



Italian American Heritage Club Of Hunterdon County

KEEPING OUR *Pride*, CELEBRATING OUR *Culture*, REMEMBERING OUR *Past*

Program Notes for May: Vicki Vasilopoulos, Director/Producer



Vicki Vasilopoulos

Vicki Vasilopoulos was born in Greece and raised in New York City. She loves Italian culture in all its forms, and thus considers herself an “honorary Italian.”

Vicki was introduced to the world of Italian master tailors through her many trips to Italy as a men’s fashion editor for DNR, the fashion newsmagazine where she produced photo spreads, reviewed runway shows and wrote fashion features. She was also a contributor to Fashion Wire Daily (an international newswire service) and has had feature stories published in The New York Times and Esquire. As a writer and editor Vicki covered the fashion arena for fifteen years.

On one reporting trip to the region of Abruzzo, Vicki met Checchino Fonticoli, the master tailor at the Brioni factory in the town of Penne – and this sowed the seeds for her documentary film, MEN OF THE CLOTH. About a year later she started doing research and preproduction and eventually added New York master tailor Nino Corvato and Joe Centofanti of Ardmore, PA as subjects of her film.

As Vicki became close to these master tailors, she came to realize that they are exceptional individuals – and the elegant clothing they create reflects their moral integrity. Vicki also realized that the craft of hand-tailoring was at a crossroads and she should not miss the opportunity to document an important part of Italy’s cultural heritage. These Italian master tailors represent an artisan immigrant class that many people can identify with -- it reminds them of their fathers or

grandfathers who left Italy for the brighter shores of America.

As a European immigrant whose father was a craftsman, Vicki feels a kinship with those individuals who work with their hands. Her goal is to create nuanced and complex portraits of these artisans by highlighting the proud legacy of Italian master tailors and putting their contributions into historical perspective. She also hopes to generate an intergenerational dialogue on what we are losing as our society moves to a globalized economy that is devoid of a personal or intimate connection between the creator and the consumer. This is what makes us human – and ultimately why Vicki’s film has a universal appeal and resonates with individuals from disparate backgrounds.

“Men Of The Cloth” follows three Italian master tailors who practice the disappearing art of treating each client like a unique masterpiece. As one tailor says, “We make the suit to fit the person, not the person to fit the suit.” These Old World artisans take pleasure and pride in an intimate collaboration with their clients, who get to experience the sensual pleasure of wearing a work of art. Even as they confront their challenging roles in the twilight of their career, their passionate devotion to an age-old craft sustains them in the face of mass production and the decline of the apprentice system.

MEN OF THE CLOTH has received grants from The National Italian American Foundation and contributions from dozens of individuals around the world. After ten years of following her characters, the film is now in postproduction (at the editing stage). Vicki will be presenting a preview of her forthcoming film.



Checchino in his hometown of Penne, Italy