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, April 15: Violin/Viola duets, a concert by Eva and Phillippe Cappelletti-Chao (See page 9)
Sunday, May 20: Special Program on Italian Immigration, Then and Now

Movie of the Month: “La Ragazza del Lago” (See page 6)
Italian Lessons and Conversation on April 15 at 2:00 PM

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

An exciting...even explosive...presentation by NIST physics Nobelist William D. Phillips at the March 18 meeting of the ICS was attended by approximately 120 persons. Bill Phillips showed himself to be a consummate showman as well as an expert in describing the esoteric world of atoms trapped in a magnetic bottle and cooled to just billionths of a degree above absolute zero..."the coolest stuff in the universe". He began his presentation with a Google-maps trip to Ripacandida in the province of Potenza, where his mother was born, showing the satellite view of the street where his uncle lived and some pictures of himself and family with Italian relatives he visited there a few years ago. A very engaged audience, including rapt children, listened attentively to his description of the atomic clocks based on very cold atoms that is at the heart of many of today’s carefully timed communications and transactions, including the GPS which provided him with instructions on driving to the Friendship Heights Village Center. We were honored to make him a life-long member of the ICS and, courtesy of Luigi De Luca, to present him with a translation of the Odes by the Roman lyric poet, Horace, who was born in the region of Lucania (Basilicata) where Ripacandida is located.

In addition to board elections, our April meeting will feature a violin/viola concert by the Cappelletti-Chao Duo (see p. 9). Violinist Eva Cappelletti-Chao is a regular concertmaster for performances of the Washington Concert Opera and substitutes for the National Symphony Orchestra and the Washington National Opera of which her husband, Philippe Chao, is a violist and also a GMU music faculty member. As a Duo, they play regularly in selected venues around the Washington area. Their concert and presentation will illustrate some of the ways in which Italian music has influenced the entire European classical music tradition.

The ILP of the ICS continues its activities, recently updating a memorandum of understanding with the MD State Department of Education to implement the furthering of Italian language instruction in this area in cooperation with the Education office of the Embassy of Italy.

Ron Cappelletti, president

Rapt Attention from a Future Scientist

TABLE OF CONTENTS
2. Welcome to new ICS members
2. Election of ICS Directors at April 15 Meeting
2. April 15 program: The Cappelletti-Chao Duo
3. Puccini: Opera Comes to Main Street (Part 2)
6. Movie of the Month “La Ragazza del Lago”
7. Who Is Christopher Columbus?
10. Pictures from the March meeting
11. Local Events of Interest
11. Italy and Maryland Officials Sign Agreement
11. Scholarship Applications Due May 18
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:

William Watson, Elise Marie Hurtzig, Roland Brown

Benvenuti!

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ELECTION OF DIRECTORS OF THE ITALIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY

As noted in the March issue of Poche Parole our meeting on April 15 will include the election of directors for the year starting this June. Your current board of directors is in the process of nominating a slate of candidates, to include three current directors with expiring terms who wish to be renominated as well as up to four new directors to replace the vacancies resulting from the resignations of Monica Lapenta and Olga Mancuso, the death of Cesarina Horing, and the resignation of Luigi De Luca, who has recently announced his intention to resign in June.

Prior to the April 15 meeting the board will announce the slate of nominees and communicate to the membership by email their names, backgrounds, and any statements they wish to make in support of their election. As explained in the March issue, any other member in good standing may choose to run. Please make it a point to attend this meeting in order to assure maximum representation among our members.

APRIL 15 PROGRAM

THE CAPPELLETTI-CHAO DUO

Violinist Eva Cappelletti-Chao and violist Phillippe Chao have been sharing their collaborative music-making with appreciative audiences around the US for well over a decade.

The Cappelletti-Chao Duo performs in diverse venues throughout the mid-Atlantic region as well as in music festivals around the country. In roles ranging from concerto soloists and recitalists to chamber music coaches, master class teachers and private instructors, they have participated in the Grand Teton Music Festival, the Eastern Music Festival and the American festival for the Arts. When not performing together they each enjoy thriving careers performing with ensembles at the Kennedy Center and teaching school-age and university students as well as family life with their two children in Takoma Park.

