

IL POSTINO

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Festa di San Domenico May 2014



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Watsonia artist Marcello D'Amico exhibits at Montmorency's Busybird Studio Gallery

The beauty and mystique of women is captured in the latest exhibition of works from award winning Watsonia artist Marcello D'Amico



Marcello D'Amico is exhibiting his art in Montmorency. Picture: Kylie Else

Almost all of the 73-years-old artist's drawings, paintings, watercolors, ceramics, sculptures and poems celebrate the beauty of the female form.

"I've tried to bring out the essence, femininity and sensuality of the figure by focusing on female bodies of all ages, creating an illusion that the viewer is admiring a woman in her own private environment, without pretences and artificiality," D'Amico said.

"I do not intend to detract from various representations of woman, but wish society to see her in all her forms, rather than a single stereotype."

D'Amico, who has been married to Pauline for 43 years, said he was "dedicated to women" and his exhibition was a mini-retrospective of his life.

"Women are very inspiring," he said. "I don't even talk about equality because it shouldn't be an issue."

Italian-born D'Amico has also incorporated the colors of his birthplace into his "female landscapes".

"Even though my work is mainly inspired by my birthplace — the Aeolian Islands — I consider my works universal and they are aimed at a universal audience," he said.

"The volcano Stromboli, on the island where I lived for three years is the small village of Ginostra, left an indelible impression on me. The palette of red, yellow and blue is strongly influenced by the fiery outbursts that were part of my everyday experiences. The sensuality of women ... is embraced in my colored drawings where they feel, and are, free.

By: Natalie Filmer

Micheal Castaldo announces First Place Win as TOP ARTIST on Artistsignal.com

NEW YORK, N.Y. — Micheal CASTALDO, the award winning, independent classical-crossover artist won Top Artist for March 2014 on the pop-culture music website, ArtistSignal.com, just after midnight on April 1, 2014. The monthly winner is awarded a prize of \$10,000 USD to be used to further their music career.

After a month of hard work by Micheal Castaldo's fans, family and friends, their efforts paid off. The site, ArtistSignal.com, was created by several tech savvy entrepreneurs and launched to allow artists a location to promote their music. Unlike crowd funding, the site allows emerging artist to post their music and create a fan following, based on Facebook contacts, who then vote hourly for the artist of their choice. The Fan wins rewards and is constantly engaged in the artists' progress.

Over the course of 3 months, indie artist Micheal Cascado, researched the social media music network, uploaded his music, posted updates, invited fans to sign up, started to use the site to vote, met other wonder-

ful artists and developed mutually beneficial alliances.

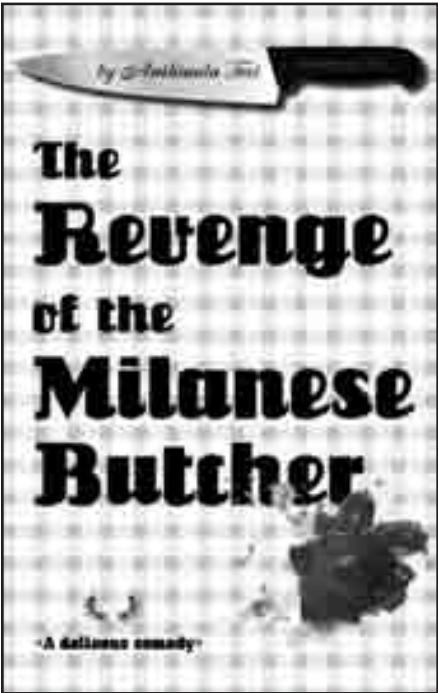
During Micheal's months of interaction with the site, he was able to rally fans to move him to the number 1 position in March. It was not an easy month, wrought with much trial and error, but due to the diligence of his amazing team, fans, careful calculations and research by previous winners Joe Grande (Oct. 2013) and Rebecca Newman (Feb. 2014), the Castaldo fan base was able vote Micheal to win as TOP ARTIST.

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Fans and Supporters of Micheal Castaldo for their valiant efforts over the past 3 months. This win could not have happened without them. Micheal plans to pay it forward and help/mentor other worthy indie artists who want to go for the win on ArtistSignal.

The monetary reward totaling \$10,000 USD, will be used for the promotion and marketing of Micheal's new CD, to be released in the fall of 2014.



The Revenge of the Milanese Butcher



Milan, Lombardia - Italian Notebook Press (yes, Press!) Is extremely proud to present Anthinula Tori's first installment in the... *Gertrude Wine & the Food Murder Mystery Series!*

This is a murder mystery (comedy?!) about food and Italy, with a little romance mixed in, that stars Gertrude Wine, a smart and independent

American chef with great sense of humor... And her snarky inner voice that just won't shut up.

