



poche parole

The Italian Cultural Society of Washington D.C.
Preserving and Promoting Italian Culture for All

www.italianculturalsociety.org

ICS EVENTS

Social meetings start at 3:00 PM on the third Sunday of the month, September thru May, at the Friendship Heights Village Center, 4433 South Park Ave., Chevy Chase, MD (map on last page)

Sunday, Nov. 15: Songs from the Italian Romanze Tradition. Miriam Costa Jackson, soprano. Accompanied by Dr. Steven Brown on the piano, with guest appearances by: Marina Costa Jackson, soprano and Ginger Costa Jackson, mezzo soprano. This is a most unusual opportunity to enjoy the music of the remarkable Costa Jackson family at this juncture of their young careers. Romanze, otherwise known as "arie da camera", are the art songs typical of the Bel Canto technique that developed in the XIX century, became very popular, and spread from Italy to neighboring European countries. Scholarship fundraiser \$20 per person

Movie of the Month: at 1:00 **L'Orchestra di Piazza Vittorio 2006** See details on page 2.

ITALIAN LESSONS ON NOVEMBER 15 AT 2:00

Sunday, Dec. 13 (NOT Dec 20th!): FESTA DI NATALE Babbo Natale, La Befana, Italian Potluck, etc.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We have no official count, but probably about 160 persons attended our October social meeting that featured a grand tour of the universe...as we currently understand it...and the point is that now we know that we really don't understand about 97 % of it! This starry message came to us from one of the great astronomer-observers of our time, Nobel laureate x-ray astronomer Riccardo Giacconi, in a masterful illustrated lecture that began with Copernican circles, featured an actual movie of the pulsating Crab Nebula, and ended with a universe running away under the inexorable push of dark energy! This unsettling vision made it necessary to return our cosmos-struck audience to more earthly comforts, and for this purpose, naturally, major equipment of Italian design had to be deployed ... wonderful freshly-baked *sfogliatelle*, and *cantucci*, and *frollini all'albicocca*, served with a champagne peach-nectar punch.



Riccardo Giacconi (more on p. 11)

It was a stimulating experience on a beautiful fall afternoon, and we are indebted to Professor Giacconi for a most informative, eloquent, witty presentation.

Our November meeting on Sunday, the 15th also promises to be a beautiful experience, but of a different variety. As explained during the October meeting, the ICS offers several scholarships each year. These need to be financed, and the next meeting will help to serve that purpose. We are pleased to bring you singers from the remarkable Costa Jackson family. Accompanied on the piano, young soprano **Miriam Costa Jackson** will delight our audience with songs from the *romanze* tradition, with a guest appearance by her soprano sister, Marina, and a guest appearance by the third sister, mezzo-soprano Ginger Costa Jackson, who debuted as *Myrtale* in *Thais* at the Met in 2008. Two of these talented young singers have benefitted from ICS scholarships in the past. Please bring your music-loving friends for a concert that will bring a warm, Italian glow to your Sunday afternoon. \$20/person

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MIRIAM COSTA JACKSON



Miriam Costa-Jackson joined the Utah State University (USU) opera program in 2007. She has since appeared as Magda in Puccini's *La Rondine*, as Rosita (Luisa Fernanda) and the Witch (Hansel and Gretel) with USU. She was the youngest opera singer General Director Michael Ballam hired to sing with the Utah Festival Opera (2004). A student of Dr. Cindy Dewey, Miriam has studied with Renata Scotto in her Opera Studio at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome, and participated in Sherrill Milnes' VOICEperience at Disney. In Italy Miriam studied with Alessia Sparacio and Maria Argento Rancatore. Miriam's awards include the USU Department of Music Vocalist Merit Award, Young Artist Awards from the Italian Cultural Society of Washington, D.C. (2003, 2004, 2005), and the Italian Cultural Center of Utah (2003), and First Place for singing, Utah State Fair.

THE COSTA-JACKSON FAMILY

Miriam is from a very musical family going back at least three generations. Her older sister Ginger is a mezzo-soprano in the three year Lindeman Young Artist Development Program of the Metropolitan Opera and her sister Marina is a developing singer at Utah State University. Their mother Emilia plays piano and has studied Bel Canto singing. Their father Walt plays musical instruments and sang in university choirs, high school musicals, and the Brigham Young University Barbershop Quartet. Walt's dad was trained in theater and wrote plays.