Phillippe is a Professor of Viola at George Mason University and has been a coach for the DC Youth Orchestra program and a guest artist-teacher for the State Department’s Artist Exchange Program and numerous other performance and teaching venues. He has a BA from the University of Minnesota and a Master of Music degree from the University of Southern California. Eva performs throughout the Washington DC area as Concertmaster with the Washington Concert Opera, City Choir of Washington, choral Arts Society of Washington and for the National Cathedral. She is a summa cum laude graduate of Ohio University (in Psychology and Music) and has an MFA in Music from Carnegie Mellon University.
Puccini's third major hit was Tosca, first performed in Rome in January 1900. Ever since Puccini had seen the 
Victorian Sardou (1831-1908) Tosca play acted in Paris by Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923), he had longed to acquire the rights to set it to music. However, Alberto Franchetti (1860-1942), another Italian composer had already secured such rights, and Puccini and his publisher Ricordi had to cajole Franchetti to relinquish them. When they did so, Puccini traveled to Paris and convinced Sardou to sign a new contract with him. Sardou, delighted at Puccini's musical talents, complied.

Tosca is the story of a beautiful singer who is in love with a painter patriot set in 1800 in a Rome occupied by the Napoleonic French. When her boyfriend Mario is arrested and condemned to be shot, Tosca works a deal with Scarpia, the chief of police, who promises to spare the boyfriend’s life by having him shot with blanks, if she accedes to his sexual advances. Once the order to spare Mario’s life is given, Tosca stabs Scarpia to death and rushes to the jail to get the “body” of her boyfriend. But Scarpia has fooled her, ordering that Mario be shot dead. Tosca, when she finds out that the bullets were not blanks, jumps to her death from the parapet of Rome’s Castel Sant’Angelo, the jail in the play. Tosca was a success because of luscious music, great arias, and its dramatic, shocking impact.

Madame Butterfly was first performed to a derisive, if not hostile, reception at La Scala in February 1904. The plot, based on a story by U.S. writer John Long and U.S. playwright David Belasco (1853-1931), is about the love of a Japanese geisha for a callous American naval lieutenant and her suicide when, at long last, he returns to Japan with an American wife. Puccini, with Toscanini’s support, revised the structure of the opera from two long ones to three acts and eliminated some arias. A month later, the revised opera became a success.

While composing this opera, in February 1903 Puccini nearly died in an automobile accident. His driver missed a curve on the road, the car overturned, and Puccini was pinned under it, suffering multiple injuries; nevertheless, he returned to composing as soon as he was physically able to do so. Despite the initial failure of Madame Butterfly, Puccini believed it to be his greatest work to date.

As we have seen, Toscanini’s support was also of help and comfort to him, although the two strong personalities did not always get along. During a period of intense disagreement, Puccini discovered, to his chagrin, that Toscanini’s name had not been dropped from his Christmas gift list of “panettoni” (“Italian sweet ‘Xmas bread”). He then telegraphed Toscanini, “Panettone sent by mistake – Puccini,” and received the telegraphed reply, “Panettone eaten by mistake – Toscanini.”

Il terzo maggior successo di Puccini fu La Tosca che ebbe la prima rappresentazione a Roma nel 1900. Quando Puccini vide la Tosca di Victorien Sardou (1831-1908) recitata da Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923), volle acquistarle i diritti per metterla in musica. Purtroppo un altro compositore italiano, Alberto Franchetti (1860-1942) ne aveva già acquistato i diritti e Puccini ed il suo editore Ricordi lo allertarono a rinunciare. Riusciti nel loro intento, Puccini andò a Parigi e convinse Sardou a firmare un nuovo contratto con lui. Sardou, consapevole del talento musicale di Puccini, vi acconsentì.

Ambientata nella Roma del 1800 occupata dai francesi di Napoleone, Tosca è la storia di una bellissima cantante innamorata di un pittore patriota. Quando il suo innamorato Mario è arrestato e condannato alla fusilazione, Tosca tratta con Scarpia, il capo della polizia, la vita dell’innamorato venisse risparmiata usando proiettili a salve se lei si concedeva alle sue brame. Non appena viene dato l’ordine di risparmiare la vita a Mario, Tosca pugnala Scarpia e corre alla prigione per avere il “corpo” dell’innamorato. Ma Scarpia l’aveva ingannata ordinando invece che Mario venisse in realtà ucciso. Tosca, quando scopre che i proiettili non erano a salve, si getta dal Castello Sant’Angelo di Roma, la prigione della storia. Tosca fu un successo per la sua musica sensuale, le bellissime arie, e la sua storia drammatica e travolgente.

