

Il Gazzettino

April 2017

Message from the Board

We are in the midst of a very active spring season with many exciting events. We hope you have or will be able to attend some of them!

Cordiali saluti,

Friends of Italy Society of Hawaii Board
info@friendsofitalyhawaii.org

In this issue:

- 1 Message from the Board**
- 1 Upcoming Events**
 - Parliamo Italiano!
 - Verdi's Requiem and Dinner
 - Italian Cinema
- 4 Past Events**
 - Cirque de la Symphonie & Dinner at Brick Fire Tavern
 - Parliamo Italiano! (first meeting)
- 5 Feature Story**
 - Alberto Sordi, Honorary Citizen of Kansas City
- 9 Background Notes**
 - Verdi, Manzoni and the Requiem Mass
- 12 Announcements**

Upcoming Events

Verdi's Requiem + Dinner April 6

Parliamo Italiano!
(Let's Speak Italian!) Next meeting April 23

Italian Films at the Doris Duke Theater, Honolulu Museum of Art, April 19, 20, & 27

Upcoming Events: Verdi Requiem and Dinner

On Thursday, April 6, the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra performs **Verdi's Requiem** with the Oahu Choral Society and the Brigham Young University Chorus led by Esther S. Yoo (OCS Artistic Director) and Michael Belnap (BYU Chorus Director) respectively. Written in 1874, this piece is a musical setting for a Roman Catholic funeral mass and was composed in memory of Alexander Manzoni, an Italian poet and novelist who was much admired by **Verdi** (**see our article on p. 9**) The piece features four soloists, a double choir and orchestra. Vigorous rhythms, contrast, and exalted rhythms define this exquisite work.

Purchasing Tickets:

As with all HSO events, FOISOH members get 30% off the ticket price! Members can buy their tickets directly from HSO by calling (808) 946-8742. Please note that non-members will have to pay the regular ticket prices. Let us know that you're attending by registering on the FOISOH website <http://www.friendsofitalyhawaii.org/>

Post-Show Dinner at Cafe Sistina at 9:15 p.m.: Come relax and join us for a post-show dinner at Cafe Sistina after the show. Cafe Sistina is located in the First Interstate Building at 1314 King St. in Honolulu. The reservation is set for **9:15 p.m.** so please arrive promptly after the show ends. Please register on our website so we can have an accurate headcount of attendees for our reservation.

We're delighted to share that the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra kindly offers a 30% off group discount for Friends of Italy Members.



Upcoming Events

Parliamo Italiano!

Parliamo Italiano! had its first informal get-together on Sunday, March 19. Jeannin Jeremiah is the host for an informal discussion in Italian. Additional meetings are planned on

- April 23 – 12:30 pm at 9Bar in SALT at Kakaako (the theme for this meeting will be to present your favorite Italian dish in Italian!)
- May 21 - 12:30 pm at 9Bar in SALT at Kakaako
- Additional meetings may be added at Panya Bistro – watch email announcements for details.

Italian Cinema At The Honolulu Museum Of Art

FOISOH has agreed to be a community partner with Honolulu Museum of Art to promote two Italian films that will be shown at the Doris Duke Theater:

- **Like Crazy (La pazza gioia)**

Showtimes:

Wednesday Apr 19 01:00 PM

Wednesday Apr 19 07:30 PM

Thursday Apr 20 01:00 PM

- **Fire at Sea (Fuocoammare)**

Showtimes:

Thursday Apr 27 01:00 PM

Thursday Apr 27 07:30 PM

More details about these films are provided in our **Announcements** section on pp. 12-13.

Past Events

Cirque de la Symphonie and Dinner at the Brick Fire Tavern

On March 18, 2017 members enjoyed the Symphony performance and delicious pizza at the Brick Fire Tavern.



Parliamo Italiano!

The first meeting of our Italian conversation group, Parliamo Italiano!, took place on March 19. It was a great success and more meetings are planned!



Feature Story

Alberto Sordi, Honorary Citizen of Kansas City

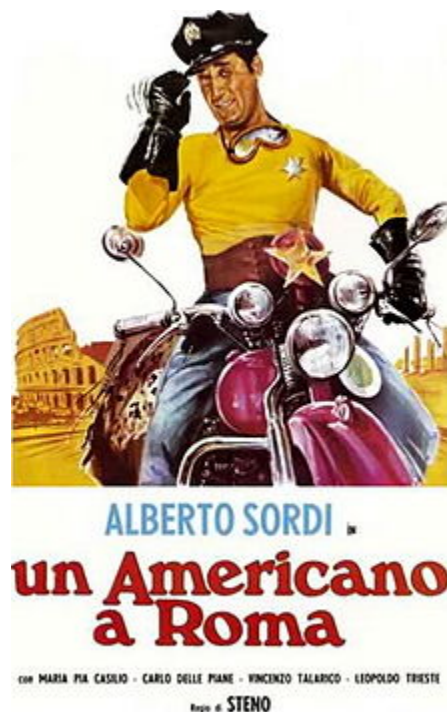
By Mark Ethridge

Alberto Sordi was a much beloved Italian actor who appeared in close to 150 movies over his more than 60-year career. These films ranged from dramas to comedies, but he is perhaps best loved for his zany and satirical comedies. When he died in Rome in 2003, a crowd of more than a million gathered to pay their last respects at his funeral, the largest of such event ever attended in Rome, second only to that of Pope John Paul II who died two years later. One of Sordi's most famous films is *An American in Rome*. It tells the story of a young Italian, Ferdinand "Nando" Moriconi, who is crazy about everything American, and tries to dress, talk, act and even eat like an American (in a hilarious scene, despite his attempt to eat like an American, he can't resist his mama's "maccheroni").



