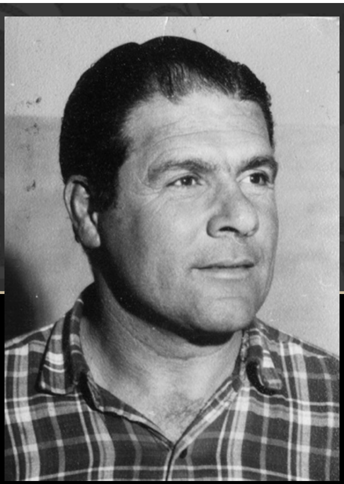


Lorrie Bellizzi
(1922-1993)

Missieru kien surmast mal-Ammiraljat u mat-Teatru Rjal. Kellu erbat aħwa u kien ikanta ma' tlieta minnhom.

Kien jaħdem it-Tarzna mas-sezzjoni li jaħdmu l-bnadar. Fil-brejk kien joqgħod ikanta lil sħabu, ingħaqad miegħu Charles Clews li kien jirrakkonta xi ċajta u ftit ftit ingħaqdu aktar nies magħhom u bdew jorganizzaw varjetà għal sħabhom il-ħaddiema. Dak kien il-bidu tal-kumpanija Stage Commandos.

Bellizzi kien jikteb il-makkjetti, kien involut fil-politika, u introduċa l-akrobazija f'Malta.

He was the son of a British Forces' bandmaster and conductor at the Royal Opera House in Valletta. As a young boy he sang with 3 of his siblings.

He worked at the dockyard's flag section. During his breaktime he used to perform songs for his colleagues. He was joined by Charles Clews who told jokes. In time others joined in and the break time variety show became quite an event. That was the start of the celebrated Stage Commandos.

Bellizzi wrote comedy lyrics and introduced acrobatics to Malta. He was also active in politics.

Terry L Bencini
(1930–)

M3P

Bdiet tirreċta fuq il-palk ta' 17-il sena u ħadet sehem fi produzzjonijiet bħal *Żeża tal-Flagship* u *Il Manichino di Legno* ma' kumpaniji Maltin u Taljani.

Bħala kantanta ħadet sehem f'opri, anki flimkien mal-istilla ta' Hollywood Oreste Kirkop. Kienet il-kantanta prinċipali f'*Geisha*, *The Belle of New York* u *The Desert Song*.

Terry rebħet it-trofew għall-aqwa kantanta fl-ewwel Malta Song Festival. Kienet popolari b'*Madonnina Omm Ġesù* u *L-Emigrant*.

Terry kantat fuq ir-radju u televiżjoni RAI fl-1960.

She started acting at the age of 17 appearing in productions such as *Żeża tal-Flagship* and *Il Manichino di Legno* with Maltese and Italian companies.

She performed in many operas, including with Hollywood star Oreste Kirkop. She interpreted leading roles in *Geisha*, *The Belle of New York* and *The Desert Song*.

Terry won the Best Singer Trophy at the first Malta Song Festival. She was best-known for the songs *Madonnina Omm Ġesù* and *L-Emigrant*.

Terry sang on RAI radio and TV in 1960.

Mike Cassar

Mike Cassar kien il-pjanist tal-programm tar-Rediffusion Radju Muskettieri.

Minbarra li kien jikteb il-mużika, kien jikteb ukoll il-lirika b'mod umoristiku fuq melodiji magħrufa barranin għall-programm u għas-serati diversi madwar Malta li kienu jorganizzaw Charles Clews u sħabu.

Mike Cassar was the pianist for the Rediffusion programm *Radju Muskettieri*.

Apart from writing music, he also wrote humorous Maltese lyrics for popular tunes in other languages. He did this for the Rediffusion programme and for other entertainment events around Malta produced by Charles Clews and friends.

Johnny Catania
(1925-1991)

Kien ikanta l-makjetti minn meta kellu 10 snin. Kien anki jilgħab il-futbol mal-klabb tal-Imsida.

