

= Antonio Paoli =

Antonio Paoli (April 14 , 1871 ? August 24 , 1946) was a Puerto Rican tenor . He was known at the height of his fame as " The King of Tenors and The Tenor of Kings . " He is considered to be the first Puerto Rican to reach international fame in the musical arts . Paoli has been recognized as " one of the most outstanding opera singers of all time , " and as one who had " one of the most lyric and powerful voices ... superior even to his contemporary rival , Enrico Caruso . "

After spending his childhood in his birth town of Ponce , Paoli moved to Spain where , with the assistance of his well @-@ connected sister Amalia , he obtained a Royal scholarship to take singing lessons in Italy . After singing to standing ovation crowds in both Spain and Italy , Paoli made his grand debut in Paris , France , where he was encouraged to perform on the highest levels of the world stage . Before the end of the 19th century and while Paoli was still in his twenties , he went on a tour of Europe that earned him both popular acclaim , and imperial honors from princes , kings , and emperors .

Between 1900 and 1914 his career skyrocketed , with performances not only in Europe but also in the Americas , the Caribbean , Africa , and Asia .

When World War I forced the closure of all European opera houses , Paoli made his living as a professional boxer . Unfortunately , he also lost his singing voice during this period . After the War ended , following medical advice and performing vocal exercises , Paoli regained his voice and returned to the international stage , in all the glory of days past . He performed in Europe , North and South America , and finally settled with his sister Amalia in San Juan , Puerto Rico , where she had opened a singing school .

Paoli spent the last 20 years of his life teaching voice and singing in San Juan , while also working for the establishment of a music conservatory in that city . He would not see this last dream come true , because he developed cancer and died at age 75 . He was buried in San Juan , but his remains were later transferred to a mausoleum in his birth town of Ponce .

= = Early years = =

Paoli (birth name : Antonio Emilio Paoli y Marcano) was born in Ponce , Puerto Rico . He was the son of Amalia Marcano Intriago , of Spanish ancestry , who was born on the island of Margarita , Venezuela , and of Domingo Paoli Marcatentti , from Corsica . Antonio Paoli 's parents met in Caracas , and immediately fell in love , however Amalia 's father , a rich landlord , was opposed to the relationship because of class differences , therefore the young couple escaped to the Dominican Republic without getting married and later returned to Puerto Rico . The couple established themselves in the city of Yauco , but later moved into a house , given to them by Amalia 's aunt , Teresa Intriago , located at one of the main arteries in the city of Ponce 's urban core , Calle Mayor (Mayor Street) , House # 14 . Ponce at the time was the financial and cultural capital of the island , thereby the ideal place for the initial cultural development of Paoli .

When Paoli was young , his parents would often take him to operas at Ponce 's La Perla Theater located a block away from Paoli 's residence . There , on one occasion he saw a performance of Giuseppe Verdi 's Il Trovatore by Italian tenor , Pietro Baccei , and at that moment knew what he wanted to do as an adult . His parents were very supportive of his ambition and guided him on this route during his youth , enrolling him in a school of " voice " directed by Ramon Marin . His sister Amalia was a soprano who performed at La Perla in Emilio Arrieta 's opera , Marina . In 1883 , when Paoli was only 12 years old , both his parents died and he went to live in Spain with his sister Amalia .

= = Debut = =

Amalia , who at that time was under the protective wing of Isabel de Borbón , Princess of Asturias , and sister of the King of Spain , Alfonso XII , was taking singing classes under Napoleon Verger . In 1884 , Amalia helped Paoli to obtain two scholarships from her Majesty Queen María Cristina ,

Queen Regent of Spain . Paoli started his studies at the Royal Monastery of El Escorial . Paoli entered Toledo 's Military Academy and in 1892 graduated with honors . He was assigned to the Queen 's escort and named personal custodian and guard of the child King Alfonso XIII . Paoli desired to continue singing and in 1897 went to study at the Academia de Canto La Scala in Milan , Italy . On April 26 , 1899 , he made his debut in Gioacchino Rossini 's opera William Tell in Paris , France . Paris newspapers commented on Paoli 's success and stated " We should declare Paoli the Tenor of France . "

= = World tours = =

Between 1900 and 1914 , Paoli performed in Europe , America , Africa , and Asia . He performed in Italy , Luxembourg and in the United Kingdom , with performances in London , Scotland , Edinburgh , and Brighton , closing the year with concerts in Corsica (his father 's homeland) and Turkey . In 1900 , he married Josephine Vetiska , an Austrian , in Vienna . From 1901 to 1902 , Paoli performed in the following countries : Argentina , Brazil , Canada , Chile , Colombia , Cuba , Haiti , Puerto Rico , Venezuela and the United States . Paoli purchased a villa in Porto Cereso , Lugano , Italy , where his son Antonio Arnaldo was born . After singing for King Alfonso XII and the Royal family in Spain , he returned to the United States and sang in various cities , among them New York , Boston , Philadelphia , Albany , Providence , Grand Rapids , New London , Detroit , Cleveland , Indianapolis , Buffalo , Pittsburg , Syracuse and Chicago .

