

## Once Upon a Time....a Prince!

Maria Rita Latto (June 01, 2009)



A new chapter of the never ending fairy tale of Italian politics: Emanuele Filiberto Umberto Reza Rene Maria di Savoia, Prince of Venice and Piedmont, is UDC candidate in the 2009 European elections. He gained popularity after starring as a celebrity contestant on Italy's version of Dancing with the Stars.

The never ending fairy tale of Italian politics has a new character to enrich its surreal atmosphere. In fact, every classic fairy tale needs a prince. This prince is a 100% blue blood by birth. His full name is Emanuele Filiberto Umberto Reza Rene Maria di Savoia, Prince of Venice and Piedmont. He is the only child of Vittorio Emanuele, Prince of Naples, the son of the last king of Italy, Humbert II who died



in exile. Emanuele Filiberto, the heir apparent to a crown that no longer exists, was born and raised in Switzerland because the male members of the Savoy family were exiled from Italy after World War II by a provision in the Italian constitution.

The law reflected the Italian people's disillusionment and disappointment with the Savoy dynasty, which stemmed from King Vittorio Emanuele III and Humbert II (Emanuele Filiberto's great-grandfather)'s inability to contain Mussolini's policies that eventually led to his dictatorship, countless tragedies, and Italy's defeat in World War II.

Emanuele Filiberto came to Italy for the first time at the age of 30 when the Italian state lifted the exile in 2002. A year later, he married French actress Clotilde Coureau with much fanfare in the Rome church where his great-grandfather, Vittorio Emanuele III, was also married. Before his return to Italy, he

had already become famous by appearing on TV talk shows, mostly discussing sports and supporting his favorite soccer team, Juventus F.C., and starring in commercials. He also ran unsuccessfully for office as a candidate for the small political party called Values and Future. Months ago he also starred as a celebrity contestant on Italy's version of Dancing with the Stars (*Ballando con le stelle*). He was convinced that by appearing on the show, Italians would "finally be able to understand who Emanuele Filiberto di Savoia really is." He admitted to not being able to dance, and rejected criticism from monarchists for his decision to take part in the show, saying: "I live in modern times. It's almost 2010. I have a family with two children to support. I've worked since I was 19 and no one has given me anything."

Thanks to the show, his wish for the Italian people to understand him finally came true. In fact, despite opposition from some of the jurors, one of whom defined the dancing prince a "piripicchio," a sort of jester, he won. Viewers defied the decision of the official jury composed of famous people in showbiz, and gave Emanuele Filiberto 75% of the popular vote and one

million phone calls in his favor, as well as a 60% audience share for the RaiUno TV channel. Since his first episode aired, the public fell in love with the tall, slim, elegant, and charming prince though his movements were described as "wooden" and "stiff." After his win he declared: "I had the chance to be myself and that's the ultimate victory for me." Emanuele Filiberto thanked Italians from the "bottom of [his] heart" for this "absolutely unexpected" win.

That triumph brought the dancing prince a line of clothing called Principe d'Italia (what else?), more TV appearances, and another attempt at politics, this time running for the European Parliament. He is a candidate for the [UDC \(Unione di Centro\)](#) [2], a center-line party following the tradition of the DC (Democrazia Cristiana). The party's secretary, Lorenzo Cesa, said: "Emanuele Filiberto will be a great surprise for Italians and European politics. I am convinced that he is an extraordinary and capable person. We are sure that he will defend the values we care about most, which are family and our Christian identity." Prince Emanuele Filiberto will run in the North Western area, a part of the Belpaese traditionally linked to the Savoy family that has had an established seat in Turin for centuries.

The young aristocrat shared his exceptional credentials: "I speak five languages, I personally know half of the European heads of state, and I'm related to the other half." He also has specific ideas on how to approach potential voters: "My electoral campaign will focus on ordinary people in cafés, markets, discos, and young people who are on Facebook, for example." Day after day, his behavior increasingly resembles that of an experienced politician, making the same rapid strides in politics as he did in dance. For instance during a television debate, a journalist asked his opinion about his family's recent request of 200 million Euro from the Italian parliament in damages sustained by the male descendants of the Savoy family in exile. The prince, who had initially supported this idea, responded as a skilled politician and quickly rejected it with a less-than regal comment, calling it "stronzate." With a family to support, such an about-face is rather awkward, even for a successful dancer like Emanuele Filiberto. Furthermore, such a statement bridges the gap between the prince and ordinary people which is the royal candidate's primary intention. After so many years in exile, he has successfully upheld one of the basic tenets of Italian life, the issue of "tengo famiglia" that is at the heart of most of the Belpaese's inappropriate behavior.

Whatever the result, the man who won't be king, Emanuele Filiberto Umberto Reza Rene Maria di



Savoia, or Emanuele Filiberto di Savoia for short, will at least reach his goal of showing the world that he is “un Italiano vero” in every respect.

Ballando sotto le stelle and Emanuele Filiberto

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