ONLINE SOCIAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS OVERVIEW

MARCH CULTURAL EVENT - POLYPHONY IN DANTE’S PARADISO
by Prof. Francesco Ciabattoni from Georgetown University
Sunday, March 21st at 3:00 PM (ET) on Zoom
PROGRAM, RSVP & TICKETS HERE

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Carnevale, celebrated in spirited “virtual” style by the ICS (see it on YouTube), with musical performances and descriptions of the Venetian traditions, is over, and we are now deeply into the contemplative season of Lent.

So perhaps it is appropriate that our next social event will take us via the poetry of Italy’s most famous poet, Dante Alighieri (b. ca 1265, died September 14, 1321), to meditate on the voyage in his famous Divina Commedia from Inferno to Purgatorio to Paradiso. Georgetown’s Prof. Francesco Ciabattoni will be our guide as we consider the musical implications of that journey in going from the disharmonious “unholy racket” of the Inferno, through the atoning unisonal singing in Purgatorio to the harmonious polyphonic choral singing in Paradiso. Choral polyphony was an exciting innovation during the Ars Nova movement of the 14th century, and Dante used it to flesh out the description of the culmination of human aspirations in Paradiso. Please register for this Sunday, March 21 event at https://dante-ciabattoni.eventbrite.com/.

Coming up in April will be elections to the ICS Board of Directors. Brief biographies of two candidates are presented in these pages. Please have a look at them and stay tuned for further information which will be sent to members by email.

And, as always, please continue to enroll in our array of courses, music and other wonderful opportunities: https://italianculturalsociety.org/ilp/.

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FESTA DI CARNEVALE 2021
BY DARIO PENZO, ICS MARKETING & EVENTS COORDINATOR

Una festa di Carnevale speciale, quella organizzata dall’Italian Cultural Society di Washington DC il 21 febbraio scorso. Un pomeriggio passato in compagnia, tra momenti culturali e il sorriso dei bambini, un’occasione che ci ha fatto dimenticare, o meglio cambiare, le mascherine contro il COVID in maschera di Carnevale.

Tra i vari interventi della festa, un ruolo importante è stato svolto dalle tradizioni carnevalesche italiane. Grazie a Laura Loddo abbiamo riscoperto le origini del secolare Carnevale di Venezia, con il cerimoniale volo dell’Angelo e la Festa delle Marie. Un’altra tradizione del carnevale italiano che ha trovato spazio nella festa è stata la meno conosciuta celebrazione della Pentolaccia, che annualmente si svolge in Liguria e Puglia la prima domenica di Quaresima. Durante questa festa, si era soliti appendere dei vasi di terracotta ripieni di dolci e caramelle, detti per l’appunto “pentolacce”, mentre a turno i bambini dovevano cercare di colpire e rompere le pentole per raccogliere tutti i dolci che vi si trovavano al loro interno.

Negli anni scorsi, la festa di Carnevale dell’ICS ha sempre avuto un ospite d’eccezione, le Chiacchiere, dolce tipico del Carnevale che sta diventando sempre più popolare anche negli Stati Uniti. Anche se quest’anno non le abbiamo potute mangiare assieme, lo Chef Roberto Donna ci è venuto in soccorso preparandone per noi e svelando la sua ricetta per la preparazione del dolce tradizionale.

È stato poi il turno dei bambini che ci hanno fatto sorridere con la loro allegria e immaginazione. Numerosi sono i video dei Bambini dell’Italian Language Program che hanno partecipato al concorso delle Maschere, presentando i loro costumi e scherzando insieme al pubblico. Il Coro dell’ICS, inoltre, si è esibito sulle note del Pulcinella di Igor Stravinsky, diretti dal Maestro Felicia Toscano. Ed ecco che i bambini ci hanno riportato nella Napoli del ’700, tra musiche, costumi e magia.

Una Festa di Carnevale diversa, ma di certo non meno ricca di contenuti. Brindando per la conclusione del Carnevale, gli spettatori si sono dati appuntamento al prossimo anno, con la certezza questa volta che potremo finalmente festeggiare insieme.

Se vi siete persi la festa di Carnevale, o volete vedere la ricetta delle Chiacchiere o il Pulcinella del Coro dell’ICS, potete rivedere i vari video nel canale YouTube dell’Italian Cultural Society.
A very Special Carnival party was the one organized by the Italian Cultural Society of Washington DC on February 21st. A nice afternoon spent together, between cultural moments and laughter. An occasion that made us forget, or rather change the anti-COVID masks into Carnival masks.

