



Qala International Folk Festival 3rd Edition

Info Pack



**Dipartiment tal-Kultura
U l-Arti – Ghawdex**



Ministry of Finance



Qala Local Council



St Julians Local Council



St Paul's Bay Local Council



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QALA INTERNATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL (QIFF)

25-28TH September 2008

By Dr. Raymond XERRI, Deputy Mayor of Qala

“Awakening the grandeur in our roots and heritage,” “National folklore is brought back to life” and “Qala brings together a fusion of local and international folklore in the modern age.” These are some of the most impressive comments made by locals and visitors to the second edition of the Qala International Folk Festival (2007). Others commented on the excellent performances made by both the Gozitan and foreign folk groups. Preparations are underway in full swing by the organizing committee and Menhir Qala Folk Group - the host group - for the third edition of this now well-established festival organized by the Qala Local Council in collaboration with a host sponsors.

Preparations for the upcoming edition started a few days after the previous edition ended - a year-long task. This third edition will attract to Gozo two European folk groups, one from Portugal and the other one from Serbia.

Grupo Danças e Cantares CTT Coimbra (Portugal)



The **Grupo Danças e Cantares CTT Coimbra** was founded in 1987 and its members are all colleagues working at a Portuguese Post Office and Portugal Telecom.

They began giving shows of singing and dancing, traditional and folk songs and dances of their own region of Coimbra, Portugal, which later on extended to all the other regions of the country, searching for new forms to show the folklore and custom of Portugal in a modern performance.

The songs and dances of the **Grupo Danças e Cantares CTT Coimbra** are related to the 'telling' of the stories about folklore of the people, land, religion, work and love. This group participated in several local and foreign countries such as Latvia, Cyprus, Malta, Norway, France and Ireland.

The KUD Zeleznicar (Serbia)

The KUD Zeleznicar is a folk group founded in 1946, its members being the workers of a Railway Company in Kraljevo, Serbia.



Nowadays KUD Zeleznicar has 180 registered members, two persons fully employed and five volunteers. KUD is managed by an executive committee consisting of seven members and their work is on a voluntary basis. The 180 members are divided in four groups mainly youths, adults, singers and also orchestrina. The main aim of KUD Zeleznicar folk group is to increase the awareness and study of Serbian national songs and dances, national costumes and tradition and its folklore. The folk group participates in several regional and state competitions and has won awards. They have participated also in foreign festivals amongst them in Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Hungary, Germany and Switzerland.

The Host Group - The Menhir Qala Folk Group

The Menhir Qala Folk Group, presently made up of 18 dancers, 7 musicians and a female singer, was originally set up to promote the local traditional Gozitan and Maltese folklore and traditions, with special reference to the village of Qala and its history. The Qala Local Council offered all its means and manpower to sustain the conception and growth of this folk group. The first official group inauguration took place on the 18th September 2004 in *Ġnien il-Familja* where a traditional Maltese night was organized with full co-operation of the Qala Local Council involving the participation of all the members of the group; the repertoire being several traditional Maltese dances and songs. Since its formation in 2003, the Menhir Qala Folk Group has participated in various local, national and international events and activities; mostly those organized by other local councils both in Malta and Gozo. It is worth mentioning here the first invitation abroad to Porto Roz in Slovenia last July 2005 for the Val Piran International Folklore Festival where we were representing the Maltese Islands amongst other foreign groups such as those from Portugal, Italia and of course the Slovenians.



For the near future the group is being enlarged with the involvement of four male dancers. Traditional costumes are worn and tools are used during the dances and songs to provide a better picture to the audience especially if tourists are present and when participating in international events abroad.



With great success our folk group participated at the Gozo International Celebration organised on 2 August 2006 in front an audience originating from 52 countries. The group also participated in popular national traditional activities such as the Mnarja in Buskett. In September 2007, the Menhir Qala Folk Group represented the Maltese Islands in another international folk festival in Serbia where several other foreign folk groups took part. This September we have just attended an international folk festival in the Czech Republic.

It-Tieg fl-Antik – A Traditional Maltese Wedding

An interesting feature for this year's 3rd Edition, is the re-enactment of a traditional Gozitan wedding, adding further to the kaleidoscope of traditional folklore events. The wedding will be officiated at Bishop Michael Buttigieg Square in front of the stone cross column, after which, a procession with the newly weds, will lead up to the Main Square of the village of Qala, where a typical 'festin' will be awaiting them serving traditional delicacies of the period. Most of the actors will be from the village, thus involving more the community in participating at this yearly event.

