

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/from-sicily-to-new-york/>

Giovanni Rosalia was a Sicilian actor born in 1864 in Palermo who migrated to the United States in 1903. Initially performing classical theater, he quickly adapted to the audience's preferences by creating a popular character known as Nolu and founded his own theater company, The Rosalia and Company. He played a significant role in the vaudeville scene of New York from 1907 to 1919, blending acting, singing, and dancing in a style that catered to the Italian American community.

Rosalia's work is notable for pioneering a form of "total theater," combining various performance arts and establishing a lingua franca of English and Italian for the community. He recorded over 200 skits and poetry collections, often writing in Sicilian and contributing to local newspapers, thus influencing the regional culture and dialect theater.

His character Nolu highlighted social conflicts between different classes, paralleling themes from Italian theatrical traditions. Despite his death in 1934, Rosalia's legacy continues to resonate, impacting the development of performance art as it transitioned into a business. His methods and styles can be seen in contemporary entertainment, such as television shows like Saturday Night Live, which incorporate a variety of skits reminiscent of vaudeville.