

Celebrating 30 Years of Cultural Heritage at Levita Martri House

Under the Patronage of
His Excellency Archbishop Wojciech Załuski Apostolic Nuncio to Malta



Civitas Dei

Grand Concert

LEVITA MARTRI PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA UNDER THE ARTISTIC DIRECTION OF

ANDREW LAWRENCE ZARB

GUEST SOLOISTS

ROSABELLE BIANCHI, SOPRANO – ANNA CATERINA CORNACCHINI, SOPRANO
CHARLES VINCENTI, TENOR – IVAN VELLA, BARITONE

PRESENTED BY

MARIELLA ATTARD and JOSEPH CHETCUTI

TUESDAY 4TH AUGUST 2026 – 8:30 PM
THE ESTEEMED COLLEGIATE PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT LAWRENCE, VITTORIOSA



VERSATILE

myc



Musical Presentation

Levita Martri Philharmonic Orchestra

Andrew Lawrence Zarb
Artistic Director

Michael Pulis
Co–Artistic Director

James Zammit
Leader

Rosabelle Bianchi
Soprano

Anna Caterina Cornacchini
Soprano

Charles Vincenti
Tenor

Ivan Vella
Baritone

Mariella Attard
Joseph Chetcuti
Presenters

Andrew Lawrence Zarb

Conductor & Composer



Andrew Lawrence Zarb was born in Cospicua on 6 February 1983. He began his musical studies at the St George's Band Club in Cospicua, where he studied under the tutelage of Carmelo Vella and Vincent Bonnici.

His principal teacher and lifelong mentor was composer Ray Sciberras, under whose direction he first performed with the band in 1994. At the age of thirteen, Zarb was appointed solo trumpeter and section leader.

He continued his trumpet studies at the Johann Strauss School of Music and later with renowned brass pedagogue Paul Borg, obtaining the FLCM in Trumpet Performance in 2014. He also studied high-register trumpet technique with Larry Meregillano.

Zarb studied theory and professional composition with Ray Sciberras, obtaining the ALCM in 2018. His compositions include sacred music, band marches, funeral marches, orchestral works, cantatas and concert works for wind band.

Among his principal compositions are *Missa di Gloria Sub Tuum Praesidium*, *Salve Regina*, *Laudate Pueri* in D Major, *Dawl Jiddi Dija Jismu l-Kbir Laurentius*, *Three Views of Malta*, *Leġen Rebbieġ*, *Walking the Cottonera Lines*, *Unpredictable Fate*, *The Invisible Invader* and *Dance of the Flags*.

He studied conducting with the worldwide renowned musician Freddie Mizzi and Conductor Michael Pulis and has conducted orchestras, choirs and wind bands during concerts, liturgical celebrations and commemorative events.

His close association with Vittoriosa, the Collegiate Parish Church of St Lawrence and Levita Martri House has strongly influenced his artistic development. His works frequently draw inspiration from the history, faith and cultural identity of the Cottonera region. Zarb refined his conducting technique in prestigious master-classes with world-renowned conductors Brian Schembri and Roberto Beltrán-Zavala.

In August 2024, Andrew Lawrence Zarb welcomed Her Excellency Myriam Spiteri Debono, President of Malta, at Levita Martri House following her attendance at the Pontifical Mass celebrating the Solemnity of St Lawrence. In August 2025 he conducted a commemorative concert, *Laudate Pueri* celebrating the 1800th Anniversary of the birth of Saint Lawrence, Patron Saint of Vittoriosa.

As Artistic Director of the Civitas Dei Grand Concert and the Levita Martri Philharmonic Orchestra, Zarb continues his commitment to Maltese composition, orchestral music and the preservation of Malta's artistic heritage.



Photo: Office of The President

On 6th August 2024 H.E. Myriam Spiteri Debono, President of Malta received Andrew Lawrence Zarb, who presented her with a publication showcasing his work and the contributions of a group of volunteers at Dar Levita Martri, ahead of the upcoming feast of St Lawrence in Vittoriosa.

During the meeting, he extended an invitation to the President to visit his home on Saturday, following the Pontifical Mass, which over the years has been transformed into a museum of art and culture surrounding St Lawrence, featuring his own sacred and profane compositions. President Spiteri Debono expressed her hope that more young people will engage in this artistic endeavour, ensuring that interest in culture continues to flourish.

