



# tradizioni

NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN FOLK ART FEDERATION OF AMERICA

Editor: Jackie Capurro

IFafa Website: [www.ItalianFolkArtFederation.org](http://www.ItalianFolkArtFederation.org)

VOLUME 32

2013

No. 2

## Letter from the President

Dear Members,  
Conference Reminder

This year's conference will be held October 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, in historic Boston, MA. Ricordi d'Italia will be the host group for this year. The conference workshops will be held at the Crowne Plaza Boston–Newton hotel, which is only a few miles outside of Boston city proper.

Registration will be completed this year through our website, or through a printed registration form. We have switched payment options for the website and moved over to using PayPal for our main payment processor. We hope you find this option easier and more secure than our previously outdated and essentially nonfunctional payment option.

Again, for those of you on Facebook, please 'like' our new page, where we will provide updates to conference information as it comes in. And as always, be sure to visit our website, [www.ItalianFolkArtFederation.org](http://www.ItalianFolkArtFederation.org), for conference updates and registration information.

So to conclude, please find us on Facebook, visit our website, or send me an email direct if you have any questions at all. I hope to see a large turnout at this year's conference, and I look forward to our future together with this great organization!

Sincerely,  
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## Anema e core -- Dizzy Fingers: the Life of Joe Soprani

Naut Pictures is producing a documentary on the life and music of IFafa member, accordionist Joe Soprani.

The accordion has brought Joe Soprani some of the most unique performance experiences imaginable. With his squeezebox in tow, Joe has collaborated with Bon Jovi, performed at the White House, with Pavarotti, on national television, and more. He has even survived a plane crash (though his first instrument did not). In his 80 years, Joe continues to work on and perfect his craft with seemingly endless energy and enthusiasm, while also passing on his knowledge to his many students.



"Dizzy Fingers: the Life of Joe Soprani" explores a remarkable life filled with music. With the help of interviews with people in Joe's life, including Obie O'Brien (Bon Jovi), Susan Ashbaker (Opera Company of Philadelphia), and Joe Parente (president, Local 77), the film examines the true talents of a masterful musician. Not only that, but "Dizzy Fingers" provides a historical context to the instrument itself, with insight by ethnomusicologist, Marion Jacobson, who describes the rise and subsequent fall of the accordion due to the arrival of the

Beatles. With the accordion seeing a great resurgence in contemporary pop and indie music, the time is now to recognize the man who never left it behind.

The producers have released the first video as a teaser for the upcoming documentary. This tune provides a nice preview, while also showing the beauty and expressiveness of the accordion. The supporting band sounds great, and Joe really digs in on his musette. The documentary is coming along nicely. There is much interview footage, archival footage, and more. Sorting through the wealth of material (and editing it all together), has been quite the task.

Enjoy this clip on YouTube. Joe Soprani and ensemble perform "Anema e core," produced by Naut Pictures for its forthcoming documentary on Joe, "Dizzy Fingers": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSevMVPd5zw>

## Paolina Kavanagh Honored in Hartford

During the Columbus Day Weekend festivities in Hartford, CT, in October 2012, Paolina Kavanagh was chosen as a scholarship honoree by the Columbus Day Annual Italian American Celebration and Parade committee.

She received commendations from the City of Hartford, CT, the US House of Representatives, and the Connecticut General Assembly for her "Dedication to celebrating the rich tradition of our Italian American heritage and culture through music and dance, and as the Director and Choreographer of Cuor d'Italia."

The entire membership extended its very best wishes on this memorable occasion and expressed the hope for continued success.

These pictures were taken at the banquet on Saturday, Oct. 6th, and again on Sunday, the 7th, after the parade.

Paolina said, "I got such a kick out of riding in a beautiful red Mercedes convertible, instead of marching, as I do every year. Later that day, my group danced for the crowd, and then we were treated again to a lovely dinner at an Italian (of course) restaurant. I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would ever receive this honor. I really think that the conference last year had a lot to do with it, and I am so proud that my group has hung together this long. It's been tough with 3 of the girls in college now. I pray that we can continue our dancing for many years to come."



