During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the foremost entertainment publication in the Italian language on the east coast of the United States was *La follia di New York*, a weekly devoted to humor and varying in size from eight to fourteen pages. The newspaper’s masthead depicted the face of a woman against the background of skyscrapers, and the woman wore a ribbon on her head on which was written the Latin phrase “castigat ridendo mores” (one corrects customs through laughter). The newspaper was founded in 1893 by Francesco Sisca and his sons Alessandro (the director who went by the pseudonym Riccardo Cordiferro) and Marziale, the editor-in-chief. The newspaper office was located at 169 Mott Street in Manhattan.

*La follia di New York* featured detailed articles on culture and customs accompanied by a great number of announcements and advertisements of products of every type—even kitchen recipes had a place in these columns—with an eye toward music in particular. This was the general tendency followed by other American publications as well, which earned a great deal of money by advertising companies that manufactured discs and music cylinders. This Italian weekly contained advertisements for gramophones, phonographs, music stores—for example, for the shop of Antonio Grauso, the maker of mandolins at 192 Grand Street—as well as names of publishers and editors such as Antonio Mongillo and Ettore De Stefano. The latter, a native of Altavilla Irpina in the Province of Avellino, left for America in 1887 and was the creator of the *Rivista musicale* (Musical review), another weekly founded in America. One of the most long-awaited events of the week on Sisca’s newspaper was the column by Enrico Caruso, who signed without charge copies of his
famous caricatures. Thousands of them were printed exclusively for *La follia di New York* starting in 1906.  

The tone of the weekly was strongly oriented toward the integration of cultures in order to keep Italian roots healthy. In an issue published in 1910 the paper announced the American version of the popular Neapolitan feast of Piedigrotta, to be held in the middle of September:

> So now we have even in America the picturesque feast of Piedigrotta. It will take place on September 7 and 8 at Harlem River Park, which is at 126th Street and Second Avenue, featuring a competition of Neapolitan songs, for which three prizes have been established: the first of $40, the second of $25, and the third of $15. While during other years the feast of Piedigrotta has been celebrated in various café chantants in the community, this year there will be another, and this one will be better than all those in previous years. It will exceed all the expectations of the public. To be convinced, all one has to do is read the beautiful program: a characteristic parade will march on both evenings, starting at 4 p.m. from 116th Street and moving along First Avenue, then returning from 104th Street along Second Avenue and crossing all the streets in between. The parade will consist of a colorful musical band, Japanese-style, made up of 500 young people and a cart with allegorical figures. At 7 p.m. there will be a triumphant entrance into the park, preceded by a squadron of knights. At 7:30 p.m. songs entered in the contest will be performed, alternating with cinematic presentations, among them the Johnson-Jeffries fight. At about 10:30, voting for the prizewinning songs will take place. The park will be splendidly decorated and illuminated by Venetian-style lanterns. The orchestra will be directed by Maestro Raffaele De Luca. The best popular singers of the community, above all the very popular Farfariello, will take part in the feast. Enough said. Whoever wishes to enjoy himself on the evenings of the 7th and 8th of this month will be at Harlem River Park.  

It is difficult to say how much the American feast resembled the original Neapolitan one. In any case, several important elements survived, such as the allegorical carts, the procession, and, above all, the song contests that offered three finalist prizes and the privilege of being published in a printed volume. This last aspect holds particular significance, and every year after the American Piedigrotta, as after the Neapolitan feast, there was published a detailed account of the event with particular attention to the scores of the songs. Coverage in the ethnic Italian newspapers is the only documentation that has preserved the memory of the event. Thus, one reads in the September 17, 1911, issue of *La follia di New York*:

> The Piedigrotta event is also worthy for this reason: it has inspired the dialect Italian-American poets, those who have stuffed their rhythmic