



IL CENACOLO

ITALIAN CULTURAL CLUB

Founded in 1928

Regular Thursday Meetings, Noon to 2:00 P.M.

San Francisco Italian Athletic Club

1630 Stockton Street (3rd floor), San Francisco, CA 94133

Post Office Box 475119, San Francisco CA 94147-5119

www.ilcenacolosf.org

MAY 2014

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Speaker: Jorge F. Escobar, SVP and Senior Portfolio Manager, UBS Financial Services

Topic: “In Search of a XXI Century Italian Renaissance”

Thursday, May 8, 2014

Speaker: Alessandro Kugushev, Author, Publisher, Entrepreneur

Topic: “Italy’s Imprint on Russia”

Thursday, May 15, 2014

Speaker: James J. Boitano, PhD, Retired Professor, Dominican University

Topic: “Italy in Turmoil, the World of Isabella D’Este”

Thursday, May 22, 2014

Speaker: Richard Wahlberg, Recording Engineer, 2012 Il Cenacolo Man of the Year

Topic: “The Italian Baroque in Music ”

Thursday, May 29, 2014

Speaker: Ruth Weinberg, Folk Art Collector and Anthropologist

Topic: “The Sicilian Puppet Theater: Culture and History Through Folk Art”

This month’s programs arranged by Alex Kugushev.

PROGRAM PROFILES



Jorge F. Escobar

Thursday, May 1, 2014

**Speaker: Jorge F. Escobar, SVP and Senior Portfolio Manager,
UBS Financial Services**

Topic: “In Search of a XXI Century Italian Renaissance”

Jorge Escobar will speak to the question of whether Italy, the cradle of much of Western civilization, can come back from its current woes. He will examine where Italy finds itself today, economically, financially, politically and socially. From his perspective as an international banker, and also as an Italophile, he will consider the steps that Italy needs to undertake to fulfill its potential for a new renaissance in the 21st century. He will especially focus on economic and political reforms within the European Union framework.

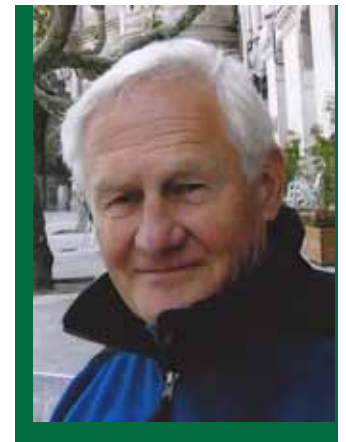
Jorge is an international banker and intimate of Italy, and the Senior Vice President and Senior Portfolio Manager at UBS Financial Services. He was born and raised in Mexico City, and since 1978 has been a resident in the Bay Area. He holds MBA and CPA degrees from two leading Mexican universities, and for 42 years has worked with clients in the United States, Latin America, Asia and Europe. Jorge is also a lover of Italy, fluent in the Italian language and married to an Italian woman born and raised in Milan. Jorge is a frequent visitor to Italy and a student of the country’s current condition. His father-in-law, incidentally, was co-founder of San Francisco’s *North Beach Restaurant*.

Thursday, May 8, 2014

Speaker: Alessandro Kugushev, Author, Publisher, Entrepreneur

Topic: “Italy’s Imprint on Russia”

Though this is largely unknown in the West, Italy has marked Russia’s cultural development since the 12th century and until the revolution of 1917. Alex Kugushev, of profound Russian background, will describe the effects of Italian influence on Russia’s architecture, music, education, and literature. He will also illustrate his talk with views of some remarkable architecture that Italians left on Russia’s landscape, as well as with some paintings of Italian landscapes by Russian artists.



Alessandro Kugushev

Fellow Cenacolista Alex Kugushev was born in Nizza, France (he and Garibaldi), of Russian parents, and schooled successively in Yugoslavia, Switzerland and Argentina. He is a journalist by training and a publisher by trade. As an adolescent he lived through World War II, the defining experience of his life. He has been an immigrant in America for over half a century, a citizen for almost as long and describes himself as an “American with Conviction.” His life in the US has spanned a broad sample of the immigrant experience – from longshoreman in Manhattan, to fruit picker in Santa Clara Valley, a stint as a college instructor in Pennsylvania, forty years as a college textbook publisher and finally a few years as an entrepreneur, publishing on the internet. He has written three books, traveled to well over 70 countries and speaks seven languages.