Nel prossimo numero, Madame Butterfly, La fanciulla del West, i rapporti con Toscanini, il viaggio in America.

La prima rappresentazione della Madame Butterfly avvenne alla Scala nel febbraio 1904 e fu accolta dal pubblico con scetticismo se non addirittura con ostilità. L’intreccio, basato su una storia dello scrittore e commediografo americano David Belasco (1853-1931), narra dell’amore tra una geisha giapponese ed un insensibile sottotenente della marina americana, e del dei lui suicidio quando lui, dopo una lunga assenza, ritorna in Giappone con la moglie americana. Puccini, con l’aiuto di Toscanini, modificò la struttura dell’opera portandola da 2 lunghi atti a tre atti ed eliminò alcune arie. Un mese dopo l’opera così modificata divenne un successo.

Nel febbraio 1893, mentre componeva quest’opera, Puccini quasi perse la vita in un incidente stradale. L’autista perdeva il controllo della macchina in una curva, l’auto si rovesciò e Puccini vi rimase incastrato sotto riportando gravi ferite. Citononostante riprese a comporre non appena gli fu possibile. Malgrado il fiasco iniziale, Puccini credeva allora che la Madame Butterfly fosse la sua opera migliore.

Come si è visto, anche il sostegno di Toscanini fu di aiuto e consolazione per Puccini sebbene le due forti personalità non andassero sempre d’accordo. Durante un periodo di intensi contrasti, Puccini scopriì con disappunto che il nome di Toscanini non era stato depennato dalla lista natalizia dei “panettoni regalati”. Telegrafò allora a Toscanini “Panettone inviato per errore – Puccini” e ricevette per telegrafo la risposta: “Panettone mangiato per errore – Toscanini”.

GIACOMO PUCCINI: OPERA COMES TO MAIN STREET
by Luciano Mangiafico (part two of two)

GIACOMO PUCCINI: L’ OPERA DIVENTA POPOLARE
di Luciano Mangiafico (seconda di due parti)
tradotto da Paolo Vidoli
In December 1906, Puccini came to New York to supervise the production of the first performance of Madame Butterfly and Manon Lescaut, and expressed the wish to write an opera with an American background. He found his subject when he saw a play by David Belasco, The Girl of the Golden West. The play was based on a short story by Bret Harte (1836-1902). Belasco was a famous playwright known as the “Bishop of Broadway” since he had the affection of dressing in black, making him look like a priest; his work was already familiar to Puccini since he was also the author of the play on which Madame Butterfly was based.

During his time in New York, Puccini stayed at the Astor Hotel and had as boon companions tenor Enrico Caruso and baritone Antonio Scotti. His wife Elvira had accompanied him on the trip and she watched him like a hawk as Puccini roving eye had the tendency to continue to flirt with pretty girls. He also attended the theater and vaudeville shows, gathering musical ideas for planned project using ragtime music and black spirituals.

When Belasco agreed to write the libretto for the new opera, Puccini was hooked and the Met commissioned him to write The Girl of the Golden West. The opera was ready in December 1910 and he returned to New York to attend its world première. The first performance, for which Puccini was paid the princely sum of $22,800, was directed by Arturo Toscanini and sung by Enrico Caruso, soprano Emmy Destin, and baritone Pasquale Amato. It was a success, with cowboys singing in Italian, and music deriving from ragtime, Zuni Indian melodies, and even young George M. Cohan (1878-1942) song Belle of the Barber’s Ball. The opera’s advanced, modern orchestration had also touches of the techniques of Claude Debussy and Richard Strauss, and a conversational style of sung dialogue. These features have not placed it frequently on the world opera stage, apart from Italy and the US.

Before returning to Italy, Puccini had fallen in love with a speedy, sleek motorboat, which he envisioned himself using in the Lake of Massaciuccoli in Torre del Lago, and in the nearby Trrhenian Sea at Viareggio. Alas, the cost was $3,000 and he was unwilling to pay that much out of his earnings. Fate however came to his rescue when at a reception a New York business magnate told him he would pay anything to have the pages of the score of the Musette Waltz from La Bohème in the composer’s handwriting. Puccini is said to have replied, “Anything? $3,000?” and getting a positive reply that night penned a copy of the waltz’s music, got the money, purchased the motorboat, and arranged to have it shipped home.

