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 (See map on back cover)

Saturday, May 14: Guided Tour of Exhibition “Canalé and His Rivals” (page 12)
Sunday, May 15: Photographer/Artist Richard Lasner, who has done extensive work in Italy, will be our guest speaker. (page 5)
Saturday, May 21: Verdi’s Requiem, in honor of Italy 150, 8 PM at Strathmore (page 8)
Sunday, June 12: Annual ICS Gala Awards Dinner, 6 to 9 PM at the FAMOSO restaurant (page 6)

ITALIAN LESSONS on May 15 at 2:00 PM
Movie of the Month: “Umberto D” 1:00 PM (page 4)

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

So much has happened: Piero Baglioni gave a lively presentation to an SRO audience at his Italian Cultural Institute lecture, cosponsored with ICS and SMATCH; Easter and Passover have come and gone, and as promised in my last message, it was indeed a lovely Sunday afternoon filled with the light of spring at our April social meeting. Prof. Anna Lawton brought that light to bear on magic moments of Italian cinema for our edification. That followed a brief business meeting in which we re-elected 4 ICS board members (Romeo Segnan, Nick Monaco, Olga Mancuso and myself) and, taking nominations from the floor, elected a new board member, Monica Lapenta, who will bring to us a rich knowledge of opera about which she has written several books for children, and a youthful, enthusiastic outlook as she navigates her way about her new country. Also in that business meeting was a presentation by Jim De Santis who heads up a corporate sponsorship program for the Festa Italiana this coming October. Jim was looking for volunteers, and our membership stepped right up to the task. You also responded to Festa president Joe Onofrietti’s plea, which bodes well for our continued ICS strong participation in that annual street festival. This year the ICS will also run a “pasta station” for the Festa, so, please, all you cooks out there, who believe that their ricetta is “veramente italiana”, volunteer to help out with that effort. (Let’s show our American friends what true Italian cooking is all about!) There is a volunteer signup sheet in this issue. And speaking of food, please also sign up for our annual gala party on June 12 at Famoso Restaurant in which we will dine well as we honor our scholarship winners. But first the National Philharmonic’s Verdi Requiem performance, dedicated to Italy@ 150 and part of that year-long celebration, will take place on Saturday, May 21. A special discount of 20 % is available to our community, so we hope to see you all there to enjoy Verdi’s musical majesty. Our May 15 social meeting will feature master photographer, Richard Lasner, who will bring us wonderful Italian images from his recent selection which won a prize at the Florence Biennale. I guess that’s enough for now!

Anna Lawton “Now I am a diva”

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12. More Pictures from April 17 Social
A seguito della pubblicazione nella Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 77 in data 4 aprile 2011 dei quattro decreti presidenziali di indizione dei referendum popolari abrogativi, che si terranno il 12 e 13 giugno 2011, si trasmette in allegato, con preghiera di urgente e ampia diffusione, un comunicato in italiano ed in inglese contenente alcune prime informazioni attinenti al voto, disponibile anche sul sito web di questa Ambasciata.

In tale contesto, la preghiera di portare a conoscenza dei nostri connazionali – nei modi ritenuti piú opportuni - quanto stabilito dall’art.4 del Regolamento esecutivo della legge 459/01 in merito all’esercizio dell’opzione di voto in Italia da parte dei connazionali residenti all’estero.

Se decide di esercitare l’opzione, il connazionale residente all’estero manifesta espressamente la volontà di votare in Italia anziché nel luogo di sua normale residenza all’estero e lo deve fare attraverso una dichiarazione scritta che deve contenere i seguenti elementi essenziali: nome, cognome, data e luogo di nascita, luogo di residenza, firma dell’ELETTORE. In merito, il Ministero degli Affari Esteri ha predisposto il modello in internet, cui i connazionali interessati potranno liberamente riferirsi.

L’opzione così formulata dovrà essere inoltrata dagli interessati a quest’Ambasciata (anche via fax al numero: 202-518 2142) entro e non oltre il 14 aprile 2011 (cioè entro il decimo giorno successivo a quello dell’indizione del referendum).

Si ricordano, qui di seguito, contatti presso l’Ambasciata d’Italia a Washington DC, cui sarà possibile rivolgersi per ulteriori informazioni: e-mail: referendum.washington@esteri.it


Cristiano Maggipinto, Ambasciata d’Italia, Washington

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ICS SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE MAY 20

Applications are being sought for the following Awards:

Except for the Moriggi/Palumbo award, applicants should be no more than 25 years of age as of Friday, May 20th, 2011, the post-marked date for receipt of applications.

1) The Maria Guarrera Wilmeth Award of $500 for outstanding high-school students of the Italian language. Two, of $500 each will be awarded.

2) The Elena and Antonio De Luca Award of $1000, to be given to an undergraduate or graduate student who has excelled in the study of Latin and/or Greek.

