

WORLD MUSIC

ITALY

WD-IT1 Italy 1963

LA GROTTA AZZURRA *

WD – Neapolitan – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: C. VALENTE, 1826 (LY-WD16)

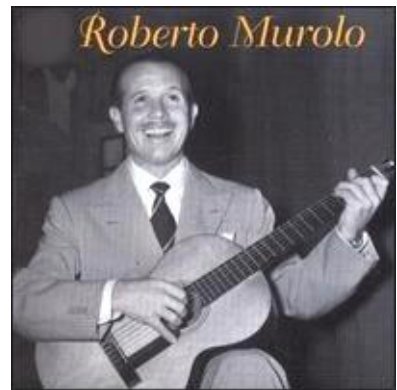
Perf: Roberto MUROLO (vocal & guitar)

Prod. Co: Durium

Liner Notes: (LP) Roberto Murolo

Time: 3:42

1. Original LP: CANZONE NAPOLETANA - DAL 1200 AL 1700 - VOL. 1
Durium msA1 77069 (Gatefold cover)
12" 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 7)
2. Box Set LP: CANZONE NAPOLETANA – DAL 1200 AL 1962
Durium (?) (4XLPs)
3. Reissue in Box Set CD: CANZONE NAPOLETANA – DAL 1200 AL 1962 (1997)
BMG/ Ricordi (?) (4XCDs) (Disc 1 – Tk 14)
4. Reissue on Compilation CD: NAPOLITANA – VOL. 1 (1200 – 1700) (1998)
Ricordi 74321391422 (Tk 14)
5. Reissue on Compilation CD: ANTHOLGIA SONORA DELLA CANZONE NAPOLETANA – VOL. 7
Phonotype SFN3-2077 (3XCDs) (Disc 3 – Tk 11)
6. Reissue on Compilation CD: NAPOLETANA – VOL. 1 (1200-1894) – Roberto Murolo
Flashback (?) (2XCDs) (Disc 1 – Tk 14)
7. Reissue on CD: SONGS OF NAPOLI (2005)
Lucky Planet (?) (Tk 13)



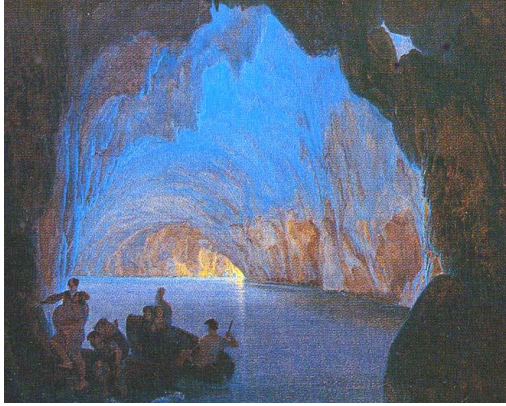
Notes: Roberto Murolo was “one of the most beloved singers in Italy and a cultural hero without peer in Naples.” (Eder, n.d.)

This song is an early Neapolitan art song (Canzone d’Arte) written by C. Valente in 1826. This volume is one of a series of eight albums devoted to old Neapolitan traditional songs, all performed by Roberto Murolo. (Anon. n.d.) The lyrics of this song are in Old Italian, but Murolo gives the modern Italian transcription in the liner notes. These together with the English translation will be found in LY-WD16. The original song as written by Valente has eight stanzas (see [napoligrafia](#)); here only the first four stanzas are performed. The fourth stanza gives some important and relevant information –

Acalete no poco	Abbassati un poco	Bend down a little
Stentato è lo passaggio,	Il passaggio è stretto	The passage it is narrow
Jarria dintò a lo fuoco	Mi getterei nel fuoco	I would also throw myself in the fire
Pe sta vicino a te ...	Pur di esserti vicino	To be near you
Chest’e a grotta azzurra,	Ecco la Grotta Azzurra	Here in the Blue Cave
Non aie chiù che bedè!	Non vedrai niente di più bella	You won’t see anything more beautiful!

As the liner notes point out that at the start of the 18th century it was necessary to bend down in the small boats when entering the low cave opening and no doubt the situation had been this way for centuries.

