

TRAVEL HISTORY CULTURE PEOPLE FOOD

ABRUZZISSIMO MAGAZINE



**From bells to bellows:
organetti Della Noce**

page 5

**San Valentino in Abruzzo
Citeriore: the town with
the longest name**

page 12

**Hello, Dolly . . . Hello,
Gessopalena**

page 23

CONTENTS



- 02. EDITOR'S NOTE
- 03. NEWS AND EVENTS
- 04. HONDA' S EUROPEAN HUB IN ATESSA
- 05. FROM BELLS TO BELLOWS: ORGANETTI DELLA NOCE
- 08. "WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?"
- 12. SAN VALENTINO IN ABRUZZO CITERIORE: THE TOWN WITH THE LONGEST NAME
- 19. THE CUCKOLDS OF SAN VALENTINO
- 23. HELLO, DOLLY . . . HELLO, GESSOPALENA
- 25. QUICK STOP, EASY TRAILS
- 26. THE RED GOLD OF NAVELLI
- 27. RECIPES: *pasta alla pecorara*, *pancotto*, and *le morette* biscuits.



ON THE COVER:

San Valentino in Abruzzo Citeriore.
Photos by Anna Lebedeva. Read the story on page 12.

LEFT:

San Valentino in Abruzzo Citeriore.
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Editor's Note

Abruzzo often appears on lists of ideal places to retire – whether for foreigners or for Abruzzese who return after a lifetime abroad – thanks to its tranquillity, affordability, and slower pace of life. But what is it like for children to grow up here? In this issue, Maria DiCenzo speaks to children and teenagers in the small communities of **San Pio** and **Fontecchio (AQ)** to discover their perspective (see page 8).

This month we also stop in **San Valentino in Abruzzo Citeriore (PE)**, officially recognised as the Italian town with the longest name. We explore its history, walk among stately *palazzi* and elegant churches, take in the sweeping views, and find a town that offers both beauty and ease of living.

Have you ever heard *ddu' botte*? This traditional accordion, a fixture at festivals, has a long history. One of the finest makers, the Della Noce family in **Teramo**, continues to handcraft organetti sought after by folk musicians around the world. Read their story on page 5.

And then there's Dolly Daggerz. You might expect a pole dancer with bright pink hair to raise eyebrows in rural Abruzzo, yet in **Gessopalena (CH)** she has been warmly received. Discover her tale of splits in the *piazza* and daring fireman spins against the backdrop of the Majella mountains on page 23.

Finally, as the saffron harvest approaches on the **Navelli plain**, we explore the story of this precious spice (page 26), alongside three traditional recipes you may not know: *pasta alla pecorara*, *pancotto*, and *le morette* biscuits.

Enjoy the October issue!

Anna Lebedeva
Founder & Editor

DIGEST OF RECENT REGIONAL NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS FROM ABRUZZO NEWSPAPERS



ABRUZZO SHINES AS A FAVOURITE MOUNTAIN ESCAPE

Abruzzo climbed to fourth place among Italy's most popular mountain destinations in September, drawing both Italian and foreign visitors. The region saw 46.12% of available rooms booked through online platforms, well above the national average of 38.3%. Only Valle d'Aosta, Trentino, and Basilicata ranked higher. Regional media were delighted to report Abruzzo's growing appeal as a mountain destination, with demand staying strong well past the holiday peak.

MOST ABRUZZESI EARN BELOW AVERAGE

More than seven in ten Abruzzo residents earn below the national average, according to a recent study by *Confederazione Generale dell'Artigianato e della Piccola e Media Impresa*. Average incomes lag across the region: **L'Aquila** tops the list at €22,531, followed closely by **Pescara** (€22,483), while **Chieti** (€21,004) and Teramo (€20,904) fall further behind, between €2,500 and €4,000 below the national average. Rising living costs and higher local taxes are eroding purchasing power, with many facing higher personal income tax without improved public services.

