



Canberra Dante Review

"To preserve and disseminate Italian language and culture"

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Novembre/
Dicembre 2012

Regular Events

Term 1 2013 starts
on Tuesday 12 February

Conversation groups
on Thursdays 7 - 9 pm

All present receive a free copy of the
Italian newspaper *La Fiamma*

Conversation sessions
preceded by
Dante Musica Viva
rehearsals 5 - 7 pm

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TIME TO CELEBRATE THE END OF
ANOTHER ACADEMIC YEAR
WITH ENTERTAINMENT FROM THE
DANTE MUSICA VIVA CHOIR
AND
THE TRADITIONAL
COOKING COMPETITION

GET THE RECIPES OUT
AND PREPARE YOUR ENTRY!

CHOOSE BETWEEN
TIRAMISU AND ZUPPA INGLESE

(One prize to be awarded in each category)

FREE REFRESHMENTS TO MEMBERS

7 pm Thursday 15 November 2012

Function Room, 2nd Fl, Notaras Multicultural Centre
180 London Cct Civic (entry via Civic Square)

News from the Office



TO ALL MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE

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

From 10:30am to 2:00pm
Tuesday to Friday

On Monday the Office will remain closed.
We apologise for any inconvenience.

For enquiries please call the office on 6247 1884
or visit our website:
www.dantealighiericanberra.org.au

LIBRARY

The Dante library is
open during office hours.

It includes the following sections:
Reading-Education-Literature-Literature/Youth
Geography-History-Art-Music-Cinema

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President: Professor Franco Papandrea

Vice-Presidents: Yvette Devlin; Sue Hancock

Treasurer: Mario Rosi

Secretary: vacant

Acting Secretary: Paul Merner

Committee members: Vittorio Beltracchi,
Cellina Benassi, Francesca Foppoli,
Franco Foppoli, Paul Merner, Orlando Di Iulio

Journal Editors: Cellina Benassi, Yvette Devlin

Note: The journal editors wish to acknowledge the
assistance of the office staff in compiling this issue.

Upcoming events

3 November: World Rhythms—fundraiser for the
Emilia Romagna earthquake.

15 November: Dante Alighieri end-of-year
celebration & cooking competition.

23 November: Dante office closes for the year.

22 January: Dante office reopens for 2013.

12 February: Dante Alighieri Term 1 begins.

14 February: Conversation groups resume

ITALIAN LANGUAGE COURSES IN ITALY

The Dante Alighieri Society of Canberra
offers its **financial members** access to Italian
language courses in Italy at discount prices.

The Dante Alighieri Society of Camerino (Marche
region), for instance,
offered Australian students
discounts of up to 46%
on their 2012 courses prices.

For only 922 Euros, you could have had a
four-week language and culture course,
accommodation, cultural visits etc.

Excellent value!

If you intend to travel to Italy for an intensive
course, contact the office for further details.

Modi di dire

Sayings

di Francesca Foppoli

Ecco alcuni modi di dire che si riferiscono a parti del corpo.

OCCHIO/OCCHI - Eye/Eyes

Quella vacanza mi è costata un occhio della testa.

That holiday cost me an arm and a leg.

Il colore di quella casa è proprio un pugno nell'occhio.

The colour of that house is a real eyesore.

A occhio e croce avrà 30 anni.

Roughly speaking I would say that (s)he is about 30.

Lontano dagli occhi, lontano dal cuore.

Out of sight, out of mind.

È tutta la settimana che mangiamo pasta; adesso mi esce dagli occhi.

We've had pasta all week; I've had it up to here now/it's coming out of my ears.

L'amore è cieco, ma anche l'occhio vuole la sua parte.

Love is blind but you should also please the eye.

NASO/Nose

Ti rendi conto che ti hanno preso per il naso?

Do you realise that they were making fun of you?

L'attrice è uscita dalla porta posteriore e ha lasciato tutti i paparazzi con un palmo di naso.

The actress outwitted the paparazzi by leaving through the backdoor.

C'è gente che non è in grado di vedere più in là del proprio naso.

Some people can't see beyond the end of their nose.

L'angolo della lingua

Language Corner

di Yvette Devlin

You may have come across the Italian expression *farsi dare* and may have wondered about it. Well, it means to get someone to give you something (*farsi* is the reflexive form of the verb *fare*).

I'll now give you some sentences which use this type of expression.

Mi sono fatta dire la verità da mia figlia.

