



# tradizioni

NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN FOLK ART FEDERATION OF AMERICA

Volume 2

Number 2

## N.E.A. MATCHING GRANT

### SUMMARY OF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C. has awarded I.F.A.F.A. a \$24,453.00 grant. The purpose of the grant is to produce a series of L.P. albums of Italian folk music and songs performed by first generation Italian immigrants living in the U.S.

Album #1: The Coro Dolomiti of Brooklyn performing songs from the Alpine and other northern regions of Italy. Though one step away from the older village style, these are fine singers, quite genuine when compared to the large semi-professional choruses which now dominate North Italian folk singing and which have virtually obliterated the varied polyphonic traditions of Northern Italy. No recordings of this genre and repertoire are available on a U.S. label. A great many Italian Americans love these songs and should be able to learn them from an audio source.

Album #2: Antonio Davida/Campania-Lazio. Davida is one of the finest interpreters I have heard of the Southern Italian solo singing tradition. Side 1 will feature his entire repertoire of medieval ballads, love and work songs, unaccompanied and accompanied variously on bagpipe, friction drum, and guitar. Side 2 will feature Campanian "neighborly" songs of a type hitherto unrecorded anywhere to my knowledge accompanied by Moorish-style oboe and tamborine, plus other material performed by a Salernitan group from Brooklyn. Also bagpipers from the bagpipe area, Lazio, who live in Boston.

Album #3: Sicilians from Buffalo. This album will cover only part of an

## HOW AN INSTRUMENT OF WAR BECAME A MUSICAL FOLK INSTRUMENT

**The Moorish word "talabalacco", later known as "tralaballacco" was originally the term given to a war instrument used to sound the battle cries. Following the Moorish domination of Southern Italy, which lasted for three centuries and ended with the Kingdom of Sicily under Ruggero II, it became known as the "triccaballacco." The Italians eventually used it as a percussion accompaniment to the folk music of the Sicilians, the Calabrians and the Neapolitans.**

Submitted by Lucy N. LaPorta, Professor of Languages, Fairleigh Dickinson University, N.J.

important repertoire of some 12 fine Sicilian singers and musicians. Most songs will be performed in the older (arabo-hispanic) peasant tradition, though the artisan style will also be heard. Men will sing serenades and work songs. Three sisters will sing the classic, famous and lengthy Sicilian ballad, "Baronessa di Carini," as well as a medieval ballad and a fine lullabye. It is felt that the Sicilian album is of great importance as the peasant laborer musical achievements and repertoire are completely unknown in this country.

Anna Chairetakis, Project director, is an anthropologist and a doctoral candidate in Cultural Anthropology at Columbia University. Recently the Italian government bestowed upon her the title of Cavaliere for her unique and scholarly contributions to Italian folk arts.

## Conference Review

The Fourth Annual Conference and Workshop of the Italian Folk Art Federation of America took place the weekend of October 2-4, 1981 at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. The Conference, chaired by Elba Farabegoli Gurzau, was hosted by the Italian Folk Ensemble of Fort Lee, New Jersey.

The Conference brought together folk groups and other interested parties to share their knowledge of various aspects of Italian folklore. Members came from Ohio, Iowa, Maryland, Washington, D.C., as well as from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. The emphasis this year was on Italian folk dances, authentic, as well as choreographed.

Activities officially began Saturday with opening remarks by Dr. Joseph E. Laggini, Associate Dean of Rutgers College, New Jersey. Elba F. Gurzau, of Philadelphia, taught the "Ballo Sardo" from Sardinia and "La Furlana" from Friuli, Veneto area. Celeste Di Pietropaolo, of Washington, D.C., demonstrated the "quadriglia di Aviano", generally danced throughout Northern Italy. The "Tarantella Sant' Alfio" and the "Saltarello Abruzzese", as well as the "Tarantella Tasso" from Sorrento were introduced by Rose Grieco of Montclair, New Jersey. The Di Duca Drake group from Waltham, Massachusetts taught "La Ballarella" a Tarantella Ciociara.

Colombia Alfonsi, led an exercise and movement workshop designed to highlight our self-awareness and sense of group experience.