Gertrude Wine has made a splash in Milan with her unconventional restaurant L'Oca Buona (The Delicious Goose). Yet serving guests is least of her worries when a crime is committed in her kitchen. She and Inspector Valenti make an unlikely pair, yet come to rely on each others skills in pursuit of the solution to the case.

Will Gertrude and Valenti figure out who the murderer is before becoming Milanese culinary specialties themselves?!

If you enjoy Italian Notebook then you'll love following Gertrude Wine on her first food and murder mystery adventure, set in Milan. So, exclusively for Italian Notebook readers, for free, here are...

For a quick peek, the following is an excerpt from Chapter 1.

Enjoy!

A young policeman came over and interrupted them with news that the freezer was covered with the fin-

gerprints of the entire kitchen staff. He stared at them as though he had located the murderers.

Inspector Valenti, trying to impress upon the young officer a lesson in investigative common sense, reminded him that it had been a working kitchen until the night before and the staff had obviously not been expecting frozen body parts in their freezer. Just as he was saying this, Valenti gave a sideways glance to Gertrude, Leo and Maria, who, although looking innocent, could still not be discarded as potential suspects.

He made a mental note to interview each of them separately even though he suspected they could easily be each other's alibi. Come to think of it, they might have even helped each other. They had the keys, the time, and the know-how to slice anything, including, most probably, a human being.

Once again Gertrude could see the wheels turning in Inspector Valenti's mind and realized that they were fast becoming suspects.

"You are more than welcome to check our knives," interjected Gertrude.

"But, if I were you, I'd also study what kind of cuts were used on the meat - classic carpaccio or the Piedmont style of cutting against the muscle? The way meat is sliced is an entire world of its own and is almost like a fingerprint depending on the knife, the cut and the section. The murderer definitely knew what he or she was doing."

Valenti looked curiously at Gertrude. "Did you cut any meat here in the restaurant yesterday?"

It was a simple question, but a look of horror rushed across Gertrude's face as she realized that they might have mistaken human flesh for pork chop or lamb.

Gertrude Wine suddenly lost her calm. "Are you suggesting that we may have inadvertently cooked and served... OTHER PARTS OF THE BODY?!"

Leo hit the floor for the third time...

Get the entire book, available on Amazon.com at the special price of \$4.99!

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il messaggio per il 25 aprile ai Comites del Centro e Nord America

In occasione della Festa della Liberazione, l'on. Francesca La Marca ha inviato ai COMITES della sua ripartizione elettorale il seguente messaggio:

"Questo 25 aprile cade mentre in Parlamento ci accingiamo a modificare parti importanti della nostra Costituzione, che ha raccolto e riassunto le istanze di libertà, di giustizia e di uguaglianza tra i cittadini che erano state alla base della lotta di liberazione nazionale e della Resistenza. Ci apprestiamo, come sapete, a modificare la forma dello Stato, superando il bicameralismo paritario, riducendo il numero dei parlamentari e i costi delle istituzioni, e cercando di trovare un nuovo equilibrio tra le istituzioni centrali e quelle regionali e locali.

L'obiettivo è quello di rendere la struttura istituzionale del Paese più moderna, più veloce ed efficiente, meno costosa. Ma lo faremo anche con la convinzione di dover tenere ferma e difendere la prima parte della Costituzione, nella quale lo spirito di libertà e di uguaglianza della Resistenza continua a vivere e a guidare i nostri passi. Quella parte in cui si ripudia la guerra come mezzo di regolazione dei rapporti tra gli Stati. E noi sappiamo bene ciò che questo impegno abbia significato per noi. La nostra vita è potuta ricominciare in questo grande e accogliente Paese perché la guerra era finita. Oggi siamo alle soglie della firma di un importante accordo di libero scambio tra il Canada e l'Unione europea perché

tutti insieme abbiamo deciso di affidare il nostro futuro alla pace.

Quando parlo della libertà e della democrazia in Italia, non posso fare a meno di ricordare il sacrificio di tanti giovani canadesi, alcuni dei quali figli di italiani, che hanno combattuto e sacrificato la loro vita per il ritorno dell'Italia tra le grandi democrazie. A loro e alle loro famiglie vadano in eterno la nostra riconoscenza e il nostro ringraziamento.

