

*LA GENERAZIONE DELL'OTTANTA*  
AND THE ITALIAN SOUND

A DISSERTATION IN  
Trumpet Performance

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ABSTRACT

*La Generazione dell'Ottanta* (The Generation of the Eighties) is a generation of Italian composers born in the 1880s, all of whom reached their artistic maturity between the two World Wars and who made it a point to part ways musically from the preceding generations that were rooted in operatic music, especially in the *Verismo* tradition. The names commonly associated with the Generazione are Alfredo Casella (1883-1947), Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973), Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968), and Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936).

In their efforts to create a new music that sounded unmistakably Italian and fueled by the musical nationalism rampant throughout Europe at the time, the four composers took inspiration from the pre-Romantic music of their country. Individually and collectively, they embarked on a journey to bring back what they considered the golden age of Italian music, with each one yielding a different result.

Through the creation of artistic associations facilitated by the fascist government, the musicians from the *Generazione* established themselves on the international scene and were involved with performances of their works around the world. Immediately after the end of World War II, in an effort to condemn the excesses that led humanity to war, their music fell out of favor and the younger generation embraced different ideals, now devoid of nationalist traits.

Through an analysis of what identified their music as properly Italian, it is possible to identify the missing link between the Italian operatic tradition of the nineteenth century and the modernist currents of the twentieth. In looking at the music of the *Generazione* more objectively, thanks to the passing of time, the talents of these four composers who were forced to work under extreme circumstances become apparent and the significance of their contributions to musical life in Italy can be critically assessed.

## APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the UMKC Conservatory have examined a thesis titled “*La Generazione dell’Ottanta* and the Italian Sound,” presented by Alberto Racanati, candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Many times during my career as a musician abroad, I have been asked by conductors to sometimes sound more “Italian,” a request often accompanied by a trembling motion of the right hand, less frequently by that popular gesture that consists of having the five fingers of the hand touching, pointing upwards. Most of the time it is pretty clear what the conductor is after: a fully voiced, open tone, with a healthy amount of vibrato and all the familiar flair commonly associated with the *bel canto* school. Even though the communication between conductor and musician during rehearsal has the sole goal of achieving a desired musical effect, I couldn’t help pondering where such an association comes from and compare it with other similar labels and their effects. What does it mean, for example, to play French, or American? In general orchestral practice, a lightness in the sound is commonly associated with the French style, whereas perhaps it can be said that the use of the full dynamic spectrum and a warmer sound could be considered when playing certain American classical music from the twentieth century. These considerations also vary between instrument categories: depending on the established tradition for each specific instrument, national



connotations in regards to style may vary. For example the United States of America, having some notable brass sections in its top-tier orchestras, as well as an established tradition of influential brass pedagogues, can boast a so-called “American sound” when it comes to brass playing, whereas there isn’t the same clear meaning behind that definition when it is applied to other instruments, such as the piano or the bassoon. The reasons behind the creation of a sonic code reflective of a national idiom include many variables and historical events, and are ultimately intertwined with the complex topic of ethnomusicology. While thinking about this, I started to dig deeper and came up with one main question: which generation of composers established themselves so deeply within the cultural fabric of a country (Italy) to the point where their music is considered a national emblem?

Every student and aspiring musician ought to ask themselves such questions for multiple reasons. First, modern orchestral performance is gradually converging to more comparable standards: what existed as audible distinctions between an Italian, a German and a French orchestra a hundred years ago are today subtle differences. The many reasons behind this go beyond the scope of this work, so in short I will say that it is a by-product of the recording industry, which made it possible to listen to any orchestra in the world, and therefore leveling the field in regard to regional aesthetic values. It is important to learn what the stylistic differences are and to use them with awareness. From this last point comes the second reason for the shift in

sound: increased mobility and opportunity. If (like in my personal experience) a developing musician would find themselves all of a sudden playing in a foreign orchestra, it would be easier to “blend in” if one knows what kind of sound they should have in mind.

The full answer to this question would necessitate an elaborate overview of the history of music intertwined with ethnomusicology and politics, something that would be different for each country. It is correctly assumed that when one thinks of an Italian sound, whatever that might entail, nineteenth-century operatic music comes to mind. Opera, as will be discussed in the course of this work, was treated very much as a lucrative enterprise, and because it was considered a “fashion,” its prominence declined rapidly after the deaths of Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) and Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924).

It would seem natural to ask the proverbial question when undertaking a wide historical operation such as this: who cares? To this day, these stories of cultural separation and aggregation constitute an important part of what is defined as modern Italian culture. Even if, with the exception of certain specific works by Respighi, most of the Italian repertoire of the first part of the twentieth century has been buried by unfortunate historical events and the ever shifting taste of the most influential critics along with the public, the generation of composers who lived between the two World Wars provided the framework for the following generations.

Besides all the enduring notions dealing with the concept of the cult of the homeland and its preservation, I think a greater lesson can be learnt now in 2021, at a time when most of the world had to come to a stop due to the Covid-19 pandemic: coming back to life. Our perspective leaves us with a clouded vision of the future, filled with uncertainty; this wasn't much different (in spirit at least) from what a young artist must have felt in 1915, when an international conflict of unprecedented proportions, together with the unforeseen onset of the Spanish flu, were about to take place and have an impact on everybody's life. It is hard to put into perspective the life of somebody born in Europe in the 1880s: experiencing two massive wars with all the history that happened in between them, as well as their consequences, is something that can possibly make us reevaluate our conditions in our present time. The thing that fascinated me the most was the concept of reawakening after such impactful events: I will confess that reading some of the correspondence regarding the resurgence of cultural life in 1919, right after many years of war, gave me an unexpected hope for the future, together with the excitement to participate in and shape the next pages of our generation's history.

The need for researching this topic came to me in 2016, while scouting for music to include in my next recital. I remember clearly stumbling upon Alfredo Casella's *Serenata* (1924), a chamber work written for the uncommon ensemble of violin, cello, clarinet, bassoon and trumpet, and feeling

overwhelmed by a sense of fresh discovery, which can be quite rare after having spent considerable years of my life studying classical music. This work (which will be further analyzed and discussed in this document) not only is a hidden gem in the realm of mixed chamber music but also bears something deeper: it manages to sound Italian, but in an alternative way that sounds clearly geographically defined but yet distances itself from the tropes of Italian opera, particularly the bel canto style. For me, the discovery of *Serenata* opened a Pandora's Box in regards to an often overlooked page of Italian music: the missing link between the last great Italian opera composers and the avant-garde<sup>1</sup> school that flourished in the country after the second World War, led by figures such as Luigi Nono, Bruno Maderna and Luciano Berio.

Soon after beginning research on Casella and by extension the Generazione, I realized that this missing link, from which perhaps only some of Respighi's symphonic poems have survived, is a musical treasure vault driven by the ideals of its proponents. Having grown up in the southern part of Italy, there weren't many common artistic attributes to use in solidifying my own contemporary view in terms of my national identity and heritage, or at the very least many of these national characteristics haven't been established in the past 100 years. The discovery of this new, vibrant repertoire made me

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<sup>1</sup> The term avant-garde can encompass a wide variety of styles. For me it represents that period in music after World War II when musicians started to seek alternative idioms for their works. On a broader European level, this is exemplified by the Darmstadt school, which counted artists of multiple nationalities among its participants.

rethink the essence of Italian music and added an important missing page to my own musical heritage. After having listened to more music composed in this period beyond the Casella work, I began reading about the leading Italian composers of the first half of the twentieth century. I discovered that the *verve* in their writings and correspondence equaled that expressed in their music. At that point, having found out not only about the musical feats of these composers but also about the artistic ideology and discussions surrounding their cultural heritage, I decided to embark on this project.

Speaking of ideologies, it is necessary to address the elephant in the room when talking about the first half of the twentieth century in Italy and the personalities of those who achieved success while living through it. It is without a doubt that some of the activities of the personalities discussed in this work were backed by a heavy nationalist campaign aimed at establishing fascism as a strong cultural entity. To various degrees, all the composers mentioned in this document had to coexist with the regime. They all benefited from it and, in some instances, they helped it reach some of its aesthetic and political goals. While this can be considered as one of the main motives behind the darkness surrounding this specific period in Italian cultural history, it is nonetheless part of the cultural fabric of the country to this day, and therefore requires a deeper understanding. Ties between the regime and the cultural life of Italy will be detailed later in this document, but only those ideas pertinent to music. For discussions of broader cultural issues during fascism,

see *Mussolini's Theatre: Fascist Experiments in Art and Politics* by Patricia Gaborik and Matteo Paoletti's *A Huge Revolution of Theatrical Commerce: Walter Mocchi and the Italian Musical Theatre Business in South America*. When it comes to music, Harvey Sachs's *Music in Fascist Italy* is the most comprehensive book on the topic, though it does not include discussions of specific musical works. Also important in this regard is Roberto Iliano (ed.)'s, *Italian Music during the Fascist Period*. Going beyond the repertory and composers discussed in this document, Luca Cerchiari's *Jazz e Fascismo* sheds an important light on the relationship between the new musical phenomenon coming from the States and the fascist regime.

Other works consulted for this study include biographies and writings of the four featured composers. Alfredo Casella's autobiography *Music in my Time* has been one of the most enlightening texts in regards to the musical life of those times, Elsa Respighi's biography of her husband Ottorino provides a portrait of the life and character of the composer, Gian Francesco Malipiero's collection of essays *Il Filo di Arianna* is important to understand the philosophy of the Venetian composer, and Guido Gatti's biography of Ildebrando Pizzetti is a detailed account on the composer's life and ideas.

This document will begin with information on the lives of the four composers most associated with the Generazione: Casella, Malipiero, Pizzetti, and Respighi. It will then consider their artistic goals individually and collectively. From there it will move to broader notions of the Italian musical

tradition and how these composers viewed themselves, especially in terms of the musical past, namely Italian opera and early music. The next chapter explores the complex relationships between the composers and Italian politics, before moving on to discussions of these composers and the reception of their works in Italy and abroad. After providing this context, the next chapter details “Il suono italiano” by looking at representative works by each composer. The following chapter addresses the legacy of these composers and their music, including during the years following World War II and in the twenty-first century. The study concludes, appropriately for a degree in trumpet performance, with a discussion of works that highlight the trumpet from the time and how the ideas presented here related directly to music-making in the twenty-first century.

I believe people are products of their times, and this applies to any generation from any culture. Being a fascist in 1930s Italy was as normal as being an anti-fascist in 2021. Because of this, I will refrain from applying any judgement to the events, people and ideas described here, leaving such considerations to the reader.

CHAPTER II

*LA GENERAZIONE DELL'OTTANTA*

AND THE ITALIAN MUSICAL TRADITION

In the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, journalists and musicologists worked to create groups of composers who would represent their nation's musical interests and reflect a distinctive national style. Famous examples include "The Mighty Handful"<sup>1</sup> in Russia and "Les Six"<sup>2</sup> in France. Sometimes these groupings would not be formed until many decades later, as is the case in Italy with *La Generazione dell'Ottanta* (The Generation of the '80s), a term which Italian musicologist Massimo Mila coined in 1963. In his book *Breve Storia della Musica* (Short History of Music), Mila noted:

Too big was the artistic past from which we had to have the courage to detach ourselves: even though the melodramatic tradition of the 1800's was in decline after Verdi's disappearance, it kept intact the tastes of the public. It was not easy to understand why it was neither possible nor desirable to keep writing nice traditional operas like the ones from Bellini to Mascagni, from Verdi to Puccini that gave so much joy to the people and much joy to Italian music. The musicians from the '80s couldn't do anything else but take notice of the changing conditions of culture, of taste and of habits, which made it no longer possible, even if someone wanted to do so, to write

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<sup>1</sup> Coined by Vladimir Stasov in 1867

<sup>2</sup> Coined by Henri Collet in 1920 as a reference to their Russian counterpart.



operas in that fashion that would enjoy artistic success; but in appearance, sometimes credited by controversial excesses and by a general confusion of ideas in which the vast historical happenings took place, made it seem like they were imposing themselves deliberately as the grave diggers of the glorious Italian opera.<sup>3</sup>

Although the composers born within or close to the 1880s have been since then conveniently labeled as a uniform category, their ideas and purposes could not be more diverse. In fact, every single musician of that time who wrote an autobiography mentioned how they resented the isolation, ostracism, fierce competition and sometimes even outright slander from their colleagues. The first half of the twentieth century was a time in which reactionary views in regards to music, aesthetic and politics were normal, if not necessary, if one wanted to build a career.

These factors were certainly present in the careers of the members of the *Generazione*. This document will focus primarily on the lives and music of four composers from this group: Alfredo Casella (1883-1947), Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973), Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936), and Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968). They are the composers commonly named whenever the label *Generazione dell'Ottanta* is used. This is due primarily to their professional successes, which outshined many others, but also because of their individual personalities. Casella was a world-famous pianist and

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<sup>3</sup> Massimo Mila, *Breve storia della musica* (Torino: Einaudi, 1963), 419. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the author.

conductor who was very active promoting Italian music around the globe.

Malipiero was an introvert, a unique voice who never wanted to leave his villa in Asolo, located in the Venetian hinterland, who spent a considerable amount of his career composing and transcribing ancient music. Respighi was an accomplished teacher and composer who toured the world playing recitals at the piano with his wife, a mezzo-soprano, and who never wanted to take part in politics or in the numerous musical associations that rose and fell in those times. Pizzetti was a famous music critic and composer, and his extensive collaborations with the regime's poet Gabriele D'Annunzio and his work in public institutions kept him close to the fascist party and Mussolini himself<sup>4</sup> to the point where the Japanese Empire would commission him to write a work in honor of its twenty-sixth centenary.

Although the Generazione dell'Ottanta is primarily identified with these four composers, there certainly were many more musicians operating in the same time period, who even though they might have left smaller musical imprints from our perspective, were nonetheless involved in creating and contributing to a national music scene, which served as the necessary background for our four main composers. Composers and critics such as Franco Alfano (1875-1954), Vittorio Gui (1885-1975), Giannotto Bastianelli (1883-1927), Fausto Torrefranca (1883-1955), and Guido Gatti (1892-1973)

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<sup>4</sup> Lara Sonja Uras, *Nazionalismo in musica: il caso Pizzetti dagli esordi al 1945* (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2003), 28.

are just few of the notable personalities who helped create the musical life of Italy at the time.

### **Connections with the Italian Musical Tradition**

In the early twentieth century Italian musicians had to face an artistic and an aesthetic dilemma: more than a century of intense creation and marketing of opera, culminating in Verismo (realism), had established a need for young composers who were eager to participate in the musical life of their country to reaffirm the practice of Italian instrumental music, which had been largely neglected since the days of Vivaldi. The idea that there wasn't any production of symphonic and chamber music in the peninsula is a common misconception, since composers such as Giovanni Sgambati (1841-1914) and Giuseppe Martucci (1856-1909) championed instrumental music in the orchestral and the chamber form, although often their successes came through frequent commissions from behind the Alps. As such, their music was viewed as less Italian and more German in influence (Martucci conducted the first Italian performance of *Tristan und Isolde* in 1888), since instrumental music held in higher esteem in German-speaking Europe than in Italy.

As the twentieth century began, music was seen as a powerful tool to shape and guide the masses,<sup>5</sup> especially since it functioned as a strong call

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<sup>5</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder and Philip Bohlman, *Song Loves the Masses: Herder on Music and Nationalism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

to action during the *Risorgimento* decades,<sup>6</sup> which were characterized by fights as the peninsula moved toward a political union in the mid-nineteenth century. Especially at that time, music was one of the weapons used to galvanize Italian spirits and warm them to the rhetoric of the “Motherland,” especially in the emotively charged choruses of Italian opera.

Considering some music as “Italian” had a distinct meaning in the 1800s, and the musical attributes that pointed to this particular geographical association were specifically linked to how music was performed, which was already endorsed by centuries of composers. But Italian composers could not just write for orchestra without any considerations. In 1923, Guido Gatti wrote about the state of orchestral writing in his country:

The nineteenth century witnessed a decisive instrumental orientation; Romanticism infused an orchestral sensibility all its own, which, in the opening years of our century, has reached a degree of refinement bordering on caricature; all the instrumental timbres have been analyzed and labelled with respect to their individual possibilities and their most diverse and strange combinations. What novelty of orchestral elaboration yet remains undiscovered? Nowadays we find musicians who contribute to this insatiate orchestral analysis confining themselves to writing for an excessively reduced orchestra or for two or three instruments, disdaining, as it were, to make further use of that phalanx of instruments which successively swelled beyond all measure, and grew heavier and

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<sup>6</sup> Italian unification, also known as the *Risorgimento* (Resurgence), was the 19th-century political and social movement that resulted in the consolidation of different states of the Italian Peninsula into a single state, the Kingdom of Italy. Inspired by the rebellions in the 1820s and 1830s against the outcome of the Congress of Vienna, the unification process was precipitated by the revolutions of 1848, and reached completion in 1861, when Rome was officially designated the capital of the Kingdom of Italy.

heavier, and then spread out like a veil and dispersed in a mist of tones.<sup>7</sup>

Italian music had above all the characteristic of being melodic and individualistic in nature. Nineteenth-century Italian musicologists saw in Palestrina the actualization of these qualities for the first time, since he “translated Christendom in notes, and since then started with his melodies the Italian school, which took these characteristics and kept them.”<sup>8</sup> Italian music during the Romantic era was thus characterized by the exaltation of the ego, unbending to stylistic trends and forever chasing its wildest fantasies. “There isn’t a rational and stable norm, nor progressive life thought appositely for a specific intent in mind, only a rapid and violent burst,”<sup>9</sup> wrote Venuri and Mazzini. Italian music was seen as the exaltation of lyricism and passion, a portrayal of the shiny and intense *pathos* attributed to Italians and in terms of form, unruly, ever shifting, incurrent of modulations and transitions. This feverish depiction of what was considered the Italian style by Romantics spans the widest array of feelings, “converging heaven and hell on stage at the same time,”<sup>10</sup> in an aesthetic taste that is notably different from the one in vogue during the eighteenth century. It is safe to say that throughout its history Italian music has shown a continued focus on the human voice. Works

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<sup>7</sup> Guido M. Gatti, *Ildebrando Pizzetti, His Life and Works* (London: Dobson, 1951), 7.

<sup>8</sup> Emilie Ashurst Venturi and Giuseppe Mazzini, *Giuseppe Mazzini's Philosophy of Music: Envisioning a Social Opera* (New York: Edward Mellen Press, 2004), 23.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

by Francesco Landini (1325-1397), Giulio Caccini's *Le Nuove Musiche* (1602), and Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1609) are testimonies to the importance of vocal writing in the Italian peninsula.

Opposed to this view, in the minds of Italians, was German music. Considered by them to hold the quintessential embodiment of moral values, to their ears it lacked the energy and enthusiasm of their music, whereas their music lacked the sense of unity and compositional rigor that the German-speaking world promoted. This general feeling existed among even the most reactionary Italian musicians, and there was a general idea around the 1920s that "German expressionism was a genre impossible to replicate by Italians."<sup>11</sup> In the nineteenth century Mazzini remarked that "Italian music becomes sterile in materialism. German music consumes itself uselessly in mysticism."<sup>12</sup> Although a confrontation with German music aesthetic was commonplace in the nineteenth century, it was especially divisive in the Italian musical scene. With the Italians being renowned for their operatic repertoire, their use of words and the meaning attached to their music clashed directly with the German absolute music aesthetic, which favored instrumental music and had a much more transcendental quality.

Within these contexts, the new generation of composers emerging in at the turn of the twentieth century took over the task of bringing back Italian

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<sup>11</sup> Gian Francesco Malipiero, *Il Filo di Arianna: saggi e fantasie* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), 59.

<sup>12</sup> Mazzini, *Philosophy of Music*, 31.

instrumental music after a long slumber hoping to restore the central role it had in Europe and the rest of the world before the popular tastes of the nineteenth century took over. These composers, who include the aforementioned Sgambati and Martucci, and their devotion to instrumental music influenced the musicians of the Generazione dell'Ottanta, perhaps not so much in style, but in intent. Gian Francesco Malipiero said of Martucci's *Second Symphony* (1904), for example, that it was "the beginning of the renaissance of non-operatic Italian music."<sup>13</sup>

After the sobering events of the First World War, which officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, each country had to face a necessary "return to order," something which affected society on every level. The crescendo that took the Classical period into the Romantic era had lost its momentum by the beginning of the new century and was giving way to a general feeling of an impoverishment of musical taste that had already been lurking among the newer generations for some time. Musicians in early-twentieth century Italy felt that the Verismo era had ended in a self-destructive spiral. The genre had gained so much popularity that it had become a collection of tropes aimed to draw the masses, and nothing more.<sup>14</sup> Almost in a parricidal fashion, the generation coming immediately after *La Giovane*

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<sup>13</sup> Malipiero, *Il Filo di Arianna*, 101.

<sup>14</sup> Alfredo Casella, *Music in my time*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1955), 35.

*Scuola*<sup>15</sup> felt that it was up to them to steer the values of Italian music back to the perceived ancient splendor of what that music was before Italian opera spread throughout the world in the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, every composer had a different idea in as to which period symbolized the true Italian golden age of music, a topic to be developed in chapter 4.

At the same time, radical new musical ideas were coming into existence. In some places these avant-garde movements were seen as the sunrise in terms of a new day of artistic developments, while in others they proved to be the sunset of a long period that was now gone. Casella seemed to take the second viewpoint, for he said he grew up in “an epoch in which four centuries of harmony are dissolving.”<sup>16</sup> Whereas the Second Viennese School can be seen as the Austrian equivalent to the Generation of the 1880, France didn’t have a proper generation of musicians, or a cluster of genius minds, as Luciano Berio had put it.<sup>17</sup> They did, however, have Les Six, a group, who like the *Generazione*, was assembled by critics rather than by the composers themselves.

