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F.Y.I.

The Immortal Duse

By [MICHAEL POLLAK](#)

Q. *In a recent visit to Green-Wood Cemetery, I noticed a memorial to Eleanora Duse, the Italian actress. She was buried in Italy, so what's a memorial to her doing in Brooklyn?*

A. It is a tribute by a fan who was starstruck as a little boy.

Eleanora Duse (1858-1924), a leading interpreter of Ibsen and an important figure in the development of modern acting style, became a much-loved Italian symbol. There was grief on two continents when Duse (the name was pronounced DOO-zeh) died on tour in Pittsburgh. Long lines attended her funeral in New York, and tearful admirers watched the liner Duilio depart for Naples carrying her body.

Cut away to the little boy, Martin Waldron, who had been adopted by an Italian-American family that loved theater. On Duse's final tour in New York, his grandmother, Rosa Catania, following Italian tradition, took the child, then about 18 months old, to meet her. The grandmother asked the actress if she would be Martin's godmother. It would be an honor, Duse replied, and the account remained part of family lore.

Mr. Waldron, who is now 83 and lives in Park Slope, went on to a long career in what he called "a profession of tears and rejection" onstage (including "King Lear" and "Saint Joan" on Broadway) and as a voice teacher. Around 1961 he bought a family plot on a hill in Green-Wood Cemetery. On one side of the memorial stone is the name of his family members. On the other side are the words "Eleanora Duse" and an inscription about dedication and perseverance. "It was just an impulse," he said, "and the link being my grandmother and the presentation."

The Transient U.N.

Q. *With all the debate about the United Nations and the planned refurbishing of its East River site, I wondered where in the city the U.N. originally had its headquarters.*

A. The agency's first headquarters was actually Room 786 at the Waldorf-Astoria. "It was there that A. H. Feller, general counsel of the United Nations, checked in on Feb. 19, 1946, with orders to find first a temporary home in New York, then a permanent one," A. M. Rosenthal wrote in The New York Times in 1996.

In 1946, the United Nations was all over the city. Sometimes it had several temporary sites, no single place being large enough. After the Waldorf, the United Nations used the Bronx campus of Hunter College, whose students had been shifted to Manhattan. The agency also made use of a boardroom at 630 Fifth Avenue, and the Henry Hudson Hotel at 353 West 57th Street, where the Security Council met. Later in the year, the United Nations moved out of Manhattan, and in October, the General Assembly convened in a refurbished skating rink in the former New York City Building at Flushing Meadows, Queens. The Secretariat set up in a former Sperry Gyroscope war plant in Nassau County.

The United Nations occupied its Turtle Bay headquarters in stages from 1950 to 1952.

Pointy Red Cube

Q. *I was touring the financial district and wondered about the giant red cube with a hole in it that stands in front of 140 Liberty Street at Broadway. Can you tell me about it?*

A. The 24-foot-high vermilion sculpture with the cylindrical hole is - surprise! - "Red Cube," a 1968 work by Isamu Noguchi. It is actually a rhombohedron, a six-sided prism, each face of which is a rhombus, or equilateral parallelogram. In plain English, that means the shape is pointier than a cube, a detail that is said to enhance the sculpture's visual power as it stands, balanced on one end, as if symbolizing eternal risk.

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