3) The Luciana Montanari-Mendola award of $1000 for an undergraduate or conservatory student showing promise in piano performance. Examples of recordings must accompany your application.

4) The Candida Pitassi Di Croce Italian Language Award of $1000, to be given to a university scholar who has excelled in learning the Italian Language and shows promise of continued commitment to excel in the language and culture of Italy.

5) The Ruggiero Moriggi /Vincenzo Palumbo Artisan Award of $500, to be given to a person who has excelled in the fine arts (exclusive of music), or to an artisan who has excelled in a traditional Italian craft (such as ceramics, jewelry, leather-working, furniture-making, musical instruments, lace work, fine fabrics, etc.). Written reviews and/or photographs, etc. of your work must be submitted to the Awards Committee. Age restriction does not apply.

6) The Young Scientist Award of $1,000, to be given to a young person who has excelled in the physical sciences or biological sciences.

7) The Fred La Marca Award of $1000, to be given to a young person who has excelled in studies of the Humanities.

Materials to be included in the application are:

1. College transcripts when appropriate and High School transcripts for no. 1 (These are not required for award no. 5. That person should submit photographs or other examples of their work.)
2. Three letters of recommendation
3. An essay describing why the applicant is a valid contender for the award.
4. A short biographical presentation of the candidate (curriculum vitae).
5. Anything that would demonstrate the ability of the candidate, including publications by and/or about the candidate, photographs, CDs etc.

Selection will occur during the last week of May and awards will be presented at the ICS gala dinner, which will take place during the weekend of June 11,12, as will be advertised in our newsletter Poche Parole. Attendance at the dinner is required and awards will be reassigned if the winner is unable to attend, except for exceptional circumstances as determined by the Awards Committee. The winner of the Luciana Montanari-Mendola award may be asked to perform at the gala dinner.

Application materials postmarked no later than Friday, May 20th, 2010 should be sent to:

The Italian Cultural Society, Awards section
4827 Rugby Ave., Suite #301
Bethesda, MD 20814

Poche Parole is pleased to publish the following message for citizens of Italy in the USA from First Counsellor Cristiano Maggipinto of the Embassy of Italy regarding the procedure for voting in the June referendum.

Poche Parole pubblica il seguente messaggio per i cittadini italiani negli Stati Uniti dal Primo Consigliere Cristiano Maggipinto dell’Ambasciata d’Italia sulla procedura per votare nel referendum di giugno.
FESTA ITALIANA, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9
11:30 AM – 5:30 PM
NOW IS THE TIME TO VOLUNTEER !!!

At one time, Washington, D.C., had its very own Little Italy! The area around Holy Rosary Church, at 3rd and F Streets N.W., was once home to a thriving Italian neighborhood, complete with frequent feste – street festivals. In 1999, Washington’s active and growing Italian community came together to revive the traditions of their ancestors, and Festa Italiana, DC was born and has continued every year.

Our Society, the Holy Rosary Church Council, The Abruzzo and Molise Heritage Society, and the Lido Civic Club are organizing and staging the Festa during the Columbus Day weekend. ICS board members Joe Onofrietti, Ron Cappelletti, Nick Monaco, Cecilia Fiermonte, Anthony Sinopoli, and Arrigo Mongini are already working on the Festa and even though the event is not until October, now would be a good time for other ICS members to get in on the planning. This year our theme is IL RISORGIMENTO AND 150 YEARS OF ITALIAN UNITY

Festa is now seeking volunteers from all the sponsoring organizations. ICS members interested in volunteering are requested to complete the following information and either bring this form to an ICS Social meeting to hand in at the front table or mail it to:

Arrigo Mongini, 5541 Mohican Rd., Bethesda. MD 20816 or just call him at 301-229-1653, or send an email to arrigo.mongini@verizon.net

FESTA ITALIANA 2010 VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP SHEET

Name ___________________________________________ E-mail ________________________________

Phone ___________________________ Cell ___________________________

_____ I would like to help research organize and plan the cultural displays
_____ I would like to help with publicity and getting organizations to participate
_____ I would like to help with fund raising
_____ I know some vendors who might be willing to donate raffle or silent auction prizes and I will contact them.

_____ I would like to help with the layout of the various components in and outside Casa Italiana

_____ I would like to help put together the printed program, deal with advertisers, printer, etc.

_____ I would like to help with any number of jobs on the day of the Festa

_____ I would like to help to organize other volunteers

You will find volunteering to stage this colorful and lively Festa to be very rewarding and a means by which to show your pride in our shared heritage and/or your love of Italian Culture
MOVIE OF THE MONTH
"Umberto D"