Italy was in a peculiar position at the time. The disastrous consequences of World War I, compounded by the death of Verdi in 1901 and

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<sup>15</sup> The *Giovane Scuola* (Young School) refers to a group of Italian composers (mostly operatic) who succeeded Verdi and flourished in the late 19th and early 20th century. The group all had close connections with the Milan Conservatory and included Puccini, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano and Cilea among others.

<sup>16</sup> Guido Gatti, *L’Opera di Malipiero* (Treviso: Edizioni di Treviso, 1952), 132.

<sup>17</sup> Luciano Berio, “Radici,” in *Musica italiana del primo Novecento: la generazione dell’Ottanta*, ed. Fiamma Nicolodi (Florence: Olschki, 1981), 9.



its once popular melodrama now succumbing to its last shreds of success, led to the establishment of one of the most incendiary of the avant-garde currents in a country that found itself artistically tired after a century of artistic abuse by impresarios, theatre establishments, and glamorized composers.<sup>18</sup> The Futurist movement, created by the Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who wrote its Manifesto in 1909, was gaining a lot of traction. Futurism was built around the rejection of the past and the celebration of speed, machinery, violence, youth, and industry. It also advocated for the modernization and cultural rejuvenation of Italy. It was the antithesis of the *laissez-faire* that characterized the national stance on art and general culture at the time. The Manifesto was intentionally inflammatory and reactionary in its very nature, as the following excerpts demonstrate.

1. We want to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and rashness.

2. The essential elements of our poetry will be courage, audacity and revolt.

3. Literature has up to now magnified pensive immobility, ecstasy and slumber. We want to exalt movements of aggression, feverish sleeplessness, the double march, the perilous leap, the slap and the blow with the fist.

4. We declare that the splendor of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing automobile with its bonnet adorned with great tubes like serpents with explosive breath ... a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.

5. We want to sing the man at the wheel, the ideal axis of which crosses the earth, itself hurled along its orbit.

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<sup>18</sup> Malipiero, *Il filo di Arianna*, 59.

6. The poet must spend himself with warmth, glamour and prodigality to increase the enthusiastic fervor of the primordial elements.

7. Beauty exists only in struggle. There is no masterpiece that has not an aggressive character. Poetry must be a violent assault on the forces of the unknown, to force them to bow before man.

8. We are on the extreme promontory of the centuries! What is the use of looking behind at the moment when we must open the mysterious shutters of the impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. We are already living in the absolute, since we have already created eternal, omnipresent speed.

9. We want to glorify war - the only cure for the world - militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchists, the beautiful ideas which kill, and contempt for woman.

10. We want to demolish museums and libraries, fight morality, feminism and all opportunist and utilitarian cowardice.

11. We will sing of the great crowds agitated by work, pleasure and revolt; the multi-colored and polyphonic surf of revolutions in modern capitals: the nocturnal vibration of the arsenals and the workshops beneath their violent electric moons: the gluttonous railway stations devouring smoking serpents; factories suspended from the clouds by the thread of their smoke; bridges with the leap of gymnasts flung across the diabolic cutlery of sunny rivers: adventurous steamers sniffing the horizon; great-breasted locomotives, puffing on the rails like enormous steel horses with long tubes for bridle, and the gliding flight of airplanes whose propeller sounds like the flapping of a flag and the applause of enthusiastic crowds.

It is in Italy that we are issuing this manifesto of ruinous and incendiary violence, by which we today are founding Futurism, because we want to deliver Italy from its gangrene of professors, archaeologists, tourist guides and antiquaries.<sup>19</sup>

The Futurist Manifesto nowadays is thought of more as a prodigious statement than as an actual declaration of intents. Some critics applauded the

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<sup>19</sup> Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Manifesto del Futurismo," *Le Figaro*, February 20, 1909.

movement while others did not like it largely because of its aggressiveness and its exaltation of war and machines.

Even though Futurism was largely a movement in the visual arts, it influenced musicians as well and paved the road for some of the most reactionary ones. Casella wrote in his memoirs:

[...] do not forget that [Futurism] was the first indication of a bold, rebellious, and youthful spirit to come from Italy, which had been considered for so many years to be 'the land of the dead' with regard to art. Even if the accomplishments of the futurists did not always correspond to their intentions, it gave us a feeling of joy to see arise a spirit which exalted the love of danger, energy, rebellion, aggressiveness, and the equation of beauty and struggle, 'the fine ideas for which one dies' as Marinetti concluded. It seemed the announcement of a new and greater Italy. Let it be remembered that futurism was the only Italian artistic movement between 1870 and 1914 which received world-wide attention and had universal influence.<sup>20</sup>

Though Marinetti's statement is regarded as the most influential of its kind, other manifestos were written in the same years by other members of the futurist current in regard to specific art forms. Francesco Balilla Pratella (1880-1955) wrote the *Manifesto of Futurist Musicians* in 1910. In his manifesto there is a comparison between the music scenes of various European countries. Pratella shows enthusiasm for the music of Wagner, Strauss, Elgar, and Sibelius, spite for the music of Puccini and Giordano, and admiration for Pietro Mascagni.<sup>21</sup> Pratella's manifesto is an important

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<sup>20</sup> Casella, *Music in my Time*, 88.

<sup>21</sup> An English translation of the manifesto can be found in Nicolas Slonimsky, *Music Since 1900* (New York: Schirmer 1994), 1016-1019.

statement within the futurist current, but it didn't resonate as much with members of the Generazione as Marinetti's. One possible explanation for this can be seen in Pratella's reactionary ideas toward music institutions: all of the composers of the Generazione were involved at some point with the Italian conservatories in various capacities, and this connection was always instrumental in their careers.

The members of the Generazione, therefore, not only found themselves in a continuum of Italian music history that saw instrumental music overtaken by the popularity of opera, but also had to posit their work and ideas in relation to one of the most distinctive and controversial international artistic currents of the time.

### CHAPTER III

#### FOUR COMPOSERS: CASELLA, MALIPIERO, RESPIGHI, AND PIZZETTI

The intellectual effort required to find common threads between the four celebrated composers of the *Generazione* and thus analyze their thoughts and intents through a timeline involves numerous twists and turns. It is not easy to summarize what these four composers stood for, and that's for a variety of reasons. First, they represented four distinct personalities, with only few things in common, musically and otherwise. Second, they lived in a political and cultural environment of great unrest and not infrequently had to change their allegiances to this or that style, if not to actual politicians or statesmen in positions of power. It is in this diversity where the *Generazione dell'Ottanta* found fertile ground, fulfilling the prophecy of the "Latin genius" often enounced by Malipiero, the figure of the eclectic artist, who was usually stranded away on a musical island and couldn't function in any other way. This discussion will move from the most reactionary musicians, Casella and Malipiero, to the more conservative ones, Respighi and Pizzetti. Even within these pairs, neither were always in perfect agreement.

### **Alfredo Casella (1883-1947)**

Alfredo Casella (1883-1947) chased what critics have defined as “a constellation of myths”<sup>1</sup> from the past, including the cult of the Mediterranean Sun, fascism and anti-decadence, and eternal comedy. The negativity he fights is localized and lives in the “monster” that is nineteenth-century music, bearing names such as Verdi or Wagner: a monster that has to be slain. At a time when the fascist regime had the power (and use of it at will) to declare what was Italian art and what wasn't, Casella felt in control of what those embraced values were and not only contributed to the identification and glorification of the Italian musical past but also made a point to write his vision of the future in music. During his time, Casella was probably one of the most well-known musicians of his generation, and definitely the one who travelled the most among the four composers of the *Generazione*. After the premature death of his father, he moved to Paris with his mother. He enrolled in the Paris Conservatory in 1896, where he studied piano with Louis Diémer and composition with Gabriel Fauré; in these classes, George Enescu and Maurice Ravel were among his fellow students. During his Parisian period, Casella made acquaintances with artists such as Claude Debussy, Igor Stravinsky, Gustav Mahler, and Manuel de Falla, among many others. After World War I, he moved back to Rome, where he taught piano at the Santa

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<sup>1</sup> Guido Salvetti, *Breve Storia della Musica* (Turin: EDT, 2013), 117.

Cecilia Conservatory in Rome. During his lifetime he was one of the leading piano virtuosos and in high demand as a conductor, serving as chief conductor of the Boston Pops from 1927 to 1929. He travelled constantly between Europe, the Americas, and Russia. Even though he enjoyed great success worldwide, he was frequently criticized in his homeland for being a xenophile, even though one of his main artistic goals was to create music that reflected his nationalistic views.<sup>2</sup>

### **Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973)**

Throughout his long life, Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973) consistently shaped his artistic views not through crises, conversions, or sudden findings, but more by personal discovery. Neither the neoclassical current as exemplified by Igor Stravinsky and his *Pulcinella*, Existentialism, nor Schoenberg's twelve-tone system penetrated the soul of the composer, even though his keen ear was always interested in the new music that was happening during the span of his career. Malipiero's musical discourse is centered on the idea of self, a continuum that doesn't involve looking back. In Malipiero's vision, Italian instrumental music hadn't been able to really flourish primarily because of the attention that staged musical representations (e.g., opera) had among the public of the peninsula. He longed for a national style and envied the musical schools present in France, Russia and Germany.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Casella, *Music in my Time*, 231.

<sup>3</sup> Gian Francesco Malipiero, "La Sinfonia Italiana Dell'Avvenire," *Rivista Musicale italiana* 3 (1912), 729.

Malipiero opined that Italian orchestral music is modeled on its choral music. For centuries instruments weren't allowed in church music performance in Italy, which forced composers to resort to a full use of the voice as an instrument. Malipiero points out how Monteverdi probably imagined his music to be played by instruments,<sup>4</sup> but still always wrote for voices.

He saw in Giovanni Battista Sammartini (1704-1774) the creation of the symphony, the genre which inspired Haydn after hearing one played during a trip to Milan.<sup>5</sup> The reason why, in his opinion, the genre found great success in the Germanic world but not in the Italian peninsula is given by his description of the "Latin Genius" and its famed inconsistency. This is what he writes the challenges inherent in the Italian symphony in his essay "La Sinfonia Italiana Dell'Avvenire" from 1912:

It has to get into the spirit of the Italian youth that the conviction that there isn't a musical formula to guarantee the "Made in Italy." The Italian Symphonist will have to invent instinctively their individual form, which certainly will betray the "Latin Master," but that won't have any direct relationship with what other Italian musicians have done so far and will continue doing for the future. [...] How will the Italian Symphony of the future be? It is never possible, in art, to make predictions! Art's path is bizarre, but the whole country of Italy is a fervent symphony itself and it is impossible that the musicians will persist in their deafness, while everywhere else is a continuous, pressing whispering of symphonic motives and a myriad of immense symphonies are wait for those whom are able to harvest them.<sup>6</sup> [...] In music, as for every other artform,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



Technique is the raw material indispensable for who creates, but of secondary importance for who is under the influence of the work of art.<sup>7</sup>

In short, part of the drive that pushed Malipiero in his quest for the rediscovery of the Italian sound was fueled by his ultimate and complete rejection of the German musical aesthetic, which he always associated with his lonely and unhappy childhood. Malipiero was strongly against the academization of music and its industry. He didn't go along with ideas promoted by musicologists, and even though the practice in Italy wasn't really up and running until its academization after World War I, he made it clear in his writings that he did not belong in this category:

Musicologists are scared by the divulgation of music from the past and try to avoid that the public may fall in love with it. Musicology institutes would fail if it were discovered that before the fourteenth century there wasn't a musical art and that the difficulties in deciphering the ancient codes are just an invention by the well read.<sup>8</sup>

It is not clear here whether Malipiero shows an aversion toward musicologists in general or toward the perceived feeling of German self-superiority in the realm of instrumental music as promoted by German musicologists. He was celebrated as an instinctive composer, and it is in the figure of the independent Latin Genius that he sees the future of Italian instrumental music. The successful Italian creator will stand out from the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Malipiero, *Il Filo di Arianna*, 280.

crowd without having to abide by the dogmatic style imposed by the conservatories. He was also an avid writer and music critic (perhaps surpassed in this matter only by Pizzetti among the composers of the *Generazione*). Malipiero showed a distinctive approach when it came to the relationship between musical creation and musical critique. His effort in his music essays were never aimed at establishing his intellectual prowess, but more toward building a connection with the public at large. In fact, for the composer, writing about music was a way to be better understood and beloved by the critics. Malipiero often found the effects of music on people from different cultures to be far more fascinating and engaging than the music itself.

Malipiero considered his music to be reflective of the Italian sound, which in his view was characterized by an aversion to the German approach to musical form and instead an embrace of free-flowing form that moved from one instinctive idea to another. “I have materially rejected the easy game of thematic development, because I was saturated by it and it bore me,”<sup>9</sup> he wrote in his published memoirs. Malipiero embraced the qualities of Italian music in musicians like Scarlatti, who “never stops, and follows the natural law of relationships and contrasts: not a geometrical construction but a pensile and solid structure, antisymmetric and proportioned.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Gatti, *L'Opera di Malipiero*, 340.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

### **Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)**

Ottorino Respighi is the oldest member of the Generazione dell'Ottanta and also the one who lived the shortest out of the bunch, passing in an untimely manner due to a heart infection (subacute bacterial endocarditis) at age 56. Even though Respighi was born slightly before the 1880s, because of the nature of his music, he has always been considered as belonging to this generation of composers. The biography written by Elsa, Respighi's wife (formally his student) who lived for nearly sixty years after the death of her husband, is one of the main sources associated with Respighi and provides a very human portrait of a composer who worked and suffered feverishly in his life. Although the book is certainly not unbiased, it is considered highly reliable.<sup>11</sup>

Very reserved throughout his life, Respighi always stayed away from the masses and chaotic city life, even though he spent his later years in Rome and had multiple occasions to travel across the Atlantic for extended tours that included cities such as New York, Boston, and Buenos Aires. Unlike many of his colleagues, he wasn't interested in having love affairs and late nights and always drifted away from such a lifestyle. Besides being a very accomplished composer, Respighi was also the composition teacher at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome, a position he held until his death, which

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<sup>11</sup> Elsa Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi: His Life Story* (London: Ricordi, 1962).

then went to his colleague (and the next composer to be discussed)

Ildebrando Pizzetti.

Born in Bologna, Respighi studied the violin and the viola, which later secured him employment at the local theatre. One of his most formative experiences was his time as a member of the orchestra at the Saint Petersburg Theatre in 1900 during the Italian opera season.<sup>12</sup> While there, he wanted to study with the esteemed Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and met with him on several occasions. Respighi recalled that “[the encounters] weren’t many, but they were vitally important to me.”<sup>13</sup> This early experience was the longest time Respighi ever spent away from Italy.

Respighi wrote in many musical genres, but his rise to fame certainly came thanks to his symphonic poems, represented mainly by his Roman Trilogy, which includes *Fontane di Roma* (Fountains of Rome, 1916), *I Pini di Roma* (Pines of Rome, 1924) and *Feste Romane* (Roman Festivals, 1928). His respect for his predecessors and their musical styles allowed him to benefit from the friendship and help of his elder colleagues, which helped his own rise to fame in his younger years. He was friends with Giacomo Puccini, and he was also in the good graces of the influential editor and publisher Giulio Ricordi and the eccentric maestro Arturo Toscanini. Respighi’s

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<sup>12</sup> Respighi, *Respighi*, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

approach to the long-established genre of the symphonic poem,<sup>14</sup> closely associated with the German world, blended picturesque, poetic and epic impressions with essentially classical architectural clarity, “and yet the modernity of the conception,” as his wife would describe it, “is characteristically Italian in that it is never biased or excessive.”<sup>15</sup> She continued: “Somebody called it programme [sic] music, but he was so wrong. The synopses of Respighi’s symphonic poems were always written after he had finished composing.”<sup>16</sup> In such clarification it is possible to see how, even if using the same form with which his public was well acquainted, Respighi always tried to disengage himself from the common tropes of Romantic music, specifying that his music was “transfigured truth into sound.”<sup>17</sup> Respighi didn’t claim to have invented a brand new musical language and has never wrote a treatise or any explanatory article on the nature of his orchestration, which is one of the main characteristics of his music that granted him international attention. This is what his wife wrote about his orchestration process:

Respighi used to say about orchestration that music was always born for a specific instrument or group of instruments and nothing irked him more than to hear someone praise his

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<sup>14</sup> According to musicologist Hugh Macdonald in his entry on “Symphonic Poem” in the *Grove Dictionary of Music*, the symphonic poem met three 19th-century aesthetic goals: it related music to outside sources; it often combined or compressed multiple movements into a single principal section; and it elevated instrumental program music to an aesthetic level that could be regarded as equivalent to, or higher than opera. ([https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/search?f\\_0=title&q\\_0=symphonic+poem](https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/search?f_0=title&q_0=symphonic+poem))

<sup>15</sup> Respighi, *Respighi*, 54.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*.

orchestration. You had to see him drafting a score to understand that for him it was merely a mechanical operation, every problem being solved with the creation of the music itself and it was really amazing to watch the rapidity and neat clarity with which the pages flowed from his pen. [...] Great artists are often chiefly appreciated for their minor gifts, and so it happened that the brilliant orchestration of Respighi's symphonic poems and operas made more impact than their content and form.<sup>18</sup>

Respighi's orchestration is arguably one of the most recognizable aspects of his orchestral output. Even though his style was deemed as conservative by his colleagues, his colorful orchestration gained the attention of the critics. His orchestration style is generally credited to his early lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov, even though Respighi's style is different from that of the Russian composer. In Respighi's most famous composition, *I Pini di Roma*, the last movement features an extended off-stage brass section playing a triumphant march, imitating the Roman legion victoriously returning into the city after a war. The trumpets are marked *buccina* in the score, which is a name given to the ancient, heraldic trumpets utilized by the ancient Romans for either war or ceremonial purposes. The parts are meant to be played by modern trumpets, but the historical reference in the orchestration contributes to the context of the piece. In another famous work, *Ancient Air and Dances*, Suite No.1 (1917), Respighi freely arranged for orchestra some anonymous music from the sixteenth century originally conceived for the lute. His orchestration choices, even if applied to early music, sound modern for a

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 54.

piece from the time. Notably, the last movement of the Suite features a part for muted trumpet in D that lasts throughout the entire movement. Finally, Respighi was the first composer to ever employ an external recording within an orchestral composition, with the use of the phonograph playing a recording of nightingales between the third and fourth movement of *Pines of Rome*.

### **Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968)**

Ildebrando Pizzetti can be considered as the most reactionary of the four musicians discussed in this research, but this quality shows more in his words than in his music. Together with Respighi, he represents fully the more conservative side of the Generazione. Pizzetti wasn't the most innovative composer of his generation, and even though he was a fervent nationalist and wrote music he deemed as Italian, his style originated in German Romanticism and especially Wagner, which during his career he transformed in a more personal voice. Within the history of twentieth-century music, in such a crucial political and social moment as Italy in the 1930s and '40s, the figure of Ildebrando Pizzetti became crystallized as the celebrative image of the fascist party and as a symbol of the result of a nationalistic journey that was indissolubly linked to the regime.

The young Pizzetti was passionate about sixteenth-century polyphony, and in 1905 he had the chance to begin a collaboration with Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938), one which changed his artistic life. D'annunzio took Pizzetti as a pupil and collaborated extensively with him for over a decade,

even renaming him as “Ildebrando da Parma” (Ildebrando from Parma), a moniker that the young composer would use for two decades on all of his scores. D’Annunzio and Pizzetti worked toward the creation of a “Latin musical drama,” an entirely new way of composing for the stage, obviously with a heavy nationalistic glow. The Latin drama mainly featured a new way of exploring the sonority of words, one that stood in line with the Italian vocal traditions, both monodic and polyphonic. These same elements, together with a new and reactionary idea of homeland, nation and lineage, constituted the background of his nationalist theories, which he explicated from 1913 onward through his intense activity as a music critic. Establishing his identity both nationally and internationally on the basis of his declared nationalism, Pizzetti was irrevocably involved with the onset of fascism, to the point that he was appointed as administrator of culture in the fascistization process. It is through this process that the composer promoted the fascist ideology and some of its darkest theories, such as autarchy and antisemitism. He signed the Manifesto of the Fascist Intellectuals in 1925.

Pizzetti was famous for being a harsh critic, and more so for having a difficult, contrarian personality. With the passing of the years he gradually distanced himself from the sympathy of his countrymen and became the main advocate against the more progressive wing of Italian musicians. He was with Malipiero and Casella at the premiere of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* in 1913 in Paris, and it is revealing to see how this specific event changed these three



composers in different ways: while Casella and Malipiero felt like a new door was being opened by such a powerful work, Pizzetti stood at the back of the room, filled with skepticism. With the downfall of the *Società Italiana di Musica Contemporanea*, or SIMC,<sup>19</sup> and the manifesto he co-signed against Malipiero and Casella, he ostracized himself from many Italian musicians. His difficult personality, coupled with his extremist political views, can explain the reasons why his stage works, which constitute the bulk of his activity as a composer, are nowadays largely forgotten and are represented by only a handful of recordings, even though the composer lived a long life after the events of the Second World War.

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<sup>19</sup> A more detailed description of this association and the events related to it will be given on Chapter VI.

