



# Poche Parole

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

[www.italianculturalsociety.org](http://www.italianculturalsociety.org)

## ICS EVENTS

Social meetings start at 3:00 PM on the third Sunday of the month, September through May, at the Friendship Heights Village Center, 4433 South Park Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD (see map on back cover).

Sunday, September 21: 1:00 PM, Movie of the Month, *La Strada* by Federico Fellini; 2:00PM Italian Conversation; 3:00PM, the kids' movie *Peter Pan*; 3:00PM The Rigatoni Brothers discussing and performing Italian immigrant music.

Sunday, October 19: 1:00 PM Movie of the Month; 2:00PM Italian Conversation; 3:00PM Brian Billion, our winner of the Montanari Mendola piano award will play various classical selections.

Sunday, November 16: 1:00 PM, Movie of the Month; 2:00PM Italian conversation; 3:00 PM Italian Car Culture will cover the history of the Italian automobile industry, touching on conventional cars, designer cars (Pininfarina, etc.), Formula One racing, and Italian attitudes toward cars, and where this is all headed.

Sunday, December 14: 4:00 PM (note the time) Christmas Party, *Festa di Natale*.



Showing his cookie-making ability at Campi Estivi.



Luigi De Luca with Katrina Szabo, classics, U. Md, the winner of the Elena and Antonio De Luca Award.



At the May Social Arlindo Sobral and Nick Monaco register a guest for the raffle. Below: at the Awards Gala.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome back everyone to this coming season with *Poche Parole*, the Sunday socials, and the Italian Language Program. Please take advantage of our ICS activities. We start off with the September social, featuring a musical program with The Rigatoni Brothers, performers and collectors of Twentieth Century Italian-American music for mandolin trio. This will be followed in October by a classical piano performance by Brian Billion, one of our scholarship winners, and in November a program on Italian cars, the automobile industry and culture.

The ICS summer began in June with our annual scholarship awards Gala (page 7 for the list of winners and pictures). We also inaugurated a series of summer camps for children. What better way to keep kids occupied while strengthening their knowledge of Italian!

In August, the family of Maria Wilmeth, founder and former director of the Italian Language Program, informed us that Maria had bequeathed to the ICS \$5,000; further evidence of her generosity and love of the ICS and its work. This will insure our ability to provide prizes for many years to children who excel in the study of Italian. This year we will make an early start to recruit applicants for our scholarships. If you know of meritorious students, please consult our web site for more information, let us know their names, and urge them to submit applications.

Visit our office on Rugby Ave. We have a new lease, are rearranging furniture, painting, and installing carpets. I also hope to see you at the Sunday, September 21 social.

## Welcome To New ICS Members

Caroline E. Andridge  
Cinderella Bermudez  
Ranieri Moore Cavaceppi  
Suzanne M. Dunlap  
Nicole Martinez  
Elsa Proverbio-Bradford  
Alexey and Liza Semyonov  
Dennis Gilbert  
Nina M. Serafino  
Alexis Devoney Stern  
Stephanie Chantry Tamborrino  
Peter A. Abbruzzese  
Anita Doberman  
Susan Eister  
Paul and Jan Melluzzo  
Brenda L. Pearson  
Diane Quandar  
Joe and Kimberley Thachuk  
Deborah Tolson

*Arrigo Mongini*

## ICS Board of Directors and their Duties

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Olga Mancuso, *Historian*

### ICS Poche Parole

Dennis A. Siracusa, *editor*

Romeo Segnan, Paolo Vidoli, Riccardo Cannavò  
*Italian editors and writers*

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[ics.pocheparole@gmail.com](mailto:ics.pocheparole@gmail.com) or on a computer CD/DVD to: Editor, *Poche Parole*, 4827 Rugby Avenue, Suite 301, Bethesda, MD 20814

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# Discover Liguria and Its People



**Umberto Neri discusses Liguria with Carlo Ellena after the Sunday lecture.**



**Guests enjoy the refreshments after the lecture.**

For the May social, Carlo Ellena gave us an interesting history lesson on his own province, Liguria. As a preview to his summer course, “Discover Liguria and its People,” Carlo discussed Liguria’s contribution to Italian culture. Liguria once included Milan and parts of Tuscany, France and the Piedmont.

