings around us. Some people simply cannot grow out of this conditioning.

A 10-meter gilded statue of Renzo Piano? 3D shimmering holograms of Dr Gonzi to cover all surfaces? The US-President will himself hold his own wedding within it? Tourists will flock by the millions just to touch the Pink Igloo? Is this a sign of not having anything constructive left to say, Mr Galdes?

What I would like to ask is: How accessible will the new theatre be, for example, to the elderly and to people with disability? Will the new management be required to provide performances dedicated to children, even if these may have some form of disadvantage? This is what Jørn Utzon meant by the "...idea of giving buildings a more humane expression."

Margot Galdes, B.Arch.(Hons) - Society for the Built Environment (1 week, 1 day ago)

@Raymond-Sammut
@Joe-Micallef
@j-ebejer

Then I suggest building a 15-storey, bright pink, igloo with no ceiling, complete with a 10-meter gilded statue of Renzo Piano suspended at the top. Gonzi's face will be captured in 3D shimmering holograms covering all surfaces. This hightech Igloo of pink dreams will replace those disgusting theater ruins and their baroque surroundings. Piano will be revered (and worshiped) for ushering a new era of roofless architecture.

This may not be to everybody's liking, however in time, our children will learn to love it because they will have a ball of a good time during their many outings to the Pink Piano Igloo... Their teachers at school will teach them about the Visionary, Superbly-Trained, Piano who discovered the exquisitely-modern value of displacing all old, unfashionable, classical architecture with big modern bright Pink Igloos - squarely in the middle of Baroque Valletta!!!

In 50 years time, it will also be considered a world-heritage site and the US-President will himself hold his own wedding within it. Tourists will flock by the millions just to touch the Pink Igloo and AirMalta's problems will be forever solved!

Carla Abdilla (1 week, 2 days ago)

isnt the shakespeare's globe a roofless theatre, yet it is mentioned as a grand theatre, in fact one of the best and most popular.... i personally dont have an opinion about it however i believe it could be better preserved if it had a roof, on the other hand would be nice as would be a bit diff if there was no roof.

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 2 days ago)

@ Joe Micallef

Along the same line of argument, we also have the Anglican cathedral which, to the best of my knowledge, had replaced the German Langue. Imagine replacing something like Castille with something which is not baroque, yet no-one ever complained about this cathedral. The image of the Anglican cathedral is, in fact, used as a tourist picture card.

As individuals, we need to come out of "the square", and remember that there are 400,000+ people on Malta, not including the hundreds of visitors at any given time. We also need to remember that the average age of us commenters here would be, say, 40 or so. The way the 10-year old Maltese of today are going to think in the future is totally different from the way we do today. They may or may not like the open-air design. I think they will. In fact, if their teachers at school started to take them for outings to the new theatre, Maltese kids are in for a ball, and as adults they

are most likely to be proud of their open-air theatre and its surroundings. To me, in fact, doesn't matter a bit. It's them who count.

Joe Micallef (1 week, 2 days ago)

Raymond.

What I was suggesting is that had Timberlake proposed something like he has done for the US Embassy in Battersea he would have been stoned to death by folks that cannot even realise that Barry's creation (using their same line of argument) was a severe desecration of Valletta's architecture.

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 2 days ago)

@ j ebejer -- You mean James Stagno Navarra, rather than Joe Micallef.

j ebejer (1 week, 2 days ago)

Referring to works of architecture, Peter Serracino Inglott wrote (December 2008): "when consensus was required, mediocrity was the usual result."

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20081207/opinion/gonzi-shows-his-mettle>

The articles, letters and the blog comments confirm what was blatantly obvious from the start: any kind of agreement or consensus on the City Gate project is impossible.

Government has decided. He is right to stick to that decision. The alternative is the disgusting sight of an opera house ruin and a surface car park at the entrance of Valletta for the foreseeable future.

@ Joe Micallef , you state: "The problem with these "great" architects is an utter lack of humility." You are wrong. The people showing lack of humility are those objectors who think that they can produce better designs than Renzo Piano without ever having been trained in architecture and design.

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 2 days ago)

@ Joe Micallef

Are you suggesting that the Maltese people are notorious when it comes to a large and sensitive project?

Renzo Piano must feel privileged to have had this opportunity. We are looking at, here, a major project in a World Heritage city. There is always going to be a level of risk, and this risk inevitably stokes controversy. Nobody can expect the Maltese people to be the exception.

Here are two snippets expressed by Jørn Utzon on the design of the Sydney Opera House.

"This happened at a time when the reigning functionalism had not yet yielded to the idea of giving buildings a more humane expression."

"The architects' gift to society is to bring the people a big joy from the surroundings that architects create."

I have no doubt that Mr Piano was aware of this type of sentiments when he designed the outdoor theatre. The Maltese people may yet need some time to realize, and to appreciate, what is really going on here. My admiration for Mr Piano stems from the way he wants to give this unconventional, open-air design to "all" the people without yielding to extraneous pressures.

James Stagno Navarra (1 week, 2 days ago)

@ Joe Micallef

Then we are equally lucky!

...because none of Kieran Timberlake & Associates' works would fit in Valletta. The problem with these "great" architects is an utter lack of humility. They feel compelled to impose their signature style rather than listen and adapt to the situation. They harbour an inner perversion to shock the public with their provocative architecture.

For this reason they will only ever produce... White Elephants!

Anyway Mr. Micallef, Valletta is no place for such social experiments.

Joe Micallef (1 week, 2 days ago)

James Timberlake is a lucky guy! He thanks his stars that he wasn't commissioned to work in Malta!

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 5 days ago)

@ George Manduca

In regard to my previous comment, it should actually be 217th count, using (for verification):

$n = \frac{4 \times 1.96 \times 1.96 \times p(1-p)}{(0.1 \times 0.1)}$. (My apologies.)

Nevertheless, my computational mistake doesn't alter the important argument in relation to the lack of stratification in The Times poll.

Another issue is the way The Times has worded the question. The wording has a tendency to bias the response of the interviewee. That is, when we say that something is "roofless" we are also implying that something is bad. Like saying, for example, the glass is half empty, thus implying that something is bad while we omit (sometimes intentionally) the fact that something is good because the glass is half full.

The right wording would have been:

How do you prefer the new theatre to be built on the opera house site:

Option(A): Indoor.....Option(B): Outdoor

That, I think, would have been a survey question which, together with good stratification, would have yielded a truer picture of public opinion.

And BTW. You made the unwarranted comment: "It WILL happen and some artists

have already declared taking the "tennis game" elsewhere." Please be reminded that tennis is also played indoor.

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 5 days ago)

@ George Manduca --"It is one scrap of evidence you cannot afford to ignore."

I cannot speak on behalf of Mr Micallef, but I surely can afford to ignore the current result being displayed here by The Times. At time of reading, the data were:

Sample size (n) = 2257

Percentage point of those against (p) = 80.3

In any first-year stats textbook, usually as early as chapter one, we are reminded that if it were true that all the Maltese people right across Malta and Gozo thought in exactly the same way, then The Times may as well switch off the polls because the result was already known by the 124th count at the usually accepted confidence interval of $\pm 5\%$.

We have to take note here of the very strong assumption in The Times result. That is, do all the Maltese people on Malta and Gozo think in the same way? I yet have to meet someone who would give me a "Yes" for an answer.

For a statistical result to have at least a reasonable level of reliability, one must first stratify the community being tested. The Times is polling only one stratum.

George Manduca (1 week, 5 days ago)

Dear Prof. Micallef,

The sampling mechanism used in such web-polls may not be optimal or consistent with the scientific norms which you and I are accustomed to. However, it would be hard to overthrow the significance of the unequivocal result of 86% [against] versus 14% [in favour] with such a rather large (fairly random) sample of 2100+. It is one vote per *public* IP address - duplicates are unlikely.

The only solution to end the debate is an official referendum... Shall we begin collecting the signatures of 10% of the electorate? I bet it will be easy.

The "world acknowledged master" is about to commit professional suicide with his project... If he forges on, with his head buried deep in the sand, he will have to face the humiliation of having his "art work" demolished within his lifetime.

I'd rather not be Maltese when this hits the world headlines.