I got my daughter to tell me the truth.

Ti sei fatta fare questo vestito dalla sarta? Did you get this dress made for you by the dressmaker?

Non ti preoccupare, mi faccio dare io il conto. **Don't worry, I'll get the bill (lit. I'll get them to give me the bill).**

Oggi la mamma si è fatta vaccinare contro l'influenza.

Today mum got the flu shot.

Questa volta me l'hai fatta proprio bella!

This time you've really gone overboard!

Non ti preoccupare, mi faccio dare io il conto.

L'angolo della poesia

Poetry corner

di Yvette Devlin

For this edition I have chosen a short and simple poem by a XXth century poet, **Attilio Bertolucci**.

Born in the province of Parma in November 1911, at age 18 he published his first collection of poems, *Sirio*.

His collection *Fuochi di novembre* (1932) was praised by Nobel prize-winning poet Eugenio Montale. He moved to Rome where he married and had two sons (Bernardo and Giuseppe) who became respected film directors. In Rome he became a close friend of Pier Paolo Pasolini. He published other poetry and together with Alberto Moravia edited the literary review *Nuovi argomenti*. Bertolucci died in Rome in June 2000.



The following poem is from the collection *Fuochi di novembre*. I find it amusing that the young 21 y.o. poet thought that a woman of 30 would be forgetful.... already old?

La rosa bianca

Coglierò per te
l'ultima rosa del giardino,
la rosa bianca che fiorisce
nelle prime nebbie.
Le avide api l'hanno visitata
sino a ieri,
ma è ancora così dolce
che fa tremare.
È un ritratto di te a trent'anni,
un po' smemorata, come tu sarai allora.

Here is my literary translation

The white rose

I will pick for you
the last rose in the garden,
the white rose that flowers
in the first fogs.
The eager bees visited it
till yesterday,
but it is still so sweet
that it makes you tremble.
It is a portrait of you at thirty,
a little forgetful, as you will then be.

*Una risata non
fa mai male!*

Un bambino protestante ritorna a casa con un occhio nero e la mamma gli chiede:
"Chi ti ha fatto quell'occhio nero?"
"Stavo giocondo con Timmy O'Connell e ho raccontato delle barzellette sul Papa",
spiega Jimmy.
"Ma non sapevi che gli O'Connell sono cattolici?"
"Sì, lo sapevo, ma nessuno mi ha mai detto che anche il Papa è cattolico."

Cenno storico

A bit of history

di Yvette Devlin

La data del **4 novembre** è diventata per l'Italia la **Festa delle Forze Armate e dell'Unità Nazionale.**

For Italy, the date of 4 November has become the **Armed Forces and Italian Unification Day.**

Inizialmente conosciuta come la Festa della Vittoria, la data segnava la fine della prima guerra mondiale (la 'Grande Guerra') quando nel 1918 le truppe italiane entrarono vittoriose a Trento e Trieste.

Il suo significato simbolico si è allargato per due ragioni: anzitutto perché fu il 4 novembre 1918 che si completò il processo dell'unificazione italiana

con l'inclusione di zone previamente sotto il dominio austro-ungarico; e poi perché questo fatto storico fu reso possibile dal coinvolgimento di tutte le forze armate di oltre cinque milioni di mobilitati provenienti da tutte le regioni d'Italia e appartenenti a tutti i ceti sociali che lottarono insieme condividendo sofferenze e la vittoria finale.



Trincea vicino a Caporetto
Trench near Caporetto

Initially known as Victory Day, this date marked the ending of the first world war (The Great War) when in 1918 the Italian troops entered victorious the cities of Trento and Trieste.

Its symbolic meaning broadened because it was on 4 November 1918 that the process of Italian unification was completed with the inclusion of the territories that were still

under Austro-Hungarian Empire domination, and because this historic achievement was made possible by the involvement of all the armed forces of over five million conscripts coming from all the regions of Italy, and all social classes who fought

together sharing the suffering and the eventual victory.



Sono arrivati i Bersaglieri a Trieste!
The Bersaglieri have arrived in Trieste!

Impressions of current Italy

di Yvette Devlin

My annual pilgrimage to Italy has recently concluded, and I would like to share with you some of the impressions I came away with. Of course this is totally subjective but it is what struck me over the period late-July early September.

Australia did not really make the news in Italy except for when the famous former Juventus player **Del Piero** was signed up by the Sydney FC – then it was splashed across all newspapers and TV news. It just shows you how prominent soccer (*calcio*) is in Italy.

