



Farmers at Żabbar harvest their olive trees on a typical autumn day. PHOTO: JONATHAN BORG

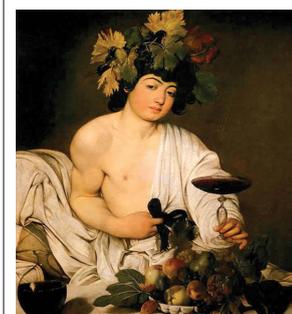
## WHAT'S ON

### Screening of *Aida*

The Eden Cinemas is screening a new take on Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Aida* live from the Royal Opera House, in London on Wednesday at 7.45pm.

In the new production, director Robert Carsen situates Verdi's large-scale political drama within a contemporary world, framing its power struggles and toxic jealousies in the apparatus of a modern, totalitarian state.

The opera, rated PG, will be sung in Italian with English subtitles. There will be an encore on Sunday at 3pm. For more information and tickets, visit the Eden Cinemas website.



*Bacchus* (c. 1596) by Caravaggio

# Essential or desirable?

## TALKING POINT



DANIEL BORG

The *Times of Malta* editorial of October 6, 'Viable connectivity for Gozo', referred to Gozo business lobbies' aspirations for more frequent connections to Gozo: "But do they need to ask themselves whether what they're asking for is essential or merely desirable? Is it a case of having their cake and eating it? Are their aspirations realistic?"

Earlier on, the editorial highlighted that "what is essential is not the same as what is desirable and affordable".

I believe that the editorial is based on a number of wrong premises. Connectivity is an issue which unites all Gozitans. By 'Gozitans' I do not mean only people who were born in Gozo but people who have made the choice to live here.

We may not agree on the type of connection but I believe that everyone agrees the fast ferry service was a step in the right direction. It is aligned with the

priorities of greener travel as it encourages people to put away their cars and travel by sea, so it conforms with the priorities of the Green Deal set out by the European Commission.

Along the decades, Gozitans have put up with substantial difficulties. Many a time they have seen services provided and then taken away. Be it the fast ferry service or the air link, they were already provided for by state entities many years ago but were then stopped because they were assessed not to be feasible.

It seems that during periods of duress, like the one we are facing right now, the first thing that one questions is services provided to Gozitans.

However, it would be right to question other things. What is the equivalent to a road that links Gozo to Malta? The sea. Consequently, the sea must be seen as an access point between the two islands. It is not a choice but a necessity.

Are we to preclude Gozitans from seeking better working opportunities, studying, undergoing health procedures and treatments or doing business in Malta? If these same opportunities – work, study, business or health – were offered in Gozo one would not need to travel to Malta. However, this is not the reality nowadays.

One may argue that the ferry service is subsidised. However, we have always paid because we need to and not because we have a choice. Our road system is supposed to be paid-for and maintained through our licensing regime, with some roads being paid-for through EU funds. Why is Gozo's access point through the sea not to be considered on an equivalent level?

The state has an obligation to all its citizens, whether they are living on the main island of

Malta or on Gozo. So the state is obliged to make sure accessibility remains a priority for Gozo and that a fast ferry service is provided. Gozitans need to be put on an equal footing with people living in Malta.

I am not going to enter into the question of whether the service has to be provided by the state or the private sector or into the way the public service obligation should be calculated. All the factors need to be taken into consideration.

The fact that operators consistently changed the service schedule surely has not helped to put it on a solid footing. However, it is up to the state and the European Commission to correctly assess the cost.

Nonetheless, it would be good if Gozo were to be considered an island region for all intents and purposes, with its unique peculiarities and difficulties. It is only this perspective that can really put us in a position to target the difficulties faced by the island.

This perspective should apply to everything. One can therefore say that "yes, a consistent and scheduled fast ferry service is an essential service". It is not one that is desirable but necessary.

Daniel Borg is CEO of the Gozo Business Chamber.

## Talk on art inspired by wine

John Ericsson, a former lecturer at the University of Bath, will share his knowledge and enthusiasm for wine in ASinMalta's first lecture of the 2022/2023 programme. He will discuss the depiction of wine in anything from portraits to cartoons to stickers and examine wine labels from around the world.

The lecture will be held at the Radisson Blu Resort, St Julian's on Thursday at 6.30pm. To attend, contact ASinMalta's membership secretary Nicole Stilon on media. [asinmalta@theartssociety.org](mailto:asinmalta@theartssociety.org).

## Armour-making workshop

Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum in Mdina is hosting an armour-themed artsy workshop for children (aged six to 10) inspired by Olof Gollcher's arms and armour collection on Sunday at 10.30am.

The children will learn about the decoration of symbols of courage and protection on armour and apply what they learn to create their own breastplates and swords, followed by a dance to the tune of the traditional *Il-Parata*. A fun-fact tour of the museum will also be included.

Pre-booking is essential. Send an e-mail to [bookings@palazzo-falson.com](mailto:bookings@palazzo-falson.com) or call on 2145 4512.

For more events and updates, look up the What's On online guide on [timesofmalta.com](http://timesofmalta.com).



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