It WILL happen and some artists have already declared taking the "tennis game" elsewhere.

These polls are important Prof. Micallef.

It is one scrap of evidence you cannot afford to ignore.

Joe Micallef (1 week, 6 days ago)

Geroge Manduca! Your ability to determine statistical significance is as shallow as your ability to show due respect to a world acknowledged master whose work is as difficult for you to understand as is the creative, innovative and feasible use of the site itself!

George Manduca (1 week, 6 days ago)

@Raymond Sammut

You don't seem to get it yet, do you?... Yes! Most Maltese don't give a hoot about opera... BUT they do, however, care that the Opera House BUILDING is REBUILT to its former glory - if for nothing else, to fill and decorate our capital city - IRRESPECTIVE of whether it is actually used as an opera house at all.

Online polls were held in a number of websites. The latest one is that being held on THIS very website as I write.

Look up!...A little further up...a little to the right...There you go Mr Sammut!

Do you see it now? Sample size 1700 and counting? That is statistically very significant.

And who is voting? Well, the ones who matter I presume - Only the people who care.

Do you need more proof? Shall we hold a referendum? I sure know where to place my bets.

Renzo Piano's "Tennis Court" concept will be as barren as the desert - Because it is a concept hated and loathed by the vast, vast majority in this country - and it certainly offends the majority of those who matter. Give it up! It's a stillborn project.

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 6 days ago)

@ James Stagno Navarra -- "Polls clearly indicate that 85% of the country disapproves..."

What polls are these? Honestly, how many in Malta even think of going to the Opera -- Peppu, Ċikka u Żepi tar-raġal? Most people in Malta's towns and villages would not even know where the Maneol Theatre is, let alone they would consider going there or voting in the polls. So where are these percentages "of the country" coming from? Who is voting here? Where is the credibility of what these "polls" are saying?

The time when those in Valletta thought of themselves as "the country" when it came to the Opera, is over. Try and put this into year heads. Renzo Piano has well and truly put you all on notice. A theatre is not a theatre if it does not belong to all the people. So the people will have the theatre that Mr Piano is going to give them -- an open-air, outdoor theatre which everyone will know about, will be able to visit, participate in, and enjoy.

James Stagno Navarra (1 week, 6 days ago)

Polls clearly indicate that 85% of the country disapproves of these Roofless Theatre plans.

The writing is on the wall - This will be a very short lived theatre!

It would doubtlessly be an immeasurable personal disgrace for both the Government, the Prime Minister as well as Renzo Piano if this Roofless theatre were to be demolished in the near future to make way for a better version - a version that is more sensitive to the emotional and practical needs of the people.

I suggest they revise their position, if only to spare themselves this eternal humiliation!

This is some good advice worth heeding.
Don't be hard headed - it's not worth it!

Joe Micallef (1 week, 6 days ago)

Astrid you are clueless! Your self proclaimed representation of the Maltese nation has sent you ability to read at sixes and sevens.

In now way did I question Carmine Luari's ability! Totally the opposite. Such arrogance I leave to others.

As for your denigration of Parliament I am not at all surprised.

As for desecrating other historic building I am even less surprised. As the ridiculous howler when your proposed that the riches of St.John's Cathedral be scattered around in other historic buildings which are inappropriate for such purpose.

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 6 days ago)

@ Astrid Vella

All issues --with the exception of weather-- you have addressed to me are issues for the incumbent government to deal with; with new legislation if needed. To say that Valletta should not have an open-air theatre designed by Renzo Piano and equipped with modern sound engineering gear, only because of some privately owned flats and because some people release petards at the wrong time, simply doesn't make sense. How can Valletta and the Maltese people be held back, and treated with contempt by their own government, because of some macabre looking, privately owned flats and ear-busting petards? It would be totally deplorable. And the area will no longer be "noisy". Nor it should be noisy. That's why Mr Piano dismissed parking for vehicles. And the buses are being gradually moved away from Putirjal. You are clearly not looking at the big picture.

Once Jan/Feb are over, it's all back to sunny Malta. That leaves theatre-goers with 10 months to play with. And I still see no reason as to why an independent company couldn't be contracted out to erect a free standing canopy --light, mobile and flexible- - which would easily make the theatre an all-year-rounder.

Astrid Vella (1 week, 6 days ago)

@ Raymond Sammut: the government flats can't be demolished as many of them have been sold off. Artistic or not, the theatre is destined to be an extremely expensive white elephant simply because every summer weekend is ruined by festa bangs which have stopped several open-air concerts and performances in their tracks. The Maltese public is not going to brave the wind and rain to attend concerts in the open air in winter, so which arts entrepreneur is going to invest in productions there, summer or winter?

@ Piero Timpano: you are making the same old simplistic mistake. Open air theatres are purpose-built in the round and far from sources of noise, like the one you highlighted. The rectangular site of a former closed theatre in a noisy area simply does not work in the same way and will not enjoy the same acoustic qualities.

Astrid Vella (1 week, 6 days ago)

@ Joe Micallef: A mature Western democracy is judged by its arts, not by its obsession with politics. Every European country funds its arts, and so should our Government. And by the way, the EU funding could be used to help build a theatre, but not a parliament.

If you are so keen to have Parliament occupying the most prestigious position as “the foremost symbol of any democratic nation and of its capital city” then you should be supporting the Main Guard option as being the most architecturally and historically significant place for Parliament. This could also be a much cheaper option which would leave a slice of the budget over for the building of the theatre.

As for your reply to Carmine Lauri, you asked him who he was to voice an opinion, and he answered you simply to show his wide experience in theatrical matters.

@E Vassallo: If the site of the former theatre is too small, it can expand towards Freedom Square, the proposed site of the unwanted Parliament.

Raymond Sammut (1 week, 6 days ago)

@ Piero Timpano

Good images those. One can also look at some videos.

Here is one that gives an idea of how an outdoor theatre can attract people not only for a one off occasion, but as a way of life with lots of style and most importantly, one of inclusiveness:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mJvG3PQbdg>

And here is another nice clip that tells a little on the many possibilities of open-air sound engineering:

http://video.google.com.au/videoplay?docid=1411983141114766743&ei=dhZ_S8iFJYG2wgP-xYWMDA&q=outdoor+opera&hl=en#

(I have no association whatsoever with either of these two concerns.)

Vertical, close-minded thinking will shut people inside a box until they suffocate. If there is no-one in Malta who could do it, then the Maltese government will have no choice but to contract out the management of the Piano theatre to a company from abroad. The Maltese people have got to move on, and not be held back by the few -- because the Maltese people deserve to have the best, only the best. In fact, my conviction is that this comparatively small design by Renzo Piano is only the beginning. Piano's idea may have actually opened up the way for much bigger things to come for Opera on Malta and Gozo.

Piero Timpano (2 weeks ago)

<http://www.bezbrige.com/index.php/Interesting-Facts/worlds-most-awesome-theater.html> Take a look, and then tell people that an open air theatre is a bad idea! Open your minds people..

m. portelli (2 weeks ago)

@ Raymond Sammut Well following your 'cohesive' logic it is not going to be a work of art because the government of Malta will be claiming it and my guess is Profs Piano will consider it finished since he expects payment for his work. You wouldn't be suggesting we cede sovereignty of the site to Profs Piano by any chance would you, so he can tinker away to his heart's content? Or then again, is this some ode to the unfinished work of art produced by diving Meschermitts and Stukas?

Mario Gatt (2 weeks ago)

@ Raymond Sammut

I'm glad you note the sarcasm in which I surround the word "illustrious"...

Despite all the post-modern apologetic reasoning on "unfinished-art" - The stark truth is that unfinished art is but a monument for the weakness of character of the artist that failed to see his artwork through to completion.

It is like the stillborn child whose mother lacked the fortitude to complete the gift of life.

It is like the victorious warship that sank in harbour drowning everybody on board
It is a sad failure that was inches away from success.

This, is a far more plausible interpretation of "Unfinished Art".

However, in this case the reasons are far more damning - For it is not lack of skill or lack of resolve. In this case the reason for the unfinished artwork is insensitivity to the plea of a nation - "Cruelty" is another word that comes to mind.

The Royal Opera House is an open wound which bled profusely for 60years and has been crying out loud for a generous medic to nurse its haemorrhage.