A couple of events attracted much media coverage: **the death of the former cardinal of Milan Carlo Maria Martini** and the Venice Film Festival. With regard to the first, it was reported that Martini had expressed views that were not in tune with official Vatican dictum, eg on the use of condoms in some cases as representing the lesser of two evils; the possible use of frozen embryos no longer needed; the embracing of people who are divorced, homosexual etc. The people of Milan (believers and non-believers) turned out in force to farewell the body of the cardinal laid in state in the Duomo. The Vatican downplayed the role played by Martini in getting close to the people and dealing with reality rather than cold doctrine.

The **Venice Film Festival** left Italians disappointed in that none of Italy's entries were awarded a prize. Indeed there was much expectation that **Bellocchio's *Bella addormentata*** (on the controversial story of Eluana Englaro whose parents decided to cease feeding her with a probe after 17 years in a vegetative state, dividing Italy) would earn a gong. The director had received a long standing ovation on the evening of its presentation.

The major social issue that engaged the media was **youth unemployment** – over a third of all young people are looking for work and most of those who are employed are in casual positions. Many think that youth unemployment will inevitably lead to a generation of disenfranchised people who are

unable to have a career, form a family, buy a house. Unemployed youth live at home with their parents and therefore are a continuing drain on their resources.

Youth unemployment is linked to the **dire state of the economy**. Once the engine room of small-to-medium size enterprises, the Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia regions are going through very difficult times, with constant closures. In the large industrial area of Maniago, near my hometown in the province of Pordenone, one third of the firms has closed and each one of those used to employ 50-150 people. The multiplier effect of firm closures and unemployment is obvious: fewer people eat out, go shopping for clothes and shoes, and go on annual holiday. The economic crisis was on everyone's lips (**those still in work felt vulnerable**) and received constant media coverage.

Statistics on the **teaching profession** released during this period pointed to a totally **feminized** occupation: women make up 96% of primary school teachers, 78% of those at middle level (scuole medie) and 65% of teachers at high school (licei, scuole superiori). Teaching in Italy is characterized by extraordinary levels of casualisation – some teachers have their contract renewed annually for over 15 years before being made permanent.

The **Monti government** has embarked on a major project: to change people's attitudes towards tax evasion. Traditionally, Italians pride themselves in **paying little if any tax** ("others don't pay, why should I?"). Indeed, as they argue, **this is one area in which you need to be a "furbo" (smart) because only the "fessi" (the stupid ones) pay all taxes due** – and follow all the rules. The government has launched a clever advertising campaign that likens tax dodgers to parasites. It will be interesting to see whether the average Italian will be converted **by the campaign...**

Monti's government was receiving patchy approval – officially, politicians by and large support it, but the average person was complaining about rising

Impressions of current Italy

(continued)

di Yvette Devlin

taxes and the age for pension eligibility. Many on the right side of politics argued that things were better under Berlusconi. Most people did not appreciate that the stringent measures introduced by Monti were designed to stem the **worsening of public debt and restore Italy's** international credibility. With very few exceptions, the views of the foreign media were not reported or given any weight when reported.

On the **cultural side**, I made a lovely trip to Posagno (Treviso) to visit the **Museo Antonio Canova**. The great 19th century sculptor was born there and the house where he lived has now become a gallery displaying his works, which included many drawings and paintings of dancing women. Attached to the house there is a "*gipsoteca*" where almost all of the statues of

Canova are displayed in their original form – gypsum. Canova used to make them in this medium before carving the marble. One of my favourites was the *Venere Italica* – a reproduction of which I had bought a few days earlier as a statue for my garden. It now stands near a special **rock I had collected from a nearby 'bosco'** and which I had analysed by two geologist friends. I was told that parts of this rock (with the technical name of '*breccia di versante*') **date back to the cretaceous era (70-140 million years ago)** and the porous rock that cements those parts together is "**only 1 million years old**". **What a find!**

Another cultural trip took me to Venice to admire the religious works of **Tiziano** whose birthplace at Pieve di Cadore (also in the Veneto region) I had visited as part of a guided tour organized by



Canova's Venere Italica and my super ancient rock - millions of years old!

Impressions of current Italy

(continued)

di Yvette Devlin

my village. This day-trip had also confirmed my great love for the Friulan Alps and Dolomites. We passed through Cortina d'Ampezzo where the winter Olympics of 1956 were held: the downhill 'pista' is still there.

