

King Lear 'live on TV' at the Argotti

Lisa Gwen Baldacchino

Shakespeare's tragedy of King Lear has taken on a modern twist and the plot unfolds in a television studio suspended between the world of mass media and reality.

The modernised version, "King" J. Lear, will be performed by Peter Busuttil and Pino Scicluna at the Argotti Gardens, Floriana, on Tuesday and Wednesday.

First performed last April in the *Manneggio Reale* in Turin, "King" J. Lear will be touring various regions in Italy in the coming months.

The script is a mixture of Italian and Maltese, even though the first runs were primarily in Italian.

"We try to use Maltese as much as possible in all our productions to express certain emotions (and not just anger)," he said, adding this generated a certain amount of curiosity about the actors' origins when they performed in Italy.

"I have become known in some Italian theatre circles as 'that Maltese actor'," said Mr Busuttil.

"I find that irrespective of the language used in a production... it's the emotions, attitude and amount of verisimilitude the actor gives to the performance that makes it understood," he added.

Performing in Malta was familiar territory, but performing in another language was not that easy as one had to keep track of all the verbs and their conjugation.

"When I am not careful I allow the performance to take over and consequently create my own verbs and words in Italian," Mr Busuttil said. The play, which was originally two hours long, has been reduced to 80 minutes.

The production is set in a television studio where Lear (played by Mr Scicluna) is assisted by Edmund (played by Mr Busuttil). The performance is filmed and parts are performed as if they were on a live television show.

The authors, Marco Gobetti and Domenico Castaldo, who is also directing, have used extensive parts of the original play with some additional text.

There is a lot of Shakespeare in the script but other authors fea-

ture too. The play seeks to follow the content of King Lear while changing the overall structure.

Mr Busuttil and Mr Scicluna have been working together on a regular basis for more than 20 years. The performing duo have recently brought to the Maltese stage two memorable productions in the Maltese language - *Waiting for Godot* (2006) and *Ghaziz Francis* (staged in 2007 and 2008 respectively).

Their future projects include a production based on the Maltese cartoon character *Corto Maltese* as well as a play based on the political atmosphere in Malta during World War II.

Mr Busuttil and Mr Scicluna will be performing "King" J. Lear with Katia Capato, Domenico Castaldo, Giulietta Debernardi, Alessandra Dell'Atti, Ruggero Dondi, Marco Gobetti, Francesca Netto and Nicola Zambelli.

Tickets can be purchased from any of the following outlets in Malta and Gozo: Exotique, Agenda, Vodafone, Bookends and Newskiosk.

www.maltaartsfestival.com.

