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# La Voce della Dante

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## President's Message

Ciao a Tutti,

I hope your January has passed with no unpleasant surprises, and that this finds everyone in good spirits – or on your way to them!

We continue to enjoy each others company as best we can with our bi-monthly zoom presentation meetings. Attendance has been GREAT at these — we hit a record 75 people at the January English meeting given by Janet and John Lenart! And the scope of topics has also been enormous this season, from travelogues and a concert to

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textiles and medical research, not to mention the entire history of pasta! You never know WHAT you'll find at our Dante Zooms! The February meetings are the 10th and 24th. Watch for mailing announcements and check out the topics in advance in this issue of La Voce.

**\*\*Please renew your membership\*\*** if you have not done so. Family memberships are \$50; individual \$40. Even though all our events are online this season, expenses are still there, and we want the fiscal health of Dante to continue uninterrupted by this pandemic, so renewals are important. Treasurer Harry has designed a super-easy registration page online which not only lets you renew, but keeps all your contact information current in our lists, which is very important right now too. So please visit this site: <https://wp.me/PacvBR-Cj>, fill out the form, follow the prompts, and at the end you have the choice to pay your renewal online or mail a check for renewal to **Dante Alighieri Society of Washington, PO Box 9494, Seattle, WA 98109**. Donations above membership are welcome as well, if you are interested and able to add greater support.

### **Volunteer Opportunity for your beloved Dante Society**

We need one or two people who understand QuickBooks to serve on the Finance Committee. No regularly scheduled meetings required; work will be scheduled as needed with the treasurer. Please email [joyce@danteseattle.org](mailto:joyce@danteseattle.org) if you can help. We need to form this committee by or before the annual meeting in April. **If you have been looking for a way to be helpful to Dante without having to serve on the Board of Directors, this opportunity is for you!** (Ok, I know that's cheesy, but it's true. We need the help!) There is provision in the bylaws for persons who are not Dante members to assist on this committee if they can offer expertise, so suggestions of possible contacts will be accepted with gratitude as well.

Buon Febbraio –

A presto,  
Joyce

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## February & March Programs

### February 10, 2021 English Meeting



### **The Innocents at Home**

Rob Prufer

*The Innocents at Home* explores Florence's remarkable Renaissance institution, the Hospital of the Innocents. We'll trace its life from its creation as a civic orphanage in the early 15th century all the way up to its associated institutions today. We'll investigate the story of its founding patron and attempts by directors through the centuries to secure adequate funding by commissioning art for the orphanage. And of course we'll appreciate the remarkable architecture by Brunelleschi and the darling terra cottas by the della Robbia family.

In addition to his day job teaching art history and history at Newport H.S. in Bellevue, Rob used to lecture on art history in the community, particularly at

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Dante and the Bellevue Arts Museum's Loggia Lecture Series. Since the pandemic, however, adapting education to a remote environment has been all-consuming. *The Innocents at Home* was the last art history project he created, a whirlwind effort in March and April as an expression of gratitude to all the healthcare workers in our community.



*The facade of the Hospital of the Innocents (Ospedale degli Innocenti) in Florence*

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## **February 24, 2021 Italian Meeting**



### **Venice and the Establishment of Printing in Italy in the Late 15th Century**

Marta Bernstein

Even though movable type was “invented” in Germany by Johannes

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Gutenberg, the design of books and letters — typefaces — were perfected in Italy in the last quarter of the 15th Century. Venice at the time was the «Silicon Valley» of Europe, the perfect place for a new technology to develop. We will talk about German emigrants, French punch-cutters and visionary Venetian merchants that still influence the fonts we use and the books we read today.

Designer and researcher originally from Milan, Marta Berstein is currently associate creative director at Studio Matthews (Seattle) and lecturer at USC Roski (Los Angeles). Type and typography are her true passions and the common threads of all her projects. She has a soft spot for 19th-century type, a topic she has been researching for a decade and presented at various international type conferences. She has been involved in teaching graphic design, typography and type design on a regular basis since 2007 in universities and design schools in Europe, USA and China. She completed her B.Sc. & M.Sc. in Graphic Design at Politecnico di Milano and her M.Des in type design at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague (NL).



