

# 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, October 19: 1:00 PM Movie of the Month: Mario Monicelli's *Big Deal on Madonna Street*  
2:00PM Italian Conversation; 3:00PM The kids' movie Walt Disney's *Ponyo* in italiano;

3:00PM Brian Billion, our winner of the Luciana Montanari Mendola Award for piano, will play various classical selections.

Sunday, November 16: 1:00 PM, Movie of the Month; 2:00PM Italian conversation; 3:00 PM A talk on the history and culture of Italian automobiles (TBD).



Dr. Luigi De Luca awarded Grande Ufficiale della Repubblica by the Italian government. (more on page 3)



Photo by Ron Cappelletti

**The Rigatoni Brothers (Gina Faber, Paul Oorts and Jay Benforado) entertained at the September social with Italian-American immigrant music for two mandolins and guitar, with historical comments and slides. (more on page 4)**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The 2014-2015 season of Sunday afternoon socials got off to a fabulous start with The Rigatini Brothers presentation and performance of Italian-American mandolin trio music of 1880 to 1920. The audience of 80 people was captivated by Paul Oort's review of the history of this musical form and the trio's skilled performance of it. The next social, on October 19, will feature Brian Billion, winner of our Luciana Montanari Mendola scholarship award for piano performance playing an entirely different kind of music, selections of works by classical composers.

I am happy to tell you that our Italian Language Program is also getting off to a great start this school season after a successful summer session that included children's camps. Enrollment is up substantially over last year and we offer many new courses, and continue to receive new enrollments even as the courses are just beginning.

I mentioned at the September social that we have two vacancies on the ICS board and that we have a particular need for a person with experience in budgeting and financial management who will be the assistant to our treasurer and will focus on membership renewal, the Sunday socials, and special events. Please tell us if you or someone you know would be interested in doing this work.

One of our board vacancies is due to the departure of Joe Onofrietti who is moving to Florida in November. Many of you know Joe and I hope you will not only enjoy the October social but take the time to say goodbye to Joe.

I hope to see you on October 19.

## Welcome to New ICS Members

Patricia J Absher	Jose Carlos Linares
Sean & Patricia I. Adams	Danouth Louis
Sara B. Anderson	Thomas Palagano
Kathryn Attfield	Melanie P. Rodriguez
Margaret Bare	Maria Ruggiero
Yang Sook Cho	Patricia Salas
Elham Cicippio	Sarah P. Scott
Tina Davidson	Sandi L. Wilson
Joseph Del Balzo	
Beth Kronthal	

*Arrigo Mongini*

## ICS Board of Directors and their Duties

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Riccardo Cannavò, *Writer, Poche Parole*

Olga Mancuso, *Historian*

### **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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# Luigi De Luca Honored by Italian Government

*Most of you know Dr. Luigi De Luca, who served for nine years as President of the Italian Cultural Society of Washington DC. As you may have already read on our website, Luigi has been honored with the title “Grande Ufficiale” of the Order of the Star of Italy by the President of Italy Giorgio Napolitano. This honor is awarded annually to only about 60 people worldwide who have supported the preservation of Italy’s prestige abroad through their good works. It is the highest ranking of a series of four honorary awards to about 400 individuals. We asked Luigi to tell us about what led to this award in the article below.*

On June 13 the Embassy of Italy presented me with a certificate signed by Giorgio Napolitano to bestow on me the title of “Grande Ufficiale” of the Order of the Star of Italy. I am pleased to share this with you as I have been the president of the ICS for nine years, in two separate tenure periods, and this recognition rewards my services to the ICS, mainly, but not only, as a promoter of the Italian Language Program, headed by Maria Wilmeth and later by Cesarina Horing. Among other achievements of the ICS during my tenure as President was the award of a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to run an Institute in Italy for teachers of Italian in the USA on The art of teaching Italian through Italian Art. This grant was obtained through the efforts of Professors Maria Wilmeth and Roberto Severino of Georgetown University. When Maria Wilmeth became suddenly ill, I stepped in to function as a co-director of the Institute, in 2009 and 2011.

