



tradizioni

NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN FOLK ART FEDERATION OF AMERICA

Editor: Jackie Capurro
IFafa Website: www.italian-american.com/ifafa

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No. 1

Letter From the President

Dear IFafa Members,

It was exactly one year ago today that I wrote to you for the first time, and I'd like to take just a few minutes at the beginning of this letter to say thank you to each and every one of you for all of the support I've received over the past year. Countless emails have come through from individuals sharing their hope for the sustained longevity of IFafa, and although the message has come from individuals all across this country and abroad, their ideas remain one and the same. It is the shared purpose that we as an organization stay strong and stable, yet find the courage to push through and adapt new and innovative ideas for the future.

With that being said, I'm extremely delighted to announce several new and exciting developments. First, as I've mentioned to you many times in the past, initiating new and active committees was one of my first and major goals. As those in attendance at the Dallas conference have already learned, heads of each of the three committees have been approved, and participating board members have been appointed for each. **Now all that remains is your participation!** It is my goal that at least half of the participants in each committee come from the general membership.

I know that each one of you has an opinion or vision regarding IFafa – why not share your thoughts by joining a committee? If you hesitate because time might be an issue, I can assure you that your efforts will require no more than 4 to 5 solid hours every three months. That's really all it takes...I promise! As a final thought on this, while each of the Executive officers and the entire Board of Directors always have your best interests at heart, we will always continue to seek direction from you, our most valued members. Please contact me at the information below if you're interested, and I will immediately put you in touch with the head of the committee you're interested in joining.

The second major announcement is that the Board of Directors has approved a bill to allow the development of a brand new IFafa website! A local Wisconsin-based web development company has responded to our organization with a proposal based upon a rather large wishlist of items, which we as a group decided we'd like to see implemented as part of the new website design. I'd like to take just a quick moment to highlight some of the exciting features that will be available through the new site:

- Discussion Forums – Provides all users of the site with the ability to post questions, opinions, and get answers under a single topic thread. Very useful!
- Blog (a.k.a. Web Log) – Allows anyone the chance to share their personal thoughts with the readers of the site! Have you recently taken a trip to Italy and would like to share some of your experiences? Post a blog! Have an interesting opinion regarding the state of traditional Italian folk arts in the world today? Post a blog! Just had a new baby? Post a blog and let us all know!
- Members will now be able to pay their dues online.
- Non-members will now be able to register with IFafa, and pay their dues directly online.
- Provides the ability for members to update their contact info directly online.
- Allows for all visitors to pay for merchandise directly through the site.
- Provides the IFafa website administrators the ability to make immediate changes to the site, without the need to involve the host. (For those of you who have noticed that our current site doesn't get updated so often, this is a huge win!)
- Ability to sign up for email updates.
- Allows RSS feeds to be linked to any registered supporter site.

And believe it or not, this is just a small subset of items that will be incorporated into the new site. This was another one of my top priority goals when I took over my position, and to see it come to fruition pleases me to no end. The site is scheduled to begin development in April, with deployment slotted for sometime in late May or early June. I will be sure to keep all of you informed as we move forward with the design.

The final important announcement provides an answer to the question that I'm sure has been on everyone's mind – Where will this year's IFafa conference be held?! Well, I'm very pleased to announce that the 2008 Italian Folk Art Federation of America conference will be held in....drum role please....Sacramento, California!! The conference is scheduled to be held October 24th through October 26th at the Radisson Hotel – Sacramento. Doris Beckert and her group *Balliamo* are actively brain-storming for new workshop ideas, and have already proposed some interesting topics.

(continued on page 3)

Sacramento Proudly Opens New Italian Center

After more than two years of fund-raising, development, and construction, the Italian Center of Northern California opened its doors to the Sacramento community in September, 2007. The first Italian community center to be built in California in a generation, the Center is a proud symbol of the future of the local Italian-American community.



The beautiful new building is capable of housing several concurrent activities. The building's entryway, with high ceilings and wide open main room, boasts a custom Tuscan marble floor, meticulously hand-crafted with four types of marble which are cut into a medallion with the shape of Italy in the center, inlaid in a travertine floor.

The Center will host all cultural events of the Italian Cultural Society, including films, lectures, exhibits, language and cooking classes, and dance rehearsal and performances of *Balliamo!* adult dance troupe and The *Bambini* Dancers children's group. Several large events have already been held in the new Center, including a Gala Dedication last May and a huge Open House last September.

Attendees of this year's IFAFA Conference may get the opportunity to visit this Fall!