Now that the doctor has arrived - he turns his back on it - breaking his Hippocratic Oath!

Raymond Sammut (2 weeks ago)

@ Mario Gatt

Your criticism of Renzo Piano clearly lacks cohesion. It consists of a series of raps. Here is some of the vocabulary you have used: "blunder", "hated", "roughshod", "offensive", and "desecrating". This vocabulary is hardly applicable to a person even if he were just a little "illustrious".

There is one thing I like to point out, however. Here is what you said: "There are very good reasons to undo this barbaric act on our city - Building what others left half-built is hardly vandalism..."

"half-built", or so it may appear, is one of the greatest attributes any artist can ever hope to possess. One such artist was Leonardo Da Vinci. Pope after pope in the Vatican would go mad at Da Vinci because he would never finish off a painting he had been commissioned to deliver. In fact, all of Da Vinci's paintings remain until now as you said: "half-completed".

The true artist never in actual fact finish off their piece. An art-piece ceases to be an art-piece the moment someone claims it is finished, it's been completed and is ready to be delivered. Renzo Piano could have gone forever creating his art-piece.

Mario Gatt (2 weeks ago)

@ Raymond Sammut

Look at the polls!!!!

Can anyone afford to ignore the will of 90% of those who care?

Where is our democracy going?

Mario Gatt (2 weeks ago)

@ Raymond Sammut

While I fully concur that the "flats and shops across the road" are an utter disgrace to our beautiful Baroque city, [and they were erected by a (very mediocre) local architect (!)], the argument of Rodrick Dingli, Anthony Pace Gouder, and Mario Caruana stands up for your criticism.

Renzo Piano - however illustrious - is committing the greatest blunder of his career - In our island! He is proposing to build a monument which is hated by the people forking out the cash... He is running roughshod over public sentiment - He is being VERY INSENSITIVE. The Royal Opera House is a VERY sore point for anybody who dares call himself Maltese.

Therefore, dismissing it as an afterthought, by wrapping it in a few white drapes, in a 100 Million euro project is outright offensive! Renzo Piano (with the prime minister's blessing) is desecrating the first page of the Philosophy of Architecture.

There are very good reasons to undo this barbaric act on our city - Building what others left half-built is hardly vandalism...

It would be a heroic and patriotic act of love towards the Maltese People.

Narcy Calamatta (2 weeks ago)

Adenda to my message to Mr Joe Azzopardi. Please come home to tea and I will show you the DVD of the entirely Maltese musical Manwel Manwel. This is the life story of Manwel Dimech. You will see what a single Maltese idealist was capable of doing and how Maltese artists collaborated to honor his memory. United we stand, divided we will not survive and neither will our culture.

Raymond Sammut (2 weeks ago)

@ Rodrick Dingli

@ Anthony Pace Gouder

@ Mario Caruana

What will have to come down by a future Prime Minister are the flats and shops across the road. They can, as they should and must, be brought down because they are insipid and unoriginal as much as they constitute an obscenity right above the entrance of this most noble city.

Mr Piano's design, on the other hand, constitutes intellectual property. To remove it or alter it, would require some profound justification which only architects themselves can provide. But how can they? Who would these architects be? If none were to come forward, and yet a future Prime Minister were to go ahead and alter it, that action would amount to national vandalism at the level we witnessed back in the seventies.

Narcy Calamatta (2 weeks ago)

I thank all the participants in this discussion. I invite Mr Joe Azzopardi to contact me on onnarcycalamatta@gmail.com so I can put his mind at rest that the signatories are all valid artists who were pioneers in their field before any EU funds were ever heard of. Our work has been awarded by the French Government in Tanya Bajona's case. Toni Attard and myself have just returned from a conference in Brussels where we were invited as experts on the contribution of the artist to the SME's in Cultural Industries. 20 years ago Carmen Azzopardi took 2 drama groups to perform in Moscow. Iljeli Mediterranji cultural festival ran 14 years in open air spaces with innovative productions which brought classical Maltese literature to the people. Maltese composers and musicians have regularly graced the finest cultural venues all over Europe. Better still many Maltese artists are teaching in European academies. At one time we had 3 Maltese dancers teaching Flamenco to the Spaniards in Spain. No my friend do not knock your brother sister and brother compatriots to worship a foreigner who will never ever hear of you. Come home to tea

Rodrick Dingli (2 weeks ago)

@Anthony Pace Gouder
@Mario Caruana

Well said! You hit the nail on it's head!

The Gonzi plaque will be removed, discarded and replaced while a glorius new Opera House will rise over the ruins - obliterating every last trace of Piano's short lived Legacy.

In the end it's deeply traditional.. We cannot do things right first time in this country!

I bet that a future Prime Minister, with a little more sense, will take the bull by it's horns to do what should have been done from the very start!

Raymond Sammut (2 weeks ago)

@ E. Vassallo --"I suspect that even the performances at the Manoel Theatre rarely have a full house."

If this is the case, then one has to ask: why? With a population of 400,000+, surely there must be enough interest to fill the Manoel Theatre. Yet they cannot do it. They cannot blame the good old VCR, because theatre art is real -- you just simply have got to be there to experience it. Theatre art comes in real flesh and costumes, and real melodies and voices. So what keeps the people, from all the villages and towns of Malta, away from the Manoel Theatre? Thanks to the Piano design, now we know who the usual suspects are. Renzo Piano, with his revolutionary design, has smoked them out of their burrows -- and they are pleading for mercy.

Anthony Pace Gouder (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

@Mario Caruana

Very well said Mario .

Thanks to Renzo's finesse , the original Opera House FOOTPRINT is actually being preserved for an eventual reconstruction . Its no wonder some regard him a GENIUS !.

J Cardona (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

@ Joe Micallef

Likewise, I will also be wielding the power of my 2013 vote accordingly... I rest my case!

Joe Micallef (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

This would be an interesting discussion. As with architecture, technology and a million and one other things the classical pure democracy has evolved into many schools, the most common would be representative democracy. The problem with your view of democracy in today's world which has moved from a subsistence society structure would be enormous!

I see that you prefer a state where people don't look forward but back. I submit that you are part of a large group, if not the majority, however I beg to remark that the artists who signed the petition are not petitioning to have Barry's architecturally misplaced theatre rebuilt, but a building to house a modern facility!

Obviously I would like to see Renzo Piano's facility completed but that is beyond me. I will only be able to put whatever happens in the equation determining where my 2013 vote goes!

Thanks for entertaining the discussion but I have to move on!

J Cardona (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

@ Joe Micallef

You confuse my state with the very sorry state of my regard for Parliament... I do suggest, however, that you look up the definition of the word "Democracy":

it's "The Rule of the People"

The ancient Athenians did not even trust intermediaries to exercise democracy... They directly ruled their own land. Today, we sadly departed from this ideal, for lack of time, so we delegate the power to rule to a select few - but on one condition: That they listen to and act on behalf of the people - always!

When the representatives we elect depart from the spirit of servitude towards the nation, when they put self-interest, and other personal motivations before their contracted mission then the Comino pig farm becomes a very fitting location indeed.

May no politician ever forget the reason for his existence!

Back to the Opera House... This project has nothing to do with the common good... we can survive equally well with it or without it... But this is a matter of National pride and hence every penny spent must reflect the will and sentiment of the majority.

Given the sums involved, a referendum would be very fitting!

Raymond Sammut (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

@ Rebecca Hall - musician

You probably can consider yourself 129, as you have requested. All they need is

your signature. It will not make any difference. These signatories carry no weight. They have no right whatsoever to decide --with their "signatures"-- for the Prime Minister what theatre 400,000 Maltese people should have over generations to come. In Malta 2010 and beyond, the Arts will belong to all the people.

In regard to birds in Valletta; they are feral, and should be trapped and destroyed. In fact, Valletta as a historical city should be free from all forms of misplaced organic material, such as, for example, obnoxiously pruned trees in public squares. But this is Valletta Council's fault and not the Piano design.

Joe Micallef (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

J Cardona

Honestly I am sorry to learn you are in such a sorry state, but an objective look around the world (or even the region) tells me you are wrong. A Government is not there to do the will of people but to do the good of people. If you do not like what it does you can send it packing with your vote!

