

67

4

Ott.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. *in Sib*

Clne *in Sib*

I, II

III

Fg.

Cor. *in Mi*

Cor. *in Mib*

Trb. *in Mi s. sc.*

Trb. *in Mib*

Trbn.

B. Tuba

Tp. *in Fa#, Si, Do#*

Cassa e Piatti

Gr. C. e P.

Rag.

S.

T.

B.

CORO

I

II

Vni

Vle

Vc.

Cb.

Ott.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.
in Sib

Clne
in Sib

I, II

Fg.

III

Cor.
in Mi

Cor.
in Mi^b

Trb.
in Mi s. sc.

Trb.
in Mi^b

Trbn.

B. Tuba

Tp.
in Fa[#], Si, Do[#]

Gr. C. e P.

Rag.

S.

T.

B.

I

Vni

II

Vle

Vc.

Cb.

Cassa e Piatti Cassa sola

CORO

stro Leoncavallo will be required, if asked, to review and correct for free the reductions and final proofs.

This is what the parties promise to expect and strictly observe in good faith and without any exception; to this effect, the parties themselves undersign in the presence of the undersigning witnesses, in two original copies, one for each of the parties and at the expense of the publisher, Edoardo Sonzogno.

Ruggero Leoncavallo
Resti Emilio, witness
Giuseppe Capucci, witness⁶⁴

Maurel's recollections presented so far fit rather neatly with the pieces of the puzzle gathered from other sources, and despite the well-known high opinion he had of himself, the important role he played in the preparation of the premiere is repeatedly acknowledged in the Leoncavallo-Sonzogno correspondence (see below). The pieces that do not fit (Maurel's claims that the premiere was originally planned for the fall, that he introduced Leoncavallo to Sonzogno *after* the premiere of *Pagliacci*, and that a contract with the publisher was concluded only at that point) may be attributed to the twenty-eight years that had passed between the premiere and the interview.⁶⁵ For his role in adding a prologue, an aspect Leoncavallo understandably suppresses in his "Appunti," we have only Maurel's own account.

Maurel claims that he suggested adding a prologue immediately after having heard Leoncavallo perform the opera for him. Leoncavallo objected: "This suggestion is not the advice of a friend but rather of someone who has not understood what I have tried to get him to hear."⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Maurel had dinner with Leoncavallo, presenting his reasons for the need of a prologue. He felt that in emulation of antique Italian plays, *Pagliaccio* should have not only an epilogue (Tonio's phrase "La commedia è finita") but also a prologue (essentially an explanation of the plot before the opera begins). Maurel, always according to his own recollection, even tried to stimulate Leoncavallo's creativity by providing ideas for verses, vocal characterization, and staging, quickly converting Leoncavallo from a skeptic to an enthusiast; he may have even urged him to change the title from *Pagliaccio* (putting the spotlight on Canio) to *Pagliacci* (putting the spotlight on all comedians, including Tonio).⁶⁷ If Maurel's version is to be trusted, Leoncavallo added the "Prologue" before he signed the contract. Scant support appears in the contract itself, which quotes the title of the opera twice, first as "Pagliacci," then as "Pagliaccio," as if the scribe first remembered the new title and then, by mistake, reverted to the old one. The libretto first submitted to Sonzogno for printing, however, does not yet include the "Prologue," only Leoncavallo's handwritten

instruction to add it, suggesting that it was completed after the audition and possibly even after the contract was signed.⁶⁸

Preparation, Premiere, Reception

Leoncavallo recalls the process of selecting the singers as unproblematic, except for the tenor, as all the good ones had already been engaged elsewhere. He thus approached Enrico Barbacini, a well-respected teacher at the Parma Conservatory. Barbacini recommended Fiorello Giraud, whom Leoncavallo immediately accepted. The other choices were Adelina Stehle (Nedda), Francesco Daddi (Arlecchino), and Mario Ancona (Silvio); Ancona fell ill and was replaced by Mario Roussel.⁶⁹ As the conductor, Maurel wanted Arturo Toscanini, insisting on Leoncavallo's compliance.⁷⁰

The first ensemble rehearsal took place ten days before the premiere. Although preparations appeared to be going smoothly, Leoncavallo began to be concerned about Sonzogno's absence. The resulting exchange, transcribed here in full, sheds a unique light on nineteenth-century operatic propaganda.

