

# Piazza dell'Indipendenza

## The 19th Century Florence itineraries: Squares and Music

The 19th Century Florence itineraries – designed significantly to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the unification of Tuscany to the newly born unified state (1859 – 2009) – will take citizens and tourists on the discovery of the traces of a Century that left a profound impression on the face of Florence. The idea is to restore the role of 19th Century Florence within the collective imagination, alongside the Florence of Medieval and Renaissance times. This is why one of the Century's typical customs will be renewed: the military band concert in a city square.

17th may 2009  
Piazza  
dell'Indipendenza,  
11.00 am-12.30 am  
Fanfara (Brass  
band) of the  
Scuola Marescialli  
e Brigadieri  
dell'Arma dei  
Carabinieri

The brass band of the Scuola Marescialli e Brigadieri dei Carabinieri is one of the five Carabinieri bands whose origin lies in the buglers of the various Legions of the Carabinieri, from which the first bands were later formed with brass and percussion instruments. Today the Brass Band – based in Florence at the School with the same name – is a small band with a varied repertoire (symphonies, operas, film sound tracks as well as blues and jazz), especially trained for its main activity: the performance of ceremonies with assemblies and marches typical of military music. The band wears the so-called Grande Uniforme Speciale, a very special uniform with its typical hat known as the "lucerna" (cocked hat) and the red and white plume that sets it apart from the musicians of other units of the Carabinieri (red-blue plume). The band is conducted by Maresciallo Ennio Robbio.



On the morning of the 27th April 1859 - day of the peaceful revolution that brought an end to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and marked the beginning of the process that was to end with the unification of Tuscany to the dawning Kingdom of Italy - the crowd that was gathered in the square saw a detachment of the Gendarmerie arriving from Piazza San Marco. Many of those present were afraid, but their fear quickly vanished when they saw that it was the brass band of the Imperial and Royal Gendarmerie of the Grand Duchy who,

by playing the "Mameli Hymn", displayed their loyalty to the same national sentiment as the crowd. It is well known that after this event the Regiment of the Imperial and Royal Tuscan Gendarmerie was transformed into the Legion of Tuscan Carabinieri and a year later joined the Carabinieri of the newly unified state.

1859  
2009



Many of the tricolour flags that flew in Florence on 27th April 1859 had horizontal stripes: these flags had most likely been made by replacing the bottom red stripe of the old Tuscan flag with a green stripe. The Tuscan troops who left for the second war of independence used these flags and kept them along side the regulation flag up until 1865.



There is one place that is symbolic of 19th Century Florence: Piazza dell'Indipendenza. This is the background to which Guido Nobili, 1850, lawyer and writer, sets his autobiographical tale whose title alone, "Distant Memories", conveys the deeply rooted change that his generation was witness to. The volume will be distributed free of charge during the event.



In collaborazione con



## 17th May 2009, Piazza dell'Indipendenza and surroundings

The theme of the tour is the peaceful revolution of 1859 that marked the beginning of great transformations in Florence.

- 10.30 am** Piazza Indipendenza. Information desk opens where you will be able to book afternoon guided tours and where the volume **Memorie lontane** (*Distant Memories*) will be distributed free of charge.
- 11.00 am** The Carabinieri brass band will leave Piazza San Marco, cross via degli Arazzieri and via 27 Aprile and will end up in Piazza Indipendenza.
- 11.30 am** The band arrives in Piazza Indipendenza, lines up in the assigned area and the concert begins.
- 12.30 pm** The band goes back to Piazza San Marco where the performance will end.
- 3.30/4.30 pm** Free guided tours, leaving from the information desk in Piazza Indipendenza, to the 19th-century monuments of Piazza Indipendenza and Piazza San Marco, for the Gipsoteca dell'Accademia and Istituto Geografico Militare.

From 11th May guided tours can also be booked by phone, calling **055 2654753**



FORTHCOMING  
DATES

**28st June:**  
Piazza della Repubblica;  
**27th September:**  
Piazza d'Azeglio;  
**17th October:**  
Piazza Santa Croce.

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## The Square and its History

Erected at the beginning of the 1840's on the green areas within the city walls, Piazza dell'Indipendenza was the result of a previous project aimed at building popular housing



on the road that was to open as a continuation of Via degli Arazzeri: a straight axis constituted by Via Santa Apollonia (now via 27 Aprile) that pushed out from the northern edge of the city (then represented by Piazza San Marco) going west towards the city walls where it met with the ramparts of the Fortezza di San Giovanni (commonly known as the Fortezza da Basso to distinguish it from the Forte di San Giorgio that due to its position was – and still is – known as Forte di Belvedere). Those houses were to make up the initial heart of the new Barbano quarter, destined to become the

residential area of the city. Half way down the new thoroughfare and at the centre of the quarter a large rectangular square was planned and realised. It is with this square that for the first time – at the edge of a grid of roads virtually unaltered since medieval times – a new symmetrical and uniform perspective is introduced that until then had been completely foreign to the urban Florentine landscape. Although references to the Renaissance can easily be found within the architectural forms chosen and the context remains faithful to the codified classicism typical

of Florentine architecture, by proposing a new residential model of ordered space – almost a happy salon - the square seems to create a break with the past, despite its apparent continuity, in which not even the seats of power were reserved any kind of preconstituted scenographic structure. On the other hand, both the continuity and the break with the past reflect the social milieu of the residents, exponents of the newly emerging bourgeoisie who will be the major agents of change that, along with the end of the Grand Duchy, will see the end of a Florence that had

been left unchanged for centuries. This change will be reflected in the square's name: initially dedicated to the beautiful princess Maria Antonia di Borbone Due Sicilie, wife of the Grand Duke Leopoldo II and then, after 1859, to attained national Independence.