LOOMING WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

The region is facing a looming workforce crunch, with nearly 65,000 workers set to retire by 2029, according to research from Cgia di Mestre, a centre studying Italian labour and small businesses. The region's private-sector employees have an age ratio of 77 over-55s for every 100 under-35s, well above the national average of 65. Most retirements will hit services, industry, and healthcare. With few young people entering the workforce, local businesses risk struggling to replace retiring staff.



PESCARA AIRPORT EYES US AND CANADA FLIGHTS

Saga, the company managing **Pescara Airport**, has announced ambitious plans for intercontinental flights, targeting New York within two years and a Canadian destination soon after. Airlines are conducting technical assessments and simulations, while Saga invests in infrastructure, adds check-in counters, and increases staff to support the international leap. With passenger targets approaching one million and the winter 2025-2026 schedule already busy, the airport is steadily moving closer to becoming a key gateway to North America.

INTRODACQUA DRAWS FOREIGN RESIDENTS

Local media have reported an interesting phenomenon: the small town of **Introdacqua (AQ)**, near Sulmona, is thriving thanks to an influx of English-speaking expats from the US, UK, Canada, and Australia. Over 300 newcomers have settled here, sparking a revival of old streets, organising music festivals, and cultural events (read our story about the *Introdacqua Music Project* in the July-August 2023 issue).

The mayor, Cristian Colasante, described the situation as unusual for Abruzzo as his town's population is rising while most mountain communities continue to shrink. Many foreign families have settled here permanently over the last five years, with some purchasing two homes each, one for themselves and one for their children. Properties now sell quickly and are increasingly hard to find in Introdacqua.



CHESTNUT FESTIVALS IN ABRUZZO

Autumn in Abruzzo means chestnuts – and the season's *sagre* bring whole towns to life. From **Canistro (AQ)** to **Leofara (TE)** and **San Felice d'Ocre (AQ)**, piazzas glow with open fires, the scent of roasting chestnuts drifts through old streets, and music fills the air. These much-loved festivals celebrate tradition, food, and community, drawing visitors from near and far.

We've rounded up some of the best chestnut festivals to visit this year – read the full list on ABRUZZISSIMO site [here](#).

DID YOU KNOW?

HONDA'S EUROPEAN HUB IN ATESSA



One in five Honda scooters sold in Europe is produced in Atessa (CH). Abruzzo's plant is one of Honda's 35 factories spread across 21 countries. It produces eight different models with more than 100 colour and variant combinations, including scooters from the SH series and Forza line, as well as motorcycles such as the CB125R and CB125F. In the past, it has also produced larger, iconic bikes including the Hornet, CB1000R, and Transalp.

Honda's story in Italy began in 1971 when the Atessa facility, then called I.A.P. Industriale, assembled imported motorcycles. By 1976, local production began, and exports soon followed, first to European markets and later to Japan.

The factory today covers some 140,000 square metres and operates as a fully integrated manufacturing centre, performing aluminium casting, mechanical machining, frame welding, painting, final assembly, and testing. It also produces prototypes, special editions, and scooters for racing paddocks, alongside accessories and components for emerging markets.

The numbers are impressive: around 600 scooters leave the plant each day, roughly one every 90 seconds, with an annual capacity of 130,000 vehicles. In 2024, production reached 141,448 motorcycles, surpassing expectations, and plans for 2025 target 145,100 units. Atessa's production alone accounts for more than half of Honda's European output and, while much of the automotive industry struggles under crisis, the factory in Abruzzo is bucking the trend.



FROM BELLS TO BELLOWS

By Teresa Mastrobuono

For over a century, the Della Noce family of Penne Sant'Andrea (TE) has refined the traditional accordion, creating a sound that is uniquely Abruzzese.

If you attend almost any festival or gathering in Abruzzo, you are likely to hear traditional Abruzzese songs accompanied by the *organetto*. Nicknamed “the singing wood”, this regional type of accordion produces a bright, energetic sound that complements the spirited folk songs and often sets the pace for the lively dances that follow. Much of the credit for the instrument’s distinctive tone and enduring popularity goes to the Della Noce family from the province of Teramo.