Yesterday, we had the first ensemble rehearsal with piano, with which Maurel and Toscanini were very happy because the artists already have a good musical grasp of the opera. The distribution of the roles is thus definitively established as follows: Stehle is *Nedda*, Maurel *Tonio*, Giraud *Canio*, Ancona *Silvio*, and the tenor Daddi *Peppe*. The cast is thus excellent, and I am more than satisfied. The orchestral parts will be ready in two days so that we'll be able to begin rehearsing right away. The choristers are studying zealously. [Aleardo] Villa has made splendid costume designs for me; all who have seen them admire them, and [both] Maurel and the management are of the opinion that they should be exhibited in the gallery before the performance. Today I have a meeting with the scenographer to go over the sketch for the set. Everything thus proceeds in the best manner, and I believe that we can open on the 20th or, at the latest, the 22nd. Now I come again to abuse your kindness and ask a favor on Maurel's behalf too, who will write to you, by the way, on the subject.

It might be necessary for you to top all the kindness you have already bestowed on me by coming to Milan for at least 48 hours to attend the premiere. Maurel says that your absence might be negatively interpreted as a lack of confidence in my work, inasmuch as you have attended with truly fatherly care all the debuts of the new operas you have acquired.

As to Maurel, his confidence (like that of all who hear the work, by the way) is such that he will do something I'm about to tell you but you will have the kindness to pretend not to

⁶⁴ Museo teatrale alla Scala, Biblioteca Livia Simoni, document 2841.

⁶⁵ See De Biasi, "Come nacque il prologo dei *Pagliacci*," 209–10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 209. Despite the lack of solid evidence, it is undoubtedly upon pressure from Maurel that Leoncavallo changed the title. In his interview, Maurel takes at least partial credit (p. 206).

⁶⁸ The document (A[MI]) is held in Milan, Biblioteca Livia Simoni, Museo teatrale alla Scala.

⁶⁹ Leoncavallo, "Appunti," 70. The cast is confirmed by the original printed libretto (still in one act): PAGLIACCI / DRAMMA IN UN ATTO / PAROLE E MUSICA / DI / R. LEONCAVALLO / TEATRO DAL VERME / Stagione di Primavera 1892. / MILANO / EDOARDO SONZOGNO, EDITORE / 14 – Via Pasquirolo – 14.

⁷⁰ De Biasi, "Come nacque il Prologo dei *Pagliacci*," 210.

know. He will spend 1000 lire to bring from London a journalist he knows who writes for the 12 principal London papers so that he can take care of the greatest *publicity* for the opera and the interpretation. True, [Maurel] is doing this for himself, but I will profit from it greatly. And then Maurel wishes to see you in Milan to talk to you about the project he has of proposing to Harris to take the entire company with the [choral and orchestral] masses to London as soon as the performances at the Dal Verme are finished. To do so, it would be indispensable to talk with you face to face so that this deal may serve to launch the opera in a truly unique manner!

Therefore, make the sacrifice of coming, I'm asking you with clasped hands, also because – even though it is true that Maurel, Galli, and I are there – a final expert glance at the scene by you, who are more competent than anyone, could be of great help – and besides, all of us regard your approval as a token of success. Being here, you could also provide some direction to assure us of the support of friends in the auditorium. I do not fear the fight, and I have already said to myself *alea iacta est*... But Milan is the city you know, and precautions are never too many.⁷¹

Sonzogno, who was still in Paris, responded on 14 May, addressing all of Leoncavallo's concerns in turn:

I have received your letter of two days ago, but despite all the desire I might have to be present at the premiere of *Pagliaccio*,⁷² I hope you'll have enough pity on my state of health not to insist on my making the tiresome round-trip from Paris to Milan!

With you, Maurel, and Maestro Galli on site, my presence is entirely superfluous, and as far as the interpretation that could be made of my absence, everyone in the theatrical world knows that I'm away from Milan for at least three months to rest my spirit, and nobody will read into it the lack of confidence to which you refer and which is belied by the sole fact that I have quickly acquired your work and stirred the Company to a *tour de force* to get the materials ready in time for a prompt performance.

With regard to the London project, it will be quickly realized if Harris will agree to Maurel's proposal. In such a case, I'll come to London, which is only a few hours from Paris.

