

Il Pensiero Musicale (1921-1929)

Il Pensiero Musicale [PEM] began publication in Bologna in 1921, by the firm Mattiuzzi and Biancani, a music publisher active since 1863. The firm gradually became one of the highlights in the city's musical life and a sort of gathering place — a “salotto”—for Bolognese musicians and music amateurs.

As evident in the subtitle *Rivista mensile di cultura musicale* (maintained to 1929) the primary goal of the periodical was to appeal to a wide audience. To this end, it occasionally pursued a didactic function: to inform on current musical events, and to introduce the rudiments of music and musical theory to those without such knowledge.

The specific and fundamental aim of this newly created periodical is the following: to *publicize musical culture*. In order to resolve the passionately felt problem of *musical education of the populace* [...] we believe that it would greatly help to publish a periodical that avoids unintelligible theoretical issues and features debates based on aesthetic and historical issues. To this end, it should propose the dissemination of a simple and elementary culture, yet adequate enough to enable the listener to make more conscious judgements, and to offer as well to those possessing a deeper understanding of music the possibility of extending their knowledge. This is, therefore, not a *Rivista* aimed at music professionals, but projected and written for all *music amateurs*: it is a *popular* periodical because it aspires to remain accessible to all readers wishing to acquire a certain cultural foundation without excessive expenditure of time and fatigue.¹

In addition, the other primary goals of the periodical would be the coverage of Bolognese and national musical events – gradually extended over the years – together with reviews and discussions of scores and writings of musicological interest.

The Bolognese Antonio Costa, founder of the periodical and its first director, was the author of numerous articles appearing in the first fascicles. After his sudden death in March 1922, he was succeeded by Francesco Balilla Pratella—who with Luigi Russolo was the most significant representative of the Italian futurist movement.² After reaching the highest point in his interest in the futurist movement, as director of *Il Pensiero Musicale* he chooses to devote more attention to the rediscovery of musical folklore of the Romagna region in place of the vanguard experimentalism, which is only sporadically treated in the periodical.

Under Pratella's directorship the periodical continues to devote much attention to Italian music and musicians, in line with the nationalistic movement that he himself promoted. His precise aim is to build an interest in contemporary music that did not find favor with the public.

In 1925 Pratella left the directorship of the periodical; he was succeeded for only two months by Cesare Paglia (Gajanus), and for the rest of the year the position remained vacant. From 1926 to 1929, Cesare Brighenti-Rosa directed *Il Pensiero Musicale*. His directorship was longer than that of any other. Brighenti-Rosa did not modify the original path of the periodical followed by the preceding director; rather he places even more emphasis on the need to rediscover the musical features that were thought to be typically Italian, in keeping

¹ “Il nostro programma”, *Il Pensiero Musicale*, anno I – N. 1, novembre 1921.

² On the influence exerted by the futurist movement – by Pratella in particular – on avantgard music of the early 20th century see, M. A. Radice, “*Futurismo: Its Origins, Context, Repertory, and Influence*”, *The Musical Quarterly* 73 (1989): 1-17. Pratella gradually withdrew from the movement after World War I to dedicate himself increasingly to the study of Italian – particularly Romagnan folk music. See *Francesco Balilla Pratella. Edizioni, scritti, manoscritti musicali e futuristi*, ed. D. Tampieri (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1995).

with the cultural ideals of the nascent fascist regime (to gain an insight into his mode of thinking see his 1926 articles “Idea latina e musica dell’avvenire”).^{Copyright © 2007 RIPM Consortium Ltd}

With the exception of some marginal changes introduced over the years, the periodical maintained the following structure:

1) The opening pages are reserved for ample essays, at times continued in successive fascicles, dedicated to historical and musicological topics and those treating musical criticism. Among these are the biographical “Medaglioni” dedicated to Italian and foreign composers written by director Antonio Costa (“Anko”). They are decidedly aimed at a wide audience; after Costa’s death, the title “Medaglioni” was changed into “Profili”, maintaining its structure almost identically. The rubric “Brevi cenni di storia e teoria musicale” by Ottino Ranalli, appeared at the end of each fascicle in 1921-22, and the rubric “Storia popolare della musica” signed by Guido Guerrini in 1923 which aimed at tracing the origins and historical evolution of various families of instruments. Both have the characteristics of an authentic course on the rudiments of music planned in several installments. In this first section the rubric “Descrizioni” frequently appears. It features stylistic analysis and summary of librettos of contemporary operatic works. The rubric “Lecture al pianoforte” mainly discusses works by Italian contemporary composers. Among the principal collaborators of this section of the periodical are Antonio Costa, Francesco Balilla Pratella, Antonio Veretti, Francesco Vatielli, Felice Boghen, Salvino Chiereghin, Arnaldo Bonaventura, Giovanni Tebaldini, Guido Guerrini, Dino Poli, Camillo Pollak, Franco Sartori, Umberto Gherardini, Cesare Valabrega, Giorgio Franchi, Alfeo Buya, Melchiorre Rosa, Cesare Brighenti-Rosa, Carlo Tagliavini, Alfredo Bonaccorsi, Silvio Mix, Giacomo Del Valle De Paz, Cesare Nordio, Romeo Rabbiosi.

