



SOCIETÀ DANTE ALIGHIERI
IL MONDO IN ITALIANO
COMITATO DI CANBERRA

Dante Review

"To preserve and disseminate Italian language and culture"

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Regular Events

**Enrolments in Term 4
starting on Tuesday
10 October are now open!**

**DMV rehearsals
on Thursdays 5-7pm**

**Conversation groups
are back on Thursdays
14 September at 7pm!**

Leonardo, we hardly knew you!

The transmission of the intellectual achievements of the Arab civilization and those it had inherited from its Babylonian, Greek and Indian predecessors to the scholars, artisans and merchants of Europe was one of the major sources of inspiration for the Renaissance

David Wilson will introduce you to the role that Leonardo played in the transmission of this Idea!

Thursday 14 September - 8pm

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Italian Trivia Night

Spend a convivial hour with us learning all sorts of facts about Italy - its geography, history, cuisine, sport and culture - and showing off what you already know, in the company of your friends and colleagues!

Thursday 5 October - 8pm

**Both events will be held in the Function Room
of the Notaras Multicultural Centre (Level 2)
180 London Circuit (entry via Civic Square)**

News from the office

Office Hours

The office hours of the Dante Alighieri Society of Canberra Inc. are:

9:30am-1:00pm Tuesday to Friday

For all enquiries please call the office on **6247 1884** or send us an email to **info@danteact.org.au**

Visit us at **www.danteact.org.au**

We are also on *Facebook*: click 'like' to be up to date!

Library

The Dante library is open during office hours. It includes the following sections: Reading, Education, Literature, Youth, Geography, History, Art, Music, Cinema.

Committee Members

President

Professor Franco Papandrea

Vice-Presidents

Cristina Giusti and Gordon McCormick

Treasurer

Tony Hanrahan

Secretary

Grant Doran

Committee members

Luigi Catizone, Julie Docker,
Sonia Fortuna, Sam Palma

Journal Editors: Yvette Devlin, Susan Reye

Note: the journal editors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Alessia and Daniela in compiling this issue.

Upcoming Events

1 September - Enrolments in formal courses for Term 4 open

14 September - Conversation groups @7pm - every Thursday for 10 weeks

14 September - Cultural Event: *Leonardo, we hardly knew you! A talk by David Wilson* (see p. 1)

20 September - Term 3 formal courses end

21 September - Conversation groups @7pm

28 September - Conversation groups @7pm

5 October - Conversation groups (7-8pm)

5 October - Special Event: *Italian Trivia night*

10 October - Term 4 formal courses begin

12 October - Conversation groups @7pm

19 October - Conversation groups @7pm

26 October - Conversation groups @7pm

2 November - Cultural Event: *The Truth of Fiction: Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels. A talk by Joseph Falsone.*

Calendar of Activities

Formal Courses

Term 1	From 6 February to 7 April
Term 2	From 1 May to 30 June
Term 3	From 24 July to 22 September
Term 4	From 9 October to 8 December

Thursday Conversation Groups

Term 1	From 23 February to 27 April
Term 2	From 1 June to 3 August
Term 3	From 14 September to 16 November

Cultural Activities

14 September	Leonardo, we hardly knew you - <i>D. Wilson</i>
5 October	Italian Trivia Night
2 November	The Truth of Fiction: Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels - <i>Joseph Falsone</i>
23 November	End-of year function: DMV Choir, cooking competition, refreshments

Choir Rehearsals: every Thursday from 2 February to 7 December from 5pm to 7pm in the Function Room at the Notaras Multicultural Centre

Modi di dire

Sayings - Francesca Foppoli

Avresti dovuto tacere: ti sei dato la zappa sui piedi.

You should have kept quiet, you shot yourself in the foot.

E così facendo, si è trovato tra l'incudine e il martello.

And by doing so, he found himself between a rock and a hard place.

È un commerciante in gamba anche se pare tagliato con la scure.

He is a very capable business owner despite being a bit rough around the edges.

È sempre stato un lazzarone ed è andato avanti a forza di puntelli.

He's always been lazy and moved up thanks to his connections.

Un'operazione così a 90 anni non è consigliabile: c'è il pericolo di rimanere sotto i ferri.

It's not advisable to have this type of surgery at 90 years of age; there is the risk of dying on the operating table.

Dopo il suo incarico politico, Pino è diventato un personaggio di grosso calibro nel mondo degli affari.

Following his political role, Pino has become a prominent figure in the business world.

Quando è sotto stress, Andrea può perdere facilmente la bussola.

When he's under stress, Andrea can easily lose his bearings.



L'angolo della lingua

Language corner - Yvette Devlin

Here are three idiomatic expressions and a false friend.

Prendersela - [composed of the verb *prendere* in the reflexive form + *la* meaning *for/about it*] means *to get upset/feel hurt for/about something*. Ex: **non prendertela - non intendeva offenderti** = *don't get upset - he didn't mean to offend you*.

Tenerci - [composed of the verb *tenere* + *ci* meaning *about something*] means *to care about something*. Ex: **ci tengo molto alla puntualità** = *I really care about punctuality / punctuality is important to me*.