During the following decade, Puccini composed La Rondine (“The Swallow”-1917), and three one-act operas intended to be played together Il Tabarro, Suor Angelica, and Gianni Schicchi (The Overcoat, Sister Angelica, and Gianni Schicchi). One of these, Gianni Schicchi, first produced in New York in December 1918, is a scintillating comedy almost equal to Rossini and Verdi best. It is based on a true event, which took place in Florence in 1293 and was recounted by Dante in Canto XXX of his Inferno in The Divine Comedy.

Puccini’s last opera was Turandot, based on a story of Venetian playwright Count Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806) about a Chinese princess who has all those aspiring for her hand.
killed, at least until she falls in love.

When Puccini died of throat cancer (due to heavy smoking) and a heart attack in Brussels in 1924 the opera was still unfinished and composer Franco Alfano (1876-1954) finished the last ten minutes of the score from Puccini’s Toscanini notes. However when Turandot was first performed at La Scala on April 25, 1926, Maestro Arturo Toscanini, when he reached the end of the Puccini’s score, put down the baton, and, turning toward the audience said, “Here the maestro puts down his pen,” and ended the performance.

Puccini's music, while equally successful as that of Verdi, was very different from it. While Verdi (and Wagner), painted music on large canvases and characters had nobility, dying not only for love but frequently for great causes (the fatherland, freedom, honor, and so on.), Puccini’s dramas were mostly populated by ordinary human beings subject to the common emotions and stresses we all undergo. In this, he was a “verist” but he was always experimenting, borrowing, adapting, and exhibiting in his lyrical orchestral writing, the equivalent luscious, suggestive, ripe coloring that the French impressionist painters used in their canvasses.

Frequently accused of pandering to popular emotions and tastes, Puccini had many enemies, including other composers. One prominent critic accused him of “cynical commercialism” and predicted that “in a few decades, hardly anything will be remembered of Puccini’s works.”

How wrong he was! One hundred years later, Puccini is still the composer whose operas form the bread and butter of any opera house bill.

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

Suor Angelica e Gianni Schicchi. Una di queste, Gianni Schicchi, la cui prima fu rappresentata a New York nel 1918, e’ una commedia brillante paragonabile alle migliori opere di Verdi e Rossini. E’ basata su un fatto realmente accaduto a Firenze nel 1293 raccontato da Dante ne La Divina Commedia, nel XXX canto dell’Inferno.

L’ultima opera di Puccini fu Turandot, ispirata ad un racconto del commediografo veneziano conte Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806) che tratta di una principessa cinese che fa giustiziare tutti gli aspiranti alla sua mano finché’ non s’innamora di un pretendente.

L’opera non era ancora finita quando Puccini morì a Bruxelles nel 1924 a causa di un cancro alla gola (Puccini era un grande fumatore) e di un infarto e il compositore Franco Alfano (1876-1954) completò gli ultimi 10 minuti della partitura basandosi sulle annotazioni lasciate da Puccini. Tuttavia, alla prima di Turandot alla Scala il 25 aprile 1926, il maestro Arturo Toscanini, arrivato alla fine della partitura di Puccini, posò la bacchetta e, giratosi verso il pubblico, disse: “Qui il maestro mette giù la penna” e terminò l’esecuzione.

La musica di Puccini, sebbene avesse altrettanto successo di quella di Verdi, ne era molto diversa. Mentre Verdi e Wagner dipingevano con la musica in grandi quadri ed i personaggi avevano un carattere di nobiltà, morivano non solo per amore ma anche per grandi cause (patria, libertà, onore, etc.), i drammatici di Puccini erano per lo più drammatici di gente comune, soggetta a normali emozioni ed a pressioni che noi tutti subiamo. Da questo punto di vista Puccini era un verista ma sperimentava sempre prendendo a prestito, adattando e mostrando nelle sue composizioni orchestrali l’equivalente dei colori lussureggianti, suggestivi, pieni che i pittori impressionisti francesi usavano nelle loro tele. Accusato frequentemente di compiacersi delle emozioni e dei gusti popolari, Puccini ebbe moltissimi nemici, tra i quali altri compositori. Un critico molto noto lo accusò di “commercialismo cinico” e predisse che “tra qualche decina di anni praticamente nulla resterà dei lavori di Puccini.” Come si era sbagliato! Cento anni dopo Puccini e’ ancora il compositore le cui opere sono il punto forte di qualunque programma lirico.

