

On the trail from Rome to Hong Kong

by *Leila Salimbeni*

There is a prequel to the auction that will be held by Gelardini & Romani wine auctions on 13 April next in the setting of Domani Restaurant, as the culmination of a path embarked on last November, when the famous auctioneers officially launched the first bottles of Fiorano Boncompagni Ludovisi at an auction in Hong Kong. There was boundless enthusiasm from the bidders for the lots of Fiorano Boncompagni Ludovisi, which all recorded 100% increases on their reserve prices. This is the narrative but also, as I said, the factual trigger of this story. Those that have the good fortune to be there will enjoy the parade, its rhythm marked out by the auctioneer's hammer, of the long-lived wonders of the Roman estate, which was the first in Italy to adopt the Bordeaux blend. In chronological order, materializing the words of Luca Martini, no. 1 World wide sommelier association 2013, is the 2008, with its meaty and already potent bouquet.

That will be followed by the 2007, an impenetrable cornucopia of plum, chocolate and blackcurrant, and then the 2006, fluid and slender. Then we will jump back in time to 1994, with an impressive bouquet worthy of its finest French cousins, and so on, through the mysterious and immense theme of the lots in the catalogue, 1991, 1990, still incredibly young, 1989, 1988, 'an epic wine that traces the history of Italian winemaking', to the 1987, unique and unforgettable. This is the repertory of wines that 'enchant you with the first sip, ploughing a furrow in your memory and leaving you forever better for having tasted them', as the eminent Luigi Veronelli, the greatest Italian food and wine critic since the mid-20th century, says of them. It is hence easy to explain the ovation that greeted the first ap-

pearance, the outcome of the interweaving of technique and identity, of the charms of Bordeaux fermented the old fashioned way, like a Brunello in fortuitous exile in Lazio, in that soil with its volcanic subtext where the estate extends until it grazes the outskirts of Rome, the Eternal City, whose presence must, in a certain sense, have shaped its origins as much as its future. The history of Tenuta di Fiorano is linked hand in glove with the personage of Alberico Boncompagni Ludovisi, Prince of Venosa, wine enthusiast and eclectic enough, in less than auspicious years, to choose to plant varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and the then unknown Sémillon. The prince's circle of friends includes Tancredi Biondi Santi and Luigi Veronelli.

**The history
of the estate is that
of its Prince...**



In 1998, suddenly, without a single word of explanation, he dug up almost all the vines and, as he had arrived, he abandoned the world of winemaking, increasing the mystery that surrounded his persona.

It is only thanks to his cousin Paolo Boncompagni Ludovisi and his son Alessandro Jacopo, who formerly owned part of the estate, that we can relate this story to you today. Paolo and Alessandro, guided by the vigilant and inquisitive hand of Alberico, selected new plots to purchase and, with his approval, redesigned the cloning system and the vineyard, keeping the production rigorously organic. The hand-picked grapes are brought to the

cellar where, still today, they are pressed, then fermented in the old building, of which Alberico was the jealous custodian, in the old-fashioned way. From here, thanks to gravity, the wine flows to the historic cellar, where it continues its journey towards itself all the way to Domani in Hong Kong, from whence, after a brief interlude, it will set off on a new story (www.tenutadifiorano.it; www.grwineauction.com). 🍷