



tradizioni

NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN FOLK ART FEDERATION OF AMERICA

VOLUME 5

1984

NUMBER 1

Dear Reader,

I wish to thank all who have responded to the appeal in our last newsletter. As I explained, we are experiencing escalating costs and a diminishing source of funds and that explains why the last few issues of Tradizioni have not come out on time.

I personally wish to acknowledge your contributions as a sign of your deep commitment and interest in the preservation of the Italian folklore and traditions here in the U.S.

To date, the contributions have amounted to \$570 plus a substantial number of renewed subscriptions. A complete tally of the contributions will appear in the next issue. Our readers are honest, hard-working people, not necessarily rich. I know that a \$20.00 contribution is not an easy matter, but it is an important matter!!

So, if you can't contribute \$20., please send \$10. or \$5.. We will fulfill our commitment to publish two issues for 1984 and go beyond even though our financial crisis is not resolved.

We at Tradizioni sincerely cherish your support as it is our source of income. I trust that those who are planning to make their contributions do so soon — why not now? Please do!

The next issue is scheduled for September 1st. Look for it.

Anthony F. LePera, Editor in Chief

IL CARRETTINO SICILIANO

by Elba F. Gurzau

I always thought that the colorful CARETTINO SICILIANO, with historical paintings, colored tassels and brilliant decorations, was a very old tradition. Not so.

At the suggestion of Prof. Nico Leotta of the University of Messina, our IFAFA Folk Dance Study Group in May 1983, ended its tour in Palermo with the explicit purpose of visiting the Giuseppe Pitre' Museum in that city. Giuseppe Pitre' is the outstanding folklorist of Sicily. During our visit to the Museum, we were particularly interested in the room dedicated to "IL CARRETTINO".

We were told that the plain carrettino, a two-wheeled wagon drawn by a donkey, existed for centuries, but the elaborate carrettino we know now came into being after 1870 when Italy was united and roads started to be built in Sicily.

With the new roads "i contadini" (farmers) were able to bring their produce to the towns and cities and thus acquire some wealth. How best to show it than to decorate their carrettini... and soon a great competition started.

The artists to decorate the carrettini were found in the persons who made the scenery for the puppet shows. Puppet

shows were extremely popular at that time of no radio, TV or even live shows in small towns. This explains why all the scenes painted on the panels of the carrettini are of events in the history of Sicily: battles, wars, heroes, striking figures!

There is, however, a section of the carrettino, the panel behind the axle, which for time immemorial was carved or painted with symbolic images for protection and good omen.

IL CARRETTINO today is no longer used to carry vegetables, but is often seen at festivals carrying young people, sometimes in colorful costumes, playing local instruments and singing joyfully. □

Elba F. Gurzau is the artistic director of I.F.A.F.A. and author of the book "Folk Dances, Costumes and Customs of Italy."

ITALIAN AMERICANS CELEBRATE THEIR HERITAGE AT PHILADELPHIA'S GALA FESTA FOLCLORICA

A gala Festa Folclorica sponsored by the Italian Folk Arts Federation of America (I.F.A.F.A.) was recently held at the Midtown Holiday Inn, Philadelphia, Pa. I.F.A.F.A. is composed of twenty-one folk art groups who work together to preserve the Italian Folk Arts for America's future generations. These groups, representing various parts of the United States and Canada, presented a Festa Folclorica as part of their Sixth annual Folk Art Conference.

President Loretta Marsella welcomed the distinguished guests along with the Federation's members from Canada and the U.S. Guest of honor and award winning folk singer, Gina Carano, known to many as the "Voice of Abruzzo," delighted the audience with her folk singing presentations. Elba Farabegoli Gurzau, The Federation's Founder and Artistic Director, presented a colorful array of Italian folk costumes. Mrs. Gurzau, who is an authority on Italian folk dances and costumes, later led the enthusiastic audience in a joyful march and Quadriglia during the evening's finale.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

for the

7th National Italian

FOLK ART CONFERENCE

In Philadelphia

Oct. 19, 20, 21, 1984

WORKSHOPS in Italian folk dance,

music, other folk arts, exchange of ideas.

AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE

FOR THOSE WHO ATTEND

THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN LANGUAGE

"The First American Saint"
By Franco Lalli

(Translated and adapted for Tradizioni by
Claudia I. Sovran)

The Italians arrived in America and began to create — slowly but surely — a special language which they use to this day among themselves and which only they understand. It is a barbaric language which makes one shudder and yet laugh; full of color and mystery. Extremely interesting!

It is the language of the "giobba." A language for which one removes his jacket, rolls up his sleeves, spits into his hands, and begins to work. Azzoraito endazolle.

If one were to deny the Italian-American this picturesque and extraordinary language, if one were to forbid the saying of "pressatore," and "bissiniso," "scioppa," and "grosseria," the Italian-American would not know how to express himself in any other fashion and one would condemn into silence millions of individuals who have forgotten the vocabulary of their adopted land. Thus, between the two giants — Webster and Petrocchi — they find themselves protected by the armour of this unrefined dialect and they are able to adapt and survive as best they can. After all, even crutches help one to walk.

When, for the first time, I asked an old Italian-American immigrant what he was doing in America, and he answered me "Songo sciabolatore del re erode," I was, I confess, profoundly dumbfounded. I was not able to understand what in heaven's name he meant. "Sciabolatore," that is, a swordsman of one of the most powerful King's courts of ancient times? How was this possible? What mystery was this? And then, soldier and trumpeter of King Herod (re erode) with that face and that hat that was so big it covered almost his entire face? But no, there must have been a misunderstanding. And, in fact, there was one, as big as a mountain. I did not comprehend well the meaning of his Italian-American language. By saying, "Songo sciabolatore del re erode," he meant "shoveler of the railroad." That is, he works with a shovel along the railroad tracks.

Just off the press, the long-awaited,
second and enlarged edition now
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19140 — (215) 324-1250.

immigrants coined their own Italian word. A language, therefore, of sounds. But let's understand each other; not a harmonious and clear sounds, not a serenade, but a language of slaps and punches. Easier and simpler, instead, was a response given me by another farmer when, to my question, he told me he had a "farmicella nel Niu Gesi" (a little farm in New Jersey).

Here the adaption had not succumbed to the violence of a beating; it was more natural. Consequently, he communicated his thoughts more easily. But the classical, typical, and most common word is "la giobba." "Giobba" is something intrinsic to our times: it is the occupation, the employment, the profession of some kind and of some type, with some or no dignity. It can be onerous or pleasant, gratifying or demanding. It could have been obtained either through connections or through personal merit. It is full of disdain or great spiritual and material benefit. It is the real word of the Exile — a word of anxiety, of hope, of difficult times, of crises of adjustment. When they want to signify an employment of little importance and satisfaction and poor financial compensation, the Italians say "na giobbarella," or still "na giobbittella."

The manner in which many have succeeded in Italianizing the English language is simple. To all the words which end in a consonant, they added the proverbial vowel, and thus the "picnic" became "picchinico," the "street" "lo stritto," "lunch" became "il loncio," "cake" became "la checca," a "pint" — "la pinta," the "sign" — "la saina," a "theatrical show" — "lo scio," the "shoemaker" — "lo sciumecca," the "ticket" — "la tichetta," the "railroad track" — "la traccia," the "fruitstand" — "il fruttistende," and the "shoe-shine boy" — "lo scainatore."

The most difficult words to understand are those whose derivation is an English word, such as "Crisemisse," Christmas. The difficulty arises when the word resembles one which already exists in Italian. Then begins the "trobbolo." For example: "blocca, bordo, costume, fattoria, galloni, sciocchezza, ponte." These are all words which in Italian have a very precise meaning. And if one says he has "due or tre costumi," one must not think that he has two or three evening or casual outfits. No. What he means to say is that he has two or three clients.

(Continued on Page 5)

THE FOLK DANCE IN ITALY

By Lucy N. La Porta

"Rhythmical patterns of movement, the plastic sense of space, the vivid representation of a world seen and imagined — these things man creates in his own body in the dance."

Curt Sacks, World History of the Dance

If in the movements that constitute the dance we find magical and sacred symbols of the cross, the wheel and the star, these very same symbols are the rhythmical patterns that man creates in his "representation of a world seen and imagined". All of the above symbols are linear arrangements of the circle, the sphere of perfection, and if the arms of the cross, the spokes of the wheel and the points of the star are joined, the result is a circular enclosure, symbol of perfection, complete control, possession and union, void of fracture and escape.