Among the various speeches of the festival, an important role was played by the various Italian carnival traditions. Thanks to Laura Loddo, we rediscovered the origins of the centuries-old Carnival of Venice, with the ceremonial flight of the Angel and the Festa delle Marie. Another tradition of the Italian carnival that had some space in the party was the lesser known celebration of the Pentolaccia, which takes place annually in Liguria and Puglia on the first Sunday of Lent. During this festival, it was customary to hang clay pots filled with sweets and candies, called pearl pans, while in turn the children tried to hit and break the pots to collect all the sweets that were inside them.

In recent years, the ICS Carnival party has always had an exceptional presence, the Chiacchiere, a typical Carnival dessert that is becoming increasingly popular in the United States as well. Although this year we weren’t able to eat them together, Chef Roberto Donna came to our aid by preparing some and revealing his recipe for the traditional dessert.

It was then the turn of the children who made us smile with their joy and imagination. There were numerous videos of the children of the Italian Language Program who participated in the masks competition, presenting their costumes and joking with the public. The ICS Chorus also performed the notes of Igor Stravinsky’s Pulcinella, conducted by Maestro Felicia Toscano. And here the children brought us back to the Naples of the 18th century, among music, costumes and magic.

A different Carnival Party, but certainly no less rich in content. Toasting to the conclusion of the Carnival, the spectators have arranged to meet next year, with the certainty this time that we will finally be able to celebrate together.

If you missed the Carnival party, or you want to see the recipe of the Chiacchiere or the Pulcinella of the ICS Choir, you can review the various videos on the YouTube channel of the Italian Cultural Society.
MARCH CULTURAL EVENT - POLYPHYONY IN DANTE’S PARADISO
JOIN US ON MARCH 21ST, 3:00 PM ET ON ZOOM
RSVP & TICKETS HERE

The Italian Cultural Society is pleased to host Prof. Francesco Ciabattoni from Georgetown University, on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of Dante’s death, and in anticipation of the official day dedicated to the sommo poeta in Italy and in the world - Dantedì - March 25th, recognized as the day Dante started his journey described in The Divine Comedy.

The role of sacred music in Dante’s Commedia goes far beyond the merely rhetorical and decorative, but adds metaphysical meaning to the description of the afterlife. The Commedia’s musical journey culminates with the evocation in Paradiso of polyphonic singing, a technical novelty during Dante’s time. This talk will track the musical progression in the poem from Inferno’s “unholy racket” to unisonal performance and finally to harmony in heaven, revealing the complex authorial strategy that marks the passage from musical punishment in hell, to a self-centred itinerary of individual purification in purgatory, to the reconciliation of human multiplicity and divine unity in paradise.

Francesco Ciabattoni (PhD, Johns Hopkins 2006) is Full Professor and the Term Professor of Italian Literature at Georgetown University. He has published in international journals on medieval and contemporary Italian literature, including singer-songwriters’ lyrics. Among his publications are Dante’s Journey to Polyphony (Toronto, 2010), The Decameron Third Day in Perspective: Volume Three of Lectura Boccaccii (Toronto 2014, edited with Pier Massimo Forni), La citazione è sintomo d’amore (Carocci, 2016), and Tradition and the Individual Text: Essays in Memory of Pier Massimo Forni (MLN 134, edited with Federica Deigan and Stefano Giannini).

Prof. Ciabattoni is the founder and director of https://italiansongwriters.com/, the first bilingual website about Italian songwriters, with critical commentaries and translations.
REPORT OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM
BY FRANCESCA CASAZZA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

One year ago, on March 12th, the Italian Language Program launched its first online lessons on Zoom. On March 28th, our first ICS virtual event took place. It has been a difficult and transformative year, and we are immensely grateful for your support during the covid situation. Your enthusiasm and motivation have been heartening. New enrollments grew, and we now include students from other parts of the US.

Vaccines are giving us hope to enjoy in-person gatherings and travel once again, and I’m very pleased to share our Spring Season with you, full of online courses to prepare you for traveling to Italy and enjoying Italian food.