The Grande Ufficiale title also recognizes my scientific work first at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and then at the National Cancer Institute, which has resulted in more than 200 publications over a period of some 40 years. My scientific work has dealt with the essential function of derivative retinoic acid on the maintenance of the specialized functions of tissues that cover the body, both externally and internally. The health of these tissues is fundamental in the prevention of cancer at the same tissue sites, such as skin, breast, lung, intestine, prostate and other organs. As a consequence of this work we have suggested novel approaches to overcome the resistance of malignant cells to retinoic acid and possibly, if the mechanism is a common one, to other variety of physiological agents, such as a similar way to prevent the development of cancer in different tissues.



**Ministro Franchetti Pardo presents the award to Dr. Luigi De Luca.**

A third area of interest for me, also recognized by the award, is my study of the Classics. I am presently enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Greek and Latin at The Catholic University of America, after having obtained an M.A. in Latin from the University of Maryland at College Park in 2002, and an M.A. in Greek at the Catholic University of America in 2011. My involvement in the Classics also extends to my teaching of Latin in a local middle school for the past 11 years, and at the University of Maryland College Park on and off for the past several years. My present main occupation is teaching Nutritional Biochemistry at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, which I have done for the past 8 years. My teaching abroad has included the University of Rome-La Sapienza, the University of Naples-Federico II, the University of Pavia, Tokyo, Oslo, among others.

This brief summary of my activities is meant to share with you my achievements as recognized by the President of Italy Giorgio Napolitano.

I look forward to seeing you at our social gatherings.

All best wishes, **Luigi De Luca**

# September Social: The Rigatoni Brothers



ICS members Diana Di Hernandez, Cronelia Ventresca Domingues, and Luis Domingues pose for a post-concert picture with Paul Orts, mandolinist for the Rigatoni Brothers.

At the September 21, 2014 social meeting the "Rigatoni Brothers", a musical ensemble of two mandolins and a guitar consisting of leader Paul Orts, Gina Faber and Jay Benforado on guitar, performed a variety of pieces from the genre of 20th century Italian-American immigrant music. Paul, who teaches Italian at Loyola in Baltimore, gave a vivid illustrated presentation of the history of this music to provide context to the performance. The appreciative audience overflowed the usual half-room used for the meeting, and we expanded the space to accommodate them all.-Ron Cappelletti



Melody Musette, Isabel Levin and Rosalie Di Nicola Sanchez select from an assortment of beverages.

Part of the large crowd that enjoyed the performance.



Michele Perisi won the first raffle and selected a book on Italy.



Jose Carlos Linares enjoys the post-lecture social.



Guitarist, Jay Benforado greets his friend David Ziegele.

## Brian Billion Winner of ICS Mendola Award to Perform at October Social



**Below: Brian receives the Montanari Mendola Award from Silvana De Luca at the June Gala Awards dinner.**



The first thing we noticed when we listened to his audition CD was the fine touch, and when it was over, we sat back to savor the taste and elegance of the performance. Brian Billion, the first prize winner of the 2014 ICS Luciana Montanari Mendola Award for piano performance, is in his junior year as a piano major at Catholic University. **On Sunday, October 19, he will be featured in a varied piano program of both Italian composers and others at our 3:00 pm ICS social meeting at the Friendship Heights Village Center, Chevy Chase, MD.** In his program, Mr. Billion intends to include relevant remarks of either musical or historical interest about each piece.

Hailing from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, this remarkable young man with a stage presence and sophistication well beyond his 20 years has won top prizes in both national and international competitions, including numerous MTNA (Music Teachers National Association) and MTA State competitions, and the DAR Nellie Love Butcher Music Scholarship, to mention just a few. Brian was named the first-prize winner of the first annual Catholic University International Piano Competition this summer. He has performed at the Kennedy Center, Carnegie's Weill Hall, and Sioux Falls Washington Pavilion. His concerto debut was in 2009 with the Aberdeen, S.D. Civic Orchestra. He also has participated in multiple international musical festivals and performed this summer as a soloist with the Orquestra De Camara De Cascais e Oeira in Cascais, Portugal.

To quote Prof. Ivo Kaltchev, head of the piano division at Catholic University, "Such professional accomplishments are absolutely incredible for a student who is only 20 years old. I am so proud of Brian. It is an honor to be his piano teacher."