This season we are proud to have brought classic Italian Neorealism films like Open City, The Bicycle Thief and Ossessione. It is only fitting to end the season with Umberto D, the last Italian Neorealism film made. Vittorio De Sica watched his father Umberto De Sica work 30 years for the Italian Ministry of Public Works only to be left a meager pension which didn’t match inflation. This was the inspiration for his central character Umberto Domenico Ferrari (Carlo Battisti). Maria Pia Casilio makes her film debut as a teenage maid facing eviction by her landlady Olga (Lina Gennari) and pregnant by an Italian soldier who wants nothing to do with her. Too proud to beg and too dumb to steal, Umberto is left to wander the streets of Rome alone with his faithful dog Flike. In a 2003 interview María Pia Casilio said “The story of Umberto D is still true in Italy today”. Umberto D got an Oscar nomination in 1952 and also won the New York Film Critics Circle Award as the best foreign film of the year. (In Italian with English subtitles)

Quest’anno vi abbiamo presentati i grandi film del neorealismo italiano come Roma Città’ Aperta, Ladi di Biciclette e Ossessione. Vogliamo concludere la stagione con Umberto D, l’ultimo film neorealista d’Italia. Il film è stato inspirato dal padre di Vittorio De Sica, Umberto, che aveva lavorato per 30 anni nel ministero dei lavori pubblici. Quando Umberto De Sica lasciò il lavoro, la pensione ricevuta era talmente bassa di non permettergli di vivere decentemente. Il personaggio principale del film è Umberto Domenico Ferrari (Carlo Battisti). Maria Pia Casilio ha fatto il suo debutto cinematografico con il personaggio di una serva giovane che poteva essere sfrettata dalla proprietaria della casa, Olga (Lina Gennari), ed incinta da un soldato italiano che non vuole avere nulla a che fare con lei. Troppo orgoglioso per chiedere l’elemosina e troppo stupido per rubare, ad Umberto non rimane altro che girare le strade di Roma con il suo fedele cane, Flike. Maria Pia Casilio disse in un’intervista nel 2003 “La storia di Umberto D è sempre attuale oggi in Italia.” Umberto D fu nominato per un Oscar dei 1952 Academy Awards e vinse inoltre il premio New York Film Critics Circle Award come miglior film straniero dell’anno. (In italiano con sottotitoli in inglese)

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:

Ana Maria Murgueytio, Frances and John Crull, Mariela Rodriguez, Ed and Joyce Soyster, Andrea Cocozella, Anthony Francavilla, Teresa Cutolo, Zach Foster

BENVENUTI! Cesarina Horing, Membership Chair

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Antenna Italia

is now on the AMICO website. Get news from Italy and information on Italian and Italian-American events as well as music & commentary in streaming audio. Log on any time at Pino Cicala’s web site www.italianamericancommunications.org

ITALIAN GOURMET MARKET

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*Torrone * Perugina Chocolates*

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ICS Board of Directors and their Responsibilities
Ron Cappelletti, President & Webmaster
Olga Mancuso, Vice President
Cesarina Horing, Membership, Treasurer & Italian Language Program
Cecilia Fierrmonte, Secretary
Arrigo Mongini, Editor of Poche Parole
Joe Onofrietti, Film & Hospitality
Nick Monaco, Outside Events
Luigi De Luca, At large (Past President)
Paolo Vidoli, At large
Anthony Sinopoli, At large
Romeo Segnan, At large
Monics La Rama, At large
Maria Wilmeth, Historian
Elio Grandi, Emeritus
Aldo Bove, Liaison in Italy
LOCAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

National Gallery of Art:  Canaletto and his rivals: A 60 minute talk at the Canaletto exhibition on various dates in May.  http://www.nga.gov/programs/qaltalks/

Italian Cultural Institute:  The Heirs of Canaletto: Prints by Fabio Mauroner and Sebastiano Brugnoli until May 8.  To view the exhibit 10 AM to 12 PM or 2 PM to 4 PM by appointment, email iicwashington@esteri.it

For more on the above event see http://www.iicwashington.esteri.it/IIC_Washington/Menu/Gli Eventi/Calendario/

Holy Rosary Church:  Festa della Repubblica, Sunday, June 5, 10:30 AM Mass

Baltimore’s Little Italy:  Two street festivals, St. Anthony, June 11 & 12 and St. Gabriel, August 20 & 21, see http://www.littleitalymd.com/activities.htm


Piazza Italia, Washington DC Italian Language & Culture Meetup Group: Social gatherings every Monday & Friday at Vapiano restaurant. See www.meetup.com/DCItalian

The Washington DC Italian Language Meetup Group: Helping people with an interest in Italian language and culture connect with one another, both online and in person. See www.meetup.com/Italian


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
Bethesda, MD 20814

Publication notice: The ICS Board reserves sole discretion for accepting any material, including advertisements, for inclusion in Poche Parole, pursuant to its established Publication Policy. A copy of this policy is available upon request by contacting the Editor. Advertisers appearing in Poche Parole have paid a fee or provided services in kind to ICS for publishing their respective advertisements. Publication of any advertisement in Poche Parole does not reflect ICS endorsement or guarantee of the advertisers’ services, products or statements. Material contained in articles published is the sole responsibility of the author and does not indicate ICS endorsement.

