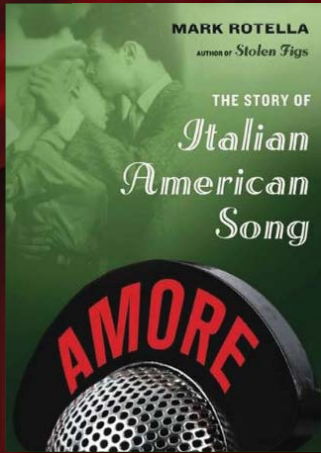


Friday, September 28th - 7:30 PM
An Unforgettable Evening of Music!



Amore: The Story of Italian American Song
Host-Author Mark Rotella explores how a tidal wave of Italian-American singers dominated the pop charts for decades and set the musical standards ever since!

Musical salutes to Mario Lanza, Frank Sinatra, Al Martino Bobby Darin, Connie Francis, Louie Prima and more!

Starring

BILLY RUTH

RAY GELATO

JENNA ESPOSITO

MARC ANTONELLI

STEVE RITROVATO

and the 20-piece

CITY RHYTHM ORCHESTRA

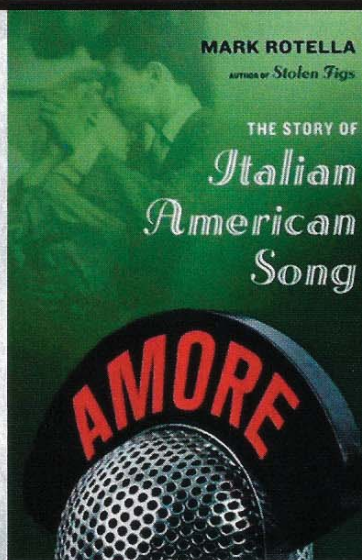
Neumann-Goretti H.S. Auditorium
10th & Moore Streets, Philadelphia
Tickets \$20

Free Parking in School Lot

Purchase By Phone: 215-463-1326

By Mail: St. Nicholas Church, 910 Watkins Street, Phila., PA 19148

Benefits St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church
Celebrating 100 years of Faith, Family and Tradition



by COLLEEN HEAVENS

THAT'S AMORE

The proud stories and ancestral marks of Italian culture can be found all over Philadelphia. Some can be seen in the bricks and stained glass of South Philadelphia's Catholic churches. Others can be heard over Sunday dinner at Nonna's house. And some can only be felt through the music.

A musical performance of Italian proportions will be presented by St. Nicholas of Tolentine Parish on Friday, September 28th. The show was inspired by the book *Amore: The Story of Italian American Song*, and its author, New Jersey-based Mark Rotella, will host the program. Paired with Rotella's adept commentary on the decade's most celebrated singers, City Rhythm Orchestra will perform some of the greatest hits that are chronicled within the book's pages.

Amore tells the story of the great Italian American artists who dominated the pop charts from the 1940s through the 1960s. Rotella

affectionately refers to it as the "Italian decade," falling somewhere between the end of the big band era and the onset of Beatlemania. It is the time when Frank Sinatra's fedora and Dean Martin's cocktail became images etched in the history of pop culture, and when their timeless classics became the soundtrack of a generation.

"Because of You," "That's Amore," "I Got the World on a String." These were the songs of Italian American singers breaking out of their working-class, immigrant neighborhoods and entering mainstream pop culture. Americans everywhere fell in love with their voices, as the Marios, Louies and Frankies took over the barrooms and nightclubs of Brooklyn, the Bronx and South Philly.

South Philadelphia certainly plays a role in *Amore*, from its prime position in the era's music scene to the stories of Mario Lanza and Al Martino – the neighborhood's very own crooner legends.

"South Philly is a place that has given so much to American pop music," Rotella said. "So the setting makes complete sense for a show like this."

Rotella hopped right on board when asked to join the project. It was City Rhythm Orchestra's Pete Spina who first got the wheels turning. After reading the book, he knew there was definite stage potential.

"I really wanted to bring the book to life," Spina said. "It's full of so many timeless songs."

Spina is the band leader and saxophone player for City Rhythm Orchestra, a 17-piece big band that's been rocking nightclubs and venues around Philly for more than 25 years. While the band plays everything from pop and rock to jazz and swing, the Sinatra and Tony Bennet classics are at the center of its heart and soul.

"This is the music that is right up our alley," Spina said.

The band also will perform on-stage collaborations with singers

Marc Antonelli, Billy Ruth, Steve Ritrovato and Ray Gelato. The show, co-sponsored by Philadelphia Row-Home Magazine, will be presented at the Neumann-Goretti Auditorium, located at 10th and Moore Streets. Proceeds will benefit St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church on the occasion of its 100th anniversary.

"We're an Italian parish that likes to keep an eye on our past," said Spina, a born-and-bred South Philadelphian who was raised listening to these records. He hopes the performance will weave an historical account of these classics with the heart-felt music of his heritage... the music of love, pride and passion.

And as Dean Martin crooned, "That's Amore!"

Tickets to "Amore: The Story of Italian American Song" are \$20 and can be purchased at the St. Nicholas Rectory, located at 910 Watkins Street, or by calling 215-463-1326. St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church is a member of the PRH Business Network. ■