Vorrei concludere riaffermando che il principio di uguaglianza tra i cittadini, sancito nell'articolo 3 della Costituzione, vale naturalmente anche tra cittadini in Italia e cittadini all'estero. Per questo, noi eletti

nella circoscrizione Estero ribadiremo con tutte le nostre forze che il nostro voto e il nostro diritto di rappresentanza dovranno valere quanto quello degli altri. I rappresentanti delle nostre comunità, quindi, dovranno far parte sia della Camera che voterà la fiducia al Governo che del Senato delle Autonomie, dove potranno continuare il loro dialogo con le Regioni, già sviluppato negli ultimi decenni. La Resistenza, attraverso la Costituzione, è dunque un riferimento vivo e attuale. Per questo sento di unirmi a voi per ribadire con convinzione: Viva il 25 aprile, festa della Libertà, viva la Costituzione italiana".

Francesca La Marca

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Minister Fantino meets with Italian Undersecretary of Defence



Minister Fantino and Mrs. Fantino, joined by Giuseppe Golini Petracone, Mayor of Cassino and Gianni Blasi, military historian, reflect on the heroic contribution of Canada at the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Cassino

Nicholas Bergamini



ROME - The Honourable Julian Fantino, Canada's Minister of Veteran Affairs, met with Domenico Rossi, Undersecretary of the Department of Defence to exchange best practices and discuss Veterans' programs, health and services. Minister Fantino also met with Lt. Gen Federico Marmo, Inspector General of Military Health with the Italian military.

Ministers Fantino and Rossi reaffirmed their mutual commitment in improving the quality of life and service delivery for Veterans.

Minister Fantino commented on the bilateral relationship, saying, "Canada and Italy have a strong bond, underscored by our shared values and commitment to create jobs and grow our respective economies."

The Ministers concluded by reaffirming the strong economic, political and people to people ties between Canada and Italy.

Nicholas Bergamini



(Rome, Italy) Minister Julian Fantino, joined by Parliamentary Secretary Pierre Lemieux (Chair of the Canada-Holy See Friendship Group) and Member of Parliament Wladyslaw Lizon on the eve of the Canonization of Pope John Paul II and Pope John XXIII.

"I am tremendously proud and humbled to represent Canada at this historic celebration to honour the life of Pope John Paul II and Pope John XXIII.

"On the eve of their canonization to Sainthood, we remember their service to humanity, especially Pope John Paul II who advanced the cause of freedom and tolerance, and Pope John XXIII for his commitment to the renewal and reform of the faith."

- Honourable Julian Fantino, Minister of Veteran Affairs
Head of Canada's Official Delegation

Minister Fantino Attends Mass with His Eminence Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto



ROME - Honourable Julian Fantino, Canada's Minister of Veteran Affairs attends mass with Canadian faithful and His Eminence Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, in Rome for the canonization of Pope John Paul II and Pope John XXIII at St. Patrizio's Church.

Sarah Levesque

Minister Fantino in Ortona, Italy



Minister Fantino and Liviana Fantino today met Francesca, a citizen of Ortona, Italy. Francesca housed, fed and supported Canadian soldiers during the 1943 Battle of Ortona, which saw 1,375 Canadian soldiers lose their lives.



The Honourable Julian Fantino, Minister of Veteran Affairs and head of Canada's official delegation for the canonization of Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II, brings greetings on behalf of all Canadians to Pope Francis.

Nicholas Bergamini

Canada and BC sign agreement to help connect Canadians with available jobs

The Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Employment and Social Development, and the Honourable Shirley Bond, British Columbia Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour, today signed several agreements to help connect Canadians with available jobs, including one to implement the Canada Job Grant in British Columbia.

Quotes

“Our government’s top priorities are creating jobs, economic growth and

long-term prosperity. The Canada Job Grant is part of our commitment to address the paradox of too many Canadians without jobs in an economy of too many jobs without Canadians. With employers' skin in the game, the Canada Job Grant will lead to a guaranteed job. Helping employers train Canadians for jobs that need to be filled will help their businesses grow and succeed. And that is good news for the British Columbia economy.”- The Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Employment and Social Development

“The energy and resource industry in British Columbia has the potential to create tens of thousands of jobs and generate billions of dollars. Ensuring that British Columbia’s workforce has the skills needed by this industry is crucial to unlocking that potential.”- The Honourable James Moore, Minister of Industry and Minister Responsible for British Columbia

“Our priority is making sure British Columbians are first in line for the over one million job openings expected by 2020. Together, these

agreements will play a significant role in our work to connect British Columbians with the skills they need. We look forward to working in partnership with the federal government to connect people with the critical skills training programs and services that will ensure B.C.’s employers have the right workers, in the right place, at the right time.”- The Honourable Shirley Bond, British Columbia Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour.