The girls were raised by Walter and Emilia with Italian as their native language. Ginger was born in Italy. The family moved to Utah and the girls grew up there. As kids they learned Italian lullabies and folk tunes from their Nonna Lucia. At age ten, ▶▶

Miriam discovered opera in the family record collection. At twelve she began voice lessons and graduated to being taught by one of the most prominent voice teachers of Utah.

Meanwhile, the more academically inclined Ginger, who at first thought she wanted to pursue a career as a professor, began to try voice lessons too. The family went to Palermo to visit grandparents, and Ginger and Miriam studied there with a voice teacher that brought out the best of both of them. Meanwhile, Marina, who also had vocal talent was studying dance. On return to Utah, all three girls were hired by the Utah Festival Opera Company and Miriam and Ginger sang in 26 performances.

After more voice training in Italy, Ginger began to enter competitions in Europe and won prizes in all of them. She was selected for the 2007 class in the Young Artists Program at the Met. Meanwhile Miriam has been singing in leading roles in productions of the Utah State University opera program and, at 20, is competing with much older singers.

Marina finally admitted that she too wants to pursue opera and, rather than starting a medical career, won a music scholarship to Utah State University.

As an added bonus, both of Miriam's sisters, as well as their mother, are expected to make an appearance at our meeting on November 15.

FILM OF THE MONTH

L'Orchestra di Piazza Vittorio 2006. Esquilino is an immigrant section of Rome where musicians from various cultures play unique instruments creating different sounds daily resonating from their central Piazza Vittorio. In 2000, a dozen of these international performers formed a band, produced 3 albums and toured the world. In 2006, director Agostino Ferrente filmed a 95 minute documentary of this extraordinary underground musical movement. L'Orchestra Di Piazza Vittorio 2006 won the Mastro D'Argento and the Globo D'Oro for best documentary. Read more on the official website: www.l'orchestradi piazzavittorio.it In Italian with English Subtitles

ICS ITALIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM HAS RELOCATED

On November 1 The Italian Language Program of The Italian Cultural Society relocated to

**4827 Rugby Ave, Suite 301
Bethesda, MD 20814**

The new site is just a block away from the old address on Battery Lane.

Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749-1838), Mozart's Librettist and First Professor of Italian at Columbia University

Lorenzo da Ponte's fame rests primarily on his authorship of the librettos of Mozart's "Italian" operas: *Don Giovanni*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and *Così Fan Tutte* which he wrote for the famous Austrian composer during his sojourn at the intrigue-filled imperial court of Vienna. Yet very few know that from 1805 on he spent the rest of his adventurous life in America where he became an ambassador and fervent promoter of Italian culture and letters and where, in 1825, was the first to be appointed professor of Italian at Columbia University.



The many fascinating episodes of his long life can be found in his *Memorie...* or "Story of His Life" which he published in New York between 1823 and 1827, and which is available in an English translation. Among the many revealing glimpses of other people and of himself, there is the proud claim made to his friend and mentor Clement C. Moore, the

famous author of *'Twas the Night before Christmas*, of his own pivotal role in the diffusion of Italian culture in America: "if the language of Italy, if her noblest authors, are known and loved in New York not only, but in the most cultural cities of America, if, finally, I am enabled to make the glorious boast of having, I alone introduced them, I alone spread their fame, their practice, their light in America, the principal merit belongs to you."

Da Ponte's boastful remark, however, might hold more than one kernel of truth. Although financially unsuccessful, he was also the first opera impresario in America, the author of a history of Italian literature (*Storia della letteratura italiana*, 1827), and a keen and well-known importer of Italian books that he deemed necessary for the diffusion of Italian culture. Indeed, in 1823, he wrote a critical catalogue (*Catalogo ragionato...*) of the books that were for sale at the bookstore he ran together with his son Carlo, who later was himself to become the first professor of Italian at New York University. Both of these works can be considered among the very first examples of Italian literary and historical criticism published in America. It is also to his credit that the two oldest New York City's libraries, the Columbia College Library and The New York Society Library still today have remarkable holdings of Italian books.

