

La Voce della Dante

May 2026/Maggio 2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Joyce Ramée



Greetings Dante friends!

As I write this, it really does look like spring in Seattle, and it sounds like it, too, with my “bird app” identifying at least six different singers in the backyard this morning. Since I prefer the good looks of birds and animals to any photo of myself (and, since 99% of mine are holding a viola instead of travelling to Italy.... Sigh...) I offer a Costa Rican native **Chlorospingus**, above, as the cheery topper for this message. Rodger and I made a memorable trip to Costa Rica in January and met this fellow and many of his compatriots. Down below you’ll see a very unprofessional but clear photo of the bird everyone goes to Costa Rica to find – the **Resplendent Quetzal**. Thanks to a wonderful guide, we had him all to our own spotting scope for 45 minutes!

But I digress. I am pleased to return to the office of President of your Board of Directors, and I’m grateful for the many nice messages of support I’ve received from so many of you since April 8. Thank you for your confidence! I am very lucky to have such a great Board around me this year. Thank you to fellow officers Bruce Leone (VP), John Steedman (Sec) and Harry Reinert (Treas); to Karen Stash for her past duties as Secretary and for remaining as a counselor, to Nico Minotti and Judy Klayman for their continuing roles on the Board and our FOUR NEW Board members Greg Wetzel, Debra Rovetto Gillett, Tiziana Bollini and Domenic Sportelli. Giuseppe Tassone, of course, continues to direct our Language Program. Returning as our Program Chairs for 2026-2027 will be the awesome duo of Carol DeMatteis and Cecilia Paul, and Dan DeMatteis is our devoted La Voce Editor. **What a great team!** And we have so much

to do, all of it good stuff. We will send out some summer updates this year with news as it develops toward next season, including info on Festa Italiana, plans and dates for our meetings next year, our collaborative Festa di Natale, and many opportunities for all our members to get involved more deeply with this beloved organization. We'll also try to support ongoing events by other groups in our community as we receive information.

But first--- we have one more very fabulous English meeting on May 13! See the write-up in this issue, and don't forget to reserve your spot for dinner.

See you in a couple of weeks!

Joyce Ramée



**May 13, 2026
English Meeting:**

***Violinist and
Conductor
Allion Salvador
performs works by
Italian composer,
Pietro Locatelli***

**English Meeting:
Wednesday, May 13, 2026
Greenwood Senior Center 525 N. 85th St.
Seattle WA 98103**

**Doors open at 6:00, dinner 6:30, presentation 7:30
please bring antipasti, beverages and desserts to share!**

Reservations required

PLEASE RESERVE YOUR SPOT by Monday May 11!

[Ctrl+click here to reserve your place
at the Pre-Dante Pasta Dinner](#)

For our final meeting of the season, come enjoy virtuoso violin-playing by a prominent, young Seattle-based artist! Allion will give us program notes and talk about one of the great composers for violin of Italian Baroque era.

Pre-Dante Pasta dinner (\$10/person onsite) will be lovingly prepared by Dante members Domenico Minotti and Andrea Sehmel.

Reserve your spot!

[Ctrl+click here to reserve your place
at the Pre-Dante Pasta Dinner](#)

Allion Salvador, Violinist and Conductor, performs across the Pacific Northwest as both violinist and conductor. He served as music director of Federal Way Youth Orchestra from 2023 to 2025. He doubled the orchestra's size, led a "side-by-side" with Central Washington University students and professionals, and collaborated with CWU's Mariachi Ensemble. In Fall 2024, he led a full production of The Nutcracker at CWU in collaboration with Ellensburg Dance Ensemble. Allion performs as a pops conductor for Candlelight Concerts and leads West Seattle Community Orchestra's Concert Orchestra. He has conducted professional and community ensembles in the Pacific Northwest including the Spokane Symphony, Missoula Symphony, Seattle Collaborative Orchestra, Sammamish Symphony, and Seattle Philharmonic. He also founded and led a community ensemble, the Seattle Philharmonic Strings, from 2015 to 2018, performing free concerts at Seattle Central Library, Norse Home Seattle, and Horizon House Retirement Community. Allion studied at the Pierre Monteux School with Ludovic Morlot and Michael Jinbo, and at CWU with Nikolas Caoile. Allion has conducted in workshops with James Ross, James Lowe, and Ken Kiesler. As a violinist, Allion is a founder of Seattle-based Glass House String Quartet, member of Spokane Symphony's awesome second violin section, a

concertmaster at Seattle's Paramount Theater, and a leader at Missoula-based String Orchestra of the Rockies. He was the 1st prize winner of the 2021 Music International Grand Prix, and completed graduate work in violin at Manhattan School of Music with Lisa Kim and Peter Winograd. Allion holds degrees in conducting from CWU, and in Neurobiology and Violin from University of Washington. A violin student of Ronald Patterson, Allion plays on a 1986 Italian violin by Cesare Magrini. He is kindly supported by Barb Thorne, Pierre Vauthy, and his family.

