

## A play by Clare Azzopardi published in French and Arabic

*L'Interdett taħt is-Sodda*, a play by Clare Azzopardi (1977), is being published in French and Arabic translations by two publishing houses in Paris and Alexandria. The French translation by Cécilia Mattalia, with the collaboration of Olivier Favier, will be published by Editions Théâtrales (Paris) and will be launched during a reading directed by Alexandra Tobelaim at the Théâtre de l'Odéon this month.

The publication is part of a series of 27 original theatre pieces penned by authors from each European Union country, and forms part of a cultural initiative on the occasion of France's presidency of the European Union.

The play was also selected for publication by the International

Association for Creation and Training in Alexandria, and the Arabic translation by Walid Nabhan will be published and performed in February 2009.

The play was premiered in Malta at the Saint James Cavalier Centre for Creativity by TeatruTramm, under the direction of Marcelle Teuma. It focuses on the Church-State conflict in Malta during the 1960s, but introduces a surreal twist, in that the events are viewed through the eyes of the ghost of a young woman who was buried in unconsecrated ground during the conflict, and through the boisterous and irreverent barbs of an undertaker who works at the Addolorata cemetery.

The politico-religious dispute occupies a salient place in many people's memories, due to the atmosphere of tension and division in the Maltese community that it brought about. Its origins lie in the period of Malta's decolonisation, particularly the conflict between the Church and the Malta Labour Party over the question of Integration. This was exacerbated by the Church's feeling threatened by a Labour Party under Dom Mintoff's leadership which was also affiliated to the AAPSO. Although there are various literary works in Maltese that are set in or around this period, it remains a delicate subject that elicits painful memories. Its publication in Paris and Egypt is an important literary contribution in that it places a work of literature rooted in Malta's contemporary history on the international literary map.

