



ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

special issue – 2013



on the occasion of the exhibition

musical migrants
pictures and stories from the lucanian
community in melbourne

co.as.it. museo italiano, 16 august – 12 october 2013

ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

Musical Migrants. Pictures and Stories from the Lucanian Community in Melbourne Special Issue 2013

This issue of the *Italian Historical Society Journal* was edited by Alexandra Forté Rankine, Alexander Andrew Parise, Alison Rabinovici and Dr Paolo Baracchi.

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The *Italian Historical Society Journal* invites submissions from its readers. Guidelines for submissions can be found on the last page of this issue.

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Front cover: Studio photograph of musician Tomaso Cerbasi and his harp, c. 1893. Tomaso's father was a travelling musician from Basilicata. Tomaso was born in Boston, United States of America on 17 March 1873; when he was eight years old his parents returned to Naples, Italy so that Tomaso could be taught to play the harp by the master Caramello. In 1888, the family migrated to Albany, Western Australia. In 1896 Tomaso Cerbasi married Emilia Curcio. The couple with their young family migrated to Victoria in 1900, where Tomaso established himself as a musician. [See *Italian Historical Society Journal*, June 1994 vol.2 no.1].

Back Cover: Panoramic view of the town of Viggiano, Potenza, Basilicata, c. 1915. [Photographer: Vincenzo Candela]

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TO THE READERS

The Italian Historical Society is proud to present this special issue of the *Italian Historical Society Journal*, on the occasion of the exhibition *Musical Migrants. Pictures and stories from the Lucanian community in Melbourne*. The exhibition will be showing at the Museo Italiano at Co.As.It., Melbourne, from 16 August to 12 October 2013. This is the second special edition, after last year's which celebrated photographer and Australian art cinema pioneer Giorgio Mangiamele.

The *Musical Migrants* project comprises the exhibition proper, this issue of the Journal, and three public events – two cultural evenings with live music (traditional Lucanian music and music by composers of the Lucanian diaspora) and the launch of the book, *Italy in Australia's Musical Landscape*, edited by Linda Barwick and Marcello Sorce Keller (Lyrebird Press, 2012), supported by the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

The project developed from a series of circumstances that brought together photographs and stories, generously shared by the Melbourne Lucanian community through the collections of the Co.As.It. Italian Historical Society on the one hand, with musicologist Alison Rabinovici's PhD project on the other.

Ever since its first publication in 1989, the *Italian Historical Society Journal* has played a part in sharing the history and culture of Italian Australians. The sharing, collecting and preserving of this heritage constitute the Italian Historical Society's mission since its foundation in 1980. The Museo Italiano, which complements the Society since 2010, is also vital to the fulfilment of its mission. Building on the connectivity that is a natural element of the migrant experience, the Society, its Journal and the Museo all help tell the Italian Australian story as an integral part of the wider Australian story.

Another connection traditionally valued by the Historical Society is that between the material that it collects and preserves – the historical and cultural testimonies of our community's experience – and the work of research and interpretation carried out by scholars on that material. This connection

AI LETTORI

La Società Storica Italiana è orgogliosa di presentare questo numero speciale dell'*Italian Historical Society Journal*, in occasione della mostra *Musical Migrants. Pictures and stories from the Lucanian community in Melbourne*, che si terrà nello spazio espositivo del Museo Italiano del Co.As.It. dal 16 agosto al 12 ottobre 2013. Questo è il secondo numero speciale del Journal, dopo quello dell'anno scorso, uscito in occasione della mostra sul fotografo e pioniere del cinema d'arte australiano Giorgio Mangiamele.

Il progetto *Musical Migrants* comprende la mostra, questo numero del Journal e tre eventi – due serate culturali con musica dal vivo (musica della tradizione lucana e musica di compositori migranti di origine lucana), e il lancio del volume *Italy in Australia's Musical Landscape*, a cura di Linda Barwick e Marcello Sorce Keller (Lyrebird Press, 2012), con il sostegno del Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

Il progetto si è sviluppato a partire da una serie di circostanze che hanno portato insieme, da una parte, le fotografie e storie generosamente condivise dalla comunità lucana di Melbourne attraverso le collezioni della Società Storica Italiana del Co.As.It. e, dall'altra parte, il progetto di dottorato della musicologa dott.ssa Alison Rabinovici.

Fin dal suo esordio nel 1989, l'*Italian Historical Society Journal* ha promosso la condivisione della storia e della cultura degli italiani d'Australia. La condivisione, la raccolta e la conservazione di questo patrimonio costituiscono gli obiettivi della Società Storica Italiana fin dalla sua fondazione nel 1980. Il Museo Italiano, che si è affiancato alla Società nel 2010, è pure fondamentale per questi obiettivi. Partendo dalla connettività che è un elemento cardine dell'esperienza migratoria, la Società, il suo Journal e il Museo contribuiscono a raccontare la storia degli italiani d'Australia come una parte integrante della più ampia storia Australiana.

Un altro collegamento tradizionalmente importante per la Società Storica è quello fra il materiale che essa raccoglie e conserva – le testimonianze storiche e culturali dell'esperienza della nostra comunità – ed il lavoro di ricerca e di interpretazione svolto dagli studiosi a partire da questo materiale.

has been made on the occasion of the Society's collaborations with universities and individual scholars engaged in specific research projects. It is, however, perhaps in the pages of this Journal that community and scholarly voices pre-eminently come together in what is more than a mere juxtaposition.

The current issue is no exception. Opening the journal is an essay on the exhibition written by musicologist Alison Rabinovici. Alison is the curator of the exhibition, and has worked extensively on all aspects of the project with competence and passion. The well-known Italian scholar Enzo Vinicio Alliegro (University of Naples), one of the luminaries in the field, generously contributed an article which is here published for the first time in both Italian and English. Finally, Bette Leone's memoir offers precious glimpses into the experiences of one migrant musician family with warmth and rich detail. Her piece is representative of the story of many families in the international Lucanian diaspora.

Gratitude is also extended to Alexander Andrew Parise, who translated Professor Alliegro's article into English, and Alexandra Forté Rankine, who diligently edited this issue of the Journal and curated its graphic design.

Essential to the whole *Musical Migrants* project is the warm support lent by the local community and the Federazione Lucana, as well as the encouragement and interest demonstrated by the community and civic authorities in Italy.

Finally, it is important to note that the *Musical Migrants* project is not the product of the Italian Historical Society, its Journal or the Museo Italiano. The Society, the Journal and the Museo are no more – and no less – than the places at which the generosity of the Italian Australian community in sharing its historical and cultural heritage meets with the passion of the scholars who are studying this subject.

Questo collegamento si è verificato in occasione delle collaborazioni della Società con università e studiosi impegnati in specifici progetti di ricerca. È forse però soprattutto nelle pagine del Journal che le voci comunitarie e specialistiche si incontrano in quella che è più che una mera giustapposizione.

Il numero presente del Journal non costituisce un'eccezione. In apertura si trova un saggio sulla mostra scritto dalla musicologa Alison Rabinovici. La dott.ssa Rabinovici, la curatrice della mostra, ha lavorato a tutti gli aspetti del progetto con competenza e passione. Il noto studioso italiano Enzo Vinicio Alliegro (Università di Napoli), uno dei maggiori esperti nel campo, ha generosamente offerto un articolo qui pubblicato per la prima volta in versione italiana ed inglese. Infine, l'articolo di Bette Leone offre, con calore umano e dovizia di informazioni, un prezioso spiraglio sulle esperienze di una famiglia di musicisti migranti. Il suo pezzo è rappresentativo della storia di molte famiglie nella diaspora lucana internazionale

Siamo anche grati al dott. Alexander Andrew Parise che ha tradotto in inglese l'articolo del prof. Alliegro, ed alla dott.ssa Alexandra Forté Rankine, che ha curato con diligenza i testi e l'impostazione grafica di questo numero del Journal.

Essenziali all'intero progetto *Musical Migrants* sono l'appoggio della comunità e della Federazione Lucana, oltre all'incoraggiamento e all'interesse dimostrati dalla comunità e dalle autorità locali in Italia.

Infine, è importante notare che il progetto *Musical Migrants* non è il prodotto della Società Storica Italiana, del suo Journal o del Museo Italiano. La Società, il Journal ed il Museo non sono niente di più – e niente di meno – che i luoghi dove la generosità della comunità italiana d'Australia nel condividere il suo patrimonio storico e culturale si incontra con la passione degli studiosi della materia.



Figure 1. Panoramic view of the town of Viggiano, Potenza, Basilicata. [Photograph by Vincenzo Candela (1873-1943)].

**musical migrants:
pictures and stories from the lucanian
community in melbourne
curatorial essay
by alison rabinovici**

Alison Rabinovici is a Doctoral candidate at the University of Melbourne. Her research topic is 'Virtuosi of the Kerbstone: Italian street musicians in Australia, 1860-1930'. She completed her Masters Degree (Musicology), 'A History of Horned Strings: Organology and Early Sound Recording 1899-1945', in 2010, for which she was awarded the Helen Macpherson Smith Scholarship (one of two awarded annually). Alison was recently awarded the AEH Nickson Travelling Scholarship, which will enable her to carry out archival research in Viggiano and Marsicovetere. She has a long-standing interest in museums and exhibitions, and her research into the history of the Stroh violin was part of exhibitions curated by Aleksander Kolkowski, at the Musical Museum in Brentford, London (2009) and at the Royal College of Music, London (2012).

Her publications include: Aleksander Kolkowski and Alison Rabinovici, 'Bellowphones and Blowed Strings: The Auxeto-Instruments of Horace Short and Charles Algernon Parsons', In Material Culture and Electronic Sound. Vol. 8; Artefacts: Studies in the History of Science and Technology eds. Frode Weium & Tim Boon. Smithsonian Institution Press, 2013; 'A Web of Connections: The Orchestral Ledger in the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library,' University of Melbourne Collections, no. 3 (2008): 34-41; 'Augustus Stroh's Phonographic Violin. A Journey: Victorian London, Australia, Transylvania', The Galpin Society Journal 58 (2005): 100-23.

My interest in the itinerant migrant street musicians of Melbourne began in 1996, when I undertook an artefact conservation management project in the University of Melbourne music library. One of the treasures of the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library is a ledger that documents the library's holdings of orchestral music, and records the loans of those scores for a period of nearly fifty years, from 1910.¹ Among the borrowers, I found Italian names. At that time, my impression was that musical activities in nineteenth-century Melbourne were almost exclusively the preserve of Anglo-Australian and German-Australian musicians. My curiosity was aroused, and I began to research the stories of Giuseppe Briglia and Agostino Di Gilio. A moving history emerged; stories of seasonal travel and chain migration, of complex family networks and community loyalties, of long family separations, of privation and eventual stability.

Based on the photographs and stories generously shared by the Melbourne Lucanian community through the collections of the Co.As.It. Italian Historical Society, this exhibition tells the little known story of a remarkable group of migrants and their descendants in Australia and other destinations of Italian migration.

Originally hailing from a cluster of small towns in the mountainous province of Potenza in the region of Basilicata — home of a vibrant musical tradition centred on the *ar-picedda* (the portable harp) — these communities of dedicated performers had for centuries travelled to other destinations in Italy, Europe, the Americas, Africa and Oceania. The early itinerant musicians (*musicanti*), who sometimes left Italy as children, were versatile musicians who eventually played professionally in the ballrooms, theatres, cinemas and symphony orchestras of the countries in which they settled. (Well over three hundred individual Lucanian musicians have been identified. (For family names, see Table 2).

The connection with Basilicata (sometimes called by the ancient name of Lucania) has been retained across the generations, and in

recent years has been strengthened as Italian Australians rediscover their family roots.

Context of Departure



Figure 2. The small hilltop town of Marsicovetere was second only to Viggiano as a centre for street musicians (*musicanti di strada*). The stony and unforgiving landscape is clearly evident.

The vast majority of migrant musicians who settled in Melbourne in the late nineteenth century came from Viggiano and Marsicovetere, two small hilltop towns in the province of Potenza, Basilicata. Others came from the nearby towns of Corleto Perticara, Saponara di Grumento (now Grumento Nova), Laurenzana, Moliterno, Montemurro and Tramutola, all within thirty kilometres of each other.² Many men, from Viggiano in particular, were involved in the itinerant music trade. By the middle of the nineteenth century, at least a quarter of the families from Viggiano had at least one member who was a musician by trade, and who had emigrated in order to continue their calling abroad.³ In fact, marriage records in Viggiano (*atti di matrimonio*) indicate that the percentage of men listed as *musicanti* (artisan musicians) rose from 5 per cent in the period 1809-1835, to 20 per cent between 1886-1910.⁴

The reasons for the increasing popularity of itinerant music as an occupation are complex, and are dealt with in detail in the scholarship

¹ A. Rabinovici, 'A Web of Connections: The Orchestral Ledger in the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library.' *University of Melbourne Collections* December, vol. 3, 2008, pp.34-41.

² Information drawn from naturalisation documents, National Archives of Australia.

³ E.V. Alliegro, 'Les Voyages des Musiciens de Rue. Pratiques du Métier et Processus de Marginalisation (XVIIIe-XIXe Siècle).' In *Musical Life in Europe 1600-1900: Circulation, Institutions, Representation*. Ed Christian Meyer, Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts Verlag, 2003, pp.315-28.

⁴ E.V. Alliegro, 'Il Flautista Magico: I Musicanti di strada tra identità debole e rappresentazioni contraddittorie (Secc. XVII-XIV).' *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome Italie et Méditerranée* vol. 115, no. 1, 2003, p.153.

of E.V. Alliegro and Giuseppe Michele Gala.⁵ It is sufficient to note here that the region of Basilicata was one of the poorest regions of southern Italy; a mountainous deforested region with soil that was so degraded, that for many, seasonal migration for music – and other trades – provided an essential supplement to family income in what was essentially a subsistence economy. The economic crisis became even more severe after the unification of Italy in 1861, and in addition, the catastrophic earthquake of 1857 devastated the region, killed thousands of people, and gave further impetus for migration. It was at this time that the number of musicians increased dramatically.



Figure 3. Women and children gathered for the harvesting of the wheat in the town of Viggiano, c. 1910. Signed 'P. Nigro'. Pasquale Nigro (b. 1878) arrived in Australia aged 14, in 1892.

Itineraries for seasonal migration within the Italian peninsula in the early nineteenth century extended to the countries of the Mediterranean, and to all continents by the mid-nineteenth century. Journeys lasted a few months or several years, depending on the destination.⁶ Many musicians eventually settled abroad, joining the mass migration of millions of other Italians. Some travelling musicians chose to retire to their hometown in Italy after a lifetime of voyaging.

The departure of itinerant musicians was very rarely an individual experience. It was a family trade — a business in which fathers and sons and even small boys travelled together with fellow townsmen, many of whom were connected by complex webs of inter-

marriage.⁷ They travelled in small groups, typically carrying with them the '*arpicedda*', a simple portable diatonic harp, violin, flute or clarinet.⁸

Above all, street music proved to be a profitable occupation in the nineteenth century. Musicians used their earnings to ease the poverty of their families in the hometown, and typically, were able to improve their financial and social status by the purchase of properties in their hometowns and in the cities of final migration.

From street band to string band



Figure 4. Italian Street Musicians, London 1877. In John Thomson and Adolphe Smith. *Street Life in London*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1877. [Private collection]

Italian street bands played in Australian cities and in rural towns from the 1860s onwards. For many travelling musicians, by the end of the nineteenth century, Australia was a final destination. While remaining on the margins of society, street musicians found authorities in Australia to be more tolerant than in other parts of the world. Perhaps this was partly because there were relatively few Italians in Australia in the nineteenth century. In other countries, street musicians were regarded as mendicants – as beggars, in fact.⁹ In France,

⁵ For instance, see E. V. Alliegro, *L'arpa perduta. Dinamiche dell'identità e dell'appartenenza in una tradizione di musicanti girovaghi*. Lecce, Italia: Argo, 2007; G.M. Gala, *Le tradizioni musicali in Lucania. Strumenti*. Bologna: SGA Storia Geofisica Ambiente, 2007.

⁶ E. V. Alliegro, 'Les Voyages des Musiciens de Rue', pp. 315-324.

⁷ E.V. Alliegro, 'Les Voyages des Musiciens de Rue', p. 318; F.L. Jones, 'The Italian Population of Carlton: A Demographic and Sociological Survey.' PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1962. (Jones discusses the complex web of intermarriage between musician families. His thesis includes four Viggianese genealogies that demonstrate this).

⁸ The clarinet, while not often mentioned in publications on the topic, is well-represented in photographs in the collection of the Co.As.It. Italian Historical Society in Melbourne.

⁹ For further discussion, see J.M. Picker, 'The Soundproof Study.' *Victorian Studies* vol. 42, no. 3 1999/2000, pp. 427-53. See also J. Thomson and A. Smith. *Street Life in London*.

street musicians required licenses, but that was not the case in Australia, where hawkers and street traders were licensed, but street musicians were not.¹⁰ Street musicians were relatively mobile and able to move on quickly if the police accused them or their audience of obstructing the footpath or disregarding the 'move on' by-laws.¹¹



Figure 5. A harpist plays a portable diatonic harp, accompanied by a small boy on the violin. From *The Streets of Sydney from the Shady Side*. Sydney: Nelson P. Whitelocke, 1885. [Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria]



Figure 6. 'Different Styles of Street Music'. Note the careful placement of the harpist on the kerbstone. The *Illustrated Australian News*, August 1886. [Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria]

London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1877, p. 85.