## VILLABATE PASTRY SHOP ADVANCES HISTORICAL NOVEL SET IN SICILIAN HOMETOWN

**(Brooklyn, New York)** Villabate is the name of one of the New York Metropolitan area's finest Sicilian bakery and pastry shops. It is also the name of the ancestral town of the Alaimo family, who have owned and operated this Bensonhurst institution for 35 years. For family and historical reasons, their hometown of Villabate, Sicily is now the primary setting for *Trinàcria: A Tale of Bourbon Sicily*, a novel that the Alaimos are helping to support and promote.

"This may be a case of the Princess and the Pastries, or of the Bourbons come to Brooklyn," said author Anthony Di Renzo, whose roots also extend to Villabate. Inspired by a town legend, popular when patriarch Angelo Alaimo was still a boy, Di Renzo's novel pays tribute to their common heritage.

The author's great-grandfather, Antonio Coffaro, supposedly smuggled food and supplies to Giuseppe Garibaldi, whose troops invaded Sicily as part of the Risorgimento, the Italian unification movement of the mid-1800's. Garibaldi and a hand-picked retinue came to Villabate and personally thanked him in the municipal square.

For three generations the Alaimo family has created the finest Sicilian pastries, cakes, cookies and breads, whether in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn or back in Villabate, Sicily. The author's mother, Maria Coffaro Bilo, and Angelo Alaimo, the founder of the Brooklyn pastry dynasty, were distant cousins and childhood playmates.

When the economic recovery from World War II proved too daunting, Angelo and his son Emanuele immigrated to America. For over a decade, the two worked hard as simple breadmakers in bakeries all over Brooklyn, earning a reputation for quality and craftsmanship. Encouraged by their neighbors and customers, father and son in 1979 started their own place: Villabate of 18th Avenue. On opening day, Di Renzo's 48-year-old mother, who had moved to America several years before Angelo, drove in from New Jersey to be among the first customers.

Since then, Villabate-Alba has passed from Emanuele Senior to Emanuele Junior, Anthony, Lina, and Angela. As the family explained in a 2010 feature on *Brooklyn Independent Television*, Manny, "the quiet one," runs things in the back; Anthony, "Mr. Personality," entertains customers and handles the advertising and public relations; and Angela "basically bosses everyone around." The new generation is proud of its Sicilian roots and visits Villabate almost every year. However, *Trinàcria* became a rich source of knowledge, providing the Alaimo family a whole new perspective on their roots and their ancestral town's actual history.

From the days of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Villabate, a suburb of 20,000 people, has been an important agricultural center in the Conca d'Oro, or Golden Conch, the fertile plain surrounding Palermo. In 1700, Antonio Agnello, an aristocratic abbé and an amateur botanist, founded a commune to develop the hardy strands of olive and citrus that became the area's chief crops. Most of the town, not incorporated until 1858, would be parceled from the abbé's huge estate; hence came the name Villabate, a contraction of Villa dell'Abate (Abbot's Villa).

This land forms the heart of *Trinàcria: A Tale of Bourbon Sicily*. The book's title derives from the ancient Greek name for Sicily. *Trinàcria* refers to the island's triangular shape and the three-legged gorgon on its regional flag. It is also the nickname of the novel's narrator and protagonist, Zita Valanguerra Spinelli (1794-1882), Marchesa of Scalea, who moves from Bagheria to Villabate to grow prized blood oranges. Her turbulent life mirrors Sicily's rocky transition from feudalism to capitalism. Guernica Editions, an independent literary press in Toronto, Canada, plans to release the novel by November.

