

JAMES GRAHAM MY PRIX ITALIA



My Prix Italia

by James Graham OBE
Prix Italia Honorary President

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AFTER an introduction of Carlo Sartori, Secretary General of the Prix Italia, James Graham, President of the Prix Italia, addressed the audience (composed of more than 400 international and local dignitaries and delegates of the Prix Italia) stating: "I speak as a European but the Prix Italia, whose home is in Europe, belongs to the world. Italy gave birth to the Prix Italia, creating a fellowship of broadcasters who would seek after truth and give it dignity and form in their work. It is to the great credit of the Rai that the Italian state television service has nurtured and sustained these ideals in its support of the Prix Italia for more than half a century. No prize is more envied nor held in higher esteem than a Prix Italia, a beacon to light the way to those whose consistent aim is quality in a constantly changing world.

The Prix Italia serves mankind because it speaks to the heart and the indelible truths that mark out decent men, now and for the century to come".

From the transcript of the opening ceremony, Prix Italia 1999.

Foreword

AS HE HIMSELF recounts in these notes, James Graham first attended the Prix Italia in 1980 (the Riva del Garda edition) to take part in that year's Circom meeting. For more than 30 years thereafter, he would remain one of the Prix's most faithful and distinguished fixtures, of which he would become President between 1999 and 2001.

Leaving aside his official roles, Jim has been a longstanding loyal friend of Prix Italia, whose invaluable input has been a constant resource in helping to steer it through its prestigious history. A few elegant well-chosen words have repeatedly proved Jim Graham's successful recipe in guiding the Prix through thick and thin.

As well as offering a colourful array of key moments and characters, Jim also gives us a rare insight into the post-war years, evoking precious memories that only someone of his calibre and diplomacy can provide.

These notes were originally drafted for our website in 2015, at the suggestion of then General Secretary Paolo Morawski. We are pleased to re-publish, here collected together for the first time, these inestimable personal recollections from our true Ambassador, Honorary President and a pivotal figure in so much of our history.

An Act of Love

THE ENGLISH translation of the French 'aimez' is 'to like, or to love'. To me, 'like' was never enough. For longer than I care to think, I have loved the Prix Italia. If you like someone or something, there is a reason. It's 'because...'. If you love something, there is no reason, no cause, no gain to be made by association. It's in the heart. So how did this love affair begin? Paradoxically, it was not in Italy but in France.

We stood on a bridge near Nancy in the Lorraine, like Alsace, one of the disputed provinces between France and Germany at the start of the 20th century. I was with a French academic and television producer called Michel Kuhn. He told me how his father had taken him to the bridge and explained how, in 1940, German forces had crossed the bridge on their way to occupy France. In 1944, the Americans pushed their way eastward over the bridge. Their advance did not last. The Germans counter-attacked in what was known as the Ardennes offensive. That did not last either. A few months later, General Patton took US and Allied forces across the same bridge, towards the heart of Germany.

A little bit of history, that time prods us to forget, for most Prix Italia delegates will not have lived through that period? No, not for me. I was seven when war broke out and 11 when it ended. It was part of my life and Michel Kuhn's. So we looked at each other and he put into words what I was thinking and feeling: 'What a tragic waste'. I recall that we pledged, at that moment, to do what we could to advance the cause of a Europe of co-operation and never again confrontation.

He lived in North East France, which was suffering economically, as it moved into an era of post-industrialisation, the giant steelworks at Longwy threatened with closure, as the mines of

Emile Zola gradually shut down. I was the BBC television manager in North East England, going through a similar process, with the decline of coal, steel and shipbuilding. I said: 'Why don't we work together? Come across and do two programmes on how the British are tackling these problems and I will do two in France and we'll swap'.

He looked astonished! Paris would never give him the budget for overseas work. He was programme controller of a regional station, FR3 - France Regional 3. So I said: 'Forget the budget. Your crew can stay in the homes of our crew and we will do the same when we come to Nancy. You use our film library and we will use yours. Who needs a budget!'.

And that is absolutely what we did. We bartered our way through. We each ran the other's subsequent films, with subtitles, each getting four films out of the exchange. Actually, we wound up the project with a live debate via outside broadcast. More than that, we made history.

The project came to the notice of the Paris-based Circom, who invited me to Riva del Garda to explain the idea. I did not know then, that a leading figure in Circom was Sergio Borelli, director, under Secretary General Alvise Zorzi, of the Prix Italia. I explained my idea at a Circom meeting at the Prix Italia, which was taking place there at the time.¹

The idea was taken up with some enthusiasm, as an example of region-to-region cooperation in Europe. Circom launched Circom Regional on that basis, with conferences to see what exchanges could take place. That led to an award from the French Prime Minister, Michel Barre, who was mayor of Lille. I remember he presented me with a metal copy of the Lille belfry, Le Beffroi d'Or. Being British, I was terrified when his blue chin skimmed mine and I thought: 'My God! He's going to kiss me'. (I escaped!) Because of the extended cooperation that ensued between two regions, the European Flag of Honour followed, an award I treasure.

Heady days! But something more subtle had taken root, something that was to influence the rest of my life in broadcasting. I had slipped, sideways, into the arms of Prix Italia. At first, it was through Sergio Borelli, Dario Natoli, Mike Fentiman of the BBC, and the cerebral Hans-Geert Falkenberg, between them, the core of Circom. But, after a spell at BBC Headquarters, in London, as Head of the Governors' Secretariat, I heeded a call to switch back to ITV, to take charge at Border TV, the Anglo-Scottish station where I had begun. That way, I could get back to production and have the freedom to shape the station's programme destiny, with Channel Four coming on stream to take bright ideas.

¹This would be the 1980 Prix Italia.

I was a Council Member of ITV, then the biggest commercial channel in Europe and where the distinguished Paul Fox decided to hand on to me, the post of Prix Italia delegate, in light of my European experience. I seized it with both hands.

That must be some 40 years ago. Some of our colleagues of that era have passed on, among them Michel Kuhn, although our President, Rémy Pfmilin², continues to remember him. There are few now who bear the scars of war, as people like Hans-Geert Falkenberg. He had been enrolled in Hitler Youth, as many young people were at that time. His father had wound up in Britain and there was a period when they were fighting on opposite sides, in northern France. Hans-Geert became a prisoner, in a Paris jail, from which he and others had managed to break out as the war drew to a close. He had by then become Communist. His partner, a New Yorker called Marcia Lerner, won the Prix Italia with a programme using previously un-reported tapes, on the life of Marilyn Monroe.³

How different the world is now. But what has not changed are the values of the Prix Italia, a festival which chose not to recognise the Cold War, and was therefore one of the few venues where Americans and Soviet Union delegates mixed freely. Delegates still do, no matter what the political stance of the countries they represent. Life-long friendships are struck up on juries, many cemented around checked table-cloth suppers, or late-night coffee on the way home.

These are the simple threads of friendship, worldwide, but inextricably woven into the fabric of Europe. A Europe of friendship? A Europe of commitment? If these words are inadequate, a Europe where the Prix Italia has helped spread the value of a love of mankind that so often runs through its programme entries. Of that, we can be proud.

²President of Prix Italia in 2014-15, at the time of this writing.

³This appears to be a false recollection. *Norma Jean dite Marilyn Monroe* by André Romus and Marcia Lerner, starring Catherine Deneuve, was in the 1987 competition but did not win.

