



Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli Marimò. An Italian Landmark in New York

Marina Melchionda (October 29, 2009)



On November 4 2009 the Italian Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli Marimò will be awarded The New York Landmarks Conservancy 2009 “Living Landmarks” Award. The founder of Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò, hosted in a US National Historic Landmark building in Greenwich Village, she has deeply boosted the debate on Italian culture in New York City and is the first non-American to be granted



this recognition.

On November 4, 2009 the Italian Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli Marimò will be awarded The New York Landmarks Conservancy 2009 "Living Landmarks" Award during a gala hosted at Cipriani on 42nd Street, Manhattan. "Here in America we say that the best comes from abroad", President Peg Breen told us while commenting on the award. The Baroness is indeed the first Italian to receive this special recognition from the Conservancy, an association committed to the preservation and revitalization of New York's historical and most significant buildings.

Baroness Marimò is commonly referred to as a philanthropist, a woman of extraordinary generosity committed to the diffusion and promotion of Italian culture in New York.

The Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò, which she founded, is hosted in a building built in 1853 at 24 West 12nd Street, commonly referred to as the Winfield Scott House. It is where General and unsuccessful Whig Presidential candidate Winfield Scott lived from 1853 to 1855. Situated right in the heart of Greenwich Village, the building was proclaimed a US National Historic Landmark in 1973 and was reopened on November 10, 1990 after two years of intense restructuring.

The Casa has in no time at all become an important meeting point between Italian and American cultures, an open environment where everybody is welcome especially researchers and young students interested in studying the Italian geniuses Dante Alighieri, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and others. The Casa's activities are closely interconnected to those of many other departments of New York University and to various Italian Institutions in New York City and it has become a fundamental place to meet, exchange ideas, and debate for all of those who share a deep passion for Italian culture in all its facets.

The cultural buzz at the Casa, home of the Department of Italian Studies at New York University, is enriched by the consistent series of events, from concerts to exhibitions, debates, lectures and movie screenings that it regularly hosts. The director of the foundation, Prof. Stefano Albertini, selects the events of interest according to very strict quality criteria following also the precious advice of the Baroness and the rest of the Board of Directors.

According to the Baroness' desire, the Casa is named after her beloved husband, Guido Zerilli Marimò, an intellectual and businessman.

She and her husband shared a deep love and sense of gratitude for the United States and she wished to donate a cultural bridge that would link her new homeland to her country of origin.

One of the main activities aimed at this purpose is without doubt the Premio Zerilli Marimò, organized in collaboration with the [Casa delle Letterature](#) [2] in Roma. The award is given every two years to a book considered especially worthy for publication and diffusion on the US market. It consists in a grant given to its author and a contribution for the diffusion of the work in the United States which generally requires its translation into English.

"The Baroness is very modest. She does not think that she should receive this award for her personal merits, but only as recognition for being a representative of the Italian community in New York that has done so much for the growth and the beauty of this city. We at the New York Landmarks Conservancy, instead, value her contribution immensely. She has done great things for the enrichment of New York, from both the cultural and the architectural point of view."

The Casa, in fact, is only one example of the Baroness' commitment towards the spread of the Italian culture in New York. [IBLA](#) [3], which she co-founded in 1992, is another one. This New York-based Foundation organizes an annual music competition for pianists, singers, instrumentalists and composers which takes place in Ragusa Ibla, Italy. Among the participants at the competition there usually are several young Italian virtuosi. The winners, who are invited to perform at such venues as the Lincoln Center and the Carnegie Hall, and in other major foreign theatres and stages, become both vehicles and symbols of Italian contemporary excellence on a broader international level.



On November 4, the Baroness will be awarded the "2009 New York Landmarks Conservancy" recognition together with other winners that have also contributed to the renovation and modernization of the architectural beauty of the city. They are the legendary New York County District Attorney **Robert Morgenthau**; Tony-Award winning prolific theatre man, **Tommy Tune**; noted playwright, author, screenwriter and "Newman's Own" co-creator, **A.E. Hotchner**; real estate developer and film studio chief, **George Kaufman**; and the renowned New York Times fashion photographer **Bill Cunningham**.

Since the Conservancy also marks the "sweet sixteen" anniversary for the "Living Landmarks Awards" program, the ceremony will also be enriched by the presence of past winners. Among them, artists and philanthropists such as Charlie Rose, Lauren Bacall, Oscar de la Renta, Harry Belafonte, Tom & Meredith Brokaw, Pat & William F. Buckley Jr., Walter Cronkite, Diane von Furstenberg, Whoopi Goldberg, Peter Jennings, Edward I. Koch, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Jerry Orbach & Sam Waterston, Joan Rivers, George Steinbrenner, Gloria Steinem, Barbara Walters, Mario Cuomo, and Harvey and Bob Weinstein.

The New York Landmarks Conservancy is dedicated to preserving, revitalizing, and reusing New York's architecturally significant buildings. Through pragmatic leadership, financial and technical assistance, advocacy, and public education, the Conservancy ensures that New York's historically and culturally significant buildings, streetscapes, and neighborhoods continue to contribute to New York's economy, tourism, and quality of life.

The Landmarks Conservancy has succeeded in preserving and protecting New York's extraordinary historic buildings and neighborhoods through the generosity of our loyal annual donors - people who care about New York as much as we do. We depend on private contributions for almost 75 percent of our annual operating budget, and your contribution allows the Landmarks Conservancy to sustain programs and develop initiatives that address the needs of New York's historic buildings.

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