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The Politics of Spectacle: Italian Music and Fascist Propaganda*

Abstract: Propaganda played a very important role during Fascism; the kind of propaganda used by Mussolini to build a totalitarian state was to a very large extent based on his own personality cult, on the myth of the leader. Despite the disastrous outcome of the Mussolini regime, the propaganda has outlived Mussolini himself. Cultivating the image therefore becomes an essential part of the mechanism of generating consensus, anticipating by more than half a century the politics of spectacle used today throughout the world.

Key words: Fascism, Propaganda, Race, Mussolini, Petrassi

In Fascist Italy, propaganda was the most widely deployed means of imposing political consensus. The kind of propaganda used by Mussolini to build a totalitarian state was to a very large extent based on his own personality cult, on the myth of the leader. This meant that the positive attributes of the Duce were constantly celebrated in the press, on the radio, in books, in newsreels, and above all in schools. The dogma of infallibility bordered on idolatry, so much so that at a certain point even the Vatican took fright. Fascist propaganda, based on the figure of the charismatic leader, played a much more important role under Fascism than it did in other dictatorial regimes (see Cannistraro 1975; De Grazia 1975; Falasca Zamponi 2003).

The regime's propaganda acted on the individual from childhood onwards. Pictures of Mussolini were presented to children who received a gift-pack for the fascist Epiphany, a feast for the children of popular origin that, established in 1928, is still celebrated today on 6 January. The tale of the Epiphany became the occasion for ceremonies that included performances, films, and gifts (including clothing and items of food, in addition to postcards and photographs of the Duce): through this feast fascism promoted the charitable activity of the state in favour of families.

The image of Mussolini was also widespread in schools, where the inauguration of his portrait represented an important ceremony. The writer Italo Calvino, in a 1983 article, wrote: "I can say that I passed the first years of my life with the face of

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Mussolini always in view, as his portrait was hung in all classrooms, as well as in all the offices and public spaces” (Calvino 1983).

In addition the exercise books in schools constituted an important means of propaganda for the regime, which sought to attract the interest of children and families with coloured covers showing images and celebrating texts of fascist life. Unlike postcards and photographs, the purchase of exercise books was actually required by law and through them the messages of the propaganda circulated in the hands of the children’s families, infiltrating the collective imagination.

The omnipresence of Mussolini thus came about in various ways and in different forms, influencing the daily life of Italian people. The French journalist Henri Béraud, after a trip to Rome in 1929, wrote an interesting report depicting the atmosphere of Italy at that time: “Mussolini is omnipresent, like a god, he is watching you everywhere you go [...] Wherever you go, whatever you do, that gaze will follow you; the eyes of the big boss are all around you! [...] You see his picture everywhere. Who designs them, who produces them, who puts them up? No one knows. It is like this all over Italy. Mussolini is everywhere, [...] even more so than Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, even more than Lenin in Moscow. Open a newspaper, any newspaper: you will find a report, commentary and praise for a ‘brilliant’ speech by the Duce [...] in all kinds of costume and in all poses, dressed up in a frock coat, in uniform, in a yachtsman’s garb, as an aviator, on horseback [...] in the driving seat of a sports car, jumping over obstacles, addressing the crowd, threshing grain [...] taming wild beasts, marching on Rome, playing the violin...” (Béraud 1929). Béraud highlights one characteristic of the Mussolini myth: the creation of a panoply of different characters.

The strategy implemented by the regime contemplated the idea of ‘going to the people’, that is, bringing the masses to the state. Mussolini, in fact, was convinced that the totalitarian regimes that did not succeed in creating a broad consensus were destined to have a short life. In October 1926 he said: “[...] my word is a verb: endure! Endure day after day, month after month, year after year” (Mussolini 1957).

With this policy Mussolini sought to offer a response to the real needs of the people, especially those most disadvantaged economically: to conquer these people was his aim, as they were far from a consensus built on ideological or political ideas. It was

an absolute novelty in the history of Italy: a mass politicization involving social classes until then never involved actively in politics.

For this reason the regime propagated a programme of assistance to less wealthy classes that would employ the unemployed. In addition, the fascist officials had to implement a policy that would enable them 'physically' to approach the people. Fascism therefore invited their officials to walk or to use public transportation, or to remain in their offices for days on end to take care of the largest possible number of people.