Nine-Eleven and the Prix Italia

IF YOU THINK about the world in numbers, you soon realise that some have a distinct and outstanding potency. For instance, the street between Fourth and Sixth in New York is Fifth Avenue. But it's not just a number. Its very name carries the resonance of the most famous shopping street in the world. A few blocks away, you can look across at the new skyscraper which replaced the World Trade Center. That leads us to another set of numbers: Nine Eleven, synonymous with a horrific atrocity that shocked the world. It is there that the Prix Italia picked up the story.

It was September 10, 2001, and Carlo Sartori, the energetic Secretary General of the Prix Italia, had invited Walter Cronkite, doyen of the American television commentators, to address the Prix Italia and to receive an Hon Doctorate from Prof Sartori's university, the University of Rome. Dinner had been arranged at the Eden Hotel, in Rome, for a party which included Walter and his wife, Betsy, and Russ Kagan, the New York impresario and close friend of Carlo Sartori, who had arranged the visit, as well as Mrs Kagan and, on the Prix Italia side, Luciano Pinelli, the festival director and myself, as President, with my wife.

The Americans had left New York almost immediately before the atrocity. Walter lived not far from the World Trade Center. What had been intended as a welcoming occasion gave way to one single, sombre, all-consuming topic.

Next day, television camera crews and newspaper reporters besieged the great hall of the university, anxious to record a comment from one of the most distinguished commentators of his day. Walter was well-prepared. He had made history when it was he

who told the American people, on television, of the death of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, shot during a motorcade in Dallas. Walter recalled that the only way he could end the announcement, in deep shock, was carefully to enunciate the time and the date, in a statement that was to register its place in history. Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded President Kennedy, was later to make a remarkable comment on Walter Cronkite's calibre and influence. Walter had taken time off from his anchorman role at CBS to make a documentary on the American involvement in Vietnam. President Johnson said the documentary had moved American opinion on the war. If the US government could not persuade Walter Cronkite of the justice of the war how, the President asked, could it persuade the American people?

Walter took to the podium, in Rome, to deliver his address before the conferment of the doctorate. He spoke of peace. Against the background of the worst tragedy in American history since Pearl Harbour, he spoke without hesitation on the need to place the event in the context of a world where American values had to overcome the impact of a brutal attack which had cost 3,000 lives.

The Prix Italia was centred in Bologna that year, with some elements taking place elsewhere nearby. It was my privilege to introduce and thank Walter Cronkite on more than one occasion, a daunting task at the best of times but, in the charged atmosphere following 9/11, testing indeed. Walter maintained his theme that American values, the essence of what a democratic nation ultimately stood for, rather than weight of arms, would overcome such dark forces that had launched the attack.

Fortune came to my aid. I remembered a film I had commissioned for a Channel Four series, in the United Kingdom, called *Revelations*, in which we had interviewed the Dalai Lama in Nepal about his response to what was taking place in terms of the Chinese absorption of Tibet. One phrase stood out, devastating in its simplicity. He had said: "We must all learn to live together on this small planet. It's the only one we have". It seemed to me, that this reached the essence of what Walter was saying.

The speeches went on. I thought of the medieval English poet, John Donne: "No man is an island, complete in himself. If a clod falls from a cliff, Europe is the less. Send not to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee". We all shared the loss of 9/11. It was toward the end of the sequence of speeches, that I stood at the side of the stage and found myself relying on Lincoln's First Inaugural, after the American civil war: "We must appeal to the better angels of our senses". Again, the wisdom of this simple statement echoed Walter Cronkite's appeal. As I used the phrase, I looked down at Walter's wife, Betsy, who seemed only partly

to have heard. 'He has called my husband an angel', she said. I never corrected her.

Soon after, Russ Kagan reminded us that it was shortly to be the Day of Atonement, a significant day in the Jewish calendar. He invited those, of whatever faith, who wished to acknowledge the sentiments of that day, to join him in prayer at the synagogue in Bologna. I felt it my duty to support him and became deeply moved by the ancient ceremony.

Walter, his wife, Betsy, and our good friend, Carlo Sartori are now no longer with us. But, each in their way, left their indelible mark on the history of the Prix Italia, a festival of which it is often said, has its home in Europe but belongs to the world: the world of New York, the world of Tibet, the world of medieval England and above all, our world of today, as we gather each year in Italy, a family that transcends our many differences in our common belief in the better qualities of mankind, in the programmes we are privileged to judge.

The Thomson Years

THE FIRST starburst lit the air, followed by the crack of yet another rocket until the sky above the rocks across the narrow strip of sea on Capri was aglow. It was the 70th birthday of Lord Thomson of Monifieth. A thoughtful PR man from Yorkshire Television, Geoff Brownlee, had clambered over the grey rocks to ensure that the birthday of the Chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, responsible for the ITV licences in Britain, did not go unmarked.

It was 1988, the height of British participation in the Prix Italia, as the year of TV licence applications approached. Seventy marked the customary retirement age for people in public office in Britain. For Lord Thomson, it was just the beginning of his impact on the international festival he so enjoyed. It was, indeed, the support given by the IBA that drew the attendance of so many senior British figures in ITV, often matching those of the public service BBC. In some ways, at that time, the Prix Italia was the late-summer gathering point for top British broadcasters, especially those keen to demonstrate their support for the public service broadcasting ethic which the IBA imposed with vigour on the commercially-funded channels.

The lightweight suits of the controlling influences of ITV could be spotted in the narrow streets of Capri, or on the boat rides to the Blue Grotto and other places of interest. My abiding memory is not of the VIPs but of Grace Thomson – Lady Thomson – swimming serenely in the pool at the principal hotel on Capri, head never touching the water, in so many ways, her demeanour the epitome of her Christian name.

We watched and discussed the programmes simultaneously with the juries, for that was the practise at that time. There

seemed more leisure then, although people were often busy. But it was a time before the internet and there was no stream of messages demanding instant response. Was it a better time? That question should be left to history. Let's just say it was different. But in that era, people felt it was perfectly acceptable to gather at the Prix Italia, learn what the rest of the broadcasting world was thinking, and return refreshed and informed.

The 2008 economic crash was two decades ahead, when the collapse of budgets – not the drifting down of sparks from a fireworks display – would dictate social attitudes, to a point where it would make headlines if a BBC or ITV group was considered, by the rest of the media, to be too large for overseas party-going, especially, in the BBC's case, on licence fee. Unless one lived through it, it might be difficult now to appreciate that the world was still recovering from various conflicts, 'hot' wars or 'Cold'. The importance of international gatherings, especially in the case of the Prix Italia, which never allowed the Iron Curtain to disrupt its range of attendance, was professionally accepted. That is an important point, for it is a significant factor in understanding why the numbers attending the Prix Italia gradually declined from their peak.

Phrases like 'the world's principal broadcasting festival', the one where one had to be seen, were of their time, a time that has slipped into history, like the finned American cars, or bankers in black jackets and pin-striped trouser, who had never seen a computer.

Embracing the New

What we must recognise is that the Prix Italia has successfully transformed itself, remained true to its original concepts, but has learned to embrace the new and be part of the astonishing digital world that, in the early days, was beyond our imagination. In that transformation, we have learned to live with the fact that the Americans have developed their own, national festivals, Natpe, The Emmys, Banff and the rest; as the bankers had their lessons to learn.

One other factor was at work, in ensuring the Prix Italia retained its values. Lord Thomson of Monifieth, former member of Britain's Labour government, then European Commissioner, was to become President of the Prix Italia. He fitted the appointment like a hand in a glove, for he was intensely proud of a Scottish upbringing founded on integrity and proper behaviour. Indeed, he at one time headed the UK Parliament's Committee on Standards of behaviour.