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Giovanni gest ONE On ONE with **PATRIZIO BUANNE**

Italian Crooner, Patrizio Buanne has taken the world by storm with his ballads and up-tempo tunes, all rooted the pop traditions of his Italian homeland. Patrizio will be singing in Ottawa for one night only at the Centrepointhe Theatre. Patrizio is an Italian-Austrian, baritone singer, songwriter and producer, who has sold over one million albums worldwide. Patrizio performs many of his greatest hits including "Il Mondo", "Un Angelo" and "Solo Tu My Baby." In addition, Patrizio will be performing spirited interpretations of timeless pop standards from the Italian songbook such as "Mambo Italiano" and "You Don't Have To Say You Love Me," as well as his favourite American songs and upcoming releases.

Presented by Settimana Italiana di Ottawa 2014, President Claudio Pagani and his Executive Committee!



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Q&A

1. Which Italian traditions do you value?

- I adore Italian history, culture and traditions, just like I adore any country's history, culture and traditions (if they have something to share and tell). Perhaps because I personally relate to Italian history, culture and traditions and some other country traditions and culture make me angry and disappointed I decided to be only a simple ambassador of the Italy which we all love and admire around the world.

2. How do you stay so fit?

- hahaha, I am aware of what I eat and I am aware of where I am what to get and look at being conscious, that's all.

3. Where would you like to perform in the world?

- At the Grammys

4. If you would not be singing, what would you be doing?

- Be a history teacher and travel the world using my languages.

5. What was the best advice ever given to you?

- I never got advice from anybody but rather based my decisions on experience and lessons.

6. What do you love most about your career?

- That I am allowed to be myself, that I sing what I want to sing and that I am successful not just for my music or hits but for my personality and voice.

7. How do you relieve stress?

- Pray for energy and convince myself that "it is not who runs quicker, but who runs longer." Slowly but surely things come together.

8. Where do you see yourself in ten years from now?

- Married, 3 kids, Grammys and perhaps an Oscar.

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L'Ambasciata d'Italia a Ottawa ringrazia altresì

la Corale della Chiesa di Sant'Antonio
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Un Bicchiere di Vino con IL Postino

Lenny Recanati

As we approach Easter, this month's column will touch upon the holy land and wine making. I will introduce you to an interesting figure with an Italian connection playing a big role in the development of excellent quality wine in Israel.

Many wine lovers are familiar with the exciting wines produced in relatively new wine regions such as New Zealand for example. Very few are familiar with Israeli wines or know that excellent wines are being produced there. The wine industry in this country has undergone a profound change in only twenty years. Whereby there were very few wineries 30-40 years ago, today you have over 300 wineries in a country the size of New Jersey.

Today's wine industry in Israel can attribute its success to French Baron Edmond de Rothschild. In 1882, the Baron, owner of the Bordeaux estate Chateau Lafite-Rothschild, began to import grape cuttings and wine making know how to the area. However, wine making in the area goes back even further: biblical times. In Deuteronomy 8:8, wine is described as being a "blessed species of fruit found in the land of Israel." In Genesis 9, 20-21 the bible says that 'Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard'. The geographic location of Israel was part of a wine trading route between Mesopotamia and Egypt. In Roman times, wine from Israel was exported to Rome in Amphoras. With the arrival of Islam in the 7th century, wine production was destroyed. It was not till the 19th century, that a revival of wine making in Israel took hold.

From a viticultural point of view, the climate of Israel is defined as Mediterranean. That is, the growing season is long with moderate to hot temperatures and little rain. There are 5 main growing regions in Israel:

- Galilee-Golan - Israel's top wineries are located here, especially in the Golan Heights
- Samson - Most of Israel's wine production is located in this region. About 40%.
- Judean Hills - This region enjoys cool nights. The cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem are located here.
- Negev - Hot and dry region of Israel. Requires irrigation.
- Shomron - Largest region in terms of vineyards planted. Most of the grape varieties grown in Israel will be found here.

Most of the grape varieties in Israel are the Bordeaux grapes Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Other red varieties found are Syrah, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel and some Barbera, brought from Piemonte. Some of the white grape varieties present are Gewurztraminer, Chardonnay, Riesling, and Sauvignon Blanc. While Israel has a rich history in terms of wine making, it does not have any indigenous grape varieties. Any indigenous varieties that might have been present were replaced with table grapes with the arrival of the Ottoman Empire and Muslim rule.

Any discussion of food or beverage consumption in Judaism must cover the topic of Jewish dietary laws or Kosher. For a wine to be deemed kosher, the entire wine making process must be supervised by Sabbath-Observant Jews. Any ingredients added must also be kosher. Finally, a kosher agency or rabbi must provide the final approval or hechsher. While not all wines produced in Israel are kosher, the vast majority are. Whether a wine is kosher or not, has no ramifications on the quality of the final product.

