SOCIAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS OVERVIEW

FESTA DI NATALE

Our 2018 Festa di Natale will take place at Chevy Chase Village Hall, 5906 Connecticut Ave NW, Chevy Chase, MD 20815 on December 16 at 4 PM.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Our social activities in November covered the two important areas of Italian music and literature. On Friday November 16th, Prof. Richard Giarusso of Johns Hopkins University’s Peabody Conservatory gave a very interesting and well attended presentation on “Conversation about Puccini’s Messa di Gloria”. On Sunday November 18th, Prof. Kristina Olson of George Mason University spoke on the equally interesting and well attended topic of “Boccaccio’s Works and Influence”.

Our next social, the Festa di Natale, will take place at the Chevy Chase Village Hall, 5906 Connecticut Ave NW, Chevy Chase, MD 20815 on December 16 at 4 PM. It will feature piano music by one of our young pianist award winners Dominick Cristofori D’ Alessandro, a visit by Babbo Natale and the Befana with their Elves, our traditional presepe, children’s entertainment organized by our teacher Fiorenza Castelli, with the associations Le D.I.V.E., MaPaCi Italians in DC and Music Together Vivo. (Gifts for the children should be marked with the first and last name of the child to avoid confusion). The members attending are asked to bring food as specified in detail in the following pages, as it is traditional for this event. Finally it is my pleasure to welcome the following new members of the Board, approved by the membership on Sunday November 18th, Annelise Brody, David Cieslikowski, David Flaxman, Carola Mamberto, and Sanjay Srikantiah.

- Luigi M. De Luca, President ICS
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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Single: George H. Johnson III, Anthony Spadafora

Couple and Family: Deanna and Kevin Youngquist, Elisa and Louis Evangelista, Joseph Rizzo and family

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NOVEMBER SOCIAL EVENT WITH PROF. KRISTINA OLSON

Dr Olson began her presentation on Boccaccio and his most famous work, the Decameron with a short review of Boccaccio’s life (1313-1375) and his role as one of the three great Italian authors of the period, Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarcha. He was born in Certaldo, in Tuscany, the illegitimate son of a merchant and a woman of humble origin. Although Dante is given credit for the first great literary work in the Italian language, it was Boccaccio who lectured on and popularized La Divina Commedia. Both authors wrote in Latin as well as early Italian. The Decameron is a story in which a group of ten young people spend ten days outside of Florence narrating and discussing 100 tales on a variety of topics. The topics on each day had a different theme. The young people were fleeing the black plague, which reduced the population of Italy by over 50%. It is most well known for its ribaldry and sexual content and was banned from publication in the USA during the first quarter of the 20th century. Dr. Olson explained that this aspect of the story is not the most important one. It can also be thought of as “the performance of literature as a social experience”. The Decameron is considered as the beginning of the novel (romanzo) as a literary form. Boccaccio is also considered to be the first “psychological” author as well as the first writer of the short story (novella) form.
PUCCINI AT THE ITALIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY

The Italian Cultural Society launched a new collaboration with the Georgetown Chorale this fall. The Chorale is a fine community choir directed by Dr. Richard Giarusso. Dr. Giarusso presented a talk to the ICS on Friday, November 16 about the great Italian opera composer Giacomo Puccini. Puccini had written a beautiful sacred work, his “Messa di Gloria”, early in his career. This work is not performed a great deal and the Georgetown Chorale was preparing to perform it on Saturday, December 1, at the Church of the Epiphany in Washington, DC.

Dr. Giarusso took the attendees through a guided tour of this beautiful piece, playing excerpts of a recording of the piece in order to help illustrate his points. There was a spirited question and answer section at the end of the talk. The Georgetown Chorale extended a 20% discount offer to members of the ICS for this concert.

On December 1, the Puccini “Messa di Gloria” was performed quite beautifully (by all accounts of audience members) with tenor soloist Patrick Kilbride and baritone soloist Brody del Beccaro. Richard Giarusso conducted and he was ably assisted by Andrew Welch on piano and the Georgetown Chorale Festival Orchestra. There were many ICS members in attendance in a crowd estimated at 350 patrons at the magnificent Church of the Epiphany at 13th and G. In addition to the Puccini “Messa”, the Chorale presented three Christmas carols – “Tu Scendi dalle Stelle,” “Christmas Night” by John Rutter, and “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” by David Willcocks. We look forward to future Italian themed musical events with the Georgetown Chorale.

