



tradizioni

NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN FOLK ARTS FEDERATION OF AMERICA

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Spring 1980

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I eagerly welcome this opportunity to serve as President and Chairman of the Board of IFAFA.

The rich tradition of Italian folk arts, one of the most original, most dynamic and most varied of Europe must be vigorously introduced to the American scene.

The Italian "musica popolare," music of the working people, is relatively unknown in the U.S. It has long been overshadowed by commercial music, classical and pop, and has been largely ignored through class prejudice.

Encouraged by the renaissance interest in folk arts, the Federation offers us a unique opportunity to document for the first time the present status of Italian folk arts in the U.S. and to generate research, interest and participation in Italian folk arts. We must do this individually, through group membership, our Newsletter and through the schools.

The fascination of folk arts lies not only in the joy of learning but also in the recreation of the past, the love of traditions and the celebration of time.

I encourage our readers to communicate with us and to be part of this documentation. I strongly urge our officers and members to work diligently and productively. Through this convergence of energy, support and resources, we will make the work of the Federation flourish and our goals a proud reality.

Dr. Anthony J. De Vera

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.



IFAFA is an outgrowth of the Italian Folk Art Project initiated at the Nationalities Service Center (NSC) of Philadelphia in 1977. With the assistance of NSC and the leadership and dedication of Cav. Elba Farabegoli Gurzau, IFAFA was incorporated May 7, 1979, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a nonprofit, cultural and educational organization.

CONFERENCE REVIEW

Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., was the site of the Second Annual Conference of the Italian Folk Arts Federation of America held September 29 and 30, 1979.

The conference was extremely successful; among other things, it brought together an increasing number of Italian folk groups as well as many authorities in the field of Italian folk arts from around the nation, making it possible for the Italian folk arts to keep pace with the ever-increasing interest in folk arts around the world. Rita Tonitto was chairperson and moderator of the conference.

Activities officially began Saturday with opening remarks by Dr. Joseph E. Laggini, Associate Dean of Rutgers College, followed by a dance workshop headed by Elba F. Gurzau, a pioneer and expert in Italian folk dance. Olivia Bonelli Ortell, formerly of the N.Y.C. Opera, conducted a song workshop including warm-up exercises and breathing techniques. Through the day, various papers were presented. Lucy La Porta and Filomena del Olmo from Fairleigh Dickinson University spoke on "Getting to Know the Village and Documenting its Folklore," which was based on their personal research in Puglie.

"Spreading the Word: Public Relations Tips and Techniques," by Camille Zampetti Wegner provided valuable

hints for more effective publicity. The afternoon session closed with a panel discussion "Value of Authenticity in Folk Art." Panel members included Mae Fraley, District of Columbia; Elba F. Gurzau, Pa.; Lucy La Porta, N.J. Celest Dipietropaolo of Washington, D.C., moderated. Additional comments were made by Anna Lomax Chairetakis, ethnomusicologist, and Rose Grieco who were present in the audience.

After dinner, the Italian Folk Ensemble, based in Fort Lee, N.J., host of the conference, opened the evening festivities with "Festival Italiano," a musical tour representing, through song and dance, the various regions of Italy. The rest of the evening was opened to the audience for singing and dancing.

Sunday started with a workshop on the sword dance of Ischia taught by Blaise Panizzi, dance director of I Campagnoli of Pittsburgh. Regina Forte, Don Castronovo and Jeannette Sias of the Balli d'Italia, Baltimore, gave an extremely valuable lecture and slide presentation on the less glamorous side of running a folk group, i.e., the legal, administrative and business practicalities. The Lehigh Valley group gave a presentation of Popular Italian Songs.

OFFICERS

Officers of the Federation held their annual meeting in conjunction with the conference. Dr. Anthony F. Le Pera of Fort Lee, N.J., was unanimously elected President and Chairman of the Board. Also elected were Regina Forte of Baltimore, Vice President; Mary G. Briggs of Hackensack, N.J., Recording Secretary; Lucy Baldessarini of Washington, D.C., Corresponding Secretary; Virginia Gallucci, Allentown, Pa., Treasurer. By special action of the Board, Jeannette Sias of Baltimore and Rita Tonitto of Fort Lee were elected to the Board of Directors. Elba Farabegoli Gurzau of Philadelphia, Founder and Charter President, was appointed to the position of Artistic Director.