HOW IT STARTED

The Della Noce story began in 1760, when the family cast bells in makeshift spaces near their home. Their craftsmanship soon gained renown, leading to the opening of a proper foundry in Penne Sant'Andrea in 1925.

Photo: an organetto made in the Della Noce workshop in Teramo

A PILGRIM'S GIFT

The accordion itself is not Italian in origin but Austrian. Its arrival in Abruzzo is wrapped in local lore: sometime in the mid-19th century, an Austrian pilgrim returning from the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Loreto stopped at the farm of Paoli Soprani in the Marche. The pilgrim carried an accordion, an instrument Soprani had never seen. Fascinated, he studied it overnight, later building his own version. Travellers heading through the Marche towards Abruzzo heard its sound and brought it further south, where it became part of Abruzzese tradition.

Loreto Della Noce was among those captivated by the accordion's possibilities. His background in metallurgy and acoustics, gained through years of bell-making, gave him the tools to experiment with sound in new ways. The leap from casting heavy bronze bells to shaping a nimble *organetto* may seem wide, yet both required the same sensitivity to airflow and vibration. Loreto applied this knowledge to the reeds, introducing light metal alloys for the plates. What once rang from church towers was reimagined into finely tuned components, producing a brighter, more distinctive tone – the unmistakable voice of the Della Noce organetto.

THE TECHNIQUE

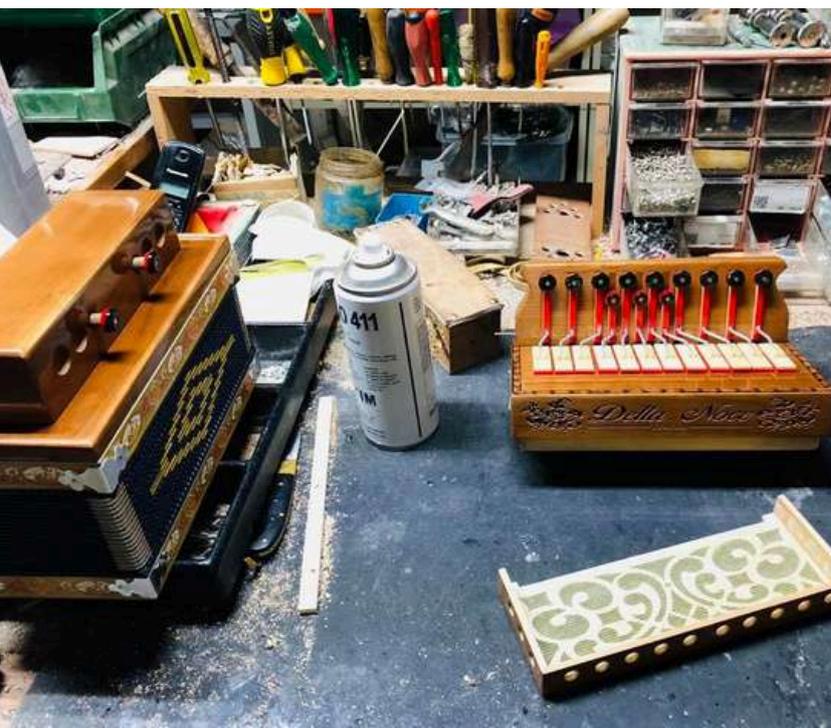
The organetto produces sound through the interaction of bellows and reeds. The bellows, made of layered fabric and leather, act like the instrument's lungs,

"In the early twentieth century, Loreto Della Noce moved to the United States, like many Italians looking for a better future," says Marco Falconi, owner of *Organetti Della Noce*. "At the family foundry, Loreto learned the skills that helped him to repair the reeds of his accordion, using cast light alloy plates. Thanks to this skill, he managed to find a job as a repairman and builder at *Petromilli & Piatanesi*, an Italian-American accordion factory in Wisconsin."

Loreto later opened a workshop in Wilmington, Delaware, with fellow Italian immigrant Vincenzo Ianni. He remained in the United States until the 1950s, when he returned to Abruzzo. "Back home, he worked together with his son Giuseppe and son-in-law Gianni Falconi – my father," says Marco.

