

Dante Oggi



Per la promozione della lingua e della cultura italiana



Dante Alighieri Society - Melbourne Branch - Marzo 2022

2021 President's report

AGM - 7 February 2022

Dear members and friends,

Welcome to the 2021 AGM, once again postponed and conducted this evening via Zoom due to the continuing restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a report of the activities that took place in 2021.

Thank you for having again entrusted me with the duties of the Dante Alighieri Society for which I feel very honoured and privileged.

Despite encouraging messages by the various governments that normality would soon be reached once vaccines became available, it became obvious that the enormity of the problem was greatly underestimated all around the world.

Mixed messages on the remedial strategies employed gave further negative impetus to the various Covid variants periodically popping up around the world, with their disruptive virulence.

Lockdowns, isolations, family and social disruptions have markedly reduced our "gioia di vivere".

I am greatly indebted and grateful to our resourceful, hardworking committee and co-opted members who continued our work under stressful circumstances adopting new technology and modified strategies.

Despite all the suffered calamities, the year 2021 will be remembered as the year that brought the global Dante Society family together to celebrate the **700th Anniversary** of the Passing of our Sommo Poeta, Dante Alighieri. The Hon. Sergio Mattarella, President of the Italian Republic, launched the 12 month long celebrations in Ravenna.

All the Societies in Australia planned a **National Conference** staging events under the title and theme “Dante Under the Southern Cross” as proposed by Francesco Papandrea and Michael Curtotti of the Canberra Society.

This was a new initiative that showed how much more united and productive we can be when we work together. Each Society branch committed to present local cultural events periodically throughout the year and offered them to be enjoyed by all on Zoom, streaming and/or face to face whenever possible.

The Ambassador of Italy, Dr. Francesca Tardioli, gracefully opened the celebrations in Canberra in March.

Melbourne’s contribution consisted of a multitude of events, some of which had to be modified and others postponed due to Covid restrictions. We are very grateful to the National Gallery of Victoria for the wonderful presentation, in a video format conducted by Ms. Cathy Leahy, Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings, for her professional and extensive explanation of William Blake’s brilliant watercolour illustrations of the *Divina Commedia*.

Our own Secretary, Paolo Baracchi, read Canto 3 of *Inferno* with a touch of Florentine tone which brought music to our ears. Thank you Paolo for your meaningful interpretation!

I thank the State Library of Victoria for bringing to life their collection of Dante books for all to enjoy.

We have been working in collaboration with Margot Costanzo and 3MBS Radio in presenting Fine Music and a series of lectures which unfortunately had to be postponed until 2022.

In addition to the seminars held for the National Conference, we had the input from Nicholas Sgro-Traikovski, who presented the stories and tales from **Giovanni Boccaccio’s Decameron** in a course titled *Storie da un’altra pandemia: Il Decameron*.

This famous literary work was very appropriately chosen in this Covid climate. It was not only greatly appreciated and enjoyed by all participants but was also employed as a therapeutic measure to improve the mental stress created by the pandemic. Well done Nick. Grazie!

Mille grazie to everyone who contributed to the **presentation of cultural events** that we were able to provide. We are indebted to Professoressa Antonella Cavallini, Patrizia Burley-Lombardi, and Professor John Lando, who delivered seminars that reflect their professionalism and knowledge of the topics chosen.

I am grateful to Sarah Mantoan and Gabriella Gomersall-Hubbard for the preparation of the *Dante Oggi* magazine and the interesting articles written. Thank you also to other members of the committee and the Society for their contributions. Our magazine always aims to bring you the latest news and articles of interest to read as well as the planned coming events and courses.

Thank you to Ester Marcuccio for organizing the **Literary and Poetry Recitation Competitions** last year. Only 1600 students were entered into the competitions, since schools were not able to access the usual venues at the University of Melbourne. Judging was carried out in schools and when lockdowns began the judging had to be changed to digital platforms. The challenges of re-organizing times and dates with schools was horrendous and time consuming! **60 years** is a record extraordinary length of time for the Recitation Competition to have held its popularity. Thank you to the coordinators who have made it a success over the years, especially to Ester and to Anna Cavedon.