By David Flaxman
Photos from the social event with Prof. Giarusso
FESTA DI NATALE!

The program of the party is on the flyer below and you can find a full description and RSVP on our webpage at http://www.italianculturalsociety.org/natale-2018/ (RSVP is required!)

FESTA DI NATALE
December 16th, 2018 at 4pm
CHEVY CHASE VILLAGE HALL
5906 Connecticut Ave NW - Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Program

4:00-5:00PM Kids will be entertained by Le D.I.V.E, MaPaCi Italians in D.C. with Arts & Crafts activities and by Music Together Vivo in Italian, with instructor Rita.

4:20PM Dominick Cristofori D’Alessandro’s piano performance of classical arias and holiday music.

5:00PM Children’s choir followed by Babbo Natale, Befana and the Elves for gifts distribution.
   (Parents must bring labelled gifts and drop them off at the door by 5:00PM)

5:45PM POTLUCK
   Last names from A to F, please bring meats or casseroles.
   Last names from G to M, salad or fruit;
   N to Z, pasta or rice dish.
   ICS will provide desserts and drinks.

6:30 RAFFLE: Lotteria di Natale
   (Great prizes from our sponsors! Buy tickets at the door.)

RSVP
To help us plan refreshments and children’s crafts, please specify names number of adults and children in your party by Dec. 10th.
RSVP by completing the online form at http://www.italianculturalsociety.org/natale-2018/
Call 301-215-7885 if you need assistance. Space is limited and RSVP is required.
FROM THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM
DECEMBER 2018

On Sunday November 11, the ILP organized a full day training for our teachers on “Il metodo comunicativo - aspetti teorici e pratici, lesson plan, libri di testo, attività e materiale didattico,” conducted mainly by Prof. Annelise Brody. It was then enriched with interventions by our expert teacher Camilla Presti, myself and especially Cristiana Fabiani.

The Winter schedule is online and registration is open. New beginners classes start both in the evening and in the morning. Intermediate and advanced levels can choose from History, Art History, Cinema, Literature, *The art of story telling in the middle ages-from Petrarch to Boccaccio*, Virtual Tours, *Italy Today or Live from Italy*, to discuss the Italian news of the week and practice journalist style writing. Different levels of “Book Club” reading classes will introduce you to authors like Tomasi di Lampedusa, Donatella di Pietranantonio and others.

In English and in Italian, we also offer some *Courses +Trips* (starting with the region Veneto), *Cooking Classes, Traditional Italian Cuisine* and *Latin Classes*. All children’s courses will continue as from Fall schedule, as well as *Yoga in Italian*, for which we are adding also a lunch time session.

On our website you will find information about these and more courses, as well as our recommended trips and suggestions for schools to study in Italy.

See you at the Festa di Natale on December 16th. Buone Feste!

Francesca Casazza

Don’t miss the KIDS WINTER WORKSHOP, with Fiorenza, on Friday, December 14, 6:00-9:00pm! More information and registration at http://www.italianculturalsociety.org/children-workshops/
RACCOMANDAZIONI LETTERARIE DEI NOSTRI STUDENTI
SETA DI ALESSANDRO BARICCO BY EDIE LASNER

Questa storia tratta di un uomo francese, Herve` Joncour, il quale attraversa il mondo per andare in Giappone, prima a causa del suo lavoro (lui cerca i bachi da seta) e poi a causa dell’amore misterioso con una ragazzina che è una concubina di un barone locale. La storia ha luogo nel XIX secolo.

La storia è sensuale. Quando la ragazzina giapponese beve dalla tazza da te` di Herve`, l’autore scrive: “Lentamente, la ruota’ fino ad avere sulle labbra il punto preciso in cui aveva bevuto lui. Socchiudendo gli occhi, beve un sorso di te’.” Un altro esempio è quando Herve` lascia cadere uno dei suoi guanti accanto al vestito della ragazzina: “Con un gesto impercettibile, prima di avviarsi verso il sentiero lascio’ cadere uno dei suoi guanti accanto all’abitto color arancio, abbandonato sulla riva.” Un altro esempio è quando Herve` fa il bagno (presumibilmente una vecchia donna gli fa il bagno), e lui pensa: “Non era la mano vecchia di una vecchia.”