I remember now, Michael Johnstone, the long-serving BBC delegate, and I wondering whether we dare suggest to the Secretary General, Pier Giorgio Branzi, that he consider recommending to Rai the appointment of Lord Thomson, who was approaching retirement from the IBA, fearing a rebuff from such a mighty figure in UK broadcasting. We need never have demurred. George Thomson loved the international broadcasting world. (The formal process, of course, required the approval of Rai, who would present their decision to the General Assembly. But it all began with a pondering over names).

Venice

Venice was our winter resort. It was usually February, when the delegates would gather at Palazzo Labia, on the Grand Canal. Year after year, Michael Johnstone and I would attend the theatre, La Fenice, as I recall, to see a repeat of the same opera, Wolf-Ferri's *Four Seasons*. By the third occasion, it had become a little tedious. I solemnly declare now, that neither Michael Johnstone nor I were responsible for the fire that, tragically, burned it down. Even in the years before the theatre was splendidly rebuilt, Venice, on its magical lagoon, was its own theatre, as the world knows.

One occasion comes vividly to mind.⁴ I was about to enter the conference chamber, with its remarkable Tiepolo ceiling, when I saw a young woman, leaning against a wall, obviously upset. She was Pilar Miró, Director General of Spanish Television, who was about to chair the Winter Assembly. We took our seats and waited and nothing seemed to be happening. Presently, one of the Secretariat approached and asked if I would, temporarily, take the chair? I was astounded. Words of protest were forming in my mind, then I thought: no, I must do my duty, since it seems I am trusted to do so. It was not an easy meeting. I remember, seeing agreement would be hard to come by, calling a lengthy coffee break, so that we could sort things out. Somehow, we got through it.

There had been a problem in Madrid. Pilar Miró feared she could not go ahead with chairing the meeting, since she felt that, in the longer term, she would be unable to fulfill her duties as President. That, unfortunately, is how it worked out.

It was into this sophisticated but diverse world, of often large variations of opinion, that Lord Thomson was later to burst upon the scene. He was the European Commissioner incarnate. Thor-

⁴The time is early 1989.

oughly at home with the international scene, he skipped masterfully through difficult areas and brought the meeting to an early close. Actually, it gave us all time to take a walk through the canal-side streets, savour one of Europe's most ethereal cities, in the winter mist off the sea, before dinner with our new President, thoroughly relishing the checked table-cloth and red wine of the era.

Palermo

Lord Thomson was President in Palermo, in 1990. How different the atmosphere then. It was the year the 17 ITV companies in Britain had to re-apply for their licences. The government, under Margaret Thatcher, had decided to wind down the IBA and replace it with a 'lighter touch' Independent Television Commission, under Sir George Russell. Both regulators attended the Prix Italia that year.

Once more, the planes were laden with ITV executives. There was much at stake. The licences were this time to be auctioned, a disturbing departure for those concerned. No one was really sure how it would work. Sir George had persuaded Mrs Thatcher to insert a clause allowing the ITC to make a 'quality judgement'. It was a lifeline, so impressing the authorities with 'quality' credentials, such as attending the Prix Italia, was a must.

On the plane in which I flew out was Richard Dunn, the handsome, Icelandic CEO of ITV's principal company, Thames. The two Georges, Lord Thomson and Sir George, arranged dinner for the UK representatives. I remember taking a hand in the process, as ITV delegate, then, dutifully, sitting at the foot of the long table, at the opposite end to the hosts.

Richard Dunn entered the room. He moved, naturally, towards the top table, only to see the two hosts signalling him away, lest his presence next to those who could decide his company's future, could be misinterpreted. It was Lord Thomson at his most prudent. I pulled out a chair beside me and welcomed Richard, thoughts of the future racing through my head. (In the event, Thames lost its franchise. Not long afterwards, Richard died at an early age.)

The drama played out throughout the week. I think there were at least four Heads of Corporate Affairs, from ITV. There was no lack of social occasions. The following year, in Urbino in 1991, the licences having been awarded and many of those who had attended the previous year, casualties of the franchise round, there were large stretches of empty chairs, where the ITV contingent had been. Bruce Christensen, the amiable head of PBS, in

Washington, had taken over from Lord Thomson, as President. It was lonely being ITV delegate at that time.

But the Thomson Years did not end there. There was more to follow.

Seeking a President

I was sitting in a street café in Rome, with Carlo Sartori, undoubtedly the most memorable of the Prix Italia Secretary Generals, now sadly passed away. Frank Freiling, of ZDF, polished, sophisticated, thoroughly at home in international relations, was approaching the end of his Presidency.⁵ Who could we recommend to take over? The job of representing the international delegates, working in harmony with the Secretary General, conscious of the influence of Rai, the Italian State broadcaster who sponsored the festival, called for leadership qualities, allied to a well-tuned sense of diplomacy.

I remember offering a bench-mark to Carlo Sartori: that the President of the Prix Italia must be someone who could address their country's Minister of Broadcasting by their first name. I had watched Frank Freiling do it, at a gathering of Ministers of Culture, which took place alongside the Prix Italia, in Sicily. (I was fortunate in knowing the UK Minister, Lord McIntosh, whose wife was a Channel 4 commissioner; while Mrs Thatcher's Secretary of State for Culture and the Media, Lord Inglewood, was a neighbour in Northern England.)

We pondered. I suggested Caroline Thomson, Chief Operating Officer of the BBC, daughter of Lord Thomson, someone who had worked at Channel Four, gaining a knowledge of both sides of broadcasting. Carlo shook his head, somewhat wanly. The name had come up in discrete conversations among those attending EBU meetings, the sort of place that served as an unofficial consulting ground. It was an excellent idea but the consensus was that she would be far too busy. Dedicated to the BBC, a potential DG, working at the heart of the corporation, she would never have time.

I agreed with the description but demurred at the conclusion. She would make time! 'Well', said Carlo. 'You could try, since you know her'. Mobile phones were still something of a novelty at that time, in 2004. I recall stepping aside, away from the noise of the Roman traffic and managed to get through to Caroline straight away. We had known each other many years, for I had

⁵The scene must have taken place in early 2004, possibly on the sidelines of the Winter Assembly. Still that year, however, Freiling will be President, while Sartori will have given way to Alessandro Feroldi as Secretary General.

received enormous help from her father and mother when I had been President; and Caroline and I had worked together in the BBC. I guess it was the weight of history that swung the decision. Did I appreciate how busy she was? Yes; but we'd find ways to help. A pause, then firmly: if asked, she would do it.

I turned back to Carlo, the tiny coffee cup empty, a moment of expectancy. 'She'll do it', I said. He smiled. I could sense what he was thinking, for we had discussed the British temperament many times before. 'These Brits. You never can tell when duty calls!'. He was right. It was to be the first time a daughter had followed her father as President of the Prix Italia.

Milan

Caroline took office in Milan, in 2005, and was President in Venice and Verona, remarkable years. Carlo Sartori, always full of vigour, bright ideas and bonhomie, had moved on to a senior appointment. Alessandro Feroldi, the new Secretary General, welcomed us to his home city, Milan, where his family was well-connected to the city's ruling elite.

The Prix Italia took place in an amazing cooling tower, part of a former factory estate, which had been converted into offices, with a large open space at its base. It was not the only surprise.

