

# La Circolettera

Summer 2019



GALA PHOTOS PAGES 5-7



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Paul Finizio, President

### CARI AMICI,

As we approach Summer 2019, we reflect on the wonderful season Il Circolo had. Our annual celebration of Italian Heritage Month kicked it off and was followed by our spectacular *Natale in Famiglia* Christmas luncheon at Boca West. We also enjoyed opera performances, regional dinners, our first *Festa della Donna* celebration and, of course, *Paparazzi Italiani*, our 43rd gala at The Breakers. Introduced by Dion of Dion and the Belmonts was honoree Buddy Fortunato, publisher of The Italian Tribune. Also honored were Franc D'Ambrosio, the Phantom of the Opera, and the Palm Beach-based Romano family. And, we aren't done yet! The Il Circolo *Aperitivos* continue throughout the year and serve to create networking opportunities for young professionals of Italian heritage in Martin, Palm Beach and Broward counties.

I want to focus for a moment on the wonderful first 'Italian Festival on the Beach' headed by our friend John DiPrato of the Rotary Club of Deerfield Beach. Our own Marco Capoccia organized the non-stop entertainment schedule that served to create a multi-generational "Italian" experience from noon to 10 p.m. It was a great event!

As always, we say *grazie* to our board members, officers and supporters who generously contribute as sponsors, patrons and donors to help accomplish our mission. We continue to ask you to consider increasing your involvement in Il Circolo either with your financial support, committee participation or by being an event coordinator or presenter. You "are" valuable to our mission!

Our hope is that you and yours have the best of summers as we prepare the 2019-2020 season and more amazing experiences!

*Buona estate!*  
– Paul Finizio



**The Italian Cultural Society**  
IlCircoloFlorida.com

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Sally Valenti, Executive Editor  
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Il Circolo, the Italian Cultural Society of Florida, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and was created in 1976 with the mission to preserve and promote Italian Culture in South Florida through educational outreach and special events. To fulfill this mission, the organization each year produces a robust schedule of special events that focus on Italian art, music, culture and Italian food and wine. In addition, Il Circolo gives support to college students to study in Italy and provides funding to local school organizations that promote Italian culture, including Florida Atlantic University, Palm Beach Opera, Palm Beach Atlantic University, St. Paul Academy and St. Andrew's School.

With this issue of La Circolettera, we put the spotlight on Ken Langone, a well-known, extremely successful and admired Italian-American, who recently made the news again when he and his wife Elaine shocked the audience of NYU first year medical students and their families at the traditional White Coat ceremony by announcing “As of this very moment, the NYU school of medicine is now a tuition-free medical school.”

According to Langone, NYU’s free tuition applies not just to first-year med students, but to every current student in every class. It’s a gift worth more than \$200,000 each, erases the stress of student loans and frees them to focus on their chosen profession. It took more than a decade to put this plan in action, but NYU now has the endowment to offer free tuition to every med student, in perpetuity. And the implication for the future of medicine in this country has been taken to a new level.

We also want to share with you a bit of the correspondence between our Sally Valenti who immediately sent an email congratulating Langone on this magnanimous initiative and his response to her that speaks to what the Italian family and Il Circolo is all about.

**Sally:** *After seeing you on 60 Minutes, I realized how privileged I am to have this photo with you. As a member of the Italian American community, we share its root values and worship the privileges our immigrant parents took advantage of to make a better life ... Despite all kinds of adversities, they were the parents of the first 2 Italian brothers to graduate from West Point, one in 1943, the other in 1947 ... I’m so proud of what my parents accomplished and so proud of how you share your hard-work achieved success with aspiring young men and women who aim to benefit society.*

**Langone:** *You speak so eloquently about our heritage and the efforts our ancestors made so that we could have better lives and have the chance to live the American dream. That has happened and now we live in this great experiment called America. Elaine and I are committed to showing our gratitude by sharing the many blessings that have come our way. I hope things are well and I again thank you for your kind words. How blessed we are to have great Americans like your brothers who gave so much to make sure all our freedoms are protected.*



Notes:

Ken Langone made his fortune as a co-founder of Home Depot. He and Elaine donated \$100 million toward the free tuition initiative, and he helped raise the additional \$350 million needed to make it a reality.

Sources:

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tuition-free-medical-school-how-the-nyu-school-of-medicine-is-going-tuition-free-60-minutes/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth\\_Langone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Langone)

<https://www.forbes.com/profile/ken-langone/#43cccb13385>

## CULINARY SQUALARSHIP



Il Circolo awarded its first culinary scholarship to Gloria Lewis at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York on March 1st. Representing the Valenti family and the Il Circolo Squalarship in honor of Pasquale and Tom Valenti were Maureen Valenti, Mary Barba and Nick Valenti.

Tim Ryan, President of the CIA, stated that there were over 50,000 graduates already spread throughout the world demonstrating the skills they learned at the school. Guest speaker, Lydia Bastianich, spoke of her passionate drive to gain her present status in the food world, despite the fact it was then a male-dominated profession, and complimented the students, encouraging them to learn how to "cook good food without complications."

Il Circolo wishes Gloria Louis good luck and looks forward to many more future Il Circolo Squalarship awardees.

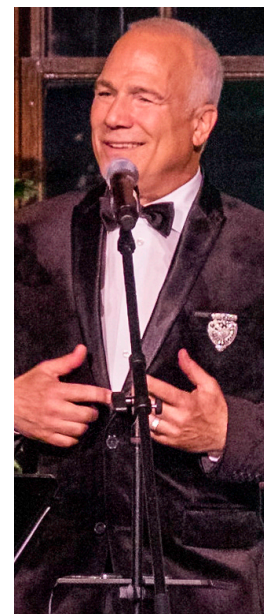
## 43RD ANNIVERSARY GALA

Il Circolo held its 43rd anniversary gala at The Breakers in Palm Beach on Sunday, March 24, 2019. With the sunlit courtyard welcoming guests as they arrived for the Tuscan buffet of appetizers, the stage was set for an evening of splendor and celebration. Live music shared the sounds of joyous greetings and happy laughter.