Alla fine Hervé torna in Francia e li` riprende la sua vita. Dopo poco tempo riceve una lettera composta da ideogrammi giapponesi. Dovete leggere il libro per scoprire che succede!

This story tells of a Frenchman, Herve` Joncour, who crosses the world to Japan, first because of his work (he is in search of silkworms) and then for reasons of a mysterious love with a young girl who is a concubine of a local baron. The story takes place in the 19th century.

The story is sensual. When the Japanese girl drinks from Herve’s cup of tea, the author writes: “Slowly, she turns it to have her lips on the precise point where he drank. Closing her eyes, she drinks a sip of tea.” Another example occurs when Herve` lets one of his gloves drop next to the girl’s garment: “With an imperceptible gesture, before going ahead on the path he lets fall one of his gloves next to the orange gown, abandoned on the shore.” Yet another example is when Herve` takes a bath in Japan (presumably an old woman gives him the bath), he thinks “It wasn’t the old hand of an old woman.”

The form of the book is almost poetic. There’s a rhythm to the words. The language is simple, but every word has significance. Barrico uses few words to evoke many thoughts. For example, when he writes of Herve` and his wife Helene, “They don’t have children,” these three words evoke many thoughts more than that they don’t have children. He repeats some phrases as a reprise. He writes some phrases as a haiku. Also, the pages themselves appear almost as a poem, with much empty space.

Eventually Herve` returns to France and resumes his life there. After a while he receives a letter composed of Japanese ideograms. You must read the book to discover what happens!
A SPECIAL TOUR OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

BY LUCY FALCONE

We recently visited the Metropolitan Museum with a group from the National Organization of Italian American Women. It was a behind-the-scenes tour of the Department of Scientific Research. A young Italian woman took us down to the basement where the department is located. Fourteen scientists conduct research at the Met in addition to about 40 doctoral and post-doctoral fellows who work there for a year while completing their studies. Most of the scientists have doctorates in geology or chemistry. Among the 14 permanent staff, five are Italians who received their doctorates in Italy. The Met has the largest department of scientific research in the U.S., the only ones with a similar budget being the Smithsonian and the Getty. In addition, two years ago, the Met received a $6 million grant from the Mellon Foundation to assist 10 other museums in New York City that don’t have research departments, including the Guggenheim, MoMA and the Whitney.

The first stop on our visit was with a scientist who studies the environment of works of art. For example, she studies various types of packaging material for transporting art, trying to understand if a type of foam, for example, might cause damage to a painting or a statue. Or she might investigate various types of plexiglass. She might put a piece of foam or plexiglass in the same container as the material with which a work of art was made and conduct tests, including in a high temperature oven, to judge the safety of the material.

In other stops the staff explained how they date with precision a work of art using above all non-invasive methods, including high-powered microscopes and x-ray machines. They’ve been able to examine an artifact from the Olmec culture, for example, and reduce the time period in which it was produced from Recentemente ho partecipato a una visita guidata al Metropolitan Museum organizzata dal National Organization of Italian American Women. Si può dire che era una visita dietro le quinte perché abbiamo potuto vedere il lavoro del dipartimento della ricerca scientifica. Dopo esserci ritrovati all’entrata del museo la nostra guida, una giovane ragazza italiana, ci ha condotto nel seminterrato del palazzo.

Prima di descrivere l’obiettivo del dipartimento si deve sapere che ci sono 14 scienziati che fanno la ricerca oltre a una quarantina di borsisti che lavorano li per un’anno mentre completano i loro studi. La maggior parte hanno dottorati o in geologia o in chimica. E, tra questi 14, cinque sono italiani che hanno fatto i loro studi in Italia. Il museo ha il più grande dipartimento di ricerca museologica degli Stati Uniti, gli unici con un budget simile sono lo Smithsonian e il Getty Museum. Per di più due anni fa il dipartimento ha ricevuto un finanziamento di 6 milioni di dollari dalla Fondazione Mellon per poter mettere gli scienziati a disposizione di 10 musei a New York che non hanno le risorse di fare ricerca autonomamente, incluso il Guggenheim, il MoMA, e il Whitney.