## Florentine Monuments from the 19th Century



Until the beginning of the 19th Century only two honorary monuments adorned Florence: *Cosimo I* in Piazza della Signoria and *Ferdinando I* in Piazza Santissima Annunziata (both by Giambologna and his studio). The great sculptural decoration of the city had always been devoted to biblical heroes or pagan divinities and designed to be placed within specific architectural settings (Giotto's bell tower and Orsanmichele). A more urban dimension was created with the great masterpieces of Renaissance sculpture in Piazza della Signoria (Michelangelo's *David*, Cellini's *Perseo*, Giambologna's *Statue delle Sabine*) or with the honorary columns (like for instance the column of Santa Trinita). The placing of Luigi Pampaloni's statues *Arnolfo di Cambio* and *Filippo Brunelleschi* in two niches of the new Canonical houses in Piazza del Duomo in 1830 is then perfectly in keeping with the Florentine tradition. In those same years (from 1834 to 1858) the empty niches of the Uffizi Loggia were also filled up with *Illustrious Tuscans* (as foreseen by Vasari): the best sculptors of the time participated in the operation. With the annexing of Tuscany to the dawning Kingdom of Italy and the capital's later move to Florence, renewed interest for celebratory sculpture begins, linked to the urban decoration of the squares. The first fruit of this interest is the monument to *Dante* in the middle of Piazza Santa Croce (at the side of the church from 1968) made by Enrico Pazzi for the occasion of the 1865 Dante celebrations. It will then be the turn of an officer of the newly unified state: in 1872 the monument to *General Manfredo Fanti* by Pio Fedi (also author of *Ratto di Polissena* under the Loggia della Signoria) will be placed in the middle of Piazza San Marco from where the general, to whom the Italian Army owes its organisation, looks towards the then War Ministry. In the thirty years that follow the city is to fill its squares with more or less successful celebratory monuments: the *Obelisco ai Caduti della Guerra d'Indipendenza* (memorial for the soldiers fallen in the Italian independence war) in Piazza dell'Unità Italiana; *Vittorio Emanuele II* by Emilio Zocchi in the middle of the square with the same name (now Piazza della Repubblica), that later emigrated to the entrance of the Cascine; *Cosimo Ridolfi* by Raffaello Romanelli in Piazza Santo Spirito; *Ubaldo Peruzzi* by Romanelli and *Bettino Ricasoli* by Augusto Rivalta in Piazza dell'Indipendenza. As well as the squares the spaces along the River Arno also became theatrical wings for celebratory monuments: Piazza Demidoff for *Nicola Demidoff* (begun in 1828 by Lorenzo Bartolini and completed by Romanelli in 1871); the new Lungarno Vespucci for *Giuseppe Garibaldi* by Cesare Zocchi, *Goldoni* by Ulisse Cambi and *Daniele Manin* by Urbano Nono (now in Piazzale Galileo); the square with the same name at the Ponte alle Grazie bridge for the *Caduti di Mentana* (memorial for the soldiers fallen in the battle of Mentana) by Oreste Calzolari (completed at the beginning of the 20th Century) and lastly, where the Arno and Mugnone meet at the Cascine for the "*Monumento dell'Indiano*" (monument to the Indian) by the English sculptor Charles Fuller (picturesque memorial to the cremation of the Maharajah of Kolapoor, Rajaram Chuttraputti). Finally, to seal the exception to the 19th Century tradition, the monument to Michelangelo in the middle of the Piazzale Michelangelo made by Giuseppe Poggi: over and above its artistic value this work remains the most evident and visible sign of that series of monuments that innervated late 19th Century Florence.

## Discovering a Century: The guided tours



### The Gipsoteca of the Accademia

On display in the charming space that was once the women's entrance to the San Matteo hospital are to be found the plaster cast collections of two important Nineteenth Century sculptors, Lorenzo Bartolini and Luigi Pampaloni, as well as a collection of paintings by the pupils of the Accademia di Belle Arti, some of whom were to become famous artists (such as Silvestro Lega or Cesare Mussini). The large number of busts on display is testimony to the importance enjoyed by portrait art in European bourgeois circles of the period, at a time when photography did not yet exist.



### The Military Geographical Institute

The institute has its origins in the Technical Office of the General Staff Corps of the Italian Army, that in 1861 brought together the traditions and experience of the cartography offices of the pre-unified states. The 1872 "Military Topographical Institute" was transformed in 1882 into the Military Geographical Institute (IGM), with the task of carrying out all the geodetic and topographical work necessary to satisfy the civil and military demands of the nation. The old building of the Sapienza, based between Piazza San Marco and Piazza Santissima Annunziata, initially conceived by Niccolò da Uzzano (1430) as a boarding school for young people, was used over the centuries for the most diverse purposes (centre for cloth weaving, foundry for the artillery of the Republic, Menagerie of Lions – for gathering together animals symbolic to the Florentine State – during the age of Cosimo I and, in the Lorenese era, seat to the Royal Stables). An invaluable collection of instruments, records and knowledge are conserved there and can be consulted both by public and private users.