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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

MOVIE OF THE MONTH
The Italian Cultural Society presents La Ragazza del Lago (The Girl by the Lake) as our April movie of the month. Roman screenwriter Andrea Molaioli makes his directorial debut with this thrilling mystery based on the 2002 Karin Fossom novel turned Norwegian mini series Don’t Look Back. A female athlete is found murdered in an Alpine town where everyone knows each other. Commissario Giovanni Sanzio (Toni Servillo), his assistant Alfredo (Nelo Mascia) and detective Siboldi (Fausto Maria Sciarappa) sift through the accusations, dark secrets and deceit to uncover the shocking truth. Molaioli uses a fine supporting cast of veteran actors including Valeria Golino (Respiro), Fabrizio Gifuni (The Best of Youth) and Omero Antonutti (Padre Padrone) for the Friuli townspeople. La Ragazza del Lago won the 2007 Venice Film Festival Best Actor Award (Toni Servillo), the 2007 Nastro d’Argento for best new director (Andrea Molaioli) and swept the David Donatello Awards. In Italian with English subtitles.

FILM DEL MESE
La Italian Cultural Society presenta il film del mese, La Ragazza del Lago. Andrea Molaioli fa il suo debutto registico con questa storia misteriosa basata sul romanzo del 2002 della scrittrice norvegese Karin Fossom che è stato fatto in una mini-serie norvegese Don’t Look Back (non guardare indietro). Un’atleta femminile è stata trovata morta in un piccolo villaggio alpino, dove tutti si conoscono. Il commissario Giovanni Sanzio (Toni Servillo), il suo assistente Alfredo (Nelo Mascia) e l’investigatore Siboldi (Fausto Maria Sciarappa) esaminano le accuse, i segreti oscuri, e l’inganno per scoprire l’orribile verità. Molaioli usa un bel complesso di attori veterani, fra i quali Valeria Golino (Respiro), Fabrizio Gifuni (La Meglio Gioventu’) e Omero Antonutti (Padre Padrone) per i paesani friulani. La Ragazza del Lago ha vinto il premio per il miglior attore (Toni Servillo) del Festival del Film di Venezia del 2007, il Nastro d’Argento per il miglior regista (Andrea Molaioli) e tutti i premi Davide Donatello. In italiano con sottotitoli in inglese.

Joe Onofrietti
CHI È' CRISTOFORO COLOMBO?
dl Cathy Delahay

Chi è Cristoforo Colombo? Negli Stati Uniti, ha sempre rappresentato la figura che vogliamo che sia. Nel XIX secolo avevamo bisogno di costruire eroi le cui azioni potessero essere viste dalla società americana come la rappresentazione del comportamento ideale. Nel XXI secolo abbiamo bisogno di distruggere eroi le cui azioni possano essere viste dalla società americana come la rappresentazione del comportamento spregevole. Colombo era una tela perfetta su cui dipingere una figura eroica. Aveva vissuto secoli fa, e il pubblico sapeva poco di lui eccetto per la sua scoperta di un mondo nuovo. Un aventuriero, coraggioso e audace, Colombo era perfetto per il piedestallo. Ma com'era la sua vita mentre i suoi piedi erano ancora a terra?

Cristoforo Colombo è nato nel 1451 a Genova, figlio di un tessitore. Ha sempre voluto essere un marinaio, e ha iniziato a navigare all'età di 14 anni. Nel 1480, in Portogallo, ha avuto un figlio (Diego) con sua moglie Felipa Perestrello. A quel tempo Colombo cercava qualcuno per finanziare il suo piano per trovare una rotta occidentale verso l'Asia. Portogallo, Genova e Venezia tutti hanno detto di no. Quando sua moglie è morta ha portato suo figlio con se in Spagna nel 1486 per vendere la sua idea ai monarchi spagnoli. Per questo processo ci sono voluti sei anni e, nel frattempo, Colombo ha generato un secondo figlio (Fernando) fuori dal matrimonio con Beatriz Enriquez de Arana. Infine, nel 1492, Colombo ha iniziato il suo primo viaggio per trovare una via più breve per l'Asia.

