Mdina: the old capital of new art

For the next two months, the Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale will showcase art in all its forms, from 27 countries.

Many of Mdina's beautiful sites will double up as an art space when the Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale kicks off. Leading artists from all over the world will have their pieces hanging in Malta's first capital city between 13 November 2015 and 7 January 2016.

The Biennale, with APS Bank as its main partner, opens officially with the prestigious APS Annual Concert on Friday, 13 November at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mdina at 8pm, when all the venues with the exhibits will also be open to the public. The concert will feature the premiere of the Stabat Mater composed by Euchar Gravina. The Malta Philharmonic Orchestra will be conducted by Mro Christopher Muscat, accompanied by soprano Andriana Yordanova and Coro Bel Canto, directed by Mro Hermann Farrugia Frantz.

This new edition of the Mdina Biennale, with the theme, Christianity, Spirituality and the Other, takes a different approach to art and religion, and is being hailed as a bridge between different cultures, faiths and even non-faiths.

The new conceptual direction for the event has been developed by artist, art critic and academic Dr Giuseppe Schembri-Bonaci, the artistic director of the Biennale. The Biennale is going to emphasise creativity, with high-quality artworks by top artists from 27 countries, including Malta.

"What we are witnessing is a Biennale of international standards giving visitors a lot of food for thought. In today's world, we encourage multi-cultural heritage. Spirituality goes well beyond religion and through this Biennale

we are exploring it in all its facets," says Dr Schembri-Bonaci.

"Mdina has a history of multiculturalism and this rebirth of the Biennale, which knows its origin to the Christian and Sacred Art Biennale which The Cathedral Chapter established to encourage artists in this field. Under the artistic direction of Dr Schembri-Bonaci, this will take us beyond what we usually perceive when we refer to art and spirituality," said Mdina Cathedral Archpriest Mgr Anton Cassar. "Sacred Art is artistic imagery using religious ispiration and motifs and is intended to uplift the mind to the spiritual. In this respect, the Biennale acts as the ideal platform to connect many people, giving Mdina a truly international feel that embraces different religions, ideologies and creed."

The long list of artists features names from across the artistic disciplines. Among the big names in the international artistic field, the Biennale features 23 works of art which are the private collection of Dr Schembri-Bonaci from Nobel-prize winner Dario Fo.

All pieces exhibited have also been studied very well and will be displayed in ways that make the art respect the surroundings while allowing the visitor to have an enjoyable and highly illuminating tour of the art.

The Mdina Biennale does not solely focus on representational art and its display. Besides making many sites more accessible and visible to the public – thus provoking interest in Malta's heritage – the Biennale will also present a full calendar of events throughout its eight weeks' duration. These include musical, literary and audio-visual events. Performances will also be held in Mdina and other venues outside the medieval city.

Lectures, conferences and jazz will also be held during this eight-week extravaganza of art in its various manifestations. Venues are interesting and varied and include St Paul's Cathedral, Cathedral Museum, Palazzo de Piro, The Church of St Peter in Chains, Chapel of St Roque, Archbishop Square, Greeks Gate and Vilhena Palace. Opening hours of the different venues are available at *http://mdinabiennale.org/index.php/participation/visitor-info.*

"Mdina has been a city of art for centuries. We are thrilled to showcase that history and to bring more art than ever within its fortified walls," said Dr Schembri-Bonaci. "Now, at this key moment in our own era, we are proud to celebrate diversity through art and encourage interfaith dialogue whenever possible. All art is spiritual, and that is the message that we want to pass on to the many visitors we hope will enjoy this Biennale in the months to come."

The Mdina Biennale owes its existence and success in grouping such a fine collection of art and events to the support and work of many individuals who worked tirelessly and gave so much of their time and dedication. But without the full support and generous sponsorship of APS Bank it would have been impossible to organise such an ambitious project.