Feature Story

He imagines himself (among other American roles) a “sheriff” for the Kansas City police, and even causes an accident in which the American ambassador’s car is wrecked through Nando’s misguided efforts. In a desperate attempt to get to the United States, he climbs the Colosseum, and imitating a character in a recent film, *Fourteen Hours* by Harry Hathaway, he threatens to commit suicide by jumping unless his demands are met. The American ambassador arrives on the scene and gets Nando to come down by promising him that his demands will be met. Once he comes down, he is soundly thrashed and ends up in the hospital, but not entirely renouncing his American dream.



Feature Story

Sordi's constant references to Kansas City did not go unnoticed on this side of the Atlantic. He was invited by the Mayor to visit the city and was made an honorary citizen. He attended the American Royal, which was a livestock show that dates from 1899 (interesting side note: The Kansas City baseball team "The Kansas City Royals," got their name from this livestock show). At the American Royal, Sordi, wearing a cowboy hat and sporting a fake six shooter was designated the "honorary president," and was given a small stuffed bull as a gift.

Much later, two months after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, in a tribute to the USA, Sordi expressed his solidarity with America and thanked the USA for liberty, stating with some humor that as an honorary citizen of Kansas City how could he not do otherwise. In an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, He referred back to the moments after the Second World War and explained how the character of Nando although exaggerated, was to a certain extent autobiographical:

"I remember when the Americans entered Rome in 1945. After we had fought them, they came to free us and to bring us all kinds of aid. I remember all of those days very well, hour by hour...».

Interviewer: The first American soldier you saw, do you remember that?

Sordi: «And how could we not! He could have been any poor stiff, but for us Roman boys it was like seeing Gary Cooper or John Wayne in flesh and blood. Understand that we grew up with their films. They gave us so many of our dreams. And now we saw them among us, joking with us, and sharing their cigarettes with us. We all felt like Americans, with chewing gum and Coca Cola».

Feature Story

Interviewer: Was Nando Moriconi one of those boys?

Sordi: «Nando is all of those boys. I didn't have to make up anything when I portrayed him. For "Un Americano a Roma" all I had to do was remember those days. We poor souls, condemned to eating spaghetti while we dreamed of steak, of living in the neighborhoods of Rome while we dreamed of Kansas City».

Interviewer: Why Kansas City?

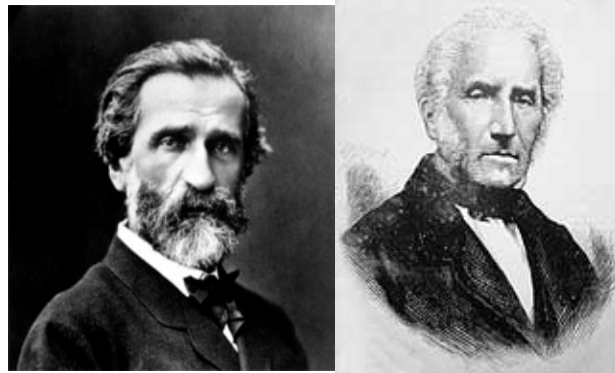
Sordi: «Because in cowboy films I always heard the name mentioned, and I liked how it sounded. In the end, I really went there. Do you know that they made me an honorary citizen?» ... “Yes, beautiful. And the whole city came out to meet me. Led by President Harry Truman, who was actually from Kansas City». (*La Repubblica*, November 10, 2001, interviewed by Barbara Jerkov)

NOTE: The author was born in and lived the first twelve years of his life in Kansas City, Missouri, and still has extended family living there...

Background Notes

VERDI, MANZONI AND THE REQUIEM MASS

By Mark Ethridge



Giuseppe Verdi, one of the world's greatest operatic composers, was an ardent admirer of Alessandro Manzoni, a towering figure in Italian literature and the author of the masterpiece *I Promessi Sposi* (the Betrothed). They had both frequently attended the "salon" of Clara Maffei in Milan to discuss art, music and literature, but they had never met each other. Maffei had a strong desire for the two famous men to meet. In May of 1867, she succeeded in getting Manzoni to send an autographed portrait of himself to Verdi. Manzoni wrote with self-deprecating humor the dedication **"to Giuseppe Verdi, glory of Italy, from a decrepit writer of Lombardy."**

Verdi was profoundly moved and responded through Clara Maffei. Verdi wrote:

"But I don't know, even if I came to Milan, whether I would have courage to introduce myself to him. You know how great my respect is for this man, and that, in my opinion, he has written not only the greatest book of our time, but one of the greatest books that has ever been produced by a human mind. It is not only a book but a consolation for humanity..."