I particularly like attending '*rievocazioni storiche*' in the towns that were once owned by the nobility and which still have a functioning '*castello*' medioevale. This year I attended one at Spilimbergo during the afternoon, featuring people dressed in elegant velvet clothes with the '*conte*' and the '*contessa*' at the head of the procession but also including common peasants, piglets, chicks, drummers, fire eaters, dancers, hunchbacks – the full gamut of humanity. The second was at night at Valvasone. Here they turn off street lights and keep a few lamps just for safety – but torches and '*fiaccole*' abound. Medieval food and drinks, medieval games (which I tried), jewellery, archery, theatre, music (mainly drums, but also string instruments)



Inside the Canova museum at Possagno

livened the narrow, exceedingly crowded streets of the little town where I attended '*scuole medie*' in the 50s. Some trivia for you: it was at these *scuole medie* that Pasolini had taught Italian a few years earlier; and Valvasone's duomo holds one of only two functioning organs dating back to the 16th century.



Some of the elegant medieval costumes on parade at Spilimbergo

Religious festivities and other excuses for holding country festivals (eg *la sagra dell'oca*, *del mirtillo*, *del formaggio*, *della patata*, *del prosciutto*, *della rana*) as well as religious processions, dancing at the *sagre*, attending conferences for Friulan people living abroad, and visiting friends and the many relatives took up the rest of the time. A welcome immersion in "*friulanità*" and tradition in which I gladly bathe every year.

September's Italian Trivia Night

di Yvette Devlin

Every two years we organise an entertaining as well as educational evening of questions relating to Italy in five major categories. This year five tables took part on 20 September. The **First Secretary at the Embassy Alessandro Giovine** graciously agreed to be one of the two “examiners” – the other being Francesca Foppoli. I played the role of MC, while Catharina Koopman and Orlando Di Iulio collected the answer sheets and kept the score on the whiteboard.

A prize was presented to the winning table, which was *Le belle e la bestia* (made up of Susan, Helen, Wendy, Barbara, Gabriele and his wife). Second was the *Da Vinci* table; third *The Moravians*, fourth *I meravigliosi di Pauline*, and fifth (with some room for improvement) were *I principianti*.

I'll give you an example of the questions we asked under the five broad categories:

1. **History and politics:** *Where is the city of Aquileia and why does it have a place in history?*
2. **Art and literature:** *Name at least two major works of Gianlorenzo Bernini.*
3. **Entertainment and culture:** *What is the original meaning of the greeting 'Ciao'? Three options: (a) How are you? (b) God bless you (c) I am your servant.*
4. **Sport and food:** *What type of milk was first*

used to make mozzarella and where was it first made?

5. **Geography and miscellanea:** *How long did it take to build the leaning tower of Pisa? Three options: (a) 57 yrs (b) 127 yrs; (c) 177 yrs.*

So when we run it again in two years' time – be part of it! You might just enjoy it!

The answers to the five questions are as follows:

Aquileia is in Friuli Venezia Giulia, accessible via the Adriatic Sea. It was founded by the Romans in 180 BC as a fortress against the barbarians and by the 2nd century it had a population of 100,000, being the second-largest Roman city in Italy. It has many Roman ruins and relics and also a large basilica with byzantine mosaics.

The design of St Peter's Square; St Peter's Baldachin; the Fontana dei 4 fiumi (fountain of the four rivers) in Piazza Navona; the statue of Apollo and Daphne; the statue of The Ecstasy of St Teresa

I am your servant.

Buffalo milk. Mozzarella was first made near Naples.

177 years.



Part of the room during the trivia night

7th Biennial Conference of the Dante Alighieri Societies of Australia

di Yvette Devlin

This conference was held in Canberra over the week-end 28-30 September, organised by our society with the full support of the Italian Embassy. **There were representatives from six Societies: Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra.**

On Friday 28 the ten interstate visitors met with Dante Committee members and other guests for the official welcoming reception and buffet dinner at the residence of the Italian ambassador. The host was **Alessandro Giovine, First Secretary at the Embassy** - the ambassador being overseas at the time.

