

Dante Review

“To preserve and disseminate Italian language and culture”

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DANTE ALIGHIERI SOCIETY of CANBERRA CULTURAL CALENDAR

PREVIEW- COMING UP IN 2018!

- **Spotlight on the diversity of Italian regions**
 - **Video conferences from Italia**
- **Round table discussion on regional dialects and the Italo-Australian experience**

Dates and locations of presentations to be confirmed.
Keep a look out for our special events.



Regular Events

**DMV rehearsals
on Thursdays 5-7pm
from 1 February**

**Formal Courses start
on 6 February at 6pm**

**Conversation sessions start
on 8 February at 7pm**

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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
Please note that the office will be open every day (Monday to Friday) from 15 January to 2 February.

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** and click 'like' on *Facebook* 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,
Alessandro Merola, Sam Palma

Journal Editors: Luigi Catizone, Susan Reye

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

Upcoming Events

1 January - Enrolments in formal courses are open

15 January - The Office opens after the Christmas break

1 February - Enrolments in formal courses close

6 February - Language course term 1 starts (*Beginners and Continuing Beginners*)

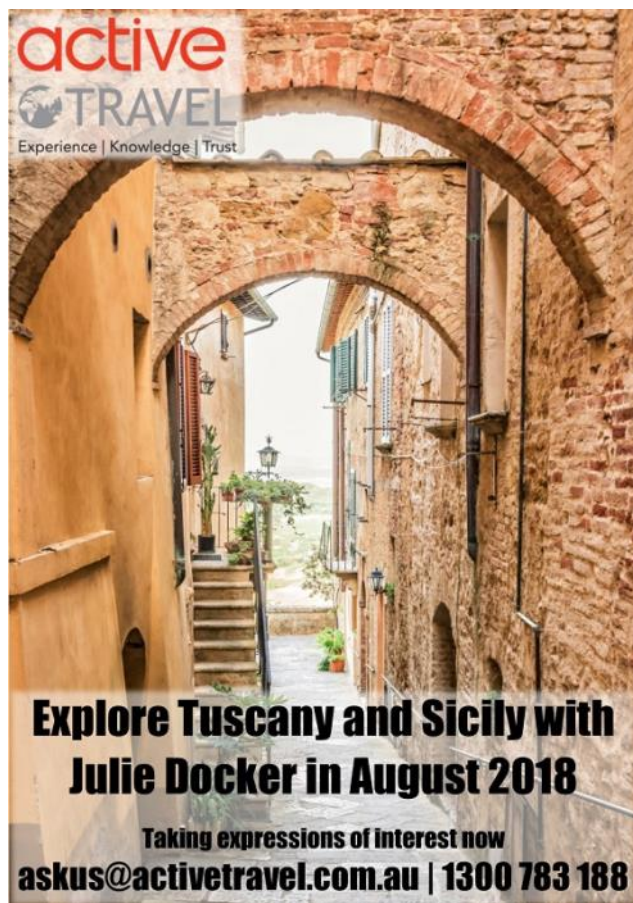
7 February - Language course term 1 starts (*Intermediate, Continuing Intermediate and Advanced*)

8 February - Conversation groups @7pm

15 February - Conversation groups @7pm

16 - 18 February - National Multicultural Festival (DMV performing on 17 February)

22 February - Conversation groups @7pm



New Year, New Courses

It is not only about finding some good reasons (or many reasons) for learning a foreign language; it is all about the benefits. As Anne Merritt, a Canadian teacher, writer, and editor who has spent over eight years living, teaching, and travelling in Europe and Asia, writes in *The Telegraph*: “Physiological studies have found that speaking two or more languages is a great asset to the cognitive process. The brains of bilingual people operate differently than single language speakers, and these differences offer several mental benefits.

Below are seven cognitive advantages to learning a foreign language. Many of these attributes are only apparent in people who speak multiple languages regularly – if you haven’t spoken a foreign tongue since your A levels, your brain might not be reaping these bilingual benefits. However, people who begin language study in their adult lives can still achieve the same levels of fluency as a young learner, and still reap the same mental benefits, too”.

Here is a list of the seven cognitive advantages to learning a foreign language:

- 1) you become smarter
- 2) you build multitasking skills
- 3) you stave off Alzheimer’s and dementia
- 4) your memory improves
- 5) you become more perceptive
- 6) your decision-making skills improve
- 7) you improve your English.

So... what are you waiting for?

Our Italian courses cater for a wide range of needs. Whether your interest is in travel, study, improved language skills, or in simply the pleasure of sampling the excitement of Italian culture, the Dante Alighieri Society of Canberra is the place to go.

Enrolment in one of our classes ensures you get the best value-for-money course available in Canberra. What’s more, you are taught by native Italian teachers in an authentic and

friendly environment of a non-profit, community organisation that has been promoting Italian language and culture in Canberra for more than 60 years.

We currently offer courses catering for five different levels of proficiency: Beginner, Continuing Beginner, Intermediate, Continuing Intermediate and Advanced.

Are you a continuing student? Something **special** is waiting for you! The DAS Committee, aware of the importance and the contribution made by all its members and students, has agreed to offer a special discount to those continuing students who enrol before Monday 15 January!

Instead of \$295 for the term and \$560 for the semester, continuing students will pay only \$265 for the term and \$505 for the semester.

Hurry! Renew your membership, fill in the enrolment form, proceed with the payment and you will be able to get a 10% discount on the course fees!



La Dante Alighieri di Canberra compie 60 anni

di Luigi Catizone

La Società Dante Alighieri di Canberra (DAS) è stata fondata nel giugno del 1957, quando la città, con soli 39.000 abitanti, era agli inizi della sua trasformazione in Capitale nazionale. Quest'anno compie pertanto ben 60 anni di vita ed è stata la prima associazione della comunità italiana di Canberra.

La Società Dante Alighieri, che ha la sede centrale a Roma, è stata fondata nel 1889 dal poeta Giosuè Carducci, premio Nobel per la Letteratura nel 1906. Le Società autonome sparse per il mondo sono circa 500 (400 di esse sono fuori dall'Italia) e tutte perseguono gli stessi obiettivi e la stessa missione di diffondere la lingua e la cultura italiana in Italia e nel mondo.