On 10th August 2024, H.E. Myriam Spiteri Debono, President of Malta, attended the High Mass at the Collegiate Parish Church of St Lawrence in Vittoriosa on the Solemnity of St Lawrence. The President also toured Dar Levita Martri, a residence/museum that houses artefacts related to the cult of Saint Lawrence as well as other works of art. The promoter is Andrew Lawrence Zarb, whose work is also instilling knowledge and appreciation of art and music among the young people who help in the parish of St Lawrence in Vittoriosa.

Dun Karm Busuttil

Archpriest



Vittoriosa distinguishes itself from other historic Maltese localities as it continues to uphold a rich tradition of culture and faith. Understanding the Maltese custom of religious celebrations, we are reminded of an everlasting splendour that reflects our long-standing historical and religious traditions.

This particular occasion, presented to us by the Levita Martri Philharmonic Orchestra through Civitas Dei, unites us in our collective endeavour to celebrate and fully appreciate not only our historical and religious heritage, but also a vision for our future. In today's reality, our understanding of these religious customs and traditions may be influenced by modern social realities that can compromise our historical heritage.

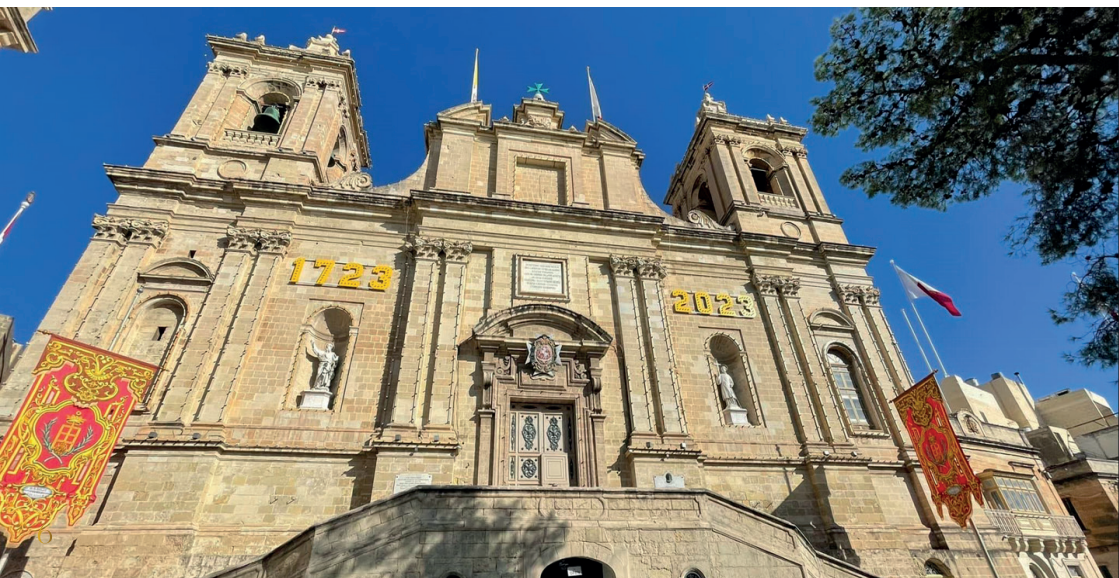
The Levita Martri Philharmonic Orchestra contributes towards the revival and preservation of our ecclesiastical musical heritage, thus offering a new perspective where we preserve the treasures of the past while giving voice to newly composed works that enrich our present and inspire our future.

Vittoriosa is enriched by a wealth of renowned sacred music, carefully preserved in the archives of the Chapter of St. Lawrence's Collegiate Church. The Levita Martri Philharmonic Orchestra is therefore warmly welcomed to give us the opportunity, both now and in the future, to revive and witness the splendour of these symphonies and antiphons which once echoed through the walls of this marvellous Collegiate Church.

Rev. Chev. Can. Archpriest Carmelo
Busuttil M.Juris

Sth. Dip
B.A Hons.

M.A Human Rights
M.A Diplomatic Studies



Levita Martri House

Celebrating 30 Years of Cultural Heritage at Levita Martri House

Located in the heart of Vittoriosa, Levita Martri House is far more than a private residence. Over the years, it has become closely associated with Maltese faith, culture and artistic tradition.