Our beloved instructor Carlo Ellena, from Savona, will offer his Viaggio Gastronomico, a journey through Italy and its traditional food, to learn about the origin, traditions, and vocabulary needed for culinary experiences in Italy (in English, with some Italian). He will also teach Discover Italian wine: history and tasting. This 5-week course will be followed by Discover Liguria, history, food and wine, in Italian and in English. Prof. Annelise Brody Morani will teach Discover Emilia Romagna and Discover Toscana, in English (or in Italian, on request). Laura Loddo, Discover Sardegna. Cristiana Fabiani will teach I borghi più belli d’Italia (B1-B2); Dario Penzo, Italian Archeology: Pompei, a 3-week course in English.

For Opera and Music, Laura Loddo will teach Diction for classical singers and postcards from the opera (A1-B2), to learn about various opera characters and their stories and to be introduced to the IPA and Italian diction; Maestro Felicia Toscano will teach Listening to Music (B1-C2), a one-hour class to learn about the different musical genres and develop a personal “ear critic”. For this term, the class will take place during lunch time, as well as the new conversation course taught by Prof. Valentina Asciutti L’Italia, Parliamone! intended for Intermediate students (B1) who are eager to practice their communication skills, but don’t yet have the tools to complete more complicated texts.

The Spring Schedule outlines additional courses, including cinema, literature, reading, current events, and courses for beginners. Registration will open next week. The starting date for our Spring Term is March 23rd, though a few classes will begin after Spring break (March 30th- April 5th.)

On Thursday March 18, Maestra Fiorenza Castelli will offer the Kids Workshop: La festa del Papà. Reserve your spot at https://italianculturalsociety.org/kids-teens/ You can register for our Summer Camps on the same webpage. The Early bird discount ends on April 1st, so sign up soon! You can also join our fantastic CORO (choir) directed by Maestro Felicia Toscano. This class is still online, until the beginning of May, but planned for in person when possible, to prepare for an outdoor choir performance to end the school year.

Buona primavera a tutti!

Francesca Casazza,
Executive Director
ELECTIONS OF THE ICS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PROFESSOR LAURA BENEDETTI, CANDIDATE

Dr. Laura Benedetti is the Laura and Gaetano De Sole Professor of Contemporary Italian Culture at Georgetown University. She has degrees from La Sapienza in Rome, U. of Edmonton, and a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins. Apart from Georgetown, she has conducted classes at Johns Hopkins, Harvard, Yale and Perugia. She is the author of nine books, the latest in 2020 entitled Da Venezia al Cairo: il viaggio di Zaccaria Pagani nel primo Cinquecento, and many other articles and contributions. Some of you may be familiar with her through her several presentations to the Italian Cultural Society, including, memorably, one on the Neapolitan Quartet novels of Elena Ferrante. In fact, recently, Prof. Benedetti was a guest of well-known radio host Diane Rehm’s book club in a webinar discussing Ferrante’s latest novel: The Lying Lives of Adults. Prof. Benedetti would bring to the Board a wealth of academic and cultural connections, both here and abroad. She is a proven friend of the ICS, is enthusiastic about our mission and activities, and would be happy to serve as a Board Director.

MELITTA PATERNI, CANDIDATE

Melitta Paterni is the director and founder of the company Melitta P. LLC which promotes and distributes various categories of luxury clothing made in Italy in the American market. From Tuscany, but based in Washington, she graduated in contemporary history and has worked in the fashion sector since 2002. She started as an editor in Milan for Cosmopolitan Italia magazine and then moved to New York where she collaborated as a coordinator of fashion services for the weekly magazine D of Repubblica. She oversaw the styling of several advertising campaigns including the worldwide campaign for Bulgari and United Colors of Benetton.

Ms. Paterni will help strengthen the ICS by bringing to the Board her specializations in the fashion and business sector, and the social network built over the course of twenty years of specialization in the field of Italian and American fashion, as well as her passions and cultural knowledge.
IL LATO FORTE DELLE DONNE E LA VITTORIA DI UNA GRANDE ARTISTA
BY GIOVANNA GALLETTA, INSEGNANTE ICS

Marzo è il mese che celebra la festa della donna, giornata internazionale per innalzare i diritti femminili ed eliminare la violenza contro le donne. Per tale occasione apriamo una finestra sul mondo femminile e su come le donne siano emerse all’estero per qualità e capacità. Trasferirsi all’estero è una condizione che richiede coraggio e spirito di adattamento, all’ambiente, alla cultura e alla lingua. Non tutti hanno il desiderio o la capacità di farlo, a volte per esigenze o solo perché è arrivato il “time for changing”.

