



Piazza della Grammatica 1 • Antonella Olson & Eric Edwards, Presentatori e Capocomici

Gentili Ascoltatori, Dear Listeners,

Here is a transcript of our recent broadcast about using the **trapassato prossimo** and the **trapassato remoto** to talk about the past, "Pulcinella Plugged,"

<https://coerll.utexas.edu/ra/episode/ep03.html>

Ha partecipato:

Nevin Pecorelli

Featured in this program:

as Pulcinella

Buon divertimento!

Transcript

Antonella: Pulcinella, che piacere rivederti! Come stai?

Pulcinella: Bene, bene, grazie... Ciao, grazie, grazie... grazie a tutti quanti...

Antonella: Senti, mio caro, questo tuo nuovo CD,

Pulcinella: "Pulcinella Plugged"

Antonella: ma è stupendo! L'ho sentito ieri. Non **avevo** mai **sentito** una musica simile...

Pulcinella: È piaciuto anche a te?

Antonella: Come no! Dimmi una cosa, Pulcinella, è vero che all'età di sette anni **avevi** già **composto** le tue prime canzonette?

Pulcinella: Senti, io, quando sono nato, il medico non mi **aveva** ancora **sculacciato** quando ho cominciato a cantare...

Antonella: Pulcinella, it's great to see you again! How are you?

Pulcinella: Fine, fine, thanks... Thank you, thank you. Thanks, everybody.

Antonella: Listen, my dear, this new CD of yours...

Pulcinella: "Pulcinella Plugged"

Antonella: why it's stupendous! I heard it yesterday. I had never heard music like that...

Pulcinella: Did you like it too?

Antonella: Of course! Tell me something, Pulcinella, is it true that at the age of seven you had all ready composed your first little songs?

Pulcinella: Listen, me, when I was born, the doctor hadn't spanked me yet when I started to sing...

Antonella: Ma dici sul serio?!

Antonella: Are you serious?!

Pulcinella: Non so scherzare...

Pulcinella: Pulcinella: No joke...

Antonella: Comunque il tuo grande successo da cantautore non è stata una cosa repentina...

Antonella: Anyway, your success as a singer-songwriter didn't happen overnight...

Pulcinella: Assolutamente no!... Da grande **avevo abbandonato** ogni speranza di raggiungere la fama.

Pulcinella: Absolutely not!... When I grew up I had abandoned every hope of becoming famous.

Antonella: Incredibile! E come hai trovato poi il coraggio di proseguire?

Antonella: Incredible! So how did you find the courage to go on, then?

Pulcinella: L'ho trovato grazie a Colombina. Tutto è cambiato da quando le ho cantato alcune mie melodie.

Pulcinella: I found it thanks to Colombina. Everything changed when I sang a few of my tunes for her.

Antonella: Davvero?

Antonella: Really?

Pulcinella: È rimasta sbalordita dalle musiche che **avevo scritto** da giovane.

Pulcinella: She was astonished by the music I had written when I was young.

Antonella: Posso immaginarmelo... In effetti, il grande pubblico aspettava da anni una novità musicale quando tu finalmente hai ritrovato l'ispirazione e hai portato una ventata di novità col tuo "Pulcinella Plugged".

Antonella: I can imagine... In fact, the public at large had been waiting for years for something new in music when you finally found your inspiration again and ushered in a breath of fresh air with your "Pulcinella Plugged."

Pulcinella: Come mi ha incoraggiato l'entusiasmo di quella fanciulla!

Pulcinella: How that girl's enthusiasm encouraged me!

Antonella: Poi ti hanno contattato i rappresentanti della Dimentichi...

Antonella: Then the agents from Dimentichi contacted you...

Pulcinella: No no, è stato proprio lui... il signor Dimentichi... **avevo** appena **cominciato** a scrivere una nuova canzone quando mi ha telefonato.