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Thursday, May 15, 2014

Speaker: James J. Boitano, PhD, Retired Professor, Dominican University

Topic: “Italy in Turmoil, the World of Isabella D’Este”

Isabella D’Este lived at a dramatic time in Italian history. She was both participant and witness of Italy’s transition from the summit of the Renaissance into what would seem as decay. She knew everyone who mattered in Italy at the time—the popes, the rulers, the invading kings of France and Spain and the German emperor. She knew the intellectuals—Guicciardini, Machiavelli and Castiglione, and the artists such as Michelangelo, Leonardo, Ticiano, Tintoretto, Veronese and many others. She had to rule, successfully, when all around her was falling apart. Jim will discuss the events both glorious and inglorious that took place on the Peninsula during Isabella’s time and the famous and the infamous with whom she was destined to deal.



James J. Boitano

Dr. James J. Boitano is a Cenacolista and our Immediate Past-President, as well as the author of the *Alla Corrente* column in our monthly bulletin. Jim was born and raised in Seattle. He holds a BA from Seattle University, an MA in International Relations from the University of Denver, and a PhD in Political Philosophy from the Catholic University of America. He taught for 36 years at Dominican College/University of San Rafael, California, before retiring in 2006 as Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Humanities, and Dean Emeritus of Arts and Sciences. At Dominican, he was the founding Chair of the Political Science Department; Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences for three years; Chair of the MA in Humanities Program; and Faculty Development Program Director, among other positions.

Jim served on the Marin Symphony Board of Directors for fifteen years and two years as President. He now sits on the Board of the Marin Music Chest, and will be the next President of that Board. He also serves as the Chairman of the Advisory Board to the Dean of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at Dominican University.

Thursday, May 22, 2014

Speaker: Dick Wahlberg, Recording Engineer, and 2012 Il Cenacolo Man of the Year

Topic: “The Italian Baroque in Music”

In Jim Boitano’s overview of the world of Isabella d’Este we saw an Italy still creative and culturally vigorous, but now in political turmoil and in steep economic decline. What happened to that cultural vigor at the turn of the seventeenth century? Well, the Italian genius now exploded in the musical baroque. Beginning around 1600 multiple Italian composers spilled onto Western civilization a torrent of new musical forms and ideas: symphonies, concertos, suites, sonatas, opera, oratorios, ballets, and cantatas. These Italian creations influenced and at times defined the development of European music for three centuries.

Dick Wahlberg will give us the opportunity to listen to some outstanding examples of this musical revolution.



Richard Wahlberg

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Dick Wahlberg, a master of musical recording and 2012 Il Cenacolo Man of the Year, embodies the essence of music for us Cenacolisti. Every man is born to his destiny, and looking back, it is clear that Dick was destined to a musical life. His mother was personal secretary to Gaetano Merola, founder of the San Francisco Opera Company. Home was chock full of the best classical recordings, and he took to them like a duck to water. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven were mother's milk to young Richard.

Always inquisitive and possessed of the collector's bent, he went on to found his record collection, now among the best in the world. The headmaster at his grammar school encouraged Dick in the art of recording live music. A friendship with the African American janitor there opened his ears to jazz. His high school music teacher nominated him for the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he met the love of his life, his wonderful wife Vivian.

Over the years Dick has become our most popular speaker, offering musicales of classical and popular music, educating and entertaining us ceaselessly with song, much of it played on his vintage Victrola.

Thursday, May 29, 2014

Speaker: Ruth Weinberg, Folk Art Collector and Anthropologist

Topic: "The Sicilian Puppet Theater: Culture and History Through Folk Art"

In 2008, the Sicilian Puppet Theater, L'Opera dei Pupi, was inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in recognition of its artistic expression. Why? What makes L'Opera dei Pupi unique and important? Ruth will take us through the traditions, history and culture of the Sicilian Puppet Theater. She will tell us how it emerged and discuss the traditional function and its recurring themes. Significantly, she will show how L'Opera dei Pupi served to reinforce Sicilian culture and history. Ruth will also explain how the puppets are made and how they differ regionally. In closing she will discuss why interest in the puppet theater declined and why this treasured tradition is now being reborn.



L'Opera dei Pupi

Ruth is of Sicilian heritage and was born in Buffalo, New York, which was a resettlement community for her grandmother's village, Valledolmo. Ruth holds a Master's degree in anthropology and worked in the publishing industry for more than 30 years. She is the mother of three sons and the proud grandmother of Benjamin Alessio. Ruth has traveled in Sicily many times, and with her brother, conducted family research in both Valledolmo and Villalba, her grandfather's village. She is a collector of folk art and her interest in the Sicilian Puppet Theater, as one of the last expressions of an important Sicilian folk tradition, began many years ago when she attended her first L'Opera dei Pupi in Cefalu, Sicily.

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

MAY 2014

Greetings Cenacolisti:

This year, for the first time, our Renzo Turco Scholarship Award program was held as a Dinner program. I am pleased to report that the this 30th anniversary program was a delightful event and a true success. Many members brought their wives and enjoyed an evening of conversation, good food along with the wonderful program. Hopefully those that were not able to attend this year will be able to join us at a future evening affair.

