



ELSEVIER

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Foreword

Venezia, Oh cara!

Venice, my beloved one! We think this must have been the mood of the 160 scientists who attended the ITP'98 symposium on capillary electroseparation techniques, held there on 4–7 October 1998. A scientific meeting in Venice is a rare event; perhaps in this magic town only arts and music are tolerated. So, to keep with the mood, we hope that most of the attendees have worked hard (in their free time, of course) to feel up a bag of memories: not just visiting the most celebrated sights, such as Piazza San Marco, the Basilica and the Palazzo dei Dogi, but also other unique places, such as the Accademia (the fine art museum where the renaissance artists of the Venetian school offer perhaps the most glorious show in earth) and the Scuola di San Rocco, where Tintoretto's tableaus give a superb account of the Old and New Testament.

Aware of all these temptations, we managed to organize such a fine and tremendous scientific program to literally keep the participants glued to the meeting saloon (in the unique setting of the Hotel Des Bains at the Lido, a Belle Epoque, magnificent hotel in whose grand ballroom the meeting took place). It seems, however, that we were aided also by an awful weather, which kept pouring tremendous amounts of rain for most of the meeting. The brave ones who ventured on Monday night in downtown Venice also experienced a novel type of baptizing ceremony: Piazza San Marco underwater. As one was crossing it, under a beating downpour of rain, one could see water gushing from the pavement and rapidly flooding the square. It seems that the "Acqua Alta" has already occurred 787 times in a mild form (10 cm deep) and 132 times in a more severe form (1/2 to 1 m high) in the last 10 years. As we were trapped under the portico of the Libreria of Sangallo,

some brave ones removed their shoes and waded through the water: they have all been recovered in a hospital with gangrenous feet. One of the latest projects to save Venezia is called Moises: it is a gigantic platform with massive shields to be raised and block the inlet of the lagoon during high seas and strong southerly winds (the Scirocco). Ironically, he who was saved from the waters by the daughter of a Pharaoh as a baby, in its adult life will rescue others from high waters.

Although the meeting lasted only three days, the tight schedule allowed us to accommodate 44 oral communications, enough to have plenty of science floating around and possibly to excite new ideas and new research avenues. Even at this frantic rhythm we could hardly have been a match to Dominus Karol Wojtila, who in all of his career has delivered (at this writing) no less than 12 000 talks for a total of >15 million words! Clearly, we still have a long way to go. About 100 posters were displayed during the meeting and there was a poster prize competition, presided by a panel of three distinguished scientists in the field: Dr. S. Fanali (Italy), Professor B. Gas (Czech Republic) and Professor D. Kaniaski (Slovak Republic). At the awarding ceremony for the three winners, we were notified at the last minute that there was a fourth one (*ex-aequo*), which created the embarrassing situation of dividing three prizes into four (at least Saint Martin had a sword to split his mantle between two persons!). We are happy, nevertheless, to send our greetings to these four young scientists: Dr. A. Bossi (University of Verona, Italy); Dr. S. Bottani (Paris, France), Dr. M. Dankova (Bratislava, Slovak Republic) and Dr. Z. Kabatek (Prague, Czech Republic).

It would have been nice to be able to open the

meeting with a speech from the head of the University of Verona, the academic body most supportive of ITP'98. As the Rettore Magnifico could not come, we took the liberty of composing a limerick to welcome the participants. Here it goes:

*You have got to be crazy(s)Coming all the way to
VeniceJust for capillary electrophoresisNot even
for a concert in do diesis*

There is always a hidden dualism in things in life. Thus, we learned the hard way why scientific meetings are so rare in Venice. In Italian, the adjective “cara” means not simply “beloved one”, but, just as frequently, “expensive one”. As we struggled hard to create a unique setting for our meeting, we selected this superb location of the

Hotel Des Bains, the setting also of some famous movies, such as *Death in Venice* (*Der Tod in Venedig*, by T. Mann; by the way, read in this unique novel a description of Venice and our hotel as they looked in 1910) and *The English Patient*. Due to our meagre budget, we went bankrupt and we learned very well the lesson of Venice as a town for “mordi e fuggi” (the strategy of most tourists who flood Venice from morning till evening, bivouac in the streets and quickly retreat as the sun sets). We do not know if this meeting will go down to history as a most exciting scientific event, but surely it will win first price as the most expensive one!

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