Whilst I respect your views I cannot understand how your logic follows to needing "prestigious and historic places to house these MPs" - With your views I would send them to the Comino pig farm!.

Besides that, the historic and prestigious places you mentioned should as much as possible be used and glorified as such not desecrated to house some activity foreign to their conception.

J Cardona (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

Joe Micallef

There are dozens of far more prestigious and historic places to house these MPs

Democracy? What democracy?

In this country, Parliament is only a Symbol of Oligarchy and eternally Spiralling Confusion... Nothing else! because even in this very case, Parliament is out of touch with the will of the people.

Joe Micallef (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

J Cardona

Despite all my love for creative arts in general, as a citizen in a democracy I understand that parliament is a far greater priority. It is the foremost symbol of any democratic nation and of its capital city!

J Cardona (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

@Joe Micallef

Then how do you explain that can we afford a new €60,000,000 Parliament???

The problem isn't lack of cheese... the problem is ebezzlement of the cheese
The Opera House Project became the excuse for the Parliament Project

Joe Micallef (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

Carmine

Granted that I totally agree with you, what about the cheese? that is, who is expected to finance the running cost of the proposed facility, which as you are probably aware cannot be financed by the ridiculous audiences we get at our theatre notwithstanding the ridiculous price charged.

You see between real or perceived wishes and what can be done there is a huge gap. For example I have long set my eyes on a top notch digital sound system which would add value to my appreciation of Petruciani, Haydn or AC/CD.....but the truth is I cannot afford it.

Beyond that and beyond the fact that I like the innovative concept of the open theatre itself, I am convinced that with the technology available the facility itself can be a magnet of attraction and an inspiration to creative work, different from what is produced for closed environment. New innovative work rather than reproductions or adaptations.

In another post I said that as a tax payer I would be willing to surrender my claim for innovation if the government, after building the request facility, leases it out to artists for management and financing.

Carmine Lauri (2 weeks, 1 day ago)

Joe Micallef

Two weeks ago i gave a concert at the Manoel Theatre, accompanied by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra. Now when i see that due to lack of space to fit a symphony orchestra there, one of my colleagues playing the harp had to be placed in the left ground-floor balcony to do her job, just heard but not seen, i think we can say that the Manoel is no venue for a symphonic concert! Infact it was demoralising for her to play and not be seen at all by the public! Secondly, a concert last year "The Grand Concert" of the MPO at the MCC. I was once again a guest of the MPO playing the Dvorak Concerto. The acoustics are so bad and difficult to make a decent sound in, being so dry, that artificial acoustic enhancements had to be used during the concert to make the overall sound in there acceptable! So the MCC is also a no no! What are we left with? Churches are a no no too as we are not allowed to perform in them...a great shame! To music lovers and artists, the answer is one!

C Attard (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Dawn il-Prim Ministri li ha jibqaw jisemew:

Il-Prim Ministru Dr Giorgio Borg Olivier - Bieb il-Belt (Garage)

Il-Prim Ministru Perit Dom Mintoff - Govt Flats fuq Bieb il-Belt

Il-Prim Ministru Dr Laurence Gonzi - Teatru bla saqaf

Mario Caruana (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Cheer up my fellow citizens! This is just a very slight delay...

I predict that before the end of this decade, this Piano-Fiasco will be pulled down again to make way for the true Royal Opera House to be rebuilt as it should... by a bolder head of state and and a wiser local architect.

On a positive note, relatively little money is being wasted, because next to nothing is actually being spent on the proposed "Open-Air Theatre" itself...

Dismantling this Piano-Fiasco will be an exceedingly simple task... All it'll involve is rolling up a few white drapes and plucking out a few columns - So it's no great loss! Renzo Piano is simply postponing the reconstruction of the Royal Opera House

The bets are open on who this bold new Prime Minister will be!

Joanne Camilleri - musician (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

I'm number 130 in this petition then! Thank goodness this issue is being given a big microphone! Why is it that music & musicians have to constantly battle for humane conditions? :-/

E. Vassallo (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

The site for the former theatre is small as it is for today's requirements. One has to take in consideration the patronage numbers of local theatres. Who is going to foot the recurrent expenses of the projected theatre? I suspect that even the performances at the Manoel Theatre rarely have a full house.

Having said that, if a roofless theatre (or call whatever you like) would be useless due to its limited use. On the other hand, the theatre can also be roofed and developed upon if there is a change in course re its use.

M Spiteri (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Just by looking that the scale model you can tell that this project is a joke...

A few stretched drapes to replace the Grand Royal Opera House???

This is a parody of the Royal Opera House!

C.Sammut (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Can I please add my name to this petition albeit as an art loving citizen not an artist?

Joe Micallef (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Carmine Lauri

Beyond self praise (none unjustified, but still very cheesy) let us get to the cheese. Who are you expecting to finance your wish? Not many have such a wealthy portfolio as yours!

Paul V. Azzopardi (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Should it take 128 golden signatures for common sense to prevail ?

Jesmond Micallef (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Stephen Florian,

If German pilots who dropped bombs on Malta are still alive, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT ? Not much thats for sure. I am MALTESE, meaning I AM

NOT GERMAN but neither BRITISH, so tell me what are you going to do about it ?

Another "significant" event for your perusal, The Mosta Parish Church.....

Michel Bencini,

Indeed the war still lurks deeply in people's minds. All wars are "catastrophies", they are worst then, yes, NATURAL calamities such as earthquakes, for example..... !!!!

Generic:

My own mother suffered a complete hair loss during the bombardments when she was still a young child !!! Her mother, brothers and sisters sheltered nearly right underneath where the theatre once stood. !!! She was indeed in that same shelter when the theatre was hit !!!

She has reservations about all the bombardments but watches both Deutsche Welle and Italian stations on TV !!!!

My own opinion : I wish this project full and complete success.

Brian Farrugia (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

These elite egoists want an opera house. and they are vociferous about it. Malta cannot afford an opera house. We made St James Cavalier at a great expense for the taxpayer.. For what? for the gang of four who insult us every time they stage a play like Sticthing inside it, a play for their own personal grandeur. Nay we dont need an opera house. If we take a look at what is happening in Gozo with regards to opera, it is enough for one and all to decide that NO, we dont need an opera house in Malta. We cannot have all these theatres (St James, MCC, Manoel, etc) just for this elite. The Maltese saying goes L-ewwel il-pappa u mbaghad l-umpappa. We cannot afford to put more money in an opera house when there are people dying for the want of a costly medicine.

Carmine Lauri (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

First of all - Mr Ivan Attard: "Who are most of these 128 artists & experts?" May I suggest perhaps that you would do a little bit of research and find out who some of these artists are before making such a comment? Lack of awareness is incredible in our country! We have signed this petition as we ARE the artists! I can speak for myself and from my experience of performing in Malta for the past 25 years or so! Leading the London Symphony Orchestra and guesting as concertmaster in other world famous orchestras is what i do, Sir, taking me frequently to all sides of the globe performing in the best concert halls in the world. I think i can now voice my opinion with proof, that Malta NEEDS a proper concert hall with the perfect acoustics to give us performers and audience alike a home to make great music. We also need a concert hall to be able to provide a suitable venue for great symphony orchestras, soloists and conductors of fame to perform in Malta. No wonder our audiences in Malta for classical music are sadly declining! Let's do something before it's too late!! Thanks.

Anna Maria Bartolo (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Why not reconstruct and restore this building to its former glory? With a roof of course. :-) In that way, the architectural harmony of our noble capital will remain undisturbed. Several European palaces/churches/cathedrals have undergone

excellent reconstruction after the ravages of war. Why should the Royal Opera House be an exception?

vincent a galea (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

By what stretch of the imagination can the PM ride roughshod over such personalities as Profs Peter Serracino Inglott, world tenor Joseph Calleja, and others !

Another famous Italian Architect, TREVISAN, has submitted EXCELLENT plans for the site of the Opera House. And according to him this will cost us FIFTEEN MILLION EUROS!

NEED ONE SAY MORE!!