Carlo sprinkled his talk with little-known facts, for example, the Ligurians had built two or three cities because previous cities were destroyed by pirates. The Genovese were a pragmatic people who made friends with their vanquished enemies with an eye toward profiting from a lucrative trade with them. Genova fought valiantly in the Pope’s crusades but not out of piety but to gain papal favors.

One of Liguria’s contributions to modern times is jeans which were invented to keep the sailors dry. Another interesting tidbit is that Napoleon wrote in the Genovese language because Corsica belonged to Genova until one year before he was born. -Dennis A. Siracusa



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**Two of the winners of the raffle, Sylvia Ehrman and Richard Ferrara.**

Photos by Dennis A. Siracusa



**Marie Frances and Arlindo Sobral assist with the raffle.**

# Music of the Twentieth Century Italian Immigrants to America

Ron Cappelletti, VP ICS

The Washington, DC area is blessed with a thriving music scene of many genres, from Chuck Brown's go-go to the Choral Arts Society, from the Washington National Opera to the 18<sup>th</sup> Street Singers. D.C. is also home to sparkling musical gems of a rarer sort, and one is Paul Oorts. Born in Belgium and fluent in French and Flemish, this young man found his way to Italy where he learned that language so well that one of his many occupations for many years was teaching it at the Peabody Conservatory. Paul is conversant in several other languages as well...but I digress.

Paul is an accomplished musician with a mastery of an astonishing variety of instruments and styles. He is a leader and participant in a rich array of musical ensembles. Here is a short list: KAPO, Cabaret Sauvignon, Pavilion Three, Melodious Thunk, Goldchrest, Trio con Brio, Tympanon, Carillon, and the Rigatoni Brothers. (You may have noticed a certain whimsical style in the band names, one of Paul's many charming characteristics.) Each of these groups features a distinctive genre of music and combination of instruments, ranging from the harp-guitar and hammered dulcimer to accordion and viler, the Belgian variety of the mountain dulcimer.

The Rigatoni Brothers, Paul Oorts (Paolo Rigatoni), Gina Faber (Gina Rigatoni) and Jay Benforado (Giacomo Rigatoni) performing Italian Immigrant music at the Strathmore Mansion in Bethesda. (Below, left.)



At our September 21 social meeting, the Italian Cultural Society is pleased to present Paul (playing mandolin) and his Rigatoni "Brothers" Gina Faber (mandolin) and Jay Benforado (guitar). They are part of one of Paul's projects which is to collect, play, and make available to the public music from the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century written for and by Italian immigrants and featuring two mandolins and a guitar. (Full disclosure, this is the music this correspondent grew up with in an Italian immigrant family in Waterbury, CT that was and remain one of the defining features of our family gatherings, including aunts and uncles well into their nineties and still playing and singing.) And what sorts of music do we have? There are waltzes, mazurkas, marches, tarantellas, tangos, and even schottisches and ragtime pieces. Of course, there are the familiar Neapolitan pieces that we all know and love, as

well as opera pieces. From his research Paul will tell us the fascinating story of how Italian immigrants brought this music with them and merged it into the great flowing river of American music. As that stream flows, these musical forms, like the immigrants' culture itself, slowly melt and dissolve.

