



tradizioni

NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN FOLK ART FEDERATION OF AMERICA

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Greetings From Your President

The IFAFA Conference of 1995 in Rockford, Illinois, has come and gone. For those of you who could not attend, I must report that you missed the most unique and educational week-end that I personally have experienced in many moons. Upon reflection, one gets the feeling that indeed it was magical. Hats off to Gene and Shirley Fedeli for their untiring efforts and attention to detail! 'Gli Amici Italiani,' of course, mirrored the leadership and left nothing to be desired. By golly, I even had a huge glass of water delivered to me at my workshops. That's a first! Gene and Shirley have set a precedent and that's a big plus, for we shall strive to maintain this level of conference quality.

Unfortunately, due to personal circumstances beyond our control, we have found it necessary to cancel this year's conference. We are, however, going to descend and shuffle off to Buffalo, NY, in 1997. In fact, why don't you mark your calendars now so that you can be sure of attending? The dates will be October 2, 3, 4, and 5, 1997. Please note that we have set aside four days for the '97 conference. This was one of the suggestions put forth at our annual conference. We think it's a good one and we are going to initiate this new concept.

We have totally dedicated ourselves to the notion of being supportive of our members and group memberships. In this realm of responsibility, I pledge to assist with whatever materials, advice, or projects you should undertake. Our concern, however, is delinquent dues. Two years ago, we set into motion a January-to-December calendar year. This was to enable members to better remember this responsibility. I bring this subject to your attention to encourage you to stay up-to-date, for we are planning many services to be supplied but feel very strongly that they should be afforded only to dues-paying members. Please do this now and send the insert on the back page

of our *Tradizioni*. If you have already done so, we thank you for, in a sense, you have given your stamp of approval to the agenda of being "keepers of the flame of Italian heritage and folklore."

Please stay in touch, or I won't think anybody loves me. By the way, I have moved; please note my new address and telephone number:

Jane P. Ferro
115 Cloverleaf Drive
Carnegie, PA 15106
(412) 429-3525

Sincerely yours in Italian
folklore,

Jane



In Memoriam

1915 - 1995

ROSE GRIECO, Montclair, NJ, died November 17, 1995. She was founder of the Italian Folklore Group of Montclair which was a charter member of IFAFA.

Rose was a playwright, author, dancer, dance teacher, and folklorist. Two of her plays were performed in off-Broadway theaters. She was the recipient of many awards, and her works have been published in the United States, Latin America, and Italy. These works are archived at the Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota; the Balch Institute of Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia; and the Library of the National Italian-American Foundation in Washington, DC.

The talent and knowledge which Rose shared with IFAFA members is inestimable. She will be greatly missed.

Rita Tonitto

In Tribute to Rose Grieco

The following article was written by Ms. Rose Grieco in 1953. It was later published and has just come to my attention. I was so struck with her astute evaluation of the difference between Italian Culture and American Culture that I felt the need to share her thoughts with you at this time. Strangely enough, what was evident to her 43 years ago still prevails today. This is an excerpt from the article titled, "The Heart of Italy—La Gentilezza." Enjoy!

Jane P. Ferro

"La Gentilezza"

by Rose Grieco

Aside from appreciating our generosity, Italians find us a very strange breed. For instance, they cannot understand our preoccupation with television. In a country where daily living is charged with an abundance of love, music, drama and tears, the idea of spending endless hours seated passively before a screen, absorbed in the affairs of total strangers, remains an unhappy mystery. Italians are great lovers of the theatre in many forms, but they are not so concerned with it that they ignore the drama that evolves out of their own daily living. Because of the intensity of feeling with which they are blessed, (or cursed, depending on the situation involved) what might elsewhere be simply an ordinary love affair, family feud, or expected loss, manages to develop into an overwhelming romance, the battle of the ages, or stark tragedy. In other words, they create their own entertainment, and become the leading players in the drama of life.

