A lot has happened and is currently ongoing in the cultural life of our ICS. Last Sunday we had the pleasure of hosting Dr. Eleonora Troja of the University of Maryland and NASA to speak on her very exciting discoveries published in outstanding premier scientific journals, like Science and Nature. These discoveries deal with her astronomical observation and interpretation of an unusual gravitational wave phenomenon in August 2017. Our President Emeritus, Dr. Ron Cappelletti’s article in this issue of Poche Parole explains the topic and the very exciting consequences of the observation. In connection with this I should remark that Dr. Troja was the recipient of the “Young Scientist Award” of our Society given to her on the occasion of our annual Gala dinner graciously hosted by the Embassy of Italy in May 2017. I refer to this to actually demonstrate the significant advances our cultural programs have made since 1997, i.e. 20 years ago when in my other message as President of this Society, which is also being printed in this issue, I highlighted the importance of our cultural programs and of donations that would support the awards we give at our Gala dinner. Another speaker of importance was Dr. Laura Benedetti, a professor at George Washington University’s Department of Italian, who presented in a discussion session with Dr. Lucia Wolf of the Library of Congress, the publication of her second book, 

Secondo Piano. During the discussion, as the final message came the consideration of our status as citizens of the world. We live a life of two cultures. We are excited for our professional lives here, but constantly realize our being out of pace with the developments of cultural, family and identity, political and otherwise, of the Italian self that falls behind with the self of our relatives and those friends whom we left behind in Italy. For these reasons I am republishing my article of 20 years ago in this issue of Poche Parole. It touches on both subjects and I hope you find it of interest.

Luigi M. De Luca
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Drew and Jane Spalding

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Courtney Perna and family
George Watkins and family

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JANUARY SOCIAL EVENT
A Midsummer’s Night Dream: Gravitational Waves and Light Strike Cosmic Gold

Did you know that the gold jewelry and any platinum bling you are wearing was produced in a cosmic event of epic proportions when two medium-sized neutron stars spiraled into each other, merged and created a kilonova a thousand times brighter than the exploding star, a nova, that produced the sodium in the salt on your dinner table? Not many of us did, and that was just one of the surprising discoveries NASA’s Dr. Eleonora Troja told us about in her talk at our January 21 Social Meeting. On August 17, 2017 the collision of two neutron stars (superdense stars having about the mass of the sun but small enough to fit within the beltway, the relics of stars that have burned up their nuclear fuel) was so powerful that it created a measurable ripple in space-time called a “gravitational wave” (represented by the oscillating blue fabric in the image above.) No doubt, this has happened many times before, but for the first time we Earthlings have been able to detect it in two installations, one a pair of detectors called LIGO here in the US and other called VIRGO in Italy. And because they were detected in these separate locations, the observers were able to sufficiently pinpoint the location in the sky where the event occurred...which in turn caused a hundred or so telescopes around the world to slew to that location to see what they could see. And see they did, giving rise to a whole new branch of astronomy called “Multi-messenger Astronomy” because the event produced signals all through the electromagnetic spectrum, from radio waves to gamma rays that have provided a wealth of new information. And we are just at the beginning of this new mode of astronomy.

That August event kind of ruined Dr. Troja’s weekend with her family because she knew right away that this was something that the team she leads at NASA, the SWIFT satellite telescope program, needed to get busy on immediately, and, moreover, the world’s premier x-ray telescope, CHANDRA, which she was using, had also better immediately turn its attention to this event. SWIFT was excited to see something in UV, visible and infrared light in short order, but CHANDRA did not. Troja persisted nonetheless, even though it was a crap-shoot. In fact it was days later before an x-ray signal turned up at all, which is an interesting story in itself, and her persistence was rewarded.

In a well-presented talk to about 35 listeners followed by a lively Q&A, Eleonora Troja, the 2017 ICS Young Scientist awardee, also told us of her own voyage of discovery starting in Palermo and taking her to NASA/Goddard. In fact, the number of Italian women scientists involved in these discoveries is quite striking. In a panel discussion put together by the NSF to describe the discoveries, in addition to Dr. Troja representing NASA/Goddard, LIGO’s deputy spokesperson is Dr. Laura Cadonati (Georgia Tech). Radio telescopy was represented by Dr. Alessandra Corsi of Texas Tech. Dr. Marica
Branchesi was the representative from the VIRGO/Gran Sasso laboratory. And there were other women as well: Dr. Julie McEnery of NASA, Prof. Vicky Kalogera from Northwestern University, and Prof. Marcelle Soares-Santos from Brandeis University. You can watch that meeting on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFxLA3RGjnc. Dr. Troja’s part begins at about 1 h and 50 minutes into the video.