¹⁰ On hawkers and street sellers, see A. Brown May, 'A Charitable Indulgence: Street Stalls and the Transformation of Public Space in Melbourne, C. 1850-1920.' *Urban History* vol. 23, no. 1, 1996, pp. 48-71; *The Highway of Civilisation and Common Sense: Street Regulation and the Transformation of Social Space in 19th and Early 20th Century Melbourne*, vol. 49. Canberra: Urban Research Program, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1995.

¹¹ This became clear to me after extensive research in the archives of the Public Record Office of Victoria.

Repertoire and Performance

Research suggests that Italian street bands played surprisingly well, and passers-by generally appreciated the quality of their performances.¹² The street bands were not sentimental about the music of their home towns, and pleased their audiences with popular songs, dance music, Neapolitan airs, well-known opera melodies and Irish and Scottish airs and ballads. Music was a business, after all, and music was a commodity. The trade was a matter of supply and demand.¹³



Figure 7. Di Gilio's Band at a private function in East St. Kilda. Included is Roccantonio Di Gilio, who with his brother Michelangelo, founded the band in the late nineteenth century and acted as booking agents for other musicians. Also pictured is Francesco Domenico (Frank) Leone and Leonardo Labattaglia (standing, fourth from right).

The street was not the only stage of the street musicians. Street bands accepted engagements to play for picnics, steamer excursions, balls and official functions. The Di Gilio Band in Melbourne, for instance, having initially played on the street, was regularly booked for functions at Government House. On such occasions, street bands of two or three players became 'string bands' and were expanded for larger, more formal performances, advertising themselves in the press from the 1860s onwards.¹⁴ Briglia's String Band provides one such example, and was ac-

¹² Lucanian musicians can be identified in news sources when the typical instrumentation of harp, violin and flute is mentioned. Positive accounts of their performances date from the 1860s to the early twentieth century.

¹³ 'Street Musicians. A Chat with Two of Them.' *The Argus*, 22 March 1899, p. 7.

¹⁴ For instance, see *The Mercury*, 15 January 1862, p. 1. 'Messrs. Dentith & Gagliardi's Efficient String and Wind Band, of Flute and Piano, for Concerts, Balls, &c. Terms moderate. – P.S. Country Engagements punctually attended to.'

tive from 1903, sometimes being advertised as 'Briglia's Orchestra'.¹⁵



Figure 8. String Band, Melbourne c. 1900. Two violinists and a harpist, dressed for an evening performance. Giuseppe Briglia on the right.

Adelaide, while not remembered today for its early settlement of Lucanian musicians, had many flourishing 'Italian String Bands', almost all of which were directed by musicians from Viggiano. The Canary String Band, under the leadership of Giuseppe Setaro (b. Viggiano 1862-d. Adelaide 1926), was arguably the most famous.¹⁶ Setaro had earned his living on the street from the age of twelve, and came to Australia as a member of a special band engaged to play at the opening of the Jubilee Exhibition in 1879. His *Canary Waltz*, dedicated to Lady Downer, was published in 1893.¹⁷

Although most lacked formal training, many of the Lucanian street performers distinguished themselves as fine musicians who could arrange, improvise and compose according to the requirements of the occasion. Several photographs from the 1890s feature

music stands, indicating the importance of musical literacy to their success.

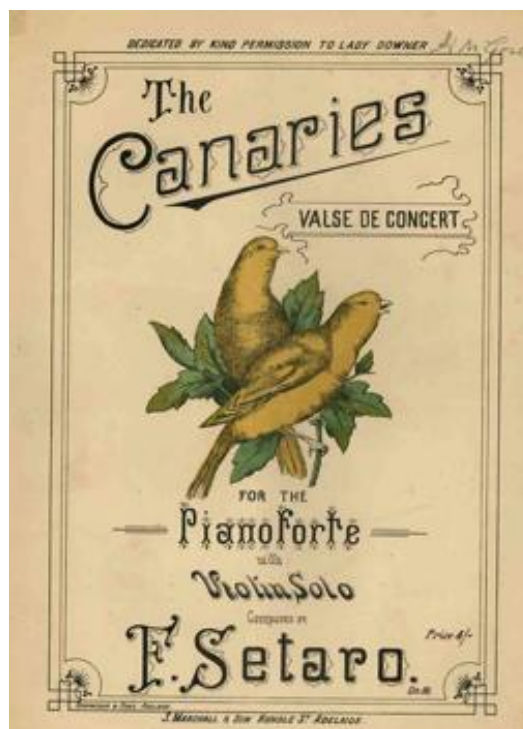


Figure 9. Francesco Setaro, *The Canaries*. Valse de Concert. S. Marshall & Son, 1893. [Image courtesy of the National Library of Australia]

Musical and entrepreneurial skills, as well as family and community cooperation and cohesion made it possible for street musicians to move easily from street performance to the stage – and back to the street when necessary. Thus the street band transformed itself into the Italian 'string band' or 'string orchestra' that was so popular with Australian audiences at the end of the nineteenth century. Small communities of Lucanian musicians became important contributors to music for leisure and pleasure in capital and rural cities throughout Australia.

Supporting trades

The Lucanian community in Melbourne included tailors, instrument makers and repairers – all tradesmen whose activities were mutually beneficial.

Giuseppe Cinquegrana (1861-1945) was a harpist, who also made and repaired harps at his home in Kerr Street, Fitzroy, in the 1890s. He played – or possibly his namesake played – in the Di Gilio Band. Before settling in Australia, the Cinquegrana brothers had established themselves in New Zealand as importers of violin, viola, guitar, banjo, and harp

¹⁵ For example, see *Williamstown Chronicle*, 31 October 1903, p. 1., *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 24 June, 1911, p. 3.

¹⁶ See: 'Obituary. Mr Francesco Setaro.' *The Advertiser*, 18 January 1926, p. 13.

¹⁷ In Brisbane, Giuseppe Truda (1869-1904) provided another example of a Viggianese-born street musician who became a respected conductor and teacher. He had studied violin at the Naples conservatory and was one of a large family of musicians from Viggiano and Tramutola who settled in Brisbane and Sydney. The Truda brothers also played on the street and gave concert performances in New Zealand. See 'Opera House Two Grand Concerts by Truda Brothers.' *Evening Post*, 22 February 1893, p. 3.

strings, which they imported direct from Italy.¹⁸ They also made and sold umbrellas.¹⁹



Figure 10. Nicola Del Monaco (1864-1937) Violinist, harpist, harp maker, hawker.

Nicola Del Monaco (1864-1937) was connected to the trade of instrument-making as well as to the tailoring business. Del Monaco arrived in Australia for the first time at the age of twelve as a group member of travelling musicians from Viggiano. He went backwards and forwards a number of times before settling in Australia in 1911. Del Monaco's wife and two young sons joined him in 1921. Nicola Del Monaco was a harpist, violinist, harp maker and instrument repairer, whose skills were greatly valued by the community. At the time of his naturalization in 1921, he gave his occupation as that of 'hawker'; 'I work for myself in the streets of Melbourne for about seven years,' he noted on the document.²⁰ Perhaps this was the beginning of the tailoring business, 'Del Monaco High Class Tailors', established in Carlton by his sons Michele and Arturo. After Nicola Del Monaco's death, his

¹⁸ 'Advertisement.' *Evening Post*, (New Zealand) 16 May 1887, p. 4.

¹⁹ 'Wanted Known— Selling Off .' [Advertisement] *Evening Post*, (NZ) 15 December 1891, p. 3. Another member of the family, Francis Cinquegrana (1893-1915) died at Gallipoli in 1915, only a few months after enlisting at the age of 22. His photograph hangs on the wall of honour at the Warrnambool RSL.

²⁰ NAA: A1, 1921/24050. Nicola Del Monaco, Naturalisation.

instruments and tools were passed on to his friend and neighbour, Felice Gagliardi.²¹



Figure 11. Felice Gagliardi (1879-1947) in his 'Violin Hospital', 1947.

Felice Gagliardi (1879-1947) came to Australia from Viggiano in 1885, as a six-year old boy. For some years he played in suburban theatre orchestras, in the days of silent movies. Gagliardi's violin repair shop in Lygon Street, known as the 'violin hospital', served the Italian musicians and the wider musical community for many years. By 1947, Gagliardi was the self-proclaimed 'only real harp repairer in Australia – a country where harp players are now a dying race'.²²

Child musicians: exploited and abused?

Child street musicians were a common sight in Europe and the United States during the nineteenth century. In France, the exploitation of these children was known as the 'white slave trade'. Performing children were regarded as beggars, and with their *padroni* (masters), were expelled in large numbers from the country in the 1860s.²³ In the United States, the children were known as 'the little slaves of the harp', and a number of *padroni* were pro-

²¹ Personal communication with Nick Del Monaco, grandson of Nicola Del Monaco.

²² R. Testro, 'The Fiddles of 'Uncle' Felici [sic]. For 30 Years Felici Gagliardi Has Treated Sick and Invalid Violins.' *The Argus Week-End Magazine*, 1947, p. 1.

²³ It was estimated that 3,000 child musicians were performing on the streets of Paris in 1867. The majority were from Marsicovetere. Among the *padroni* were Giuseppe Rossi, Agostino Digilia [sic], Antonio Briglia and Domenico Antonio Varallo (all from Marsicovetere) and Andrea Lamacchia (Viggiano) See J.E. Zucchi, *The Little Slaves of the Harp: Italian Child Street Musicians in Nineteenth-Century Paris, London and New York*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992, pp. 62-7.

secuted for abusing their young workers.²⁴ There is little evidence, however, to suggest that such abuses occurred in any widespread way in Australia.



Figure 12. Unknown child with harp, Viggiano c 1910. [Candela Collection]

In the Victorian Parliamentary Debates Session of October 1887, Mr L.L. Smith, the member for Mornington, asked the Chief Secretary the following questions:

If he will cause the Police department to make inquiries into the circumstances connected with the introduction of young foreigners into this country to follow the calling of street musicians?

Whether it is not a fact that the abominable *padrone* system, similar to that which the New York Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children has crushed in the United States of America, is growing up here, and to inquire if attention has officially been given to an advertisement in the Age to the

following effect:—'Missing from home, two Italian boys, carrying violins, dressed in light and dark clothes, one aged 11 years, the other 13. Finder rewarded with £1 by bringing same to McCormack-place, off Little Lonsdale-street, to Mary Della. Names of boys, Frank Parlerno, Frank Boffo.'²⁵

If the Government will take steps to inquire into the condition of, and protect such children already in this country, and also take steps to prevent any further importation under the circumstances and for the purposes referred to?

Mr Deakin replied that the police department had inquired into the rumoured introduction of the *padrone* system in Melbourne, but that it did not appear to be the case. There were, he said,

only about seven foreign children employed as street musicians in Melbourne. Of these, four lived with their parents, and three with persons who were their protectors and employers. There was no reason to believe that any of the children were badly treated. Within the past six months, four Italian boys who had been employed as musicians about the streets of the city had returned to their native country, so that the number here did not seem to be on the increase."²⁶



Figure 13. The Labattaglia brothers, shortly after their arrival, c. 1893. Pictured are (left to right): Leonardo (flute) Scipione (harp) and Prospero (violin). The post of the harp is still wrapped up from the voyage.

There is good reason to believe that there were more than 'seven foreign children' on the streets, and the following year (1888) saw

²⁴ Among those prosecuted in the United States was Antonio Briglia, a harpist from Marsicovetere. See 'The Italian *Padrone*.' *New York Times*, July 18 1878, p. 3; 'Antonio Briglia, the '*Padrone*.' *New York Times*, July 16 1878, p. 8. Antonio Briglia had earlier advertised for the return of his own seven year old child, Frank, who played the violin. See 'Child Slavery a Brutal Italian Task-Master Brought to Grief—Parents Selling Their Children—an Italian Fagin.' *Daily Evening Bulletin*, July 30 1873.

²⁵ 'Boffo' could possibly have been a mis-spelling of 'Boffa'.

²⁶ 'Italian Street Musicians.' Victoria. Parliamentary Debates Session 1887 Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly, vol. 56, 1887, pp. 1776-7.

a renewal of concern about the young performers. Although the Italian Government had made it an offence for children under the age of 18 to be employed in an itinerant profession, it was not an offence in Australia, and the suggested solution of sending the children back to Italy, even if it was possible to prove that they were under the control of a *padrone*, rather than with family, was clearly not tenable.²⁷ Italians such as Signor Sceusa again raised concerns about the children in Sydney and Melbourne in the 1890s.²⁸ Indeed, the plight of child street traders generally – not only the Italian children – began to attract the attention of the public.²⁹

A musical apprenticeship

Most groups of travelling musicians who came to Australia after the 1860s included young boys (see Table 1 for examples of travelling groups, drawn from shipping lists held at the Public Record Office of Victoria). Many of them travelled with their families, while others arrived apparently without close family connections but accompanied by fellow townsmen.³⁰ Systems of formal or informal apprenticeship were common, and children were socialised to a life of travelling and performing, learning their musical skills and gaining some understanding of the business side of the trade during the voyage.³¹ One of the inevitable side effects was that boys were

separated from their mothers at a young age, some never to be reunited. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, families began to make the long journey together, and other families were reunited within a few years in their adopted country.



Figure 14. c. 1917, shortly before migration from Viggiano. Angelo Candela (violin), Francesco Candela (flute), and a little harpist (unknown). Note the leather carry strap on the diatonic harp.

Street music was a family trade, so most children would have had their earliest lessons within the family. Other children studied more formally with a teacher in the hometown in Italy. Early in the nineteenth century, Don Giovanni Ghailard, from a family of wealthy landowners, was a music teacher in Viggiano. Even at this early stage it is possible that the children learned to read the music.³² In the town of Marsicovetere, Giuseppe Viggiano was a musician who played the violin and harp. He also had his own music school (Viggiano's three sons, all musicians, settled in Melbourne). In Viggiano, the chief music teacher for over half a century was Giacomo Nigro (1848-1919), who taught the flute and also the rudiments of music to all would-be violinists, harpists or flautists. One student, Leonardo De Lorenzo (1875-1962), became a famous flautist in the United States. His account of his early tuition with Nigro is daunt-

²⁷ J.E. Zucchi, *Little Slaves of the Harp*, pp. 161-5. ; 'Street Musicians in Melbourne.' *The South Australian Advertiser*, 19 January 1888, p. 5.

²⁸ Francesco Sceusa (1851-1919) founded the Australian Socialist League in 1890, and did much to help Italian immigrants. Also see: 'The Employment of Italian Children.' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1891, p. 2.

²⁹ 'Senior Constable McHugh urges the necessity for some action towards checking the liberty that children at present enjoy of wandering, vagrant-fashion, about the streets of Melbourne, particularly at night. Children of both sexes live almost constantly on the streets, adopting a variety of means or tricks to make money and escape the attention of the police, selling evening papers, matches, flowers, and laces, sweeping crossings, running for cabs at theatres, begging and plundering [...] The truant officer [...] never troubles these children, and a great many grow up with little or no education of a useful kind, although their education is not neglected in another direction, for they quickly learn how to smoke, drink, use filthy language, and steal, ultimately developing into vagrants and criminals.' in 'Street Children in Melbourne. Juvenile Depravity and Immorality.' *The Argus*, 19 November 1886, p. 10.

³⁰ Shipping lists held at the Public Record Office of Victoria support this view.

³¹ E.V. Alliegro, 'Les Voyages des Musiciens de Rue.'

³² (Is it possible that 'Ghailard' became 'Gagliardi'? A name well known in Australia). See E.V. Alliegro, *L'arpa perduta*, p. 80.

ing. His lessons started at 6.30am and lasted for an hour or more. And that was daily!³³

Once in Australia, many Lucanian musicians added teaching to their weekly routine. Among those who were well regarded as teachers were Giuseppe Briglia and Domenico Boffa (Melbourne), Angelo Demodena and Francesco Setaro (Adelaide), and Giuseppe Truda (Brisbane). True to the tradition of community support, some teachers took no payment from their students' parents. Angelo Candela, when interviewed in 1985, described how he went to Francesco Di Cieri, a silent movie violinist, for lessons when he was a boy;³⁴ 'Just as sort of a helping hand because that's what you do when people come to a foreign place and you try to help them,' he said.³⁵



Figure 15. Labb's String Band [Labattaglia] From left to right, standing: Michelino (harp), Domenico (violin), Scipione (harp). Left to right, seated: Leonardo (flute) and Prospero (violin).

Many of the young musicians who arrived in Australia as children continued their calling into their adult years. Most received their training within the family or the community. While a musical career may well have been expected of them, they were born into a profession of which they could well feel proud. The five Labattaglia brothers, who arrived in

1893 and 1894 as children, are an example of this. Likewise, Matt and Charles Vita and Tony La Gruta worked as professional musicians from a young age. Their photographs suggest a confidence of bearing, and a pride in their achievement that speaks volumes for their status in the world of popular music performance. The Leone family, father Antonio (double bass) and Australian-born sons Luigi (flute) and Frank (cornet), exemplify the father-son working relationship.



Figure 16. Agostino Di Gilio.

A few musicians studied formally in the conservatoires of Naples, Rome and Salerno. Among these were Giuseppe Truda (mentioned above) who studied violin at Salerno and Naples, Domenico Boffa, who also studied in the Conservatory of Salerno, and Tomaso Cerbasi, who studied harp in Naples. Very few of the Lucanian musicians who settled in Australia, or their sons, studied at tertiary institutions. The tradition of tuition within the family and community circle must have continued uninterrupted, as many of their Italian-born and Australian-born sons became professional musicians. Agostino Di Gilio (1897-1950) proved to be the exception to the rule. Di Gilio studied at the Melba Conservatorium in Albert Street and at the Conservatorium of the University of Melbourne, where he gained his diploma. The Conservatorium appointed Di Gilio as a teacher of flute and violin in 1919.

