We celebrated the start of the Holiday Season with lots of joy and cheer at our Festa di Natale! The members of the ICS gathered to share a lovely evening surrounded by love and appreciation for Italian language and culture.

La Festa opened with an astonishing piano performance by our 2020 Luciana Montanari-Mendola Award winner, Kyeongmi Leung. The crowd was delighted to hear her variations on several holiday classics, each with its own headbanging rhythmic twist! In the meantime, Maestra Fiorenza Castelli led a holiday arts and crafts session with the children of the ICS. They then had the chance to showcase their colorful creations, including drawings and decorative ornaments. After the piano performance, the children sang along to traditional carols with delight, bringing much glee to all of those around them.

To everyone’s surprise, Babbo Natale and La Befana made their entrance while a wonderful piano rendition of “Here Comes Santa Claus” played in the background. The couple brought two huge bags of presents for the children, who were overjoyed to say the least! One by one, they came up to receive their regalo from Babbo Natale and merily thanked him with an airy “grazie!” After a few photos, the crowd moved into the main hall to indulge together in a delicious merenda. A gigantic jumbo panettone and classic pandoro were served along with aperol spritz and other delicious treats.

The festivities concluded with a marvelous holiday raffle conducted by some of the ICS children. Many lucky winners brought home a Campari basket, original artwork, porcelain plates and a hand painted tea set. On the way out, each member received a Ferrero Rocher gift to kickstart the season of giving.

Special thanks to our sponsors, Ferrero, who provided lots of chocolate and snacks for kids, Delizia Café, who provided the 5kilos panettone, and Gemelli’s Italian Market, who provided Prosecco. May the new year bring you and your family good health, happiness and prosperity!
MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

By Chair of the Board Annelise Brody Morani, PhD

Dear ICS Members,

We finished December with our traditional Christmas party, where I was promoted to be our Befana for the joy of the children. I also had the pleasure to meet many of you over a slice of delicious panettone and a glass of spumante. You will read more on the following pages.

Despite the raging Omicron we are staying positive, looking forward to the future of ICS and to the plethora of activities we are organizing. We feel deeply grateful for your ongoing support and feedback. Earlier on the same day of the Christmas party, we had a guided tour of early Italian Renaissance at the National Art Gallery with the members who signed up during our auction 2021. It was so successful that I decided (as soon as the wave of Omicron ends) to make it a regular offering to our members and their friends and family. In addition to tours on the early Renaissance, there will be more tours on the sculptures collection, on the high Renaissance collection (Raffaello, Tiziano, Bellini, Arcimboldo), as well as some of the later painters in the East Wing, like Modigliani, Morandi etc. Stay tuned as we will release shortly the new dates of these tours happening this Spring and Fall.

Soon our classes will be back in Bethesda, as well as the events (the upcoming event is online – see following pages.) It is important to us to continue our mission of being a point of reference for our community. We are opening this January with a bang of enthusiasm and ideas to bring you the best that Italy has to offer. As you will read in the Executive Director’s article, this includes a new cooking class series focused on regional cuisine, intensive workshops for those who wish to learn a bit of conversational Italian for travels - in English, Yoga in Italian and the newly introduced Tango class.

We hope that 2022 will bring you joy, health, peace, and the same excitement we share for all Italian things!

Happy beginning and buon viaggio!

Annelise Brody Morani
Chair of the ICS Board of Directors
ILP’s Advisor & Instructor
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Welcome to a new Year! We are looking forward to sharing with you another pleasant year of discovery and learning. We will do our best to keep promoting high quality programs, events, scholarships, courses and more.

I am very glad to see more donors and members involved and passionate about our mission. Together, we will be able to bring more Italian culture to the US. Feel free to contact us to be more involved.

I would like to thank all our teachers for their passionate work and our great students for a difficult but successful 2021. In 2021, we welcomed new students and members from all around the United States, both adults and children/teens, thanks to our online events and courses. We will continue to offer online classes as part of the Italian Language Program, even when in-person classes will start back to normal.

Now, while we are waiting for the 4th wave of Covid to pass, we are all online, but we are optimistic that our “corner of Italy” in Bethesda will be lively again this spring!

Our goal is to offer an authentic learning experience, not only on the Italian language, but also on literature, cinema, opera, art, history, cuisine, fashion, design and the Italian way of life. We enable you to experience the Italian lifestyle when you travel, following our suggestions and taking advantage of our contacts in Italy. Our preparatory courses include: “Course + Trip”, Immersion course for travelers, and our “Study Abroad” recommendations. But also, take a look at our new courses Winter 2022, which include Viaggio in Italia (level A2-B2) with Antonella, Alla ricerca dei tesori d’Italia (B2-C1) with Valentina, Isole intorno alla più bella penisola del mondo (B2-C2) with Silvana, Virtual Tour of Dante’s cities (B2-C2) with Camilla, and Discover Veneto: History and Folklore (in English) with Dario.

