

The San Pietro a Majella Conservatory of Naples

The San Pietro a Majella Conservatory in Naples is one of the oldest and most prestigious musical institutions in Italy, located in the heart of the old town. It was declared a royal institution in 1807 and named as the *Real Collegio di Musica*. The Conservatory originated as the unification of three previous musical institutions born as orphanages: Santa Maria di Loreto, Sant' Onofrio a Capuana and Santa Maria della Pietà dei Turchini. These institutions, established during the 16th century and initially intended to care for and educate abandoned children, gradually evolved into renowned music schools, giving rise in the eighteenth century to the famous Neapolitan School of Music.

In 1826, the Conservatory moved to its current location in the former Celestine monastery attached to the church of San Pietro a Majella and was renamed the *Royal Conservatory of Music of San Pietro a Majella*. The historical building includes two monumental cloisters: the larger one, built in 1684, and a smaller one, both excellent examples of Neapolitan Baroque architecture.

Inside the Conservatory are the Scarlatti Hall and the Martucci Hall, both used for concerts and musical events. It also houses one of the most important and oldest music libraries in the world, containing approximately 27,000 music manuscripts, 300,000 musical prints, 20,000 books, 10,000 opera librettos, 10,000 letters and 1,000 periodicals.

Inaugurated by Francesco Cilea in 1925, the Conservatory's Museum hosts one of the most important collections of musical instruments in Europe, including a diatonic harp crafted by Antonio Stradivari (1681) and a valuable gallery of portraits of famous composers such as Gioachino Rossini, Richard Wagner, and Giuseppe Verdi. Among the notable directors and teachers who shaped the Conservatory's legacy are Gaetano Donizetti, Saverio Mercadante, Francesco Cilea, and Francesco Florimo - who also served as librarian and music historian. The conservatory has trained numerous internationally acclaimed musicians and remains a leading institution for advanced musical education in Italy and worldwide.