Greenwood Senior Center
525 N. 85th St
Seattle WA 98103

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There is no Italian meeting in May.

Regular meetings start again in September.

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Thanks to all who have renewed their Dante Membership. If you haven't done so yet, please renew soon. Dues fund all our activities.

\$40/individual, \$60/family. [Renew now!](#)



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Driving in Italy

by Sam Ciapanna, Dante Member



While it is easy to visit major tourist sites in Italy using public transportation, getting to places beyond the typical spots in an efficient way will require the use of a car. This is something visitors might fear, especially those who have witnessed Italian drivers in crowded cities. Driving a car in Italy, however, can be a truly liberating experience and allows people to experience Italy beyond its urban and tourist centers. For Americans, the road signs are easily comprehensible and there is no need to learn to drive on the other side of the road.

To rent a car in Italy, you will need your passport, a major credit card, and an international driving permit, obtainable prior to departure from AAA. When renting a car, choose the zero deductible insurance plan. It may cost a bit more but is worth it in the long run. It's also a good idea to have a photo of your US auto insurance card. If you are planning to rent the car for more than 3 weeks, however, an extended lease is a less expensive option through Autoeurope.com or Europcar.com. These are special programs for non-residents that offer the opportunity to drive a brand new French car that is 100% covered by insurance.

Once you obtain your vehicle and are behind the wheel you will soon be driving on an autostrada, or highway, typically a toll road. You enter from a toll booth where you will get a ticket (biglietto) to enter the autostrada since you won't have a Telepass. Take your ticket and don't lose it. When you exit the autostrada, you will encounter toll booth lanes for Telepass, Carta di Credito, and Cash, depending on how you plan to pay the toll. You insert your ticket in the slot and your toll price will be displayed. Then you insert cash or credit card and wait for the "arrivederci." Sometimes, there is a malfunction. Not to worry, you just push the help button, explain the problem (typically a non-readable ticket or a jammed credit card slot), and someone will help you sort it all out.

The speed limit on the autostrada is 130 kph unless otherwise marked. Speed limits are enforced on the autostrada by overhead cameras which calculate average speeds from point to point. If your average speed exceeds 130 kph plus 5%, you will be eligible to receive a speeding ticket. In Italy, left lanes are used for passing only. If you are not going faster than the vehicle behind you (which may be indicated to you by the driver behind you tailgating you), you are in the wrong lane and need to move into the right lane. ALWAYS move to the right to allow a vehicle behind you that is going faster or on your bumper to pass. NEVER NEVER pass a vehicle on the right. When in the left lane, you are supposed to keep your left signal on until you exit it back into the right lane. It is non-uncommon for a vehicle behind you to flash its lights to remind you to move over and let it pass.

Before we leave the Autostrada, we must discuss rest stops. In most of Italy, these consist of a service station with much higher costing fuel, very clean restrooms, and food and beverage options. One of my favorites is Autogrill. I love Autogrill! Think of an AM/PM on steroids. Where else can you find a meter long package of cookies? I usually stretch my legs and entertain myself by walking through the store portion to see what's available. Almost all of these have bars where you can get a caffè or a snack, but some even have restaurants. The food is not the cheapest but the quality is consistently good and there are regional variations.

One reason rest stops are so popular is that speeding is detected by averaging vehicle speeds from point to point instead of at fixed points. Some drivers will speed on the autostrada then take a break to be below the average and avoid a ticket. No one will pull you over for speeding. Instead you will get a ticket in the mail after your credit card company gives the ticketing authority your address and charges you an administrative fee for the inconvenience. The ticketing authority then has one year to properly serve you with your summons. This is usually done by a form of registered mail which includes a little red postcard that you sign and is returned to the authority. Good service is required to enforce the ticket.

This same process happens with nearly any moving violation. Parking tickets are usually left on windshields and you get a slight reduction if you pay these early. Remember blue parking spaces are the ones you have to pay to park in during payment periods, while white lines are free. It is really important to be able to read parking signs to find out when paid parking is required. It's also a good idea to keep some coins for meters, know your license plate number, and have your cell phone handy as you never know what will be required to simply park. In addition to handicapped parking spaces, Italy has pink parking lines for women who are pregnant or those with very young children. Whenever you park in a public parking lot, be sure to understand when it closes. Nothing is more frustrating than finding your car locked in a parking lot that has closed for the night.