Among other Winter courses, we will continue a deep study in Cinema, and in Literature with Annelise, with il segreto di Petrarca e la nascita della poesia moderna (C1-C2), Italian through Literature (B2-C2) with Dario, and several “Book clubs” with various teachers.

Lunch conversation courses are very popular. We are also offering several levels of Latin (in English for adults and teens, or in Italian for Italian teens).

Winter Term started on January 10th and a few courses will start soon. Kids courses started in September, but we can include your children in class at any time. Please visit italianculturalsociety.org/ilp/.

We look forward to seeing you on Zoom:
• on January 22nd at 2:00 for the next Cooking Class (Homemade Lasagne al ragù, from the Emilia Romagna region), and
• on January 23rd at 2:30, for the monthly cultural event, that will feature our friends Dr. Laura Benedetti, who will present Renato Miracco’s book, in conversation with Prof. Gino Scatasta. See details on the next page.

Auguri di cuore per un nuovo anno sereno e in salute!

Francesca Casazza
Executive Director
For our Cultural Events on January 23rd at 2:30pm, the Italian Cultural Society is happy to promote a book presentation by Renato Miracco, with Prof. Gino Scatasta and Prof. Laura Benedetti entitled Oscar Wilde’s Italian Dream. In Oscar Wilde’s Italian Dream 1875–1900 (Damiani, 2020), leading Wilde scholar Renato Miracco combines written research with previously unseen visual material ranging from Wilde’s earliest heady trips to Italy as an Oxford student to recently released court documents from his trial and his final days in France and Italy in 1900, after his incarceration in Reading Gaol, and his voluntary exile from Britain. Italy, and the larger world beyond London, was essential to the sensitivity and awareness of Wilde’s identity, his contributions to prison reform and his challenges to social norms and sexual stereotypes in his last years. It also offered a great deal of sexual liberty compared to the oppressive moral atmosphere of England at that time.

The previously unseen images Miracco has incorporated in this volume (including photos that Wilde received from the gay German photographer Wilhelm von Gloeden) are mainly from private collections, and together with letters, reminiscences and magazine and newspaper articles (along with derogatory articles about Wilde from the Italian press) they play a key role in placing Wilde’s character, and an entire generation, in a complex context. Oscar Wilde’s Italian Dream 1875–1900 is a major addition to the canon of one of the world’s greatest literary figures.

Renato Miracco (born 1953) is an Italian art critic and curator. He was awarded the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic for Cultural Achievements in 2018. He served as Cultural Attaché for the Italian Embassy in Washington from 2010 to 2018 and as advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy. Miracco has curated major exhibitions for Tate Modern in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and London’s Estorick Collection. His passion for Wilde dates from the early 1980s when he wrote his first essay on Wilde’s time in Italy. This new book on Wilde is based on new materials that Miracco has found over the last few years.

RSVP for this event at http://italianculturalsociety.org/course/cultural-event.

Prof. Gino Scatasta and Prof. Laura Benedetti will be in conversation with Renato Miracco, in a Webinar, taking place on Sunday 23rd at 2:30. You can read their bios and RSVP to participate at: http://italianculturalsociety.org/events.
Venice is famous for its festive sweets, from San Martino to Carnival frittelle with centuries-old recipes, but where did the sugar of Venetian sweets come from?

In that somewhat clumsy Latin widespread in the Middle Ages were called “sacchettis venetis” some canvas bags in which there were often flavored sugar grains. The city of Venice produced it in large quantities and went to take sugar from Palestine, where they were discovered during the Crusades and introduced in the Mediterranean by the Arabs.

The arrival of sugar in Europe surprised the merchants: in fact, honey was used as the only sweetener until the Middle Ages. But when people realized that sugar could replace it and was actually better and tastier, rich and nobles from every part of Europe asked for bags of sugar.

It was said that the “sacchetti venetis” were worth so much that they were bequeathed to the descendants or given as a dowry for brides.

In the following centuries the Republic had beetroot cultivated also in Crete (called Candia). For this reason “candioto” (sugar) was born with which fruits and sweets called “candii” were caramelized: this is the etymology of the term candied fruit!

Sugar refiners were extremely skilled in creating shapes of sugar, dissolving and thickening it by letting it cool in special molds.