One exciting winery which been around since 2000 is the Recanati Winery in Galilee owned by Lenny Recanati. His family hails from the Marche region of Italy where they lived for centuries. They trace their roots to the town of the same name. The town of Recanati had a sizeable Jewish population for hundreds of years. The Recanati family left Italy in 1933 for Israel. As a child Lenny's parents would make wine with the grapes grown in their backyard. However, Lenny is not a wine maker by trade. He is a very successful international banker and financier. But his dream was to have his very own winery. And in the year 2000 along with some partners he founded the winery. Today Recanati Winery produces about 83 000 cases per year. It is Israel's sixth largest winery. Their wines are exported around the world, including Italy! About 80% of production is devoted to red wines and the remainder to whites. The winery's mission is to produce quality wines at reasonable prices. The wines fall under the Yasmin label, the Recanati and Reserve label and the Special Reserve label. Red wines are made mostly from the Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot varieties. The winery also produces wine with the Cabernet Franc, Shiraz and Syrah, Barbera, Zinfandel, Carignan, and Petite Syrah varieties. The whites are



made with the Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, French Colombard and Emerald Riesling varieties. The LCBO has 9 wines available from the Recanati portfolio. Amongst the reds, I would recommend the Recanati Petite Syrah/Zinfandel Reserve KP 2011, \$33.95. This is a blend you often see in California and it was a surprise to see it being produced in Israel. It's mostly Petite Syrah with some Zinfandel in the blend. It's a beautiful deep ruby red colour. Berries and a slight nuttiness are the primary aromas. On the palate you will notice that it is a full-bodied wine with moderate tannins. The berry flavours, especially cherry carry over to the palate. There is also a slight herbal note of thyme and oregano and some black pepper. Great with Easter lamb. Released a few weeks ago at the LCBO is the Recanati Chardonnay KP 2012, \$19.95. Made from grapes from a single vineyard and aged in French oak barrels sur lie. This is a French term which means "on the lees". The lees are the sediment which consist of dead yeast cells, small grape particles which accumulated after fermentation, at the bottom of the barrel, demi-john, etc.. Winemakers allow the wine to age on the "lees". This results in complex wines with a buttery, yeasty almost creamy feel in the mouth. The technique can also add a slight carbonation to the wine. This technique is often used with Chardonnay grapes. The Recanati Char-

donnay has aromas of lemon and green apple and peach. On the palate you quickly pick up the creamy notes and oak from the aging sur lie. This is not a heavy bruising toasty chardonnay that sometimes you come across from California. It's very elegant and smooth. Citrus and peach notes come across on the palate. It finishes off with a clean, crisp acidity. Because of the acidity I would pair this with a rich creamy pasta sauce or risotto alla Milanese. It has that backbone of acidity to stand up to any cream sauce. I was very impressed with the complexity of the wine.

Researching this article was a real eye opener for me regarding the exciting wine scene taking place in Israel. I invite you this Easter to try some of the wines of this very holy and historical area of the world. You won't be disappointed.

Buona Pasqua. Grazie e salute!

If you have any questions or suggestions for future columns, please contact me at:
vinumbonumest@yahoo.com

Domenico Cellucci is a wine consultant and educator and is a graduate of Algonquin College's Sommelier Program. He puts on food and wine matching events in the national capital area. He has visited wineries and vineyards in Italy, France, British Columbia, Ontario and the United States.

Domenico Cellucci

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Amid Rising Anti-Semitism in Western Europe, Italian Jews Are Staging a Surprising Revival

A strong communal response to a terrorist attack in the 1980s seeded a new generation of dynamic leaders

On March 20, Shalom Bahbout, chief rabbi of Naples and Southern Italy, sent a letter to the governors of the six regions that comprised the old Spanish Viceroyalty—Sicily, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, and Puglia—calling on them to institute an annual holiday for “research and memory” about the expulsion or forced conversion of the Jews from those regions on Oct. 31, 1541.

“The departure of those people, by all rights native Italians, created grave damage to the cultural, economic, and social patrimony of the southern regions,” Bahbout wrote. His letter stressed that remembering the episode—which is rarely studied or seriously discussed in schools and universities, if at all—was important not only for Jews, but for promoting tolerance of all those considered different or outside the mainstream of society.

Yet, while southern Italians may have forgotten the details of how their ancestors treated local Jews, whose presence on the peninsula stretches back more than two millennia, they are in the midst of a widespread—and surprising—revival of contemporary Jewish life. From Rome to Palermo, Jewish religious activity is visibly on the rise, and Jewish-themed festivals have become regular events throughout the country, with religious leaders celebrating in some of the country’s most famous public squares—and even the legendary San Paolo soccer stadium in Naples. Last December, for Hanukkah, Italy’s Prime Minister Enrico Letta hosted Benjamin Netanyahu for a menorah-lighting in Rome, and candles were lit in Naples’ elegant Piazza dei Martiri and at Palermo’s Palazzo Steri, the old site of the Spanish Inquisition tribunal and prison. Meanwhile, Italian Jews—particularly in Rome—have organized new self-defense groups to combat outbursts of anti-Semitism, and leaders, Bahbout only one among them, have demanded that public officials confront the darker moments of Italy’s relationship with its Jews.