La prima tappa della nostra visita è stata con una scienziata che studia gli ambienti in cui sono esposte o contenute le opere d’arte. Per esempio studia i vari tipi d’imballaggio per trasportare le opere, cercando di capire se un pannello in polistirene possa danneggiare un quadro o una statua. Un’altro esempio sarebbe lo studio di vari tipi di plexiglas con lo stesso scopo. La scienziata colloca un pezzetto del pannello o del plexiglas con un esemplare del materiale in cui è stata costruita l’opera d’arte e poi fa varie prove, incluse in un tipo di forno ad alta temperatura per giudicare la sicurezza del materiale messo in prossimità dell’opera d’arte.
A SPECIAL TOUR OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
BY LUCY FALCONE (CONTINUED)

a range of 700 years to roughly an 80-year time frame. At the end of our visit they explained how they analyzed a Van Gogh painting at the request of the Guggenheim. What interested the curators at the Guggenheim was that the colors in the painting (Landscape with Snow) were dissimilar to those in other works by Van Gogh. The colors were muddy rather than clear and bright. The Guggenheim curators weren’t concerned about the authenticity of the painting but rather whether it had been retouched or degraded by environmental exposure. In this case the Met scientists weren’t able to do their work using only non-invasive methods. They took a microscopic chip of the paint, using surgical type tools, and examined it under a high-powered microscope. They discovered that the nucleus of the chip was a bright pink color and that it was only the surface that had faded to a pale, almost white, lilac. Thus they were able to conclude that the painting had suffered from environmental degradation.

It was a fascinating visit even though beforehand it seemed as if the topic was too dry and technical for me.

In altre tappe ci hanno spiegato come fanno per datare con precisione un’opera d’arte usando soprattutto metodi non invasivi servendosi di microscopi molto potenti e di macchine radiografiche. Così sono stati in grado di datare con precisione un artefatto della cultura messicana Olmec di cui i conservatori sapevano solamente che era stato fatto in un arco di 700 anni e gli scienziati hanno potuto ridurarlo a un’ottantina di anni.

Alla fine ci hanno spiegato come hanno fatto ad analizzare un quadro di Van Gogh su richiesta del Guggenheim Museum. La cosa che aveva destato l’interesse dei conservatori del Guggenheim era che i colori del quadro non assomigliavano per niente a quelli che di solito usava il pittore. Erano torbidi piuttosto che i colori chiari e vivi che si trovano negli altri quadri di Van Gogh. I conservatori del Guggenheim non dubitavano dell’autenticità del quadro, invece volevano sapere per esempio se il quadro fosse stato ritoccato o se si fosse degradato nell’ambiente. In questo caso non era stato possibile per gli scienziati arrivare ad una conclusione usando solamente metodi non invasivi. Hanno preso un piccolo frammento della vernice usando strumenti impiegati in chirurgia. Una volta fatta l’analisi con un microscopio ad alto ingrandimento hanno scoperto che il nucleo del frammento era di colore rosa vivo e che era solamente la superficie che era diventata di un lilla sbiadito quasi bianco. Con questi risultati hanno concluso che il quadro si era degradato a contatto con l’ambiente.

Mi è piaciuta molto questa visita nonostante che prima d’andarci mi fossi chiesto se non sarebbe stato un argomento troppo arido e tecnico per me.

Lucy Falcone e’ stata per molti anni un membro della nostra Societa’ ed ha studiato la nostra lingua presso l’Italian Language Program!
LOCAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

Sunday, December 9, 2018 at 3:00pm, at the Kennedy Center: National Symphony Orchestra: Noseda conducts Mahler’s First Symphony (A special offer exclusively for members of the Italian Cultural Society: $29 orchestra seats. Call us (301)215-7885 to get the code!)

Please visit our webpage: www.italianculturalsociety.org/events
And visit The Italian Cultural Institute’s calendar: www.iicwashington.esteri.it/iic_washington/it

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