

Sunday, 28th September 2008 – TimesofMalta.com

***Notte Bianca* organisers learn from the past**

Patrick Cooke



Tens of thousands have attended the previous two editions of Notte Bianca.

Crowds flocking to this year's Notte Bianca will be treated to the largest and most varied programme to date, according to creative director Peter Busuttil, who has dedicated the past two months to ensuring that the cultural and social extravaganza is a resounding success.

Tens of thousands of people are expected to pack Valletta on Saturday night for the third annual Notte Bianca, with over 100 events scheduled across the capital.

The festival will run till at least 4 a.m., with activities going on through the night.

For the first time, all Heritage Malta museums and sites in Valletta will be open to the public free of charge.

Mr Busuttil hopes that this will not only encourage tourists, but also the Maltese to learn more about the country's heritage.

Mr Busuttil says that organisers have learnt the lessons of the previous two festivals and have planned this year's accordingly.

To avoid having excessive concentrations of people in certain areas of the city centre, this year's Notte Bianca has been extended to cover the area from City Gate to Auberge de Baviere.

Mr Busuttill says that whichever access point people decide to enter the city from, they will be greeted by a performance or activity to entertain them, which will limit the number of people immediately flocking to central landmarks.

To avoid confusion about events taking place, Maltese-language event programmes will be posted to 160,000 households in Malta and Gozo before the festival. A further 25,000 English-language event programmes will be distributed during the festival.

Performances at the Manoel Theatre, the old Opera House and other venues will be repeated throughout the evening to ensure that they can be viewed by the maximum number of people. There will also be a number of looped costume theatre performances taking place at roaming locations on the streets of Valletta.

In an attempt to reduce traffic congestion around Valletta, a park and ride system will be in operation and organisers are attempting to create new parking spaces. However, Mr Busuttill urged people to use public transport.

The organisers have attempted to ensure that the festival creates a lasting legacy for Valletta residents, some of whom are not happy that their locality is hosting tens of thousands of people in one night.

The event will attempt to breathe new life into old buildings that were once the hub of Valletta life. For example, the old market area will be transformed into a traditional tavern and crafts area for the evening.

Nearly all the streets will be adorned with the decorations of Valletta's parish feasts. Residents will also receive a 10 per cent discount at certain restaurants during the festival to encourage them to embrace it.

A 'Clean-Up Valletta' campaign will ensure that the capital is looking its best for the festival and that life returns to normal as soon as possible afterwards.

"This is one way of saying thanks to residents, who will be hosting the whole of Malta and Gozo," Mr Busuttill said.

Comments

Paul Mizzi (3 days, 10 hours ago)

""This is one way of saying thanks to residents, who will be hosting the whole of Malta and Gozo," Mr Busuttill said."

Many Valletta residents are proud about Valletta and are aware about the city's potential towards Maltese traditional and modern culture. The worry about Notte Bianca is that it is becoming a one-night stand affair with such a beautiful lady. The worry about Notte Bianca is the views of dirty streets and steps following the 4a.m. toll. The worry about Notte Bianca is the access in and out of the city for residents during the same night. The worry about Notte Bianca is that it might well be growing the love for the city but not the initiative throughout the year, but not the budgets in young couples' pockets for creating the real "new life into old buildings".

Valletta residents are in love with Valletta.

Marvin Mizzi (3 days, 12 hours ago)

Yes Mr. Busuttil we are not happy with this event and try to buy us with money will make us love the event even less. If you want that the residents to endorse such events it is important one thing let them live there lives and do not interfere in the private lives. On such days residents have to stay home so how do you think they can endorse it.

Franco Farrugia (4 days, 3 hours ago)

@ Mr Antoine Borg - Please, allow me to contradict you:

In Latvia, the event is called - balta nakts.

In Italy, the event is known as 'la notte bianca'.

In France, it is 'la nuit blanche'.

In Spain, 'la noche en blanco'.

In the USA, Las Vegas, the event was named 'Glow'.

It is true: it is a European series of events, but in Malta, we choose to call it: Notte bianca presumably because we do not trust that our Maltese language will attract the tourists we seek to attract.

In other words, we still have the colonialist mentality of rubbishing our language because we have this permanent inferiority complex where our language is concerned.

At the end of the day, no national event should be given a name in any foreign language.

Antoine Borg (4 days, 8 hours ago)

@F Farrugia,

The phrase "Notte Bianca" comes from the Italian "Fare una notte in Bianca". It is not written in Italian in an attempt at snubbing the Maltese language.

In English, for example, no one writes "kaput", "bungalow", "shampoo" or "helium" because they wish to snub the English language but because they are accepted as bona fide English words now. Likewise, the phrase is meant to evoke the imagery that the Italian phrase does and has become part of our lexicon - no matter what your native tongue is.

Franco Farrugia (4 days, 10 hours ago)

It is true that THE TIMES is an English-language newspaper.

But can it not find within itself the will to be in the forefront in the promotion of the Maltese language?

NOTTE BIANCA????? Why can't they use its Maltese equivalent in promoting this event? Why is it that some people and institutions find it so demeaning to use the Maltese language? And this applies to the Government departments!