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)
Sunday, March 18: Dr. William T. Phillips, Nobel physicist from NIST, will give a presentation with live demonstrations entitled “Time, Einstein, and the Coolest Stuff in the Universe”
Sunday, April 15: Violin/Viola duets, a concert by Eva and Phillippe Cappelletti-Chao
Movie of the Month: “Delitto d’ Amore” (See page 5)
Italian Lessons and Conversation on March 18 at 2:00 PM

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
February 12 was a bright, cold Sunday afternoon made warmer by the presence of Janine Smith, wonderful dance-caller, and musicians Andrea Hoag and Paul Oorts, (abetted by a guest guitarist), who led a small but merry band of revelers in celebrating the pleasant excesses of Festa di Carnevale this year. It was fun. More of you should have been there! See the pictures on page 6 of this issue.

This month on March 18 we look forward to a large audience as NIST physics Nobelist Bill Phillips brings his unique style to our meeting in a multimedia presentation, with live demonstrations, entitled “Time, Einstein and the coolest stuff in the universe.” And he means “cool” both in the hip sense and in the literal sense: the coolest stuff he is talking about is a collection of atoms at a few billionths of a degree above absolute zero that is at the heart of the most precise timepiece ever built. Make sure you are there. This will be great. Il dottore Phillips e’ bravissimo! See page 2.

Given the situation brought about by recently announced markedly reduced funding to our Italian Language Program by an Italian government in economic crisis, and although our good friends at the Embassy are making every effort to help us, this year your election in April of members to your board is very important as we find ourselves needing to make decisions to keep that program viable and find ways to raise money for that purpose. Your thoughtful help in the coming months will be much appreciated. Read a brief summary about what we do on page 4 and think about how you might be able to help by being on our board yourself.

Ron Cappelletti, president

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The Italian Cultural Society presents

a lecture by physics Nobelist

William D. Phillips, NIST

Time, Einstein and the coolest stuff in the universe

At the beginning of the 20th century Einstein changed the way we think about Time. At the beginning of the 21st century Einstein's thinking is shaping one of the key scientific and technological wonders of contemporary life: atomic clocks, the best timekeepers ever made. Such super-accurate clocks are essential to industry, commerce, and science; they are the heart of the Global Positioning System (GPS), which guides cars, airplanes, and hikers to their destinations. Today, atomic clocks are still being improved, using atoms cooled to incredibly low temperatures. Atomic gases reach temperatures less than a billionth of a degree above Absolute Zero.

A lively, multimedia presentation, including experimental demonstrations and down-to-earth explanations about some of today's most exciting science.

Super-cold atoms are at the heart of Primary Clocks accurate to better than a second in 100 million years. Such atoms also use, and allow tests of, some of Einstein's strangest predictions.

Sunday, March 18, 3 pm

Friendship Heights Village Center
4433 South Park Avenue
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
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:

Catherine M. Alfano, Oriana Casadei, Joseph Dino Horing
Michael Hannan, Bruno and Joanne Fusco

Benvenuti!
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE ITALIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY

Many of our members, particularly new members, may be unfamiliar with the full scope of what ICS and the Italian Language Program do. In this and subsequent issues of Poche Parole we will outline and describe the scope of these programs and activities. This issue gives a brief overview below and subsequent issues will describe them in detail.

Overview

There are two main areas of programs and activities: the Italian Language Program, and the Social and Cultural Activities.

The Italian Language Program has the following components:

1) The adult education program for teaching the Italian language at several levels of competence. Many of the members of ICS take these courses.

2) The program for teaching the Italian language to children of Italian residents in the Washington area from kindergarten thru Liceo (high school) with the standard curriculum used in Italy.

3) The program to assist students to prepare for taking the Italian advance placement exams given by the US College Board.

4) The program, subsidized by the Italian government, to provide seed money to pay for hiring teachers to teach Italian in local public and private schools at all levels and to train Italian speaking teachers to help them receive US certification in their educational jurisdictions.

The Social and Cultural Activities of the ICS include:

1) The monthly social meetings, usually on the third Sunday, usually involving a guest speaker or some type of performance involving Italian themes.

2) The Movie of the Month, In Italian with English subtitles, shown just before most of the monthly socials.

3) An hour of Italian conversation and instruction also just before most of the monthly socials.


5) Carnevale – Traditional Venetian mardi gras party sometimes with the collaboration of other Italian organizations.

6) Participation in the planning management operation and design of the cultural components of this annual street festival, held in downtown Washington near the Holy Rosary Church.

9) Conduct of special programs such as designing and operating a workshop for teachers of Italian under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

10) Participation with other organizations and the Italian embassy in sponsorship of occasional performances and lectures related to Italian culture.