## CHAPTER IV

### LA GENERAZIONE AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE ITALIAN MUSICAL PAST

An important part of the musical identities of the composers identified with the Generation of the '80s is their relationship with the musical past. Of course, each of the four composers discussed in this document had a different sort of relationship with what came before. Two historical eras are especially notable in this regard, the nineteenth century and early music, here defined as music from before 1800.

#### **The Nineteenth Century**

The general aversion in Italy in the early twentieth century toward the musical drama presents itself not so much as hostility towards the fathers of this now nationalized art form, but more as a conflict between the Generazione dell'Ottanta and the composers of the earlier Giovane Scuola, who the former charged with a betrayal of the Italian musical tradition. In fact, the aversion to melodrama presents itself as a generational clash internal to Italian cultural discourse. In order to better understand how the Romantic heritage was dealt with in Italy, some details concerning its origins on the peninsula and its continuation into the twentieth century are in order.

Giuseppe Mazzini (1807-1872) was an Italian politician and a fervent activist who fathered the unification of the peninsula in what later became the Kingdom of Italy (1861-1946). A man passionate for the arts as well as politics, he wrote an essay titled “Philosophy of Music” in 1833, in which he talks about the superiority of Romanticism over Classicism:

When Romanticism threw on this challenge on the literates’ dining tables, literary men were Greeks or bastard (sic) Romans, not Italians, not Europeans of the nineteenth century. The ancient was the despot. The element of the modern world was cancelled. Christian art, free art, human art sunk under the ruins of the Pagan world. Romanticism, like the northern invaders around the end of the Empire, put a hand in those relics and so ruffled them; exhuming the trampled individuality, and whispering to the intellect a word void for nearly five centuries. It said: the universe is yours.<sup>1</sup>

This excerpt from Mazzini’s essay is enough to understand why the early romantics decided to shift a paradigm that no longer mirrored their societal and human values. He goes as far as prophesying the coming of a great composer mind, who will forever consecrate the Romantic ideals and serve as a beacon for future generations in both Italy and the rest of Europe.<sup>2</sup> In 1833, he was already describing the impact that Verdi and Verismo would later have on an international scale.

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<sup>1</sup> Mazzini, *Philosophy of Music*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Besides being instrumental for the unification of Italy, Mazzini was also one of the first politicians to envision an idea of a united European state, or coalition.

## **Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973)**

At first, Gian Francesco Malipiero was very sympathetic towards Romantic ideals, though he views would ultimately become quite the opposite. He grew up in an environment drenched with the cultural implications of the Romantic era, in a Venice that was home to many Italian artists and also welcomed a number of important Romantic poets.<sup>3</sup> This explains his sympathy towards Romanticism, especially a Romanticism enriched by the folklore and colors of the northern side of Italy. In fact, some of his earliest compositions bear titles that prove to be unequivocally Romantic: *Sinfonia Degli Eroi* (Symphony of Heroes, 1905), *Sinfonia Del Silenzio e Della Morte* (Symphony of Silence and Death, 1909), and the later withdrawn *Canto Notturmo Di Un Pastore Errante Nell'Asia* (Nocturnal Chant of a Wanderer Pastor of Asia, 1910). From his earlier works it is possible to experience that mystic love for the unreal, the macabre, and the mysterious. He was a Romantic in the subjects he chose for his works, but not so much when it came to his compositional style. The quintessential Romantic artist is theoretically unable to fully express their intuition and generally is averse to the concept of academic form, aspects not present in Malipiero's oeuvre. As the Italian music critic and Malipiero's biographer Guido Gatti puts it, Malipiero's music is Romantic in spirit, but Classical for the sobriety and

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<sup>3</sup> Gatti, *L'Opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, 25.

simplicity of his tools, the clarity and transparency of colors, and the composure of its linear elaboration.<sup>4</sup> When it came to staged works, it is possible to find a more consolidated style in the later works, but even though Malipiero was unsurprisingly vocal in his early years when talking about the Post-Verdian dramaturgy, his view of staged music resembled Wagner's, in the sense that for him it was the complex overall artistic form that took priority, instead of the specific language used to craft it.

In Malipiero's vision, the Classical and Romantic traditions treated timbre as a secondary parameter,<sup>5</sup> used only to objectively demonstrate obvious preexisting contrasts in the melodic and harmonic structure of a piece, whereas in "the most modern music"<sup>6</sup> timbre gains a new central place within the compositional process, being itself the source of musical material. "Ideas are born together with their timbral character,"<sup>7</sup> he remarked. The modern orchestral sensibility, founded on an aesthetic of pure timbre, counters the one inherited from the Classical and Romantic traditions (which he saw as culminating with Wagner), which prioritized the theory of instrumental doubling. Malipiero wrote about this particular orchestration practice:

I have heard a critic say that Stravinsky learned to appreciate the pure sound of instruments, the one without doubling, from his master Rimsky-Korsakov. It's all wrong, if

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Malipiero, *Il Filo di Arianna*, 82

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

anything Rimsky-Korsakov's treatise could be called the doubling treatise. [...] Already in 1939 in Germany music was subjected to this kind of economy, for example by playing the *Meistersinger* by Wagner with an orchestra reduced to only 40 people, but who has actually missed those elements? Even in this, Stravinsky is a precursor.<sup>8</sup>

When talking about Malipiero's style, Casella said that his harmony is "essentially anti-romantic,"<sup>9</sup> meaning that it is devoid of any residue of nineteenth-century chromaticism. This remark indicates a fundamental shift in Malipiero's view of the Romantics.

When looking back to the music of the nineteenth century in Italy, Malipiero went so far as to identify that period as one of "melodramatic tyranny."<sup>10</sup> His main complaint runs deep into his philosophy as a composer, and that is that in nineteenth century music, the pure, unadulterated musical thought had to be subjected to the vocal technique of the singers, as well as the requirements of the *Impresario* system and the capitalist practice of the mass reproduction of a work.<sup>11</sup> Malipiero lit the fire against the tiring and old-fashioned melodrama on multiple occasions. In one instance, he recalled how while studying in Vienna in 1900 he got food poisoning from eating too much sausage, and he goes as far as comparing the melodramatic tradition with

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>9</sup> Gatti, *L'Opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, 130.

<sup>10</sup> Malipiero, *Il Filo di Arianna*, 128.

<sup>11</sup> Michele Chiappini, "La scrittura dell'interpretazione Teoria e pratica della trascrizione musicale durante gli anni veneziani di Bruno Maderna (1946-1952)" (PhD. diss., Università di Bologna, 2015), 8.

Viennese sausage, saying that he hasn't had any since that one time.<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, Malipiero always thought that speaking in negative terms about Giuseppe Verdi publicly was bad for his reputation (and hence, for business with publishers, Ricordi *in primis*), and he tried to dissociate himself from such a stance anytime he had the occasion to do so in public. In fact, it is interesting to see how the private Malipiero we perceive through his extensive correspondence<sup>13</sup> is fundamentally much more opposed and negative towards Verdi and his generation than the public Malipiero who gave interviews and wrote about music. The point Malipiero tried to make was that there was a gap between the “idolatry and the exaggeration”<sup>14</sup> attributed to Verdi's myth and his actual music.

Malipiero projects a high degree of melancholia, a Romantic attribute, not only in his music but also in his writings, both his personal correspondence and his published articles. His childhood was an unhappy one, and since his family was musically versed, he always associated sad memories with the operas that permeated Italian cultural life at the end of the nineteenth century. Besides a few exceptions (notably late Verdi), the bel canto style ends with Verismo, which suppressed the salient aspects of the style without ever renouncing its vocal sonorities. For Malipiero there isn't a

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<sup>12</sup> Gatti, *L'Opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, 326.

<sup>13</sup> Gian Francesco Malipiero and Guido Gatti, *Gian Francesco Malipiero, il carteggio con Guido M. Gatti, 1914-1972*, ed. Cecilia Palandri (Florence: Olschki, 1997), 46.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

true objectivity of what is real: he distrusts structures of perception, which focus on reaching coherence and continuity.<sup>15</sup> In a comment about his orchestral composition *Impressioni dal Vero* (1911), he expresses a clear refusal to imitate the voice, stating that: "it is not necessary at all that the musician would imitate, that they would try to replicate the voice of nature, since it would be a bad counterfeit."<sup>16</sup> It is his conviction that if the artist tries to portray a real object, they make something real look unlikely.<sup>17</sup>

Malipiero here is talking about one of the basic tenets of musical Modernism. Going against Romanticism, Modernism concerns itself with the movement of consciousness of oneself, which progressively overturns the relationship between musical thought and material thought and places musical intuition as the new, central foundation of a new modern musical aesthetic. In an essay by Everett Helm about Malipiero, the author talks about the Venetian maestro's strong feelings regarding the music of nineteenth century Italy, describing it as high treason against the great tradition instilled by Palestrina, Gabrieli, and so on. The rigidity of form was what turned Malipiero away from the style that preceded his arrival on the European music scene.

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<sup>15</sup> Joachim Noller and Flavio Pezzato, "Malipiero: Una Poetica e Un'Estetica," *Rivista Italiana Di Musicologia* 26, no. 1 (1991): 37. Please give the page number of the exact quote.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 3.



### Alfredo Casella (1883-1947)

Such harsh sentiments regarding the world of Italian melodrama and its subsequent Verismo phase weren't as accentuated in the other musicians of the Generazione as they were for Malipiero. Alfredo Casella, for example, wrote a fairly provocative article called "Ho detto male di... Verdi" (I spoke ill of... Verdi) for his short lived music magazine *Ars Nova* in which he denounces a total aversion toward mythicized composers, while at the same time stating his distrust in figures such as Verdi and Donizetti, declaring that "winter hovers all over Italian music."<sup>18</sup> Here is a passage from the article:

In the "Tribuna" newspaper there was an article about the second concert conducted by Vittorio Gui<sup>19</sup> at the Augusteo Theatre: Giuseppe Verdi is for us sacred, and whoever dares to pronounce a less than respectful word about him is a true traitor of the principle of Italianness.

[...] We think that threatening [...] the wicked ones who find themselves something to talk about Verdi's personality [...] will not change our opinion. We think that: a) the symphony from the Nabucco and the one from the Sicilian Vespers constitutes terrible music; b) that their insertion in a symphonic program is absolutely condemnable in name of good artistic education; c) that the infraction to the intellectual dignity of Vittorio Gui, young Italian director, is even more deplorable, since he should aim his energy in order to remove what is the way decayed and corrupted taste of our public<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Guido Salvetti, "«Ho Detto Male Di... Verdi». Saggio Di Ricezione Negativa," *Rivista Italiana Di Musicologia*, no. 48 (2013): 105-141.

<sup>19</sup> Vittorio Gui (14 September 1885 – 16 October 1975) was an Italian conductor, composer, musicologist and critic. He interpreted numerous operas by Verdi and was a celebrated conductor in his time.

<sup>20</sup> Salvetti, "Ho Detto Male Di... Verdi", 107.

Casella did not use soft words to express how he felt about what is considered the pinnacle of Italian music. In his estimation, Italian music would have been the same if Verdi, Donizetti or Boito had never existed,<sup>21</sup> since Verdi arguably failed to influence the following generation (which included Casella himself), stating that “His [Verdi’s] successors preferred an imitation of Massenet rather than the noble teachings of the Falstaff,”<sup>22</sup> a statement that also reveals the rivalry between French and Italian opera. It is notable how seldom he criticizes the actual music but rather the Verdi’s lack of influence.

### **Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968)**

Ildebrando Pizzetti took a different stance. Influenced by frequent discussions with the writer Gabriele D’Annunzio, although Pizzetti condemned the excesses of Verismo, at the same time he vigorously defended nineteenth-century Italian music. He constantly showed himself as not being convinced of the argument that instrumental music from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was superior to the melodrama of the nineteenth, even though on more than one occasion Pizzetti expressed reservations about Verdi’s music.

Pizzetti and Malipiero engaged in a debate on the matter in letters printed in music magazines between 1921 and 1922. After a couple of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Casella, *Music In My Time*, 50.

exchanges Pizzetti raised his tone (at the end of one of his letters he asked Malipiero to go to the place where Verdi is buried and ask the Maestro for forgiveness), and in his final response, Malipiero had no choice but to end his friendship with Pizzetti.<sup>23</sup> With the passing of the years Pizzetti changed his views (always only partially and never with retractions of his earlier remarks) regarding his stance towards melodrama and the now problematic figure of Verdi. Both Malipiero and Pizzetti held antithetical positions as the so-called Verdi-Renaissance in the 1930s took hold. While Malipiero became more and more secluded and insular in his views against melodrama in his later years, Pizzetti took a step back in 1940 when he published a more measured essay on the topic, "La grandezza di Verdi"<sup>24</sup> (Verdi's grandeur), in which he expresses his desire for a massive revival of the maestro's oeuvre, even in some cases of certain works about which he had been quite vocal during his younger years.

### **Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)**

Ottorino Respighi was probably the one composer from the *Generazione* to be at peace with music from the nineteenth century. His studies with Rimsky-Korsakov in Russia and with Max Bruch in Germany are reflected in his music, although he developed his own vivid and personal style. This is particularly true for his earlier works. When writing of the 1910

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 136.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 141.

opera *Semirâma*, musicologist John Waterhouse describes Respighi's style as "still somewhat eclectic, with suggestions both of recent French music and – not least – of the Strauss of *Salome*, interacting with more traditionally Italian operatic tendencies and with appropriate excursions into the exotic."<sup>25</sup> This affinity for the nineteenth century may be one reason why Respighi's music was played more often by orchestras around the world than that of the other members of the *Generazione*.

### Early Music (pre-1800)

The practice of historicism, looking to the past, formed a significant part of the artistic climate in the early twentieth century. Artists, architects, playwrights, and composers were all inspired by historical epochs ranging from ancient Greece to eighteenth-century Vienna. The composers of the *Generazione*, along with others such as Goffredo Petrassi (1904-2003) and Giorgio Federico Ghedini (1892-1965), were among those captivated by the past.<sup>26</sup> This trend is evident in transcriptions (whose resemblance to the original could vary) such as *Antiche Arie e Danze per Liuto* by Respighi, *Scarlattiana* by Casella, *Vivaldiana* by Malipiero, among many others.

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<sup>25</sup> John C.G. Waterhouse, ed. Janet Waterhouse and Potito Pedarra, "Respighi, Ottorino." *Grove Music Online*, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/om-o-9781561592630-e-0000047335>.

<sup>26</sup> Guido Salvetti, "Ideologie Politiche e Poetiche Musicali nel Novecento Italiano," *Rivista Italiana Di Musicologia* 35, no. 1/2 (2000): 107-133.

After the excesses of the nineteenth century and the sobering aftermath of the First World War, many artistic movements looked at the rigor, simplicity, and purity of older forms in order to formulate a new current, almost wanting to delete the one that immediately preceded this historical moment. This practice is commonly associated with the reorchestration of Pergolesi's *Pulcinella* by Stravinsky, but the principles of the *Generazione* went beyond the technical prowess exercised by the celebrated Russian composer. This particular stylistic trend wasn't unanimously accepted, and in fact Pizzetti famously said that "It is time now to stop with this system where ancient music is celebrated only because it is ancient."<sup>27</sup>

While delivering a talk on Malipiero as a transcriber in 1942, the musicologist Fedele D'Amico said:

The Italian classical style, away from the veneration of canonic forms, is historically absolute formal freedom, conditioned only by its expressive opportunities and mostly felt by instinct, with carefree airiness, within the current tradition, but never provoked, as in Germany, by the fight with pre-established forms.<sup>28</sup>

This national ideology, which permeated the musical scene of the time, behind the claim that Italy has been the cradle of every musical genre, even when it comes to symphonic, chamber, or soloistic works. In order to exhume these long-forgotten treasures, many volumes of transcriptions were issued.

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<sup>27</sup> Salvetti, "Ho Detto Male Di... Verdi," 136.

<sup>28</sup> Gatti, *L'Opera di Malipiero*, 112.

This can be seen as a particular Italian version of neoclassicism: the composers from the *Generazione* were more interested in using actual source material from earlier times in their music than just creating the spirit or atmosphere of earlier styles. This level of historical connection and discovery and renewal of the music of the past seems distinctively Italian.

In an effort to exhume long-forgotten musical treasures in order to strengthen a national musical identity, D'Annunzio sponsored the publishing of *I Classici della Musica*, a series supervised by Angelo Notari. Some of the transcriptions (described by D'Annunzio as *fedelissime*, very faithful) are of arguable veracity, and the selection of the works that are transcribed is spotty and somewhat erratic. Nonetheless these scholars were contributing to the rediscovery of the Italian musical past, long buried. As with many things in Italy at that time, the different approaches in this process of nationalistic discovery happened randomly: there really wasn't a direct point of contact between theory and practice, between musicology and musical execution.

Facing the large amount of works to discover, the country needed direction from the musicological front, to process and give perspective to this resurgence. On one hand the conservatories decided to remain involved mainly in the practical teachings of music, excluding musicology for its theoretical connotations, while on the other universities refused to include music history in their curricula because of its practical considerations. This left the subject of musicology outside the official academic institutions in the

country, which set back the way music was talked about and caused a fracture that is still tangible in the country today<sup>29</sup> in the curricula of music history classes in Italian conservatories. Therefore, discourse on music was tackled mainly by composers.

It is thanks to Pizzetti, Malipiero, and Casella that Italy found out about the stimulating, new ideas of their time, international relationships in the musical world, new concepts rising from new technologies, and generally speaking, new themes involving the musical public at large. These men were also important in promoting the music of the past. If they were going to disregard the nineteenth century, they had to delineate a point of cultural detachment, a point where Italian music stopped. This ended up being the Baroque period, marked not only by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) and Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643), but also by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) and Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741).

### **Malipiero**

Throughout his oeuvre Malipiero used the techniques of early music to bridge the gap between the old and the new, following his aesthetic ideals. Within his belief in radical pessimism,<sup>30</sup> Malipiero's relationship with the past is an instinctive, sentimental and mediatic one, one which shows a profound

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<sup>29</sup> Salvetti, "Ho Detto Male Di... Verdi," 113.

<sup>30</sup> Massimo Mila, "Modernità e Antimodernismo in Malipiero," in *Omaggio a Malipiero: atti del Convegno di studi malipieriani promosso dalla Fondazione Giorgio Cini*, ed. Mario Messinis (Florence: Olschki, 1977), 17.

strangeness and real horror for the feeling not only of progress but also of a logical and rational unraveling of history.

Malipiero's name is today widely associated to his activities as a transcriber and editor, and such activities gave him tremendous exposure during the 1920s and '30s, years in which the government was eager to invest in the rediscovery of the almost forgotten Italian glorious past. Through frequent visits to the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice, he transcribed the entire body of works by Claudio Monteverdi between 1926 and 1942.

In 1952 Malipiero became the artistic director of the edition of all the instrumental works of Antonio Vivaldi, the Red Priest, sponsored by the Antonio Vivaldi Institute in collaboration with Ricordi. The project was finished only in 1972, just a year before Malipiero's passing. Malipiero had a very critical view of transcriptions made between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. This is what he says about musicology and its effect on transcriptions:

Musicology became then the only resource for failed composers, who in order not to fail once more, disguised composers from the past with the current fashion. [...] The horizons of the confused listener would have been a little broader, if Palestrina wouldn't have been made a church music director from the country, Monteverdi (see the elaborations by Vincent D'Indy) a housewife Wagner and Vivaldi an early nineteenth-century classic.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Gian Francesco Malipiero, *Antonio Vivaldi, il Prete Rosso* (Milan: Ricordi, 1958), 5.



In his own music, Malipiero's "effort in modernity" shows a dramatic tension between the fear of death and beauty, the anguish of the present and the myth of a classic "supreme civilization." Indeed his friend and correspondent Guido Gatti stated that Malipiero's study of the ancient classics was a substantial asset to the composer's musical language.<sup>32</sup> In this Malipiero is not always consistent, since he evokes a number of different "ancients," rather than just a clearly defined one. Malipiero was undoubtedly fascinated by the past and fueled by a perpetual nostalgia of a long gone Italy, values that are lost, to paraphrase his own words, in the sunniest centuries of the country, cradled by an arcane comfort of an ideal homeland, mysterious and sweet with a maternal tenderness.<sup>33</sup> Malipiero would even write Gatti that in fact one of the reasons why he was so devoted to the transcription of early music was to disprove the credo that Italian music is mainly melodramatic in nature.<sup>34</sup> Objectively speaking, the frequent visits to the past by Malipiero are more of a visionary experience of an idealized past, long lost.

In his musical tribute to the Red Priest called *Vivaldiana* (1952), Malipiero offers a personal interpretation of the attitude toward transcription at the beginning of the century that he himself despised. The score consists of elaborations of six movements by Vivaldi, taken from six different concertos

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<sup>32</sup> Gatti, *L'Opera di Malipiero*, 117.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Malipiero and Gatti, *Carteggio*, 84.

for strings, to which Malipiero adds a wind section. Many different orchestration techniques converge in this fantasy transcription, spanning from the early eighteenth to the twentieth century. In this version these works by Vivaldi appear as if they have been projected into a fantastic musical realm that, from a historical and stylistic point of view, would never have existed if not for Malipiero's imagination. In a way the result can be seen as a utopic concerto, the perfect concerto by Vivaldi as seen through Malipiero's eyes, an experiment akin to those of Leopold Stokowski or William Henry Humiston, both of whom transcribed many pages of Bach's music for orchestra.

The specific relationship between the old and the new in Malipiero's music has a particular meaning: rather than being a contraposition between beauty and death, it is more of a point of convergence between the two. The contemplation of death, present in large part in his first period, joins the contemplation of a pure Italian beauty, but one that has been corrupted through the centuries by the evolution of musical language. A clearly repurposable past wouldn't have struck his artistry the same way because it wouldn't have left much space for creativity.