Who knows whether we might not also be able to organize a repeat performance in Vienna, in conjunction with the small Italian season I have arranged.

I hope the performance will meet your expectations in every way. I'm glad to see that the part of Nedda will be sung by Stehle.

About [Libia] Drog, I have had little good news.

Please greet Maurel for me and thank him also on my behalf for all the interest he is taking in [your] work.

As to the support of friends in the auditorium, it is a very dangerous thing. It is with inappropriate applause that an opera is made to fail and not with unjust disapproval.

I'm practical about it and have always believed that with regard to music, the one true audience, which is always good if we don't annoy it by creating an insincere environment, would make the kind of clear judgment that does not fail.

⁷¹ Leoncavallo to Sonzogno, Milan, 12 May 1892; CH-LObc, Fondo Leoncavallo, Co 64/158.

⁷² Sonzogno is reverting to the old title out of habit.

Friends do well but only if they are very, very discerning.

I have never wanted a claque in a theater, and if there was one, it was the fault of the artists, not mine.

If there is intrinsic value, it will challenge the most colossal intrigue, for instance with [*L'amico*] Fritz.

Therefore, let me be absent this time; it will be better for all, but *above all* for me!⁷³

Sonzogno did not return to Milan for the premiere and therefore did not learn until later that Leoncavallo, by the second performance and perhaps in consultation with Maurel and Galli, had decided to divide the opera into two acts.⁷⁴ Sonzogno even failed to advertise the premiere in his house journal, in contrast to Ricordi, who announced the date, work (albeit as *I pagliacci*, that is, with the article that would be frequently added in the future), and performers in his own.⁷⁵

The premiere was a resounding success, acknowledged even by those reviewers who were not overly impressed. Alfredo Soffredini, for instance, writing for Ricordi's *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, wrote that "this new opera, which consists of a prologue and a long act, undoubtedly had a brilliant success at the Dal Verme Saturday evening." Still, he criticized what he felt he could. He found most pieces lacking in originality, especially the second chorus, the "Coro delle Campanie," which in his opinion was too similar to the chorus of "another lucky opera of very recent times."⁷⁶ And his reference to "certain lengths" will resonate in Sonzogno's letters discussed below. Soffredini also lists the sections that were repeated: Nedda's aria, Canio's soliloquy, and Arlecchino's song; the public apparently also "wanted an encore of every one of [Maurel's] pieces," but "the eminent artist refrained."⁷⁷

Amintore Galli in *Il teatro illustrato* wrote a positive and detailed review, as might have been expected from the editor of Sonzogno's house journal. Perhaps of greatest interest is the passage in which Galli positions the opera within nineteenth-century styles. After having mentioned the "veristic principles," he singles out a place where Tonio addresses Nedda in a manner too aristocratic for his standing and uses it as a point of departure for this assessment of another place that violated these principles:

It seems to us that Maestro Leoncavallo profoundly feels the musical romanticism of a Schumann, a Gounod, and the

⁷³ CH-LObc, Fondo Leoncavallo, Co 62/3.

⁷⁴ Sachs, *Toscanini: Musician of Conscience*, 61. According to the reviewer of the *Corriere della sera*, the decision to divide the opera into two acts was made at the final rehearsal. a[chille] t[edeschi], "Corriere teatrale: Dal Verme, *Pagliacci*, opera in 2 atti e prologo, parole e musica del maestro R. Leoncavallo," *Corriere della sera*, 22–23 May 1892, [3]. See also Leoncavallo's letter to Sonzogno, undated but written between 22 and 24 May, cited in Rubboli, *Ridi, Pagliaccio*, 79 (the location of the autograph is unknown).

⁷⁵ *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* 47, no. 21 (22 May 1892): 343. Although the announcement reads "Milan, 21 May. – Announced for tonight is..." the issue is dated 22 May.

⁷⁶ The "Coro d'introduzione" of *Cavalleria rusticana*, which also includes bells.

⁷⁷ [Alfredo] Soffredini, "Rivista Milanese, Sabato, 28 Maggio, Teatro Dal Verme: *I Pagliacci*, dramma lirico, parole e musica del maestro R. Leoncavallo," *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* 47, no. 22 (29 May 1892), 348–49.