Roberto Severino

Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749-1838), Librettista di Mozart e Primo Professore di Italiano alla Columbia University

La fama di Lorenzo Da Ponte è basata principalmente sulla sua paternità dei libretti delle opere "italiane" di Mozart: *Don Giovanni*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, e *Così Fan Tutte*, che scrisse per il famoso compositore austriaco durante il suo soggiorno nella corte imperiale, piena d'intrighi e macchinazioni, di Vienna. Eppure pochissimi sanno che a partire dal 1805 trascorse il resto della sua avventurosa vita in America, dove diventò un ambasciatore e fervente promotore della cultura e lettere italiane, e dove, nel 1825, fu il primo ad essere nominato professore d'italiano alla Columbia University.

I numerosi e affascinanti episodi della sua lunga vita si possono leggere nel suo libro di *Memorie* che Da Ponte pubblicò a New York tra il 1823 e il 1827, e che è oggi disponibile anche in versione inglese. Fra i parecchi giudizi rivelatori sui suoi contemporanei e su se stesso c'è l'essersi energicamente vantato col suo amico e mentore Clement C. Moore, il famoso autore di *'Twas the Night before Christmas*, dell'importante ruolo da lui avuto nella diffusione della cultura italiana in America: "se la lingua d'Italia, se i suoi più nobili autori sono conosciuti ed amati in New York non solo, ma anche nelle più colte città d'America, se posso alfin darmi il vanto glorioso d'averli io solo introdotti, d'averne io solo diffusa la fama, la cultura e la luce in America, il principale merito è vostro".

Il commento in apparenza piuttosto vanaglorioso di Da Ponte potrebbe però racchiudere più che un semplice nocciolo di verità. Benché i suoi tentativi commerciali ebbero spesso cattivo esito, egli fu il primo impresario e promotore di un teatro stabile di opera lirica in America, l'autore di una *Storia della Letteratura Italiana* (1827), e un sagace e ben noto importatore di libri italiani che riteneva essenziali per la diffusione della cultura italiana. Infatti, già nel 1823 aveva scritto un catalogo critico (*Catalogo ragionato...*) dei libri in vendita presso la libreria che gestiva insieme al figlio Carlo, destinato più tardi a diventare il primo docente d'italiano alla New York University. Queste due opere possono essere considerate fra i primissimi esempi di critica letteraria e storica italiana pubblicati in America, e a suo credito è doveroso menzionare anche il fatto che le due più antiche biblioteche di New York, la Columbia College Library e la New York Society Library, anche oggi possono vantare delle notevoli collezioni di libri italiani.

Traduzione

*A buon intenditor, poche parole
(A word to the wise is sufficient)*



Ai Nostri Lettori: Questo Saggio e' un lavoro di uno studente in un corso avanzato di Camilla Presti Russell dell' Italian Language Program.

I TRULLI
di Karin Karp

I trulli sono antiche costruzioni in pietra, coniche, di origini protostoriche. Oggi non esistono trulli particolarmente antichi perche' si preferiva abbattere i trulli e ricostruirli. I trulli piu' antichi sono stati costruiti nel XVI secolo. La parola *trullo* viene da una parola del greco *tardo*, che significa cupola.

I trulli sono piccole abitazioni contadine a pietra circolare e con il tetto a cono. Le pareti e il tetto sono fatti di pietre unite "a secco", cioe' senza cemento. Le pietre si trovavano nei campi. Ce n'erano molte! In generale le pareti dei trulli sono intonacate di vernice bianca, mentre i tetti conservano il colore originale ma terminano in una chiave di volta scolpita con elementi lapidei decorativi che si chiamano "pinnacoli". Molto spesso sui tetti ci sono disegni religiosi o scaramantici..

All'interno queste abitazioni hanno uno o due ambienti molto confortevoli, perche' in inverno mantengono la temperatura calda e in estate invece sono freschi. All'inizio il pavimento era in terra battuta, oggi e' coperto di legno. Il trullo ha un solo piano abitabile, tuttavia quando la famiglia cresceva era necessario far costruire un soppalco per sistemarvi uno o piu' letti.

Lo spazio nel trullo e' davvero ristretto e c'e' poca luce - viene spesso dall' unica apertura, la porta dell'ingresso. Allora alcuni abitanti hanno messo

To Our Readers: This essay is the work of a student in an Advanced Italian course of Camilla Presti Russell , of the Italian Language Program

TRULLI (translation)

Trulli are ancient conical stone constructions of prehistoric origin. Today, existing trulli are not especially old because people preferred to tear them down and rebuild them. The oldest existing trulli were built in the XVI century. The word *trullo* is derived from the Greek *tardo*, which means cupola.

