Part 2 – THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

The golden age of Neapolitan song is generally considered to have begun, as mentioned above, in 1880, when, to promote the funicular railway that carried passengers up Mount Vesuvius, “Giuseppe «Peppino» Turco” and “Luigi Denza” presented the song “Funiculì funiculà” at the Piedigrotta Festival.
Neapolitan song often becomes poetry, as in the case of “Salvatore Di Giacomo”, one of the greatest Italian poets of the 20th century, best known precisely for his songs. “Benito Mussolini”, in a rare moment of clarity, wanted to appoint him senator for life, but his henchmen blocked the proposal, shouting: «”Mergellina” must not enter Parliament». The song “Era de maggio” alone would suffice: more than a century later, “Lucio Dalla” described it as «better than any Beatles song». And then there is “Sergio Bruni”, perhaps the last great guardian of classical Neapolitan song, but also one of its most refined innovators. A voice capable of turning every song into poetry, and a songwriter who, together with “Salvatore Palomba”, gave Naples masterpieces such as “Carmela”, proving that this great tradition was not merely a legacy to be preserved, but a story still waiting to be written. There are, however, far too many authors, poets, composers and performers whose stories deserve to be told. We will therefore simply recall that it was in Naples that song took on a form destined to conquer the world. And that, over the centuries, the whole world has sung and reinterpreted what we now know as the great classics of the Neapolitan tradition. From Frank Sinatra to Pope Wojtyła, from Elvis Presley to Lady Gaga, and even Pearl Jam: artists and public figures from every era, background and musical genre have engaged with this extraordinary heritage. The list is virtually endless, demonstrating how Neapolitan song has crossed every geographical, linguistic and cultural boundary to become a universal language.

5 Funiculì Funiculà
6 Era De Maggio
7 ‘E Spingule Frangese
8 ‘O Sole mio
9 ‘O Surdato 'nnammurato
10 Guapparia

FUNICULÌ FUNICULÀ (Composer Luigi Denza, Author Giuseppe Turco)

NEAPOLITAN

Aissera, Nanninè, mme ne sagliette,
Tu saje addò? Tu saje addò?
Addò 'sto core 'ngrato cchiù dispiette
Farme nun pò, farme nun pò.
Addò lo ffuoco coce, ma si fuje,
Te lassa stà, te lassa stà.
E nun te corre appriesso e nun te struje
Sulo a guardà, sulo a guardà.
Jammo, jammo,
'Ncoppa jammo, jà!
Jammo, jammo,
'Ncoppa jammo, jà!
Funiculì, funiculà,
Funiculì, funiculà!
'Ncoppa jammo, jà,
Funiculì, funiculà!
Nèh, jammo! Da la terra a la montagna,
'No passo nc'è, 'no passo nc'è.
Se vede Francia, Proceta, la Spagna
E io veco a te, e io veco a te!
Tirate co li ffune, 'nditto 'nfatto,
'Ncielo se va, 'ncielo se va.
Se va comm'a lo viento e, a ll'intrasatto,
Guè, saglie sà, guè, saglie sà!
Jammo, jammo,
'Ncoppa jammo, jà!
Jammo, jammo,
'Ncoppa jammo, jà!
Funiculì, funiculà,
Funiculì, funiculà!
'Ncoppa jammo, jà,
Funiculì, funiculà!
Se n'è sagliuta, oje nè, se n'è sagliuta
La capa già, la capa già.
È ghiuta, po' è tornata, po' è venuta,
Sta sempe ccà, sta sempe ccà.
La capa vota, vota attuorno,
Attuorno a te, attuorno a te.
Lo core canta sempe 'no taluorno:
Sposammo, oje nè, sposammo, oje nè!
Jammo, jammo,
'Ncoppa jammo, jà!
Jammo, jammo,
'Ncoppa jammo, jà!
Funiculì, funiculà,
Funiculì, funiculà!
'Ncoppa jammo, jà,
Funiculì, funiculà!

ENGLISH

Last night, Annina, I went up,
Do you know where? Do you know where?
Where this ungrateful heart can no longer
Torment me, torment me.
Where the fire burns, but if you run away,
It leaves you alone, leaves you alone.
And it does not chase or destroy you
Just for looking at it, just for looking at it.
Come on, come on,
Come on, let's go up there!
Come on, come on,
Come on, let's go up there!
“Funiculì, Funiculà”
“Funiculì, Funiculà!”
Come on, let's go up there,
“Funiculì, Funiculà!”
Come on! From the earth to the mountain,
It is just one step, just one step.
You can see France, Procida, Spain,
And I see you, and I see you!
Pulled along by the cables, in a moment,
You reach the sky, reach the sky.
You travel like the wind and, suddenly,
Oh, you rise, oh, you rise!
Come on, come on,
Come on, let's go up there!
Come on, come on,
Come on, let's go up there!
“Funiculì, Funiculà”
“Funiculì, Funiculà!”
Come on, let's go up there,
“Funiculì, Funiculà!”
It has gone up, my dear, it has gone up,
My head already, my head already.
It went away, then returned, then came back,
It is still here, it is still here.
My head spins round and round,
Around you, around you.
My heart keeps singing a lament:
Let us marry, my dear, let us marry!
Come on, come on,
Come on, let's go up there!
Come on, come on,
Come on, let's go up there!
“Funiculì, Funiculà”
“Funiculì, Funiculà!”
Come on, let's go up there,
“Funiculì, Funiculà!”