FOLKLORE

Prof. Lucy N. La Porta



In its lexical definition, folklore is that body of customs, legends, beliefs and superstitions passed on by oral tradition. For the folklorist, it is the expression of the human soul as influenced by external conditions and cultures. It is a coat of many colors: songs, proverbs, superstitions, dances, religious customs, foods, the work ethic, etc., everything that goes into the human fabric.

The study of folklore is the study of the generation, degeneration and regeneration of traditions through transformation, for when a factor changes or disappears, another factor takes its place so that folklore is always in a state of flux.

To study folklore is to lay one's finger on the pulse of the masses as they celebrate life. It is human contact with tradition and traditions. Tradition is the historical past under which are unbracketed the individual traditions (the remnants of the past) and their transformation through time. The creation of these traditions refers to that period of time during which traditions generated. As time passed, the creation underwent changes; it degenerated for a time, then regenerated; that is called transformation.

The processes of creation and transformation apply to all the traditions mentioned; the song, the dance, the proverb, etc. As long as there have been fields to till, people have danced in them; as long as there have been fires about which to sit, people have sung around them.

In Italy, the early minstrels were not only musicians, but carriers of news and gossip, who sang their songs from the castles to the cottages. St. Francis urged his followers to sing: it lifted the spirit. During his time, every parish had its "Compagnia dei laudesi." In the *Decameron*, there is singing and dancing every evening at the end of the day's storytelling. The "cantori a liuto," the troubadours, sang songs of love, war, pestilence and feuds in taverns as well as in palaces. The singers of the "piazze" transmitted their songs orally; their lyrics were not written.

One characteristic, however, remained constant in each of these forms of singing - spontaneity of expression. Stable hands and servants of nobles carried songs or variations of them back to their families and neighborhoods. The masses often varied the words to suit their own spontaneity of expression. Frequently the songs were transformed into parodies; they were a spontaneous rejection, acceptance or modification of the original form. Continuity was maintained through repetition when the original was passed on from father to son. When the repetition was broken, the result was a reproduction of the original form. However, each transformation reflected the spirit of the masses as they related to their environmental, material, social and linguistic cultures.

A concerned folklorist seeks to contribute to the survival of folklore through revival. Revival is achieved through research; survival is maintained through documentation of the results of the research. Hence, research for revival and documentation for survival.

(to be continued)

ARTISTIC

DIRECTOR

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In introducing our newly appointed Artistic Director, Elba Farabegoli Gurzau, a brief biography is in order.

Elba was born in New York City to immigrant parents from Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna. At age 12, she went to Italy and began studies in Florence, subsequently receiving a teaching diploma from the Istituto Magistrale of Bologna.

Upon returning to the U.S., Elba continued her studies at New York University, receiving a B. S. in Education. Here, during the early 30's, she met Dr. Leonard Covello, who opened the way for her life-time interest in the folk arts of many countries and of Italy in particular. Dr. Covello suggested that the Italian folk arts be represented at the newly organized multinational Folk Festival Council. Elba accepted the challenge. She, Dr. Covello and a few others organized the Italian Choral Society, and the difficulty experienced in obtaining Italian songs, dances and costumes was indicative of the need for research and documentation. With perseverance, the Italian Choral Society presented an initial program which included a Codiglionone (also referred to as La Quadriglia), La Danza, a little ballroom dance, and a Tarantella Napoletana, choreographed by the Albertieri Dance Studio especially for the group. The Choral Society later became known as the Coro d'Italia, which to this day exists and is probably the oldest and best known Italian folk group in the U.S.

Elba moved to Philadelphia where, as Activities Director of the Nationalities Service Center, she introduced many people to international folk dancing and directed the English classes. In 1975 she received her Master's Degree

in Teaching English as a second language. Also, that year, the Italian government bestowed upon her the title of Cavaliere for her contributions to Italians in America and for her book FOLK DANCES, COSTUMES AND CUSTOMS OF ITALY, the first of its kind in the U.S.