Farcela - [composed of the verb *fare* + *ci* + *la* which becomes *cela* meaning *it/something*] means *to succeed/manage to do something*. Ex: **finalmente ce l'ha fatta: è stato promosso!** = *He finally made it: he's passed!* and **non ce la faccio più, sono stanchissima** = *I can't stand it any longer/ cannot go on, I'm very tired*.

Occorrere and *occur* have different meanings. Check out these examples.

Mi occorrono tre uova per la torta = *I need three eggs for the cake* [note the Italian construction: three eggs are needed by me]; **Cosa ti occorre adesso?** = *what do you need/require now?*; **mi occorre un cacciavite** = *I need a screwdriver*.

It occurred to me that she might be overseas = **mi è venuto in mente che potrebbe essere all'estero**.

What occurred last night is unforgivable = **quello/ciò che è successo ieri sera è imperdonabile**.

Qual è il colmo per un giardiniere?

Inviare la Vostra risposta a info@danteact.org.au.

Non si vince niente, ma le risposte più divertenti verranno pubblicate sul prossimo numero della rivista :-)

L'angolo della poesia

Poetry corner - Yvette Devlin



Poet and novelist **Umberto Saba** was born in 1883 in Trieste when the city was under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and died in 1957 in nearby Gorizia. He lived most of his life in Trieste, which frequently features in his works. He suffered from depressive lows interspersed with creative highs for most of his adult life. He managed to make a living for his family out of an antiquarian bookshop he bought and ran in Trieste.

Born of a Jewish mother, Umberto was influenced by this background which also prompted him to go into hiding during WWII to escape being deported. He published several poetry collections, essays and novels. His last novel, *Ernesto*, was unfinished at the time of his death and was published posthumously. He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Rome and an award from the Lincean Academy.

The following poem presents glimpses of his native city while also expressing his sombre mood.

Trieste

Ho attraversata tutta la città.
Poi ho salita un'erta,
popolosa in principio, in là deserta,
chiusa da un muricciolo:
un cantuccio in cui solo
siedo; e mi pare che dove esso termina
termini la città.

Trieste ha una scontrosa
grazia. Se piace,
è come un ragazzaccio aspro e vorace,
con gli occhi azzurri e mani troppo grandi
per regalare un fiore;
come un amore
con gelosia.

Da quest'erta ogni chiesa, ogni sua via
scopro, se mena all'ingrombrata spiaggia,
o alla collina cui, sulla sassosa
cima, una casa, l'ultima, s'aggrappa.

Intorno
circola ad ogni cosa
un'aria strana, un'aria tormentosa,
l'aria natia.

La mia città che in ogni parte è viva,
ha il cantuccio a me fatto, alla mia vita
pensosa e schiva.



L'angolo della poesia

Poetry corner - Yvette Devlin (cont'd)

The following translation, by Vincent Moleta, is found in the volume *Umberto Saba – Poetry and Prose*

I made my way right across the city.
Then I climbed a slope,
crowded at the start, deserted further up,
closed off by a low wall:
a corner in which I sit
alone; and it seems to me that where this
corner ends
ends the city.

Trieste has a testy
charm. If it takes your fancy,
it is like a rough, eager lad,
with blue eyes and hands too big
to give a flower as a gift;
like a love
mingled with jealousy.

From this slope I can pick out every church,
every one of its streets, whether they lead to
the crowded beach
or to the hill where one house, the last one,
clings to the stony summit.
On all sides
an unfamiliar troubled air
flows over everything,
the native air.

My city, vibrant in its every part,
has a corner just for me, for my
pensive, withdrawn life.

***The pictures show a younger Saba,
an older Saba and Trieste, one of the
oldest parts of the Habsburg Monarchy,
belonging to it from 1382 until 1918***



Cenno storico

A bit of history - Yvette Devlin

Andrea Mantegna (1431 - 13 September 1506) is one of our foremost painters of the Italian Renaissance.

Born near Padua, at the age of eleven he joined the workshop of Padua's painter Scuarione where he remained for six years before branching out on his own. Renowned for his experimentation with perspective and a sculptural approach to frescoes, Mantegna undertook commissions for churches in Padua (Eremitani, Sant'Antonio) before moving to Verona and then Mantua and Rome.

Among his major works are a painted altarpiece at San Zeno, Verona; frescoes in the Wedding Chamber at the Gonzaga family apartment located in the Mantua castle, where he had been retained as court artist and where he worked closely with the cultured Marchesa Isabella d'Este, one of the leading political women in the Italian Renaissance; and a haunting painting of The Dead Christ in which the cadaver of Christ is portrayed supine on a marble slab and the perspective technique accentuates the tragedy of the scene.



The Lamentation over the Dead Christ
Tempera on canvas, 68x81 cm, 1490
Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.

Andrea Mantegna (1431-13 settembre 1506) è uno dei maggiori pittori del Rinascimento italiano. Nato vicino a Padova, all'età di undici anni entrò nella bottega del pittore padovano Scuarione e vi rimase sei anni prima di andarsene per conto proprio.

