

***Musica d'oggi* (1919-1942)**

June 1919: the World War was over just a few months earlier and Casa Ricordi presented to the musical community a new musical periodical initiated by Claudio Clausetti and Renzo Valcarengi titled *Musica d'oggi* [MDO]. Its forerunner was the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, which first appeared in 1842, and which was transformed in 1903 to the monthly *Musica e musicisti*, and in 1906 to *Ars et Labor*, before ceasing publication in 1912. The title of the new journal, MDO, is clearly intended to suggest a new desire to document contemporary music in relation to the most recent developments in European musical life, which were given only scant attention in the lattermost issues of the preceding periodical. This musical life was characterized by an ever-increasing evolution of the musical language and of the communication media, and primarily dominated by new protagonists (mainly Stravinsky and Schönberg). But the primary aim of the new periodical, very evident, in fact, in the introductory pages to the first issue, is above all “to bridge the gaps in the field of bibliography,” that is, to list in the final pages of each fascicle, all the recent Italian publications printed not only by Casa Ricordi, but also by other publishers such as Sonzogno, Carish, Schmidl, and Bongiovanni. To this end, the rubric “Bibliografia” constitutes a very precious, almost irreplaceable documentary resource of Italian musical publications of the period between the two World Wars.

Rodolfo Galli was appointed director of the periodical; in 1924 he was succeeded by Antonio Manca. In 1926 Carlo Clausetti assumed this position and in 1929, Antonio Manca returned to the post. The 1919 publications comprise only three quarterly fascicles. In its second year of publication, 1920, *Musica d'oggi* is transformed into a monthly periodical (eleven issues per year) and takes on a structure in 1924-25 that is steadily maintained until its final year—except for some marginal adjustments introduced particularly in the graphic design from 1934 onward. Initially, the single fascicles contained thirty-two to thirty-five pages. However, from 1924 they contain an average of forty pages, which is steadily maintained up to autumn 1939, when the number of pages is drastically reduced (not exceeding thirty from October 1939 onward)¹ in compliance with a government ordinance that required all periodicals to economize severely in the use of paper due to the international political crisis.

The periodical is structured as follows.

1) The opening pages of each fascicle are generally reserved for full-page articles and critical essays concerning topics of historical and musicological interest, at times of a commemorative nature; these are followed by notices of significant operatic premières and by foreign correspondence—starting with the November 1928 issue—placed under the rubric “Vita musicale.” Numerous scholars contributed major articles to *Musica d'oggi*, among them are Domenico Alaleona, Alfredo Bonaccorsi, Arnaldo Bonaventura, Alberto Cametti, Alfredo Casella, Adelmo Damerini, Alberto De Angelis, Andrea Della Corte, Raffaello De Rensis, Giulio Fara, Guido Maria Gatti, Arturo Lancellotti, S. A.

¹ MDO 21, no. 11 (October 1939): 325.

Luciani, Tancredi Mantovani, Luigi Perrachio, F. B. Pratella, Giuseppe Radiciotti, Vito Raeli, Mario Rinaldi, Ettore Romagnoli, Mario Signorelli, and Giovanni Tebaldini.

The following rubrics are printed in two columns.

2) The “Rivista delle riviste,” which begins with one or two musicological studies concerning contemporary music, presents a list of Italian and foreign music periodicals accompanied by ample abstracts of their contents (these are suspended in March 1933 and reintroduced beginning in 1936 in a shortened form).

3) The rubric “Vita musicale” is usually arranged in the following sub-sections: “Theatri” – “Concerti” – “Corrispondenze dall'estero.” Together with the rubric “Recensioni,” it constitutes the most cogent and informative section in the periodical. Featuring mainly notices on current operatic and concert activities, this rubric frequently draws on articles that appeared in other journals, such as *Il Pensiero musicale*, *Musicisti d'Italia*, *L'Arte pianistica*, *Il Bollettino bibliografico musicale*, *La Critica musicale*, *Il Pianoforte*, *La Rassegna musicale*, *Rivista musicale italiana*, *La Musica*, *Libri del giorno*, etc., as well as in daily journals such as *Il Corriere della sera*, *La Stampa*, *Il Secolo*, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, *La Nazione*, *Il Lavoratore*, etc. Quite extensive is the number of collaborators corresponding from foreign countries, from London to Russia, from Paris to Germany, from Austria to Switzerland. The correspondence from Germany is the most frequent and constitutes the central part of the information transmitted from abroad; these reports are signed by Hugo Fleischmann, Adolf Weissmann, Wilhelm Virneisel, Walther Hirschberg and, from 1926 onward, exclusively by Alfred Brügemann. The Brügemann reports, written originally in Italian by the German author (no mention of translations is made), are rather awkward, cluttered by many inaccuracies in the translation of German titles into Italian; but above all one feels a deep sense of repulsion reading the correspondence published following Hitler's rise to power (1933), as they are rather replete with ideological contortions tending to justify the racist and anti-Semitic philosophy of Nazism. Correspondence from Austria is regularly published (1920-1938: Hugo Fleischmann; after the *Anschluss* of 1938 Brügemann is the music critic responsible for Austria as well), from Paris (1928-1933: Robert Russel; 1939: Vincenzo Davico), from London (1928-1930: Edwin Evans; 1930-1935: Giorgio R. Foa), from Switzerland (1928-1934: Gustave Doret), from Russia (1927-1933: M. Ivanov-Boretzky, then Boris de Schloezer), from Belgium (1928-1932: Ernest Closson), from Czechoslovakia and from New York (various correspondents).

