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Italian Sound

Italian Sounds, Lost and Found: Introduction to Volume 4, Issue 1

Deanna Shemek and Arielle Saiber

Is there something we can call “Italian sound”? Taking as a point of departure the popular association of Italy with linguistic and artistic musicality (and reactions against this association), *California Italian Studies* 4:1 invites transhistorical reflection on the auditory culture and work of Italians and on the “acoustemology” of Italy as space, place, and idea.¹ In proposing this theme, we had in mind a range of topics, including Italian and Italian-influenced music of all periods but also media and the mediatization of sound. We thought of historic advances in acoustic science and sound technology such as the work of anatomist Bartolomeo Eustachi (d. 1574), who first accurately described the structure of the internal ear; of musician Vincenzo Galilei, (d. 1591, father of the astronomer), whose systematic experiments using weights and strings revised a theory of musical intervals that had reigned in Europe since antiquity; of Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937), whose work in radio and telegraph transmission earned him the shared Nobel prize for Physics in 1909; and of the avant-garde compositions of Futurist Luigi Russolo (1885-1947), whose noise device, the *intonarumori*, made him one of the first sound artists. We considered, in the realm of philosophy, Adriana Cavarero's focus on the sonorousness of speech—the vocalicity of speakers—as a constitutive feature of unique, individual identities.² And we invited reflection on the transformations of spoken Italian from historical, demographic, political, and technological perspectives; literary evocations of sound and orality; ambient Italian soundscapes both countryside and urban; and the organized use of sound for purposes artistic, political, social, aesthetic, and religious.³

¹ We borrow the term in quotes from the path-breaking work of Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Smith's ambitious “acoustemology” attends to body, psyche, media, and society as factors in the experience of the sound world.

² Adriana Cavarero, *A più voci. Filosofia dell'espressione vocale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003). Translated and edited by Paul A. Kottman as *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

³ For recent work in early modern Italian sound studies, see for example Niall Atkinson, “The Republic of Sound: Listening to Florence at the Threshold of the Renaissance,” *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 16/1-2 (2013): 57-84; Andrew Dell'Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice: Architecture, Music, Acoustics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Nina Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court: The 1589 Interludes for La pellegrina* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). For an excellent collection of essays on modern sound studies topics, see the themed issue of *Studi Culturali* 10.1 (2013), which was published as *CIS* 4 was in production, and in particular the issue's introduction, Paolo Magaudda and Marco Santoro, “Dalla popular music ai sound studies: Lo studio delle culture sonore,” <http://www.rivisteweb.it/issn/1824-369X/issue/6105>. See also Paolo Magaudda, *Oggetti da ascoltare. Hifi, iPod e consumo delle tecnologie musicali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012); Gabriele Balbi, *Le origini del telefono in Italia. Politica, economia, tecnologia, società* (Milan: Mondadori, 2011); Stefano Pivato, *Il secolo del rumore. Il paesaggio sonoro nel Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011); Antonello Ricci, *Antropologia dell'ascolto* (Roma: Nuova cultura, 2011); Gianfranco Bettetini, *Il timpano dell'occhio: gli*

In our era of transglobal cultures, the notion of sounds associated with a national community may appear problematic. Our second fundamental aim with this issue was to counterweigh the perpetual emphasis in popular culture on Italy as a producer of visual (and gustatory) pleasure. Well aware that as scholars we constitute our objects of study by the very questions we pose, we intend here not to reify once more the imagined unity and community of Italy but rather to frame our topic in two ways: historically, by presenting analysis of certain events that took place under specific national conditions (for example the advent of sound to Italian cinema in a period of Fascist dictatorship); and culturally, by acknowledging that something like “Italian sound” is a product of intersubjective fantasies and projections—myths and commonplaces—that are themselves open to interrogation. From the prodigious achievements of Rossini, Verdi, and Puccini to the cliché of Italian as a “musical” language, from the chiming of church tower bells that still, miraculously, drifts through Italian towns on any Sunday morning to the splashing of fountains in the city squares, foreign impressions of Italian culture are freighted with sonorous equivalents of the picturesque. If such signature associations are not invalid, they are reductive and are often—it must be noted—lodged in the past: Italy’s music today is a locus of sometimes gloriously aggressive cross-cultural encounter and analysis; the spoken idiom (however melodious) is punctuated by words from Global English and immigrant tongues; and in Italian cities and towns the splashing of fountains in the *piazze* competes with the din of cars, buses, and unmuffled *motorini*, augmented during soccer games by the blasts of the *vuvuzela*, the ear-splitting plastic horn that world soccer fans have adopted from South Africa.