Pulcinella: No no, it was him... Mr Dimentichi himself. I had just started writing a new song when he phoned me.

Antonella: Allora questo CD... "Pulcinella Plugged"...?

Antonella: So this new CD... "Pulcinella Plugged"...?

Pulcinella: Tutt'una nuova fase nello sviluppo della musica leggera, modestia a parte...

Antonella: Questo CD, dicevo, sarà in vendita...

Pulcinella: È in vendita! Nei negozi, in rete... Quando i negozi si sono aperti stamani le copie del CD **erano** già **arrivate**... Anzi, ragazzi, è stato un piacere, ma devo andare -- vi saluto, amici...

Antonella: Oh, Pulcinella! Non puoi rimanere ancora un attimo con noi?

Pulcinella: Mi dispiace, devo fare uno spot pubblicitario qui nello studio accanto, poi si fa una festa da Colombina... devo proprio scappare...

Antonella: A presto, Pulcinella, tanti auguri per il CD...

Pulcinella: An entirely new phase in the development of pop music, if I do say so myself.

Antonella: This CD, I was going to say, will be on sale...

Pulcinella: It is on sale. In the stores, online... When the stores opened this morning, the copies of the CD had already arrived. Guys, it's been a pleasure, but I have to go... So long, friends...

Antonella: Oh, Pulcinella! Can't you stay with us a little bit longer?

Pulcinella: I'm sorry, I have to do a promo here in the studio next door, then there's a party at Colombina's... I really have to run...

Antonella: See you soon, Pulcinella, best wishes for the CD...

Nota Grammaticale

The **trapassato prossimo** and the **trapassato remoto** are the last two past tenses we are going to talk about. In fact we can't have a **passato prossimo**, without having a **trapassato prossimo**, and having a **passato remoto** doesn't save us from also having a **trapassato remoto**. The good news is that, since the **trapassato remoto** is mainly used in literature, we can focus on the **trapassato prossimo**.

The function of the **trapassato prossimo** is to put the actions in the right chronological order: the **trapassato prossimo** is used to report actions that had happened further back in the past than the other ones that we are talking about.

As Pulcinella says: 'Colombina è rimasta sbalordita dalle musiche che **avevo scritto** da giovane'. The action '**scrivere le musiche**' happened way before (in fact Pulcinella says 'da giovane') than the action 'Colombina è rimasta sbalordita'.

And again: '**Avevo** appena **cominciato** a scrivere una nuova canzone quando mi ha telefonato il Signor Dimentichi'. Even in this sentence the action of writing the song happened before (even if it was 'appena', just before) Mr Dimentichi called Pulcinella.

When the **trapassato prossimo** reports an action that took place before another action in the past, the other action is not always explicit. Sometimes in fact you use the **trapassato prossimo** by itself without referring to the other action like 'Da grande **avevo abbandonato** ogni speranza di raggiungere la fama'. Here you assume something happened after '**avevo abbandonato**' that changed Pulcinella's situation.

Other times the **trapassato prossimo** comes out to show the prior cause of a past event: 'Non ho più scritto canzoni perchè **avevo abbandonato** la speranza di diventare un grande cantante' where '**avevo abbandonato** la speranza' is the cause of past event 'Non ho più scritto canzoni'.

formation

The pluperfect (**il piuccheperfetto**, or more commonly **il trapassato prossimo**) is formed with the auxiliary in the imperfetto followed by the past participle of the verb. The choice of auxiliary, essere or avere, is the same as for the **passato prossimo**.

Trapassato prossimo = auxiliary in the imperfetto + past participle of verb

mangiare, <i>to eat I had eaten, you had eaten, etc.</i>	
avevo mangiato	avevamo mangiato
avevi mangiato	avevate mangiato
aveva mangiato	avevamo mangiato

andare, <i>to go - I had gone, you had gone, etc.</i>	
ero andato/a	eravamo andati/e
eri andato/a	eravate andati/e
era andato/a	erano andati/e

The rules for past participle agreement in the **trapassato prossimo** are the same as for the **passato prossimo**.