ERA DE MAGGIO (Composer Pasquale Mario Costa, Author Salvatore Di Giacomo)

NEAPOLITAN

Era de maggio e te cadeano 'nzino,
A schiocche a schiocche, li ccerase rosse.
Fresca era ll'aria e tutto lu ciardino
Addurava de rrose a ciento passe.
Era de maggio; io, no, nun mme ne scordo,
'Na canzona cantavamo a ddoje vvoce!
Cchiù tiempo passa e cchiù mme n'allicordo
Fresca era ll'aria e la canzona doce.
E diceva: "Core, core!
Core mio, luntano vaje!
Tu me lasse, io conto ll'ore.
Chi sà quanno turnarraje!"
Rispunnev'io: "Turnarraggio
Quanno tornano li rrose.
Si 'stu sciore torna a maggio,
Pur' a maggio io stongo ccà!
Si 'stu sciore torna a maggio,
Pur' a maggio io stongo ccà!"
E sò turnato e mò, comm'a 'na vota,
Cantammo 'nzieme la canzona antica.
Passa lu tiempo e lu munno s'avota,
Ma 'ammore vero, no, nun vota viche!
De te, bellezza mia, mm'annammuraje,
Si t'allicuorde, 'nnanz'a la funtana.
Ll'acqua, llà dinto, nun se secca maje
E ferita d'ammore nun se sana!
Nun se sana, ca sanata
Si se fosse, gioja mia,
'Mmiez'a 'st'aria 'mbarzamata,
A guardarte io nun starria!
E te dico: "Core, core!
Core mio, turnato io sò!
Torna maggio e torna 'ammore.
Fa' de me chello che vuò!
Torna maggio e torna a me.
Fa' de me chello che vuò!"

ENGLISH

It was May, and red cherries fell onto your breast,
In clusters, in clusters.
The air was fresh and the whole garden
Smelled of roses from a hundred paces away.
It was May; no, I have not forgotten
A song we used to sing together!
The more time passes, the more I remember,
The air was fresh and the song was sweet.
And it said: Heart, heart!
My heart, you are going far away!
You leave me, and I count the hours.
Who knows when you will return!
I answered: " I will return,
When the roses return.
If this flower returns in May,
Then in May I too shall be here!
If this flower returns in May,
Then in May I too shall be here.
And I returned and now, like once before,
We sing together the ancient song.
Time passes and the world changes,
But true love, no, does not change alleys!
With you, my beauty, I fell in love,
If you remember, in front of the fountain.
The water, in there, never dries up,
And a love wound does not heal!
It does not heal, because if healed
It were, my joy,
In this embalmed air,
Looking at you I would not stay!
And I tell you: " Heart, oh heart!
My heart, I have returned!
May returns, and love returns.
Do with me whatever you wish!
May returns, and you return to me.
Do with me whatever you wish!

‘E SPINGOLE FRANGESE (Composer Enrico De Leva, Author Salvatore Di Giacomo)

NEAPOLITAN

'Nu juorno mme ne jette da la casa,
Jenno vennenno spingole frangese.
'Nu juorno mme ne jette da la casa,
Jenno vennenno spingole frangese.
Me chiamma 'na figliola: "Trase, trase!
Quanta spingole daje pe' 'nu turnese?"
Me chiamma 'na figliola: "Trase, trase!
Quanta spingole daje pe' 'nu turnese?"
E io, che songo 'nu poco veziuso,
Subbeto mme 'mmuccaje dint'a 'sta casa.
"Ah, chi vò belli spingole frangese?
Ah, chi vò spingole, chi vò? (2 x)
Dich'io: "Si tu me daje tre o quatto vase, Te dongo tutt' 'e spingole frangese".
Dich'io: "Si tu me daje tre o quatto vase, Te dongo tutt' 'e spingole frangese".
Pizzeche e vase nun fanno purtose
E ne può ghienchere 'e spingole 'o paese.
Pizzeche e vase nun fanno purtose
E ne può ghienchere 'e spingole 'o paese.
Sentite a mme ca, pure 'mParaviso,
'E vase vanno a cinche 'nu turnese!
Ah, chi vò belli spingole frangese?Ah, chi vò spingole, chi vò? 2x

