

of the

## Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

## NEWSLETTER

## An Ancient Craft, A True Craftsman at the Cemetery

by Minny Augeri

*He is bent over a slab of marble while he carves a name ... the unmistakable tapping of the chisel is heard through a cloud of white powder ... Later I meet Luciano Salvatori, the Cemetery's stone-carver, during a break in his work.*

### **When did you begin working at the Cemetery?**

In the autumn of 1977. I was young, I had a family to support and I went to the employment office to find work. I knew that the Cemetery was looking for a general laborer. I applied and was hired to do a bit of everything. I already had metalworking experience, I was a metal engraver and had had my own workshop for galvanic cleaning and polishing. There was an old man at the Cemetery named Giuseppe Caprara, who did the stone carving then—I was curious and attracted by his craft, so I watched him work whenever I could.

### **What's the origin of your passion for carving?**

I have always been attracted by manual labor, by the ability to create a work of art out of nothing. When I was little, perhaps nine years old, instead of playing ball, I spied on an artisan who embossed metal. He realized how interested I was, and he taught me the first secrets of his craft.

Caprara also took me under his wing and taught me to carve stone. My first attempts were very laborious—it took me a week to do an inscription. During lunch breaks I used to copy various lettering styles and try to draw them and carve them. But after three or four years I had learned enough to become the “scalpellino” of the Cemetery.

The great thing was that at the Cemetery all the inscriptions were done by hand, without the use of the pantograph. This is



work that nobody does any more, which is one reason it has always fascinated me.

### **Your workshop is on one side of the Parte Antica, but I know that you used to work in another part of the Cemetery.**

The workshop as you see it now was built in 1995. Before that, I used to work on a makeshift bench outside the office (now the Visitors' Centre). I did all the carving there, but there was no electric gate then, so when visitors came they rang a bell and I went to let them in and welcome them. I liked that because I could exchange a few words with the families and relatives. I knew everyone!

### **What are the hardest things about your work?**

Above all, I have to be very careful with the technical aspects of the design, so as to center the inscription on the stone and calculate the placement of the letters and the space between the lines. Then I start carving from the bottom, in order to avoid erasing the letters already drawn on the stone. With marble you have to be very careful, because if you make a mistake, you can't correct it—but it's much better

—continued on p.4

## Friends Come to the Aid of Trees

One of the reasons why the Non-Catholic Cemetery is known as the most beautiful in Rome (or in the world!) is its wealth of trees and other vegetation. When branches fall, however, or when vegetation threatens the conservation of the monuments, it is time to take preventive action.

This autumn, donations from Friends of the Non-Catholic Cemetery will be used for a new systematic survey of the Cemetery's trees. The survey follows the emergency measures carried out last spring and summer, when falling branches damaged several tombs. The survey will be carried out by Dr. Gian Pietro Cantiani, agronomist and tree specialist, using the VTA (Visual Tree Assessment) method. Each tree will be assigned a number and its condition will be examined and recorded, as a basis for future action. More information about the survey will be provided by Dr. Cantiani himself in the next issue of the Newsletter.

—continued on p.4

## WHO THEY WERE...

### Inger Bang Lund (1876-1968)



Inger Bang Lund, Norwegian composer, was born in 1876 in Bergen, Norway, where her father Karl Joachim Bang, lawyer for the Supreme Court, discovered her musical talent early. When she was only three years old, while listening to a concert in the park of Bergen with her father, the child was so impressed by the music that when she returned home she was able to repeat the principal themes on the piano. As a child she also displayed her talent by composing little melodies, so that her father decided to send her to study with the best professors.

After studying harmonic theory with the noted composer and performer Johan Halvorsen, Inger was encouraged to continue her studies in Rome with the great Italian Maestro and composer Alfredo Casella. On 11 October 1911, in the theater of Christiania (Oslo), Inger Bang Lund made her triumphant concert debut with a program exclusively of her own compositions. She was 25 years old.

In 1912, with her husband Dr. Harald Lund, three daughters and her mother, Inger moved to Rome. It was a period of intense activity and great artistic inspiration. Casella showed great appreciation for her compositions.

Inger Bang Lund wrote numerous works for piano and violin, as well as liturgical vocal and choral works. She gave many concerts, not only of her own compositions but also of Chopin, Brahms, Scarlatti, etc., both in Norway and in Rome, always accompanied by excellent performers. The singer Nina Grieg, wife of Edvard Grieg, performed Lund's compositions in her own concerts.

For Inger Bang Lund, performing in public was a kind of mission. She said that her gift, which had been given to her by God, should be shared with others and that music was the most beautiful message from our Lord.

Although her musical compositions and her work as instructor in the conservatory of Bergen were appreciated, Lund encountered obstacles in the diffusion of her music, owing to prejudices of the time against women composers.

The composer died in Bergen in 1968, at the age of 92, having dedicated her whole life to music.