Emanuel P. Delia, APS Bank chairman, expressed satisfaction that the Bank is associated with such a happening. "The revamped Mdina Biennale dovetails perfectly with APS Bank's vision of supporting cultural activity," he said. "This is especially so as the Biennale has been extended to cover artistic activity and diversity that was not present in past editions. We have always supported high standards in art and encouraged the exchange of ideas not just from beyond our shores but also in new spheres."

Besides APS Bank, who is the Main Partner, Express Trailers are the Official Carriers, Horizons, publishers of the Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale 2015 catalogue and the collaboration of Caravan and Artnaked.

Caravan is a trans-cultural initiative which organises a multitude of arts events with the intention of creating peaceful dialogue between diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Caravan will be coordinating a number of projects for the Mdina Biennale, including the Maltese Donkey sculptural installation and a series of concerts.

Artnaked is a London-based curatorial organisation which creates numerous events, exhibitions, performances, radio podcasts and literary and academic events. A group of contemporary artists from London and beyond will be participating in the Mdina Biennale under the management of Artnaked.

Supporters who also made the Biennale a reality include the Malta Tourism, Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Lumen Design brand coaching and Salvo Grima Group.

For more comprehensive information about the Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale 2015, visit http:www.mdinabiennale.org

German Film Festival returns next week

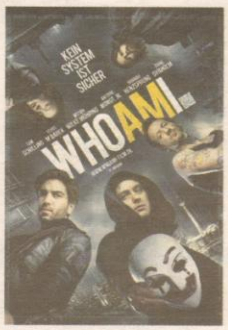
The German Film Festival will return to local screens with its seventh edition between 18 and 22 November.

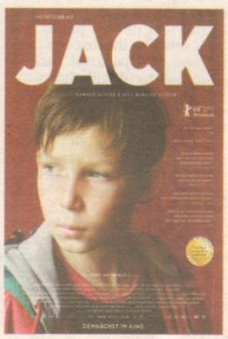
The festival opens at St James Cavalier on Wednesday, 18 November with 'Beloved Sisters', the first feature film in eight years of acclaimed German director Dominik Graf and the German submission for the 87th Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film in 2014.

On Thursday, 19 November the Festival will showcase 'Phoenix' (directed by Christian Petzold) and 'Who Am I' (directed by Baran bo Odar) – two German films which were premiered in the 2014 Toronto Film Festival.

On Friday, 20 November there will be a repeat of the opening film 'Beloved Sisters' along with the a screening of 'Jack' (directed by Edward Berger) which was premiered during this year's Biennale in Berlin.

The Seventh German Film Festival will come to an end on Sunday 22 November with the screening of three films: 'Windstorm' (a family film which forms part of this year's Ziguzajg Children's Festival), 'Parents'





(directed by Robert Thalheim) and a second screening of 'Phoenix'.

A Classic Film Night, dedicated to feature films marking the end of World War II, will be held on Saturday, 21 November at Messina Palace, the premises of the German-Maltese Circle in Triq San Kristofru, Valletta.

Unlike in recent years, when the Classic Film Night was dedicated to the works of one acclaimed German Director, the films being screened this year are linked by a common theme: the end of World War 2.

2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II and this year's Classic Film Night focuses exactly on these few months in Germany history – spanning from the last days of World War II into the first weeks of life in post-war Germany, reproducing in their variety of plots and aesthetics a manifold and sometimes surprising snapshot of this dramatic moment in German history.

The films to be screened are 'I Was Nineteen' (Konrad Wolf), 'Murderers Are Among Us' (Wolfgang Staudte) and 'Carbide and Sorrel' (Frank Beyer).

The Festival, which forms part of the Spazju Kreativ programme, is organised by the German-Maltese Circle in collaboration with the Goethe Institute.

All films will be screened in German with English subtitles.

For more information contact the German-Maltese Circle on Tel. 21246967 or gmc@germanmaltesecircle.org or, visit the websites www.germanmaltesecircle.org or www.kreattivita.org. Booking is open from St James Cavalier in Valletta. Entrance to the Classic Film Night is complimentary.