³³ L. De Lorenzo, *My Complete Story of the Flute: The Instrument, the Performer, the Music*. New York: Citadel Press, 1951, p. 397.

³⁴ Francesco Antonio Di Cieri (b. 1879, Algeria) arrived in Australia in 1908, probably the son of a musician. He had been in Australia for 3 years as a child, and on another occasion, for 4 years. His wife Caterina Amerena was the daughter of a musician, who at the time of her birth, was living in Brighton, UK. Naturalisation document, NAA: A1, 1925/25614.

³⁵ Transcript of Romilda Lauricella's interview with Angelo Candela, 7 Jan. 1985, Candela Family documents, Co.As.It. Italian Historical Society collection.

After the street: cinema and orchestral work



Figure 17. Tomaso Cerbasi (1873-1944), c. 1893. Cerbasi, a 'vaudeville artist', photographed with his double action Erard Gothic harp.

Lucanian harpists filled a particular niche in nineteenth century musical entertainment. As soloists, they could – and indeed did – function independently on the streets with or without the support of accompanying musicians. In Adelaide, for example, Pietro Romano (1852-1941) was a 'well-known pavement artist' who strummed his harp in Adelaide's thoroughfares, with violin and flute obbligatos.³⁶ Romano's skills must have been considerable. He was a founding member of Setaro's Canary String Band, and took over as the band director after Setaro's death. He also composed and published several works.³⁷

Tomaso Cerbasi (1873-1944) filled another niche in Australia's musical fabric. He was

much in demand as an accompanist for amateur and professional singers, at a time when harp accompaniment was a frequent alternative to piano accompaniment. Cerbasi, whose portrait welcomes the visitor to this exhibition, was also a self-described 'vaudeville artist'.³⁸ He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, the son of a Viggianese musician. When he was a child, his family returned to Italy where he studied harp in Naples. Cerbasi and his brother, Rocco (who settled in Adelaide) toured New Zealand and Australia as the 'Cerbasi Brothers Italian String Band' in the 1890s. Cerbasi played a double action Erard Gothic harp and frequently used the Irish harp in stage performance, often in company with harpist Clare Vears, whom he later married.³⁹

By the 1890s, the vaudeville and variety theatres, in which Lucanian harp players regularly performed, became the venues for Melbourne's earliest cinema screenings as intermissions between the live acts. Many Lucanian musicians and their Australian-born sons found regular work in the orchestras that accompanied silent film screenings in the many 'Picture Palaces' that sprang up in cities and suburbs in the early 1900s. Musicians such as Giuseppe Briglia and Vincenzo Ricco became respected musical directors of cinema and theatre orchestras. Amateur suburban symphony orchestras relied on the expertise of Italians hired as additional players or as conductors to bring greater prestige to events. By the 1910s, Lucanian musicians had joined the broader musical community of Melbourne and were widely respected by their fellow musicians. A number of flautists made a name for themselves as soloists, and among them were Americo Gagliardi and Luigi Leone. Leone and Gagliardi both worked with Dame Nellie Melba, who warmly acknowledged their talent, generously acknowledging Leone with the gift of a piccolo, now on display in the *Museo Italiano* in Melbourne.

³⁶ 'Peter Romano.' *The Advertiser*, 12 December 1938, p. 25.

³⁷ For example, P. Romano, *The Adelaide Kreuz Polka [Music] Performed by the 'Setaro Canary String Band' and All Principal Adelaide Bands*. Adelaide: S. Marshall, c. 1900?; P. Romano, *Sempre Cara. Always Dear. Gavotte for Pianoforte [Music]*. Adelaide: S. Marshall & Sons, c. 1900? Francesco Setaro and Pietro Romano are buried in the same plot in Adelaide's West Terrace Cemetery.

³⁸ 'Tom Cerbasi: Notice of Change of Abode', 1921, Item VIC/ITALY/CERBASI TOM Series MT269/1, National Archives of Australia.

³⁹ The Sydney harpist Albert Torzillo (1883-1938), Australian-born son of a musician family from Viggiano, similarly performed in variety and vaudeville. Torzillo took his harp with him to the First World War. In Adelaide and in Cobar, New South Wales, harpist Michel Angelo Padula (1851-1945) born in Moliterno, frequently accompanied singers in amateur and professional performances.

Touring opera companies supplemented their orchestras with local players, Lucanians among them. Radio emerged in the 1920s as a popular form of entertainment, and the newly formed radio stations employed Italians in their resident orchestras and featured them regularly on air as instrumental soloists.



Figure 18. A quartet from the 3AW Radio Orchestra share the microphone. Angelo Candela (son of Vincenzo Candela) is second from the right.

The inter-war years saw an influx of musicians from the north of Italy. By the 1930s, Lucanian musicians were working regularly with the newer arrivals, creating a new trend in music that remained popular for decades. The all-Italian Argentino Tango Band was Melbourne's first dedicated tango band, led by Domenico Caffaro. The other musicians were Pietro Piccini (piano-accordion), Giovanni Cera (harp-guitar), violinists Ezio Giannaccini and Angelo Candela (the Australian-born son of a musician from Viggiano). Caffaro, Piccini and Cera were from Northern Italy, and had all migrated in the 1920s. John Whiteoak has argued that Italian musicians were central to the introduction of Hispanic-influenced music into Australian popular entertainment during the 1930s.⁴⁰ They created a trend, rather than simply following a popular path. Caffaro's Cosmopolitan Orchestra became the in-house band for the Myer Emporium in 1935. Alf Viggiano (1907-1985) similarly kept abreast with the times. He led a Spanish-costumed tango-rumba band at Navaretti's Restaurant in Collins Street. Alf's two brothers, Fancescantonio and Michelangelo were also band members.⁴¹ The three brothers were born in Marsicovetere.

Lucanian musicians in Melbourne and other state capitals played regularly in the amateur and professional orchestras that preceded the establishment of the State Symphony Orchestras in the 1930s. Violinists Agostino Di Gilio, Domenico Boffa, Tony and Leon La Gruta all played in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra under Sir Bernard Heinz.



Figure 19. The Victorian Professional Orchestra conducted by Gustave Slapoffski. Radio Broadcast, c. 1930. Seen here are Giuseppe Briglia and Angelo Candela (violins) and Tony Briglia (cello).

When hard times came for musicians in the late 1920s, Giuseppe Briglia (1878-1960) was instrumental in setting up the Melbourne Professional Orchestra, which aimed to provide work for musicians who had lost their employment at the theatres when the 'talkies' arrived. The orchestra performed weekly, but income from performances barely covered the travel expenses of the musicians, and the orchestra disbanded in 1931. Briglia's life as a musician spanned the years of transition from street performance to relative security as a theatre musician and musical director. He was one of the earliest members of the Musicians' Union and a founding member of the Music Teachers' Association. He was the father of nine children, four of whom served in the Australian forces during the Second World War. Four of Briglia's sons followed in his footsteps as musicians. 'If there is harmony in the heart there is harmony in the home', said Maestro Briglia on the occasion of his fiftieth wedding anniversary.⁴² Perhaps this may stand as the motto of this extraordinary community.

⁴⁰ J. Whiteoak, 'Italian-Australian Musicians, 'Argentino' Tango Bands and the Australian Tango Band Era.' *Context: Journal of Music Research* vol. 35/36, 2010/2011, pp. 98-9.

⁴¹ J. Whiteoak, op. cit., p. 107.

⁴² 'They've Had Fifty Years of Harmony in the Home.' *The Argus*, 11 January 1955, p. 9.



Figure 20. *Giuseppe and Rosina Briglia, on the occasion of their fiftieth wedding anniversary, 1955.*

Epilogue

The settlement of the Lucanian community made a lasting impact on the character and history of Carlton and surrounding inner-city suburbs. Lucanian musicians have likewise left their mark on the Australian music scene. The ability to make the most of any situation, to adapt creatively to new employment oppor-

tunities, to support each other in adversity, and most of all, to provide familial and community support were all contributing factors to the success of the Lucanian musicians.

The direct gaze of these musicians speaks of their confidence in their established place in the musical world of their adopted country. Professional pride radiates from these images.

The world of the musical entertainer suffered a severe blow in the late 1920s. The introduction of the 'talkies' brought an abrupt end to the employment of musicians in the cinema theatres. The end of silent cinema, in tandem with the Great Depression, signalled a return to the streets for some of the more unfortunate performers. Once again, however, the Lucanians showed their remarkable resourcefulness by successfully establishing themselves in other trades and professions.

In recent years, descendants of the Lucanian musicians have begun to explore their heritage here in Australia and in the home-towns of their ancestors. Lucania is now enjoying a revival of its old traditions of instrument making and playing. Viggiano, the central town of our story, is now listed by UNESCO as "Città dell'arpa e della musica" – the city of the harp and of music.

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Table 1. Shipping lists: Lucanian Musicians

S.S. GREAT VICTORIA, November 1863

FAMILY NAME	FIRST NAME	AGE
NIGRO	PASQUALE	30
PISANI	GIACOMO	32
SETARA [SETARO]	NICOLO [NICOLA]	35

S.S. TORNADO, September 1867

FAMILY NAME	FIRST NAME	AGE
MELFI	ANDREW	27
MELFI	NICOLI	11
MELFI	JOSEPH	10

S.S. GREAT BRITAIN, September 1868

FAMILY NAME	FIRST NAME	AGE
?	MICHAELANGELO	15
ASTRELLA	FRANCISCO	10
BOFFA	LENARDO	10
BUFFA [BOFFA?]	GUESSEPPE	15
DEMOREO [DEMODENA?]	PROSPERO	9
NIGRO	FABRIZIO	8
LAMACCHIA	ANDREW	37
LAMACCHIA	PASQUAL	10
LAMACCHIA	DOMINCO	5
VARALLO	FABRIZO	44
VARALLO	DOMINQUE	14

S.S. GREAT BRITAIN, May 1873

FAMILY NAME	FIRST NAME	AGE
LAMACCHIO [LAMACCHIA]	AN [ANDREA]	46
LAMACCHIO [A]	PROSPERO	11
LAMACCHIO	PASQUIL	10
LAMACCHIO	SAVERIO	9
LAMACCHIO	DOMENIC	8
PASIANI [PISANI]	G	46
PASIANI [PISANI]	DOM	11
PASIANI [PISANI]	V	10
PASIANI [PISANI]	FRANS	9
PASIANI [PISANI]	J O	8
LAMACCHIO [LAMACCHIA]	AN [ANDREA]	46

S.S. SOMERSETSHIRE, August 1878

DE RAGO	PROSPERO	15
GARGARO	EGIDO	40
GARGARO	VINCENT	30
GARGARO	FRANCISCO	28
GARGARO	—	11
GARGARO	DOMINITE	9
GARGARO	GERMANCO	8
NICOLIA	VINCENT	17
NICOLIA	FRANCESCO	11
NITTE	MATTEO	11
OTTAIONO	FRANCOIS	26
PIZZO	VINCENT	39
POLIESSE	GUISEPPI	11
RAGO	PROSPERO DE	15

Table 2. Families of Lucanian Musicians

LAST NAME	TOWN OF ORIGIN	AUSTRALIAN CITY
ALBERTI	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE
AMERENA	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE, WARRNAMBOOL BENDIGO MARYBOROUGH
ANGERAMI	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE
ARCARO	VIGGIANO	CARLTON MELBOURNE
ARGENZIO	VIGGIANO	CLIFTON HILL
ASTRELLA	VIGGIANO	HOBART SYDNEY
BARRILE	MARSICOVETERE	HOBART HORSHAM MELBOURNE
BATTISTA	?	
BELLIZIA	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE
BOFFA	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE MELBOURNE
BRIGLIA	MARSICOVETERE	MELBOURNE
BUTTA	NAPLES	SYDNEY WESTERN AUSTRALIA
CANDELA	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE GEELONG
CERBASI	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE MELBOURNE
CIANCARULO	VIGGIANO, MARSICOVETERE	MELBOURNE
CINQUEGRANA	VIGGIANO	NEW ZEALAND MELBOURNE WARRNAMBOOL
CURCIO	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
D'ALBERTI	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE
D'ELIA	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
DE LUCA	?	?
DE SANCTIS	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
DEL MONACO	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE

DELLAMACCHIA	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
DEMODENA	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE
DI CIERI	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
DI GILIO	MARSICOVETERE	MELBOURNE
DI MILITA	VIGGIANO	PERTH
DI RAGO	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE PERTH
DIFUCCIO	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE
EVANGELISTA	MARSICOVETERE	MELBOURNE
GAGLIARDI	VIGGIANO	HOBART MELBOURNE
GARGARO	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE MELBOURNE
GERMINO	SAPONARA DI GRUMENTO	MELBOURNE
GINEVRA	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
LA GRUTA	SAPONARA DI GRUMENTO	SYDNEY MELBOURNE
LABATTAGLIA	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
LACAVA	VIGGIANO CORLETO PERTICARA	MELBOURNE
LAMACCHIA	VIGGIANO	PERTH BRISBANE
LARAIA	VIGGIANO	PERTH MELBOURNE
LAULETTA	MARSICOVETERE	MELBOURNE
LEONE	MARSICOVETERE	MELBOURNE
LOMBARDI	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE
LOTI [LOTTI]	?	ADELAIDE
MESSINA	VIGGIANO	BRISBANE
MIGLIONICO	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
MONTANA	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
NICOLIA	VIGGIANO	LISMORE
NIGRO	VIGGIANO	BRISBANE MELBOURNE
OTTAINO	VIGGIANO ?	MELBOURNE
PADULA	MOLITERNO	ADELAIDE COBAR
PAOLIELLO	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
PASCALE	MARSICOVETERE	MELBOURNE
PISANI	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
PIZZO	MONTECALVARIO VIGGIANO	SYDNEY
PRICOLO	TRAMUTOLA	BRISBANE
PUGLIA	SAPONARA	MELBOURNE
RAJO [RAJA, RAIA]	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE
RAGO	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE
RICCO	POTENZA	MELBOURNE
ROMANO	LAURENZANA	ADELAIDE
RUGGIERO	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE MELBOURNE
RUSSO	VIGGIANO	HOBART
SCHIAVONI	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
SETARO	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE
TORZILLO	VIGGIANO	SYDNEY MELBOURNE
TRANCHITELLA	MARSICOVETERE	SYDNEY
TRUDA	VIGGIANO	SYDNEY
TRUPIANO	NAPLES	MELBOURNE
VARALLA	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE
VARALLO	VIGGIANO	ADELAIDE MELBOURNE
VIGGIANO	MARSICOVETERE	MELBOURNE
VIGNOLA	MARSICOVETERE	MELBOURNE
VITA	VIGGIANO	MELBOURNE



Figura 1. Musicanti girovagli nei pressi di un'edicola votiva, Acquaforse firmata Quevado e d'Embrum, in Richard de Saint Non, *Voyage pittoresque ou Description de Naples et de Sicilie*, Paris, 1781¹. [Immagine cortesia di E. V. Alliegro]

suonatori di strada, vagabondi e migranti: la costruzione della diversità culturale

di enzo v. alliegro

Enzo Vinicio Alliegro svolge attività didattica e di ricerca presso le Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia e di Sociologia dell'Università degli studi di Napoli "Federico II". È membro del Centro Audiovisuale Interdipartimentale per lo Studio della Cultura Popolare dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli "Federico II", socio ordinario dell'AISEA (Associazione Italiana Studi Etnoantropologici), socio ordinario della Simdea (Società Italiana per la Museografia e Beni Demoetnoantropologici), socio ordinario dell'Associazione per la Storia Sociale del Mezzogiorno e dell'area Mediterranea. La sua formazione si presenta con forti caratteri internazionali e marcatamente pluridisciplinari, come mostra la Laurea in Sociologia conseguita a Napoli, il Perfezionamento in Antropologia culturale conseguito a Roma La Sapienza, la Specializzazione in Storia sociale presso l'EHESS di Parigi, e il Dottorato di ricerca in Antropologia storica presso l'European University Institute a Firenze. È stato borsista dell'European Science Foundation (Strasburgo), ed ha svolto attività di ricerca presso il Public Record Office e la British Library di Londra, la Biblioteca Nazionale di Parigi, ecc. I suoi maggiori campi d'interesse, i cui esiti sono confluiti in numerose pubblicazioni italiane, estere ed in convegni specialistici, sono estesi a tematiche relative alla storia ed alla storiografia degli studi demoetnoantropologici italiani, all'antropologia dei processi identitari e dei conflitti culturali, all'antropologia dello sviluppo locale e del territorio, all'antropologia della modernizzazione e del mutamento socio-culturale. Nel 2011 per il volume *Antropologia Italiana. Storia e Storiografia (1869-1975)*, (Firenze, SEID, 2011) al prof. Alliegro è stato conferito il prestigioso premio Costantino Nigra come migliore opera di Antropologia edita tra il 2009 ed il 2011, mentre nel 2012 gli è stato conferito il premio Carlo Levi per il libro *Il Totem Nero. Petrolio, sviluppo e conflitti in Basilicata* (Roma, Cisu).

Tra i suoi volumi recenti, oltre alla pubblicazione *La Terra del Cristo. Percorsi antropologici nella cultura tradizionale lucana* (Potenza, CRB, 2005), si segnala *L'Arpa Perduta. Dinamiche dell'identità e dell'appartenenza in una comunità di musicanti girovagli* (Argo, Lecce, 2007 - Premio Speciale saggistica storica, Premio Basilicata 2009).