--Ida Solange Bang Turola

*Postscript: Inger Bang Lund is commemorated with a plaque on the Aurelian Wall, above the Zona Vecchia.*

**WHO THEY WERE...** tells the story of a person who is buried in the Non-Catholic Cemetery. Suggestions and contributions for future issues are welcome. (Write to: [mail@protestantcemetery.it](mailto:mail@protestantcemetery.it))



## Weed & Read

On Friday 19 October, 80 volunteers from the Association of American College & University Programs in Italy spent a day at the cemetery. Students, faculty, and staff members from 6 study abroad programs gave some 240 hours of time to assist gardeners and conservators with raking, weeding, and cleaning of monuments. The results were impressive! Led by Dr. Laura Flusche of the University of Dallas, the Weed & Read program also provided students with an introduction to the literary luminaries buried in the cemetery.



The Visitors' Centre at the Non-Catholic Cemetery is looking for **Volunteers**.

If you like to work with people, to garden, to translate or to just spend a couple of hours in Rome's most beautiful landscape then

## WE WANT YOU!



Come by today and talk with the Volunteer on duty in the Visitors' Centre.

MON - SAT 10:00 - 5:00pm  
333.309.2201 or 06.574.1900

EMAIL: [visitorcenter@protestantcemetery.it](mailto:visitorcenter@protestantcemetery.it)

## A Place to Work, A Treasure to Discover

by Minny Augeri



*Later this fall, Minny Augeri will step down from the directorship of the Cemetery after four years of service. As a search is underway for a new director, she shares her thoughts on what the Cemetery has meant to her.*

Four years ago I didn't even know that there was a cemetery next to the Pyramid, even though I consider myself one of those Romans who appreciate the beauties of Rome and who visit its archeological, artistic and historical sites whenever they can. Imagine my astonishment when I was offered a job and discovered this enchanted corner in the heart of Rome. And even greater astonishment when I learned about the tombs of Gramsci, Gadda, Keats and Shelley! But the Cemetery soon revealed much more of interest, even for someone like me who had never been in close contact with areas reserved for the burial of the dead.

As part of my duties, I was asked to open a small space for providing information and welcoming visitors, and thus after a few months' work, we inaugurated the Visitors' Centre. In the first few months that I worked at the Cemetery I tried to learn where the most important and frequently-visited tombs were located, those of illustrious or famous people. I spent many hours tracking down biographical data and finding out about the foreign artists who were so important for the visitors from each country. It was a way to discover Carstens, Pander, Semper, Story, and Bruloff, to name just a few.

I did not succeed in memorizing the names of the more common mortals...they were simply the dead. Yes! But who were they when they were alive? What did they do, and did their dreams come true? What was their destiny? Mine was no simple curiosity, but rather an awareness of the fact that I was contemplating the gravestones of unknown people, behind which was hidden an existence that had left no trace beyond the memories of the relatives and friends who had known them in life. It was difficult to call up their faces, their bodies, and their lives by looking at the names carved into the stone; here at the Non-Catholic Cemetery there are no photographs on the tombs. Only a name, a date, a dedication. Thus one could only imagine their pallid existences trapped within the anonymity of a "normal" life. So it is for the majority of human beings.

—continued on p.4

### COMING EVENTS IN ROME

**28 NOVEMBER: CONFERENCE - "Alfred Wilhelm Strohl-Fern et la Fondation Gleyre"** Istituto Svizzero di Roma, via Ludovisi 48, 2-7 pm. Strohl-Fern (1847-1947) is buried in the Cemetery and was featured in issue no. 1

**3 DECEMBER: POETRY READING - Jorie Graham** (also featured in issue no. 1), American Academy in Rome, Villa Aurelia, Piazza di Porta San Pancrazio, 1, 6 pm.

**UNTIL 13 JANUARY: EXHIBITION - "Italienische Landschaftler der Goethezeit - Paesaggi Italiani dell'epoca di Goethe,"** at the Casa di Goethe, Via del Corso 18, 10 am-6 pm Tu-Su.

Part 2 of an exhibition that included William Friedrich Gmelin's view of the Cemetery (ca. 1810) and engravings by Johann Christian Reinhart (1761-1847), who is buried there.

## An excerpt from the Elegies of August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845)

Also sang ich am Fuße von Cestius Denkpyramide,

Weil allmählich ihr Schatt' unter den Gräbern verschwomm.

Dämmerung entfaltete rings den gefildeinhüllenden Mantel,

Um den Betrachtenden schwieg tiefere Feyerlichkeit:

Fernher flüsterten nur wehmüthige dunkle Cypressen,

Und mitfühlend, so schien's, wankte der Pinie Haupt.

Stumm war alles Gewühl und Getös' unruhiges Treibens,

Leisesten Pulsschlag kaum spürte die ganze Natur,

Und fast schauerte mir, ob nicht den Lebendigen fremd ich

Ohn' eindruckende Spur wandelt' im Schattengebiet.

Schwermuthsvoller Moment, wann, sinkend, des Tages Monarchin

Samt dem beseelenden Licht Formen und Farben entrückt: Alles,

gedämpft und erlaßt, mahnt unser entschwindendes Daseyn,

Und kein Hoffen erhebt über den irdischen Staub.

Noch nicht funkeln die Sterne, und gleichsam zwischen das Leben

Drängt ein Stillstand sich, und die Unsterblichkeit, ein.

