

Itinerari
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e
MUSICA

28th June 2009

Piazza della Repubblica

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.

28th June 2009
Piazza della Repubblica
11am - 12.30pm
The Band of the
Military Corps of the
Italian Red Cross



The Band of the Military Corps of the Italian Red Cross of Tuscany was founded in Florence in the year 2000 on the initiative of the Command of the VIII Mobilisation Centre and is heir to the musical traditions of the *General Band Corps of the Italian Red Cross* founded in 1871.

It is made up of 45 musicians, voluntarily enrolled in the Military Corps as musicians, and is called to accompany the ceremonies, shows and institutional services of the organisation.

Its repertoire includes celebratory pieces (hymns and marches), traditional military and civil music, light music and jazz. It has been conducted, ever since it began, by the Maestro Maresciallo Mauro Rosi who was also responsible for the transcription, revision and adaptation of the *Italian red Cross Hymn* composed by Ruggero Leoncavallo, as well as being author of the *March of the Military Corps of the Italian Red Cross* entitled *La Condivisione*.

On the 2nd June 2008, for the Festa della Repubblica, the band paraded in Rome at the head of the Military Corps, Voluntary Nursing and Voluntary Rescue sections of the Italian Red Cross.



On 24th June, 1859, considering the many French, Piedmontese and Austrian soldiers wounded in the battle of Solferino, the Swiss businessman Henry Dunant had the idea of a *super partes* organization which could take care of wounded soldiers, making no distinctions between nationalities. From that experience, described in the book *Souvenir de Solferino*, the Red Cross was created.

The constitution of the Military Corps of the Italian Red Cross dates back to 1st June 1866. In a circular from the then Ministry of War, it was established that those belonging to the

rescue *Squadrons* of the "Committee of the Italian Rescue Association for wounded or ill soldiers", founded in Milan on 15th June 1864, would adopt a military style uniform and a military juridical status for mobilised personnel. Just a few days later the III War of Independence broke out and four "Mobile Rescue Squadrons" sent by the committees of Florence, Milan, Bergamo and Pavia, worked side by side with the Italian Army; so the Florence committee was active from the very beginning and further more it was equipped with an *ambulance carriage*, the first vehicle in the Italian Red Cross's long history.



Florence Nightingale was the ideal founder of the Red Cross: her theories - matured on the field in 1855 during the Crimean War - specifically inspired the Swiss Henry Dunant, actual founder of the Red Cross. Born in Florence in 1820 from British parents (thus explaining the name **Florence**), the city has dedicated a monument to her in the Santa Croce complex which takes inspiration from her nickname "Lady of the Lamp", testifying to her unrelenting work of assistance.



28th June 2009, from Piazza della Signoria to Piazza della Repubblica

This route recalls the transformations that the city underwent in the last forty years of the 19th Century: from the plebiscite that ratified the annexing of Tuscany to the newly born Kingdom of Italy (15th March 1860), to the role of provisory Capital of the new Kingdom (1865 - 1870), up to the end of the Century.

- 10.30 Piazza della Repubblica, information desk opens where you can book afternoon tours.
- 10.45 Piazza Signoria, the Band lines up for its first short performance.
- 11.00 Band departs for Piazza della Repubblica, via Via Calzaioli and Via degli Speziali.
- 11.30 Band arrives in Piazza della Repubblica and lines up in the centre of the square for the concert.
- 12.15 Band returns to Piazza Signoria through via Calimala, Loggia del Porcellino, Via Vacchereccia.
- 15,30/16,00/17,00/17,30 visits start for the Nineteenth Century tour of Palazzo Vecchio with starting point at the information desk in Piazza della Repubblica.
- 17.40 Information desk closes.

The free guided tours can also be booked by phone on 055 2654753 from 20th June.



Con la partecipazione di



In collaborazione con



UP AND COMING DATES

27th September:
Piazza d'Azeglio.

11th October:
Piazza Santa Croce.

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The Square and its history



The current appearance of the square is the result of a long process whose roots are to be found way back in the age of Roman *Florentia*, in the 1st Century BC. It is in the exact place where the main roads of the Roman colony crossed (*cardo* and *decumano*) that the Forum was opened: market place and theatre to public city life (some of the remains of the Campidoglio and the Tempio di Augusto came to light during 19th Century archaeological digs). During the medieval age the space left by the ancient forum was occupied by the tower-houses of the most influential local families, but it is from the Fourteenth Century that the square's vocation as a market place is confirmed (after this it is commonly known as the Piazza del Mercato Vecchio). The

first stalls to appear were butchers' stalls, followed by fish stalls and other products for whom Vasari, commissioned by Cosimo I, built the elegant Sixteenth Century "loggia del pesce" (dismantled during the Nineteenth Century work on the square and moved to the actual Piazza de'ciampi). The settlement of the Jewish Ghetto on the northern side of the square was also due to the same Medici Grand Duke. The quarter that began to develop here quickly became the real *bowels* of the city. From the Eighteenth Century in particular it began its inexorable decline (over crowding, precarious sanitary conditions, security problems) and became stigmatized during the era of Florence as capital. In the 1880s the unconditional demolition of the area

began, including churches, tabernacles and tower-houses, some fragments of which were collected by the Museo di San Marco where they can still be seen today. It was intended to create a new, clearly geometric, "Turin style" square that did not however coincide with the soul of the city. When the demolition work was still in course an equestrian monument to Vittorio Emanuele II was placed in the centre of the square from which it was to take its name (in 1932 the Zocchi statue was moved to the entrance of the Cascine park). Shortly after, the Portici building was built based on a design by Micheli, with its large central arch (on which the famous and today ironic inscription stands out: "*the old centre of the city, from centuries old squalor to new*

life restored"), followed by a whole series of neo classical style buildings still home to famous historical cafés. The column of abundance at the centre of the square, copy of the Eighteenth Century original removed in 1800, was placed there in 1956. The original sculpture by Foggini was made in 1721 to substitute the Donatellian one - collapsed in the same year - which in its turn had been made to substitute the old sacrificial Roman column erected at the centre of the forum and by extension at the centre of the entire city.

