



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

"Il Cenacolo is an organization that preserves, enhances and encourages all aspects of Italian arts, language and culture and recognizes the unique contribution of Italian heritage that is intertwined in the history and life of the San Francisco Bay Area."

OCTOBER 2017

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2017

The 2017-18 San Francisco Opera Season

Kip Cranna, Cenacolista

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2017

Domes, Arches and Minarets:

A History of Islamic-Inspired Buildings in America

Phil Pasquini

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2017

The Life and Afterlife of the Etruscan Banquet

Dr. Lisa Pieraccini

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2017

La Sagrada Familia

Alex Kugushev, Cenacolista

This month's programs arranged by David T. Giannini.

PROGRAM PROFILES

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2017

The 2017-18 San Francisco Opera Season

Kip Cranna, Cenacolista

With the opening of the 2017-2018 San Francisco Opera Season, we are privileged to again welcome our Cenacolo member Kip Cranna to describe the repertoire: five different performances from Turandot to Girl of the Golden West, plus three concerts. As always, Kip will outline the highlights of each of the operatic performances and their principals, while also enticing us with details about the concerts. He is well equipped to do this, currently serving as the [Dramaturg](#) [do google this!] and has also been serving on the Opera Company's staff since 1979, including as Director of Music for over 30 years!



Photo by Cory Weaver

Among his many awards, Kip has received the San Francisco Opera Medal and the Bernard Osher Award for Distinguished Efforts. His curriculum vitae includes a BA from the University of North Dakota and a PhD in Musicology from Stanford. He has also been the program director and lecturer for the Carmel Bach Festival, teaches at the San Francisco Conservatory and the Fromm Institute, and moderates the San Francisco Opera Guild's "Insight" panel discussions. Needless to say, our fellow Cenacolista knows of what he speaks—if you are at all interested in understanding what the San Francisco Opera and Il Cenacolo are all about, don't miss this luncheon!

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2017

Domes, Arches and Minarets:

A History of Islamic-Inspired Buildings in America

Phil Pasquini

Ever marveled at the beautiful domes and minarets gracing buildings and structures throughout the US—even here in San Francisco and California? Phil Pasquini, cousin to Cenacolista brothers Marc and Dennis Pasquini, will trace the 200+ year history and development of Islamic-inspired architecture in America from the earliest Spanish-Moorish buildings constructed in the 1700s to the contemporary structures of our 21st century. Phil will show us how Islamic architecture was adapted and incorporated by many of the famous architects such as our own Timothy Pflueger, Thomas Patterson Ross, Frank Lloyd Wright, Carl and Robert Boller and Philip Johnson, to name just a few. Five years in the making, Phil will detail how he traveled throughout our country to photograph and describe these architectural marvels depicted in his published book of the same name—which we can purchase at our luncheon.



Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco.

Photo from aviewoncities.com

Born in Sacramento, Phil earned his BFA and MFA at the San Francisco Art Institute. He was awarded an individual fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and enjoyed a 39-year career as a college professor at San Francisco City College and a lecturer in the Classics Department at San Francisco State, the École Supérieure de Commerce de Toulon, France and the Hadassah Technological College, Jerusalem, Israel. He has also worked for 22 years as a photojournalist for various international newspapers, magazines and publications.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2017

The Life and Afterlife of the Etruscan Banquet

Lisa Pieraccini, PhD

The Etruscans, the first “banqueters” of ancient Italy, created an aristocratic feasting ideology that became an essential component of elite Etruscan culture. The depictions of their feasting span from daily life to the afterlife. The banquet became a quintessential component of Etruscan culture where certain foods and beverages took on symbolic meaning.



*From The National Archaeological
Museum of Tarquinia*

<http://www.tarquinia-cerveteri.it/en/museum-and-necropolis-of-tarquinia/museum>

What can we learn from the eating and drinking customs of the Etruscans? How have these customs formed part of the culinary fabric of Italy today? These are all matters which are of special interest for us as “Cenacolisti.”