While neither of this issue’s co-editors is a musicologist, musician, or sound artist or engineer by training, each of us has engaged, through both teaching and research, with Italian music and aspects of the emerging field of sound studies, ranging from an interest in the barely traceable accents of historically remote Italian speech and performance to the study of Italian contributions to experimental electronic music.⁴ We are grateful to this issue’s contributors—the writers of the submissions published here, the many blind reviewers who lent us their expertise, and the *CIS* Executive Committee—for their insights and inroads to the auditory world of Italy.

To what degree is Italian sound the sound of Italian? Attempts to regulate the auditory as well as the lexical and formal aspects of the language have arisen historically in response to ideological pressure, technological innovation, and commercial enterprise. As with all languages, native speakers of Italian convey the peninsula’s history, its geography, and its ethnic diversity on their tongues. A flourishing printing industry in sixteenth-century Venice posed a challenge to editors eager to capitalize on the potential

intrecci e i giochi dei suoni e delle immagini (Milan: Bompiani, 2009); Paola Valentini, *Presenze sonore. Il passaggio al cinema sonoro in Italia tra cinema e radio* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2007); Antonello Colimberti, *Ecologia della musica. Saggi sul paesaggio sonoro* (Rome: Donzelli, 2004); Franco Fabbri, *Il suono in cui viviamo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1995). For general introductions to sound studies, see two recent collections: Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Jonathan Sterne, ed., *The Sound Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁴ See, for example, on the traces of orality in early modern correspondence, Deanna Shemek, “<<Ci ci>> and <<Pa Pa>>: Script, Mimicry, and Mediation in Isabella d’Este’s Letters,” *Rinascimento Seconda Serie*, Vol. 43 (2003): 75-91; and on contemporary electronic music and genre theory, Arielle Saiber, “The Polyvalent Discourse of Electronic Music,” *PMLA* October (2007): 1613-25.

market for mechanically produced books: how to reach the broadest target audience, given the fact that Latin could only serve a *niche*, scholarly market while even literate Italians *spoke* different languages? Many intellectuals associated the war-torn peninsula's vulnerability not only with its lack of political unity, but also with the absence of any consensus on a shared language. In some sense, Baldesar Castiglione's argument in the *Book of the Courtier* (1528) for eclectic linguistic borrowing (even of foreign words) has inevitably won out, for languages live and breathe with the people who speak them. Owing, however, to the overwhelming success of Pietro Bembo's prescriptive treatise, the *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), among writers from Ariosto to Manzoni and beyond, Italy's national language, both written and spoken, emerged principally from one regional dialect, Tuscan.⁵ Bembo, himself a Venetian, advanced a standardizing program that argued for the strict imitation of two Tuscan writers (Petrarch for poetry and Boccaccio for prose) who already in Bembo's time had been dead for over a hundred and fifty years. Bembo's sense of these two authors' superiority was based on literary achievement, but it was also substantially acoustic in its orientation: the values of *gravità* (dignity), *purezza* (purity), *piacevolezza* (pleasure to the mind), *varietà* (variety) and especially *dolcezza* (sweetness) derive principally from the way words sound.

The connection between language, audition, and cultural politics was not a new one for Italians of the sixteenth century. In the *De vulgari eloquentia* (1303-1305), the exiled Dante dreamed synesthetically of a language whose region would be that of the peninsula as a whole, one that "disperses its scent in every Italian city but resides in none." Using adjectives that clearly refer to aural qualities, he identified some words as "combed," others as "hairy and bristly," and some as "nothing but smoke." In his advice about which words to employ when writing in the exalted, tragic style, Dante asserts that after eliminating all words that are "childish," "feminine," or "urbane and glossy," which are unsuitable, "You will see that you have left only the combed and hairy words, which are the most noble and are members of the illustrious vernacular."⁶ Use those, Dante tells his readers, proceeding then to elucidate his terms: combed words are trisyllables with no aspiration, no acute or circumflex accents, no double consonants etc.; while hairy words include the monosyllables *si*, *no*, *me*, and *te*. Given the variability of regional pronunciations for Italian even today, decades into the standardizing effects of radio, television, film, and digital media, we can only imagine what precise sounds Dante, Castiglione, and Bembo heard coming out of their contemporaries' mouths.