First inspired by Lorenza Vincenza Zarb and further developed by Andrew Lawrence Zarb from 2000 onwards, the House has evolved naturally into a recognised place of devotion, heritage and creativity. Levita Martri House has welcomed several distinguished visitors, including Her Excellency Myriam Spiteri Debono, President of Malta; Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson; Cardinal Mario Grech; Archbishop Savio Hon Tai Fai; Bishop Francesco Adeodato Micallef; Bishop Manuel Nin; Bishop George Bugeja; Bishop George Frendo; Archbishop Wojciech Załuski and other prominent ecclesiastical and public figures.

The House is also home to a notable collection of hand-painted flags, devotional statues and important works by leading Maltese artists. Each work contributes to an environment that is deeply personal while also reflecting the wider cultural and religious heritage of Vittoriosa.

In 2026, Levita Martri House commemorates 30 years since it was first adorned for the Feast of St Lawrence. This important anniversary celebrates three decades of dedication to art, music, devotion and the preservation of local tradition. The house is also the sede of the Levita Martri Philharmonic Orchestra.



Levita Martri Philharmonic Orchestra

The Levita Martri Philharmonic Orchestra was established to create a permanent musical platform closely connected with the cultural and devotional work of Levita Martri House.

Its mission is to celebrate and promote Malta's musical heritage, give greater visibility to the works of Maltese composers and create opportunities for musicians, soloists and composers to collaborate on ambitious artistic projects.

The Orchestra also seeks to encourage the performance of newly composed Maltese works alongside established compositions from the national repertoire.

Its formal blessing and official establishment form an important part of the Civitas Dei Grand Concert, marking the beginning of a new artistic chapter for Levita Martri House.

Under the artistic direction of Andrew Lawrence Zarb, the Orchestra aspires to contribute to Malta's cultural landscape through concerts, sacred music, commemorative events and international artistic collaborations.

Rosabelle Bianchi

Soprano



Rosabelle Bianchi began her singing studies at the age of sixteen. She initially studied at the School of Music under Alice Horne and Claire Massa before continuing her vocal development with Juliette Bisazza Zanni.

She participated in master-classes organised by the British Kodály Association in the United Kingdom, studying with Hungarian soprano Paula Somoraj. She later worked with distinguished artists including Sona Ghazarian, Sumi Jo, Thomas E. Bauer, Daniel Lichti, Laura Sarti and Barbara Frittoli.

She also attended the intensive Operaviva singing and drama programme in Verona, studying with tutors from leading international institutions.

Her operatic roles include Mari in *Il-Wegħda*, Elisabeth in *Elisabeth: Or to Be a Mann*, Dido in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Paquette in Bernstein's *Candide*, the Second Lady in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and Giannetta in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*.

She has also interpreted the role of Mary, Mother of Jesus, in the musical *Għalik*, presented at the Mediterranean Conference Centre.

Her repertoire includes lieder by Schubert, Brahms and Schumann; masses by Mozart, Haydn, Vivaldi and Beethoven; and sacred works by several Maltese composers.

Rosabelle has performed under the direction of internationally recognised composers and conductors, including Mons. Marco Frisina and Mro. Jacob de Haan. She has also represented Malta during cultural events held in connection with the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

She graduated from the University of Malta with a BA (Hons) in Music Studies and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education in Music Teaching.

Anna Caterina Cornacchini

Soprano



Anna Caterina Cornacchini is a lyric soprano, multi-instrumentalist and composer. She graduated from the G. Rossini Conservatory in Pesaro, where she studied singing, viola and composition.

Her vocal development included guidance from distinguished teachers and artists such as Gianfranca Ostini, Sergio Bertocchi, Paola Molinari, Luciano Pavarotti, Patrizia Orciani, Luis Bacalov, Barry Alexander, Mariella Devia, Richard Barker and Alfonso Antoniozzi.

Her career encompasses opera, symphonic concerts, sacred music and chamber repertoire, with performances across Europe, the Americas and Asia.

After beginning her professional career as a violist with prominent Italian orchestras, she established herself as a soprano, appearing in international tours, recitals, opera productions and concerts featuring her own compositions.

Her operatic repertoire includes Mimi in *La Bohème*, Tosca in *Tosca*, Santuzza in *Cavalleria rusticana*, Frasquita and Mercédès in *Carmen*, Marcellina in *Le nozze di Figaro*,

Clorinda in *La Cenerentola*, Berta in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and the title role in *Suor Angelica*.

She also performs extensively in symphonic and sacred concerts, collaborating with orchestras, choirs, international festivals and academic institutions.

Her distinctions include a Diploma of Merit from the Musica da Film Seminar, the Best Student Award scholarship from the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna, a Special Mention from the IBLA Foundation Grand Prize in New York, and recognition as Best Italian Voice and finalist at the Castrocara Festival.

Alongside her performing career, Cornacchini is actively involved in music education. She has taught in Italy, the United States, China and Thailand and has also gained extensive experience as a choral conductor. She continues to collaborate with international cultural institutions through concert tours, recitals and artistic projects worldwide.

Charles Vincenti

Tenor

Charles Vincenti studied with mezzo-soprano Claire Massa and soprano Juliette Bisazza Zanni. He also attended master-classes at the Kodály International School in the United Kingdom with Hungarian soprano Éva Andor.

His operatic repertoire includes Rinuccio in Gianni Schicchi, Spoletta in Tosca, Goro in Madama Butterfly, Pang in Turandot, Roderigo in Otello, Tybalt in Roméo et Juliette, Aeneas in Dido and Aeneas, Monostatos in Die Zauberflöte and Turiddu in Cavalleria rusticana.

He has also performed in Maltese operatic works, including Il-Wegħda and the operas Swar and Blat, as well as Nemorino in Donizetti's L'elisir d'amore during the BOV Opera Festival.

His concert and sacred repertoire includes works by Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Rossini, Gounod, Puccini, Paolino Vassallo, Carmelo Pace, Joseph Sammut, Nicolò Isouard and Joseph Vella.

Vincenti has performed in Malta and internationally, including appearances in Ireland, England, France and India.

He holds a BA (Hons) in Music Studies and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education in Music from the University of Malta.



Ivan Vella

Baritone

Ivan Vella developed an interest in music at the age of fifteen, initially studying the euphonium with Mro. Lawrence Bonnici.

He continued his musical training with the Fra Antoine De Paule Philharmonic Society, Banda Kristu Re of Paola, under Mro. Kevin Abela, while also studying music theory with Mro. David Sammut.

In 2000, he began three years of vocal studies with soprano Ruth Sammut Casingena. During this period, he made his debut as a soloist, performing The Prayer with Banda Kristu Re under the direction of Mro. David Sammut.

Encouraged by Ruth Sammut Casingena, Ivan joined the ActReact company and appeared in Andrew Lloyd Webber's Jesus Christ Superstar at the University Theatre and A Night with the Musicals at the Manoel Theatre.

In 2005, he joined the Amadeus Chamber Choir under the direction of tenor Mro. Brian Cefai, taking part in several concerts as a soloist.

Among his notable performances was We Three Kings of Orient Are at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta in 2007. That same year, he also performed internationally as a soloist in Poland.

In 2008, Ivan continued his vocal studies with American mezzo-soprano Deborah Harrison, further developing the versatility of his baritone voice across musical theatre, sacred music, opera and operetta.

He later studied with soprano Miriam Cauchi and, more recently, bass Albert Buttigieg.

Ivan remains active within the musical scene in Malta and Gozo, performing in churches, with local bands, and in sacred concerts and oratorios. He is also strongly involved in theatre and has appeared in numerous musicals and plays, including several leading roles.



Musical Synopsis

LEVITA LAURENTIUS

Rev. Can. Luigi Fenech, 1837–1905

The Antiphon of St Lawrence, composed by Canon Luigi Fenech, is one of the most cherished works in Vittoriosa's musical tradition. For generations, its noble and memorable melody has accompanied the feast of the city's patron saint, becoming deeply rooted in its spiritual and cultural identity. Although festive and richly melodic, the composition is also technically demanding and reflects Fenech's mastery of sacred music. Presented during this concert in a full orchestral setting, the performance reveals the work through the colour, depth and expressive range of the symphony orchestra, allowing audiences to rediscover a much-loved composition from a new perspective.