A musician and teacher, Giuseppe Della Noce took over the business in 1959. He expanded it into an established music bookshop in Teramo, and later opened a store in Piazza Dante dedicated to selling the family's signature *organetti*. The shop is still there today. In the 1970s, Giuseppe and his wife Teresa founded several music schools in Teramo and its province, where students learned the difficult push-and-pull technique of the *organetto Pennese* – as the instrument came to be known thanks to its link with Penne Sant'Andrea.

At the Della Noce workshop, organetti are still made by hand



pushing and pulling air through the reeds. Each reed is a thin strip of metal that vibrates when air passes over it, creating a musical note. What makes it especially challenging is that each key produces two different notes: one when the bellows are pushed in, another when they are pulled out. The player must therefore think in two directions at once, coordinating hand movements with split-second timing. Mastery comes not only from speed and precision, but also from an intuitive feel for when to change direction without breaking the flow of melody. In Abruzzese folk music, where songs often accelerate into spirited dances, this push-and-pull technique gives the *organetto* its unmistakable pulse and driving energy.

A CRAFT IN DETAIL

Loreto built his first *ddu' botte* (dialect for two-bass *organetto*) entirely by hand, even creating his own tools when necessary. Today, the method remains artisanal, though aided by modern instruments for the most delicate steps. The Della Noce workshop now produces different types of *organetti*, from the traditional two-bass model to more modern versions with four or eight basses for a wider range of notes and richer harmonies.

“We choose woods such as cherry, walnut, maple and mahogany not only for their aesthetic beauty, but above all for their acoustic qualities and durability,” explains Marco Falconi. The bellows are reinforced with leather for elasticity and airtightness, while the internal mechanisms – levers, springs and buttons – are shaped from brass, steel, and aluminum (see the process in this [video](#)). Every detail matters: glue, precision-drilled holes, even the inlays and engravings, often customised on request. Compact and lightweight, the *organetto* is easy to carry – one reason it remains ever-present at Abruzzese celebrations.

TODAY'S ORGANETTI

The Della Noce workshop produces around 200–250 *organetti* per year, a “deliberately limited number,” says Falconi, to safeguard quality. Their customers span Italy and beyond, especially in France, Germany, the United States, and Argentina, where Abruzzese communities keep folk traditions alive. The Della Noce accordions also travelled with emigrants. Abroad, it became a thread connecting Abruzzese diasporas to home. At gatherings overseas, the familiar push-and-pull rhythm recalled village festivals and family dances, ensuring that even far from



Organetti made in the Della Noce workshop in Teramo

Penne Sant'Andrea, the “singing wood” remained part of Abruzzo’s cultural heartbeat. Many of Italy’s leading folk musicians play a Della Noce *organetto* (listen to the instrument in this [video](#)).

Prices for an *organetto* Della Noce vary according to tuning, decorations, type of wood, and number of basses, starting at around €400 and rising above €2000 for elaborate or customised models.

The Della Noce family [shop](#), where their accordions are made and sold, is located in Teramo.

Photos courtesy of Organetti Della Noce.

Teresa Mastrobuono is a professional actress, voice over artist and ABRUZZISSIMO Magazine's regular contributor. Originally from the US, she now lives in Abruzzo.



“WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?”

Text and photos by Maria DiCenzo

What is it like to grow up in a mountain village where the school is shrinking, the population is dwindling, yet the air is clear and the bonds are strong? The voices of children and teenagers from Fontecchio and San Pio reveal both the beauty and the limits of life in Abruzzo’s interior.

In the summer of 2019, I was translating exchanges between my nephew who was visiting San Pio for the first time and some of the local kids. As we discussed differences between Canada and Italy, one of the girls, Claudia, eight at the time, exclaimed ‘*ma che stiamo a fa qua?*’ (‘What are we doing here’) implying there was obviously a better world out there they were missing out on. I never forgot her words or streetwise tone and gestures. As we face the increasing challenges of depopulation in Abruzzo’s interior, I recalled this incident and asked the question *What does it mean to grow up in*

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