The earliest audible record of spoken Italian dates just to 1860 and was made not by a native speaker but by the French linguist Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville. For his study of tonic accents, Martinville recorded the (slightly misquoted) first lines of Torquato Tasso's 1573 pastoral drama, *Aminta*: "Chi crederia che sotto umane forme, e sotto queste pastorali spoglie fosse nascosto un Dio?"⁷ In the 1930s Antonio Gramsci noted the difficulty of studying the particular language of any of the historic poets given that, "an

⁵ Pietro Bembo, *Prose e rime*, ed. Carlo Dionisotti (Turin: U.T.E.T., 1960); Baldesar Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano, con una scelta delle opera minori*, ed. Bruno Maier (Turin: U.T.E.T., 1964), I.2, I.29-38.

⁶ Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, trans. and ed. Marianne Shapiro in Marianne Shapiro, *De vulgari eloquentia: Dante's Book of Exile* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 1.XVI, 2.VII.

⁷ This recording may be heard online, at <http://www.firstsounds.org/sounds/scott.php> on the website of First Sounds, an "informal collaborative of audio historians, recording engineers, sound archivists, scientists, other individuals, and organizations who aim to make mankind's earliest sound recordings available to all people for all time." We thank Jon Snyder for this reference.

essential document is missing: i.e. there exists no extensive evidence about the spoken language of these writers' times." And over three decades later in 1965, Pier Paolo Pasolini made the inaccessible sound of Gramsci's own spoken tongue—in which one would have heard the inevitable stratification of Gramsci's native Sardinian; the foreign, academic Italian learned in school as a boy; and the "Frenchified" vernacular he encountered at the University of Turin—the starting point for brilliant meditations on the poetics and politics of dialect in relation to national hegemony.⁸ Of these historic language theorists, only Pasolini wrote from a present in which voiced language could be recorded and broadcast. Perhaps not even he anticipated that audio technologies would so forcefully mediate people's daily language practices as they do today. Yet all of these writers address an enduring cultural issue that is marking Italian speech anew, as waves of immigrants for the first time in centuries exert new linguistic influences on the sound of Italian, and new words enter the language almost daily from American speech and technology. Now, in contrast to then, these shifts and variations are not only audible; they are also preservable as 'essential documents.'⁹

Equally remote today is another historic Italian sound phenomenon, the unearthly timbre of the sensationalized *castrati*.¹⁰ The sixteenth-century emergence of the *castrato* singer responded to a demand for soprano voices in the papal choir, where women's singing was prohibited. Typical *castrati* were boys born into poor or middle-class families who were removed early from their homes for vocal training, then castrated at an age between seven and thirteen in order to prevent the enlargement of the vocal cords that produces adult male voices. The combination of prepubescent voice with manly lungpower resulted in singing that was described as crystalline and ethereal, at once high and forceful. Only the most talented of these children grew to be international celebrities by singing for larger public audiences in the new *drammi musicali*, better known today as opera. Though, as Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker observe, "the castrati have gone forever" and "most

⁸ See Tyrus Miller, "The Ashes of Civic Poetry: Pasolini and Philology After Gramsci," in Tyrus Miller, *Time Images: Alternative Temporalities in Twentieth-Century Theory, Literature and Art* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009) 142-53. For the passage quoted from Gramsci see Notebook 5, paragraph 151 of Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni dal carcere* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001 [1975]), Vol.1, 678. Pasolini's study, "Dal laboratorio" appeared in his *Empirismo eretico* (Milan: Garzanti, 1972) and is available in English in *Heretical Empiricism*, ed. Louise K. Barnett, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 50-76.

⁹ See, for example the "unscientific" survey by *La Repubblica* of readers' adoption of new words: <http://temi.repubblica.it/repubblica-sondaggio/?cmd=vedirisultati&pollId=4230> . Our thanks to linguist Giulia Centineo for informative discussions of this phenomenon.

¹⁰ *Castrati* are also on record in Paris, Munich, London and other cities. Though some of these men became international celebrities, Italy was home to most of them and, as French counter-tenor Philippe Jaroussky has remarked in an interview, most of the parts written for the Baroque castrato voice are sung in Italian. See <http://www.hometheaterhifi.com/interviews-musicians-artists/interviews-musicians-artists/an-interview-with-french-countertenor-philippe-jaroussky.html>. See Martha Feldman, "Strange Births and Surprising Kin: The Castrato's Tale," in *Italy's Eighteenth Century: Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, ed. Paula Findlen, Wendy Wassyng, Catherine Sama (Stanford and London: Stanford University Press, 2009), 175-202, 400-14; Roger Freitas, "Sex Without Sex: An Erotic Image of the Castrato Singer," in Findlen et al., *Italy's Eighteenth Century*, 203-15, 414-18; Giuseppe Gerbino, "The Quest for the Soprano Voice: Castrati in Renaissance Italy," *Studi musicali* 33 (2004): 303-57; Valeria Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 225-80; Patrick Barbier, *The World of the Castrati: The History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon* (London: Souvenir Press, 1996 [French original 1989]).

