

Music Culture Research Paper:
The History of Modern Italian Music Culture

Justin Sterlacci

Marist College

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Professor Coppola

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The History of Modern Italian Music Culture

Italian Music is a prominent one throughout time, as many people to this day listen to Italian music without even realizing it. While there have been several evolutions of Italian Music, the one I am primarily going to be focusing on is Modern Italian Music and how it was shaped to this day. By following this, I aim to fully explore and know about the origins of Modern Italian Music and how it was shaped into what it is today.

Early Modern Italian Music was primarily started in 1733 with a piece composed by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi titled *La serva padrona: Intermezzo*. The piece was created as an intermezzo to Pergolesi's prior work, a tragedy entitled *Il prigioniero superbo* for the Neapolitan Teatro San Bartolomeo. This piece was played consistently for two decades, which was highly unusual for the time, and had more than 60 separate productions made on it. Outside of these orchestral works, there was also quite a lot of jazz, Italian Pop, and classical music produced during the beginning of the era of Modern Italian Music. Many of these pieces were shown through the Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), and they had four orchestras to perform these pieces, and were attached to an Opera House.

After World War II, Italian music saw a lot of diversity. In the 1950s, a lot of pop music, also known as canzone, was created. This stemmed off the traditions of Neapolitan music and used elements from jazz and swing. A lot of Italian Artists found popularity during this time by a festival called "Festival della canzone italiana", however it was primarily referred to as Festival di San Remo or as Sanremo Music Festival. This

was a contest where new and upcoming artists could showcase their work on both radio and, later, television. In the mid-1950s, the rules of Sanremo were adjusted for technological innovations and started to focus more on composition. For this period of the contest, from 1953-1971, a composer would submit a song, and two different bands or singers would perform the same song. Typically, this consisted of one Italian artist(s), and then another one from an international band or guest. The international musicians captured the attention of the Italian Audiences, helping the development of the nation's musical tastes.(Life in Italy, paragraphs 5-11)

One of the most popular musicians that contributed to Modern Italian Music was Ferdinando Buscaglione, later known as Fred. Fred was enrolled at the Conservatorio (music school) at eleven years old where he became a violinist. While he was there, he found his passion to be Jazz, thus he started to play with swing Orchestras. In the first couple years after World War 2, his music got extremely popular, and he reached the charts of the top European Jazz violinists. Fred found his subset of music, which was being part of a musical universe where there was an Italian-style parody of Peter Cheyney novels and Eddie Constantine films. He supplied several tracks, but most notably “Che bambola!” (1956), “Whisky facile” (1957), and “Eri piccolo” (1958). All these pieces featured unlikely and humorous versions of Chicago or New York gangsters, where they portrayed the “tough guys” of Hollywood flicks. (Life in Italy, paragraph 14) These works were hugely successful, boosting Freds already successful career. However, things

didn't end great for Fred, as at the height of his career in, Fred Buscaglione died in a car crash against a truck in a Roman Street on February 3rd, 1960.

In the 1960s, Italy had a “golden era” of Romantic pop, tailing off the success of Italian pop music in the 1950s. This shift in Italy's pop music is due to the stylish approach of Italian Cinema and fashion. This was, in part, due to the Western World beginning to take these things seriously. These romantic pop singers who emerged were stuck to primarily performing in Italy due to language barriers, thus only being well known in their home country. This new generation of musicians were proud of their heritage and optimistic for the new future of Italian pop music. (Myers)

In conclusion, the evolution of Italian music has had a long and varied history. Starting in its earliest days of orchestral pieces to the days of pop and jazz, Italian music has evolved over the past 70 years. Modern Italian music started in the 1950s, where a new generation of musicians embraced Jazz, swing, and pop. The Sanremo Music Festival helped to bring in new faces to the Italian music scene, as well as bringing Italian music to the western world by bringing international artists to perform alongside Italian musicians. Ferdinando Buscaglione brought new kinds of music to Italy, and with his “tough boys” they made headway with comedic tracks to musicals. After his tragic death in 1960, the new decade brought in the romantic pop era of Italian music, adding to the already rich history of Italian Music.

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