Rinomato per la sua sperimentazione con la prospettiva ed un approccio scultoreo nei suoi affreschi, Mantegna accettò commissioni per chiese a Padova (gli Eremitani e Sant'Antonio) prima di trasferirsi a Verona ed in seguito a Mantova e Roma.

Tra le sue maggiori opere figurano una pala d'altare a San Zeno, Verona; gli affreschi nella Casa degli Sposi nell'appartamento della famiglia Gonzaga situato nel castello di Mantova, alla cui corte era stato assunto come artista e dove collaborò strettamente con la colta Marchesa Isabella d'Este, una delle donne di maggior rilievo politico del Rinascimento italiano; ed un inquietante dipinto del Cristo morto in cui il cadavere di Cristo è ritratto supino su una lastra di marmo e la prospettiva usata acuisce la tragedia della scena.

A farewell to Dante Members

Yvette Devlin

As foreshadowed, I have relinquished all of my tasks at the Dante Alighieri Society in light of my impending move to Sydney after living in Canberra for thirty-six years and being closely associated with the Dante for the past seventeen years.

Many of you will know that over many of these seventeen years I have taken responsibility for coordinating formal courses and conversation evenings, for the cultural program, for the newsletter, for some of the marketing and advertising; that I led a conversation group all these years, and that I was the link between the Dante Committee and the wonderful Dante Musica Viva choir of which I've been a member since its foundation in 2005.

My last project for the Society, of which I am particularly proud, was the preparation of a booklet on the Society's history to mark its 60th anniversary. This has involved a lot of research, interviews, writing, selection of photos and working with the graphic designer and printer. The booklet was launched at the reception held at the ambassador's residence on 16 June to celebrate the Society's important landmark.

It was at this event that our president Professor Franco Papandrea, in recognition of my contribution to the Society over a long period, kindly presented me with a Life Membership certificate and a magnificent edition of the *Divine Comedy* illustrated with the beautiful images of Gustave Doré. Nice words were said about me by Franco and I take this opportunity to thank him and the Committee for their thoughtfulness in marking the end of an important chapter in my life in Canberra.

I leave this city and the Society with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I am looking forward to starting a new chapter in Sydney: being near my lovely daughter Natasha and her black toy poodle Tiger; doing some writing and pursuing some personal projects;

extending the time I spend every year in my hometown in Friuli; and hopefully enjoying some down-time if I manage to avoid being drawn into committees – although the Dante Society of Sydney has already approached me about joining its Committee!

On the other hand, I am going to miss a lot of Canberra's life: first and foremost the Dante choir which has given me so much joy and friendship over the last twelve years; then the direct contact I had (through the conversation evenings and cultural activities) with Dante students/members who love Italy's language and culture; my direct involvement in important events of the Italian community including those organised by the Ambassador; the reporting of such events for the Italian newspaper *La Fiamma* thereby demonstrating that Canberra was an interesting and thriving place; and the many friendships and acquaintances I have made through my involvement is so much of the Italian life of Canberra. For all these opportunities and experiences, I feel very blessed.

I am now saying farewell to all of you, dear members. I hope you will maintain your interest and enthusiasm for Italy's beautiful language and culture, and your support for our great Society.

And a big thank you to Franco Papandrea for his long-standing commitment to the Society: he was already on the committee when I joined it in the year 2000!



Europe's future, and should we care?

David Ritchie

Why should we care about Europe when Australia's own region is turbulent?

- The strategic policy of our principal security partner, the United States, is uncertain;
- China is newly assertive. The period of 'hiding our strength and biding our time' is over;
- Is Indonesia's transition to liberal democracy firmly established? The recent imprisonment of the Governor of Jakarta on charges of blasphemy is not a good sign;
- Does the fighting in Murawi City in the Philippines indicate a worrying shift of radical Islamist fighters into Southeast Asia?
- North Korea's bellicosity and nuclear capability are a potentially catastrophic flash point;
- And in our nearest neighbour, PNG, the challenges of governance and development remain as acute as ever.

But we have close ties to Europe.

- Most obviously for Dante Alighieri society members, it is where most of us come from;
- We derive our values and our institutions from Europe;
- While infuriatingly self-absorbed at times, the EU is also a standard setter in many areas of economic activity;
- Taken as a group, the EU is Australia's second largest trading partner;
- It is a source of technology and know-how, and a partner for our universities and research institutions;
- We cooperate on security issues, notably in Afghanistan;
- Europe is an important partner in our attempts to find solutions to global issues – financial stability and economic growth, cyber security, counter-terrorism, the continuing menace of nuclear weapons, climate change;
- We have a common interest in the continued functioning of the liberal international system, and in agreed rules for the conduct of international affairs.

Europe does matter to Australia but is it still a constant and predictable partner?

Europe itself is going through a period of change. The two largest peripheral powers, Russia and Turkey, are moving in an increasingly authoritarian and illiberal direction. And the leaders of two EU members, Poland and Hungary, are implementing populist policies that bring them into conflict with EU rules and decisions. The trend to monitor is whether these differences within the EU will accentuate or attenuate over time.