operas of the [eighteenth century] can never be performed today as they were performed then,” an impressive array of counter-tenors is reviving the musical repertoire that was written expressly for these transgendered voices.¹¹

Italy’s most spectacular contribution to Western music is certainly the opera, which developed in several cities on the peninsula between 1598 and 1600 under various names (*dramma musicale, opera scenica, festa teatrale* etc.), coming to be called *opera* only in the nineteenth century. Italian opera thrived as a signature cultural form for domestic and foreign consumption for over four hundred years. As a musical-theatrical phenomenon opera has long been perceived as both elitist and strange: elitist because opera productions are costly to mount and thus expensive to attend, and strange because—aside from the linguistic barriers that inhere for much of the audience—opera’s form is highly stylized, its plots are wildly improbable, and its tone is emotionally extravagant. Opera’s elitism has been considerably diminished by the audio and video technologies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Radio, records, CDs, and podcasts extend listening access; while television, DVD, and high-definition simulcast performances allow a vast public to attend productions virtually; and pop phenomena like the Three Tenors have made some of opera’s performers into domestic names and global superstars.¹² Yet in many ways, it is the very absurdity of completely sung, melodramatic theater performed by virtuoso artists that continues to account for opera’s greatest appeal.

In 1825 when the first Italian opera was performed in New York, it took Americans by surprise. English opera had existed since 1656 and Americans were somewhat familiar with ballad operas sung in English, but the sound of Italian opera was for them a stunning novelty. Walt Whitman, among the early American commentators on this bold and fascinating form with which he became enthralled, captures the sense of Italian opera’s acoustic impact in those early American performances:

You listen to the music and the songs, and choruses—all of the highest range of composition known to the world of melody. It is novel, of course, being far, very far different from what you were used to, the church choir, or the songs and playing on the piano, or the songs, or any performance of the Ethiopian minstrels. A new world—a liquid world—rushes like a torrent through you. If you have the true musical feeling in you, from this night you

¹¹ Abbate and Parker, *A History of Opera*, 70. Performers such as Philippe Jaroussky, Franco Fagioli, Max Emanuel Cencic and David Daniels are reaching a new generation of listeners for this music, inevitably also drawing attention to the historic factors of sexism and child abuse that contributed to its original flourishing. To what degree these vocalists approximate the sound of the *castrati* is impossible to say. The last known *castrato*, Alessandro Moreschi (1858-1922) made a series of recordings in 1902 and 1904. Though the quality of the recording equipment was inferior Moreschi, then in his forties and past his singing prime, left to posterity a precious and, indeed, unique document of music history. *Alessandro Moreschi the Last Castrato: The Complete Vatican Recordings* (Sussex: Pavilion Records, 1993).

¹² For reflections on the democratization of opera that resulted from the long-playing record, see Theodor W. Adorno’s 1969 essay, “Opera and the Long-Playing Record,” translated and introduced by Thomas Y. Levin, *October* 55 (1990): 62-66.

date a new era in your development and, for the first time, receive your ideas of what the divine art of music really is.¹³

Though most of them have yet to hear their first opera, when students are asked today why they chose to study the Italian language, more than any other answer one hears, “I love the way it sounds.” Those of us who study and teach Italian culture may wince at the cliché of *la bella lingua*, but on the contrary we know it to be true, and we should be ever mindful of this ace in our pocket.¹⁴ Marketing experts have long capitalized on the love affair between foreigners and things Italian, by giving Italian-sounding names to products that are Italian-like but not produced in Italy. Yet “Italian sound,” we submit, is more than an illusion of global capitalist marketing or a pure cultural fantasy: it is also a range of acoustic phenomena tied to definable lived environments, diasporic movements, everyday practices, and historical mediation. The effect of natural landscapes as well as of architectural, artistic, and technological achievements that are “made in Italy,” whether rooted in memory, imagination, or place, Italian sound merits our attention and invites analysis.

The essays and creative texts gathered in this issue by no means “cover” the territory of Italian sound but rather constitute a diverse mix of contributions with foci ranging from the nineteenth century to the present. The issue’s emphasis on modern forms and media reflects submissions received, and not the extent of current sound studies research. The writings we publish here fall into a number of thematic clusters.