The Grotta Azzurra was known at least in Roman times because a statue dating to that period was found in 1965 by divers in the underwater sediments well inside the cave. (Maltini 1966) First cited in the literature as the Grotta di Gradola, the Grotta Azzurra or Blue Grotto was mentioned by the Venetian geographer Marco Vincenzo Coronelli in the second volume of his *Isolario* published in 1696. (Pisaturo 1998) The first



known painting of the Grotta Azzurra was done by Frans Vervloet in 1825, but diligent research will probably bring to light earlier works. Surely, during that first quarter of the 19th century, other painters of the Posillipo School of natural landscape painting would have heard of this picturesque cave and have come over to paint it. We are told that just one year after Vervloet did his painting, the cave was “rediscovered” by the German poet August Kopisch and the painter Ernst Fries, guided by the local fisherman, Angelo Ferraro. A few isolated original paintings of the cave may have circulated prior to 1826, but it was surely the publication of Kopisch’s description of the discovery of the Blue Grotto that began spreading the fame of the cave far and wide. This song dates to 1826. The painting shown here, *Die Blaue Grotte von Capri* (1835), is by

Heinrich Jakob Fried and is located at the Kunsthalle in Bremen, Germany.

We also get erroneous information regarding the earliest song about the Grotta Azzurra. Writing with knowledge of Roberto Murolo’s work Paolo Prato stated that – “According to the Enciclopedia della Canzone Napoletana by Ettore De Mura (Il Torchio, Naples, 1968), the earliest known song about Capri is 'A grotta azzurra (1889), by Pasquale Cinquegrana (who also wrote Ndringhetendrà) and Edoardo Di Capua (the composer of 'O sole mio' and 'I te vurria vasà'). "Chell è na grotta tutta turchina, comme so' l'uocchie ca tiene, oi né"(This is a grotto all turquoise, like your eyes), run the words of the song, dedicated to the famous grotto.” (Prato 2005)

For other recorded music inspired by the Grotta Azzurra, Capri see under Jazz Music – Swing – *Blue Grotto in Capri*; and under Popular Music – Germany, Italy, & United Kingdom.

Ref: Anon. n.d., Canzoni Napoletana, [Pisciotta](#)

Antologia Sonora della Canzone Napoletana – Cofanetto 7, [Musica Napoletana](#)

Archivo Sonoro della Canzone Napoletana, Ricera, [Canzone Napoletana](#)

Blue Grotto (Capri), [Wikipedia](#)

Eder, Bruce n.d., Roberto Murolo, Biography, [Allmusic](#) & CD [Allmusic](#)

Faiella, Vincenzo, Personal communication, Sept. 26, 2004, Libreria Mario Faiella e Figli, Capri

Grotta Azzurra, Capri, Photos, [Capri](#)

Kopisch, August ca.1829 (1997), *Entdeckung der Blaue Grotte auf der Insel Capri*, Reprinted by Verlag Klaus Wagenback, Berlin, (Cover painting)

Lindenmayr, Franz, Die Blaue Grotte – The Blue Grotto (in German), [lochstein.de](#)

Maltini, Raniero 1966, Capri’s Mystery Maiden, *Skin Diver*, April 1966, p. 38-40

Pisaturo, Antonella Basilico 1998, *Painters on Capri 1850-1950*, Edizioni La Conchiglia, Capri, p. 80

Prato, Paolo 2005, An Island of Music, *Capri Review Magazine*, n. 24, 19 Sept. 2005, [Capri Review](#)

Roberto Murolo, Biography (in Italian & English), [italica.rai](#)

Roberto Murolo, Songs of Naples, Libreria Neapolis, [Libreria Neapolis](#)

Valente, C. 1826, La Grotta Azzurra, Lyrics, [napoligrafia](#)

WD-IT2 Italy 2001

LA GROTTA AZZURRA *

WD – Neapolitan – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: (?)

