

A Roman "Toccata e Fuga" in NY

Benedetta Grasso (January 22, 2010)



"Toccata & Fuga" was presented on January 21 at Saint Patrick's Cathedral on 5th Avenue. Tourists and New Yorkers stopped by and enjoyed Italian masterpieces of all times. The event was organized by the Deputy Mayor of Rome Mauro Cutrufo and the Italian Government Tourist Board in New York

Welcome to St. Patrick's Cathedral...in Rome! Forget the cold New York City winter, the giant American flags at Banana Republic, the yellow cabs honking on 5th Avenue and imagine the palms in Piazza Di Spagna, the warm summer breeze over the ancient ruins...

On January 21, in fact, if you happened to be walking around 50th Street and 5th Avenue you might have heard a famous aria or a popular Italian folk song sung on the cathedral's steps. You might have stopped for a moment, curious, and perhaps even shocked to see pictures of the capital of Italy



in the heart of the Big Apple.

Hearing the first notes played by the pianist outside, the crowd at noon grew and included churchgoers, tourists, some Italians surprised to recognize the tunes, enthusiastic opera fans, and many interested people who stayed for little while or remained for the entire event and were entertained by four opera singers in the mobile show called "Toccata e Fuga."

The City Council of Rome usually holds these shows in Italy and Senator Mauro Cutrufo (Deputy Mayor of Rome) explained that this event was held to honor more than 2 million American tourists who every year visit the most important attractions in Rome, and to bring some of the best Italy can offer abroad.

From a tourist's perspective, it was the ideal mix of songs like "O Sole Mio," "Nessun Dorma," and famous arias from *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

To highlight the religious connection between Rome and St. Patrick's Cathedral there were sacred pieces like "Ave Maria." As a tribute to American composer Henri Mancini, "Moon River" was performed.

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This tribute to the music traditions of Italy, a sampling of the most well-known pieces, was indeed an atypical experience for those who were just passing by, and even more so for a non-Italian audience who was less familiar with the music.

If the event's intention was to promote Rome and fascinate New Yorkers even if only for a moment, it definitely worked: a distracted truck driver missed the green light twice while poking his head out of the window to listen to the music and stare dreamily at the singers...

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