The circle dance and its philosophical significance was popular in the Middle Ages. The "ruota" symbolized love in which the worthy participated, while the unworthy were eliminated at every turn. The "ballata" which was poetry, song and dance, was sung and performed in a circle. The first stanza of the ballata, called the "ripresa" (refrain), was repeated before each succeeding stanza. This was followed by the "continenza", the bow, executed to the strains of the "ripresa". Then the routine was repeated to the music and lyrics of the second stanza. The terms *volta*, *mezza volta*, *ripresa* and *continenza* continue to be used in the choreographical descriptions of Italian folk dances.

It is from the choral front dance, "fronte", in which partners form two facing lines, that courtship dances evolved. The pattern of the "fronte" is a series of progressions in the ancient courtship ritual: the formation of the two columns ritualizes the encounter; the advancing of the columns, a sense of daring; the falling back of the columns, hesitation; the backward turn, flight; the serpentine line, pursuit; and the breakthrough as the lines intersect, conquest.

The "danze delle spade" are all linked to historical events, especially those that occurred between the Christians and the Moors. The "moresca" is still danced in

E' BAL 'D L' AMICIZIA

By Mae Fraley

Source: "Le Arte e le Tradizioni Popolare d' Italia"

Music: Any Quadriglia (not too fast)

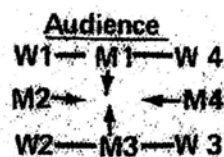
Formation: Four Couples in a square or quadrille formation.

Counts:

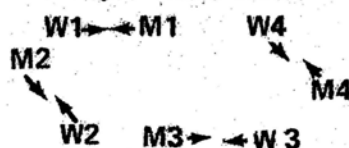
- 8 Two lead men join hands with partner and the lady to their left. All three dance 3 steps forward, honor, 3 steps backward to place, close feet together.
- 8 The side men, who are without partners at this point, dance forward, join right hands and turn halfway round, exchanging places.
- 8 Lead men with partners dance forward and back again.
- 8 Side men dance forward, joining left hands, turn halfway and return to place.
- 32 Partners face, giving right hands, dance a Grand Chain (Grand right and left) full around and back to place, with a deep honor when meeting partner on opposite side.

Dance is repeated with the side men taking the two ladies forward and back, lead men crossing over, etc. Repeat entire dance once more for leads and sides.

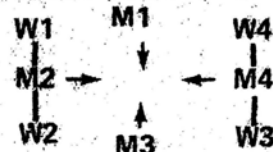
W = Woman
M = Man



Begin Grand Chain:



End Grand Chain in this Position:



Mae Fraley is a lecturer and International Folk Dance Teacher based in Maryland!

* Dialect spoken in the North-West Border.

parts of Sicily, Abruzzi, and Venice. The swords, however, were eventually replaced by clubs or *bastoni* which were brandished by each dancer in time with the music. In still another transformation, the theme of battle was replaced by the theme of contest for the hand of the bride. There are several *danze delle spade* that have survived, which merit further study: *La danza della bella mugnaia* (Piemonte), *Il ballo dei lacheri* (Piemonte) and *L'ndrezzata* (Campania).

Many of the dances, still popular at today's folk festivals, emerged from the court dances of the 16th and 17th centuries. *La Monferrina* (Piemonte) is still danced at Casale Monferrato in this

manner: A couple starts out with a strolling step, and at intervals, halts while the lady makes a turn (*volta*) passing under the arch formed by her arm and that of her dance partner. Another male dancer intervenes, takes the lady by the hand, and the same figure is repeated while the first partner returns to his place. This single figure continues until the music stops. There may, however, be more than one couple dancing at any one time.

The *bergamasco* or *bergamasca* (Lombardia) begins as a procession which then takes the form of a circle; as the music changes (*al variare del suono*), a waltz in couples follows. The procession

(Continued on Page 5)

ITALIAN AMERICAN (Continued from Page 2)

Ignoring all this, if one were to listen when one of our women enters a butcher shop and exclaims, "Datemi un ponto di carne," (intending to mean "a pound of meat," "un libra") one would be bewildered!