Trulli are small peasant houses of circular plan and with cone shaped roofs. The walls and the roof are made of stones laid "dry", that is, without mortar. The stones were found in the fields. There were many! Generally the walls for the trulli are finished with white paint, while the roofs retain the original color but end in a keystone sculpted with decorative stone known as "pinnacoli". Very often on the roofs there are designs that are religious or against bad luck.

On the inside, these houses have one or two very comfortable rooms, because in winter they keep the temperature warm and in summer they are cool. In the beginning the floor was compressed earth and today it is covered with wood. The trullo has just one inhabitable floor, nevertheless as the family grew it was necessary to get a loft built to accommodate one or more beds.

The space in the trullo is really restricted and there is little light - often it comes from the opening, the entrance doorway. So then some occupants put a mirror in a frontal position at the entrance of the

uno specchio in posizione frontale all'entrata dei trulli che riflettesse la luce. Si pensa che in origine il trulli fossero stati ideati in questo particolare tipo costruttivo per evadere il pagamento delle tasse sulle case. Ma ci sono varie teorie al riguardo non ancora veramente chiarite.

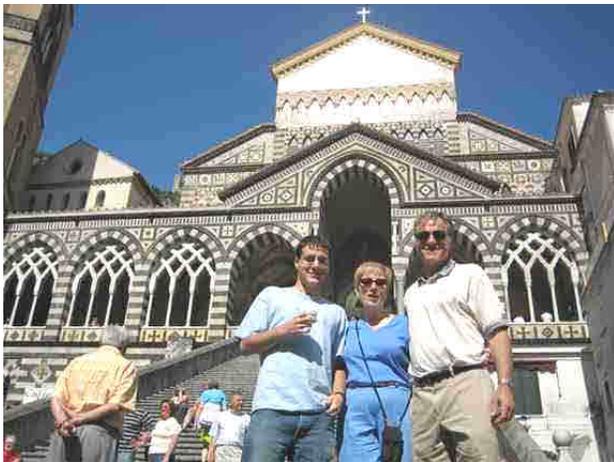
L'altopiano della Murgia per la sua stessa natura geologica a matrice calcarea ha fornito la possibilita' di far costruire i trulli. Il territorio piu' importante e' la Valle d'Itria con la citta' d'Alberobello, la "capitale dei trulli". Ad Alberobello c'e' anche una chiesa a forma di trullo, costruita nell'XX secolo da uno degli ultimi mastri trullari ancora attivi nella cittadina. I trulli di Alberobello sono stati dichiarati "Patrimonio mondiale dell'umanita" dall' UNESCO.

Il trullo era una tipica costruzione contadina ma oggi ci sono dei trulli lussuosi che si vendono o si affittano su internet. Molti sono "Bed & Breakfast".



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trulli to reflect the light. It is thought that originally the trulli had been conceived in this particular type of construction in order to avoid paying taxes on the houses. But there are various theories regarding this that have not yet really been explained.

The high plain of the Murgia, by its own limestone matrix geology, has furnished the possibility of building the trulli. The most important trulli area is the Itria Valley, with the city of Alberobello the "capital of trulli". In Alberobello there is even a church in the form of a trullo, built in the XX century by one of the last masters of trullo construction still active in the little city. The trulli of Alberobello have been declared "World heritage of humanity" by UNESCO.

The trullo was a typical peasant construction but today there are luxury trulli sold or rented on the internet. Many are bed and breakfast facilities.

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Frederick II and Castel del Monte

by Cecilia Fiermonte

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The Castel del Monte, the most artistically and scientifically advanced building of its time, is one of Europe's most famous castles, and yet its true function remains a puzzle to this day. Not built as a fortification, but as an intellectual exercise, it stands as a monument to the towering influence of its master planner, King Frederick II, a man whose



Federico II as Augustus

intellectual and artistic endeavors raised the caliber of art and scholarship all over Europe. His Castel del Monte, with its unique octagonal design, brings into play sophisticated principles of mathematics, astronomy and architecture. Beautiful, moving and mysterious, it has been shrouded in myth and legend since the middle ages: a subject of debate, study, and in the end, deep appreciation. UNESCO has included it in its World Heritage List and it is even featured on Italy's one cent Euro coin.