La fondazione della DAS a Canberra fu opera dell'illustre cultore dell'antichità classica Professor A.D. Trendall ("Master of the House" dell'University College, poi diventato Università Nazionale Australiana, ANU), che

Il Presidente Papandrea consegna a Andrew Barr, Chief Minister del Territorio della Capitale Australiana (ACT) il libro scritto e pubblicato in occasione del 60esimo anniversario della fondazione della Società



fu anche il primo Presidente. Il Ministro d'Italia, S.E. Silvio Daneo, allora capo della legazione italiana in Australia (che nel 1958 divenne Ambasciata Italiana), fu nominato Presidente onorario. Il Professor Keith Hancock, storico che scrisse anche un libro su Ricasoli e il Risorgimento italiano, divenne il Vice-Presidente. Segretario fu l'Architetto Enrico Taglietti, che poi progettò la sede dell'Ambasciata Italiana, e che era l'unico italiano nel Comitato Direttivo. Gli altri componenti erano tutti di origine anglosassone, tra cui Lady Carrington, consorte dell'allora Alto Commissario Britannico in Australia.

Queste ed altre notizie, assieme ad un'ampia raccolta fotografica, sono contenute in un libro pubblicato dalla DAS in occasione del suo 60esimo compleanno.

Tra le manifestazioni che in questi mesi si sono succedute per celebrare la ricorrenza, ricordiamo il ricevimento all'Ambasciata Italiana a metà giugno, voluta dall'Ambasciatore S.E. Pier Francesco Zazo, proprio per sottolineare l'influenza che la DAS di Canberra ha avuto nel promuovere e diffondere la cultura e la lingua italiana nella città Capitale.

Lo scorso 3 Novembre, il Chief Minister dell'ACT, Mr Andrew Barr ha ricevuto il Committee della DAS, gli insegnanti dei Corsi e i Leader dei tavoli di conversazione, nella sede della "Legislative Assembly".

Nel suo indirizzo di saluto, Mr Barr si è congratulato con la DAS per il traguardo raggiunto in 60 anni di continuo servizio verso la Comunità di Canberra e per l'apporto dato alla ricchezza multiculturale della città. Ha voluto anche sottolineare l'immenso contributo degli emigranti italiani alla costruzione ed allo sviluppo di Canberra: piccola città negli anni '50 ed oggi grande e bella, tanto che Lonely Planet l'ha classificata al terzo posto tra le città consigliate ai turisti.



Il discorso di benvenuto del Chief Minister Andrew Barr

Il Presidente della DAS, Professor Franco Papandrea, rispondendo allo Chief Minister, lo ha ringraziato per aver accolto la DAS in una sede così prestigiosa ed ha tracciato un breve profilo della Società in generale e della sezione di Canberra, a partire dai suoi esordi in città, dove è diventata la più importante Associazione italiana che contribuisce all'arricchimento multiculturale di Canberra. Ha richiamato come la DAS organizzi il maggior numero di corsi di italiano per adulti in Canberra, oltre ai gruppi di conversazione settimanali che consentono di fare esercizio diretto dell'Italiano.

Le attività culturali organizzate vengono pubblicizzate sul giornale bimensile "Dante Review" della DAS, sul suo sito web e sulla pagina Facebook.

Il Presidente ha anche ricordato l'attività del Coro "Dante Musica Viva", che da oltre 10 anni si occupa del recupero e della diffusione di canzoni folk e popolari italiane, con frequenti esibizioni in tutta Canberra, e non solo. Da rilevare come la maggioranza dei coristi non sia di origine italiana, ma cantano con passione in italiano ed anche alcune canzoni dialettali.

Alla fine della cerimonia, il Presidente Papandrea ha donato il libro del 60esimo a

Mr Barr, che ha offerto un rinfresco ai suoi ospiti, intrattenendosi cordialmente e a lungo con essi.

A conclusione, possiamo ricordare, quasi come un buon augurio, il sottotitolo del libro che recita *"Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita, i primi sessanta anni"*, sperando che ve ne siano in futuro molti altri.

The Canberra Dante Society turns 60

Translation provided by Susan Reye

The Canberra Dante Alighieri Society (DAS) was established in June 1957, when the city, with only 39,000 residents, was at the beginning of its development as the national capital. So this year it is 60 years old, having been Canberra's first Italian community association.

The Dante Alighieri Society, which has its headquarters in Rome, was established in 1889 by the poet Giosuè Carducci, winner of the 1906 Nobel Prize for Literature. There are about 500 autonomous Societies throughout the world (400 of them outside Italy) and all pursue the same goals and the same mission of disseminating, in Italy and the world, the Italian language and Italian culture.

The DAS was established in Canberra by the well-known classical history expert Professor A.D. Trendall ("Master of the House" of the University College, which later became the Australian National University (ANU)). He became the Society's first President. The Italian Minister, H.E. Silvio Daneo, at the time the head of the Italian mission in Australia (which became the Italian Embassy in 1958), was named Honorary President. Professor Keith Hancock, an historian who wrote a book on Ricasoli and the Italian *Risorgimento*, became Vice-President. The Secretary was the architect Enrico Taglietti, who later designed the Italian Embassy. He was the only Italian on the Steering Committee. The other members were all of Anglo-Saxon origin, including Lady Carrington, wife of the then British High Commissioner in Australia. This and other information, together with numerous photographs, are in a booklet published by the DAS on the occasion of its 60th anniversary.

Cont'd →

Among the anniversary celebrations held in the last few months, we recall the reception held at the Italian Embassy in mid-June, organised by the Ambassador H.E. Pier Francesco Zazo, to emphasise the influence that the Canberra DAS has had in promoting and disseminating Italian language and culture in the capital.

On 3 November 2017, the Chief Minister of the ACT, Mr Andrew Barr, welcomed the DAS Committee, as well as the Society's teachers and leaders of conversation groups, to the Legislative Assembly Building.

In his address, Mr Barr congratulated the DAS on what it has achieved in its 60 years of continuous service to the Italian community of Canberra and on its contribution to the city's multicultural riches. He also stressed the immense contribution of Italian migrants to the construction and development of Canberra: a small city in the 1950s, now big and so beautiful that *Lonely Planet* has given it third place among the cities it recommends to tourists.

The President of the DAS, Professor Franco Papandrea, responding to the Chief Minister's address, thanked him for having received the DAS in such a prestigious place, and gave a brief outline of the history of the Dante Alighieri Society in general and of the Canberra Society in particular, beginning

with its origins in this city, where it has become the most important Italian association to contribute to the wealth of Canberra's multiculturalism. He recalled that the DAS organises the largest number of Italian courses for adults in Canberra, besides the weekly conversation groups which allow members to practise their Italian.