The Alaimo family played a key role in the book's online campaign and live fundraising event, both sponsored by the Italian Cultural Foundation and Casa Belvedere and organized by consultant Roberto Ragone. The Villabate-Alba Bakery and Pastry Shop not only contributed money but supplied a large tray of *ossi di morti* for the November 29 reception at Umberto's Clam House in New York's Little Italy. Shaped like human bones, these traditional almond-paste cookies are served throughout the month when All Souls Day falls. They seemed a fitting symbol for a book whose narrator speaks from beyond the grave.

"We're pleased to do whatever we can to move this book forward," said Antonio Alaimo, "but we're just as pleased to reconnect with a long-lost relative. Cousin Anthony and I share the same heritage. Sicilian stories and Sicilian sweets: who can get enough of them?"

Di Renzo agrees. "It's about the tasting the past. I think of that passage in Proust, where he bites into a madeleine and remembers his childhood. A slice of *cassata* or a pistachio *cannolo* has the same effect on Sicilians and Sicilian Americans. It unlocks memories and brings back the dead, whether in Palermo or Brooklyn. In fact, I hope this all inspires post-St. Joseph's Day Order zeppoli and sfingi from Villabate-Alba."

Readers may sample authentic Sicilian pastries at the Villabate-Alba Bakery and Pastry Shop, 7001 18th Avenue, Brooklyn. Business hours are: Monday through Saturday, 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM; Sunday, 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM; Holidays, 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Villabate-Alba also ships practically anywhere. Order through their website at <http://villabate.com> and taste the past.

--Submitted by Roberto Ragone

Italian Folk Art Federation of America

October 25 – 27, 2013

Hosted by: *Gruppo Folkoristico Ricordi D'Italia*, Newton, MA

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Hotel reservations are made directly to the Crowne Plaza Boston Newton. Be sure to tell them that you are attending the IFAFA Conference. If reserving online, the Group Code is "IFA." The IFAFA room rate is only available for Friday and Saturday nights. If you stay additional nights, the cost will be the hotel's going rate.

Hotel: Crowne Plaza Boston Newton  
320 Washington Street  
6963  
Newton, MA 02458

Room Rate: \$169 per night (plus 11.7% tax)  
To make a reservation please call: 1-877-227-

Cut off date for reservations is Oct. 5, 2013

Check in time: 3:00pm

Check out time: 11:00am

Parking Fee: \$10 flat rate

Registration Information: Full Conference fee includes all activities, workshops, & meals (excluding breakfast).

DVD of entire event & Group Photo will be available to order at the conference.

Please complete and detach form below. Make check payable to IFAFA. Mail form and check to: Claire Guerriero, 230 Gaston St., Medford, MA 02155. If you have any questions please feel free to call Claire at 781-391-8434.

Name(s)\*

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Group Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_ IFAFA Member? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

Indicate number of registrations and calculate cost:

**Registration after Oct. 5, add \$15 per person.**

Full Conference: IFAFA Member # \_\_\_\_\_ x \$135.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

Full Conference: Non Member # \_\_\_\_\_ x \$145 .00= \_\_\_\_\_

For Non-Participating Guests:

Lunch for Saturday # \_\_\_\_\_ x \$35.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Night Festa # \_\_\_\_\_ x \$60.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount of Check: \_\_\_\_\_

\*If this registration is for more than one person, please use a separate sheet to list all the names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses for each participant and include with registration.

## 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 a costume from the region of the *Veneto*.

### Women's Costume from Belluno and the Surrounding Area

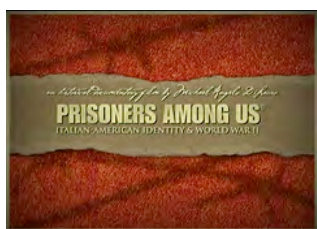
Blouse of homespun fabric, decorated at the neck and wrists with needleworked lace. The skirt and corset are of wool, woven with alternating thread of many colors. The skirt is very full with a border of velvet appliquéd near the bottom. On the shoulders, a fringed shawl of wool. The apron, of patterned wool, is tied at the waist with multi-colored ribbons. Knit stockings. Wooden clogs. In the hair, silver *guazze* (a circle of silver hairpins) for married women. Long earrings of gold filigree (see detail **RIGHT**). Necklace of coral or garnet.