TOP: *Etching of Catherine of Siena from Epistole deuotissime de sancta Catharina da Siena. Printed by Aldus Manutius, Venice 1500. Courtesy of Tipoteca*

BOTTOM: *Map of Venice in the 15th century.*

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## March Meetings

Our meetings in March will focus on celebrating what the Italian government has declared as National Dante Day (Dantedì) officially March 25, 2021. The new holiday is in anticipation of the 700th anniversary of the poet's death, which occurred in September 1321 in Ravenna. For the English meeting, the teachers and students of our Language School are preparing a program for us this term focussing on Dante. The Italian meeting will include a showing of the 1911 silent Italian film, *L'Inferno*. This hour-long film, which took three years to make, was the first full-length Italian feature film.

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## The Sagra, One of the Best Things about Summer in Italy

By Sam Ciapanna

One of the best things about spending summers in Italy is attending a local *sagra*. A *sagra* is a festival, typically outdoors, that can be a celebration of a historical event, a religious figure, and/or a food product.

Driving around Italy one will see posters or large billboards on trailers parked in high traffic areas advertising upcoming *sagre* which typically include the days of the event, the general location, and the name of the *sagra*. One can also do an internet search for "*sagre e eventi*" in which the search can be narrowed by date and geographical area, such as a region or province. Most *sagre* have their own websites or Facebook pages which can provide a lot more helpful information than a poster or billboard.

One of the frustrating things about attending a *sagra* is the ability to actually find it from the general location description advertised. This is because many times the location is nothing more than a neighborhood and GPS requires a physical address or town name. Often a neighborhood may have the same name as a nearby town, but arriving in the town will not get you to the *sagra*. I thought I was the only one with this problem until I went with Italian friends and saw that even they had a hard time finding the location of the event. In addition, individual restaurants and bars will sometimes sponsor a "*sagra*" that is really

nothing more than a special event at the establishment. These can still be fun, but are nothing compared to a community celebration.

While there may be processions or parades or blessings that take place during the day, more typically the fun begins when the sun goes down, particularly in the summer months in Southern Italy. The best time to arrive, *secondo me*, is after 8 PM and the best way to arrive is hungry.

Depending on the size of the *sagra*, there will be street parking, lots walking distance from the main event, or large parking areas in open fields with free shuttle buses. Parking your car and climbing into a shuttle bus to an unknown destination can be a great adventure but be sure to notice the number of your bus which corresponds to the number of your parking lot.

Upon arrival, the first thing to do is to check out the food. Typically, there are individual food stands for various courses and beverages. Wine is generally sold by the bottle, not the glass, but at 3 and 4 Euro a bottle - not a problem! Once you figure out what it is you are going to eat, you have to find the *cassa*, or cashier. You tell the *cassa* what you are going to eat or drink and pay with cash or credit card. You then receive a receipt in the form of a tape that you present at the food stands and as your order is filled they cross off the items. There is great variety in these operations, however, and sometimes you can be waiting quite a while for your food to be prepared. They can take your receipt and then give you a number to wait to be called – getting number 92 when they are on 34 can be a bit disappointing. My tip is to not just consider the food choices but also evaluate the delivery system before making your selection.

Of course, you know, as Americans we stick out in a crowd of Italians and this can be a source of interest and hesitancy. I find it best to greet my neighbors with a “*Buona sera, posso?*” before sitting down and then taking the first step by saying something like this is my first time here and that I am an American visiting from Seattle. In the rural areas of Abruzzo and Le Marche where very few Americans venture, this is usually a big ice breaker because they want to know why I am there or they talk about their own connections to America.

Musical entertainment is usually a big component of these *sagre* with everything from live performers to deejays, complete with flashing lights and artificial smoke. Dance areas fill with line dancers while couples may dance together on the periphery. Folk dancing is rare.