The cultural activities organised by the DAS are publicised in its two-monthly newsletter the "Dante Review", as well as on its website and Facebook page. The President also referred to the choir "Dante Musica Viva", which for more than ten years has been collecting and disseminating Italian folksongs and popular songs, with frequent performances throughout Canberra and beyond. It should be noted that the majority of choristers are not of Italian origin, but love singing in Italian and also some dialect songs.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Professor Papandrea presented Mr Barr with a copy of the 60th anniversary booklet. Mr Barr then mingled with his guests while they enjoyed the refreshments provided.

In conclusion, we can recall, almost like a hope for the future, the title of the 60th anniversary booklet "In the middle of the journey of our life: the first sixty years", hoping that there will be many more in the future.

Foto ricordo di Andrew Barr con un gruppo di partecipanti alla cerimonia
Souvenir photo of Andrew Barr with a group of participants in the ceremony



Il nostro party di fine anno!

Luigi Catizone

Anche quest'anno la Società Dante Alighieri ha voluto rispettare la tradizione organizzando una serata dedicata alla chiusura delle attività svolte nell'anno ormai quasi finito.

Il 23 novembre 2017, proprio in occasione della fine dei corsi e delle serate di conversazione, ci siamo trovati numerosi, eravamo almeno un centinaio di persone, nella Function Room del Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre per fare il punto della ormai passata stagione e per qualche progetto per il futuro.

La serata è stata allietata da alcune canzoni della tradizione italiana cantate dal Coro Dante Musica Viva, che sempre tanto successo ed affettuosa accoglienza ha tra tutti gli ascoltatori. Non pochi dei presenti si sono uniti nel canto di alcuni brani particolarmente popolari.

Si è anche esibito alla fisarmonica il Maestro Francesco, musicista veramente capace ed appassionato, nonché Direttore del Coro della Dante. Una esibizione inusuale per la Dante, ma non meno apprezzata e gradita, è stata quella di due esperti ballerini di danze tradizionali sarde, Bruna e Ottavio, in alcune delle quali sono stati coinvolti diversi spettatori che hanno mostrato interesse e passione.

Il Vice-Presidente Gordon McCormick ha ringraziato tutti gli intervenuti per la

Il Vice-Presidente Gordon McCormick



I ballerini di danze sarde Bruna e Ottavio

partecipazione e ha ricordato quanti si sono prodigati per le varie attività svolte dalla Dante, in particolare gli insegnanti nei Corsi di Lingua Italiana, i leader dei tavoli di Conversazione, i componenti del Coro e il suo Direttore, l'Ufficio di Segreteria. Ha portato anche il saluto del Presidente Franco Papandrea, assente perché in Italia per impegni istituzionali di lavoro. Gordon ha fatto infine ai presenti e alle loro famiglie e a tutti i Soci i migliori auguri per il prossimo Natale e per il Nuovo Anno a nome della Società Dante Alighieri. Per finire, è stato offerto un delizioso buffet, ben organizzato da Alessia e Daniela, con pizze, prosciutto e formaggi, alcuni piatti di pasta fredda, cocomero e altra frutta, dolci. Non è mancato un buon bicchiere di vino per accompagnare i cibi. Infine c'è stato il tradizionale panettone e il brindisi con il Prosecco per tutti.

Il DMV e il pubblico in sala



L'angolo della poesia

Poetry corner - Yvette Devlin

With Bob Dylan winning the Nobel prize for literature, it is appropriate to draw attention to an Italian singer-songwriter whose lyrics were deeply influenced by modern poetry – **Fabrizio De André**. Indeed some of his lyrics are included in school poetry books.

Born in Genoa in 1940, he died of lung cancer in Milan in 1999. An anarchist and unconventional man, he dedicated his life to composing and performing songs, often in the style of ballads, with many featuring the disenfranchised. He railed against abuses of power in the name of egalitarianism and brotherhood. De André also translated and performed songs written by Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and the French singer-songwriter Georges Brassens. He recorded 13 LPs. He considered *La buona novella* (*The Good News*, an LP focussed on Jesus's human qualities) to be his best.

The following song *Le passanti* was translated by our own Canberra poet Mark O'Connor who is a real admirer of De André. I recommend listening to the song on Youtube:

either on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SOKH_3H1is

or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTVdY-5ZA0M>. The second version is recorded live so its quality is inferior but includes some musings on women. Students of Italian will appreciate the clarity of De André's diction.

Le passanti

Io dedico questa canzone
ad ogni donna pensata come amore
in un attimo di libertà
a quella conosciuta appena
non c'era tempo e valeva la pena
di perderci un secolo in più.
A quella quasi da immaginare
tanto di fretta l'hai vista passare
dal balcone a un segreto più in là
e ti piace ricordarne il sorriso
che non ti ha fatto e che tu le hai deciso

in un vuoto di felicità.

Alla compagna di viaggio
i suoi occhi il più bel paesaggio
fan sembrare più corto il cammino
e magari sei l'unico a capirla
e la fai scendere senza seguirla
senza averle sfiorato la mano.
A quelle che sono già prese
e che vivendo delle ore deluse
con un uomo ormai troppo cambiato
ti hanno lasciato, inutile pazzia,
vedere il fondo della malinconia
di un avvenire disperato.

Immagini care per qualche istante
sarete presto una folla distante
scavalcate da un ricordo più vicino
per poco che la felicità ritorni
è molto raro che ci si ricordi
degli episodi del cammino.

Ma se la vita smette di aiutarti
è più difficile dimenticarti
di quelle felicità intraviste
dei baci che non si è osato dare
delle occasioni lasciate ad aspettare
degli occhi mai più rivisti.
Allora nei momenti di solitudine
quando il rimpianto diventa abitudine,
una maniera di viverci insieme,
si piangono le labbra assenti
di tutte le belle passanti
che non siamo riusciti a trattenere.