MAY 15 PROGRAM

Richard Lasner is a fine art photographer specializing in Italy. He has traveled to Italy every year since 1996 taking photographs of landscapes, architectural details, gardens, cityscapes, and food. His fourth place prize in photography at the Florence Biennale in 2009 provided international status to his career. He has had many solo exhibitions, is represented in five museums and three galleries, and has been published in eight books. His website is www.LasnerPhoto.com. His Italian portfolio consists of 92 limited edition prints crafted in four sizes.

Last year, Mr. Lasner wrote and published his own book of Italian photographs accompanied by short poems in Haiku style. At the May 15 presentation, he will show his photographs, read from his book, and sign copies. The book’s title, I-Ku, is a play on three concepts: “I” for Italy; “I” for the photographer’s eye; and the term Haiku.

ITALIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM

4827 Rugby Avenue, Suite 301
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Day, Evening and Weekend Classes for Adults and Children
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SUMMER SESSION STARTS JUNE 27

website:  www.italianculturalsociety.org
phone:  301-215-7885

VACCARO’S DESSERTS
8949 BROOKVILLE RD.
SILVER SPRING, MD 20910
301-587-8700
2011 ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER
of the Italian Cultural Society
SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 12, 6 – 9 pm. At the
Restaurant

Located in the Courtyard
Marriott, 5520 Wisconsin Ave,
Chevy Chase, MD
On the west side of Wisconsin

Parking free in back of hotel

**First course**
Endive (or radicchio) salad with gorgonzola cheese, pears and balsamic vinaigrette

**Main course** (choice of one among)
Pounded and Grilled chicken breast topped with cherry tomatoes, arugula salad, citrus dressing
or
Pan-seared Fluke filet, spinach, herbed roasted potatoes in a light butter almond vinegar
or
Handcrafted Fresh ricotta filled pasta, golden raisins, ricotta salata, sage, parmesan emulsion, eggplant

**Dessert** (choice of one of the following two)
Chocolate Fondant with Pistachio Gelato and Fresh Berries, or Homemade Sorbet

filtered water, soft drinks, 1 glass of wine or beer, American coffee/tea

**Cut here**

Please return this portion with your check and selections. Make check out to the Italian Cultural Society and send it postmarked no later than May 24 to: GALA, Italian Cultural Society 4827 Rugby Ave, Bethesda, MD 20814

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□ Telephone number in case we need to contact you: ________________________________

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**PREMIAZIONE DEI VINCITORI DEL CONCORSO**

"Disegna una T-shirt per i 150 anni dell’Unita’ d’Italia"
di Lucia Dalla Monta’, dirigente scolastico dell’Ufficio Scuola

Si è svolta ieri sera presso l’Auditorium dell’Ambasciata a Washington, la cerimonia di premiazione dei vincitori del Concorso “Disegna una T-shirt per i 150 anni dell’Unita’ d’Italia” organizzato dall’Ufficio Scuola, dagli insegnanti di italiano e dagli Enti Gestori della nostra circoscrizione. Il Concorso, aperto a tutti gli studenti k-12 dei corsi di italiano delle scuole pubbliche e private dell’area di DC, è stato reso possibile grazie all’impegno del Comitato organizzatore formato da Chiara Monticelli, Claudia Deferre, Elisa Sileoni, Maggie Pecora, OlgaMancuso oltre alle dirette dei due Enti Gestori, Cesarina Horing e Daria Mizza, e dal dirigente scolastico dell’Ufficio Scuola Lucia Dalla Monta’.

Sponsor dell’iniziativa sono stati AATI-DC Chapter II, Italian Cultural Language Program, Federazione Italiana Gioco Calcio, Casa Italiana Language School con Osteria Sette e Istituto Italiano di Cultura.

Al concurso hanno partecipato una quarantina di scuole. La Giuria, composta da Anna Franceschetto, Fulvia Musti, Alberto Manai e Lucia Dalla Monta’ ha avuto il difficile compito di esaminare i 185 disegni pervenuti. Come previsto dal Regolamento, sono stati individuati, all’interno di ognuna della 4 categorie di età, i finalisti, tra i quali e’ stato scelto il vincitore. Primo classificato e’ stato il disegno di Crystal Hughes, grade 10, Eleanor Roosevelt H.S. della contea di Prince George; secondo classificato il disegno di Sophia Wu, grade 6 e terzo classificato Andrew Juni Kim, grade 5 entrambi della Mantua Elementary School, Fairfax County; quarto classificato Ryan Sommerville della J. Hanson French Immersion della contea di Prince George.