As for the proposed UNSIGHTL PARLIAMENT BUILDING on STILTS in the most HILARIOUS position in Valletta, I think I have at last cracked the 'MYSTERY' ! Knowing that PARLIAMENT is not the present PM's monopoly, he will not want any other future PM sitting MAJESTICALLY on such a MARVELLOUSLY POSITIONED SITE as FORT ST ELMO, GLORIOUSLY enjoying the OPEN VIEWS on this PRIME POSITION in whole of the MEDITERRANEAN!!!

Adrian Borg Cardona (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

I totally disagree with P'iano's planned roofless theatre mainly as it forces us lose an opportunity to develop the theatre we really need. It will be 20 million euros down the drain, Perhaps a solution would be to leave this as a monument to the war against fascism and nazism and build a proper (roofed) theatre elsewhere. Ta'Qali comes to mind. We could replace the existing open air theatre there - which is hardly ever used. It would solve the parking problems too. I know this is not ideal as the best site would be in our capital city. I also fear that the PM and Minister Gatt are not really bothered by the arts. Remember that it was they who closed down Radju Bronju!

J Cardona (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

@j ebejer

May I remind you, that the Royal Opera House site happens to conjoin with Freedom Square, therefore the argument of there not being enough space is ludicrous... There is actually enough space to build one of Europe's biggest opera houses (!!) with all the facilities you could possibly ask for - if you expand onto freedom square.

Is it only the Parliament project that's getting in the way... and nobody asked for a new Parliament (PM aside) only a new Opera house!!

Jon Vercellono (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Sometimes, the people really do know best - despite what may be said on the worth of the peoples' opinions on the internet (how can we argue with a great architects' vision)? We who love the arts can argue with it. Listen, even Catania has an Opera House; and I don't think it was enlarged or improved over the years. Barry designed it, and if it wouldn't have been bombed, it would still be there, and productions would still be occurring. So where's the argument? Nothing would be fake, it's simply putting back what was there. We don't have to build the Met of New York here, or anything that gigantic but simply a great venue that considers its audience, and location. Dresden didn't opt for new structures in place of its bombed buildings, and neither did Warsaw. There's no logic to ignoring the peoples' opinions, and those of the artists.

H Dempster (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

On behalf of my late grand father MAESTRO JOSIE MALLIA PULVIRENTI i wish to sign the petition as well.

S Bencini (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

My dear fellow citizens,

We can sadly say that today we are being held hostage by the personal obsession of one single man... The fly in the ointment is that this man happens to be our "dictator" for the next three years and there is nothing we can do about it - before the next election!

He WILL squander our last chance for a beautiful classic Opera House in Valletta and he will also squander €100,000,000 of our money to fulfill his ludicrous objective... A comfy parliament, a few steps from the city gate!

We can only stand by the side of this huge construction site with tears trickling down our cheeks, while we watch our beloved Capital city being violated by this one man! What a sad thought!

However, we will make sure that Lawrence Gonzi will go down in history as the Prime Minister who refused to listen to the will of his nation.

For sure, this issue alone, will cost him my vote!

Ray de Bono (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Consultation! Consultation! Consultation! And please, if one is building a hospital - he/she doesn't just go taking vox-pops on the street... Doctors and medical professionals are consulted...and health care specialists are involved in the decision making process. Here we have a theatre being built (albeit by a world-leading architect), that is apparently being projected WITHOUT the support of Malta's leading performing artists and culture/arts exponents. If we don't have the money to complete it with a roof (which seems to be the reason for an incomplete deal), then let it wait... A few years down the line, when the pocket allows, we can erect a proper theatre to adorn our capital. We surely deserve better! Ps. Where there alternative plans created by Renzo Piano? Can we see them?If you agree and feel free to join the purposely created Facebook group which aims to create some pressure on this theme with the competent authorities.. (No to roofless theatre in Valletta!)http://www.facebook.com/photo_search.php?oid=352126593031&view=use_r#!/group.php?gid=352126593031&gid=352126593031

j ebejer (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

The need for a properly designed national theatre is not in doubt. What is in doubt is whether the site of the opera house is appropriate.

Just putting a roof over Piano's design would not be enough to provide the national theatre that the petitioners are asking for. There would be the need for a complete redesign including a much larger stage, a large fly tower over the stage, much larger back stage facilities and substantial volumes dedicated to air-condition and other services.

As much as one would wish the national theatre to be sited within the Capital, this appears impractical and therefore an alternative site outside the Capital, but possibly within easy reach of Valletta, should be identified.

The draft National Cultural Policy issued recently states as follows: “Malta needs a versatile, dedicated space which can accommodate workshop areas, and large scale dance, theatrical and musical productions with adequate backstage areas and facilities. This should be developed within the wider framework of major urban redevelopment measures, with sensitivity towards community and residents’ needs.”

The opera house site is not the right place to put such a facility.

Joe Pace (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

@J Abela

If I were an architect, I would not be pleased that YOU labelled me a know-it-all!

How would you like it if your doctor came along and suddenly decided to start you on a treatment regime without your say in it? Doctors are highly trained individuals after all: what do you know about your own health?

More democracy please!

L. Aquilina (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

As a valletta resident since birth, I think the best option is to rebuild it in Barry's style. No one can deny that it is what the majority of the Maltese want deepdown. I am sure that those who love the city will agree, even though Barry's style was not Baroque. The fact that so many pictorial and structural representations of the old theatre have been nostalgically reproduced over the years must have been saying something. I wish the maltese and generations to come could experience the same feeling, as people who remember it once felt when looking up at the theatre's imposing structure.

Sara Falconi (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

The importance of a 'purposely built public space for creative expression' must not be underestimated if we seriously believe in a culture-led regeneration of Valletta (which will involve the whole Country).

Culture and the Arts are instrumental in socio-economic development and community renewal.

Malta would only benefit from re-installing this building as a functional hub for culture.

We have a great opportunity and it should be used wisely: why not a proper public consultation process for this project? Why don't consider Giovanni Trevisan's proposal for which he dedicated so much energy? Why don't invite him to explain his idea?

Julian Esposito (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Where do I sign?

J. Scicluna (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Get Eddie anytime !

J Farrugia (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

PLEASE PLEASE Mr Prime Minister do listen to me, the voice of reason and logic. Leave this hole as it is, a memorial to the long lasting stupidity of the Maltese people. Dont try to build this hot spot. Dont crash the dissenters, not those who signed this petition. Listen just to the voice of reason. Leave this hole as it is. Dont try to build it. THANK YOU.

M. Vella (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Now i'm beginning to understand what "Flimkien kollox possibli" really meant ! Lawrence and Austin deciding on their own on what they think is the best way forward while ignoring the rest of the populations opinions and concerns. This is a real shame ! Spending all those millions of euros on a senseless project ! Unfortunately these two politicians do not want to listen to :

1) the Valletta business stake holders who are asking for further parking facilities instead of the hundreds of spaces which have already been removed and the further hundreds of parking spaces which are going to be removed instead of the yellow garage, the ditch and freedom square,

2) the artists who believe the construction of an open air theatre is much less favourable than a roofed theatre that can be used all the year round no matter what the weather is like!

3) The thousands of maltese who believe that Valletta needs a proper smart doorway and not a hole in the bastions as its entrance!

Is this "il- Visjoni 2015" !!!

jcmicalef (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

I'd like to join the voice and thoughts of Charles Sammut - that Malta can do better with a smaller parliament. We need to change the way politics work.

Instead of electing gratified village lawyers (and dentists and shop owners) why can't we have a smaller parliament, and instead source the ideal people for the jobs? Those who wish to contribute can be headhunted and 'employed' - as long as they are capable.

Charles Sammut (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

@ Stephen Florian

While it is true that the Germans dropped the bomb that destroyed the Opera House, it is also true that German prisoners of war offered to rebuild it at nominal cost.

How's that for German love of the arts? If I were Angle Merkel and you come up with thi sone, I would tell you in no uncertain terms what you could do with your 65 year old theatre ruins.

It was the General Workers' Union that objected at the time, because they held that allowing Germans to do the building was tantamount to taking jobs from the Maltese. I don't see the GWU protesting at the jobs that illegal immigrants are taking from the Maltese now. How's that for hypocrisy?

Joe Azzopardi (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

2) I do concur that " Malta still needed a fully-fledged purposely-built space for the performing arts" but this should function manly to foster creativity and quality and not

“ cater for the needs of artists, which are not being addressed in the existing theaters”.