The passers-by

[translation by Mark O'Connor, Oct 2017]

I dedicate this song of mine
to every woman thought of as a love
in some moment of freedom or fancy.
To that one who was so barely known
--there was no time; and she deserved all the
time
to have lost yourself with her an age.
To her, who was all but a fantasy –
in such a rush you once glimpsed her pass
by

from the balcony to some secret within –
and you like to remember that smile
she never gave, but you feigned you saw it,
in a vacuum of happiness.
And to the travelling companion
her eyes the best part of the landscape
made the road seem much shorter
and perhaps you alone understand her
and you hand her bags down, and don't fol-
low,
without even brushing her hand.
To those ones now already taken
and living out sad bitter hours
with a man already so changed
-- who left you, in a useless folly,
a glimpse in the bottomless sorrow
of a future, already despaired.
Dear images – but for few minutes!

soon part of a whole distant crowd
overwhelmed by some memory more recent.
-- Though the joy may return for a little
it's so rare that we pause to re-visit
the episodes met on the way.
But if life ceases being your friend
then it's harder to push out of mind
all those joys you once dimly knew,
like the kisses you did not dare offer
chances left to await some vague future,
eyes never encountered again.
Then in the moment of solitude
when regret settles into a habit,
and the way to accept what's around you,
then we sob for those lips, now so absent
of all of those women once passing
whom we could not manage to hold.



**On the left:
Fabrizio De André**

**Below:
Genova, Marina di
Boccadasse**



Modi di dire

Sayings - Francesca Foppoli

Quando eravamo bambini andavamo a zonzo per i campi da mattina a sera.

When we were children, we would be roaming in the fields from dawn to dusk.

Il colloquio di lavoro stava andando benissimo finché Mario non è andato nel pallone.

The job interview was going very well until Mario freaked out.

Durante le vacanze scolastiche, i prezzi dei voli nazionali vanno alle stelle.

During school holidays, the cost of domestic flights hits the roof.

Nonostante le numerose difficoltà e la mancanza di aiuto, il loro progetto è andato in porto.

Despite considerable difficulties and lack of support, their project succeeded.

Piero e Lucia si stavano annoiando alla festa e quindi decisero di andarsene alla chetichella.

Piero and Lucia were getting bored at the party so decided to slip away when no one was looking.

Lo scorso anno, Pino e Diana avevano una relazione che andava a gonfie vele mentre ora sta andando a rotoli.

Last year, Pino and Diana had an excellent relationship while now it's falling apart.



L'angolo della lingua

Language corner - Yvette Devlin

Language evolves and typically reflects societal norms and cultural change. In Italian, as all students painfully learn, we have masculine and feminine genders and these dictate grammatical constructions.

While it is a mystery how inanimate objects came to be considered masculine or feminine (eg *luna* (moon) is feminine whereas *sole* (sun) is masculine – the opposite is true in German!), it is clear why professions came to acquire masculine or feminine nouns (eg *chirurgo* (surgeon) and *infermiera* (nurse)).

But social stratification has changed, with women now being involved in all types of occupations.

Language needs to evolve to reflect this. However, there is still some resistance to accepting the feminine form of many nouns. Here are some examples of feminised job titles that may sound odd at the moment but that, in time, will become 'normal' usage:

la sindaca (mayor); *la ministra* (minister); *l'avvocata* (lawyer); *la deputata* (deputy); *la giudice* (judge); *la presidente* (president); *l'architetta* (architect); *l'assessora* (councillor); *la soldata* (soldier) .

We already accepted the feminine gender of *senatore* (*senatrice*); of *professore* (*professoressa*); of *dottore* (*dottoressa*). But we also had many professions that ended with 'a' and applied to both genders such as *dentista* and *giornalista*. No change is suggested for these.

The conclusion reached in an article I read in the *Corriere della Sera* of 8 September 2017 is that language change takes time and naturally follows cultural/social change.



Cenno Storico

A bit of history - Yvette Devlin

Many heroic deeds have been commemorated during the centenary of World War I but there is one aspect that relates to the Carnic Alps (in Friuli) that is not well known: the role played by the Carnic women carriers.

Between August 1915 and October 1917 women from villages near the Austrian border, who knew the terrain well, were recruited as auxiliaries by the Italian army to carry on their back food supplies, medicines, tools and munitions to the Alpine soldiers defending the border. Some 10-12,000 men were deployed on the mountains, but there were no roads between the stores and their location.

Around 1000 women ranging in age between 12 and 60 were recruited to carry all supplies in conical wicker baskets on their shoulders, weighing 30-40 kg. The difference in height between valley and mountain ranged between 600 and 1200m. For this, they earned the equivalent of 3 euro a trip, which took all day. Some even knitted while walking or while resting! And as their husbands were away fighting, the women also had to take care of the cows and the children when they got home at night.

At Timau, a border village in Friuli, a monument was inaugurated in 1992 to commemorate these carriers, and on 1 October 1997 the then President of Italy Oscar Luigi Scalfaro visited Timau to award a war medal to the daughter of Maria Plozner, who had been killed "in action" in 1916.

In occasione del centenario della I Guerra Mondiale sono stati commemorati numerosi gesti eroici, ma ve n'è uno legato alle Alpi Carniche (in Friuli) che non è ben conosciuto: il ruolo delle portatrici carniche.

Tra agosto 1915 e settembre 1917 donne residenti nei villaggi confinanti con l'Austria, che conoscevano bene il terreno, furono re-

clutate come ausiliarie dall'Esercito italiano per trasportare sulle spalle viveri, medicine, attrezzi e munizioni ai soldati che difendevano il confine. Sulle montagne erano stanziati circa 10-12.000 Soldati, ma non c'erano strade tra le montagne e le valli dove si trovavano i rifornimenti.

Un migliaio di donne tra i 12 e i 60 anni di età fu quindi reclutato per il trasporto di tutto il necessario in gerla. Cariche, le gerle pesavano tra i 30 e i 40 chili. Il dislivello tra la valle e la montagna variava tra i 600 e i 1.200 metri. Per ogni viaggio la portatrice guadagnava l'equivalente di 3 euro ed il viaggio durava tutto il giorno. Alcune facevano pure la maglia per strada o durante la sosta! E siccome i mariti erano via a combattere, le donne dovevano pure occuparsi delle mucche e dei figli una volta rientrate.

Nel 1992 un monumento dedicato alle portatrici carniche fu inaugurato a Timau, paese di confine in Friuli, e il 1° ottobre 1997 l'allora presidente della Repubblica Oscar Luigi Scalfaro si recò a Timau per consegnare una medaglia d'oro al valor militare alla figlia di Maria Plozner, portatrice uccisa da un soldato austriaco nel 1916.