Rose Grieco and Celeste Di Pietropaolo demonstrated various old folk musical instruments. Gina Carano, well-loved singer of Italian folk songs, here and in Italy, presented songs from her native Abruzzo and other regions of Italy. Rita Tonitto, New Jersey, moderated a very vocal and enthusiastic group discussion. Dorothy Marucci, Director of La Cucina Italiana of

Continued on page 4

# The Neapolitan Song

By Dr. Anthony LePera

The Neapolitan song is a genre all its own and its origin is still unknown. Historians have not been able to verify the first melodies of the Neapolitan People, however Ulysses attests to the enchanting melodies of the Guif of Naples.

The first song that we are more sure of is the *Canto delle Lavandaie del Vornero* about 1200 A.D. From then on grew a flurry of songs so loved by the people that they ushered in the brilliant and universal phenomena known as the Neapolitan song.

The style and context of the "Villaneia" gave rise to literally hundreds of similar songs during the 15th and 16th centuries. The first "villanella" to appear in print was in the early 1500's, and was in great vogue through the middle of the 1600's. From then on, songs were less polyphonic moving more and more toward a single voice with simpler accompaniment, giving birth to the *modern Neapolitan song*.

"Michelemmá," author unknown<sup>1</sup>, dating back to the 1600's can be considered the first of the recorded modern Neapolitan songs – a nationalistic song at that. It's universal charm lies in its simplicity, in its message. The flavor of the song is typical Neapolitan. The text is not too clear, neither is the title. Michel a mare? Michela mia? Michela é mia?

According to some, during the Algerian and Turkish Saracen battles against the people of Campagna, Michela, a very beautiful woman, daughter of a local public officer, was kidnapped by the Turks. However, with the help of the powerful star hanging from her neck (e mpietto porta na), she slaughtered her kidnapers two at a time, "a duie aduie."

For others the song may symbolically signify Italy in that "la cimma" (peak) is the north and "lo streppone" (the leg) is the south. "Li turche sé nce vanno a riposare chi pe la cimma, e chi pe lo streppone." The text defies literal translation, for how can one express the joy, the desire, the voluptuous nature of "oje n'a scarola" We therefore reprint it in its utterly charming, Neapolitan dialect.

<sup>1</sup> In jest, Salvatore Di Giacomo, a famous Neapolitan song writer, "E Marechiere", "Era di Maggio", "Oili, Oila", Carmé", tired of the inconclusive and unending debate as to the author of Michelemmá, falsified Salvator Rosa's signature on an old parched music sheet. This was passed off as an original and for many years threw historians off-track.

Words and sheet music for piano is available. Non-members send \$2.00 check or M.O. and self-addressed, stamped envelope to I.F.A.F.A.; free to members.

## "Michelemmá" (1600)

È nata miez'o mare  
Michelemmá e Michelemmá  
è nata miez'o mare  
Michelemmá e Michelemmá  
oje n'a scarola  
oje n'a scarola.

Li Turche se nce vanno  
Michelemmá e Michelemmá (R)  
a riposare

Chi pe la cimma e chi  
Michelemmá e Michelemmá (R)  
pe lo streppone.

Viato a chi la vence  
Michelemmá e Michelemmá (R)  
co sta figliola

Sta figliola ch'e figlia  
Michelemmá e Michelemmá (R)  
oje de Notare.

E mpietto porta na  
Michelemmá e Michelemmá (R)  
stella Diana

Pe fa muri ll'amante  
Michelemmá e Michelemmá (R)  
a duie a duie.

"La Cammesella," author unknown, is one of the most delightful songs of the 1700 period. At first glance it seems to have ushered in the present-day night club tease, however, it really is the couple's first moments together on their wedding day.

The groom expresses a sense of warmth and spontaneous admiration for his young and beautiful bride.

*E levate lu mantesino  
lu mantesino gnornó, gnornó!  
si nun te lo vuó levá me soso e me  
ne vaco da ccá*

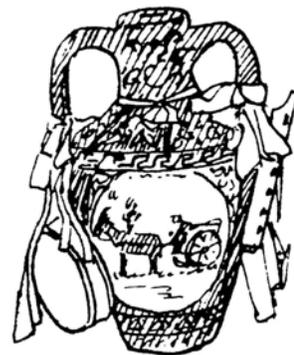
*E té me l'aggio levato, Ciccillo cun-  
tento  
fa chello che vuó  
sia benedetta mammete guanno te  
mmaritó!*

It's a young couple. He says to her "take off your smock!" She is delighted at the thought, tries to appear bashful and to resist, but off it comes.