And so it is with "sciochezza." The bride who prepares for her wedding selects the "fornitura" (another classic word for "mobile") and buys the "sciochezza." Now this "sciochezza" is not a "nothing" or "fessaria," as the Southern Italian would say. It is no more or less than the "show case." And how from "show case" one got the word "sciochezza" is a mystery like the one of the "re erode."

And when one announces that he has purchased "un lotto," one should not assume that he gambled and won "un banco lotto." What he means to say is that he bought a piece of land upon which to build a home in "dis contri." And if perchance he adds that in his home he does not have the "stima," he does not mean that his family gives him little respect, but that he does not have central heating, "steam heat," or he does and it "chicca," (kicks) and he complains. There are some words that are truly bewildering, such as "vasitobbo" for "washtub," and "pitticcolo" for "particular."

Many of these words were born in humble surroundings and were nurtured in local publications. In fact, we frequently find in daily and weekly newspapers - in advertisements and classified listings - that one is looking for "pressatori" and that such "grosseria" sells oil at a good price. □

IN COMING ISSUES Directory of Performing Folk Groups in U.S.

The "Morra" — Jonathan David
Folk Regional Costumes of Italy
— Elba Gurzau
Taratella — Parts II & III
— Dr. Le Pera

Translators Comment:

Many of us probably chuckled and reminisced while reading the above article. The Italian — American language, spoken by our parents and/or grandparents, was a creation developed by a people out of a necessity. A language of the people — a marvelous extension of their everyday folk culture.

The Italian — American language of author Lolli's article is dying, destined to remain not part of our culture but rather part of the history of our forefathers in this country. Their Italianizing of English words in the various ways they did should be a source of pride in their creativity and in their perseverance to make their mark in the New World.

We are the proud heirs to this great legacy. □

Claudia I. Sovran studied Italian at l'Università Italiana per Stranieri, Perugia, Italy and is at present a Trial Lawyer and a member of the Board of Directors of the Columbian Lawyers Association of Westchester County, N.Y.



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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FOLK DANCE IN ITALY (Continued from Page 3)

is then formed again. In il **bal del capel** (Romagna), the above sequence is preceded by a **continenza**, and is danced as follows: (1) Partners form two facing columns (fronte); (2) the men take four steps forward, remove their hats and bow (continenza); (3) the men extend their hands in greeting, and execute a complete turn with their partners; (4) all couples form a procession in a circle; (5) Waltz in couples; (6) partners form two facing columns again, but the lead male dancer leaves the head of the line, and goes to the end while other male dancers move up one place. The dance sequence begins again with (2).

The word "volta" was also the name of a Renaissance court dance. Curt Sacks describes it for us:

"Instead of dancing alongside or opposite each other, back and forth, to and fro, scarcely touching each other, the "volta" dancers, in close embrace, turning constantly and without separating leap high into the air. With the right foot raised high in the air the dancers hop on the left and turn at an angle of ninety degrees, take a long stride and again a quarter turn, then they spring high as they make a third quarter turn. Since each figure consists of only three quarter turns, the dancers do not reach their original position until four figures have been performed. The lady places her right hand around her partner's neck and holds her skirt with her left. For the male dancers, however, the instructions are: 'left arm around the right hip of the lady, left thigh as a rudder against her right thigh, right hand, in order to assist her in the leaps, underneath the front part of the corset'."

The "Volta" made its way into France, and the flying of the skirts so delighted Brantome, the chronicler of the immoralities of the Paris court about 1570, that he made this entry:

(Continued on Page 6)

STAFF

Anthony F. LePera D.D.S. —
Editor in Chief
—
Elba Gurzau
Lucy N. La Porta
Claudia I. Sovran

FOLK DANCE IN ITALY

(Continued from Page 5)

"....those flying skirts always reveal something pleasing to the sight, and I have seen some led astray by it, and others delight in it among themselves".

There are many dances that have been lost. Finding the music and the choreography of these dances is a monumental project. To undertake this task is to revive what seems to be only a memory.

In an attempt to compile a list of dances by region, I submit the following. Additions are welcome.