Colombo è arrivato a un'isola delle Bahamas il 12 ottobre...e il resto è storia, per il meglio o per il peggio. Colombo ha esplorato Cuba, Hispaniola ed altre isole dei Caraibi durante il primo ed il secondo viaggio. Al suo terzo viaggio Colombo ha raggiunto il continente americano in quella terra che oggi è il Venezuela. Durante questi viaggi Colombo ha lottato contro le avversità atmosferiche, così come contro i coloni spagnoli e gli indigeni. Al suo quarto (e ultimo) viaggio per gli spagnoli, la nave di Colombo è stata distrutta sulla costa di Cuba. Gli indigeni hanno rifiutato di dare da mangiare agli spagnoli; Colombo ha detto che li avrebbe puniti, e avrebbe tolto loro la luna. Aveva già consultato il suo almanacco e sapeva che ci sarebbe stato un eclisse lunare il 29 febbraio del 1504. Avevano un sacco da mangiare dopo quel fatto.

Questo era dunque un uomo che ha trionfato in circostanze difficili. Era audace, avventuroso ed innovativo. Cristoforo Colombo era un individuo senza paura di affrontare l'ignoto. Come esploratore era un uomo a suo agio in situazioni nuove, un uomo che amava il progresso. Questi erano i valori cari alla società americana nel XIX secolo e Colombo è stato scelto come il simbolo nazionale. Columbia” (un nome derivato da quello di Cristoforo Colombo) è diventata la personificazione femminile degli Stati Uniti, come la figura di Britannia in Inghilterra, la figura di Marianna in Francia e la figura di Turrita in Italia. Alcuni esempi sono: Columbia Records, Columbia Pictures, Columbia Broadcasting System e Space Shuttle Columbia. Nel 1784 il King's College di New York ha cambiato il suo nome in Columbia. La Carolina del Sud ha nominato la sua capitale Columbia nel 1786, e...
almeno 20 altre città hanno pure preso questo nome. Nel 1791 la nuova capitale degli Stati Uniti, Washington, ha incluso le parole “District of Columbia” nel suo nome.


L’ideale americano di innovazione e di superamento delle avversità è celebrato in rappresentazioni artistiche di Cristoforo Colombo ovunque negli Stati Uniti. La capitale della nostra nazione ha molti bellissimi esempi, solo per citarne alcuni: tre dipinti di Colombo di Constantino Brumidi nel Campodoglio; le porte di bronzo che ricordano Colombo, create da Randolph Rogers per la Rotunda del Campodoglio; ed il Christopher Columbus Memorial Fountain in Union Station Plaza progettata da Daniel Burnham. In aggiunta alla celebrazione artistica di Cristoforo Colombo, Franklin Roosevelt ha designato il 12 ottobre come una festa nazionale.

Ci dispiace, Cris, i giorni di gloria sono finiti. Abbiamo voluto raccogliere lo spirito degli americani quando ti abbiamo messo su quel piedistallo nel XIX secolo. Adesso, nel XXI secolo, ci sono persone che vogliono rovesciare quel piedistallo. Cristoforo Colombo è ora catturato nel fuoco incrociato della battaglia che si chiama “multiculturalismo.” Non è più una buona cosa rappresentare gli ideali della civiltà occidentale. Il multiculturalismo dovrebbe contribuire ad aumentare le nostre conoscenze attraverso un esame equilibrato di altre culture, ma questo non è il caso. Sfortunatamente, il movimento del multiculturalismo è guidato da persone che hanno bisogno di incolpare la civiltà occidentale per tutti i mali di altre civiltà. Perdono di vista il fatto che c’è sia il bene che il male in ogni cultura. Nella loro versione della “storia,” i popoli indigeni delle Americhe sono pacifici ed innocenti, mentre gli spagnoli sono mercenari avidi. Punto e a capo!

La distruzione di un eroe è un processo brutto. Negli Stati Uniti ci sono persone che non vogliono più una festa federale per Cristoforo Colombo. In Venezuela (dove Colombo è sbarcato nelle Americhe per la prima volta) Chavez ha cambiato il nome del Columbus Day in “Il Giorno della Resistenza Indigena.” I sostenitori di Chavez hanno abbattuto una statua vecchia di cent’anni di Colombo perché lo hanno dichiarato colpevole di “genocidio imperialista.” Colombo avrebbe certo goduto della sua posizione passata d’onore e, senza dubbio, sarebbe ora colpito dalla sua posizione presente di vergogna. La retorica è così veemente da entrarmi le parti perché si tratta in realtà di due diverse visioni del mondo. Questo è un conflitto tra i cosiddetti valori confrontando l’unknown. As an explorer he was a man at ease in new situations, a man who loved progress. These were the values dear to American society in the XIX century and Columbus was chosen as a national symbol. “Columbia” (a name derived from that of Christopher Columbus) became the feminine personification of the United States, like the figure of Britannia in England, the figure of Marianna in France and the figure of Turrita in Italy. Some examples are: Columbia Records, Columbia Pictures, Columbia Broadcasting System and Space Shuttle Columbia. In 1784 King’s College of New York changed its name to Columbia. South Carolina named its capital Columbia in 1786, and at least twenty other cities also took the name. In 1791 the new capital of the United States, Washington, included the words “District of Columbia” in its name.