"Remove your dress" and down it comes. "Remove your slip", "your camisole." All comes off. At the end a passionate kiss rewards this authentic tease of the 1700's.

Nor does he forget a blessing for his mother-in-law: the recurrent "Sia benedetta mmamete guanno te mmaritó," is a sentiment present today, however, never expressed with the same original freshness and sincerity.

Beautiful! Warm! Human!



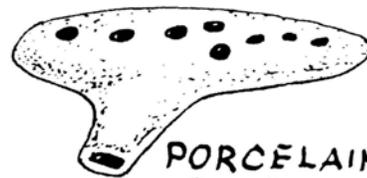
QUARTARA



CIAN CIANE

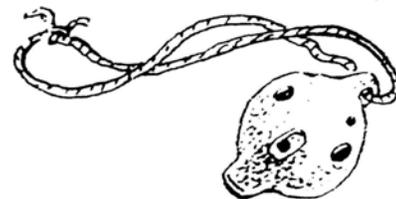


LAUNEDDAS



PORCELAIN  
OCARINA

CLAY TOY OCARINA



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## Italian Folk Instruments

By Rose Grieco

Since folk instruments are usually constructed out of easily available materials, it is interesting to note how the personality of the region is often reflected in the musical creations of the area.

In the cool north one finds the simple ocarina, a wind instrument shaped like an elongated egg with finger holes. The instrument takes its name from oca - goose, because of its shape. The Gruppo Ocarinisti di Budrio, Bologna, comprises an entire company of ocarina players.

On the isle of Capri, the Putipù Band, said to have originated with the Greeks, includes the following: *Cupa-cupa*, or *cro-cro*, a kind of friction drum consisting of a cloth drawn tightly across the top of a small barrel with a reed in the center, is played by drawing up and down on the reed which must constantly be kept wet; the *scetaviasse*, two notched wooden stick, adorned with tin discs is played violin fashion; the *acciarino*, a wooden triangle, enclosing a small iron that rings softly when hit with an iron rod; the *triccaballacco*, of Moorish origin, is composed of three square wooden hammers, attached at the bottom so that the two outer ones can be beaten against the one in the middle.

On the island of Sardinia, one of the most ancient of instruments, the *launeddas* is used for dancing, singing and during processions. According to Alan Lomax, "the launeddas is a wind instrument of three cylindrical tubes of cane, with simple reeds which the player inserts in his mouth. The cheeks are used as bellows, respiration is entirely through the nose. One cannot be precise about the origin of the launeddas, however, prehistoric bronze statuettes of launeddas players dating back to 1,000 B.C. have been found in Sardinia.

The *ciaramella* is a primitive oboe played with bagpipes. It is heard in the cities during the Christmas season, when shepherds come down from the mountains of Abruzzi to play their haunting music. The *fischietto* is a reedless fife, carved by shepherds.

In Sicily there is the *quartara*, a water jug highly-decorated in vibrant reds and yellows. It is held with both hands and moved gracefully around while the player breathes into it, almost spitting, in order to create a sound like the hooting of an owl. At times the quartara player hurls the jar into the air, then catches it to continue his playing, much to the delight of the onlookers. The *maranzanu*, or jaw's harp, called *scacciapensiero* in Naples, gives out a strange, twanging sound when strummed with the thumb or index finger, while held between the teeth. The *cian-cian* is a donkey collar adorned with sequins, mirrors and bells.

Other ancient instruments are the *tambourines*, *bagpipes*, and the wooden or cane *flute*.

These are some of the Italian folk instruments which I have seen and heard in live performances.

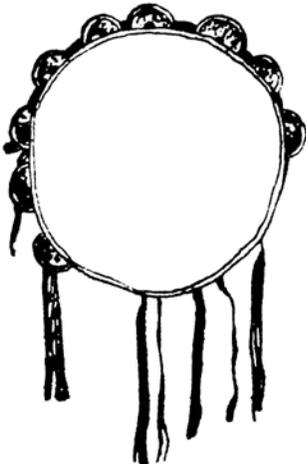
Rose Grieco, lecturer, author, international folk-dance teacher, is founder and director of the Italian Folklore Group of Montclair, NJ.