Abruzzi

La Moresca
Laccio d'amore
La quadriglia

Basilicata

Tarantella basilisca

Calabria

Vala
Danza dei ladroni
Ruggero

Campania

Tarantella Caprese
Tarantella Sorrentina
Tarantella Tasso
L'ndrezzata

Emilia Romagna

Ahi
Ballo dei lacheri
La giga
Il Mambruc
I quattro cantoni
Trescone bolognese
Bal del capel

Friuli Venezia Giulia

La Furlana
Il torotele
La rescana

Lazio

Manfrida
Tarantelle romanesca
Saltarello romanesco
Saltarello sdruciollo

Liguria

La Perigordina
La Farandola

Lombardia

La bergamasca

Marche

Il fazzoletto
il Galoppo
Saltarello machegiano

Piemonte

Danza piemontese
La nizzarda
La bella mugnaia
La monferrina
Il corente
Il ballo dei lacheri
Puglie
Tarantella barese
Pizzica-Pizzica
Tarantella Sammarchese

Sardegna

Duru-duru
Ball'i Ogei
Ballu a passu
Ballu zoppu

Sicilia

La Cordella
La Fasola
La moresca siciliana

Toscana

Trescone toscano

Trentino Alto Adige

La lavandera
La girometa

Umbria

Saltarello umbro

Val d' Aosta

Badhoche
Bal de Chabots
Bal del sabre

Veneto

La Pavana
La danza del ventaglio
La moresca

In Brief:

Brooklyn Rediscovery:

Brooklyn is a borough of many neighborhoods, with people of varied ethnic origins and cultural traditions – a valuable resource for the study of the diversity of American life. The project is an unusual attempt by urban folklorists, working in collaboration with community residents, to document in a broad and inclusive manner the folklife of urban neighborhoods. The project is seeking to record, interpret, and celebrate the forms and process of urban folk culture.

Since Brooklyn has a large Italian neighborhood, we look forward to the results of this project.

For information:

Brooklyn Rediscovery
57 Willoughby Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201
(212) 852 6200

The Folk Group "Canterini Peloritani" from Italy will be touring the U.S. from October 1st to the 14th 1984.

Anyone willing to offer hospitality is kindly requested to contact:

Elba F. Gurzau
c/o I.F.A.F.A.

Emma S. Rocco is researching the marvelous contributions Italians made in the area of musical bands.

She is interested in interviews, music and photos in and around the Pennsylvania area to add to her collection dating back to 1898.

Anyone having information should contact:

Prof. Emma S. Rocco
260 River Rd.
Beaver, Pa. 15009

The Ethnic Folk Arts Center, N.Y.C. presented a major tour of traditional Italian musicians, singers, and dancers. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awarded the Center a grant to produce the Tour, which brought "musica popolare" to ten Italian American communities in the north-eastern United States.

The Italian Music Tour featured approximately 20 performers representing the traditions of a number of regions of southern Italy. The unusually rich variety of music and dance, delighted and surprised many who were not familiar with the diversity of these traditions. The program ranged from poignant solo singing to vivacious dancing of rhythmic tarantellas. The musicians played folk instruments little known in this country, such as the *zampogna* (bagpipes), the

organetto (push-button accordion), the oboe-like *ciaramella*, and the *chitarra battente*, an ancient predecessor of the guitar. The core group of performers were United States residents; in addition, six musicians came directly from Italy to participate in the Tour.

THE STORY OF A MAN AND HIS FAMILY AND OF THE CONFLICTS WITHIN HIMSELF.

This nostalgic turn-of-the-century novel, based on fact, offers an in-depth, authentic view of a good, colorful life, stressing love of family, in a small Italian village. The talents, the warmth, and in a few cases, the cruelty, of the people are depicted in Don Ci's difficult voyage to America, the family's detention on Ellis Island, the rift between father and son over the latter's employer's plan to send a railroad through Don Ci's choice farmland, the family's frightening experience during the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, and Don Ci's tragic decision to return to his native Italian village. All this makes for an absorbing tale.

You may purchase this book from Theresa Kempker, P.O. Box 1225 Orangevale, CA 95662 for \$12.95.

The magazine **ATTENZIONE** is featuring an "Events in America" column and welcomes any information their readers can provide. They require **three months' advance notice** on all submissions.

If you have any event coming up or know of any Italian-American organization that has an event pending -- write to or call --

Events in America Editor
ATTENZIONE
152 Madison Avenue
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