In the 12th century, Europe was emerging from the darkest of the Middle Ages as improvements in farming, increased trade with the East and technological advances led to a more prosperous and cosmopolitan populace. The scientific and philosophical teachings of ancient Greece and Rome were coming to light after having been lost for various reasons, including willful suppression by those who felt their underlying philosophies contradicted Christianity. In 1194, the birth of ►►

King Federico II united the Altavilla and the Hohenstaufen dynasties, which ruled the Holy Roman Empire in the 12th and 13th centuries. Federico became titled ruler of many different lands, but it was Puglia that captured his heart and imagination, and where he spent most of his time.

Kings of the Middle Ages were considered the mediators of God, their coronations including the sacred rite of anointment by the Church. However, Federico's interests remained secular and he often clashed with the Church, which led to three excommunications, the most famous for attempting to negotiate a pact with Jerusalem, extremely controversial in a time when conquering the Holy Land was Christian Europe's main goal. Federico dispensed with the religious role and brashly cast himself as Augustus, the first emperor of Rome, who was known for creating the *pax romana*, a period of accomplishment, peace and prosperity. The legacy of Augustus includes legislative reform, architectural growth and expansion of the arts. Federico actually referred to himself as "Augustus" and even, like the ancient Romans, circulated coins of the emperor.

The new Augustus commanded a court of great thinkers: artists, scientists and mathematicians. He included many Arabs, who at the time had made great advances in math and science and with whom he was familiar through his rule of Sicily. It was the Arabs who had preserved many classical writings and reintroduced them to Europe during the middle ages. Deeply intellectually curious, Federico promoted research and had texts translated. The Pugliesi were leery of non-Christians, against whom they were forever defending their shores, but Federico embraced the Arabs and their teachings, many of which were based on classical concepts. The historian Georges Duby said of Federico II: "It is he who embodied the return of the Roman Empire to the Mediterranean." That return to classical ideals eventually sparked the scientific, cultural and artistic revolutions of Renaissance Italy in the 15th century.

Federico milked the privilege of his royalty and, like the Renaissance men to follow him, vigorously applied himself to various disciplines. His achievements spanned a variety of fields, becoming so vast and so amazing he became known as *stupor mundi*, wonder of the world.

He wrote several important treatises, including a comprehensive treatise on the art of falconry, which He loved, *De arte venandi cum avibus*, one of the

first serious zoological encyclopedias produced, and which he spent 30 years researching.

His court produced much legislation based on Roman systems of law, for example, The Constitution of Melfi, also called the *Liber Augustus*, which is the first legislation of a modern state. Like Augustus, he encouraged literature, establishing the first school of poetry using the common Italian language. In the Augustan mold, he also built or restored architecture, his castles forming a chain of massive links across Puglia.

Federico was also a lover of the arts, and his influence spread to Northern Italy and beyond. He commissioned a bust of himself as Augustus, now in the museum in nearby Barletta, considered important for creating a renewed interest in the art of the Roman Empire. (See page 6) One of Federico's artists, Nicola Pisano (also called Nicola of Apulia) left for Pisa where he applied Roman proportional concepts to his octagonal baptistery, and where he influenced the geometric proportions of Renaissance architecture and sculpture.

It was in this atmosphere of enlightened advancement that the Castel del Monte rose triumphantly on a hill in Andria, an embodiment of the deep thought and rigorous intellectualism of King Federico's court. With no moat or other defensive features, it was never a fortification, and its intended use remains one of its many mysteries. It has been proposed that it was to be a hunting lodge or perhaps a monument to the people of Andria who stood firm in their support of the Hohenstaufens as they began to lose political ground. Contemporary author Umberto Eco, in his bestselling medieval thriller *The Name of the Rose*, cast the Castel del Monte as a library, a repository of knowledge and learning. In an age when the king's power, glory and wealth was personified by grand churches, Federico instead built a secular monument, imperial glorification of logical thought and reasoning, that, like any great work of art, inspires, elevates and educates.

Perhaps no other feature of the Castel del Monte fascinates like its octagonal design. The number eight recurs as a numerical theme, most obviously in its octagonal layout and eight octagonal towers, which create an overall crown shape. The significance of the number eight is open to speculation but most likely it held several meanings, with which the multi-faceted and learned king was no doubt familiar.



Castel del Monte

Through his study of Eastern thought, Federico would have known that in the East, eight was often held to be a perfect number. In the Middle Ages, the number eight symbolized the perfection of incoming planetary energy, based on seven planets plus earth. At one point Federico had entered into a pact with the sultan of Egypt which gave him a title over the city of Jerusalem, the plan of which is based on the octagon. And the number eight might also be a bow to Puglia's classical roots as part of Magna Graecia (Greater Greece). The great Puglian general Archytas of Taranto studied with Pythagoras and developed complex theories of music and infinity, both related to the number eight.