Matul it-tieni gwerra, daħal jaħdem bħala Armaments Fitter fit-Tarzna. Hemm kienu jorganizzaw varjetajiet għall-ħaddiema waqt il-brejk u Johnny beda jieħu sehem ikanta l-makjetti. B'hekk spiċċa parti mill-iStage Commandos. Maż-żmien, il-koppja Catania/Clews saret popolari ħafna. Kienu qishom Laurel and Hardy ta' Malta. Johnny kien ukoll parti mill-programm popolari Radju Muskettieri.

Kiteb l-Innu tal-Karnival.

He sang comical songs in public from childhood and also played football with Msida FC.

During WWII he was employed as an Armaments Fitter with the local drydocks. There Johnny took part in variety shows during their breaktime and. That was his stage baptism with Stage Commandos.

By time, the duo Catania/Clews became very popular; the local Laurel and Hardy. Johnny was also part of Radju Muskettieri.

He wrote the lyrics for the local Carnival anthem.

Charles Clews
(1919-2009)

Xtaq isir perit iżda kellu joħroġ jaħdem kmieni biex jgħin lill-familja. Daħal jaħdem it-Tarzna u fi żmien il-gwerra, ma' oħrajn, kien jagħti divertiment lil sħabu l-ħaddiema fil-brejk. Meta darba bagħat għalih l-Ammirall, ħaseb li se jitkeċċa. Minflok, ħeġġu jkompli għax kien qed jgħolli l-moral tan-nies.

Kiteb eluf ta' skripts, fosthom għall-iStage Commandos, Radju Muskettieri u aktar. Il-kummiedja tiegħu *It-Tieġ ta' Karmena Abdilla* kienet l-aktar xogħol għall-palk popolari ta' kull żmien.

Wieħed mill-aqwa stand-up comedians ta' pajjiżna. Iċ-ċajta favorita tiegħu kienet dejjem dwar il-kunjata.

He aspired to become an architect but had to start working at the dockyards at a young age. With some colleagues, he entertained fellow workers at break time during WWII. When the Admiral asked to see him, Charles thought he was getting fired. Instead, he urged him to carry on lifting the workers' spirit.

He wrote thousands of scripts, including for the Stage Commandos and Radju Muskettieri. His comedy *It-Tieġ ta' Karmena Abdilla* is the highest ever attended theatre event in Malta.

One of the foremost local stand-up comedians. His favourite joke topic was always his mother-in-law.

Vitorin Galea
(1926-1996)

Twieldet l-Isla iżda fil-gwerra familtha marret fl-Imdina. Qrabatha kienu kollha impenjati fuq il-palk u waqqfu kumpanija bl-isem Indipendenti. Kienet taħdem partijiet żgħar. Imma darba kellhom attriċi prinċipali ma tiflaħx u l-unika għażla kienet li taħdimha mil-lum għall-għada Vitorin.

Kompliet u spiccat wahda mill-aktar attrici popolari f'pajjizna. Hadmet ma' ħafna kumpaniji madwar Malta u Għawdex, dejjem tiġri minn raħal għall-ieħor b'tal-linja. Hadmet ukoll għal snin twal fuq ir-radju u fuq it-televiżjoni.

Kienet tħit il-kostumi tagħha u tal-atturi l-oħrajn kollha hi.

She was born in l-Isla but her family moved to Mdina during WWII. Her relatives were all involved in show business and her family ran the company Indipendenti. Vitorin played minor parts until the day she replaced a principal actress who was ill, learning all her lines in one day.

After that she became one of the most popular actresses in Malta. She acted for numerous companies around Malta and Gozo, always travelling by bus. She also performed numerous parts in radio and television productions.

She made all her own costumes along with those of her fellow actors.

Nosi Ghirlando
(1908-1964)

M3P

Għex parti minn tfulitu fi Tripli u tilef lil ommu meta kellu sentejn. Beda jirreċta ta’ età żgħira u ġieli ngħata partijiet femminili. Waqqaf il-kumpaniji teatrali Maleth u Ribalta.