11) The awarding of scholarships for academic performance and artistic or artisan skills related to Italian language or culture.
MOVIE OF THE MONTH

MASTER OF COMMEDIA ALL’ ITALIANA GETS SERIOUS

by Joe Onofrietti, hospitality chair

Few Italian directors have brought as many smiles to faces as Luigi Comencini. Over the years, hit movies like Pane, Amore e Fantasia (1953), Pane, Amore e Gelosia (1954) and Tutti a Casa (1960) earned him the moniker “Master of Commedia all’Italiana.” Comencini was unique among directors for using his craft to do RAI public broadcast television stating “Chaplin as director was usually defined as a craftsman and that’s good company.” However, he unveiled a serious side in a lesser known work entitled Delitto D’Amore (1974). Unbeknownst to Comencini, this was to be the last movie he would make before developing Parkinson’s Disease which slowly paralyzed and ultimately claimed his life in 2007. Fans of Luigi Comencini will be glad to know his daughters Cristina and Francesca are both active film directors today.

The Italian Cultural Society film of the month is Delitto D’Amore. The late Luigi Comencini of Salò, Lombardia, wrote and directed this social/political commentary on the clash between northern versus southern Italian culture and the effects that modern industrialization has on plant workers and the environment.

Carmela Santoro (Stefania Sandrelli) and her Sicilian family immigrate to Lombardia seeking wealth, but must live in squalid conditions. Nullo Branzi (Giuliano Gemma) is a vespa driving local who describes the bland Milan high rise condo of his youth as “the bee hive.” The two fall in love, but can this relationship survive all the turmoil? Delitto D’Amore was nominated for best picture at the 1974 Cannes Film Festival. In Italian with English subtitles.

La Italian Cultural Society presenta il film del mese Delitto D’Amore. Il regista Luigi Comencini di Salò, Lombardia scrisse e diresse questo commentario politico/sociale sulla differenza culturale fra il nord e il sud d’Italia e l’effetto che l’industrializzazione moderna aveva sugli operai e l’ambiente.

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

LOCAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

National Gallery of Art: guided tours of the Italian renaissance collection, West Building, main floor rotunda Mon.-Sat. 2:30, Sun. 1:30

Italian Language guided tours: West Building, March 13 & 17, 12:00 PM and East Building, March 13 & 17, 2 PM. Call 202-842-6247 for RSVP

“Antico: the Golded Age of Renaissance Bronzes”, East Building, ground floor, thru April 8.

“The Baroque Genius of Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione”, paintings Prints and drawings, Ground Floor, West Building, thru July 8.

More details on these events and exhibits can be found on the National Gallery website www.nga.gov .

Holy Rosary Church: Annual wine tasting sponsored by the Washington Winemakers. Sunday, March 18, 1:15 – 5:00 in Casa Italiana $10 (Seniors, $5) www.washingtonwinemakers.org

Georgetown University: Thomas Pandolfi, Pianist, with an all Liszt program March 23, 1:15 PM,McNear Hall, new North Building, Main Campus
After Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) was the greatest opera composer in the Italian style, but, as far as the box office is concerned, he is probably the most popular opera composer ever. Puccini was born in Lucca, Tuscany, in a family of musicians, which counting him, numbered five generations all the way back to the early 18th century. Their musical talents, however, while respectable were not in composing: His ancestors had held the post of organist and choirmaster at a local church and taught music at a local school. When young Giacomo’s father died, the six years old boy was expected to continue musical training and take up his father’s post, but an uncle who tried to teach him music, declared that he was “a backward Puccini” and did not have the discipline or patience to learn. Nevertheless, young Puccini took music lessons, and while somewhat disorganized, lazy, or indifferent, became an organist.

He could have stayed in Lucca, carrying on the family tradition, but for an incident. When he was 17, curious about opera, he walked to Pisa (a 26 mile round trip) to see a performance of Verdi’s Aida, and then, as he said, he knew what he wanted to do with his life. With the financial assistance from a relative and a scholarship from the Queen of Italy, he went to Milan to study at the conservatory and was trained by Amilcare Ponchielli (1834-1886) and Antonio Bazzini (1818-1897), who was also the teacher of composers Umberto Mascagni (1863-1945) and Alfredo Catalani (1854-93), and the author of the opera Turandot, a subject rewritten anew by Puccini in the 1920s. Puccini’s graduation composition was a symphonic caprice for orchestra, which was well received and published.

