
La Voce della Dante

Published by the Dante Alighieri Society of Washington (DAS) <http://www.danteseattle.org/DAS>

January 2007

January Meeting: Emilio Fonzo; Paestum

Wednesday, January 10th, 6:00 -
9:00 PM
Headquarters House, 2336 15th
Ave. S., Seattle

Emilio Fonzo is passionate about Southern Italy. There is much to see there, rivaling tourist attractions in Rome and further north. Tonight Emilio will tell us about Paestum, some of the most well preserved Grecian ruins in the world. As always, Emilio has lots of interesting things to tell us, so don't miss him. We will also be having a Pasta dinner, so don't forget to call and make reservations so we know how many people will be eating.



January Italian Meeting; Daniele Di Lodovico

Wednesday, January 10th, 7:00 - 9:00 PM
Headquarters House, 2336 15th Ave. S., Seattle

Daniele Di Lodovico is a graduate student at the University of Washington and an Italian Language instructor. Daniele has done a lot of research in the fine arts and has a presentation of about 100 works from all over the world that he would like to share with us.

Festa di Natale per
i bambini—was a great
success!

We were so happy to welcome 27 children to Natale this year! Many of these children were joined by more than one adult or family member, several of which were homesick Italians !

Thanks to all who made this event possible with your encouragement and support.

Upcoming Events

January English Program

Emilio Fonzo

Wednesday, January 10th

7:30—9:00 pm

(Pre-Dante pasta 5:30-7)

Headquarters House

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January Italian Program

Daniele Di Lodovico

Wednesday, January 24th

7:30—9:00 pm

Headquarters House

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Board Meeting

Monday, January 22

7:00-8:30pm

Faerland Terrace—1421 Minor Ave

February English Program

John Venables

Wednesday, February 14th

7:30—9:00 pm

(Pre-Dante pasta 5:30-7)

Headquarters House

February Italian Program

Tina Morelli

Wednesday, February 28th

7:30—9:00 pm

Headquarters House



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From the President's Desk

Happy New Year! I trust you all enjoyed your holiday festivities and survived the wild and windy weather we've been having. Many of you missed some beautiful decorations and lots of fun at the Festa di Natale per i Bambini and more of you missed great desserts at our December membership meeting.

Your volunteers did a great job putting on two wonderful events and we've had some good feedback which will guide some changes to next year's programming calendar. We're listening!

Some of you receiving this newsletter are not now members of Dante. You might recall, from my first message to you in September, that part of our focus this year is renewal and growth of our membership, both in terms of numbers and participation. If for any reason you are no longer a member, please consider supporting Dante with your dues and your vote of confidence in what we are trying to achieve. We recognize that all clubs are competing against many ways to be entertained in this electronic age, but I strongly believe there is no substitute in this busy world for the opportunity to build community and have great experiences with other people. These are what participation in Dante offers to you.

Your Board is beginning to plan for next year already, so come and join us! We are now forming a nominating committee to help fill our open positions before the end of the year so the outgoing folks have some time for transition. If you'd like to be part of building our future as an elected officer, committee chair or if you'd just like to help find those who wish to serve, please let me know. I'd love to have your help.

I'm still looking forward to celebrating Dante as a vibrant, healthy organization when we bring this year to a close next May and I'm so pleased for the progress we are making towards that goal. I hope you see the difference.

A presto,

Donna Lipsky

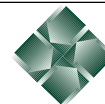
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Le Notizie



Seattle-Perugia Sister City Calendars

Need a 2007 calendar? We have a small supply of Seattle-Perugia calendars. The calendars sell for \$15, and Dante keeps \$5, so support two great organizations and get a great calendar. To order, please contact Dick Crawford

Dante on the Internet!

We have a website. We have all the more recent newsletters there (including this one!), as well as the latest information on speakers. Our web address is:

<http://www.danteseattle.org/DAS>

Remember that DAS must be capitalized!

**Winter Quarter 2007
Italian Language
classes start on
January 9th please
check the website for
more information:**

<http://www.danteseattle.org>

Please don't forget; your
membership renewal is due
1 January 2007.

If you joined **before** September of 2006, it is time for you to renew. Please use the handy form on the last page of this newsletter and mail it with your check right away. Our dues are still \$30.00 for individuals and \$40.00 for families. Thank you for supporting the Dante Alighieri Society.

