



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 501/2018

Date: 3rd September 2018

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### Local Writers for 6th Edition of the Literary Festival

A total of eight writers from Gibraltar join the Festival line up for this year's Gibunco Gibraltar International Literary festival.

**The Hon Prof John E Cortes MP, MBE, JP** and **Professor Clive Finlayson** will be presenting a feature entitled, *Recollections and Reflections of two Gibraltarian Naturalists*.

John Cortes is a Graduate of Royal Holloway College, University of London and Doctor of Philosophy at Magdalen College and the Animal Ecology Research Group, Oxford. He is Beacon professor of the University of Gibraltar and holds an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Kingston. In 2003 he was awarded an MBE for his services to Ecology. He was a founder of the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society and its General Secretary for thirty five years and was for twenty years Director of the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens. He was elected into Government and became Minister for Health and the Environment in H.M. Government of Gibraltar in December 2011. He is currently Minister for Education, Environment, Heritage, Energy and Climate Change in HM Government of Gibraltar. His current work includes the development of environmental legislation and governance in Gibraltar. He has worked as a field biologist in southern Europe and North Africa and has published and broadcast widely on natural history and ecology.

Professor Clive Finlayson is the Director of the Gibraltar Museum and of the Gorham's Cave Complex World Heritage Site. He is an evolutionary ecologist whose great passion is birds. He got involved in Neanderthal research after participating in the early excavations in Gorham's Cave; he now co-directs the research programme in the caves. Clive is also a nature photographer who started his trade in the old days of black and white film, developing his own photographs, some of which were published in ornithological books as far back as the 1970s.

**Michele Attias** originates from Gibraltar and currently resides in London. She is a Mindset Expert, Executive Coach, International Speaker and Author of 'Look Inside: Stop Seeking Start Living.', which will be the feature of her talk. She was previously a registered and accredited Therapist.

Michele completed her Advanced Diploma in Therapy at North London University, Qualified as a Clinical Supervisor at the Central School for Counselling and Psychotherapy London, studied at the



prestigious Tavistock Clinic studying a Masters in Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy, and further on Completed a Coaching Certification. She has clinically supervised the client caseloads for over 60 therapists and worked with highly complex clients.

She's a passionate writer and has published more than 100 articles on Personal Development. Her philosophy when coaching, writing or public speaking is based on a basic principle: Outer world success should not come at an Inner world price.

**Kenneth Castiel** is an entrepreneur, high performance business coach, keynote speaker and a Million Dollar Round Table Life member, who began his career selling books door-to-door and went on to found one of the leading home grown financial services corporations in Gibraltar. After thirteen years, he sold the company and attained financial freedom at the age of forty-three.

He has embarked on cutting-edge education at the highest level in the fields of NLP and archetypal branding and returned to university at the age of fifty-nine to graduate through the school of psychotherapy and psychology, with a master's in creative leadership from one of the UK's top universities. Kenneth is the eighty-first civilian in the world to do a military style skydive from 30,000 feet, the cruising altitude of a commercial jet and is married with three children. Kenneth is the author of the upcoming book *The Hero and Villain Within*, which will be launched on 17th September.

**Giordano Durante** was born in Gibraltar in 1981. He attended Bayside Comprehensive School before heading to London to study philosophy.

He returned to the Rock in 2007. After some years working as a clerk and a prison officer, he became Editor of the news website YGTV.

Giordano is a regular contributor to Radio Gibraltar's 'Pause for Reflection'. Since 2014, he has delivered radio talks on celebrity culture, free speech, patriotism, the value of reading and the poetry of Thomas Hardy. Giordano also took part in the inaugural 'Gib Talks' event in 2015.

His first book of poems 'West' was published in 2017. This debut collection contains poems about Gibraltar, the cities of Andalucía and the metropolitan gloom of London - three places which have structured Giordano's literary sensibilities.

