

Le 'mie' Feste della Repubblica

Natalia Quintavalle (May 28, 2015)



The celebration of June 2nd presents the perfect occasion to open up the doors of the Consulate and the Institute and, together with ICE, ENIT and La Scuola d'Italia, we have been working on a project that for three consecutive years brought artists, musicians, writers, entrepreneurs, politicians and economists to Park Avenue, with the participation of over a thousand people each year.

[ARTICOLO IN LINGUA ITALIANA >>>](#) [2]

I arrived in New York in September 2011 and was lucky enough to have nine months to come up with a new formula for the celebration of La Festa della Repubblica. It had to be “new” particularly in view of the fact that many had highlighted the “novelty” of my arrival: I was the first female Consul General in New York at the head of a predominantly female staff.

Through the eyes of a woman - not just those of a new Consul General - I looked at the beautiful state-owned buildings that host the Consulate and the Cultural Institute and thought, “They need



freshening up!" So I started to take a mental note of all the work that needed to be done, the renovations that had to be made and, unfortunately, also the costs that had to be undergone.

I found enthusiastic support from my two colleagues, Laura Aghilarre and Lucia Pasqualini, who had been in New York for a while, and from Dino Sorrentino who, having arrived at the same time as me, proved right from the start that he didn't feel uncomfortable in the Pink Consulate! The entire staff took to the "Let's open the Consulate and let fresh air in!" project with energy and patience.

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Each celebration has chosen a different theme by which to celebrate our country's rich heritage: music in 2012, books in 2013, sports in 2014. In 2015, the focus is on Italian cinema. Last year we also came up with a hunt for Manhattan's Italian treasures, which was very successful. This year there will be a photography marathon. Furthermore, for the second year in a row, [NYU's Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò](#) [5] will celebrate with us through an initiative dedicated to Cinema and the Republic.

Not without a twinge of pain, we gave up the idea of celebrating La Festa della Repubblica in beautiful [Cipriani](#) [6]'s, but we wanted to give our Park Avenue buildings more visibility, dusting them off with the generous support of Italian and American sponsors, as well as the whole community.

Our choice was strongly influenced by the desire to present today's Italy, born of the choice made by Italian women and men on June 2nd 1946, built on the wealth of a thousand year old culture and on the capacity to imagine a better future, in the very place where Italian institutions operate.

Experience teaches us that every year we go through the same phases and the same mood swings: in January we all have great ideas and are clear on what mistakes to avoid; in February we agree on a specific theme and begin to gather contacts for the main events; in March we realize that the letters for the people involved in the preparation, as sponsors or as volunteers, have yet to be sent and that we're running behind on all fronts; in April the momentum gets going and not a day goes by without a piece of the program coming together; in May, however, we realize that there are too many things to do, especially because in the meantime the visa and passport requests have increased and all the departments are under a lot of stress.

This is when we ask ourselves: "Why on earth did we get into this?!" Then June 2nd comes around and the entire Sistema Italia is exhausted but happy because once again our country put its best face forward and New York manifested the same love, appreciation, and friendship as always. And this alone would suffice to say that being the Consul General of Italy in New York is the best job in the world!

I forgot to mention that Laura and Lucia have already left and have been replaced by Roberto Frangione and Isabella Periotto, which means that we now have a perfect gender balance!

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[6] <http://www.cipriani.com/en/services/event-spaces/cipriani-42nd-street>