Perf: **Adria MORTARI** (vocal)

Gianluca Marino (guitar)

Leonard Massa (mandolin)

Prod. Co: Niccolò

Time: 2:17

CD: THE NEAPOLITAN POPULAR SONG (2001)

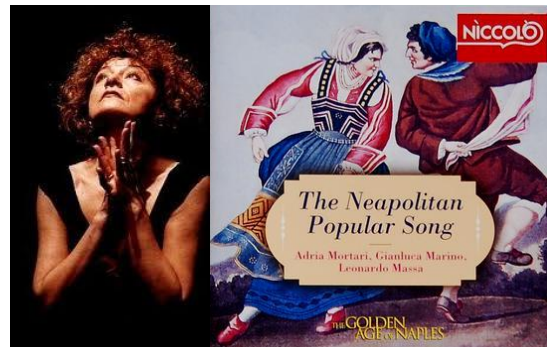
Niccolò CD-NIC-48 (Tk 5)

Notes: Nothing further could be learned about this song. Adria Mortari is a well-known Neapolitan singer and she may well have recorded this song much earlier in her career.

Ref: Adria Mortari, Bio, (in Italian), [scatolasonora](#)

Adria Mortari, The Neapolitan Popular Song, [Amazon](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

Adria Mortari, The Neapolitan Popular Song, La Grotta Azzurra, [Tradebit](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)



WD-IT3 Italy ca.1970s

'A GROTTA AZZURRA *

WD – Neapolitan – Vocal & Instrumental –
Cave Pic Cover

Mus: Anon. (Traditional)

Lyr: (Traditional) & Alberto SCIOTTI

Arr: Eduardo Alfieri

Rts: Piccola Vela

Perf: Nino FIORE (vocal)
(with orchestra)

Mus. Dir: Eduardo Alfieri

Prod. Co: Bella Record S.R.L.; Naples

Time: (No. 1) 3:05 & (No 2) 3:10

1. **LP:** BAGLIORI DEL GOLFO ([PC-RE-SI2](#))

Bella BRLP 10026 (stereo)

12" 33rpm (Sd 1 – Bd 5)

2. Reissue on Compilation **CD:** NAPOLI – ETERNA MELODIA – VOL. 8 (2004)

KappaO CD-0239 (Tk 5)

3. Reissue on Compilation **CD:** ANTHOLGIA SONORA DELLA CANZONE NAPOLETANA – VOL. 1

Phonotype (?) (3XCDs) (Disc 3 – Tk 6)

Notes: During his career as a songwriter Alberto Sciotti recovered several ancient Neapolitan songs and he worked on albums with many other artists besides Nino Fiore. For this early Neapolitan art song he kept the first stanza in Old Italian (the same one that Roberto Murolo sings) and he wrote three new stanzas of his own in Old Italian, all referring to the Grotta Azzurra. It was not possible to transcribe these additional three stanzas.

There were at least three other old Neapolitan songs inspired by the Grotta Azzurra all titled "Grotta Azzurra" – one dated 1906 with music by Carlo Fanti and lyrics by F. Pintatura; one in 1928 with music by Raffaele Bossi and lyrics by Eduardo Scala; and one in 1931 with music by Giovanni Donnarumma and lyrics by Giuseppe Garafalo. It is not known if any of these songs were ever recorded.

An Italian popular song, entitled "Grotta Azzurra" was written and performed by the well-known singer Peppino di Capri and released in 2008 on the CD "Capri," Lucky Planets label. This album also included a song entitled, "Grotta Smeraldo," another marine cave on the Amalfi peninsula, not far from Capri. However, neither of these popular songs will be included in this discography because the CD was released after 2005.

Ref: Antologia sonora della canzone napoletana – Vol. 1, [Allmusic](#)

Antologia sonora napoletana - Vol. 1, [MusicaNapoletana](#)

Archivio Sonoro della Canzone Napoletana, Ricera, [Canzonenapoletana](#)

Musica Napoletana, [MusicaNapoletana](#)

Nino Fiore, 'A grotto Azzurra (3:14), [YouTube](#) (◀**COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE**)

Paola, Grotta Azzurra de Capri, Capri Love Song and Liscio de Capri, [itunes](#)

Peppino di Capri, Capri CD, [Allmusic](#)



Alberto SCIOTTI



Nino FIORE

WD-IT4 Norway 1995

DEN BLÅU GROTTE *

WD – Neapolitan – Vocal & Instrumental

Mus: Anon. (Traditional)