Alessandro Feroldi had arranged for a group of dancers to provide a welcoming performance, setting the scene for a cultural occasion. The figures danced off the stage and moved towards the audience. In a trice, there was one more dancer! Caroline found herself swept off her feet and into the movement of the dance. It is an incredible tribute to her quick-witted adjustment, not to mention sang froid, that she took up the dance beat without a moment's hesitation. It is a scene etched in my memory. How prescient! How could we have known then, that she was one day to be appointed Executive Chair of the English National Ballet?

We began to recognise Milan's position as a northern power house, personified, perhaps, by the presence of La Scala, whose voice – as with the city – could be heard across the world. It reminded me of London, in some ways. I presume, as such, there might be the odd tension with Rome. Alessandro always kept in close touch, even though that led to some interesting phone calls. Since I live in the Canadian Rockies, near Vancouver, half my time, we had a nine-hour time gap with Italy. I never asked who was calling, when the phone rang in the middle of the night. 'Si Alessandro?'. But the calls were always welcome and we, with Caroline, enjoyed our time together, although within a year he too was offered another post, in his beloved Milan.

As with a change of monarch, a new era inevitably opens up when there is a new Secretary General. I met Guido Paglia at Rai headquarters in Rome, when he was appointed. Outgoing, impeccably suited, he reminded me of the senior sales figures who, in a sense, paid my wages in ITV. It was consequently a convivial meeting but I wondered whether he would want to get as close to programmes as others in the post? In the event, an old friend appeared on the scene.

Pier Luigi Malesani knew everyone. Immensely experienced, he understood the Prix Italia instinctively and he and Guido Paglia arranged to make it work together. I could see immediately that he and Caroline would make an excellent team. It was 2006 and that year, under Pier Luigi's guidance, the Prix Italia turned towards its old venue. We were to go to Venice.

Venice Once More

Who would not want to go to Venice? When the announcement was made, there was a palpable buzz and, as the telephones rang and messages flew, anticipation grew higher. It was where Lord Thomson had first held court in one of the multitude of restaurants in the narrow canal-side streets leading off San Marco. It was where his smiling daughter was now to welcome delegates and jurors in what felt like a return home.

For me, it breathed on the embers of so many memories: Prix Italia lunches on the islands in the lagoon. One instance I recall. I had to leave early to catch a plane back to London. A tall, blonde Scandinavian lady shared the boat. I was concerned about the possibility of a company take-over. She was concerned about the possibility of a take-over of the Baltic states bordering on what was, at that time, an unstable Russia. Both fears were, in the end, unfounded.

It was the image that struck me: her hair blowing back in the slipstream over the windscreen, a classic image of haste towards some crisis. And I thought: we can never completely disassociate the Prix Italia from the history of Europe, which is its home; and we must always remember that, bringing people together, learning about each other, directly and through our programmes, we are part of a unifying force, a force for good.

There was a sense of renewal in the converted Post Office building that Pier Luigi had secured as the venue that year. I joined a group for coffee, inside the mellow stone walls. Someone said: 'This is how it should be'. It seemed we were back in the old days. I understood. But at the same time, I was aware how the world had changed, in technology and in the economics of broadcasting.

Things would never be quite the same. There had been a point, before the decision on Venice, when Pier Luigi had phoned me to say, memorably, that we were ‘the last Japanese soldiers on the island!’. Nonetheless, our friends rallied round. There was more good news to come.

Verona

After the triumph of Venice, Pier Luigi arranged for the following year’s festival to be held in Verona, the beautiful city where he was personally well-known and influential. It was also near where he was born. It was 2007. Prix Italia delegates were once again to walk across the wide square, next to the Roman amphitheatre, home to stunning open air operas, to the city council building where we had been invited to conduct events.

Ursula von Zallinger, longest-serving of the delegates and former Director of the Prix Jeunesse, was faultless in selecting social venues, along with Frank Freiling, making an influential and engaging German team. They soon identified the best restaurant, facing the square, with a large, well-appointed dining room. That was where a number of old friends were to have dinner, celebrating the fact that we were all together again.

The dark clouds of the economic storm might be brewing on the horizon but it had not yet arrived and we were in buoyant mood. I cite one dinner of many, over the long years. I remember Richard Hooper, former head of the Radio Authority in Britain, and his author wife, my own wife, Annie – a long-time Prix Italia supporter – Caroline and Sue Lynas, of the BBC, as well as Pier Luigi, and Louis Heinsman, NOS; and so many more, whose indulgence I beg if I do not remember all the names. It was how we kept together. How the jurors, delegates and contributors from distant parts of the world became a family.

We thanked Pier Luigi who, as a son of Verona, could seemingly wave a magic wand, for he had arranged for the wine-maker, Tomassi, to offer a tour and dinner, in the next few days, to the Prix Italia. The wine was superb. As Mr Tomassi toured the tables I complimented him on the excellent vintage and, jokingly, said the only place I knew that could match it, was the Okanagan vineyards near Vancouver, which I had visited shortly before flying out to Italy. ‘Don’t worry’, he said teasingly. ‘I have also just flown back. We supply the best wines in Vancouver!’. I accepted the admonition but the interplay endorsed, once again, the enduring international reach of the Prix Italia.

The Thomson Years came to a close, only in a formal sense, when Caroline completed her three years in office. As with all good series, the last sentence must say ‘more to follow’.

A Royal Farewell

THE CHIMES of Big Ben, the giant clock overlooking the River Thames and the Houses of Parliament, is probably the best-known sound in Britain. Its chimes – slightly off key – have been heard by generations listening to BBC radio and later ITN’s *News at Ten*. It is the iconic sound of London and reflects the ancient traditions of the Palace of Westminster, which accommodates the two Houses of Parliament. Palace it may be but, among the traditions there is one which requires the Monarch to send a messenger, Black Rod, to knock on the door for permission to enter.

Big Ben was chiming when the members of the Prix Italia Winter Assembly, in effect the festival’s parliament, arrived at the entrance. They had been invited to hold their annual meeting in London by Caroline Thomson, then President, and Chief Operating Officer of the BBC. The dinner had been arranged by Lord Thomson of Monifieth, Caroline’s father, himself a former President, the only father and daughter to have held the office.

I arrived by taxi with Frank Freiling, of ZDF, whose colleague, Ursula von Zallinger, was to become the focus of the evening, on her retirement as Director of the Prix Jeunesse, the international broadcasting festival for young people, which she had nurtured and developed to global dimensions. It was 3 February 2006.

Ursula was the longest-serving delegate of the Prix Italia, her memory of the competition stretching back some 40 years.⁶ She was one of the few who could recall the days when Charles Curran, Director General of the BBC, undertook to act as the first President, helping to intertwine the BBC’s history with that of the

⁶She is first mentioned among the delegates in the 1976 catalogue, and will attend the Prix every year until at least the 2009-2015 Turin editions.

Prix Italia, which it had always staunchly supported. How could we let the opportunity go, to say farewell to someone who had, in her own way, come to be regarded as ‘queen’ of the international broadcasting community?

The delegates filed in. I recall Sir George Russell, chairman of the government broadcasting regulator, the Independent Television Commission, Pier Luigi Malesani, a senior RAI official who was to take the post of Secretary General of the Prix Italia, Louis Heinsman, of the Dutch broadcasting service, NOS, along with colleagues from Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland, others from France, Spain, Poland and a host of European countries. I was given the privilege of proposing the delegates’ thanks to Ursula for her achievements in the broadcasting world, a world which, for her, had stretched from Shanghai to New York. It was in New York that I remember joining her, accompanied by another former President, Bruce Christensen of PBS, as she conducted a session at the Goethe Institute. Heady days!