Sound and Sense

Opening the issue is a tour-de-force essay by **Hillel Schwartz**, whose book, *Making Noise: From Babel to the Big Bang and Beyond* (2011), was an inspiration as we thought about the topic of “Italian Sound.” In “**Fifth Elements: A Research Program in Italian Sound**,” Schwartz offers both a serious set of reflections on how one might go about studying—indeed constituting—something called Italian sound, and a whistle-stop tour through an eclectic history of sounds musical, mechanical, mythical, and maniacal that “outlanders” have associated with Italian culture. Through a textual strategy of chronological swerves bound by a structure of essayistic move(ment)s signaled by the language of Italian musical notation, Schwartz lays out cases both “weak” and “strong” for the particularity of Italian sound. If Italy as a nation has historically been a dubious concept,

¹³ Cited in John Dizikes, *Opera in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 9. Whitman’s description was published in his 1855 article for the New York magazine, *Life Illustrated*. The 1825 debut of Italian opera in America was a production of Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at New York’s Park Theater, performed in Italian by a cast consisting mostly of a Spanish family of singers, the Garcías. See Dizikes, 3-11. On the role of nationalism in early opera, see Dizikes, 15-24.

¹⁴ Journalist Dianne Hales has become the latest US ambassador for Italian language learning as an acoustic adventure. Hales tours extensively to speak about her experience as an Anglophone learner of Italian. See Dianne Hales, *La Bella Lingua: My Love Affair with Italian, the World’s Most Enchanting Language* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010) and her dedicated website: <http://www.becomingitalian.com>

never completed and always under pressure of erasure by its persistent, assertive, regional identities and its diasporic emigrations, there may nonetheless be a *something there*, Schwartz argues, something blatant and recognizable and available for critical analysis as “Italian”—if not *Italian*—sound. Given that this *something* is largely perceived as such from the outside, from California or New York or another elsewhere that is *beside* rather than *of* Italy, Schwartz’s survey and *CIS* 4.1 as a whole occupy to some extent the position of the *ieron*: we engage in a knowing and serious play with the notions of sound, affect, and identity that concern us here.

The three essays that directly follow Schwartz’s extend his practice of addressing dimensions of sound and sense, in Italian poetry and fiction. Translating and expanding a chapter from her book, *Leopardi Sublime*, **Margaret Brose** considers the recent flood of translations into English of both the lyrics and the quasi-theoretical notebooks (*Zibaldone*) of Italy’s greatest Romantic poet, Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837).¹⁵ Of particular interest, given our theme, is Brose’s sustained reflection in “**Leopardi and the Power of Sound**” on the role played by acoustic references in Leopardi’s many meditations on time and infinity. Brose ties together Leopardi’s numerous remarks on music, his production of poetic effects from sound patterns (a “tendency to valorize the signifier over the signified”), and his frequent construction of scenes where the speaker’s thought process is triggered by an ambient sound (what Brose terms “auditory semiosis”) as features that point to Leopardi’s modernity. Ultimately, Brose argues for the primacy of sound rather than sight *or* language in Leopardi’s extended reflection on “the infinite effect.” We are delighted to include in this issue also a selection of three poems by Leopardi, translated by the celebrated poet **Patrick Creagh** (1930-2012) and preceded by a brief biographical sketch of Creagh’s career by **Lucia Re**, “**Translator Patrick Creagh and the Sound of Italy.**”

In “**Come un fulgore azzurro: Umberto Saba and the Verdian Sound of Italy,**” **Mattia Acetoso** explores the Triestine Saba’s gravitation toward the figure of Giuseppe Verdi as the embodiment of an Italian identity that seemed to elude Saba (1883-1957) himself. While Verdi’s status as a figure of Italian unity has become commonplace, Acetoso’s interest here is in the identification of the deeply divided Saba—the Italian Central European, the Catholic Jew, the married homosexual—with this “uncompromised symbol of national identity.” Arguing that readers have vastly underestimated the scope of Saba’s passion for music and opera, Acetoso’s essay lays out the entanglement of Saba’s political views, his “ardent desire to be part of the Italian cultural tradition,” and Verdian opera.