But populism has been checked, at least for the present, in the Western European core of the EU. Wilders and his far-right Freedom Party won just 13% of the vote in the Dutch elections in March. The National Front, while still a substantial political force in France, came a distant second in the Presidential elections and has only 8 members of the National Assembly. The UK Independence Party had a bad general election, attracting less than 2% of the vote and winning no seats. And pro-European parties are on track to score close to 80% of the vote in German

**Canberra Dante Society Vice-President,
Cristina Giusti, thanks David Ritchie
for his presentation on 22 June 2017**



Europe's future, and should we care?

David Ritchie

elections in September. So a broad pattern has emerged of populist nationalism in the East and, with the exception of the Brexit referendum, a more internationalist, pro-EU trend in Western Europe.

Looking in more detail at two recent spectacular events in Europe – the French and UK elections – the first shows a tectonic shift in political alignments and the other unveils a problematic future.

The scope of change in **France** has been surprising for a country so attached to tradition. The Socialist Party fell from 284 seats in the Assembly elections to 44, losing the seats of its presidential candidate and its party head in the process. The Republicans dropped from 199 to 137. Seventy five per cent of parliamentarians are first timers. President Macron obtained a strong majority for his party and looks set to be able to legislate without obstruction in the Assembly.

Macron occupies what might be called the radical centre. He believes traditional party alignments are poorly suited to dealing with the disruptive challenges of the day – globalisation, automation, the freelance economy, the environment. He borrows policies from Left and Right. His first priority will be to introduce flexibility into France's notoriously rigid industrial-relations scene, slimming down the 3,000-page Code du Travail. But France will remain a *dirigiste* economy and society, with the government intervening extensively. And there will be no end to presidential pomp and circumstance; France has been called a monarchy masquerading as a republic. Macron will retain all the dignity of his position as head of state.

A note of caution is called for. Have we really seen the end of the old France deeply divided between the workers and the bosses? The first reaction of parliamentarians from the far left was to say the battle was just beginning, and to call for people to hit the streets in a time-honoured 'day of action'. The rec-

ord abstention rate in the second round of the Assembly election of 57% could also indicate that many people are reserving judgment, and that the government is 'sous surveillance'. The President may have won a parliamentary majority; but he now has to overcome the street.

The success of Macron's reforming efforts will have repercussions beyond France. A re-invigorated and newly confident France will be a strong partner for Germany as a driving force in the EU, and could relieve the concerns of the German taxpayer that he/she is always forking out for other people's mistakes and big ideas. Already this Franco-German duo has been dubbed 'Merkron'. But Merkron will only be able to power on with the European project if France's domestic reform efforts succeed.

If France's future has still to be written, the outlook for the **UK** is much tougher and more challenging than would have been guessed even six months ago. Prime Minister May has gone from having a working majority in parliament to heading a minority government. Three months of the 2-year notice period for Brexit have been spent on the election. The enormity and cost of leaving the EU are not widely appreciated: an estimated 19,000 rules, regulations and directives to be reviewed, and a "divorce" bill variously put at between 50 to 100 billion Euros. A weakened Prime Minister confronts the largest diplomatic and legal challenge the UK has faced for decades.

Some say that May's weakened position will paradoxically result in a more reasonable negotiating position, and eventually a 'soft' Brexit. That could mean the UK remaining in the single market, at least for a transitional period, and retaining links to other areas of the EU. The mention in the Queen's speech of a Brexit which commands maximum public support indicates that the Prime Minister may now be seeking a softer Brexit than she was girding up for before the elections. But

Europe's future, and should we care?

David Ritchie (cont'd)

will a soft Brexit pass muster with the Eurosceptics in the Conservative Party? PM May's task is a many-headed hydra – get the best deal for Britain from the tough nuts in Brussels, while at the same time steering a course through the shoals of the Conservative Party and the parliament in Westminster.

What does Brexit mean for Europe's future? Most obviously, both sides will be mightily preoccupied with negotiations until late March 2019, and possibly for a time thereafter. For the rest, there are two schools of thought:

- Given that the UK is the fifth largest economy in the world, one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, has a power-projection capability and a nuclear deterrent force, the EU will lose a part of its strategic and normative weight, will be that much less important in the world;
- Alternatively, free of the UK's tendency to drag the chain, the EU will be able to deepen policy harmonisation, strengthen economic cooperation, and build greater security ties among the remaining countries; European integration will surge ahead.

The outcome for Europe remains to be seen. Much will depend on the exact shape of the final Brexit agreement - whether, for example, the UK remains within the EU's emerging security and defence arrangements.

How is **Italy** positioned on these issues? Elections are due by May of next year, although electoral laws need to be adopted first. Recent local elections indicate that the parties of the Right, including Berlusconi's Forza Italia and the Northern League, did well; and Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement did less well, failing to reach the run-off stage in any of the 25 provincial capitals it contested. Pro-Europeans will take some satisfaction from Cinque Stelle's showing, Eurosceptic as it is, but little satisfaction in the continuing presence of the Northern League whose leader, Matteo Salvini, has

called for Italy to leave the Eurozone.

It is likely that Italy will remain strongly pro-European. It benefits from regional development funds that flow to the Mezzogiorno; from being in the single market and the Eurozone, so gaining access to major export markets without tariffs and the transactions costs of different currencies; from having access to the output of various European technical and regulatory agencies at a far cheaper price than setting such agencies up at the national level; and it looks to the EU to help with the massive migration flows from north Africa. Importantly too the EU is seen as a reference point for good government, for political stability, and as a second vehicle for Italy's international presence.