Ġieli kien artist mistieden fis-serati tal-iStage Commandos. Daħal mar-Radju Muskettieri u talab lil Charles Clews joħloqlu parti ta’ mara storbjuża. Charles ħoloq il-karattru ta’ Karmena Abdilla li tant sar popolari fuq ir-radju. *It-Tieġ ta’ Karmena Abdilla* kien l-aktar xogħol lokali ta’ suċċess fuq il-palk matul is-snin.

Nosi Ghirlando romol żgħir u rabba’ lit-tmien uliedu waħdu.

Nosi lived in Tripoli as a child and lost his mother when he was just 2 years old. As a young actor, he even frequently played female characters. He co-founded the theatrical companies Maleth and Ribalta.

He was occasionally invited to be a special guest during Stage Commandos shows. He joined Radju Muskettieri asking Charles Clews to create a lively female character to play on the radio show. That character was Karmena Abdilla. Eventually, *It-Tieġ ta’ Karmena Abdilla* became the most successful local stage comedy of all time.

Ghirlando raised his 8 children alone after his wife died at a young age.

Johnny Navarro
(1912-1997)

M3P

F'żgħożitu ħadem aktar minn darba fit-Teatru Rjal. Irreċta f'teatri differenti bit-Taljan, bl-Ingliż u bil-Malti. Kien attur komiku li jieħu kollox bis-serjetà.

Magħruf fuq ir-radju u fuq it-televiżjoni, l-aktar għall-parti ta' Spiru Cefai. Kien jagħmel parti mir-Radju Muskettieri, u l-ewwel programm li kellu meta wasal it-televiżjoni f'Malta kien *Popping the Pops* ma' Johnny Catania, fejn kienu magħrufin bħala *The Two Johnnies*.

Ħa sehem f'partijiet serji fosthom f'films internazzjonali bħal *Pulp* u *Midnight Express*.

As a young man he performed at the Royal Opera House in Valletta. He acted in many theatres across the country in Maltese, Italian, and English.

Her was popular on radio and television, mainly for the part as Spiru Cefai, created by Fr Harry Born for Rediffusion. He was a regular player on Radju Muskettieri., and his first television programme was *Popping the Pops* with Johnny Catania, where they were known as *The Two Johnnies*.

Navarro took part in international films such as *Pulp* and *Midnight Express*.

Gemma Portelli
(1932-2008)

M3P

Bdiet żgħira fuq ix-xandir fir-radjudrammi. Fl-1957 ingħaqdet mar-Radju Muskettieri bħala attriċi u kantanta. Fis-snin sittin iffurmat il-grupp *The Bluebirds* ma' żewġha Paul u kienu jipproduċu u jippreżentaw programm għat-tfal.

Fl-1976, kienet l-attriċi prinċipali fl-ewwel serje ta' drama għat-televiżjoni f'Malta, *F'Baħar Wieħed*, fil-parti ta' Ġoma.

Kitbet ħafna xogħlijiet għat-teatru, radju, televiżjoni u night clubs. Irrekordjat żewġ cassettes b'kanzunetti u sketches bil-Malti li saru popolari ħafna mal-emigranti fl-Awstralja.

Her broadcasting career started at an young age when she performed in radio plays. In 1957 she joined Radju Muskettieri, singing and acting regularly on the show. In the 1960s she formed *The Bluebirds* together with her husband Paul.

In 1976, Portelli played Ġoma, the main female part, in the first ever Maltese TV drama series *F'Baħar Wieħed*.

She write several works for theatre, radio, television and cabaret. She recorded two cassettes with Maltese songs and sketches, which were very popular emigrants in Australia.

Mary Ripard
(1918-1990)

Missierha kien surmast tal-mużika. Fil-gwerra kienet *wren* tal-Ingliżi fil-*War Rooms* timmarka l-manuvri tal-għadu.