Our Honoree Connie McNair, a senior at Stanford University, recounted her two stays in Italy and her desire to continue with the Italian language and hopefully return to Italy to teach English. Her professor, David Lummus, spoke about the Italian Language program at Stanford, giving us an overview of the entire program. We have asked him to return as a speaker at a future Thursday luncheon.

A special thanks to Ron Derenzi for organizing the 2014 Renzo Turco evening and assembling an excellent program for April. For May, Alex Kugushev has lined up a month devoted to Italian Culture, be sure to see the details in the Program Profiles.

A REMINDER that our 2014 Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, June 26th, at a regularly scheduled luncheon—as always, only members and their male guests may attend. The program for the day will be the official business of the club including the election of five new Board members, By-Law modifications, year-end reports on finance, membership, program and other matters. A formal announcement will be sent at the end of May.

See you at lunch!

—*Don Lewis, Presidente*



*Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901),
by Théobald Chartran (1849-1907),
for Vanity Fair, 1879.*

ALLA CORRENTE

JOSEPH STELLA (1877-1946)

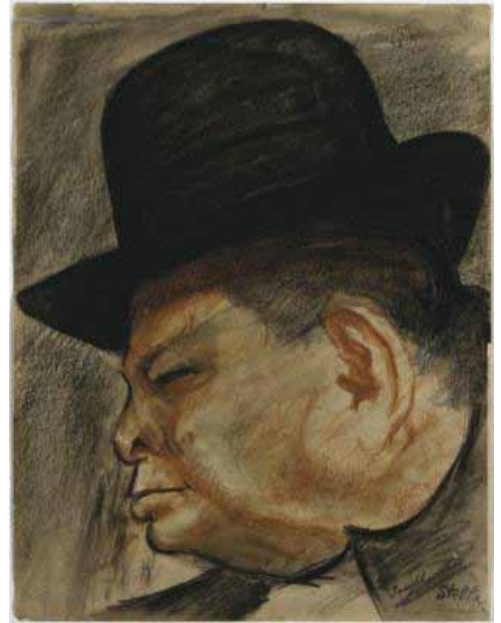
Italian-born Joseph Stella is hailed as America's first Futurist painter and is best remembered for his dynamic paintings of New York monuments such as Coney Island and the Brooklyn Bridge. As an important American Modernist, Stella had enormous influence over subsequent generations of Modernist artists like Knud Merrild, Edgar Ewing, Lyla Harcoff, and Anya Fisher, who helped bring Modernism to the West Coast.

He was born Giuseppe Michele Stella on June 13, 1877, to Michele Stella and his wife Vincenza, née Cerone, in Muro Lucano, a mountain village not far from Naples, Italy. He was the fourth of five brothers and was called "Beppino," a family nickname that lasted until his thirties. In 1896, he immigrated to the United States and joined his brother Antonio, a doctor, who two years earlier had set up his medical practice in lower Manhattan's Little Italy, in New York City.

Stella initially studied medicine and pharmacology; however, after a year at medical school, followed by another year at pharmacy school, he found his true passion—the arts. While enrolled at the College of Pharmacy, he attended the antique class at the Art Students League in New York. He left the League after several months in 1898 because they would not allow him to focus on drawing the flowers he preferred to figures. By this time he had given up on his family's hopes of him becoming a physician. Instead, he sought after his own dream, and enrolled at the New York School of Art (now Parsons, the New School for Design) for more formal training. There, he studied with William Merritt Chase for three years until 1901. Chase considered the floral still life to be not just an admirable theme but also the most complex form of still life. Under Chase's guidance, he became proficient in emulating his mentor's style of swiftly applied brushstrokes. Also, under the influence of Chase's lectures, Stella began to admire the works of Dutch, German and Flemish masters that were on view at the nearby Metropolitan Museum of Art. Chase called his student the "American Manet" and said that one of his portrait studies was the equivalent of the French master.

In 1903, artist Robert Henri became an instructor at the New York School of Art. After hearing Henri's belief that no subject was too mundane for art, the young Stella soon turned to illustrating subjects of New York's immigrant population to which he, himself, belonged. In 1905, Stella's drawings of immigrants were included in the popular social reform weekly *The Outlook*. Soon after, Stella became involved in the immigration issues that were sweeping the nation. Arguing for the equal treatment of fellow immigrants, he completed commissions for more social reform weeklies, such as the widely distributed *Charities* and *The Commons*.