Trapassato remoto

Like the passato remoto, the **trapassato remoto** is a tense used in literature and narrative writing. The two tenses are often found together in the same text. The **trapassato remoto** is used in literature, in formal writing, and in very formal speeches, when speaking of past events which are prior to other past actions. It is very similar to the **trapassato prossimo** in that it is used to refer to a past action that was completed before another action in the past, but its use is very restricted.

Three different conditions must all be met before **trapassato remoto** can be the right tense to use:

1. **trapassato remoto** must appear in a subordinate clause introduced by a conjunction of time, such as (non) appena (as soon as), dopo che (after), or quando (when);
2. the verb in the main clause must be in the **passato remoto**;
3. the action of the verb in the **trapassato remoto** must be prior, that is, it happens before the verb in the main clause.

Consider the following example:

Appena **ebbe compiuto** dieci anni Pantalone **cominciò** a risparmiare.
(As soon as he turned ten Pantalone began to save)

1. the clause with “had turned ten” is introduced by “appena,” a conjunction of time. The first condition has been met.
2. the verb in the main clause, “**cominciò**”, is in the **passato remoto**. The second condition has been met.
3. the action of the verb in the subordinate clause is prior to the action in the main clause. Thus all three of the necessary conditions for **trapassato remoto** have been met.

formation

The **trapassato remoto** is formed with the **passato remoto** of the appropriate auxiliary (avere or essere) plus the past participle of the main verb.

Trapassato remoto = auxiliary in the **passato remoto** + past participle of main verb

parlare 'to speak' - I had spoken, you had spoken, etc.	
ebbi parlato	avemmo parlato
avesti parlato	aveste parlato
ebbe parlato	ebbero parlato

andare 'to go' - I had gone, you had gone, etc.	
fui andato/a	fummo andati/e
fosti andato/a	foste andati/e
fu andato/a	furono andati/e

Nota Culturale

It can be great fun to familiarize yourself with these tenses through the history of the great period of the Italian opera and by reading the libretti that accompany each of these operas. **Libretto** (pl. libretti) is an Italian word that translates literally as "*little book*"—it's the script of an opera, the words that the singers sing. They are usually very easy to access online. To start your journey, you could visit the web site of Casa Ricordi (www.ricordi.com). Casa Ricordi is the oldest Italian music publishing firm and 'undoubtedly the world's most important publisher of opera. It was founded in Milan in 1808 and Ricordi has published some of the all-time greatest Italian opera scores and libretti. Ricordi is also a very important Italian recording label. On the web site of Casa Ricordi you may read about the most famous Italian composers from Rossini to Donizetti, as well as the other great names like Bellini, Verdi and Puccini. You may also read and listen to some of the most important contemporary composers both Italian and foreign.

If opera is not your genre, there is a wide array of Italian pop singers whose work is accessible on the website of MTV Italia (www.mtv.it). Despite the strong presence of foreign artists, there is also a considerable number of Italian singers ranging from hip-hop and rap to techno. Sadly, you won't be able to learn much about the **trapassato prossimo** and the **trapassato remoto** as they are not much employed in this musical context.

Another option is to log on the web site of the Italian public television network (www.rai.it). Usually, on the very first page there is a music section where you can learn about very many talented **cantautori** (singer-songwriters) that do not belong to the pop mainstream. You may search and learn more about such talented artists as Fabrizio De Andrè, Paolo Conte, Mimmo Locasciulli and many more. Unfortunately, Pulcinella's greatest hits are probably confined to history and our imagination.

Thanks for listening! And be sure to tell your friends that everything is *plus quam perfectus* – more than perfect – here on **Radio Arlecchino!**

Your hosts with the most – grammar,
Antonella Olson & Eric Edwards
“*Out of our minds ... into your ears*”