Questions such as these will be answered by Dr. Pieraccini, who has regaled us about Etruscan culture and mores at several of our past Thursday luncheons. She is a professor and project director at the Del Chiaro Center for Ancient Italian Studies at UC Berkeley. Having received her PhD at UC Santa Barbara, she is a leading much-published authority on Etruria. Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about our ancient forebearers.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2017

La Sagrada Familia

Alex Kugushev, Cenacolista

Barcelona's basilica La Sagrada Familia is a cultural and religious phenomenon unique in contemporary Western civilization. These days, churches throughout the rest of Western Europe stand empty, but the citizens of Barcelona have countered the trend by creating a monument for the ages. The construction which has been continuously ongoing since 1883—

the year when Antoni Gaudí initiated it—is slated for completion, as the Barcelonans proudly insist, “over the next few decades.” We will experience, in a richly illustrated presentation, the beauty we see now and how it came to be—the genius of Gaudí and spirit of Barcelona.

Noneother than our erudite fellow Cenacolista and frequent Thursday luncheon presenter Alex Kugushev will educate us about this wondrous monument. We are all acquainted with Alex’s accomplishments which need not be repeated here—simply put: we’ll see you at the October 26th Cenacolo Luncheon!

One-minute video of the simulated completion of the basilica according to Gaudi’s design:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcDmloG3tXU> (Click here)



[Photo from DocumentaryTube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcDmloG3tXU)

Dear Cenacolisti,

Welcome to the first bulletin of fall. I hope that you and your family enjoyed summer—wasn't it warmer than usual?—and didn't the time just fly? Obviously a function of age! This bulletin contains information about upcoming events and other matters that I hope you will find useful.

A SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE BOARD—

The big news first. On the matter of admitting women as members to Il Cenacolo: over the past year since the club-wide “referendum” there has been a lot more input and discussion to the point that your Board decided to reconsider its previous position. At its September 21 meeting, the Directors of Il Cenacolo unanimously agreed to accept applications from women. This policy will go into effect January 1, 2018, although earlier applications are both encouraged and welcome.

There were many compelling reasons for changing our policy, including the belief that women will add a new and improved dynamic to our Club, that admission will increase our membership totals, and that women will provide a unique, perhaps different, and certainly enhanced perspective. We realize that this revision may be controversial. I encourage you to send me your thoughts, suggestions, etc. via email (ilpresidente@ilcenacolosf.org). Your Board strongly believes that this change will be a major step (among many) towards the continued growth and evolution of Il Cenacolo.

PEOPLE—

Just a couple of reminders:

—Our TEAMS are in the process of doing important work. As before, I encourage you to join one of these committees. Your contribution will be appreciated and will make a difference. Please take the time now to contact one of the team chairmen (they are listed after this message) and get involved!

—We will soon be gearing up to identify those members who would be good Board of Director members next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2018. I know it's early to start this process, but it takes time. Please refer to last month's bulletin for more information on this. You are needed to help lead our Club. Please contact me now ilpresidente@ilcenacolosf.org to throw your name into the hat for consideration.

EVENTS & PROGRAMS—

Thanks to Ken Sproul for organizing the September programs. The programs were really well-received.

This bulletin highlights our October programs—organized by David Giannini. Many thanks to David. Please support your Club by attending as many of the Thursday luncheons as possible. Your support is really needed, so please continue to enjoy the outstanding programs and the camaraderie of your fellow club members.

Just for your future planning—

OCTOBER

Meetings will be held as usual on each Thursday.

NOVEMBER

Meetings will be held each Thursday, except for November 23 (Thanksgiving) and November 30 (the day before the Holiday Gala).

DECEMBER

Regular meetings will be held on December 7 and December 14. There will be no meetings on December 21 and 28 because of Christmas and New Year's.

JANUARY

Regular meetings each Thursday.