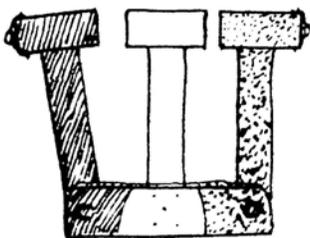
ZAMPOGNA



CIARAMELLA

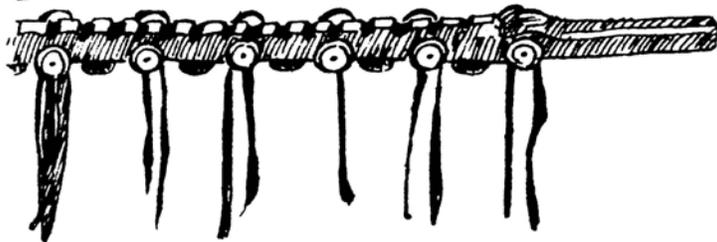


TAMBURO



TRICCABALLACCO

SCETAVIASSE



FISCHIETTO

ART BY ANGELO GEPPONI

The Italian Folk Art Federation of America, Inc. is a non-profit, educational federation. Its purpose is to research, preserve and foster interest in the various aspects of Italian folklore.

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 Elba F. Gurzau Rita Tonitto  
 Lucy N. LaPorta

**In Brief**

The second edition of *Folk Dances, Costumes and Customs of Italy*, by Elba F. Gurzau is now available. It is the only book of its kind in English and should be in everyone's library - student, teacher, performer or anyone interested in Italian Folklore. Write or call I.F.A.F.A. (215-324-1250).

The New Jersey Committee for the Humanities awarded the New Jersey Professional Women Association a grant in support of a community oriented program in Italian Culture and Folklore. The workshop was held on six consecutive Thursday evenings at St. Michael's Church Hall, Paterson, N.J. and featured presentations and lectures by Lucy N. La Porta and Filomena del Olmo of Fairleigh Dickinson University. The topics included life in an Italian village, Naples and its environs, "la canzone napoletana" early Italian painting, music and poetry, "la ballata", Italian festivals and celebrations, Sicily and the south. Community response was overwhelming and this year another series of presentations is being held entitled "OUR HERITAGE: A MULTI-ETHNIC EXPERIENCE."

*Continued from page 1*

Philadelphia, talked on "The art of Italian cooking and it's influence on other cultures."

Resource people present were: Dr. Anthony F. LePera, N.J., I.F.A.F.A. President and Chairman of the Board; Anna Chairetakis, N.Y.C., N.E.A. Grant Project Director; Mae Fraley, Rockville, Maryland, lecturer and International Folk Dance Teacher; Lucy N. LaPorta, Professor of languages, F.D.U., N.J.

*Arba Sicula* is a bi-lingual Sicilian-English review containing many proverbs and folk sayings for which the island's culture is justly famous. The origins are clearly rooted in a rural and peasant society, yet they retain genuine impact in 20th century terms. Membership in the national society for Sicilian ethnics includes a subscription to its review. Individual copies are available to the general public.

All inquiries should be addressed to Arba Sicula, Inc., Box "D", Brooklyn, N.Y. 11204.

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Bagpiper available to play traditional Christmas novenas (La Pastorale e la Novena di Natale) for Christmas services, church groups, clubs and other occasions.

Also beautiful bagpipes, *zampogna* and *ciaramella* for sale, handcrafted in Molise, Italy, choice of olive or cherry wood. The ciaramella, or piffero, is the shawn or primitive oboe which traditionally provides the melodic accompaniment to the Italian bagpipes, and is played solo as well.

Call: Vincenzo DeLuca, 201-465-1684 (best time to call: 4 - 11 p.m.).

Workshops with audience participation were scheduled all day Saturday and Sunday morning. Various jam sessions were held. The annual dinner, followed by groups performing, was held on Saturday evening. The Conference closed with the Annual Meeting of the Board and nominations of new officers.

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