On Sat 29 the proceedings took place at the Italian Embassy. Apart from the interstate representatives, there were also some 12-15 local people including Dante President Franco Papandrea, Vice-President Sue Hancock, Treasurer Mario Rosi, Committee members Francesca and Franco Foppoli, Cellina Benassi, Orlando Di Iulio, Vittorio Beltracchi and myself as vice-president; teacher Pauline Adams and conversation leader Giuseppe Parisi; teacher of Italian at the

Yarralumla Bilingual School Meri Dragicevic; the **ANU's Piera Carroli for a short time; the Canberra** Convenor of the Languages Forum Mandy Scott; and Alessandro Giovine.

The morning session was dedicated to the presentation of their activities by each Society. What we learnt was that each one of us operates in a different way: although we all have the same overriding goal of promoting Italian language and culture, our activities are determined by the environment in which we operate (eg whether there are other organisations offering Italian language courses or cultural events; whether there are universities with which to run collaborative activities; whether we have access to a significant number of young people etc). So, for instance, in Melbourne there are no formal classes but there are conversation classes to assist Yr 12 students, and the Society focuses on literary competitions among school students at all levels as well as cultural events, and a young person on the committee has made strong links with GIA - she organises successful social evenings attracting 100-200 young people; in

Sydney the Italian language classes are successful but there is limited focus on cultural events given that so many are already organised by other organisations; in Brisbane teaching activities have been maintained despite a series of negative events (two floods and then loss of premises) that have thwarted other plans; in Adelaide language classes have started and a successful event around cinema (*Cineforum*) run jointly with the universities is held regularly; Perth too runs classes as well as cultural events such as a successful theatre night during Italian



*Back: delegations from Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, and Perth, with Concetta Perna.
Front: Delegations from Brisbane and Canberra, with Alessandro Giovine*

7th Biennial Conference of The Dante Alighieri Societies of Australia

di Yvette Devlin

Language Week. I presented the report on our activities with which you are already familiar.

The afternoon was mostly taken up by a round-table discussion that centred on similarities and differences, shared goals and common issues (eg lack of Italian government funding) and pros and cons of nominating a spokesperson to speak on behalf of all the societies if the need to present a strong united front arises (eg threats to the teaching of Italian at schools or universities in Australia). There was general agreement that it would be advantageous to have such a spokesperson and that it should be the president of the committee charged with the responsibility of organising the next biennial conference. In this case, Dominic Barbaro, president of the Melbourne Dante, offered to organise the next conference and will therefore be the spokesman for all the committees on major issues.

During the morning there was an entertaining and instructive talk on Dante given by Mario Serenellini. **He spoke of Dante's life, career and literary works – not just the Divine Comedy. He then focussed on Dante's treatment of love, and recited the canto in which Francesca da Rimini explains how her love for Paolo was born.**

The afternoon started with a fascinating in-depth analysis by Concetta Perna of the coverage of Italy and Italians by the international media, ie what was the image of Italy portrayed outside the country. Concetta traced the positive coverage in the 50s (Vespa, Cinquecento) and 60s (Stile Italiano), the negative coverage in the 70s (Red Brigades) and the shift to positive again in the 80s (fashion, quality products at expositions) only to return to the negative treatment from the 90s due to a focus on corruption, organised crime, tax evasion, bureaucratic inefficiency, economic crisis, Berlusconi. Concetta stressed that to counter this negative focus, there continues to be much attention devoted to lifestyle, culture, the Made in Italy, artistic heritage and beautiful landscapes.

Special thanks go to our devoted long-term member Catharina Koopman who, with the assistance of Sue Hancock, assumed full



First Secretary Alessandro Giovine welcomes delegates

responsibility for the catering arrangements for the Saturday at the embassy and for organising the conference dinner at the Yarralumla Yacht Club. Catering arrangements were extremely smooth and everyone appreciated the good food, coffee and tea as well as the cakes and biscuits baked by Cellina Benassi and Catharina herself.

Another thank-you goes to the Dante Musica Viva choir that came during the lunch break to give guests from out of town a taste of its musical skills – real home-grown entertainment (we are after all the only Dante with a choir!).

Mario Rosi also deserves praise for his very attractive design of the conference program.