Background Notes

I am sending you a photograph of me for him. I had the idea of writing a few lines to accompany it, but my courage fails me, and I think it would be a bit pretentious of me to do so. If you see him, thank him for me for his portrait, that, with his signature, has become to me one of the most precious of all things. Tell him how great my love and respect is for him, that I hold him in the highest esteem... and how high an honor this is for our ever suffering country.”

In June of 1868, the two finally met at Verdi's house. This is how Verdi described Manzoni to his friend Maffei:

“What can I say about Manzoni? How to describe the sweet, indefinable, new sensation produced in me, by this Saint, as you call him? I would have fallen on my knees in front of him, if it were possible to worship a man.”

Manzoni was no less impressed by the great maestro. He sent Verdi a greeting on March 19, 1869 in which he said:

“To Verdi – [from] Alessandro Manzoni, an insignificant echo of the public admiration for the great maestro, from one who is so fortunate to know personally the noble and admirable qualities of this man.”

Verdi received this letter in Genoa while he was enjoying a dinner celebrating his Saint's Day, and he proudly showed the letter to his friends. After the dinner, to his great dismay, he could not find the note. In a fit of desperation, he couldn't stop himself from telling the invitees: **“If someone is intending to perform a sleight of hand trick, please stop the joke now.”** The hostess at that moment found the note lying on the shelf of a mirror and said: **“you will be happy to know that among our guests there are no thieves.”** To which Verdi replied after calming himself: **“-- but I must admit that for a hand-written note of Manzoni even I would become a thief.”**

Background Notes

For a later anniversary of Verdi's Saint's Day, Manzoni sent him another and final note: **"To Giuseppe Verdi, best wishes for prosperity to match your fame."** Shortly after, Manzoni became ill and died on May 22, 1873.

Maffei sent him the news and Verdi responded:
"I am profoundly saddened by the death of our Great Man! But I shall not come to Milan, for I would not have the heart to go his funeral. I will come soon to visit his grave, alone and unseen, and perhaps (after further reflection, after having weighed my strength) to propose something to honor his memory."

In early June, Verdi came to Milan to visit Manzoni's grave. He returned to his hotel and immediately penned a letter to the Mayor of Milan promising to compose a Requiem Mass that would be performed on the first anniversary of the death of the great writer.

"It is an impulse, or I should say rather a heartfelt need that moves me to honor as much as I can this great man, that I have admired so much as a writer, and venerated as a man, the model of virtue and patriotism."

In a short time after, Verdi finished the Requiem, and on May 22, 1874, it was first performed in the Saint Mark's Church in Milan and would become one of the great masterpieces of choral music.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Verdi proposed a collective effort with 12 other composers in 1868 to compose a requiem for Gioachino Rossini, but the project was abandoned for various reasons.

I owe much of the information in this article to a book titled *"La vita di Giuseppe Verdi narrata al popolo,"* written by Giovanni Bragagnolo and Enrico Bettazzi in the year 1905.

Most of the excerpts here were translated from the original Italian by the author himself.

Announcements

Italian Cinema at the Doris Duke Theater Like Crazy (La pazza gioia)



Showtimes:

Wednesday Apr 19 01:00 PM

Wednesday Apr 19 07:30 PM

Thursday Apr 20 01:00 PM

Location:

Doris Duke Theatre

Price:

Museum members: \$8.00

General Admission: \$10.00

About the Film:

Directed by Paolo Virzì. Italy. 2016. 116 min. Italian with English subtitles. Valeria Bruni Tedeschi and Micaela Ramazzotti are fabulous as a mythomaniac *and a fragile wreck who flee a Tuscan mental institution in this comedy-drama filled with crack characters and dialogue. The women's growing Crazytown bond strike a deeply human chord in this 21st-century Thelma and Louise.

*A mythomaniac is an individual who compulsively tells lies and recounts experiences that are nothing but fantasies.

Announcements

Fire at Sea (Fuocoammare)

**Showtimes:**

Thursday Apr 27 01:00 PM

Thursday Apr 27 07:30 PM

Location:

Doris Duke Theatre

Price:

Museum members: \$8.00

General Admission: \$10.00

About the Film:

Directed by Gianfranco Rossi. Italy. 2016. 108 min. Italian with English subtitles.

An Academy Award® nominee for Best Documentary Feature and the first nonfiction film to win the top prize at the Berlin International Film Festival, *Fire at Sea* takes place in Lampedusa, the Mediterranean island that has become a major entry point for refugees into Europe. There, we meet Samuele, a 12-year-old boy who lives simply, climbing rocks by the shore and playing with his slingshot. Nearby, we bear witness as thousands of men, women, and children risk their lives to make the brutal crossing from Africa. Filmmaker Gianfranco Rosi masterfully juxtaposes these realities, jolting the audience into a new understanding of what is happening in the region, the heavy toll of the migrant crisis, and the price of freedom in this *New York Times* Critics' Pick.