

## STELLA PULO: ALIEN OF EXTRAORDINARY ABILITY, ACTOR, WRITER, BUSINESSWOMAN

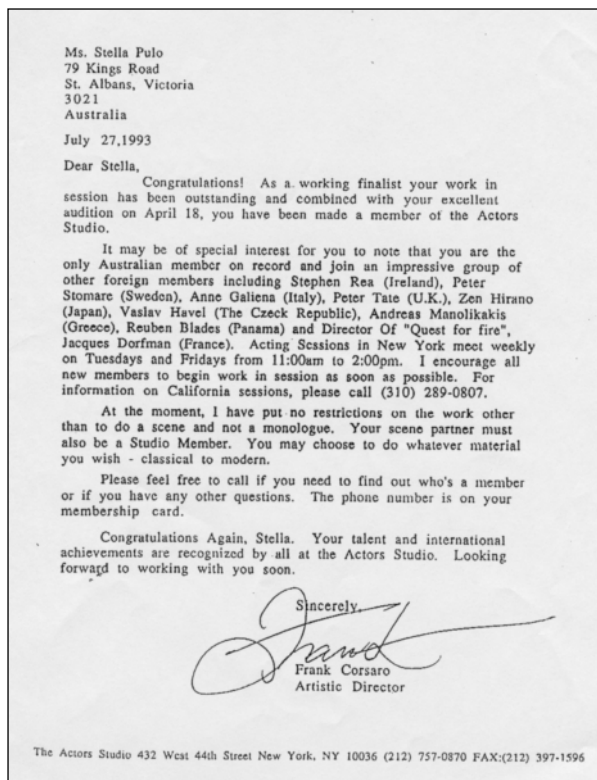


Stella Cherie Pulo's family migrated from Malta. Pulo's mother, Yvonne, arrived in Melbourne from Gzira with her father when she was 11 years old and years later met her future husband, George Pulo, who was originally from Paola but who had lived in London before emigrating to Australia. Yvonne and George established their home in Kings Road, St Albans, and raised two children, Stella and Michael. Stella soon experienced the 'wog' label phenomenon and stopped speaking Maltese, but later found that teachers were understanding and challenging of racist attitudes.

Stella went to St Albans High School during the 1970s (she was in Form 4B in 1971). She discovered a flair for acting which she developed further by enrolling in the drama department at Melbourne University. She completed a Bachelor of Education course in Creative Arts in 1978 - one could assume that, as for

many of her era, training as a teacher was a good way of obtaining access to university education.

She also trained with voice and drama coaches to extend her abilities. These initiatives enabled her to develop a career in acting, singing and writing.



Her professional acting career started in Melbourne in the eighties where she performed in shows at La Mama, a livewire theatrical venue in Carlton that was based on the New York off-off-Broadway venue of La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club. Some of her earliest works were based on themes of racism, isolation and exclusion.

In 1984 she toured Victorian schools with her one-woman show "Migrants" and was astonished at the fear of migrants shown by audiences. One of her earlier performances was in "Crazed!?" at the Comedy Cafe, Fitzroy. She tackled racism through shows such as "Stuff We Like" (1988) and "Wadda Ya Doin' Here Anyway?" (1987) which drew on her experience of immigration and settlement within the Maltese community.

The latter was published as an illustrated edition by the Victorian Association for Drama in Education. The play was also used with high school children to promote discussion "about the position of migrants in our community and our expectations of

migrants. It highlighted the ease with which people are able to jump to unfounded and unjustified conclusions and fall into the trap of using blanket stereotypes."

One of her later shows "Every Night Something Happens" toured internationally.

## Rising star

Her name is Stella Pulo and she hails from Melbourne. She is 33 years old, but can look 20. And she is the first Australian to be selected to join the celebrated

Actors Studio in New York. Her selection begs the question: how did she do it? (Dustin Hoffman had to audition 13 times before being accepted.)

Says the studio's Artistic Director, Frank Corsaro: "She is a very determined young lady. She was an observer here for a year. She has a great deal of dramatic power. Great sense of humour, a fantastic singing voice. She was determined to audition and to succeed. I laud her for it."