While working as an illustrator for these publications, Stella was also making a name for himself as a painter. In 1906, his first exhibited work, "The Old Man," a portrait of a poor old man in the Bowery that was a study in various shades of black, was hung in the Vanderbilt Gallery in New York at an exhibition of the Society of American Artists. However, despite success in America, Stella grew homesick for his small hometown of Muro Lucano in Italy. In 1909, he sailed for Europe, visiting Rome, Florence, Naples, Muro Lucano, and Paris. During his extended stay in Paris, he was a participant in the salon of Gertrude Stein where he met and interacted with other famous American expatriate artists and writers who met regularly in her home. He also



Joseph Stella, Self-portrait

witnessed, for the first time, Cubist and Futurist works at the annual Salon des Independants and the Section d'Or exhibition. Also, while in Paris, he attended the first exhibition of Italian Futurist paintings at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in 1912. Influenced by the Italian Futurists, Stella adopted the group's claims that the modern artist should not look to the past for material; instead, the modern artist must endeavor to express the civilization of his or her own era.

With this new rhetoric in mind, Stella returned to New York in the fall of 1912. Upon his arrival, he broke away from the traditional styles he had been taught years earlier. As if to highlight his schism from tradition even more poignantly, two of his paintings were included in the landmark, modern art Armory Show of 1913. Soon afterwards, he produced his first grand Futurist painting, "Battle of Lights, Mardi Gras, Coney Island" (1913-14), which is a colorful and swirling interpretation of Brooklyn's famous amusement park. It is a large, multifaceted, conceptual work that was among the first and only American paintings to display an understanding of the Italian Modernist style that he had observed at the Italian Futurist exhibit at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris. Since its display at the Montross Gallery in the fall of 1913, it has been hailed as the first American Futurist painting.



The Red Hat

Throughout the next decade, Stella created romantic, partially abstract, interpretations of parts of New York, in particular the Brooklyn Bridge, which he viewed as the quintessence of American culture. In addition, he painted colorful, purely abstract works, and he never lost his love of painting flowers, looking to 14th- and 15th-century



Palm Tree and Bird

Italian and Flemish painters for inspiration. By 1916, Stella had begun to produce stylistically diverse paintings of nature and symbolic abstractions infused with his own interpretation and symbolism. The pastel "Nativity" (1917-18) and watercolor "Spring" are beautiful examples. In 1919, he began the silverpoint and wax-crayon sketches of flowers, vegetables, butterflies, and birds that would captivate him for the rest of his career. In 1919-20, he painted two of his most important works, "Brooklyn Bridge" and "The Tree of My Life," which was sold at Christie's in 1986 for \$2.2 million, a record price for the artist at the time.

During the early 1920s, Stella earned a reputation as an important figure in American modern art. In 1921, he published his first of many lectures on art in the popular magazine *Broom*. He acted as a director of the Society of Independent Artists and also of Salons of America. After years as an immigrant in a country that prized him as an artist of its own, Stella finally became a citizen of the United States in 1923. However, despite his new citizenship, Stella was unable to shake feelings of displacement and homesickness. During the next ten years of his life, he lived mainly in Europe, only visiting the United States

to help plan exhibitions of his work. Finally, in 1934, he permanently settled in the Bronx with his wife Mary French Stella. Over the next decade, his health deteriorated rapidly, and in turn, his reputation as a prolific painter suffered.

At times during his last years, his art was inspired by a 1938 visit to Barbados, which he called “the magic island.” Following this visit, he sometimes used tropical subject matter with an opulent decorative style in his paintings, while at other times he demonstrated awe for Renaissance art. His works during this period also included several figural studies saturated with religious meaning.

At the age of 60, he developed heart disease, and was eventually confined to his bed in 1942. In the years following, Stella underwent an unsuccessful surgery for thrombosis in his left eye, and he suffered a serious injury from falling down an open elevator shaft. Despite numerous near-fatal circumstances, Stella’s life ended with a heart attack on November 5, 1946.



Serenade, A Christmas Fantasy



Knight of Roses

MEMBERSHIP

IN MEMORIAM

Al Nathe, Cenacolista, died March 17, 2014 at the age of 93.

MEMBER NEWS

Member and Past President Joe Simini wrote a new book about his odyssey of losing 115 pounds, from 285 to a trim 170, from a 60" belt to a 40" belt. *An Easy and Permanent Weight Loss Diet* is available in Kindle and NOOK.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ILCENACOLO

THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 2014

*IL CENACOLO ANNUAL MEETING
SAN FRANCISCO ITALIAN ATHLETIC CLUB
NOON*

SEPTEMBER 14, 2014

*SAL REINA OPERA OUTING
DEER PARK VILLA*

DECEMBER 5, 2014

*CHRISTMAS GALA
ST. FRANCIS YACHT CLUB*



POSTCARDS FROM ITALY *



*La Provinca - Podernuovo, Tuscany