Certainly it is Italian government policy – as outlined in Ambassador Zazo's national day speech – to want more Europe, rather than less, deeper integration, faster progress in harmonisation of fiscal and social policies, and in economic and monetary union. That agenda will probably be better served by the absence of the UK which was, even when Brexit was not on the agenda, a voice of caution restraining ambitions for policy harmonisation. Most recently, Italy will have taken particular encouragement from Chancellor Merkel's professed openness to the ideas of giving the Eurozone a common budget and a finance minister.

A final thought. In a recent speech, Chancellor Merkel said that Europe would need to take its future more into its own hands and build a new level of self-reliance. This is a remarkable staking out of a new position for the ever-cautious Chancellor, and came against the background of Brexit, US withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement, and President Trump's not having re-affirmed US commitment to NATO's collective defence article. Are we seeing a rift between the United States and Europe, hitherto the joint drivers of the liberal international system?

Europe's future, and should we care?

David Ritchie (cont'd)

Is the West dead? President Trump's inconsistent tweetery could prove to be a passing phenomenon. US engagement in Europe and in dealing with global challenges may very well return after we live through a period of unpredictability and policy incoherence in the United States, which could last throughout the current US presidency but may in fact end earlier.

There are darker visions. Robert Kagan's recent article 'Backing Into World War 111' postulates two trend lines in global affairs - the activism of revisionist powers (Russia and China), and the declining confidence, capacity and will of the democratic world. Kagan forecasts that when those trends intersect, we will reach a moment at which the existing order collapses and the world descends into brutal anarchy as it has three times in the past two centuries; the cost of

that descent in lives and treasure will be staggering.

We may very well hope that reports of the death of the West are premature. But it is a prospect which makes Australia-EU understanding and cooperation as important now as it has ever been in the past.

David is a retired Australian diplomat whose career included the position of head of DFAT's Americas and Europe Division and postings in Rome, London and Paris. He participates in a Dante conversation group on Thursday evenings. This article is based on a presentation that David gave to a large and engrossed audience at our cultural evening on 22 June 2017. The views in his presentation were personal.

Dante Society members listen attentively to David Ritchie's presentation on 22 June 2017



Presentation by Rory Steele

The Amazing Life of Felice Benuzzi

Susan Reye

On 20 July 2017, we heard a fascinating talk by Rory Steele. A retired Australian diplomat and writer, Rory has a number of connections to Italy, including having served as Australia's ambassador to Italy from 1997 to 2001.

In 1954, when he was a child, his family went to live in Italy for a number of years. In a house that they rented in Liguria, he found on the bookshelves a copy of the book *No Picnic on Mt Kenya*. Reading this book aroused in him a lifelong interest in its author, Felice Benuzzi. That interest eventually led him to write a biography of Benuzzi, which was published recently in Australia and, in Italian translation, in Italy.

Benuzzi, he told us, must be the only person ever to break out of prison, climb a mountain higher than any he had ever seen before, and then break back into prison to finish his sentence.

Felice Benuzzi was born in 1910 in Vienna, but after the First World War his family moved to Trieste. Felice was a born and bred mountaineer, having first gone up a mountain as a baby in his father's backpack. Encouraged by the passion for outdoor exercise that was then being promoted by Italy's fascist regime, young Felice and his friends constantly climbed the hills and mountains near Trieste. When he did his military service, he was disappointed not to get into the Alpini. An attempt to join the Foreign Service was also unsuccessful. Instead he joined the Ministry of Colonies.

However, in the meantime he had met and fallen in love with a young Jewish woman from Berlin. They married one week before racial laws forbade Italian civil servants to marry Jews.

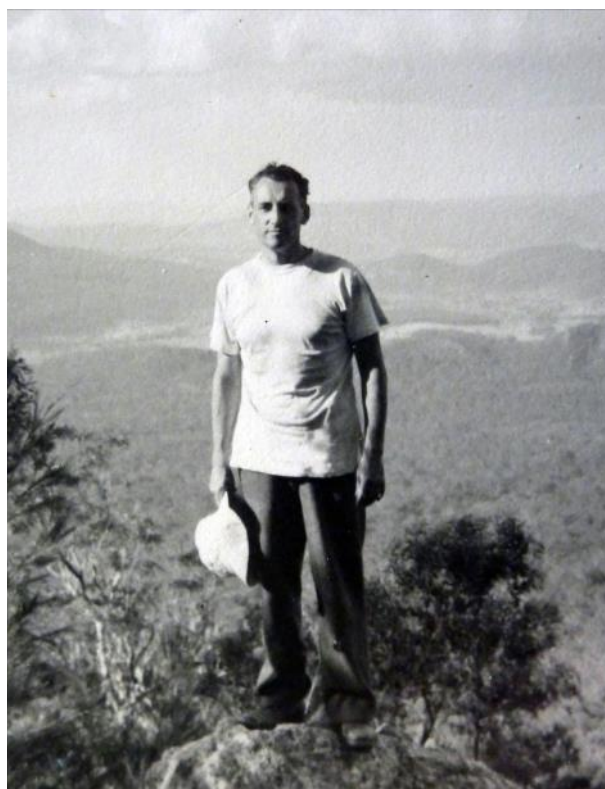
Felice was posted to Ethiopia as a civil servant. He then served in the Italian army there from 1938 to 1940. However, in April 1941, the British captured Addis Ababa and

rounded up Italian civil servants and military personnel.