The quality deficit is admired to by the signatories themselves "Only in this way can we guarantee that this provides the high-quality performances that Malta, and any performance space, aspire to". It is my conviction that quality comes from the performer not the space.

“They said that ultimately, the performance space should not be seen as a monument”. I bag to differ on this point. Any such building should be conceived as a monument. But apart from this, the signatories fail to realise that the site is already a monument. It would have been expected that they, of all people, could and should appreciate this fact and the efforts made by Renzo Piano to preserve it as such and to give it back to all Maltese rather than to an elitist lot. Don't forget that the space will function as a public square when not is use for performances.

Joe Azzopardi (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

1) No wonder that, with a very few and significant exception, the art products on offer in Malta are what they are ie an amalgama of repetitive acts lacking in originality and betraying very little creativity.

It seems that the protagonists of the arts themselves, even the most respected ones, are not creative enough to envisage the grandness and the possibilities offered by this space. A valid artist should be able to uses what is offed to him/her and us creativity to offer something new and challenging. But I suppose most of these people are to confy in their cushy self-congratulating circles to challenge the Status Quo.

The signatories write

“This project also throws up a number of logistical and financial problems ". What about the financial problems created by running a performing space such as that envisaged by them? Can they, looking a things objectively, guarantee that what they offer will be of such quality and appeal that it will generate sufficient funds to sustain it. Leaving quality aside statistic and reports show that appeal, particularly to the newer public, is missing in all performing arts.

H Dempster (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Absolute rubbish. where is the old beautiful architecture which once doned our capital city, where the great Maestros use to direct magical music and opera . This is a monument not a playground. It is evident that the government is giving more importance on the new parliament than on this monument. The great Maestros , like Nani and my grand father < Josie Mallia Pulvirenti will turn in their grave when they see what is happening to Royal opera house. Come on Gonzi , give it back to us.

Carmel Cilia (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

I would leave everything as it is and just put a notice on that very convenient T.V. screen nearby reading something like this:- This is what Malta received sixty five years ago from the European Disunion of those times' Today we are going to use the money needed to restore it to buy the necessary medecine for those same people who suffered then as young children deprived of food and every necessity just to satisfy the power lust by the same countries with whom today we are so enamoured.

I will not say please to the man who is supposed to be there to do the will of the people.

Franco Farrugia (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

@ Albert Debono: So, in your opinion, all the above-mentioned artists are wrong and not forward-looking! A roofless theatre is no new concept! Even the Romans constructed such theatres!!!! Another thing: no human being is 'great'. We are all fallible people and we are all people who are not 100 per cent correct all the time - and that includes Piano.

Mary Mizzi (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

There is much much more on the common citizen's mind to worry on that polemics on roofless theatres.

All this artistic talent should not be wasted on futile protests to put a roof over their acts, why not organise themselves and do some collecting themselves.

Diversive tactics.

R. Caruana (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Of course, one very simple solution would be to leave things as they are, and we'll have no theatre at all.

Open air theatres abound in most European countries, especially those who have reasonably good weather. We have enclosed theatres and all those connected with culture know well enough that they are underutilised. A case in point was the Radio City theatre where I attended many an opera as a boy. It practically fell into disuse, posed as a cinema for some years and then sold to the PL to become their new HQ. So many other large theatres went the same way, demolished or turned into shopping malls. So why do we need another enclosed theatre when the theatre-going community is so small?

Hands up those who remember theatre performances at the Alhambra, Plaza, Radio City, Hollywood, Gaitery, Lyric, Orpheum, Rialto.... Most of these were 750-1000 seaters, for those who do not know them.

Charles J. Buttigieg (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

The cry of all the mass demonstrations in the world, public perceptions, petitions, NGO's protests and the opposition in parliament are totally impotent when it comes to convincing Laurence Gonzi to change a harmful decision. The only way which makes Gonzi steer away from a collision course is to have only one of his MP's reminding him that his or her vote in parliament would get him and his government down.

Lara Vella (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Whoever came up with this idea of having a roofless theatre clearly doesn't understand in performing arts and the importance of having a roof in such cases. It is already hard enough to find a venue to perform, by giving us a "headless horseman" things aren't going to get any better!

In Malta the government does not invest enough in the arts - and it is a shame to have a bum deal!

Charles Caligari Conti (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Hear ! Hear !
Or should we say Listen ! Listen !

There also remains -
A Hole in the Wall instead of a Majestic Gate for Valletta and

Parliament that will be placed in a 'Pjazza' that is used for Carnival. Apart from being Claustrophobic, this will also block the view to St. James Cavalier.... which open view and open space which was one of the initial considerations of the project.

Valletta should be respected for what it is - a world heritage city

Listen ! Listen !

Marco Busutill (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

It may be that for our politicians theatre goes no further than their mass meetings in the open air.

That has to be the reasoning for such a silly and stupid idea of an open air theatre which will hardly ever be used

Carmel Garcia (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Rattab dik ir-ras iebisa li ghandek Gonz, ghax se titfa lilek u lil partit nazzjonalista ghal xi ghoxrin sena jekk mhux izjed fl-oppozizjoni terga u l-htija tkun kollha tieghek. Teatru bla saqaf qisu ragel bla xaghar.

Ahjar flok ser nonfqu l-fuq minn tlett miljun f'bicca pont bla uzu fil-breakwater nuzawhom biex insaqqu t-teatru.

albert debono (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

Im no artist myself so i have to acknowledge that i cannot have such a deep insight. but i do read some sense in the fact that this is a new concept worth trying out!, even more if as is being declared by a great architect the location does not provide for a closed theatre!

Im for this project if this project. And Im sure many of those shooting it down today have the best opportunity of being amongst those who with creative twists find new avenues of use for this new venture!

This is a new space for new artists with new ideas!

I also like the design by the way...its different :)

Franco Farrugia (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

@ p curmi - Din mhix kwistjoni ta' 'favour' jew 'kontra'.Din hija kwistjoni ta' nuqqa a' qbil fuq parti minn progett. Ma noqghodux nitfghu botti partiggjani li ma jwassl ghal imkien - li naghmuhom sempliciment ghax ghandna isimna mohbi!!! Inkunu maturi u nidhlu f'argument biex narrikkuh u mhux biex nuru kemm ahna mohh zghir u batut.

M Chetcuti (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

WHERE ABOUT IN THE CENTER OF OLD CITIES IN EUROPE SUCH UGLINESS DO EXIST.

This roofless theatre seems more like an NEW costruction site being developed with

"SCAFFOLDING" on the inside.

Dear PM wake up please and do consider the true 128 experts on the matter.

Anthony Briffa (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

@ Sandro Pace

Have you ever been to the 'Arena di Verona? If so can you tell us how many times you have been there. As far as tenor Joseph Calleja is concerned, will he perform at the Arena if he is invited to do so? At the Arena every year there is an opera season , which last from the beginning of summer till late September, and one has to book seats and even hotels in Verona from a year in advance. This besides the other concets, which are held throughout the year.

John Montanaro (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

As Actor and also on Behalf of Mellow Drama - PLease add me to this list - You might as well keep it as a carpark...There is no use for an open air Theatre in Malta!!!

D Fenech (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

This attitude of I can so i will is being stretched to its limit with obvious consequences for the present generation and that of the future.

Can you hear us Mr. Gonzi?

WE DO NOT WANT A ROOFLESS THEATRE!

Michel Bencini (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

And the drama goes on after that fatal bomb hit the theatre so many decades ago. Why not rebuild it to the exact dimensions and majestic style it once had? The German government should fork out the expense. After all, Germany had destroyed it. Lest we forget, if it were not for American money, Germany would not have resurrected itself so successfully from the tragedy and vicssitudes of an ill advised war which is not as of yet forgotten. Venturing into Valletta and beholding the sorry site of the ruined building does not bode well for a country which is now part of the European Union.

Mark Seychell (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

J Abela

With your reasoning, no one ought to ever petition anything ever again since they do not have the expertise. How frightfully illogical of you.

I am not an artist, but I do consider myself an enthusiast and would like to give the encouragement these 128 deserve. Come on PM, the population is this close to falling on its knees for you to listen. For the sake of our children, and our children's children, please swallow your pride.