BOOK PRESENTATION AT THE ILP

È stato un onore avere l’autrice Prof.ssa Laura Benedetti all’ICS per la presentazione del suo ultimo romanzo. Laura è attualmente titolare della cattedra intitolata a Laura e Gaetano De Sole presso la Georgetown University e le sue pubblicazioni spaziano dal Medioevo alla narrativa più recente. Il suo romanzo Un paese di carta (2015) traccia il percorso di tre generazioni di donne tra L’Aquila, Bethesda e Moab, e l’ultimo romanzo giallo, Secondo Piano (2017), è ambientato sul campus di una immaginaria università nordamericana. Lucia Wolf, bibliotecaria specializzata nelle collezioni italiane, vaticane, svizzere e maltesi alla Divisione europea della Library of Congress, ha introdotto l’autrice e condotto una brillante conversazione sull’ultimo romanzo, con richiami al precedente, stimolando l’interesse del pubblico, che è intervenuto con osservazioni, domande e complimenti per lo stile elegante della scrittura, l’originalità della trama e l’attualità delle tematiche. L’autrice ha poi autografato alcune copie e la gradevole serata si è protratta fino a tardi, con un allegro aperitivo offerto dall’Italian Language Program e da Parolab-Italians in D.C.

Le copie sono in vendita su http://www.pacinieditore.it/un-paese-di-carta/ e http://www.pacinieditore.it/secondo-piano/ su cui si trova la descrizione e un’anteprima dei romanzi.

Ron Cappelletti
FROM THE ILP

On January 20th, Chiara Gastaldi and I attended the 2018 Bilingual Education Fair of DC, promoting the Italian language together with Casa Italiana Ente Gestore. This fair is part of the DC Language Immersion Project, a non-profit founded by the Italian Dott.ssa Vanessa Bertelli.

This Winter term, forty-four courses began, including Music Together in Italian, for children 0-5 years old and their parents and grandparents, which is organized by Music Together and takes place in our headquarters. I recommend it for those of you who have babies and toddlers, as a fun activity for the entire family. Fourteen more classes will start in mid-February, for Session 2 of Winter Term, including Cooking classes, with a 3 lesson-course in Chevy Chase or Potomac.

I would like to draw your attention to our Courses + Trips, in particular: “DiscoverTuscany: in the heart and soul of Italy” and “Discover Liguria, Piemonte and Veneto - Slow Food and wine”. Please visit our website at http://www.italianculturalsociety.org/coursestrips/ to learn about the unique, personalized trips that we recommend, and see our Study abroad webpage.

We also invite you to attend “Live from Italy”, an intermediate/advanced conversation and writing course with the journalist Nicoletta Nencioli, on Mondays 1:00-3:00pm, and a Storia class with Antonella Salvatore, on Wednesdays at 12:30-1:30pm. Classes, in collaboration with NIAF at the NIAF headquarters in Dupont Circle are about to start again. This time we will offer a 5 week course, titled Regional Italian cuisine - history, traditions and recipes, on Tuesdays 6:30-8:30pm (final class 6:00-9:00pm -cooking class and dinner).

Finally, Summer Camp registration is open! We are offering a significant discount for enrollment before April 1st. Children are now getting ready for Carnevale. Do not miss their performance and the opportunity to learn more about Italian culture through them and a fun trivia game for adults!

See you all at the Festa di Carnevale, on February 11th!
Francesca Casazza
Executive Director
FEBRUARY EVENT 2/11/18

The Italian Cultural Society of Washington DC in collaboration with LE D.I.V.E. presents
Festa di Carnevale 2018

Get dressed in your favorite costume and join us on February 11th, from 3:00 to 6:00 pm at the Chevy Chase Village Hall, to enjoy a very special Carnival party!

- Arts & crafts for your children
- Adults will challenge their cultural skills with a fun Trivia game: teams organized in multiple tables will compete over questions on Italian Culture (Carnevale and much more! – Never miss the opportunity to learn something new with us!)
- Music and karaoke (for kids and adults who love karaoke)
- We will offer pizza, spritz, prosecco, wine and soft drinks. You are kindly invited to bring some traditional Carnevale treats, or another dessert or snack of your choice. Thank you for helping us make this event another fun Italian get together!