2008 IFAFA CONFERENCE IN SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA OCTOBER 24, 25, AND 26, 2008

Balliamo! of Sacramento will host the 2008 IFAFA Conference. Further information will be available soon. To receive updates by email, please send your email address to Doris Beckert at :

bdbeckert@sbcglobal.net

Allegro in West Virginia

Ciao! We are *Allegro Dance Company* from Wheeling, WV. *Allegro* is celebrating 15 years of touring and performing this year and will be touring our new production called "*Fuoco di Passione*." Our new season is filled with the hottest tarantella and blends of ballroom and modern dance that heat up any celebration or event.

Allegro is directed and choreographed by Mrs. Anna Pishner Harsh. Anna started *Allegro* with the idea that her passion for music, dance and her Italian heritage can be shared and preserved for the next generation to enjoy. Anna holds a Masters degree in Communications Instruction from West Virginia University and a B.A degree in Dance. Anna has toured the USA and Italy researching and teaching dance throughout the years. *Allegro* is thrilled to bring the Italian culture to the next generation.

Visit www.Allegrodancecompany.net for more information on the company and tour dates.



Allegro Dance Company of Wheeling, W V

Notizi di Ohio

I Gagliardi Italiani (pronounced: E Ga le ar dee Italiani) means the Vivacious Italians! We are a traveling troupe of volunteer performers, first organized in 1975. Dedicated to promoting and maintaining Italian culture and traditions, IGI has performed in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and all over the state of Ohio. Most recently, we performed seven shows at the Bella Italia Home and Garden show at the IX Center in Cleveland, Ohio.

We are more like family, enjoying singing Italian folk songs and performing folk dances from provinces throughout Italy. We have live music provided by Diane DeGasparis and Roy Gelonese (accordionists), Bruno Settimio (guitarist) and Gabriele Pelosi (concertina). Our current director is Brian Shannon. Officers include: Alice Cleary, President; Maria Lahmers, Vice President; Joann Franz, Secretary, and Bruno Settimeo, Treasurer. We are preparing to produce a CD of songs and we look forward to performing at the Stark County Italian American Festival on June 28 and 29, 2008! Buona festa a tutti!



In Memoriam: Jim Tortora

James B. Tortora was one of the founding members of *I Gagliardi Italiani*, in 1975, in Canton, Ohio. Jim was born in 1924, and after a very full life, filled with family, friends, travel and wonderful gestures of friendship and service, he died in August 2007, at the age of 83.

Born in Capagatti, Italy, in the province of the Abruzzi, Jim lived most of his life in the Canton area of Ohio. He was a member of St. Anthony's Parish. He had been a general contractor for over 50 years. Besides being a co-founder of IGI, Jim was a co-founder of the following additional organizations: Stark County Italian-American Festival, St. Anthony's Holy Name Society, Ben V. Marconi Lodge #1628, and May's Barber Shop Crew. He was also a past president of the Stark County Home Builder's Association. He was a WWII veteran, and was devoted to his family and friends.

Jim Tortora was passionate about his Italian heritage, about *I Gagliardi Italiani* and about IFAFA. He was well known as a proponent of Italian folk songs and dance. At his funeral mass, the words from "I Am The Lord of the Dance" were printed in his service program. Included here are the words from the chorus.

Dance, then, wherever you may be.

"I am the lord of the dance," said he.

"I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,

I will lead you all in the dance," said he.

Jim surely did! We love him. We honor his contributions and our memories of him, and we miss him. God bless you, Jim. Grazie tante!

Letter From the President

(continued from page 1)

Registration for the event will soon be available online from our new website, as well as through future mailings. Please note that the conference fee for adult members this year will be increased slightly to offset the costs associated with hosting a conference in California. Students under the age of 22, however, will continue to be granted a full reimbursement of their entrance fees, provided they attend a minimum set number of workshops and adhere to a very short list of rules set forth by IFAFA. This scholarship program, which started several years ago, has been a great success thus far, and will continue to be afforded for many years to come!

There is one additional announcement regarding the 2008 conference. Another one of my very high priority goals was to bring in a group direct from Italy to each conference held during my term as President. I'm very pleased to announce that I've managed to all but secure a wonderful musical group by the name of *DisCanto*, hailing direct from the region of Abruzzo, to participate at this year's conference in Sacramento! The group has been traveling to Philadelphia for the past several years, and has garnered quite a following. This year, they will not only be performing in Philadelphia, but will also be performing in Toronto and, of course, now in Sacramento as part of their U.S. itinerary! While all of the details have not yet been established, I hope to work alongside Doris and her group in order to provide *DisCanto* a stage to present us with some entertainment, not only on Friday and Saturday nights, but also to allow them to present several workshops based on topics as they see fit. Again, some very exciting news!

