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Financing Culture and Theatre. Remigio Paone between Economics and Politics (1899-1977)

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Make no mistake about it: the Theatre is organisation, it is industry, it is managerial know-how, and commercial astuteness.

Mario Ferrigni, *Cronache teatrali* 1930, Milan-Rome, 1932, p. 176

1. Introduction

The history of culture is a flourishing, well established field of historical research. As concerns in particular the “organisers” of the complex machinery that lies behind any performance, in recent

ABBREVIATIONS: Archivio Centrale dello Stato: ACS, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione generale di pubblica sicurezza: MI, Dgps, fondo Casellario politico centrale: Cpc, fondo Divisione polizia politica, fascicoli personali. 1927-1944: Dpp; Archivio di Stato di Latina: ASL, fondo Remigio Paone: RP; Archivio Storico della Banca d'Italia: ASBI, Vigilanza sulle Aziende di credito: Vigilanza, Pratiche: P; Archivio Storico della Camera di Commercio di Milano: ASCCM, Registro delle Ditte: indicato solo il no.; Archivio Storico Intesa Sanpaolo: ASIS, Banca Commerciale Italiana: BCI, fondo Segreteria degli Amministratori Delegati Facconi e Mattioli: AD2, fondo Corrispondenza di Raffaele Mattioli: CM, fondo Carte di Emilio Brusa: CB; Archivio Ufficio Stampa del Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino: AUSTMMF, ritaglio di giornale: r., ritagli di vari giornali datati: rv.g.; fascicolo-i: fasc., fasc.; busta: b.; cartella: cart.; colonna: col.; Decreto del Capo del Governo: D.C. Gov.; Decreto Legge: D.L.; Decreto Legislativo: D.Lgs.; Decreto Legislativo Luogotenenziale: D.Lgs. Lgt.; Legge: L.; Regio Decreto-Legge: R.D.L.; Regio Decreto Legislativo: R.D.Lgs.

decades attention has been focussed on the *impresario*¹ as distinct from the *capocomico* (leader of a theatre company) or the agent, all figures linked to the commercial/entrepreneurial side of the theatre, united in reality by contacts and overlapping, as in the relationships between public and private.²

Within the context of cultural industries and cultural economics, the activity of the *impresario* – “one who, while not directly engaged in artistic activity, organises theatrical productions at his own expense and financial risk”³ – has been compared to that of the entrepreneur,⁴ but these studies on the whole tend to neglect the political/institutional and economic aspects, which instead are important factors; while on the one hand the *impresario* makes or influences artistic decisions, on the other he incurs expenses and faces contingencies. This does not mean that he has not benefited over the years from contributions from both central and peripheral government agencies. These were granted in alternating stages from the 17th through the 19th century, codified by the Fascist regime which, for political reasons, became an *Impresario-State*, and then extended when Italy became a republic, regulating production as a whole.

Starting from these premises, we will trace the career of Remigio Paone (Formia, 1899-Milan, 1977), to determine the factors responsible for his success, but also his failures, nearly always due to financial problems, in an activity that combines a “flair for the theatre” with a great variety of encounters, relationships and professional ex-

¹ E. Pozzi, *I maghi dello spettacolo. Gli impresari italiani dal 1930 ad oggi*, Milan, 1990; F. Ferrari, *Intorno al palcoscenico. Storie e cronache dell'organizzazione teatrale*, Milan, 2012.

² M. Procino Santarelli, *Eduardo dietro le quinte. Un capocomico-impresario attraverso cinquant'anni di storia, censura e sovvenzioni (1920-1970)*, Rome, 2003, p. 181.

³ “*Impresario*”, in *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, founded by S. D'Amico, Rome, 1959, vol. VI, col. 516.

⁴ The reader is referred to D. Manetti, “Remigio Paone, ‘impresario’ and entrepreneur, in F. Amatori (ed.), *Archives of Italian Economic and Business History*, II, Milan, 2018, pp. 89-121. Starting from the work of R.E. Caves, *Creative industries. Contacts Between Art and Commerce*, Cambridge, MA, 2000; R. Swedberg, “The Cultural Entrepreneur and the Creative Industries: Beginning in Vienna”, in *Journal of Cultural Economics*, no. 4, 2006, pp. 243-261, has analysed, in addition to the fundamental contribution of Joseph Schumpeter, those of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Georg Simmel to an understanding of the creative industries and cultural entrepreneurship.

periences. His personal trajectory was interwoven at crucial stages with the political-institutional life of the country – from the liberal State to the Fascist regime, to the Republic, in the hard years immediately after World War II and then the economic miracle and finally the social turmoil of 1968 and the '70s – extending beyond the stage to gain a place, not solely cultural, in twentieth-century Italy.

2. The Early Years - Political Faith and Love of the Theatre

Born and raised in an upper-middle-class family (his father was a physician), after graduation from the Institute of Economic and Commercial Sciences in Rome in 1922 and a first journalistic job with the *Rassegna della Previdenza Sociale*, Paone worked as parliamentary reporter for *Il Mondo*, the political newspaper founded by Giovanni Amendola. When the paper was shut down by the Fascists in 1926, he went on to work with Senator Luigi Della Torre, one of the most influential Milanese socialists, a banker engaged in numerous economic activities. It was probably Della Torre who found Paone a job with the Banca Zaccaria Pisa di Milano, of which Della Torre was co-owner and procurator general.

On June 26, 1924, Paone married Italia Libera Beneduce, the daughter of Alberto Beneduce, *grand commis* of the State and future founder of IRI.

Along with his interest in politics, since his university days Paone had loved the theatre, contacting Anton Giulio Bragaglia, whose “house of art”, anti-bourgeois and open to innovation, had impressed even Piero Gobetti. Along with Galeazzo Ciano, he participated in the *Sciacalli*, a group of young people who aimed to promote modern and experimental theatre⁵ as opposed to the conventional commercial repertory.⁶ From this context there

⁵ L. Trezzini, “Il Teatro sperimentale degli ‘Indipendenti’”, in *Sipario*, no. 142, Feb. 1958, pp. 5-7; A.C. Alberti, *Il teatro nel fascismo. Pirandello e Bragaglia*, Rome, 1974.