The Future is reflected in past successes

The previous two editions of the Qala International Folk Festival have attracted folk groups criss-crossing the European continent. In the first edition organized in 2006 two groups, the *Folklorno Drustvo VAL Piran* of Slovenia and the *Lu Cantastorie* of Lanciano of Italy offered a spectacular performance. An equally excellent performance was offered by last year's invited groups: the Shumen Group of Bulgaria and the Danaj Ensemble of the Czech Republic. The international dimension was accompanied by local talents drawn from just about all folk groups established in Gozo, namely, Astra Folk Group, Aurora Folk Group, *Għaqda Folkloristika tal-Qiegħa*, Mnarja Folk Group and Ta' Cangura Folk Group. Although performances were centered in Qala - the host village - performances were also given at the ancient capital of Malta, Mdina; Malta's capital, Valletta; at Xatt is-Sajjieda in St. Julians and Gozo's capital - Victoria.

Another aspect to this festival is the vast array of local '*artiġjanat*' or local art and crafts including lace, knitting, '*ganutell*', stained glass, woodwork, stone decorating, pottery, etc., all increasing their awareness of the rich craft heritage of the Maltese Islands - focused on Gozo. Unique local antiques from the previous four centuries, the local Ite ad Josef Band and local '*għana*' add further important ingredients to the QIFF.

With a vast collage of folk groups and culture, Qala is gradually emerging as the folk capital of the Maltese Islands.

The Versatile Brass Ensemble

The Versatile Brass Ensemble, formerly a brass quartet and later a quintet, played in several prestigious occasions amongst which in Terme Di Gianciano, Northern Italy. It then grew bigger in size and success as from the year 2000 when they were asked to represent the Maltese islands in the Expo 2000 in Hanover, Germany.

Since then, it has become well known and very highly recommended to highlight shows and give gigs of popular music both in Malta and also abroad, mainly in Italy.

The vast repertoire makes this ensemble versatile and very renowned for playing different kinds of music from Pop to Jazz, Swing, Latin, Rock 'n Roll, Twist, Soul music and also Classic numbers. Most of these keen professional members are all students of the leader of **The Versatile Brass**, *Paul Borg*, the Tuba player.

The band is constantly looking for new projects to undertake, and the success and the diversity of the band is due to the hard work and dedication of the players. All the arrangements of this unique combination are done by the same members.

This brass band, which features a number of professional elements, has plenty of talented musicians dotted around the stands and produce a warm and balanced sound allied to a technical clarity that is most impressive.

On their performances these fine musicians are like an unstoppable juggernaut of technical brilliance and detail, and there has been a subtle change in their balance and timbre in recent months that makes them now sound even warmer and so much better poised ensembles at both extremes of the dynamic range.

Most of the members are Brass Competition Winners with the London College of Music at the Thames Valley University. They are all top notch musicians, diploma and degree holders within the London and Trinity Universities and the Royal Academy. One of this Ensemble's euphonium players currently holds the post of Band Master of the Armed Forces of Malta, graduating in conducting at Norfolk in the U.S.A.

Paul, the founder and Musical Director of this ensemble is an expert in brass teaching and performing, composer and arranger. He currently holds the post of Principal Tuba player within the Malta National Orchestra.

This is a fantastic group of musicians who have come together to form an extraordinary brass band.

The Versatile Brass is a tremendous outfit to listen to, full of real verve and authentic brass band depth and warmth, a truly excellent ensemble.



Local Gastronomy

The people of Qala love their food and enjoy sharing their cuisine with their guests. This is one of the main reasons why the *Qalin* are organizing the **Qala International Folk Festival**, for you to share the genuine homemade and wholesome local gastronomy. The selection below is just an appetizer compared to the full range of food and beverages available at this event. Enjoy, eat and drink!



Ġbejniet
(Goat Cheese)
Tomatoes)



Kappar
(Capers)



Tadam imqadded
(Sun-dried



Ghasel
(Honey)



Imbid
(Wine)

Local Crafts – Made in Qala

An extensive variety of local crafts are carefully handmade and handcrafted by the people of Qala. As one can appreciate, despite the tiny size of our village, the *Qalin* produce an array of typical and traditional Gozitan and Maltese crafts. Below is just a glimpse into the big selection of crafts available at the **Qala International Folk Festival** to appreciate, purchase and learn the age-old secrets and techniques used!



Ganutell
(Gold & Silver embroidery)



Bizzilla
(Lace)



Fuħhar
(Pottery)



Kpiepel tal-Palm
(Palm-leaf hats)



Induratura
(Gold-leaf Gilding)



Ħgieg ikkulurit
(Stained Glass)