Continuing this focus on the interface between literature and opera in Italy, **Daniela Bombara**’s “**Compositori, impresari e pubblico nell’Anello di Ugo Fleres: Un ritratto del mondo musicale operistico alle soglie del Novecento,**” turns to the largely neglected Sicilian novelist Ugo Fleres (1857-1939). Fleres’s novel, *Anello*, participates in the recognizable Romantic subgenre of fiction set within the world of the theater. Such settings lend themselves to a number of themes, ranging from the relationships among artists, to the commodification of art and the corruption of its producers, to the nature of authorship and questions of being, all of which come to the fore in Fleres’s text. As Bombara argues in her extended reading of the novel, Fleres’s meta-theatrical exploration of musical creativity evolves as an existential tragedy, aligning this text with Pirandello’s most rigorous investigations of personal and artistic authenticity. Musical discourse in the novel

¹⁵ Margaret Brose, *Leopardi sublime* (Bologna: Re Enzo, 1998).

becomes an instrument for probing the unconscious, triggering the plot as a whole and becoming a metaphor for the writer's poetics as they reflect on the role of the artist and of art in modern society.

Resoundings

Two additional pieces extend the metatheatrical reflection on opera in relation to history. **Dacia Maraini's** 1986 play, *Norma '44*, is here translated for the first time into English by **Lucia Re** and **Monica Streifer** and preceded by a substantial introductory essay by Monica Streifer, "Female Voice in Dacia Maraini's *Norma '44*." Maraini's drama, set in an unnamed concentration camp in Germany in 1944, recounts the perverse and desperate alliance between two female prisoners—Sara and Lidia, both singers—and the SS officer Karl Hoffmann who enlists them in a coerced performance of Bellini and Romani's *bel canto* opera, *Norma*, for the entertainment of the camp colonel. As the drama unfolds, its plot ironically mirrors that of the opera. Streifer argues in her essay that Maraini's play accomplishes several important things. First, it writes women into the history of the Nazi deportations, which were narrated up through the 1980s as a story largely by and about men. Second, it thematizes female voices and highlights the power of women's solidarity that is depicted also in Bellini and Romani's text. Ultimately, *Norma '44* raises difficult questions about the power of art to mediate, resist, critique, and revise history and the limits of that power, including for Maraini herself where the Holocaust is concerned.

We are pleased to have two essays in this themed issue by internationally renowned, contemporary composers: Simone Fontanelli and Elliott Schwartz. **Simone Fontanelli's** essay, "Pinocchio, ossia C'era una volta un pezzo di legno," reflects on his experience of writing a work of chamber music for the theater based on Carlo Collodi's (Lorenzini's) famed children's story, a complex social, political, and psychological text produced in Risorgimento Italy that, as Fontanelli notes, has been widely misunderstood over the past century thanks to Disney's 1940 animated version. Fontanelli's hour-long piece, commissioned by the Gürzenich-Orchester-Köln and the Kinderoper-Köln in 2010, features only two performers: a narrator and a clarinetist. Fontanelli chose the clarinet to be the "voice" of Pinocchio's world for its versatile personality, "ricca di fantasia, *humor*, e malinconia." In addition to outlining the circumstances for the development and performance in 2011 of *Pinocchio*, Fontanelli includes details about the choices he made when transposing the literary text into a musical one (such as ending with Pinocchio's finding his father inside the whale and carrying him out to safety). He also explains a number of his compositional strategies (for example, in order to convey the sound of Lorenzini's Tuscan dialect). Fontanelli provides parts of the work's score and clips from a 2011 performance. "Pinocchio, ossia C'era una volta un pezzo di legno"—both Fontanelli's essay here and the chamber piece itself—explore means by which sound can function as a narrative device that also conveys reflections on childhood growth, resistance and rebellion, and societal norms.

Elliott Schwartz's "From Brighton Beach to Bellagio" also yields insights about the composer's process, although in this case, through an autobiographical tracing of influences that Italy, Italian music, and Italian and Italian-American musicians have had

on Schwartz's work as a whole. Focusing especially on his *Bellagio Variations*, he takes us from his childhood in 1940s and Fifties Brooklyn, where one of his best friends, a relative of the composer Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919), introduced him to opera at the Met; through his college and graduate school love of Scarlatti, Norman Dello Joio (Nicodemo DeGioio), Gian-Carlo Menotti, Ferruccio Busoni, Paul Creston (Giuseppe Guttovoggio); and into the 1960s and Seventies, when he came to know the avante-garde, electronic works of Berio, Nono, and Maderna. These modernist composers, Schwartz relates, inspired his work and led him, in a sense, to the Villa Serbelloni in Bellagio, Italy, where he held a fellowship in 1980. Schwartz describes his time in Bellagio, pausing to highlight aspects of the landscape and historical points of reference that influenced his composition. He outlines the process of composing his piece and accompanies his descriptions with parts of the score, links to a recording of a full performance of the *Variations*, and two pen and ink drawings of Como executed in that period by Schwartz's wife, Dorothy.

