

Presentation of the Italian Fiction Week. And See Rome Tomorrow at Saint Patrick's Cathedral

Benedetta Grasso (January 20, 2010)



On the occasion of "Rai Fiction Week 2010", and as part of a promotional initiative dedicated to the beauties of Italy, the Italian Government Tourist Board with Rome City Council and Lazio Regional Council organized "Toccata e fuga", an event featuring a mobile set of shows taking place on January 21 (12:00 pm) at Saint Patrick's Cathedral on 5th Avenue. The public will be guided in an imaginary journey through the culture and the streets of Rome. Zeffirelli's "Homage to Rome" was screened during the press conference organized on January 19 at RAI's headquarters in New York to present the 4th Edition of the festival.

Rome, much like New York, is one of those cities that has become part of our collective imagery and memory. Even when someone is in Rome for the first time, there's a somewhat familiar feeling, and walking around feels like déjà vu as if the movies, the pictures, the art, and the famous icons have influenced and shaped a person's imagination of a city and a country.

Media, in fact, do change how foreigners and tourists approach a city and that's why the event that took place on January 19 at RAI Corporation in NY, which promoted both culture and tourism while celebrating the city of Rome, will have a strong impact on Americans as the organizers had hoped.

In sophisticated surroundings, guests received beautiful gift packages as they filled a screening room



at RAI headquarters in NYC to attend a press conference and then watch Zeffirelli's *Homage to Rome*. Among the guests were some of the most prominent Italian directors, artists, journalists, and actors such as Beppe Fiorello. The conference was organized by RAI, Regione Lazio (Lazio Regional Council) and Comune di Roma (Rome City Council).

This was the first of many events and screenings that are part of the fourth annual RAI Fiction Week that runs from January 19 through 22. The festival began in 2006 and has steadily grown over the years. The director of RAI Corporation, Massimo Magliaro, reminded the audience that this was a symbolic and important time for him since January 20, 2010 marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of RAI Corporation. What started as a simple deal signed on Madison Avenue has now become one of the leading media companies in the world, rooted in North American and the main vehicle for Italian culture abroad. Magliaro also announced that there will be celebrations and events marking this anniversary over the next few weeks.

While the focus of the conversation remained on how to represent Italy abroad, the speakers also reflected on the role of the television mini-series as a medium to reinvent and export the image of Italy. Television mini-series are very successful in Italy; they are well-received by the public and often capture important national themes, as Paolo Galimberti, President of RAI, pointed out in his speech. He said that history, literature, contemporary issues, as well as the popular genre of detective stories, are all represented in the movies and television mini-series screened this week.

Galimberti also emphasized RAI's role as a public service aimed at spreading culture. Francesco Gesualdi, president of the Foundation Rossellini, reinforced this point by saying that this is a genre that needs to be recognized and appreciated by critics as well as the general public.

Senator Cutrufo, the deputy mayor of Rome who was attending on behalf of the Commission for Tourism, said that he wanted to "thank all those people who work for RAI and ENIT and show a slice of Italy abroad." He stressed the connection between the two people, Italians and Americans, and the "affection" in their relationship over the course of history. He described the event *Toccata e Fuga - Roman Holidays*, which will take place in front of St. Patrick's Church at 12 p.m. on Thursday, January 21. This will be a memorable, interactive show with song, music, and dance used to promote and explore tourist itineraries just as it has been performed in many Roman piazzas for thousands of spectators.

While *Toccata e Fuga* will take people almost literally through the streets of Italy's capital, Zeffirelli's latest work, *Homage to Rome*, is an experimental virtual tour that mixes famous movie scenes, opera pieces sung by Bocelli, and a dramatic and romantic acting scene between Monica Bellucci and Bocelli. As happens to many people in reality, Zeffirelli allows us to look at the most famous places in Rome with the voices of Gregory Peck or Anna Magnani superimposed over monuments, the shouts of gladiators fill the Coliseum, and glimpses of legends and stories behind what we see. As Giotto once said, "Rome is the city of echoes, the city of illusions, the city of yearning."

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