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PRESS RELEASE

VISIT TO OTTAWA OF THE ZAMPOGNARI DI BOIANO
(TRADITIONALLY DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON, BAGPIPE PLAYERS
VISITED VILLAGES THROUGHOUT ITALY BRINGING A MESSAGE OF PEACE
BY PLAYING SEASONAL MUSIC ON THEIR UNIQUE INSTRUMENTS.)

The Molisani Association of Ottawa, founded in 2008, is an association whose aim is to maintain in the Ottawa area, the cultural traditions of the region of Molise in Italy. The Association is hosting the *Zampognari di Boiano* from December 11th to December 17th. Three bagpipe players from that Region will appear in several performances as well as at fundraising event for the Italian-Canadian Historical Centre recently built on the grounds of Villa Marconi on Baseline Road. The Historical Centre is a gathering place where the contributions made by generations of Italian immigrants to Canada is celebrated in the form of exhibits, educational, cultural and heritage presentations and storage of personal, symbolic stories that have marked the last century of Italian – Canadian immigration of Canadian History.

Along with the Molisani Association of Ottawa, many individuals and businesses have offered to support this initiative financially – conscious of the fact that this initiative presents to Ottawans a rare opportunity to experience the spirit of Christmas performed in the time-honoured tradition of Italian bagpipe musicians and to celebrate the richness of Italian culture.

The *Zampognari di Boiano* have performed in Ottawa on two previous occasions, in 2008 and 2010, at which time they donated two of their original handmade instruments to the Canadian Museum of History.

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Additional background notes on the *Zampognari* are appended.

The Zampognari – Welcome visitors at Christmas

As we approach the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on the 8th of December, a holiday when Italy officially gets ready for Christmas, people in many parts of the country will be eagerly awaiting the appearance of the *zampognari* or bagpipe players. These musicians were originally shepherds who came down from the hills at Christmas to celebrate with their families and entertain

people at various shrines; today however, they are often men who work in cities and whose families have a *zampognaro* tradition.

The players derive their name from their instrument, the *zampogna*, which is a corruption of Greek “simponia”, meaning single reeds. This instrument is a type of double-chantered pipe but some of the *zampognari* play the *piffero - ciaramella* or *ciaramedda* in dialect - a kind of oboe, instead. Each pipe is tuned differently according to the tradition in the area where the players come from. The reeds are traditionally made from the giant reed “*canna marina*” although some are made from plastic these days and the bags are traditionally made from goat hide or sheepskin but again, synthetic materials are now often use. The *pifferi* are made from the wood of olive or plum trees. All *zampognari* continue to perform in traditional dress.

No one is sure precisely where the *zampognari* tradition began: some argue for Abruzzo or Molise, others for Rome and still others for Sicily. The *zampogna* tune, “Quando Nascette Ninno” [“When the Child Was Born”] is the original version of Italy’s favourite Christmas carol, “Tu scendi dalle Stelle” [“You Come Down from the Stars”]. Of course, *the zampognari* play many other traditional melodies as well and some of these extol the beauty of Italy’s various regions. The tunes are joyful and make people want to tap their feet or get up and dance.

Where will you find the *zampognari* this Christmas? Although some people are concerned that the tradition may be dying out, it is, in fact, very much alive in Abruzzo, Molise, Lazio, Sicily, Campania, Basilicata and Calabria. At Christmas, the *zampognari* often appear where there are religious grottos or open air markets; you will also see them in the streets of Rome. Children in particular, love the *zampognari* because they make everyone happy by wishing them a “Buon Natale” and offering them the gift of friendship. Not surprisingly, traditional Italian homes will often include *zampognari* figurines in their Nativity scenes.

Look for the *zampognari* if you are going to be in Italy between now and Christmas, especially on the 8th of December and on Sundays!

- See more at: <http://www.italymagazine.com/featured-story/zampognari-welcome-visitors-christmas#sthash.bt1VphGp.dpuf>

The Christmas Carol and the *Zampogna*

The Christmas Carol is traditionally played on the *zampogna* (a type of large, sweet-toned bagpipe with two drones and two chanter) and the *ciaramella* (a small clarinet or shawm) by groups of between two and four shepherds who come from the mountains to the villages and cities throughout Italy and Sicily, notably Rome and Naples. The shepherds would serenade private homes and statues of the Virgin Mary in the Octave (eight days) before Christmas.

The *Zampognari* come to Naples from the mountains of Abbruzzi at Christmas-tide, and wander about from house to house playing and singing before the image of the Holy Infant during the Novena (nine days before Christmas). The *Zampognari* generally perform together in pairs, one playing the bagpipe, and other an offshoot of small clarinet called *ciaramella*. Many tunes played by the *Zampognari* were inspired by famous pieces such as Handel’s Messiah.

William Hone, in *Ancient Mysteries Described* (1832, p. 105) observed: "On the continent the custom of carolling at Christmas is almost universal. During the last days of Advent, Calabrian minstrels enter Rome, and are to be seen in every street saluting the shrines of the Virgin mother with their wild music, under the traditional notion of charming her labour-pains on the approaching Christmas. Lady Morgan observed them frequently stopping at the shop of a carpenter. In reply to questions concerning this, the workmen who stood at the door said, that it was done out of respect to St. Joseph. [*Lady Morgan's Italy*, c. xxi]

Many carols are sung in the dialect of the region. A common thread among dialects is the Neapolitan dialect, one of the master-dialects of Italy. In its train it counts several under-dialects, such as the Pugliese or Apulian, the Sabine, and that of the island of Capri. Even in Naples, the different quarters of the city are marked by different jargons, though it should not be supposed that these subdivisions exhibit any varieties so striking as to diminish the universal sway of Puicineila, or to prevent that monarch's voice from being understood in every corner of his own particular dominion.

A classic carol is taken from an original Italian poem that is said to contain 24 verses: [Quanno nascette Ninno](#).

It is widely reported that Handel may have adopted pipe music with his so-called 'Pipers Carol' or 'Canzone d'i Zampognari' which he used for "[He Shall Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd](#)" in "The Messiah." He may have heard this melody during a visit to Naples in 1708, 33 years before composition of the oratorio. Note that Ruth Heller added the note that "From this ancient carol Handel developed the melody of "Come Unto Him," a famous aria in his oratorio "*The Messiah*."

Zampognaro (Shepherd with bagpipe)

A shepherd's gift... a joyous melody... proclaiming the news!

"I love the idea of bringing music to the Nativity... and I wanted to portray an instrument that's traditionally been used for that purpose.

*"My son is immersed in the preservation of indigenous music in the regions of Italy and Sicily, from where my grandparents immigrated. He's re-introduced an authentic musical tradition to our family by learning about and playing the **zampogna**, the Italian bagpipe (pronounced zam-pone-ya).*

*"The bagpipe is an ancient pastoral instrument played by shepherds and farmers for thousands of years, and is used in many cultures to celebrate the nativity. In present day Italy, the **Zampognaro** (shepherd with bagpipe) plays the Novena, the nine days leading up to Christmas... a celebration and announcement of the birth of Christ.*

“The music is festive and vibrant, accompanied by singing and dancing. It’s a time of reunion and company – heralding the arrival of the holidays. It’s the Italian version of caroling – people gather and singing songs passed down through the generations.

“The zampogna is a humble shepherd’s instrument, yet it produces a rich texture of melody and rhythm. I like the thought of this joyful, symphonic music surrounding the nativity scene.”

Susan Lordi (Willow Tree)

- From: The Italy Magazine
- Visit our website at:<http://www.amoottawa.com/>

**We in Ottawa are fortunate that the
zampognari will be HERE!**