David Micallef - Stagemanager (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

#130 ...my participation didn't manage to make it on time for publication/presentation, although submitted with the rest.

Joseph V. Grech (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

I wish to thank all those who signed the petition. May I beg the Hon. Prime Minister yet again to heed the wishes and the concerns of his people...please!

To err is human but

It is never too late to rethink. Please put the interests of our lovely Valletta uppermost.

May each and every M.P. prevail on our P.M. to spare Valletta this shattering blow!

Joe Micallef (2 weeks, 2 days ago)

It is now obvious that Piano's concept is beyond our threshold of acceptable innovation.

In view of this given that there is quite a gathering of artists I believe that Government should consider covering the theatre or better still develop site according to their expectations. The government should fund development and lease completed theatre to same gathering or an association of same artists for management and financing of operations.

The government should continue investing public money in the facilities that already exist some of which need considerable improvement like the school of music. Funds should also be allocated for the setting up of a secondary school with a focus on performing and visual arts.

C Attard (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Fejn gej il-monument ta' Sette Giuogno... Ghax xejn ma intqal fid-diskusjoni li sar dan l-ahhar mal-Perit Renzo Piano? ghalix ma narawx il-proposta li qed joffri il-Perit Trevisan dwar it-teatru... Jien l-idea tieghi halli jigi hafna irhas jitwqqa kollox ake il-flats u issir pjazza kbira miftuha b'monument kif jixraq ta la vallette u monument iehor nazzjonali li jghaqqad il-Maltin, Bhal tal -ibliet fl-ewropa... Il-Parlament imurr fil-berga tal-Italja fejn Kastilja u il-flats jinbnew fuq l-istill tal-faccata dawk li hemm il-Ballutta sbieh minflok it teatru rjal u teatru kbir u komdu jinbena fuq il car park tal furjana. u hemm bzonn tinbena triq ezatt bhal Triq Gilormu Cassar ta quddiem Kastilja li tigi ghan nahha ta hastings Garden jekk ha tispicca it triq ta' fuq bieb il-belt. u bieb il-belt jinbena jerga qiau bhal ma kien fl antik bl-arma ta Malta u Tal-belt fuq

Dylan Olliver (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

I fully agree with all these renowned artists, but it's a big waste of time, as we have a Prime-Minister who does not want to listen

Stephen Florian (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

No, Dr. Gonzi will not listen. He will go ahead with his plans and look at us with that empty smile of his. Politicians do not love art as they are in direct competition with it. There you are, Malta has created yet another political monster...one more for the list of incompetent idols.

It would not be a bad idea to let German President Angela Merkel know about this madness, after all they dropped the bomb in 1942. It would be interesting to know the name of the pilot and if he is still around. It is time we took art in Malta seriously Dr. Gonzi.

A. Farrugia (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Sur Prim Ministru, nassigurak li ma dik il lista, li kellhom jingabru il firem ta nies ordinarji li jopponu bis shih dwar il progett ta teatru, il lista tant titwal li taqtalek nifsek . Min Qalbi qed nghidlek biex terga u terga tahsibha, ghax possibli dawn in nies ta kultura, li qed jopponu ma jifhmux !!!

Wesley Ellul (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

@J Abela

So in your mind it would be best not to consult the people using the space? Its common sense - If your building a carpenter's workshop, you consult the carpenters who are going to use it... They may have special needs such as larger doors, or higher celings etc...

What is the point in having an aesthetically pleasing theatre that no one uses? To sit there and rot?

These theatre practitioners speak from experience. Having myself been the artistic director of MADC, and having produced a 2 outdoor shows in the ruins of the opera house i can tell you it is no mean feat as one faces a mountain of obstacles.

Beyond the obvious like sound pollution and weather, there are also the technical aspects. For example lighting. In the summer months (when this theatre may be used), the sun sets from between 8 and 9, which means one can only work on lighting after that time, (a normal show normally takes 8 - 12 hrs to light including light setup).

Shows must start later (thus disturbing neighbors), how about bars? The List is endless!

J.Borg (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

BACK BENCHERS PLEASE NOTE

Please pass on our appeal to the PM. Why does the PM keeps on ignoring all advice he gets on many different fronts. Why? Back benchers...you too represent us. Please do something now. Do not go public but do something drastic. We cannot keep on being governed with artificial public consultations.... Back benchers....if you do not amplify your actions now...it will be too late. It is already late. PM Gonzi is disappointing the very people who voted him to power. Look at the list of who endorsed this petition.... And look at how many things the PM has ignored....not just feedback on Piano's proposals but also recommendations by a number of entities to have a major cabinet reshuffle. I feel ashamed and disappointed to see how we are being treated.

Ivan Attard (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Just who are most of these 128 'artists' and 'experts' ???!!!! (Joseph Calleja excluded obviously).

Malta sure does produce quality AND quantity!!!!

Lewis Ellul (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

It's all a waste of time. You'll have as much success changing Gonzi and Gatt's minds as the unions and everybody else had over the hike in then utility bills. And it's not a question of obstinacy - it's just pig-headedness. Anyone for tennis?

M. Brincat (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

I would like to add my thought. If the roofless theatre was initially Piano's idea, then I would like to question his knowledge in such matters.

If, on the other hand, it was the Government's idea, then I STILL question Piano's expertise, since of he is really the expert everyone would like us to believe he is, then how come he accepted this idea when it seems it's not technically viable?

g.c.Forte (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

"128 artists petition P.M. against roofless theatre"... As a normal citizen I have been saying that I am against the whole project of Mr. Renzo Piano, especially the theater from day one. Where have these artists been, all this time. It is not fair that you let the P.M. go to France to meet Piano again. You should have spoken from the beginning. I hope that this is not sort of a tactic so our P.M. blame the artists for not doing the theater, so he will not kneel in front of the common citizen, for the farce of this project. Some thing fishy going on. Another national problem that you created your self...Dr. Gonzi. You better listen from the majority of the public and scrap the whole project. Don't waste our money .

M. Farrugia (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

I wonder why the Prime Minister had to choose a foreign architect... it gives me the impression that the Prime Minister doesn't trust Maltese architects. If all of Valletta, or at least the majority of it, was made by a Maltese architect, Ġerolamo Cassar, why shouldn't the theatre be made by a Maltese architect?

clive borg (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Lets hope the PM for a once consider and discuss with others that are more keen in their area of work, in this case the artists, rather than going for what Renzo Piano has designed..

Steve Compagno (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Give us Giovanni Trevisan's theatre!! He has given us a wonderful proposal and yet this Government is trying to take us all for another ride by telling us it wants to regenerate Valletta! All they want is to have a short walking distance to Parliament! (because they never car-pool, mind you!) That's it! Everyone knows that! Out of 80million Euros, how much would a couple of stupid poles cost to erect? I could have done a better project for my Systems of Knowledge project in my days! Where's the "we have to be sensitive" to people's pulse, now? Isn't this a pulse of the people? Stop being arrogant and give us what we want - something decent for once!!

Roderick Micallef (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Ooohh what a pity, all these artists that most probably the majority of them have voted Gonzi PN in the last election are now crying to their beloved prime minister to reconsider the roofless theatre.

I only pity the minority, those minority that voted Labour because they at least didn't vote for it, they deserve some respect but any one that voted for it should now enjoy it.

But I guess we need much more then just a roofless theatre and a Renzo Piano project, I am amazed at how ridiculous this government has become, one day we are told that we are in a financial recession and that the country has a huge challenge ahead and the next day we come out boasting on spending 80 million Euros on City Gate and in building a new parliament.

Will this be another saga like Mater Dei? Will the costs be double of the original plan? Will the new parliament be smaller in size to the previous one just like Mater Dei is smaller to St.Luke's was?

But why do I bother, GonziPN isn't into negotiations with Joe Public because GonziPN now knows that next election will be won by PL

M.Vassallo (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Where shall arrogance by someone whose is supposed to serve stop? Dear Dott Gonzi, please stop thinking that you are an expert in everything because you are our Prime Minister for a while more!

K Micallef (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

I second the motion...actually, I 129th rather than 2nd!!