I felt them all come flooding back as I did my best to sum up an outstanding individual contribution to the festival world, at Prix Jeunesse and the Prix Italia, where her elfin smile and command of languages made her an enviable dinner companion at many a Prix Italia function. But would a summary be sufficient to represent an historic evening in the annals of the Prix Italia? I perused the speeches again, which Uli had thoughtfully kept, a small illustration of her administrative skills. It did not take long to come to the conclusion that, by reproducing the speeches, we might recapture something of the atmosphere, in the ancient building that houses the Mother of Parliaments. We might also re-open, verbatim, an enlightening page of Prix Italia history.

James Graham, Hon President, Prix Italia

Lord Thomson, Caroline, my good friends. How do you say farewell to a lady? Scotland’s national poet, Robert Burns, suggested with ‘Aye fond kiss’. Perhaps not here although, to judge from the British press, political dalliances are not unknown in this place! To stay with the political theme, Robert Menzies, Canada’s wartime Prime Minister, was so overwhelmed when our young Queen ascended to the throne, in 1953, that he used the quotation: ‘I did but see her passing by and yet I love her till I die’.

Ursula von Zallinger passing by? How often have I observed her, always elegant in black and superbly composed, in the canyons of Manhattan, in London, in Rome; down tiny cobbled

streets in Assisi, or the narrow canal sides of Venice in the ghostly light of winter, as I recall now, to an unforgettable supper hosted by Lord Thomson during his Presidency. No Prix Italia gathering was ever complete without Ursula, that delightful – if occasionally complex – individual we honour tonight. A personal memory I shall treasure is of a boat trip on Lac Lemman – Lake Geneva if you prefer – with my wife Annie and the distinguished columnist of the New York Times, Les Brown, towering over us at some 6ft 4 inches, as Uli has towered over Prix Italia gatherings in her own special way. I said complex but in the most complimentary way.

I was introduced to Countess Ursula von Zallinger by Micheal Johnston, of the BBC, more than a quarter of a century ago, and was immediately corrected by Ursula. ‘My name is Ursula’, she said. It was later I heard her answer to Uli and, I think, from Frank Freiling as ‘Sally’! Les Brown? Not the European Oorsula but Ehrsula, New York style.

In her many guises, we have traced the geography of Italy together, etching unfading memories of the companionship the Prix Italia brings to all who attend the festival in that beautiful land. And for that we must offer unalloyed thanks to Rai through their representatives here.

It has been an interesting experience, exotic in some ways. In Perugia, jostling with the Crown Prince of Monaco and Gina Lollobrigida and, it seemed a cast of thousands, for a cellar buffet. In Rome, in 1993, wondering whether the festival would take place, after an impassioned appeal in which Uli played a central role, where we urged Rai to set aside its judicial problems of that time and keep the festival going.

Ursula prompted a letter to Rai from Bruce Christensen, chief executive of PBS in Washington and President of the Prix, expressing our fear that we had not made it sufficiently clear to RAI how much we appreciated what they had done and how important the international community regarded the Prix Italia. It may be that these sentiments hold good today and, if so, perhaps our friends will take that message back to Rome. I have mentioned two names who could not be with us tonight. Both Bruce Christensen and Michael Johnston send their fondest good wishes.

There have been moments of excitement, high drama even. It was Michael Johnston, at Lucca I believe, who fought so hard to prevent the entry of Channel Four, which was to go on to become one of the festival’s most prolific prize winners.⁷ There was the moment in Palazzo Labia, in Venice, where Pilar Miró,

⁷This was indeed the 1986 Lucca edition. Channel Four was accepted as a member from the following year and ITV joined in 1988.

Director General of Spanish Television, stood sobbing in an ante-room because a serious problem in Madrid made her feel she could not chair the Winter Assembly that day. Nor did she. I was asked to step in – and have often suspected Uli to have been behind that move.⁸ There have been celebrated battles: Count Zorzi versus Sergio Borelli, whose left wing values caused him to wear a worker's cap in protest. Zorzi was the last descendant of the Doges of Venice; Borelli was the mainstay of CIRCUM.⁹ The fact that Lord Birt – John Birt – and I were members hints at our political leanings in those heady days, part of the rich history of the Prix Italia, where the name Ursula von Zallinger runs through like a silver thread.

But there may be one more justification for the term complex. Uli, whose home is in Bavaria, is in fact Austrian and, for reasons that baffle the British, she contends that her Austrian background gives her a special insight into the minds of Italians. Lord Thomson, there are European connotations that we offshore British cannot penetrate!

With Frank Freiling, she has been an exemplar of the trustworthy stability and support that are the hallmark of the German delegation. And they threw some wonderful parties! Where was it we climbed a hill, the approaching path lit by candles in the earth, to what seemed like a cave? Assisi, I seem to recall. And there, in the looming dark, I encountered the considerable presence of Dr Albert Scharf, of Bayerischer, Munich and President of the EBU. There can be few who could handle that indomitable personality like Ursula.

But, then, she has been charming influential men all her life. Charles Curran of the BBC was one. I think only Uli and I, and perhaps Caroline's father, will remember him. He was President of the Prix Italia in the earliest days¹⁰ and ultimately Director General of the BBC. If you would allow a digression: he once considered firing me as an editor believing, wrongly, I was a 'red under the bed' for my sympathy for the miners' cause in a great strike we had in Britain. I cite that as an illustration of the vulnerability we share in broadcasting, trying to interpret the great issues of the day, that is one of the things that binds us. Uli knows about vulnerability, as budgets came under increasing pressure when she knew there was so much still to be done.

⁸This happened in early 1989, as mentioned above.

⁹They were Alvise Zorzi, the third General Secretary from 1976 to 1987, and Sergio Borelli, his right-hand man in those years and one of the founders of CIRCUM and INPUT. It appears that, on the whole, the two worked together for a long time without much disagreement.

¹⁰In 1977-1978.

She has been a great friend to the British, co-operating when we held our dinners, always a lively companion at table, whose company was enjoyed by regulators such as Lord Thomson, Sir George Russell or Sir Robin Biggam and last year, Richard Hooper of Ofcom, an admiring friend.

Uli was with us when Piergiorgio Branzi took delegates to meet Pope John Paul at Castelgandolfo; and knew a host of Prix Italia secretary generals and festival directors, from Alvize Zorzi to Alessandro Feroldi, who has been with us most recently and asked me to apologise that a late administrative change prevents him offering you his warmest good wishes in person.

How often have I sought her counsel, as President and more frequently as a fellow-delegate. Her advice was drawn from a deep cultural understanding of Europe and always based on what was good for the Prix Italia and the programme makers whose finest work deserved the highest quality of judgement. The open jury debate is Uli's concept.

I have remarked before: the Prix Italia is a European festival that belongs to the world. Only someone with a profound comprehension of that most European art form, the opera, could comment, at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York: 'You know their stage settings are so wooden'! But then, Countess von Zallinger's father was the great influence behind the calibre of the Munich Opera House for years. Permit me: I flew back from Vancouver a few days ago to find the BBC running a month of Mozart celebrations and was tempted to think: they've discovered Uli is coming to London!