**So come, bring your friends and listen. The Rigatoni Brothers will bring memories rushing back to life for you!**

**Here are some remarks about a Rigatoni Brothers performance for the Folklore Society of Greater Washington.**

*Our good friend R.F., whose father's side of the family is very Italian, heard the first couple of notes and immediately recognized the style of mandolin playing she remembered from her youth, even though the songs you played weren't necessarily ones she recalled. You guys got the style exactly right! She was impressed with the great amount of knowledge you conveyed to the audience without being pedantic, and was crying tears of joy. (Charlie Baum FSGW President) I am delighted that his performance was so well received -- this sort of well-researched exploration of a little-known part of American musical history is exactly what FSGW should celebrate. (April Blum, Minifest Organizer-in-chief) I have to comment here that the Rigatoni Brothers concert was an amazing success. The room was absolutely packed with standing room only. Nobody left their spaces once the music began. There was extraordinary buzz after the show. Everybody had connections and personal stories relative to the music. What a terrific theme this would be for a future event...Mother Country music... (?) At any rate, the music was fabulous as well (S. Koppel, FSGW volunteer). I have been hearing raves about the Rigatoni Bros. too-knowledge, virtuosity, style, understanding, passion for material combined with scholarship, charm, audience outreach. I wish I could have been there. (Elizabeth Null)*



# REPORT FROM THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Francesca Casazza, Director, ILP

This summer, our instructors Sabrina Munaò and Carlo Ellena enjoyed teaching their morning and evening classes until the end of July/beginning of August. Three weeks of Summer Camps (June 23, July 7 and August 18) brought a lot of young energy and smiles to our school which is now being repainted and cleaned up for the new season. We are looking forward to seeing all of our students and welcoming the new ones. So, let me talk about what's new!

After the success of "Discover Sicily: history, culture, food and wine on the island of sun" and "Discover Liguria and its People" (both of which will be offered again in upcoming terms), we will continue this formula of "class + trip" created for travelers who want more than a basic tourist experience and want an authentic immersion into real Italian life. Through our selected local contacts, participants will enjoy local traditions, history and natural interests of Italy's various regions. Our new teacher, Andrea Siotto, from Rome, will teach the class "Discover Roma and Lazio." On the subsequent trip, students will visit the "Caput Mundi," and then move to a wonderful agriturismo south of Rome in the "Ciociara" countryside (see our web site). There, one can relax far from the thousands of tourists in Rome and discover different historical places nearby, while resting, eating well, attending cooking classes and more. Surrounded by the warm hospitality of Annalisa, Pasqualino e Antonella, you will learn about local traditions and customs. For example during Christmas, the hilltop village of Castro becomes a live reproduction of the Nativity scene!

During my summer tour, with the purpose of advising our students who asked me about studying Italian in Italy, I also visited Professor Suzanne Branciforte's school in Genoa and Daniela and Paola's school in Reggio Emilia, a small town that offers a wide range of cultural activities, the city of the "Tricolore" which then became the national flag, and the city of Parmesan cheese. An ideal place to learn Italian, as is Genoa, for those who prefer a city by the sea. You can find more information about our new program "Study Abroad" on our website, under the Language Program menu.

Back to our local reality, we will have more new cultural classes for advanced levels. La cultura italiana dell'800 e "il processo di unificazione della nazione," will be taught by Andra Siotto, who has an MA in history and art history; "Viaggio gastronomico" in English, to learn the history and the variety of regional Italian food, while learning some basic Italian. Please visit our website for our fall schedule.

I have the pleasure to announce our cooking classes, starting at the end of September, "Cooking with Maura." She will share her concepts of simple yet sophisticated Italian cuisine while teaching students how to prepare a gourmet meal in the comfort of Maura's own home.

Finally, we have been working to enrich the syllabus for children four and older based on their level of Italian. We welcome teenagers to join our classes for middle school and high school students.

The Italian Language Program welcomes everyone to become immersed into the most authentic aspects of our fascinating language and culture!



**Annalisa, Francesca, Antonella, and Pasqualino, at the Locanda del Ruspante, Castro dei Volsci (seen in next picture).**



# CAMPI ESTIVI



## Summer Camp-giocare, crescere, imparare

Cari genitori,

It was a great pleasure for us to teach and play with your kids at the Summer Camp at the ICS.