Dicette: "Core mio, chist'è 'o paese, Ca, si te prore 'o naso, muore acciso!"
Dicette: "Core mio, chist'è 'o paese, Ca, si te prore 'o naso, muore acciso!"
E i' rispunnette: "Agge pacienza, scusa! 'A tengo 'a 'nnammurata e sta ô paese".
E i' rispunnette: "Agge pacienza, scusa! 'A tengo 'a 'nnammurata e sta ô paese".
E tene 'a faccia comm' ê ffronne 'e rosa,
E tene 'a vocca comm'a 'na cerasa.
Ah, chi vò belli spingole frangese?Ah, chi vò spingole, chi vò?2x

***”TORNESE” – ANTICA MONETA NAPOLETANA**

ENGLISH

One day I left home,
I went to sell safety pins.
One day I left home,
I went to sell safety pins.
A girl calls me: Come in, come in!
How many pins will you give me for a “***tornese****”?"
Mi chiama una ragazza: Entra, entra!
Quante spille mi dai per un “***tornese****”?*
And I, being a little mischievous,
Immediately slipped inside that house.
Ah, who wants beautiful safety pins?
Ah, who wants beautiful pins, who wants some? (2x)
I say: If you give me three or four kisses, I'll give you all the safety pins.
I say: If you give me three or four kisses, I'll give you all the safety pins.
Pinches and kisses do no harm,
And you can fill the whole town with pins.
Pinches and kisses do no harm,
And you can fill the whole town with pins.
Listen to me, even in Heaven
Kisses cost five for a “tornese”!*
Ah, who wants beautiful safety pins? Ah, who wants beautiful pins, who wants some? 2x
She said: My handsome fellow, in this town, if your nose itches, you might be killed!
She said: My handsome fellow, in this town, if your nose itches, you might be killed!
And I replied: Be patient, forgive me! My sweetheart lives in this town.
And I replied: Be patient, forgive me! My sweetheart lives in this town.
Her face is like rose petals,
And her mouth is like a cherry.
Ah, who wants beautiful safety pins? Ah, who wants beautiful pins, who wants some? 2x

***”TORNESE” – ANCIENT NEAPOLITAN COIN**

‘O SOLE MIO (Composer Eduardo Di Capua, Author Giovanni Capurro)

NEAPOLITAN

Che bella cosa è 'na jurnata 'e sole,
'N'aria serena doppo 'na tempesta!
Pe' ll'aria fresca pare già 'na festa.
Che bella cosa è 'na jurnata 'e sole!
Ma 'n'atu sole
Cchiù bello, oje nè,
'O sole mio
Sta 'nfronte a te!
'O sole, 'o sole mio
Sta 'nfronte a te,
Sta 'nfronte a te!
Luceno 'e llastre d' 'a fenesta toja,
'Na lavannara canta e se ne vanta
E pe' tramente torce, spanne e canta,
Luceno 'e llastre d' 'a fenesta toja.
Ma 'n'atu sole
Cchiù bello, oje nè,
'O sole mio
Sta 'nfronte a te!
'O sole, 'o sole mio
Sta 'nfronte a te,
Sta 'nfronte a te!
Quanno fa notte e 'o sole se ne scenne,
Me vene quase 'na malincunia;
Sott' â fenesta toja restarria
Quanno fa notte e 'o sole se ne scenne.
Ma 'n'atu sole
Cchiù bello, oje nè,
'O sole mio
Sta 'nfronte a te!
'O sole, 'o sole mio
Sta 'nfronte a te,
Sta 'nfronte a te!

ENGLISH

What a beautiful thing a sunny day is,
Clear skies after a storm!
The fresh air makes it feel like a celebration.
What a beautiful thing a sunny day is!
But another sun,
More beautiful, my dear,
My own sun
Shines upon your face!
The sun, my own sun
Shines upon your face,
Shines upon your face!
Your windowpanes are gleaming,
A washerwoman sings and proudly rejoices,
And as she wrings, hangs out clothes and sings,
Your windowpanes are gleaming.
But another sun,
More beautiful, my dear,
My own sun
Shines upon your face!
The sun, my own sun
Shines upon your face,
Shines upon your face!
When night falls and the sun goes down,
A kind of melancholy comes over me;
I would stay beneath your window
When night falls and the sun goes down.
But another sun,
More beautiful, my dear,
My own sun
Shines upon your face!
The sun, my own sun
Shines upon your face,
Shines upon your face!