The act of composing in a progressive manner becomes a process of unraveling the thread of history in a way that is almost a reinvention of the ancient. In this sense Malipiero closely follows his literary colleagues, who were already apt in the rediscovery of the glorious, ancient past, D'Annunzio being the biggest inspiration. In D'Annunzio's view, music from the past is a

guarantee of nobility in a European landscape in which the dignity and importance of Mediterranean culture is affirmed. In his writings, Malipiero frequently calls for the standards of absolute excellence that the Italian classics had. His relationship with the old and the new is not univocal, for it includes aspects of the decadent movement as well as the avant-garde. The principle of musical ransacking, or the free repurposing of sources, rules his aesthetic principles, and he uses the old as a creative asset. The nucleus of his modernity is an anti-historic one that focuses on the modal system from the sixteenth century, the pre-harmonic, pre-tonal, pre-temperament world. The beauty of the ancient emerges, but only in order to be contaminated.

### **Pizzetti**

Out of the four composers from the *Generazione dell'Ottanta*, Pizzetti was the one who disagreed with the idea of looking back in order to look ahead to the future, and as with anything else he felt strongly about, he was vocal in his skepticism about this practice that his colleagues professed as the only way forward. Pizzetti thought that the nineteenth century, both in the symphonic and the operatic genres, was incomparable in regards to quantity and quality with any other musical period and mocked whoever dared to oppose this conviction.

### **Respighi**

Respighi was, like Malipiero, an avid scholar of early music. In his original music, especially in his symphonic poems (and in particular the

Roman trilogy), he often employed modal structures like those found in Gregorian chant. In her biography, Elsa Respighi narrates the moment in which she arguably taught him everything she knew about Gregorian chant:

We had been married for some weeks when one day I asked Ottorino if he had ever studied Gregorian Chant. He replied that it was something he had long wanted to do but never found the opportunity. For my part I had studied the subject with particular enthusiasm and been given a first class diploma a few months previously. I offered to teach him and must admit that it was not at all hard work. In a few days Respighi had learnt all I knew and much more besides. It became quite a craze with him. Not a day passed but he asked me to intone a passage from the Roman Gradual while he listened spellbound. The maestro was considerably influenced by this music, for there are echoes of Gregorian Chant in almost everything he wrote after 1920.[...] The Maestro told me how wonderful it would be to recast those magnificent melodies in a new language of sounds, free them from the rigidly formal Catholic liturgy of the Roman Gradual and revive the indestructible germ of real human values contained therein.<sup>35</sup>

While Malipiero was more involved in the transcription and retrieval process of the lost works of Vivaldi and Monteverdi, Respighi worked creatively in the reorchestration of older works. The famous impresario Sergej Diaghilev commissioned Respighi to create an adaptation of Domenico Cimarosa's (1749-1801) *Le Astuzie Femminili* (Feminine Tricks, 1794) to be performed with the Ballet Russe. Subsequently the two worked together on a number of *pastiche* compositions based on various works by Rossini (*La Boutique Fantasque*, 1919), Scarlatti and Pergolesi. His three sets of *Ancient*

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<sup>35</sup> Respighi, *Respighi*, 70.

*Airs and Dances* (1917/1923) are collections of compositions for lute written by various forgotten composers (in some cases, even unknown), orchestrated for a twentieth-century orchestra.

## **Casella**

Even though his efforts as a transcriber didn't match those of Malipiero or Respighi, Casella was an enthusiast of early and pre-Romantic music. His *Scarlattiana* (1926) for piano and orchestra is a direct homage to Domenico Scarlatti in which, according to the composer, "about eighty themes taken from the miraculous 545 sonatas are given a totally new treatment."<sup>36</sup>

In 1935 Casella showed his continued adoration of older music when he embarked on the massive project of orchestrating Bach's *Chaconne*, originally written for solo violin, for large orchestra. This is what he said in his memoirs about this endeavor:

[the orchestration of the *Chaconne*] represents a type of "orchestral interpretation" based on quite different principles from those employed in previous attempts of the kind. In this transcription there is undoubtedly a great amount of inventive fancy and a strong dose of boldness, since it is not a question merely of putting Bach's violin original into the orchestra but above all of bringing to the light all that vast polyphonic and contrapuntal substratum which the prodigious original contains in latent form. The orchestral version which resulted is therefore a labor of love and veneration for the art of Bach, but it is also the affirmation of personal principles and the application of an orchestral technique now arrived at complete maturity. It is essentially anti-archeological work, sometimes rather contentious. For this it can be admired or despised. In this as in similar cases, my conscience as an artist and as a humble

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<sup>36</sup> Casella, *Music In My Time*, 173.

disciple of Bach is perfectly undisturbed and firm in the face of any hasty criticism.<sup>37</sup>

For the members of the *Generazione*, history mattered. Whereas Casella, Respighi, and Malipiero mostly dismissed the nineteenth century (and to dismiss it, they proved they knew its attributes and why they were problematic in their eyes), they admired what came before. Pizzetti's views were just the opposite, and this proves that in any sort of group, unanimous consensus is not always the case.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 210-211.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GENERAZIONE AND POLITICS

During the period of Fascist Italy (1922-1943), the scope and breadth of the regime touched virtually every aspect of life and culture, and Mussolini definitely tried to use music to help push his vision on the population. His love for music was often been romanticized by many poets of the regime. Although we don't know exactly to which extent these descriptions of Il Duce's virtuosity on the violin or his love for music are true, it is safe to say that he gave special consideration to the art form. For example, in 1927 Raffaello De Rensis wrote in his propagandist pamphlet *Mussolini musicista* (Mussolini the Musician):

Little Benito diligently frequented the church [in his native village, Predappio] to hear the dragging cantilenas of the faithful and the organ's harmonious sounds, which perturbed him in a strange, indefinable way. When the gay, noisy Romagnole bands arrived for religious holidays, he was among the most assiduous listeners; he often followed them as they marched through the streets of the village, and the dry, bold rhythm stirred his instinctively war-like spirit. He harboured a special sympathy for birds and listened with curiosity, in the solitude of the woods, to their tweeting, their chirping and their screeching, as if their language revealed profound mysteries.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Harvey Sachs, *Music In Fascist Italy* (London: Norton, 1988), 24.

The history of Mussolini and the fascist regime has been divided in six distinct periods by Renzo De Felice, an Italian historian and a scholar of the fascist era. First there is the revolutionary period (1883-1921), then the seizure of power (1921-1925), the organization of the fascist state (1925-1929), the years of consensus (1929-1936), then the totalitarian state (1936-1939), and finally the “Allied” years (1940-1945).<sup>2</sup>

When Mussolini came to power in 1922, the most celebrated composers in Italy’s musical panorama were those whose success had been established before the turn of the century: Giacomo Puccini, Pietro Mascagni, and to a lesser extent, Umberto Giordano and Francesco Cilea. None of them knew how to play the new political game, but since all of them were in their later years, they didn’t refuse the honors bestowed on them after contributing to their country’s culture for the previous fifty years. All of these composers were born in the late 1850s and early 1860s, and all of them grew up along with the newborn Kingdom of Italy, which came to unify the peninsula in 1861. The generation that followed these composers, our *Generazione*, was at its artistic peak in 1922 when fascism came to power in Italy. This generation was less worried about immortal fame (unlike their immediate predecessors) and more about work and survival.

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<sup>2</sup> Renzo De Felice, *Le Interpretazioni del Fascismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1972).



In 1931 Mussolini distributed his “secret circular” to all Italian diplomatic and consular representatives in foreign countries in which he expressed views about music:

I prescribe that from now on, no favor be shown in any way to [Italian] musical initiatives - operas, vocal [recitals], concerts or musical evenings - [and] that they be treated icily. Exceptions will be made for symphony orchestras, whose performances also give an idea of collective group discipline. All the rest must be ignored. It is high time that the world - that is, hundreds of millions of men - get to know a different type of Italian from that of yesterday - the eternal tenor and mandolinist [who exists] for others' diversion. Caruso and the like were or are [representatives of] the old Italy. Mussolini.<sup>3</sup>

### **Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938)**

It is impossible to talk about the connection between politics and music without discussing the figure of Gabriele D'Annunzio. The poet unleashed newfound feelings of patriotic heroism, and in doing so he always gave music a special place in his imagination. For D'Annunzio, music included the components of mysticism, eroticism, and heroism, all of which he used in his own work to create characters and ideas. He collaborated extensively with some of the most famous musicians of his time, such as Claude Debussy (*Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*, 1911) and Pietro Mascagni (*Parisina*, 1913), among others.

D'Annunzio had a close relationship with the composers and ideology of the *Generazione*. Many times he became their mouthpiece when it came to

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 45.

interfacing with Il Duce's ear. Besides being a revered poet who the regime called a "precursor to fascism," D'Annunzio was a free-minded intellectual (he actually never officially joined the party) whose contributions to everyday Italian life are still tangible today, although his figure is still surrounded by a high degree of controversy because of his politics and personal life.

D'Annunzio collaborated with each of the four composers included in this study of the *Generazione dell'Ottanta*, thus putting his footprint on many musical works (in Italy, as well as abroad) during his lifetime. Each one of our four composers had a different relationship with the poet, which is documented by the robust amount of correspondence he maintained.

D'Annunzio started collaborating with the young Ildebrando Pizzetti in 1905, when he answered a call to compose a choral setting of some of the poet's verses. This first commission generated a lasting relationship of the mentor/pupil type,<sup>4</sup> after which D'Annunzio nicknamed Pizzetti as *Ildebrando da Parma* (Ildebrando from Parma), a name which the composer happily adopted as his alias and with which he autographed his creations during that artistic period. Their collaboration continued until 1914, when Pizzetti was commissioned to write his *Sinfonia del Fuoco* for the movie *Cabiria*, which was partially inspired by D'Annunzio, who recommended Pizzetti for the score.

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<sup>4</sup> Franco Sciannameo, "In Black and White: Pizzetti, Mussolini and Scipio Africanus," *The Musical Times* 145, no. 1887 (2004), 28.

Alfredo Casella and Gian Francesco Malipiero began working with the D'Annunzio around 1910, when the poet made idealistic and monetary contributions to the musical society *Società Internazionale di Musica Contemporanea*, or SIMC. Malipiero and Casella would remain friends and collaborators with D'Annunzio for the rest of the poet's life. Their vast correspondence regarding worldly events, friendship, and work has been published and sheds an important light on the nature of the Italian cultural fabric at the time.<sup>5</sup> Casella recounts a meeting between the "three illustrious Italians"<sup>6</sup> in June 1913, when he, Malipiero, Pizzetti, and D'Annunzio all met in Paris, just a few weeks after attending the legendary premiere of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

Even the solitary and reserved Respighi couldn't avoid crossing paths with the regime's poet, as much as he tried. Young Respighi was offered many opportunities to collaborate with D'Annunzio, but he refused every single time. His reticence to collaborate with one of the most worldly and discussed figures in the agitated Italian life of the first twentieth century is partially explained by his wife, Elsa, who said that on one hand Respighi felt "too unimportant"<sup>7</sup> in 1911, when he was first asked by his publisher Sonzogno to collaborate with the poet. On the other hand, she remarked that

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<sup>5</sup> Gian Francesco Malipiero and Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Il Carteggio tra Gabriele D'Annunzio e Gian Francesco Malipiero: 1910-1938*, ed. Chiara Bianchi (Cosenza: Ferrari, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Casella, *Music In My Time*, 111.

<sup>7</sup> Respighi, *Respighi*, 137.

“Respighi, simple, mild, solitary, in some ways childlike, felt poles apart from D’Annunzio splendid, luxurious life and he found the host of legends about the poet an insurmountable barrier.”<sup>8</sup> The two finally did begin to collaborate in 1932 on a work called *La Vergine e la Città* (The Virgin and the City), which will never see the light of day due to Respighi’s frequent American tours, which ended with his premature death in 1936.

### **Ildebrando Pizzetti**

Among the composers of the Generazione dell’Ottanta, it was probably Ildebrando Pizzetti who managed to gain the most from involving himself with the regime. He was (together with Respighi) a musical conservative throughout his life and was very vocal as a nationally acclaimed music critic who was forever fighting a crusade against the avant-garde fringes of music. In 1922 he was one of the main writers for the music magazine *La Voce*; he became dean of the Milan Conservatory in 1924; and in 1925 he was selected by the former minister Gentile to write the music section of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, which was supposed to be one of the greatest cultural achievements of the fascist period.<sup>9</sup> Pizzetti had a good relationship with Mussolini, who had even hired the composer for a private concert of his works in December 1925, together with Gabriele D’Annunzio. This is what Pizzetti wrote to Mussolini about that event in 1932:

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Sachs, *Music in Fascist Italy*, 123.

The long conversation you allowed me to have with you nearly seven years ago is one of my best memories. [...] It is my hope that the gift of your penetrating and thoroughly comprehending attention will again be granted me. Not so that I may boast of it among others, but because I know the value of every moment lived near great men, and the good they can do those who understand how to listen to them.<sup>10</sup>

Mussolini's friendship with Pizzetti at this point was thus ensured to last until the dictator's death. Pizzetti was awarded the Mussolini prize in 1931 for his opera *Debora e Jaele*, and was frequently in contact with il Duce, who sometimes would in fact weigh in on some of his musical and poetical choices. In 1932 Pizzetti sent Mussolini a copy of the libretto of his opera *Orseo*. Mussolini returned the libretto with only 3 words underlined (liberty and justice being two of them) in pencil, which the composer promptly erased from the final copy of the libretto.

Pizzetti was also an influential member of the committee which in 1921 reformed the Italian conservatories. The reform involved many aspects of the institutions and remained in effect until 1999.<sup>11</sup>

The full account of Pizzetti's ultimate stance towards fascism is still divisive today. The scholar Harvey Sachs said that "Pizzetti was fundamentally ignorant politically wise, and did the bare minimum he had to do in order to be seen as a fascist and retain his activity,"<sup>12</sup> while the

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<sup>10</sup> Nicolodi, *La generazione dell'Ottanta*, 434.

<sup>11</sup> Matteo Paoletti, "'D'arte chi se ne occupa più?' Tendenze e questioni del mercato lirico," in *La Grande Trasformazione. Il teatro italiano tra il 1914 e il 1924*, ed. Federica Mazzocchi and Armando Petrucci (Turin: Accademia University Press, 2019), 57.

<sup>12</sup> Sachs, *Music In Fascist Italy*, 35.

musicologist Franco Sciannameo claims that “in such a particular cultural environment at the forefront of nationalist, soon-to-become imperialistic, aspirations, Pizzetti somehow wore the mantle of a Mussolini paladin, a mantle that he wore with a great deal of dignity.”<sup>13</sup> The truth probably lies in the middle. Pizzetti’s contribution to the ongoing trend in Italy to revive medieval and Renaissance styles mixed with more popular and folk melodies matched Mussolini’s blurred vision on what constituted the newly reinvigorated Italian national style and concept of Italianness.<sup>14</sup>

Each had something to gain from the other, and that was the main nature of their relationship. For example, the premiere of Pizzetti’s opera *Orseolo* in 1935 was secured through the personal intervention of Mussolini on behalf of the Florentine Festival. The artistic director of the festival, unable to gain the commitment of Pizzetti, asked Il Duce in person to convince the composer. Mussolini fulfilled this request by sending Pizzetti this dispatch: “The committee of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino awaits the already announced *Orseolo*. I am sure that *Orseolo* will be ready by May 1935 and that its premiere will be a delicious event for Italian opera.”<sup>15</sup> Needless to say, Pizzetti was very happy to honor this request coming from the highest power in the country and subsequently even regarded the work as one of the greatest achievements of his artistic career.

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<sup>13</sup> Sciannameo, “In Black and White,” 32.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 33.

Three important events concerning Pizzetti took place during the remaining years of the fascist dictatorship. First was his inheritance of Ottorino Respighi's coveted composition chair at the Conservatorio Santa Cecilia after the composer's premature death in 1936. Second was the film score he wrote that same year for *Scipione l'Africano* (Scipio the African),<sup>16</sup> which is considered to this day to be one of the most important examples of fascist propaganda concerning the Italian colonialist campaign in Africa. The extent to which Pizzetti was regarded as one of the main musical protagonists of the fascist regime led to the third event, a peculiar commission in 1940 from the Emperor of Japan, who, in a moment of solidarity between the three empires forming the axis, requested Pizzetti to write a symphony in celebration of the twenty-sixth centennial of the foundation of the Japanese Empire. This prestigious task resulted in the creation of *Sinfonia in La*, which was premiered and recorded in Tokyo on 7 December 1940. By virtue of his artistic integrity, Pizzetti's professional reputation wasn't particularly damaged by his uncomfortable past, and he met no resistance when he kept composing, writing, teaching, and conducting for the rest of his long life.

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<sup>16</sup> This movie, directed by Carmine Gallone, was financed with an investment capital, devolved by the Italian government, of the astonishing amount of 12.6 million lire. The making of the movie took 232 days and featured almost 100.000 people between actors, technical and administrative personnel, and extras.

### **Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973)**

Being the most introverted of the bunch, Gian Francesco Malipiero was among the Italian composers who while never fully embracing the regime didn't hesitate to live with it. In his memoirs, whenever the topic of politics came up, he always remarked on how much he doesn't associate with this or that regime. Despite this, he sought Mussolini's aid multiple times when he needed his music to be performed or was in need of financial assistance. Mussolini granted Malipiero an audience three times, but due perhaps to the always pessimistic, almost begging tones of his correspondence with Il Duce, his requests were ignored most of the time.

Malipiero was generally on good terms with Mussolini until 1934, the year after he set the libretto of *La favola del Figlio Cambiato* (The Fable of the Changed Son) by Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936), a leading figure in Italian literary circles and an acclaimed playwright and novelist. A couple of lines in the libretto which inherently criticized the Roman empire caused not only the disfavor of the public but also the condemnation of the fascists. This incident is what probably changed Mussolini's stance towards Malipiero (and Pirandello) for the duration of the regime. Malipiero tried to make up for his wrongdoing by redacting the offending lines from the libretto, and when he asked Pirandello what he thought of the idea, the playwright decided to leave it completely up to the composer, mostly out of fear of again being associated with a dissident work of art. In an effort to regain favor, Malipiero dedicated



his next opera, *Giulio Cesare*, to Mussolini, but this did not help in winning back the sympathies of the despot in Rome and started the process of increased isolation that would accompany the composer until his final days.

### **Alfredo Casella (1883-1947)**

Even though Alfredo Casella was known to be a fascist on paper, like most of his colleagues, there aren't many surviving documents to overtly reveal his precise ideas regarding the regime. It is known, though, that Casella's second wife, Yvonne Müller (1892-1977), was of Jewish descent, and that after the introduction of racial laws in Italy in 1938, the couple spent time off and on in hiding.<sup>17</sup> Casella's most overt statement concerning the regime's philosophy comes from one of his staged works, *Il Deserto Tentato* (The Tempted Desert), written in 1937. This one-act opera celebrates the Italian colonial expansion in Africa, and it depicts the arrival of a group of Italian airmen in Ethiopia and their welcome by the indigenous peoples. The work was dedicated to "Mussolini, *fondatore dell'Impero*" (the Empire's founder), and it is filled with elements that directly praise the regime, the heroism of the Italian colonial mission, and the perceived inferiority of the colonized people. *Il Deserto Tentato* was one of several operas commissioned by the *Ministero della Cultura Popolare* (often abbreviated as *MinCulPop*, Ministry of Popular Culture, in effect a ministry of propaganda),

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<sup>17</sup> Laura Basini, "Alfredo Casella and the Rhetoric of Colonialism," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 24, no. 2 (2012): 129, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23319597>.

and its premiere was given on the first anniversary of the Empire's founding. The regime sponsored a plethora of other staged works during those years, with perhaps the most famous being *Nerone* (1935) by Pietro Mascagni.<sup>18</sup> While Casella surely composed his work out of duty, it remains unclear to which extent he actually agreed with the clear political attitude presented in the opera. A similar case abroad can be seen in the Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975), about whose relationship to the Soviet state much has been written.<sup>19</sup>

### **Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)**

The extent of Ottorino Respighi's interaction with fascism is also not clearly defined. If on one hand the composer who wrote *The Fountains of Rome* lived a reserved life, dictated only by his musical engagements without much concern for celebrity, and on the other experienced fame and success in Italy and abroad largely because of his sonic depictions of Roman grandness presented in the friendly form of the symphonic poem, he became an automatic asset for the regime's propaganda machine. Respighi held the coveted chair of composition at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome until his death, and such a prestigious appointment surely wouldn't have been given to somebody openly opposed to the fascist regime, although it is also

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<sup>18</sup> Cesare Orselli, *Pietro Mascagni* (Palermo: L'Epos, 2019), 330.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Allan B. Ho and Dmitry Feofanov, eds., *Shostakovich Reconsidered* (London: Toccata Press, 1998), Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

important to recognize that since he was the first of the composers from the Generazione to pass away (in 1936), he didn't live through perhaps the most intense and crucial years of the dictatorship, which would include the enforcement of racial laws in 1938 and entering World War II in 1940. Elsa Respighi recounts in her memoirs an event in which Respighi met Mussolini in Milan in 1923 after a concert of all of his own music. Apparently, Mussolini was well informed about Respighi's output and showed friendliness to the composer, a friendliness that Elsa Respighi said was "very different from what [the public image of Mussolini] we usually saw in newspaper photographs."<sup>20</sup>

The remark made earlier concerning Casella also applies to Respighi. For any artistic creator who works in a totalitarian state, the differences between one's internal beliefs and their external endorsements will never, and can never, be fully known. This is certainly true with not just Respighi and Casella but all the members of the Generazione discussed here.