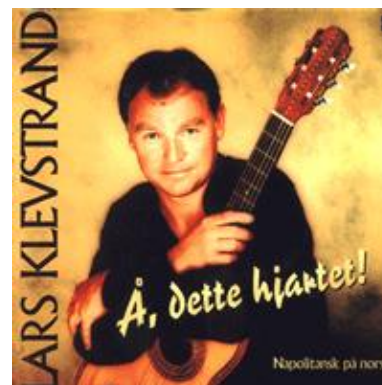
Lyr: Bodil Madalena DYBS

Perf: Lars KLEVSTAND (vocal & guitar)

Prod: Lars Klevstrand

Prod. Co: Quattro AS; Oslo

Rec. Co: Vidaråsen Landsby



Time: 3:21

CD: Å, DETTE HJARTET !

Quattro QCD 9307 (Tk 1)

Notes: A very unusual case of a Norwegian singer performing an old Neapolitan song about "The Blue Grotto" where he sings the lyrics in the Norwegian Nynorsk language but the style is old Neapolitan not Norwegian.

Only a 30-second audio clip was heard of this song and it was not possible to obtain the Norwegian lyrics.

Ref: Lars Klevstand, A Dette Hjartet, [Allmusic](#)

Lars Klevstrand, Å Dette Hjartet!, [Quattro](#)

WD-IT5 France ca.1970s

LA LEGGENDA DEL BUE MARINO *

WD – Folk – Instrumental

Comp: (Unknown)

Arr: Benito Merlino

Rts: Buda Musique, Paris

Perf: I FOLK MUSICI DELL'EOLIE

Angelo Merlino (guitar)

Giovanni Ruggiero (guitar)

Sydney Aufrere (flute)

Mus. Dir: Benito Merlino

Prod. Co: Société Française de Productions
Phonographiques; Paris

Time: 2:15

1. **LP:** CHANTS ET LÉGENDES DE L'ITALIE DU SUD

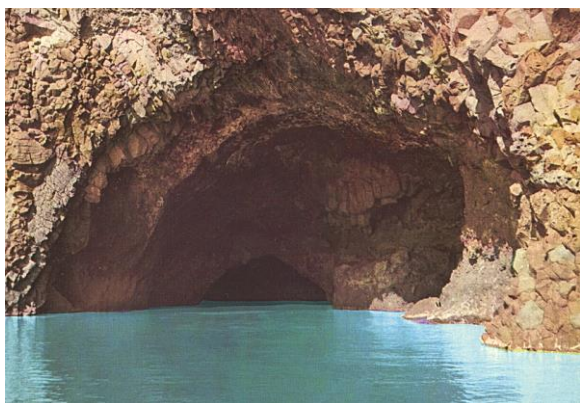
SFP SFP-52008 (stereo)

12' 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 5)

2. **CD:** CHANTS DE L'ITALIE DU SUD

Musique du Monde 82486-2 (Tk 12)

Notes: An ancient melody of the fishermen of Filicudi Island in the Aeolian Group off the north coast of Sicily. Even today fishermen are sometimes obliged to take shelter from storms in the Grotta del Bue Marino (Cave of the Seal), a sea cave on the Filicudi coast. Inside the cave they apparently can hear this melody carried by the wind. About 30 meters wide at the entrance and over 20 meters long, there is an inner room with a small pebble beach at the back end.



As presented here this simple, haunting tune is introduced by the flute with guitar accompaniment, followed by guitars alone repeating the same refrain.

The liner notes tell about the old legend concerning this cave, which comes down to us from protohistory and mythology – “*Les personnages de cette légende sont Eole (qui donna son nom à ces îles), une sirène du nom d’Amanda et un veau marin, son amant, qui avaient pour alcôve une immense grotte marine gardée par une gigantesque pieuvre.*” [The characters in this legend are Aeolus (who gives his name to these islands), a siren by the name of Amanda, and a seal, her lover, who had as their bedchamber a huge marine cave guarded by a gigantic octopus.]