Futurist Audition

Continuing the exploration of the auditory in the early twentieth century are three essays on Futurism and sound. In “**Futurism in Venice, Crisis, and ‘la musica dell’avvenire,’ 1924,**” **Harriet Boyd** points to a largely unintentional contradiction in Futurist theory and practice. She takes as her case study the 1924 tour by Il Nuovo Teatro Futurista, specifically studying the high-octane publicity for its stop in Venice and the subsequent media explosion following its performance at the Teatro Goldoni. While Boyd notes the genius and effectiveness of the Futurists' media blitz, their visionary language describing the future of music, and the importance of their direct engagement with numerous cultural identity crises in Italy following World War I, in the end, she argues, Il Nuovo Teatro Futurista's expositions on music, noise, and silence revealed cracks in the Futurists' platform. For this Venetian leg of their tour, the Futurists undermined their own philosophies by making use of the very retro-media technology, musical genres, and sounds against which they had railed, disappointing audiences who had been led by hyped-up publicity to expect much more noisy, raucous events. The disparity between what the Futurists avowed and what they were then producing came under scrutiny, and the depth of their commitment to some of their most fundamental tenets was challenged in—and by—Venice, both the patron city of modern art with its Biennale and a venerable symbol of Italy's great musical past.

Selena Daly, on the other hand, highlights a significant, positive side to the Futurists's fascination with harsh noises. In “**Futurist War Noise: Coping with the Sounds of the First World War**” she proposes that the Futurists' exploration between 1911 and 1914 of “the art of noise” —mechanical, electric, and vocal—helped them address some of the traumatic auditory experiences of the First World War. Devoting particular attention to F.T. Marinetti, Umberto Boccioni, and Luigi Russolo, Daly argues that their celebration of noise and their concentration on the production of jarring, modern sounds in Futurist performance provided a “filter” through which Futurist soldiers could intellectualize and process the continuous explosive sounds of battle. As she points out, the

Futurists seemed indifferent to the landscape of human war sounds: the cries and moans of the wounded and dying are rarely discussed in their letters from the front or in later writings. But in Daly's view, the aesthetics and politics of Futurist noise likely served not only as provocation but also as sublimation and, indeed therapy for the war-worn.

In a different approach to thinking about Futurism and sound, **Daniela Gangale** analyzes the Futurists' thoughts about music by way of approximately thirty polemical pieces published between 1913 and 1915 primarily in the Florentine journal *Lacerba*. "**Il suono dei futuristi: La musica in *Lacerba* e altre polemiche musicali,**" catalogues these music-related pieces in an effort to chart the role of the journal itself in propagandistic Futurist programs. Of the essay's four sections, two focus, year by year, on the specific controversies provoked by the Futurists' notions of what music is and should be; a third discusses the playful creative works related to music that the Futurists published in *Lacerba* (and elsewhere) during these years. Ultimately, Gangale's study brings into focus many of the deeper issues underlying and motivating their polemic in favor of "new" music: Italy's recent national unification; an impending war; the dissonance between rural Italy and a modernizing, industrial one; and the country's love for the classics and its nostalgia for the past (especially in Florence, the home city of these journals). Such factors, she argues, constituted the particular complexity of conditions for avant-garde movements in Italy.

Fascist Sound Politics

In "**Da 'Yeah' a 'Ueee' senza passare dal MinCulPop. Strategie di coesistenza e resistenza del jazz italiano durante il fascismo,**" **Dario Martinelli** explores a very different sound phenomenon of the era, the contradictory relationship of official, Fascist Italy with Italians' taste for the American jazz idiom. Banned by a regime whose dictator's immediate family included accomplished jazz musicians, and criticized in patently racist terms by prominent journalists but tolerated for its commercial profitability, jazz enjoyed a "strange coexistence" not only in the Mussolini household but in Fascist Italy generally. Among Italian jazz musicians of the period, Martinelli identifies three types of relations with the regime: some artists went underground, emerging to build successful careers only after 1945; some persisted, performing "real jazz" but paying the price of exclusion and conflict; and some, like Alberto Rabagliati—Martinelli's primary focus—forged a compromise by mediating jazz styles through an Italian tradition, thus securing the ability to continue working, even under Fascist rule. Martinelli urges a move beyond the impulse to assign relative blame and praise in these cases: conditions were complicated, and contradictions abounded. In the case of Rabagliati, he sees a *presa in giro* of the regime's institutions (in particular the Ministero della Cultura Popolare, or MinCulPop) that remained light enough to go (mostly) uncensored but constituted, in Martinelli's view, a form of artistic, if not political resistance.