Another phase of our living which leaves Italians startled is the fact that we constantly run ourselves ragged in order to acquire the comforts of life. The Italian earns little and enjoys much. In the evening, he wanders into the piazza, and for the price of a cup of cafe espresso he has an evening's entertainment, as he sits with family or friends at a little table, listening to the music provided by the inevitable town band, talking and singing and arguing, as he relaxes under the stars. If he doesn't want to buy coffee, he can sit on the church steps and enjoy the activities that transpire in the square. Perhaps his ability to relax is due in part to the fact that he has never read an article on how to go about it.

As I became familiar with Italian home life, I sensed a strange harmony which, when I gave it serious thought, forced me to the conclusion that it is the result of following quite naturally the formula expressed in that beautiful proverb, "The man is the head of the house; the woman is the heart." The roles leave

no room for competition because of their difference. I believe that much of the serenity of Latin women lies in that they are not so interested in being treated as equals, but as women. This simple, well-ordered state of affairs leaves our romantic neighbors baffled and somewhat horrified at the suggestion which is predominant in our humor and much of our literature, that the purpose in life of the American female is completely to subjugate the male. The idea that a sweetheart, wife or daughter always gets the better of the man in the picture is not only unfunny to an Italian, it is appalling.

They find it difficult to understand our baby-sitting problem, because in Italy, it doesn't exist. This homey chore is automatically relegated to the grandparents, who have often reached the age where the question of social security should enter the picture. Thus, two problems are neatly resolved. The old people have the most precious kind of security, that of being cared for by those they love, and the children are guarded by those who love them. Our concern with our aged seems strange to a people whose pattern of living sees no alternative but to keep their parents with them, as retired rulers of their particular little kingdom, the family. To suggest to an Italian that he send an aged, ailing parent to a nursing home, is tantamount to suggesting that he cut off the main artery to his heart. No doubt the parent would die within a week, for even though he may disagree with his daughter-in-law, and perhaps be difficult with his son, the important thing to all concerned is that he is where he belongs.

These are some of the impressions I had acquired when the time for my departure came. Although I was anxious to see my family and friends in America, I felt a strange reluctance to leave a country I had grown to love, and a people who had completely overwhelmed me with that untranslatable "gentilezza" of theirs. In any case, I had managed to face the reality of my impending departure in fairly

good spirits. And then, at the airlines terminal I happened to glance at two American magazines, and scanning the list of featured articles, I beheld such delectable bits as "How to Get Along with Your Nerves," "Pornography in Our Schools," and "Is Alcoholism Curable?" I was momentarily stunned, for I had only a moment before been still full of the warmth and simplicity of Italy, where a psychiatrist would quickly starve to death, and now I was thrown mercilessly back into an awareness of our peculiar American national problems. I weakly sat down, trying to think it out, confronted only by a giant question-mark. What has happened to us?, I kept asking myself. Why is there so much talk about sex, and so little about love? Why do so many people drink themselves into a stupor, instead of for the enjoyment of meals and life in general? Why is there pornography among our youth and so few beautiful nudes in our public buildings and squares? Something was wrong somewhere.

I think the slowest steps I have ever taken as an adult were those leading to the airlines bus. When the handsome Italian officer closed the door after us, saluted smartly, and remained standing at attention as we pulled out, his motionless face not quite able to hide the message his eyes were sending, that of a safe trip home, I thought I was going to cry. But my American self-restraint would not permit it. Then, the only Italian on the bus, a middle-aged woman on her way to Paris, waved her handkerchief at the disappearing cypress trees, and called out brokenly, "Addio, Roma." Maybe that was what was wrong. We don't cry out "Farewell, Rome," when we feel like it.

Perhaps that is why more and more Americans are finding their way to Italy. For we need reassurance that even in the fury of the twentieth century, the fine art of conversation still exists, the enjoyment of each moment as it passes is possible, and penniless people still sing to the stars.



U SULI S'INNIVA

SICILIAN FOLKSONG

U SULI S'INNIVA A Sicilian Folksong

This piece was researched by Ms. Rose Grieco. I have notated this piece from Rose's handwritten music sheet. On November 17, 1995, as I completed the last draft on this gem, my telephone rang, and Rose's sister, Barbara, sadly informed me that Rose had passed on.