Since the very first day, we initiated them in a variety of activities: through games, reading, cooking, and studying, they were introduced to the Italian language in a fun and effective way!

They learned to play and respect each other, as well as new grammar and vocabulary!

Our goal was to help them with Italian, not only with the use of textbooks, but also through games and creative projects. Enjoy some pictures of your kids!



**Insegnante: Tamara D'Addieco, Chiara Melucci, Clarissa Frigerio.**  
**Assistenti: Margaret Crosson, Alessandra Middei.**



# The Gala Awards Dinner



**Arrigo Mongini, Karen Davis, Cameron Whitman and Carlo Ellena**



**Winners: Juncheng Shen, winner of the Luciana Montanari Mendola Award for high school: Antonia Stabile, second prize winner of the Luciana Montanari Mendola Award and Brian Billion, first prize winner of the Luciana Mendola Award.**



**Katrina Szabo winner of the Elena and Antonio DeLuca Award seen with her mom.**



**Francesco Fedele, chief of staff, Italian Embassy.**

**Program**  
**Aperitivo/Hors**  
**d'Oeuvres**

**Welcome**

**Remembering Maria**  
**Wilmeth**

**The ICS Italian**  
**Language Program**

**Dinner**

**The Awards**  
**Alessio Petrozziello**  
**Katrina Szabo**  
**Brian Billion**  
**Antonia Stabile**  
**Juncheng Shen**

**Conclusion**

The highlight of the ICS programs is the June Gala Awards when we honor students for their achievements in the field of Italian culture. This year's winners were: Alessio Petrozziello for the Young Scientist Award, Katrina Szabo, Brian Billion, Antonia Stabile, and Juncheng Shen awards are listed on this page.

This year we were pleased to have Francesco Fedele, chief of staff at the Italian Embassy, deliver the keynote address. In his talk, he lauded the ICS for our efforts in promoting Italian culture in the fields of music, science and Italian language for the youth of the area. He went on to say that more students are enrolling in Italian studies, both on the high school and college level. -Dennis A. Siracusa

# Ricordi D'Italia

by Cameron Whitman-a student  
in the ILP

La mia famiglia ha vissuto in Italia per otto anni fra il 1978 e il 1987. Noi abbiamo tanti ricordi felici di questo periodo, tre anni a Milano e cinque a Roma.

Prima di arrivare in Italia, io e mio marito ci siamo conosciuti in Bolivia. Lui e due amici suoi parlavano costantemente di Italia e Sicilia dove avevano vissuto per piu' di due anni, prima di arrivare in Bolivia. La Bolivia e' uno Stato povero e mancava la storia e la bellezza dell'Italia. Questi discorsi mi seccavano molto perche' io non ero mai stata in Italia.

Tanti anni dopo la Bolivia, abbiamo viaggiato attraverso la Francia e siamo entrati in Italia e visitato il Lago di Garda. Questa era la prima volta in Italia per me. Siamo rimasti al lago due giorni in un albergo elegante. L'albergo aveva un locale notturno dove Gino Paoli, il famoso cantautore, cantava ogni sera. Mio marito mi ha corteggiata con le canzoni di Paoli, Vanoni e Modugno.

Abbiamo vissuto a Milano tre anni. Milano e' una citta' molto efficiente, un centro di cultura, affari e moda. Abbiamo sviluppato molte amicizie e vissuto una vita normale invece della vita diplomatica in altri paesi. Ci divertivamo nei buoni ristoranti, visitando musei e chiese storiche e facendo shopping nelle botteghe e nei negozi eleganti. Siamo andati ogni estate in Liguria per le vacanze estive e in inverno andavamo in montagna, vicino Milano, a sciare. La nostra vita era molto piacevole.

Nel 1982 siamo arrivati a Roma dove siamo rimasti cinque anni in una posizione splendida. Il nostro appartamento era di fronte a Villa Borghese e ai giardini Borghese. Potevamo andare a piedi dappertutto. Roma e' un posto dove fa bel tempo quasi sempre. La nostra vita era un sogno. Mio marito diceva spesso, "Non posso credere che qualcuno mi paghi per vivere cosi!"