Please come and join us on Sunday, October 19, 3:00 PM to enjoy the music of this fine young pianist.



**Brian plays at a concert in Cascais, Portugal.**

# Items of Local Interest

## At the Italian Embassy

Wednesday, October 08, 2014

### [ANTONIO VIVALDI, ASTOR PIAZZOLLA - THE EIGHT SEASONS](#)

The chamber orchestra Cameristi della Scala presents a program that has achieved a resounding success all over the world: Le quattro stagioni by Antonio Vivaldi and Las cuatro estaciones. porteñas by Astor Piazzolla.

Tuesday, October 14, 2014 - Wednesday, October 15, 2014

### [Italy Today and Yesterday](#)

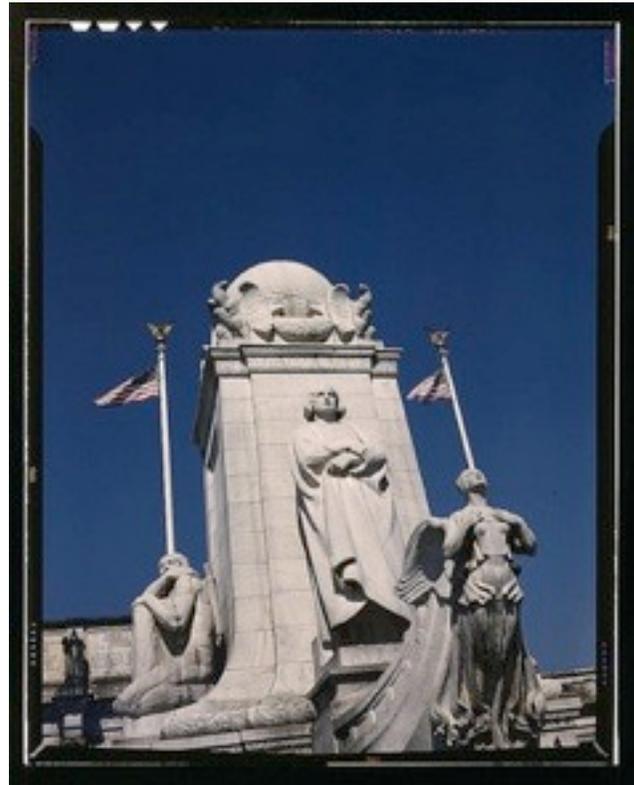
Award-winning Neapolitan pianist Marco Ciampi will play works of great composers in a tribute to Italy, including Morricone, Scipione, Marvulli, Colasanti and Scarlatti. In his program, Ciampi will also play an unpublished work by nineteenth-century composer

### **National Gallery of Art**

One of the most sensual paintings of the Italian Renaissance - Titian's Danaë (1544-1545) from the Capodimonte Museum, Naples - is on view at the National Gallery of Art from July 1 to November 2, 2014 to celebrate the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU). The Danaë is one of several examples of the genre of erotic mythologies in Western art popularized by Titian.

### [Maryland Renaissance Festival](#)

Weekends through October 19, 2014. A 16th century English village with crafts, food, live performances, games and lots more. Located in Crownsville, Maryland.



**Columbus Fountain in front of Union Station in Washington, D.C.**

Columbus Day celebrates the October 12, 1492, arrival of Italian-born explorer [Christopher Columbus](#) on his first voyage to the New World. The holiday has long been celebrated throughout the Western Hemisphere under various names such as the [Dia de la Raza](#) in South America and [Thanksgiving](#) in Canada. Italian-Americans have adopted Columbus Day as a day to celebrate their Italian heritage. In the United States, Columbus Day is the only public holiday in October. It takes place each year on the second Monday of the month. This year it falls on Monday, October 13.

# Report From The Italian Language Program

Our summer term 2014 counted 15 courses and 83 students plus three weeks of summer camps with 42 kids, versus the four courses and 24 students in the summer term of 2013.