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<sup>20</sup> Respighi, *Respighi*, 89.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GENERAZIONE IN THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MUSIC SCENES OF ITS TIME

The professional music world is filled with networks. These can revolve around publishers, agents, performing organizations (e.g., orchestras), venues, critics and the press, musicians' unions and other collective bodies to protect them and their rights, and ones of a more personal nature built through direct interactions. For the members of the *Generazione*, these networks existed both within Italy and abroad and had directly influences on the composers and the performance of their works during their lifetimes.

#### **The Italian Music Scene**

Reading the extensive correspondence and articles coming from the composers themselves, it is evident how their individual and collective distrust in the Italian musical infrastructure becomes a leitmotif for all four of those discussed in this document. More tangible in the writings of Alfredo Casella (1883-1947) and Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973) than in those of Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) and Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968), Italy for the *Generazione* always represented a hostile territory when it came to new and foreign music. This attitude extended from the rambunctious public to the

publishing houses, and was rampant among opera house managers and newspaper critics. There are multiple reports of concerts ending in a brawl either because German music was played or because the music would be too modern for the Italian audiences of the time. Concerts were frequently interrupted and cut short for such reasons.<sup>1</sup> These events colored Italy's international reputation, for comparisons were often made between other countries, those at the forefront of the musical scene, and the still "provincial and backwards"<sup>2</sup> Italy. There thus was an ideological need from the Italian musical frontrunners to establish their reputations in their own country, but without the needed support from the public and state institutions, alternative platforms had to be created.

Other countries, most notably France, already had a long history of music societies and other collectives that operated towards a certain artistic goal. In 1909, following an altercation caused by the programming on a concert of the *Société Nationale de Musique* (National Musical Society), Maurice Ravel decided to part ways with it and founded the *Société Musicale Indépendante* (Independent Music Society), presided over by Gabriel Fauré and frequented by a young Alfredo Casella.<sup>3</sup> This is perhaps where Casella had the first glimpse of what a musical association would be able to

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<sup>1</sup> Notably, there was one concert at the Augusteo Theatre in Rome on November 19th 1916, in which Arturo Toscanini had to abruptly leave the stage for playing a Wagner overture during a time in which the relationships with the German world were critical.

<sup>2</sup> Casella, *Music in my Time*, 138.

<sup>3</sup> Gabriele D'Annunzio, then in voluntary exile in France, was also a notable member.

accomplish in his own country, and in his memoirs he often wrote about how much his frequent participation in Parisian soirées put him in contact with a wide network of artists. Once he returned to Italy and settled in Rome in 1915, he felt a longing for the intense musical life he had relished in Paris, and he took it upon himself to find a way to bring his music and that of his countrymen to the Italian public.

Following the lead of what had already happened in France (and Spain), in 1916 Casella established the Società Nazionale di Musica (National Music Society, renamed Società Italiana di Musica Moderna [Italian Society of Modern Music]), which would subsequently be dissolved in 1919. Casella confessed that, “One of my immediate objectives was the creation of a musical organization which could function as a Trojan horse in that environment which was still so backward and provincial.”<sup>4</sup> Among the first members of this group were Respighi, Malipiero, Pizzetti and Vittorio Gui, and honorary membership was given to Arturo Toscanini and Ferruccio Busoni. Casella states in his autobiography the initial purpose of the organization:

The National Music Society came into existence with the aim of performing the most interesting music of the young Italians, resurrecting our old forgotten music, printing the most interesting new compositions, publishing a periodical, and organizing a system of exchanging new music with the principal foreign countries.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Casella, *Music in my Time*, 139.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 140.

The first concert of the society took place on March 16, 1917, and the enthusiasm that Casella reported portrays the newly founded society as a successful enterprise, with several active seasons taking place throughout the country that featured works by not just the frontrunners of Italian music but also from notable foreign composers such as Ravel, Fauré, Debussy and De Falla. In his enterprise, Casella made full use of the networks he established during his nineteen years in Paris. He frequently collaborated with the French and Spanish counterparts of the society, thus establishing a fruitful cultural exchange among the three Latin nations. This union soon came apart, mainly because of Casella's increasing international tours as a concert pianist, which required long periods away from Italy. Even though some of the relationships established in this brief but meaningful moment of cultural aggregation would take a bad turn in the following years, Casella wrote about this first tentative approach to an Italian new music society in an affectionate manner:

I recall nostalgically that first year of our activity, especially the spirit of enthusiasm which bound me to Respighi, Pizzetti, Malipiero, and my other contemporaries. It was really a united front of intelligence against mediocrity and dilettantism, and such a fraternity of artists has never since been seen among us. Life separated us later, and even set in opposition to me as enemies some of those musicians who fought by my side in the beginning. This does not alter the significance of 1917, the year in which the renovation of our national musical consciousness really began.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid 143.

After the dissolution of this first society, Casella kept in mind the power that a collective of creative minds could have in organizing and promoting music, and in 1923, together with Malipiero and Gabriele D'Annunzio, he founded another society, the *Corporazione Delle Nuove Musiche* (New Music Corporation), or CDNM, which existed in this iteration until 1928, when it was absorbed into the International Society for Contemporary Music. CDNM, as a new model of modern culture, had a statute, written by D'Annunzio, that involved not only the valorization of contemporary music but also the revival of Italian “ancient” music, starting with Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). The society planned on having its own orchestra and had the noble intent of playing for the masses, specifying that every concert was intended to be an educational experience for the public, and therefore had to be free of charge.

The ambitious project required an investment the likes of which had not been seen before in a cultural association, and D'Annunzio (with Casella's justified diffidence) tried without much success to find the funding. Thanks to Casella's connections at this point in his career, however, major funding came from the American philanthropist Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864-1953), along with other minor donors. Mrs. Coolidge was one of the wealthiest and most generous patrons of music, and was instrumental in the commission of many chamber works from composers from all over the world. The corporation also served initially as the Italian section of the afore-mentioned International Society for Contemporary Music, which originally was started in



Vienna in 1922 as a way to resume international relations between European composers, whose countries had until a few years prior fought against each other.

All the members of the *Generazione* were a part of the CDNM, although Casella was the only one involved with the artistic direction. In its five years of existence, the corporation organized over seventy events, both in Italy and abroad, that featured works by Italian composers, as well as by some of the most famous musicians active in Europe at the time, such as Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Béla Bartók, and Francis Poulenc. One especially noteworthy event was the Italian premiere of *Pierrot Lunaire* in 1924, at which Casella fondly recalled the encounter between Arnold Schoenberg, who conducted his own work, and Giacomo Puccini, who was an admirer of the former's work. This association was of great interest to the now dominant fascist regime, which on more than one occasion provided logistical and monetary support for its concerts.<sup>7</sup> Through this artistic channel, Casella contributed directly to the Italian participation in a new musical scene that readily identified itself as purely European.

Malipiero, who after the initial meeting with Casella and D'Annunzio participated primarily as a composer, did so with glee, since CDNM organized

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<sup>7</sup> The *Biennale Di Venezia*, a contemporary art festival that is still held nowadays every two years in Venice, had its first season in 1925 thanks to the International Society of Contemporary Music, followed by an outstanding success which brought the officials of the regime to make it a recurring event.

numerous performances of his works in Italy, which until then he always felt hadn't been properly received in his own country. His individualistic spirit, however, made him criticize such organizations and he talked about the SIMC as a feverishly, raving ill patient whose symptoms don't reveal the diseases behind it.<sup>8</sup>

The reason for his disillusionment about the association he helped found had to do with the rising younger generation, headed by Luigi Dallapiccola (1904-1975) and Goffredo Petrassi (1904-2003), and their avant-garde techniques, which at this point were clearly influenced by new possibilities that technology now had to offer. In a poking comment, a classic example of Malipiero's wit, he suggested that the SIMC should change its name to SIRC, where the "M for *musica* gave up to the R for *rumore* (noise)."<sup>9</sup> After the SIMC was absorbed into the International Society of Contemporary Music, only Malipiero and Casella represented their generation within the association.

In December 1933, a manifesto was published simultaneously in several important Italian newspapers that carried the signatures of Respighi, Pizzetti, and Riccardo Zandonai (1883-1944), among others. This manifesto was an attack on modern art, which was in fact a blow to the artistic vision of Casella and Malipiero, even though their names are not specifically

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<sup>8</sup> Malipiero, *Il Filo di Arianna*, 218.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 219.

mentioned. This excerpt from the antimodernist manifesto affirms many of the attitudes and debates discussed earlier in the present document:

[...]All the aesthetic creeds that were going to subvert traditional laws have been set forth and put into practice. Our world has been hit, so to speak, by all the squalls of the most reckless futuristic concepts. As it grew more furious, the password truly aimed at the destruction of every old and ancient artistic ideal. Everything was good so long as it was previously unthought and unthinkable. What have we gained from this? Atonal and polytonal honking. And what has been achieved by objectivism and expressionism? What is left of them?

We are still at the stage of tendencies and experiments, and we do not know what definitive statements and safe roads these may lead to. The public no longer knows which voice to listen to or which road to follow. A sense of facile rebellion against the centuries-old, fundamental laws of art has infiltrated the spirit of young musicians. The future of Italian music seems safe [according to the modernists] only at the tail-end of all the different types of foreign music. There are also those who wish to re-chew the cud of our distant musical past. Above all, however, the last century's romanticism is being opposed and combatted. [...] We are against so-called objective music which, as such, can only represent sound in itself, without the living expression caused by the animating breath that creates it. We are against this art, which does not wish to have and does not have any human content. We Italians of today - in the midst of a political revolution that is revealing, once again, the immortality of Italian genius, and that is strengthening every one of our virtues - feel the beauty of the times in which we live and wish to sing of them, in their tragic moments as well as in their ardent days of glory. Yesterday's romanticism will also be tomorrow's romanticism.<sup>10</sup>

The manifesto did not have any practical consequences, for both Casella and Malipiero continued their work despite the infamous blow by so

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<sup>10</sup> John C.G. Waterhouse, *Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973): The Life, Times and Music of a Wayward Genius* (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 42.

many of their colleagues. After the manifesto's publication, Mussolini personally wrote letters to Casella and Malipiero to express that the ideas expressed in the manifesto did not come from a higher office. This was done in order to endorse the artistic plurality of the fascist party.<sup>11</sup> This publication once and for all exacerbated the division between the two modernists of the *Generazione* and its conservative members and resulted in an irremediable fracture between the two groups.

Respighi, who signed the manifesto, did not enjoy belonging to and participating in associations such as the CDNM. As his widow Elsa wrote in her biography of her husband, "It was impossible for Respighi to belong to clubs, groups or cliques because both as a man and an artist he was by nature a lone figure, a recluse."<sup>12</sup> The book's curated (and biased) view of the composer wants to absolve Respighi of any ill done during his life.

The other conservative member of the *Generazione* discussed here, Pizzetti also refrained from being part of such associations. Given his character and the tenets of the anti-modernist manifesto, Pizzetti continued to work mainly in his own alley and without too many external artistic interactions. His closeness to the regime, the Ministry of Popular Culture, and Mussolini himself provided him with plenty of opportunities to participate in national festivals and to hear his music played on all the major stages in the

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<sup>11</sup> Harriet Boyd-Bennett, *Opera in Postwar Venice: Cultural Politics and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Respighi, *Respighi*, 80.

country. His network was political rather than artistic. Even though Pizzetti communicated with Mussolini and was close to the internal mechanisms of the regime, at least when it came to music, he managed to land on his feet when the regime came to an end. His statements during the fascist era didn't leave a permanent political mark, but they can be seen as tentative for a composer having to cope with a system that ended up benefiting him. Rather than being a staunch fascist, his views were tempered by the incessant necessity for a national rhetoric and he ended up offering support to the regime in exchange for visibility. Pizzetti was well enclosed within Italy as both a frequently performed composer and a critic. He was a musical conservative and a purist when it came to Italian heritage and did not respond kindly to the reenacting of ancient cultures by non-Italian composers.

After CDNM became part of the International Society of Contemporary Music, Alfredo Casella continued to be the Italian representative to the larger entity until 1940. Casella's CDNM inspired subsequent organizations with a similar mission in Italy, including one that remains active today, the *Società Italiana di Musica Contemporanea* (Italian Society of Contemporary Music), or SIMC.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> More information on the current activities of the association can be found at <https://www.simc-italia.com/>

## The International Music Scene

The ideology in music and aesthetic values pushed by the regime didn't just compare itself with its own Italian glorious past but also had to deal with the styles and cultures coming from abroad. Therefore, the musicians of the Generazione couldn't help but be compared to Wagnerian and post-Wagnerian (primarily Richard Strauss) currents. If a passage from *Tristan und Isolde* would end up influencing one musical page by Pizzetti or Mascagni, that work would always be then an "Italian Tristan." A continuous filtering of what was accepted and what wasn't accepted from beyond the Alps was always applied, and this went for France as well as Germany. Italian music critics of the time in fact saw French styles, including Impressionism, as examples not to be followed, since the over-assimilation of styles and cultures (primed by Debussy) was seen as passive and amoral.

So-called "contaminations" from the external (i.e., non-Italian) world had to undergo the severe scrutiny of the regime, which had to deliberate whether a certain music or ideology was compatible with its ideals of Italian supremacy. As an example, this is what the regime's newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, said about jazz music (among other things) in March 1928:

It is nefarious and insulting for tradition, and so for our lineage, to bring back violins, mandolins and guitars back to the attic in order to blow saxophones and hit timpani after barbaric melodies which only live for the ephemeris of trends.[...] <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Carlo Ravasio, "Fascismo e Tradizione," *Il Popolo, d'Italia*, March 30, 1928.

During the 1920s many composers from around the world were captivated by the new music coming from North America: jazz (or Jazz Band, as it was erroneously called in its first decades in Italy) with its many variants and styles. Composers such as Stravinsky, Milhaud and Debussy all used the new exciting rhythms and harmonic constructions in their compositions. Italy had only a few instances of classical composers writing music inspired by jazz, such as the fox trot written by Casella in 1920 for piano four hands. The rest of his generation saw in jazz a menace that could in their view threaten and crush the national supremacist effort in all the arts that the regime was pushing.<sup>15</sup> Casella is in fact one of the few music critics of his time to write about jazz in non-derogatory terms.<sup>16</sup>

Casella states in his article “Il Jazz” that “Jazz music is the only music of our times which undoubtedly presents the twentieth century style.”<sup>17</sup> He includes jazz fully in the musical vocabulary of the twentieth century and criticizes all the composers who still reject it. He goes on by saying that jazz is teaching all the serious composers a valuable lesson, for humanity is in need of a music that could bring people the much-needed sonic joy they need and

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<sup>15</sup> It is worth mentioning that Romano Mussolini (1927-2006), Benito's fourth son, enjoyed an accomplished career after the war as a jazz pianist and bandleader.

<sup>16</sup> Luca Cerchiari, *Jazz e fascismo: Dalla nascita della radio a Gorni Kramer* (Milan: Mimesis Edizioni, 2019), 89.

<sup>17</sup> Alfredo Casella, 21+26 (Florence: Olschki 2001), 48.

deserve.<sup>18</sup> It is in this context that Casella's position has a connotation of originality, doubling his musical roles as critic<sup>19</sup> and composer.

Casella's engagement with the musics of different European countries, as well as ones coming from the Americas, gave him the tools and techniques to develop his own progressive musical nationalism that was focused on bringing out the true intrinsic values of Italian music while intentionally keeping his own aesthetic values up to date. He did so while obviously pleasing the regime, with statements aimed to guarantee his place within the nationalistic order. It is not an exaggeration to say that during his time, Casella was closely connected with virtually every musician worthy of mention. His relationships went beyond simple acquaintances in many cases; his connections were directly responsible for the Italian premieres of *Petrushka* and *Pierrot Lunaire* and the French and Italian premieres of Mahler's Second Symphony.

Unlike Casella, who was by far the worldliest of our four composers, Malipiero was certainly the most insular and the least cosmopolitan. Being a dedicated Venetian, he lived in the Venice hinterland, more precisely in the village of Asolo, almost his entire life, except for the time of his early studies in Germany with Max Bruch and the year he served as Dean of the Conservatory of Parma. Even though he was invited multiple times to go to

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<sup>18</sup> Camilla Poesio, "Alfredo Casella, L'avanguardia Musicale, Il Jazz E Una Campagna Antisemita Degli Anni Trenta," *Contemporanea* 18, no. 2 (2015): 270, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24654055>.

<sup>19</sup> Salvetti, "Ideologie Politiche," 111.



America, he always refused. Whereas Casella established a name for himself over the course of a few years hopping from soirée to soirée in *fin-de-siècle* Paris,<sup>20</sup> Malipiero was a staunch introvert throughout his long life, particularly in his later years.

While Malipiero complained about his many enemies in his homeland, his relationships with composers from beyond the Alps were few, but in some cases steady and intense. He always carried resentment from his visit to Paris in 1913, where perhaps his eagerness didn't endear him to the many fashionable composers who were introduced to him by his well-connected friend and compatriot Alfredo Casella. This single year, however, was perhaps Malipiero's only real positive experience abroad. Under pressure from Casella, he extended his stay in Paris in order to assist with the legendary premiere of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. Malipiero wrote many times during the year about this evening, thanking his insistent friend Casella for being able to recognize the kind of impact this young composer called Igor Stravinsky would have with this work. Malipiero will later remember that evening as "a reawakening from a long slumber."<sup>21</sup>

Most of the international acquaintances made by the young Malipiero always carried a certain degree of distaste. He lamented Ravel's poor etiquette and complained about the unreachability of Debussy, who for him

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<sup>20</sup> Roberto Calabretto, *Alfredo Casella: gli anni di Parigi: dai documenti* (Florence: Olschki, 1997), 53.

<sup>21</sup> Malipiero, *Il Filo di Arianna*, 130.

represented “an indispensable source of music.”<sup>22</sup> He said about Stravinsky that “every conversation with him didn’t have any goal if not to introduce his own music.”<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, there were composers with whom he maintained sympathetic relationships. He corresponded with Schoenberg, who apparently sought Malipiero’s help to come to Italy with the intensification of anti-Semitism in Vienna (a plan on Schoenberg’s part that proved unsuccessful) right before he moved to the United States, and with Ernest Bloch, whom he met only once in Rome. He was closely connected for a long time with Alban Berg, who in a way can be seen as a musician who shared many of Malipiero’s qualities when it came to following his own way within a national scene.

Being ensconced primarily in the Italian scene due to his relationship with the fascist ministry of culture, Ildebrando Pizzetti is probably the least known composer out of the four of the *Generazione* outside Italy. In his recurrent writings and articles, he was vocal in asserting the superiority of Italian culture above that of other European countries. This didn’t help his popularity and invitations from beyond the Alps. Here is what he wrote in 1939 about the *Rite of Spring*, when he was at the height of his academic power:

If the art of Italian primitives can be universally grasped,  
the reason lies in its spiritual content. But Stravinsky’s

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<sup>22</sup> Gatti, *L’Opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, 301.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

primitivism [...] is that of an artist who does not have a real, authentic civilization behind him, but merely the elemental life of a people dominated by material things and by the senses - more by superstition than by religion, more by entirely material greed than by moral aspirations. If Stravinsky's music [...] makes us think of religious forebodings and rites, they are [...] the barbaric rites performed by savages before intentionally terrifying, grotesque masks: [...] certainly no longer those of civilized Europe.<sup>24</sup>

To further attest his connections with the regime, his *Sinfonia in La* was commissioned by the Japanese government in 1940 to celebrate the 2,600th anniversary of the empire and strengthen the cultural relationships between the two Axis powers.

Respighi always cherished a private and secluded existence, but he nonetheless enjoyed in his short life a global network of contacts, which provided him immense visibility together with artistic collaborations. Some of his partnerships seem peculiar because of the juxtaposition between the public figure of the worldly, Casella-like, wild figure of the passionate artist and the private one, whose lifestyle was quite frugal, reserved, and quiet. Respighi collaborated with Sergei Diaghilev on some of his Russian ballets, and his music was championed by the idolized Maestro Toscanini in New York as well as in Italy. Especially notable in this regard is the fact that on the very first concert Toscanini conducted with the New York Philharmonic on January 14, 1926, *The Pines of Rome* was given its very successful American

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<sup>24</sup> Ildebrando Pizzetti, "Antichi Capolavori e Bizzarrie Nuove", *La Tribuna*, March 20, 1939, 25.

premiere. Among his other celebrity connections, he spent an evening with Albert Einstein and auditioned a very young Vladimir Horowitz. He met personalities such as Richard Strauss, Serge Koussevitzky, Jean Sibelius and was endorsed (like the rest of the musicians from the *Generazione*) by Mrs. Elizabeth Coolidge on multiple occasions. His symphonic poems enjoyed immediate success around the world and he often conducted his own works, very much like Casella.

The composers of the *Generazione*, therefore, maintained varying degrees of connections within Italy and abroad. Casella and Respighi are the ones who maintained a strong presence in both realms, while Malipiero and Pizzetti were more active within Italian borders than beyond them. This is not entirely the case with their reputations nowadays, with Respighi the sole member of the group to enjoy a general degree of name recognition outside of Italy.