For Federico, the octagon was surely related to the work of Vitruvius, one of the architects of Augustus who based his work on ancient Greek texts. Vitruvius wrote volumes on architecture which became references for many to follow, especially Renaissance architects. He was interested in proportion and symmetry and worked with what Danish engineer Tones Brunes calls the Sacred Cut, a system of architectural proportion which involves creating the octagon, considered sacred because it unites the square, representing the human, and the circle, representing the divine.

There are other examples of European and Byzantine octagonal structures, most of them religious. Charlemagne's eight-sided Palatine Chapel at Aachen, built about 400 years before Castel del Monte, also casts the king as the leader of the new empire, in the Roman tradition. In Christianity, baptismal fonts were eight-sided, signifying rebirth and resurrection, perhaps symbolizing for Federico rebirth of his family dynasty, which was by then falling out of favor.

The castle's technology was not merely abstract,

however. Of course it was the Romans, who perfected the art of moving water, that inspired the builders of Castel de Monte to create the most modern plumbing in use at the time.

Astrology was a respected science in the middle ages and the Arab physicians in Federico's court would have used plants and charts to predict health and fortune. The Castel del Monte's mathematical plan is so precise that experts have devised formulas to show that the way the light falls is in harmony with the signs of the zodiac and the equinoxes.

In the mysteriously complicated design, the play of light expresses the universal harmony that underlies classic beauty. The soaring walls pull the Puglian light in and play with it, bouncing it off the stone walls and creating a harmonious flow and communication from window to window. The stone interior answers the call by reflecting back the light, the soft Puglian limestone especially famous for its ability to shift color and mood at different times of day. The effect is particularly spectacular in the throne room, which overlooks the courtyard and also offers a view of a typical Puglian vista: rich green countryside dropping to a silent and ▶▶▶

fading vast blue sea in the distance

The castle's light amplifies the artistic detail which UNESCO described as "a successful blend of elements from classical antiquity, the Islamic Orient and north European Cistercian Gothic." The geometric patterns reflect Eastern design and can be found on cathedrals throughout Puglia. The windows and towering proportions echo the Northern European Gothic. As is typical of medieval architecture, the columns play an important role; however, these depart from the Romanesque of the time. Some are clearly classical, while some recast the Romanesque religiously expressive figures as characters from classical mythology. For example, fanciful Faun reliefs, a reference to Pan, the Greek god of the hunt, signify Federico's love of hunting and fueled the theory that the castle was to be his hunting lodge.

Though King Federico died before the castle was finished, his spirit couldn't have found a more eternal legacy: a triumphal monument honoring truth beauty and knowledge. Hauntingly complex and challenging, it is a bridge that takes us from the wisdom of the past to the advancement of the future.



A BRIDGE OVER THE STRAIT OF MESSINA

by Arrigo Mongini

I was looking on the internet for some material to fill this space when I noticed that Mr. Berlusconi has recently reaffirmed his intent to reactivate the project to build a suspension bridge connecting Sicily and Calabria. This brought back memories of a trip I took in 1962 in a compartment of the train on the ferry boat across the Strait of Messina, listening to a young Sicilian headed north for the nearest French Foreign Legion recruiting station because "u barone" had run him out of town for trying to court his daughter. In any case, it seems appropriate to devote some Poche Parole ink (and electrons) to this massive engineering project.

UN PONTE SULLO STRETTO DI MESSINA

Traduzione di Paolo Vidoli

Stavo navigando su Internet e cercavo degli spunti per riempire questo spazio quando ho notato che Berlusconi ha recentemente confermato la sua intenzione di rimettere mano al progetto di costruire un ponte sospeso che colleghi la Sicilia alla Calabria. Questo mi ha fatto ricordare un viaggio in treno che ho fatto nel 1962 mentre ascoltavo un giovane siciliano che viaggiava nel mio stesso compartimento durante la traversata sul traghetto che attraversa lo stretto di Messina. Il giovane era diretto al nord, per raggiungere la più vicina stazione di arruolamento della Legione Straniera Francese perché "u barone" lo aveva costretto a fuggire dalla sua città in quanto cercava di

The origins of the project go back to Roman times when, according to Pliny the Elder, the Romans conceived of, and may have even built, a "bridge" using boats and barrels lashed together. This seems highly unlikely, given the strong currents found in the Strait (remember Scylla and Charybdis from Greek mythology). In the intervening centuries various rulers, including Charlemagne and Roger II of Sicily, considered the idea but it was never realized because of the technical challenges, including seismic activity near Messina.