⁶ The formula that indicates this type of theatre, prevailing from the turn of the century to World War II, is the one specified by S. Tofano, *Il teatro all'antica italiana*, Milan, 1965.

emerged Bragaglia's Teatro degli Indipendenti and the work of Pirandello, who in the second half of the '20s was also *capocomico* of his own Teatro d'Arte.⁷ In fact, starting from the late 19th century, but especially during these years, the theatre passed from a "pre-industrial" stage to a more complex, "industrial" type of organisation.⁸ Paone participated as an actor and in 1929 became organising director of the Sem Benelli company, solving its financial problems. This experience led to his decision to devote himself entirely to the theatre. In the next year, in collaboration with Bragaglia, he made his debut in theatrical production with the first Italian production of Brecht's *Three-penny Opera* under the title *La veglia dei lestofanti*, which was also performed at Riccardo Gualino's Teatro di Torino.

3. From Theatrical Organisation to Labour Unions: UNAD to UNAT

In the 1930s the Italian theatrical industry entered a critical stage of difficulty in marketing live entertainment.

In 1934 Paone, aiming to "moralise" the sector of employment in theatrical companies, founded and directed UNAD (national union of the dramatic arts), an organisation that was "like a highly sensitive seismograph", operating according to the same principles all over Italy, with the aim of self-regulating competition by ensuring lower costs for the companies and more equal distribution of performances.⁹ In October 1934 there were 241 associated companies, and 361 the following year. UNAD provided 1,404 contracts, win-

⁷ A. d'Amico, A. Tinterri, *Pirandello capocomico. La Compagnia del Teatro d'Arte di Roma. 1925-1928*, Palermo, 1987; Luigi Pirandello *teatrante e capocomico*, Catania, 1990.

⁸ E. Scarpellini, *Organizzazione teatrale e politica del teatro nell'Italia fascista*, Milan, 2004, p. 13; D. Thompson, "The Organisation, Fascistisation and Management of Theatre in Italy, 1925-1943", in G. Berghaus (ed.), *Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945*, New York-Oxford, 1996, pp. 94-112.

⁹ R. Paone, *L'U.N.A.T. nel suo primo anno di vita. Relazione svolta all'Assemblea del 30 settembre 1935*, Milan, undated, pp. 24-26.

ning Paone the compliments of Ciano, Minister for the Press and Propaganda. In 1935, UNAD became UNAT (national union of theatrical art). Founded under the aegis of the Federazione Nazionale Fascista degli Industriali dello Spettacolo (FNFIS), UNAT was an inter-company association among exhibitors and *capocomici*, responsible for extending the organisation of the circuits to opera, symphonic concerts, operetta, revues and curtain-raisers (variety shows).

Shortly thereafter the government suppressed private mediation – the function of the agent – and assigned UNAT the exclusive right to stipulate contracts, sanctioned by three corporative regulations.¹⁰ As stated by Nicola De Pirro – Director of the Entertainment Federation and Theatrical Inspector of the Ministry of Press and Propaganda – the rebirth of the theatre within the framework of the regime’s initiatives took place “on the social and technical terrain”,¹¹ going on to involve artistic questions, as part of the initiatives taken by the regime to promote a theatre capable of involving the masses.¹²

Curtain-raisers generated an annual turnover of 40 million lire (about the same as opera and theatre combined) but impromptu *capocomici* had reduced this genre to a field ruled by ignorance, sharp practices and the scourge of private mediation, which became “blackmail on work”, with the agent usually demanding 10% or more, and the manager of the premises taking even larger cuts. In collaboration with the Federazione dello Spettacolo (entertainment federation), Paone acted to relaunch this sector. Within a year’s time,

¹⁰ D.C. Gov. 28 January 1936, no. 121, *Norme per il regolamento collettivo dei rapporti economici tra esercenti di teatro e capocomici di compagnie di prosa*, art. 15, and no. 122, *Norme per il regolamento collettivo dei rapporti economici tra esercenti di cinema-teatri e capocomici di compagnie di avanspettacolo*, art. 14; D.C. Gov. 14 February 1938, no. 152, *Norme corporative per il regolamento collettivo dei rapporti economici tra esercenti di teatro e capocomici di compagnie di operette, riviste ed arte varia*, single art.; R. Paone, *Il teatro italiano nell’anno delle sanzioni. Relazione all’Assemblea generale dell’U.N.A.T. del 30 settembre 1936*, Milan, undated (1936?), pp. 16, 29-32.

¹¹ In G. Pedullà, *Il teatro italiano nel tempo del fascismo*, Bologna, 1994, p. 153 ff.

¹² S. D’Amico, *Il teatro non deve morire*, Rome, 1945, p. 157 ff.; M. Verdone, “Mussolini’s ‘Theatre of the Masses’”, in G. Berghaus G. (ed.), *Fascism and Theatre*, cit., pp. 133-139; E. Gentile, “The Theatre of Politics in Fascist Italy”, *ivi*, pp. 71-93; E. Scarpellini, *Organizzazione teatrale e politica del teatro nell’Italia fascista*, cit., p. 239 ff.

175 companies were involved and 1,791 contracts had been stipulated,¹³ while only companies fully complying with the regulations on employment would be granted subsidies¹⁴. In 1935-36 the number of contracts rose to 4,155 for a value of 19,168,415 lire, making possible the total "UNAT-isation" of the variety show, and in 1937, 1,283 contracts were stipulated for theatrical companies. While all of this confirmed the new role of public bureaus and labour unions in the theatrical market by comparison with the liberal State, it inevitably meant the exercise of political control over the companies.

Paone led UNAT to provide increasingly ample services, with a budget rising from the original 33,000 lire to 900,000 in 1938, when he left the agency.¹⁵ In managing all the commercial dealings of the companies in Italy, he operated in virtually monopolistic conditions and his offices became the centre of the theatrical world. This brought him to work in close contact not only with De Pirro but also with Eitel Monaco, a member of the Consiglio della Corporazione dello Spettacolo, and then Director of the FNFIS.¹⁶

4. Direct Entry into the Market

In 1938 Toro Assicurazioni, owner of a building in Milan where a theatre was under construction, offered Paone the job of managing the Teatro Nuovo, which was to remain until his death "his reason for living" and "his true home."¹⁷ His meeting with the publisher

¹³ R. Paone, *L'U.N.A.T. nel suo primo anno di vita*, cit., pp. 30-33.

