



## The Celebration of Italy's "Independence Day" in New York

Eleonora Mazzucchi (June 04, 2008)

Italy's Republic Day was elegantly commemorated at Cipriani on Wall Street. Presided over by the foremost Italian institutions in New York, the event also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the publication of nationally cherished novel, "Il Gattopardo", and the 150th anniversary of Puccini's birth

The evening began in dramatic style. The Consul General, Francesco Maria Talò rolled up to the steps of [Cipriani Wall Street](#) [1], where Italy's Republic Day was celebrated June 2nd, on a shiny blue [Vespa](#) [2]. Photographers and cameramen captured him as he made his way up red-carpeted steps and limestone columns to open the festivities. Though the entrance on a Piaggio-brand Vespa provided some Italianate flair, to Talò, it is a symbol of something more. Indeed, ever since taking his post as Consul, his vision for Italy has consistently been one that looks to the future, emphasizing not only the country's vast artistic patrimony but its contributions to science and industry, with trademarks like [Piaggio](#) [3] (also a co-sponsor of the event). He would later reprise this theme in his speech.

The gargantuan, opulent space at [Cipriani](#) [1] was a fitting location to import all the foodstuffs, cocktails, and musical, irrepressible chattiness of an Italy in miniature. Italians living in New York, from residents to envoys in the diplomatic world to members of Italian associations, decked out in their Sunday best, mingled among their compatriots with a rapture no less spontaneous than if they had truly returned home.



Italy's Consul General Francesco Talò

and his wife arriving at the Cipriani reception

by Vespa

Although the party organized by the [General Consulate](#) [4], [the Italian Trade Commission](#) [5], [the Italian Cultural Institute](#) [6] and [the Italian Tourist Board](#) [7] saw some 1000 attendees, a spirit of familiarity reigned. Republic Day commemorates the birth of the Italian nation post-Fascism, or more specifically the ousting of the idle Savoy monarchs, but it is questionable as to whether the guests that evening were driven by patriotism. While there were no women seen slipping dinner rolls into their purses, the open bar and buffet were a big attraction. Typical dishes from Sicily and Tuscany, the two regions spotlighted at the party, were laid out or served by white-jacket waiters, and were almost always accompanied by a [Bellini](#) [8], a national cocktail of sorts that is also [Cipriani](#) [9]'s signature drink, invented by Giuseppe Cipriani in the 1930s. The rush to get one of the tart, meticulously prepared drinks was so intense that one woman, caught in a crush of people around the bar, fainted. She may have been revived by the proceedings that took place thereafter, in which film and television actress, Melba Ruffo di Calabria, led the heads of the hosting institutions onto a stage.

It is no coincidence that Tuscany and Sicily were the regions chosen to co-host the national celebration. This year marks the [150th birthday of Giacomo Puccini](#) [10], a native Tuscan, and [50 years since the publication of the Sicilian literary masterpiece "Il Gattopardo" \("The Leopard"\) by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa](#) [11]. Peter Gelb, the General Manager of the [Metropolitan Opera](#) [12], was bestowed the Puccini International Award by Tuscan Culture Minister, Paolo Cocchi, for his continued efforts in staging the works of the beloved composer. Of the award, Talò said "You can't know how much Puccini loved New York, a capital of opera music. It is why I think it particularly appropriate to honor a great man in the New York cultural scene with an international prize: my congratulations to Peter Gelb." The Consul also extended praise to Giovanni Castellaneta, the Italian Ambassador to the U.S., who also spoke at the event.

Castellaneta pertinently remarked that "Italy owes a lot to the U.S., and vice a versa. Indeed, it is this keen awareness of reciprocity that has allowed for the strengthening of our transatlantic relations." He went on to read a statement from President Bush, who declared June 2nd "Italian Independence Day", a holiday recognized in the U.S.

And in true form for a national holiday, anthems were sung and played from a balcony with gilded balustrades overhead. Famous jazz trumpeter [Chuck Mangione](#) [13] gave a rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner", while the chorus from the Marconi school in New York sang the European anthem and tenor Carlo Barricelli superbly interpreted the Italian national anthem. Throughout the evening Barricelli also sang arias from various Puccini operas, in what were probably the only moments guests settled into awed silence.

Among the prestigious guests were Marcello Spatafora, Italian Ambassador to the United Nations, State Supreme Court Justice Dominic R. Massaro, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, Nicola di Marzio, Bishop of Brooklyn, Rabbi Arthur Schneier, who hosted Pope Benedict XVI at Park East Synagogue last April, representatives from NYPD and NYFD, and Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi di Lampedusa. Italian tenor and superstar Andrea Bocelli sent a video message to the guests through the [Arpa Foundation](#) [14]. Co-hosting the event were Renato Miracco, Director of [the Italian Cultural Institute in New York](#) [6], Riccardo Strano, Director of [the Italian Tourism Board](#) [7] and Aniello Musella, Director of [the Italian Trade Commission](#) [5].

Although the party was supposed to have ended at a precise time, guests lingered nevertheless, sentimentally consuming "real" Italian ice cream and delighting in conversation. On their way out, they took the opportunity to marvel at a glossy [Ferrari](#) [15] and [Maserati](#) [16], displayed for the



occasion. Two cars, as Talò might put it, that stand for the excellence and hope of the nation.

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### Links

- [1] <http://www.cipriani.com/cipriani/Locs/wall.htm>
- [2] <http://www.vespausa.com/>
- [3] <http://www.piaggiousa.com/>
- [4] [http://www.consnewyork.esteri.it/Consolato\\_NewYork](http://www.consnewyork.esteri.it/Consolato_NewYork)
- [5] <http://www.italtrade.com/>
- [6] [http://www.iicnewyork.esteri.it/IIC\\_Newyork](http://www.iicnewyork.esteri.it/IIC_Newyork)
- [7] <http://www.italiantourism.com>
- [8] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bellini\\_\(cocktail\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bellini_(cocktail))
- [9] <http://www.cipriani.com>
- [10] <http://www.puccini2008.it/>
- [11] [http://www.comune.santamargheritadibelice.ag.it/il\\_parco\\_del\\_gattopardo.html](http://www.comune.santamargheritadibelice.ag.it/il_parco_del_gattopardo.html)
- [12] <http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/>
- [13] <http://www.chuckmangione.com/>



[14] <http://www.fondazionearpa.it/>

[15] <http://www.ferrarius.com/>

[16] <http://www.maserati.com>