Frans Attard (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

It-tejatron għadu mwaqqa, ilu sebgha w sittin sena rmied
U hekk ser jibqa għal dejjem, minkejja li l-kotra tibnieh mill-gdid trid.

Andrea Portelli (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Joseph Calleja, John Schranz, Philip Mizzi, Niki Gravino....

woah this is really saying something!!!!

I hope the Prime Minister considers this horrible to-be theatre!!!!

david vella (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

I could have done that piece of architecture for free my fellow countrymen! But...
But.... do they pay thousands for that crap????? Tomorrow I'm off to E.T.C to sign
up as an architectural engineer with no roofs!!!!!!

Henry J Bonett (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

As a Maltese citizen, I salute the signatories of this petition. Malta needs a proper
theatre for arts. A new parliament, does not justify the expense; still less the excuse
to embellish Valletta. I do pray reason prevails.

Christian Tanti (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Consider me another addition to the list. We have enough open theatres in Malta
and there s no need of another venue with limited use. Although our most influential
and successful musicians, visual artists, actors, cultural experts and others involved
in the creative arts have clearly stated that a roofless theater is plain maddness it
seems clear that people in politics (please note the small p) are not in tune with the
obvious reality of this situation.

Ps: On a side note it is much better to invest more in a roofed theater which could
eventually contribute something to our GDP than having a monumental floating
parliament spilling light pollution and dwarfing to insignificance the adjacent
proposed roofless theater.

Andrew Camilleri (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Bunch of traitors!! How dare they criticize the King..err Prime Minister? Throw them
all into jail, cancel their public funding and throw the key away!

N.Lawrence (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Sorry to have to tell you guys that your petition is a waste of time. Malta is blessed
with a 'dictator' who THINKS he knows what is best according to his blinkered vision
and any PROFESSIONAL advice is there to be ignored.

Ian Galea (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

These 128 learned opinionists are right to criticise this rookie architect who is
designing his first theatre!! ... Give us all a break and stick to singing or acting or
whatever it is you do. How dare you criticise someone who is revered the world over
for his architectural masterpieces!!

Norman Lowell (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

An unfolding tragedy.
The ruination of a noble city: Valletta.
Sheer madness.

A principle of High Politics:
"Short term gain for the Elite - means long term loss for the Nation".
The Piano Project is a case in point.

Our country needs a new Elite.
An Elite of High Culture Bearers.
Only then, can regeneration, resurgence resume.

Peter Borg (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Lawrence why do you do this? You're shooting yourself in the leg!

...Eddie would have behaved differently

Ian Bugeja (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

I cannot understand why there is this opposition against the roofless theatre. This site has been roofless for the past 55 years and in the recent years performances have been carried out already. Malta has the ideal climate for such a project and although I'm no artist i think it is a good investment.

One must consider that the site is a pile of rubble and it deserves to be treated like a monument. The 80 million budget would not be enough to build it to its former glory. Enough time has passed since it was destroyed and maybe it's time to put this idea to rest.

I really hope that Valletta gets the entrance it deserves and I think piano is on the right track.

Jesmond Micallef (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Honourable Prime Minister,

On the architecture side of things, please demolish the building which houses the Law Courts of Malta and reconstruct a building whose architecture is more appropriate !!! Same principle applies here !!!

P Pace (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Gonzi is going to end up alone.... even Peter Seracino is now against him!!!
wow!!

Not sure what is wrong with this guy suddenly, but he cannot get one right, and seem to be digging a deeper hole. Also the guy seems to have become paranoid and very stubborn!!

In his first years, I don't think he had this style..... I think he is feeling the pressure from his own people.....

Eric Gahn (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Local pastizzeriji are in for some hard competition this year since it seems that GonziPN is intent on making bigger and better qassattat than anyone else in the islands un-short history.

Henry Jacobs (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

The Government has over the years invested substantially in places like MCC and St James. They have been misled to believe that these are theaters. Really and truly the only theatre in MALTA is the Manoel Theatre but this is way too small and has no backstage.

p curmi (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

iva issa anke Peter kontra tieghek Gonz??

Joe Anastasi (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Forget petitions from outside. This guy won't even listen to his own insiders.

As a tax paying citizen I demand that my taxes are spent sensibly. We need decent roads far more than government needs a new parliament, or a theatre that nobody will go to, or for that matter a gate that shows off Piano's fantasies but not Malta's history, culture and character.

J Abela (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

128 qualified and world famous architects who studied architecture in all its aspects. Why do we have architects in the first place! we should ask these people to design our theatre. I wonder what offensive thing they would come with....

D. Fenech (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

I just hope our dear PM will listen to these professionals. I'm a musician as well, although not a professional one, but I can fully understand Ms Hall's comment. When a band, orchestra, musicians, singers play or sing outside, the quality of the sound will be decreased dramatically, no matter what's done. It's a fact. Not to mention the noise from the surrounding areas. I try to avoid using this word, but this is plain stupid!! Please take note of this petition!!!

Charles Sammut (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Malta does not need a new parliament house. Malta needs a smaller parliament because we have now seen that half the MPs are there biex isahhnu ls-siggu biss. 35 MPs would be enough for tiny Malta and would save us a lot of money too.

It is time to organise a national protest against this rape of Valletta. No politics and no agendas, just the will to save Valletta from Gonzi and Piano.

sandro pace (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

A roofless theatre can never replace the artistic and acoustic 'warmth' of an enclosed one. However, enclosing a theatre is not just putting a roof on it. Design alone may cost lots of money. But it would be money well invested in culture.

On the other hand, this country does not need a new parliament. Ironically, when private companies are shrinking their space and putting workers in crowded conditions further still, our politicians' excuse is that they need a larger parliament. How pathetic. Probably even MPs at Westminster have lower space per person. Our MPs can still do their job effectively where they are. So a new parliament is a really

waste of money, which is not going to add value to anything.

The new theatre as it is, is ugly and seem an unfinished business.

Gabriella Micallef Trigona (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Such a waste of public funds to build a theatre you cannot use at least six months a year! It only requires plain common sense to realise the entire project is ludicrous- but then 'common sense' is not as common as the name might imply.....

R Axisa (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Impossibbli biex il-PM ma jismax minn dawn l-esperti! Jekk le, min jaf ghaliex???? Saret xi tip ta' diskussjoni fuq dan il-progett tat-teatru ma' nies professjonali fit-teatru?

Andrew Mangion (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Dawn kollha lejburisti! Immishom jisthu! Dak bla saqaf biex jiffrankaw id-dawl fis-Sajf u l-ilma fix-Xitwa.

philip pace (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

As being involved in numerous events in the last 30 odd years in various types of entertainment in Malta and abroad, I fully agree and would join the 128 artists regarding this petition.

Should this roofless theatre materialise then Maltese Art in general shall suffer and the finger can be clearly pointed to the PM.

Other artists involved and not mentioned in this petition please join and write your disapproval.

Mario Camilleri (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

I guess we will have people writing in this blog saying that this petition is politically motivated and that all these artist are LP supporters and that they are being maneuvered by J Muscat...right?????

we have a government who is always right in everything. in 25 years in office the PN never admitted 1 mistakeand the roofless theatre is the last example of this long chain. we are fed up of this arrogance and the know it all attitude.

Jesmond Micallef (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

WOW, I wouldn't like to be in the Prime Ministers shoes, reading this article here !!!!

I am still in favour of the idea, both in function and as a somewhat "clever" monument, too, the theatre without a roof !!!

It goes without saying but that's only my opinion.

Kevin Zammit (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

But its ok to spend 80 million on a parliament building that we do not need! Go on feed the masses with more mediocrity.

I read the newspaper daily and I am ashamed to say I had not heard Mr. Lauri before. I did for the first time last week and only because I was accompanying someone else.

It was truly an amazing performance that anyone with even a mediocre sense of the

arts could not but appreciate.

Is there some grand scheme being worked out somewhere not to get more people to appreciate the arts? Or is it that the people in the know feel that the rest of us are just not worth it?

Rebecca Hall - musician (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Please consider me number 129. I cannot describe how many concerts I have played where music has blown away, dust and poor lighting, not to mention terrible acoustics have disturbed the sound, birds have flown over top and contributed in their own inimitable way to the performance....

Laurence Zerafa (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Will our Prime Minister listen?