And last but not least a big thank-you to Alessandro Giovine for his warm hospitality on **Friday evening at the ambassador's residence and on Saturday at the Embassy.**

Giorgio Mangiamele

A presentation by Gino Moliterno
di Yvette Devlin

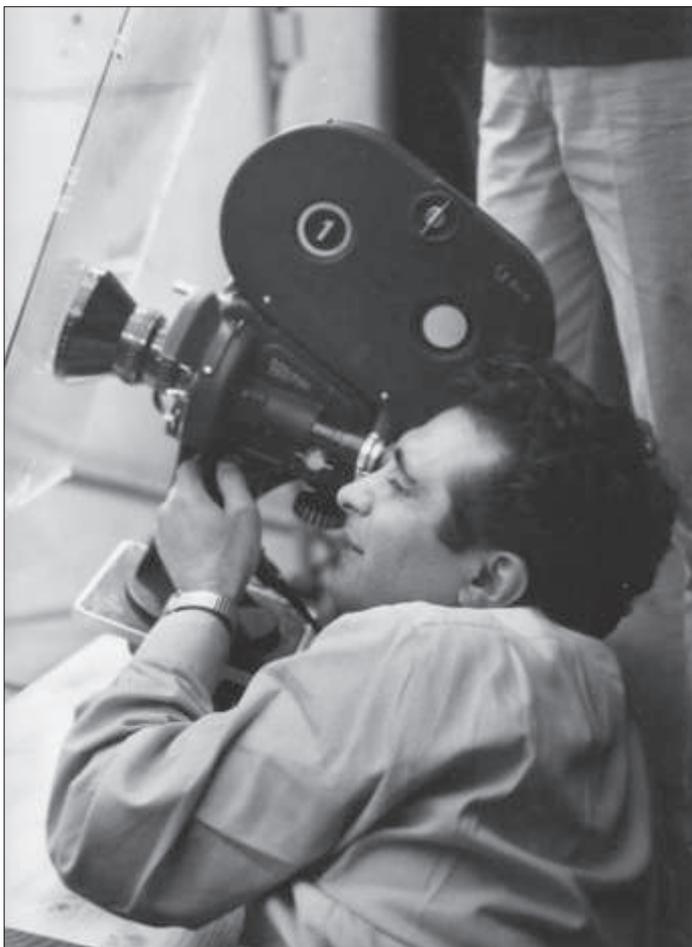
What a delight to see the quirky B & W 45-minute comedy *Ninety-nine per cent* made by Giorgio Mangiamele in 1963 in Carlton! The plot follows the attempts by an Italian widower to find a new wife through an international matrimonial agency.....

As Gino Moliterno explained during the cultural evening of 18 October, the Sicilian-born Mangiamele came to Australia in the early fifties and earned an income as a photographer, but his real passion was the cinema. A small problem: he had no money or financial backers to make the films. Undeterred, he borrowed a camera and started to make short films documenting the difficult experiences of Italian migrants in those days, e.g. two versions of *The Spag*. He filmed many of the



A portrait of Mangiamele behind his camera.

scenes from his window with most of the settings being the Carlton streets near his home.



Mangiamele shooting with minimal crew and equipment

In 1964 Giorgio Mangiamele made a 90-minute film – *Clay* - set at Montsalvat, an artists colony located at Eltham. Again, he basically made it with no money - in fact actors were asked to pay in order to be in the film! This lyrical film, which displays his love of the arts, was accepted at Cannes but had no commercial success in Australia. Gino told us that Mangiamele never managed to get funding from the new Australian **Film Corporation** and was ‘swept aside’ in Australia. In 1979 he went to PNG to make films for the government there. He died in 2001 aged 75.

Gino stressed that Giorgio Mangiamele is the only Italian-Australian film director to have made films here, particularly at a time when the Australian film industry was practically non-existent. His work is inspired by De Sica and Fellini. Following the restoration of his films by the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) with Gino’s assistance, Mangiamele is finally recognised for his efforts and dedication to the cinema, with some of his films now regarded as first-rate.

Five of his films are included in a double DVD that can be purchased from Ronin Films or through NFSA.



Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

di Alessia La Cavera

In Italia, così come in gran parte del mondo occidentale, il Natale è una festività molto sentita, **oltre che un'occasione di festa, svago e possibilmente vacanza nel mezzo della lunga stagione invernale.**

Come spesso avviene, in un Paese dalla forte **identità culturale e dalle mille tradizioni**, l'aspetto più strettamente religioso della celebrazione si è fuso ed arricchito con diverse tradizioni che spesso variano da regione a regione, se non addirittura da paese a paese. Così se nel suo significato originale il Natale è una celebrazione strettamente religiosa, volta a festeggiare la nascita del Signore, nella realtà si è tramutato in un momento di ritrovo ed **identità familiare.** Nell'**immaginario collettivo** questo periodo è spesso associato a giornate trascorse insieme ai propri cari o agli amici, accarezzati dal tepore di casa o sorseggiando bevande calde tra mercatini tradizionali e presepi viventi, ove figuranti fanno rinascere tradizioni e mestieri ormai scomparsi, spesso incastonati nella pittoresca scenografia di case e palazzo antichi. Per gli adulti il Natale, o più in generale, le settimane a ridosso di questa data costituiscono una scusa per ritrovarsi con gli amici e stemperare la routine quotidiana, magari programmando vacanze in paesi più o meno esotici.

