

La Scuola d'Italia Celebrates 40th Anniversary

Kayla Pantano (March 28, 2017)



Characterized by an exciting energy and an air of elegance, the 2017 La Scuola Gala Benefit Dinner took place on March 24 to commemorate the jubilee with live entertainment and fine dining in the presence of important political dignitaries and the evening's accomplished honorees: Mauro Porcini of PepsiCo and George A. Hirsch of "New York Magazine."

On the 40th Anniversary of the founding of [La Scuola d'Italia Guglielmo Marconi](#) [2] in 1977 by the [Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) [3], guests attended a gala at the breathtaking [Cipriani 42nd Street](#) [4] to benefit the outstanding students and faculty. Under the auspices of the [Ambassador of Italy to the United States](#) [5] and Mrs. Armando Varricchio; the [Consul General of Italy in New York](#) [6] and Mrs. Francesco Genuardi; the [Board of Trustees](#) [7]; and the Head of School, [Maria Palandra, Ph.D.](#) [8], the event honored [Mauro Porcini](#) [9], [PepsiCo](#) [10]'s first Chief Design Officer, and [George A.](#)



[Hirsch](#) [11], the founding publisher of [New York Magazine](#) [12].

For the last four decades, La Scuola has been the only school in North America to offer its entire academic curriculum in both English and Italian. Palandra explained why this anniversary is of so much significance: “It’s an important anniversary because the school is changing and becoming a more international school. Obviously it’s a bilingual and bicultural school, but it’s a school that’s committed to preparing students for a global world, a different world than the one we saw 40 years ago. We want to prepare students well and give them the ability to express themselves in different languages, as well as an international outlook.”

Alessandra Cortese de Bosis, daughter of the Consul General at the time La Scuola was born, was in attendance and shared how her father strongly and successfully pushed for the school. She explained, “As soon as he stepped foot on American soil as the Consul General, he realized that there was no Italian school in the city home to the largest Italian-American population. So right away he began, as he says, ‘to annoy the Italian government.’” Soon enough twelve teachers were brought to his attention, a committee was created, and they started the school in the Marymount school building.

The affair commenced with an elaborate cocktail reception and the bidding portion of the silent auction. In addition to the auction, there was also a raffle for three grand prizes. Tickets were drawn after dinner, with the third place winner receiving [Persol](#) [13] and [Marc Jacobs](#) [14] his and her sunglasses. The second place winner won a magenta [Fendi](#) [15] “Mini By the Way” handbag made of calf leather valued at \$1,450. And the lucky first place winner was gifted with two economy class tickets to Naples and Palermo via [Meridiana](#) [16] airlines.

Once guests moved into the principal hall, Italian tenor Francesco Pavesi, accompanied by La Scuola d’Italia ensemble, performed beautiful renditions of the national anthems of both countries. With guests on their feet, Consul Genuardi took the stage to offer his opening remarks, welcoming with great pleasure and thanking the members of the Board, the parents, and, of course, the students.

He communicated, “La Scuola represents a pillar of Italian culture and history that is told with the splendor and beauty of the past but also with the challenges of and optimism for the future.” He added in regards to their planned move from the Upper East Side: “I am certain that the future and long awaited transfer of La Scuola into the new prestigious headquarters of Columbus Circle will transmit a new drive and energy that La Scuola will know to spend the best to always assert itself better in the panorama of the New York schools.”

He then introduced the guest of honor, [George A. Hirsch](#) [11], who was humbled to take the podium. A graduate of [Princeton University](#) [17] and [Harvard Business School](#) [18], in addition to founding [New York Magazine](#) [12] in 1968, he founded the [New York Marathon](#) [19] and currently serves as Chairman of the Board of the [New York Road Runners](#) [20]. In addition, he published the U.S. edition of [La Cucina Italiana](#) [21]—Italy’s oldest and largest food and cooking magazine, is a longtime worldwide publisher of [Runner’s World](#) [22], started publishing [Men’s Health](#) [23] in Italy, and helped launch Panorama—a weekly magazine based in Milan. With many experiences in the sphere of Italian publishing, he has advanced Italian and American ties and serves as an inspiration to all.