Firenze, non solo gli Uffizi...

di Marcello Amato - Medico napoletano che vive a Firenze

Firenze è una città sorprendente! Il suo centro storico, delimitato dalla cerchia di mura del XIV secolo, è stato nel 1982 dichiarato dall'UNESCO patrimonio dell'umanità. Certamente non si può che rimanere incantati di fronte alla Cupola del Brunelleschi, al campanile di Giotto, alla Basilica di Santa Croce e di Santa Maria Novella, al Battistero, a Piazza della Signoria, vero polo museale a cielo aperto, e così via.

Tuttavia esistono altri gioielli, posti al di fuori delle mura e situati sull'altra sponda del fiume Arno, che meritano di esser visitati, anche per la magnifica vista sulla città monumentale che da essi si può godere. Ci riferiamo a Forte Belvedere, nel quale vengono spesso ospitate mostre di scultura assai apprezzate, e di **Villa Bardini**, di cui vogliamo qui parlare più diffusamente.

Firenze, pur essendo una città di dimensioni ridotte, ha gli stessi problemi di traffico di

una grande città, anche per l'enorme numero di turisti che ogni anno la visitano. Il consiglio è quindi di muoversi quanto più possibile a piedi. Se attraversate il Ponte Vecchio e poi vi spingete su per la strada della Costa San Giorgio (assai ripida in verità), costeggiando il Forte di Belvedere, al numero 2 vi imbatterete nell'ingresso di Villa Bardini.

Di origini secentesche, detta all'epoca "Manadora" dal nome del costruttore Francesco Manadori, è stata oggetto di numerosi passaggi di proprietà, sino al 1913, allorché venne acquistata da Stefano Bardini, definito il principe degli antiquari, che volle rimanere sul colle come a presidiarlo, stregato dalle caratteristiche della Villa e dal Giardino, declinante sul fianco nord della collina, con uno spettacolare affaccio sulla città.

Per capire che cosa significa nella immagine

Villa Bardini





Veduta di Firenze da Villa Bardini

di Firenze il parco di villa Bardini, è opportuno guardare la città dal corridoio di Ponente degli Uffizi, quello che si affaccia sull'Arno. Sotto di noi vedremo scorrere *“il fiume che i ponti cavalcano tesi come archi”*, come scriveva Elisabeth Browning, poetessa inglese dell'era vittoriana. Di fronte invece vediamo stagliarsi il Colle Belvedere, fitto di chiese e di ville fra cui quella del grande antiquario con la sua loggia rinascimentale, ove venivano ospitati i mecenati che, di fronte a Firenze distesa ai loro piedi, si convincevano a firmare i sontuosi assegni che avrebbero portato in giro per il mondo (da Berlino a Boston, da New York a Washington) i capolavori dell'arte italiana, offerti in vendita dall'antiquario Stefano Bardini.

Due sono le mostre permanenti presenti nella villa: l'esposizione dedicata all'arte sartoriale di Roberto Capucci, vera icona della moda italiana nel mondo, e una raccolta di opere di Pietro Annigoni, il *“pittore delle Regine”*, di cui viene documentata l'intera attività di un artista più di ogni altro radicato nella grande tradizione umanistica dell'arte italiana.

Sino al 7 gennaio 2018 è stata ospitata la mostra dedicata a Llevelyn Loyd, pittore di origini gallesi ma livornese di nascita, fiorentino d'adozione e innamorato dell'isola d'Elba. L'esposizione presentava 60 opere di Lloyd, concentrandosi sul tema che più lo appassionava: il paesaggio toscano sia campestre che marino.

Se poi passeggiamo nel giardino, ci accorgiamo che in realtà esso è composto da

tre sezioni diverse per epoca e stile: al centro la grande scalinata costruita nel Seicento ed arricchita con statue e fontane alla fine del Settecento; ad ovest il giardino anglo-cinese con boschetti e canali d'acqua, costruito all'inizio dell'Ottocento per circondare la villa; ad est poi, nel parco agricolo, possiamo scoprire il frutteto con la varietà di prodotti della tradizione agricola toscana e le diverse maniere di collocare le piante a spalliera, a cordone e a frutteto nano. Da non perdere assolutamente la fioritura delle camelie a marzo; la galleria del glicine in fiore, le azalee e i rododendri in aprile; le rose a maggio e le ortensie da giugno in poi.

Così il parco-giardino di Stefano Bardini entra a far parte di quella mirabile *“spina verde”* di Firenze che da Porta Romana, attraverso Boboli, giunge alle sponde dell'Arno.

Il percorso che abbiamo descritto ci ha così presentato un grande antiquario che aveva compreso come la bellezza, consegnata ai dipinti e alle sculture, ai mobili intarsiati e alle ceramiche robbiane policrome, si possa anche riflettere, come in un gioco di specchi, nelle meraviglie della Natura.

Questa bellissima scalinata, costruita nel Seicento ed arricchita con statue e fontane alla fine del Settecento, si trova al centro del giardino che circonda Villa Bardini



Leonardo, we hardly knew you!

Report of a talk by David Wilson

The scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries is generally regarded as one of European civilisation's greatest achievements. This revolution probably could not have occurred without groundwork laid by a somewhat earlier intellectual revolution, which was largely brought about through the work of a single individual. The role he played in this revolution was largely forgotten for several hundred years, very nearly lost to history entirely, and is still not widely known. The name of this individual? *Leonardo!*

No, not *that* Leonardo, of *Vinci*, but Leonardo of *Pisa*. “Leonardo of *where?*” I imagine most of you will be thinking, since this name is likely to be recognised only by scholars interested in the history of mathematics. Among mathematicians, Leonardo is better known under the name Leonardo Fibonacci or, more commonly, just *Fibonacci*, a title which was not conferred upon him until the 19th century.

Although Leonardo was one of the most distinguished mathematicians Europe managed to produce during the entire middle ages, very few details of his life are known. He was born some time around 1170 AD, but the exact year is not known. He became famous within his lifetime, and remained so for a couple of centuries after his death, but by the end of the 15th century, his achievements had largely been forgotten.

The extent of Leonardo's lapse into obscurity is well illustrated by a wonderful anecdote told by Keith Devlin in his book, *Finding Fibonacci*, an account of his quest to learn more about Leonardo. Prof. Devlin was visiting Pisa in 2002, shortly after becoming interested in the life of Leonardo, and was attempting to visit some of the memorials to Leonardo which he had heard were to be found scattered around Pisa. One of these was a statue, on whose location Prof. Devlin's sources had disagreed.