After the unification of Italy the government commissioned an engineering plan for a bridge, and later a tunnel was proposed but again nothing was built. Efforts restarted in the early 20th century, when possible bridges and tunnels were again studied. In 1953, the famous American bridge designer D.B. Steinman prepared a concept design for a suspension bridge using two 220 meter towers sunk in 120 meters of water. This plan again went nowhere. In 1969 there was an international design competition with 143 entries. Six first prizes were awarded, including one to a project later named Archimede, involving a tube anchored below the sea bed but located under water between the sea bed and surface.

In the 1970s the Italian State Railways (FS) undertook further feasibility studies, and a special corporation, Stretto di Messina SpA, was created in 1981 to design and build the bridge. Detailed plans were produced in the 1990s calling for a six lane suspension bridge with two railroad tracks. Two giant pillars would be built on the sides of the Strait for a span of two miles, about 65% longer than the Akashi-Kaikyo (Japan) bridge span, the longest in the world, and 140% longer than the Tsing Ma (Hong Kong) bridge span, the longest to support six lanes and two tracks.

In 2006, after a competitive bidding process, a contract based on the above design was awarded to a group headed by Impregilo SpA for € 3.6 billion, but a few months later, the center left parliament voted to cancel the project. Rather than having to pay a cancellation penalty, the contract was not canceled but remained in suspension. When the center right returned to power, the project was revived as part of the countrywide infrastructure improvement program, and just recently December 23 was given as the date for the start of construction, with completion estimated for 2016.

The project continues to be opposed by the political left, which has other fiscal priorities, and is concerned about environmental impacts. For now the project would seem to depend heavily on the continued survival of the current government, but at

corteggiare sua figlia. Ad ogni modo sembra appropriato dedicare un po' dell'inchiostro di Poche Parole (e qualche elettrone) su questo impressionante progetto di ingegneria.

Le origini di questo progetto risalgono ai tempi dei romani quando, secondo Plinio il Vecchio, essi avevano concepito e forse anche costruito un ponte di barche e barili legati tra di loro. Questo sembra molto improbabile date le forti correnti dello stretto (ricordate le Scilla e Cariddi della mitologia greca). Nei secoli successivi vari governanti, compresi Carlo Magno e Ruggero II di Sicilia considerarono l'idea che pero' non fu mai realizzata a causa delle difficolta' tecniche fra le quali dell'attivita' sismica vicino a Messina..

Dopo l'unificazione d'Italia, il governo ordino' uno studio dettagliato per un ponte e piu' tardi ci fu la proposta di una galleria, ma ancora una volta non se ne fece nulla. Dei tentativi ricominciarono all'inizio del XX secolo quando furono fatti degli studi per possibili ponti o gallerie. Nel 1953 il famoso progettista di ponti americano D. B. Steinman preparo' un disegno di concetto per un ponte sospeso con due torri di 220 metri sommerse in 120 metri d'acqua. Ancora una volta il progetto si fermo' li. Nel 1969 ci fu un concorso internazionale al quale furono presentati 143 progetti. Furono conferiti sei primi premi compreso uno per un progetto chiamato Archimede, che consisteva in un tubo ancorato al fondo del mare ma situato a meta' strada tra il fondo e la superficie.

Nel 1970 le Ferrovie Italiane (FFSS) intrapresero ulteriori studi di fattibilita' e nel 1981 fu creata la societa' Stretto di Messina S.p.A. per progettare e costruire il ponte. Nel 1990 furono presentati dei piani dettagliati che mostravano un ponte sospeso a sei corsie piu' due binari per i treni. Due pilastri giganteschi sarebbero stati costruiti ai due lati dello stretto con una campata di due miglia, circa 65% piu' lunga di quella del ponte Akashi-Kaikyo (Giappone), la piu' lunga del mondo, e 140% piu' lunga della campata del ponte Tsing Ma (Hong Kong), il ponte piu' lungo di sei corsie e due binari.