Pre-Dante Pasta

Join us for the pre-Dante Pasta dinner preceding the English language programs. **To attend the dinner, reservations are required. The only way to make these reservations is by calling the Activity Line at (206) 320-9159 by the Monday before the meeting.**

Please remember to bring your homemade Italian Desserts to finish off this great meal.

Pasta dinner cost is \$8 per person, \$15 per couple, plus BYOB, if reservations are received on the activity line by the Monday before the meeting. Late reservations and walk-ins are charged \$10 per person and subject to availability.



Dante Alighieri Society
of Washington
*"Società per la diffusione
della lingua e della cultura
italiana nel mondo"*

PMB #1244
1122 East Pike Street
Seattle, WA 98122
(206) 320-9159

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.

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LA STORIA DEGLI STRUFFOLI

(translated from the website <http://www.struffoli.it>)

Struffoli are probably the most authentic Neapolitan dessert. They are at least as famous as *sfogliatelle*, and certainly more authentic than *Babà* which are originally from Poland. *Struffoli* arrived in Naples when it was still a Grecian suburb. It is believed that the name “*struffolo*” is derived from the greek “*strongoulos*” which means rounded. In Calabria and Puglia often what we call a *struffolo* became “strangled priest;” the name given to a kind of pasta. Another theory is that *struffolo* is derived from *strofinare*, to rub, describing the movements made by a cook’s hands turning pasta into a cylinder before cutting it into little balls. Some believe that the confection is called “*struffoli*” because it rubs the palate in a pleasant sense. Others believe that the roots of *struffoli* comes from the word *strutto* or lard, because in olden times they were cooked in lard. The actual origin of this word is probably lost in time but what is very clear is where *struffoli* goes. They go first into our stomach and then to our hips.



In two ancient cook books dating from over a thousand years ago is a reference stating that “ ‘*struffoli*’ aka ‘*struffoli alla romana*’ are desserts that are made the same way as ‘*struffoli alla napoletana*.’ ” In Umbria and Abruzzo they are called *cicerchiate*, because these delectable balls of fried paste glued together with honey resemble a particular field pea not considered edible for humans. (In certain parts of Italy, people say “have you been eating field peas? (*cicerchiate*) ,” meaning, “are you seeing things?”) There is another dessert which shares the name *struffoli*. The inhabitants of Tuscia, a region near Viterbo still have a dessert named *struffoli* which is a fried fluffy light dough which, in other places is called “*Castagnole*,” and is eaten during Carnevale.

You can find *struffoli* in Palermo, which are not very different from those found in Napoli. There are two Sicilies, but the *struffolo* is the same in both.

The preparation of *struffoli* is a masterpiece of domestic engineering. Why is the best *struffolo* so small? Because the outside surface which is in contact with the honey is larger in relationship to its volume, thus imparting a better flavor. This perfect marriage of honey and dough has improved the quality of life for a long time, especially during the Christmas season. Many years ago, their effect was even more significant, when people ate poor fare and not much of it. The only time people ate *Struffoli* was at Natale and other important feast days.

Struffoli come in many variations, regional & familiar. In this way they are a little like *polpette* (meatballs). Even with the same ingredients, they will vary tremendously from house to house. Each cook maintains that her *Struffoli* are authentic, passed down from a grandmother or mother. In Naples, a recipe from an old nun is said to be most authentic because at one time, *Struffoli* were prepared in convents to be given to noble families in return for their acts of charity.

Here’s another important admonition: There should be no extra ingredients in *struffoli*. Omit the candied fruits, even though you will find many recipes that call for candied oranges and citron, the only thing that should be used is candied squash, called Cucuzzata. (A lengthy, labor and time intensive recipe is available to anyone who wants it. I personally think candied citron is a close substitute.)

Note from editor: my own grandmother who called them Ciccierotti made these with nonpareils.

