

La Musica (1876-78, 1883-85)

The third Neapolitan *La Musica*, appeared slightly less than twenty years after the termination of the second. During this period Italy saw radical changes in its political, economic, and cultural life.

With the second war of independence Italy finally achieved political unity under the sovereignty of Vittorio Emanuele II. Naples, the largest Italian city, then fell from its time-honored role as the capital of a kingdom. The new center of gravity of political, economic, and even cultural life of the young nation moved to the North, between Milan, capital of finance and industry, and Turin, the institutional capital of the new kingdom (at least until this role was later assigned to Florence and thereafter to Rome). The new economic order, inspired by the legislative principles of the former Piedmont kingdom, did not favor the development of the ancient capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Naples did not resign itself easily to a subordinate role. In the field of music, under the new socioeconomic order, Milan dictated the rules through Ricordi and Lucca, its two powerful publishers. Their influence on musical life was further strengthened by the new law regulating author's and publisher's rights. This law had negative consequences on Neapolitan music publishing, which during the period immediately preceding unification, functioned in a consistent and autonomous manner.

Music in Naples after unification seems to recall the past. Saverio Mercadante, the last prestigious representative of the earlier period, died in 1870 after almost twenty years of apparent inactivity. The predominance of Verdi and of his imitators was almost absolute. Beside the influence of Verdi stood that of grand opera, and Meyerbeer in particular. A new chapter in music history opens with the introduction into Italy of Wagner's operas (*Lohengrin* in Bologna in 1870), a source of both enthusiasm and of burning controversy. At the same time an increasing interest in instrumental music is demonstrated by the flowering of Quartet Societies and Orchestral Societies during the 1860s and 1870s. The importance of Naples as a musical center, where the tradition of instrumental music flourished (and where during the first half of the century resided an orchestra that could be considered Italy's best), did not decline under the changing conditions of the peninsula's musical life. Rather, Naples maintained its role of leadership with a dynamic musical life and many enriching performances as the pages of this Neapolitan periodical document.

La Musica was founded and directed by the composer and pedagogue Michele Ruta (1826-1896)—teacher at the Naples Conservatory from 1879, critic of the Neapolitan *Corriere del mattino* and already an active collaborator of the first *La Musica*. The journal was published bi-monthly from 22 July 1876 to 13 April 1885,

with a four-year interruption, from November 1878 to 1 January 1883 (caused by a cholera epidemic) and another suspension from 4 August 1884 to 2 March 1885.

In the third *La Musica* one perceives a sort of synthesis in the criteria adopted by each of the two preceding journals. In common with the periodical directed by Trisolini (1855), Ruta's *La Musica* contains a series of articles of a pedagogical nature on musical forms signed by Ruta himself, which, nevertheless, is far from satisfying the new critical, aesthetic, and didactic consciousness called for in the journal's stated editorial policy. A strong link with Staffa's *La Musica* (1857-1859) is found in the common interest in the theoretical and scientific aspects of the musical art. Nevertheless, a long period separates the latest *La Musica* from the preceding two, a fact which is noticeable in the typographic presentation and in the skillful lay-out of its first number: four pages in three columns, characters differentiated for titles, subtitles, and classified advertising. The first three pages are occupied by articles and polemics on musical topics; the last page contains the miscellaneous rubric *Notizie varie* analogous to that of Trisolini's weekly.

The promotional price for the first number was 15 cents; subsequent issues sold for 50 cents. An announcement in number six of the first year indicates an increase in the number of subscribers. Beginning with the second number, the office of the journal is situated with the publisher G. Maddaloni. With number ten of the second year commercial advertising disappears and with number twenty-four of the same year the name of the publisher also disappears. Apparently, in addition to the cholera epidemic, reasons of an economic nature must have contributed to the long interruption of the journal between its third and fourth year of publication.

In its fourth year, the journal is printed in a new typeface and the subscription price is reduced. With number eighteen of that year a new rubric appears for classified advertisements. Number twenty-one, which contains the journal's only full-page illustration and an enriched number of classified advertisements, seems to represent the periodical's moment of greatest prosperity. But immediately following this issue the journal begins to decline; briefly, the classified notices diminish and the journal appears with irregularity despite the good intentions of the management which in the first number of 1885, after a suspension of several months, writes:

After six months of silence the journal *La Musica* resumes publication suspended first for the epidemic, and later for internal reasons. The editors hope to find the same benevolence in the subscribers enjoyed in the past; in turn they will faithfully continue both its didactic and its critical approach.

From the beginning Michele Ruta creates a journal which expresses a wide range of views; the regular and occasional collaborators in fact are numerous, and include both established journalists and young beginning critics such as Gemmino

Rajola, author of articles of a historical character, who won a competition sponsored by the journal for a monograph on Muzio Clementi. The journal's constant interest in Neapolitan musical institutions is explained by the close bonds of friendship between Ruta and the persons who direct these institutions, in particular, the director of the Neapolitan Conservatory, Lauro Rossi. A sizeable amount of space is reserved for announcements and for comments on symphonic concerts of the newly created Neapolitan Orchestral Society directed by Giuseppe Martucci. Noticeable also is the space reserved for the Neapolitan instrumental school in an era of great flowering of young performers, pianists in particular, in large part trained in the school of Sigismond Thalberg and in that of his student Beniamino Cesi. The numerous competitions sponsored in Naples and in other cities, for which the editors of the journal were diligent spokesmen, witness their trust in young talent and their constant commitment to the progress of musical life.