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INTRODUCTION

Maltese Folktales is a valuable collection of imaginative stories which have passed down from storyteller to storyteller from time immemorial. This publication is a unique heritage gift ... but it is also a contemporary art-piece embellishing the folktales with an original music score and a vibrant showcase of illustrations.

In this brief introduction I would like to share with you the journey of this project. It all started with a piano cycle of contemporary music. In 2004 I moved back to Malta after having spent four years living in California and my first composition project was a performance piece featuring Maltese folktales. The concept for this performance was to present heritage and contemporary music within the same setting: Maltese folktales accompanied by an avant-garde soundtrack for solo piano. In fact the music was premiered as a piano cycle in Chicago for a contemporary music event on the 30th of June 2005. For many composers, one of the most frustrating aspects of the classical music world is that over the last century it scared off its audience. Many people feel that without the necessary formation, they would not enjoy modern classical music. I am well aware of this reality and therefore I am interested in developing strategies that take contemporary music to places where it is not being heard. The concept of a contemporary music soundtrack accompanying Maltese folktales introduces new music to both children and adults within an unexpected setting.

The idea of translating the performance into a publication intrigued me. Since I was dealing with folktales, what could be a better partnership than that of a wizard?! ... Merlin Library came on board as official partners. Merlin's expertise in children's books developed the project into a state-of-the-art publication. Probably the most important level to the book format is the opportunity to portray a selection of illustrations by some of Malta's finest artists. The exciting techniques adopted by the illustrators include traditional water colour, collage, paper-cutting, mixed media and digital art. Another major contribution by Merlin Library has been the work of designer Pierre Portelli who created a fresh and contemporary layout for the entire project.

Just like a folktale, this publication has been a wonderful adventure. Along the way we encountered many challenges. Defeating ogres and seeking good advice from wizards! The fellowship was strong and the efforts were great ... with a little bit of magic we have accomplished our quest!

Ruben Zahra



Ġaħan u l-Istatwa

Illustrata minn Greta Borg Carbott

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Omm Ġaħan xebgħet tara lil binha jdur mad-dar b'idejh fil-bwiet. Għalhekk xtratlu pezza xoqqa, armatlu karrettun tal-idejn u qaltlu: "Ibni ... mur ara għandekx hila tbigh din il-pezza xoqqa. Tkun qed tedha f'xi haġa u taqla' xi sold ukoll. Imma ara x'se ngħidlek: qis li ma tbighx lil dawk li jiġu b'hafna diskors!"

Ġaħan għoġbitu l-bicċa. Qabad il-karrettun f'idejh u telaq idur mar-raħal u jgħajjat: "Xoqqa samra! Min inbighlu qasbtejn xoqqa?!" In-nisa bdew johorġu fuq l-għetiebi ta' djarhom u jsejhulu, imma Ġaħan ftakar fit-twissija t'ommu u go qalbu qal: "Lil dawn żgur ma nbegħilhomx ... għax dawn se joqogħdu ġejjin B'HAFNA DISKORS!" U għalkemm hafna nies ingabru madwaru jistaqsuh kemm kienet tqum, Ġaħan ma riedx ibegħilhom; u baqa' sejjer dritt jimbotta l-karrettun.

Imxi u ġib lil min jimxi, sa fl-aħħar Ġaħan hareġ barra mir-raħal u wasal go Belt. F'nofs il-pjazza ta' din il-belt kien hemm statwa ta' mara li kienet timmarka



r-rih. Jekk ikun rih isfel l-istatwa kienet tibda tbaxxi rasha 'l isfel, u jekk ikun rih fuq tibda tgholli rasha 'l fuq. Dakinhar inzerta rih isfel, u malli Ġahan lemah lil dik il-mara tbaxxi rasha 'l isfel hasibha qed issejjahlu. "Lili trid mara?" kien pront staqsieha. U peress li din baqghet tmejjel rasha 'l isfel, Ġahan saq il-karrettun lejha u ġo qalbu qal: "Lil din inbigh, għax lanqas biss titkellem!" Malli wasal tahtha sew, Ġahan qalilha: "Trid tixtri qasbtejn xoqqa, mara? Kollox sew ... kemm trid?" U l-istatwa dejjem qisha qed tghidlu

"iva", Ġahan tghidx kemm ha gost. "Qed inghid," dar jghidilha, "trid inbighlek il-pezza kollha? M'hawnx għalik! Hawn ara, se npoġġihielek hdejn riglejk. Issa meta se thallasni? Ara ... tridx niġi għada?"

U hekk Ġahan ftiehem mal-istatwa li l-għada jmur għall-flus. Meta Ġahan qal lil ommu bil-bicċa kollha, din mill-ewwel xammet li kien ġej l-inkwiet, imma qatt ma basret li Ġahan kien biegh il-pezza lil statwa.

Il-għada filghodu Ġahan bakkar biex imur għall-flus; imma inzerta rih fuq, u





Gahan and the Statue

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Gahan's mother felt exasperated watching her lazy son shuffling around the house wasting time. So she bought him a roll of linen, set him up with a hand-driven cart and told him: "Son ... Let us see if you are able to sell this roll of linen. You will make good use of your time and earn some money. But, mark my words: don't bother selling to anyone who is too talkative!"

Gahan liked the idea and set off pushing the cart around the village yelling "Linen! Who will buy a yard of linen?!" Women began showing up on their doorsteps calling him to attract attention: "Come on over Gahan, come on over." But Gahan had his mother's words still buzzing in his head and said to himself: "These women are so talkative ... I will not sell them anything!" Many people gathered around him to inquire the price of the linen but Gahan refused to sell it to them and simply kept pushing the cart forward.

On and on he went until Gahan left the village and came to a town. Right in the middle of the town square there was a statue of a woman with a bobbing head signalling the direction of the wind. The statue would lower its head when the wind blew south and tilt it back when the wind blew north. On that particular day there was a south wind blowing and when Gahan saw the statue bobbing its head he thought she was calling him. "Is it me you want, Ma'am?" he immediately asked. The statue kept tilting its head forward and Gahan pushed his cart towards her thinking: "I like this customer, she doesn't utter a single word!" When he arrived beneath the statue, Gahan told her: