

### Star of Strait Street

**A love song for the people of the Maltese Islands, whose courage and unquenchable spirit shone brightly at a time of terrible danger and privation.**

**Geoff Thomas**  
Music Teacher



Five years ago, I was rehearsing in a garage in Naxxar with a lovely group of (mostly) Maltese singers and actors on a musical called *The Great Big Radio Show!* which played at Teatru Manoel in October of that year. Little did I know what that would lead to. Philip Glassborow came to Malta for the new production of his musical and, in his own words, ‘fell head-over-heels in love with Valletta and the islands and the Maltese people, as well as the talent base of gifted actors and singers one can find here.’ Drawing on Ratcliffe’s personal memoirs, *Carve Malta on my heart* by Frederick Galea, and *Malta’s Greater Siege and Adrian Warburton* by Paul McDonald, Philip created a musical play based on the life of Christina Ratcliffe. Ms Ratcliffe landed in Malta as a cabaret performer during the Second World War, and later enrolled as a plotter in the Operations Room in Lascaris. The musical play tells her story and is called *Star of Strait Street*.

of his aircraft, buried about 1.8 m deep in a field near the Bavarian village of Egling an der Paar, 55 km west of Munich.

*Star of Strait Street* tells the story of Christina from her early days as a song and dance artiste travelling around Europe and North Africa, through her first days at the Morning Star in Valletta, her meeting with ‘Warby’, and a glimpse of her days as a lonely spinster waiting for him - a man she’d known for less than three years, but who was the first and only true love of her life. What you see in the play is



**This is a picture of Christina carrying a cauldron through Valletta. The girl, Lisa, is still alive and came to one of the performances where she was interviewed and shared her memories**



**The only known photo of Christina and Warby together**



**Christina on a boat, probably in the Grand Harbour**

Christina fell in love with the islands, the people, and – especially – Flying Officer Adrian Warburton. She lived out her days in Malta waiting for him to return from his final mission, convinced he would return. Unfortunately, unknown to her, Adrian (by then, Wing Commander Adrian Warburton DSO and Bar, DFC and Two Bars, DFC [USA]) had died in Bavaria on a secret mission on April 12, 1944; his remains only being found in 2002, in the cockpit



**Geoff Thomas & Larissa Bonaci**

Larissa Bonaci as Christina in the 1940s, and Polly March as the older Christina in the 1970s. The older Christina remembers the high points of her life and conjures up her younger self. The two Christinas take us through the good times and the bad, the joys, the tears and fears. I represent assorted minor male characters, such as Manwel, Gianni Fiteni, and radio ops voices, but most importantly spring to life to play the piano in the songs which are a mixture of old standards and brand-new songs by Philip Glassborow.

The show had six sold out performances in Strait Street in April 2017 and has played to another eleven full houses since. Performances at the Royal Malta Golf Club, MADC club rooms, Hilltop Gardens, Teatru Salesjan, and the Phoenicia Hotel, were followed by a tour of Australia, specifically to the Maltese communities at La Vallette Social Centre, Blacktown, Sydney, The Maltese Community Council of Victoria, Parkville, Melbourne, and Maltese Guild of South Australia, Beverley, Adelaide. Next stop is London, with four performances there in November, (two at Applecourt Arts, Newham, two more at OSO Arts Centre,



**Larissa Bonaci & Polly March**

Barnes) and two in Winchester before we fly back. After that, we hope to perform in Mellieħa and Gozo, so watch out for the publicity; tickets will sell out fast!

As a post script, Paul McDonald is bringing out a new book, *The Ladies of Lascaris: Christina Ratcliffe and the forgotten Heroes of Malta's War*, in November this year; included in this book is a whole chapter on Christina, the contribution she made to Malta (gaining the British Empire Medal in the process), and her relationship with Adrian Warburton.