Per i bambini invece l'intero mese di dicembre è un crescendo di gioia e fervore, catturati dalla tradizioni, dai colori e dalla smania di questo giorno tanto atteso, quando sotto l'albero addobbato con cura si troveranno i doni a lungo desiderati.

Come ogni tradizione, anche la visione del Natale ha subito modifiche nel corso degli ultimi anni: se **l'aspetto commerciale è sempre esistito**, negli ultimi anni il focus della festa si è spostato dalla celebrazione della nascita del Signore alla figura di Babbo Natale, complice anche la cinematografia hollywoodiana.

La figura di Babbo Natale, ereditata dal mondo anglosassone e dalla cultura pagana del nord Europa, porta con sé il fascino di questa anziana figura che vive nelle desolate e nevose **steppe della Scandinavia, preparando, con l'aiuto**

dei folletti, giochi e regali per i bimbi. Per quanto **questa visione si possa conciliare poco con l'originale natura religiosa della festa**, le due realtà convivono ormai a pieno titolo e sono state assimilate e rielaborate con interessanti risvolti.

Mentre la prima parte della sera del 24 dicembre è **caratterizzata dall'aspetto più mistico** - la celebrazione religiosa - il resto della notte è dedicato allo scambio dei regali o, per i più piccini, ad attendere che questi compaiano magicamente al risveglio.

L'aspetto più commerciale delle celebrazioni natalizie ormai inizia nel tardo autunno boreale, quando le diverse attività commerciali iniziano a proporre idee regalo e gli scaffali dei supermercati e dei negozi alimentari si arricchiscono di prelibatezze, ghiottonerie ed altri prodotti tipici di questo periodo.

Tra questi il più conosciuto è forse il panettone, dolce originario del Milanese, senza dimenticare però il pandoro, il torrone, il panforte ed i biscotti allo zenzero o alla mandorla!

Il trionfo culinario si raggiunge nella notte di Capodanno, di solito festeggiato con gli amici, piuttosto che con i familiari, e spesso una buona dose di botti e mortaretti fatti scoppiare allo scoccare della mezzanotte per scacciare il passato e dare il benvenuto al nuovo che verrà.

L'aspetto gioioso di questo periodo continua fino all'Epifania, anche questa una tradizione originariamente religiosa che ormai segna la fine di due intense settimane di feste e tradizioni e detta il ritorno alla routine quotidiana dei mesi a venire fino al Carnevale!



Friends, Romans, Country men, **lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song**

by Professor Francesco Sofo

In a previous Bulletin, one of our choir members wrote about the history of the Dante Musica Viva, how we came to exist, by accident. Call it serendipity, as a small group of us wanted to sing some songs after conversation class on Thursday evenings to enjoy the language **through its music.** 'Mamma' was perhaps our first song! There was no outlandish ambition. Our ambition was to enjoy singing the charming songs from Italy. There were no auditions and exclusions; anybody could join in and sing! This remains the case today. From these humble beginnings seven years ago, we now find ourselves to be winners of the Australian National Eisteddfod (Multicultural and Community Choirs Section). *Veni, Canta, Vici!* We came, we sang, we conquered! How did this happen?

For those who know little about this national

competition, The Australian National Eisteddfod is an annual contest and includes entries in more than 200 sections for solo and group performance and competition in voice and instrument. In 2012 there were six competitions including choirs. The DMV entered the Multicultural Choirs section.

We were judged on two pieces we selected for their contrast. The first was *Va Pensiero* (Go my thoughts) from the opera *Nabucco*. Also known as the Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, it is a stirring chorus composed by Giuseppe Verdi born in Emilia Romagna. The second piece, *Calabrisella* (Calabrian Girl) from the south of Italy is a lovely ancient folk song which tells the story of a young man who falls in love instantly when he sees a beautiful girl hanging out the washing and then steals her best handkerchief so he can always be reminded of her.