Speciale menzione e’ stata assegnata al disegno di Adam Bengharsa, grade 10, Walt Withman HS, Montgomery County. Ai vincitori e’ stato consegnato un assegno in denaro (offerto da AATI-DC e Italian Cultural Society), un libro (offerto da Italian Cultural Society), un pallone appositamente inviato dallaFederazione italiana Gioco Calcio, settore Giovanile e Scolastico (il cui presidente e’ l’ex campione mondiale Gianni Rivera) ed un diploma. Un diploma ed un pallone sono stati consegnati anche agli insegnanti di italiano e ai presidi delle scuole dei finalisti.

In apertura, l’ascolto dei due inni nazionali, poi la premiazione dei vincitori, sottolineata da ingresso dei finalisti sulle note della Marcia Trionfale dall’Aida di Giuseppe Verdi, rulli di tamburi e dalle note del “Nessun dorma” dalla Turandot di Giacomo Puccini.

Ad introdurre la serata, il Primo Consigliere Cristiano Maggipinto che ha richiamato il grande significato della ricorrenza per la nostra nazione illustrando brevemente alcuni momenti salienti della storia risorgimentale. Quindi il dirigente scolastico ha proclamato i vincitori. A seguire, la consegna da parte del Primo Consigliere di un diploma a tutti gli insegnanti di italiano presenti come riconoscimento per il loro sforzo quotidiano nella diffusione della lingua e cultura italiane, cui e’ seguita la consegna di un diploma, quale segno di riconoscenza, anche alle autorita’ scolastiche presenti per l’appoggio ai nostri programmi, al:

Comitato organizzatore, alla Giuria, agli Sponsor. Particolarmente emozionante e’ stato il momento della consegna dei diplomi anche ai due Enti Gestori, in occasione della consegna di un attestato alla Direttrice emerita di I.C.S. Maria Wilmeth cui e’ seguita una standing ovation iniziata dalle stesse supervisors delle Foreign Languages presenti in sala, che hanno voluto così rendere omaggio ad una straordinaria protagonista dell’impegno per la diffusione dello studio delle lingue straniere e, in particolare dell’Italiano, nella nostra circoscrizione e negli Stati Uniti.

La serata e’ stata quindi allietata dalla splendida performance del coro della Wiley H. Bates Middle School di Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, apprezzata con particolare simpatia nel corso dell’esecuzione di brani celebri in lingua italiana.

Il buffet finale e’ risultato particolarmente gradito, soprattutto ai ragazzi, per la presenza dell’angolo del gelato artigianale. Nonostante l’inclemenza del tempo, la partecipazione e’ stata piuttosto elevata e, al termine, si sono avuti una sequela di riscontri positivi da parte delle famiglie, dei dirigenti del coro, degli insegnanti e soprattutto delle autorità scolastiche presenti che hanno richiesto a piu’ voci di cominciare già a lavorare ad un prossimo concorso.

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Verdi’s Requiem

Triumph of the Spirit

The National Philharmonic

Stan Engebretson, conductor
Arianna Zuckerman, soprano • Patricia Miller, mezzo-soprano
Don Bernardini, tenor • Kevin Deas, bass

Saturday, May 21, 2011 8 pm at the Music Center at Strathmore

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for a 20% discount on tickets. Kids 7-17 free!

Available for purchases made by phone or in person. Not applicable to previously purchased tickets. Visit nationalphilharmonic.org.
Giuseppe Verdi (1813 – 1901) and Alessandro Manzoni (1785 – 1873, the Italian writer whose death in 1873 prompted the writing of the Requiem) were both key figures in the Risorgimento which led to Italian unification in 1861.

After a prolific period in which he quickly composed Rigoletto, Il Trovatore and La Traviata, for fifteen years (or even twenty in between Aida and Otello), Verdi composed little and seemed quite content to live life as a country squire with his second wife, the singer Giuseppina Strepponi, until a succession of deaths prompted the Requiem.

In 1868 Gioacchino Rossini had died. Within four days of Rossini’s death, Verdi proposed to his publisher Ricordi a collaborative project with thirteen leading Italian composers each composing a section of the Requiem in honor of Rossini. The Libera me section of the Requiem for Manzoni was composed originally for this project, which was never finalized. Apparently fervor died down as professional rivalries increased and the conductor, Angelo Mariani, lost his enthusiasm for the project (and lost Verdi as a friend when he did). More importantly, Verdi realized it was better not to rely on other people for completion of the requiem to honor Manzoni.

A central figure of Italian culture and literature, whose writing helped to forge the Italian national identity, Manzoni had been ailing for years. When at last the writer and patriot he idolized died, Verdi was disappointed with the obituaries: “Not one speaks the way it should. Many words, but none of them deeply felt.” Verdi went “alone and unseen” to Manzoni’s grave and stayed away from the funeral.

Verdi’s admiration for Alessandro Manzoni began when he was a teenager and first read I Promessi Sposi (“The Betrothed”):

“It’s not just a book, it’s a consolation to humanity. I was 16 when I first read it. Since then…if anything my experience of men has made me admire it all the more – because it’s a true book…Oh, if artists could but understand that “true,” there would be no more composers of the future or composers of the past, no puristic, realistic or idealistic painters, no poets classic or romantic, but true poets, true painters, true composers.”