¹⁴ R.D.L. 16 June 1938, no. 1547, *Concessione di sovvenzioni in favore di stagioni liriche e concertistiche, compagnie drammatiche, di operette e di riviste*, converted into Law of 18 January 1939, no. 423, art. 14.

¹⁵ R. Paone, *Il teatro italiano nell'anno delle sanzioni*, cit., pp. 27, 42; Confederazione Fascista degli Industriali - Federazione Nazionale Fascista degli Industriali dello Spettacolo, *Le industrie dello spettacolo nell'anno 1937. Relazione sull'attività della Federazione presentata al Consiglio nella seduta del 14 giugno 1938*, Rome, 1938, pp. 82, 84.

¹⁶ On the Corporazione dello Spettacolo, cf. D. Thompson, *The Organisation, Fascistisation and Management of Theatre in Italy, 1925-1943*, cit., pp. 104-106; E. Scarpellini, *Organizzazione teatrale e politica del teatro nell'Italia fascista*, cit., pp. 133-159.

¹⁷ ASCCM, no. 266607, *Costituzione di società anonima (SAGIT)*, p. 4; P. E. P. [PAOLO EMILIO POESIO], "È morto Remigio Paone", in *La Nazione*, 8 Jan. 1977, p. 3.

Angelo Rizzoli, who provided the capital (around 1,200,000 lire), and for a short time his partnership, allowed Paone to devote himself to serving as exhibitor and *capocomico*.¹⁸ That same year he founded the Società Anonima “Spettacoli Errepi” in Milan, with a capital of 150,000 lire and himself as sole director.¹⁹

The Teatro Nuovo was inaugurated on October 19, 1938. To manage it, in April SAGIT – Società Anonima Gestione Italiana Teatri (Italian Theatre Management Company) – was created, followed by GET – Gestione Esercizio Teatri (Theatre Operation Management). In addition to Paone, the founding partners were his brother Mario (a lawyer) and Rizzoli and his son Andrea.²⁰ In 1942 Errepi (pronounced “RP” in Italian) became Spettacoli “Errepi-Essezeta”²¹ (SZ standing for Suvini Zerboni Teatri, a joint-stock company with a capital of 700,000 lire, headed by Michele Suvini).²² This was a significant operation; Suvini-Zerboni, a real centre of cultural and commercial power, was a company that had been in operation since the 19th century with entrepreneurs who had dominated the theatrical life of Milan and central and northern Italy, with good relations with the Corporazione dello Spettacolo.²³ Paone saw that he could not compete with it, and, by involving it directly in Errepi, managed to transform Suvini from powerful rival into partner.

¹⁸ “Il teatro come ‘roulette’”, in *Corriere della Sera*, 8 Jan. 1977, p. 11.

¹⁹ ASCCM, no. 272503, Costituzione di società anonima, pp. 2, 3; ASIS, BCI, AD2, cart. 2, fasc. 11, no. 4/a/all 1.

²⁰ ASCCM, no. 266607, fasc. Sagit; ASIS, BCI, CM, cart. 225, fasc. Paone, no. 9.

²¹ ASCCM, no. 272503, Denuncia di modifica, Verbale dell’Assemblea gen. Straor. del 20 January 1942 e Statuto.

²² ASCCM, no. 57990; Archivi Storici dell’Unione Europea, fondo Piero Malvestiti, dossier 318, *I problemi attuali dello spettacolo*, relazione di Michele Suvini, September 1955; ASCCM, no. 272503, Costituzione di società anonima, p. 3 and ASCCM, no. 266607, SAGIT, Verbale di Assemblea generale ordinaria, 31 December 1955.

²³ E. Scarpellini, *Organizzazione teatrale e politica del teatro nell’Italia fascista*, cit., pp. 15, 16, 175-188; D. Thompson, *The Organisation, Fascistisation and Management of Theatre in Italy, 1925-1943*, cit., p. 106.

5. From Fascism to the Liberation

The foundation of UNAT; the reorganisation of the national theatrical scene (begun by Mussolini in 1935 with regulations perfecting the system of financial aid);²⁴ the establishment of bureaus and authorities to administer the sector with ever more clearly defined relationships between public action and the initiative of private individuals; and the fact that the *Corporazione del Teatro* had been the first of the State's new political/economic regulatory agencies, all reveal Fascism's interest in the theatre²⁵ and the close-knit web of politics, culture and consensus. They also show how heavily conditioned the theatrical operators were²⁶ and how they had to make concessions to the government, which aimed at centralised administration of the sector, at control exerted by the Ministry for Popular Culture, or *Minculpop*, and at a broad audience, to educate the masses and manipulate public opinion.²⁷ Paone, formerly an activist in the Italian Socialist Party, remained anti-Fascist but enjoyed the esteem and friendship of Ciano and Italo Balbo, who considered him "a subversive with clean hands."

Paone's relationship with the regime was rather ambiguous. On the one hand, he "continued to maintain regular political behaviour" and "at least apparently [...] a deferential attitude",²⁸ operating in

²⁴ R.D.L. 3 February, 1936, no. 720, *Norme per disciplinare la concessione di sovvenzioni per la gestione di stagioni liriche, di compagnie drammatiche, ecc., in esecuzione dell'art. 4 del Regio D.L. 1° aprile 1935, no. 327*; R.D.L. 16 June 1938, no. 1547, *Concessione di sovvenzioni in favore di stagioni liriche e concertistiche, compagnie drammatiche, di operette e di riviste*.