In 1905 , Paoli performed at the Grand Theatre du Conservatoire in St. Petersburg , Russia . The Czar of Russia Nicholas II was present during one of the performances and after inviting Paoli to perform at the royal Winter Palace , awarded Paoli The Cross of St. Mauricio medal and bestowed upon him the title Cammer Sanger (Chamber Singer) .

On September 5 , 1907 , Paoli held a private recital for Pope Pius X at the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican . That same year he was named as a " Singer of the Royal Court " by William II of Germany . Paoli was also the first operatic artist to record an entire opera when he participated in a performance of Pagliacci by Ruggiero Leoncavallo in Milan , Italy . He was selected in 1907 , as the First Tenor in the main character by a team of engineers and musicians which included Leoncavallo . The recording was arranged in the following manner ; the musicians were placed at the end of the recording room and the back up singers in a semi @-@ arc in front of the gramophone while Paoli stood alone 20 feet (6 @.@ 1 m) away from the gramophone .

Paoli continued to perform around the world with performances in Greece , Palestine , Poland , Egypt , Spain and Italy , where he established his permanent residence . In 1910 , the singer was signed as the First Tenor by La Scala , Milan , the most prestigious opera company in the world at the time . Paoli received a contract to inaugurate Teatro Colón , in Buenos Aires , Argentina , where he sang Otello and Di quella pira . He also performed in Russia , Poland , Egypt , Hungary , Belgium , Cuba , Chile , Haiti , Colombia , Venezuela , Brazil , Canada , and the United States .

= = Boxing career = =

By 1914 , just before the start of World War I , Paoli lost his voice and all of the major opera houses in Europe were shut down . Paoli moved to Spain , a neutral country in the conflict , leaving all his properties unattended in Italy . By 1915 , Paoli found himself without economic means as a result of his bad investments .

In order to make a living , Paoli became a professional boxer and after a period of training in Spain , he moved to England to start his new " career . " He was undefeated in his first five fights . He broke his right wrist on his sixth challenge , which ended his boxing career .

Paoli sold his properties in Italy and acquired a small country house in Spain . He stayed for a few months with his brother Carlos in the Philippines . Paoli was medically treating his vocal cords , and it was commented that his career was over , but he continued his singing exercises with his sister Amalia , who moved into his house in Spain .

= = Comeback = =

In January 1917 , Paoli returned to the stage and performed the opera Samson and Delilah at the Constanzi Theater in Rome . Elvira de Hidalgo , who later became the singing coach of Maria Callas , remembered that :

" No one suspected that Paoli was coming back to the stage ; we all knew that he had lost his voice . People were there to see him fail ; I saw some guys with tomatoes and rotten eggs , ready to throw them as soon as Paoli made his first mistake . But when he came out singing his initial aria , the public went crazy and stood up in a standing ovation . Paoli 's voice sounded like one of those trumpets that you expect to hear in the day of the final judgment . His debut was tremendous . He had to repeat twice every single aria that he performed that night , because the public furiously demanded it . He performed for seven consecutive nights with the theater at its maximum capacity . I attended every single function . Every night he sang better than the night before . I always dreamed to sing with Paoli , but I don 't think my voice was good or strong enough to sing with him . I think he was the greatest tenor ever . "

Paoli kept busy performing in Italy , South America and the United States . He returned to Puerto Rico in 1923 . At the time , Amalia Paoli was residing in San Juan (in the ward of Santurce) where she was running a singing school (Academia Paoli) . Antonio conducted a few performances around the island and then departed to sing at the Brooklyn Academy of Music , the Manhattan Opera House and the Metropolitan Opera House in Philadelphia . He had wanted to sing in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York , but apparently his competitor Enrico Caruso opposed this . Some attribute this to the fact that Caruso was a shareholder of the renowned opera house . From the U.S. , the tenor would visit Curaçao , Cuba , Colombia , Haiti and Ecuador .

= = Last years = =

Even with this busy agenda , Paoli 's financial situation remained strained . After living in New York City for almost the entire year of 1927 , Paoli decided to come back to Puerto Rico to live and work with his sister Amalia , giving voice lessons at the Academia Paoli . Paoli also helped produce Othello at the Municipal Theater in San Juan . For the next two decades Paoli 's main concern would be teaching at the Paoli Academy with Amalia . In 1928 , the tenor performed Verdi 's Otello entirely for the last time in San Juan , Puerto Rico . This was his last performance on stage . It took place at the San Juan Municipal Theater , known today as the Tapia Theater . In 1935 , the government of Puerto Rico named the San Juan Municipal Theater in his honor , changing its name to Teatro Paoli . In 1929 , his wife Josephine died and a year later he married Adelaida Bonini , from Rimini , Italy , and whom he affectionately called " Adina " . He gave his last singing performance in 1942 , while commemorating the one @-@ year anniversary of the death of his sister , Amalia Paoli . The service was conducted at the Chapel of the University of the Sacred Heart (Santurce) .