Finally, before I conclude, I'd like to share with all of you a humorous, but telling story that I heard recently from one of the Italian leaders here in Milwaukee. He reminisced about a trip he'd recently taken to Italy some time last year, and while traveling through some of the smaller towns in Southern Italy, he happened upon a local celebration. During his time there, he walked the streets, enjoying the unique camaraderie that only Italians seem to have, when unbeknownst to him, a parade started to pour through the streets. The beginning of the parade was no different than any other Italian parade you can think of, until, he said, the local Italian band started to march through. Some of you might immediately picture a uniformed band marching in step, all playing their instruments with tremendous fervor, like the German or Chinese bands might do. As he explained it, however, this couldn't be any further from the truth! Every single band member was walking at a different pace, some looking left, some looking right, one member on his cell phone, "most" playing their instruments, and one, wearing just a v-neck t-shirt on top, carried, but didn't play his trumpet, most likely because of the huge cigar that hung out of his mouth!! The description was purely hysterical...and purely Italian.

I tell you this story because I believe there's a great message found inside. Italians throughout history have been known for their individualism...but just like this band, no matter how individual each member is, they all marched together as a group. I believe this notion should hold true with IFAFA, as well. All of us have different reasons why we as individuals or as a group have joined IFAFA. Some of us enjoy the dancing, some of us, the singing, some, the instruments and music, and others, simply the camaraderie that I spoke of earlier. We all remain true to the reasons we joined, but we must remember that no single instrument can take the place of the entire band. And as your leader, it must be known that I'm only as good as the band members themselves! We are all ultimately here for one sole purpose – to keep our Italian heritage alive, here in the United States, by preserving the one subject we know so well and are so passionate about...the Italian folk arts...every single aspect of them.

I'd like to thank you all again for your support. Please continue to look for further updates regarding all of the subject matter that I spoke of, and as always, I ask that you feel absolutely comfortable to contact me through phone or email at any time. I love hearing from our members, and am excited about our future!

Sincerely,

Mark DeSanctis

President, Italian Folk Art Federation of America

Mark.DeSanctis@gmail.com

(414) 550-6419

Italian Dance Group in Brazil

Sao Paulo, Brazil, has the second-largest Italian community in the Americas, after New York City. Maria Alice Molinari Dechiare has been the coordinator of the folk group *Nostra Italia* for ten years in Sao Paulo. She learned about IFAFA through our website while searching the internet for Italian folklore and music. She is interested in the possibility of an exchange for her group to participate in events in the United States, or in U.S. groups performing in Brazil.

Nostra Italia dance troupe consists of 19 dancers, ages 24 to 38, and two technical support people. They have four different costumes: two with the colors of the Italian flag, one that represents immigrants, and another representing Carnival in Venice.

Nostra Italia is constantly seeking new information on Italian folk dance and new ways to share that information. They perform at many events throughout Brazil. The group studies and represents dances from several regions and currently has dances from Lombardia, Veneto, Calabria, Campania, Sicilia, Emilia-Romagna and more.

Additional information can be found on the group's website at <www.nostraitalia.com.br>. Unfortunately, the website is only in Portuguese at present, but they are in the process of translating it into Italian and English.

If you'd like to contact the group, Maria Alice's phone numbers are 55-11-4688-1347 or 55-11-9646-3766, or you may contact her by email at: <nostraitalia@nostraitalia.com.br>.



Le Guazze di Lucia

The traditional headpiece worn in the Lake Como area of Lombardia

Lecco (a city on Lake Como in Lombardia), was the setting for the famous Italian historical fiction novel, *I Promessi Sposi*, (*The Betrothed*), by Alessandro Manzoni. The traditional woman's costume from Lecco is linked to the image of Manzoni's heroine, Lucia. The word *guazze* is used to describe the corona of silver hatpins or *spadine* (little swords) inserted one by one in the two braids formed by the woman's hair. The hatpins, as many as 24, were placed in a circle behind the head and assumed the aspect of a low half-halo appearing only slightly above the head and protruding beyond the sides of the face. The hairstyle was completed with a *spontone*, a longer thicker hatpin ending in two *capocchie* (finials/end ornaments) attached horizontally at the point of maximum diameter.

The corona is made up in this manner: a *spontone* located very low, with the *capocchie* very visible in the shape of a small wheel decorated with two pendants -- a couple of hatpins with elongated or pear-shaped finials -- behind the top of the head and semi-hidden, a series of at least five hatpins in a pointed arch, preceded by a large long flat element with a middle crack. This last element, also seen in an authentic pattern of Novarese, could also have a quadrangular openwork head ending in a *sferrata*. Stylized and flattened, it became the sword of eight holes of the silverworkers. A fundamental component of the very ancient pattern exists in the Manzonian Civic Museum at *Caleotto di Lecco*.