Borghese Gardens

# Memories of Italy

by Cameron Whitman  
(translated)

My family lived in Italy for 8 years between 1978 and 1987. We have many happy memories from this period; three years in Milan and five years in Rome.

Before we arrived in Italy, my husband and I met in Bolivia. He and two of his friends spoke constantly about Italy and Sicily where they lived more than two years before they arrived in Bolivia. Bolivia was very poor and lacked the beauty of Italy. These conversations bored me a lot because I had never been in Italy.

Many years after Bolivia, we traveled across France and entered Italy at Lake Garda. This was the first time I was in Italy. We stayed at the lake for two days in an elegant hotel. The

hotel had a night club where Gino Pauli sang every evening. My husband courted me with the songs of Pauli, Vanone e Modugno.

We lived in Milan for three years. Milan is an efficient city, of culture, business and fashion. We made many good friends and lived a normal life instead of the diplomatic life as in other countries. We enjoyed ourselves at many wonderful restaurants, historic museums and churches and in the elegant boutiques and stores. Every summer we went to Luguria for vacation and during the winters we went in the mountains near Milan to ski. We had a very pleasant life.

In 1982 we arrived in Rome where we lived for five years in a splendid situation. Our apartment was just across the street from the Villa Borghese and the Borghese Gardens. We were able to walk everywhere in the in the city. Rome is a place where there is always good weather. Our life was a dream. My husband said often, "I can't believe someone pays me to live like this."



## Axel Frederik Munthe: L'uomo ed il mito

by Cathy Delahay

L'antica sfinge egizia siede di fronte al glorioso panorama del golfo di Napoli. Che strana creatura – parte umano, parte animale – una creatura del mito. Adesso un simbolo della Villa San Michele ad Anacapri, la sfinge è in realtà un simbolo appropriato per l'uomo che ha costruito la villa. Axel Frederik Munthe è certamente una creatura di parti contrastanti. Crea il proprio mito nel suo libro La Storia di San Michele, in cui si presenta come un medico competente, un amico intimo dei famosi, un buon narratore ed un uomo che è sicuro di sé. Nel corso del suo libro, la realtà sfata questo mito. Solo per abolire un mito fin dall'inizio: La Storia di San Michele non è la storia di San Michele. È la storia della vita di Axel Munthe. Era nato a Oskarshamn nel sud-est della Svezia nel 1857. Il libro comincia con un Axel giovane che corre sulla scala fenicia per vedere i panorami incomparabili dalle altezze di Anacapri. È amore a prima vista. Axel ha 18 anni ed è in procinto di iniziare la scuola medica a Parigi. È ansioso di finire i suoi studi al più presto e di raccogliere i benefici monetari e sociali della professione medica. Dopo la realizzazione di questi obiettivi, Axel prevede di tornare ad Anacapri per costruire la sua casa da sogno.



Axel Munthe

## Axel Frederick Munthe: The Man and the Myth Translated

by Cathy Delahay

The ancient Egyptian sphinx sits in front of the glorious panorama of the Gulf of Naples. What a strange creature – part human, part animal – a creature of myth. Now a symbol of the Villa San Michele in Anacapri, the sphinx is in reality an appropriate symbol of the man who built the villa. Axel Frederick Munthe is certainly a creature of contrasting parts. He creates his own myth in his book The Story of San Michele, in which he presents himself as a

competent doctor, an intimate friend of the famous, a good story teller and a man who is sure of himself. In the course of his book, reality debunks this myth. Just to do away with one myth from the beginning: The Story of San Michele is not the story of San Michele. It is the story of the life of Axel Munthe. He was born in Oskarshamn in southeast Sweden in 1857. The book begins with a young Axel running up the Phoenician staircase to see the incomparable panorama

from the heights of Anacapri. It is love at first sight. Axel is 18 and about to begin medical school in Paris. He is anxious to finish his studies as quickly as possible and to reap the monetary and social benefits of the medical profession. After accomplishing these goals, Axel plans to return to Anacapri to construct the house of his dreams.