CHAPTER VII  
“IL SUONO ITALIANO”, THE ITALIAN SOUND  
IN THE MUSIC OF THE FIRST PART OF THE  
TWENTIETH CENTURY

Now that we have looked at the circumstances surrounding the lives of the composers of La Generazione dell'Ottanta, it is time to look at how these aspects play out in their music. This chapter will include analytical discussions of works by each composer featured in this study: Alfredo Casella's *Italia* (1909), Gian Francesco Malipiero's *Rispetti e Strambotti* (1920), Ottorino Respighi's *Trittico Botticelliano* (1925), and Ildebrando Pizzetti's *Fedra* (1915). Due to copyright issues, musical examples are not included.

**Alfredo Casella - *Italia***

*Italia* (1909) is a large-scale work for orchestra written by the twenty-six-year-old Casella when he was living in Paris. In this piece he tried to assert his own self-identity as an expat. As a successful artist in the Parisian scene, he always made an effort to remind himself and others where he came from. Casella's aim in this rhapsodic piece is to present two of the most characteristic aspects of Southern Italy in succession: first, the bittersweet sadness of Sicily, the volcanic island with its wide, barren plains scorched by

the sweltering sun, its life full of superstitions and feverishness, and second, bustling Naples with its atmosphere of exultant gaiety and careless frivolity. Each “scene” is presented in its own section, generating a clear-cut formal design of AB supplemented by a slow introduction and a coda. After a slow introduction, the “Sicily” theme, based on the folk song named *Song of Lament*, exudes a somber and lamenting tone. The second section, which is in stark contrast to the first, depicts a carnivalesque Naples, with its exuberant life. Toward the end the famous Neapolitan song *Funiculi, Funiculà* is quoted, after which the opening melody returns in a hymn-like coda. Casella later wrote of the work:

In such an era of artistic splendor and excitement, I began two important orchestral works in which I intended to face for the first time the problem of creating a style at once Italian in spirit and contemporary in its sonorous language. One of these was the Suite in C Major... The other work was a much greater undertaking and still resists the weight of the years; it is the rhapsody, *Italia*. It was natural that when I wished to create a national music I should look for a basis in the nationalism which always characterizes the dawn of a new school or the first steps of a personality who is trying to create a national style. Everybody knows today that the inserting of folk material in operatic and symphonic works is an expedient which has now served its time. It is an easy and expeditious method of achieving the appearance of nationalism. We must not forget that *Italia* was written in 1909 by a young man of twenty-six who had lived in exile from the beginning of his adolescence; it was quite difficult to create the style he imagined and sought to realize in that work in the environment in which he lived. The rhapsody still gives me great satisfaction in one way; conceived in the midst of a musical culture overwhelmingly dominated by impressionism, the work turned out to be anti-impressionistic. Nothing is more remote from Debussyism than this linear and monumental architecture. The severe character of the

composition, without superfluous ornamentation, demonstrates that I was already becoming conscious of the road I had to travel, the long and tiring road which was to lead me many years later to the style of my latest works.

Italia was composed in only fifteen days. I completed the scoring during the summer in Piedmont, but the rhapsody was not heard in Italy until February 17, 1924, at the Augusteo. This was fifteen years after its composition, and it had already been played by orchestras all over the world.<sup>1</sup>

This work represents a strong example of the first stages of national-inspired instrumental music in Italy. Its inclusion of familiar songs, along with its title, can give an idea of how much the young Casella felt the need to identify with his homeland and his desire to become an active voice within its fervent scene.

### **Gian Francesco Malipiero – String Quartet No. 1, *Rispetti e Strambotti***

Among Malipiero's rich musical output, the eight string quartets have a noteworthy place, perhaps only comparable to the music he wrote for the stage. The eight quartets were composed between 1920 and 1964. For a polystylistic composer such as Malipiero, the quartets clearly represent the evolution of his aesthetic over the years better than his symphonies for two reasons. First, there are fewer of them and second, the quartets seem to follow a more direct line, stylistically speaking, than the symphonies. Malipiero's approach to the string quartet genre is highly idiosyncratic, because he generally avoided the classical models of Haydn or Beethoven,

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<sup>1</sup> Casella, *Music in my Time*, 95.

and logical, since one of his main artistic goals was to renew Italian music by freeing it from the Verismo fashion and concentrating on more abstract concepts of form.

This specific approach is clearly evident in the first three string quartets, all of which all refer, directly or indirectly, to older popular Italian musical forms as suggested by their subtitles: String Quartet No. 1, *Rispetti e Strambotti* (Love Messages and Roundelays); String Quartet No. 2 *Stornelli e Ballate* (Rhymes and Ballads); and String Quartet No. 3 *Cantari alla Madrigalesca* (Madrigal Cantatas). It must be noted that Malipiero's subtitles are sometimes highly misleading (this is particularly true with the subtitles of the symphonies).

Mailipiero's *Rispetti e Strambotti* quartet was written in 1920 and is dedicated to Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, as are all the string quartets by Malipiero. Coolidge, who was a generous patron—especially of chamber music—established the Coolidge Prize, a chamber music competition which Mailipiero's quartet won the year of its composition. The composer himself described both the subtitle and the unusual form of the work:

The title *Rispetti e Strambotti* has given occasion for numerous mistaken conceptions. Those who look for it in a dictionary will find the following definition there: the *rispetti* is a kind of ottava of a folk character, whose first verse is rhymed alternately, while the second contains successive rhymes. Strambotti are rustic love-songs. Though these definitions may be applicable to poetry of this kind, still they cannot be applied in a literal sense to music. Besides the alternate and successive rhymes, the characteristics of old Italian poetry also hold good



for these kinds of versifying, and it is to these principally that the composer wished to adhere in his quartet. Since the second half of the eighteenth century, the combination of two violins, a viola and a violoncello has determined a form of composition which since its birth has been classical, although the sonorous possibilities of the instruments which compose a string quartet are infinite and admit of escape from the atmosphere of chamber music to that of the open air in street and country. The twenty stanzas which form this quartet are united one another by a theme which almost resembles a Ritornello but which is meant above all, to express the joy of one who loves to listen to the vibrations of the open strings and to intoxicate himself with their sounds. Each stanza in turn expresses some musical thought of a folk nature, which can be materialized only by four instruments, two violins, a viola and a violoncello.<sup>2</sup>

In *Rispetti e Strambotti*, Malipiero's anti-romantic stance is clearly perceptible: the work attempts to antagonize, rather than supersede, Romanticism by disrupting the contents and forms of what Paulo Cattelan calls "bourgeois art."<sup>3</sup> In spite of the described panel structure that includes twenty stanzas (or panels), each of which is indicated on the score, the first quartet can be organized into three aurally recognizable sections. It actually takes on dimensions of sonata form, with a first section in which the theme is stated (exposition) and a third one in which it returns (recapitulation). Where the movement departs from the norm is the way Malipiero treats the theme (a motif of fifths played on open strings), and more precisely its recurrent repetition. The bizarre theme is constantly deformed through a non-grammatical development, which gives it, as Malipiero revealed, a vague

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<sup>2</sup> Gian Francesco Malipiero, preface to *Rispetti e Strambotti*, (Huntsville, TX: Recital Publications, 1998), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Cattelan, "I Quartetti, Ovvero Le Strane Maschere."

resemblance to popular, picturesque street music. In the middle of this three-part structure is a somber stanza consisting of whole notes that is isolated by four measures of silence before and after. Melody is banished from this decidedly contrasting section and replaced by a sort of improvised confabulation, a free-wheeling, athematic, four-part conference<sup>4</sup> The whole-note passage returns at the end of the work.

Each stanza expresses in its turn a musical thought that hints at a quintessential Italian popular song, though Malipiero never quotes an actual song. Cesare Orselli offers a salient programmatic description of the effect of hearing these stanza-evocations one after the other:

The tale of the author's walk who lives a moment of particular peacefulness among his beloved Venice streets and canals, in which you can hear lovers' serenades under the girls' terraces at night, or boaters and gondoliers' songs at a distance, or dance rhythms and funny laughs in sunny squares.<sup>5</sup>

These stylings of Renaissance-style frottola and madrigals alongside seventeenth-century dances result in a series fragments, pale little symbols that become the thoughtful ramblings of a man who perceives humanity and the serenity of Venice as seen (or more precisely, heard) through a distorting lens. It is a patchwork structure, markedly rhapsodic, and with very little concern for harmonic logic. The quartet, with its almost improvisatory blend of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Cesare Orselli, liner notes for Gian Francesco Malipiero, *Quartets 1 and 8, Symphony n. 6*, performed by Quartetto Mitja and Orchestra Nazionale Artes, Tactus Records, TC881303, 2016, CD.

motifs and lines that sometimes seem to swirl and at other times are relaxed or employ enchanting rhythms, has a spirit of unpredictably and a very original tonal-modal pitch structure.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the twenty stanzas references to the soft, declamatory style of Debussy intermingle with virtuoso *style hongroise* passages with the recurrent melodiousness of Slavic taste (Venice has historically been the most open Italian city to cultures from the east) in which it is possible to pinpoint some Czech or Russian influence.

The distinctive thematic core of the piece is heard from the start, where aside from the top two notes of the open chord, which double the lower open D string, every pitch is played on open strings. The recognizable sound of open fifths on string instruments is commonly associated with the tuning process that precedes an actual performance, but in this piece Malipiero wanted to convey the aforementioned “joy of one who loves to listen to the vibrations of the open strings and to intoxicate himself with their sounds.”<sup>7</sup>

The use of open strings has been commonly avoided in standard practice since the eighteenth century. In analyzing Beethoven’s standard practice concerning open strings, musicologist William Drabkin writes that

Violinists are taught at an early stage to avoid using open strings wherever possible. The open string, with its different tone colour, can interfere with the flow of a melodic line, distort its shape, and sometimes even give the impression that a

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Malipiero, *Rispetti e Strambotti*.

second instrument has been called upon to contribute just one note to it. The fact that violin E strings in the Classical period would have been made of unwound sheep-gut, rather than of thin wire, does not really change matters: the qualitative difference between open and stopped string sounds is well documented in 18th-century writings on violin playing.<sup>8</sup>

One of the leading authorities of the period and author of the influential guide *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing* (1756), Leopold Mozart, wrote: "He who plays a solo does well if he allows the open strings to be heard but rarely, or not at all."<sup>9</sup>

Malipiero, in his First String Quartet, is already showing his aversion for hard-set scholarly rules and paradigms, turning a specific sound often identified with preparation to a performance into the performance itself. This musical device will be used by other composers such as Edgar Varèse in his *Tuning Up* for orchestra (1947, arr. by Chou Wen-Chung) and Leonardo Balada's *Steel Symphony* (1972). Both of these pieces center around the sound concept of an orchestra tuning, therefore using open strings, fifths, and drones on the tuning pitch, A.

The specification by Malipiero of these open strings resonating in the countryside triggers the nostalgia of times past, where what nowadays we call chamber music used to be played in the streets by simple peasants, rather than in fancy concert halls by seasoned professionals.

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<sup>8</sup> William Drabkin, "Beethoven and the Open String," *Music Analysis* 4, no. 1/2 (1985), 17.

<sup>9</sup> Leopold Mozart, *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*, trans. Editha Kocker (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1948), 21.

The sixth stanza of the piece represents the first real departure from the *spiccato* style, to an even deeper excursion into the countryside. The cello, the viola and the second violin take turns in plucking all of their open strings, practically imitating the strumming of a guitar playing the accompaniment part to the first violin, in another simple but effective sound device apt to recreate the free vibrations of the open strings. In one of the last stanzas before the reprise of the initial musical gesture, Malipiero once again uses the sound of the open strings in the cello and the viola, this time in a more *marcato* approach to evoke the sound of a medieval secular dance. What sets this section apart from the others is the frequent use of ninth chords, constructed by the continuous juxtaposition of fifths.

The String Quartet No. 1 *Rispetti e Strambotti* embodies Malipiero's condition of a man stuck between a romanticized idea of the past and his present, one that is filled with countless musical contaminations. In employing what basically is a bowing exercise on the violin as his main musical idea, he manages to take a small gesture and gradually turn it into a larger one. The use of compositional technique to create affect in a piece with overt Italian elements is clearly evident here.

### **Ottorino Respighi - Trittico Botticelliano**

*Trittico Botticelliano* (Botticellian Triptyque, 1927) is a symphonic work in three movements for small orchestra, dedicated to Elizabeth Coolidge. The work aurally illustrates three paintings by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), which

are today preserved in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence: *La Primavera* (Spring), *L'Adorazione dei Magi* (The Adoration of the Magi), and *La Nascita di Venere* (The Birth of Venus). Under the patronage of Mrs. Coolidge, the world première was held on September 28, 1927, at the Konzerthaus in Vienna, conducted by the composer. Despite the modest size of the orchestra, in this piece Respighi showcases his vivid orchestration technique, which is perhaps his most notable skill as a composer, in a seductive work that is one of the highlights of his entire output. The richness of the sound comes from the careful mixture of instrumental colors, rather than from instrumental doubling and sheer volume. Respighi achieves a freshness of sound in harmony with the youthful beauty of Botticelli's characters and seems to bring the pictures to life in sound.

To structure his adaptation of Botticelli's world into music, Respighi created a triptych in which the sections are arranged in a tonally symmetrical manner – E major, C sharp major, E major – and follow the traditional fast - slow - fast pattern. As discussed above, one of the trademarks of Respighi was to use older, perhaps even archaic formal structures in his music (as he had already done with the symphonic poems in his Roman Trilogy) and repurpose these forms for his modern sounding, vibrant music.

The first movement, *La Primavera* (Spring), is filled with effects characteristic of Respighi, namely trills and densely-scored sonorities. It continues with an array of horn and trumpet calls and buoyant dance rhythms.

The second and slower movement, *L'Adorazione dei Magi* (The Adoration of the Magi) is based on a variant on the well-known medieval hymn *Veni, Veni Emmanuel* (O come, o come Emmanuel). Less recognizable outside Italy is Respighi's use of the Italian Christmas tune *Tu Scendi dalle Stelle* (You descend from the stars). The melodies are delicately and ingeniously orchestrated to emphasize timbral color, and feature solos by the flute and bassoon. All these elements combine to contribute to the pastoral setting in Botticelli's painting. The third and final movement, *La Nascita di Venere* (The Birth of Venus), brings Respighi back to his more Impressionistic side, in which transparent and nimble orchestration coupled with melodies running apart in octaves conveys the depiction of Venus rising from the sea. The concluding orchestral effect is quite sublime with its soaring climax that gives way to sudden silence. The movement's subtle, ethereal ending slows the pace of the string momentum, a breeze of waves from Zephyrus, god of the west wind.

*Trittico Botticelliano* is an important piece in its demonstration of not only Respighi's craft as an orchestrator and composer, but also in its place within the intentional creation of a purely Italian sound. The repurposing of old compositional practices in a modern fashion is ever present, making this a solid example of Italian neoclassicism.

Respighi's choice of the early Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli as an inspiration is telling and fits the music, which is inherently pastoral, direct

and archaic, even if many of the timbral colors musical gestures make the listener aware of the time period in which it was composed. In looking back to what perhaps was thought of as simpler times than Respighi's own, there is this unmistakable desire, which in some way exists all of the composers from the *Generazione* at one time or another, to glorify the distant past, as discussed in Chapter IV. The Renaissance is especially significant in the Italian context, for it was a time in which Italian art truly set the golden standard in the Western world. Respighi celebrates not just any past but specifically the Italian past.

The inclusion of familiar musical quotations is another element that locates this work firmly into its compositional period, and is something that Casella also used in his more youthful compositions. The specific Italian-ness of the work is evident in Respighi's choice to quote *Tu Scendi dalle Stelle*, which is a well-known and characteristic Christmas carol in Italy, but does not enjoy this level of familiarity outside the country. Respighi's earlier quotation of *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* could be heard as Respighi recalling the broader world while that of *Tu Scendi dalle Stelle* gives the work its specific Italian identity.

Finally, the idea of writing music inspired by a painting was a practice widely used in the nineteenth century. In France, such works were known as musical *tableaux*, and the idea was especially popular in Russia, with notable examples including Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874)



and Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Isle of the Dead* (1907), and later in French Impressionism, with Claude Debussy's *La Mer* (1905) as one instance.

Once again Respighi revamps pre-existing compositional techniques that most of his colleagues deemed as antiquated in terms of a three-movement sinfonia and the quotation of familiar tunes (as he did earlier with the symphonic poem and his Roman trilogy) through his colorful orchestrations. This piece is symbolic for Respighi for this very reason: it is a mixture of recycled elements from the past, repurposed to sound modern and at pace with the time in which it was written. Through such perennial looking back in order to move forward, Respighi made his artistic fortune.

### **Ildebrando Pizzetti - Fedra**

*Fedra* (1915) is an opera in three acts composed by Ildebrando Pizzetti to a libretto by Gabriele D'Annunzio, which he adapted from his 1909 tragedy of the same name, which was itself an elaboration of the ancient Greek myth of Phaedra. The work features three main characters, Fedra, Ippolito, and Teseo, a dozen minor characters, choir, and large orchestra. It had its premiere at La Scala in Milan on March 20, 1915.

The story behind the making of this work sheds an important light on multiple societal and musical aspects of the time. First of all, the extent of the collaboration between the national cultural icon Gabriele D'Annunzio and the then young Pizzetti was all encompassing and projected the name of Ildebrando Da Parma (as he called himself in his earlier years) into

mainstream circles. Pizzetti (and D'Annunzio) used the mythological setting of the Greek tale in order to foster his imaginary idea of classic archaism, which is one thing that distinguished Pizzetti throughout his career. He wrote:

The first idea to write *Fedra* came to D'Annunzio from a tentative of mine to set to music a reduction of the *Hippolytus* by Euripides, a tentative which I wouldn't, I believe, taken to completion, to which testimony only twenty pages remain, among my useless papers. I couldn't believe that D'Annunzio wanted to write *Fedra* appositely for me, but his offer moved and exalted me so much that from that moment on I felt I couldn't see to any other work if first I wouldn't have completed the music so inspired by his poetry.<sup>10</sup>

It is widely known that D'Annunzio enjoyed a lifestyle that extended above his means, especially in his younger years. The need to repay his creditors (which made him flee to Paris in 1910, where he ended up meeting Casella and Malipiero) put D'Annunzio in the position of having to seek an immediate source of remuneration. Having already written the libretto for *Fedra*, he hastened to get the work staged in its prose form. The resulting production was a fiasco, and the poet did not manage to achieve his financial goal. The project of a musical version of *Fedra* also began in 1909, when D'Annunzio wrote to the publisher Ricordi, who recommended Pizzetti as a composer. D'Annunzio, in his desperation, tried to convince the head of the famous publishing company to pay a monthly stipend of 250 lire to the composer, in order for the latter to avoid having to teaching lessons, which

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<sup>10</sup> Ildebrando Pizzetti, "Fedra, memorie e appunti del musicista per la biografia del poeta," *Scenario* VII, 4, (April 1938): 200.

was slowing down his work on the opera. In the precious-toned letter that D'Annunzio wrote Ricordi, he reveals important ideas in regards to the artistic and practical goals of *Fedra*:

Adorable friend,

Forgive me for indulging in answering your courteous letter. The "metric" *Fedra* distracted me from the "musical" one. The master Ildebrando da Parma will be in Milan for the first show of *Elettra*. Would you receive us? We would like to make a new tentative in writing a latin musical drama, about which we have a very clear idea, outside from any Wagnerian prejudice (we do not believe, for example, to the necessity of Leit-Motiv), outside from any Straussian excess, outside from any Debussian affection. We will be glad if you would like to sponsor this endeavor. And I will be most grateful to you if you would like to deliberate on that without any delay, since the Maestro is already at work. Basically only one condition is important: that your company would allow, for a certain number of months, to aid the relentless effort of my collaborator granting him a modest monthly sum, which - in my desire - wouldn't exceed 250 lire. I need to keep him away from the daily torture of lessons. My faith in the doctrine of this youngster is huge. I wish you would have faith in my faith. I shake your hand quickly as I hear the roar of the panther *Fedra*.<sup>11</sup>

The answer from Ricordi came quickly: it was negative, despite the author's courteous tone. The editor wasn't interested in the process, but Pizzetti kept working on the music regardless. The work was further delayed by D'Annunzio moving to Paris in 1910 to flee from his creditors, and saw the light of day only in March 1915 at La Scala, under the baton of Gino Marinuzzi. The opera enjoyed modest success, but it didn't establish itself among the broader public and lasted only four performances. It has been

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<sup>11</sup> Gabriele D'Annunzio, letter to Giulio Ricordi, May 4, 1909.

produced and recorded a few times since its premiere and cannot be counted as standard repertory.

D'Annunzio's tragedy presents numerous mythological elements, but against a historical background, namely the wars between Greek city states around the 4th century BCE. Fedra, the protagonist, is the wife of Theseus, the hero who defeated the minotaur. She has fallen in love with her stepson Hippolytus, who was born out of the relationship between Theseus and the queen of the Amazons. Hippolytus, who doesn't reciprocate his step-mother's love, is about to strike her with his sword after they have a fierce argument, but decides instead to hold back and leave on horseback. Fedra feels offended, and thus starts harboring feelings of revenge towards Hippolytus. Theseus comes to the royal palace just in time to see his son leave, and asks Fedra the reasons behind his departure. At first Theseus is skeptical, and thinks there has been some wrongdoing from Fedra, but she eventually convinces him, lying, that it was Hippolytus who was actually threatening her. Blinded by rage, Theseus casts a spell on his son and summons Poseidon to ask him to murder his son that same day. Hippolytus, now near the sea, has a fatal accident while riding his horse; he hit his head on a boulder as he fell off the horse. Theseus and Fedra arrive on the scene, and she confesses her lie to her husband, who wishes her a tormented death. At the end of a long declaration of eternal love, Fedra dies on her lover's body.