INTERMEZZO ALPINO

Mro. Carlo Diacono, 1876–1942

Intermezzo Alpino is a reflective orchestral interlude drawn from the operatic repertoire of distinguished Maltese composer Carlo Diacono. The work demonstrates his gift for lyrical melody, elegant orchestration and expressive musical writing. Rather than relying on dramatic effects, the music unfolds through graceful melodic lines and subtle orchestral colours, creating an atmosphere of serenity and contemplation. Diacono shares a special connection with Vittoriosa, where his compositions have long formed part of the musical and liturgical tradition of the Collegiate Parish Church of St Lawrence. In this concert, Intermezzo Alpino offers a moment of reflection while celebrating his enduring contribution to Malta's musical heritage.

REBBIEĦA, OP. 45

Prof. Joseph Vella, 1942–2018

Composed in 1986, Rebbieĥa is one of Prof. Joseph Vella's most recognised and frequently performed orchestral works. This powerful symphonic poem is charged with energy, dramatic tension and moments of grandeur, leading the listener through struggle towards a triumphant affirmation of victory. Its title evokes the courage, resilience and perseverance that have shaped Maltese history. It is particularly meaningful in Vittoriosa, the city at the heart of the Great Siege of 1565, whose name remains inseparably associated with victory. Performed in Birgu itself, Rebbieĥa acquires an even deeper significance, becoming both a celebration of national memory and a tribute to the strength of the human spirit.

CIVITAS DEI

Mro. Andrew Lawrence Zarb, born 1983

Civitas Dei is one of Andrew Lawrence Zarb's most ambitious and personal compositions and receives its first performance during this concert. The work is dedicated to Birgu and reflects the city through the composer's own experiences and memories. The composition is shaped by contrasts between light and darkness, fear and hope, suffering and triumph. Conceived during the most difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was initially inspired by artist Joseph Galea under the working title *The Invisible Invader*. Extraordinary circumstances led the artist and composer to spend seventeen days living and working together in the Birgu parish hall, where they continued their artistic projects away from the isolation and uncertainty of lockdown. One of the work's defining inspirations came on Good Friday 2020, when the silent streets of Birgu witnessed an exceptional procession led by Archpriest Carmelo Busuttill carrying the Crucifix. He was accompanied by Andrew Lawrence Zarb, Fr John Avellino, Noel Castillo and sacristan Anton Gellel. The rhythm of Gellel's small hand drum became a central musical motif within the composition. Against this orchestral landscape, soprano Rosabelle Bianchi sings the prayer *Kyrie eleison*, a plea for mercy, hope and faith. Gradually, fear gives way to hope, silence gives way to life, and the city rises once again.

Civitas Dei is both a reflection on an extraordinary period and a musical monument to the faith, courage and enduring spirit of Vittoriosa.

PRELUDE

From *Dawl Jiddi Dija Jismu l-Kbir Laurentius*

Mro. Andrew Lawrence Zarb, born 1983

The cantata *Dawl Jiddi Dija Jismu l-Kbir Laurentius* was premiered in 2022 after being commissioned by the Venerable Chapter of the Collegiate Parish Church of St Lawrence. The work marked an important milestone in Andrew Lawrence Zarb's development as a composer and introduced a musical language that is recognisably his own. The Prelude opens with images of fire and martyrdom. It introduces the cantata's principal musical themes, moving between the saint's suffering and the glory that follows. The libretto was written by Vittoriosa-born author George Peresso and was inspired by the Akathist Hymn dedicated to St Lawrence. The original concept was proposed by Rev. Can. Stephen Attard, Secretary of the Chapter.

AVE MARIA, OP. 2

Mro. Andrew Lawrence Zarb, born 1983

The Ave Maria has inspired sacred composers across generations. Raised within Malta's strong Marian tradition, Andrew Lawrence Zarb has composed two settings of this timeless prayer. This version will be interpreted by Italian soprano Anna Caterina Cornacchini as part of an artistic collaboration between the Levita Martri Philharmonic Orchestra and musicians in Italy. The collaboration developed after Italian organist Stefano Vagnini heard Zarb's music during a performance at the Collegiate Parish Church of St Lawrence and introduced his work to Mro. Sauro Nicoletti. This led to an artistic exchange involving the Italian International Orchestra and the Levita Martri Philharmonic Orchestra, with Cornacchini joining the Civitas Dei Grand Concert as guest soprano.

BALLATA TAR-REBĦA

Music by Mro. Andrew Lawrence Zarb

Lyrics by Fr Alan Joseph Adami O.P.