The Dante Musica Viva choir singing at the Australian National Eisteddfod

Lend me your ears

(continued)

by Professor Francesco Sofò

The judges summed up their report of our performance as follows: *'Lovely sotto voce opening.... Dynamics were well observed throughout... Good sense of passion... Good ensemble sound'*. The closing comment from one judge was *'thank you for sharing this beautiful music with us'* while the other stated *'altogether very enjoyable'*. These words are music to our ears because *'enjoyment – fun'* is our motto, so imagine what it means to every choir member to see those words in writing in the superlative *'altogether very enjoyable'*.

Va Pensiero was perhaps the more challenging of the two songs because every bar of its 41 bars has a different dynamic and different words and we needed to learn it all by heart, something the choir has never done before - to sing without holding a folder or words. *Calabrisella* had different challenges from *Va Pensiero*. This song has four-part harmonies all the way through and so every choir member was under pressure to make sure they came in on the right note and were true to the harmony. We had many extra rehearsals and home visits to ensure that each section of the choir knew these pieces with all the dynamics, pronunciations, pauses, holds and harmonies, impeccably. We greatly benefited from being mentored by the famous Don Whitbread, a retired conductor and judge, who came along to our rehearsals, listened, made observations which he relayed to us and even conducted the choir to lift its delivery. Through his intervention I believe we were able to excel enough to be the best we could, and consequently grab the first prize.

I think we are all better for having undertaken this challenge. So, why did we do it? Simply because we could, and what a difference that has made. The Dante Musica Viva Choir originated from humble beginnings and is now bringing more distinction and recognition to the work of the Dante Alighieri Society.

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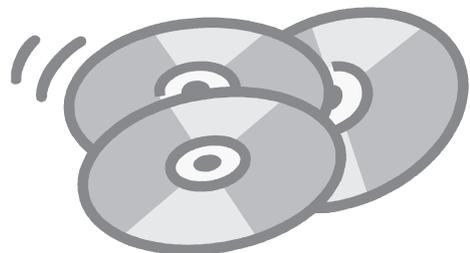
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Il mio fine settimana

My weekend

di Elspeth Hunter*

Non è mai facile andare via per un weekend e dopo lo scorso weekend, non sono sicura che valga la pena.

Avevamo deciso di andare a Sydney lo scorso **venerdì mattina con l'intenzione di partire alle nove** ma alla fine partiamo alle undici. Quella mattina ci alziamo presto e facciamo una colazione veloce. Prima di poter caricare la macchina, dobbiamo portare il cane di nostra figlia dal veterinario che lei passerà a prendere il giorno dopo quando torna dalle vacanze.

Sulla via del ritorno mio marito nota che la macchina ha poca benzina, perciò ci fermiamo al distributore a fare il pieno e per controllare la pressione delle gomme. Siccome piove a catinelle, mio marito si bagna tutto e deve cambiarsi quando arriva a casa.

Finalmente possiamo iniziare a caricare la macchina ma purtroppo in quel momento faccio cadere la torta, che avevo cucinato giovedì per

portare alla famiglia a Sydney. Adesso è immangiabile e dobbiamo ripulire la sporcizia. Un altro ritardo!!!

La maggior parte delle cose che dobbiamo portare a Sydney sono per la famiglia e di conseguenza dimentichiamo le nostre. Dieci minuti dopo la partenza, ritorniamo a casa perchè mio marito ha dimenticato il suo apparecchio acustico e io ho dimenticato la mia macchina fotografica.

A questo punto siamo così agitati che, prima di ripartire, decidiamo di prenderci un caffè per calmare i nervi.

Arrivati a Lake George verso le undici e mezza, abbiamo una bellissima sorpresa. Per la prima volta in più di venti anni, c'è acqua nel lago e tutte **le colline intorno sono coperte di neve. E' un panorama spettacolare** e fortunatamente posso scattare una foto. C'è neve lungo la strada fino a Goulburn.

Quando arriviamo a Sydney, il tempo è brutto e siamo congelati. **“Perchè siamo venuti?” ci chiediamo. Ma poi sabato il tempo è bello e cominciamo a divertirci.**

Questa è una foto del lago e della neve.

[Elspeth è socio della Dante e partecipa al gruppo di conversazione di Francesca. Parla di venerdì 12 ottobre]*



Lago George e la neve sulle colline circostanti.



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