It was a tradition that the Procurators of San Marco donated to each member of the Maggior Consiglio, four loaves of sugar to each Venetian patrician who entered the state organ. This tradition was on the occasion of the installation of the assembly every 4 December, the day of Santa Barbara.

The spread of sugar also caused an unprecedented confectionery production in Europe starting in Venice, that was in fact the first city in the West to develop a culinary tradition in which sugar was used. Contemporary Venetian sweets are still a tasty historical testimony of this ancient primacy of the Serenissima.

Venezia è famosa per i suoi dolci delle feste, dal San Martino alle frittelle del Carnevale con ricette centenarie, ma lo zucchero dei dolci Veneziani da dove arrivava?

In quel latino un po’ goffo diffusosi nel medioevo si chiamavano “sacchettis venetis” alcuni sacchettini in tela in cui si trovavano grani di zucchero spesso aromatizzati. La città di Venezia ne produceva in gran quantità e andava a prelevare lo zucchero in Palestina, dove lo aveva conosciuto con le Crociate: ad introdurlo nel Mediterraneo furono gli Arabi.

L’arrivo dello zucchero in Europa sorprese i mercanti: il miele, infatti, era fino al Medioevo usato come unico dolcificante: ma quando ci si accorse che lo zucchero lo sostituiva ed era anzi migliore e più gustoso da ogni parte d’Europa ricchi e notabili richiesero sacchi di zucchero.

Si diceva che i “sacchettis venetis” valessero così tanto che venivano lasciati in eredità ai discendenti oppure dati in dote alle spose.

Nei secoli seguenti la Repubblica fece coltivare la barbabietola anche a Creta (chiamata Candia): per tale motivo nacque lo zucchero “candioto” con il quale venivano caramellati frutti e dolci chiamati “candii”: ecco l’etimologia del termine frutta candita!

I raffinatori di zucchero erano estremamente abili nel creare forme di zucchero, sciogliendolo e raddensandolo lasciandolo raffreddare in stampi appositi.

Era tradizione che i Procuratori di San Marco ad ogni membro del Maggior Consiglio, in occasione dell’insediamento di tale assemblea ogni 4 dicembre, giorno di Santa Barbara, donassero quattro pani di zucchero ad ogni patrizio veneziano entrato nell’organo di stato.

La diffusione dello zucchero, inoltre, causò la nascita a Venezia di una produzione dolciaria senza precedenti in Europa: fu infatti la prima città dell’Occidente a sviluppare una tradizione culinaria in cui si usava lo zucchero: i dolci veneziani contemporanei sono ancor oggi una gustosa testimonianza storica di questo antico primato della Serenissima.

DAVID SASSOLI:
ADDIO AL PRESIDENTE DEL PARLAMENTO EUROPEO

David Sassoli, il presidente del Parlamento europeo, si è spento all'1.15 dell'11 gennaio presso l'ospedale di Aviano, in provincia di Pordenone, dove era ricoverato dallo scorso 26 dicembre. A darne l'annuncio è il suo portavoce, Roberto Cuillo, attraverso il suo account twitter. Lo stesso Cuillo aveva diffuso in precedenza la notizia del ricovero in Italia per il sopraggiungere di una grave complicanza dovuta ad una disfunzione del sistema immunitario.

Cuillo, intervistato da Rainews 24, ha ricordato: “L'impegno di Sassoli ha avuto al centro un'idea della politica come servizio per i cittadini. Il suo impegno principale da Parlamentare europeo e presidente del Pe, quasi un'ossessione, è stato quello di riafferrare le istituzioni europee ai cittadini, cioè di costruire un legame, di dare dignità all'istituzione Parlamento europeo”. Sassoli, ha poi aggiunto, “era un nativo democratico ed ha cercato sempre di rappresentare questa identità nuova al Paese. Credeva fortemente nell'allargamento del fronte progressista anche su basi nuove politiche, culturali e sociali”.

Sassoli, fiorentino di nascita ma romano di adozione, è stato per molti anni un giornalista della Rai diventando un volto noto alle famiglie italiane soprattutto per la sua conduzione del Tg1, di cui è stato anche vicedirettore. Di fatto la sua carriera giornalistica si chiude nel 2009 quando decide di candidarsi come capolista dell'allora nascente partito democratico. Viene eletto con oltre 400milà preferenze e a Bruxelles si conquista un ruolo di primo piano, guidando la delegazione italiana. Apprezzato, nel 2013, al tramonto dell’era Alemanno, su sollecitazione di Dario Franceschini si candida alle primarie di Roma. Battuto solo da Ignazio Marino, torna a tempo pieno in Europa.

