

Obama in Naples: a Play About the Italian-American Special Connection

Francesca Giuliani (April 10, 2012)



Claudio Angelini's musical comedy premieres in New York City on April 25 at the June Havoc Theater of the Abington Art Complex. The play promises to stimulate the audience's thoughts on Naples' issues, but especially on the city's strongest vital force: its population.

What would happen if Obama went to Naples to fix its problems? Would he be successful in such a complex enterprise?



Claudio Angelini, former RAI journalist, President of the Dante Alighieri Society and playwright, has written a musical comedy that answers these questions. "[Obama in Naples](#) [2]" premieres in New York City on April 25 at the [June Havoc Theater](#) [3] of the Abington Art Complex, where it will be played until May 6.

Curious about the reasons that would lead Obama to Naples, other than to accept Major Luigi De Magistris' [recent invitation](#) [4] to visit the city, we interviewed Angelini about his comedy and the special connection between New York and Naples, that goes way beyond their geographical position -- both cities in fact lie on the 41st parallel.

"I believe there is a strong bond between the USA and Naples. After all, a NATO base is located in Naples, and American tourists are always very numerous there," he told i-Italy.

Angelini, who started his career as a journalist in the Neapolitan newspaper [Il Mattino](#) [5], learned that Naples is a city with a strong faith. "It is the only city with a saint patron that performs miracles every year," he noted.

Naples' faith is also mixed with a strong fascination with charismatic figures: "When President of the Republic Sandro Pertini visited the city after the earthquake in 1980, the population was so relieved that he went that his visit really had a reinvigorating effect."

When John Fitzgerald Kennedy visited Naples in 1963, that fascination with charisma peaked very high, enhanced by the strong admiration that Neapolitans feel for Americans: "Kennedy was shocked by their enthusiasm," Angelini commented.

Angelini felt that very same enthusiasm for all things American in Naples when two and a half years ago he was there to present his book on the first year of the Obama presidency, titled "[Obama: Un Anno di Sfide](#) [6]" (Obama: A Year of Challenges).

"Neapolitans were extremely interested in Obama, the audience was full of questions about him. Some of them said it was their dream to meet Obama. I felt a very similar atmosphere as the one that I experienced in 1980 during Pertini's visit. That's when the idea of writing the play came to me."

The plot of the play is the story of an Italian journalist who, after working in the US for a long time, goes back to Naples to write a reportage on the aftermath of the 1980s earthquake. He is then confronted with all of the problems that afflict the city, but the population will start gossiping about his real identity. Is he really a journalist or a secret agent preparing a visit of the American President to Naples? Obama will in fact come visit Naples, and his arrival will excite the population and give room for unexpected twists in the story.

The show promises to stimulate the debate on the issues ailing Naples, that Angelini tried to draw the audience's attention upon in a way that also gives them the possibility to appreciate the great moral value of its inhabitants, the real driving force of the long awaited "change" that Naples needs and that Obama promised to his fellow Americans when he was campaigning for the election in 2006.

"In the play, Obama encourages Neapolitans to believe in themselves and in their potential," Angelini explained. This message is present in all of his speeches that address those social groups who are most in need, "from the African-Americans to the Palestinians," he added. "There is a similarity among all of those who are in need, and in Naples the good wins over the bad."

The play, originally written in Italian, will be performed in New York in a translated version. Angelini, however, is in touch with the directors of prestigious theaters in Naples such as the Teatro Festival and the Teatro Augusteo, with whom he is discussing taking the play by next Fall. "It's something I really look forward to doing," he told i-Italy.

What happens at the end of the show? Does Obama magically solve all of Naples' problems? We are



not going to spoil the ending, but we can anticipate an indiscretion: “Obama will fall in love with Naples and ask to become a citizen of it,” Angelini revealed.

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