4) The “Recensioni” rubric is also arranged in various sub-sections: books of musical interest, vocal and instrumental chamber music, sacred music, symphonic music, etc. Publications of musicological and theoretical arguments are here assigned mainly to Giulio Bas, then, following his death in 1929, to A. Della Corte. Reviews of music editions are often signed—in addition to Bas and Della Corte—by Michelangelo Abbado, Marco Anzoletti, Nicola Costarelli, Adelmo Damerini, Aldo Finzi, Bettina Lupo, Elisabetta Oddone, Lino Ennio Pelilli, Vito Raeli, and Maffeo Zanon. Under this rubric considerable space is reserved for publications by Casa Ricordi, with ample citations from articles that appeared in various Italian and foreign journals, in particular—with regard to Italian journals—the *Rivista musicale italiana*, *Il Pianoforte*, *La Rassegna musicale*, *Il Pensiero musicale*, and *Il Bollettino dei Musicisti*.

5) The rubric “In tutti i toni” is devoted to various topics and brief notices, also arranged in sub-sections: news of competitions, miscellaneous notices, obituaries, and personal “confidenze d’autore.”

6) “Bibliografia” (see above): a list of the most recent music publications by Casa Ricordi as well as by other Italian publishers.

7) *Hors-texte* music compositions (from March 1940 the publication of music inserts is suspended due to governmental regulations, as mentioned above; they are reintroduced three months later, although not as independently paginated *hors-texte*, and are left out altogether beginning in June 1941).

Noteworthy is the “Referendum” rubric—topics selected as the subjects of articles, by the votes of subscribers—introduced exclusively from 1921 to 1925 (1921: Wagner’s influence on Italian opera; 1922: favorite operas by Verdi and Puccini; 1923: music criticism; 1924: the influence of symphonic music on contemporary musical theatre).

Between the two World Wars . . . During this short but intense period *Musica d’oggi* passes through the experience of political events that are crucial for the destiny of European democracy, characterized as they are by a compelling advance of totalitarian regimes, starting precisely in Italy: by autumn of 1922 the fascist party has gained power, and in 1925 a dictatorship is established by Mussolini. In Russia, Stalin prepares the ground for a communist dictatorship. In Germany, Hitler rises to power in 1933, and promptly the first anti-Semitic persecutions are undertaken, culminating in 1935 with the infamous “Nuremberg laws” that deprive the Jews of all personal rights; in 1938 the Third Reich annexes Austria, forcing the escape of the Jews who had found refuge there. In that same year Mussolini, by his own initiative, promulgates the “race doctrines,” undeniably anti-Semitic. Meanwhile, the civil war in Spain had prepared the ground for fascist dictatorship.

In the midst of these events the journal of Casa Ricordi maintains a cautious position, if we set aside the ignoble correspondence by Brügemann from Germany, conceived to justify Nazi anti-Semitism and the expulsion of Jewish musicians. The only essay featuring an explicit political outlook is that of the young Remo Giazotto published in the August-September fascicle of 1940: “Popolo e valutazione artistica. L’arte di Verdi in clima fascista.”² In all other cases, the periodical maintains a position that in a certain way is moderate, by walking at times a narrow path. Of some significance, for example, is the fact that *Musica d’oggi* does not report at all on the fascist aggression toward Toscanini that took place in Bologna in 1931 on the occasion of the Martucci commemoration. While it continues, on the contrary, to report on the activities of the Maestro from Parma—by now openly anti-fascist and anti-monarchist—at the Salzburg Festival, of his *tournées* in Israel, and at the Lucerne Festival (final citation in the August-September issue of 1939).

² Remo Giazotto, MDO XXII 8-9 (August-September 1940): 233-35.