Felice was sent as a prisoner to Kenya, where he found himself in a camp north of Nairobi. He knew that this must mean he was near Mount Kenya, the second-highest mountain in Africa. However, it seemed always to be hidden in the cloud. Then one day he caught a glimpse of it – the peak covered in ice even though it was on the Equator. He immediately “fell in love” with the mountain and decided he had to climb it. This became an obsession.

He found two other prisoners to share the adventure. The idea was reckless. They were badly nourished, not in training, and had almost no information at all about conditions on the mountain, including the weather. Furthermore, they had only improvised

**Felice Benuzzi on Mount Barney, Queensland
18 September 1954**



Presentation by Rory Steele

The Amazing Life of Felice Benuzzi

Susan Reye

equipment, such as ropes made from string netting that formed part of their beds, and clothing made of blankets.

Nevertheless they broke out of the camp and set off through the jungle up the side of the mountain, through many difficulties and dangers, including wild animals. A blizzard prevented them from reaching the highest peak. However, they succeeded in scaling another peak of the mountain, where they planted an improvised Italian flag that they had brought with them from the camp.

Then they climbed down again and broke back into the prison camp. They had been away for 17 days, for the last 3 of which they went entirely without food. The next day, showered, shaved, fed and rested, they reported to the British camp commandant. Luckily, the commandant admired their sporting spirit and let them off with only 7 days confinement as punishment for their escape.

After the war, Felice was re-united with his

wife, and his daughter, who had been sent to an internment camp in Ethiopia.

He now succeeded in joining the Foreign Service and was posted to Paris. In the early 1950s, at a time of major Italian immigration to Australia, he was the Italian consul in Brisbane. He took the opportunity to climb the Glasshouse Mountains. In fact, during all of his postings, he climbed mountains wherever he went.

As well as being a diplomat and mountaineer, Benuzzi was also a prolific writer. *No Picnic on Mt Kenya*, published in 1953, is still regarded as a classic in the field of mountaineering.

Felice Benuzzi died suddenly of a heart attack at his home in Rome in 1988.

Rory Steele's book is called *The Heart and the Abyss: The Life of Felice Benuzzi*. You can find out more about the book and about Felice Benuzzi on the website at <http://www.benuzzibook.com/>.



Know your choir

A profile of Denise Stephenson



About 4 years ago I went with a friend to a concert at the Italian Cultural Centre. There were groups representing different cultures. I was impressed by the Italian choir's free and easy style of performing, especially Yvette Devlin who was "moving and a'shaking". After the performance Livio Chicco mentioned that anyone was welcome to join. And the rest is history! I have been in the choir ever since.

I was born in Belmore, NSW, but when I was two we moved to Como West in the Sutherland Shire, next door to my grandmother's home. My mother worked as a secretary in Sydney, and later for the Sutherland Shire Clerk, then in London at a private school where Prince Charles was a student.

My father was a "jack of all trades". He went through the depression catching rabbits, working on various properties as a stockman, learning the trade of a butcher - doing anything to keep alive. He had inherited a natural robust voice from his soprano mother. He was not, however, given the opportunity to learn the piano - only the girls in the family received this privilege. He became self-taught and often played Chopin's Polonaise superbly by ear. He had a natural talent and a wonderful tenor voice, with which he wooed my mother at a party where he was singing. She later became his accompanist. My mother achieved honours in the Theory of music.

I was thus born into a creative, musical, hard-working, working class family. People often think it would be wonderful to have this shared experience in music, but this is not always the case. My father tried to push me into singing very difficult songs and arias well beyond my young years. Eventually my mother stepped in and took me to a very highly recognised singing teacher, the late Richard Thew, who conducted the *Messiah* every year at the Sydney Town Hall. Richard told her "take her away and let her be a child and leave those beautiful top notes until she's 16" when he would see me again. He also remarked that I had the ability to not only sing but to "put it over" meaning the ability to act, which could not be taught. It came naturally. I must have been so precocious because I clearly remember asking him if his piano was in tune! (Our old piano at home had never been tuned.)

I went to private singing lessons from the age of 10 and competed in many Eisteddfods. In my first Eisteddfod at the age of 10 I won first prize in a section with other girls aged up to 13 years. But I disliked Eisteddfods, often getting an ulcerated throat a couple of weeks before competing I continued taking lessons until my late 50s.

At 16, I joined a Catholic Youth Organisation group, where I met my late husband, Ian. We married 50 years ago on 15 July 1967, at the age of 22 and 23. My husband was a design mechanical engineer, and became State Manager of Brownbuilt Ltd. He died 5 years ago from mesothelioma. I still experience a lot of grief and find life very difficult at times.