*Fedra* is representative of its time for a variety of reasons, the first one being the collaboration between two artists with similar intentions regarding the establishment of an Italian musical identity away from the Verismo school. Both Pizzetti and D'Annunzio wrote for ideological and subsequently political reasons, and therefore their union (of which this piece isn't the only result) is significant in regard to their individual endeavors. Furthermore, the subject chosen for this work reflects the shared aesthetics of the time, which sought to reenact the grandeur of times past, rather than perpetrate the Italian school of Verismo. Different from Casella or Malipiero, who sought this ideal myth of the Latin genius in the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Pizzetti focused his attention on much earlier practices, such as Gregorian chant and accompanied monody, even though the use of these sonic devices was always to resemble specific sonorities rather than for exact authenticity.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LEGACY OF THE GENERAZIONE

As the previous chapters have detailed, the composers of the Generazione had a significant role in the history and development of Italian music in the early twentieth century. Their relationships with the musical past, the fascist regime, and trends in contemporary music as observed in the music itself are all part of this picture. But why do they matter nowadays? This chapter looks first at their reception in the post-war years and their significance in the early twenty-first century.

#### **The Post-War Years**

The end of the war, together with the fall of the fascist regime and the proclamation of the Italian Republic on June 2, 1946 presented a second awakening for the Generation of the 1880s. Almost thirty years earlier the entire country had gone through the aftermath of a bloody world conflict that served as a starting agent for the second one. This time though, not even the propaganda of the newly founded Italian Republic could sell the failure of fascism, the partisan revolt, and its help in securing a victory for the Allies. In a short essay titled "*Risveglio: Primavera 1945*" (Awakening: Spring 1945),

Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973) gives a dreary impression about the aftermath of the war:

After what we have seen and experienced it is not possible, actually it is even more than impossible to realize if we live or if we are already dead. What value can these bones and the few pounds of flesh covering them have in front of the death of the spirit? The only hope that we can still nourish is that it had fallen into a deep slumber. Twenty-three years have passed from the day in which the city bells rang for the victory of an arising dictatorship.

The corruption of ideals, the menace of a fratricidal war, thousands and thousands of negative forces had dozed off our foresight. Nonetheless we are guilty of our blind selfishness. We could not believe, even if often we had hoped, we forced ourselves to hope because, born in a climate still vibrant with authentic love for the homeland, we could not be disinterested in the political fate of Italy.

Whoever goes to live in a newly built construction confidently moves into it everything he possesses, can he be held accountable if it crumbles? Maybe responsible for having trusted the architect? Who could have imagined the material would have been corrupted and hopelessly condemned to crumble?<sup>1</sup>

It is important to point out that by 1947, with the untimely death of Alfredo Casella (1883-1947), the core members of the *Generazione* had been cut in half, since Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) died prematurely young in 1936. This left the now aging Malipiero and Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968) to deal with the burden of their heritage and the continued evolution of a musical scene in which they seldomly saw themselves as members.

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<sup>1</sup> Malipiero, *Il Filo di Arianna*, 128.

The aftermath of the Second World War painted a different view of Italian art and its artists on the international stage; even if the conflict was resolved, the diplomatic relationships between the Europe, the Americas, and Asia had been irremediably compromised and did not welcome musicians (or themes, when it came to staged works or programmatic music) associated with the defeated menaces of the fascist and Nazi movements. Travelling throughout Europe and across the Atlantic was different now for Italians than it had been a few years earlier, the war having compromised (but not eliminating altogether) tours, competitions, and music festivals. Even the championing by some outstanding donors and foundations (above all, Mrs. Coolidge) had to stop during the war years for fear that the money sent to the artists would be intercepted by the regime and used for war purposes. When it became finally clear that such an eventuality no longer posed a threat, the patronage resumed, but without the enthusiasm (and the money) it had enjoyed previously.

Whereas Pizzetti and Malipiero had to reevaluate their beliefs and live in the newly founded Italian Republic for roughly twenty years, the legacies of Casella and Respighi in the post-war world were formed through the influence of critics, who ended up for a variety of reasons to forget the former and praise the latter, which is still how these two composers are received today in the international music scene.



Furthermore, whereas Casella and Malipiero represented innovation within the Generazione, Respighi and Pizzetti were the conservatives. This stance was palpable during the height of their careers, as discussed in Chapter III, and the division continued during the post-war years. This was a time when the surviving Pizzetti and Malipiero had to figure out ways to coexist with the consequences of their old selves, together with a brand new generation of composers who sought different goals and were no longer focused on a nationalization of sound, but more on a communitarian European avant-garde style.

### **Malipiero**

In the 1960s, near the end of a long life, Malipiero ventured into the realm of extended tonal writing. He indeed ended up applying dodecaphonic principles to his compositions but without subjugated by their dictates, rather focusing on their fundamentally polyphonic structures.<sup>2</sup> One example of his neo-dodecaphonic writing is his Eighth String Quartet, "*Per Elisabetta*" (For Elizabeth, 1964), dedicated to Elizabeth Coolidge. In his process of increasing atonality and dodecaphony, Malipiero's style moves closer to that of his pupils, Bruno Maderna (1920-1973) above all, who had already been working extensively with the dodecaphonic system. In this way Maderna continues his teacher's quest, which is to connect innovation with tradition.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Noller and Pezzato, "Malipiero: Una Poetica e Un'Estetica," 57.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

On the occasion of Malipiero's seventieth birthday in 1952, the composer-musicologist Everett Helm, who in 1936 studied with the Maestro, commented on Malipiero's significance:

The final verdict regarding his position in the musical history of the twentieth century has by no means been reached. In a troubled musical time, Malipiero has always gone his own way, uninfluenced by fashions and experiments. He was considered a radical in the 1920s, and frequently attacked. Today he is neglected and considered by many old fashioned, because he has followed no avant-garde direction. He has, on the contrary, continued to write his music, as he has seen fit (does this constitute an ivory-tower attitude?), and is, indeed, one of the few composers of this century who has succeeded in expressing spiritual repose and inward peace - qualities that are easily overlooked or underestimated in an age of anxiety.<sup>4</sup>

The fundamentally pessimistic Venetian composer, though, had different feelings about his influence on future generations. In his own quasi autobiographical article, "La Pietra Del Bando" (The Stone of Banishment, 1944), he included a chapter titled "Friendships and Disappointments," in which he stated his thoughts. The following quote concerns an unnamed student (probably Luigi Nono):

The idyll between me and the youth was short lived. The newest generation still isn't classifiable. For example: a young man, not yet twenty years old and averse to school, came to me in January 1942. He though had some interesting works in regards to counterpoint, harmony and form. Unfortunately they were dominated by that Schoenbergian spirit which slain music between 1920 and 1932. I considered him a phenomenon (surely not an innovator, maybe if even a latecomer), and I dedicated all my attention to him. Maybe, for innate optimism, I

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<sup>4</sup> Gatti, *L'Opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, 167.

was fooled by a vulgar plagiarist, who revolted against me the day I granted him the undeserved diploma.<sup>5</sup>

It is perhaps with words of envy that Malipiero wrote this about Nono in 1951:

It may be premature to announce Nono's victory as the banner of a 'new contemporary musical theatre', as I have been spending the last forty years buried like a Pharaoh together with the labors of my stage work which are taking air away from me, although I do not despair.<sup>6</sup>

Malipiero was outspoken about not needing to teach or have pupils, saying that if he did surround him with youngsters, it was because of his drive to be an optimist no matter what. He was not confident that his students took him seriously either, complaining that they placed an unnecessary focus on the technical musical aspect of composition, rather than on the spiritual and philosophical aspects. He felt that he and the rest of his generation, the "heroic swarm,"<sup>7</sup> created a movement that opened up the way for younger generations, something for which they should have been grateful, in his estimation.

His complaint in 1944, with which many composers of the time agreed unanimously, was that the newer generations, devoid of humanity, were being taken over by the practical aspect of music. This is surely a critique of the rising Darmstadt school and its emphasis on method-based approaches such

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 301.

<sup>6</sup> Malipiero, *Il Filo di Arianna*, 253.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid 300.

as serialism, which it turned out he himself would explore, in his own way, during the '60s.

As an artist who went to great lengths in order not to be fully understood and digested by his public, Malipiero always complained about the self-imposed distance between him and the ever evolving world of his times.<sup>8</sup> In his constant adoration for the past and refusal of the present, he talked about his Monteverdi edition, hoping that it could serve as a launch pad for younger composers to follow his example of the modern inspired by the past, a phenomenon which he knowingly didn't see happening despite the reboot chance given by yet another post world war scenario.

After Malipiero's death, a new vision emerged of an artist who was a part his time that replaced the one of a unique and isolated mind. In a way some critics have described Malipiero as the polar opposite of Pizzetti, since the Venetian composer always saw his stage works as an ever-changing experiment that kept perpetually renewing itself. The musical establishment of the first half of the twentieth century kept the figure of Malipiero as an unique musician, a composer alienated from his own time and instead fully engaged with sixteenth-century polyphony, one who feasted on nostalgia for a lost time and who always evoked this base as he sought his own language.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid 301.

<sup>9</sup> Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, "Malipiero: Il Nuovo, anzi l'Antico," *Saggiatore Musicale* 5, no. 2 (1998): 315, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/stable/43030386>.

Critics and musicologists have reevaluated this stance in the years that have passed since Malipiero's death. He was transformed into a Europeanist composer embedded in his own irrationality on one hand, and on the other, a composer firmly situated within the aesthetics of the *Generazione Dell'Ottanta*. Fiamma Nicolodi especially contributed to this view not only of Malipiero but also of the rest of the composers of the *Generazione* by locating the nationalistic component (common to many European countries during the 1920s) within the Italian myth of the ancient, that is, early, music.<sup>10</sup>

### **Pizzetti**

Pizzetti, once he entered the final phase of his long life, having always been skeptical of innovation, continued marching all by himself in spite of the new generation. In an undated letter, probably written around 1950, Pizzetti talks about "a great war, that is now being fought [...] is the one between musicians who would like their art to be totally subjective, and musicians who would like it to be objective."<sup>11</sup> The always judgmental Pizzetti did not yield to new ideas, even in his later years, defining the aesthetic conflict as stupid and ignorant<sup>12</sup> and as something that has been repeated countless times before in the history of music. Pizzetti frequently wrote about how atonality and polytonality (he groups the two currents together, calling polytonality the

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<sup>10</sup> Nicolodi, *La generazione dell'Ottanta*, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Pierluigi Petrobelli and Ildebrando Pizzetti, "Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968): Uno Scritto Inedito Ed Alcune Lettere a Gaetano Cesari," *Rivista Italiana Di Musicologia* 3, no. 1 (1968): 96, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24315495>.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

bridge between tonal writing and complete atonality) work against the principles of tonal music, curiously mentioning composers such as Bartok, Milhaud and Honegger as disciples of Schonberg (which isn't how modern musicology has viewed the heritage of these composers). Pizzetti claimed he didn't want to take sides, even though his skepticism towards atonal music is always palpable.

In his reassessment of much of the Italian music written right before the war, Pizzetti is critical as ever, especially when it comes to Casella and Malipiero. In his estimation, their progressive abandonment of atonal writing and gradual return to more tonal conventions demonstrated their awareness of the limitations that works such as *The Rite of Spring* imposed on the tonal system.<sup>13</sup> Observing his curious conclusions, along with his peculiar perspectives regarding the evolution of music throughout his active career as a composer and critic, it is evident that Pizzetti intended to keep living as a proverbial hermit on his own mountain even in his later years.

## **Respighi**

Out of the four personalities, it is Respighi who survived the post-war cultural alienation the best, and this rings true to this day. Even if there isn't strong evidence in regards of his collaboration with the regime, he passed before the final stage in the history of fascist power, leaving him with slightly

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 99.

lighter baggage compared to Malipiero or, worse yet, to Pizzetti. In his wife's biography of the composer, Elsa carefully chose to leave out anything that involved her husband's relationship with the dominating political party, even specifying that as a recluse, he always chose to live an isolated life.<sup>14</sup>

### **Their Influence on the Current Music Scene**

The reception of the Generazione dell'Ottanta to the generations of musical minds that followed them along in the remainder of the twentieth century is mixed at best. If, on one hand we can directly follow the thread master and pupil (Malipiero and Nono, Pizzetti and Castelnuovo-Tedesco are notable examples, among others), it is also evident how the frequent clashes, the individual aesthetic canons and mostly their agendas influenced their cultural momentum and the reception as a whole of the music of this generation by the following one. Luciano Berio was once asked to introduce a three-day conference based on the Generazione, where he briefly and frankly declared that he doesn't have much in common with these musicians, nor he particularly cares for their music.

[...]Consider this: great personalities and great intellects (musical or not), tend to appear all together, after imponderable cadences that must evidently be a mix of many and complex factors [...] I would like then the possibility to consider the musicians from the European 80s as a work group where every member has a different undertaking and role [...] Simplifying, one could say that Berg and Webern - with Schoenberg's patronage, took the weight of decantation and sublimation of the classical-romantic German heritage. [...] All of them have

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<sup>14</sup> Respighi, *Respighi*, 133.

worked towards the transformation of the visage of music. The sense of necessity that often emanates from their works is not only given by expressive features but also by the fact that each one of those musicians dealt with the problem of history (or how to be mentioned by history) in different ways. [...] It is only through a large scope that the singular works communicate a character of necessity and awareness. [...] France did not have a generation of the 80. [...] The absence of complementarity and of constructive conflict in the Italian generation of the 80 was simply given by the fact that they really didn't have anything to build together. [...] The so-called generation of the 80 seems to me more like a fortuitous encounter of musicians who happened to all be there.<sup>15</sup>

Pizzetti's legacy has been interpreted in a variety of ways. It is fair to say that he is currently the least-known composer out of the *Generazione*, and that can be attributed firstly to his aforementioned extensive relationship with the fascist regime, his conservative tendencies to renounce the newer tendencies manifesting in Italy towards the end of his life, and lastly his difficult and sometimes abrasive personality, which isolated him from the rest of the scene he belonged to.<sup>16</sup> Goffredo Petrassi, one of the few composers who inherited Pizzetti's legacy along with the one of the other fellows born in the 1880s, wrote in 1968 in commemoration of Pizzetti's death:

[...]Even if a divergent one, even if the paths have led us to destinations far from his poetic, even if we were not always in accord with His aesthetic theories, never did our respect and acknowledgment for his everlasting teaching in a particular historical moment lessen.

Pizzetti's oeuvre not only demonstrates the tenacious and polemic faith of his own ideas. It is, above all, an example of integrity, neither towards the ephemeral and precarious

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<sup>15</sup> Berio, "Radici," 9-10.

<sup>16</sup> Gianandrea Gavazzeni, "Il settantacinquesimo compleanno di Pizzetti," *Ricordiana*, no. 9 (November 1955): 339.



aesthetics of the moment, nor toward the banal commercial attitudes of the music market. This is the sense of his very firm dictum 'I will never change!'

To the historian goes the task of evaluating and placing Pizzetti's art in time. To us the regrets for the loss of a great and illuminated creator.<sup>17</sup>

The only stage work by Pizzetti which can be seen as part of the current operatic repertoire is *Assassinio Nella Cattedrale* (Murder in the Cathedral, 1958). It is considered by aficionados to be a brilliant work, although it still belongs to that category of brilliant operatic works (most of them from the twentieth century) whose fame is confined to few passionate listeners. Pizzetti's chamber music enjoys a slightly wider success, together with his art songs. The highest artistic contribution Pizzetti had made in his life was also what ended up being the reason for his disappearance from concert programs in our twenty-first century: his frequent appearances beside Benito Mussolini and other officials of the regime are well documented in the archives of the film corporation Istituto Luce, created during fascism and therefore coming from a time generally associated solely with perhaps the darkest page in modern Italian history.

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<sup>17</sup> Sciannameo, "In Black and White," 50.

## CHAPTER IX

### *LA TROMBA ITALIANA* - THE ITALIAN TRUMPET

The first idea for this project came to me while doing the musical activity that I cherish the most: playing the trumpet. During the course of my doctoral studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City I decided to start digging into what would have made my playing sound “more Italian,” and could not come up with a meaningful answer. Thus, I began studying the cultural heritage associated with my instrument.

In many ways the development of trumpet writing moved together with the evolution of the instrument itself. During the Baroque era, especially around 1650, the Italian peninsula was at the height of its musical influence. Composers such as Giovanni Gabrieli and Arcangelo Corelli were writing extensively for the trumpet in a multitude of forms. The instrument was held in high regard and treated equally alongside woodwind instruments and even string ones. A few decades later, toward the end of Baroque, some famous works were written for the trumpet, including the Concerto for Two Trumpets by Vivaldi and a collection of seven arias by Alessandro Scarlatti for trumpet, soprano, and basso continuo. With the advent of classicism, the trumpet was no longer in vogue and was confined to the back of the orchestra and playing

in a lower tessitura, often paired with timpani. The instrument itself was not able to play chromatically, and therefore it was used mainly in the tutti section of orchestral music, often to emphasize cadences. The role of the instrument would remain the same until the invention of the valve in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Coming from France, the advent of this new technology gave the instrument new capabilities, and so a plethora of different instruments started to be manufactured. The music for such brass contraptions was essentially written *ad hoc* by the composers, who basically adapted their writing to whichever instrument the local instrument maker could provide. It is in this period that we start seeing keyed bugles, cornets, stopped trumpets, and so forth. While some of these instruments eventually evolved into the modern trumpet, others became obsolete. During the Verismo movement, composers began to favor the new technological advances and the trumpet started to gain more relevance as an orchestral and solo instrument. A young Giuseppe Verdi wrote an *Adagio for F trumpet* in 1836, a testimony of the composer's interest in the instrument. Cornets (with their conical bores) and trumpets (with their cylindrical bores) often share the stage, as was normal in many other countries in Europe at that time: while the valved cornets, which were able to play chromatically, were used for melodic passages or extended harmonies and the trumpets kept their original role in tutti parts, sticking to the sounds available in the harmonic sequence. With the continued developments in instrument technology, the

two instruments' roles started to overlap, and the same Verdi in his full maturity will eventually write solely for trumpet. In 1842 Gaetano Donizetti wrote *Don Pasquale*, an opera still performed but perhaps not as popular as other staged works from this period. In the prelude to the second act, Donizetti wrote an extensive cornet solo to be played on stage by a busking musician, as it was common practice in the Verismo tradition. This solo stands out in the repertoire for its marked Bel Canto style and its length, which was unprecedented at the time.

Besides hearing the trumpet sound coming from the opera pit, it was peculiar to the Verismo current to often include marching bands on stage (usually referred to as *banda*) that would mimic the sounds heard frequently in the streets of the Italian peninsula back then. In fact, while operatic music kept the bourgeoisie in the theaters, a lot of music was being played in the streets in a variety of forms. Band music was particularly popular at the time, and in it many variants of brass instruments were used. The banda would play for all sorts of occasions, ranging from religious celebrations to military parades. Sometimes the bands marched around the town; at other times they took the stage in the town's square. The music played included marches, solo pieces, opera medleys, and numerous transcriptions of popular arias and symphonies. In this context the trumpet was frequently used as a solo instrument, usually taking the soprano part when playing operatic arrangements.

Amilcare Ponchielli (1841-1929) was a composer and a bandmaster, more than once praised by Verdi, whose frequently transcribed music from his operas for his touring band. During his tenure as bandmaster Ponchielli wrote a number of virtuoso pieces for trumpet and band, which belong unequivocally to the Italian banda tradition. Among his most famous works are the *Concerto for F trumpet* (1866) and the *Fantasia per Tromba Sopra i Motivi della Traviata* (1865). This tradition of transcribing famous operatic arias for wind band is to this day very popular in Italy, especially in the southern part of the peninsula, where the wind band world is still quite active. In summation, the ideal sound of the Italian trumpet is a blend of the Baroque, the Bel Canto, and the wind band.

The musicians of the Generazione dell'Ottanta all inherited this tradition, and each one of them used the trumpet, together with every other instrument of the orchestra, to convey this idea of a specific Italian sound relative exclusively to the idiom of a particular instrument. To demonstrate this point, four works, one by each of the composers discussed in this study, that feature the trumpet will be introduced: Casella's *Serenata*, Malipiero's *II Fanfaron della Fanfara*, Respighi's *Concerto a Cinque*, and Pizzetti's *Sinfonia in La*.

### **Alfredo Casella - Serenata**

As stated in chapter I, this piece was the catalyst for the entire project. Written for the distinctive combination of violin, cello, clarinet, bassoon, and

trumpet, *Serenata* (1927) is a lengthy work of six movements that lasts approximately thirty minutes. This piece presents all the canons of neoclassicism: extended tonal harmony, structural symmetry, and the use of standard forms. This piece has a peculiar story behind it, best narrated by the composer himself:

About the middle of November (1927), I found accidentally, in the chaos of papers which regularly fills my desk, the announcement of a competition which the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia had sent. It was for a chamber composition employing three to six instruments and free in form; the prize was ten thousand dollars, the largest sum which had ever been offered for a piece of chamber music. The announcement was accompanied by an invitation, which I had overlooked at first, which informed me that the competition was not reserved only for young unknowns, and that the promoters desired established composers to participate. I remembered what (Ernest) Bloch had said to me some years before, when I asked him why he continued to participate in so many contests, 'if you win, you have the money, if you lose, you have the honor'. I decided on the spur of the moment to accept the invitation and compete. In two days, I drew up the plan of a serenade in six movements for clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, violin, and violoncello. In six weeks I wrote the score, which was finished about December 20. [...] One morning in early October (1928) I opened the *Messaggero* and read that the first prize in the Philadelphia contest, to which I had sent my *Serenata* the preceding year, had been divided between Bela Bartok and me. If I had had any doubts as to the authenticity of the good news, it would have been dissipated by the numerous cables of congratulation which began to rain in from America in the afternoon. [...] The report of the jury was also encouraging to me in that it pronounced the *Serenata* 'an authentic model of purely Italian style in form, spirit, and in its characteristically continuous melodic flow'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Casella, *Music in my Time*, 177-180.