Musica d'oggi is an attentive and timely witness to the revolution taking place in the communication media: the ever increasing dissemination of recordings along with music used to accompany silent and subsequently sound movies. Furthermore, there is a rapid growth of radio broadcasts, which in turn contribute to the formation of the first radio orchestras; in the meantime, there are early mentions of television, though limited to Great Britain, Germany and the U. S. A.³ Ricordi's periodical reports on the introduction of music produced by new mechanical instruments, and documents the evolution in the organization of operatic and concert activities. These are increasingly under the control of the state and of the totalitarian regimes in Russia, Italy and Germany (but with regard to Italy noteworthy is the birth in 1920 of the first autonomous institution, the Teatro alla Scala). The journal reports as well on the new ways of producing and listening to music, such as the widespread organization of open air spectacles and the progressive development of numerous Festivals, namely in Salzburg, Venice (dedicated to contemporary music), Florence (the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino), and Lucerne; and we must not lose sight of the numerous festivals of the International Society for Contemporary Music taking place in various branches of Western Europe. Furthermore, the periodical documents the progressive emergence of jazz corresponding to a regression of operetta, which suddenly almost dies out on the verge of the Second World War. The periodical gives particular emphasis to popular songs and generally to musical folklore through the publication of ample essays (Bonaccorsi, Chiereghin, Fara and others) by way of reviews.

On the evolution of musical language (whether considering the treatment of dissonance or "objective music," quarters tones or "mechanical music"), the periodical maintains its aim to provide essential information, whenever necessary, and to grant space to polemics and discussions. Nevertheless, while determined to present a widely comprehensive panorama of the evolution of music in Europe, *Musica d'oggi* does not neglect to safeguard the interests of its publisher Ricordi, and consequently to reserve ample space to its editorial initiatives (in particular the *Istituzioni e Monumenti dell'Arte Musicale Italiana*) as well to print notices and critical reports concerning "its" composers. The "generazione dell'Ottanta," almost totally represented by Ricordi (not only Respighi, Pizzetti, Malipiero, and Casella, but also Zandonai and Pick-Mangiagalli), and the successive "generazione di mezzo" (Dallapiccola, Petrassi, Salviucci) receive constant attention; in particular Casella stands out as a prominent figure as composer, solo performer, and above all as strenuous organizer and promoter of the diffusion of contemporary music throughout Europe; for his long-lasting intellectual pursuits, he must unquestionably be considered a genuine protagonist in the intent to internationalize musical activities in Italy during the 1920s and 1930s. Curiously enough, it is precisely Verdi's publisher who is not particularly interested in drawing attention—with the exception of an article by Georg Göhler⁴—to the *Verdi-Renaissance* movement, wide spread in German speaking countries during the 1920s.

³ "La Television e la musica," MDO XVII 3 (March 1935): 106.

⁴ MDO 11, no. 2 (February 1929): 55-60.

Musica d'oggi resumes publication in 1955 with the title *Ricordiana*; its original title however is re-established from 1958 to 1965.

The present inventory was based on the complete collection of the periodical in the Sezione Musicale of the Biblioteca Palatina, Conservatorio di Musica “Arrigo Boito” in Parma.

Incorrectly spelled titles and names have been corrected without comments. With regard to very short reviews of chamber music (of less than four to five lines), in most cases only the composer’s names are transcribed but not the titles of the compositions.

Among the authors that signed their contributions with only initials or with a pseudonym, the following have been identified with certainty:

ac	Alberto Cametti
a.d.c., A.D.C.	Andrea Della Corte
a.dam., A. Dam., adam	Alberto Damerini
a.p.	Antonino Procida
b. dis.	Benvenuto Disertori
cc, C. C.	Carlo Clausetti
e.o., E. S. O.	Elisabetta Oddone
E. D.	Ettore Desderi
f.v.	Francesco Vatielli
g.c.	Gaetano Cesari
g.c.p., G. Gav.	Gianandrea Gavazzeni
g.pan	Guido Pannain
G. R. D., G. R.-D	Gastone Rossi-Doria
l.cort.	Luigi Cortese
l.rogn., l.rogn.	Luigi Rognoni
lep	Ennio Pelilli
luc.tom., L. Tom.	Luciano Tomelleri
m.m., M. M.	Massimo Mila
mi.ab.	Michelangelo Abbado
m.z., M. Z.	Maffeo Zanon
n.cost., N. C., N. Cost.	Nicola Costarelli
O. T.	Ottavio Tiby
P. F.	Pietro Faustini
perr.	Luigi Perrachio
r.d.r.	Raffaello De Rensis
r.v.	Renzo Valcarenghi
T. M.	Tancredi Mantovani
U. S.	Ugo Sesini
V. R.	Vito Raeli

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