December English Meeting

Andrea Sehmel - Sveva Caetani

by Carmen Fressola Flak

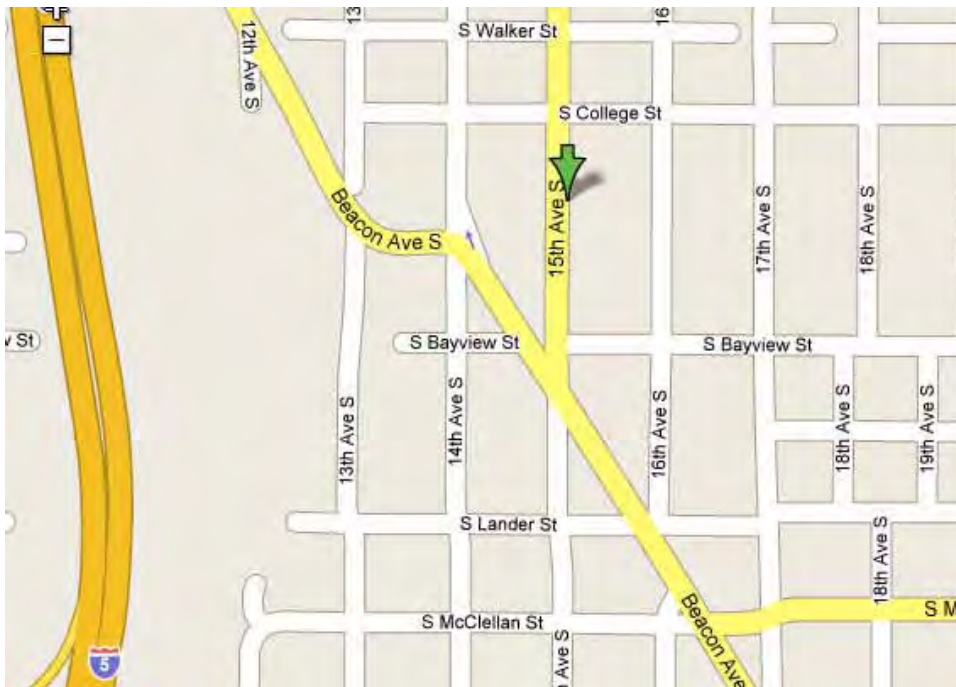
Andrea Sehmel, our December speaker is a woman with a mission. She wants to bring to the world's attention the life work of Sveva Ersilia Giovanella Maria Caetani, which now has only a limited audience. Sveva Caetani, a talented artist who was born into one of the most illustrious families in Roman history adapted Dante's Divine Comedy for the theme of her life work. She called it "Capitulation."

Sehmel painstakingly traced Sveva's family – a family tree studded with illustrious relatives. She concluded her presentation with a slide show of Sveva's fascinating, mystical creations. They were awesome.

For refreshments the membership brought wonderful and varied Italian confections, including a generous platter of cream puffs from our speaker. It was a very tasty meeting.

January Board Meeting

Remember, as a member you are welcome! Our next meeting is January 22nd, mark it on your calendar. The meeting is located at **Faerland Terrace—1421 Minor Ave**, right off Pike Street in Seattle. There is free parking.



Directions to Headquarters House

Headquarters House is located at 2336 15th Avenue South in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Seattle. From I-5, take the Columbian Way/Spokane Street exit, eastbound. Turn left at the first light, Spokane Street and left again at the next light, 15th Avenue S. After crossing Beacon Avenue, Headquarters House will be on the right side between Bayview and College Streets.

ART AND REGION: Le Marche

By Nina LaSalle

It is a new century - an era of globalization, of cultural entrepreneurship, and of intense trade with China, an era of collections, of the new patronage and the new nobility, hiring artists to create the depiction of their wealth. The Dutch bring back exotic seeds of fruits and flowers from their many expeditions to Indonesia. A passion for botany spreads throughout Europe developing a need to document, to describe these new but perishable discoveries. The outcome is the origin of the modern still life painting. The Dutch are the masters of it and their influence is felt throughout Europe. It is a time when artists draw on a range of patrons, instead of residing in one household. Consequently, the big cities of Europe become multicultural havens for artists from all over the continent. It is the year 1600.