‘O SURDATO ‘NNAMMURATO (Composer Enrico Cannio, Author Aniello Califano)

NEAPOLITAN

Staje luntana da 'stu core,
A te volo cu 'o penziero,
Niente voglio e niente spero
Ca tenerte sempe a fianco a mme!
Sì sicura 'e chist'ammore
Comm'i' sò sicuro 'e te?
Oje vita, oje vita mia!
Oje core 'e chistu core!
Sì stata 'o primmo ammore
E 'o primmo e ll'urdemo sarraje pe' mme!
Quanta nnotte nun te veco,
Nun te sento 'int'a 'sti bbracce,
Nun te vaso chesta faccia,
Nun t'astregno forte 'mbraccio a mme!
Ma, scetannome a 'sti suonne,
Me faje chiagnere pe' tte.
Oje vita, oje vita mia!
Oje core 'e chistu core!
Sì stata 'o primmo ammore
E 'o primmo e ll'urdemo sarraje pe' mme!
Scrive sempe e sta' cuntenta:
Io nun penzo che a te sola!
'Nu penziero me cunzola
Ca tu pienze sulamente a mme!
'A cchiù bella 'e tutt' 'e bbelle
Nun è maje cchiù bella 'e te!
Oje vita, oje vita mia!
Oje core 'e chistu core!
Sì stata 'o primmo ammore
E 'o primmo e ll'urdemo sarraje pe' mme!

ENGLISH

You are far away from my heart,
My thoughts fly to you,
I want nothing and hope for nothing
But to keep you always by my side!
Are you as sure of this love
As I am sure of you?
Oh life, oh my life!
Oh heart of my heart!
You were my first love
And you will be my first and last!
So many nights without seeing you,
Without holding you in my arms,
Without kissing your face,
Without embracing you tightly!
But when I wake from these dreams,
You make me weep for you.
Oh life, oh my life!
Oh heart of my heart!
You were my first love
And you will be my first and last!
Keep writing and be happy:
I think of you alone!
One thought consoles me:
That you think only of me!
The loveliest of all beauties
Could never be lovelier than you!
Oh life, oh my life!
Oh heart of my heart!
You were my first love
And you will be my first and last!

GUAPPARIA (Composer Rodolfo Falvo, Author Libero Bovio)

NEAPOLITAN

Scetateve, guagliune 'e malavita,
Ca è 'ntussecosa assaje 'sta serenata!
Io song' 'o 'nnammurato 'e Margarita
Ch'è 'a femmena cchiù bella d' 'a 'Nfrascata.
Ll'aggio purtato 'o capo cuncertino
P' 'o sfizio 'e me fà sentere 'e cantà.
Mm'aggio bevuto 'nu bicchiere 'e vino
Pecché stanotte 'a voglio 'ntussecà.
Scetateve, guagliune 'e malavita!
È accumparuta 'a luna a ll'intrasatto
Pe' lle dà 'o sfizio 'e me vedè distrutto.
Pe' chello che 'sta femmena m'ha fatto,
Vurria c' 'a luna se vestesse 'e lutto.
Quanno se ne venette â parta mia,
Ero 'o cchiù guappo 'e vascio â Sanità.
Mò, c'aggio perzo tutt' 'a guapparia,
Cacciatemmenne 'a dint' â suggità!
Scetateve, guagliune 'e malavita!
Sunate, giuvinò, vuttate 'e mmane!
Nun v'abbelite, ca stò buono 'e voce!
I' mme fido 'e cantà fino a dimane
E metto 'ncroce a chi m'ha miso 'ncroce.
Pecché nun va cchiù a tiempo 'o mandulino?
Pecché 'a chitarra nun se fa sentì?
Ma comme? Chiagne tutt' 'o cuncertino,
Addò c'avess' 'a chiagnere sul'i'.
Chiagnono 'sti guagliune 'e malavita

***"Infrascata" – Vecchio nome che il popolo dava a Via Salvator Rosa**
****"Sanità" – Quartiere popolare del centro di Napoli**

ENGLISH

Wake up, you tough young fellows,
For this serenade is full of bitterness!
I am in love with Margherita,
The loveliest woman in the "Infrascata"*.
I brought the bandleader here
Just for the pleasure of having her hear me sing.
I drank a glass of wine
Because tonight I want to provoke her.
Wake up, you tough young fellows!
The moon suddenly appeared
To enjoy the sight of my ruin.
For what this woman has done to me,
I wish the moon would dress in mourning.
When she came close to me,
I was the toughest fellow in the "Sanità"**
Now that I have lost all my swagger,
Throw me out of your company!
Wake up, you tough young fellows!
Play, young men, hurry up!
Do not lose heart, for I have a fine voice!
I can keep singing until tomorrow
And torment the one who tormented me.
Why is the mandolin out of time?
Why can the guitar no longer be heard?
What is this? The whole little band is weeping,
When I should be the only one crying.
These tough young fellows are weeping.

***"Infrascata" – Former popular name for Via Salvator Rosa**
****"Sanità" – Working-class neighbourhood in central Naples**