So we piece it together: Austrian, from Germany, with a special relationship with the Italians, opera lover, power behind the throne at the Prix Italia; and above all an outstanding contributor to children's programming on a global scale, as Director of the Prix Jeunesse. It was a post she held for decades, and to which she has added enormous prestige and respect, and from which she retired at New Year. Childrens' programming the world over owes her a great debt, for she drew attention to it, was committed to it, and enhanced its appeal among nations.

I have spoken of travels in Italy. Ursula's passport has been embossed at airports across the Americas, Europe and Asia, carrying her ideas, for instance, to the heart of China. She did it with a tiny staff. And carrying an even tinier suitcase. She can pack like a princess in a carry-on bag; and she always turns heads, when she turns up, ever in black. This idea keeps intruding: turns heads.

Just one more recollection: Ursula can spot a poorly turned-down bedsheet in an hotel from 500 metres! Luciano Pinelli, di-

rector the Prix Italia when Carlo Sartori was Secretary General, told me, in some dismay: ‘Ursula von Zallinger always wants to change hotels’. I feared they might fall out. How wrong I was. There was that little-reported, long railway journey from Bologna to Rome, this slim, attractive, Countess von Zallinger exuding Austrian charm, who stepped on the train with the urbane Dr Pinelli. And who stepped off? Luciano and Uli, lifetime friends!

How many uncountable miles have you flown in the cause of quality programming for the children who are to be the world’s future citizens? How many take-offs in the early dawn, or airport approaches in the dark over glittering cities? And now, it comes to rest. A pause, I trust, for there will always be those who will need you and there is no final goodbye for good people.

You have given so much to broadcasting across four continents and so much to the Prix Italia that you have, and deserve, countless lifetime friends. Thank you, not just for what you have achieved, but for what you are: one who, in the very essence, brought a confidence and the lilting charm of Austria to every group that was uplifted by it.

So au revoir, Ursula, but not adieu. The stage would be empty without you.

Ursula von Zallinger

Lord Thomson, Caroline, friends. *La sola ragione per la mia lunga vita con il Premio Italia era la mia ambizione di amigliorare il mio Italiano...* For those who still struggle a little with their Italian, the rough translation for this is that only because I wanted to improve my Italian have I spent so many years with Prix Italia.

The truth, of course, lies somewhere totally different: when my festival, the Prix Jeunesse, was launched 40 years ago, Prix Italia already could look back to a sound career as the outstanding and prestigious Radio and TV Festival. It served as a model not only for Prix Jeunesse but for many other festivals around the globe.

When asked by ARD’s top executives to represent ARD-TV in the Prix Italia Working Group, I was more than honoured. At the start of my new side-job career, Gert Haedeke and Hans Kimmel from ARD and ZDF were the ones to take the floor. These two experts designed the role of the two German telecasters in a most constructive and diplomatic way. For me it was to slowly but steadily grow into my role which meant – at least for quite a while – to keep my mouth shut and listen carefully.

I have met them all, the Prix Italia Secretaries General, starting with *il Conte Zaffrani* who also was a board-member of Prix Jeunesse. Later on it was *il Conte Zorzi* and his 'Peppone' Sergio Borelli who actually was the one to develop the never-ending jury-calendar.¹¹ I worked very closely with *il Professore Carlo Sartori* who gave Prix Italia a very special colour during the turn of the century period.

With Prix Italia we went up and down and East and West in Italy. If I know this country better than any other, it's because we were not only confined to meeting rooms but taken around to unique monuments, churches, palaces and whatnot. Prix Italia always rolled out the red carpet and splurged on us in the most gracious way. I never will forget our tour to Agrigento for the final evening of a Palermo Prix Italia.

And yes, I have made friends at Prix Italia. Some have long left their jobs but quite a number are still around. And may I say that I have made two quite special friends who are both with us today. Both carry the very special title of 'honorary president'.

Thank you all for your friendship, for your support, for your graciousness and your indulgence whenever I was too pushy in a meeting. Working for Prix Italia was great fun, I will miss it.

¹¹The annual jury rotation scheme came into use in 1986 and is still loosely adopted today.

Pope Paul

IT WAS LATE summer in Rome and a beautiful morning. The crowd of Prix Italia delegates stood, fidgeting on the pavement, waiting for a coach to arrive. We were used to excursions, visiting places of interest in the various cities where the festival took place. This was to be another. I remember someone asking ‘where are we going?’. Another in the crowd, jokingly replied ‘We’ll be going to see the Pope!’

Bruce Christensen, the Prix Italia’s American President, who ran PBS, the American Public Broadcasting Service, from its headquarters in Washington, was Mormon and wore the smart, blue blazer, favoured by members of his Church. I had put on a dark suit but others were casually dressed, a senior British delegate wearing a tennis shirt under his jacket, acceptable off-duty attire in 1993.

The coach began snaking its way through the traffic and soon the rumour gained credence. We were heading for Castel Gandolfo, the Pope’s summer residence, in the cool hills outside Rome. For the international delegates, the traditional image of the Pope was that of a tiny figure, in white, seen on television, on a balcony, before huge crowds in St Peter’s Square. We had seen him deliver his annual address, *Urbi et Orbi*, in this way. We would doubtless see him appear on a balcony at the castle before what we presumed would be a more intimate gathering, a few hundred maybe.

And so it seemed, when the coach halted and we stepped out. I actually recognised a figure in the crowd, the Provost of a small town on the Scottish border, near my home. Intimate indeed. Then the distinguished figure of Piergiorgio Branzi, the Secretary General, grey hair swept back, gestured us through the crowd to an entrance to the castle. What was this? Where were we going?

The delegates entered an ante-room holding about 40 people. The talking stopped and we all looked at the platform at the end of the room, with a doorway behind. Presently, the door opened; and the atmosphere changed. Pope Paul stepped through the doorway, wearing his papal gown, accompanied by a slim figure to his right, as I recall, carrying a folder.

Pope Paul took his seat and began a welcome which touched on the work of the Prix Italia. Those opening moments were the most impressive I had ever witnessed. Every person in that room was focussed on the figure in white. The speech had been prepared and was read from the folder. I believe the aide who handed the folder to Pope Paul was Cardinal Ratzinger. We did not know then what the future was to unfold.

Pope Paul had about him the air of a man who graced the top echelons of the world. I am sure he must have been an inspiration to those in his native Poland who so longed to change the regime that had been in place since the end of the war, in 1945. He exuded an undeniable presence.

It was during his address that Pope Paul used the statement that I immediately committed to memory and have quoted on countless occasions: 'You have within your hands a great instrument of communication. Use it for the benefit of Mankind'.

That has been my guiding light over many years. What was the programme trying to say? What was its message? Any documentary that I commissioned or worked on was dedicated to that theme: how would its message benefit mankind? How would it lead to greater understanding? How would it contribute to the concept of one human family, in all its glories, its heartaches, pains and sorrows in the belief that, if we love one another, we can surmount the harshness of fate?

Every now and again, we encounter a statement that influences the way we think. It happened that day, in Castel Gandolfo.

Bologna

B OLOGNA HOLDS a special place in my recollections of the Prix Italia. It was not just the Black Madonna, the beautiful town squares, the enjoyable dinners held by either the Brits or our German friends. Often, it was the small things.

I remember sitting in the central square, having coffee, the fuel that kept the festival going. Carlo Sartori, his swooping ‘Si-i-i-i-i’ the theme that echoed through so many conversations, would say: ‘Would you like a shot?’. I guess it was an Americanism he had picked up in in one of his favourite locations, New York.