Verdi fulfilled his vision of an artist’s “true” work when he used his own personal approach to the traditional liturgy of the requiem. Like Berlioz, he began with the language of the Mass for the Dead, but amplified the text with his crescendos.

Around that time death was palpable in Verdi’s life (who was now sixty) – not only Rossini and Manzoni, but his own father and father-in-law had just died. Verdi roared in defiance of death in his Requiem. Cairns says, “The Requiem is, among other things, the passionate protest of a man who rebels against the outrage that is death.”

Verdi had just gotten back his autograph of the Libera me when he heard of Manzoni’s death and proposed to the Mayor of Milan (and again to his publisher, Giulio Ricordi) a new Requiem in honor of the man so sacred to the people of the city. Verdi sweetened the deal by offering to conduct the performance himself and even to pay for the copyists’ fees.

Just as Manzoni’s “true” book shaped and invigorated Verdi’s life, with his Requiem, Verdi graced mankind with a “true” statement about death imbued with his personal feelings.

The Requiem begins very softly with a “pianissimo” and ends even more softly. In between is the massive, powerful “fortissimo” Dies Irae with its terrifying depiction of the Judgment Day, which comprises half of the Requiem.

The first performance of the Messa da Requiem took place May 22, 1874 (the first anniversary of Manzoni’s death) at the chiesa di San Marco in Milano. With special permission from the Archbishop, female choristers were included in the first performance, but they were hidden behind a screen and dressed in full-length black dresses and mourning veils. Given these restraints and the fact that applause was not allowed in the church, the first performance was met with exuberance and enthusiasm. The Requiem was a sensation overnight and began to play in European houses, including a spectacular performance at the Royal Albert Hall in London in May 1875, where Verdi himself conducted a chorus of over 1000 and an orchestra of 140.

Not all the responses were raves, and many critics disapproved of Verdi’s composing a Mass for the Dead, given his religious ambivalence, or found the work too sensational or melodramatic. Verdi took it all in stride:

As for the newspapers, does anybody force you to read them?...The day of justice will come, and it is a great pleasure for the artist, a supreme pleasure, to be able to say: 'Imbeciles, you were wrong!'

The Verdi Requiem has a history of famous performances, including at the concentration camp, Terezin or Theresienstadt. A Romanian-born Czech conductor, Rafael Schaecter, gave 16 performances between September 1943 and June 1944, working with one score of the Verdi Requiem and a voluntary chorus of 150 which constantly had to be replaced as its members were shipped off to the death camps.

For them, singing to a Nazi audience of the fearsome Day of Reckoning was an act of defiance. The Nazis made a notorious propaganda film from one of the performances to show how “humanely” the Jews were being treated.

Verdi’s Requiem has been called “Verdi’s greatest opera” and “opera for the church.” The renowned 19th century conductor Hans von Bülow famously skipped a concert of Verdi’s Requiem dismissing it as “Verdi’s latest opera, though in ecclesiastical robes.” Von Bülow was moved to tears when he finally did hear a performance of the Requiem 18 years later. When he wrote Verdi to apologize, Verdi wryly retorted that he might have been right the first time.

Johannes Brahms declared after hearing Verdi’s Requiem that “only a genius could have written such a work.”

Verdi continued to compose well into his eighties (during this time Otello and Falstaff were written). Verdi’s own funeral, a state affair in Milan, has been cited as the largest public event ever held in Italy.

In fact, Verdi was not only a prominent composer but also a symbol of Italy’s long march toward freedom and unity through the 19th century. He was born in the Duchy of Parma, one of the many small states into which Italy was divided. When traveling around as a student and later a conductor, Verdi encountered practical obstacles of needing passports to go from one town to another within Italy, as well as having no copyright protection in England since his Parma did not have diplomatic relations with the British.

Verdi’s enthusiasm for the cause of Italy’s unification was such that he became a kind of symbol of this struggle, and his name was used to “covertly” celebrate the King of Piedmont-Sardinia who was the leading force of the unification movement: To exclaim “Viva Verdi!” was to say “long live Vittorio Emanuele, Re d’Italia.”

DIVAGAZIONI INTORNO AL VIAGGIARE COME METAFORA
di Roberto Severino

Pochi giorni fa seduto al mio computer, pigiando solo alcuni tasti, e dopo aver fornito fiduciosamente i dati di una carta di credito, in pochissimi minuti ho acquistato un biglietto d’aereo per andare in Italia. In altre parole mi accingo per l’ennesima volta a fare un viaggio intercontinentale che solo alcune generazioni fa avrebbe richiesto settimane o mesi, e mi avrebbe esposto a chissà quali incognite e incontri, e forse anche a rischiose avventure e pericoli.

