

## *La Musica popolare*

*La Musica popolare; giornale ebdomandario illustrato* was published in Milan by Edoardo Sonzogno, as was its older brother *Il Teatro illustrato* (founded in 1881). With respect to the latter publication the new journal came to be a kind of *editio minor*. *La Musica popolare* began publication on 6 April 1882 as a four-page weekly, in a format of 30.5 x 21 cm, with an additional four inserted pages of music. In 1884, in a slightly reduced format, it became a sixteen-page monthly with four jacket pages, and with music inserts of eight pages. At the end of its fourth year, with the issue of 15 December 1885, the journal concluded its autonomous existence and merged with *Il Teatro illustrato*. Over almost four years of publication, *La Musica popolare* published 115 issues and more than 210 musical compositions which were inserted into the journal (for a total of over 930 pages of music).

The journal's program was outlined in the introduction to its first number. While pointing out that "during recent years the technical study of the art of sounds has been cultivated" to a greater extent than in the past, the anonymous author (probably Sonzogno himself) underlined the purpose of the new journal to be that of an offering "to families" at the modest price of ten *centesimi*

a means of obtaining a selection of music . . . at the lowest possible cost; and, at the same time a journal that offers illustrations of composers, recitalists and singers who have risen to significant fame, and that publishes concurrently their biographical sketches, and technical articles in popular form on topics that are useful for dilettantes and for every bon vivant.

The journal accomplished these objectives by publishing technical studies in a form accessible to all, articles on contemporary musical literature, reviews of major performances, bibliographic surveys, columns of miscellaneous news, and, above all, by inserting into its own pages a collection of both classic and modern music, the latter intended in particular to encourage "young beginners in the arena of composition."

The title of the journal, therefore, does not refer to a folk or musical subculture in a way that is similar to the definition of "popular music" pervasive in today's terminology for ethnic Italian studies. Rather, its meaning lies in the late nineteenth-century sense of "popular" applied to the dissemination of scientific information to a large public: the "people" meant not as a subject but rather as those for whom culture is destined. In this sense it reflects the effort intended to popularize the sciences and the arts under way during the second half of the nineteenth century by the intellectual class with a liberal-radical inclination or a socialist orientation.

Edoardo Sonzogno belonged to this class, and was its most active and illustrious exponent for generations of Milanese publishers and typographers, an indefatigable

supporter of entrepreneurial politics of abundant vitality and vast range. To a constantly growing catalogue of highly varied titles that ranged from literature to the sciences, Sonzogno joined the publication of a newspaper, *Il Secolo*, with national distribution. Founded in 1866 the newspaper became quickly the rival of *La Perseveranza* both in social and political opinion and in news reporting, and later the most authoritative competitor of the *Corriere della Sera*. In addition, Sonzogno, following the model of the *Universal-Bibliothek* emanating from Leipzig, introduced into Italy with great success an economical series of astute small volumes of cultural information—the *Biblioteca del Popolo*—with particular reference to technical and scientific problems. In 1874 he also entered music publishing, entrusting the administration of this branch to Amintore Galli, and taking a course in opposition to the almost incontestable domination of Ricordi and Lucca through the acquisition of the exclusive Italian rights of foreign operas and operettas (primarily French, among which figured the principal operas of Bizet, including *Carmen*, Halévy, Thomas, and Delibes). At the summit of this entrepreneurial course stand, in great historical importance, the *Concorsi Sonzogno* for new unpublished operas announced in 1883, 1889, 1892 and 1903, that brought to light (particularly in 1889) the composers of the so-called *Giovine Scuola*: Mascagni, Giordano, Leoncavallo, Cilea and others.