When we moved to Canberra 45 years ago a visiting friend noticed I had a piano and asked "do you play?" I replied "sort of", but I mainly used to sing. She said I should join the Philharmonic Society (Philo). Consequently, at the age of 27 I auditioned and was given my first role as Pauline in *La Vie Parisienne*, by Offenbach.

Ian and I had two sons, Haydn and Gerard. My first son was born with many problems. He was 18 months when his deafness was diagnosed correctly, although I knew intuitively that there was something wrong from birth but I was not listened to by the medical profession. In those days mothers were considered to be overly anxious

Know your choir

A profile of Denise Stephenson (cont'd)

about such things.

Haydn attended Hartley Street School for the Physically Handicapped in O'Connor from the age of 18 months until four years old. He also took lessons from the teacher of the deaf at home, and I can happily say that he has grown into a fit young man, with nothing physically wrong other than being profoundly deaf. We communicate through the use of sign language, which I was one of the first parents to adopt. Prior to that my life with my son had been pure hell because of his frustrations. Our other little boy Gerard was a source of great joy, having no real problems and being born healthy. It was during this period that I worked for the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) as the executive officer for over 22 committees. I learned a great deal about disability during this time.

Now, you might wonder why I have included this in my profile. It's because my involvement in singing virtually saved my life and kept me sane!

In 1975 I auditioned for the Canberra Opera Society Inc., a fully-funded regional opera company producing three operas a year at the Canberra Theatre with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra. I performed in many productions, eg as a geisha in *Madama Butterfly* (when my baby was about 2 months old), *Die Fledermaus*, *Merry Widow*, *La Traviata*, *The Magic Flute*, *La Vie Parisienne*, *The Mikado* (Peep Bo), *White Horse Inn*, *Man of La Mancha*, the Hansel and Gretel (Hansel) schools program and a wonderful production of *Aida* as a priestess. This was a truly exciting experience at the AIS stadium with 4000 people in the audience.

When I really thought I was over the hill, at the age of 60 I was asked to audition for the musical *Titanic*, produced by Supa Productions. I was chosen for the role of Mrs Strauss, with Garry Walbrook as Mr Strauss. Garry and I sang a beautiful duet, performed just before the couple was due to drown. This was a truly moving experience.

During this period and working full time in the airline industry I also managed to do many charity performances with Michael Politi and became Secretary for the ACT Singers Inc. This group

performed three concerts a year ranging from musical theatre to the Beatles over a period of approx 20 years.

I commenced singing lessons here with Pat Davey, then with the late Joan Richards and the late Max Orwin. Fourteen years ago, on the recommendation of my very good friend Joan Breen, I started teaching singing from my home. This proved very enjoyable, and in retrospect I should have been teaching much earlier. After the loss of my husband I cut down on teaching, and now only have a few students.

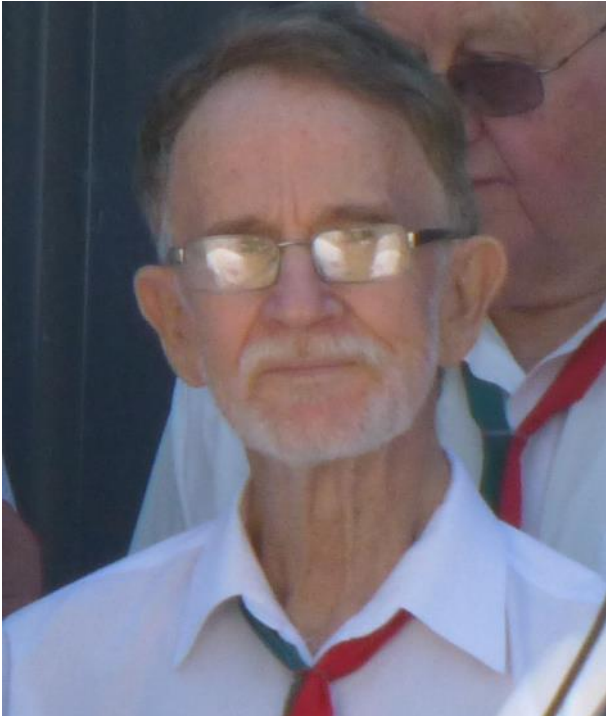
Ian and I travelled widely. My fifth trip to Italy is coming up shortly, as well as France (where my sculptor sister lives) and other parts of Europe. However, the most exciting trip was six weeks in Bamako in West Africa, where my brother-in-law was Ambassador representing the United Nations Development Program. In Zimbabwe we went on a tented safari. We were creeping along in an open Land Rover looking for lions, which we were told were very close. I was in the front seat. Suddenly, a huge lion with a black mane jumped up from the long grass a few metres from my seat. I immediately regressed into childhood and thought I had thrown myself under the dashboard, but oh no! I came to when the driver said "Can you move, Denise, so that I can drive": I had thrown myself into his lap and was stuck between the steering wheel and him! Another exciting holiday was to Madang in Papua New Guinea. It's on the coast, with the most beautiful crystal-clear water.

