

CHAPTER V

Naples music capital.

But one fact is certain: Naples in the Italic peninsula is the capital of the dialectal culture: poetry, song, theatre and prose; it is the capital of most traditional, most rooted forms of entertainment and music genres in the history of the peninsula, what's more, in the early part of the 19th century it was still considered the music capital of Italy .

*"... Naples ... was still the land of Paisiello, Pergolesi, Cimarosa; there was Zingarelli, Bellini; here Rossini got his education, here was Donizetti ..."*³⁵ there was Mercadante. But even before them there were Francesco Provenzale and Alessandro Scarlatti, the leading exponent of the 'Neapolitan School'.

Scarlatti, the author of over a hundred plays and 661 chamber cantatas, and the Neapolitan Provenzale, for some extraordinary reasons, dictated a change in the evolution of the melodrama which would connote its form and essence to the end of its history.

But Alessandro Scarlatti and, then, his son Domenico would leave an indelible mark also in the field of instrumental music (a genre usually more typical of other European music cultures). Alessandro with twelve symphonies apart from sacred concerts, toccatas, sonatas, suites, preludes and fugues, etc. Domenico with 555 harpsichord sonatas. "...Scarlatti's Neapolitan activity becomes a fixed benchmark for generations of musicians who trained in the milieu of the city of Campania, influencing and combining itself with the activity of other acclaimed opera composers, Vivaldi, Galluppi, not to mention Händel..."³⁶

Naples has had the oldest, most renowned music conservatories ever existed in the world, a good four were founded between 1537 and 1589, although, proper schools would open in some of these institutions only later on³⁷ The Neapolitan music school structure itself became the model for all the schools in Europe all the way to Petersburg, a model that justifies and attests to the existence of a 'Neapolitan School'³⁸.

Here for the first time are taught together *"... counterpoint, singing and instruments..."* and these music schools *"Supply an endless nursery of the most competent singers and musicians in Europe who unlike the Venetian "whores" will find work at theatres and chapels in Italy and abroad..."*⁴⁰.

In truth, a music school had already been established in Naples in the 15th century by Ferdinand I of Aragon, *"... not wanting to consider the one the Angevin Rulers already had in their Castelnuovo Royal Palace"*⁴¹.

He *"... in 1458, invited Giovanni Tinctor to come to Naples, who was the author of the first music dictionary titled: Terminorum Musicae definitorum ... and ... whose friends and collaborators were Gulielmo Guarnerio and Bernardo Ycart, both Belgian ..."*. Then there was *"...In Naples Franchino Gaffurio ..."* whose masterpiece which gave him *"... the name of excellent theorist is titled: Theoricum opus armonicae disciplinae"*⁴².

*"The first music school was founded and there Neapolitan music underwent a radical change..."*⁴³. *"... As a consequence, the Flemish influence impinges also on the vocal music, which becomes polyphonic, more and more complex and difficult; music for lords; the masses stay loyal to the monody..."*⁴⁴.

*"...The century ended with that Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Canosa who took the Italian madrigal to the the most resplendent heights..."*⁴⁵ and, if the new trends towards the monody do not interest him, his music *"....Distinguish itself for a disquietingly modern tone..."*⁴⁶. *"... The madrigal reaches its prime and sanctions the triumph of the Italian musicians with Marenzio, Gesualdo and Monteverdi..."*⁴⁷

"... No chapel in Europe could boast such a powerful musical group: not even the more famous Royal or Papal Chapels could bear comparison. In the 16th century, when the Church allowed the use of musical instruments during the sacred rites... the Governors of the Holy House were the first ones to introduce them... The conduction of this imposing musical group always went to famous conductors whose line starts with.... Franchino Gaffurio, the 15th century leading

*Italian musician, followed by... other famous musicians from Naples and the rest of the Peninsula, and other roles had famous foreign musicians like the Flemish Pietro D'Halem and Jean de Macque*⁴⁸.

*"... The significance of Naples as a crossroads for Flemish, Spanish, Italian trends is evident in the harpsichord - organ production which reveals such original features so one can speak of a Neapolitan school..."*⁴⁹.

In 1751, in one of the four above mentioned music schools, the Conservatorio di S. Maria di Loreto, (which later on merged with the more prestigious Conservatorio di Sant' Onofrio) was established the education of the *mastricellos*, the best senior students freshmen were entrusted to. This teaching method became a model for the other schools in the continent founded later on : mutual teaching⁵⁰ .

Musicians from all over Europe such as Hasse, Taradellas, Doll and also one of J.S Bach's son came to study at this school.

Those who might have read the headlines of some the newspapers published worldwide in October 1997 « *"Requiem for a piece of plagiarism"; "Mozart clever copycat"* »⁵¹ are already well aware of how important the *Neapolitan School* was to the great Salzburger musician, who in one of his letters described one of its exponents, the musician Pasquale Anfossi, as a “ *Well known Neapolitan* ”⁵² .