The Annual Opera Outing was held on August 27. What a wonderful event! There were over 125 in attendance. The live music by opera singers was enjoyed by all. The weather was nice. The food and beverages were enjoyed by all. Lots of people to thank for a great event: to **Michael Muscardini, David Cobb and Ron Fenolio**—many thanks gentlemen for your gracious donation of wine from your wineries—**Muscardini Cellers, Cobb Wines and Veeder Crest Wines**. The entire event was orchestrated by **Chuck Stagliano**. He was supported by his team including **Richard Ruff, Ron Derenzi and Don Lewis**, and they spent many hours ensuring that we all had a good time. Well done, gentlemen!

The Marin Italian Film Festival took place on September 23 and **Il Cenacolo** was a major participant on opening night with several of our members in attendance at the performance and afterward at a nearby Italian restaurant for dinner. Too late to report on the results in this bulletin, but I know that **Ken Sproul and Lido Cantarutti** put together a fantastic evening. Our fellow member, **Lido Cantarutti**, has organized this festival for about 40 years now and the **Il Cenacolo** opening night event was sold out early.

Our next major event will be the **Holiday Gala on December 1** at the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club. **Ron Derenzi**, the Gala's chairman, and his team are working on this real Italian-style holiday party—with great food and lots of fun. This year's Gala is a change from prior years and will be different in style and substance—in a much more casual environment and at a lower price. We will be honoring our **Woman-of-the-Year—Anna Maria Pierini**, Executive Director of Italian Community Services—an agency that has provided outstanding service to our Italian community for many, many years. Please mark December 1 on your calendars now. More information will follow in future bulletins.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: OCTOBER 12, 2017

Just a reminder that you are invited to attend and observe a Board meeting. If you are interested, please e-mail me ilpresidente@ilcenacolosf.org and let me know your preferred date (we usually meet at 9:30 am on the second Thursday of each month—right before the weekly luncheon meeting).

FINALLY—

Many thanks to each of you who have made an effort to increase your participation—at both our events and at our Thursday luncheons. Your involvement is critical to the continuation of our Club and to the support of our San Francisco and Italian culture. It is rewarding to observe your enjoyment of the programs and camaraderie with your fellow members.

Best regards,
Franz Cristiani
President



“Loden dal Brun” - Achille Beltrami

IL CENACOLO TEAMS

SEPTEMBER 2017

FINANCE/INVESTMENTS

CHAIRMAN: Marv Pheffer (m.pheffer@ilcenacolosf.org)
TEAM MEMBERS: John Benson, Ron Derenzi and David Giannini

FUND RAISING

CHAIRMAN: Stuart Hume (s.hume@ilcenacolosf.org)
TEAM MEMBERS: Michael Muscardini and John Shook

HOLIDAY GALA

CHAIRMAN: Ron Derenzi (r.derenzi@ilcenacolosf.org)
TEAM MEMBERS: Eugene Lanzone and West Whittaker

ITALIAN FILM FESTIVAL

CHAIRMAN: Ken Sproul (k.sproul@ilcenacolosf.org)
TEAM MEMBER: Lido Cantarutti

LUNCHEONS/SFIAC LIAISON

CHAIRMAN: Eugene Lanzone (e.lanzone@ilcenacolosf.org)
TEAM MEMBERS: Ken Sproul and Lou Sarto

OPERA OUTING

CHAIRMAN: Chuck Stagliano (c.stagliano@ilcenacolosf.org)
TEAM MEMBERS: Ron Derenzi, Don Lewis and Richard Ruff

PUBLIC RELATIONS, COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND MEMBERSHIP

CHAIRMAN: Alex Kugushev (a.kugushev@ilcenacolosf.org)
TEAM MEMBERS: David Cobb, Bill Dito and Mauro Zanetti

STRATEGIC PLANNING/MARKETING

CHAIRMAN: Richard DeBono (r.debono@ilcenacolosf.org)
TEAM MEMBERS: Jim Boitano, Pietro Bonanno and Mike Prior