²⁵ For a description of the Italian theatre under Fascism, cf. S. D'Amico, *Il teatro non deve morire*, cit.; F. Doglio, *Il teatro pubblico in Italia*, Rome, 1969, pp. 92-119 and, for the assistance provided by the regime, E. Scarpellini, *Organizzazione teatrale e politica del teatro nell'Italia fascista*, cit., pp. 146-150, 200-205; J. Franklin, "The Emergence of Government Supported Resident Theatres in Italy", in *Educational Theatre Journal*, no. 3, 1977, pp. 385-394, in part. p. 387.

²⁶ E. Scarpellini, *Organizzazione teatrale e politica del teatro nell'Italia fascista*, cit., p. 199.

²⁷ N. De Pirro, *Il teatro per il popolo*, Rome, 1938, p. 16; P. Cavallo, *Immaginario e rappresentazione. Il teatro fascista di propaganda*, Rome, 1990; M. Verdone, "Mussolini's 'Theatre of the Masses'", cit.; E. Gentile, "The Theatre of Politics in Fascist Italy", cit.

²⁸ ACS, MI, Dgps, Cpc, b. 3716, *ad nomen*.

harmony with the key figures of the theatrical institutions, who encouraged him with a contribution of 400,000 lire and other occasional subsidies.²⁹ However, his political principles were well known. Because of these principles, and of his powerful father-in-law, attacked by the “integral” Fascists, he was listed in the files of OVRA, the secret police, which held the entire Paone family responsible for having led an anti-Fascist movement in Formia.

In 1928 the Commissioner of Rome ordered that Paone “be discreetly, but attentively watched.” Deemed an “inflexible opponent of Fascism” and a Freemason, he was accused of engaging foreign and Jewish actors, and of having arranged with Beneduce to provide financial aid to the family of Francesco Fausto Nitti who, sentenced to five years of confinement, had escaped from the island of Lipari with Lussu and Rosselli.³⁰

Under the Badoglio government, Paone was appointed Extraordinary Commissioner of Entertainment and participated in the Resistance. In contact with anti-Fascist groups in Milan and Rome, he made the Teatro Nuovo available for secret meetings, opening his offices and his home to anti-Fascists. In the capital, he helped to organise the escape of Sandro Pertini and Giuseppe Saragat from prison, housing them in one of his temporary living quarters along with Giorgio Amendola and Bruno Buozzi.

After the Liberation, Paone returned to Milan, where he held various positions in the PSI, was a candidate of the Popular Democratic Front in the elections of 1948 and supported the party’s campaign financially.

6. The Casa della Cultura and “Musical Afternoons at the Teatro Nuovo”

From that time on, Paone played an active role in the cultural life

²⁹ ACS, MI, Dgps, Dpp, b. 953, fasc. 36; E. Scarpellini, *Organizzazione teatrale e politica del teatro nell’Italia fascista*, cit., p. 202.

³⁰ Ibidem and Cpc, b. 3716, fasc. 2290, 93589, 132277; M. Franzinelli, M. Magnani, *Beneduce. Il finanziere di Mussolini*, Milan, 2009, pp. 257-258.

of Milan, and not there alone. In 1946, with a group of intellectuals coming from the Resistance, he participated in the newly founded Casa della Cultura, designed as an open, non-academic, non-sectarian centre of information and debate. Up to 1960 Paone was a member of the Board of Directors, along with members of the political, economic and university worlds such as Lelio Basso, Franco Fortini, Guido Aristarco, Mario Dal Pra, Paolo Grassi, Luigi Fossati, Cesare Musatti, Raffaele Mattioli, Rossana Rossanda, Roberto Tremelloni, Enzo Paci, Guido Piovene, and Giuliano Procacci.

Through Errepi, Paone organised and managed the “Musical Afternoons at the Teatro Nuovo di Milano” for chamber music concerts, and in 1946 he established the company responsible for them. The ‘Afternoons’ came to be known for presenting young conductors and unknown soloists, as was characteristic of Paone who, always open to the new and a real talent scout, could ensure top-quality programming and repertoires in the vanguard, alternating classics and experimental authors who had been banned under Fascism.³¹

7. Resources and Financing: a Rocky Road

Crisis was always lurking behind any theatrical initiative, and in 1954 the “Afternoons” seemed doomed to disappear.

Provisions in favour of the theatre had been made back in 1948, but shortly thereafter entertainment taxes were increased,³² while

³¹ *I Pomeriggi Musicali di Milano al Teatro Nuovo al Ventesimo Anno di Attività Concertistica. 1945-1946 – 1964-1965* (place not specified, undated); *Casa della cultura, quarant'anni: 1946 Milano* 1986, Milan, 1986; M. Serri, *Sorvegliati speciali. Gli intellettuali spiati dai gen-darmi (1945-1980)*, Milan, 2012, pp. 64-68.

³² D.Lgs. 20 February 1948, no. 62, *Disposizioni a favore del teatro*; L. 29 December 1949, no. 959, *Proroga di provvidenze a favore del teatro*; D.Lgs. Lgt. 8 March 1945, no. 76, *Modificazione alla tariffa dei diritti erariali sui pubblici spettacoli, sulle corse dei cavalli, dei leorieri ed altre gare e sulle scommesse*; R.D.Lgs. 30 May 1946, no. 538, *Nuove norme dei diritti erariali sui pubblici spettacoli*; L. 26 November 1955, no. 1109, *Provvedimenti in materia di diritti erariali sui pubblici spettacoli*.

the creation of a “National solidarity fund” and a “National fund for winter assistance” had dealt a fiscal blow to the entertainment industry. The consequences were twofold: many theatrical companies were unable to initiate activity,³³ and theatrical companies, unlike businesses, “were taxed *on their proceeds* and not on their profits.”³⁴

Paone, too, often found himself in serious financial trouble. His mainstay was Raffaele Mattioli, a top manager of Banca Commerciale Italiana, who was not only a banker but also a prominent patron of the arts who saw culture as an element of revitalisation and political/social growth.³⁵ He had backed Paone, the Teatro Nuovo and the Musical Afternoons since what the impresario called his “tempestuous beginnings.”