2) A second section of the periodical is arranged by regularly recurring rubrics:

— “Vita musicale” is dedicated to notices of concert activities in Italy, and contains detailed information on operatic and symphonic seasons, and on *tournées* of Italian musicians. From 1923 onward this rubric includes reports from various cities. The principal correspondents are: Dina Pasini from Milan; Carlo Ravasenga from Turin (substituted by Lodovico Rocca in 1926); Emilio Gragnani from Livorno; Giovanni Monagheddu from Sassari; Guido Pannain from Naples; Dario Rambelli from Lugo di Romagna; A. Fava Tempesta from Venice; and Camillo Pariset from Parma.

— “La musica a Bologna”, contains ample and detailed accounts of activities of the city’s musical institutions. Dino Poli and Melchiorre Rosa are the principal contributors. From 1926 onward this rubric is titled “Vita petroniana” and features even more detailed reports dealing with each one of the city’s musical entities. Throughout the years, “Vita musicale” and “La musica a Bologna” are assigned an increasing space within the periodical, becoming at times the most extensive rubrics.

— From July–August 1922 to the end of 1923 “La rubrica della FA–MI” is published regularly. It is assigned to Elisabetta Oddone, who reports on the activities of the Federazione Audizioni Musicali Infantili, that she herself had founded.

3) “Recensioni,” is devoted to reviews of publications of musicological interest and of music editions. The principal authors over the years are Antonio Costa, Nino Rossi, Francesco Balilla Pratella, Aristide Giungi, Melchiorre Rosa, Guido Guerrini, Cesare Carlo Cantino and Fauro d’Arco. From 1924 onward the reviews are signed exclusively by Pratella, Rosa and Guerrini.

In the first years the following rubrics occasionally appear: a “Rivista delle riviste”, that is a summary of the contents of recently published Italian and foreign periodicals; and a list of “Musica ricevuta in omaggio.” From 1926 onward additional rubrics are published: a “Notiziario” containing many announcements of Italian and international

competitions, and “Echi d’oltralpe” which focuses on *tournées* of Italian musicians abroad as well on the dissemination of works by Italian composers. Starting the same year, each single fascicle features poetic texts by Fauro d’Arco, intended as verses to be set to music. Lastly, from 1928 onward the rubric “Recensione dischi” is introduced, attesting to a developing interest in a new medium that is gaining increasing importance in the diffusion of music; the reviewers’ attention concentrates especially on products of the Fototopia Carish, devoting at times some attention to recordings of jazz and popular songs.

The publication of *Il Pensiero Musicale* coincided with the political advancement of the fascist regime in Italy in its initial phase of enthusiastic and propagandist élan; and even though the periodical never treats straightforward political topics, it fully adheres to the ideals of the new regime. Furthermore, we should not lose sight of Pratella’s openly nationalistic and interventionist attitude, and the fact that Brighenti–Rosa subscribes entirely to the political ideals of the time, publishing, for example, in 1929, the text of an “Inno dei commercianti” in praise of “patria e Duce.” Set to music by Melchiorre Rosa it is performed at the Teatro del Corso in Bologna during the regional Congress of the “Federazione fascista dei commercianti.”

In 1927 *Il Pensiero Musicale* received a letter of high praise from Fedele, the Minister of Education, containing expressions of his gratitude to the authors of the periodical for having followed readily the Ministry’s decree concerning the organization of concert activities in middle schools. In this respect it is significant that the publication of Mussolini’s message commemorating the centenary of Beethoven’s death appears in the first page of the journal’s February–March 1927 fascicle.