His first opera, Le Villi, which he submitted to the Sonzogno competition, was not even mentioned by the jury, partly because it was hard to read Puccini’s handwritten score, and the jury, probably frustrated, gave up. However, Arrigo Boito (1842-1918), the composer of the Wagnerian-style opera Mefistofele, and Verdi’s poet for Simon Boccanegra, Othello and Falstaff, helped him in raising funds and Le Villi was performed, to a great success, in May 1884. Ricordi then bought the rights, and La Scala put the opera on the following season. Ricordi also put Puccini on a retainer and commissioned another opera, which turned out to be a total failure when first performed in 1889.

Dopo Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini (1859-1924) fu il più grande compositore di opere nello stile italiano, ma probabilmente, tra i compositori, e’ quello che ebbe il più grande successo di cassa. Puccini nacque a Lucca, in Toscana, in una famiglia che dall’inizio del diciottesimo secolo contava, compresa la sua, cinque generazioni di musicisti. Il loro talento musicale, pur essendo valido, non stava nella composizione. I suoi antenati furono organisti e maestri di cappella in una chiesa locale ed insegnarono musica in una scuola vicina. Quando morì il padre del giovane Giacomo, si penso’ che il ragazzo che aveva sei anni avrebbe continuato l’educazione musicale e che avrebbe preso il posto del padre, ma uno che tento’ di insegnargli la musica dichiaro’ che era “un Puccini ottuso” e che non aveva ne’ la disciplina ne’ la pazienza per imparare. Cio’ nonostante, il giovane Puccini studio’ musica e, pur essendo un po’ disorganizzato, pigro o indifferente, divenne organista.

Avrebbe potuto rimanere a Lucca seguendo la tradizione di famiglia, se non fosse stato per un avvenimento: quando aveva 17 anni, interessato a conoscere il mondo dell’opera, ando’ a piedi a Pisa (42 km tra andata e ritorno) per assistere ad una rappresentazione dell’Aida di Verdi e, come poi disse, in quel momento scopri’ cosa voleva fare della sua vita. Con il sussidio di un parente ed una borsa di studio della regina d’ Italia, ando’ a Milano a studiare presso il conservatorio. Li’ tra i suoi insegnanti c’erano Amilcare Ponchielli (1834-1886) e Antonio Bazzini (1818-1897), che era anche il maestro dei compositori Umberto Mascagni (1863-1945) e Alfredo Catalani (1854-93), e l’ autore di una Turandot, un soggetto ripreso da Puccini negli anni del 1920. La composizione di laurea di Puccini era un capriccio sinfonico per orchestra, che fu bene accolto e venne anche pubblicato.


Malgrado il generoso onorario di Ricordi, questi erano tempi difficili per Puccini, che spendeva sempre grandi somme per vestiti, cose personali e donne. Risparmiava sul cibo mangiando fagioli, accumulo’ un grosso debito con un
Despite the generous retainer from Ricordi, these were hard times for Puccini, always a big spender on clothes, personal items, and women. He skimped on food, eating beans, ran up a large tab at a restaurant (named “Aida”) and once pawned his coat to take a girlfriend out for a night on the town.

In late 1884 Puccini fell in love with Elvira Bonturi Gemignani, a 24-year-old mother of two children, who was the wife of a Lucca grocer who had been a schoolmate of Puccini. Madly in love, Gemignani abandoned her husband and the smaller child, and moved to Milan with Puccini, taking along her older daughter, Fosca. This adulterous relationship continued until Elvira’s husband died in 1903 and Puccini married her in January 1904. In 1886, while living together out of wedlock the couple had had a male child, Antonio.

In the first decade of their relationship, the Puccini-Gemignani match was once of intense passionate love, but by the 1890s the relationship soured for a number of reasons. Puccini traveled a lot on musical business, seldom taking Elvira along, engaged in casual affairs frequently, and she developed a pathological jealousy and became contemptuous of his artistry, which took him away from her.

Puccini was extremely attractive to the opposite sex: he was a dapper dresser, fastidious in his personal care with hair and moustache cleanly trimmed, heavy-lidded eyes and a sensual face; thus he attracted many women and enjoyed engaging in casual relationships. In fact, as he said himself, hunting, playing cards, and chasing women, were his foremost pleasures. A heartthrob, he had many lovers: Corinne, a young law student, soprano Lina Cavalieri, one of the first Tosca, Blanke Ledvai, an Hungarian conductor’s sister, Rose Ader, another soprano, and German Baroness Josephine von Stanger.

Nevertheless, he never once considered leaving Elvira, although once, beginning in October 1905 in London, he had an intense relationship with Sybil Seligman, the wife of a Lucca grocer who had been a schoolmate of Puccini’s. In 1908, Elvira’s raging jealousy reached insanity levels and she accused a sixteen-year-old servant, Doria Manfredi, of having an affair with her husband. Both accused parties denied it, but Elvira fired Doria and for months hounded her in the village, calling her a slut and slandering her publicly. Finally the distraught girl committed suicide and the Puccini, to avoid angry villagers, left Torre Del Lago temporarily, he for Rome, she for Milan.