WEBSITE REDESIGN

CHAIRMAN: Doug Von Qualen (d.vonqualen@ilcenacolosf.org)
TEAM MEMBER: Chuck Stagliano

RIDE SHARE

FROM:

CONTACT:

SF—Pacific Heights and the Marina . . . [Richard De Bono](#) 415-730-2584 cell

SF—Marina [David Giannini](#) 415-921-3077 home
415-713-9219 cell

SF—Jordan Park, Inner Richmond . . . [Chuck Stagliano](#) 415 531-6900 cell

Marin County [David Cobb](#) 707-888-2311 cell

SFIAC PARKING

(all within 1-4 blocks away)

- Valet parking at [Original Joe's](#) restaurant at the corner of Stockton and Union. You do not have to dine there to use the valet. The current charge is \$9.
- [APM Parking at 721 Filbert](#). \$10 with SFIAC validation.
- [North Beach Garage at 735 Vallejo](#) (between Stockton and Powell). \$3 per hour.
- [Vallejo Street Garage at 766 Vallejo](#). \$3 per hour.
- [Green Street Parking at 626 Green](#) (between Columbus and Powell). \$10.
- [Powell Street Garage at 1636 Powell](#) (between Union and Green). \$12-\$25.

(Click on links for directions to SFIAC)

TEATRO ALLA SCALA

In the September 2016 Bulletin my essay was about the oldest working opera house in the World—Teatro di San Carlo (1737) in Naples. In this month's essay, I will look at what is considered by many to be the most renowned opera house in the world—the Teatro alla Scala (or La Scala) in Milan. This is to coincide with Kip Cranna's talk to us on October 7 about the current season of the San Francisco Opera.

La Scala was founded, under the auspices of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria (*right*), to replace the *Teatro Regio Ducale* (*Royal Ducal Theater*), which had been destroyed by fire on February 26, 1776 and had until then been the home of opera in Milan. It was originally known as *Nuovo Regio Ducale Teatro alla Scala* (*New Royal-Ducal Theater alla Scala*). The cost of building the new theater was borne by those who owned the boxes at the old opera house, in exchange for possession of the land on which stood the Church of Santa Maria alla Scala (which had to be destroyed to make room for the new theater), and also for renewed ownership of their boxes in the new theater.



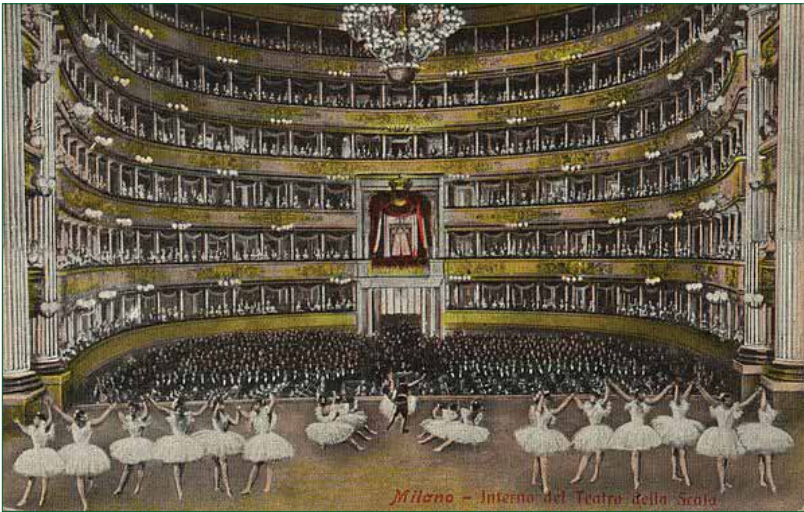
*Portrait by
Martin van Meytens, 1759*

It was designed by the architect Giuseppe Piermarini, who was born in Foligno, then part of the Papal States in central Italy. La Scala was his most famous project; the one he would be most remembered for (so much so, that the “the Piermarini” is sometimes used in Milan as a synonym for La Scala). Piermarini was a neoclassical architect; thus, he preferred sobriety to the artifices of the baroque style. (La Scala has undergone several reconstructions and renovations over the centuries since its beginning, so that today the parts that mirror his original vision are the general structure and the façade of the theater). The construction took two years to complete, and the theater opened on August 3, 1778 with Antonio Salieri's opera *L'Europa Riconosciuta* (“Europe Recognized”) with the libretto by Mattia Verazi.