The ensemble of hair and hatpins, in the *lecchese* dialect, was called "*i guazz*" (from *i coazza* which means "hair in braids"). In other places, it has other names: *giron*, *speronada*, or *sperada* (with slender elements), *coo d'argent* with wide elements. Certain hatpins were called *spadin* (triangular, flat, made of openwork) or *cugiarett* or *spazzaorec* ending in a slightly concave shovel-shaped blade. The *spontoni* or *guggioni*, to be inserted horizontally at the end of the braiding with large pear-shaped finials, were called *cugiar*, *oeuv*, or *ball*. Among the two types of hatpins, they inserted at times *spadini* (little swords), much larger and more elaborate in number and form according to, so it seemed, the nobility of the family of the bride.

Members of *Il Gruppo Folcloristico Firlinfeu "Renzo e Lucia"* in Lecco explain that, if the family could afford it, it was a frequent custom to purchase a silver *spontone* for a baby girl when she was born, and then buy one *spadino* for each birthday until, at least, her 18th birthday, sometimes until her 24th birthday.

It's interesting to note that in the *lecchese* area, the use of this hairstyle appears only in the second half of the 17th century. In fact, among the things donated to the Madonna del Rosario of the Collegiata of Lecco (in the year 1684), one finds, for the first time, the unquestionable use of something similar to the corona of Lucia. What happened later, causing this ornament to thicken with hatpins with the passing of decades, is not certain. Halfway through the 19th century, at Acquate, one sees the *guazzi* with 27 *spadine*, at Castello with 24 *spazzaorec*; while in Varesotto (in the year 1852) they counted up to 30 and 40 of them. The private collection existing at Lecco and Cantù, shows antique coronas from the 18th century, formed of 35, 41 and more elements.

"The young black hair of Lucia was wrapped, behind the head, in multiple circles of braids, passed through with hatpins of silver, that were divided evenly all around, almost as rays of a halo."

Chapter II of *I promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*) by Alessandro Manzoni

Book of Interest to Italian-Americans: *The Saint of Lost Things*

Set in 1953 in Wilmington, Delaware, *The Saint of Lost Things* by Christopher Castellani, tells the story of a tight-knit Italian neighborhood. Maddalena Grasso has left behind her country, her family, and the man she loved by immigrating to America. Her husband, Antonio, has lost his ability to realize the American Dream; and their friend, Giulio Fabbri, an accordion player, has lost his parents. The three characters pray in the shadow of St. Anthony's Church, named for their patron saint of lost things, and their prayers are answered in unforeseeable ways.

This is Castellani's second novel. His first, *A kiss from Maddalena*, won the Massachusetts Book Award for best work of fiction, and was a Book Sense Top Ten Pick, a national selection of the Readers Club of America, and a Barnes and Noble on-line pick. Born and raised in Wilmington, Castellani uses his own experiences to shape his latest novel. His parents immigrated to the United States from Italy following World War II.

The book is available from Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill from their website at <www.algonquin.com>. --NIAF News

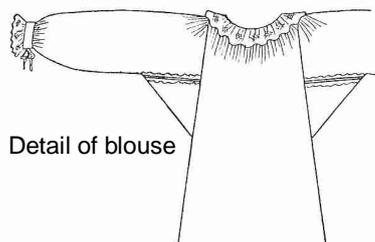
Regional Italian Folk Costume

We continue the series of descriptions of folk costumes taken from the book, now out of print, *Il Costume popolare in Italia*, by Emma Calderini, published by Sperling & Kupfer, Milano. In this issue, we highlight two costumes from the region of Lombardia.

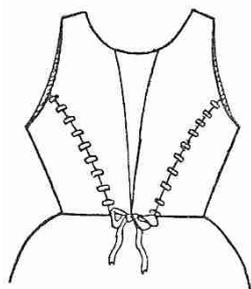


**LEFT:
Contadina di Parre
Countrywoman of Parre**

Blouse of homespun cloth, decorated at the collar and at the end of the wide sleeves with crocheted lace or pillow lace, and tied at the wrist with green braid. Wide skirt of light blue cotton, gathered at the waist, covered with an apron of homespun cloth embroidered vertically where the lines meet, tied at the waist with red ribbons. Vest of thick dark-brown wool, strengthened with stays, with two lacings of ribbons passing through red grommets. Leather shoes; knit stockings. The braids are supported with padding and tied through with ribbons (colored purple or sky blue) in order to support the *guazze*, or silver hatpin crown (see further description of the *guazze* on page 4).