My hobbies are gardening, music, singing, travel and taking care of my 3 lovely dogs plus 3 chickens and about 100 goldfish in my outside ponds. Last, but not least, I have four lovely grandchildren ranging in ages from 19 months to 19 years.

My life is full with many wonderful, close friends, from childhood through to this age. I am truly grateful for my singing experiences, which have kept me sane!. This includes my involvement in the Dante Musica Viva choir, which has helped me recover from the loss of my husband. The choir has given me the opportunity to do some solos at St Christopher's cathedral (Manuka) and at St Raphael's (Queanbeyan). My confidence has returned through these wonderful experiences.

VALE Basil Yule

Yvette Devlin



Basil Yule, a long-term Dante member, conversation student and one of the foundation members of the Dante Musica Viva choir, died in tragic circumstances in early July while doing some mountaineering on the Dolomites, in the Marmolada area. He was alone at the time and it appears that he slipped and fell into a crevice. He was found two days later.

Three of the Dante members who knew him best were Dagmar Kelly, Giuseppe Parisi and Sam Palma. Here are some reflections from each one of them on the tragic passing of Basil.

"I have known Basil for a number of years. He was a very loyal member of my conversation group with Giuseppe and also part of another little Italian group that met once a

week. Basil always came prepared. The articles that he wrote were very interesting. They were mainly about his sporting adventures and the good times he had while engaging in them. Basil was a very fit person. He loved the mountains, did a lot of trekking and lately a fair bit of kayaking. He joined us a number of times at functions at the Austrian Club where it turned out that he could even dance very well.

Basil was a quiet, gentle and easy-going fellow. It will take me a long time to realise that he will not turn up at my conversation classes any longer. The only consolation is that he died doing what he loved doing. Basil, we will miss you lots!!!" - **Dagmar**

"I have known Basil for over 10 years. He was in my Italian conversation group; Basil rarely missed a class. During conversation classes Basil loved to present reports, in Italian, of his weekends away. He was obviously fascinated by the Italian language and culture. More than anything Basil was enchanted by the Italian Dolomites. For the past two years this has been his favourite subject during conversation classes. He was planning this trip to the Marmolada so he spoke about it with such enthusiasm. Sometimes I commented, with some concern, about Basil's incredible attraction for the Dolomites. I wished him well as he left for Italy". - **Giuseppe**

"The news of Basil's passing was received with much sadness from all members of the choir. Basil was one of the foundation members of the choir and regardless of his actual age, he was quite fit and an energetic part of the support team that helped set equipment up for choir performances. He loved his singing and was fully committed to the choir and to the Society. Basil was a lovely, highly respected, reliable, no-nonsense and peace-loving man, much loved by all that knew him. He will be sadly missed." - **Sam**

Basil was featured in the series Know your choir of July-August 2016. In his article, he spoke of his dream to go to the Dolomites in 2017.

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Barzellette napoletane

Susan Reye

Napoli.

Un rapinatore sale sull'autobus e grida: "Fermi, questa è una rapina!".

Un signore si alza e dice: "Maronn' mia, che spavento: pensavo fosse 'o controllore!"

("Madonna mia, che spavento: pensavo fosse il controllore")

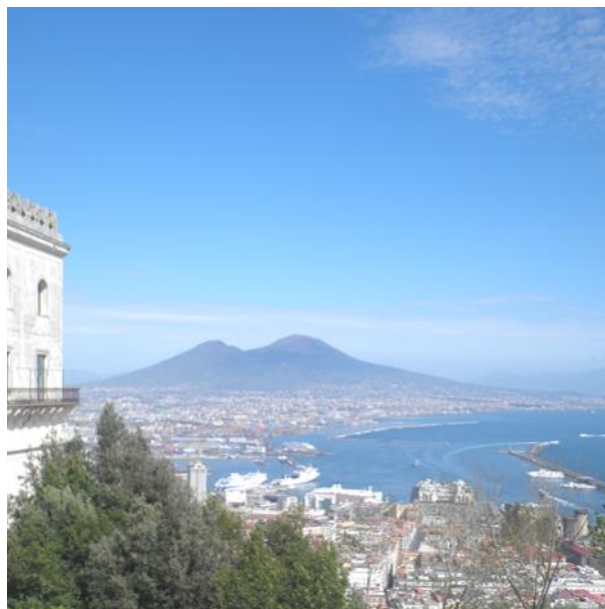
In ospedale a Napoli. Il paziente al dottore: "Dottò, ma l'operazione di appendicite è pericolosa?".

"Macché... Solo a uno su mille succede qualcosa".

"Dottò, a che numero stamm?" ("Dottore, a che numero siamo?").

Un vigile napoletano si accosta a un automobilista fermo al semaforo rosso: "Bravo, lei è un esempio di civiltà. Il Comune le regala 1.000 euro, cosa ne farà?".

"Mah. Penz ca m'accatt'a patente!" (Penso che prenderò la patente!).



Napoli, cantieri della metropolitana aperti da 30 anni. Un vecchietto si avvicina agli operai e chiede: "Scusate, voi state scavando da trent'anni. Ma questa metropolitana, la state facendo o la state cercando?".

Al maneggio: – Salve, vorrei un cavallo... – Da montare? – No no, già bell e pronto...!

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