E questo mi ha fatto riflettere su come in pochi anni le cose siano drasticamente mutate, e che mentre una volta intraprendere un simile viaggio era un’esperienza che avrebbe potuto definire e cambiare radicalmente la propria esistenza, adesso si è ridotta solo ad una breve esperienza passiva, all’essere trasportati per alcune ore nella fusoliera pressurizzata di un aereo -- ad alta quota, al di sopra delle nuvole e lontano da tutto e da tutti -- per giungere il mattino dopo, e senza aver compiuto fisicamente un solo passo verso la nostra destinazione, in un altro continente a migliaia di chilometri di distanza.

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RAMBLINGS ABOUT TRAVELING AS METAPHOR
by Roberto Severino
(translation))

A few days ago, sitting at my computer, with just a few keystrokes and after trustfully providing the data from my credit card, within a very few minutes I bought an airline ticket to go to Italy. In other words, I am preparing for the nth time to make an intercontinental trip that just a few generations ago would have required weeks or months and would have exposed me to who knows what unknowns and encounters and perhaps even to risky adventures and dangers.

And this made me ponder how in just a few years things have changed drastically, and that while at one time taking such a journey was an experience that could have defined and radically changed one’s own existence, now it has been reduced to just a brief passive experience, to being transported for several hours in the pressurized cabin of an airplane – at high altitude, above the clouds and far from everything and everyone – to get there the next morning, and without having taken one physical step toward our destination in another continent thousands of kilometers away.
Una volta, come recita il noto adagio, si diceva che “partire è un po’ morire”, romanticamente reso dall’italianizzante Bardo con “parting is such sweet sorrow”, ma in altri tempi effettivamente chi partiva non aveva la certezza del ritorno, e lasciare i luoghi in cui si era nati e i propri affetti, gli amici e i parenti, significava esporli ad una lunga assenza e lontananza e alla “quasi morte” del dimenticare e dell’essere dimenticati. Basti pensare al viaggio dell’adolescente Marco Polo verso le favolose terre del Caiato che torna in patria dopo 24 anni e ormai adulto, o a quello dei pellegrini che si recavano in Terra Santa o alla Mecca e che spesso non tornavano più, o ai viaggi verso l’ignoto di intrepidi esploratori e navigatori come Magellano o Cristoforo Colombo o, più recentemente, ai numerosi nordeuropei ed americani che intraprendevano il “Grand Tour” in Italia, un viaggio che mediamente durava da due a quattro anni.

Il viaggio era qualcosa di molto, ma molto di più: era confronto con altre realtà ed esperienze di vita, occasione di conoscenza degli altri e di sé stessi, di nuove sensazioni, e di scoperta di nuovi luoghi geografici, culturali, mentali, e spirituali. Un viaggio significava aprirsi a nuove dimensioni del pensiero, mettersi alla prova, raffrontarsi col mondo esterno e, soprattutto, con quello interiore. Era un processo di maturazione, autoconoscenza e misura di chi e di ciò che siamo, occasione di scelta. Era vivere così come nasciamo alla vita, non per andare semplicemente e inevitabilmente incontro alla morte, partire dal punto A per raggiungere il punto B, ma per intraprendere il cammino della nostra vicenda umana verso un arricchimento e stimolante percorso esistenziale e cognitivo, e di essere posti nella condizione di dare le nostre risposte, anche di natura etica o spirituale, alle scelte e ai quesiti che la vita di volta in volta ci avrebbe posto. In altre parole mettersi in cammino e intraprendere il percorso era altrettanto se non molto più importante che raggiungere la meta, e andare avanti e spingersi oltre, contava quasi di più che arrivare.

Un episodio altamente esemplificativo di questa dimensione etico-spirituale che viene subito alla mente è l’epistola allegorica scritta in latino da Giovanni Petrarca (1304-1374) all’amico Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro, in cui narra al suo corrispondente l’ascesa, probabilmente immaginaria, che lui e il fratello fecero del Monte Ventoso, in Provenza. In essa leggiamo che il fratello Gherardo, che apparteneva ad un ordine religioso, punta direttamente verso la vetta raggiungendola speditamente, mentre il poeta rimane indietro, si sofferma a guardare il panorama, distoglie lo sguardo dalla meta, si smarrisce perdendo la strada, discende invece di salire e si scoraggia, ma alla fine arriva anche lui in cima al monte. È chiaro che per lui, uomo moderno e non più medievale, l’esperienza umana del viaggio conta se non di più, almeno tanto quanto raggiungere la sommità del monte, e che la vita, con tutti i suoi cedimenti e le sue contraddizioni, va vissuta pienamente in tutti gli aspetti e le occasioni che ci offre.