The structure of *La Musica popolare* remained almost unaltered over the course of its four years of publication. Each issue consistently opened with *Medaglioni artistici*, or critical-biographical profiles (with an accompanying illustration), which alternated between articles dedicated to composers signed by Amintore Galli, and articles dedicated to performers, mostly singers, almost always signed by Vincenzo Valle. After *Medaglioni* follow contributions relating to musical topics of a technical or scientific character “rendered for the understanding of all” and regarding, time and again, the physiology of music, harmony, choral singing, acoustics, the study of language pronunciation, the history of polyphony, notation, etc. Thereafter appear these rubrics: *La nostra musica* (to illuminate and comment on the inserted musical compositions), *Rivista teatrale* (dedicated to news and events of artistic significance), *Note varie* (miscellaneous information on musical activities in Italy and abroad), and lastly, a rubric of historical and anecdotal gleanings titled *Fogli d'album*. Beginning in August 1882 the rubric *Poesie per musica* was added (expressly written to facilitate “a way for composers to keep in shape”) and from December of the same year appeared a bibliographic review, *Nuove pubblicazioni*, dedicated to recent editions of music. The following January two more regular rubrics were added: *Opere nuove* (containing information on recent or upcoming premières and current operatic news) and *Concorsi*.

In the collection of classic and modern music inserted into the individual issues were compositions by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century composers (from Bach to Corelli, from Handel to the two Scarlattis) and by composers of the Romantic period

(Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Mendelssohn), not to mention opera composers (from Mozart to Bellini, Gluck to Rossini, and Meyerbeer to Glinka). But more space was reserved for contemporary composers (about sixty), in the great majority little known or beginners. Among this last group the name of the young Giacomo Puccini stands out. His melody *Storiella d'amore* on a text attributed to Antonio Ghislanzoni, published in no. 40 of 4 October 1883, is considered his first composition given to the press.

While the director of the journal is not identified, the publisher, Edoardo Sonzogno fulfilled this function as he did with *Il Teatro illustrato*. As for the managing director, Luigi Bozetti, his role focused on legal matters during these years and not on editorial issues. There were apparently two editors of the journal. The first and more authoritative was Amintore Galli (1845-1919); composer, teacher, music critic, administrator of Sonzogno's music editions, and author for the *Biblioteca del Popolo*, a series of small elementary didactic volumes turned out to popularize music culture. He wrote all of the *medaglioni* dedicated to composers, the series of articles dedicated to the study of language pronunciation ("Harmony and melody rendered to the understanding of all") and to notation, and he probably selected most of the music inserted into the journal. The second editor was Vincenzo Valle (1857-1890), composer, librettist and music critic for *Il Secolo*. Almost all the *medaglioni* dedicated to performers carry his signature or his initials V. V. (or also simply V. or W.), as do the bibliographic reviews (*Nostre pubblicazioni*) and many poems for music, with his name rendered in the anagram Inocenza Well. He probably also compiled many of the unsigned rubrics. Among the journal's occasional collaborators should be cited Giovanni Battista Bergamini (1858-?), composer, author of some correspondence concerning theaters; the critic Francesco Biagi (1857-1892) for the correspondence from Bologna; Primo Crotti (1825-1901), lecturer and author of theoretical works who signed a series of articles on music acoustics; Gaetano Foschini (1836-1908) composer, conductor, lecturer who signed a long theoretical essay on musical scales; the music critic Pier Romualdo Giani (1868-1931) for the correspondence from Turin. The series of articles on music aesthetics signed by the composer Isidoro Rossi (1815-1884) was published posthumously. Often the journal reproduced articles, not always citing their source, which carry the signatures of, among others, Girolamo Alessandro Biaggi, Achille De Marzi, Michele Ruta, Lorenzo Parodi, Gustavo Sangiorgi, Guido Tacchinardi, Giovanni Tebaldini, and Ippolito Valetta.

A list of initials and a pseudonym which have been identified or attributed follows.

Giovanni Battista Bergamini	gbb g. bb gb. B. Ber....
Amintore Galli	A. G.
Vincenzo Valle	V. V. V. Well Inocenza W.

The merger of *La Musica popolare* and *Il Teatro illustrato*, announced in the 15 December 1885 issue (p. 178), was explained "by the fact that the two journals present too many similarities in order to justify their existence separate from each other." The principal rubrics were inherited by *Il Teatro illustrato* which, for this reason, assumed from January 1886 the double title *Il Teatro illustrato e La Musica popolare*.

#### Notes on the Catalogue

This catalogue is based on a complete copy assembled from collections in Parma, at the Biblioteca dell'Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, and in Milan, at the Biblioteca Civica and at the Biblioteca del Conservatorio "Giuseppe Verdi." The placement of the musical inserts is recorded as it appears in these copies even if it does not correspond to the original position.