He shared, “It really means a lot to be here tonight because I love Italy.” He continued, “I lived in Italy when I was very young. I was in the Navy aboard a ship that was stationed in Naples. It was fantastic. Also my daughter-in-law, who is here, is Italian. My son, who is also here, is an architect and worked in Milan for six years with a very great studio. Now he does projects in New York. Right now he’s doing one for [B&B Italia](#) [24] on Madison Avenue. So my family has a lot of Italian connections.”

Another successful businessman to grace the gala, [Charles Adams](#) [25] was next to speak to the crowd. A Partner Expatriate at [Clifford Chance](#) [26], a leading global law firm, he has recently relocated to NY and is widely recognized as one of Italy’s leading banking and restructuring lawyers. He and his wife are proud parents of a La Scuola student and was unanimously elected to serve a Board Chair. As Chairman, he mirrored Palandra’s earlier remarks when we said, “It’s a very important year for the school, not only because of its the 40 year anniversary but also because it’s a



year of transition.” He continued, “We are beginning the International Baccalaureate program. We’re undergoing the process of accreditation, and this is a very important step for us. We’ll be perhaps the first Italian high school abroad that we hope will offer both high school courses and the International Baccalaureate.”

He then switched the attention to the night’s honoree. “Tonight, we come together as a community of Italians, Italian-Americans, and Italophiles to celebrate Italian excellence as currently best expressed in our honoree, [Mauro Porcini](#) [27]. As the Chief Design Officer for PepsiCo, one of the world’s best-known brands, he has epitomized the innate design talent of Italians.”

After Adams’s warm welcome, Porcini was presented an award by his coworker, CEO [Indra Krishnamurthy Nooyi](#) [28], on behalf of La Scuola d’Italia. Since 2012, Porcini has been infusing design thinking into Pepsi’s culture and is leading a new approach to innovation by design that impacts the company’s product platforms and brands. He explained, “I’m trying to mix Italian culture with the American approach to business. That has become something very magical for me—an asset that I’ve been leveraging all of these years. It’s really about blending the visceral, intuitive passion and the holistic, problem-solving dream and approach typical of Italians with a more structured, organized, strategic approach of the American cultural. When these two worlds meet each other in this hyper connected global market we live in, magic can happen.”

For dinner, guests were treated to herb-crusted shrimp with avocado before divulging into the main course of Branzino al Forno served with asparagus tied with leaks and stuffed baby eggplant. As no meal is complete without vino, Cipriani offered their house wines of Canello Del Sole Cabernet Sauvignon for the red and Canello Della Luna Chardonnay for the white. And for dessert, diners had the option of a three chocolate parfait or a vanilla crème meringue cake. Naturally, everyone also enjoyed his or her choice of coffee or tea.

La Scuola d’Italia is an independent Italian-English bilingual Pre-K—12 school that provides an exceptional educational experience in the heart of Manhattan. Rooted in the best features of Italian and American instruction systems, it is committed to providing a multicultural education to foster international understanding and openness in order to prepare students to become citizens of the world. Visit lascuoladitalia.org [2] to learn more or to schedule a tour.

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Links

- [1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/gala2jpg>
- [2] <http://lascuoladitalia.org>
- [3] <http://www.esteri.it/mae/en>
- [4] <http://cipriani.com/events/?loc=ny-42nd-street>
- [5] http://www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it/ambasciata_washington/en/aboutus/messaggio.html
- [6] http://www.consnewyork.esteri.it/consolato_newyork/en/
- [7] <http://lascuoladitalia.org/about-us/board-of-trustees/>
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- [11] <http://www.nyrr.org/about-us/board-of-directors>
- [12] <http://nymag.com>
- [13] <http://www.persol.com/usa>
- [14] <https://www.marcjacobs.com>
- [15] <https://www.fendi.com/us>
- [16] <https://www.meridiana.it/en-us/>
- [17] <https://www.princeton.edu/main/>
- [18] <http://www.hbs.edu/Pages/default.aspx>



[19] <http://www.tcsnycmarathon.org>

[20] <http://www.nyrr.org>

[21] <http://www.lacucinaitaliana.it>

[22] <http://www.runnersworld.com>

[23] <http://www.menshealth.com/fitness>

[24] <http://www.bebitalia.com/en>

[25] https://www.cliffordchance.com/people_and_places/people/partners/us/charles_adams.html

[26] <https://www.cliffordchance.com/home.html>

[27] <http://www.linkedin.com/in/mauroporcini/>

[28] <http://www.pepsico.com/company/leadership>