

Scuola d'Italia Guglielmo Marconi. A Benefit Gala to Celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Italian Unification

L. A. (March 15, 2011)



Friday March 12, 2011. Gala to benefit the only school in North America that offers its entire academic curriculum in both English and Italian. Guests came together to promote education and celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Italian Unification. Ambassador Terzi di Sant'Agata during his speech acknowledged the importance of the Italian language

Green white and red ribbons were visible on the evening clothes of the guests of the annual Scuola d'Italia Guglielmo Marconi gala in New York at Cipriani 42nd Street, where the tables were set with 'autographed' lamps of heroes and other personalities that contributed to the Italian Unification.



The La Scuola d'Italia “Guglielmo Marconi”, directed by Dean Anna Fiore, is the only school in North America that offers its entire academic curriculum in both English and Italian as well as an international education that constantly reflects both Italian and American cultures.

This year this institution welcomed the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Italian Unification by making it the theme for its traditional gala.

Many touching moments occurred when everyone present stood up for the Italian, American and European anthems. The room was filled with different voices and intonations that accompanied those of the Marconi students.

Many important figures were present together with Consul General Francesco Talò and Ambassador Giulio Terzi, such as UN Ambassador Kim Won-soo, Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, and special guest Emma Bonino, Vice-president of the Italian Senate. Numerous representatives of the Italian and Italian-American communities were present, especially those connected to the cultural scene.

After the appetizer, which included the famous Cipriani Bellini, the dinner began with a rich but elegantly sombre menu. Entertainment was provided by the students, in tune with the national celebrations. Well-known television host Ornella Fado presented several guests, among which the much applauded (especially by the younger people present) Olympic champion, Igor Cassina.

The Scuola d'Italia is not only an important reference point for the Italian community, speaking more than one language and sharing different cultures are central point in a difficult moment, when the younger generations are immediately faced with a globalized world. The experience these kids have, from elementary school through high school is unique. Immersed in the New York atmosphere they live in a school that isn't isolated, but that builds upon the suggestions of the city that surrounds them, focusing on the Italian heritage but welcoming other cultures.

This only Italian-American school in the United States organizes its traditional yearly gala to collect funds to finance the many educational and cultural activities of its students throughout the Academic year.

The gala is only one of the several events the Scuola organizes throughout the academic year. Both Middle School and High school students are involved in a series of projects, that range from in house laboratories to cultural tours organized within the city of New York and abroad.

During the evening, NYU professors Raffaella Cribione and Antonio Monda were honored and the latter – also a writer and journalist, as well as professor of Italian Cinema – couldn't resist quoting The Godfather. “My favorite movie of all time is The Godfather and I want to quote the opening line ‘I love America’. However my roots are in my homeland, I am and I will always be an Italian and I feel proud”. Afterwards he quoted Pasolini's La Ricotta where Orson Welles plays a Marxist director.

Ambassador Terzi's speech (published at the bottom of this article) was a rapid journey through Italy's past up until today. From recollections of the “giants of political thinking” of the 18th century up until today, when, just as then, it is the younger generations in the front lines who can change history...

Emma Bonino, engaged this week in the second edition of the Women in the World Summit, which collects all those women committed to fighting for gender equality around the world. “My country is in the front line for human rights - she said in her speech - and we have been successful on the moratorium on death penalty, we have been successful for the International Criminal court and we are now in a new effort which is the fight against female genital mutilation and I hope we will succeed... for tonight be generous with The Scuola di'Italia, which is totally worth while”.

“The school has a great history. I hope you will find the courage to keep going”



“One hundred and fifty years after the proclamation of the Unity of Italy, we are in a position to fully appreciate the scope and the universal call which freedom exerts upon young people.” said the Ambassador, mentioning the return of AP Italian programs in American schools.