A square at the centre of the city



It was nearly midnight on the 15th March 1860; the day planned for the proclamation of the results of the plebiscite with which Tuscany was to become part of a new Kingdom under the Savoia was coming to an end, but the Court was delaying the result. Enrico Poggi, the Minister for Justice in the Tuscan Government, stopped the clock of the Palazzo, in order to gain a few minutes of time.

In the end the results arrived: it was his job to read them to the crowd gathered in Piazza della Signoria. Bettino Ricasoli, head of the government, felt that given Poggi's height nobody would have seen the person reading the results. He sent for a bench and the minister stood upright on the bench to proclaim the Union of Tuscany to the Constitutional Kingdom of Vittorio Emanuele II. It was in this

way that a new history for Tuscany began and a period of great transformation for Florence destined to change the face of the city. In fact, up to the mid 1800s the city was still trapped within the third ring of city walls with the countryside immediately beyond the old town, broaching its walls every morning with its products. The roads and squares were full of salesmen and the craftsmen would take their work into the open air, beyond the doors of their shops. This chaotic and colourful life reached its height right in the centre of the city where the *cardo* and *decumano* roads of Roman *Florentia* crossed paths in the Old Market square. This is how Bruno Cicognani describes it: "*Was it a square? What cataclysm had led to all that rubble and ruins that reached right up to*

the first floor? Those weren't rubble and ruins! They were shops, stalls with roofs, piled up store cupboards, filled to bursting: boards, beams, bricks and gutters, layered, put together at odds as intentionally temporary huts; except that through the force of filth and bad weather the wood, terracotta, iron and tin had got tangled and twisted, layer upon layer, into a permanent continuity of new material with its very own properties, colour and rebellious behavior, against all the laws of mechanics and engineering". This peasant like dimension did not stop the capital of the Grand Duke from being the cultural capital of Italy: theatres, clubs, cafes and cultural life were not missing. The city hides but plays out its own role that, ironically, it will only be able to express itself as long

as it experiences this intentional contradiction. When, at the end of the Century, the hovels, filth and confusion of the Old Market leave their place to the geometric pomp of the new Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, Florence has difficulty recognizing itself: its role as *provisory Capital* of the Kingdom of Italy is over; it has been abandoned by the long line of employees and functionaries come down from Turin; turned into a Dame, confused by too many turns of the waltz, fallen foul of a persistent identity crisis. The city partly recovers at the beginning of the following century when the Nineteenth Century cafes of the same square become real centres for cultural journals in which a generation of artists and literary figures will imagine, for good and for bad, a *new culture for the new century*.

Discovering a Century: guided Tours

Palazzo Vecchio in the 1800s

At the beginning of the 1800s Palazzo Vecchio rediscovered its political function: from being home to the *Guardaroba Maggiore* (a kind of enormous deposit for objects and works of art at the service of the court) and some of the grand-ducal state administration offices, in 1808 it became home to the *Mairie*, city administration born from the annexing of Tuscany to the French empire of Napoleon Bonaparte. It is in this period that the 1565 frescoes with their views of Austrian cities in the Michelozzo courtyard were restored and

the great Argenario stairway, where the Lords, Ladies and Grand Dukes appeared during solemn ceremonies, was disgracefully demolished. This destruction led to a change in the entrance stairway and the pedestal of Michelangelo's *David*, as well as the substitution of the old Marzocco (the Lion that is a symbol of the city) with Donatello's *Marzocco* that had been in Santa Maria Novella up to that time. On the return of Ferdinando III of Lorena in 1814 the Palazzo rediscovered its old role precisely when *elite* tourism (more and more widespread thanks to the distribution of the first guidebooks) began to consider it a charming port of call. But political events were to take the stage again and in 1848 and again in 1859 the Salone dei Cinquecento became seat to the Legislative

Assembly of Tuscany. In 1860 with the annex to the Kingdom of Italy, Bettino Ricasoli, Governor General, chose to live in Palazzo Vecchio and a first floor living quarters was prepared in the Ammannati courtyard. The major change came in 1865 when Florence became Capital of the Kingdom and it was decided to house the House of Deputies in the Salone dei Cinquecento. The building of the new steps, the removal of the sculptures from the Salone and the use of the Renaissance quarters for political functions (the office of the President of the House was in the Quartiere di Leone X) were not good times. In 1871, with the move of the capital to Rome the State gave the palace over to the city administration and Ubaldo Peruzzi was the first Mayor of Florence to be se-

ated in the Sala di Clemente VII. In the years that followed the Sala dei Duecento was re-adapted to become the seat of the Town Council bringing back the Sixteenth Century tapestries depicting the *Storie di Giuseppe*; an internal pool from the Palazzo di Parte Guelfa was placed in the Sala di Ester and in the Salone dei Cinquecento the head piece in front of the Udienna was completed (planned by the architect De Fabris who also won the competition for the façade of the Cathedral), and some of the statues that had been removed were replaced. In the first decade of the Twentieth Century a more decided campaign took shape to recuperate Palazzo Vecchio as a museum and in 1909, 100 years on, the Museo dei Quartieri Monumentali was opened for the first time.