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### **Prisoners Among Us: Film and Study Guide**

In the Fall 2010 issue (Volume 29, #2) of *Tradizioni*, we included a description of the documentary *Prisoners Among Us*, about the assimilation of Italians into American culture, including the little-known story of Italian prisoners-of-war who were interned on American soil.



The producers of the film now offer a free guide to the film, available online as a downloadable PDF, intended mainly for classroom use for middle school and high school students. The overall purpose of the *Prisoners Among Us* Study Guide is to bring students a part of American history that has been given little or no attention.

Built in three chapters, the guide begins by covering the Italian migration and assimilation into American culture. The second chapter contains four key elements: 1) How American and Italian-American attitudes were changed by World War II, 2) An assessment of Italian-American soldiers, 3) The little known story of the internment of Italian-Americans, and 4) The Italian prisoners of war held in this country. The third chapter concludes with recognition and remembrances of the issues previously covered, bringing these lessons into a comparative light with current issues.

This study guide was designed on the premise that students have viewed, or will be viewing, the documentary film in preparation for these lessons. The total length of the film is 88 minutes and, while it can be viewed in its entirety, it can also be shown in two 45-minute screenings. You may order the DVD and/or download the free PDF through the web site [www.prisonersamongus.com](http://www.prisonersamongus.com).

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### **Pane Amaro (Bitter Bread):**

#### **The Italian American Journey from Despised Immigrants to Honored Citizens**

This 2009 feature-length documentary has been called the first comprehensive depiction on film of the Italian American experience. The 103-minute, feature-length documentary is the result of four years of research in the United States and Italy and tracks the social, economic and political transformation of Italians from immigrant victims of violence and prejudice to prominent members of American society. This story is told by weaving together accounts from members of the community, comments by noted scholars and a treasure trove of historical footage and photographs.

*Pane Amaro* (Bitter Bread) brings to life pivotal events in the history of Italian Americans, including the lynching of Italian immigrants, the growth of Italian Harlem and the rise of Italian political and community leaders.

The Italian version of the film, broadcast nationally by RAI-Italian Television in 2007, received wide critical acclaim. The title of the film comes from a popular Neapolitan song of the early 1900s which spoke of the immigrants' pain at being separated from home and family.

*Pane Amaro* is produced and directed by Gianfranco Norelli, a New York based independent filmmaker of award-winning documentaries for American and European television for over 20 years, and his wife Suma Kurien, a native of India, and the founder and Director of LaGuardia Community College for Immigrant Education and Training. The DVD is available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

## HOW TO CONTACT US

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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 "IFafa – Founder's Fund" and mailed to: IFafa, c/o Treasurer, P.O. Box 3185, Fort Lee, NJ 07024.

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

### FOLK DANCES, COSTUMES AND CUSTOMS OF ITALY

by Elba Farabgelo Gurzau

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

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  
103 Greenbrier Drive  
Carnegie, PA 15106

### Contributors to this Issue of Tradizioni

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

Mark DeSanctis

Claire Guerriero

Paolina Bosco Kavanagh

Roberto Ragone

Joseph Soprani

Paul Torna

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 non-profit cultural and educational organization.

### Membership in IFafa

You may also join online!

<http://www.italianfolkartfederation.org/EN/Membership.asp>

Individual Membership:

- Youth (under 18): \$18/year
- Adult (18-60 years of age): \$24/year
- Senior (60 and up): \$18/year

Performance Groups:

- Groups (up to 10 members): \$100/year
- Groups (10+ members): \$150/year

Contributing to the work of IFafa: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Contributions are tax-deductible. Make checks payable to IFafa Mail to:  
IFafa Treasurer, 103 Greenbrier Drive, Carnegie, PA 15106