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The Officers' Log

RARE BAND SURVIVES

by John Mancini, Chairman



Maestro Joseph Stamboni acknowledges audience applause during an annual Columbus Day concert in Yonkers, NY. This cultural treasure needs support.

One of the great losses our community has sustained is that of the traditional band. So, it is a rare thing to find one that has performed continuously since 1941. I had occasion to attend a performance of the Yonkers Concert Band last month just north of New York City. Of course, the musicians have changed over the years, many are not of Italian stock, but the music is pure Italian, from classical to opera, from patriotic to traditional Neapolitan.

Our relationship with the band goes back some years. Institute member Frank Cardone plays the baritone horn and has been the band manager for 20 years. (Frank is the brother of Alfred Cardone, our Financial Secretary and feature writer for *The Italic Way*.)

Our Institute forged a strong relationship with the band in the 1990s. It was the first time the band played in Manhattan. Under our auspices the band renamed itself the Italic Institute Concert Band when performing in Manhattan. Among the venues was the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in the Egyptian

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GETTING MORE INK

In the jargon of the print media, our Institute has gotten some "good ink." In this Log is an insert with two letters published in the *New York Times* and the *Financial Times* by Rosario Iaconis, our Vice Chairman East, and a letter published in *Long Island Newsday* written by Chairman John Mancini.

Iaconis' letter to the *New York Times*, although representing his own opinion, conforms with stated U.S. policy in the Middle East. In his letter to the *Financial Times*, Vice Chairman Iaconis' defense of the Italian economy found its way to the new Italian Ambassador Giulio Terzi Sant'Agata, who greatly appreciated Iaconis' setting the record straight on behalf of Italy.

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DID YOU RECEIVE YOUR ITALIC WAY?

Issue XXXV was bulk-mailed on November 3rd. This is the most economical but slowest postal method. If you haven't received your copy, let us know at 516.488.7400 or ItalicOne@aol.com.

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AURORA CLASSES IN PROGRESS

Now operating without public grants or any contributions from the major Italian American organizations, our Institute has, nevertheless, "reset" the *Aurora* button. One Introductory and one Advanced class were reopened in Nassau County, Long Island, in November. The classes were underwritten by a donation from Lisa Carcaterra and husband Steve Napolitano, long-time members of our Institute.

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Once word got out, the Introductory class filled quickly. Five youngsters had to be turned away. Adults in the background (l-r.), Antonella Guercio, teacher's aide, Mary Bruschi, teacher, and Gina Dunas, President of Cellini Lodge. Gina is also a former *Aurora* student. The classroom was donated by Cellini.



Despite a 2-year gap, these former Introductory students signed up for the Advanced class. The teacher is Donna Fontanetta (standing). The teaching aide is Emily Tudisco, a local high school Italian AP student. The classroom was provided by St. Thomas RC Church.

CIVIL RIGHTS CHAMPION DIES

Illinois attorney Joseph Rago, 49, died of pancreatic cancer on November 13th. Rago led the battle against a Batavia, IL, middle school that planned to stage a blatantly anti-Italic play entitled *Fuggedaboutit: A Little Mobster Comedy*. Working pro-bono for the Levato family whose 12-year old son Johnny attended the school, Rago fought to stop the play with a court injunction. The court refused despite evidence that the faculty had written and coached the students to act "Italian."

(l - r) Institute Advisor Theodore Grippo, Esq., Institute Vice Chairman Midwest Don Fiore, parent Marina Levato, and attorney Joseph Rago.



Shouldn't There Be More to the Italian Heritage Than Galas?

Of course there is! But, you need to link up with the right people. Broaden and deepen your knowledge of the Italian heritage. Let us show you the difference between the Classical Italian Heritage and the superficial version.

We are the Alternative.

Enroll me as a member (\$50 check enclosed)

Enclosed is a tax-deductible donation of \$ _____

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Rare Band, from p.1



(l - r) Chairman John Mancini, Advisor and Financial Secretary Alfred Cardone, and Yonkers Band Manager Frank Cardone,

room honoring then-Governor George Pataki. Verdi's "Triumphant March" from *Aida* was especially appropriate in that room. (It was written and first performed at the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.)

The Yonkers Band has 33 pieces, probably the largest Italian band this side of the Mississippi. Only a handful of these bands survive. One other I know of is the Caliendo Band in Chicago, in which Don Fiore, our Vice Chairman Midwest, plays.

