



April 2006

La Rondine

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN CLUB OF ST. LOUIS

Theodoric the Great, King of Italy by Anna Amelung

Next Meeting

Wednesday

April 19th

Cocktails – 6:30p.m.

Dinner – 7:00 p.m.
\$22 per person

RSVP
Dan and Jan Viele

(636) 537-5960
or

ItalianClubSTL@aol.com
by noon
Tuesday April 18

Italians are usually aware--and proud of-- their ancient Roman roots, and often because of the impressive Roman ruins which can still be seen in Italy. Who has not heard of--or even visited--the Colosseum, the Forum, the Circus Maximus in Rome, or perhaps walked along the ancient Appian Way? But very few are cognizant of the crucial heritage left in Italy by the so-called "barbarians," those tribes that settled in the Roman Empire and became the heirs to the great power of their predecessors. Calling them "barbarians" is indeed a mistake, a term of convenience, because in many ways they were far superior to the "civilized" Romans: their moral standards were far stricter, their family and societal values being taken as model even by Roman historians such as Tacitus. Gladiatorial games and prostitution, for example, so popular among the Romans, were considered with horror by many of these "less civilized" nations.

Soon these tribes mingled with the Romans, and most of them showed great awe and respect for their civilization, attempting not to destroy it-- as it has been often said, but to profit from it and enjoy all the advantages this culture had to offer, from paved roads to higher education. The Romans themselves soon realized the advantages of living with the "barbarians", adopted some of their customs (such as the use of soap or the wearing of trousers) and often they married their women, much more faithful and fertile than the Roman ones.

Theodoric the Great, leader of the Ostrogoths and king of Italy, is perhaps the most beloved of all the "barbarian" rulers. Born of the family of the Amali, he was raised in Constantinople as a hostage, and soon came to appreciate--although with a critical eye-- all the luxuries the Eastern Roman Empire had to offer. Soon he distinguished himself for his quick wit and great sense of diplomacy, so much that the emperor Zeno himself sent him to Italy to displace Odoacer (who had deposed the last Western Roman Emperor) and to become the sole ruler of that country. During his long reign he rebuilt and embellished cities such as Rome, Verona, and especially Ravenna, and forged alliances with all the most powerful rulers of Europe, so much that one can speak of a first attempt at creating a European Community. He attempted to have Romans and Goths live side by side, he gathered Roman laws in a new code, and established a climate of religious tolerance unheard of at that time. His legacy can still be found in the building of Ravenna-- the church of Sant'Apollinare as well as his majestic tomb, an enduring tribute to his power and Arian faith. During the Middle Ages, Theodoric became a legendary hero: he is portrayed in many poems-- among which the most famous is the "Nibelungenlied" under the name of Dietrich von Bern, and he is even remembered in an Italian poem by Carducci which will close our evening together at the Italian Club.

"The Stonecutter's Aria" by Carol Faenzi

One hundred years ago, a young man of nineteen was living in Carrara, Italy. Carrara is the Mediterranean seaport city that is surrounded by the vast marble quarries mined by the Romans 2,000 years ago and also Michelangelo for his masterpieces because they hold the purest white marble in the world.

The young man's name was Aristide Giovanoni and he had two passions -- marble and opera. Aristide studied gothic architecture and became a master at tracery, which is the decorative ornamentation around archways and windows. He also had a beautiful tenor's voice and performed occasionally at the two opera houses of Carrara. This was the time when Giuseppe Verdi was the master of the form and Giacomo Puccini was just getting his career started.

Aristide made a decision to come to America and while he left his new wife and parents behind, he brought with him his passions for carving and music.

It would take twenty years before his family and children would join him in America. And as with any immigrant

who came to our country in those early years of the twentieth century, it was a difficult road to follow -- ugly racism, life threatening labor practices, overcoming language and cultural barriers were everyday experiences, often resulting in violence.