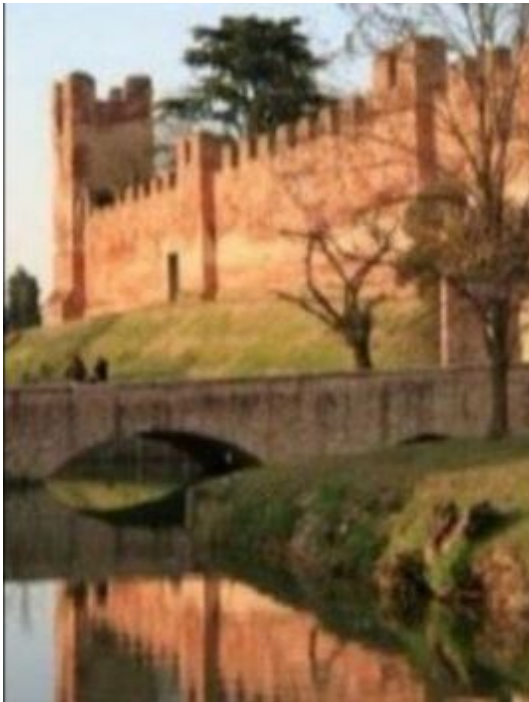
In the age of Covid, most *sagre* were cancelled last year, but a few found new ways to continue to exist with significant restrictions. All lines were socially spaced, food was served from behind clear plastic sheets, and seating was spread out with sanitation after



each occupant left. Of course, there was no dancing. Temperatures were taken and health forms had to be completed, including contact information, before we were allowed to enter. But the food was as fantastic as ever.

So far, I have attended *sagra* featuring clams, mussels, *arrosticini*, *porchetta*, seafood, *gnocchi*, *timballo*, *maccheroni* in various shapes and sizes, *stincino di maiale*, *birra*, *capra*....now I am starting to get hungry, but you get the idea. In the smaller towns, it seems like the entire village has turned out for the event because, in many cases, that is exactly what has happened because literally the entire town takes vacation that week. So when you take your next vacation to Italy, be sure to check out a *sagra*!

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## Travels with Marco

By Janet Lenart

**A**s often happens in Italy, having one friend quickly multiplies to a dozen more friends. I was introduced to Marco Maule by a friend in Vicenza and was immediately struck by his depth of knowledge about places, history, art, architecture and more. Perhaps you have met people like Marco who make you wonder how they remember so many interesting facts and also have the ability to bring them to life. My husband and I enjoyed a very engaging conversation with Marco, in Italian over a delicious dinner while enjoying a local



Veneto Cabernet. Marco then proposed to give us a tour of two nearby towns, Castelfranco Veneto and Asolo, so he could practice his English.

Of course we jumped at the opportunity. A few days later we found ourselves bundled up on a wintery day in the Duomo of Castelfranco Veneto standing in front of Giorgione's stunning masterpiece the Castelfranco Madonna, also known as the *Madonna and Child Between St. Francis and St. Nicasius* (1503-4). This painting is in the form of a sacred conversation, a genre of Italian Renaissance art. Born in 1477 or 78, Giorgio Barbarelli da Castelfranco, Giorgione lived to 30 years of age and 6 of his paintings survive today.

Another frequent experience in Italy is the discovery of a delightfully complex story behind a painting. Travelling back in time from 1504 when Giorgione painted his masterpiece let's see how the Queen of Cyprus pertains to the painting. Catarina Cornaro was born to a powerful family in Venice who had four Doges in their heritage. In 1468 she was married to the King of Cyprus at age 14 to increase the commercial and political power of Venice in Cyprus. Strangely her husband died very early in their marriage and soon after her son died before his first birthday in 1474 and thus she became the Queen of Cyprus. Did the Venetian empire have a hand in these deaths? The story becomes darker. Because she had no heir, in 1489 Catarina was compelled to relinquish her dominion over Cyprus to the Doge and the Venetian republic. In exchange she was given the small town of Asolo which is 10 miles from Castelfranco Veneta. In her role as Lady of Asolo she contributed establishing Asolo as a center of art and literature until her death in 1510. Today Asolo is a picturesque hill town with a castle, museum, a Jewish quarter, a church with a painting by Lorenzo Lotto and small charming shops.