Abstract: A partire dalla ricostruzione di alcune pratiche di mestiere legate ai musicanti girovagli originari da una località interna del Sud Italia, la Valle dell'Agri, in Basilicata, i quali raggiunsero fin dal Settecento in qualità di arpisti, violinisti e flautisti le maggiori città europee, il saggio è indirizzato ad analizzare le modalità attraverso le quali nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento presero corpo in Europa alcune modalità di rappresentazione che restituirono del musicante girovago un'immagine alquanto negativa.

Attraverso una metodologia integrata che unisce alla ricerca biografica e di ricostruzione delle famiglie e delle genealogie quella intensiva dell'analisi quantitativa, l'intervento solleva interrogativi che investono alcuni processi di costruzione e dell'identità e dell'alterità culturale.

¹ Roving musicians next to a religious aedicule, Etching signed by Quevado and d'Embrum, in Richard de Saint Non, *Voyage pittoresque ou Description de Naples et de Sicilie*, Paris, 1781. [Image courtesy of E. V. Alliegro.]

1. “Sonatori di strada” del Mezzogiorno d’Italia

Uno degli elementi sonori che ha maggiormente caratterizzato l’orizzonte musicale della Basilicata è certamente rappresentato dalla tradizione dei suonatori ambulanti di arpa originari della Valle dell’Agri, in provincia di Potenza.

Allo stato attuale della ricerca sembra possibile asserire che i musicanti di Viggiano¹, la località maggiormente rappresentativa di tale fenomeno, avviarono la loro attività fin dalla seconda metà del Settecento, e presumibilmente ancor prima, quando prese corpo la figura del girovago di professione, del suonatore di arpa, di flauto e di violino, che raggiungeva Napoli in occasione della novena natalizia².

Dell’attività settecentesca restano preziose e singolari testimonianze forniteci dalle statue riproducenti suonatori di strada poste nei presepi del Museo S. Martino di Napoli. Con le sue tinte forti di città di “frontiera”, di capitale con ambasciate di paesi lontani, con il suo porto e le sue navi che disegnavano ben oltre il Mediterraneo una fitta ragnatela di commerci, proprio Napoli ebbe un ruolo di primo piano e si costituì come un importante punto di partenza per i viaggi successivi.

Per aprire un varco nelle pratiche migratorie dei musicanti di strada, risulta indispensabile fare riferimento ai registri dei passaporti conservati nel fondo Casa Reale Antica e Ministero degli Esteri dell’Archivio di Stato di Napoli.

Tra il 1816 ed il 1818 ben 32 musicanti di Viggiano si recarono a Napoli per ottenere dalle autorità di polizia il visto al passaporto. Di questi, dodici erano diretti verso la Spagna, diciannove indicarono come destinazione Roma, mentre uno raggiunse la Toscana.

Le date di rilascio dei visti suggeriscono che i musicanti non lasciavano le proprie famiglie in modo indifferenziato nel corso dell’intero anno: infatti, malgrado il numero dei casi sia piuttosto esiguo, si ricava che quasi la metà

delle partenze, precisamente il 47%, si concentrava in inverno, il che va posto in relazione alla forte attrazione esercitata dai festeggiamenti natalizi che costituivano un’occasione sicura di introiti indispensabili per i viaggi successivi. Nessuna partenza, inoltre, è registrata in estate, quando i musicanti dovevano già essere giunti laddove intendevano esercitare la loro attività, mentre il rimanente 53% riguardava la primavera, il periodo che più degli altri si adattava alle esigenze dei viaggiatori.

Tali concentrazioni temporali pongono in risalto (se si prendono in considerazione i dati estrapolabili dai verbali della polizia e dai visti posti su alcuni passaporti) che i viaggi si strutturassero intorno a cicli temporali che vertevano su assenze superiori all’anno e che l’esercizio di tale attività prescindesse completamente dal ritmo dei lavori agricoli nelle comunità di partenza. Oltre a tali conclusioni, le vidimazioni poste dai funzionari di pubblica sicurezza ai passaporti dei suonatori di Viggiano, sono una chiara ed inequivocabile testimonianza del pieno riconoscimento conferito all’attività dalle autorità che non trovarono alcuna difficoltà nel concedere i visti per l’estero ai musicanti, anche nei casi in cui fossero accompagnati da bambini.

Chi sono i musicanti che si recarono nella capitale borbonica per assolvere alle incombenze amministrative prescritte? Nel corso del 1817 nei registri dei passaporti comparvero 12 musicanti, divisi in quattro gruppi. Il 1 gennaio Francesco Melfi e i fratelli Raffaele e Francescantonio Parisi ottennero il visto per Roma. Verso la stessa città, il 16 aprile, si diresse Prospero Gallo, Vincenzo Paoliello e Pasquale Nigro, mentre il 17 aprile fu la volta di Vincenzo Marsicano e Vincenzo Melfi. È verso la Spagna che chiese di recarsi il quarto gruppo, composto da Nicola Bellizia, dal figlio Vincenzo, da Francesco Fiatarone e da Pasquale Nigro. Nel registro dei passaporti del 1818 figurano tre gruppi di musicanti giunti a Napoli per chiedere l’autorizzazione per un viaggio verso la Spagna. Nel primo compaiono Giuseppe Bellizia e Pasquale Cascia; nel secondo i fratelli Pietro e Antonio Laraja; nel terzo Pasquale Pennella, Giosue Di Pierri e i fratelli Antonio e Vincenzo Punaro. I tre gruppi ottennero il visto il 1 gennaio 1818.

Alla luce dei dati di cui si dispone, sembra evidente che i viaggi dei musicanti avessero

¹ Si tratta di un paese posto su una vetta appenninica a circa 1.000 metri di altitudine, nella parte nord-occidentale della Basilicata. Nei primi decenni dell’Ottocento contava circa 5000 abitanti.

² Cfr. Enzo V. Alliegro, *L’arpa perduta. Dinamiche dell’identità e dell’appartenenza in una tradizione di musicanti girovaghi*, Lecce, Argo, 2007.

una connotazione collettiva e che nei gruppi fossero inseriti individui appartenenti prevalentemente, ma non esclusivamente, al medesimo ambito familiare e parentale. Dalle ricostruzioni, inoltre, emerge che non si ebbe alcun caso di partenza di interi nuclei familiari e che il fenomeno non coinvolse direttamente le donne.

I registri dei passaporti, per quanto utili siano, non consentono di conoscere quali fossero gli itinerari effettivamente seguiti dai musicanti e neppure chiariscono se le località indicate come luoghi di destinazione fossero state realmente raggiunte e non fossero soltanto dei punti intermedi per viaggi ulteriori. Del resto, anche altri elementi tutt'altro che trascurabili nell'organizzazione del lavoro e nelle esperienze migratorie restano in ombra, per non riferire dell'assoluta impossibilità finanche di stimare per grosse linee l'incidenza e le caratteristiche dei movimenti migratori di tutti quei musicanti che partirono clandestinamente.

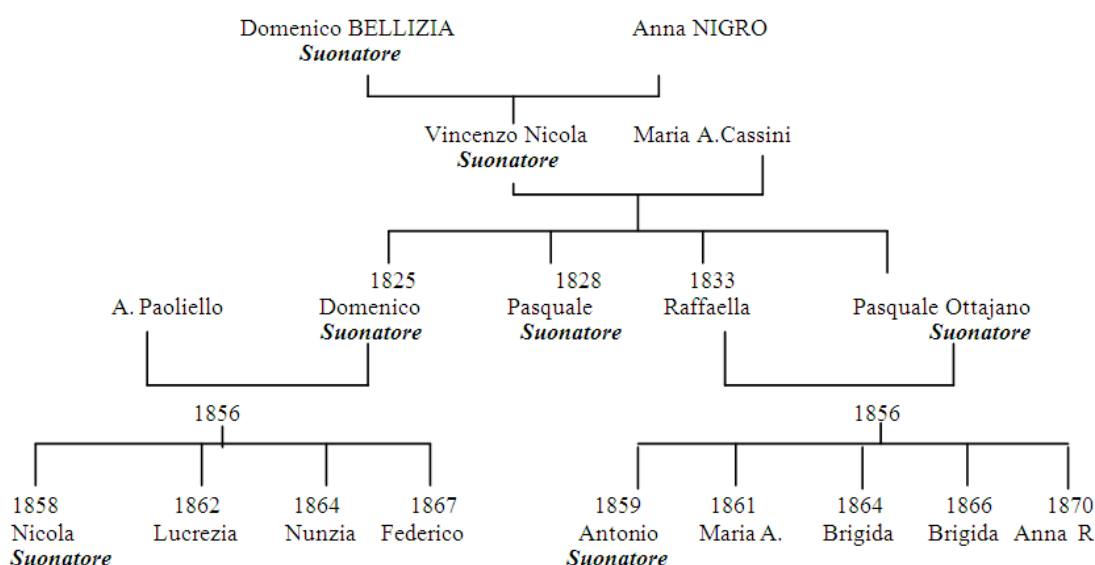
È ad altri tipi di fonti, dunque, che bisogna prestare attenzione. Per evidenziare alcune delle modalità attraverso le quali il mestiere veniva trasmesso ai membri delle nuove generazioni, è utile fare ricorso alla metodologia messa a punto nell'ambito delle ricerche di storia della famiglia e fare leva sui registri dello stato civile. Chi diventa musicante?

La genealogia n.1 offre un'esemplificazione di un meccanismo di trasmissione del mestie-

re secondo una linea di discendenza patrilineare succedutasi ininterrottamente per quasi un secolo e per ben quattro generazioni, malgrado non manchino interessanti esempi di trasmissione secondo la linea matrilineare.

Nonostante la genealogia non sia ancora completa e non consenta di evidenziare le attività di tutti i cadetti, molto chiaramente si evince l'esistenza di una sorta di legge di trasmissione ereditaria attestata per l'intero l'Ottocento: tutti i primogeniti seguiranno le orme dei padri. Si tratta di un sistema di trasmissione ben documentato attraverso la ricostruzione di numerose genealogie di altre famiglie di musicanti del posto. A tale riguardo, può essere interessante prendere in considerazione la tabella n.1 nella quale i cognomi dei musicanti rilevati negli atti di matrimonio sono stati raggruppati tenendo conto del numero complessivo delle volte che essi compaiono. Malgrado tale tabella non chiarisca se il ripetersi dei cognomi sia indice di trasmissione intra-generazionale o inter-generazionale, essa risulta piuttosto utile per porre in risalto la presenza nella comunità lucana di famiglie di musicanti molto diverse, quelle che potremmo definire degli *specialisti*, i cui cognomi si ripetono lungo il secolo senza alcuna interruzione, e quelle in cui l'esperienza musicale sembra piuttosto occasionale, legata ad alcuni decenni soltanto. Inoltre la tabella illustra alcune importanti trasformazioni che si ebbero nel corso dell'Ottocento,

Genealogia n. 1 Trasmissione della professione nella famiglia Bellizia



Fonte: Archivio Comunale di Viggiano, Registri di Stato Civile, Atti di nascita e di matrimonio

come, ad esempio, il comparire di molte famiglie di non specialisti nei decenni successivi all'unità d'Italia (1861).

Tab. n. 1. – Famiglie di musicanti di Viggiano: raggruppamento realizzato in base alle ripetizioni dei cognomi.

	Anni	a	b	c	d	e	Totale
1	1809 - 1835	2	12	8	21	15	58
2	1836 - 1860	7	38	34	23	23	125
3	1861 - 1885	24	80	67	33	44	248
4	1886 - 1910	14	37	31	10	12	104
	Totale	47	167	140	87	94	535

a) Cognomi che si ripetono una sola volta; b) Cognomi che si ripetono tra 2 e 5 volte; c) Cognomi che si ripetono tra 6 e 10 volte; d) Cognomi che si ripetono tra 11 e 15 volte; e) Cognomi che si ripetono oltre 15 volte.

La riga n.1 mostra che su un totale di 58 matrimoni contratti tra il 1809 ed il 1835, soltanto due cognomi di musicanti risultano scomparsi nei decenni successivi, mentre dei 47 cognomi che compaiono soltanto per una volta (colonna a) ben 24, pari al 51%, compaiono nel decennio successivo all'unificazione del Paese che spingerà, con il peggiorare delle condizioni socio-economiche, famiglie di contadini, di pastori, di artigiani e di piccoli proprietari, finanche di notabili decaduti, ad intraprendere la strada dell'emigrazione musicale che si porrà quale modalità risolutiva attivata in ordine a problematiche individuali ed a configurazioni familiari di diversa natura. È in questo contesto postunitario, cui farà seguito una sorta di dequalificazione intrinseca dei suonatori che non potranno più contare sui segreti trasmessi dai propri padri,

che si consolideranno forme di selezione e di avvio all'attività girovaga basate sulla compravendita di bambini, in cui l'*apprentisage* si iscrive in una logica di sfruttamento e di impiego mercantile di bambini affidati dai propri genitori o tutori a musicanti adulti mediante la stipulazione di contratti di locazione d'opera, come attestato da numerose scritture private risalenti agli anni '60³.



Figura 2. Piccolo arpista di Viggiano. [Immagine cortesia di E. V. Alliegro]⁴

Sul periodo successivo all'unità d'Italia che si pose quale vera e propria cesura nell'ambito dell'intera comunità lucana, con forti conseguenze sulle modalità migratorie delle famiglie di musicanti, torneremo in seguito, non prima di aver esposto un quadro di sintesi generale per l'intero Ottocento, indirizzato a

Tab. n. 2. - Professione degli sposi di Viggiano riportati negli atti di matrimonio (1809-1910).

Anni	a		b		c		d*		e*		f*		g*		Totale	
	v. a.	%	v. a.	%	v. a.	%	v. a.	%	v. a.	%	v. a.	%	v. a.	%	v. a.	%
1809 - 1835	58	5	835	73	134	12	91	8	11	1	5	0,5	7	0,5	1141	100
1836 - 1860	127	10,5	801	66,5	135	11	109	9	14	1,1	15	1,4	2	0,5	1203	100
1861 - 1885	248	21	534	45	146	12	144	12	24	2	53	5	33	3	1182	100
1886 - 1910	104	20	263	48	51	9	63	11	19	3	42	8	8	1	550	100
Totale	537	13	2433	60	466	11	407	10	68	2	115	3	50	1	4076	100

* sono esclusi gli anni compresi tra il 1900 ed il 1910: a) musicanti; b) contadini; c) proprietari; d) artigiani; e) professionisti (medici, avvocati, notai, etc.); f) commercianti; g) pastori.

³ Cfr. J. E. Zucchi, *I piccoli schiavi dell'arpa*, Roma, Marietti, 1999, (ed. or. 1992), E. V. Alliegro, *L'arpa perduta*.

⁴ Young harp player from Viggiano. [Image courtesy of E. V. Alliegro.]

meglio illustrare il contesto in cui i musicanti si collocarono e le relative trasformazioni.

La tabella n.2 evidenzia i forti mutamenti sopraggiunti nei decenni che seguirono l'unificazione: il numero dei matrimoni dei musicanti rispetto al numero totale raddoppiò (colonna a), passando dal 10,5% relativo agli anni 1836-1860 al 21% degli anni 1861-1885. Contemporaneamente si verificò un forte incremento di commercianti (colonna f) che nello stesso periodo passarono dall' 1,4% ad un significativo 5%. Negli anni presi in esame, tuttavia, il quadro delle categorie professionali sembra fondamentalmente restare immutato. Quasi irrilevante il cambiamento tra i professionisti (colonna e) che passarono dall'1,1% al 2%. Ciò che colpisce, inoltre, a fronte del cospicuo incremento dei musicanti e coerentemente con ciò, è il decremento dei contadini (colonna b) che dal 66,5% passarono al 45%, il che va posto in relazione alla crisi del settore agricolo che seguì l'unificazione, all'estrema frantumazione della proprietà terriera, ai fenomeni di brigantaggio e di repressione che ebbero un peso non irrilevante nella disgregazione della comunità rurale e, soprattutto, alla forte attrazione esercitata proprio dall'attività musicale cui molti contadini, anche per non svolgere il servizio militare, si indirizzarono. Si trattava forse di una scelta consapevole operata da un gruppo che vide, come ha sostenuto Emilio Sereni, nell'emigrazione musicale l'unica possibilità per sottrarsi alla progressiva pauperizzazione⁵?

2. Pratiche di mestiere e dinamiche migratorie

Le ricostruzioni dei viaggi non sono naturalmente esaustive. Ampie zone d'ombra oscurano aspetti legati agli itinerari, agli organici, e ben poco emerge relativamente alle modalità di esercizio del mestiere. Malgrado tali lacune è possibile individuare alcuni punti importanti.

Anzitutto sembra piuttosto evidente che nonostante questi girovaghi si assentassero anche per alcuni anni e si recassero molto lontano dalle aree di origine, essi non diedero affatto luogo a partenze definitive le quali, semmai, presero corpo nei decenni successivi

all'unità d'Italia. L'attività di musicante ambulante non fu un'attività saltuaria ed estemporanea, ma fissa. Essa non fu temporanea né in relazione al ciclo agrario – come attività integrativa svolta nei tempi morti del calendario agrario – né in relazione al ciclo di vita, come attività svolta da giovani per poter accedere al matrimonio o espletata da adulti nelle fasi critiche di sviluppo del ménage.