It is evident while perusing the score that Casella saw this instrumentation as a challenge, and the ways he orchestrated the musical material is a proof of it. Each of the five instruments is in fact used to its full extent. The piece begins with an uplifting march, light and cheerful in character. The second movement is a minuet that alternates playful sections with moments of somber polytonality. The third movement is a nocturne, and it begins by quoting the *Stabat Mater* by Gioacchino Rossini. The intense opening character of this movement gradually turns into a placid feeling of peace. Its ending is particularly noteworthy, with the strings playing natural harmonics and the wind instruments decrescendoing to nothing. In the fourth and fifth movements, Casella decided to once more take advantage of the peculiar instrumentation by isolating the wind instruments from the two strings. In the Gavotta for the three winds, the fast and light character is alternated with a minor-mode B section. The Gavotta is followed by the Cavatina, which is played by the strings only. This might be the hardest movement to execute in performance, since it requires the use of constant double stops for both the violin and the cello, making two people sound almost like a quartet. After the slow and meditative Cavatina, the piece ends with an absolutely dashing tarantella in 6/8 meter that gets increasingly faster as the end of the whole piece approaches, culminating in a glorious final C major chord.

This piece sounds Italian in nature, and that probably is because of the frequent evocations of popular Italian folk tunes throughout its movements. The practice of including folk references was something in vogue at that time (Béla Bartók being at the forefront of this practice), and for Casella, it is associated with this particular period in his career. Later he would be criticized for using such tropes and resorted to different methods in order to bring the sense of nationalism to mind.

Specifically in regards to trumpet playing, the *Serenata* presents many difficulties and it is definitely an “out of the box” sort of work. The primary challenge for the trumpet player is to blend with the rest of the ensemble, which requires a great control of the softer dynamics of the instrument. This overall feature of the piece speaks for itself and is reflective of the orchestral performance practice in Italy: brass sections, especially in operatic works, are used to operating in the full dynamic range of the instrument, from triple piano to triple forte. (Another composer who used the full spectrum of the trumpet is Giuseppe Verdi, who experimented greatly in his stage works and the *Requiem* with his writing for high brass instruments.) The dynamics involved in the piece give the music its delicate quality, which is overall an integral part of the buoyancy and lightness that characterized most of the work.

In the first movement the trumpet makes its entrance in a grandiose way, after an introductory duet by the clarinet and the bassoon accompanied by the strings. This first gesture starts off in a militaristic style, created



primarily by the repeated notes and the use of the G-C interval that reminds the listener of a military bugle. Casella's ability in this case lies in the fact that he knows he is writing for instruments which don't necessarily belong to that march style, and so he immediately shifts the mood from militaristic to light and bouncy within a few measures. For me, this attitude of quick changes between more "serious" music and playful sonorities embodies in a way the Italian lifestyle, in which one can't be serious all the time nor can one always be about lightness and fun. It is almost as if the composer's intent was to not be taken too seriously. This alternance between the serious and the playful will be exploited throughout the work. Another element of playfulness is given at the end of this movement, where a melody reminiscent of child play guides the march toward its end. Casella once again applies a stark contrast between the military impression of the beginning and the sweet playfulness that takes over. The rhythmic motif of short-short-long lends itself well to convey this almost simplistic feeling.

A key moment of the work is the popular melody presented towards the end of the Nocturne. This movement begins in a most somber and mournful atmosphere, but as the movement progresses, the character of the music gradually lightens up, almost as if the sad and mournful connotation of the night sounds gradually leave space for the sun and the excitement of a new day. In this gradual shift of sonority, I see another trait that perhaps can be attributed to the Italian spirit that Casella sought: undying optimism in the

face of any and every adversity. The stark contrasts within the movement are further emphasized by the melody played by the trumpet toward the end of the movement. The origin of the melody is unknown, but it is possible it belonged to the folk repertoire. The pizzicato accompaniment in the strings enhance the popular quality of the music, almost as if an actual serenade is taking place in the street. The long notes are a clear invitation to further means of expression such as vibrato. From this point on, the music becomes more hopeful and totally detaches itself from its initial mood.

The fourth movement, Gavotte, is a fast, light and cheerful dance for the novel combination of trumpet, clarinet, and bassoon. In this movement the trumpet player must blend with the other two instruments to a further degree than in the other movements: the counterpoint is thick between the three voices, and the very short articulations combined with consistent soft dynamics make this movement a particular challenge for the player. The use of soft dynamics and short articulations is something that recurs in Casella's writing, and it reflects (in instances such as this one) once more the lighthearted and playful feel commonly associated with the Italian spirit.

The last movement, simply named Finale, is a quick-tempo 6/8 Tarantella dance that brings the entire work to an epic conclusion. The use of triple tonguing is frequent in this movement and is used in both rhythmic and melodic fashions. In this movement Casella quotes what is undoubtedly the most famous tarantella tune, *Tarantella Napoletana* by Luigi Ricci, a largely-

forgotten Neapolitan composer from the nineteenth century. The melodies from the southern part of the peninsula have been a vault of inspiration for composers, especially for those coming from the northern part. This is a trend that aimed to narrate the different, perhaps more primal, communities who lived in the south, or at least did so through the eyes of the northern Italians. The relevance of this popular tune to our day (it has been heard on tv commercials, at town festivals, in popular songs, etc.) gives the use of this particular musical quote a good dose of humor, since it is the tune most commonly associated with Naples and its appearance on such a composition happens almost by surprise. This kind of practice would cost Casella some criticism, and he later on refrain from the use of such quotes, trying to avoid falling into the folklore trap of which his critics accused him.

### **Gian Francesco Malipiero - *Il Fanfaron Della Fanfara***

This piece, written in 1957, belongs to the most mature artistic phase of Malipiero's long creative career. It is written for trumpet and piano, and it is the only piece in the composer's vault of chamber music to feature a solo trumpet. There is no information whatsoever about this piece in the vast archives left behind by Malipiero that have been explored to date, and Jon C. G. Waterhouse, in his book on Malipiero, does not mention the piece in the list of the composer's works.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, this piece has never been

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<sup>2</sup> Waterhouse, *Malipiero*, 385.

professionally recorded, and it is virtually unknown within the trumpet world, which is usually a fertile environment for works written by accomplished composers from the twentieth century. The possible reasons behind this omission can be up for speculation, but it is known that Malipiero would withdraw many of his works, and perhaps this piece belongs to that category.<sup>3</sup> Another reason could be seen in the nature of the music itself: the older Malipiero got, the more he relied on his instincts to develop his music, and this late piece shows a pronounced rhapsodic vein, hopping from theme to theme in a multitude of musical settings throughout its short four minutes.

Even though I wouldn't call the piece virtuosic, it presents some sections in which one is able to perceive an Italian bravura style. The challenges for the player in this piece are mainly delivering the kaleidoscopic essence of the musical styles illustrated and enduring the more muscular side of the music, which presents only a few rests throughout the piece, thus forcing the player to play non-stop for almost the whole time.

The title of the piece can be used as a key to try to understand something more regarding the meaning of the piece, even though we know that Malipiero did not follow the trends of programmatic music. The title *// Fanfaron della Fanfara* is an alliteration, meant to be quirky and playful. The word *fanfarone* can be translated as braggart or swaggerer, and the word

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<sup>3</sup> Malipiero, *Il Filo di Arianna*, 311.

*fanfara*, besides being the well-known musical style often played by brass instruments, is also the name of a specific brass ensemble in Italy, often directly linked to military celebrations. Hence a possible interpretation for this peculiar work can be a funny caricatural description of some kind of jokester musician playing in the town's military band. The rapid changes in humor are possibly connected to somebody who almost wants to mock the sounds commonly associated with Italian brass bands.

The piece starts with the trumpet on its own stating a pompous call, immediately suggesting a formal mood that will soon be shattered. Later in the piece, after a brief energetic burst come some repeated quarter notes, with the flutter tongue effect being applied to every other note. This is clearly a musical trope coming from a military band snare drum: a quarter note drum roll alternated with a simple quarter note can be a gesture used when the band is not playing but yet still marching, and traditionally signals that the snare drum is in charge of coordinating everybody. After establishing this new pace, the imaginary swaggerer begins playing a placid melody, which gets repeated as if it is a broken record, unable to move forward from the repeated four sixteenth-note stepwise motion. Malipiero shows how in a few bars music can go from showing a feeling of total control (the repeated snare roll and its pulse), giving way to a to a pleasant melody, and ending abruptly in madness.

Just a few bars later, the character of the music changes yet again. Having already explored triumphant, sorrowful, and manic qualities, now

Malipiero writes a playful melody in a playful style with the use of detached articulation. Once again, this setting is to last just a couple of measures: repeated sixteenth notes bring the music again to a culmination that ends with a reappearance of the repeated fluttered quarter notes. Continuing with the swaggerer trope, I would imagine a musician from the brass band who cannot resist playing outside his part, and thus gets reprimanded by the band master over and over to follow the lead, which coincides with the imitation of the paced snare drum roll.

Malipiero saves his greatest use of contrasts for the end of the piece. He marks this section *molto triste*, calls for a mute, and writes for the lower register of the instrument. The lack of cadential motion in both the trumpet and the piano gives the music a contemplative quality that reflects sadness, as indicated in the score. As if he wants to crack one last joke before the real ending of the piece, the last three bars, now unmuted, have a singsong quality that almost resembles child play rhymes, which is a sound trope Respighi made famous in the first movement of his *Pines of Rome*. The ending is the epitome of Malipiero's soul: dark and contemplative, but always ready to cheer up and explore the lightness of life, even if just for a fleeting moment. This piece could have been perhaps more successful in the standard trumpet repertoire if its backstory survived, since it has a strong descriptive flavor to it. In its kaleidoscopic essence Malipiero showcases many facets of the instrument and its use in daily public life. Who knows?

Maybe the story of the piece is lurking in some as-of-yet unexplored archival box, but nonetheless, the piece reflects Malipiero's quest for something Italian in his music.

### **Ottorino Respighi - *Concerto a Cinque***

Respighi's *Concerto a Cinque* (1933) for trumpet, oboe, violin, double bass and piano, accompanied by strings, is yet another composition dedicated to Elizabeth Coolidge, who was especially fond of mixed chamber ensembles. This piece of music stands out for its instrumentation, which in the trumpet repertoire is resembled perhaps only by Samuel Barber's *Capricorn Concerto* (1944) for trumpet, oboe, flute, and strings. Neither Respighi nor his wife wrote extensively about this piece, which after its premiere at the composer's estate in Rome (appropriately named *I Pini*) and a few other performances in South America and one in New York (this one organized by Mrs. Coolidge herself) was forgotten. This concerto has been rediscovered only recently thanks to a renewed interest in Respighi's lesser-known works and a couple of successful recordings. This is one of the few works in the composer's catalog which can be defined as genuinely neo-classical, mainly because of its instrumentation, which suggests a modern incarnation of a concerto grosso, but also because of its structure and thematic material.

Like the Casella work described earlier, the main challenge for the trumpet player in this piece lies in being able to blend with such a diverse

configuration of solo instruments: the sphere of action of the trumpet spans from purely accompanying orchestral gestures, common to the standard orchestral repertoire, to extensive solo writing, which showcases the instrument in a more virtuosic light.

The piece begins without revealing its true colors: all the solo instruments engage in quarter-note counterpoint, with the support of the orchestra, in a quasi-baroque setting. For much of the opening, the trumpet takes on a purely accompanying role, reinforcing the pedal D provided by the lower strings in the orchestra. The juxtaposition between older and newer styles is evident between sections in which the predictable concerto grosso framework is interrupted with moments of more improvisatory nature, namely the extensive cadenzas passed among the solo instruments.

Respighi shows an example of his highly creative orchestration when he presents the second theme of the first movement doubled in octaves in the trumpet and the violin. The blend of trumpet and violin in such a passage is unusual in the solo literature, and its distinctiveness is accentuated further by the higher voicing given to the trumpet.

In another neoclassical move, Respighi employs the dotted eighth/sixteenth note configuration as one of the work's main rhythmical devices. This motif was used so extensively during the Baroque era that it could almost seem clichéd to use it here. But Respighi's creative innovation and ingenuity keep this from becoming the case.



## Ildebrando Pizzetti - Sinfonia in La

Out of the four composers examined in this document, Ildebrando Pizzetti is the only one who didn't write music featuring the trumpet as a solo instrument. The piece chosen for discussion here is therefore an orchestral work, one that has culturally sensitive historical value because of the nature of its commission. The *Sinfonia in La* was written at the request of the Japanese empire to commemorate its twenty-sixth centenary, and was premiered in Tokyo in 1940. Given the precise intention for its commission, Pizzetti paid a great deal of attention to the character of this four-movement symphony, which combines triumphant and glorious sonorities with more funereal and sorrowful soundscapes. In his Pizzetti biography, Guido Gatti talks about the last movement of the symphony, Marcia, by providing a narrative:

This march is symbolic of some person or thing that no one can stop, a being that crushes underfoot and annihilates everything - a terrible Fate, an inexorable Moloch. Human creatures recoil in terror. Flashes of lightning illuminate the sky, which grows blacker every minute, closing in upon a world in chaos. In vain men try to ward off the danger by prayer. The faint and fugitive accents of the initial theme are expressive at once of an unquenchable desire for tranquility and peace and of the futility of all attempts to find it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gatti, *Pizzetti*, 102.

Given this particular story, it is natural to think that the brass section, with the trumpet section crowning it, will be one of the main sounds to represent this feeling of war, victory, and heroism. This is certainly the case, as would be expected with a composer considered traditional by his contemporaries. There are innovative aspects as well. For example, Pizzetti showcases the trumpet in an especially sonorous way toward the very end of the piece in one of the last iterations of the main theme. Here, the melody is stated in the trumpet and the flute in unison, with the harp emphasizing pitches present in the overtone series' of the principal melodic notes.

Because of the history behind its conception, Pizzetti's *Sinfonia in La* has only been recorded a few times to date. It does represent, though, a case study in cultural diplomacy, or soft power, as an important part of a dark historical period during which Japan was trying to strengthen ties with its Axis allies. The trumpet is used as an effective sound device throughout the piece as a symbol of battle and victory, thus showing Pizzetti's affection for the instrument and its extramusical associations that had been developing in Italy since the time of Gabrielli, but this time within a larger orchestral setting.

## CHAPTER X

### CONCLUSIONS

It has been established throughout this document how the musicians of the Generazione dell'Ottanta tried to establish a new, unequivocally Italian sound in both instrumental and staged music that would break the chain of a century and a half of mainly operatic music, lately of the Verismo variety. The four main composers were labeled as belonging to the same decade, which is one of the few things that actually bound them together, especially when one considers that the moniker was created many years after the fact. The discrepancies between the four composers (and the many other musical personalities who gravitated around them) were many, and even with the historical perspective that we are given now, roughly fifty years since the passing of the last of them (Malipiero, who died in 1973 at the age of 89), the impression that these four individuals leave to posterity is certainly heterogeneous and, in certain cases, in clashing contrast with one another. Nonetheless, it is possible to appreciate the broad strokes of their shared historical condition as expressed through their music, and therefore place them in a "box" that can be large enough to allow them to coexist under the same label.

The main thing all four composers championed was undoubtedly a change in the musical taste that they inherited. The idea that by the 1920s Verismo had run its course, both artistically and economically, was common among the rising, younger generation that sought a hard break with their predecessors. The degrees of repudiation varied between composers, but a change was certainly necessary.

In seeking how to make this change, all four composers from the *Generazione* looked to the rediscovery and reappropriation of the Italian musical past, something which aligned them to the wider neoclassical movement in music composition. Although the neoclassical label *per se* doesn't really apply to all four composers of the *Generazione*, they all shared the idea of renewing a mythicized past that they admired while trying to steer the cultural taste at large toward a different idea of Italian music. Pizzetti often turned to the Gregorian chant repertory along with modal writing in his instrumental and mostly choral compositions, and wrote operas (e.g., *Fedra*) based on Greek mythology. Respighi was an early music scholar and remodeled (as in *Antiche Arie e Danze*) old anonymous works for lute for orchestra. His vivid musical imagery is filled with echoes from the past, as in the Roman trilogy of symphonic poems or *Trittico Botticelliano*. Casella was enamored with the Italian instrumental music of the eighteenth century, particularly that of Domenico Scarlatti, which became the basis for his pastiche composition *Scarlattiana*. During one of his trips to the Library of

Congress in Washington, D.C. he transcribed Muzio Clementi's last symphonies, which Ricordi later published.<sup>1</sup> Malipiero was perhaps the most active of the four in his dealings with the past, and it is thanks to him and his efforts as a transcriber that today we can access Monteverdi's music and have a complete catalog of Vivaldi's operas. Like Casella, he composed a pastiche piece; Malipiero's is named *Vivaldiana*.

Another thing common to the members of the Generazione, even if it was not their choice, was having to interact (or in certain cases choosing to actively participate) with the fascist regime. Music was a propaganda tool during the fascist years, and the regime had an active hand in commissioning, promoting, and financing musical works that influenced the masses toward the single party in power and its policies. Likewise, all music that did not adhere to the ideals of the party was labeled as anti-Italian and struggled to receive any sort of recognition, at least until 1945. Therefore, it is logical to assume that if our four composers had any success in the years between 1922 and 1945, they had to be in good standing with the ongoing national politics. Respighi is arguably the one out of the four who had the least ties with the regime (which perhaps explains part of his popularity to this day), even though he was acquainted with Mussolini and his Roman Trilogy had been used to celebrate the ancient glory of the Roman Empire, which the

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<sup>1</sup> Casella, *Music in my Time*, 202.

fascists said was the preeminent basis for their values. Malipiero had several audiences with Il Duce, and through his scholarly endeavors as a transcriber of earlier Italian music was helped financially multiple times (thanks to the favor of D'Annunzio) directly by Mussolini and the Ministry of Popular Culture. Casella was a big proponent of fascism, and his quest for establishing the figure of the Latin Genius, paired with the recurrent imagery of war (*Il Deserto Tentato, Pagine di Guerra* [War Pages, 1915]) gained him the title of the “regime’s unofficial composer,”<sup>2</sup> along with the rare permission to travel extensively around the world, something that was quite difficult to obtain during the years of dictatorship. Ildebrando Pizzetti was one of the musicians most involved with the regime. By establishing his presence in the Ministry of Popular Culture and serving on numerous committees, he kept an active hand in Italian cultural life during fascism.

The last common thread that unites the Generazione dell'Ottanta concerns the love for the homeland and its portrayal inside and outside its borders. This nationalist sentiment is obviously tied to the political history of the time, and to various degrees it manifested itself in every European country. Casella, who was the most connected among the four of the Generazione, already saw in the rise of nationalism throughout Europe some

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<sup>2</sup> Sachs, *Music in Fascist Italy*, 145.

communalities which hinted at the possible beginning of a larger European identity. He expressed this vision near the end of his autobiography:

From my first consciousness, music was my religion and my only reason for living in this world. Besides that essential faith, I have always been motivated by one other love: that of my country, not understood simply as a geographic or linguistic entity but above all as an expression of beauty and of pure artistic tradition. It can be said that from my formation as an artist I lived only to achieve an art which would be not only Italian but also European in its position in the general cultural picture. This idea was already visible, if confused, in such works as *Italia* or the Suite for Orchestra. It never ceased for a day to be present in every artistic action including the conclusive works of the last years, which mark the definite attainment of those old aspirations. Fifteen years separate *Italia* from *The Jar*, which is the first of the works of maturity in which invention and technique are combined in complete harmony, even if this and the following works were only preludes to still newer developments in my art.<sup>3</sup>

The astonishing events of World War II shifted the musical discourse radically, and all of a sudden nationalism was going to be practiced very differently, especially in the defeated countries. What rose during the 1950s was the beginning of a European shared musical identity, perhaps best represented by the Darmstadt School (established in 1946), which included the successors and students of the Generazione dell'Ottanta as participants. Artists such as Luigi Nono, Bruno Maderna and Luigi Dallapiccola all had direct ties with the Generazione, but embarked on an aesthetic that was devoid of overt nationalism as a direct answer to the events they all

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<sup>3</sup> Casella, *Music in my Time*, 228.

personally witnessed. Just as the *Generazione* largely rejected the tenets of the previous generation, so did this younger group reject those of the *Generazione*. The rise of serial music and the twelve-tone system levelled the playing field, making this new musical style more homogeneous and in a way devoid of the fervent reactionary passions that characterized the previous generation.

With the exception of Respighi's Roman trilogy, the music of the *Generazione dell'Ottanta* is not part of any standard repertoire. If on one hand the cultural implications behind their disappearance from concert programs is clear, on the other we do have now enough historical perspective between the events of the first half of the twentieth century and our present day to be able to receive their music divorced from their political beliefs. In a time in which the standard repertoire of classical music threatens to become overplayed and obsolete, the works of Casella, Malipiero, Respighi, and Pizzetti can indeed provide a breath of fresh air to listeners and performers who are keen on rediscovering the music belonging to this complicated, yet fascinating historical period.



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## VITA

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