Thank you also to Imogen Lazarus for organizing the **Poster Competition**. It also experienced a reduction in the number of participating schools - 205 participants from 7 schools. This was a very difficult exercise for the teachers, who had limited time and face to face teaching with their students that resulted in tasks that could not be completed.

Thank you also to Mary Marcuccio for organizing the **Year 11&12 Italian Conversation program** again via Zoom.

It is evident that the effect of the closure of schools and face to face teaching has impacted gravely on our contact with schools, so we hope that there will be a turnaround very soon to the kind of successful involvement with schools that we have enjoyed.

Awards of Excellence to students of Italian from the Melbourne, Monash and La Trobe and Swinburne Universities did happen after many cancellations of the date!

The presentation to the 12 students was held in November last year and this included prizes awarded to 3 undergraduate students who researched the life of Dante Alighieri and wrote an essay in Italian. Well done to all the students for their dedication to the study of Italian language and culture.

The Society welcomes the resumption of the teaching of Italian at the Australian Catholic University and looks forward to resuming prize giving to its students who excel in Italian.

The **annual lunch** to celebrate Dante's birth and the Society's 125th Anniversary was postponed several times due to Covid restrictions. It is now proposed to be held in August 2022.

VALE:

Sadly Sir James Gobbo peacefully passed away on 16th November 2021 (see articles in the December edition of *Dante Oggi*). Sir James was a former DAS Patron, friend and contributor to our major events. His eloquent and inspiring speeches will be missed.

Our deep condolences and prayers were expressed to his wife, Lady Shirley Gobbo, and his beloved family. May he Rest in Peace.

FAREWELLS:

Dr. Laura Napolitano, director of the Italian Institute of Culture and a friend and collaborator of DAS, finished her term in Melbourne. We wish her the very best in her new position in Italy.

Dr. Pierluigi Trombetta, with his wife Paola and his son Edoardo, came to the end of his term as Consul General of Italy in Melbourne. We thank him and his wife for their friendship and collaboration. Pierluigi was an outstanding administrator of the Melbourne Consulate, where significant improvements were implemented to the office. We wish him well for the future.

WELCOME:

Dr. Hanna Pappalardo is the new Consul General of Italy in Melbourne. Mary Marcuccio and I had the privilege of welcoming her to Melbourne. Her enthusiasm and plans to engage with the whole Italian community in her role as Consul General were quite evident and comforting. We wish her a very pleasant and effective term in Melbourne.



The president of the Dante Alighieri Society Melbourne, Dominic Barbaro, welcomes the new Consul General, Hanna Pappalardo.

Dr. Angelo Gioè is the new Director of the Italian Institute of Culture. Welcome to Melbourne! We look forward to a pleasant and fruitful collaboration in promoting the Italian language and culture so dear to us.

SPECIAL THANKS:

Thank you to all our financial supporters: Mr. Eusebio and Mrs. Giovanna Marcocci, Mrs. Elsie Valmorbida, Dr. George and Mrs. Susan Santoro, the Italian Club Cavour, the Casa D'Abruzzo Club, Prof. Colin Mc Cormick family.

To Co.As.It. and *Il Globo-Rete Italia* and the Universities for their collaboration.

To my son Robert Barbaro and his wife Honey Rouhani: Thank you for enriching our Christmas festivities with your excellent Christmas Concert from London. Listening to melodic singing was certainly needed to uplift our heart and soul during the Covid lockdowns and bringing us the Christmas spirit.

Mille grazie to all our friends and members who have supported us with their presence and contribution throughout the year; we look forward to a better environment in 2022 and beyond.

To Ester Marcuccio: Thank you for the many years of service to DAS in your role as Committee Member and in particular as Coordinator of the Literary and Poetry Competition which has not only considerably grown in size but also has so much improved in its presentation with more focus on Dante and the *Divina Commedia*. The Presentation of Awards nights have been much enjoyed by all. We will miss you and your organization skills and passion for Italian, in the realization that your efficient role in your ever-increasing work responsibilities within your school demand more of your time. We wish you well in your future endeavours and thank you for promising to give us a hand whenever asked.

