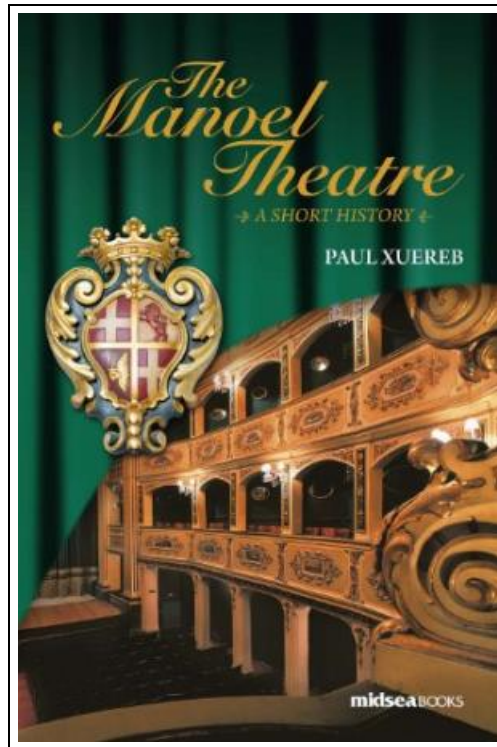


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Midsea Books Ltd, Malta, Malta, 2012. Paperback. Condition: New. 2nd Revised ed.. Language: English . Brand New Book. The Manoel Theatre is the only theatre building still extant and still regularly used in Malta that dates back to the period when Malta was ruled by the Order of St John. It was founded by the Portuguese Grand master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena in 1732 and was used regularly by the Knights for their amateur performances of plays and even operas, and also by visiting professional companies. Although meant for the honest entertainment of the public, it was the young Knights who dominated it either as performers or as members of the audience. During the siege of the French occupiers during 1798-1800, the theatre was managed by the Maltese opera composer Nicolo Isouard and provided the besieged soldiers with their main entertainment. The passing of Malta to Britain meant that the theatre, now known as Theatre Royal, remained of importance to the substantial British garrison and the many British civil servants and businessmen who spent years in Malta, but the rise of an educated Maltese middle class also meant that productions in Italian and then also in Maltese were produced by talented Maltese amateurs. A good many Maltese authors produced mainly farcical plays in Maltese or adapted foreign comedies for performance, and the end of the century saw the birth of the first important Maltese drama group, directed for many years by M.A. Borg. The Manoel, however, functioned mostly as an opera theatre, managed by entrepreneurs who imported singers and dancers to appear in operas by people like Rossini, Cimarosa, Bellini and Donizetti, and Verdi. The building of a new opera house that opened its doors in 1866 meant that the theatre was no longer Theatre Royal and was now renamed Manoel..

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