This is driven, at least in part, by the fact that a considerable number of southern Italians have reason to suspect or believe that their ancestors were forcibly converted to Catholicism 550 years ago. Some are interested in exploring their families’ Jewish roots, and that in turn has generated a wave of interest in conversion—but there are also some remarkable cases of recent conversions involving those without Jewish

ancestors at all. The result has been an injection of new energy into congregations ranging from Orthodox groups operating under the umbrella the Union of Italian Jewish Communities in Rome to a lively Reform shul in Calabria that is now under the spirited leadership of Rabbi Barbara Aiello, an Italo-American who recently returned to her father’s birthplace of Serrastretta after spending years working in Milan.

It is hard to get accurate dimensions for this largely unnoticed phenomenon, perhaps because it runs directly counter to the larger theme of intensifying anti-Semitism in so much of Western Europe. Italian Jews have also traditionally preferred to maintain a low profile and are consequently reluc-

“The departure of those people, by all rights native Italians, created grave damage to the cultural, economic, and social patrimony of the southern regions.”

tant to discuss their affairs, especially with outsiders. Chabad certainly has played a role—the group is especially active in Florence and Venice, where it operates popular kosher restaurants—but the central components are Italian. The rabbis themselves are unsure of the numbers involved. As Riccardo Di Segni, the chief rabbi of Rome, recently told me, they themselves are a bit baffled. “Yes, it is certainly real, all of us agree,” Di Segni told me. “But I can’t give you an explanation.”

Italian Jews have seen plenty of oppression—“ghetto” is, of course, an Italian word, originally used to describe the area in Venice where Jews were restricted to living—from the time of the Inquisition forward to the Fascist period, when Benito Mussolini passed racial laws more restrictive than Berlin’s. But while there have certainly been, and still are, Italian anti-Semites, Italians by and large never participated in the popular European anti-Semitic movements, whether racist or nationalist, of the 19th and 20th centuries that contributed to episodes like the Dreyfus Affair in France or for Nazism in Austria and Germany. By 1914, before the outbreak of World War I, the country had been led by two Jewish prime ministers, Alessandro Fortis and Luigi Luzzatti; two decades later, Italian authorities declined to join in the Nazis’ mass murder of Jews.

For decades after the Second World War, Roman Judaism was quiet, even moribund. In 1973, when I married my wife, Barbara, in the big early-20th-century synagogue on the banks of the Tiber, there was only one kosher restaurant in the ghetto area. Services were sparsely attended, the median age of worshipers was advanced, Jewish holidays were observed quietly, and by and large community leaders either preferred to maintain a low profile or threw in with the secular, leftist intelligentsia. The central piazza was notable mainly for its ancient bakery, which still produces spectacular sweets. It wasn’t a very chic place to live and was mostly populated by poor Jews, the shopkeepers in the neighborhood, or by a small group of movie people.

No more. The ghetto is now a beehive of tourism—foreign and Italian, Jewish and gentile—and there are many kosher restaurants, some very good indeed and frequented by lots of well-to-do non-Jews. A second bakery has opened featuring Eastern and Central European specialties. The Jewish schools, which had been across the river, have now moved into the ghetto and are flourishing, and the synagogue is well-attended both on holidays and for regular weekly services.

Moreover, Judaism is booming in other Roman neighborhoods. At last count there were 18 shuls in town, most Sephardic or Roman—a tradition all its own, with a unique *t’filah*—and with various approaches to would-be congregants, from very strict, demanding formal proof of the mother’s Judaism or of an official conversion, to very open, including non-Jews who are considering conversion.

It helps that Pope Francis is openly philo-Semitic, and the third such pope in a row. This counts for a lot in Italy, even in a period of greatly increased secularization. Three decades ago, John Paul II’s embrace of “Jewish fathers” and his historic trip to the Rome synagogue were major changes in Vatican doctrine and practice. As Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI was Pope John Paul’s theologian and drafted many of his declarations;

he also wrote that the Jews were innocent of Jesus’ death and followed in John Paul’s footsteps to the Roman synagogue and to Israel. Pope Francis famously welcomes his Argentine Jewish friends to the Vatican and serves them kosher takeout from the ghetto; next month, he is scheduled to make his first official visit to Israel in the company of Abraham Skorka, a close friend who is rector of the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary in Buenos Aires.