La Scala soon became the preeminent meeting place for noble and wealthy Milanese. In the tradition of the times, the main floor had no chairs and spectators watched the shows while standing up. The orchestra was in full sight of the audience since the orchestra pit had not yet been built. As with most of the theaters at that time, La Scala was also a casino with gamblers sitting in the foyer (gambling was allowed in theaters only during performances!).

Conditions in the auditorium could be frustrating for the opera lover, as the author Mary Shelley discovered in September, 1840: “At the Opera they were giving Otto Nicolai’s *Templario*. Unfortunately, as is well known, the theater of La Scala serves, not only as the universal drawing-room for all the society of Milan, but every sort of trading transaction, from horse-dealing to stock-jobbing, is carried on in the pit; so that brief and far between are the snatches of melody one can catch.”



La Scala’s original features caused an immediate sensation. It had an enormous stage and more than 3,000 seats; both of which were unlike other theaters in Europe. Six levels of boxes were built. The boxes were decorated according to their owners’ (and theater funders’) preferences. Above the boxes was a gallery—called the *loggione*—where the less wealthy could watch the performances. Over the years, the gallery has been typically

crowded with the most critical opera aficionados, known as the “*loggionisti*”, who could be ecstatic or merciless towards singers’ perceived successes or failures. It is the *loggionisti* who also decide the success or failure of an opera. For their failures, artists receive a “baptism of fire” from these aficionados, and singers’ fiascos are long remembered. (Over the centuries down to the present, many a singer has been booed unmercifully off the stage during a performance. Such an indignity not only embarrasses the singer at the moment, but also tarnishes the singer’s reputation for years).

La Scala was originally illuminated with 84 oil lamps mounted on the stage and another thousand in the rest of theater. To prevent the risks of fire, several rooms were filled with hundreds of water buckets. (In time, the oil lamps were replaced by gas lamps, which were ultimately replaced by electric lights in 1883).

Another feature of the theater that caused an immediate sensation at its opening was its superb acoustics, which made it one of the best theaters in Europe for non-amplified performances (which opera traditionally is). To this day, its acoustics are considered outstanding. In order to improve the acoustics, Piermarini used two original devices: the columns that separated the boxes were smaller than was usual in such theaters, and a wooden vault created almost-perfect audibility from any corner of the theater.

IMPORTANT COMPOSERS AND THEIR PREMIERES AT LA SCALA

La Scala became the principal opera house for Italian “*opera seria*” with the premiere of Gioachino Rossini’s *La Pietra del Paragone* (1812). With this work Rossini became Italy’s most important composer. Following this opera, Rossini had several operas performed at La Scala for the next decade, among them the premieres of *La Gazza Ladra* (1817) and *Il Turco in Italia* (1814). Others that were performed after their premieres in other Italian theaters were: *La Cenerentola*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *La Donna del Lago*, *Otello*, *Tancredi*, *Semiramide*, and *Mosè in Egitto*.

After the wave of works composed by Rossini, a new phase in the history of opera was born. This phase celebrated the new compositional style which is known as “*bel canto*,” and frequently featured the operas of Gaetano Donizetti and Vincenzo Bellini. Donizetti’s premieres at La Scala were *Chiara e Serafina* (1822), *Lucrecia Borgia* (1833), *Gemma di Vergy* (1834), and *Maria Stuarda* (1834). Bellini’s premieres at La Scala were *Il Pirata* (1827), followed by *La Straniera* (1829) and *Norma* (1831).