In "**100% Italian': The Coming of Hollywood Sound Films in 1930s Italy and State Regulation of Dubbing**" **Carla Mereu Keating** examines the effects of the Fascist insistence on linguistic purity in the context of the new technology of talking cinema. In the first half of the 1920s, she points out, foreign intertitles and captions were permitted on Italian screens. With the advent of sound, however, controlling forces doubled down. The

production crisis that was gripping the Italian film industry led to quotas for the screening of Italian-made films beginning in 1925. Mereu Keating returns to the well-documented subject of Hollywood's exportation of sound film to markets abroad in the late 1920s and the 1930s and offers some explanation for why, in Italy, dubbing was embraced as a response to this new technology. Along the way, she illustrates some of the intrinsically sonorous problems that Hollywood created for Italian film audiences: for example, by dubbing films with the voices of Italian-American and transplanted native speakers, they incorporated class and regional accents that clashed with the narratives of the films they were dubbing. Hollywood's tin ear for the nuances of spoken Italian, its regionalisms and its stratified dictions, Mereu Keating explains, resulted first in the programmatic silencing of spoken foreign films—the removal of their sound tracks altogether—and ultimately in the transfer of foreign film dubbing into Italy, whence a lucrative industry was born that thrives to this day. For cinema in the twentieth century as for print in the sixteenth, for commercial and technological as well as ideological reasons, the purity and unity of Italian as a language, here principally as sound, became an issue.

Transnational Pop

Popular music subgenres in Italy, as elsewhere in the world, are numerous and diverse, ranging from the dialect-infused and regional, to the globally influenced, national, and transnational. Two essays in the issue look at the socio-political and economic elements central to the transnationalism of two different subgenres. **Jason Pine**, an anthropologist whose work focuses on ethnographic research in Naples, and **Francesco Pepe**, who studies Italian diasporic culture from his home in the Netherlands, have collaborated on **“Neomelodica Music and Transnational Economic Cultures.”** Exploring how and why the *canzone neomelodica* emerged in Naples in the 1980s, they point to the social, political, and economic reasons why it has enjoyed success in Southern Italy and with Southern Italians abroad (especially in Germany, Belgium, and the United States). Pine and Pepe note the complex relationship this form of song has with its traditional Neapolitan folk roots, with Arab music, and with mainstream pop music from the 1980s, noting also its associations (real and imagined) with an “alternative” clientele in the *camorra* and the larger international black market. The authors explicate *neomelodica* lyrics about family, love, crime, prison, gang life, and poverty, drawing parallels to gangsta rap and Mexican *narcocorrido*; and they discuss what the performers' choice of instruments and melodies conveys about the form itself. Presenting data on the demographics of *neomelodica* performers and audience, on the modes of performance and distribution, and on the identity politics that are central to *neomelodica*'s popularity as well as its marginalization, Pine and Pepe call to our attention the unique, non-mainstream aesthetic and moral sensibilities of this subgenre.

While also a story about diaspora and the transnationalism of music, **Ilaria Serra's “Unexpected Italian Sound: ‘Italian Tango’ between Buenos Aires and Paolo Conte,”** appears, at first glance, to take us in the opposite direction from Pine and Pepe's piece: from Argentina and the birth of tango in the 1890s, to its arrival in Italy in 1911, and its later adaptation by contemporary Italian singers and composers, such as Paolo Conte. But

on closer inspection, Serra argues, history reveals that Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires contributed a great deal to the template of sound that was to become tango, and Porteño tango's introduction into Italy, was, in a sense, a re-introduction. Serra's essay brings to light the many contributions Italian immigrants to Argentina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made to tango as musicians, composers (of both music and text), conductors, dance-club owners, and promoters of tango music and dance. She connects important aspects of the tango's form and style to Italian melodies and lyricism, as well as to the immigrant experience. After World War II, with a new wave of Italian immigration to Argentina and more movement between Argentina and Italy, tango became further transnationalized and hybridized. Conte's tangos (from the Seventies to the 2000s), as Serra shows in the second half of her essay, "appropriated, dismantled, and reworked" tango, emphasizing a longing for the exotic located within the familiar. Serra's piece reveals how tango music is in dialogue with the immigrant experience and with the fiery attraction to the distant, the foreign, the other, and what is left behind.

At the end of this issue we append a brief coda by co-editor **Arielle Saiber**, "**Sound Bytes: Experimental Electronic Music and Sound Art in Italy**," that highlights several areas of modern and contemporary innovations in music and acoustic art. This final note offers a pathway into the airwaves of Italy's present, with hints toward its future.

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