But it turns out that the Rome community, which I had always considered one of the most timorous I had encountered anywhere, began organizing itself in the early 1980s in response to a wave of anti-Semitic provocations, including a Palestinian terrorist attack on the synagogue in 1982—and in developing new institutions managed to nurture a new generation of brave and imaginative leaders who have galvanized—politically, socially, and religiously—a new generation of young Roman Jews.

In the aftermath of the 1982 attack, in which a toddler was killed, the schools were moved into the ghetto, and in December 1985 a new shul, the Tempio dei Giovani, was established on the second floor of the Jewish Hospital on the Tiberina Island in the Tiber, where a tiny synagogue functioned in secret throughout the Fascist period, even during Nazi occupation.

The Tempio dei Giovani was led by the hyperactive Rabbi Bahbout, who instituted a more “international” *t’filah* rather than the traditional Roman prayers chanted in the big synagogue nearby. Instead of viewing the new synagogue as a challenge to Rome’s Jewish establishment, the city’s Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff quietly offered his support. Publicly a meek, accommodating, and impeccably diplomatic man, he privately encouraged the young Jews of the capital to practice a form of Judaism with broader appeal—and to fight back against the religious and secular anti-Semites and learn self-defense, to protect the ghetto. New organizations were created, including one called the “Youth of ’48” and led by Angelo Sermonets, aka “il Baffone”—“the big mustache.”

From then on, there were firm and sometimes even violent responses to anyone who acted against the Roman Jews. The two best-known actions are the occupation of the military courtroom where the Nazi murderer Erich



A demonstration organized by the "Amici di Israele" (friends of Israel) on Oct. 7, 2010, in front of Temple of Hadrian in Rome. (Andreas Solaro/AFP/Getty Images)

Priebke was tried in the mid-1980s after his extradition from Argentina, and the assault on neo-Fascist headquarters in November 1992, in Via Domodossola. The first is well-documented; the second, not so much.

In late July 1996, as the military judges were considering their verdict, it had become obvious that they were planning to accept Priebke's "Nuremberg defense" and let him go on the grounds that he had no choice in the matter once he had received orders from the führer. The Roman Jews found this intolerable and, with Toaff's full support, occupied the courtroom and took up positions outside the building. They were then surrounded by Italian security forces who asked the Jews to leave. They called Toaff, who was outside Rome on holiday, and asked him what to do. "Stay right there," he said, "and don't let him get away." They remained in place, and the tribunal announced a double decision: The case against Priebke was dismissed, but he was rearrested because the German government was asking to try him for murder. The Appeals Court threw out the verdict, replaced two of the judges, and ordered a retrial. In 1997 he was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. Almost everyone in Rome saw it as a great success for the Jews. Without their physical presence, Priebke might well have walked.

Five years later, in November 1992, a neo-Fascist group had been publicly threatening the Jewish community, and roughly 100 Jewish activists attacked the Fascist offices in Via Domodossola, trashing the premises, sending two Fascists to the emergency room, and carrying off Nazi icons. In short order, new legislation was passed banning actions, gestures, and slogans

in support of "Nazifascism" and all incitement to violence for racial, ethnic, or religious motives.

It was another scalp for Rabbi Toaff and the ghetto activists. By then, the entire image of the Roman Jews has been transformed from victims to tough guys. In a 2010 interview, Sermoneta declared that he and Jewish Community President Riccardo Pacifici, a veteran of the Tempio dei Giovani and the self-defense groups, were restraining Rome's Jewish youth from attacking some outspoken neo-Fascists. "We're tired of seeing swastikas and graffiti," Pacifici warned. "Anyone who thinks the Jews are frightened is making a big mistake."

On the "spur" of the Italian boot lies the little agricultural town of San Nicandro, where, during and immediately after the Fascist period, an amazing event took place: the spontaneous conversion of a community of Catholics to Judaism. In a recent book, *The Jews of San Nicandro*, historian John Davis calls it "the only case of collective conversion to Judaism in Europe in modern times."

The story goes like this: A local, Donato Manduzio, ended up in a northern hospital after falling ill on the Austrian front during the First World War. In the hospital, he became an avid reader.

After the war, he returned to Puglia, and one day an Evangelical preacher came through town and left a copy of the Bible; Manduzio devoured it and loved the Old Testament. He read it to his friends, and they decided it was the truth. "But where are these people?" They asked Manduzio. "Oh, they're long gone," he answered. "This is all ancient history. No Jews left in the world." He thought they were

wiped out in the flood. So, Manduzio set out to recreate Judaism from the Bible, banning pork from San Nicandro's tables, shifting the Sabbath from Sunday to Saturday, and eliminating Christian art, sculptures, and amulets from their homes.