Don't get Don started on the loss of these traditional bands. It's one of his biggest heartaches, and I totally agree. These bands have disappeared because Italian Americans think they have better things to do. These bands also lack the financing to perform. (What else is new?) It can cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to put on a production, even if you are lucky to obtain a school auditorium. Concerts must be held free to the public because Italian Americans generally do not support their own arts. Sponsors are vital. The Yonkers Band is funded for Columbus Day by the City of Yonkers. You may often find smaller bands at feasts, but even these are disappearing.

Compare this to Irish and Scottish Americans who have made bagpipe bands and step-dancing a ubiquitous tradition. Many of their bagpipe bands are line items in police, fire and sanitation budgets. Our taxes support their tradition!

I must say one last word about the band's conductor, Joseph Stamboni. Joe not only leads the band but he is a composer as well. Working with our Institute, Joe has composed full arrangements for old tunes that we use for our Aurora Color Guard and never-before-arranged medleys of patriotic songs. His talent is exceptional.

Bringing the band back under the Institute's umbrella is one of my dreams. *****

CRIME FAMILY UPDATE

On the tortuous path to applying political correctness to the Italian American community, we have engaged in discussions with New York Senator Chuck Schumer's staff. We are soliciting his support in our on-going struggle with the U.S. Dept. of Justice over the term "crime family" as applied only to Italian American mobsters.

We already have the support of Long Island's House Representative Carolyn McCarthy. Nevertheless, it will take some heavy hitters to force the FBI and Justice officials to own up to the illogic of labeling Italian American crime syndicates "families." For that matter we have the landmark book *The Story of English* by former PBS newscaster Robert MacNeil to back up our claim that "the family" is a pejorative used only against Italian Americans.

Talks with Senator Schumer's staff have been fruitful thus far. They do not often hear of an "Italian issue." Nevertheless, we are providing them with sound documentation and substantial historical research. An Italian American staffer has been specifically assigned to our case.

To be continued...

THE GRANT GAME

The more you dig into "earmarks," "member items," or "discretionary funds," the money politicians give out in their states or districts, the more amazed you are by the sheer value of political connections.

In the Institute's home district of Floral Park, Long Island, we happen to have an Italian American state assemblyman named Tom Alfano. Mr. Alfano has ignored requests for *Aurora* grants stating that his personal rule is to restrict his grants to public entities such as the local fire department or public schools. It seemed like a logical and safe way to avoid playing favorites among the various ethnic and social groups within his district. Notwithstanding his Italian background, we had to respect his fairness. That was until we learned recently that he gave a \$40,000 grant to Young Israel of West Hempstead. Not only was this a blatant violation of his own "rule," but it was four times the amount we had asked for. (NB - New York State has a \$3.2 billion deficit crisis this year.)

A visit to the Young Israel website reveals that this is an insular Orthodox sect that is politically active against U.S. foreign policy (they are against a Palestinian state) and are lobbying to free the spy Jonathan Pollard. They are hardly representative of the national Jewish American community.

Suffice it to say that Assemblyman Alfano is the perfect example of why voting for Italian American candidates is not always in our best interest.

ROMAN ACADEMY IN DEVELOPMENT

Losing our New York State and City grant money, and shutting down eight *Aurora* sites as a consequence, has given us the opportunity of concentrating our efforts in further developing the *Aurora* Program locally.



Cavaliere di Gran Croce
Dominic R. Massaro
President of the American Society of the
Italian Legions of Merit.

In the last *Officers' Log* we mentioned our desire to develop a third phase of *Aurora*, for students who complete the Introductory and Advanced courses. That thought inspired long-time associate and friend Dominic Massaro, president of the American Society of the Italian Legions of Merit, to donate \$1,000 on behalf of the Association for the curriculum development of the Roman Academy. Under Judge Massaro's leadership, the Legions of Merit is one of the more classically-minded of the national Italian American organizations. Clearly, we are honored by its faith in us.

We hope to draft a new curriculum in the coming months and launch the course next fall. The Roman Academy will focus on a generalist foundation (language, history, current events) and analytical thought. The objective will be to prepare teenagers for higher education and provide them with a deeper understanding of their classical Italian heritage.