We reacted to this news with a heavy sadness, for the communities of folk enthusiasts will mourn this loss deeply. She was personally a mentor, a soulmate, and a very dear friend. I wrote *she was*, but indeed, *she is*, for we shall vow to celebrate life with that which she loved so very much: this song, her numerous dances, and the published literary accounts which she wrote, validating Italians and our heritage. We shall contribute, as she did, with pride, dignity, love, and dedication to maintaining the soul of our forefathers alive and well. "Italian culture" for you, Ms. Rose Grieco.

Jane P. Ferro

The musical score for "U SULI S'INNIVA" features 12 staves of music. The vocal line begins with a piano introduction in C major. The vocal part starts with a melodic line and lyrics in Sicilian. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords like G7, A7, and D7. The vocal line continues with a mix of melodic phrases and lyrics, including "U SULI S'INNIVA", "DU NUN TO MA N R NA", and "TO CH RI NA SI TO IN". The score concludes with a final section in 2/4 time, ending on a C major chord.

Italian-American Documentaries Celebrate Life

Dear fellow folklore enthusiasts, lately I had the pleasure of viewing three refreshing Italian-American documentary videos that were excellent.

1) *It's One Family - Knock on Wood* (24 min., color)

Meet puppeteers Mike and Ida Manteo, their children and grandchildren, a family bound together by a Sicilian folk tradition that dates back to the 16th century. Mike, now 72, still builds marionettes; Ida sews the capes and gowns. The entire family works together in Brooklyn, NY, to present traditional Sicilian marionette productions of the stories of Orlando Furioso

2) *Part of Your Loving* (10 min., color)

This film focuses on a baker, Ben Togati, who brings the bread-making process to life with his words and hands. The motion and rhythm of his work give the entire baking process a spiritual quality — making bread becomes an art, a celebration of life. This film has received awards at the New York Film Festival, the

London Film Festival, and the Australian Film Festival, among others, and has been broadcast throughout the world.

3) *Antonio Meucci: The Father of the Telephone* (14 min., color)

Experience the life of Antonio Meucci who invented the principle of the telephone when Alexander Graham Bell was two years old. The film allows you to imagine the age in which he lived, the 19th century: the age of invention and mass migration, the growth of monopolies, and the principle of the industrial revolution.

These videos were written, produced, and directed by award-winning filmmaker Tony De Nonno. This Italian-American has an impressive collection of awards, and his films have been broadcast on PBS-TV, ABC's "20/20," HBO, Showtime, and FOX-TV. A few years ago, New York's Museum of Modern Art honored De Nonno with a retrospective of his films, which are now preserved there, in the company of the great films that inspired him in his youth.

De Nonno shares his talents with many youth groups and is presently working on another Italian documentary entitled "Heaven Touches Brooklyn in July," a film about the dance of the Giglio, an Italian procession held in New York. He has also written a major motion picture screenplay, "Il Letto di Garibaldi" (Garibaldi's Bed).

For more information, contact: De Nonno Productions, 7119 Shore Road, Brooklyn, NY 11209, (718) 745-3937.

Anna Maria Fiori

Source for Italian-American Publications

In 1993, Otto Bruno founded *Adetto Books*, a publishing and distributing company specializing in Italian-American authors and subject matter. To date, *Adetto* carries 35 titles, ranging from cookbooks to literary classics. *Adetto* also contacts companies who have published books by Italian-American writers and arranges distribution.

Highly recommended is the videotape *Little Italy*, a one-hour documentary capturing the spirit of those neighborhoods and the people living in them, people who have persevered over generations and preserved the richness of their Italian heritage.

For more information, write or call: *Adetto Books*, 127 Fairfax Road, Rochester, NY 14609, (800) 810-2331.

The purpose of the ITALIAN FOLK ART FEDERATION OF AMERICA (IFAFA) is to preserve and foster interest in Italian folk art; to research Italian folklore, traditions, customs, costumes, dances, songs, instruments, etc.; to act as a center for gathering, storing, and disseminating the information; and to bring together Italian folk performing groups and other interested individuals.

I am interested in:

Membership

- Performing Folk Group \$25.00
(send for application)
- Supporting Organization \$25.00
(non-performing)
- Individual \$10.00
- Student/Senior Citizen \$5.00

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