48th Annual Meeting of the Società Astronomica Italiana

Palazzo Visconti, Milano, April 19 - 23, 2004

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FOREWORD

The XLVIII edition of the Annual Meeting of the Società Astronomica Italiana took place in Milan from April 19 to 23 and was organized by the Osservatorio Astronomico di Brera. The choice was probably influenced by the “Great Opposition” of Mars in August 2003, which reminded and revived the importance of the observational and speculative activity of V. Schiaparelli, using a 22 cm Merz refractor from a dome on top of the Osservatorio di Brera.

The attendance was large and well qualified with more than 50 talks solicited by the Scientific Organizing Committee to cover the most important recent results obtained in various fields from stellar and galactic astronomy to compact objects (neutron stars and black holes) and extragalactic astronomy and cosmology. A special session was devoted to instrumental projects under development, the closest to completion being the X-ray Telescope for the SWIFT mission (Launch October 2004) and the associated robotic telescope REM (operative), aimed at the fast identification and follow up studies of Gamma Ray Bursts, with the exciting prospect of finding objects at very high redshift ($z>6$).

The reorganization of astrophysical research in a National Institute was still underway at the time of the meeting. Prof. Piero Benvenuti, in charge of taking the process to completion, discussed in particular the prospective structure of committees responsible for selecting and funding research proposals and the organization of panels in thematic areas.

Conferences open to the general public were organized at the Civic Hoepli Planetarium, the largest in Italy and the oldest still in activity, on the “Exploration of the Planetary System” held by Prof. Marcello Fulchignoni and on “Archeoastronomy” held by Prof. Vittorio Castellani.

The meeting was sponsored by Osservatorio Astronomico di Brera, Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica, Società Astronomica Italiana, Comune di Milano, European Space Agency, Alenia Spazio, Heidenhain Italiana, Agenzia Spaziale Italiana.

L. Maraschi