Bdiet il-karriera tal-palk mal-kumpanija Stage Commandos. Hadmet ma' ħafna kumpaniji Maltin, kif ukoll f'films internazzjonali fosthom *Pulp*, *Mackintosh Man*, *The Brothers*, *Shout at the Devil* u *Christopher Colombus*.

Għamlet ħafna xogħol ta' natura soċjali, fosthom għall-għarfien ta' persuni b'diżabilità. Kienet torganizza serati biex jinġabru l-fondi meħtieġa għalihom. Kienet fuq quddiem anki politikament biex iddaħħlu liġijiet soċjali favur il-magħtuba.

Her father was a bandmaster. During WWII she worked as a wren marking enemy moves at the War Rooms.

She started her stage career with the Stage Commandos. She eventually also acted with many other local companies and in international films like *Pulp*, *Mackintosh Man*, *The Brothers*, *Shout at the Devil* and *Christopher Colombus*.

Mary was also active in social matters, especially in raising awareness on disability. She organised fund raising events for disabled persons and led political action towards the introduction of laws in favour of vulnerable people.

Freddie Underwood
(1923-1970)

M3P

Missieru kien Ingliż u minħabba l-aċċent li kellu kien iqaxxar partijiet fejn kellu taparsi jitħallat il-Malti mal-Ingliż.

Kien jaħdem it-Tarzna u kien minn tal-bidu ma' Charles Clews, Lorrie Bellizzi u Nestu Laiviera meta twieldet il-kumpanija tat-teatru Stage Commandos.

Hadimha taz-Ziju Fred *f'It-Tieġ ta' Karmena Abdilla*, l-aktar kummiedja ta' suċċess ta' kull żmien bil-Malti. Kien is-segretarju fil-kumitat tal-kumpanija.

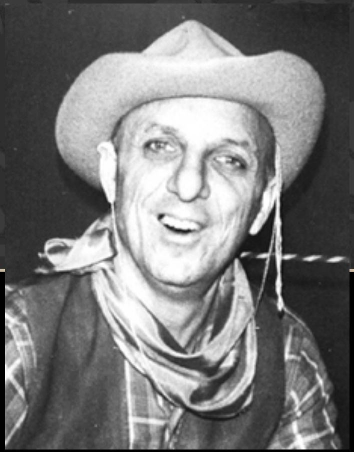
Il-karriera tiegħu fil-qasam tal-ispettaklu ntemmet kmieni meta emigra lejn l-Ingilterra.

His father was British. This came in handy whenever he played the part of an Englishman trying to speak Maltese.

He was a dockyard employee and was one of the founders of the Stage Commandos company with Charles Clews, Lorrie Bellizzi and Nestu Laiviera.

He played Uncle Fred in the most successful Maltese comedy of all time *It-Tieġ ta' Karmena Abdilla*. He was the company's committee secretary.

His performance career ended prematurely when he emigrated to England.



Armando Urso
(1918-1976)

Ta’ 4 snin, ħa sehem f’reċta fit-Teatru Rjal u f’żgħożitu kien regolari ma’ kumpaniji bħal Goldoni, Ribalta, Indipendenza u Maleth fit-Teatru Manoel.

Kien wieħed minn tal-bidu fir-Radju Muskettieri li dam jixxandar mill-1947 sal-1970. Kien jippreżenta fuq it-televiżjoni wkoll; programmi bħal Armando28 u Armando70.

Kiteb għadd ta’ makjetti bil-Malti fosthom il-magħrufa *Lanċa Ġejja u Oħra Sejra*.

At 4 years of age he made his stage debut at the Royal Opera House. As he grew older he was a regular with the theatrical companies Goldoni, Ribalta, Indipendenza and Maleth at the Manoel Theatre.

He was one of the founding performers on *Radju Muskettieri*, a comic radio show which aired regularly between 1947 and 1970. He also presented *Armando28* and *Armando70* on television.

Urso authored many comedy songs in Maltese, including the well known *Lanċa Ġejja u Oħra Sejra*.