After a fruitless afternoon's searching for the

statue in the places that had been given as its purported location, Prof. Devlin finally resorted to enquiring at the local tourist information office, where the following exchange took place:

“Where is the statue of Leonardo of Pisa?”

“You mean Leonardo Da Vinci” - this uttered, not as a question, but with a tone of absolute confidence.

“No, Leonardo of Pisa.”

“Leonardo Da *Vinci*” - this being accompanied by a withering look typically reserved for the most irritatingly ignorant of foreign tourists.

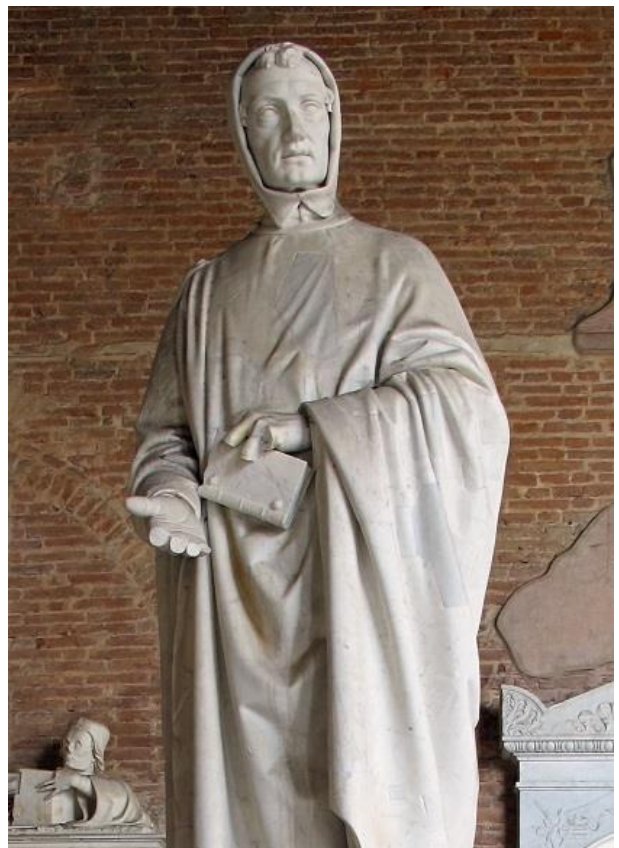
“No, Leonardo of *Pisa* - Fibonacci, the mathematician.”

“There is no Leonardo of Pisa. No statue.”

After leaving the tourist information office,

1863 statue of Leonardo of Pisa by Giovanni Paganucci, now housed in the *Camposanto*, Pisa.

Photograph by Hans-Peter Postel, published on Wikimedia Commons under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Generic license



however, Prof. Devlin did eventually manage to find the sought-for statue - in the *Camposanto*, a monumental cemetery on the north-western edge of the *Piazza dei Miracoli*, the same piazza on which the famous leaning tower stands.

Today, most of the few people who have ever heard of Leonardo probably know of him only through his association with so-called Fibonacci numbers, which were named after him. These are numbers which lie in the sequence that begins 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, , and in which each number is the sum of the two immediately preceding it. But Leonardo did not discover these numbers themselves, nor any of their significant properties. His only connection with them is that they arose in a whimsical example which he included in his most significant work merely as an illustration of how certain problems could be solved with the techniques of calculation he wished to explain.

Leonardo's importance to the intellectual development of Europe stems neither from his association with Fibonacci numbers, nor from any of his original mathematical discoveries, but from his influential works promoting use of the now familiar Hindu-Arabic numerals. The chief of these was a monumental Latin treatise of around six hundred pages - *Liber abaci (Book of calculation)* - first published in 1202.

By the time of Leonardo, European scholars had already known of Hindu-Arabic numerals for more than a century. However, they had remained little more than an academic curiosity, known *only* to such scholars. In European practice, numbers were still being recorded with Roman numerals, and arithmetical calculations were not carried out in writing, but with mechanical aids such as calculating tables, abacuses, or - for the simplest calculations - just fingers, by specially trained bookkeepers.

The development of Hindu-Arabic numerals occurred in India during the first millennium AD and had been completed by about the year 700. They came to the notice of the Arabs shortly thereafter, who recognised their advantages and swiftly adopted them as their standard method for representing numbers. European scholars became acquainted with them from about the late 10th century

through contact with the Arabs, and translations of some of their mathematical works into Latin.

The chief advantage of the Hindu-Arabic decimal system is the relative simplicity of its procedures for multiplication and division. Roman numerals are poorly adapted for performing these operations, with division being especially cumbersome. It has often been claimed that the only way to perform these operations with Roman numerals is by repeated addition and repeated subtraction, respectively. This is something of an exaggeration, however.

	I	L
X	X	D
X	X	D
X	X	D
V	V	CCL
I	I	L
I	I	L
	XXXVII	MDCCCL

$$\text{XXXVII} \times \text{IL} = \text{MDCCCL} - \text{XXXVII} \\ = \text{MDCCCXIII}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ 37 \\ \hline 343 \\ 1470 \\ \hline 1813 \end{array}$$

Calculation of 49 x 37 using Roman numerals and Hindu-Arabic decimals

In the above diagram, the same pair of numbers, 49 and 37, are multiplied together using both Roman and Hindu-Arabic numerals. One way to perform this calculation with Ro-

Cont'd →

man numerals, is to write one factor above the top row and the other to the left of the leftmost column of a table in which the products of the individual components of the numerals are recorded. The number, **CCL**, in the fourth row and second column of the table, for instance, is the product of the number, **V**, to the left of that row and the number, **L**, above that column. The result of the multiplication is obtained by subtracting the sum of the numbers in the first column from the sum of those in the second. Nevertheless, if Leonardo's contemporaries were aware of any procedures like this, they found them too cumbersome to use in practice, and the mechanical aids mentioned earlier were universally used for all but the very simplest arithmetical calculations.

This had the disadvantage that none of the intermediate steps in a calculation were ever recorded - only the operands and the final result being written down. Thus, checking the calculation required the whole of it to be redone entirely from scratch. On the other hand, after a calculation with Hindu-Arabic decimals has been written down, all the intermediate steps have been recorded, and can be checked at a glance. In Leonardo's time, when accurate recording and auditing of financial transactions was rapidly becoming more important, this was a huge advantage of written calculations using the Hindu-Arabic system.