Our students enjoyed reviewing grammar, conversing and learning through movies. Some beginning students requested *Discover Liguria and its People* in English (after the original course was taught in Italian) and they had the pleasure of experiencing a trip organized by our partners from Beautiful Liguria (<http://www.beautifuliguria.com>)

I am happy to have received very positive feed back from our recommended trips to Liguria, as well as Sicily. I am confident that the trip that we are planning to the region of Lazio will also be greatly appreciated. Our Roman instructor, Andra Siotto, MA in History and Art History, is ready to start the course as soon as we have enough students enrolled. Please sign up early because we would like to end the class in December to allow the first travelers to enjoy Christmas holiday in Roma and in places like the hilltop village of Castro that becomes a live reproduction of the Nativity scene. Please visit our website for more details.

So far in September we have opened 34 courses and the room that has been used as the office is officially becoming our fourth classroom! (We are still looking for ways to increase our space.) For our five-week Session Two courses which start during the week of October 20, we should open up 12 or 13 more classes. Among these are *Viaggio Gastronomico*, in English, for our beginning students and for those who do not understand Italian, but who are interested in exploring Italian history and cuisine while learning basic vocabulary. If you prefer to learn how to cook authentic Italian dishes you should enroll in *Cooking with Maura*! More details on our website <http://www.italianculturalsociety.org/> under the Italian Language Program menu.

Finally, I anticipate that Carlo Ellena's course *Food/Wine Pairing*, mentioned in the September issue of the *Washingtonian* magazine, will be offered again in January.

Stay tuned and feel free to contact us at (301)-215-7885 if you have any questions.

Enjoy *the autunno!*

Francesca Casazza-Director ILP



Judy Blumberg, Bill Sittig, and Joseph Bangiolo in Carlo Ellena's class.



Francisca Helmer uses Bart Simpson to demonstrate parts of the body in Italian.

## Movie of the Month

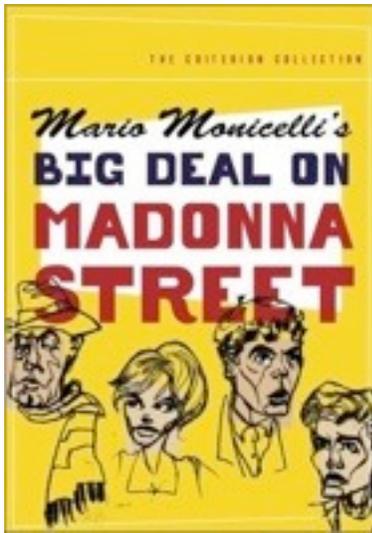
### *Big Deal on Madonna Street* (1958)

"I soliti ignoti" (*original title*)

106 min - [Comedy](#) | [Crime](#) - [22 November 1960 \(USA\)](#)

A motley quintet of inept small-time thieves bungle the burglary of a local pawnshop in this Italian farce.

**Director:** [Mario Monicelli](#)



Peppe, formerly a boxer, organizes the break-in of a pawnshop. Tiberio, an unemployed photographer, Mario, a receiver, the Sicilian Michele and Capannelle, an ex-jockey, are the other members of the gang. Though they are advised by Dante, a retired burglar, the task is not so easy...

- Written by [Yepok](#)

Cast

Vittorio Gassman-Peppe il pantera

Claudia Cardinale-Carmelina

Renato Salvatori-Mario Angeletti

## Kids Movie of the Month

### *Ponyo-in italiano* (2008)

A Walt Disney film.

The son of a sailor, 5-year old Sosuke lives a quiet life on an oceanside cliff with his mother Lisa. One fateful day, he finds a beautiful goldfish trapped in a bottle on the beach and upon rescuing her, names her Ponyo. But she is no ordinary goldfish. The daughter of a masterful wizard and a sea goddess, Ponyo uses her father's magic to transform herself into a young girl and quickly falls in love with Sosuke, but the use of such powerful sorcery causes a dangerous imbalance in the world. As the moon steadily draws nearer to the earth and Ponyo's father sends the ocean's mighty waves to find his daughter, the two children embark on an adventure of a lifetime to save the world and fulfill Ponyo's dreams of becoming human.