Paoli died of prostate cancer in San Juan on August 24 , 1946 , and was buried in the Puerto Rico Memorial Cemetery in Carolina , Puerto Rico . On April 13 , 2005 , Paoli 's remains , and those of his (second) wife Adina Bonini (who had died in May , 1978) were exhumed and transferred to Ponce 's Román Baldorioty de Castro National Pantheon and buried by the base of his statue .

= = Honors , accolades , and legacy = =

In Antonio Paoli , Puerto Rico had the first Puerto Rican to reach international recognition in the performing arts . He gave 1 @,@ 725 performances between 1888 and 1942 and interpreted Verdi 's Otello 575 times . To his credit , Paoli was also the first opera singer in the world to record an entire opera when he participated in a performance of Pagliacci by Ruggiero Leoncavallo in Italy in 1907 .

As early as 1904 , Paoli was awarded The Cross of St. Mauricio medal by the Czar of Russia Nicholas II , and María Cristina de Habsburgo , Queen of Spain , declared Paoli Cantante de Cámara de la Corte (Chamber Singer of the Court) and gave him La Gran Cruz de Isabel la

Católica (The Cross of Isabella the Catholic) , while Carlos de Braganza , Prince of Portugal , named him Caballero Comendador del Cristo de Portugal y Cantante de Cámara . Just two years later , in 1906 , the same title of Cammer Sanger (Chamber Singer of the Court) was given to Paoli by Franz Joseph , Emperor of Austria , and in 1907 he was decorated by Carlos I of Braganza .

In 1909 , Paoli received La Cruz de Alfonso II from Alfonso XIII , King of Spain , and was declared ? Honor Singer of the Vatican ? ? by Pope Pius X. In 1910 , he was honored with the title of Hijo Predilecto de España (Favorite Son of Spain) , while in 1911 , Wilhelm II , Kaiser of Germany , declared Paoli ? ? Kammer Sanger of the Empire ? ? , and in 1912 , Paoli received a protocol @-@ breaking standing ovation from the Austro @-@ Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph when Paoli sang Lohengrin in Vienna . In 1920 , the tenor was knighted by Vittorio Emanuele III , King of Italy , making him Cavaliere De La Corona Italiana and Commendatore Dell Popolo Romano (Knight of the Italian Crown and Commandant of the Roman People) .

Though he did not see it happen during his lifetime , Puerto Rico also built the Music Conservatory , something for which Paoli had worked so hard to establish . This dream was finally realized shortly after his death . In San Juan 's " Centro de Bellas Artes " there is also a 1 @,@ 883 @-@ seat " Antonio Paoli Festival Hall . " San Juan 's Municipal Theater was also renamed Teatro Paoli in his honor in 1935 . In recognition of his fame and talent , the government of Puerto Rico also awarded Paoli a pension in 1934 .

In 1983 , the non @-@ profit " Paoli Award " was created . This award honors the effort , work , and success of outstanding professionals in the various arts and media , including music and recording , television , radio , written communication , fashion , and beauty . Originally designated to recognize the outstanding achievements of Puerto Ricans , the Paoli Award has branched out internationally , and since 1992 it also includes Hispanics and Latin Americans from around the world .

On October 9 , 2009 , the Government of the United States listed Casa Paoli in Antonio Paoli 's hometown of Ponce , Puerto Rico , in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places . The house , Antonio 's childhood house in Puerto Rico , is Paoli 's only remaining residencial structure in Puerto Rico .

Among other honors bestowed on Paoli after his death are a music school named in his honor (" Escuela Libre de Música Antonio Paoli ") , in the city of Caguas , Puerto Rico , and in his hometown of Ponce , there is a theater at the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico , Ponce named in his memory , Teatro Paoli .

Paoli has also been the subject of many books written about his life and influence . Included is the work by Emilio J. Pasarell titled " Orígenes y desarrollo de la afición teatral en Puerto Rico " (Origins and development of the theatrical pursuit in Puerto Rico) where he describes the life of Paoli in detail .

= = Discography = =

The following are part of Antonio Paoli 's discography :

Antonio Paoli . (2000)

Great Voices . (1999)

Antonio Paoli in arias from Otello . (1998)

Leoncavallo : Pagliacci . (1996)

Serie Artistas Célebres No. 1 : Edición del Centenario del Tenor Antonio Paoli . Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (1971)