

The presentation of Alfred Buttigieg's IR-REWWIXTA TAL-QASSISIN (The Uprising of the Priests) at the Manoel Theatre was an occasion for the public to see some valid Maltese theatre the like of which has rarely been seen or rather heard before. The work is a bold putting together of historical elements of the oppression of the Maltese under the final years of the Order's rule in Malta when the tools of power passed from Ximenes to De Rohan.

The historical aspect is insignificant in fact the work has a major change that undoubtedly was deliberately made by Buttigieg to suit his theatrical and dramatic purposes. The script itself is of innumerable good qualities and has already been reviewed by the present writer (Weekend Chronicle 20.12.86). The production served to bring out further the validity of the written word although visually much more could have been done for such a work. The constant use of an open light, as a start, deprived much of the colour and dynamism that was in the atmosphere of the writing's suggestiveness.

Undoubtedly costumes were good, particularly that of Ximenes. Even the set could have been more alive and less arid, although the work intended to follow the same Brechtianism of the writing, in the directing. Another valid element was the music, making use of a piano, violin and clarinet with Manoel Pirotta's compositions, though overtly Weissian by extraction, were highly relevant and tied to the work. The actor's singing was well coordinated and the anger and shifting from humour to irony and other emotions came through.

Interpretations were hardly outstanding and this was quite natural in a play of strong collective qualities since it is the seminarists who are the 'heroes' of the work by their very own uprising against the authoritarian and opportunistic Rettur played with confidence yet not without some dries by Renald Galea. This episode gives importance to the otherwise less highly charged second act, compared with the first where most of Buttigieg's creative qualities came out. The apparition of Mannarinu remained structurally detached and isolated from the rest of the work in the manner it was handled and presented by the Rettur. It would have been more convenient and in harmony with the play had Mannarinu been brought forward by the seminarists and lumped in front of the Rettur and the Bishop and saying his bit in a realistic and theatrically more plausible manner than having him practically read off his homely about the ethics of politics and how we should handle illegitimate rulers, undemocratic governments and sundry tyrants.

The production, however, stands as a generally successful piece of socially conscious theatre particularly in the present political situation when major developments are taking place and its merits remain basically due to a sound script that must have been the work of years' preparation.

The collective effort of the actors cannot go unnoticed and their coordination gave life to the work. The director perhaps too much under the influence of a Brechtian conception of theatre production missed an occasion to give more movement and lighting creativeness to the work, the like of which would definitely be a most valid and far-reaching contribution towards culture as a means of instilling the people a sense of social and existential awareness making them able to draw their own individual and mature conclusions on Malta's social and political destiny and destinations.

***Ethics of Politics* by Adrian Stivala, Weekend Chronicle, 27-12-1986**