A very special thank you to an amazing lady, Annamaria Marcuccio, our Vice President since 2008 and a committee member since 1990.

Mary, words are not enough to describe the contribution that you have made to DAS with your enthusiastic, caring, creative, unrelenting, altruistic and always inclusive character.

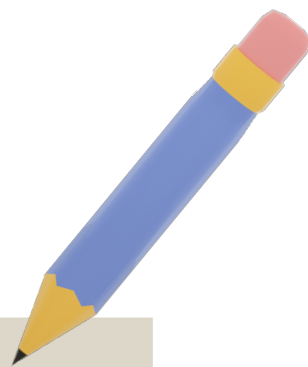
You have made DAS your home and treated us all as members of your family. It has been a full time job that you have executed with great diligence, effectiveness, love and attention to detail.

Your devoted husband Angelo has been a solid pillar of strength and assistance to all our events and will also be very much missed. Thank you Angelo, I wish you a healthy, happy, peaceful and restful future together with Mary.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to my wife Leanne, for her unrelenting understanding and who continues to support me despite the frequent and numerous meetings and activities, that in recent years have been on Zoom. I thank you for resolving all the Internet problems encountered throughout the year.

Un caro saluto a tutti voi augurandovi un migliore, felice e sano 2022.

Dominic Barbaro AM
President
Dante Alighieri Society – Melbourne.



Forthcoming:

Lectures and events by
Patrizia Burley-Lombardi,
Nicholas Sgro-Traikovski,
Simon West, John Lando -
and the Society lunch in
August!

**Your financial support is important
and very much appreciated.
You can find a membership renewal
form in the last page of this issue
and also on our website
www.dantealighierimelbourne.com
Renewals are due by 31st March.
Invite your family and friends to
join!**

2022 Committee

President - Dr. Dominic Barbaro AM

Vice President - Paolo Baracchi

Honorary Secretary - Gabriella Gomersall-Hubbard

Honorary Treasurer - Christina Siciliano

Committee members:

Agata Bonfà Colosimo

Adriana Congiu

John Hajek

Laura Campanaro

Nicholas Sgro-Traikovski

Imogen Lazarus

Juliet Floramo

Co-opted members:

Tania Barbati

Mariano Coreno

Sarah Mantoan

Claudia McLean

Chiara Franzo

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Our condolences to the family of Dr. Francesca Tardioli, Ambassador of Italy to Australia, for their untimely loss.

The Dante Alighieri Society Melbourne is deeply saddened to hear of the passing of our esteemed member, Dr. Muriel Baker, wife of Dr. Andrew Newell (dec.).

Our sincere condolences to all members of her family.



2022 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Membership (Please circle one)

INDIVIDUAL (\$35) **FAMILY** (2 Adults \$50) **SENIOR** (\$20) **YOUNG DANTE** (\$20)

| | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Title | Name(s) | Surname |
| Address | | Postcode |
| Telephone | | |
| Email (Print clearly) | | |

Preferred correspondence (Please circle one) **EMAIL** or **POST**

Payment – Enclosed is (Please circle one)

CHEQUE **MONEY ORDER** **CASH** **DIRECT PAYMENT**

Of \$ _____ for **2022** Membership

Electronic transfer - Please indicate "membership" when transferring to this account

Dante Alighieri Society Melbourne Inc. Bendigo Bank (Cassa Commerciale)
BSB – 633 000 ACCOUNT NUMBER – 108 127 986

*(Please send a copy of your EFT receipt payment together with your form to Dante Alighieri Society
P.O. Box 1124, Carlton VIC 3053)*

Signature _____ **Date** _____

OFFICE USE ONLY DATE REC. CHEQUE / CASH / MONEY ORDER / DIR. PAYMENT Membership card/s issued

Receipt no: Signature:

Office: 308 Drummond Street, Carlton VIC 3053
Postal: PO Box 1124, Carlton VIC 3053
Phone: (03) 9349 1143

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