Le donne che emigrano restano, comunque donne italiane, e dall’Italia vogliono essere viste, ascoltate ed apprezzate. Molteplici storie emergono da diverse ricerche e testimonianze di donne che insegnano; per trasmettere la loro cultura altrove, quelle che scattano fotografie, per imprimere la loro arte attraverso un’immagine, oppure quelle che suonano, per diffondere la loro musica in ogni parte del mondo o semplicemente si siano trasferite per amore. Differenti storie che nel contempo affascinano e intrigano ma che comunque lasciano un marchio interessante nelle diverse culture e paesi lontani dal loro.

Poi ci sono donne che dal loro paese di origine risuonano come un diamante in cima al mondo, come nel caso della famosa cantante italiana, Laura Pausini la prima a vincere il “Golden Globe 2021” con il brano: “Io sì”, una canzone completamente in italiano, colonna sonora del film “La vita davanti a sé” un vero orgoglio per la nostra lingua ottenere un premio così prestigioso. La cantante, che ha seguito la premiazione in collegamento dall’Italia, ha pubblicato su Instagram alcune storie per condividere la sua incontenibile gioia e in un lungo post ha dedicato la vittoria a: “Quella ragazzina che 28 anni fa vinse Sanremo e non si sarebbe mai aspettata di arrivare così lontano”. Ha dedicato la sua vittoria all’Italia, alla famiglia, a sua figlia e ha ringraziato Sophia Loren, grande interprete del film.

Storie che emozionano e che ci fanno capire che i sogni vanno perseguiti in modo da diventare realtà.
Amo guardare la televisione italiana. Adoro ascoltare il ritmo della lingua, vedere le diverse regioni d’Italia, imparare parolacce siciliane e sentirmi soddisfatta quando posso dire che i sottotitoli sono solo un sommario approssimativo del vero dialogo.

Il commissario Montalbano è stato il primo programma italiano che ho scoperto e di cui mi sono innamorata. È scritto e recitato magnificamente, le ambientazioni sono spettacolari e ogni episodio ha la durata di un film americano. Gli attori non protagonisti, tutti siciliani, sono fantastici. Non vedremmo mai personaggi del genere negli spettacoli americani.

Si - ho qualcosa da ridire sul programma - a volte perdo la traccia della trama, alcune delle transizioni tra le scene mi fanno grattare la testa e possiamo parlare di come ritrae le donne - ma assaporo ogni episodio.

Questa settimana è andata in onda in Italia una nuova puntata. Spero di vederlo su MHZ Choice, la piattaforma su cui guardo il programma, a giugno. So che la serie finirà presto. L’autore Andrea Camilleri è morto nel 2019 e l’anno scorso è uscito il suo ultimo romanzo di Montalbano. Nel 2019 è deceduto anche il consigliere Alberto Sironi; lo scenografo Luciano Ricceri nel 2020. Luca Zingaretti, che interpreta Salvo Montalbano e ha diretto gli episodi recenti, non sa se ce ne sarà un altro.

Da quando ho scoperto Montalbano, mi sono innamorata anche di altre serie italiane. Ma Montalbano, proprio come il mio primo amore, avrà sempre un posto speciale nel mio cuore.

Il commissario Montalbano was the first Italian program I discovered and fell in love with. It is beautifully written and acted, the settings are spectacular and each episode is the length of an American movie. The supporting actors, all of them Sicilian, are amazing. We would never see characters like that in American shows.

Yes – I have quibbles with the show – sometimes I lose track of the story lines, some of the transitions between scenes leave me scratching my head and we can talk about how it portrays women – but I savor every episode.

This week a new episode aired in Italy. I hope to see it on MHZ Choice, the platform on which I watch the show, in June. I know the series will soon come to an end. Author Andrea Camilleri died in 2019 and his last Montalbano novel was published last year. Director Alberto Sironi also died in 2019; set designer Luciano Ricceri in 2020. Luca Zingaretti, who plays Salvo Montalbano and directed recent episodes, is unsure if there will be another.

Since I first discovered Montalbano, I’ve fallen in love with other Italian series as well. But Montalbano, just like my first love, will always have a special place in my heart.
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