Our whole life, dear Doctor, for the last twenty years, has unfolded around your dear person, who protects our tormented existence,

wrote Paone in a letter dated June 1949, and again in 1964:

My whole life is called Raffaele Mattioli. In that long-ago '32, when you, not yet Managing Director of Comit, called me to “give me a hand” and then in '33, and in '38 as the New was being born, and still again in '39-'40 when, Rizzoli having left, you alone made it possible for me to continue this management, and then in the tragic days of '54 and, in a word, everything that you have said and done up to now to support me, protect me, defend

³³ D.Lgs. Lgt. 8 March 1945, no. 72, *Fondo di solidarietà nazionale*, title III, art. 19; L. 3 November 1954, no. 1042, *Fondo nazionale per il soccorso invernale*, art. 2; L. 6 August 1954, no. 617, *Istituzione di un'addizionale ai diritti erariali sui pubblici spettacoli; I problemi attuali dello spettacolo*, cit., pp. 3-6, 10-11.

³⁴ “Intervista a quattr'occhi con Remigio Paone”, in *Il Sipario*, June 1956, no. 122, pp. 5-6; R. Paone, “Oro e orpello”, in *Il dramma*, 1° Sept. 1951, nos. 139-140, p. 52.

³⁵ ASIS, BCI, CM, cart. 20, fasc. Banfi Antonio, no. 4 and CB, cart. 3, fasc. Banfi Antonio; F. Pino, “Fare impresa con i talenti del Paese. L'esempio di Raffaele Mattioli (1945-1960)”, in P. Landi (ed.), *Fare impresa con la cultura. Milano nel secondo dopoguerra (1945-1960)*, Bologna, 2013, pp. 247, 254.

me, all, all is the precious moving documentation of your affection and esteem.³⁶

This assistance came in various forms and amounts.³⁷ As noted by Paone in 1957, with the theatre companies it was usually barely possible to cover the general operating costs, while the variety shows had a sufficient margin. It was thus necessary to engage some of these shows and to beat the competition of the major theatres that procured them by financing the impresarios against promissory notes and assigning them a percentage of the royalties. Paone asked Toro to help him, but the condition required was that Comit too should intervene. It was a question of 30-40 million lire to be provided equally by the two institutions.³⁸

Obviously, the competitors found Mattioli's steady assistance objectionable. In 1938, the Bank of Italy received an anonymous letter denouncing a 250,000 lire loan to SAGIT, with no date of reimbursement, against 500,000 lire worth of securities signed by Giuseppe Antonio Paone, Remigio's cousin,

real accommodation securities and, what is worse, in open violation of the law, because the guarantor is the Sole Administrator of the Company financed,³⁹

that is to say, Remigio Paone. The author of the letter seems very well informed:

[I]t is now being rumoured in Milan that the inspirer of this affair, Great Officer Rizzoli, intends to get out of it, after the first unhappy results, and that he is already trying to dispose of the share packet in his possession (almost the whole amount), also requesting reimbursement of his credit, amounting to nearly L. 500,000, with the

³⁶ ASIS, BCI, CM, cart. 225, fasc. Paone, no. 9 and no. 2.

³⁷ Ibid., nos. 3, 5/e; ASIS, BCI, CB, cart. 32, fasc. 4, no. 1; AD2, cart. 2, fasc. 11, no number, nos. 3, 4, 4/a; fondo Rappresentanza di Roma, no. 58.

³⁸ ASIS, BCI, CM, cart. 225, fasc. Paone, no. 7.

³⁹ ASBI, Vigilanza, P. 1185.0, fasc. 1, pp. 641, 643.

Company. But who would now want to take the place of Grand Officer Rizzoli, given the already precarious situation of SAGIT, burdened with an annual cost of L. 510,000 for the rental of the Theatre alone? Can it be that the Banca Commerciale has already generously provided the aforesaid 250,000, considering that it is not new to such generosity extended to the Paone family?⁴⁰

The letter concludes that “other persons will also be informed”. The author seems determined to do everything possible to obstruct Paone’s activity by closing off his access to credit. An investigation by the Bank of Italy confirmed the truthfulness of the information; and the long duration of the operation, having no due date, clearly revealed the network of kinship, contacts and support provided to Paone by the upper ranks of the financial world, the State bureaucracy and the élites in general.

[T]he financing was provided at the order of the Managing Director Commendatore Mattioli, at the advice of the Honourable Beneduce, the father-in-law of Dr. Remigio Paone. (Giuseppe Antonio is the brother-in-law of Commendatore Simeone, Chief Executive of the Ministry for Popular Culture.) (...) It cannot be excluded that Paone has already been granted other loans by other financial institutions, always thanks to the recommendation of the Honourable Beneduce.⁴¹

In the margin of this reserved information, the Governor of the Bank, Vincenzo Azzolini, felt it necessary to note by hand that

Beneduce cannot have recommended any irregular operation – They may have done it thinking they were doing him a favour, but without his direct involvement.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 641-642.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 736, 737.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 737.

A few days later – on January 13, 1939 – it was Mattioli who wrote him that the Bureau of Inspection for the defence of savings and the exercise of credit had requested of Comit

precise information as to the technical form, duration and purpose of the financing in question.⁴³

And it was again Mattioli to bluntly end his correspondence with Azzolini and the business as a whole while indirectly confirming his faith in the impresario:

It is needless to add that I have no doubts as to the satisfactory conclusion of the “SAGIT” operation.⁴⁴

Frequently beset by minor and major creditors, Paone continued even after the downfall of Fascism to count on many relationships in influential circles and on persons ready to come to his aid, such as the well-known Roman lawyer Francesco (Franco) Libonati, a former member of the Board of Auditors of Errepi and Sagit, who interceded with De Pirro (in the '50s Direttore Generale dello Spettacolo) and Giulio Andreotti, the young under-secretary to the Prime Minister responsible for entertainment in the various De Gasperi governments from 1947 to 1953.⁴⁵ He sponsored State intervention to save Errepi, now in dire need due to *Carosello Napoletano* (1950), a musical comedy that cost Paone a personal loss of 86 million lire, the suspension of the company's programmes and a drastic downturn in the receipts of the Teatro Nuovo.⁴⁶

It was such recurrent financial problems that induced Paone in the 1960s to abandon the activity of impresario:

I had no more money to throw away. I had owned something, I own nothing anymore (...) I am propertyless, I

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 999.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 997.