Corsaro points out that the Actors Studio is not a drama school, with no classes as such. "It's a professional hang-out. Stella came as many people do – seeking artistic sanctuary. This is the most prestigious place for actors in this country. You name them, we've had them."

Pulo sees it as a professional laboratory where she can experiment: "You can perform pieces and have instant feedback. There is nowhere else like it in the world."

– Amanda Buckworth



**Stella Pulo: flying the flag at the Actors Studio.**

She became a member of Melbourne Writers Theatre and the Fellowship of Australian Writers. Her articles appeared in the Women's Weekly and the Age where her column would report on New York theatre and the comic happenings in and around New York.

The New York antecedents of La Mama must have been magical because in 1990 Pulo was in the United States performing one-woman shows in off-Broadway theatres. In May 1993 she became the first Australia to be accepted as a lifetime member of The Actors Studio in New York, which is an exclusive theatre workshop for professional actors, directors and playwrights.

During the nineties she combined her teaching expertise with overseas travel. In 1993-1995 she was in Japan teaching English as a second language.

In 1995-1997 she was back in Australia working as a consultant for drama and theatre studies with the Victorian Education Department. She returned to New York in 1997 and was granted Permanent Residency in USA as an "Alien of Extraordinary Ability". She acquired US Citizenship in 2004.

One of her overseas accomplishments

was performing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe "Every Night Something Awful" written and performed by Stella Pulo. She has appeared in various television show, including the quirky and popular "Flight of the Concorde".

In 2011 Pulo wrote "Shrimp Shells in My Cleavage: Travel Tales from an Aussie Actress on the Run." Not only was it popular for her followers but it was also staged as a performance at the New York School of Visual Arts. Her "commercial" work has included working with Jerry Seinfeld in the advertising genre. In 2012 she was featured on the front page of the "Maltese Link" for the Federation of Maltese Living Abroad. Pulo says she has been to Malta several times since and has taught at and performed in drama classes at the University of Malta.

Her latest article in The Age was on 9 January 2014: "Snow place like Home in New York". She lives in mid-town Manhattan.

And in conclusion, Pulo wrote: "In Malta the the people are like my Maltese family in Australia: generous, helpful, warm and and friendly. But although Malta is where my blood comes from, I didn't feel like I had come home in any way. I had arrived in Malta on a boat that rocked all the way from Naples, but as I quickly learned, there is is no rocking the boat once I got there. For me, Malta was an excursion in tolerance, compassion, a series of lonely moments and revelations, and finally an understanding and acceptance of my family roots and some of the things that make me, me. To me, Malta will always be a small place with a big heart."

STELLA PULO's physical and vocal characterisations are excellent - her entire performance has a great deal of integrity. -- Melbourne Times, Feb. '92

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 SOME  
 THING  
 AWFUL!**

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**MALTESE LINK**  
 Federation of Maltese Living Abroad

FMLA Newsletter Issue 15 JANUARY 2012

Stella Pulo  
 Award winning Maltese  
 Australian Actress  
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**Shrimp Shells  
 in My Cleavage**

Travel Tales from an Aussie Actress on the Run  
**STELLA PULO**  
 Illustrations by Anita Sinclair  
 Foreword by Estelle Parsons

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Stella would especially like to acknowledge the bag lady on 47th Street, New York City, who sat in the snow during the winter of 1986 and played the flute, beautifully. This woman was the original inspiration for "Every Night Some Thing Awful!"

STEL PRODUCTIONS  
 presents  
**EVERY NIGHT  
 SOME THING  
 AWFUL!**

a one-woman show  
 written and performed by  
**STELLA PULO**  
 directed by  
**GEORGE RONDO**

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE '92  
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Theatre Workshop  
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Stella Pulo and Jerry Seinfeld advertising an Australian bank.



Stella Pulo, 1973

Information and photographs supplied by Pulo family and the internet.

Ref: Maltese Link Issue 15, January 2012; Federation of Maltese Living Abroad.