Giovanna Garzoni (1600-1670) was born that year in Ascoli Piceno, a town in the fertile valley of the Tronto River in Le Marche at a time when the region, part of the Papal States, finally achieved peace after a century of war. During the 17th century Ascoli Piceno became one of the larger towns in an agricultural zone that supplied much of the grain, fruit and produce to the surrounding areas. Growing up in this environment contributed to her awareness of the subjects that we see so carefully attended to in her paintings. She was trained as a "miniaturist", one who paints in tempera on vellum - a medium considered more appropriate for a woman than large oils on canvas like those of Caravaggio's. Giovanna, in her early twenties, published a book on calligraphy - capital letters illuminated with carefully rendered insects, birds, flowers and fruits. She traveled to Venice to do a miniature, "Portrait of a Young Man". As her skill and talent became known, she acquired patrons in Rome, Naples, and Turin. Her work was highly regarded by the nobility of these cities, and brought her fame by the time she was 30. Giovanna, 37, finally settled in Florence where she painted for the Medici. At the age of 66 she moved to Rome, a city she always loved, and donated her entire estate to the Academia di San Luca with the stipulation that her tomb be erected in the church. She died in 1670. Two Marchegiani, Giuseppe Ghezzi and Carlo Maretta carried out her final wishes in 1698.

Giovanna Garzoni's still lifes look like giant bowls of fruit on a lunar landscape. She does not place her still lifes on carefully arranged linens, but what seem to be rocks and dirt. Perhaps she was influenced by Galileo, a good friend of the Medici's, or by the planetary rooms of the Pitti Palace, where she worked. The Medici employed many botanical illustrators to describe their acquisitions of imported plants, however the subject matter of Garzoni's painting "A Dish of Figs", is homegrown. In this painting of an ancient fruit so much a part of the Italian table, there is no dramatic chiaroscuro as is so often seen in the northern oil paintings, instead there is a warm Mediterranean light that suffuses the picture as if it were painted outside at midday.



Figs in a Plate 25x32.5 cm; Galleria Palatina, Florence

In the "Old Man from Artimino" 38.3cm.x 60.2cm (page 7), one of her largest paintings, we see a table of local produce laid out again on this strange "mountains of the moon" landscape- it surely is the dream larder of a trendy 21st century restaurant - prosciutto, cardoni, melone, coppacolo, chianti, parmigiana, nocciuoli, uve, mele, fagioli, uove, galline, etc. We also have what must be the old man's mastiff guarding the food and looking at the viewer with protective suspicion - non toccare! Since the Medici are bankers, not big maritime traders like the Dutch, perhaps they are saying that they need go no further than their hunting lodge in Artimino, near Prato, to find the best subjects for their still life paintings. However, were this on ly a still life to display their abundance, the "old man" would be left out of the picture. For his portrait to be painted means he is important to the Medici - he is given stature - he has a significant position in this new era - he is groundskeeper, caretaker, hunter, and gardener (continued on page 7)



continued from page 6)
 for the nobility, a trusted and indispensable cog in their existence.

There exists equanimity in Garzoni's composition, a tenderness and humility in the rendering of her objects. She pays equal attention to the annoying fly as to the ripened melon on which it settles. A small bird sips confidently from a bowl of water while another hops unthreatened through the landscape. Unlike the northern paintings, this is an earthy and animated still life, devoid of hedonistic banquet scenes, and groups of dead game with the exception of a single pigeon in the lower right. The scene reflects a trait of the Medici - an avoidance of wealthy ostentation. Garzoni expresses the fragile perishability and fleeting sensuality of natural objects in a joyful way. She captures in her still life painting what is inherent to the Italian peninsula, the pleasure of tasting the "Abbondanza" of life in the constant and reliable light of the Mediterranean sun.

Giovanna Garzoni's work can be seen in the Uffizi in Florence, and the Accademia di San Luca, in Rome, and at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Her portrait, by Giuseppe Ghezzi, is in the Pinacoteca of Ascoli Piceno in Le Marche. Her illustrations grace Lorenza de' Medici's cookbook, "Florentines: A Tuscan Feast", published by Random House, New York 1992.


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Membership Application

I (We) want to promote Italian language and culture and request membership in the Dante Alighieri Society of Washington. Enclosed is my (our) check in full payment of annual membership dues (\$30.00 for individual, \$40.00 for a family).

Mark one : () **New Membership** () **Membership Renewal**

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If you have any questions, please call (206) 320-9159 and leave a message.

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