

La Freccia Rossa Arrives on Madison Avenue

Riccardo Chioni (May 07, 2008)



New York is the fifth and last stop on the Mille Miglia (1,000 Miles) which showcases historic cars around the world from Geneva to London, from Monaco to Moscow to promote what Enzo Ferrari referred to as the “the most beautiful race in the world.”

La Freccia Rossa (the Red Arrow) arrives on Madison Avenue and the Big Apple prepares to be enchanted by the Alfa Romeo driven Tazio Nuvolari, on display at the Morgan Library as part of the Mille Miglia International Roadshow, which will leave from Brescia in two weeks.

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On May 15, the 81st annual Freccia Rossa will begin at via da Piazza della Loggia in Brescia and will include 375 classic cars designed between 1927 and 1957 and drawn from private collections in 29 countries. It will prominently feature a group of 40 Americans who will compete in 49 races along the thousand-mile route.

Many of the cars have participated in previous years. Following stops in Verona, Ferrara, Ravenna, Urbino, Assisi, and Rome, on May 16 the cars will set out for Siena, Florence, and Bologna, and then return to Brescia. On May 18 the awards ceremony will take place at the Teatro Grande, a yearly tradition since 1928.

Under the floodlights on Madison Avenue sits a legendary Alfa Romeo Monza 8C 2300 driven by Tazio Nuvolari which in 1932 was awarded the Grand Prix of Monaco. This is the same red car that participated in last year’s Mille Miglia and is owned by Lawrence Auriana, Chairman of [the Columbus Citizens Foundation](#) [3]. Auriana, a well-known and passionate race car collector, told that he counts on participating next year with a 1953 red Maserati A6GCS MM, currently on view at the Morgan Library.

“On the eighth of May,” reports Alessandro Casali, president of the race’s organizing committee, “we arrive in Campidoglio for the Mille Miglia preview. Having traveled around the world,” he emphasizes, “we see the extraordinary enthusiasm for the Mille Miglia and it is a wonderful thing. Along the Roadshow route we have been received by presidents of state, ministers, and heads of government.”

“The rest of the world,” stresses Casali, “envies this historic race, but at home [in Italy] it plays a smaller role.”

“It is perhaps because the [Mille Miglia](#) [4] is too close to home, in Italy, that it has been underappreciated -- in the same way that a shoemaker walks around with holes in his own shoes. This has been the case in Italy, which in my opinion, has not invested in itself even though it was important to do so with this extraordinary event,” observes Casali.

During the entire week of the Mille Miglia, organizers have planned a series of related events which will be broadcast by public and private television stations, with a large-scale event on Saturday, May 17 that will air on RAI 1 (the Italian Broadcasting Corporation) with the cooperation of Raitalia for countries abroad.

“Larry Auriana,” maintains Casali, “is a friend of Italy and the Mille Miglia, and an enthusiastic person who we have involved in this exhibit. There are many other aspects of the event, including a concert. Thanks to a joint venture with the Arena di Verona, we have brought to New York singers who perform at the Arena during the summer.”



“The Mille Miglia in the Big Apple,” explains Casali, “is also an opportunity to remind Americans not only of the excellent cars that are part of the ‘Made in Italy’ label, but also of everything else that comprises the Italian way of life.”

The Consul General Francesco Maria Talò participated in the presentation and passed along an inaugural message and greetings from Ambassador Giovanni Castellaneta who could not attend.

Accompanied by pianist Maria Cristina Orsolato, singers from the Arena di Verona included soprano Tamara Alexeeva, mezzo-soprano Milena Josipovic, and tenor Gian Luca Terranova who performed a repertory of Vivaldi, Bizet, Puccini, Verdi, and Bellini.

According to legend the Mille Miglia began in 1926 by four friends who were crazy about cars: the counts Aymo Maggi of Gradella and Franco Mazotti, both founders of the Automobile Club of Brescia, as well as the entrepreneur Renzo Castagneto and Gazzetta dello Sport journalist Giovanni Canestrini. The race was supposedly born out spite, since the four friends were indignant that the Italian edition of the Grand Prix did not take place in Brescia.

They therefore decided to launch the [Mille Miglia](#). [4] a race route in the shape of a figure eight which left from Brescia, arrived in Rome, and then returned. The inaugural race took place on March 26, 1927 with the participation of 77 teams, only two of which were foreign. The two winners of the first Mille Miglia were Ferdinando Minoia and Giuseppe Morandi who completed the course in 21 hours and 4 minutes, with an average speed of 77 kilometers per hour.

(Translated by Giulia Prestia)

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