When an autopsy showed that Doria had been a virgin and thus could not have been Giacomo’s lover, her family sued Elvira Puccini for defamation and she was found guilty at a trial in Pisa and was sentenced to five months imprisonment. However, she did not serve any time since before an appeal could be heard, Giacomo Puccini settled out of court with the Manfredi family and the case became moot. After a few months, the Puccinis resumed living together and stayed together until he died.

Elvira Gemignani

Nella prima decade della loro relazione, l’unione Puccini-Gemignani fu di un’amore intenso ed ardente, ma negli anni del 1890 la relazione si inaccerbi’ per vari ragioni. Puccini viaggiava molto per la sua musica, raramente accompagnato da Elvira, e si imbarcava frequentemente in avventure casuali. Elvira diventò’ patologicamente gelosa e cominciò’ a disprezzare la sua arte che lo allontanava da lei.

Puccini era estremamente attraente all’altro sesso: si vestiva con eleganza ed aveva grande cura della sua persona, con capelli e baffi sempre perfettamente tagliati, occhi seducenti e un viso sensuale; con questo aspetto riusciva ad attrarre le donne e si lasciava trasportare in relazioni effimeri. Infatti, come diceva lui, andare a caccia, giocare a carte e sedurre le donne erano i suoi piaceri preferiti. Da rubacuori quale era, aveva avuto molte amanti: Corinne, giovane studentessa di legge, Lina Cavalieri, soprano, una delle prime Tosca, Blanke Ledvai, sorella di un direttore d’orchestra ungherese, Rose Ader, un altro soprano, e la baronessa tedesca Josephine von Stanger.

Tuttavia, non penso’ mai di lasciare Elvira, sebbene una volta, a Londra, a partire dall’ottobre del 1905 ebbe una relazione intensa con Sybil Seligman, una donna sposata, il cui figlio più’ tardi scrisse una delle biografie di Puccini. Sebbene la relazione ebbe termine, i due rimasero amici per tutta la vita.

All’inizio del XX secolo Puccini era non solo famoso ma anche ricco ed aveva costruito una villa sulle rive di un lago a Torre del Lago, una piccola città’ vicino a Lucca. Qui nel 1908 la crescente gelosia di Elvira raggiunse livelli di pazzia e lei accusò’ una domestica sedicenne, Doria Manfredi, di avere una tresca con il marito. Ambedue gli accusati negarono ma Elvira licenziò’ Doria e per mesi la perseguì’ nel villaggio chiamandola prostituta e calunniandola davanti a tutti. Infine la ragazza sconvolto si suicidò’ e, per evitare l’ira dei cittadini, i Puccini lasciarono Torre del Lago, lui per Roma, lei per Milano.

Quando dall’autopsia risultò’ che Doria era vergine e non poteva essere stata l’amante di Giacomo, la famiglia intestò’ causa a Elvira Puccini per diffamazione. Al processo condotto a Pisa Elvira fu condannata a cinque mesi di prigione comunque lei non andò’ mai in carcere perché’
Musically, Puccini’s big break came in 1893 with the opera *Manon Lescaut*, a drama based on the French novel of Abbé Antoine Prevost (1697-1763), which had previously been set to music by French composer Jules Massenet in 1884. Puccini was hailed in the press as “a genius,” “a master of his art,” and his opera a “song of our paganism, of our artistic sensualism.”

Next, in February 1886, *La Boheme*, under the direction of Arturo Toscanini was produced in Turin. Puccini had not only “borrowed” the idea for the opera on bohemian life in Paris from Leoncavallo, but had also beaten him by producing a popular work first. Not an instant success, either with the public or critics, *La Boheme* became a hit later in a Palermo production.

*(In the next issue, Madame Butterfly, La Fanciulla del West, relations with Toscanini, voyage to America)*

Luciano Mangiafico is a retired US diplomat. Among his many positions he was Consul General in Palermo and Consul in Milan.
ICS membership application

Name ___________________________________ Occupation ___________________________
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Address change □ New member □ Renewal □
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Mail application to:
c/o ICS Treasurer
4827 Rugby Avenue
Suite #301
Bethesda, MD 20814

Please make check payable to:
The Italian Cultural Society

Type of membership
□ Single $35.00  □ Family $50.00
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Please mark the group you are interested in

meeting location

friendship heights village center
4433 South Park Ave., Chevy Chase, MD 20815

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(202) 333-CIAO
www.ItalianCulturalSociety.org

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