Detail of blouse

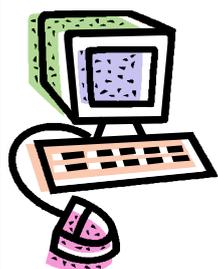


Detail of beribboned vest



**ABOVE: Popolano di Varese.
Citizen of Varese**

Felt hat with a thin colored ribbon. Embroidered shirt of homespun cloth. The suit is of ribbed velvet, with a "hunter-style" jacket, with rather short sleeves, trimmed with red ribbon. At the waist, a sash of fringed cotton. Shoes of common leather, hob-nailed.



On The Web

Visit Italy Every Day

A new website, ItalianNotebook.com, offers users a chance to experience everything Italian right from your computer. Subscribers receive a daily email with photos that cover one topic about the beauty, sensations, and memories of Italy. Themes sometimes include food, customs, traditions, wine, art, history, and more. Visit www.italiannotebook.com and subscribe for free.

-- from NIAF News Monthly

Websites of Interest to Genealogy Searchers

Ellis Island Passenger List

Millions of Americans whose relatives entered the United States through Ellis Island now have easy access to their records. The historic collection of Ellis Island passenger arrival records is now available on-line through the Statue of Liberty – Ellis Island Foundation Inc., World Vital Records, Inc., and Family Search. The records document the arrival of 25 million immigrants through the Port of New York from 1892 to 1924. Private and corporate donations made the project possible; it took 5.6 million hours and seven years to complete.

Records are available free of charge by visiting www.worldvitalrecords.com and www.familylink.com.

L'Italia dei Cognomi

Curious about Italians who share your surname? *L'Italia dei Cognomi*, part of an Italian genealogical website, provides visitors with a detailed map of Italy and information about their surname (*cognome*). You may know the province and/or region where your family's name originated, but you may find other regions where your name also appears. The site utilizes local records and indicates concentrations of citizens with that surname. Visit www.gens.labo.net/en/cognomi/.

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Founder's Fund

The Elba Farabegoli Gurzau Founder's Fund was originally established as a living memorial to the founder of the Italian Folk Art Federation of America. Contributions for any intention, i.e. birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion, as well as in memoriam, are used only for artistic endeavors.

Donations may be made payable to "IFAF A – Founder's Fund" and mailed to: IFAFA, c/o Anna Marie Fiori, Treasurer, P.O. Box 1192, Rockford, IL 61105.

When sending a donation to commemorate an event, please: Identify the occasion and give the full name of the individual to be honored, and give the full name and address to whom the announcement is to be sent. The contributor should also provide his/her own name, address, and telephone number.

A special letter, announcing the contribution and naming the contributor, will be forwarded to the honored person or family, and an acknowledgement will be sent to the contributor.

This Issue's Contributors

The editor would like to thank the following people for contributing articles and/or information for this issue:

- Doris Beckert
- Alice Cleary
- Maria Alice Molinari Dechiare
- Mark DeSanctis
- Anna Pishner Harsh
- NIAF News Monthly

**FOLK DANCES,
 COSTUMES
 AND
 CUSTOMS OF ITALY**

by Elba Farabegoli Gurzau

Softcover book, 128 pages, which includes black-and-white and color illustrations, 17 dances with description and notated music, information about Italy, costumes, customs, etc. Comes with recorded music to accompany the dances, your choice of audiocassette or CD.

Price: \$25.00, plus \$3.95 for handling and postage. Be sure to specify CD or cassette.

Please make check or money order payable to IFAFA and mail to:
 IFAFA Treasurer
 P.O. Box 1192
 Rockford, IL 61105

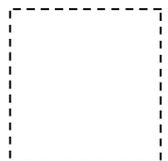
The purpose of the ITALIAN FOLK ART FEDERATION OF AMERICA (IFAF A) is to preserve and foster interest in Italian folk art; to research Italian folklore, traditions, customs, costumes, dances, songs, instruments, etc.; to act as a center for gathering, storing, and disseminating the information; and to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

IFAF A 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 non-profit cultural and educational organization.

MEMBERSHIP in IFAFA

- I am interested in:
- Annual Membership
 - Performing Folk Group \$25.00, plus \$5.00 per member address (if new, send for application)
 - Supporting Organization \$25.00 (non-performing)
 - Individual \$10.00
 - Student/Senior Citizen \$5.00
 - Contributing to the work of IFAFA \$ _____
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