⁴⁵ ASL, RP, album I, 30, 19 giugno 1959. Linked to the *Mondo* group of Pannunzio, a liberal, Libonati was to be Undersecretary to the Prime Minister (second Governo Bonomi, Dec. 1944-June 1945).

⁴⁶ ASIS, BCI, CM, cart. 225, fasc. Paone, no. 4/all; CB, cart. 32, fasc. 4, no. 6.

have to work, I will go on managing theatres to keep my head above water.⁴⁷

8. Product Diversification and Multifaceted Activities

Paone soon turned to diversifying his product. With the war's end, the nation felt a need for escape. As movies were becoming an ever more threatening competitor for the theatre, and television was just over the horizon, through Errepi Paone produced 127 performances (plays, reviews, ballet, concerts), introducing Italians to music ranging from classical to musical comedy⁴⁸ and acquiring a visibility that attracted harsh criticism:

Paone has become too big, he is no longer an impresario but a Minister of Entertainment.⁴⁹

Paone's knowledge of the theatre extended beyond Italy, as did his vision of the impresario who offered new models of entertainment. Convinced of the need for "broadening the narrow boundaries of the Italian theatre, opening up new frontiers, encouraging exchange", ⁵⁰ he managed to take his expertise and his shows abroad and to bring the best foreign productions to Italy, striving for internationalism while becoming less provincial at home.

In 1947, for example, he organised the Italian season of the Paris Theatre Festival, winning the title of *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*,⁵¹ and arranged numerous tournées abroad. At the same time, he held positions in theatres, companies, and cultural associations, such as the Unione Capocomici Italiani and the Ente Nazionale Previdenza Assistenza Lavoratori dello Spettacolo (ENPALS).

⁴⁷ P.M. Paoletti, "Paone: splendido tiranno del palcoscenico italiano", in *Il Giorno*, 24 Mar. 1974, p. 23.

⁴⁸ *Spettacoli Errepi*, fasc. found at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, S 9280 Milan.

⁴⁹ In M. Cambiaghi (ed.), *Il teatro di Garinei e Giovannini*, Rome, 1999, p. 72.

⁵⁰ U. Buzzolan, "Un uomo del palcoscenico", in *La Stampa*, 8 Jan. 1977, p. 7.

⁵¹ Musée de la Légion d'Honneur et des Ordres de Chevalerie, Paris, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, service du protocole, par décret du 10 juillet 1954.

9. Experience as Public Manager: Director of the Teatro Comunale in Florence

Paone's consolidated experience as impresario; his knowledge of the theatre world and total mastery of the theatrical machine's operation; his long-standing reputation; his refusal to remain crystallised in obsolete musical and theatrical styles thanks to a sort of "lifelong learning"; his contacts with a plurality of stakeholders including politicians and institutions (he was called a "great navigator amid the perilous reefs of the Ministry of Entertainment");⁵² and his historic militancy in the ranks of the Socialist Party gave him the chance for a new commitment, this time in the public theatre. In December 1965, supported by Pietro Nenni, a friend from the years of militancy and the Resistance, he was named Director of the Teatro Comunale of Florence,⁵³ a function with an immediate difference from any he had held before: operating with public resources, he was less exposed to the impresario's risk, but all his decisions would be subjected to the scrutiny and criticism of politicians and the press.

The Comunale's *Maggio Musicale* music festival had long been embroiled in managerial, organisational and financial crisis, and the most urgent task was that of preparing its 29th edition in the span of just a few months. Considering the difficulty of finding performers of sufficiently high standing, who were usually booked long in advance, Paone opted for an eclectic rather than a monographic programme. Despite talk of a "bridge Maggio", or "transition Maggio", he was intent on staging some contemporary musical works, a line that would be adopted also in the future.

As to budget, with an average intake of 130 million lire, ticket sales covered 7.7% of the annual expenses of 2 billion lire.⁵⁴ Paone worked to increase subscriptions (from 6,000 to 15,000) and to reduce

⁵² AUSTMMF, r. *l'Unità*, 11 June 1966, R. Tedeschi, "La vita musicale italiana: un caos ben organizzato (IV). Monta l'assedio ai 'benpensanti'".

⁵³ AUSTMMF, rv. 17 Dec. 1965; r. *l'Unità*, 18 Dec., G. D. R., "Sottogoverno al Comunale?".

⁵⁴ AUSTMMF, r. *La Nazione*, 1 Mar. 1966, "Il Maggio è già pronto. Ora si cercano i soldi".

the deficit,⁵⁵ but at least 1.2 billion lire was needed, while just 600 million was available to produce the Maggio as well as the summer and winter programmes. Waiting for the cultural nature of the Maggio (specified more clearly), the figures speak clearly: 853 season tickets (+153% from the previous year), 36,546 spectators (+50%) and total receipts of 89,767,535 lire (+99%).⁵⁶

While he was working on the 30th Maggio and mobilising all resources to make it an event of international standing, on November 4, 1966, the city of Florence was struck by a devastating flood, inflicting over 900 million lire of damage to the Theatre. The State allocated 500 million lire, Paone, assisted by the technical and artistic personnel, worked tirelessly to get the premises back in working order. On November 27, while the city was still without drinking water, the season opened in a performance without scenery, hailed by all as nothing short of a miracle.⁵⁷

Nor was the 30th Maggio Musicale, dedicated to the memory of Toscanini in the centennial of his birth, subjected to any change. While that edition was dominated by famous conductors and orchestras, the real sensation was the *Ballo Excelsior*, a document from the Belle Époque with *mise en scène* of the ideals of the Umberto-era *borghesia*. The show grossed 30 million lire in six evenings and was then presented at La Scala.⁵⁸ The festival, which included an International Conference of Toscanini Studies,⁵⁹ was as a whole the one

⁵⁵ AUSTMME, rvg, 19 Jan. and 1 Mar. 1966; r. *L'Espresso*, 15 May, S. Saviane, "I dodicimila garofani di centro-sinistra"; r. *La Nazione*, 16 Sept. 1969, "I settant'anni di Remigio Paone", in ASL, fondo RM, album *I magnifici 70 di Remigio Paone*.