I was sitting with my wife, Annie, in Bologna’s principal square in the year 2000, when a young man we both knew from the BBC came up and joined us. It was Mark Thompson, always eager to know what was happening. What programmes had we seen? What was outstanding? What did we think of the BBC entries? Mark was to go on to become DG and after that, take charge at the august New York Times. Such encounters were one of the rewards of attending the Prix Italia, a little broadcasting history among the swirling coffee.

There was a splendid hotel, whose name escapes me. We made sure Steve Morrison, managing director of Granada, one of ITV’s original companies, a good friend and an engaging one, stayed there. His support was hugely helpful when I became President and for many years after. I preferred a small hotel not far from the square which Luciano Pinelli had fixed, because he knew I liked to live ‘above the shop’, close to the festival centre and enjoyed smaller, more personal places. It was called *Il Capello Rosso*, as I remember: the cardinal’s Red Hat.

One would sometimes hear the phrase ‘Bologna la Rossa’, a reference to the left-wing government in the historic city. Granarolo,

the milk products company, were there. They ran their own television awards and, for some years, contributed handsomely to Prix Italia funds, thanks to a deal struck by Carlo Sartori. It was an impressive organisation, but the awards were not televised and the relationship faded when Carlo moved on.¹²

My wife and I attended one year, as did Ursula von Zallinger, to show solidarity. It was the year Granarolo invited one of the mothers who had lost a child in the terrorist attack at Beslan. She told us the family lived in a block overlooking the school where terrorists were holding several hundred children. It was the time of the war in Chechnya.

The mother said she saw the security forces firing before they reached the school windows to check who they might hit. One of her children died in the rescue. She spoke out about this later, in essence saying one could not beat terrorists by behaving like terrorists. A profound thought, clearly from the heart.

I understand the fact that her views were beginning to gain support was not welcomed by the authorities and she did not make an appearance on television. So Bologna invited her so that she could speak out. Someone had commissioned a metal sculpture. Shaped like a small tree, it depicted the mothers with their arms outstretched like branches and with angels above, their dead children ascending to Heaven.

Maybe it has always been like that. Maybe it always will be. But what is important is that there are organisations, like the Prix Italia, which keep the light of honourable behaviour alive, its programme entries frequently drawing attention to the eternal decency to be found in mankind, no matter how people are treated.

But fundamental emotions, like seeds buried for years, can survive and show signs of life generations after events. It happened one day in a public debate in Bologna.

The Prix Italia always maintained good relations with the universities in the cities where it was being held. Bologna was an outstanding example. Carlo Sartori was a professor at the University of Rome, known for his books on Quality Television. I accompanied him when we met the Rector, who I discovered, held the courtesy title *Il Magnifico*!

A debate was set up involving Umberto Eco, professor at Bologna and, if memory serves, Luciano Berio, who had devised *musique concrète*, with others taking part.¹³ One of the questions

¹²The Granarolo Special Prize was awarded from 2001 to 2006.

¹³The protagonists of the debate 'The splendour of radio', held in Bologna on Sept. 17, 2000 were Umberto Eco, Luciano Berio and ethno-musicologist Roberto Leydi.

put to the panel before an invited audience at the university, was ‘what was the outstanding radio broadcast, in your recollection?’. It was about that time that we had celebrated the 100th anniversary of Marconi’s first signal, at the original studio.

The Prix Italia put out a memorable CD, to mark the occasion, ‘One Hundred Years of Radio’, so the question was pertinent and contemporary.¹⁴ It was the response of the audience that struck those deep chords of European history once again.

Umberto Eco said a Christmas broadcast by the Germans, early in the war, had seemed to him, an outstanding technical achievement. It had linked German forces outside Leningrad with submarine crews in the Atlantic and soldiers in the Western Desert. Simply to have achieved this marked an historic stage in the development of radio, in the Nineteen Forties, well before the development of television, when radio was the principal means of communication. At that, half a dozen people stood up. I could not make out the Italian comments but there was no doubt about the intensity of their objections, for a number walked out.

No matter how much one might plead the case that this was an academic comment, in a discussion in a university, human emotions run deep, as they must do in so much that is locked into the radio and television programmes entered, year after year, in the Prix Italia. These programmes are a reflection of the world we live in. It is an ever-changing world. Since that time, there have been many programmes that have shown the process of reconciliation that are the hope for the future.

There is one example. I was a relatively young journalist when I accompanied a reporter from the BBC’s *Panorama* programme as we walked through one of the more notorious streets in Belfast when I first felt the crunch of broken glass under my feet, as The Troubles began. There was a stream of programmes on Northern Ireland for some years at the Prix Italia. I sometimes wondered at the ability of international juries to unravel the complexities of the situation but they did.

I am not the only one who could never have imagined then, that I would one day see the Revd Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams, polar opposites during those terrible times, sharing a joke, in government.

That debate, in Bologna, brought the tensions of history to the fore. I marvel that documentary juries, each year, assess and

¹⁴This had happened a few years earlier, in 1995, in an edition of the Prix also held in Bologna. At that time, Sartori was not yet Secretary General, but still attended the session in his capacity as Rai Director of International and Public Affairs.

overcome the stresses of history, politics and emotions, to reach rational judgements. But year after year, that is their achievement: that is the hallmark of the Prix Italia.

Berlin

THE WHOLE point about anniversaries is that they create a moment of reflection. So 10 years after the Berlin Wall came down, attention was focussed on a city, ravaged by war, then held in an iron political grip, that had become once more the capital of a united country, striving to heal the wounds and re-build. Maybe the reconstructed Reichstag was the principal symbol of this renewal but there was more going on, much more. Not just the buildings but the institutions, stimulated by the return of the government, were revitalised. In broadcasting, that included the Prix Europa.

The festival had its unique system of jury assessment. Everyone could take part and the debate took place in public. It began to attract the European broadcasters' attention and gained impetus from the European Union. In due course it came to the attention of the Prix Italia.

Dr Frank Freiling, of ZDF, was a member of its governing body while, in Italy, he was due to become President of the Prix Italia, in Florence, in 1999.¹⁵ Both festivals attracted much the same sort of entries, although the Prix Italia jury system was different. They were in competition but could they work together, entertaining the hope of something bigger, something with a greatly enhanced profile, of global dimensions? It seemed to Frank that we should try. I was President, had a European track record and the concept fitted our ambitions.

I have to say that, when the idea was put to the Prix Italia Secretary General, Carlo Sartori, and the festival director, Luciano Pinelli, there was a muted response. I suspect at the root of it

¹⁵Freiling would later succeed Jim Graham as President of the Prix Italia in 2002.

was pride in the Prix Italia. One could hardly object to that. The glittering opening concerts, lunches and the way the Brits and Germans gave the impression of competing happily in the candlelit dinners they presented, at ancient castles and elsewhere, did give the Prix Italia a lustrous dimension.

I think the argument that won them over was: what's the harm in taking a look? We would not be committed. And, in any case, if we did not do that, we would look decidedly churlish, in view of an interesting even exciting offer. We packed weekend bags and headed for Berlin.

It was an amazing time. A city emerging from its past, with incredible energy, it gave an impression of urgent renewal. We went to the Brandenburg Gate and saw what Richard Rogers had designed for the futuristic Reichstag. Were taken to the graffiti-marked concrete Wall. Then to Potsdam, which had housed the East German government when the city was divided between the Russian and Allied sectors. Walking through history, yes, but walking towards tomorrow.