I fenomeni di mobilità di antico regime sono stati analizzati, talvolta, nel quadro degli studi sulla pluriattività come esperienze integrative poste in essere in momenti critici del ciclo di sviluppo della *household* e nei cosiddetti periodi morti del ciclo agrario per correggere il rapporto produttori-consumatori. A tal proposito si è fatto riferimento a strategie conservative e ad economie denominate "dell'assenza". I dati riportati documentano, invece, una situazione di altro genere, in cui l'attività di musicante di strada non rappresentava un espediente estemporaneo attivato in relazione alle necessità che maturavano in momenti critici del ciclo vitale. Quello del musicante migrante si profilava agli occhi dei protagonisti ed in seno alle comunità in esame come un mestiere che copriva l'intera esistenza, salvo i casi di mobilità sociale o decisioni maturate alla luce di elementi di altro genere ed al quale si accedeva attraverso sistemi di trasmissione e di selezione che poggiavano su una forma specifica di *apprentissage* indirizzato a bambini anche al di sotto dei dieci anni.

I viaggi condotti in gruppo e della durata variabile avvenivano secondo la seguente tipologia: 1. viaggi itineranti all'interno della penisola italiana con alcune puntate in paesi confinanti come la Svizzera; 2. viaggi itineranti incentrati soprattutto su paesi europei e del bacino del Mediterraneo come la Francia, la Spagna, l'Egitto. Gli itinerari in questo caso sembrano essere determinati dalle grandi capitali come Madrid, Parigi, Alessandria d'Egitto, le quali detenevano indiscutibilmente un ruolo di primo piano, anche se non ancora esclusivo, rispetto ad aree più periferiche, come accadrà per i decenni successivi al 1861; 3. viaggi itineranti transoceanici. Viaggi compiuti soprattutto verso le Americhe del Sud e verso gli Stati Uniti e l'Australia con l'ausilio di battelli dai porti di Napoli, di Genova e di Marsiglia. I viaggi dei musicanti si

⁵ E. Sereni, *Il capitalismo nelle campagne (1860-1900)*, Torino, Einaudi, 1965, p. 158.

collocavano, in questo caso, nei circuiti internazionali disegnati dagli scambi commerciali.

Per avere un'idea della rilevanza quantitativa del fenomeno dei musicanti ed uno spaccato non impressionistico, piuttosto particolareggiato, circa l'emigrazione dei girovaghi dal Sud Italia, gli assetti famigliari e il radicamento nel tessuto comunitario, può essere utile procedere attraverso un'analisi quantitativa del censimento del Comune di Viggiano realizzato nel 1881⁶.

Su un numero complessivo di 1.364 nuclei familiari censiti, ben 337, pari a circa il 25%, presentano al loro interno un componente, e talvolta più di uno, dedito all'attività di musicante. Dall'analisi si ricava inoltre che su una popolazione totale di 6.030 individui, i musicanti coniugati sono ben 497 (8.2%), 176 (35.4%), mentre i restanti 317 (63%) celibi. I dati presenti nel censimento permettono di realizzare, inoltre, una prima mappatura delle direttrici migratorie.

Tab. n. 3. - Luoghi di destinazione dei musicanti, 1881.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Tot.
Totale	10	94	17	4	29	4	4	149	31	342

1) Africa (Algeria, Egitto); 2) America del Sud (Argentina, Brasile, Cile, Perù, Uruguay, Paraguay); 3) Australia; 4) Canada; 5) Europa (Francia, Inghilterra, Portogallo, Grecia); 6) India (Bombay); 7) Medio Oriente (Costantinopoli); 8) Stati Uniti (New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Filadelfia, etc.); 9) Estero (non è specificato il luogo).

Piuttosto chiaramente emerge che i musicanti infransero i confini segnati dall'Europa per inoltrarsi verso aree geografiche non raggiunte in precedenza, facendo registrare una netta predilezione per gli Stati Uniti e l'America del Sud.

3. Identità e alterità culturale. I musicanti di strada tra mitizzazioni e denigrazioni

I paragrafi precedenti possono essere sufficienti per avere un'idea di come si svolgesse l'attività dei musicanti e quale fosse il radicamento culturale e sociale nell'ambito di una comunità del Mezzogiorno. Ma quale giudizio i musicanti conferirono alla loro attività ed in

che termini si autorappresentarono? Secondo quali modalità vennero invece rappresentati?

Nel 1841 i fratelli De Blasiis, musicanti di Viggiano, rivolgendosi al Sovrano per ottenere il passaporto scrissero:

Colle lacrime agli occhi prostrato avanti il Real Trono, ne vengono i supplicati (...) implorando della clemenza della M.V. d'impartire loro la grazia per permettere ai medesimi di procurarsi il vitto all'Estero coll'esercizio del loro mestiere come musicanti girovaghi, mentre in questo Regno a malapena possono tirare avanti i loro giorni, essendo buoni di nulla e le loro famiglie sostenute con questo mestiere, vengansi nella necessità di dar vita a chiedere l'elemosina (...). Maestà gli esponenti prima dell'inibizione si trovarono di aver formato delle compagnie prendendosi a salariati molti ragazzi sottoposti ad un giusto scrutinio, e negargli il passaporto sarebbe lo stesso che renderli maggiormente miserabili⁷.

"Siamo dei lavoratori, peraltro poveri, senza alcuna alternativa". Questo è quanto in questa lettera, ed in altre simili rinvenute, i musicanti sembra vogliano dire di sé. Al di là dell'atteggiamento cauto che tali documenti impongono, in quanto prodotti di una modalità di rappresentazione funzionale e contingente permeata da tratti di denigrazione tesi all'ottenimento della grazia, è significativo che il linguaggio impiegato sia proprio quello delle tradizioni artigianali di bottega e si faccia uso di termini quali "compagnie", "salariati" e "giusto scrutinio", il che denota da parte dei protagonisti l'idea che la propria attività fosse da annoverare nell'elenco delle iniziative di lavoro. Non molto diverso invece il giudizio conferito in precedenza, quando i musicanti di strada furono pensati come autentici rappresentanti della poesia e dell'arte popolare.

Una delle prime documentazioni relative alla pratica della musica di Viggiano è di fine Settecento, precisamente del 1797, anno in cui Lorenzo Giustiniani scrisse:

I Viggianesi sono per lo più sonatori di arpa e taluni avrebbero delle molte abilità a ben riuscire in si fatto strumento se fossero istruiti nella scienza della musica e loro si presentasse perfetto finanche il

⁶ Archivio Comunale di Viggiano (PZ), Censimento Unitario, 1881.

⁷ Archivio di Stato di Napoli (A.S.N.), M.S.P.G., Gab., Cart. 863, V. Manfredi e G. De Bonis, 1851, fasc. 994, part. 5.

suddivisato strumento⁸.

È nei primi decenni dell'Ottocento che i musicanti furono oggetto di una nuova attenzione e di un interesse inusitato. Il fenomeno della musica di strada venne inserito nelle attività di matrice romanticheggiante di documentazione e di descrizione delle manifestazioni dell'arte e della vita popolare. In questo ambito si verificò, pertanto, una vera ed appassionata esaltazione di tutti quegli aspetti in grado di testimoniare dell'autenticità delle espressioni popolari.

Pier Paolo Parzanese nel 1838, nella prefazione ad una sua raccolta di poesie intitolata "I Canti del Viggianese", scrisse:

Viggiano è un grosso villaggio nella Provincia di Basilicata, ed i Viggianesi sono gente naturalmente disposta alla musica. Da fanciulli imparano a suonare di arpa e di violino, e poi venuti su coll'età lasciano allegramente il paese e vanno attorno per il mondo suonando e cantando fino a che, raggranellato un po' di denaro, tornano in Patria a godersi la pace della famiglia. Or avendo io forte desiderio che la nostra poesia si rinnovelli e, quasi direi, si rinvergini con immagini ed armonie native e popolari non lasciai passar di qua un sol Viggianese senza avergli fatto cantare le sue cento canzoni; sicché da questo tolsi una ballata, da quello una romanza, da uno presi un concetto, da un altro un ritornello; e rimpastato tutto nella mia mente, come Dio volle, venni incarnando questi miei canti di quanto più bello mi venne fatto raccogliere da cotesti vaganti trovatori de' tempi nostri⁹.

Anche sulle pagine della rivista napoletana «Poliorama Pittresco» si possono incontrare i musicanti ritratti in termini del tutto positivi. Giuseppe Regaldi nel 1848 sulla rivista della capitale pubblicò un articolo dal titolo *I Viggianesi*, che Francesco De Boucard inserì, corredato da un disegno di Palizzi (fig. n.2), nel volume *Usi e costumi di Napoli e contorni*¹⁰.

Merita veramente il saluto della poesia nazionale il melodico Viggiano imperocché deggiono essere piene di armonia le

sue acque, i suoi alberi e le sue pietre: una musica segreta deve accarezzare la culla di quel semplice popolo, e gemere nel santuario delle loro tombe¹¹.



Figura 3. I Viggianesi. Disegno di Palizzi, in Francesco De Boucard, *Usi e costumi di Napoli e contorni*, Napoli, Tip. G. Nobile, 1857. [Immagine cortesia di E. V. Alliegro]¹²



Figura 4. I Viggianesi. Disegno di Molino, in Cesare Malpica, *I Viggianesi*, in «Poliorama Pittresco», Napoli, 1836-'37, n.1. [Immagine cortesia di E. V. Alliegro]¹³

Intorno agli anni '50 dell'Ottocento il fenomeno dei musicanti *viggianesi* si impose all'attenzione delle autorità con dei segnali di mutamento.

⁸ L. Giustiniani, *Dizionario geografico-ragionato del Regno di Napoli*, Napoli, 1797-1805, Vol. X, p. 61.

⁹ P. P. Parzanese, *I Canti del Viggianese*, Moliterno (PZ), Porfidio, 1984, p.7, (ed. or. 1838).

¹⁰ F. De Boucard, *Usi e costumi di Napoli e contorni descritti e dipinti*, 2 voll., Napoli, Tip. G. Nobile, 1857-1866.

¹¹ G. Regaldi, *I Viggianesi*, in F. De Boucard, *Usi e costumi di Napoli e contorni*, Milano, Longanesi, 1977, pp. 190 (ed. or. 1857).

¹² I Viggianesi. Drawing by Palizzi, in Francesco De Boucard, *Usi e costumi di Napoli e contorni*, Naples, Tip. G. Nobile, 1857. [Image courtesy of E.V. Alliegro]

¹³ I Viggianesi. Drawing by Molino, in Cesare Malpica, "I Viggianesi", in *Poliorama Pittresco*, Naples, 1836-1837, n.1. [Image courtesy of E. V. Alliegro]

A far cambiare lo scenario concorse la nuova situazione politica determinatasi dopo i moti rivoluzionari del 1848. In una lettera dell'aprile del 1851 spedita da Torino da un informatore borbonico al Ministero della Polizia di Napoli si legge:

Gentilissimo Signore, da che questo infelicissimo e disgraziatissimo paese è diventato la sede di quanto vi è di più canaglia in Italia, e dove si fa professione di ateismo, e dove la propaganda inglese già fa progressi del protestantesimo, e dove in una parola non si ha altro scopo che di demoralizzare le classi, io stimerei che ai nostri Consoli ed Agenti diplomatici all'estero venisse ordinato dal Ministero degli Esteri di Napoli di non più rilasciare visti ai passaporti dei Regi Sud-diti per lo Stato Piemontese, e particolarmente ai cosiddetti calderai e viggianesi suonatori ambulanti¹⁴

Le reazioni delle autorità di polizia furono immediate. Il 10 aprile 1851 l'Intendente di Basilicata ricevette la seguente lettera indiriz-zatagli dal Ministero e Real Segreteria di Stato dell'Interno, Ramo Polizia:

Signore, in Piemonte e particolarmente a Torino, trovansi in questo momento più viggianesi per esercitare il mestiere di musicante e si ha notizia che i medesimi abbiano quivi partecipato alle massime rivoluzionarie e pronunciato ateismo. Ad impedire che i suddetti provinciali nel ritorno possano essere propagatori di principi sovversivi, la prego far verificare preventivamente i nomi di quei che trovansi in Piemonte, e vegliare onde si avveri l'arrivo di alcuno di essi in Patria, siano sottoposti a strettissima vigilanza dall'Autorità Locale¹⁵.

Dettate all'Intendente di Basilicata le misure per le prime azioni di controllo, la polizia borbonica decise di intervenire contro i musicanti in maniera ancora più decisa: vietò le nuove partenze negando il passaporto ai richiedenti. In una lettera del 22 aprile dello stesso anno, l'Intendente di Basilicata assicurava il direttore generale del Ministero dell'Interno, ramo di Polizia «*che saranno eseguite le disposizioni di non ispedire per ora*

passaporti per l'estero ai ramieri e suonatori ambulanti»¹⁶.

È nella seconda metà degli anni '60 dell'Ottocento che l'approccio al fenomeno dei musicanti di strada si arricchì di nuove connotazioni. Nel 1868 la Società Italiana di Beneficenza di Parigi realizzò un'inchiesta indirizzata a documentare le condizioni di vita dei bambini italiani presenti a Parigi, mentre in una nota rivista parigina a proposito dell'uso dei bambini si leggeva che:

C'est la Basilicate – scrisse Maxime Du Camp – qui fournit les neuf dixièmes de ces petits malheureux. C'est une sorte de commerce monstrueux dont ceux qui s'en rendent coupables ne comprennent probablement pas l'immoralité; le choses se passent régulièrement et le plus souvent par-devant notaire; c'est la traite des blancs¹⁷.

Anche i consolati e le ambasciate italiane si occuparono dei musicanti lucani, in quanto preoccupati che la loro presenza nelle maggiori capitali del mondo potesse pregiudicare l'onore della Patria. A titolo esemplificativo è utile riportare alcune annotazioni estrapolate da un rapporto del 31 marzo 1862 dal Console Generale d'Italia a Parigi (L. Cerruti) il quale dopo una lunga e dettagliata descrizione della comunità italiana presente a Parigi, a proposito dei musicanti scrisse:

So bene che l'Italia fu sempre la culla della musica e della danza, ma non v'ha perciò ragione per gli italiani di essere fuori della loro patria lo zimbello degli stranieri, suonando e ballando per speculazione sulle pubbliche strade. Ora che l'Italia ha un avvenire brillante a sé davanti, ora che le numerose ferrovie progettate ed in via di costruzione presentano lavoro a migliaia di braccia, sarà facile al Governo di far cessare l'emigrazione vergognosa¹⁸.

Negli ultimi decenni dell'Ottocento il fenomeno dei musicanti lucani fu oggetto di un'inversione semantica e di un totale rovesciamento interpretativo, strettamente legati alle teorie dell'antropologia criminale

¹⁴ A.S.N., M.S.P.G., Gab., Cart. 863, 1851, fasc. 994, part. 1.

¹⁵ A.S.N., M.S.P.G., Gab., Cart. 863, 1851, fasc. 994, part. 1.

¹⁶ A.S.N., M.S.P.G., Gab., Cart. 863, 1851, fasc. 994, part. 1.

¹⁷ M. Du Camp, *La Mendicité à Paris*, in «Revue Des Deux Mondes», 1870, n. 87, p. 197.

¹⁸ L. Cerruti, Cenni statistici sull'industria e sul commercio nel distretto consolare di Parigi, in «Bollettino Consolare», 1861-1862, n. 1, pp. 581-584.

sviluppate in pieno clima positivista da Cesare Lombroso.

Paulucci di Calboli, agente diplomatico italiano in Inghilterra, nel 1893 diede alle stampe il volume *I girovaghi italiani e i suonatori ambulanti*¹⁹ in cui si richiamava, se pur in termini del tutto personali, al quadro teorico proprio dell'antropologia lombrosiana. Secondo Paulucci di Calboli, i musicanti ambulanti non erano nient'altro che dei vagabondi, spinti all'esercizio di tale attività per deficienze congenite. In altre parole, sostenne il di Calboli, musicanti di strada si nasce, soprattutto nelle regioni del Sud Italia e nella Basilicata. Svolte queste premesse, l'autore passò a descrivere le più importanti caratteristiche dei nomadi, in generale, e dei musicanti girovaghi, in particolare, le quali risultarono le seguenti: "la ripugnanza ad un lavoro regolare, l'amore per l'ozio, la mancanza assoluta di previdenza, la negazione completa del concetto di economia, la mancanza del senso morale, l'insensibilità psichica e fisica, il perversimento sessuale, la mancanza del concetto di onore, di generosità, del gusto e dell'estetica, la spiccata propensione al furto, al gioco ed all'alcool". Aspetti piuttosto simili a quelli già individuati da Henry Mayhew nell'imponente *London Labour and the London Poor*²⁰.

Terminata la descrizione delle caratteristiche morali e sociali dei vagabondi, il diplomatico italiano passò agli aspetti fisici, sottoponendo una serie di musicanti lucani ad una particolareggiata indagine antropometrica. Ecco i risultati:

Il più superficiale osservatore non potrebbe non notare in questi errabondi la prevalenza del diametro bizigomatico, il grande sviluppo delle mandibole, la ricchezza di capelli, la lunghezza anormale della braccia ed il torvo sguardo. Vi abbiamo pure trovato con molta frequenza il tatuaggio che, sebbene comune per altre ragioni, a marinai ed a soldati, è pur nonostante un carattere singolare dell'uomo nomade primitivo allo stato di selvatichezza, tale certo da mostrare nella classe che esaminiamo l'influenza dell'ativismo e della tradizio-

ne. Non manca pure di una certa importanza il fatto del foramento delle orecchie, circostanza questa che era stata notata negli zingari (...). Abbiamo rinvenuto infine nei vari individui da noi esaminati un altro segnale già notato dal Parent Duchatelet e dal Lombroso come vero carattere professionale dell'uomo delinquente, quello cioè dei traumi, cicatrici di ferite avute in rissa²¹.