Entering the Circle Room to the music of Gino De Marco and his band, the attendees were greeted by spectacular centerpieces giving tribute to our honorees. For Buddy Fortunato, publisher of the Italian Tribune, there were tall vases lined with pages of the newspaper and for opera singer Franc D'Ambrosio, roses dangled over a Phantom of the Opera mask. The evening began with greetings by Chairmen Paul Finizio and Chris Salamone, followed by the American and Italian national anthems, a blessing from Bishop Gerald Barbarito read by Sally Valenti, and then the dinner and dancing began.

America's Got Talent contestant, Carlos De Antonis, sang *Nessun Dorma* from Puccini's *Turandot* and Dion of the Belmonts, a close friend of Publisher Buddy Fortunato, introduced him. His speech of gratitude to Il Circolo reinforced his dedication to preserving and promoting Italian Culture through his weekly home-delivered English language newspaper which is full of informative and historic articles of general interest to all who love the culture, not only the food!

The full dance floor, the lavish dinner, the camaraderie continued and then Franc D'Ambrosio took stage. His performance of the theme song of *Phantom of the Opera* stunned guests beyond belief. What a send-off to a most memorable evening! As guests left, they received Il Circolo-embled goody bags chock full of Italian products to take home.



# 43RD ANNIVERSARY GALA



43RD ANNIVERSARY GALA



## EVENTS



### Palm Beach Opera

- The students in the Young Artists program, under the direction of Artistic Operations Manager Scott Guzielek, gave Il Circolo a spectacular free performance in appreciation for a \$3,000 donation. The program highlighted well-known arias from famous operas and was a very professional performance and an afternoon that everyone enjoyed.
- Four years ago, Il Circolo gave Virginia Sims a scholarship as she entered her music studies at Indiana University. In thanks to all who supported her, she gave a free concert at the Royal Poinciana Chapel in Palm Beach. Almost 200 people came to hear the magnificent voice of this beautiful 22-year old, accompanied by an equally talented pianist, Yu-Jhen Liu. Her range, clear tone and star-performance stunned the audience; even her godmother, Virginia Zeani, whose constant “Brava” brought an even broader smile to Mims’ face. At this concert, Il Circolo gave her an additional \$1,000 towards her further studies in Italy where she expects to learn more about refining her art.

Bravi Virginia Mims, her mother and teacher Marilyn Mims, and Virginia Zeani, her godmother and inspiration.







## EVENTS

**Festa della Donna**, also widely known as International Women's Day, gained momentum after a 1911 factory fire in New York where 146 women, mostly immigrants, perished. More than 100,000 outraged people participated in the funeral march and it subsequently became a global event as an expression of unity and promotion of equal rights around the world.

Its popularity rose in Italy in 1946, on the first March 8th following the end of WW II, when Italian feminists chose the mimosa flower as a symbol of sensitivity, strength and sensibility.

On March 8th at the classic Arturo's Ristorante in Boca Raton, we honored two accomplished women, both of whom have made significant contributions to the promotion of Italian culture through their life's work.

*Barbara Salani, renowned concert pianist, music teacher, author of "Music for Life: the Salani Brothers" (soon to be a movie).*

*Rosaria Gismondi, proprietor of Arturo's Ristorante, former president of Unico, a real estate agent, and mother of 5 daughters.*

Many attendees brought a small piece of embroidered cloth that represented a woman or worker in their lives. These cloths were gathered and sent to New York to be part of a memorial for the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of March 25, 1911.

This was a first-time event for Il Circolo and was chaired by Professor Ilaria Serra of Florida Atlantic University and Claire Giannamore, Il Circolo board member. We hope to make it annual on our event calendar.



**Appreciation Lunch** Il Circolo held its annual end-of-season Appreciation Lunch for board members, staff, volunteers and supporters, at the classic fine-dining La Sirena restaurant in West Palm Beach.

The event started with a warm greeting by President Paul Finizio who introduced and generously acknowledged the contributions of many in the room, each of whom was responsible in some way for making the current season a notable success.

Under the supervision of proprietor Marcello Fiorentino, guests enjoyed a celebratory and exquisite multi-course luncheon while small groups chatted and enjoyed each other's company.





**Italian Festival on the Beach** The festival site between the beach and Wyndham Hotel in Deerfield Beach was perfect. Attendees enjoyed music, dancing, food, laughter, singing and all things Italian. One of the highlights was the fork-less spaghetti-eating contest.

Thanks to John Di Prato whose persistence, organization and dedication inspired the event, Robert and Kim De Angelis who manned the Il Circolo booth, Marco Capoccia who provided an all-star line up of non-stop entertainment and everyone else whose support made this festival a huge success. For sure, the community looks forward to the next one.



### Alla Prossima

Our last event of the season was held at Sardinia Ristorante in Boca Raton. Attendees were treated to an extensive Sardinian tasting dinner, including Sardinian wine. Music was provided by Gianni Monti. *Felice estate a tutti.* See you in the Fall.

## ALLA PROSSIMA



The Il Circolo team is creating a new and exciting event calendar for the 2019-20 season. Look for it to be mailed with your membership renewal letter this summer. Remember all event photos are posted on our website and you can also follow us between events on our new Facebook page: [facebook.com/ilcircoloflorida/](https://facebook.com/ilcircoloflorida/)