



## LYCEUM CLUB INTERNAZIONALE DI FIRENZE (ITALIA)

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Presented to the General Assembly at end of term 2014-2018

March 19, 2018

#### **International affairs**

The Board of Directors elected in 2014 began their official activities with the organization of the International Central Bureau and Cultural Days in Florence. This event involved the participation of 84 Lyceum members from 9 different countries outside Italy: Australia 11, Finland 2, France 14, Germany 8, Netherlands 8, New Zealand 1, Sweden 7, Switzerland 29, and United States 4.

The general appreciation of the quality of this event put the Lyceum Club Firenze in the spot light, resulting in the International President's request that I, President of the Florence Club, assume the role of President of the Italian Clubs. The invitation was declined because I preferred to concentrate my attention and energies to the Florence Club, in part because the other Italian Clubs show little inclination to collaborate with us and behave in an undisguised unfriendly way toward us.

The total boycott of the other Italian Clubs of the meeting organized to take place in Florence in May 2017 was proof of this attitude. All the Italian Clubs were invited, none participated and none replied to the invitation. A special meeting has been scheduled for April in Genoa, with the participation of Muriel Hannart, President of the Clubs in the Northern Hemisphere, to discuss the particular situation regarding the Italian Clubs.

Irene Weber Froboese and I have both participated, at our own expense, in all the ICB and CD events organized after the Florentine one. We have established good relationships and consolidated friendships with representatives from Clubs worldwide. In addition our Club has given hospitality to Lyceum members from different countries (Australia, France, Suisse) on various occasions, and two of our Board members offered

hospitality at their own personal expense for the 15 day sojourn of a student from Neuchâtel who had won a scholarship sponsored by the local Lyceum Club.

## **Communications**

Our monthly Bulletin is sent regularly to all the other Italian Clubs, and the local Florentine press gives it a benevolent reception. In this regard, remember that we have always organized a press conference at the beginning of each new year to present our annual program. Furthermore, since the beginning of 2018 the staff of the Agenzia Headline is at our disposition free of charge. Diffusion of information regarding our activities has been enhanced also thanks to the assistance of a professional webmaster who manages our site, our mailing list and our Facebook page.

## **Social Program**

The Club has organized an average of 70 events per year open to the members of the Club and to general public, free of cost. The events of the past four years have included numerous guided visits and trips with excellent programs and highly qualified guides. We have introduced the habit of a "Friday Salon" (*Salotti del venerdì*) as well as a series of "Solidarity dinners" to increment the Club's finances.

The Club is active in the Florentine cultural ambiance, with increasingly important relationships as witnessed by the requests to consult our archives and the bequest to the Club of the Fondo Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco, for which the Lyceum Club Firenze has been awarded financing from the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze to catalogue the material.

The inclusion of the Lyceum Club Firenze among the organizers of events focused on Luigi Dallapiccola in the 81st Maggio Musicale Fiorentino program is another important sign. We have been invited to participate actively in this celebration, together with some highly prestigious institutions, and are organizing both a concert and an exhibit.

Speaking of exhibits, we must mention those organized in the last few years dedicated to Elena Salvaneschi, Marisa Mori, and Giulio Marchetti.

We have also given attention to the talents of the younger generation with exhibits of works by the students of the Academy of Beaux Arts, a series of concerts by young musicians (*I Giovani Talenti*), and presentations of

books by young authors. These events all bear witness to the Club's capacity to participate in and create innovative undertakings.

We note that our efforts have had positive results, and our Membership has increased in the last 4 years, from 52 in 2014 to 153 at the beginning of 2018. However, we still need more Members. In this regard, you will remember that last year I asked all of you to invite a friend to join our Club. Unfortunately, very few of you paid heed to the appeal, that if successful would help us to solve many of the Club's problems. When we invite our friends to join, they often reply that they are busy with other things that make regular participation in Lyceum Club events difficult.

Let me emphasize that this invitation is not a request for charity contributions to the Lyceum Club. It is an invitation to participate in a fine quality cultural project rooted in the past, but that continues still today and remains faithful to the endeavor begun in 1908.

The Supporting Members have understood this: they are now 13, up from only 8 in 2014.

Instead, the Friends of the Lyceum have diminished since the peak of 24 Friends in 2017, due to deaths, changes of residence, and other reasons. Nowadays they are 14.

## **Finances**

Overall, however, the number of members has grown, with consequent increase in our income. This has made it possible for the Club to close the deficit on our balance sheet that we inherited from the past Administration. Specifically, we have paid the debt to the landlord, signed a regular contract for the use of the rooms we occupy, regularized the position of the cleaning woman (Lucy), who was then replaced with a cleaning agency, and drawn up a new Statute that conforms to current regulations.

Realizing the above has not been particularly burdensome on our finances thanks to the specific skills of our members and also thanks to Friends, in particular Avv. Marchetti and the notary Dr. Frediani, who have offered their professional services free of charge.

We must also recognize the valuable support in the realization of various cultural initiatives on the part of many, including, among others, Donatella Carmi Bartolozzi, Maureen Jones, Riccardo Luciani, Andrea Muzzi, Ludovica Sebregondi, Carlo Sisi, Ulisse Tramonti, and Paolo Zampini, Director of the Conservatory Luigi Cherubini.

## **Shadows**

Of course there have also been some shadows along our path. Certain events, for example, did not give the expected results. In this regard I must mention our initiative for the Day of Remembrance 2017, organized to help bring us closer to the Jewish Community given the sad events that took place here in Italy in the years of the Race Laws. The Jewish Community, represented on the occasion by the Cultural councilor, a substitute for the Rabbi who was unable to participate for health reasons, did not demonstrate any appreciation of the initiative to establish a better relationship.

This was an isolated case, but we must remember the episode and leave trace of the Lyceum's will to recognize that the position taken in 1936 may not have been sufficiently clear and decisive in the defense of our Jewish sisters.

I believe that today we should be proud of our Club's capacity for self-criticism and its willingness to face and deal with such difficult situations.

Another unpleasant chapter in our recent history is the current situation regarding our Club premises. In fact at the beginning of January we received notice from the landlord that we must vacate the current site by July 31st. Right now, as I talk to you, no decisions have been made, although a possible alternative has been individuated in a prestigious site. Our lawyers are assisting us in the procedures to follow in solving the problem.

## **Closing remarks**

The 2014-2018 Board now passes the reins to the 2018-2022 Board. Some of the old Board members are candidates for the new Board, but there are also new names, new people who will certainly bring new energies and ideas, vivacious thoughts, and dedicated activity. The capacity for refreshing, new dialogue and projects is a vital challenge, if you will indulge my expressing the obvious, in situations of habit and routine. The mandate is for 4 years: the Members who are elected know and accept the responsibilities related to their positions. The roles are not merely honorific titles. They involve undertaking the management, together with all of you, of the Club in all its functions, the Club that must be always "ours."

I thank all of you for the faith you placed in me four years ago, and in the Board four years ago: I sincerely hope that I, for one, have fulfilled your expectations. I thank the Board members who have helped me hold the

helm and steer us often with joy through both the quiet waters of good weather and the rough waters of stormy times.

We have done our best to realize stimulating and exclusive programs: we sincerely hope we have been successful "*But if, instead, we managed only to bore you*", as Manzoni said, "*believe us, we did not intend to do so*".

Donatella Lippi

President, Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze, 2014-2018