



FLAG-THROWERS AT THE TROFEO MARZOCCO AND “LA FIORITA” 1st of May

TROFEO MARZOCCO GARA DI SBANDIERATORI



In the month of May the perfumes and colours of the flowers in the countryside around Florence reign supreme, and even today the heart of the city, Piazza della Signoria, opens up to a myriad of colours fluttering with graceful elegance. The colours of Maytime in the city are those of the intriguing and ancient flag-throwing display. The flags flutter and fly, guided with masterful skill during the prestigious *Trofeo Marzocco*, an important four-corner competition between groups of flag-throwers from various Italian cities, which has been held in Florence on the first Sunday of May for about twenty years. The Trofeo is divided into two distinct disciplines: the so-called "Piccola squadra" or small team, involving a limited group of flag-throwers selected from each of the competing groups, and the "Grande squadra" or big team, with choreographic exercises of exceptionally scenographic effect performed by a minimum of eight standard-bearers. During the event a special prize is also awarded to the best of the four groups of Musicians accompanying the exercises. Finally the jury awards the Trophy on the basis of performance in the three different

disciplines. Maytime colours and flowers are also the stars of the commemoration which is still held of an historic event which, possibly more than any other, marked the passage of Florence from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century. On 23 May every year the ceremony of the *Fiorita* is held at the circular stone set within the pavement of Piazza della Signoria which marks the point where Fra' Girolamo Savonarola was hung and burnt at the stake along with his two fellow friars Fra' Domenico Buonvicini from Pescia and Fra' Silvestro Maruffi from Florence. The modern ceremony has its origins in the compassionate and spontaneous initiative of the local people who, on the morning following the death of the preacher, covered with flowers the spot where Savonarola had suffered and died.