## Parte II: Axel Frederik Munthe: L'uomo ed il mito by Cathy Delahay

Queste storie sono notevolmente abbellite ma è caratteristico delle storie di Munthe. Nel suo mito, Axel è un buon narratore. Racconta le storie della sua passeggiata tra i boschi della Lapponia e di essere intrappolato in una valanga nella Svizzera. Quando il libro si muove finalmente alla costruzione della Villa San Michele, Munthe racconta molte storie sentimentali sui contadini dell'isola di Capri. Ma, è un fatto che le storie, in cui glorifica se stesso, sono bugie. Munthe racconta storie fantastiche delle sue bravure: l'aver rischiato la morte per trovare la sfinge in una grotta caprese e la maschera di Medusa sotto il mare. Non sono vere. Sappiamo solamente che la sfinge è dall'Egitto, ma nessuno sa da dove provenga, e noi sappiamo per certo che la maschera di Medusa è dal tempio di Venere a Roma. Sembra che il nostro buon narratore fosse un prevericatore.

Un'altra affermazione discutibile nel suo mito è che Munthe ha costruito la Villa San Michele "ad occhio," senza l'uso di un disegno formale o le misure esatte. Gli esperti sono assai dubbiosi che questo lavoro sia stato compiuto da una famiglia di contadini analfabeti guidata unicamente dall'occhio onnisciente di Axel Munthe. Nel suo mito, Axel è un uomo che è sicuro di sé. In realtà, Axel Munthe è incredibilmente egoista. Si glorifica nelle pubblicazioni delle sue avventure a Napoli durante un'epidemia di colera e nelle Fiandre con la Croce Rossa durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale. E in tutto ciò che scrive, Axel mette parole stravaganti di elogio per lui in bocca dei suoi personaggi. Il suo servo fedele, Pacciale, proclama a una folla ad Anacapri: "Io vi dico non c'è nessuno come lui, è il più grande medico a Roma." Nel corso del libro Axel dice la stessa cosa su se stesso molte volte, e una donna che ha creduto questo era Victoria, la regina di Svezia. Era una paziente di Munthe dal 1901 fino alla sua morte nel 1930. Axel ha detto che la regina aveva bisogno di trascorrere del tempo ogni anno ad Anacapri per la sua salute, ed ha felicemente fatto così.

## Part II: Axel Frederik Munthe: The Man and the Myth

These stories are greatly embellished, but it is characteristic of Munthe's stories. In his myth, Axel is a good story teller. He tells stories of his walking through the forests of Lapland and of being trapped in an avalanche in Switzerland. When the book finally moves to the construction of the Villa San Michele, Munthe tells many sentimental stories about the peasants on the island of Capri. But, it is a fact that the stories in which he glorifies himself are lies. Munthe tells fantastic stories about his bravery: having risked his life to find the sphinx in a cave in Capri and the mask of Medusa under the sea. They are not true. We know only that the sphinx is Egyptian, but nobody knows from where it comes; and we know for certain that the mask of Medusa is from the temple of Venus in Rome. It seems that our good story teller was a liar.

Another questionable assertion in his myth is that Munthe built the Villa San Michele, just as a rough guess, without the use of a formal design or exact measurements. The experts are quite dubious that this work was accomplished by a family of illiterate peasants guided only by the omniscient eye of Axel Munthe. In his myth, Axel is a man who is sure of himself. In reality, Axel Munthe is incredibly egotistical. He glorifies himself in publications of his adventures in Naples during the cholera epidemic and in Flanders with the Red Cross during the Second World War. In everything he writes, Axel puts extravagant words of praise for himself in the mouths of his characters. His faithful servant, Pacciale, proclaims to a crowd in Anacapri: "I tell you there is no one like him, he is the greatest doctor in Rome." While writing the book, Axel says the same thing about himself many times; and one woman who believed this was Victoria, the queen of Sweden. She was Munthe's patient from 1901 until her death in 1930. Axel told the queen that she needed to spend some time every year in Anacapri for her health, and she did so, happily. (Continued on the next page)

