



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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PRESS RELEASE

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**A NEW "NATIONAL THEATRE" FOR GIBRALTAR : THEATRE COMMITTEE WITH
LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE TO ADVISE GOVERNMENT ON
REFURBISHMENT**

- *Government acquires Queen's Cinema for £3.5m*
- *Committee of Experts to advise Government on refurbishment*
- *Theatre will also be home to Academy of the Performing Arts*

HM Government of Gibraltar has agreed terms to acquire the old Queen's Cinema for 3.5 million pounds. The cinema, which has remained closed for several years, is to be converted into Gibraltar's New National Theatre in keeping with GSLP/Liberal Government's commitment to provide a new, modern theatre for Gibraltar.

A refurbishment programme will be undertaken to prepare the building to house the theatre. The Theatre will be designed for multi-use and will become the home of the Gibraltar Academy of Performing Arts also providing studio and rehearsal space for Gibraltar's talented young artists.

It is expected that the first performance and inauguration will take place in 2015. The old Queen's Cinema will then become "The Queen's National Theatre".

The refurbishment programme will be led by a committee of established local specialists set up by the Chief Minister, who will chair it, and to include the Culture Minister, the Hon Steven Linares.

The Chief Minister, Hon Fabian Picardo said: "I am delighted to have agreed terms with the Benatar family for the acquisition of the Queen's Cinema. As with many of our other manifesto commitments, the public can now start seeing the work we have been undertaking these past 16 months taking shape and our manifesto commitments being delivered. On many fronts, the change people voted for is starting to bear fruit. On this project, in particular, we are delivering not just a new and much needed theatre on the scale necessary to bring touring productions to Gibraltar. We are also providing a home for the Gibraltar Academy of the Performing Arts and for young Gibraltarian talent to have

areas to rehearse. I am delighted that a very talented group of people, whose expertise is patently obvious, have accepted my invitation to become involved in advising the Government on this project. We will rely on their expertise to deliver an excellent final product for our nation.”

Minister for Culture, Hon Steven Linares, said: “As you can imagine, I am delighted to be involved in delivering this manifesto commitment for Gibraltar. It is time Gibraltar had more than just a “vision” for a new Theatre; but that it should actually become a reality – as we are committed to doing in this four year term. The Chief Minister has assembled an excellent committee to advice on the refurbishment and I very much look forward to the work we are going to do together to deliver on this commitment.”

The Committee is made up of the following persons:

Alice Mascarenhas, Journalist and Broadcaster, trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in Stage Management. Her theatre, film and TV credits include: 1994's Canal Theatre, UK Premiere of 'Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living In Paris', 1994's BBC TV drama 'Signs and Wonders', 2004 dance film 'Tussle' with N. Conroy, and for GBC 'Political Development', 'The Governors', 'We Served' And the '1995 Sunshine Games'. A theatre and music critic today she is the Features Editor of the Gibraltar Chronicle. She has worked extensively in amateur dramatics locally as stage manager and director and is a member of Group 2000. She has also worked with Group 70, Stage Circle and The Trafalgar Theatre Group.

Mark Cortes gained BTEC National Diploma in Technical Theatre (Southampton). BA Hons Degree in Technical Theatre with major in lighting and a minor in stage management. He has long been involved in productions in Gibraltar. He has worked professionally in the Mayflower Theatre in Southampton and for a White Light Limited in London, one of the UK's major stage lighting companies.

Julian Felice gained a BA(Hons) in Drama and English from the University of Kent, before completing an MA in Drama from the same institution, specialising in performance technique at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, which included a research placement at the Theatre. He then trained as a Drama teacher at Central School of Speech and Drama, which led to a job at New Brompton Performing Arts College. He returned to Gibraltar in 2008 to take over the job of Head of Drama at Bayside School and set up Bayside & Westside Drama Group, which has won Best Play at the last two Gibraltar Drama Festivals, including with his original play Mary Jane, which was subsequently published by Eldridge Plays, the first play by a Gibraltarian playwright to be published internationally.

Cecil Gomez, Former Headmaster of St Anne's Middle School (retired), he was a founder member of Group 56 and later Group 70 following the amalgamation with St Joseph's. He has been involved in theatre throughout his life in Gibraltar as actor, director and producer, with many theatre credits to his name from Shakespeare to Lorca to a string of poetry recitals. Today he leads Group 2000. His most recent work was seen in the Gibraltar Drama Festival.

Humbert Hernandez, a teacher by profession (retired) he was a founder member of St Joseph's Drama Group which amalgamated to create Group 70. Today he is a member of Group 2000. Actor, director and producer he was last seen on stage in a recital of the poet Miguel Hernandez and in the Gibraltar Drama Festival in the play 'Zoo Story'.

Carmen Gomez's career on stage and screen needs no introduction. A professional actress for many years has worked extensively in Theatre and TV. She was in the World

Premier musical 'Buddy' on the West End and in the World Premier Stage version of 'The House of Spirits' by Isabel Allende.

Christian Santos is the director of Santos Productions. He has worked extensively in the entertainment industry with a degree in Contemporary Arts at Nottingham Trent University, as well as a post-graduate diploma in Acting and Musicals, working for companies such as Openwide International, The English Theatre Company, Sun Cruises and Disney. His background is in Musical Theatre and has worked mainly as a vocalist returning to Gibraltar after a 4 - year stint with Disney in Tokyo. Creating Santos Productions he has produced various shows including the Miss Gibraltar Pageant. Christian is well known locally for his original Llanito comedies - 'El Susto', 'Miss Llanita International' and 'El Cuento'. He was last seen on stage in a very successful 'An Audience with Rock Masters' in stand-up comedy. Vocal coach and director of the Santos Choir they have become a favourite locally and have found international success in competition in UK and Barcelona.

Nathan Conroy is a Professional dancer and choreographer he was in the original stage production on the West End of the dance sensation 'Stomp' and for a number of years was also the face behind its international and European team performing around the world. Nathan formed part of Stomp's London 2012 Olympics at the Closing Ceremony. Today he also runs Art In Movement on the Rock. He started his career as a breakdancer and martial artist. He trained at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. After his four years training, he worked for a series of contemporary dance companies, including Phoenix, (A.B.C.D), Urban Classicism and Motion House amongst others. Commercially Nathan has worked for Wycliffe Jean, Mel B and Enigma, as well as having choreographed for short films, dance companies and for DKNY.

Joe Cortes has been secretary and is now vice president of the Gibraltar Amateur Dramatics Association as well as secretary and director of long established Group 70. He was a hugely popular teacher for many years, retiring as headmaster of St Anne's School. He has held various posts on the executive of the Gibraltar Teachers' Association.

Lionel Perez is an M.A. Hon Fellow of St Mary's University College, (First Gibraltarian to be so honoured) Teacher, producer/Director of Drama, Dance and TV Productions, Author of Children Books and two Plays and Coin designer. Studied in London, New York, Puerto Rico and Canada. Chairman of the Medical Users Forum and forms part of Local Charities committees. He was head of drama at Bayside for many years.

Academic qualification covers Teacher Certificate Art and History, Master Theatre Arts (covering all aspect of the theatre world) a Tesol Member. A member of the International WHO'WHO of Entrepreneurs.

Carl Viagas will be involved as co-ordinator of works for the Government.

The Chief Minister will hold a press conference at the Queen's Cinema today at noon.