Then, one day in the early 1930s, a traveling salesman told them there were plenty of Jews in Italy, with rabbis who could help educate Manduzio and his followers. Manduzio sent postcards to the rabbis in Turin, Florence, and Rome, initially without success—imagine, for a moment, what those rabbis thought, getting requests about adopting Jewish practice from these people in San Nicandro, at a time when Hitler was on the rise and the always hostile Catholic Church was in cahoots with Mussolini. But Manduzio persisted, and eventually people came from Rome with proper prayer books and promises of help accompanied by proper warnings that it was not a propitious time to become a Jew in Europe. Yet most of Manduzio's community successfully converted at the end of the war, and most of them made aliyah. Today their descendants are mostly in and around Sfat, and a few years ago one of them, a cinematography student named Eti, made a lovely documentary about her trip to San Nicandro, where she found the children of those who had stayed behind and who are now repeating the spiritual itinerary of Manduzio's generation. Some have already converted, others are studying for it, and all seem to be debating whether to stay or move to Israel.

In March, I attended a Shabbaton at a hotel in nearby Radi Garganico, followed by a celebration in San Nicandro. I drove down from Rome with Rav Bahbout and a Torah

from the Tempio dei Giovani, which he delivered to the tiny shul in the main street. About a hundred people attended, and I've rarely seen so many tears of joy, from Jews and non-Jews alike. The mayor gave a very supportive talk. The event was organized by Shavei Israel, an Israeli group that brings far-flung communities to Israel and who now have a project under way in southern Italy. There was even a stray Ukrainian-Italian Jew named Igor, whose father moved to Calabria 20 years ago.

But perhaps the most remarkable conversion story I've heard is the one concerning the concert pianist and musicologist Francesco Lotoro, who comes from Barletta in Puglia, not far from San Nicandro. He had a successful performing career, but Lotoro's enduring contribution has been to collect, perform, arrange, and sometimes record thousands of musical compositions from the Holocaust camps. He's published many volumes of scores and has recorded more than 20 albums of the music, gathered from camps all over central and eastern Europe.

A decade ago, Lotoro decided to become a Jew. He and his wife studied with Bahbout in Rome and converted in 2004. Lotoro told me he had been interested in, and attracted to, Judaism from the time he was 14 or 15 years old. His grandfather told him about family practices—such as washing hands before meals, not making the sign of the cross at church services, and baking white bread for the Sabbath—that suggested a Marano background. Years later, after his conversion process was under way, he learned there was archival evidence that his grandfather's grandfather was officially considered to have come from a Jewish family.

In recent years, Lotoro has become a Jewish activist. Two years after his conversion, he convinced the authorities in the neighboring town of Trani to permit him to take charge of one of the town's oldest churches and turn it back into the synagogue it had been before the Inquisition. The restoration was complicated, and while the mayor of Trani was very helpful, he had to reject Lotoro's request to whitewash a fresco of Christ and the Blessed Virgin from one of the interior walls—it was an officially protected work of art. So, the temple of Scolanova in the heart of Puglia is unique: I don't know of another shul anywhere in the world with Jesus and Mary on the wall.

It's a reminder that Italian Jews have long been an intimate part of the country's history—and perhaps a sign that Italy, with its brave and imaginative Jewish leaders, can offer a model to the rest of Europe, and inspire the same sort of revival among Jews elsewhere on the continent.

By Michael Ledeen

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Happy Birthday

Giovanni in Pompano Beach Florida



Happy birthday Anne Algie



Happy birthday Lawrence Greenspon (Lawyer)



Happy 80th Birthday Emidio Peloso

Spring Vegetables

Monterosso, Liguria - Spring means lots of things here in Italy.

Little flowers peeking through damp soil, pink blossoms opening on cherry trees, kumquats glowing orange against lush green leaves, and most importantly, the return of color and fun vegetables to our weekly markets. There are some vegetables that look more like geometry projects than things you eat (broccolo romanesco) and some others that appear only for a few weeks in the spring time.



Everyone makes a beeline for the fava beans as you are elbow to elbow with an old nonna buying what looks to be her weight in the bright green pods.

The local wild asparagus gets snapped up in minutes, knowing eyes surveying the woody, scraggly thin stalks full of flavor and still covered in dirt.



Barba di frate, which look like lawn clippings, are usually caked in mud too, but when cleaned, boiled and sauteed in garlic and oil, it's earthy, spinach-like flavor tastes just like spring.



Sometimes I wind up picking things up without even knowing what they are, but knowing that they will be gone in just a few weeks as the summer peaches and cherries claim their space makes them taste even more delicious.



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