Le teorie dell'antropologia criminale maturate nell'ambito del clima positivista e delle istanze evoluzioniste vennero impiegate quali chiavi di lettura per assimilare i musicanti ad una più ampia categoria di degenerati, geneticamente inferiore.

4. Dalle strade all'orchestra

L'età romantica connotata dall'accettazione e dall'esaltazione del buon musicista di strada venne sostituita, nel quadro di un clima culturale e politico dominato nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento da imperativi politici di controllo dell'ordine pubblico connessi ai processi di urbanizzazione e di industrializzazione, da un lungo periodo di denigrazione e di progressiva marginalizzazione e criminalizzazione del musicista di strada. La cultura occidentale, a lungo nutritasi di figure marginali quali quella dei suonatori girovaghi, intraprese la strada della repressione, la quale fece sì che i musicanti scomparvero dalle piazze e l'emigrazione temporanea si trasformasse in definitiva.

Tale repentino mutamento sopraggiunto tra Ottocento e Novecento non impedì alla vena musicale della Basilicata di mostrarsi secondo altre modalità espressive ed artistiche.

Tra Ottocento e Novecento, infatti, molti figli di musicanti di strada furono avviati alla musica colta attraverso i prestigiosi conservatori San Pietro a Majella di Napoli e Santa Cecilia di Roma. Fu infatti a seguito di un attento processo formativo basato sulla gloriosa tradizione musicale italiana che molti giovani lucani si imposero nelle maggiori orchestre del mondo in qualità di musicisti, docenti, direttori d'orchestra e virtuosi di fama internazionale, come Nicola Alberti, solista in diverse orchestre di Los Angeles, Pasquale Amerena, primo flauto dell'Orchestra Sinfoni-

¹⁹ R. Paulucci di Calboli, *I girovaghi italiani e i suonatori ambulanti*, Città di Castello, Lapi, 1893.

²⁰ H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, New York, Dover, 1968 (ed. or. 1861-1862).

²¹ *Ivi*, p. 10.

ca di Boston e St. Louis, Leonardo De Lorenzo, primo flauto dell'Orchestra Sinfonica di New York, Minneapolis, Rochester, Los Angeles, Giuseppe Messina, primo flauto dell'orchestra Sinfonica di St. Louis, Vincenzo Pizzo, membro dell'Orchestra Sinfonica di New York, Americo Gagliardi, primo flauto dell'Orchestra Melba Opera Company di Melbourne, Angelo Paolo Truda, primo flauto della Exhibition Orchestra ed insegnante alla School of Music di Wellington in Nuova Zelanda, i fratelli Salvi, Miglionico, De Stefano, e tanti altri che ebbero il privilegio di esibirsi nelle orchestre filarmoniche più importanti del mondo²².



Figura 5. De Stefano, arpista-solista di Viggiano. [Immagine cortesia di E. V. Alliegro]²³



Figura 6. Leonardo De Lorenzo, primo flauto dell'Orchestra Sinfonica di New York, Minneapolis, Rochester. [Immagine cortesia di E. V. Alliegro]²⁴

Quasi magicamente, dunque, nella prima metà del Novecento, una vera e propria metamorfosi trasformò rustici campagnoli in abili musicisti. Furono questi, nel porto di Napoli, a farsi ancora sedurre dal canto delle sirene per recarsi ovunque nel mondo fosse possibile vivere di musica.

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²² Cfr. E. V. Alliegro, *L'arpa perduta*, Gian Luca Petrucci, Leonardo De Lorenzo. *Da Viggiano a Los Angeles fra tradizione e avanguardia*, Roma, Pantheon, 1995.

²³ De Stefano, solo harp player from Viggiano. [Image courtesy of E. V. Alliegro]

²⁴ Leonardo De Lorenzo, first flutist in the Symphony Orchestra of New York, Minneapolis, Rochester. [Image courtesy of E. V. Alliegro]

street musicians, vagrants and migrants: the construction of cultural diversity

by enzo v. alliegro

(translated by alexander andrew parise)

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A well-published author both in Italy and abroad, his most recent publications include La Terra del Cristo. Percorsi antropologici nella cultura tradizionale lucana (Potenza, CRB, 2005) and L'arpa Perduta. Dinamiche dell'identità e dell'appartenenza in una comunità di musicanti girovaghi, (Argo, Lecce, 2007) which earned the special prize for historical writing Premio Basilicata 2009. In 2011 Prof. Alliegro's Antropologia Italiana. Storia e Storiografia (1869-1975), (Firenze, SEID, 2011) was awarded the prestigious Costantino Nigra prize for the best Anthropological work published between 2009 and 2011. In 2012 he was awarded the Carlo Levi prize for the book Il Totem Nero. Petrolio, sviluppo e conflitti in Basilicata (Roma, Cisu).

Abstract: The paper starts by reconstructing some significant social practices of the itinerant musicians who came from the Valle dell'Agri in Basilicata. Since the eighteenth century, musicians from this area of Italy's South travelled to Europe's major cities as harpists, violinists and flutists. The paper then analyses the way in which, during the second half of the nineteenth century, negative cultural representations of the itinerant musician arose in Europe. Using an integrated methodology that connects biographical and genealogical research on individuals and families on the one hand, with the intensive method of quantitative analysis on the other, this essay raises some basic questions regarding the processes whereby cultural senses of identity and difference are constructed.

1. “Sonatori di strada”: Street performers of Southern Italy

One of the distinctive elements of Basilicata’s musical heritage is the tradition of itinerant harpists coming from the Valle dell’Agri, in the province of Potenza.

Current research suggests that the musicians from Viggiano,¹ the town which best represents this phenomenon, began their activity in the latter half of the eighteenth century, perhaps even earlier, when the image of the professional wanderer took shape with harpists, flutists and violin players travelling to Naples during the Christmas season.²

A precious glimpse into the musicians’ activities in the eighteenth century is afforded by the figurines of street performers placed within the traditional nativity scenes preserved in the Museo S. Martino in Naples. A brash ‘frontier’ city — a capital hosting embassies from far off places, with its harbours and its ships traversing a vast network of commercial routes well beyond the Mediterranean — Naples established itself as an important point of departure for further voyages.

In order to understand the migration practices of these street performers, it is essential to study the passport registries kept in the *Casa Reale Antica e Ministero degli Esteri* collection in the State Archives in Naples.

Between 1816 and 1818, no fewer than 32 musicians from Viggiano travelled to Naples in order to obtain the necessary visas from the police authorities. Twelve of them were going to Spain, nineteen wanted to go to Rome, and one was headed to Tuscany.

The issue dates of the visas suggest that the musicians did not leave their families at random moments during the year. Even though the number of cases is rather small, we can see that 47 per cent of the departures took place during winter. This is connected to the attraction of the Christmas festivities, which also guaranteed precious income — an essential asset for later travels. Furthermore,

no departures are recorded during the summer, when the musicians needed to already be wherever they had intended to go. The remaining 53 per cent of departures occurred during the spring, the season that most suited the needs of the travellers.

The information from police reports and from the visas stamped in some of the passports suggests that the trips were structured around certain cycles, focusing on absences lasting for more than a year. This fact shows that the musicians’ activities were completely unrelated to the agricultural cycles followed by the local communities. Furthermore, the stamps on the passports of the Viggianese musicians clearly indicate that the authorities acknowledged their activity and routinely issued the proper authorisations to travel abroad — even when the performers were accompanied by children.

Who were the musicians who travelled to Naples, the capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, then under Bourbon rule, in order to complete the necessary bureaucratic requirements? The ledgers dated 1817 show twelve musicians, divided into four groups. On 1 January, Francesco Melfi and the brothers, Raffaele and Francescantonio Parisi, obtained visas for Rome. The same visa was obtained on 16 April by Prospero Gallo, Vincenzo Paoliello and Pasquale Nigro, while on 17 April visas were issued to Vincenzo Marsicano and Vincenzo Melfi. The fourth group requested authorisation to go to Spain and was made up of Nicola Bellizia, his son Vincenzo, Francesco Fiatarone and Pasquale Nigro. The 1818 passport registry shows three groups of musicians coming to Naples to ask for authorisation to travel to Spain. The first group comprised Giuseppe Bellizia and Pasquale Cascia; the second, brothers Pietro and Antonio Laraja; and the third, Pasquale Pennella, Giosue Di Pierri and brothers Antonio and Vincenzo Punaro. All three groups were issued visas on 1 January 1818.

Based on the available data, it is clear that the trips undertaken by these musicians were of a collective nature, and that these groups included individuals coming predominantly — but not exclusively — from the same family or the same branch of one family. Furthermore, the data shows that no entire families ever left together, and that this phenomenon did not directly involve women.

¹ The town is built on a hilltop in the Apennines at an elevation of about 1000 metres on the sea level, in the north-western part of Basilicata. In the early nineteenth century it had about 5000 inhabitants.

² Cf. Enzo V. Alliegro, *L’arpa perduta. Dinamiche dell’identità e dell’appartenenza in una tradizione di musicanti girovaghi*, Argo, Lecce, 2007.

Despite their usefulness in some regards, the passport registries do not allow us to retrace the actual routes used by the musicians. It is also unclear whether the declared destinations were actually reached, and whether they functioned as points of departure for further travel. Other important elements of work organisation and migratory experience also remain shrouded, while we obviously have no data regarding the numbers and migration characteristics of all those musicians who left clandestinely.

It is consequently necessary to rely on other types of sources. In order to outline the manner in which the profession was passed down to the younger generations, it is useful to employ techniques developed in the field of family history research, and rely on information supplied by the civil records. Who is it that becomes a musician?

Family tree No.1 offers an example of how the profession was passed down along an uninterrupted lineage on the father's side, over almost a century and across four generations. Even though this was the most common pattern, there are also interesting cases in which the profession was passed down along the mother's side.

Even though the family tree is incomplete and does not show the professions of all siblings, it is easy enough to see that a kind of 'law of inheritance' is operative along the whole nineteenth century: all firstborn sons

shall follow in their fathers' footsteps. This system of transmission is well documented by the family trees of many other local families of musicians. It may also be of interest in this regard to consider table No.1, which shows the musicians' surnames taken from wedding certificates, and grouped according to the overall number of instances in which each name appears.

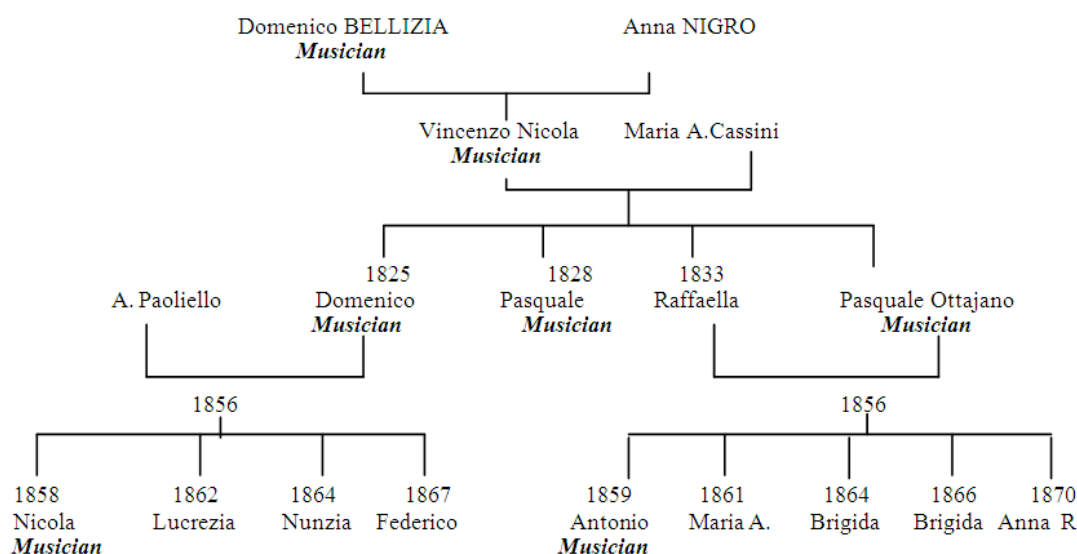
Table No. 1. – Families of musicians from Viggiano: grouping according to repetition of surnames.

	years	a	b	c	d	e	Total
1	1809 - 1835	2	12	8	21	15	58
2	1836 – 1860	7	38	34	23	23	125
3	1861 – 1885	24	80	67	33	44	248
4	1886 – 1910	14	37	31	10	12	104
	Totale	47	167	140	87	94	535

a) Surnames repeated only once; b) Surnames repeated between 2 and 5 times; c) Surnames repeated between 6 and 10 times; d) Surnames repeated between 11 and 15 times; e) Surnames repeated more than 15 times. Source: Viggiano Municipal Archive, Civil Records, Registry of Marriages.

Even though it is not clear from the table if the repetition of names depends upon intra- or inter-generational transmission, it is nonetheless a useful index in highlighting the presence in the Lucanian community of very different kinds of musician families. On the one hand, we have those who we may define as *specialists*, whose surnames are repeated without interruption across the whole cen-

Family Tree No. 1 Passing down of the profession in the Bellizia family



Source: Viggiano Municipal Archive, Civil Records, Registry of Births and Marriages.

tury; on the other hand we have families in which musical activity seems more occasional, appearing only across a few decades. Furthermore, this table illustrates important transformations that occurred during the nineteenth century, such as the appearance of many non-specialist families in the decades following the unification of Italy (1861).

Line 1 shows that out of a total of 58 weddings celebrated between 1809 and 1835, only two musicians' surnames disappeared in the following decades, while 24 (51 percent) of the 47 surnames, which appear only once (column a), appear in the decade following the unification of Italy. In these years, the worsening social and economic conditions forced families of farmers, shepherds, craftsmen and small landowners (including some impoverished notables) to choose musical migration as the solution to individual problems and to family problems of various kinds. This post-unification context saw a kind of intrinsic loss of professional qualification for the musicians who were no longer able to rely on secrets transmitted from father to son. This opened the way to new methods for the recruitment and training of itinerant musicians, essentially based on the trade of children. Accordingly, the apprenticeship system became increasingly based upon the exploitation and mercantile use of children, who were assigned by their parents or guardians to adult musicians through special work-lease contracts. Such traits are shown in many private contracts dating to the 1860s³. [See Fig.2.]

We will come back later to the post-unification period, which acted as a true watershed within the whole Lucanian community and had important consequences on the migration patterns of the families of musicians. But first, I shall outline an overall framework for the entire nineteenth century, which will illustrate the context within which the musicians operated and the transformations of that context.

Table No.2 shows the important changes that occurred in the decades following the unification of Italy: the number of weddings involving musicians doubled with respect to the overall number (column a), going from 10.5 per cent in the 1836-1860 period to 21 per cent in the 1861-1885 period. At the same time, we can see a steady increase of traders (column f), who in the same period went from 1.4 to 5 per cent. During the same years, however, the framework of professional categories appears essentially unchanged. The change in professionals (column e), from 1.1 to 2 per cent, is almost negligible. Furthermore, there is a striking increase in musicians, connected with a decrease in farmers (column b), who fall by over 20 per cent, from 66.5 to 45 per cent. This change depends upon factors such as the crisis of agriculture that followed unification, the extreme fractioning of land into increasingly smallholdings, banditry (*brigantaggio*) and repression. All these factors played an important role in breaking up the rural communities, thereby making musical activity an attractive prospect for farmers,

Table No.2. – Occupation of grooms in Viggiano shown in marriage certificates (1809-1910).

Years	a		b		c		d*		e*		f*		g*		Total	
	a. v.	%	a. v.	%	a. v.	%	a. v.	%	a. v.	%	a. v.	%	a. v.	%	a. v.	%
1809 – 1835	58	5	835	73	134	12	91	8	11	1	5	0.5	7	0.5	1141	100
1836 – 1860	127	10.5	801	66.5	135	11	109	9	14	1.1	15	1.4	2	0.5	1203	100
1861 – 1885	248	21	534	45	146	12	144	12	24	2	53	5	33	3	1182	100
1886 – 1910	104	20	263	48	51	9	63	11	19	3	42	8	8	1	550	100
Total	537	13	2433	60	466	11	407	10	68	2	115	3	50	1	4076	100

* The years between 1900 and 1910 are not included. a) musicians; b) farmers; c) landowners; d) craftsmen; e) professionals (physicians, lawyers, notaries, etc.); f) traders; g) shepherds. Source: A.C.V. (Viggiano Municipal Archive), Civil Records, Registry of Marriages.

³ Cf. J. E. Zucchi, *I piccoli schiavi dell'arpa*, Roma, Marietti, 1999, (ed. or. 1992), E. V. Alliegro, *L'arpa perduta*.

who were also keen to avoid military service. As suggested by Emilio Sereni, perhaps this was a self-conscious decision made by a social group who saw in musical migration the only chance they had to avoid progressive impoverishment.⁴

2. Occupational practices and dynamics of migration

The reconstruction of these musicians' travels is obviously far from complete. There is a lot of obscurity around the itineraries and the people involved, and there is very little information regarding the actual manner in which the musicians worked. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify some important aspects.