“On February 21, the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, spoke about ‘The Italian language as the backbone of national identity. He underlined the impulse given by the language of poetry, literature and opera to the growth of our national consciousness.” Important words on the occasion of the celebrations of the Italian unification that confer the Italian language the role it has always had which must continue today.

To make it more clear, at the end of his speech Terzi said, “Since language and cultural identity are so tightly interwoven, I would like to conclude with a heartfelt appeal to support the promotion of the Italian language. By supporting our language in American schools and universities, we are carrying out a duty most meaningful to all those who hold dear both Italy and our National Unity”.

Ambassador's speech - 11 March 2011 - Guglielmo Marconi “Scuola d'Italia”

A warm welcome to you all, especially the Director, Board and teachers of the Scuola Guglielmo Marconi, who have shown such strong dedication and commitment throughout the past year.

I would like to recognize the Vice President of the Italian Senate, the Hon. Emma Bonino, a true leader in the promotion of human rights, justice and freedom.

My heartfelt congratulations go to Mrs. Raffaella Cribiore for the award she has been given tonight. I am also delighted that the school is honoring a friend whom I hold in high esteem, Dr. Antonio Monda. The presence here of Olympic champion, Igor Cassina, is a great pleasure for us all, and for all Italians, and particularly the young ones, for whom he is an example of tenacity and skill.

The students and their families have made a truly excellent decision by choosing the Guglielmo Marconi: it is a sign of understanding the enormous cultural wealth provided by Italy to the world, and the modernity of our culture. An education based upon language, history and Italian and European thought is an essential investment for the future of our children. It is an open window on a world where democracy, rule of law and solidarity are increasingly important.

On February 21, the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, spoke on “The Italian language as the backbone of national identity”. He underlined the impulse given by the language of poetry, literature and opera to the growth of our national consciousness.

A couple of months ago I found myself having to reply to an opinion exposed during the ACTFL meeting in Boston, according to which young people should no longer study European languages and cultures, as they are supposed to belong to the past; while they should, instead, focus exclusively on Mandarin, Farsi, Arabic and so on.



I strongly believe that paying more attention, in education, to Middle East, and China is necessary. But that should not constitute the only alternative to the molding of our young generations into a well-defined cultural identity. Indeed, how could that be different, when our basic values, and freedoms, come precisely from European cultures?

In these months, the history of humanity has sped up again with irresistible impulses towards freedom. Once again, a spontaneous drive is backed by millions of young people, in Arab countries. Many draw an analogy with the movements which swept through Europe in 1989.

Also today, tens of millions of young people have triggered an equally radical and deep change whose outcome, however uncertain, demonstrates the appeal of freedom and justice in societies where the younger generations have their say.

At this special time, just a few days before the National Day for Italy's Unification, we could see an ideal thread between what is happening today – history in the making – through what happened twenty years ago with the fall of the Berlin Wall, connecting back to the youth of our Risorgimento.

One hundred and fifty years after the proclamation of the Unity of Italy, we are in a position to fully appreciate the scope and the universal call which freedom exerts upon young people. A principle which is pivotal also to the history of Italian Enlightenment at the end of the 18th century; where giants of political thought, like Filangieri and Beccaria, profoundly marked the history and the institutions of both Italy and America, long before our Countries became States.

The Scuola Guglielmo Marconi carries this DNA and is therefore one of the mainstays of Italy's projection in the United States.

Since language and cultural identity are so tightly interwoven, I would like to conclude with a heartfelt appeal to support the promotion of Italian language. By supporting our language in American schools and universities, we are carrying out a duty most meaningful to all those who hold dear both Italy and our National Unity.

Last year, on this very occasion, I assured you of the Italian government's utmost commitment, in collaboration with the most important Italian-American associations, to bring AP exams back to the US colleges and high schools. Let me underline the greatest satisfaction in having achieved this goal, and re-emphasize my appreciation to all those who brought this success about, and who now continue to work on it through the "Italian language observatory" which has just recently been created.

Once again - grazie di cuore!



Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata

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