Ballata tar-RebĦa is conceived as a symphonic ballad centred on three historical and symbolic figures: Francesco Balbi da Correggio, chronicler and eyewitness of the Great Siege; Grand Master Jean Parisot de Valette; and Malta Victorious. The roles will be interpreted by baritone Ivan Vella, tenor Charles Vincenti and soprano Rosabelle Bianchi. The work begins with an orchestral portrayal of the immediate aftermath of the Great Siege, characterised by distinctive rhythmic writing. From this setting emerges Correggio's reflective aria, which gradually develops into the music of de Valette. Malta Victorious then enters, leading towards a final trio and a triumphant conclusion. At the climax, the bells of the Collegiate Parish Church of St Lawrence join the orchestra in proclaiming victory. The libretto was written by Vittoriosa-born Fr Alan Joseph Adami O.P., further strengthening the work's connection with the city and its history. Zarb composed this work within five days.

INNU LIL SAN LAWRENZ

Music by Mro. Lorenzo Galea

Lyrics by Dun Karm Psaila

Innu lil San Lawrenz is one of the best-known and most cherished hymns associated with the titular feast of St Lawrence in Vittoriosa. Composed by Mro. Lorenzo Galea and set to words by Malta's national poet, Dun Karm Psaila, the hymn has accompanied generations of Vittoriosa residents in their devotion to the city's patron saint. Its familiar melody and powerful text express collective faith, pride and affection for St Lawrence. The work brings the Civitas Dei Grand Concert to a fitting conclusion, uniting the orchestra, soloists and audience in a musical expression deeply rooted in the identity of Vittoriosa.

Chev. Paolo Camilleri Cauchi

Artist

Paolo Camilleri Cauchi was born on 2 December 1940, the son of renowned sculptor and statuarian Agostino Camilleri and Francesca Cauchi.

He spent much of his early childhood in his father's studio, where he was introduced to the world of sacred and figurative art.

He further developed his artistic formation under Maltese artists including Gian Battista Conti, Giuseppe Briffa, Giuseppe Caruana and Toussaint Busuttil. He also received guidance from artists and academics in England and Italy.

Camilleri Cauchi initially worked as an art teacher in primary and secondary schools. In 1973, he resigned from the Education Department to dedicate himself fully to the growing number of



commissions for the decoration of church vaults and other sacred spaces.

The success of these large-scale works established him as one of Malta's leading artists in the field of sacred painting, with commissions completed both locally and internationally.

His works have received wide recognition, and he presented examples of his art to Pope Saint John Paul II in 1988.

Among his distinctions are Ġieħ il-Belt Victoria, Ġieħ Għawdex and the Premio Internazionale Pittore Giuseppe Sciuti in Sicily.

On 13 December 2017, he was appointed a Member of the National Order of Merit during an investiture ceremony held at the Presidential Palace in Valletta.

The Monumental Ceiling Painting of St Lawrence

As part of the 30th-anniversary celebrations of Levita Martri House, the monumental ceiling painting of St Lawrence by Chev. Paolo Camilleri Cauchi will be formally inaugurated and blessed.

The work was commissioned by Mro. Andrew Lawrence Zarb and forms an important addition to the artistic and devotional collection housed at Levita Martri House.

Prior to and following the concert, Levita Martri House will open its doors for the inauguration and blessing of the painting.

A private reception will also be held for invited guests and dignitaries.



Special Thanks

The Collegiate Parish of Saint Lawrence, Vittoriosa, in formal collaboration with The Very Reverend Chev. Canon Archpriest Carmelo Busuttil, providing ecclesiastical guidance and support.

Artistic Direction and Composition: The distinguished Maestro Andrew Lawrence Zarb serves as the Artistic Director and Composer, contributing his extensive expertise to the musical direction and composition.

Marketing Coordination: The strategic planning and execution of marketing initiatives are under the purview of Mr. Daniel Scicluna of MYC (Malta), ensuring comprehensive promotional outreach.

Finance and Administration: Mr. Michael Pulis for coordinating financial and administrative matters.

Logistics : Levita Martri Group

Sponsors: VisitMalta, Portofino Developments, KB Structures, LESA, Vivian, D'Orsini, Versatile, MYC





andrewlawrence.mt