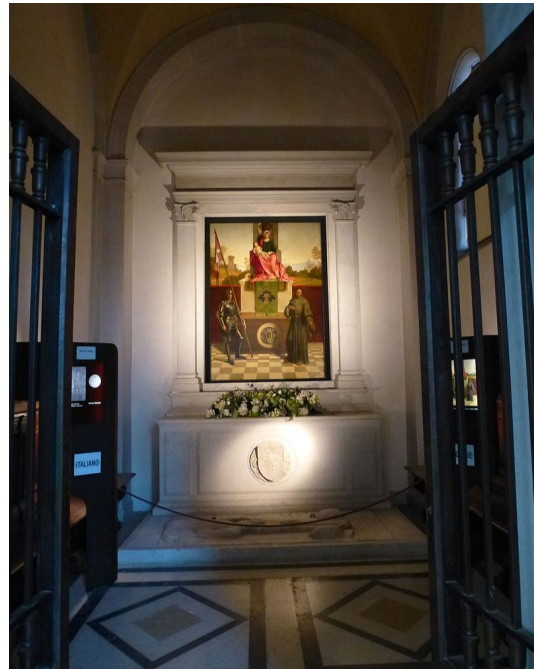
How does this story connect to the *Pala di Giorgione*? Through Muzio, Tuzio and Mateo. Muzio Costanza and later his son Tuzio were mercenaries who protected Catarina Cornaro as the Queen in Cyprus. When Catarina moved to Asolo Tuzio continued to provide her protection. He lived in the nearby town of Castelfranco Veneto where his son Matteo died of fever in 1504 at about age 23 years. The remarkable artist Giorgione also lived in Castelfranco Veneto and Tuzio asked him to paint a picture that would hang over his son Matteo's tomb. The Pala di Giorgione today still hangs over the tomb of Mateo Costanza in the Costanzo Chapel in the Duomo of Castelfranco Veneta.

Our visit to Castelfranco Veneto and Asolo with Marco Maule was topped off by a delicious lunch at Osteria ai do Mori in Castelfranco followed by a visit to the museum Casa di Giorgione. The museum displays hundreds of objects from the 15th and 16th centuries including books and instruments of science, medicine, music, astronomy, war and philosophy. Don't miss the stunning Casa Pellizzari Frieze by Giorgione which transports the visitor back in time.

The frieze is a metaphor for our day with Marco. It was filled with stories, historical reflections, art and it enriched our understanding of the world. I felt like I'd been to Cyprus, seen the ancient Venetian naval fleet and met a queen. Reluctantly we said good-bye and found ourselves thinking about all we had learned for days to come; until our next tour with Marco to Verona and Ferrara!

Marco Maule, an architect from Vicenza and scholar of art history, works as a teacher, lecturer and cultural travel guide for Italian cultural associations and tour operators. He has a multidisciplinary approach which includes cultural anthropology, aesthetics, art, architecture and literature. Marco Maule is available to teach his course ***Great Italian Architecture of the 1500's from Bramante to Palladio*** to Dante members.

If interested, by February 10 please read and complete the information at <https://forms.gle/8GmEUjGvaXkwfGw7A>.





Photos for Travels with Marco, Top to Bottom, Left to right:

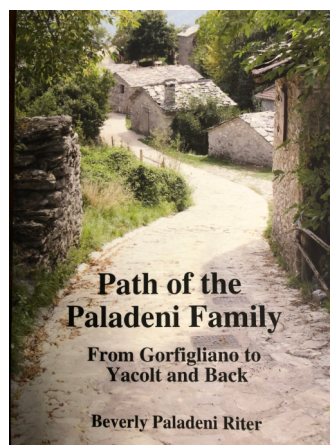
*The medieval wall of Castel Franco Veneto*

*Pala di Castel Franco by Giorgione 1503-4*

*Catarina Cornaro by Gentile Bellini 1500,*

*The Castel Franco Madonna in the Costanzo Chapel Duomo of Castel Franco Veneto*

*Casa Pellizzari Frieze by Giorgione in the Giorgione Museum, Castel Franco Veneta*



**Dante member, Beverly Paladeni Riter, has published a new book:**

**Path of the Paladeni Family**

**>From Gorfigliano to Yacolt and Back**

Beverly tells the story of the Paladeni family's immigration to the

USA from northern Italy and eventually settling in Yacolt, Washington. They longed to return to their small, remote village north of Lucca, Italy to live again permanently.

Ms. Riter has carried on where her family left off, becoming acquainted with family members in the villages of Gorfigliano and Roggio, where she has visited many times to walk in the paths of her ancestors.

There are many photographs included which are valuable to help tell her story.

The book is available on Amazon



The Dante Alighieri Society of Washington is a nonprofit corporation organized to promote Italian language and culture within the state of Washington. Membership is open to anyone interested in the goals and ideals of our society regardless of ethnic origin. La Voce della Dante is published eight times a year by the Dante Alighieri Society of Washington. All rights reserved.

Dante Alighieri Society of Washington

*Società per la diffusione della lingua e della cultura italiana nel mondo*

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