



LEONE PICCIONI

BIOGRAPHY

1925-1939

TURIN-PISTOIA

1925 Leone Piccioni was born on May 9th in Turin, which the family soon left to move to Pistoia. Son of lawyer and politician Attilio Piccioni, Leone cultivated from an early age a passion for literature, art, and music, which he listened to together with his brother Piero, who would later become an important jazz musician and film-score composer.

1939-1946

FLORENCE-ROME

1944 Leone attended high school and later the Faculty of Literature at the University of Florence, where he studied under **Roberto Longhi** and **Domenico De Robertis**. With the latter, a most refined literary critic, he developed his thesis project on the variants of Leopardi's ten *Canzoni*.

1946 Alcide De Gasperi summoned Leone's father, Attilio, to Rome to serve as deputy secretary of the Democrazia Cristiana Party. In the capital, Leone completed his studies at «La Sapienza» under the guidance of **Giuseppe Ungaretti**, later becoming the poet's assistant. A profound and lasting intellectual and personal relationship grew between Ungaretti and Piccioni; it was Ungaretti who mediated several important encounters between Leone and the contemporary art scene.
That same year Piccioni was hired by **Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI)** as a journalist, beginning a long and successful career within the Italian public broadcasting company, eventually reaching its highest executive levels.

1948-1952

VERSILIA

1948 In the summer, Piccioni used to stay with his family in Viareggio, Forte dei Marmi, and Lido di Camaiore. It was during one of these summers, in 1948, that Leone met **Osanna Doni**, his

future wife. Piccioni thus began to spend time regularly in **Forte dei Marmi**, where Osanna's parents owned a holiday home.

- 1952** In Forte dei Marmi, at the Caffè Roma, Piccioni came into contact with a lively intellectual circle that included writers such as Enrico Pea and Cesare Pavese; artists like **Mino Maccari** and **Mario Marcucci**; and celebrated masters such as **Ottone Rosai** and **Carlo Carrà**, from whom in 1952 Piccioni bought *La Marina dell'Approdo*.
Between 1949 and 1953 Leone collaborated with «**Il Popolo**» as director of the cultural section.

1952-1970

ROME

- 1952** Piccioni became editor of the quarterly magazine «**L'Approdo letterario**», produced by RAI. It was the print counterpart to the radio program by the same name, first broadcast in 1944 in newly liberated Florence, with which Piccioni had been involved since its early days. Conceived by the critic Adriano Seroni, the program focused on literature, poetry, cinema, theatre, music, and the visual arts.

- 1963** *L'Approdo TV* was launched, and it aired until 1972: the painting by Carrà that Leone had bought over a decade earlier was chosen as its opening image. This was an experience of remarkable cultural depth, with a steering committee including intellectuals such as Carlo Bo and Carlo Emilio Gadda, with whom Piccioni maintained long correspondences. The participation of Giulio Carlo Argan, Cesare Brandi, Carla Lonzi, and Roberto Longhi – among others – contributed to a high level of artistic and critical discourse.
Alongside his work at RAI, Piccioni wrote for the cultural page of «**Il Tempo**» and continuing his literary-critical research. He became university lecturer; he served as a juror for major literary prizes (including the Premio Viareggio, Premio Campiello, Premio Rapallo, and Premio Letterario Basilicata); he devoted himself to the study of Leopardi, Verga, African American poetry, and above all Ungaretti. He edited in 1969 the publication of **Vita di un uomo**, which included the complete works of Ungaretti and was the first volume of Mondadori's *Meridiani* series. Shortly after the poet's death, Piccioni published *Vita di un poeta*, mourning the loss of his mentor and friend.

- 1969** After works such as *Lettura leopardiana e altri saggi*, *Sui contemporanei*, and *Lavagna bianca*, he brought out ***Maestri e Amici*** – perhaps his best-known volume – collecting portraits of contemporary writers and artists, merging personal anecdotes with refined critical interpretation. The book recounts friendships that Leone forged in the art world: those introduced by Ungaretti, such as **Giorgio Morandi** and **Alberto Burri**; his unexpected connection with **Renato Guttuso**, a member of the Italian Communist Party from whom Piccioni, a liberal Catholic intellectual, purchased several works; his encounter with

Giacomo Manzù, facilitated by De Gasperi's widow; his connection to the **Scuola di Piazza del Popolo** through **Mario Schifano** and **Giosetta Fioroni**, who in 1970 painted a portrait of Leone's daughter, Gloria; his collaboration with **Piero Dorazio** in publishing precious editions of Ungaretti's poetry, illustrated with the artist's lithographs.

1971-2018

PIENZA

- 1971** In the 1960s, Piccioni began visiting **Pienza** with Ungaretti and **Mario Luzi**. In 1971 he bought a "tower-house" on the main street and became a driving force behind the town's cultural rebirth. He attracted to Pienza friends such as **Cesare Brandi** and **Alberto Sordi**, as well as artists like Guttuso and Manzù, who exhibited there. Furthermore, Leone supported the work of local artists Emo Formichi, Aleardo Paolucci, and Piero Sbarluzzi.
- 1983** During the 1970s Piccioni served as president of the record company Fonit Cetra, temporarily stepping away from television. In 1983, he was appointed **deputy director general of RAI**, a position he held until retirement.
- 1991** Piccioni left RAI and chose Pienza as his place of study and rest. In recognition of his significant cultural contributions to the city, in 2003 the municipal administration awarded him honorary citizenship.
- 2018** Leone Piccioni passed away on May 15th. In accordance with his wishes, he was buried in the Tuscan town.

In the years following their father's death, his heirs, Gloria and Giovanni (1952-2024), dedicated themselves with great commitment to preserving and promoting Leone's memory. In 2019, the Italian Ministry of Culture began the acquisition of an important archive of documents and letters destined for the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, complemented by the donation of part of his precious personal library. In Pienza, the Centro Studi Leone Piccioni continues his legacy, through the promotion and support of art and literature, to which Leone devoted his life.