

# Freedom of expression through jazz

Wednesday, May 9, 2012 by

**John Anthony Fsadni**

## **Concert**

Jazz in honour of Fr Peter Serracino Inglott  
*St James Cavalier*

Having risen from slavery to elite international stages, jazz represents a cross-cultural musical language which is also an expression of freedom and a protest against oppression.

On International Jazz Day (April 30), jazz lecturer Massimo de Majo organised an evening in honour of the late Fr Peter Serracino Inglott, who shared Unesco's belief that jazz is an instrument of democracy and that the joining together of musicians despite their differences was beneficial to society in general.

Frank Camilleri, known as Il-Bibi, opened the show with his original interpretation of Scott Joplin's classic ragtime, *The Entertainer*, followed by *Bye Bye Blackbird* and other jazz standards including *As Time Goes By*, *Sunny* and *Caravan*.

For some of the tunes he was joined by Mr de Majo on drums and Andrea Lamacchia on double bass, but the piano retained its dominant role.

Despite his age and illness, Mr Camilleri's dexterity was more than evident. It is a shame that local media have largely ignored Mr Camilleri and other Maltese "old-timers" in the last decades, leaving them virtually unknown to today's public.

The trio CUSP followed with a very interesting set, at times infusing jazz with a rock feel without engaging completely in fusion.

The trio consisted of Luke Briffa on drums, Alan Portelli on bass and Jes Psaila on guitar. They performed original arrangements of *Solar* by Miles Davis and *Speak No Evil* by Wayne Shorter, as well as an original composition, *Hiph*. Their performance was original to the extent of avoiding any sense of predictability, even having the guitar playing a bass part on its lower strings while the bass played melodiously in its high register.

The second part of the programme was subtitled *Lyrics and Jazz*. It featured a jazz trio accompanying a selection of poems in English read out by Biancamaria Stanzani Ghedini. The trio consisted of Mr de Majo on drums, Mr Lamacchia on the double bass and Alessandro Giachero on piano.

Despite the interesting blend of poetry and jazz, Ms Stanzani Ghedini's reading was not always clear owing to her Italian accent, thus making the performance less effective. However, the musicians' level of artistry was outstanding.

This section aimed at showing how jazz was instrumental in the fight for equality in 20th century America. It opened with Abel Meer-opol's *Strange Fruit*, an exposition of American racism made famous by Billie Holiday.

The trio and Ms Stanzani Ghedini then performed works by Max Roach, known for making musical

statements regarding the civil rights movement of African Americans.

His Triptych: Prayer/Protest/Peace, with Ms Stanzani Ghedini vocalising over solo drums, manifested Mr de Majo's virtuoso technique and creative improvisation. Another work by Roach was Freedom Day. Romantic themes were also explored in Lush Life, Body and Soul, Lover Man and Where Are You?

As the musicians performed, artist Jeni Caruana carried out a live painting session. Some of her artworks, as well as photos by Joe Smith, were also exhibited at the atrium, emphasising communication through the fusion of various arts.