

***From the Consul General of Italy
in Hong Kong and Macao,
Alessandra Schiavo***

This year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy: on 17 March 1861 the first King of Italy was proclaimed thus sealing the end of the division of the Country into several small states.

The course of our history changed forever: it was only thanks to the unification process that we succeeded in the struggle against foreign occupation. Old divisions and internal rivalries were radically transformed into a new reality, which was the first step towards a secular, modern and democratic Republic.

The perception of Italy is always connected with the arts, music and “il bel canto”.

This is the reason why to celebrate such a historical event we have decided to bring to Hong Kong some young representatives of the excellence of the Italian musical tradition, the Sextet of the “Accademia del Teatro alla Scala”.

I would also like to remind you that tomorrow, during the reception for the Italian National Day, the Sextet will delight us again with a selection of music entirely dedicated to Giuseppe Verdi, one of the greatest European musicians of the XIX century as well as a great Italian patriot.

La Scala Operahouse is not just one of the most famous theatres in the world. It is also a temple of music, ballet and Italian opera. It has been an integral part of the city of Milan since its construction, and it has acquired such a legendary reputation worldwide that no-one could really claim to have visited Milan without having first seen the ‘Duomo’ (the Cathedral) and “La Scala”. This is mainly because art, music and theatre play such a central role in the life of all Italians and are undoubtedly the symbols and ideal places of our identity, I dare say as much as our religion.

My intention tonight is therefore to share a vital element of our cultural heritage with you and the Hong Kong audience, which has shown real discerning powers and deeply felt appreciation for culture and beauty.

Music has after all inspired the many battles fought during our Risorgimento and, thanks to its intimate connection with the true identity of Italians, it has played an important unifying theme long before the political unification of the country.

I take this opportunity to thank all the distinguished sponsors of this concert: UBI Bank and Cathay Pacific for their precious and generous support; the Island Shangri-la hotel for its essential and exquisite hospitality and for its always efficient cooperation; “Domani Restaurant, “Bright View” and “Pasta Mancini”, for the delicious food of tonight’s cocktail reception.

I wish a very enjoyable evening to all of you!