Roads passing through towns will have lower speed limits which are sometimes enforced by automated radar, often from blue or orange boxes. Again, it's not too likely that you get pulled over for speeding. What you might encounter, however, is something called "controllare." Concepts of probable cause or racial profiling do not exist in Italy, but random traffic stops do. You will see a police officer holding what looks like a ping pong paddle with a red circle on it. If he waves that at you, it is your lucky day.

You must now pull over and be checked. Your driver's license, passport, and insurance information will be examined and if all is on order you will be on your way.

While driving remember that, unless otherwise marked, all vehicle types and even pedestrians have an equal right to use the roadways. The first rule of Italian driving seems to be to keep the traffic moving and this gives one the impression that all traffic signs are merely advisory. Why stop at a rural stop sign when one can clearly see that no one is coming? Despite this remember that a solid red traffic light means stop until it turns green – no right on red is allowed.

One fatal flaw that Italian drivers have is tailgating. It can be quite unnerving to have someone on your tail as you drive on winding, unfamiliar roads. My advice is to pull over and let them pass as soon as possible. Comfort spacing is much less in Italy with cars, just as it is with people. Give another driver too much space and they will think you are yielding to them, particularly at merge points.

The limit for drunk driving in Italy is .05%, much less than in the USA. You do not want to get a DWI in Italy.

Italian drivers have a point system in which each driver gets 12 points. Traffic violations result in a deduction of points. When the driver has exhausted his points, he is no longer able to drive. Hitting a pedestrian results in a 12 point deduction. For this reason you rarely see pedestrians hit by Italian drivers.

For medical related traffic emergencies call 118. For non-medical traffic emergencies call 113 for police assistance.

Dante Cooks -

**Another delicious recipe from our monthly pasta dinners.
This one, courtesy of Harry Reinert and Cecilia Paul.
Enjoy!**

Mushroom, Pesto, And Hazelnut Lasagne

(Adapted from Nick's Italian Café, McMinnville, Oregon)

Ingredients:

1 cup pesto sauce (see below)

1/2 cup ricotta cheese

Béchamel Sauce:

4 cups milk

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

12 ounces dried lasagne noodles

1 cup (4 ounces) grated parmesan cheese

1 cup (4 ounces) freshly grated pecorino romano cheese

8 ounces mushrooms, cut into 1/4-inch slices

2 1/2 cups (12 ounces) hazelnuts, toasted, skinned, and coarsely chopped (see note)

Serves 6 as a main course

- To make the béchamel: In a small saucepan, heat the milk over medium-low heat until bubbles form around the edges of the pan.
- In another medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat.
- Gradually whisk in the flour and continue whisking for about 3 minutes or until the mixture turns a golden color.
- Gradually whisk the hot milk into the mixture until smooth.
- Continue to whisk until the mixture thickens.
- Add salt and pepper. Cover and remove from heat.

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Butter a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.
2. In a small bowl, combine the pesto sauce and the ricotta cheese. Mix well. Set aside.
3. In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook the pasta for about 8 minutes, or until al dente. Drain.
4. Meanwhile, mix the 2 cheeses together well. Put a layer of lasagne in the dish, then spread the pesto mixture on top. Add another layer of lasagne and top with the mushrooms. Ladle a thin layer of béchamel over the mushrooms, then sprinkle half of the mixed cheeses over the sauce. Put another layer of lasagne on top and ladle on more béchamel sauce, spreading it to completely cover the pasta (you don't have to use up all the sauce). Sprinkle the top with the remaining cheese and the hazelnuts.
5. Bake for 20 minutes, or until the cheese has melted and browned slightly.
6. Remove from the oven and let sit for 5 to 10 minutes before cutting into squares to serve.

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Please join Seattle-Perugia Sister Cities Association for its Spring Wine Tasting and Scholarship Fundraiser!

The Seattle Perugia Sister Cities Association’s signature Spring Wine Tasting and Scholarship Fundraiser will take place on Sunday, May 3 from 2pm to 5pm at Three Sacks Full, 918 NE 64th Street, Seattle, Washington 98115 (206-330-9805).

Ten superb Italian wines will be available for tasting along with appetizers. The cost is only \$50 per person and 100% of ticket sales will support Seattle-Perugia's Annual Scholarship Program. Space is limited so register today!

Ci vediamo presto!

[For more information or to register, ctrl+click here.](#)