The one composer who became identified with the grandeur of La Scala the most was Giuseppe Verdi (*right*). Verdi premiered seven of his operas there, beginning in 1839 with *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*. This was followed by: *Un Giorno di Regno* (1840), *Nabucco* (1842), *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata* (1843), *Giovanna d’Arco* (1845), *Otello* (1887), and *Falstaff* (1893).

When *Un Giorno di Regno* proved to be a failure, Verdi appeared to be unable to write good comic music because he was mourning the loss of his first wife and their two children, all of whom had died from disease. However, Verdi’s fortunes turned on March 9, 1842, on occasion of the premiere of the *Nabucco*. This opera, an allegory of the captivity of the Italian nation under Austrian rule, was immensely popular and ran sixty-four times during its first



year. After this success and the successes of his two following works (*I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata* and *Giovanna d’Arco*), Verdi left La Scala for twenty years. Depending upon which side’s explanation one accepts, the reasons given for this hiatus were two. The management of La Scala had reproached Verdi for producing operas that were too expensive and he did not take into consideration the budget restrictions of the theater. Verdi argued that some of his music had been modified (he used the term “corrupted”) by La Scala’s orchestra in the production of *Giovanna d’Arco* in 1845. Whatever had caused the rift, by 1887 all animus had been put aside, and the fruitful collaboration between the composer and the Milanese theater had

been restored. Verdi in that year returned to La Scala for the premiere of his *Otello*, followed by the premiere of his *Falstaff* (his penultimate opera) in 1893.

La Scala also played an important role in furthering the career of Giacomo Puccini. His first opera premiere at La Scala was *Edgar* (1889). This was followed by the premieres of *Madame Butterfly* (1904) and *Turandot* (1926).

PHYSICAL CHANGES TO THE THEATER

In the 20th Century, physical improvements to the original structure were required. The original structure was renovated in 1907, when it was given its current layout with 1,987 seats. In 1943, during World War II, La Scala was severely damaged by Allied bombing. It was rebuilt and reopened on May 11, 1946, with a memorable concert conducted by Arturo Toscanini—twice La Scala’s principal conductor and an associate of the composers Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini—with a soprano solo by Renata Tebaldi (*right*), which created a sensation.



La Scala underwent a major renovation from early 2002 to late 2004.

It closed following the December 7, 2001 season’s opening performances of *Otello*, which ran through December. (La Scala’s season traditionally begins on December 7, the feast of St. Ambrose, who is the patron saint of Milan). From January 19, 2002 to November, 2004, the opera company transferred to the new *Teatro degli Arcimboldi*, built in the Pirelli-Bicocca industrial area located 4½ miles from the city center.

The renovation by architects Mario Botta and Elisabetta Fabbri cost a reported €61 million, and left a budget shortfall that the opera house finally overcame in 2006. The renovation proved controversial since preservationists feared that historic details would be lost. However, the opera company was satisfied with the improvements to the structure and to the sound quality, which was enhanced when the heavy red carpets in the hall were removed. The stage was entirely rebuilt; the backstage area was enlarged to allow more sets to be stored, which permitted more productions to be presented during the opera season.

Seats were installed with monitors for the electronic libretto system (provided by the Italian company, Radio Marconi) that allowed audiences to follow opera libretti in English and Italian, in addition to the original language.

La Scala re-opened on December 7, 2004 with a production, conducted by Riccardo Muti, of Antonio Salieri’s *Europa Riconosciuta*, the first opera that had been performed at La Scala when it originally opened in 1778.

TODAY

La Scala continues to be one of the premier theaters of the world for the production of operas and concerts. To perform on its stage is to unite the singer/orchestra player with the great personages who have been associated with this historic building over the centuries. Truly, the history of opera is contained within its walls.

Adapted by James J. Boitano, PhD from: Teatro alla Scala website, Basket Viaggi (BV) Events website, Kiss from Italy website, Revolvly website, and Wikipedia.