Leonardo learnt the details of the Hindu-Arabic system directly from Berbers of North Africa. At the time, Pisa was one of the prominent Italian maritime republics, along with Genoa, Venice and Ancona, and was engaged in extensive trade and commerce with many cities around the Mediterranean coast. Leonardo's father, Guilielmo, was a Pisan merchant who was appointed a customs official and trade representative in Bugia, on the Barbary coast - now Bejaïa, in Algeria - some time between 1180 and 1185. Shortly after his arrival, he called for his son to join him, and had him receive instruction in the school of accounting there.

It is very likely, though not certain, that Leonardo became fluent in Arabic, but, in any case, his inquisitiveness and intelligence led him to pick up an extensive knowledge of Arabic mathematics, and, owing to his familiarity with business procedures, he, more

than any other European before him, was able to recognise and clearly demonstrate the advantages of the Hindu-Arabic system for the routine arithmetical calculations arising in the normal course of doing business.

Leonardo wrote *Liber abaci* after returning to Pisa, where it was published in 1202. No copies of this first edition of the work are known to have survived, but Leonardo produced an extended and amended second edition in 1228, of which several manuscript copies dating to the 14th or late 13th century are still extant. The book was a masterpiece of exposition - rigorous, comprehensive, and well-organised - of all the known techniques and methods of calculation of Hindu-Arabic arithmetic. Although the treatment could certainly be described as scholarly, it was also accessible to merchants, bankers and other businessmen, who constituted its main intended audience. One of the features of the book which made it attractive to this audience was the inclusion of copious worked examples of the kinds of practical calculations that would be useful for them.

Although Leonardo became famous within his lifetime, history has not recorded the extent to which the revolution he initiated had proceeded at the time of his death. By the end of the 13th century, however, it was well under way. From that time onwards, *scuole d'abaco* - schools of arithmetic - in which young children were being taught modern arithmetic were springing up all over Italy. At the same time, tracts explaining the new arithmetic proliferated rapidly, to satisfy a burgeoning market for them. Leonardo's influence on these developments can be traced through the unmistakable dependence of these tracts on his works.



Know your choir

A profile of Robin Trinca



Francesco Sofo's warm invitation to join the choir got me past my reservations about my lack of a singing voice. I've been bumbling along with the altos off and on since the year after the choir started, with a long sabbatical whilst living on the south coast for some years.

I keep going to choir when I can because I love singing in Italian, and because the other choir members are so welcoming. At the coast, I was briefly a member of the Montague Choristers and I also spent many years with an a cappella group called That Bunch of Singers.

I studied classical piano for many years as a schoolgirl, but my heart has always been with popular music and musical theatre. Nowadays I really enjoy playing the piano and I'm trying to learn by heart some of the pieces I've been thumping out for 50 years. It's amazing how hard it is as one's memory fades! I've also taught myself the piano accordion in recent years, and spent some years in a ukulele group at the coast.

My family on both sides is from a small town

called Grosotto in the Alta Valtellina in northern Italy.

My mother was born in the hills out of Perth, the first of her siblings to be born Aussie. She's a real bushie at heart, and can still recite bush poetry, verse after verse, at the age of 92.

Oddly enough it's through her that I have inherited my Italian citizenship, not through my dad who migrated from Italy as a young man in 1938. It's pretty clear he was dodging the draft as everyone knew a war was coming. I grew up in a militantly anti-militaristic family! Dad had done his military training in the early '30s and knew it was not for him.

My parents only spoke Italian when they didn't want us to understand, or with Italian friends, so we grew up only knowing English. When I turned 50 and my kids pushed me to register as an Italian so that they could be EU citizens too, I decided it was time to stop being an imposter and learn the language.

Then followed a decade of teaching myself Italian from texts, CDs and visits to language schools in Italy at every opportunity. I've found the 2-3 weeks I've spent in a variety of Italian cities studying Italian to be some of the best holidays I've ever had.

Since retiring I've been able to travel quite a bit, especially in Europe. I love walking (and cycling) holidays. The natural world really is a beautiful place and walking takes you into it. But my favourite landscape is farming country where people have enhanced rather than destroyed the natural place.

My other hobbies revolve around food and gardening. I like to grow summer vegies, make passata and pesto, dig up my garlic and cook when the family is around. I planted an "orchard" at the coast but it's a battle between me and the birds to retrieve the fruit. I'm very proud of the single mango my tree produced last season, but not so proud of the single olive on my olive tree.

[Ed.: Robin also attended Dante's conversation evenings for a few years before moving to the coast]

The truth of fiction - Elena Ferrante's novels

(A presentation by Joseph Falsone)

By Susan Reye



On 2 November 2017, our cultural presentation was a talk by Joseph Falsone. Joseph is the Director of the Ainslie and Gorman Art Centres. He graduated in Art History and Literature from the University of Sydney, specialising in twentieth-century Italian poetry, and then pursued his studies at the *Università degli Studi di Firenze*. The subject of his talk was the Neapolitan novels of Elena Ferrante.

These four books are bestsellers in Italy and throughout the world. They focus on the friendship of two women – the narrator, Elena Greco, and her friend Lila – from their childhood together in a poor and violent neighbourhood of Naples in the 1950s, through the following six decades.

The title of the first book, and the overall title of the series, is *L'amica geniale* (2011). The second, third and fourth books are *Storia del nuovo cognome* (2012), *Storia di chi fugge e di chi resta* (2013) and *Storia della bambina perduta* (2014). The titles of the English translations are *My Brilliant Friend* (2012), *The Story of a New Name* (2013), *Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay* (2014), and *The Story of the Lost Child* (2015).

Elena Ferrante has stated that she considers the four books to be a single novel, which was published serially for reasons of length. In fact they contain in total over 1600 pages. Which makes it all the more admirable that Joseph agreed to give a talk on them, at the request of Yvette Devlin in June, even though at the time he had not yet read them!

Joseph said he approached them as an amateur, not as an academic. Most of the narrative is concerned with describing events, and working out who did what and why. The books are verbal, not visual, though the few visual descriptions are very effective.

Reading them, he did not have a satisfying sense of structure; it was like a lived experience. The richness of events hardly left time for reflection. Mysteries in the book remain unresolved at the end. The final resolution is acceptance that there is no resolution.