To RSVP please Submit the Form online and pay with the Donate button at http://www.italianculturalsociety.org/festa-di-carnevale-2018/

FESTA DI CARNEVALE

11 FEBRUARY 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm
CHEVY CHASE VILLAGE HALL
5906 Connecticut Ave, Chevy Chase, MD

10$ ICS/DIVE MEMBER
15$ NON MEMBER
KIDS ARE FREE

PROGRAM
3:00PM Welcome
3:10PM Arts & Crafts Children's Workshop [By Le D.I.V.E.] + Trivia game for adults
4:00PM ICS students' Performance
4:20PM Parade and Best Costume Contest
4:30PM More Music, Karaoke, Dance, Pizza and Drinks!

We would appreciate if you bring a traditional Carnevale dessert! Please specify in your RSVP.
Quando pensiamo alla Toscana, vengono in mente tante cose, in primis la sua pittoresca campagna, i cipressi, gli agriturismi, le aziende vinicole e le meravigliose città d’arte come Firenze e Pisa, per citarne giusto un paio. Questa è la bella Toscana che conosciamo tutti e che tutti amiamo. L’estate scorsa ho avuto la fortuna di scoprire qualcosa di nuovo, di colorato, di misterioso e di affascinante nella bassa Toscana: Il Giardino dei Tarocchi.


When we think of Tuscany, many things come to mind, first of all, its picturesque countryside, all its cypresses, the “agriturismi”, the wineries, and the marvelous cities full of art and artworks such as Florence and Pisa, to mention just a couple. This is the beautiful Tuscany we all know and love. Last Summer I was lucky to explore something new, something colorful, mysterious and fascinating in the Southern part of Tuscany: The Tarot Garden.

The Tarot Garden is an artistic park in Garavicchio, in the province of Grosseto, in Tuscany. The park is an idea and creation of French-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle and is populated by statues decorated in the artist’s typical mosaic style; it is the case of twenty-two monumental sculptures that represent the great mysteries of the Tarot cards, such as The High Priestess, The Magician, The Pope, The Empress, Temperance, The World, The Hermit, Death and so on. Inspired by a visit to Gaudi’s Parque Guell in Barcelona, followed by a visit to The Park of Monsters in Bomarzo, Umbria, Niki de Saint Phalle started working on the Tarot Garden in 1979, a project that will keep her busy for more than seventeen years, working together with an équipe of famous contemporary artists (to be continued)

Valentina Asciutti
NICHOLAS MONACO: WHAT A MONUMENT TO HUMAN KIND YOU ARE!

Steady at the helm of any enterprise you chose to espouse; faithful to friends that flocked around you; aware of your strength, but never imposing; humble in demeanor, but always triumphant; strong in principles and always buttressed by Brenda!

I have watched you in the past 18 years and never seen you make an error of judgment towards other people, or assuming a disposition of superiority or vanity.

You served the Italian Community as a member of the Board of Directors of the Italian Cultural Society, whether as a Chair for Hospitality, an Editor of our publication Poche Parole, or as Treasurer and organizer of the collaborative effort with The Holy Rosary Church and FIERI for the Italian Street Festival in Washington DC.

You have been one of the few truly manly man in whose company one felt secure and trusting as in a motherly womb! In the face of contrast, you always found reason for agreement; in the midst of difficulties, you came up with suggestions to facilitate the work of others. You helped the Society through painstaking efforts to raise funds with the raffle tickets, or by contributing to our Christmas party by making enough pasta al pesto to fill the stomachs of some 150 people at your pasta station.

If one needed somebody to listen to his problems he would go to Nick; if one were looking for an anchor amidst confusion he sought Nick. At the end of nearly all social events of the ICS Nick and Brenda were the obligatory stop, if only for a chat or just to enjoy their company.

Dear Nick, I am convinced that your existence in our lives, your permanence of character, your friendship and profound honesty and good will for human kind has had a formative influence on all of those who were lucky enough to be in your presence. We love you as you taught us to love. Thank you for what you have done for us, you have been an example to us all!