This young man, Aristide, despite his skills, faced years of hard labor in limestone and granite quarries from Vermont to Colorado. There were however, rare glorious moments, when monuments to America were erected that required his handiwork, especially during the Depression era when there was a renaissance of the gothic style, landmarks that bear his hallmark and that of his son, Giorgio Giovanoni who learned the craft from his father...buildings such as the National Archives in Washington, D. C., Duke University's Julian Chapel and the Cathedral of Learning in Pittsburgh are just a few of these landmarks.

I wrote *The Stonecutter's Aria* to honor his memory and that of his daughter, Olga who was my grandmother.

(Continued on page 2)

"It's a love story. It's an adventure story. It's a history lesson. But it's mostly a lesson in how valuable it is to be connected to our past."

L'angolo del Presidente by James Tognoni

My Fellow Members and Friends:

I'm sure like many of you I have been tending to my yard and doing touch-up to the outside of my house. It feels good to have everything in order and ready for a spring and summer of fun, relaxation and an overall good time. I look forward to the outdoor concerts, picnics and activities.

Now to discuss the exciting events that the Italian Club will have. As you know, April is the month in which we present a financial award to two deserving students from Washington University. The students will join us at our meeting. The speaker at our April meeting will be Anna Amelung. I believe most of you have heard Anna's

presentations in the past. She is energetic, animated, and interesting to hear. Make sure you make your reservation for the April 19th meeting.

Here are a few reminders or items to think about:

-If you have not mailed your 2006 dues, please do so right away.

-Start thinking about candidates for the Italian Heritage Award to be given at our June meeting. Please e-mail me or send me a letter with the nominee of your choice.

-Next year will be the Club's 85th Anniversary. It's time to start thinking about how we want to celebrate it. Your suggestions are most welcome.

-I am looking for one more person to join the Program Committee. Please

let me know if you are interested.

-Remember that the Young Artists' Competition is coming up soon. Look for more details in this newsletter. If you have never been, you are missing something very special. Frankly, I was amazed at the level of talent these young people have.

-Remember to come to the History Museum in Forest Park at 5:30 p.m. on Friday April, 7th. Our own, Carol Faenzi, will be presenting her book in a multi-media presentation. The event is sponsored in part by the Italian Club. Be well, enjoy the weather and keep your love of our heritage alive.

Ciao, Jim

(314) 865-1005 jtognoni@earthlink.net

"THE STONECUTTER'S ARIA" - An Evening of Music, Drama and Fiction

April 7, 2006 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Lee Auditorium , Missouri History Museum, Forest Park

Inspired by genealogical research, Carol Faenzi's novel, *The Stonecutter's Aria*, is the true story of an Italian marble carver and opera tenor at the beginning of the 20th century. Based on the novel, this program creatively combines opera and first-person narrative. Faenzi will sign copies of her book after the program. Join us for an evening of music, drama and fiction. www.mohistory.org

"The Stonecutter's Aria" (Continued from page 1)

She told me many stories as I was growing up –about the pain of family separation, the perilous voyage across an ocean, the emotion of seeing the Statue of Liberty, the frightening experience of getting through Ellis Island.

When she and my grandfather, Otto passed away in 1996, I felt a mantle of responsibility placed on my shoulders. They had taken me to Italy at an impressionable age and it began a lifelong love affair with Italy and a desire to preserve this heritage.

The stories were always in my head and in 2001, I took a career sabbatical to live in Italy and begin to put them together. This journey has taken four years. It took me to the marble quarries, to archives, to cemeteries, to opera houses. I learned so much about the immigrant experience and it was overwhelming to realize finally how brave they all were.

Imagine what it would be like to leave your family, your home, have very little money, certainly no credit cards!, get on a large ship to cross a vast ocean to a country where few if anyone even knew you or were waiting for you, to a place where you could not speak the language, had very different clothing, mannerisms, different food and where the cities seemed like giants ready to swallow you – where you were at the mercy of those who offered you any miserable job so you could eat that day.