The regime sought to restrict pomposity in public ceremonies, and created the '*Dopolavoro*', that is, a series of recreational associations for families, which supported popular folkloric traditions and mass cultural activities.

A cornerstone of the fascist conception was, according to the words of Mussolini, "the cult of beauty and strength". Truncheon and image: these were the two faces of the same policy. Beauty was essential to gain the confidence of the masses, to involve people emotionally. In order to demonstrate the industriousness of the regime and its close proximity to the masses, Mussolini utilized architecture widely. Any new work was a milestone in the construction of the politics of consensus, a witness of his 'going towards the people'.

Every inauguration of a new building became a ritual celebration, a modern and forceful operation of mass communication. The architecture offered to people became 'his' architecture: Mussolini appears as the creator of the new Italy, a nation that he himself transforms and improves.

Very important were his travels through Italy in order to inaugurate new works or to celebrate events. From 1929 to 1939 Mussolini spent more than 200 days outside Rome, dedicating himself to visiting over 320 Italian locations. In every place he made a speech in front of a crowd gathered in a square.

In almost all of these cities he inaugurated a new building or visited a recently completed project (including railways, roads, aqueducts, land drainages, and so forth). All these journeys gradually become symbols of a collective memory around which fascism constructed the Italian identity.

By fostering the illusion that the Duce identified himself with the masses, Mussolini attained his goal, which was precisely the reverse: to encourage Italians to

identify with their leader, to get them to feel that he was one of them, a man to be trusted, a myth to be followed. Mussolini's message was clear: if I am one of you, then you are a part of me, you are active participants in political life, you have a say in the fundamental decisions of the nation.

Mussolini was a genuine pioneer in the politics of spectacle. If press and radio directly trumpeted propaganda, visual arts, cinema and music were widely used in a way that was less explicit but no less effective in the attempt to increase the hegemony through the work of the invisible aggregation of the masses. The strategy of cultural propaganda, furthermore, should not be visible, because in this case, the attempt to orientate the public would have lost its effectiveness.

Culture had to be the expression of a common heritage belonging to the people, and intellectuals, through it, had the task of converting the people to a fascist conception of the world. Consequently, men of culture, as Giuseppe Bottai wrote, should not feel themselves to be spectators, but key elements of the system (Bottai 1941).¹

The call to the well-educated man, so that he might identify himself with the people beyond any abstract ideal, was based precisely on the conception that the intellectual was a worker like all the other individuals. Intellectuals and artists were distancing themselves from their singularity in order to become an organic part of a society founded on industriousness. This new fascist rhetoric of work was the cornerstone of a very complex model of propaganda, without doubt less visible than that of other regimes (for example of German national socialism), but no less powerful and dangerous.

Obviously the intellectuals were slow to become aware of this new weapon adopted by Mussolini (that is, propaganda) since until then it had never been deployed so systematically. In an article written in 1962, Dallapiccola replied to a question he had been asked by a pupil: about how the musicians of Dallapiccola's generation had been able to endure fascism for over twenty years. His answer showed great intellectual honesty: "My generation is guilty through and through: no justification is possible... Fascism had used a new weapon... a weapon much mightier than the magnetic mines: in comparison, even the atomic bomb begins to look trifling... It took years to realize

¹ In the musical and cultural sphere the cultural policy of fascism was contradictory; concerning this, see Nicolodi F. (2004) "Aspetti di politica culturale nel ventennio fascista", in R. Illiano (ed.) *Italian Music during the Fascist Period*, Turnhout: Brepols, (Speculum Musicae, 10): 97–121.

this and to discover its secret. The first to use it systematically and on a vast scale in the West was Benito Mussolini. This weapon is called Propaganda. With it and with the stifling of the press, its first derivative, a lie can be turned into truth” (Dallapiccola 1990).

The policy of ‘consensus’ aimed to amalgamate every social class in a system that would not contemplate resistance or any declared opposition, but the unconditional acceptance by the citizen of a new civilization. The term ‘consensus’ is not, however, entirely correct, since the acceptance of fascist ideals was for the most part extorted, nourished thanks to insidious propaganda activities. Enrolment in the National Fascist Party was in fact obligatory for many professions and careers, so that many people called it the *carta del pane* (‘bread card’), because without it became increasingly difficult to find employment.

