



NYC. Celebrating June 2nd with the Italian Institutions

L. A. (June 03, 2012)



The Consulate General, ENIT, ITC, The Italian Cultural Institute and the Scuola d'Italia opened their doors to all. This year the birth of the Italian republic was celebrated, for twelve hours straight, in several events that welcomed Italians, Italian Americans and Americans alike. Among great art, music, theater, film design, food and wine guests honored the Republic without forgetting the hardships Emilia Romagna is facing after a destructive earthquake. The final surprise was a lighting show that illuminated the Consulate with the colors of our flag: white, red and green. (VIDEO COMING SOON)

“We did it – the Consul proudly said – with no public funding, but thanks to the generosity of several sponsors themselves. There was who took care of the food and wine and all the different artists



participated free of charge.”

At the root of all this there was the intuition, simple yet successful at the same time, to celebrate all together in all the buildings of the institutions that comprise Sistema Italia in New York. So there was no grand gala in an expensive rented ballroom but a series of events for all ages and preferences. Planned in a window of 12 hours the festivities attracted people who knew what was going on but also passers by who were walking in the area and were attracted by what was going on.

Who knew in advance what was happening and wanted to participate to several events had, first of all, to wear comfortable shoes, and walk from one institution to the next to watch what he/she was most interested in.

Moving from the Consulate General to the Italian Cultural Institute was pretty easy, indeed the two buildings are connected by a terrace that, just for this occasion, was decorated with a big Italian flag that could be seen on Park Avenue. Going to the Istituto Nazionale del Commercio con l'Estero (ITC) or the Scuola D'Italia Guglielmo Marconi was not that difficult either as they are just a few blocks away.

At the latter, the only bilingual school in North America founded in 1977 by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to meet the academic needs of Italians living in the New York City area, the festivities were officially opened. Surrounded by ribbons featuring the Italian flag, children and their families were treated to a special show: Simona Rodano's The Italian Fairy.

“Older children” started celebrating at the Consulate General. Tilly Cernitore's cello told the story of three centuries of Italian classical music, from Vivaldi all the way to Tarantella.

A few minutes later, via the terrace, people could move to the Italian Cultural Institute and view a special showcase titled “Timeless” of the work of Massimo and Lella Vignelli, Italy's most famous design couple.

The Institute's director, Riccardo Viale, explained how their work fits in a cultural program the Institute has started focused on the concept of Slowness. Slowness means timeless, and the master himself, Mr. Vignelli, said, “Timless means the opposite of fashionable, ephemeral, trendy,” and in our show people can view concepts and objects, real or in video, that embody fifty years of work and history.”

At the Institute people could, right after the opening of the Vignelli show, view the film *Le Amiche* by Michelangelo Antonioni, in celebration of the centenary of the film director's birth. This event was packed as well as all the others.

Three institutions welcomed three works of art by famous artists:

Agostino Bonalumi's work at the Italian Cultural Institute and Giorgio De Chirico's at the ITC were placed in the directors' offices, while a painting by Guido Reni shone in the Consul General's office which was emptied of its furniture in order to welcome the day's guests.

The afternoon had much more in store. At the Scuola d'Italia a few students acted in Plauto's play *Anfitrione*. They did so in Italian, Latin and English. At the same time, back at the Consulate, awards were given to a few important members of the Italian and Italian-American communities: Louis Vele, Filomena Ricciardi, Richard Nasti, Jerome Eisemberg, and Stephen Madsen, chairman of the Scuola d'Italia.

At the Consulate people could also participate in a presentation on Italian Tourism, prepare by ENIT and hosted by its director, Eugenio Magnani.

At the ITC, guests took part in four seminars held by journalist and sommelier Alessandra Rotondi titled “United wines of Italy” in honor of Camillo Cavour and Bettino Ricasoli. Why in their honor? Because they are responsible for the birth of two wines that are cherished all over the world: Barolo and Chianti. “Italian history, the Risorgimento, were brought forward by men who loved wine and



this must not be forgotten. Americans, who are in love with our products, must know this too. History teaches us a lot.”

The director of the ITC, Aniello Musella, proudly reported extremely positive data in regards of wine exports. He showed us a few bottles that lived through Italian history.

“Brunello di Montalcino from 1945, Brolio Chianti from 1949, and Castello di Nipozzano from 1984.”

“Dall’Italia all’America: un grande abbraccio nel Jazz” was the title of a jazz concert, organized by Enzo Capua, featuring only women: Linda Oh, Sylvia Cuenca, Ada Rovatti and Daniela Schaecher. The music event was a great success, guests filled the salon at the Institute and could enjoy the music even on its grand steps.

The day reached its peak with a party that started with a speech by the Consul General and was followed by national anthems sung by Lawrence Harris and Rosa D’Imperio.

Natalia Quintavalle's speech, featured a few words of thanks, the background story of the idea to celebrate the national holiday in a way that brings institutions and people closer, and a special thought to the great difficulties people in Emilia Romagna are going through. “We could not imagine that, right in these days of celebrations, such a powerful earthquake would have struck our country. This was a grave incident that has cost lives, hurt our economy and damaged our cultural heritage.”

The evening progressed as a pleasant summer evening in New York, flavored by Chef Cesare Casella's amazing food.

You could see on people's faces and hear in their words the pride of being part of something that was less foreign and actually closer to all, more approachable. Less foreign to who knew nothing about it and just saw the festivities take place on Park Avenue, less foreign to the children who experienced it in their own school, less foreign to those who by toasting with a glass of wine learned more about Italian history, less foreign to those who flew with their imagination to Italy thanks to ENIT, for all those who listened to Italy's music, those who have talked, eaten, listened to Italy's anthem, viewed the art shows and moved through the buildings that represent Italy in New York.

It was after 10 pm, when everything was wrapping up, that when people were about to leave Park Avenue, white, green and red lights were projected in front of the Consulate General for all to take in the special spectacle. It was impossible not to notice and not to share together Italy's special holiday.

Pics by Iwona Adamczyk

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