The seal here is the Mediterranean monk seal which is now on the endangered species list. Slaughtered by fishermen who considered them a threat to the nets, they were also deprived of their habitats due to pollution and coastal development. The total population in 1994 was estimated at 500. (Anon. 1994)

This Grotta del Bue Marino should not be confused with three other Italian marine caves bearing the same name; one on San Domino Island in the small Tremiti Group in the Adriatic Sea and the other, the famous, extensive show cave on the east coast of Sardinia. There is also a Grotta del Bove Marino (sometimes written Bue Marino) a small sea cave on the north coast of Capri.



A. MERLINO & G. RUGGIERO

Ref: Anon. 1994, *Speleophilately International*, n. 44, Aug. 1994, p.22
Filicudi, Grotta del Bue Marino, Video of visit inside the sea cave, [YouTube](#)
L'Isola di Filicudi, Photos of cave & map of island, [filicudi.info](#)

WD-IT6 Italy 1964

VIENI ALLA GROTTA DI ULISSE

WD – Folk – Vocal & Instrumental

Comp: Alfio DI MAURO (LY-WD42)

Perf: **COMPLESSO CARATTERISTICO**
"GROTTA DI ULISSE"

N. Guardone or M. Di Bella or C. Viscuso (vocal)
& (THE) BEPPO'S

Mus. Dir: Alfio di Mauro

Prod. Co: Durium

Liner Notes: Beppo

Time: 1:58

LP: SERENATA A TAORMINA

Durium CR 30-075

12' 33rpm (Sd 2 – Bd 2)

Notes: An ancient Sicilian folk melody that sings of Ulysses (the Ancient Roman name for the Greek hero Odysseus) performed by a traditional group that calls itself after the cave, Grotto of Ulysses. This upbeat, cheerful song is sung in a traditional manner by a woman. It was not possible to transcribe and translate the entire lyrics. Apparently only one stanza is sung in the beginning and then for the chorus the words "Grotta di Ulisse" were heard twice in the verses. Variants of the chorus are repeated until the final coda.

"Infatti, questi strumenti tipici a plectro posseggono infinite risorse di timbri caratteristici ed è per questo motivo che il celebre e famoso locale 'Grotta di Ulisse' di Taormina, diretto da Beppo, si serve di questo tipo di strumenti, oltre che di quelli tipici siciliani, dalle cui corde si sprigionano suoni e armonie di rara bellezza che turisti di tutti i paesi del mondo gustano e assaprano." (Beppo, Liner notes)

[In fact, these instruments, typical plucked string instruments, possess endless resources of characteristic timbre, and it is for this reason that the celebrated and famous venue, 'Cave of Ulysses,' of Taormina, directed by Beppo, uses this type of instrument, as well as those typical Sicilian instruments, from which strings you create sounds and harmonies of rare beauty that tourists from all countries of the world enjoying and appreciate.]



From this statement one can possibly deduce that this piece was maybe inspired by the pizzeria restaurant Grotta di Ulisse (via Salita Lucio Denti 3) at Taormina (Messina), Sicily or, more likely, by some other famous venue, which no longer exists in that city. This venue was where the performing group, the "Characteristic Ensemble of the Ulysses Grotto," played this number whose title invited people to "Come to the Grotto of Ulysses."

It is also possible that the piece was inspired by the littoral caves located a fair distance down along the coast southeast of Taormina. A kayak trip from the port of Ognina northeast of Catania on the east coast of Sicily will allow one to visit the lava cliffs and the Caves of Ulysses (see photo below on left).

Yet another possibility is the Grotta Azzurra (Blue Grotto) (see photo above right) at the northeast end of the bay at Taormina. This large sea cave could well have served to conceal Odysseus' war galley when he and his men landed on the eastern shores of Sicily on their long and torturous journey returning from the Trojan War to their home Isle of Ithaca (see Homer's *The Odyssey* – c.XII-v.317-319).

Ref: Beppo's Complesso Caratteristico della Grotta di Ulisse, Internet Culturale, internetculturale.it
Di Mauro, A. n.d., Vieni alla Grotta de Ulisse, Istituto Centrale per Beni Sonori ed Audiovisivi, icbsa.it

caveinspiredmusic.com