Despite the disastrous outcome of the Mussolini regime, his propaganda has outlived Mussolini himself. Cultivating the image therefore becomes an essential part in the mechanism of generating consensus, anticipating by more than half a century the politics of spectacle used today throughout the world.

The years in which fascism pursued its course were very rich in events and are therefore difficult to evaluate. However, we can say with absolute clarity that in this period a few intellectuals moved away from the tacit chorus of consent to the regime. Therefore, those who search for an adhesion to fascism in some composers, striving to identify traces in the works or in dedications of their compositions, show themselves to have a limited view of Italian reality of that period.

Reading the documents of the time, in fact, we understand that it is not necessary to make many distinctions, because people of culture completely detached from political context were very few. If one browses, for example, *Primato* (‘Primacy’), the fortnightly journal of literary and art culture founded by Bottai in Rome in 1940, one can find the most important Italian intellectuals: Giovanni Gentile, Nicola Abbagnano, Gastone Manacorda, Salvatore Quasimodo, Eugenio Montale, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Mario Luzzi, Renato Guttuso, Cesare Pavese, Carlo Emilio Gadda, Dino Buzzati,

Cesare Zavattini, Gianfranco Contini, Giorgio Pasquali, Gianandrea Gavazzeni, Michelangelo Antonioni, Indro Montanelli, Enzo Biagi, and others (see Mangoni 1977; see also De Caro and De Caro 2004; Zaggarro 2007). All of them, for various reasons, shared the idea of a “spiritual supremacy of Italians of Mussolini” clearly outlined in the first issue of the journal.

The Bergamo Award — promoted again by Bottai in 1940 in response to the Cremona Award desired by Roberto Farinacci — also went through four editions and saw the participation of more than 300 artists. Amongst the first rank were art historians such as Giulio Carlo Argan who was also an adjudicator for the Cremona Award and who continued to defend the work of Bottai in the years to follow, claiming that the politician “wanted to prevent the breakdown of cultural values and had the intention to safeguard the arts” (Papa 1994).

Even musicology did not refrain from paying homage to the regime. Remo Giazotto, for example, in an article published in 1940, wrote: “as soon as the new era started, the fascist one, Italy began to feel the duty of the function of recollection and dissemination, of a revision of spiritual values, dictated by a new awareness, by the new concept of the historical and artistic tradition of the Country. [...] The century of Mussolini is that of the defence of the values of the spirit and the land” (Giazotto 1940).

Many intellectuals limited their adherence to fascism simply by not openly adopting antifascist positions and seeking favours and recommendations from politicians. For others, on the other hand, there were many more important responsibilities that were nevertheless quickly forgotten. It is enough to recall the cases of Gaetano Azzariti, President of the Tribunal of Race at the Ministry of the Interior during the fascist period, who, in 1943, was selected by Badoglio as minister of Grace and Justice, and, after the liberation in June of 1944, resumed normal service at the Ministry of Justice, becoming in 1957 President of the constitutional Court of the Italian Republic. In addition, one may note the ten scientists that signed the manifesto of race: after the fall of the dictatorship, all of them maintained chairs and honours at Italian universities and, in the case of Sabato Visco, within the National Institute of Biology of the CNR (The National Research Council) (see Cuomo 2005).

How were the arts exploited on the basis of the consensus policy implemented by the fascist regime? The fascist regime sought to implement a mass politicization, and for this purpose used the figurative arts, cinema and music, as phenomena rooted in Italian popular culture. Today it seems impossible to think of music as a phenomenon with political importance, but in the Italy of the twenties and thirties there were many theatres and orchestras, and opera was one of the most important forms of popular entertainment. The figure of a dictator who was a musician was perfectly compatible with Italy's longstanding musical tradition. The message was clear: Mussolini the musician, sensitive to various aspects of Italian culture, felt the need to convince the masses that the Duce (and therefore Fascism) was not only violence and domination, truncheons and castor oil but also culture and sensibility.

