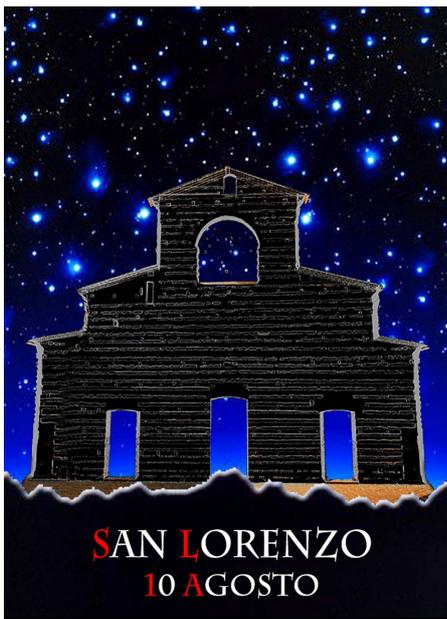




SAN LORENZO **10 August**



One of the feasts most dear to the Florentines, within a framework of history, art and culture. The feast of San Lorenzo and of the Florentine basilica named after him, which falls on 10 August, has for many centuries been one of the bestloved in Florence. The basilica of San Lorenzo was founded in the fourth century, and has always been profoundly connected with the city and those who guided its fortunes. Ancient municipal documents indicate a civic as well as religious function for the site, in that it was the seat of the first Florentine bishops, who also made it into a centre of political power. Consequently, on 10 February 1394 (in the Florentine calendar, 1395 in the modern) the Florentine Signoria passed a resolution regarding its annual commitment to the August celebrations in the basilica. In the mediaeval period, in honour of the ancient Episcopal see, a procession of great symbolic significance would take place between the cathedral and the richly-decorated Laurentian basilica, where the Councillors of the Guild of Merchants, the Proconsol and the Consuls of all the Guilds would make offerings of wax torches. The Prior of

San Lorenzo would then proceed to the "benediction of the city of Florence" in the presence of the City Magistrate. As on the occasion of all the best-loved city feasts, the Signoria - and later the Grand-ducal government, right up to the nineteenth century - would organise a horse race between Porta San Gallo and the district of San Lorenzo, while a summer feast would be held at the Charterhouse at Galluzzo, where the monastery church is dedicated to San Lorenzo. The celebrations in the basilica of San Lorenzo, in the course of which the city is blessed, are attended by the City Council and the Historic Procession of the Florentine Republic as a gesture of homage to the ancient civic headquarters. For the same purpose, the Municipal authorities also organise conferences on the theme, and free guided tours to the Laurentian sites of the city.