When I wrote this book, I was on a personal journey to change my life – to leave a corporate career and embark on something more fulfilling.

Considering the bravery and courage of my ancestors, whose blood flows in my own veins inspired me to make my own leaps into the unknown.

And that finally, is the message of *The Stonecutter's Aria*. It's a love story. It's an adventure story. It's a history lesson. But it's mostly a lesson in how valuable it is to be connected to our past. They say it's not healthy to live in the past and that's true – but looking at it long enough to understand where we came from and who we are, what makes us who we are is important. It is their legacy and then it becomes ours, a continuous link of stories and ritual, an inheritance that is rich and meaningful – a sense of belonging.

What I discovered, in a very real sense, was that my ancestors wanted me to find them. They were thinking about me before I was born. As I pieced together their lives out of yellowed scraps of paper and so forth, I realized I was fulfilling something. The men who crossed the Atlantic in hardship and did backbreaking labor for years had their future generations in mind. The women followed, making the same brutal crossing with children and infants on those ships. They weren't just working for the present or even their own future – they felt a fierce and also tender hope for those who would come after. They wanted to pass on the goodness of their lives.

The Stonecutter's Aria is an historical novel. The stories are rooted in fact and history. But what emerges from fact is memory and memory becomes legend over time. *by Carol Faenzi*

Our sincerest condolences to the family and friends of **Vincent Imperato** who passed away on March 19th. Donations may be made to: Little Sisters of the Poor, 1655 McGill Avenue, Mobile, AL 36604.

TERZA PAGINA

I capolavori della poesia italiana

a cura di Barbara Klein

Giuseppe Impastato (Cinisi 1948– Palermo 1978), assieme ad altri giovani, fonda un giornale, "L'Idea socialista" che, dopo alcuni numeri, sarà sequestrato: di particolare interesse un servizio di Peppino sulla "Marcia della protesta e della pace" organizzata da Danilo Dolci; il rapporto con Danilo lascia un notevole segno nella formazione politica di Peppino.

Nel 1975 organizza il Circolo "Musica e Cultura", un'associazione che promuove attività culturali e musicali e che diventa il principale punto di riferimento per i giovani di Cinisi. Le idee della sinistra "rivoluzionaria" porta il gruppo alla realizzazione di Radio Aut, un'emittente autofinanziata che indirizza i suoi sforzi e la sua scelta nel campo della controinformazione e soprattutto in quello della satira nei confronti della mafia e degli esponenti della politica locale.

Nel 1978 Peppino partecipa alle elezioni comunali a Cinisi. Viene assassinato il 9 maggio 1978, qualche giorno prima delle elezioni e qualche giorno dopo l'esposizione di una documentata mostra fotografica sulla devastazione del territorio operata da speculatori e gruppi mafiosi. Il caso giudiziario è stato chiuso finalmente nel 2001- 2002 con il condanno di Vito Palazzolo e Gaetano Badalamenti..

Per ulteriori informazioni vedi: www.icentopassi.com
www.peppinoimpastato.com www.centroimpastato.it

Un mare di gente

di Giuseppe Impastato

Un mare di gente
a flutti disordinati
s'è riversato nelle piazze,
nelle strade e nei sobborghi.
E' tutto un gran vociare
che gela il sangue,
come uno scricchiolo di ossa rotte.
Non si può volere e pensare
nel frastuono assordante;
nell'odore di calca
c'è aria di festa

Alla vita di Peppino è dedicato il film I CENTO PASSI di Marco Tullio Giordana, con Luigi Lo Cascio nel ruolo di Impastato. Il film è una ricostruzione abbastanza libera dell'attività di Peppino, e i "cento passi" che separavano casa sua da quella del boss Tano Badalamenti sono in realtà solo una metafora usata dal regista. Il film sarà proiettato il 15 aprile all'Italian Film Festival di St. Louis.