The four hundredth anniversary of Columbus’ famous discovery was celebrated in Chicago at the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893. It was a celebration of innovation and progress, in short: that which Columbus represented. Innovation was the theme of the World’s Columbian Exposition. Architect, Daniel Burnham, introduced modern city planning. George Westinghouse used extensive electric power to illuminate the exposition. George Ferris introduced his new carnival ride: the Ferris wheel. The postal Service produced its first commemorative stamp, honoring Christopher Columbus. And let us not forget the other things that appeared for the first time at the World’s Columbian Exposition: Quaker Oats, Cream of Wheat, Shredded Wheat, Juicy Fruit gum, Cracker Jacks and Pabst Blue Ribbon beer.

The American ideal of innovation and overcoming adversity is celebrated in artistic representations of Christopher Columbus all over the United States. The capital of our nation has many very beautiful examples, just to name a few: three paintings by Constantino Brumidi in the Capitol; the bronze doors that memorialize Columbus, created by Randolph Rogers for the Rotunda of the Capitol; and the Christopher Columbus Memorial fountain in Union Station Plaza designed by Daniel Burnham. In addition to the artistic celebration of Christopher Columbus, Franklin Roosevelt designated October 12th as a national holiday.

We are sorry, Chris, the glory days are over. The mood of the country has changed. We wanted to raise the spirit of Americans when we put you on that pedestal in the XIX century. Now, in the XXI century, there are people who want to overthrow that pedestal. Christopher Columbus is caught in the crossfire of the battle called “multiculturalism.” It is no longer a good thing to represent the ideals of western civilization. Multiculturalism should contribute to increasing our knowledge through a balanced examination of other cultures, but this is not the case. Unfortunately, the multiculturalism movement is led by people who need to blame western civilization for all the ills of other civilizations. They have lost sight of the fact that there is both good and bad in every civilization. In their version of “history,” the native people of the Americas are peaceful and innocent, while the Spanish are greedy mercenaries. Period!

The destruction of a hero is an ugly process. In the United States there are people who no longer want a federal holiday for Christopher Columbus. In Venezuela (where Columbus landed in the Americas for the first time) Chavez changed the


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name from Columbus Day to “The Day of Indigenous Resistance.” Supporters of Chavez destroyed a hundred year old statue of Columbus because they declared him guilty of “imperialist genocide.” Columbus would certainly have enjoyed his past position of honor and, no doubt, would now be hurt by his present position of shame. The rhetoric is so vehement on both sides because it is in reality about two different world views. This is a conflict between the so-called values of the hero constructed in the XIX century and the so-called crimes of the destroyed hero in the XXI century.

Who is Christopher Columbus, in reality? After all he was just a man, who (like all men) had defects. He knew that the world was a sphere, but he had underestimated its dimensions. Europe was much farther from Asia than Columbus had thought (10,000 nautical miles instead of 2,400). So he did not reach Asia; he opened permanent contact between the old and new world. He was not a good administrator, but he was an expert mariner. There is much to admire in Columbus the man. He was relentless in the pursuit of his vision. Adventurous, courageous and inventive, he went against all odds. Christopher Columbus had a characteristic common to many protagonists in history: “hubris” (excessive pride). It is the force that is behind both the rise and the fall of many great men. He had discovered a new world, but it was Vespucci who recognized it as such. If he had not persisted in his belief that he had reached Asia, perhaps America would be called the U.S. of Columbia.

Postscript: For four hundred years after his death, Christopher Columbus continued his ocean voyages. He had been buried in Valladolid, Spain after his death May 20, 1506. In 1540, in accordance with his last wishes, his body was sent to Hispaniola. When the French conquered Hispaniola in 1795, Christopher Columbus’ body was brought to Cuba. In 1898 (when Cuba gained independence) Columbus sailed the high seas, and returned to Spain. Who knows? Perhaps he will sail again one day.