Elba organized and to this day directs "I Ballerini," a very active and talented Italian folk dance group. Expanding on this idea and with the cooperation of Michael D. Blum, director of the Nationalities Service Center, she convinced several Italian folk art performing groups to join together and form IFAFA. As its first President, she guided IFAFA through its formative stages to incorporation. At the last election, she was elevated to the position of Artistic Director.

Elba has just completed revising FOLK DANCES, COSTUMES AND CUSTOMS OF ITALY. This expanded second edition will be published soon. For further information, write E. F. Gurzau, 1325 W. Roosevelt Blvd., Philadelphia 19140



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Sheet music and corresponding calls for La Quadriglia are available. With your request, send self-addressed, stamped envelope.

LaQUADRIGLIA

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Folk dance is a dramatic language - it is the primitive mimic, a mute dialogue, a primordial form of the theater. We see this preserved in its elementary form in various Italian folk dances such as the Quadriglia, Saltarello, Furlana and the Tarantella.

The Quadriglia, under different name, has been danced all over Italy for many centuries (as far back as the time of the Romans) by both the peasants and the upper classes. It originally referred to four men who dressed alike and who fought for the same cause. When they returned victoriously from their feats of skill, they celebrated with their ladies in dance and song. Later it came to mean any dance performed by four couples in a square. The Quadriglia today has a freer form. The square has become a circle; there are usually more than four couples; the dress need not be identical. What remains are the basic movements of the dance.

When Catherine deMedici married King Henry II of France, she and her entourage took the Quadriglia to France where it was introduced at court. It met with great favor and it promptly was given French calls. Later it returned to Italy with a new foreign flavor.

Today the Quadriglia may be danced with any number of couples. It may start like a march with couple following couple, or it may start with couples in a circle, each man with the lady on his right. It has a series of figures which may be called by a caposala, or caller, who is free to arrange the figures in whatever order he wishes. The dance can be very simple or very intricate. The speed of the dance may be adjusted also - young people will use a light running step, even a skip, while older people prefer a walking step. However danced, it starts with a lively call, "Si balla la Quadriglia!"

EDITOR'S NOTES

MEMBER GROUPS

As editor of this newsletter, I would like to say that I consider it a great honor and a great responsibility. Before us lies the task of collecting, cataloguing and disseminating in-depth researched information to a public that has expressed a profound interest in the Italian folk way of life. It is for this reason that I suggested the name TRADIZIONI, which means Traditions.

I see that, before we can fully understand why we are, we must know who we are and from where we hail. Given that, it is my intention to provide you with information that addresses itself to that part of our past that fully reflects the every day life of our ancestors as seen through their folk art, dance, song, music, attire, stories and tales. This newsletter, therefore, will be presented in an artistic format and written in a manner to reflect the serious aims and goals of IFAFA.

In attempting a venture such as this, I feel confident that our endeavor will grow and flourish because of the many valuable contributions that can be made. I encourage each and every one of you to impart to us from time to time a piece of the puzzle, whether it be the name of a recent arrival from Italy or an older member of your community who remembers some step or melody, so that we may piece together the entire picture of our Traditions.

REGINA FORTE

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| I Ballerini | Cav. Elba F. Gurzau
Philadelphia, Pa. |
| Balli d'Italia | Regina Forte
Baltimore, Md. |
| I Campagnoli | Jane Ferro
Pittsburgh, Pa. |
| Il Circolo Folk
Dancers | Mana Loughridge
Cherry Hill, N.J. |
| Gruppo Folkloristico
Duroniese, USA | Anthony Morsella
North Bergen, N. J. |
| Italian Folk Dancers
of Padua Academy | Josephine Di Lellis
Wilmington, Del. |
| Italian Folk Ensemble
Ricordi d'Italia | Dr. Anthony F. LePera
Fort Lee, N. J. |
| Italian Folklore Group | Rose Grieco
Montclair, N. J. |
| Italian Folklore Group
of Washington, D. C. | Celest Dipietropaolo
Arlington, Va. |
| Italian Folk Singers
of the Lehigh Valley | Paula Evans
Catasauqua, Pa. |
| Aventino Troupe
Folklorique Italienne | Matteo Martucci
Montreal, Canada |

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