Nel 2006, dopo una gara d'appalto competitiva, un contratto per 3.6 miliardi di Euro basato su questo progetto fu assegnato ad un gruppo facente capo a Impregilo S.p.A ma pochi mesi piu' tardi il Parlamento di centro sinistra voto' per la cancellazione del progetto. Piuttosto di pagare la penalita' per la cancellazione, il contratto non fu cancellato ma rimase in sospeso. Quando la coalizione di centro destra ritorno' al potere, il progetto fu ripreso come parte del programma di miglioramento dell'infrastruttura nazionale e recentemente e' stata comunicato il 23 dicembre

some point, assuming construction proceeds, it will be unstoppable, and Italy will have a project "worthy of the Pharaohs".

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WELCOME TO NEW ICS MEMBERS

It is with great pleasure that I introduce those Members who have joined us recently. As I welcome them I hope that they will take advantage of all that the Society has to offer and that they will contribute with their knowledge and expertise to the success of the Society's mission:

F. Victoria Tresansky, Martha S Swaim,
Michele Weil, Deborah Castell, William Amatruda,
Mr. & Mrs. Eric Russi, Jim and Anna Maria Delker,
Maria Carmen Aguirre, Philip Appolonia

Benvenuti !

Cesarina Horing, Membership Chair

ICS Poche Parole Publication
Arrigo Mongini, Editor
Nick Monaco, Assistant Editor
Romeo Segnan, Paolo Vidoli, Italian Editors

Poche Parole is published each month from January through May and September through December.

The deadline for the submission of all articles and ads for a newsletter issue is the 25th of the month preceding publication of the issue. Please send submissions via the Internet to e-mail address: icspoparole@verizon.net or on a computer diskette/CD to:

Editor, Poche Parole
4827 Rugby Avenue, Suite 301
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come data d'inizio dei lavori, con completamento previsto nel 2016.

Il progetto continua ad essere combattuto dalla sinistra che ha altre priorit  fiscali ed e' preoccupata per l'impatto sull'ambiente. Per ora sembra che il progetto dipenda fundamentalmente dalla sopravvivenza del presente governo. Pero' se la costruzione arrivasse ad un punto di non ritorno non potrebbe piu' essere bloccata. In tal caso l'Italia arriverebbe a completare un progetto di dimensioni "faraoniche".

ICS Board of Directors and their Responsibilities

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Image of the sun emitting X-rays

LOCAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

National Gallery of Art (West Wing, Galleries M10 and M11): An Antiquity of Imagination : Tullio Lombardo and Venetian High Renaissance Sculpture. Thru Nov. 1 <http://www.nga.gov>

Washington DC Italian Language & Culture Meetup Group: Social Gatherings every Monday & Friday at Vapiano Restaurant. For details, check <http://www.meetup.com/Dcitalian>

Downtown Piano Works: Free piano concert by international concert artist Giuseppe Lupis. Saturday, Nov. 7, 7:30 PM 74 S. Market St. Frederick, MD, RSVP 301-631-1234

Italian Cultural Institute: Silver Treasures of San Lorenzo Milan. Nov. 30 – Dec 30 Mon – Fri 10 AM to 3 PM 3000 Whitehaven St. NW, DC



Italian Cultural Institute: Meet Italian author and journalist Lia Levi and presentation of the English translation of her book “The Jewish Husband”, set in Fascist Italy. at the University of Maryland Nov. 2, 6:30 PM, RSVP to be announced.

Smithsonian Institution: “Savoring Italy” 15 presentations workshops and events by Smithsonian Associates exploring Italian Culture, thru Dec 3. www.residentassociates.org 202-633-3030

Washington Revels: Italian Country Dance and Dinner. Sunday, Nov. 1, 4-8 PM Women’s Club of Chevy Chase, 7931 Connecticut Ave. ChCh MD Adults \$40, Youth \$15. Advance purchase required. Order tickets online at www.revelsdc.org

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Type of membership

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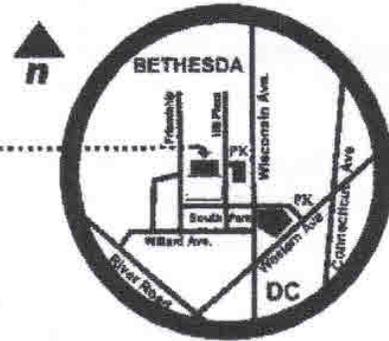
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The expiration date of your membership is shown on the address label. Please renew using the form at top of this page.