⁵⁶ AUSTMME, r. *Nazione Sera*, 1 Mar. 1966, G. C., "Più di un miliardo per l'anno artistico del Teatro Comunale"; r. 9 Mar., *Ansa* 225 - su problemi maggio musicale fiorentino; r. *Il Giornale del Mattino*, 8 July, "Incassi e spettatori del Maggio Musicale".

⁵⁷ D.L. 18 November 1966, no. 976, *Ulteriori interventi e provvidenze per la ricostruzione e per la ripresa economica nei territori colpiti dalle alluvioni e mareggiate dell'autunno 1966*, art. 76; R. Paone, "Il Teatro Comunale dalla miracolosa rinascita al XXXI Maggio Musicale Fiorentino 1968", in *Firenze. Rassegna del Comune 1965-1968*, Apr. 1968, p. 135; AUSTMME, r. *Nazione Sera*, 26 November 1966, E. Mazzuoli, "Il miracolo di Paone".

⁵⁸ AUSTMME, r. *Adn Kronos*, 2 June 1967.

⁵⁹ *La lezione di Toscanini*, Atti del Convegno di studi toscaniniani al XXX Maggio musicale fiorentino, Florence, 1970.

that lasted longest, with financial results beyond all expectations. Season tickets (+82%) brought in 37 million lire as compared to 16.5 million the previous year.⁶⁰

10. The Challenger Challenged: 1968, Politics and the Teatro Comunale in Crisis

No sooner had the season closed, however, than sharp controversy broke out over the proper “formula” for the Maggio, against the background of the national debate on the new rules governing opera companies (Law 800 of 14 August 1967, known as the Corona Law) being discussed in Parliament. The diatribe on the objectives of the Maggio overwhelmed the Theatre’s top management immediately, while the imminent renewal of the managerial posts sparked an argument that was apparently cultural but actually, in essence, political. The municipal administration would have to designate, for the position of Director, only one person instead of three, as in the past.⁶¹ This led to a split between Paone – who declared the need to balance the books and not to separate culture from entertainment – and the Artistic Director Luciano Alberti, convinced that, regardless of success, “a formative idea” in deciding the programmes was needed.⁶²

In the dispute among the city’s political forces – while protest movements, 1968, and clashing ideologies were at the gates – Paone found himself isolated, in opposition to musicians, critics, intellec-

⁶⁰ AUSTMMF, r. *Avanti!*, 7 July 1967, E. M., “Dati confortanti sul Maggio Musicale”.

⁶¹ A particular case of close ties between the City Theatre, its director and management, on the one hand, and the Municipal government and its representatives on the other, in the late 19th and early 20th century, is analysed by L. Křupková, “The City of Olomouc and Theatre Directors. Model Example of the Operation of the Austro-Hungarian City Theatre”, in *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, no. 2, 2014, pp. 275-291.

⁶² There is an implicit conflict, in fact, between art/creativity on the one hand and business/management on the other, as is shown in an examination of the theatre in Germany by D.R. Eikhof and A. Haunschild, “For Art’s Sake! Artistic and Economic Logics in Creative Production”, in *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, no. 5, 2007, pp. 523-538.

tuals and a part of public opinion, with heavy accusations from the Communist daily *l'Unità* and certain Christian Democratic fringes.⁶³ The new Municipal Council was about to draw up its budget for 1968, with a deficit rumoured to be a shocking 25 billion lire. Moreover, the administrative posts of the companies taken over by the city government were up for renewal, and a new president and director of the Theatre had to be appointed: a test case at local level, while at the Ministry of Entertainment and in the opera companies the Corona Law had triggered a race to procure posts.⁶⁴

On December 22, Paone's term of office having expired about a month before, the Florentine daily *La Nazione* published the report that he would not accept the position again without sufficient guarantees of resolution of the Theatre's financial problems, but the Municipal Council re-elected him that same evening, leading to Alberti's resignation.⁶⁵

The 31st Maggio Musicale had no particular managerial problems. Significantly, it included an international conference on experimental centres of electronic music, in the wake of the Toscanini Conference. But owing in part to an unsuccessful performance of *Othello*, the debate resumed. Paone was accused of being a Socialist who ran a theatre for the élite, practiced a policy of high prices, preferred the mediocre bourgeoisie to intellectuals, favoured entertainment over culture, and had transformed the Maggio into a jumble of extraordinary, expensive occasions, while the labour unions complained of authoritarian, paternalistic management. In the final analysis, however, the evaluation of the festival depended on the positions of the various political parties: inadequate for the Com-

⁶³ AUSTMMF, r. *La Nazione*, 12 July 1967, L. Pinzauti, "Il 'Maggio' va bene così o deve cambiare indirizzo?" and 13 Sept., R. Paone, "'Maggio': cultura e incassi"; r. *Lo Spettacolo Musicale*, Sept., "Polemica sul Maggio Musicale"; r. *l'Unità*, 19 Oct., "Sotto accusa la gestione Paone".

⁶⁴ AUSTMMF, r. *Nazione Sera*, 27 Nov. 1967, "La giunta sta per affrontare le nere scogliere del bilancio"; r. *l'Unità*, 6 Dec., "È scattata la corsa alle cariche".

⁶⁵ AUSTMMF, r. *La Nazione*, 22 Dec. 1967, "Remigio Paone intende lasciare il 'Comunale'" and 23 Dec., "Paone confermato al Teatro Comunale"; r. *Politica Lavoro Informazioni*, 15 Jan. 1968, C. D. – A. S., "C come Comunale o come Caos?"; vrg. 10-11 Feb.

munists, basically positive for the Socialists, who, like the Christian Democrats, disagreed over everything.⁶⁶

On June 24 Paone resigned and the Comunale, now receded to seventh place in State funding, found itself heading into even deeper trouble, devoid of top managers while political struggles were paralysing the city government.⁶⁷ Meanwhile Paone remained in office because, unlike the Municipal Council, the Ministry of Entertainment had ignored his resignation. Amid strikes and threats to occupy the Theatre, candidacies withdrawn, a failed attempt to elect a new director with an ensuing split in the Socialist Party, the situation became a “farce within a farce”: the resignation of the mayor and the councillors.⁶⁸

But several more months of violent protests had to pass before an agreement was reached over his successor and Paone exited from the scene. On December 27, 1969, the newspapers announced a new director – the Christian Democrat lawyer Nicola Pinto – who had held numerous political and administrative positions, but none with any theatrical connection.