Axel termina i suoi studi con grande velocità – la persona più giovane a ricevere mai una laurea in medicina in Francia all'età di 23 anni. Il dottor Munthe è un successo immediato: un appartamento elegante arredato con arte, e un sacco di soldi in tasca. Nel suo mito, Axel è un medico competente che, a differenza dei suoi colleghi, ha sempre la corretta diagnosi ed il trattamento adeguato per ogni malattia. Il fatto è che il dottore giovane aveva scoperto la pratica lucrativa di trattare la “donna isterica.” Sembra che questa fosse una afflizione comune tra le donne del 19° secolo, in particolare quelle dell'aristocrazia. Axel era molto bravo a conquistare la fiducia delle donne. Ha anche affinato un'altra abilità appresa dal neurologo famoso Jean-Martin Charcot – l'ipnotismo. Le signore ricche di Parigi erano letteralmente sotto il suo incantesimo, ed erano troppo felici di pagare per la sua attenzione. In seguito Charcot lo ha bandito per sempre dall'ospedale Salpêtrière a Parigi a causa del suo comportamento non etico, Axel era in grado di utilizzare queste stesse competenze a Roma. Infatti, a Roma, Axel ha trovato donne isteriche sempre più ricche e così fu in grado di riempire i suoi forzieri. Sembra che il nostro medico competente fosse un ciarlatano.

Attraverso la sua clientela aristocratica, è vero che Munthe ha incontrato molte figure notevoli nella società. Nel suo mito, Axel è un amico intimo dei famosi. I fatti raccontano una storia diversa. Ovviamente Munthe non ha avuto il rispetto del dottor Charcot malgrado quanto sostenesse. Munthe parla di essere proprio a fianco di Louis Pasteur quando scopre una cura per la rabbia. In realtà ha semplicemente lavorato nello stesso ospedale. Parla di un tempo a bordo dello yacht di Guy de Maupassant che gli legge dal suo manoscritto di “Sur l'Eau.” Ed era il suo buon amico, Henry James, che gli ha detto di scrivere un libro sulla Villa San Michele. Axel era un millantatore incredibile.

Axel finishes his studies with great speed – the youngest person ever to receive a medical degree in France at the age of 23. Doctor Munthe is an immediate success: an elegant apartment decorated with art, and plenty of money in his pocket. In his myth Axel is a competent doctor who, unlike his colleagues, always has the correct diagnosis and the proper treatment for every disease. The fact is that the young doctor had discovered the lucrative practice of treating the “hysterical woman.” It seems that this was a common affliction among 19th century women, in particular those of the aristocracy. Axel was very good at winning the trust of women. He also perfected another skill learned from the famous neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot – hypnotism. The wealthy ladies of Paris were literally under his spell, and they were very happy to pay for his attention. After Charcot banned him forever from the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris because of his unethical behavior, Axel was able to use these same skills in Rome. In fact, in Rome, Axel found an hysterical women even more wealthy and so he was able to fill his coffers. It seems that our competent doctor was a charlatan.

Among his aristocratic clientele, it is true that Munthe met many notable figures in society. In his myth, Axel is the intimate friend of the famous. The facts tell a different story. Obviously Munthe did not have the respect of Doctor Charcot despite what he asserted. Munthe speaks of being right beside Louis Pasteur when he discovers a cure for rabies. In reality he simply worked in the same hospital. He speaks of a time aboard the yacht of Guy de Maupassant who reads to him from his manuscript of “Sur l'Eau.” And it was his good friend, Henry James, who told him to write a book about the Villa San Michele. Axel was an incredible name dropper. **Continues in the next issue.**

**-Cathy Delahay is a student in the ILP**



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buon fine.**