

Carnival enclosure to be set up at Valletta bus terminus

by Elaine Attard

The carnival enclosure, where spectators annually watch the carnival dances and the floats show, is this year to be set up at the Valletta terminus, the carnival float makers association has been informed.



Carnival will be held this year in March.

Speaking to The Malta Independent, the float makers association president, Jason Busuttil, said he is positive and looking forward to this year's carnival, even though it is going to be different from previous years because of the on-going City Gate project. At the moment barriers encircle the old theatre ruins, the area where the former City Gate shops used to stand and Freedom Square.

"This is probably the last time that carnival will be held at City Gate. The float defilé will pass through the Valletta streets and then through City Gate as usual. The defilé can pass through City Gate for the final time before this is dismantled once and for all, and the dances will be held in the enclosure which will be set up near the terminus, closer to the Tritons fountain," Mr Busuttil said, sounding nostalgic.

Replying to a parliamentary question by MP Owen Bonnici last November, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said carnival activities were expected to take place in Valletta and Floriana. The initial plan was to have the dance shows in St George's Square and the float defilés in Floriana.

Meanwhile, works to reduce the terminus in size in preparation for the upcoming transport reform have started on the lower side of the terminus closer to the ditch.

"I can't imagine how Floriana would cope with five days of carnival, and, anyway, the Valletta suburb is not traditionally linked with carnival," Mr Busuttil pointed out.

The carnival enthusiasts were not too keen on the St George's Square idea, because the government did not want to allow a spectators' stand

to be put up, as used to be done in Freedom Square.

“The tourism parliamentary secretary intervened and we reached a compromise. We are happy that the enclosure will be used despite all the rumours,” he said.

“The area around the Tritons fountain will get a new look for the five days of carnival this year. It will offer a perfect backdrop for our floats and dances. Valletta served as the home of the Maltese carnival for the past 400 years, and it should remain like that,” he added.

Meanwhile, works on the floats and preparation for the dances are in full swing. The float makers are promising a high-quality carnival this year, but their hopes of having their own carnival village seem to have faded.

“Over the past year some float makers were evicted from Luqa, but were given an alternative site also in Luqa. The plans are still very hazy and I cannot see the carnival village concept happening anytime soon,” he said.