From its first issue onward *Il Pensiero Musicale* is in fact outwardly nationalistic: musically speaking this means campaigning for the promotion of “Italian art”, to be realized through the discovery of the national musical patrimony and of simple vocal writing. This principal characteristic is being overshadowed by the excesses of cerebral music composed abroad — in France and Germany especially — which is having a negative influence on young Italian composers.

The essays published in the periodical often feature topics regarding the nation’s musical past, and celebrated composers that need to be brought to the attention of its readers: these include Palestrina, Benedetto Marcello, Lodovico Grossi da Viadana, Veracini, Giacomo Carissimi, Tartini, Monteverdi, Frescobaldi, Leonardo Leo, Adriano Banchieri, the cembalists Pier Giuseppe Sandoni, Giovanni M. Placido Rutini, and Giovanni Battista Serini.

Ample space is naturally devoted to Italian contemporary composers who have reached maturity and gained a certain reputation (Malipiero, Pizzetti, Respighi, Alfano, Casella, M. E. Bossi, Castelnuovo–Tedesco, Wolf–Ferrari, Zandonai, Pratella), as well as to young composers who still encounter difficulties in having their compositions performed in public (Giacomo Orefice, Vittorio Gui, Domenico Alaleona, Guido Guerrini, Luigi Perrachio, Amilcare Zanella, Riccardo Pick–Mangiagalli). These composers, attracted by the novelties coming from abroad, ran the risk of having their musical language contaminated by elements extraneous to the Italian tradition. Salvino Chiereghin — who shows particular interest in the future of Italian music—firmly asserts in his essays that the artist must become “the people’s voice” and must utilize rudimentary elements of music that the common listener is capable of grasping in order to have an understanding of contemporary music.

To illustrate this tendency *Il Pensiero Musicale* devotes much attention to Marco Enrico Bossi, well known in Italy and abroad as an interpreter of his own compositions and as promoter of the ideals of Italian music based on clarity of structure and of emphasis on melodic interest. Upon Bossi’s sudden death in 1925 the periodical published an entire black–edged page mourning the loss of one of the best Italian composers of the Twenties.

On the other hand, there is no agreement on critical judgements concerning Alfredo Casella, the principal exponent of Italian music of this period: he receives attention and is appreciated for his activities as director and promoter of Italian music abroad, but as a composer he is considered with a certain diffidence because his musical style is indeed too avanguardist for the collaborators of the periodical. According to Giorgio Franchi, Casella represents, with Malipiero, the most modernist and controversial musical trends of contemporary Italian music; and Fauro d'Arco, who reviews Casella's works, expresses some perplexity regarding the "harmonic estrangements" that at times annoy his ears.

Il Pensiero musicale is and remains constantly a publication with strong ties to its region and to the city of Bologna. This is attested to by the ample sections featuring local musical life and by the regular presence of essays and articles treating local musical traditions and musicians born in the Emilia region, such as Lamberto Caffarelli, Giacomo Orefice, Guglielmo Matteoli, Stanislao Mattei, Vittore Veneziani, Antonio Ricci-Signorini.

An important initiative pursued by the periodical ever since its first issues is a series of concerts that it organized: a season of chamber music taking place every year and involving many local performers (Alfeo e Bianca Maria Buya, the Quartetto Bolognese, and the brothers Olg and Umberto Supino). It is presented to the public at very low prices, thus continuing to pursue the periodical's goal with regard to the dissemination of music.

The present inventory was based on the copy of the periodical located in the Biblioteca Musicale "Andrea Della Corte" in Turin. For the few missing fascicles, those in the Sezione Musicale of the Biblioteca Palatina were utilized.

Many essays are signed with only initials; the following have been identified with certainty:

A. C. , t. a. n., T. Ascanio Noto	Antonio Costa
a. v.	Antonio Veretti
C. B. R.	Cesare Brighenti-Rosa
D. P.	Dino Poli
d. p.	Dina Pasini
D. R.	Dario Rambelli
F. B. P.	Francesco Balilla Pratella
F. D. A.	Fauro d'Arco
f. g.	Giorgio Franchi
f. i.	Filippo Ivaldi
F. S.	Franco Sartori
ga.	Gajanus (Cesare Paglia)
G. F.	Gino Friedman
G. C. B.	Giuseppe Cesare Balbo
l. l.	Luigi Longhi
L. R., l. r., l. roc	Lodovico Rocca
r. l.	Renato Lunelli

U. G., Umber

U. S.

Umberto Gherardini

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