We attended the festival, saw the collection of delegates who made up the juries en masse. The atmosphere was so different to the Prix Italia, where the juries each met in their separate rooms, undisturbed, to apply their individual judgements to the debate on whether to include or not?

There was no concert and, indeed, no concert atmosphere. Was it a Teutonic seriousness? I would not go that far, although everything was clearly efficiently run. We met the Director, Peter Leonhard Braun, or Leo, as everyone called him. There was an immediate familiarity, for Leo had frequently attended the Prix and Carlo and Luciano knew him well. How different the two sides were.

Of the visitors, Carlo, extrovert, full of ideas which he loved to share with the crowd. Luciano, intellectual, a counter-balance for Carlo, often the one to urge caution in the face of anything that looked like exuberance. I was fond of them both. It's not always true that 'three's a crowd'. We made a warm, close and I hope effective trio.

Carlo spoke excellent English, idiomatic, knowledgeable of the American way of putting things. What little Italian I had, included the formal way to greet people. Carlo would often use 'Ciao Ragazzi!', which I took to mean 'Hi Guys'. He had other expressions, such as when bidding goodbye to women friends which, if I repeated, could raise eyebrows. 'Ciao Bambola', I vividly recall!

Luciano's English was a special brand of his own. I knew some

French but was hopeless at Italian. Yet Luciano and I would wander the streets of Rome, visiting his favourite coffee bars, deeply engrossed in conversation about Italian or European politics. It was an amazing symbiosis. When I told him I had bought a house in Canada, Luciano paused a moment and said: 'They catch fish in Canada'. After that, we stuck to European affairs.

Leo, in contrast, struck me as archetypically German. He was serious, thoughtful and measured. Let Ursula von Zallinger take up the description, for she was in at the start of the Prix Europa. To her, Leo was the radio features star, who had won several prizes at the Prix Italia. One was with *Chicken*, in 1967, Germany's first stereophonic radio feature.¹⁶ He became very much attached to the Prix Italia, doing what he could to push through his ideas and vision of the festival, which could bring him into conflict with the Secretary General, Alvise Zorzi, and his team. One example was the way he fought to secure the same amount of prize money for both the Prix Italia award and the Special Prize, which up to then had been considered a runner-up.

Peter Braun introduced the daily 'dinner table' at the Prix Italia, a device he used for his colleagues to talk through events and introduce newcomers to their peers. In 1974, he launched the Feature Conference, a bi-annual international workshop, where programme people could discuss new trends in content and technology in a hands-on way, closely reminiscent of the 'dinner table'.

So the scene was set. I found the conversation and atmosphere fascinating. It was polite, old friends exchanging ideas; but there was a gulf between the two approaches on how a festival should be run and I detected little evidence that it could be bridged.

Everything was polite, courteous and correct. We were given a genuine welcome and, for me, it was a most enjoyable visit. That evening, Frank Freiling, at his elegant and sophisticated best, introduced us to everyone of interest. In my case, to a delightful young woman who ran a network current affairs weekly. I remember, in the cocktail party in a large marquee, engaging in small talk, with the odd reference to politics. I soon realised that small talk was not enough. She was charming – and exceedingly well-informed. It was not until later I discovered that her father was a senior figure in government.

There was a thoughtful car journey to the airport. We had completed our mission. The stage was set. But the actors were

¹⁶In his capacity as Feature Director at SFB Berlin in the 1980s, Peter Leonhard Braun undoubtedly supervised several successful programmes. Specifically as a radio writer he participated in the Prix at least since 1966 and won in 1973 with *Glocken in Europa (Bells in Europe)*. His *Hüner (Chicken)* in 1967, however, did not win.

unsuited to the roles demanded of co-operation. It was evident that each of the festivals had its own special history, qualities, joys, concerns and ambitions. The one thing that could have possibly brought them together would have been a genuine commitment by the executives to work hard to overcome their differences, for the sake of a shared goal. That was not to be.

On reflection, I suspect that was the right conclusion for the times. So we remain friends, but more than a thousand miles apart.

Images from the Prix Italia
and Jim Graham's personal archives.



Awarded by the Council of Europe, the flag was presented by the Mayor of Barcelona (third from right) to a group in Newcastle U.K., which included Jim Graham, BBC Regional TV Manager, North East, for helping develop cooperation between European regions. It followed a programme exchange between BBC North East and FR3 Nancy, France, which led to Jim Graham's first encounter with Prix Italia in 1980.



The General Assembly in Perugia, 1989: Jim Graham, Pilar Miró (outgoing President), Piergiorgio Branzi (first-year Secretary General), Gian Carlo Barberis and Massimiliano Santella (Prix staff) listen to the remarks of Biagio Agnes (Rai's Director General).



Lord Thomson of Monifieth speaking at Prix Italia, 1989.



Carlisle Cathedral: UK Honorary Presidents of the Prix Italia Caroline Thomson and Jim Graham, Hon Fellows of their home university, the University of Cumbria.



A visit to the Golden Rose festival, at Montreux, on Lac Lemman. Waving the Prix Italia flag, as it were, are the late Les Brown, Television Correspondent of the New York Times, towering over Ursula von Zallinger, former Director of the Prix Jeunesse and longest-serving Prix Italia delegate, James Graham, President, at the rear, and Annie Graham.



Speaking at the General Assembly, 1999:
Countess Ursula von Zallinger.



A moment of celebration. Ursula von Zallinger marks her retirement from the Prix Jeunesse, at a reception in the Palace of Westminster, London, home of the British Parliament, during a visit to London by members of the Prix Italia. The photograph shows, left to right, the late – and much loved – Carlo Sartori, Prix Italia Secretary General, Jim Graham and Ursula with Roberto Zacaria, President of Rai, far right.



Pope Paul John II meets Prix Italia President Bruce Christensen and his wife during a Private audience for Prix Italia delegates in Castel Gandolfo, 1993.



Prix Italia President Jim Graham and Secretary General Carlo Sartori at the Bologna Prix Italia Festival, 2000.

“EVA HAMILTON OPENED the Assembly welcoming everyone and asking James Graham to begin the proceedings by recalling the contribution of the former, long-serving Secretary General, Carlo Sartori, who passed earlier that year.

James Graham said was honoured to give his personal tribute to Carlo Sartori. Their friendship had lasted over a period of 15 years, during which time, he said, they had frequently travelled together, carrying the Prix Italia message of commitment to quality to New York, London, Stockholm and Berlin. Carlo Sartori’s creativity, generosity of spirit and out-going personality was often characterised by a genial, professorial voice, one that was fresh in his memory that day, an indelible impression of a much-admired man. He would be sorely missed.

James Graham said if he could give expression to Carlo Sartori’s legacy that day, it would be: Don’t worry. The Prix is doing fine.”

From the proceedings of the General Assembly, Torino 2012.



Chatting intensely at the final evening's Prix Europa cocktail party in Berlin, 2001, Dr Frank Freiling, left, ZDF, and Jim Graham, Prix Italia President, with Susanne Biedenkopf, Former Head of ZDF European News. Dr Freiling, associated with both Prix Europa and the Prix Italia, was to take over as Prix Italia President the following year.



In Turin in 2009, talking with then Prix Italia President Robert Rabinovitch on the sidelines of a conference on HD TV.



With Secretary General Paolo Morawski at the 2015 Prix Italia in Turin.



Three Prix Italia presidents in a mood of celebration for the 70th edition in Capri, 2018. Having a great time with Jim Graham, Frank Freiling and Graham Ellis is Karina Laterza, then-Secretary General.



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