

Malta Arts Festival 2008: '17 nights of culture and quality for all'

by Annaliza Borg

The third edition of the Malta Arts Festival, to be held between 1 and 17 July, will be presenting 26 events being performed by 226 artistes.



This festival is being described by its artistic team as "a celebration of the arts and a feast for the senses". It is said to impress even those who do not feel familiar with the arts.

"No culture can live if it tries to be exclusive," said Education and Culture Minister Dolores Cristina while explaining that far from being exclusive, such a festival will present "evenings of quality to all Maltese people".

The Malta Arts Festival is once again an attempt to make culture more accessible to all.

This year's programme will surely satisfy everyone's tastes, Ms Cristina said.

"The main aim of such a festival is to provide space for local and foreign artistes to collaborate together," said the festival's Artistic Director, Mario Frendo.

He explained that such events are being organised in light of the Year of Intercultural Dialogue being celebrated across Europe.

Another intention of the festival is to highlight contemporary art which, as Mr Frendo explained, "should not only be exhibited in museums".

This year's venues include The President's Palace, the Old Opera House ruins, St James Cavalier, and the Auberge d'Italie

in Valletta, Ghar id-Dud seafront in Sliema, and the Argotti Gardens in Floriana. The Malta Arts Festival will also be introducing to its audiences new venues for artistic events such as the La Vittoria Bastion at the Ospizio in Floriana.

Besides stirring the interest of local artistes to participate, this year's festival has also caught the attention of many foreign performers.

This shows not only the festival's popularity, but also that it is reaching high standards, Mr Frendo said.

Maltese pianist Stefan Cassar together with the French ensemble Stringendo will kick off this year's festival with a chamber music recital. Jazz, contemporary music, theatre and dance will also feature during the nights.

The festival comes to an end on 17 July with a concert by the Armed Forces of Malta Band together with the Ars Ludi Percussion Ensemble of Italy at the Opera House Ruins in Valletta.

In an effort to reach the widest possible audiences, The Malta Arts Festival is keeping its entrance ticket prices low, ranging between e8 and e15. Some events are also free of charge.

"Quality costs money," Mr Frendo said while expressing his gratitude towards the main sponsors; the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, the National Lotteries and Good Causes Fund within the Ministry of Finance, HSBC, Bank of Valletta, the Malta Tourism Authority and the Valletta Local Council.

More information including the calendar of events may be obtained from the websites: www.maltaculture.com and www.maltaartsfestival.com.