First of all, it is quite clear that even though these itinerant musicians were often absent for several years and went far away from their place of origin, their departures were never definitive. Definitive departures started only in the decades following the unification of Italy. The activity of the itinerant musician was not an extemporary or occasional occupation: it was a permanent activity. It was not based on the agricultural cycle: it was not an integrative activity performed during down time in the agricultural calendar. Nor was it based on the life cycle: it was not, say, an activity for youths conducive to marriage or associated with critical phases in married life.

The phenomenon of mobility during the *ancien régime* has sometimes been analysed within a framework that interprets pluria-ctivity as a practice used during critical phases in the development of a household, and during the so-called down time of the agricultural cycle to help correct the relationship between producers and consumers. With regard to this concept, reference has often been made to conservative strategies and so-called economies of absence. However, the data provided show another situation – one in which activity as a street musician was not a mere occasional practice that one resorted to in order to address difficulties arising during critical moments in life. That of the migrant musician was, in the eyes of the protagonists and of their communities, a lifetime's occupation (though there were of course some excep-

tions, determined by social mobility or decisions of various kinds). Moreover, access to this occupation was through systems of transmission and selection based on a specific form of apprenticeship which applied to children often younger than 10 years of age.

The musicians' group travels, the duration of which was not fixed, followed one of three models. The first was itinerant travels within the boundaries of the Italian peninsula, sometimes with stops in neighbouring countries such as Switzerland. The second was itinerant travels through European and Mediterranean countries such as France, Spain, or Egypt. In this case, the itineraries seem to have followed the major capital cities like Madrid, Paris, or Alexandria in Egypt – these cities, which were, with respect to more peripheral areas, privileged destinations in the period under consideration, became exclusive destinations in the decades after the unification of Italy. The third model was transoceanic itinerant travel, undertaken especially towards South America, the United States and Australia, aboard ocean liners departing from Naples, Genoa and Marseille. The musicians' movements, in this last case, followed the main routes of international commerce.

A quantitative analysis of the census carried out by the Municipality of Viggiano in 1881 is helpful to understand the numeric aspects of the phenomenon.⁵ Such an analysis also yields a relatively detailed, fact based cross-section of the migration of roving musicians from Southern Italy, of the relevant family structures and of the musicians' deep connections with their communities.

Table No.3. – Destinations of musicians, 1881.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Tot.
Total	10	94	17	4	29	4	4	149	31	342

1) Africa (Algeria, Egypt); 2) South America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Perù, Uruguay, Paraguay); 3) Australia; 4) Canada; 5) Europe (France, England, Portugal, Greece); 6) India (Bombay); 7) Middle East (Constantinople); 8) United States (New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia, etc.); 9) Foreign Countries (not specified).

Out of a total of 1364 families, 337 (about 25 per cent) show at least one family member involved with the musical profession. Furthermore, out of a total population of 6030 indi-

⁴ E. Sereni, *Il capitalismo nelle campagne (1860-1900)*, Turin, Einaudi, 1965, p. 158.

⁵ Viggiano (Potenza) Municipal Archive, Census, 1881.

viduals, 497 (8.2 per cent) were musicians. Within this group, 176 (35.4 per cent) were married, while the remaining 317 (63 per cent) were single. Furthermore, the census data allows us to sketch a provisional map of the directions of migration.

It appears quite clearly that the musicians went beyond Europe towards areas that had never been reached previously, showing a clear preference for the United States and South America.

3. Cultural identity and otherness. The myth and vilification of street musicians

The previous paragraphs paint a picture of the musicians' activities and of their cultural and social position within the relevant communities in Southern Italy. But what did the musicians think about themselves and their profession? How did they represent themselves? And how were they perceived and represented from the outside?

In 1841, the De Blasiis brothers, musicians from Viggiano, petitioned the King in order to obtain their passport with these words:

With tearful eyes, on our knees before the Royal Throne, we submit our plea... and we implore the leniency of Your Majesty to grant us the favour of providing for our sustenance abroad by exercising our occupation as roving musicians, as we, in this Kingdom, are hard pressed to get from one day to the next, since we are good for nothing and our families, supported only by this occupation, need to go begging in order to survive... Your Majesty, before the prohibition, we, the supplicants, had formed certain companies, where we employed as hired workers many carefully selected youths, and to deny them a passport would be tantamount to making them even more miserable⁶.

'We are workers, we are poor and we have no alternative' — this is what the musicians seem to want to say about themselves in this letter and in other similar ones. It is necessary to be cautious in interpreting this kind of document, since its self-deprecatory tone is clearly functional in obtaining a favour from the recipient.

Having said that, it is important to note that the language used is typical of a context of traditional craftsmen's workshops: the terms used include *compagnie* (companies, troupes), *salariati* (hired workers) and *giusto scrutinio* (careful selection). All this tells us that the musicians believed that theirs was essentially a business and an entrepreneurial activity. The judgment formulated previously, when street musicians were thought of as authentic representatives of popular poetry and art, was not very different.

One of the first documentations of musical practice in Viggiano dates from 1797. In that year Lorenzo Giustiniani wrote:

The people from Viggiano are mostly harp players and a few of them would be very skilled in this instrument if they were educated in the musical sciences and if they could use proper and well-made instruments.⁷

In the early nineteenth century, the musicians became the object of a renewed attention and an unusual interest. The phenomenon of street music was incorporated in the romantic narratives and studies on popular art and life. Within this overarching orientation, there was a sincere and passionate celebration of all those aspects that lent themselves to be interpreted as testimonies of the authenticity of popular culture.

In 1838, in the preface to his collection of poems called *I Canti del Viggianese* [Songs from Viggiano], Pier Paolo Parzanese wrote:

Viggiano is a large village in the Province of Basilicata, and the people from Viggiano are naturally disposed towards music. As children they learn how to play the harp and the violin, and then, as they grow up, they happily leave the village and go roving around the World, playing and singing until, after having put together some money, they return home to enjoy the peace and quiet of the family. Now, since I have a strong desire that our poetry should renew itself and, might I add, should reacquire its innocence with native and traditional images and harmonies, I did not let one person from Viggiano pass without asking him to sing his hundred songs so

⁶ A.S.N., M.S.P.G., Gab., Cart. 863, 1851, fasc. 994, part. 5.

⁷ L. Giustiniani, *Dizionario geografico-ragionato del Regno di Napoli*, Naples, V. Manfredi e G. De Bonis, 1797-1805, Vol. X, p. 61.

that from one person I took a ballad, from another a romance, a concept, a refrain; and having mixed it all up in my mind, as God willed it, I imbued my songs with the greatest beauty I was able to collect from these roving troubadours of our time.⁸

If we flick through the pages of the *Poliorama Pittoresco*, a magazine printed in Naples, we can find these musicians presented under the most favourable of lights. In 1848, Giuseppe Regaldi published there an article titled *I Viggianesi*, which Francesco De Boucard included, together with a drawing by Palizzi (fig. No.1), in the volume *Usi e costumi di Napoli e contorni (Customs and traditions of Naples and its environs)*.⁹

Indeed, the melodic Viggiano warrants the acknowledgement of national poetry, as its waters, its trees, its stones must be full of harmony: a secret music must caress the crib of those simple people, and weep in the sanctuary of their graves.¹⁰

[See Figs. 3 and 4.] In the years around 1850, the phenomenon of the musicians from Viggiano came to the attention of the authorities in a different way.

The circumstances changed, in part, due to the new political situation that came into being after the revolutionary movements of 1848. A letter dated April 1851, sent from Turin by a Bourbon informant to the Ministry of Police in Naples, states:

Very kind Sir, ever since this sad and wretched country has become the abode of the most roguish of people in Italy, where atheism is professed, where English propaganda is winning people over to Protestantism and where, to put it in one word, there is no other aim than to demoralize the classes, I would suggest that our Consuls and Diplomatic Agents abroad be ordered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Naples to discontinue issuing visas and passports to the Royal Subjects intending to go to Piedmont, and more specifically to the

so-called tinkers [*calderai*] and roving musicians from Viggiano¹¹.

The police authorities were quick to react. On 10 April 1851, the Intendant of Basilicata received the following letter from the Minister and Royal State Secretary of Domestic Affairs, Police Branch:

Sir, in Piedmont and specifically in Turin, there are currently many people from Viggiano who are working as street musicians, and we have news that they took part in the revolutionary activities and that they professed atheism. In order to stop these provincials, upon their return, from spreading subversive principles, I beg you to check the names of those who are in Piedmont, and to take care that, in case any one of them should come back to the Homeland, the Local Authorities be instructed to keep them under the strictest of vigilance.¹²

After the Intendant of Basilicata issued orders for the first control operations, the police decided to take even more decisive action against the musicians: it forbade all departures by denying passports to those who requested them. In a letter dated 22 April of the same year, the Intendant of Basilicata reassured the General Director of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, Police Branch 'that all dispositions shall be put into place in order to prevent for the time being any passports for foreign nations being issued to tinkers (*ramieri*) and roving musicians'.¹³

During the second half of the 1860s, the approach to the issue of street musicians took on new connotations. In 1868, the Società Italiana di Beneficenza di Parigi (Italian Society for Charity of Paris) carried out a survey on the living conditions of the Italian children living in Paris. At the same time, Maxime Du Camp, writing in the pages of a well-known Parisian magazine, addressed the issue of the use of children as follows:

It is the Basilicata region that supplies nine tenths of these small unfortunates. It is a sort of monstrous commerce, the immorality of which is probably not understood by those who engage in it; these things are done on a regular basis

⁸ P. P. Parzanese, *I Canti del Viggianese*, Moliterno (Potenza), Porfidio, 1984, p. 7, (original edition 1838).

⁹ F. De Boucard, *Usi e costumi di Napoli e contorni descritti e dipinti*, vol. 2, Naples, Tip. G. Nobile, 1857-1866.

¹⁰ G. Regaldi, 'I Viggianesi', in F. De Boucard, *Usi e costumi di Napoli e contorni*, Milan, Longanesi, 1977, p. 190 (original edition 1857).

¹¹ A.S.N., M.S.P.G., Gab., Cart. 863, 1851, fasc. 994, part. 1.

¹² A.S.N., M.S.P.G., Gab., Cart. 863, 1851, fasc. 994, part.1.

¹³ A.S.N., M.S.P.G., Gab., Cart. 863, 1851, fasc. 994, part.1.

and are often ratified before a notary; it is the white slave trade.¹⁴

Even the Italian consulates and embassies took an interest in the musicians from Lucania, since they were worried that their presence in the major capitals in the world might compromise the honour of the Homeland. To give an illustration of this, it might be useful to consider a few annotations taken from a report drafted by the Italian Consul General in Paris, L. Cerruti on 31 March 1862. After a long and detailed description of the Italian community in Paris, the Consul wrote:

I know well that Italy has always been the cradle of music and dance, but this is no reason for Italians who are abroad to be the laughing stock of foreigners, playing and dancing for money on public roads. Now that Italy has a brilliant future ahead of her, now that the numerous railroads which have been designed and are under construction offer work to thousands of hands, it will be simple enough for the Government to put a hold on this shameful migration¹⁵.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the phenomenon of the musicians from Lucania underwent a complete reversal in meaning and interpretation, closely linked to the new theories of criminal anthropology developed by Cesare Lombroso in the spirit of a full blown positivism.

In 1893, Paolucci di Calboli, an Italian diplomatic agent in England, published the volume *I girovaghi italiani e i suonatori ambulanti* [Italian vagrants and roving musicians],¹⁶ which referred, albeit in an idiosyncratic way, to the anthropological framework developed by Lombroso. According to Paulucci di Calboli, itinerant musicians were nothing more than vagrants, compelled by congenital deficiencies to that kind of occupation. In other words, di Calboli stated that people are born as street musicians, especially in Southern Italy and in Basilicata! After this premise, the author begins to describe in the following terms the

most important traits of nomadic people in general, and of roving musicians in particular:

an aversion to a regular job, a love for idleness, an absolute lack of foresight, a complete ignorance of any concept of economy, a lack of morality, psychic and physical insensitivity, sexual perversion, a lack of any concept of honour, generosity, good taste and aesthetics, a strong proneness to thieving, gambling and drinking.

These aspects are remarkably similar to those previously identified by Henry Mayhew in his hefty book *London Labour and the London Poor*.¹⁷

After describing the moral and social traits of the vagrants, the Italian diplomat lists their physical features, giving a detailed anthropometric analysis of a number of Lucanian musicians. Here are the results:

Even the most superficial observer is hard pressed not to notice that these rovers feature an increased bi-zygomatic diameter, an enlarged jaw bone, a full head of hair, an abnormal length of the arms and a sinister gaze. We also often find tattoos, which, even though common enough for other reasons with sailors and soldiers, are nonetheless a characteristic which is particular to the primitive nomadic human in a savage state; this is certain to prove in this class that we are examining the influence of atavism and tradition. Another important aspect is the piercing of the ears, a circumstance which had already been noticed in gypsies... The individuals which we examined also show another sign which had already been noticed by Parent Duchatelet and Lombroso as a true feature of the criminal – namely scars and wounds caused by brawls and fights¹⁸.

The theories of criminal anthropology, developed within a cultural climate conditioned by positivism and evolutionary theory, were used as an interpretative key to construe the musicians as a part of a larger category of genetically inferior degenerates.

¹⁴ M. Du Camp, 'La Mendicité à Paris', in *Revue Des Deux Mondes*, 1870, n. 87, p. 197.

¹⁵ L. Cerruti, 'Cenni statistici sull'industria e sul commercio nel distretto consolare di Parigi', in *Bollettino Consolare*, 1861-1862, No. 1, pp. 581-584.

¹⁶ R. Paulucci di Calboli, *I girovaghi italiani e i suonatori ambulanti*, Città di Castello, Lapi, 1893.

¹⁷ H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, New York, Dover, 1968 (original edition 1861-1862).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 10.

4. From the streets to the orchestras

The romantic age saw the celebration of the good street musician. In the second half of the nineteenth century, this celebration was replaced by a long period of vilification, progressive marginalisation and criminalisation of street musicians. This cultural shift was determined by the political imperative to keep public order under control within the social contexts determined by the momentous processes of urban development and industrialization then under way. Western culture, which had been for a long time accepting of marginal figures such as the roving musicians, embarked on the road of repression. As a result, the musicians disappeared from the squares, and what had begun as a temporary migration became permanent. This sudden change, which occurred between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, did not prevent Basilicata's musicians from expressing their talent under different expressive and artistic guises.

Indeed, in this period, many children of street musicians were steered towards high brow music through the prestigious conservatories of San Pietro a Majella in Naples and Santa Cecilia in Rome. A rigorous education grounded in the glorious Italian musical tradition enabled many talented youths from Lucania to emerge in the major orchestras of

the world as musicians, teachers, conductors and internationally acclaimed virtuosos. Among them was Nicola Alberti, soloist in several orchestras in Los Angeles; Pasquale Amerena, first flutist of the Boston and St. Louis Symphony Orchestras; Leonardo De Lorenzo, first flutist of the New York, Minneapolis, Rochester and Los Angeles Symphony Orchestras; Giuseppe Messina, first flutist of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra; Vincenzo Pizzo, member of the New York Symphony Orchestra; Americo Gagliardi, first flutist of the Melba Opera Company Orchestra in Melbourne; Angelo Paolo Truda, first flutist of the Exhibition Orchestra and teacher at the School of Music of Wellington, New Zealand; the Salvi, Miglionico and De Stefano brothers, and many others who were privileged to perform in the most important philharmonic orchestras of the world.¹⁹ [See Figs. 5 and 6.]

In this way, almost magically, during the first half of the twentieth century these simple rustics metamorphosed into skilled musicians. These were the people who, in the port of Naples, were still seduced by the sirens' voice beckoning them to go wherever it was possible to make a living with music.

Translated by Alexander Andrew Parise

¹⁹ Cf. E. V. Alliegro, *L'arpa perduta*, Gian Luca Petrucci, Leonardo De Lorenzo. *Da Viggiano a Los Angeles fra tradizione e avanguardia*, Rome, Pantheon, 1995.



Figure 1. From left: Vince Pascale, Francesco Leone, Luigi Leone, Antonio Leone, and Francescantonio Viggiano. [Image courtesy Bette Leone]

chains and links: the story of a family of travelling musicians from lucania

by bette leone

Bette Leone, a descendant on the paternal side of musicians from the village of Marsicovetere in Basilicata, was born in Carlton, Melbourne's historical Italian district. Educated at St Brigid's School in North Fitzroy and Santa Maria College in Northcote, Bette worked as a public servant for five years before marrying Italian born Dominic in 1968. Bette now has three children and two grandchildren. Bette spent many years researching her family history and helping other Australian Italians with their research. She collaborated with the Co.As.It. Italian Historical Society on the exhibitions Australia's Italians 1788-1988 and Bridging Two Worlds: Jews and Italians in Carlton. Over the past 20 years, Bette has frequently been a guest speaker at Family History Groups and Genealogical Societies throughout Victoria on the subject of the Italian presence in Australia – particularly Victoria – before 1900. She is the author of two books: How to trace your Italian Ancestors – for Australians and New Zealanders (Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1994) and The Excellent Adventures of Max and Madison. Bed time stories for toddlers (Balboa Press, USA, 2012).

The buzz of conversation from those standing on the dock increased in volume as the steam ship was secured at her berth. Passengers milled about on the deck impatient to disembark, scanning the waiting crowd, hoping for a glimpse of loved ones. She was not just a passenger ship, she also carried the Royal Mail from England – this included crates of goods, parcels and English newspapers as well as the longed-for personal mail. A lifeline connecting the old world with the new.