With this operation of political patronage, Paone’s experience in the Tuscan capital came to an end. He was an impresario who now appeared as a man of the past.⁶⁹ Despite the increase in proceeds and the firm intent to have “a productive theatre”, the Comunale, like other opera companies, continued to show a deficit. The Corona Law, in fact, allocated fixed contributions that took no account of increased costs, especially those for personnel, so that measures to supplement the funding began to be called for.

⁶⁶ AUSTMMF, r. *Il Giornale d'Italia*, 9 June 1968, P. Listri, “Si è riaperto il ‘processo’ al Maggio musicale fiorentino”; r. *l'Unità*, 11 June, “I sindacati denunciano la crisi del Comunale” and 13 June, “Interrogato il sindaco su la crisi del ‘Comunale’”.

⁶⁷ AUSTMMF, rvg. 25 June 1968; r. *La Nazione*, 26 Sept., “Preoccupazioni per il Comunale”; r. *l'Unità*, 29 Sept., “Il Teatro comunale sprofondato nel caos”; rvg. 16 Nov.

⁶⁸ AUSTMMF, r. *Notiziario A.I.S.T.*, 12 Apr. 1969, “Musica: la strana storia di un ente che non sa darsi un nuovo sovrintendente e non riesce a liberarsi del vecchio”.

⁶⁹ L. Pinzauti, *Storia del Maggio. Dalla nascita della “Stabile Orchestrale Fiorentina” (1928) al festival del 1993*, Lucca, 1994, *passim*.

Paone left Florence in bitter spirits, and made no mystery of it. To direct the Comunale he had neglected his own theatres, the Nuovo and the Odeon.

On June 2, 1976, he was awarded the honorary title of Grande Ufficiale dell'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana.⁷⁰ But his sudden death just a few months later marked the emblematic end of an epoch centred around the traditional figure of the impresario. He never attempted cinema, nor was he interested in television ("it has no stage", he said).⁷¹

11. Conclusions

Born in the last year of the 19th century, Remigio Paone soon transformed his passion for the theatre into a profession. Raised in provincial Lazio in a family of free-lance professionals, by the age of thirty he had already played many roles in the theatre world, in a career where education was followed by on-the-job experience. His studies in business and commerce, his work in editing, journalism and banking turned out to be most useful for dealing with the theatre both as "artistic" performance and as "business". As such requiring capital, human resources and techniques differing in scope and characteristics according to the typology of the "product"; and each performance requires combining the factors of production, a long stage of preparation, organisational, managerial and financial expertise.

Starting in the 1930s Paone managed his own theatre, the Nuovo, and others during the course of his career. To this end he founded a joint-stock company through which he planned, produced, distributed and marketed theatrical productions, under the brand name Errepi, which he had to defend both with top-quality choices and through the agency responsible for the protection and

⁷⁰ Presidenza della Repubblica, Gabinetto del Segretario Generale, Cancelleria OMRI.

⁷¹ U. Buzzolan, *Un uomo del palcoscenico*, cit.

intermediation of royalties (SIAE). The work of impresario implies a propensity for risk and an orientation toward innovation, talent discovery, the launch of tendencies, and a public audience. To beat the competition, Paone staged avant-garde and ground-breaking performances, engaged foreign companies and artists, showing both competence and aptitude. In other words: to the technical/administrative tools required to direct a theatre, to found and manage a company, he added an intellectual-artistic-aesthetic vocation and an “economic soul”, attention to organisational regulations and to the market.

In particular, it was the high production costs and above all the gap between these costs and the proceeds – in the 1960s the economists Baumol and Bowen introduced the concept of “cost disease” to describe a phenomenon afflicting live entertainment in general⁷² – that plagued Paone, obliging him to turn to the banks and finally to devote himself only to the work of exhibitor. Add his experience as public manager. As Director, he tried to solve the financial problems of the Comunale, but his relations with administrators and politicians, both local and national, became even more constrictive due to the violent unrest and great changes that preceded, accompanied and followed the emblematic year of 1968.

All of this took place within a set of precise ideological and cultural models, and a political/institutional setup that disciplined the theatre, the mode of presenting performances, and financial assistance or subsidies. In nearly half a century of commitment, Paone had to contend among other things with the censorship, controls and regulations of the Fascist regime. His experience at UNAT unfolded within the corporativist context, where he worked despite his anti-Fascist beliefs and the surveillance of the political police, a situation very different from the one in which he would manage the theatre in Republican Italy.

It was in the post-war years that he could fully deploy an excep-

⁷² W.J. Baumol and W.G. Bowen, *Performing arts: the economic dilemma. A study of problems common to theater, opera, music and dance*, New York, 1966.

tional network of relationships in the most widely diverse spheres on both the national and the international level, where he had influential contacts, could move ably and be truly appreciated: “there is no personality unfamiliar to him, from music to literature, from finance to politics, from Montecitorio to the Vatican.”⁷³

In the decades of his career, cultural and economic roles and initiatives were interwoven and superimposed. All of this conferred on Paone a breadth of vision that enabled him to go beyond the productive model of the *capocomico* typical of the road company, so that – in the words of Paolo Grassi – to consider him as “only an impresario is profoundly wrong.”⁷⁴

⁷³ D. Falconi, “Paone sopporta ogni difficoltà ma non accetta scherzi sul teatro”, in *Stampa Sera*, 20-21 June 1966, p. 3. ASL, fondo RM, album I and II, 30, 19 giugno 1959.

⁷⁴ P. Grassi, *Quarant'anni di palcoscenico*, edited by E. Pozzi, Milan, 1977, p. 129.