TRAVEL WITH ICS FRIENDS THIS SUMMER
ICS is endorsing another fantastic trip to Italy organized by Bethesda Travel! (See also ad at left). After the success of the 2010 trip to Puglia, Bethesda Travel has designed a unique itinerary open to all ICS members, families, and friends. The Road Less Traveled: Scenery, Culture, Gourmet Food & Wines of Central Italy itinerary will include Tivoli, with stops in Lazio, Abruzzo and Le Marche, as well as exploration of Umbria. Fine foods, excellent wines, fabulous scenery! Cultural events include, the Mastrogiurato festival in Lanciano, a detailed visit to Assisi and much more!

An excellent value (buon mercato) offered at $4,375 p/p includes air travel, all accommodations, charter transportation in Italy, most meals, wine tastings, sight seeing and special visits, local guides, and all current taxes and fuel surcharges. Make it more than a vacation; make it an experience.
Einstein said “Time is what we measure with a clock”.

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The poet Horace grew up near Ripacandida.

The extreme cold will cause these balloons to collapse.
ITALIAN AND MARYLAND OFFICIALS SIGN AGREEMENTS ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

On Tuesday, March 20, the Embassy of Italy held a signing ceremony for three agreements aimed at sustaining the relationship between students and educators of Italy and the United States through student and teacher exchange programs and the teaching of Italian language and culture in schools of the State of Maryland. Ambassador Claudio Bisogniero stressed the importance of these agreements and the activities they support in front of an audience of public education officials representing Maryland and Ann Arundel County, other organizations involved in the teaching and promotion of the Italian language, including the Italian Cultural Society, and the student choir of the Bates Middle School of Annapolis, which sang the national anthems of Italy and the US and two other numbers.

The three agreements that were signed were:

An agreement between the Embassy of Italy and the State of Maryland to support Italian language programs in Maryland public schools and colleges.

An agreement between Ann Arundel County and Regione Lombardia to foster student exchanges and innovative teaching programs by University of Maryland students in secondary schools in Lombardia.

A similar agreement between Ann Arundel County and Regione Veneto.

The first of the three agreements included a section signed by Ron Cappelletti specifically referring to cooperation between the Embassy and the Italian Cultural Society’s Italian Language Program.

The signing of the latter two agreements took place via two separate Skype links with Milano and Padova respectively, a process which prompted First Counsellor Cristiano Maggipinto to declare that it worked well.

The program also included videos showing student exchanges and classroom activity in project SITE, in which graduate students from the US teach classes in English and other subjects to students of the liceo (high school) in Lombardia.

Besides Bisogniero and Maggipinto, other speakers included Bernard Sadusky, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, Kevin Maxwell, Ann Arundel Superintendent of Schools, Luigi Scotto, Italian Consul General in Philadelphia, John Ceschini, President of Arts Education in Maryland Schools, and Joseph Lupo, former president of COPILAS, and (by Skype) education officials of the regions of Lombardia and Veneto.

LOCAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

Italian Cultural Institute: Echoes of the Belle Epoque – a recital for VociS Arts DC, with Anna Caterina Antonacci, Soprano/Mezzo and Donald Sulzen, Piano. Kennedy Center, 7:30 PM, Tickets $25, call 202-467-4600, mention source code VADC 25.

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

ICS SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE MAY 18

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 18, 2012, the post-marked date for receipt of applications.

1) The Maria Guerrero Wilmeth Awards: two awards of $500 each for outstanding high-school students of the Italian language.

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 awards: $1000 for an undergraduate or conservatory student showing promise in piano performance and $350 for a high school age pianist showing promise in piano performance. Examples of recordings must accompany your application.

4) 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.

5) The Anna Menapace Award of $400 to a high school student who has excelled in the arts.

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. 4. That person should submit photographs or other examples of his or her 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 in June. as will be advertised in our newsletter Poche Parole and website. 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 must be postmarked no later than Friday, May 18, and sent to:

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

The funds donated in memory of Cesarina Horing will be used to fund the annual scholarships administered through area universities and to be named in honor of Cesarina. More on this in the May issue of Poche Parole.

“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.
ICS membership application

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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.