A group of men stood apart from the others: shorter and darker than the mostly Anglo people nearby, they spoke quietly amongst themselves in a foreign language. They too, scanned the railings looking for their relatives, their compatriots, their fellow Italians.

The gangplank now secured in place, people rushed forwards, calling out greetings, crying, embracing loved ones, bringing to an end long periods of separation. Labourers begin to unload the cargo as passengers grab their baggage and snake their way along the pathway to the private carriages and public transport that wait to take them into the city.

The Italians are waiting patiently when finally three men and four young boys appear and make their way down the narrow gangway to the dock. Their progress is slow, due to their efforts to balance their personal baggage as well as their awkwardly shaped musical instruments. Except for the one at the back – the youngest, who at ten years of age is still too small for a harp, and easily manages his meagre belongings and violin.

As the musicians reach the dock, the swarthy men rush forward and immediately all belongings are put down as brothers, uncles, fathers and cousins embrace. A brawny stevedore stacking crates nearby is shocked to see men embracing and kissing each other in broad daylight. His disapproval goes unnoticed by these men who are celebrating their reunion in their own exuberant way. All professional musicians, the new arrivals had left their home village three years ago and were based in Cape Town, South Africa with other compatriots, before boarding ship for the next country on their calendar.

Back at the boarding house in the city, the women had risen early to put the final touches on the welcoming feast. Yesterday, provisions had been pooled and together they worked to prepare traditional dishes. Well, as best as they

could manage with the ingredients available in this foreign city.

The youngsters have been drafted to decorate the table and young Rosina asks why zia Caterina is crying. Maria takes her daughter in her arms and explains that auntie is not crying, she is just peeling onions. Rosina sees tears in the eyes of all of the women in the kitchen, surely they have not all been peeling onions...

Back at the dock, one member of the welcoming party checks his pocket watch and notes that the morning is passing. He knows that his young wife is waiting anxiously for the first sight of her brothers in over three years. The thought of a tongue-lashing from his impatient wife urges him into action. He interrupts the back-slapping and raucous laughter, bids farewell to the rest of the group, shepherds his three brothers-in-law towards a waiting carriage, packs their belongings inside and off they go.

It is November 1894 in the port of Melbourne, Australia, but it could have been any one of a dozen different cities in the world. Marseilles in France; Boston, New York or Michigan in the United States; Montreal in Canada; Rio De Janeiro in Brazil; Wellington, Gisborne or Christchurch in New Zealand; Sydney or Brisbane in Australia. The men were forming welcoming groups at docks and railway stations, while homesick women and girls were 'peeling onions' back at crowded boarding houses and tenements. These men and boys were from the southern Italian region of Lucania – also known as Basilicata – where the men had for decades travelled to foreign countries in order to support their families.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the able-bodied men of rural Italy, accompanied by boys as young as seven, would travel away from home searching for work all over Italy and Europe. Some even travelled as far away as Argentina to harvest the crops each year, or to the United States to build railways and bridges. The musicians followed this pattern of life, playing music to earn their pay, all of them taking their harps and violins with them as they sailed across the oceans. The male groups were usually from the same village and were related to each other by blood or marriage.

Most of the musicians came from a relatively small geographical area in Italy situated south of Naples, in the province of Potenza in the region of Basilicata. In ancient Roman times the town of

Grumentum was built in the area, and a noble Roman family built their villa near the present day village of Viggiano. This village was, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the centre for the manufacture of musical instruments, mainly harps and violins. Teachers also offered musical tuition for men and boys from Viggiano, as well as many small villages and hamlets in the vicinity such as Marsicovetere and Grumento Nova (formerly Saponara di Grumento).

The region is rich in ancient sites, and is of great interest to historians and archaeologists. In 212BC, Tiberius Gracchus Major, a great Roman soldier, died in the village of Vertina, the site of the present day village of Marsicovetere. Tiberius was married to Cornelia, the daughter of the famed Roman general Scipio Africanus. He was noted for his defeat of Hannibal in the second Punic War, which was in part fought in Southern Italy. Tiberius and Cornelia were the parents of Gaius and Tiberius Gracchus, known collectively as the Gracchi. These brothers, both tribunes of the plebeians at different times, attempted to introduce social reform through the Roman Senate in the second century before the Christian era. This idea of political reform was unpopular with the ruling upper classes who vigorously opposed any change that would reduce their power and wealth. Ultimately, both men came to unfortunate ends at the hands of their opponents.

The area is dominated by steep mountains and valleys, with only eight per cent of the land being flat. Once vast forests covered these mountains, there were few roads and villages were very isolated, so the region stayed relatively untouched by the outside world. Over the centuries, the forests were cut down, causing erosion, and gradually the area became dry and barren. As a result, there was not sufficient fertile land to support the growing population. This area is also prone to severe earthquakes. On 16 December 1857, a massive earthquake caused widespread death and devastation to an already poverty-stricken area. In Marsicovetere alone, many dwellings were completely destroyed, others were severely damaged, one hundred people were killed and scores were left with serious injuries.

Historically, the southern areas of Italy have been economically depressed and neglected by the successive governments, so the communities had to struggle on as best they could with little aid. Rebuilding after the earthquake in 1857

progressed slowly, malaria was rife, and the land could not support the growing population. By the early 1880s, the musicians had begun to look further away – to the USA, South America and Australia – to provide a better quality of life for their loved ones, and some of the men decided to leave for good and make a new life elsewhere. Men from the province of Potenza began arriving in Melbourne from the early 1880s bringing their wives and young children with them. The Boffa, Del Monaco, Cinquegrana, La Battaglia, Vita, Briglia, Barrile, Di Giglio, Pascale, Di Milita, La Gruta, Leone, Viggiano, Curcio, Cerbasi, Barca, and Arcaro families – to name just a few.



Figure 2. *The Di Giglio family in Melbourne, Victoria, c. 1893. Pictured are Michelangelo Di Giglio and his wife Angela (nee Pascale), both at left, their two daughters Maria Caterina and Maria Lucrezia, Michelangelo's brother Roccantonio Di Giglio (Rocco) and their mother Lucrezia Di Giglio. The two brothers were musicians from Marsicovetere, Basilicata, and founded the Di Gilio band in Melbourne in the late nineteenth century.*

The gentleman who greeted his brothers-in-law in November 1894 was Antonio Leone, who was born in Marsicovetere and raised in the nearby town of Marsiconuovo. As a young man he had fallen in love with Maria Battista Pascale, the daughter of a local landowner. Antonio was not considered a suitable match as he was from a poor family and had few prospects. But Antonio was determined to win the hand of his beloved. He was a harpist, so he joined an orchestral group and was engaged to play several seasons in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil.

While in Rio he witnessed the beginning of the career of a legend. In 1886, while the touring company was presenting the opera *Aida*, the local conductor was considered inadequate for the task of conducting this opera. The performers were not happy with his conducting and one

evening the audience actually booed the man from the stage. Finally, the cast went on strike, insisting upon a replacement conductor. They banded together and demanded that management promote the assistant chorus master – a nineteen year old named Arturo Toscanini. Arturo conducted the performance with no musical score and was a resounding success. Toscanini went on to conduct the entire season and from this humble beginning went on to become one of the world's most famous conductors.

The musicians were well paid and Antonio returned to Marsicovetere the following year with a substantial amount of money – enough to prove that he could support his lovely young fiancée. Her parents gave their blessing and the young couple were married in June 1889 in the village church. The decision was made to join their fellow villagers in Melbourne, Australia, so eighteen months later Antonio took his wife and baby son on a voyage, which they hoped would lead to a new and prosperous life.



Figure 3. *The Leone family in Carlton, Victoria, 1912. Pictured are Francescantonio (Antonio) Leone, his wife Battista and their children [from left]: Esther Battista, Maria Rosa (Rosina), Luigi (Leo), Francesco Domenico (Frank) and Ada Nicoletta. Inscribed on verso: 'Gentilissimo Compare Giuseppe Briglia. A. Leone.' The family migrated to Victoria, arriving in April 1891. The male members of the family earned their living as musicians: Leo on flute, Frank and Antonio on violin and clarinet.*

While Italian musicians lived in Sydney and Brisbane in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the vast majority settled in inner Melbourne. Rocco and Michelangelo Di Giglio, Pasquale Melfi and Signor Di Milita acted as booking agents for the groups, placing advertisements in the newspapers and periodicals of the time. They also arranged lodgings and musical engagements for the new arrivals. The entry in the Melbourne Post Office Directory of 1891 for the Di Giglio

Brothers Band states that they were available for weddings, parties, concerts and gentlemen's smoking nights.



Figure 4. *The Di Giglio band in Victoria, c. 1920. Among the pictured are Antonio Leone, Giuseppe Cinquegrana, the Labattaglia brothers and Roccantonio Di Giglio. The band's registered address was 62 Lygon Street, Carlton. Most of the musicians were from Potenza in the region of Basilicata.*

The musicians and their families settled together in tiny houses in the streets and laneways off the Lonsdale and Exhibition Street areas on the city's edge. By the late 1890s, some had purchased their own homes and had begun to move across Victoria Street into Carlton with their growing families. Before long they had re-established old patterns of behaviour, leaving their families in Melbourne and travelling on a circuit around the states of Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania and even sailing to New Zealand and returning home again.

At first it was difficult to support a family and find permanent work in this foreign land. Men busked in the streets, played in small bands or joined together to form larger orchestras for more formal occasions. Some of the musicians were also blacksmiths, tailors or ice cream makers and played in bands to supplement their income. In the time before sound recordings and talking movies, musicians were in great demand for all types of social events.

Even the children contributed. Police reports from Williamstown, Port Melbourne and Russell Street stations in late 1888, show that Italian children were repeatedly apprehended and returned home to their parents for begging in the streets. Girls as young as eight were dancing while the boys accompanied them on their harps.

As the years went by, the Australian born sons and daughters of the musicians were taught to play various instruments and joined

their fathers and uncles as professional musicians. By the early 1900s, they were playing at the Princess and Her Majesty's Theatres as well as many other smaller theatres, which no longer exist. Many were members of JC Williamson's Orchestra. Musicians also played in movie theatres such as the Carlton Movie House, providing the musical score for the silent movies.

Antonio Leone's children were accomplished musicians, each one playing several instruments. His son Louie's speciality was the flute, and he accompanied Dame Nellie Melba on several occasions. She was so pleased with his performances that she presented him with a flute as a gift.



Figure 5. *The accomplished musicians of the Leone family in Victoria, c. 1910. Pictured are Luigi [left], with his father Francescantonio, and brother Francesco Domenico Leone.*

By the 1920s, the Leones and other musical families were living in Carlton and were doing well financially. Antonio owned several properties and the family was enjoying a good quality of life. Antonio and Maria Battista had three young grandsons by now and Antonio knew that these boys would not be deprived of their childhood by the need to travel overseas to help support their families. Then the gramophone made its appearance, movies started to come with their own soundtracks, and the life of the professional musician became less secure. There was work for those who held positions in symphony orchestras and concert groups, but musi-

cians were not needed in the great numbers that had been required in the past. Those with another profession – the tailors, ice cream makers and shopkeepers – had an income stream to support themselves, but for the vast majority of musicians there was very little hope of financial security for them or their children. The families began to move away from Carlton, mostly to the Elwood, Elsternwick and St Kilda areas. By the 1950s there were very few of these families still living in Carlton.

Some of the early musicians remained in New Zealand and settled there. Giuseppe and Vincenzo Vitetta lived in Wellington in the 1890s – they were street musicians playing the harp, flute and violin. They made their living providing musical background for silent movies and entertained on a regular basis at the Royal Oak and Empress Hotels. Later they were joined by their widowed mother and their younger brother Giovanni. He joined his brothers entertaining while their mother operated a dairy. The family was from Saponara di Grumento.

Among those who applied for naturalisation living in Wellington, Christchurch and Gisborne in the late 1890s and early 1900s were the entire Vitetta family as well as Giuseppe Pisani, Domenico Rubino, Antonio and Domenico Di Rago and Gennaro Marsicano – all musicians from Viggiano.



Figure 6. *Michelangelo Pascale, c. 1900.¹*

¹ See Newsletter of the Italian Historical Society, vol. 1, no. 2, February 1990

After arriving on the Orizaba in November 1894, Michelangelo Pascale stayed in Melbourne for a time; he then returned to Italy where he married and started a family. He returned to Melbourne aboard the Oruba in 1908 with his wife and daughter and finally settled in Brisbane for several years. But life in Australia did not suit them, so the young family, including an Australian born daughter, returned home to Marsicovetere. His grandson, also named Michelangelo, lives in the family home today with his wife and children. Standing in pride of place in the formal sitting room is the harp which Michelangelo carried with him throughout his travels.



Figure 7. Alessandro Pascale at age nineteen in the United States, 1903. Written on the back: 'Ha ricevuto questo ritratto da Alessandro la 1 Maggio 1900 dalla città chiamata Detroit Michigan United States. Melbourne Maggio 1900 Antonio Leone'. Alessandro left Marsicovetere at age seven with his older brother Michelangelo. His parents never left. [Image courtesy Bette Leone]

Alessandro Pascale was nineteen years of age when he hurried down the gangplank of the Orizaba in 1894, eager to see his sister Maria Battista and his new baby cousins Francesco and Luigi. Travelling with his uncles and cousins, Alessandro had first left home at the age of seven to sail to Cape Town South Africa, where they performed as the Pascale Family Band. He performed in Australia for several years then Alessandro moved on to the USA. His instrument of expertise was the harp.

The American census of June 1900 shows Alessandro living in a boarding house in Detroit with his wife of just one week, Maria Donatelli.

He travelled around the country for several years; in 1910, Alessandro and his family were living in Canada where they finally settled. Alessandro performed in an orchestra, which toured Canada for six months. As part of this orchestra he played the background music for the 1915 silent movie *The Birth of a Nation*, directed by D W Griffith. Alessandro's harp was passed down through the family and was always kept in a darkened room. Unfortunately, the harp was stolen from a family home during a robbery and was never recovered.

The Pascale Family Band included another brother, (Raffaello) Vincenzo, who was ten years of age when he arrived on the Orizaba with his older brothers. He sometimes travelled with Giuseppe Viggiano, who was the husband of his sister Raffaella. They visited Australia many times over the years, but both men kept their roots firmly planted in Marsicovetere. Vincenzo remained single until he retired to the village and married later in life. His descendants live in the village today, and one is living in Argentina with her husband and family.



Figure 8. Giuseppe Viggiano and Francescantonio, one of his six children, taken in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1898. Giuseppe played the violin and harp and had his own music school in Marsicovetere. He came to Melbourne on five occasions to play with the Tivoli Theatre. Giuseppe went back to Italy to be with his wife and four daughters. His three sons, also musicians, remained in Melbourne and they also played on the Tivoli circuit.

Giuseppe Viggiano's wife Raffaella Pascale and their daughters remained in the village as Giuseppe and his older sons travelled. Only the

youngest boy, Michelangelo remained at home. He later told family members that the men were all away looking for work and the only people in the village were women, children and old men. His duty was to protect the women and he was the official ringer of the church bell that was rung to warn of danger – such as fire. Giuseppe Viggiano retired to the village but his three sons Giuseppe, Francescantonio and Michelangelo eventually all settled in Melbourne.

The quality of life in the village was vastly improved by the departure of the musicians and their families. Overcrowding was eased and money arrived on a regular basis from relatives overseas. Sharing their good fortune and supporting their extended families was important to the musicians. Rocco Di Giglio donated funds for the construction of a fountain set in a garden, for use of all the villagers. He and his brother Michelangelo also arranged a sea passage for their widowed mother Lucrezia to come to join them in Melbourne. The Vitetta brothers in New Zealand also sent for their widowed mother Rosa and younger brother to join them. By the early 1900s Antonio Leone's mother, Maria Rosa, was ageing and living alone in Marsiconuovo. His wife's family took her in and she spent her final years in comfort with the Pascale family.



Figure 9. Marsicovetere, 1996. The fountain and garden donated by Rocco Di Giglio; in the foreground, Diana Di Giglio-Herbst. [Image courtesy Bette Leone]

The descendants of the Pascale brothers and sisters are these days spread over three continents. Since the passing of the original migrants, personal contact had been lost. Descendants had only photographs and old letters to help them trace their ancestry back to the family village. One great grand-daughter of Maria Battista in Melbourne began to trace the ancestry in the

1980s, and eventually found her way to the door of the family home in Marsicovetere. Hugs, kisses on both cheeks and silent tears were shed as second and third cousins forged a new link in the family chain.

A little later, a grandson of Alessandro from Canada would also establish contact with Michelangelo Pascale and visit the home village. Soon afterwards, Peter Pascale in Canada found Bette Leone in Australia. The cousins amalgamated their family databases and exchanged old and more recent photographs. The final links had been forged, the family is together once more and communications these days flow via the magic of the internet.



Figure 10. A letter dated 19 January 1911, sent from Giuseppe Viggiano and Raffaella Pascale in Marsicovetere, to their son Francescantonio, in Cape Town, South Africa. [Image courtesy Bette Leone]

This story of the Pascale, Leone and Viggiano families is only a small example of the chain migration of the musicians from the Potenza province in the nineteenth century. Many families travelled through France, the United States and New Zealand on their journey to Australia. Occasionally someone would choose to stay in one of these places, while others continued on to their final destination in Melbourne. Each family story is unique and clearly demonstrates the determination and strength of character of these humble villagers. By taking the enormous step of beginning a new life in a foreign country, these men and women ensured a future full of opportunities for their descendants which could not have been available had they remained in their country of birth.

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