Ma per restare in tema letterario come non ricordare anche il folle volo dell’Ulisse dantesco che, sfidando i terribili divieti e le proibizioni degli dèi si spinge eroicamente oltre le Colonne d’Ercole, verso l’ignoto, inducendo con le sue parole anche i suoi compagni a fare altrettanto:

… non vogliate negar l’esperienza, dietro al sol, del mondo senza gente.

Once upon a time, as the well known adage goes, we used to say “departing is a little like dying”, romantically rendered by the Italianizing Bard as “parting is such sweet sorrow”, but in other times, effectively, whoever was departing did not have the certainty of returning, and leaving one’s native lands, one’s own affections, and one’s friends and relatives meant exposing oneself to a long absence and separation and to the “near death” of forgetting and being forgotten. One has only to think about the voyage of the adolescent Marco Polo toward the fabulous lands of Cathay, who returns to his country after 24 years, by then as an adult, or that of the pilgrims heading for the Holy Land or Mecca, who often did not return, or about the voyages towards the unknown of the intrepid explorers and navigators like Magellan or Christopher Columbus, or more recently about the numerous North Europeans and Americans who undertook the “Grand tour” of Italy, a trip that on average took from two to four years.

A voyage was something much much more: it was a confrontation with other realities and experiences of life, an opportunity to get to know others and one’s own self, of new feelings, and of the discovery of new places of geography, culture, mind, and spirit. A voyage meant opening oneself to new dimensions of thought, putting oneself to the test, confronting the external world and, above all, the internal one. It was a process of maturation, of knowing one’s self, and a measure of who and what we are, a time to choose. It was to live as when we are born, not for going simply and inevitably toward death, leaving point A to get to point B, but to undertake the path of our human existence toward an enriching and stimulating existential and cognitive road, and to be placed in the condition of giving our answers, even ethical or spiritual ones, to the choices and questions that life would pose to us from time to time. In other words, setting one’s self in motion and undertaking the journey was as important, if not more important, than reaching the destination, and going forward and pushing beyond meant almost more than arriving.

One episode, an excellent example of this ethico-spiritual dimension that comes immediately to mind, is the allegorical letter written in Latin by Giovanni Petrarca (1304-1374) to his friend Dionigi di Monte San Sepolcro, in which he narrates to his correspondent the ascent of Monte Ventoso in Provence. In it we read that his brother Gherardo, who belonged to a religious order, heads directly for the summit, quickly reaching it, while the poet remains behind, stops to look at the scenery, looks away from the goal, gets lost, descends instead of ascending, gets discouraged, but finally he too arrives at the top of the mountain. It is clear that for him, a modern man and no longer a medieval one, the human experience of the voyage counts, if not more than, at least as much as, getting to the summit, and that life, with all its compromises and contradictions must be lived fully in all the aspects and opportunities that it presents to us.

But, to stay with the literary theme, let us also recall the “mad flight” of Dante’s Ulysses who, challenging the terrible injunctions and prohibitions of the gods, pushes on beyond the Columns of Hercules towards the unknown, leading his companions, with his words, to follow:

…be ye unwilling to deny the knowledge, Following the sun, of the unpeopled world.
Considerate la vostra semenza:  
*fatti non foste a viver come bruti,*  
*ma per seguire virtute e conoscenza.*  
(*Inf. XXVI, 116-120)*

E per noi poco conta che Dante -- uomo medievale, per cui invece in quel momento della sua esistenza importava soprattutto raggiungere il massimo traguardo, cioè la salvezza della propria anima -- lo condanni all'inferno tra i consiglieri fraudolenti per aver con le sue parole indotto i suoi compagni a soddisfare il desiderio di conoscenza del mondo fisico e non di quello divino e della salvezza, ed aver pertanto commesso il peccato di *vana curiositas,* e che Ulisse nel racconto di Dante finisca poi per perire tra i flutti. La sua dimensione eroica di chi mette a repentaglio tutto, anche la propria vita, per sfidare i tabù ed i luoghi comuni, e per perseguire invece la conoscenza come dovere del mondo reale che ci circonda, diventa simbolo di un nuovo mondo umanistico e rinascimentale, laico, moderno e progressista.

Roberto Severino

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**Pictures from our Social Meeting of April 17**

"We want to take the Festa to a new level!"

Let’s all welcome Monica, our new board member
Thanks, Anna, for a splendid presentation on Italian film!

“Who took all the prosciutto?”

Nicola, open your eyes!

“And Cabiria shows up many years later in a Fellini film”

That’s not part of the Adkins diet

“Was King Kong inspired by Cabiria?”

Editor’s Note: I am happy that there is a little space left over at the end of this issue of Poche Parole so that I can express the fact that it has been my pleasure to be its editor for this latest season of publication. I look forward to returning in September, but in the meantime please consider contributing articles, poems, stories, anecdotes, pictures --- anything Italy-related --- for publication in coming months. Don’t be bashful. This is not The New Yorker or La Stampa, after all.

Arrigo Mongini
ICS membership application

Mail application to:
c/o ICS Treasurer
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