www.italianfilmfestivalstlouis.com

In giro per l'Italia

a cura di Barbara Klein

Duomo di Monreale



Il Duomo, dedicato a Santa Maria la Nuova, fu edificato a partire dal 1174 per volere del re normanno Guglielmo II; è il simbolo di una raffinata mescolanza di stili architettonici come quello islamico,

quello bizantino e romanico che convergono a creare una delle maggiori opere del medioevo siciliano. Esso venne edificato insieme all'abbazia, al palazzo reale e al palazzo arcivescovile con i quali forma un complesso omogeneo.

La sua facciata è alternata da due imponenti torri quadrate e un portale sito su colonne di stile dorico al di sopra del quale vi sono delle arcate fatte in pietra calcarea e lavica, e al di sotto del quale si apre il portico originale, decorato da magnifici elementi bronzei.

L'interno, a pianta basilicale, ha tre navate erette secondo la tipica forma a croce bizantina con pianta quadrata. Tutto l'interno della chiesa, al di sopra dello zoccolo marmoreo, è rivestito da mosaici a fondo d'oro (6.340 mq) eseguiti tra il XII e il XIII secolo. La qualità dei mosaici non è costante, variano per finezza di disegno ed espressività. Ciò sembra rivelare, verosimilmente, che l'esecuzione fu affidata ad artisti di diversa provenienza, sia bizantini che locali e musulmani.

Il ciclo musivo svolge ordinatamente una narrazione del mondo secondo la Bibbia, cominciando dalle sette giornate della creazione e terminando con le



attività degli Apostoli, che fondarono la Chiesa di Cristo sulla terra, a cui, nell'abside, si aggiunge il Cristo Pantocratore con la corte celeste di angeli, profeti e santi. Il soffitto, a capriate lignee, policromo fu ricostruito nel 1816-37 dopo l'incendio del 1811, su disegno dell'originale. Il pavimento a dischi di porfido e granito con fasce marmoree intrecciate a linee spezzate è in parte originale, in parte del 1559.

Per ulteriori informazioni vedi: www.monreale.net

Buon viaggio in Italia!!!

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*LA RONDINE***

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***Celebrating
83 years of
Italian Culture
and Heritage***

**WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.ITALYSTL.COM/
ITALIANCLUB**

Prossime manifestazioni

FUTURE ITALIAN CLUB MEETINGS & EVENTS

**April 19- "Theodoric the Great" by Anna Amelung
*Washington University student awards will be presented.***

**May 17- "The Crossroads of Medicine: The Medieval School of Salerno"
*by Walton O. Schalick, III, MD, PhD,***

***The Italian Club meets the third Wednesday of each month for dinner at da Baldo's
Cocktails—6:30p.m. Dinner- 7:00p.m. \$22.00 per person***

Italian Film Festival of St. Louis

March 31-April 15, 2006

The Italian Film Festival of St. Louis will present the local premiere of six Italian films. Films will be shown on April 1, 7, 8, 14, and 15. All films are subtitled in English and the screenings, which are free and open to the general public, will be held in Brown Hall 100 on the campus of Washington University in St. Louis at 8 p.m. The festival is sponsored by Washington University's Program in Film and Media Studies and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Chicago. For further information, please visit the festival's website www.italianfilmfestivalstlouis.com or call 314-422-3102. (see insert)

"Our Sinatra"

Sunday, April 9, 2006

BROADWAY'S RISING STARS PAY TRIBUTE TO OL' BLUE EYES IN ONE-NIGHT ONLY PERFORMANCE

AT THE TOUCHHILL— University of Missouri at St. Louis www.touchill.org

6th Annual Young Artists' Competition

Sunday, April 23, 2006

Sponsored by the Federation of Italian American Organizations and St. Ambrose Church

2:00p.m.

St. Ambrose Church

5130 Wilson at Marconi

Free of charge and Open to the Public