

## Happy Festa della Repubblica, New York!

Tommaso Cartia (June 05, 2017)



Italian institutions celebrate June 2nd and italianità. An entire day filled with the best in Italian food, classic and contemporary art, and jazz. Community representatives inaugurated the design of the Consulate General of Italy's new waiting room. Also noteworthy was the presence of Italian Ambassador Armando Varricchio, who presented awards to Frank Bisignano and Jhumpa Lahiri .

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The [Consulate General of Italy](#) [3] in New York is separated from the [Italian Cultural Institute](#) [4] by only a small terrace. This terrace, rather than dividing the two Park Avenue buildings, actually connects them. The [Italian Trade Commission](#) [5] is also nearby, only two blocks away on the corner of Madison Avenue. Knowing this, one could imagine the dynamics of the long day of celebrations,

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organized by Italian institutions, that took place on June 2nd.

It all began in the morning at the Italian Cultural Institute with an event entitled “An Authentic Italian Food and Wine Experience,” dedicated to tasting the best Italian products from various Italian companies. The impeccable host Trade Commissioner & Executive Director for the USA, Maurizio Forte, took this opportunity to emphasize the insurmountable quality of our agribusiness and the richness of the Italian territory.

Between one tasting and another, those in attendance were shown the quality work that Italian companies are carrying out in the United States in order to promote and distribute only the highest-quality products. All of this is done despite difficulties, some of which are thanks to American legislation’s protectionist measures. The language of [Dante](#) [6] even had a special part that day. New Jersey’s Montclair State University and the high school Italian course that provides students with college credit were recognized. Additionally, professor [Teresa Fiore](#) [7] told us that the synergy created between Italian companies and American universities is of great value. This collaboration makes internships that bring American students closer to Italy possible.

The Italian Republic’s 71st birthday saw the Italian colors represented by more than just the traditional flag above the Consulate’s large antique door. Three beautiful [Lamborghinis](#) [8]—one green, one white, and one red—sat roped-off on a carpet outside the entrance to the Consulate.

Meetings that day covered various topics but were all equally important. The celebrations began by awarding the onorificenze (honors) of the President of the Italian Republic to both Italian and Americans who distinguished themselves. This year’s awardees included Giulio Picolli, Ferminio Berardo, Olga Imbarato, Ralph Contini, Bartolo Valastro, Giuseppina Azzolini, Andrea Bayer, Vivien Greene, Antonio Bernardo, Jason De Sena Trennert, Maria Teresa Cometto, Raffaele La Gamba, Paola Antonelli, [Jhumpa Lahiri](#) [9], and [Frank Bisignano](#) [10].

The Consulate was dressed for the celebration and embellished with Italian art. At the well-lit entrance, guests would immediately notice a reproduction of a statue of Al-lāt from 50 B.C.—the work of famous Greek sculptor Phidias. This was all thanks to the Institute of Digital Archeology. There were also some pieces of art that had been recovered by the Carabinieri and other local authorities. Naturally, contemporary art was also present and included works from Beatrice Pediconi, Giorgia Lupi, Paolo Trollo, and Luca Pignatelli.

Consul General Francesco Genuardi chose June 2nd to inaugurate the newly-furnished waiting room. The inauguration took place with the classic cutting of the tricolor ribbon. “It’s the way in which we want people who come to the Consulate to wait—although hopefully as little as possible. People will find themselves surrounded by the best contemporary Italian furnishings, thanks to leading companies that wanted to offer them.”

But the Consul General, together with the diplomats who collaborate with him, Isabella Periotto, Chiara Saulle, and Roberto Frangione, were also particularly proud of something else: the presence of the Ambassador in Washington [Armando Varricchio](#) [11].

In a certain sense, he was the day’s true guest of honor—despite the presence of various personalities in art, cinema, and culture. This is perhaps because, for many years, the Italian diplomat with the most important role in the United States, did not come to the Festa della Repubblica in New York. Therefore, there was much anticipation in the packed Consulate.

Aside from Director Giorgio Van Straten of the Italian Cultural Institute, Italian diplomats from the United Nations were also present: Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi and his deputy Inigo Lambertini; senator Renato Turano, elected as the Italian representative abroad; and Silvana Mangione, the Deputy Secretary general General Council of Italians Abroad.

Two representatives for American authorities were also present: for [Andrew Cuomo](#) [12], New York State Governor, [Maria T. Vullo](#) [13], Superintendent of the New York State Department of Financial Services; for Mayor [Bill de Blasio](#) [13], Commissioner [Victor Calise](#) [14] (Office for People with Disabilities).

Among the many guests, several of whom are notable in the Italian community, there were representatives from the most influential associations, personalities from the art world, and even directors and actors from Open Roads: New Italian Cinema, the Italian cinema festival at New York's Lincoln Center.

The two actresses who interpreted siamese twins in the film *Indivisible*, Angela and Marianna Fontana, sang the national anthem for the public, accompanied by students from the Scuola d'Italia.

The important show *European Art at the Time of the Treaties of Rome–Informel, Abstraction, Zero*, around 1957 has traveled from the Italian Trade Agency, to the Consulate, and finally to the Italian Cultural Institute, where it is currently being hosted.

It's exactly in this setting that Italian jazz was the star with the Nicola Corso Orchestra. His notes reminded everyone how important Italy is in the music industry, even when it comes to jazz. In the history of Italian-American jazz, there are some unforgettable names, and the present continues to grace us with Italian musicians of that same high caliber.

The evening proceeded until late and was livened up with refreshments from Gianfranco Sorrentino's Italian restaurant [Il Gattopardo](#) [15]. Between a seafood risotto, a babà, and a glass of prosecco, Italian New York celebrated its most important institutional festivity.

Another moment of great symbolic significance was the giving of the two important onorificenze awards at the end of the day. These went to Jumpha Lahiri, an American author of Belgali descent who writes in Italian, and to Frank Bisignano, the managing director of president of First Data, who is of Calabrese descent.

Although they're not Italian, both honorees have a special sentiment that links them to our country, and they're making a significant contribution to spreading Italianness across the world. In the eyes and in the words of Jumpha Lahiri, this sentiment is the excitement and the pride to be part of an Italian community, which embraced her when she discovered our language. In the words of Frank Bisignano, it was an immense pride for his heritage and the strength of what he was able to create, thanks to his work in the world of technology, despite the fact that he came from a family of twelve siblings in unstable conditions. Another Italian-American story with great symbolic value.

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