A Gibraltar Chronicle review of 'West', by Conchita Triay, praised "Durante's economic but rich use of language and his penetrating, pithy observations of human behaviour."

Giordano is currently working on a journal and a second collection of poems.

**Alex Menez** is a biologist. His undergraduate research was on the ecology of subtidal marine molluscs in Gibraltar. He then went on to do his PhD on the ecology of land molluscs in southern Iberia, focusing on biogeography, and habitat structure effects on diversity. Alex is an Associate Researcher of the Institute of Life and Earth Sciences at the University of Gibraltar, and an Honorary Fellow of the Gibraltar National Museum. He is currently researching the history of natural history in Gibraltar, including palaeoanthropology, and has recently published several papers on the history of the Gibraltar Skull and the Gibraltar Scientific Society. Alex is currently working a new book on the Neanderthal skull, which will be edited by Geraldine Finlayson and will be the basis for his talk.



**Ayelet Mamo Shay**, a business woman, journalist and professional researcher of small Jewish communities around the world, moved with her husband and children to Gibraltar from Israel following a job offer. Since arriving in Gibraltar, Ayelet has felt that she has been “cheating” on her country by falling in love with the other country that has welcomed her so warmly- Gibraltar! Despite the challenges and dilemmas of moving to a new country, Ayelet has embraced the opportunities offered by the relocation to become a good ambassador for both her native Israel and Gibraltar.

This life-changing experience has given Ayelet the inspiration to write her book *Relocation Darling, Relocation!* - a realistic, humorous, emotional novel about the hottest and most charged topic in modern society today, one that touches many families across the world: relocation to another country in pursuit of a promising career.

*Relocation Darling, Relocation!* was originally published in 2015 in Hebrew and has proven very popular amongst the Israeli expat community worldwide. In 2017, the book was translated to English thanks to a grant from the Gibraltar Ministry of Culture and since then became a must read for anyone who is planning to do a relocation, is currently on relocation, or has returned from a relocation assignment.

**Henry Valerga** is a veteran singer/musician, as well as lyric-writer, arranger and composer of music.

His service to the community as an entertainer is meritorious beyond that of a mere local musician, since what he has achieved and embroidered indelibly in the fabric of our community, is an integral part of our heritage and history, and reflects in music what we are. 2018 marks his 52nd Anniversary of uninterrupted, active service in the music industry.

Now in the autumn of his musical career, he has cast a look back over his chequered life and decided to share with us his vast experience in music and also in life; experiences which are exciting, revealing, surprising, sometimes frustrating and at times depressing, but always enriching and full of interest.

With “A Boy From Red Sands”, Henry makes his debut as an author. This book of his is a wide compendium of anecdotes, happenings, episodes, and encounters through which, he provides a clear account of his first twenty-one years. It is also a slice of social, local history covering the 50’s and the 60’s by a lad who grew up in ‘Los Humphrey’s’ (the first built and finest of Gibraltar’s housing estates) and wallowed in the lap of glorious luxury all the way up the Red Sands Road.

**M. G. Sanchez** comes back to the Festival. In his session he will discuss the three years he lived in India’s financial and entertainment capital and how his experiences in the city are reflected in his new autobiographical tome, the incident-packed, but shrewdly observant *Bombay Journal*.

M. G. Sanchez was educated at Bayside Comprehensive School and at the University of Leeds, where he took BA, MA and PhD degrees in English Literature. He is the author of eight books – three novels (*The Escape Artist*, *Solitude House* and *Jonathan Gallardo*), two collections of stories (*Rock Black* and *Diary of a Victorian Colonial*), two memoirs (*Past: A Memoir* and *Bombay Journal*) and a book of essays (*The Prostitutes of Serruya’s Lane* and other *Hidden Histories*) – and has also edited two anthologies of Gibraltar-related writing (*Georgian and Victorian Gibraltar: Incredible*



Eyewitness Accounts and Writing the Rock of Gibraltar: An Anthology of Literary Texts, 1720-1890).