The books revolve around eight or so families in a poor *rione* in Naples. Some leave, some stay, but their stories recur throughout. The central figures, Lila and Elena, grow up in a violent world. Both are highly intelligent, but Elena has the opportunity to study and Lila does not. Their paths diverge, but they are held together by a force that neither understands. It is the most intense relationship in the book. Relationships with men come and go, and the male characters are a pretty pathetic lot, either violent or irresponsible.

Why talk about these books? First, it is rare for contemporary Italian novels to become international bestsellers. Also they give a slice of Italian history during a period of dramatic change, from the 1950s to 2010, a time of violence and conflict, of increasing prosperity, but decreasing social cohesion.

The books were translated into English very rapidly – perhaps too rapidly, Joseph suggested. The translation is “workmanlike”. Joseph made some interesting observations about the way the English-language versions are pre-

sented differently from the Italian. He pointed out that the cover designs give very different impressions.

The Italian covers are pastel coloured. (They are outdoor scenes with a feminine feel – two little girls, lovers, a wedding couple, a mother and child.) The English publications have predominantly black covers, which hint at exoticism and violence, as does the collective title “The Neapolitan Novels”, which is used by the publishers for the English, not the Italian, version.

There are also small, but significant, differences in the titles. “*My brilliant friend*” implies that it is the narrator’s friend, Lila, who is brilliant. The Italian title “*L’amica geniale*” leaves it unspecified which of the two friends is “geniale”.

In fact, Lila describes Elena as her “amica geniale” and throughout there is a binary system in the book, each being arguably the “amica geniale” of the other. The English title of the second book refers only to a “new name”, while the Italian makes clear that it is a new surname, acquired by a woman on marriage. In the title of the third book, the Italian “chi fugge” – “who flees” – is much stronger than the English translation “who leave”.

One of the best-known facts about the novels is that “Elena Ferrante” is a pseudonym. The

author insists on remaining anonymous, giving “interviews” only in writing.

Does the concealed identity matter? Some people think that an author has an obligation to be known, and various theories have been advanced about the identity of Elena Ferrante. Other people agree with Ferrante that she is entitled to have her book judged on its own merits, and not by reference to her biography.

As Joseph pointed out, it is interesting that the pseudonymous Elena Ferrante also gave the name “Elena” to her narrator who is also a novelist.

The name of the narrator “Elena Greco”, ie “Helen Greek”, conjures up Helen of Troy, synonymous with desire and violence, though in the books the men go crazy over Lila, not Elena. Lila has various names – Raffaella, Lina, Lila– reflecting shifting identities. In fact the books deal with the idea of a person having different identities in different contexts and with different people.

Elena Greco has little self-awareness. All of her sense of self relates to Lila.

Her impetus for writing their story comes from competition with the other girl, but also from the idea that it is the act of writing that pins down our experience. But in the end she asks whether writing can ever encapsulate life.

Part of the attentive audience for Joseph Falsone’s presentation



Gli Sbandieratori: chi sono costoro?

di Sandra Catizone

Sono ora, nel nostro tempo, la ciliegina sulla torta di ogni manifestazione folcloristica che si tenga nelle diverse città, borghi o contrade italiane.

Sono così colorati, eleganti, armoniosi nelle loro rappresentazioni, ma l'origine storica di queste evoluzioni è da ricondurre a momenti di guerra e di belligeranza.

Infatti nelle varie battaglie che hanno caratterizzato soprattutto il nostro Medioevo, il Vessillifero era il combattente che doveva tenere alto e ben visibile lo stendardo che era lo stimolo per gli altri a procedere nella battaglia. Per evitare in ogni modo che il vessillo potesse cadere in mani nemiche, esso era affidato "a persone particolarmente esperte e preparate anche nel compiere quelle evoluzioni che avessero reso ben visibile tale simbolo, così come quei movimenti e quei lanci che, in caso di necessità si fossero resi necessari per sottrarlo alla conquista da parte del nemico".

Durante le varie tregue, comunque, "l'arte della bandiera" diventava una esibizione che

allietava feste e tornei o magnificava la potenza ed il valore di qualche regnante o Capitano del popolo.

Si passa così ad uno spettacolo vero e proprio che esalta più l'eleganza, l'armonia e l'agilità, piuttosto che la virilità guerresca, e meno male!

E a proposito di eleganza, un discorso a parte è quello relativo alla ricerca e ricostruzione dei costumi, delle bandiere e di tutte le attrezzature annesse e connesse (come, ad esempio, tamburi, clarine ...).

Si pensi che il gruppo Sbandieratori di San Gemini (provincia di Terni in Umbria), i nostri graditi ospiti alla festa italiana del 15 ottobre 2017, è forse ora l'unico in Italia che non usa bandiere stampate, ma bandiere in cui "i vari complessi disegni, le fiamme, i fregi, gli stemmi ecc. sono costituiti da tessuti di diverso colore cuciti insieme con la pazienza, la professionalità ed i costi che è facile immaginare".

Il drappo poi, con misure extralarge (165 x





135 cm), quindi tra i più grandi utilizzati, impone anche una extra preparazione, perché i drappi così pesanti oppongono una maggiore resistenza all'aria nel corso delle esibizioni.

Il Gruppo di San Gemini si è sempre distinto per la sua serietà comportamentale, che è la migliore presentazione sia per sé stesso, sia che per la “missione” di ambasciatori della cultura italiana nelle sue molteplici espressioni. In questo contesto di conservazione delle tradizioni più veraci, si inserisce l'attività dei Piccoli Bandierai, la Scuola dei futuri Sbandieratori di San Gemini, che in tal modo possono contare su sempre nuovi elementi da inserire in questa attività, così impegnativa sotto ogni profilo, sia esso fisico, mentale o comportamentale.

Ma il premio per tanta fatica e coerenza è la lista degli innumerevoli luoghi in cui il

gruppo si è esibito: Stati Uniti, Giappone, Israele e molte nazioni europee, fino all'Australia, già nel 1997 ed ancora quest'anno.

L'esibizione a Canberra durante la festa italiana nei giardini dell'Ambasciata ha riscosso vivo successo, suscitando ammirazione ed entusiasmo, tra grandi e piccoli.

Ed erano solo 5 atleti: tutti bravi i nostri Sergio, Fabrizio, Giacomo e i due Andrea, di cui dobbiamo sottolineare anche l'impegno personale nell'affrontare la lunga e costosa trasferta dalla piccola Umbria. A quando la prossima esibizione? Speriamo presto, magari per rivederli in una formazione più numerosa ed acrobatica.

See you soon! We are looking forward to seeing you!



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