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Prato: Local News

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A lovely city, Prato. But from afar it is little known and rarely talked about. “big textile industry” and that is about it, perhaps with a few words about how it is underrated. A lovely city, though, when seen from up close, especially in its historic center: art, memory, an ancient fascination. The people of Prato (yes, a bit rough around the edges) love to live life to the fullest, make music (classical, but also other genres), put on theater, going beyond the customary textile label. Why not start from this point -- who are the ‘Pratesi’ (or who do they appear to be) when then take off their ‘textile’ shoes and put on the shoes of the ‘hedonist’ or the ‘cultured’?

Let us start with the Camerata: the young Prato orchestra that plays its season at the Politeama and has toured with reasonable success. It opened its season this year with nothing less than Beethoven’s Ninth. Relative success, it is true, but it was no doubt a step forward. The orchestra is young, very young, and very willing. So much so that it followed up with to Brahms. And soon with Bach.

Another undisputed cultural success is that of the Textile Museum. One-of-a-kind performances. Renovation of the site and contents of the highest level. Undisputed fame, even on an international level. For example: on occasion of the show in Brussels devoted to Titian’s Venus of Urbino the museum was asked to research a fabric that best matched, in terms of color and type, the fabric upon which Venus reclines. A fabric from Prato was chosen: a fragment from the Tela di Penelope Workshop of the Textile Museum. Another fabric was chosen from the collection of Ca’ Mocenigo in the Venetian Civic Museum, sent to Prato for study purposes and to be put on exhibit.

The Textile Museum has another “first” in Scottish tartan. On occasion of the show “Scottish Tartan: the Romantic Tradition” an original pattern bearing the name of Prato was registered and previewed: a brilliant tartan, with a red background and green, blue and yellow checks. Among the high ranking visitors, a well-informed and deeply interested Prince Charles of Wales. And just a few days later his brother Prince Andrew, Duke of York.

And as if that was not enough, the Prato Textile Museum is now partnered with MoDa, the Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture in London. It is the first link in Europe between two international museums.

And again the Textile Museum: it seems as if it is about to receive the most prestigious recognition given by the European Museum Forum, that of “European museum of the year”. The nomination has been authoritatively advanced.

On the subject of Europe: a multitude of news items are circulating on the multiform interests of European members of parliament in the fate of the Prato textile industry; and also on the contacts, participation and exchange work junkets between the EU and the managing and productive structures of the Prato textile industry.

The very same insistent inter-exchangeability of themes is underway between Prato and governing bodies. Thank goodness, the leaders of the city busy talking, urging, contacting, pressing and even getting what they ask for.

And they “give” too. The Prato Industrial Association has been given the green light by Saint Petersburg to renovate and manage Veteranoff, an enormous health-care structure in the city. The Prato company Eurasia has taken on the task. Three hundred beds for oncological care. The project framework will be presented by the 30th of April and the final project by the 15th of July.

There is more news on the museums: a new museum space will be created next to the open-air space of the Luigi Pecci Center for Contemporary Art. It will finally provide a home for the permanent collection of C.Arte.

Culture, everything having to do with culture, is of interest to the residents of Prato. There have been numerous enrollments at the University of Florence for the masters program in “Technology and Management of the Textile Chain”, a national first organized by the Prato Industrial Association and the University of Florence. The course of study will turn out managers that, alongside business men and women, will organize the management of the companies. There was a great need for this, even more so now that everyone is talking about reducing times, containing costs and moving beyond conventional structures and images.

People are talking about a label that guarantees the authenticity of the Prato textiles to consumers. And people are talking, although not here, about an EU label, a single label for the European market. It is not, obviously, the same thing. So much so that the good comments on the first label are in stark contrast with the myriad of perplexities about the second. But anyhow the vast majority have a soft spot for the high-quality products in which we excel, from wines to textiles to cheese, to many other wonderful products that are traditionally “ours”.

‘Business Intelligence’ (BI). Have you heard about BI? If you have you should know that today’s companies, especially small and mid-sized businesses, are overwhelmed by the problems of competitiveness, flexibility and speed; and that new technologies are needed to remain within the marketplace, even with limited resources. No more instinctive marketing and no more organizational and productive waste. Today you have to know that BI is a combination of technology and instruments geared towards selecting company information and supporting decision-making processes. In summary, BI provides the right data to the decision makers to determine the most efficient tactical and strategic moves. A perfect BI does not happen every day, but it is the end goal that should be aspired to from the start.

The managers of the Prato industries are trying, with great success, new paths that are not always easy, but that are in tune with their fanciful imagination. The Textile Museum has already organized ‘Innovation in the Textile Field Month’. Here are a few: ‘Ingeo’, a textile fiber created from a synthetic agent taken from corn, biodegradable and environmentally-friendly; other fibers have antibacterial, thermostabilizing and fluorescent characteristics: ‘Glow in the Dark’, a fiber from South Korea. Others define

themselves as “intelligent” for interactive clothing. There are fiber optics, others obtained from Sardinian cork. There is ‘chitosan’, made with crab claws and scraps. There is ‘chitina’, a natural antibacterial fiber, made of cellulose pulp. And this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Breaking news: on the 21st of February in the Sala Rossa of the Palazzo Vescovile Curia has invited representatives from the financial sector, from associations, trade unions and institutions to meet with Bishop Simoni. The topic will be the crisis, and the meeting will not be open to the public. The participants will include priests, experts in the sector, representatives of the Laical Council, and monsignor Pierluigi Milesi, the leader of the diocesan social and labor council.