In a perfect world, Italian American children would grow up on an "Aurora Track," beginning with an Introductory Class, then an Advanced Class, Roman Academy, Summer Camp, and Study in Italy. These would be the children to receive generous scholarships, for they are the generation that will replace us.

WASTING AWAY IN GUIDOVILLE

By Louis Cornaro

As we go to print a new media “outrage” has gotten everyone’s hackles up. A cable station is doing a reality series called the *Jersey Shore*, replete with guidos and guidettes. “Guido” is one of those many common Italian words that has morphed, for most, into an insulting term. A “guido” is a macho young man with a gold chain, slicked hair and muscled body. Unfortunately, he also comes with a simple mind and inflated ego. The label “guido” is even a source of pride to him, as the show will point out.

So here we go again, 500 years after Giovanni Caboto set the first pair of Italian feet on North America. Just when you think we have fooled America into thinking we are assimilated and proud, some *cafoni* pop out of the woodwork to contradict us. First, there was the romanticized *Godfather*. Then the bottom-feeding *GoodFellas*, then the fat “goombah,” and now the dead-end “guido.”

What to do? Whether we write irate letters, boycott products or spend \$75,000 for an ad in the *New York Times*, the outrages keep coming. We fail because the outrages are aided and abetted by money-grubbing Italian Americans. They are not only money-grubbing but they are ignorant on all levels. They grew up in ignorance. They grew up in a culture that narrowed its scope to cooking and eating. Their definition of pride only extends to themselves and the local deli

The solution offered by community leaders for the past 50 years has been scholarships and charitable giving. The theory is, once we all have a college education the pride will run deep. Unfortunately, Mario Puzo, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese and David Chase all went to college and made things worse. One major organization has given \$105 million to medical charities and scholarships over the past 50 years. Another

gives \$3 million in scholarships every year. And still our culture is the object of disdain.

Jews, Greeks, Asians, Armenians and numerous other ethnic groups don’t let their children grow up to be *cafoni*. They inculcate pride before the teen years. It’s the same strategy religions use: invest in the children and you produce better adults.

Either our community opens up for discussion how better to invest the millions of dollars being spent each year, or we can look forward to outrages every year until intermarriage puts us out of our misery. *****

ALL DUES PAYABLE IN JANUARY

Just a reminder that all membership dues are payable in January. The January *Officers’ Log* will have a return envelope for your check. There will be no invoices or follow-up mailings. Your payment of \$50 will cover the year 2010.

This system helps reduce our overhead, allowing the Italic Institute to put precious resources to better use. No other organization can do what we do on our budget. *****

ITALY TOPS THE U.K.

It seems that Italy is weathering the great recession better than the United Kingdom. The Italians moved to #6 on the list of wealthiest nations, replacing the U.K. It will also have a lesser budget deficit than cost-conscious Germany. Never count Italians out. *****

Aurora, from p. 1

The Introductory class filled quickly with 23 youngsters aged 10 and 11. Five kids had to be turned away for lack of room. Parents are paying a \$25 registration fee. Our Institute provides scholarships to all students who have at least one Italic grandparent. The whole class qualified making *Aurora* a true heritage training course.

The Advanced class was recruited from a previous Introductory class. Despite the length of time since they first enrolled in *Aurora*, we managed to re-register nine students who are now aged 12- and 13-years old.

Since our Institute no longer has an office, the classes are held at Cellini Lodge (Sons of Italy), Garden City Park, and at St. Thomas Church in West Hempstead. Classrooms on Saturday mornings are difficult to find. We are fortunate that we have Italic brethren at Cellini Lodge and at St. Thomas (M sgr. Maniscalco).

An interesting sidenote is that the president of Cellini Lodge, Gina Ferrara Dunas, was an *Aurora* student some fifteen years ago. Our ties to Cellini Lodge have given Cellini four of their lodge presidents (Gina and three parents of our students) over the years. This is the power of *Aurora*. If only the major organizations could understand the connection, they would benefit more than they know. *****

More Ink, from p. 1

The *Newsday* letter was written by Chairman Mancini as a counterpoint to an op-ed piece by Jewish-American filmmaker Bruce Feiler claiming that the American republic was greatly inspired by Moses and the Hebrew exodus.

It is the policy of Council of Governors that the Italic Institute will not allow the contributions of Italy or the Italic people to be ignored, diminished or distorted.