Nel 2019 viene eletto per la terza volta come parlamentare europeo e a luglio dello stesso anno viene eletto presidente del Parlamento europeo, secondo italiano dopo Antonio Tajani.

Il 9 novembre David Sassoli, aveva postato sui social un video in cui spiegava di aver contratto in settembre durante la plenaria a Strasburgo una “brutta” polmonite dovuta al batterio della legionella, con febbre “molto alta”. Una malattia che lo ha portato ad essere ricoverato in ospedale nella città alsaziana. “Sono tornato in Italia per riprendermi, ma purtroppo ho avuto una ricaduta - continuava Sassoli - questo episodio ha portato i medici a raccomandarmi una serie di esami e accertamenti, che sto facendo. I medici stanno ora lavorando perché io possa tornare al lavoro il più presto possibile”. Dopo aver ringraziato i medici e i tanti colleghi che gli hanno espresso solidarietà, come pure i cittadini che hanno fatto lo stesso, Sassoli concludeva: “Non vedo l’ora di rivedervi presto in Parlamento”.

“Uomo delle istituzioni, profondo europeista, giornalista appassionato, Sassoli è stato simbolo di equilibrio, umanità, generosità” così lo ha definito il premier Mario Draghi che ha spiegato inoltre come “queste gli sono state sempre riconosciute da tutti i colleghi, di ogni collocazione politica e di ogni Paese europeo, a testimonianza della sua straordinaria passione civile, della sua capacità di ascolto, del suo impegno costante al servizio dei cittadini. La sua prematura e improvvisa scomparsa lascia sgomenti”.

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The Italian Cultural Society of Washington D.C.
DAVID SASSOLI: FAREWELL TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

David Sassoli, the President of the European Parliament, died at 1.15 am on 11 January at the hospital in Aviano, in the province of Pordenone, where he had been hospitalized since 26 December. His spokesman, Roberto Cuillo, gave the announcement through his twitter account. The same Cuillo had previously spread the news of the hospitalization in Italy for the arrival of a serious complication due to a dysfunction of the immune system.

Cuillo, recalled: “Sassoli’s commitment had at its center an idea of politics as a service for citizens. His main commitment as a Member of the European Parliament and President of the EP, almost an obsession, was to bring the European institutions closer to the citizens, that is, to build a bond, to give dignity to the institution of the European Parliament”. Sassoli, he added, “was a native democrat and always tried to represent this new identity to the country. He strongly believed in the enlargement of the progressive front also on new political, cultural and social bases”.

Sassoli, Florentine by birth but Roman by adoption, was for many years a journalist of Rai and became a face known to Italian families especially for his conduction of Tg1, of which he was also deputy director. His journalistic career ended in 2009 when he decided to run as the leader of the list of the Democratic Party. He was elected with over 400,000 votes and in Brussels he won a leading role, leading the Italian delegation. In 2013, at the sunset of the Alemanno era, he was a candidate for the primaries for mayor in Rome. Beaten by Ignazio Marino, Sassoli returned full-time to Europe. In 2019 he was elected for the third time as a Member of the European Parliament and in July of the same year he was elected President of the European Parliament, the second Italian after Antonio Tajani.

On November 9, David Sassoli had posted a video on social media in which he explained that he had contracted a “bad” pneumonia due to the legionella bacterium, in September during the plenary in Strasbourg. An illness that led him to be hospitalized in the Alsatian city. “I returned to Italy to recover, but unfortunately I had a relapse - continued Sassoli - this episode led the doctors to recommend a series of examinations and investigations. The doctors are now working so that I can get back to work as soon as possible.” After thanking the doctors and the many colleagues who expressed solidarity with him, as well as the citizens who did the same, Sassoli concluded: “I look forward to seeing you again soon in Parliament”.

“Man of the institutions, profound Europeanist, passionate journalist, Sassoli has been a symbol of balance, humanity, generosity” so defined by Prime Minister Mario Draghi who also explained how “these have always been recognized by all his colleagues, of every political position and of every European country, testifying to his extraordinary civil passion, his ability to listen, of its constant commitment to the service of citizens. His untimely and sudden death is dismaying.”
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OUR MISSION

The Italian Cultural Society promotes the appreciation and knowledge of the Italian language and culture by creating opportunities through language programs, cultural events, scholarships and partnerships.

OUR HISTORY

Founded in 1953 by Professor Salvatore J. Castiglione, Chairman of the Italian Department of Georgetown University, the Society launched its Italian Language Program in 1974, with contribution of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

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