Con il tesoro reale svedese a lui aperto, Axel è stato in grado di completare molti progetti ad Anacapri. Ha supervisionato la costruzione della casa della regina ad Anacapri, Casa Caprile—e accanto, una modesta abitazione per sé Villa Sole. Ma non tutto va bene in questo paradiso. Axel ha sviluppato un problema serio agli occhi che si è aggravato per via della luce brillante alla Villa San Michele. Ha cominciato a cercare una residenza meno assolata, e nel 1902 Munthe ha acquisito Materita. La torre era stata edificata nel tardo medioevo e Axel ha aggiunto le pergole le terrazze ed una piccola torre in cui ha scritto La Storia di San Michele (pubblicata nel 1929 quando aveva 71 anni). Materita (non la Villa San Michele) era l'abitazione di Munthe dal 1908 al 1943. Ha usato Villa San Michele per serate sociali. Spesso la regina svedese suonava il pianoforte mentre Axel cantava. Entrambi gli affittuari e gli ospiti soggiornavano alla villa. Tra questi vi era una sfilata di donne aristocratiche di dubbia moralità, come Luisa Casati (considerata la donna più scandalosa del suo tempo). Si può aggiungere donnaiolo all'elenco di ciarlatano, millantatore, prevericatore ed egoista. Il mito che Munthe vuole creare per se stesso nel suo libro è contraddetto dai fatti trovati al suo interno. Ma un'altra parte di questo mito della vita di Axel Munthe (l'idea che lui sia un uomo solo con la responsabilità per nessuno) si basa sull'omissione dei fatti. Mentre Axel era occupato a scrivere la storia della sua vita, non ha mai parlato della moglie che aveva durante i suoi anni a Parigi, Ultima Hornberg. Peggio ancora, non ha mai parlato della sua seconda moglie e dei due figli che vivevano con lui ad Anacapri, fino a quando sua moglie non ha più tollerato la sua infedeltà. Dopo 12 anni di matrimonio (1907-1919), Hilda Pennington-Mellor ha preso i due figli (Peter e Malcolm) ed è ritornata in Inghilterra. Axel Munthe, che ha scritto della sua compassione per i poveri e per tutti gli animali, non ha fatto alcuno sforzo per essere una parte nella vita dei suoi figli. Axel Munthe ha vissuto gli ultimi sei anni della sua vita come ospite nel palazzo reale svedese, e ha donato la Villa San Michele allo stato svedese. La Storia di San Michele si conclude con questa affermazione di Axel Munthe: "Mi pento poco di quello che ho fatto; non ritratto nulla." Strana creatura, come la sfinge, fatta di parti contrastanti e un passato velato nel mito. **Fine**

With the Swedish royal treasury open to him, Axel was able to complete many projects in Anacapri. He supervised the construction of the queen's house in Anacapri, Casa Caprile – and next door, a modest home for himself Villa Sole, but all did not go well in this paradise. Axel developed a serious eye problem which was aggravated by the brilliant light at Villa San Michele. He began to look for a less sunny residence, and in 1902, Munthe bought Materita. The tower had been built in the late Middle Ages and Axel added the pergolas, the terraces and a small tower in which he wrote The Story of San Michele (published in 1929 when he was 71). Materita (not the Villa San Michele) was the home of Munthe from 1908 to 1943. He used Villa San Michele for social evenings. Often the Swedish queen played the piano while Axel sang. Both renters and guests resided at the villa. Among these was a parade of aristocratic women of dubious morality, like Luisa Casati (considered the most scandalous woman of her day). One can add womanizer to the list of charlatan, name dropper, liar and egotist.

The myth that Munthe wanted to create for himself in his book is contradicted by the facts found within it. But another part of this myth of the life of Axel Munthe (the idea that he is a man alone with responsibility for no one) is based on the omission of facts. While Axel was busy writing the story of his life, he never spoke of the wife he had during his years in Paris, Ultima Hornberg. Even worse, he never spoke of his second wife and two sons who lived with him in Anacapri, until his wife could no longer tolerate his infidelity. After 12 years of marriage (1907-1919), Hilda Pennington-Mellor took the two sons (Peter & Malcolm) and returned to England. Axel Munthe, who wrote of his compassion for the poor and for all animals, made no effort to be a part of his sons' lives. Axel Munthe lived the last six years of his life as a guest in the royal Swedish palace, where he died in 1949. He gave the Villa San Michele to the Swedish state. The Story of San Michele ends with this statement of Axel Munthe: "I repent little of what I have done; I retract nothing." What a strange creature, like the sphinx, with contrasting parts and a past veiled in myth. **The End**



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## meeting location

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

