

Peter Bondanella

Peter Bondanella retires in May 2007 after 35 years of service to Indiana University. Over the decades Peter has established a reputation in the field of Italian studies that few scholars of his generation can rival. His early preparation, after completing a master's degree in political science at Stanford University and a doctorate in comparative literature at the University of Oregon, was in the field of Renaissance studies. Influenced by his background in political science, he completed two monographs on Italy's greatest Renaissance thinkers, Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini. In addition to a number of scholarly articles ranging from Renaissance culture to the modern period of Italian literature, he also collaborated with Distinguished Professor Emeritus Mark Musa on translations of medieval and Renaissance classics: Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Machiavelli's *Prince*, and a collection of Machiavelli texts in *The Portable Machiavelli*. With his wife, Professor Julia Conaway Bondanella, he has continued to produce important translations of key works from the same period, including Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*, Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*, Cellini's *My Life*, and Carlo Ridolfi's *The Life of Titian*. In 2005 he published a new scholarly translation of *The Prince* with Oxford University Press, based on the latest Italian critical edition and containing copious historical and interpretive notes. For the new Barnes and Noble classics series, he has edited with Julia a new edition of Longfellow's famous translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Peter's translations are standard texts in hundreds of classrooms in art history, comparative literature, history, political science, and Italian studies.

Peter has also made important contributions to the study of Italian literature. *The Dictionary of Italian Literature*, the first single-volume reference to Italian literature in English, is used widely by students and the general reading public. *The Eternal City: Images of Rome in the Modern World* was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1987 and became a selection of the History Book Club. It helped to place films about Rome in historical perspective and made a connection between Bondanella's original field of specialization (Renaissance studies) and Italian film studies, the new discipline that his subsequent research did so much to define. His critical study of Italy's most famous living novelist, *Umberto Eco and the Open Text*, was published by the Cambridge University Press, and this led to the more recent *Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel* and a work now in progress, *The Cambridge Companion to Umberto Eco*.

Most scholars would be delighted to rest on the laurels of the traditional scholarly profile outlined above, but Peter Bondanella has made even more significant and original contributions to the field of Italian film scholarship. When he became interested in Italian cinema in the early 1970s, scholarship on it was practically nonexistent in this country. More than any other American scholar, Bondanella has transformed the scholarship of this field. He devoted almost a decade to the production of *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*. Universally recognized as the standard text and reference, it placed American research in this area on firm foundations and deservedly won the President's Award of the American Association for Italian Studies.

Another similar and equally original historical work by Bondanella appeared in May 2004: *Hollywood Italians: Dagos, Romeos, Palookas, Wise Guys, and Sopranos*. This is the first comprehensive treatment of Italian Americans in Hollywood films. Like the manual on Italian cinema, *Hollywood Italians* is becoming a classic work in its field. It should do for Italian Americana what *Italian Cinema* did for Italian film.

In addition to film history, Peter has made fundamental contributions to the analysis of Italian film directors such as Roberto Rossellini and Federico Fellini. There is general agreement that his many publications on Fellini represent the most important body of criticism in English dedicated to this pivotal figure. His *Cinema of Federico Fellini* (1992) has been hailed as the definitive work on the maestro. It won the CONGRIPS Book Prize in Italian Studies, an honor bestowed on the best book in the general field of Italian studies published between 1990 and 1992. Fellini himself graced the book with a preface, something he had never done for an American writer.

The impact of Bondanella's work appears in numerous fields beyond Italian studies. When he was nominated to the rank of distinguished professor in 1992, not only did he receive strong supporting letters from the best Italianists in America, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy, but he also won praise from such diverse people as Italian film directors (Federico Fellini, Ettore Scola), art historians (Paul Baransky), political scientists (Pulitzer Prize-winner Sebastian De Grazia), historians (Denis Mack Smith, Senior Fellow Emeritus of All Souls College, Oxford University), and journalists (Tullio Kezich, film critic for Milan's *Corriere della Sera*, and Stanley Kaufmann, film reviewer for *The New Republic*). These names underscore the breadth and range of Bondanella's impact, which few scholars in Italian studies, or in the humanities in general for that matter, could match.

Were Bondanella the type of academic who devotes all his energies to research, his productivity might be less laudable. But he is a dynamic and creative teacher, who gave a great deal of time to freshman Topics courses: *Fellini and Fantasy*, *Cloak and Dagger: Spies and Detectives from Sherlock Holmes to James Bond*, and *Hollywood Italians*. His undergraduate courses have enjoyed consistently high and enthusiastic enrollments since they were first established. He founded IU's Summer Program in Florence some 25 years ago, and he has served in a number of important administrative roles, including a decade as chair of the Department of West European Studies.

Perhaps his most effective work as a teacher has been his mentoring of graduate students. He has published with students, and for over 30 years he has encouraged students to read papers from his seminars at scholarly meetings to learn how to handle the tools of the trade. Just to give an example, his seminar on Umberto Eco, taught four times since the 1990s, has produced a book, several dissertations and M.A. theses, and a number of critical articles in important journals by students who have taken the class.

Peter's retirement notwithstanding, Italian studies will continue to benefit from his many publications still in progress. He will, however, be greatly missed by IU's scholarly community, by his colleagues in the department, and, above all, by the students who have had the fortune and the privilege to take one of his classes in the past 35 years.

Andrea Ciccarelli, David Hertz, and Massimo Scalabrini