Doch, wie die heilige Nacht mit verheißenden Augen herabschaut,

Ahnet der strebende Geist freudige Wiedergeburt.

### POETS IN THE CEMETERY

As the Non-Catholic Cemetery is known for its poets, we include a poem in each Newsletter. Suggestions are welcome.

## An Ancient Craft *cont'd from p.1*

than travertine, which is porous and needs to be plastered and sometimes drives you crazy. Then there's the ancient technique of incision with lead, a real craft.

### *Is it true you can carve any type of lettering?*

Of course! I've done Arabic, Cyrillic, and Chinese. I've even reproduced some signatures on the stones! Not to mention drawings, coats of arms, etc.

### *What's the most unusual inscription that you have carved?*

Lots of them, all important. I remember the first one, for Mario Zagari, on a thick stone, not smooth, very difficult to carve. I also made an icon, and some inscriptions in relief, rather than carved. Most recently, I did the monument for a Syrian ambassador—a complicated work, with an inscription in Arabic that looks like punch work. If I hadn't done it personally, I would not believe that it had been made by hand—but of course it was.

### *Are there satisfactions in this work?*

A great many! The best thing is that you feel, working with your hands, that you are giving comfort and support to people in their time of grief, and for them, it is important that someone does this work, so that a name, a dedication, remains to memorialize their loved ones.

### *You are about to retire—will you keep carving?*

Yes, I have plenty of projects, some related to sculpture, and designs that I'd like to carry out.

### *What future do you wish for the Cemetery?*

That it continues to function as it does now, and that the technique of hand-carving is not lost.

*Luciano Salvatori is nearing his retirement. Carving of inscriptions will continue at the Cemetery, obviously, but the work*

*will be done by outside carvers, in keeping with the need to cut operating costs. One thing, however, is certain: we will miss that rhythmic, repetitive sound of letters being cut into marble. As for the inscriptions themselves, you are invited to wander through along the Cemetery's paths and read the epigraphs and epitaphs—some beautiful, some heartbreaking, others ironic or enigmatic... as good a way as any other for reflecting on the final act of our lives.*



## A place to work *cont'd from p.3*

In the course of my work, I found myself doing research in the archives of the Cemetery about some of the people buried here. I discovered some rather interesting stories, I became aware of the extraordinary things that can happen in so-called normal life, and finally I became convinced that anyone's story, even the most banal or everyday existence, can be miraculous and worth recounting. Should I write a new *Spoon River Anthology*? No, that was not my intention. Nevertheless, in recent years there has been an attempt to explore the relationship between the city of the living and the city of the dead, and if it is true that the efforts of cultural institutions are being drawn to the theme of memory, I can't help thinking that all of these people (in the Non-Catholic Cemetery there are more than 4000!), deserve, if not full honors, at least a page in history, or a fleeting remembrance from someone who might never have known them, but who would have enjoyed meeting them. To be remembered, and not just on November 2.

Little by little, as my work at the Cemetery became more demanding, my curiosity grew apace, as I discovered countless small treasures waiting to be revealed: funerary monuments that I discovered while walking among the paths between the tombs; garlands of finely carved marble flowers, Neoclassical bas-reliefs; statues in Art Nouveau style; bronze medallions; capitals dating from the time of the Roman Empire. And more: picturesque inscriptions, with reflections on death and the afterlife; epigraphs with lines of poetry; religious and non-religious symbols carved on the tombs; and dozens of species of trees and other vegetation to recognize and catalog ...

## NON-CATHOLIC CEMETERY IN ROME

Via Caio Cestio, 6  
00153 Rome, Italy

MON - SAT  
9.00am - 5.00pm  
(last entrance 4.30pm)  
Sundays & Holidays  
9.00am - 1.00pm  
(last entrance 12.30pm)

VISITORS' CENTRE  
Information Point & Bookshop  
Mon - Sat 10.00am - 4.00pm

OFFICE OPEN  
Tues & Thur  
10.00am - 1.00pm  
Thur 2.30 - 4.00pm  
By Appointment Only  
Rome Tel/Fax 06.574.1900

mail@protestantcemetery.it  
www.protestantcemetery.it

In four years of intense work at the Cemetery, I experienced much more than professional advancement. Much more than a new opportunity and a change of careers, the experience enriched my cultural and spiritual development, as every day, I discovered something that intrigued me or inspired me. From the intimate and domestic stories of relatives to the exhaustive searches of visitors, from the curiosities in literary texts to the rigorous analyses of important scholars, there are always new avenues of interpretation opening up in this complex and many-faceted place. The Non-Catholic Cemetery never ceases to amaze and to reveal its surprises, within its gates on Via Caio Cestio. And thus this is an invitation, for those who know this place well and for those who enter for the first time, to take a fresh look and to gather up the variety of stories hidden here, in one of the most important cultural sites in Rome.



## Friends *cont'd from p.1*

Pruning of some of the pines in the *Parte Antica* will also be carried out this autumn, and it may be necessary to close off part of the area while the tree-surgeons are at work.

## FRIENDS

of the

NON-CATHOLIC CEMETERY  
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