Luigi M. De Luca
RACCOMANDAZIONI LETTERARIE DAI NOSTRI STUDENTI

Nel periodo 2004-17, la nostra classe d’italiano ha letto e discusso quasi novanta libri italiani. Durante questo periodo, la classe è diventata meno una classe e più un circolo di lettura. Questo vuol dire che abbiamo usato i libri per capire meglio la lingua e la storia d’Italia e la letteratura e le idee universali scritte da autori italiani. Quasi tutti i libri che abbiamo letto erano buoni, ben scritti. In genere, valeva la pena di leggerli. Quasi ognuno aveva qualcosa di importante o interessante da offrire. Quindi non è facile raccomandare <<il migliore>> per una persona più o meno nuova per la lingua. Nonostante questo, tre libri ottimi con cui si può imparare abbastanza sono:

<<Cristo si è fermato a Eboli>>, di Carlo Levi
<<La scomparsa di Pato>>, di Andrea Camilleri
<<Canale Mussolini>>, di Antonio Pennacchi

Scelgo questi tre perché sono tutti ben scritti, dicono cose importanti della storia e della cultura d’Italia, sono libri che ogni studente serio della lingua italiana dovrebbe conoscere. Ti danno piattaforme ferme per cominciare un viaggio molto speciale attraverso una società forestiera e davvero unica.

Richard Cohen

In the period 2004-17, our Italian class has read and discussed nearly ninety books written in Italian. During this time, the class has become less a class and more a book club. This is to say that we have used the books to understand better the language and the history and the literature and universal ideas written by Italian authors. Almost all of the books we have read were good, well written. In general, reading them was worthwhile. Almost every one has had something important and interesting to offer. Therefore, it is not easy to recommend “the best” to a person more or less new to the language. Nevertheless, three very good books from which one can learn a lot are:

Cristo si e’ fermato a Eboli, by Carlo Levi
La scomparsa di Pato, by Andrea Camilleri
Canale Mussolini, by Antonio Pennachi

I choose these three because all are very well written, say something important about the history and culture of Italy, are books that every serious student of the Italian language should know. They give one a firm platform to begin a very special voyage through a truly unique foreign society.
THE PULSE OF TIME
From our archives

The pulse of time ticks inexorably without regard for anyone’s condition, or perhaps with liberating power for some. On a bridge between two cultures, we orchestrate a balancing act, at times claiming advantage, but more often conceding the ephemeral condition of the mobile soul. We fit everywhere and nowhere, we conduct lives which at times resemble more the high speed chase of a dream, a condition no longer attainable, a sadness constantly attached. We are distant and close, lost and found, happy and sad. We are aware of distances, claim pride in our flight, and yet regret the detachment ... With this background, we are only satisfied with the very best; we demand an absolute performance in our various tasks; we aim to the highest point and have little patience for the mediocre. We are very hard to please and know deep down the cost of our choices. I think that a very important function of our Italian Cultural Society should be to reassure us in our identity, provide the cement to join and support, guide and illuminate our paths and increase our pride. Above all, we should enhance Culture, and by Culture I mean not only the scholarly type, but what is traditionally Italian Culture, which comprises the renaissance of pride in parenting, in social responsibility, in civilized behavior, in mastering of technology and in arts and crafts. We should foster a vision of excellence, guided by our long and best traditions, but for this we need resources: to reward the scholars who excel in the study of Italian culture, language and literature; organize cultural trips; support and increase the quality of this publication, (which may not continue if it must only rely on volunteer work). For these and other initiatives we need income, which cannot be generated only by the yearly membership fees. We need a stable team of people to accomplish various tasks, now performed by a few generous volunteers. I appeal to those of you who can afford it, to invest in the future of this Society so that we can invite additional speakers, offer a more interesting social program, publish a more comprehensive newsletter, create a library for everyone who is interested, and support other cultural initiatives, such as the institution of a “Young Artist Award” and a “Young Scientist Award” of the Italian Cultural Society to be given at our yearly dinner function. These new ideas may open new avenues and encourage our young to be ever more proud, constructive and aware of our Italian cultural heritage.

Luigi M. De Luca

LOCAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

Please visit our web page http://www.italianculturalsociety.org/upcoming-events/

Also, check THE ITALIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE’S calendar (Istituto Italiano di Cultura (IIC), which links to specific events and exhibits: http://www.iicwashington.esteri.it/iic_washington/it
To advertise on Poche Parole, please contact language@italianculturalsociety.org, or call 301-215-7885.

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- 1/2 page: $150
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