«" Our artistic performance, in order to last for a century, to be universally heard, had to integrate "opera" with "scholasticism", and these had to adjust to each other, correct each other. This explains why so many foreigners came to our school. They came to listen to our melodies, learn the rule, thus supplying the lyrical art with new sounds..."»⁵³ .

*“[...] Not just Naples, but the whole world has reached the top with the 18th century Neapolitan school. An explosion of sublime creativity [...] incomparable, invariably hidden [...] Leo's and Porpora's concerts lead Hayden's and Mozart's and [...] Alessandro Scarlatti's symphonies precede Stamitz's. ”*⁵⁴

The theatrical productions of the exponents of this school, traditionally called ‘Neapolitan Opera’, invaded the European music world of that time and greatly influenced the scores of foreign authors, including Mozart⁵⁵ .

As a matter of fact, the ‘Comic Opera’ (Opera Buffa) was created in Naples which founded the reasons of its prestige and its fundamental contribution for the evolution of the melodrama right into the ‘Neapolitan School’.

*"....As for the art of singing Naples produced, during that century, famous artists such as the sopranists Farinelli, Caffarelli, Gizziello, Millico, Aprile; the sopranos Valentini-Minghotti, De Amicis-Bonsollazzi, Carolina Bassi, Francesca Festa, and more recently, the bass Lablache, the tenors Mirate, De Lucia, Caruso..."*⁵⁶ .

What's more, the San Carlo Theatre up to the time of Giuseppe Verdi's productions acted as a launching pad, the ‘qualifying examination’ for opera performances, which gave them the ‘ticket’ to success throughout Europe, the first one among the theatres existing at that time.

A 'juicy' account witness: on 11 October 1777 Mozart wrote in a letter to his father: " ... *once I get a contract in Naples, everybody will want me ... there is also a comic Opera, that once in a while one can write for practice ... and it gets you more credit and good reputation than giving a hundred concerts in Germany...* " . On 15 October Leopold, his father, answered: " ... *What you wrote about the opera in Naples, is exactly what I think, that is: try to get a contract - I am determined to speak to Michael del Agata again ...* ”⁵⁷

But that's not all. One must consider the fact that many works produced in Naples and just as many authors of the Neapolitan school remain unknown . If anyone wanted to listen to Cristofaro Caresana, discovered and taken, for the first time, to the recording studios by the

Centro di Musica Antica Pietà dei Turchini and considered, today, among the greatest musicians in the Italian history, he/she would have a better idea of the concept of music in Naples.

The traditional, ancient 'Piedigrotta Festival'⁵⁸ then, as for its late music component, evolved in time into a phenomenon which literally anticipated the famous Italian pop music festival, the 'San Remo Festival'. . a phenomenon which even back at the end of the 19th century had an incredible organization with a publicity and economic implications unthought of today⁵⁹. Naples had the first *Cafè Chantant* in Italy (the *Moulin Rouge* opened in 1889, just a year earlier, so the Neapolitan one was the second in Europe)⁶⁰ .

Naples pioneered the diffusion of music production and was the first, or among the first cities in Italy and among the first ones in the world, to have a recording studio and a record production: it was 1905 when the *Società Fonografica Napoletana* of Raffaele and Amerigo Esposito started the complete production cycle, after having given, as early as 1901, their production to a German moulding company⁶¹. (it soon became the *Phonotype* record company which still survives to this day thanks to the effort of the direct heirs Fernando, Vincenzo and Roberto).

Naples was among the first Italian cities to have a radio broadcasting station, in 1926, after Rome (1924) and Milan (1925). In 1927 Marconi's talent, with Vesuvius' help and that of the instruments placed there, took the voices of the Neapolitan singers in fashion at the time all the way to the incredulous Italians migrated to the United States who started, this way, one of the most significant episodes that shows how the Neapolitan song has always made all the Italians feel united as a nation. Paliotti tells us that "... *In the following days radioNapoli's studios received hundreds of letters from the Italian-Americans who, with touching words, expressed their gratitude for that extraordinary programme*"⁶².

What's more, music represents another reason why Naples has an important role in cinema, too. The Neapolitan silent film mimes "*stories of the Neapolitan songs in fashion. Real melodramas ... with the pianist playing background music at the foot of the screen. ... The most important studios reside in Naples...*"⁶³. «*The 'Lombardo film', one of the first studios, was Neapolitan ... among the most fortunate ones, so much that, later on, it changed into 'Titanus', a label certainly more recognizable today, but that few people know that it resulted from an all Neapolitan venture of a producer who bet on cinema during a time in which - the 20's - few believed it could be a lucrative business*»⁶⁴.

In short, "*the bottom line is thatwhile in Italy, split between Rome and Turin, only eight studios produced cinema, in Naples the number was double if not larger...*"⁶⁵.