

## An opera on 'dialogue' between Thomas Mann and his daughter.

### Preamble

There are some individuals whose input to the World and to Humankind is so great during that they never pass away, they are transferred into the stars to continue showing people the way to go. One of these individuals was Professor Elisabeth Mann Borgese, the Founder of the International Ocean Institute. She chose the ocean for her laboratory and founded the IOI as her instrument for promoting the principle of common heritage of mankind.

Elisabeth Mann Borgese's love for the ocean was only matched by her love for music. She trained at the Conservatory of Music in Zurich in 1937 and played the piano throughout her life. She found in the ocean the echo of the music she strove to perfect, music of life and generosity. The coherence of her life and mission is so perfectly explained by the twinning harmony of music and peace of the ocean.

The Mother of the ocean is being celebrated through the very music she loved, and what better tribute can be paid to her memory than a libretto written by a man who was both her valued friend and mentor, Father Peter Serracino Inglott. The music of this five-act libretto was composed by Charles Camilleri. It takes a setting of a dialogue between Elisabeth and her renowned father, Noble Laureate in Literature, Thomas Mann. A dialogue that reflects Elisabeth's early conviction that Humankind can and should create a just and equitable order.

We shall always celebrate the music of her soul....

Awni Behnam  
President IOI



Elisabeth  
Mann Borgese  
(1918-2002)



## The Opera

A new work by Charles Camilleri was premiered on October 17 in Malta. The work was named "*To Be A Mann*", a 30-minute opera in five "acts", to a libretto by Peter Serracino Inglott. The opera was performed during a "music festival", one of the events organised in connection with the meeting in Malta of *La Navigation du Savoir*, an EU-funded project that researches the maritime heritage of the Mediterranean.

*To Be A Mann* had only two singers, bass Noel Grima, and soprano Rosabelle Bianchi, and was scored for a chamber ensemble consisting of a violin, clarinet, trumpet, trombone and tuba.

The opera is a dialogue between the Magus (the celebrated German writer Thomas Mann) and Little Girl (Mann's daughter, Elisabeth Mann Borgese).

Rev. Professor Peter Serracino Inglott, who has collaborated with Charles Camilleri on many of his compositions, said their brief was to create something to do with the sea.

Fr Peter hit upon the idea of depicting, if briefly, the relationship between Thomas Mann and his youngest daughter Elisabeth, who was the founder of the International Ocean Institute in Malta, and organiser of the *Pacem in Maribus* conventions, which led to the Law of the Sea conference.

Mann, who was 43 when Elisabeth was born, had other children but he was later to say that in Elisabeth's case, it was the first time he experienced fatherhood, since he had been formerly detached from his family. He was to moulding his children as if they were characters in one of his novels, giving them autonomy later.

However in Elisabeth's case, he wanted to give her his fullest attention.

Elisabeth was born in 1918, at a time of great political instability in Germany, leading to the rise of extremist parties on the Left and the Right. He felt cut off from the changes taking place.

So when Elisabeth was born he was sure she was destined to live a world of chaos, symbolised by the sea. The sea eventually would take over the land, upsetting the order of creation. He saw his daughter as bringing order to chaos. He wrote all this in a mock epic poem.

## La Navigation du Savoir



European Union  
EUROMED Heritage II



University of Malta  
Mediterranean Institute



United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural  
Organisation



Thomas Mann  
(1875-1955)

Elisabeth's first reaction was to rebel. She married a man 40 years her senior - Professor Borgese, an authority on Thomas Mann, who taught at the University of Milan. In him she saw the father figure she craved.

In fact Elisabeth's relationship with her father was very cold, and she never had a proper discussion with him.

Elisabeth Mann-Borgese, who died in February 2002, was trained as a musician and musicologist. After her husband died she started writing and carried out research, exploring the different forms of "otherness", such as human's relationship with animals.

In 1967 Elisabeth had heard Arvid Pardo, then Malta's permanent representative at the United Nations, make his epoch-making speech about the seabed as the common heritage of mankind. There she got the idea that while her father had used the sea as a symbol of chaos, she saw in the sea something which truly belonged to all mankind, thus leading to co-operation between nations.

She believed that the common ownership of the sea and its resources should lead to common ownership of the land and in the institution of a world authority, a world government.

In her book *The Oceanic Circle*, Elisabeth says that after her father died she realised how much he had inspired her.

All this is brought out in the dialogue between the Magician (as Thomas Mann was called by his children) and Little Girl (*Medi*, the Bavarian nickname given to Elisabeth).

*(Extracted from an article of Laurence Grech, which appeared on The Sunday Times, October 17, 2004)*



Peter  
Serracino Inglott



Charles Camilleri

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