

Alfred Buttigieg is the playwright of the entertaining and thought-provoking play *Ir-Rewwixta tal-Qassisin* which was performed with great success in 1986 and 2005 at the Manoel Theatre. IPPERMETTILI NITLAQ (Allow me to go), his first full-length play in 20 years, is at St. James Cavalier for the first two weekends in October. This new play, directed by Immanuel Mifsud, is a searing portrait of a couple facing a horrifying dilemma. Their baby daughter will die unless subjected to a series of operations. Yet, the life given her by these interventions will be a living hell: wheelchair-bound, dependent, unable even to eat normally, and she will die before reaching adulthood. The price of either decision may be too high as the anguished father and mother see their dream of an ordinary family life crumbling. The play also takes a long hard look at the behaviour of the medical profession on a small island which, the playwright assures us, bears no resemblance to Malta.

Buttigieg is the author of various other works including *Gezzu*, the controversial *Dik il-Qtajra*, children's plays, one-act plays and the popular Maltese workbooks series *Maltimanija*. He is also one of the founding members of the 1980s theatrical group *Ateatru* and a former member of the Manoel Theatre Management Committee. After working for 25 years as a teacher, an assistant head and a headmaster in a private school he is presently doing editorial work with Midsea Books Ltd/Klabb Kotba Maltin.

How old are you? Star sign and date of birth?

I'm 51 years old, an atypical sagitarian, 13 December 1956.

What would you like to be doing in 10 years' time?

If I'm still around I hope I'll be retired and writing full time.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Enjoying a glass of wine in good company in open air spaces where I can smoke.

What is your favourite occupation?

Sleeping but I hardly ever seem to have time for it.

Significant other?

My three archangels, Raphael, Gabriel and Michaela of course.

What is your greatest fear?

Rodents and flying.

What is it that you most value in your friends?

Their bluntness. Trusting them to tell me what they think not what I want to hear.

How would you like to die?

I want to die unconsciously.

What is your greatest extravagance?

Smoking 13 000 cigarettes a year.

What is your greatest regret?

That I stopped writing for 20 years. This is my first major work since 'Ir-Rewwixta tal-Qassisin'.

What is your most treasured possession?

Sparky (Mghaffgu), my shih tzu dog but I'm not sure if he's a possession. Alternatively a small spider tattoo creeping up my left leg I did last February to celebrate a new beginning.

Which talent would you most like to have apart from the ones you already have?

I'm not sure whether I have any talent at all.

What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?

I suppose, losing a child.

Where would you like to live?

Well, maybe in future some small place overlooking the sea or the countryside.

What is your most marked characteristic?

Probably my biting sense of humour and my moustache which I only shaved off once in 30 years.

Who are your heroes/heroines in real life?

Real life people who have achieved something in life including musicians, writers and artists.

What is it that you most dislike?

I dislike shallow people who are always flaunting their money and non-existent talent.

What is your motto?

The best revenge is living well.

60-second interview – Alfred Buttigieg by Marie Benoit, The Independent on Sunday, 27-9-2008