On 11 April 1935, the Ispettorato del Teatro (Theatre Inspectorate) was established, which applied Mussolini's self-same policy of patronage. Presenting the programme of the Inspectorate for the theatre, Nicola De Pirro said:

When Mussolini says 'make theatre for the people' he actually means increasing the opportunities of the masses to go to the theatre. [...] Music is one of the main attributes of Italy. If one thinks of the supremacy of Italian lyrical repertoire in all the theatres of the world, of the prestige of our artists amongst foreign theatres, of the appeal that the Italian art of *bel canto* still has, and, the great importance of contemporary Italian output (concert and theatrical), everyone will understand how natural it is that the government keeps a watch over this vast world [...]. It can be said in a word that it is necessary to let the lyric theatre be fascist, to return it to the level of importance from which it had fallen under the impact of the *mediatorato*,² so as to bring it into contact with the public, or rather the public as a whole. (De Pirro 1935).

² A kind of private agency for placing people in suitable professional positions.

As regards musicians, Mussolini adopted a meritocratic policy tinged with patronage, with rewards for almost everyone one way or another. Such an attitude was part of a conscious plan that involved institutions, associations, syndicates, musicians and the public, acting as a unifying element from a social and political point of view.

By means of a network that funded artistic productions, Mussolini attracted the consent of men of culture, in a context of direct correspondence between reward and adulation, assistance and corruption: this progressed from the granting of economic aid to the assignment of a literary prize, from the attribution of a collaboration to the assignment of a university chair. Fascism therefore sought to take control of intellectual activities through compromises that would ensure a gradual and silent alignment of the intellectuals themselves to the regime: an adherence which, though different, was never entirely absent.

The idea of pleasing everybody tied in with the commitment not to create events that somehow represented a trend, as emphasized by the directives of MinCulPop for the Music International Festival in Venice, sent on 20 January 1938 by Minister Alfieri to the Theatre La Fenice: “The Festival, in addition to its international functions, has the task of bringing to the judgment of the public all the Italian musicians who have a positive artistic reputation; it must never be show of trends”³.

The directives issued by the General Directorate for the Theatre between 1940 and 1942 demonstrate very clearly the intention of the Ministry:

Object: Playbills
for the year XX.–

To the Superintendent of the
Autonomous Theatre “La Fenice”
VENICE

I examined the projects of the playbill for the next opera season and, in accordance with R.D.L. of 3 February 1936 n. 348, made law on 4 June 1936 n. 1570 as well as in harmony with the provisions contained in the circular number 9987 of 19

³ Historical Archive of the Theatre La Fenice of Venice [ASTF], *Ministero Cultura Popolare, 1937–1941*, B 386, fasc. 16, Prot. N. 2063.

May 1938 of this Ministry, I ask you to change the playbill that has been prepared, taking care to include in it a greater number of works performed for the first time since 1900, in order to reach the percentages fixed in the above-mentioned circular.

In fact, of the 7 works in the playbill, there are only 2 works dating from the last two decades, while, according to the above-mentioned circular, which requires the percentage of 50% for works given for the first time since 1900, the number of works ought to be at least 3.

We pray that you will wish to ensure that the playbill thus amended may be presented to the General Directorate for the Theatre and for the Music not later than 25 January

Pavolini⁴

The debate on musical aesthetics was mainly focused on the opposition between modernism and tradition, between the exploitation of composers of the last twenty years and the rediscovery of the Italian musical past; but the central government was far from engaging with certain debates, if not by means of a contingent political opportunism. This behaviour is clear in the exercise of control over MinCulPop that verified and addressed the institutions in their choices concerning its needs.

The policy of the Ministry tended on the one hand to promote international political relationships and on the other hand to make artistic events more accessible for the masses; the distance between the regime and the intellectuals in the choice of the contents and artists of the festival programmes was clear, for example, where the number of Italian and foreign composers was concerned:

Venice, 11 November 1938 – xvii°

The Honourable Minister of Popular Culture

General Directorate for the Theatre

Via Boncompagni

Rome

⁴ ASTF, *Ministero Cultura Popolare, 1937–1941*, B 386, fasc. 20, Prot. 14803.

[...] The Committee also points out that the fixed percentage of 50% of Italian and foreign artists has not produced those artistic results for which one would have hoped, since it is very difficult to find Italian musicians of equal importance and interest to those foreigners who offer a much wider spectrum of choice than is possible within a single nation. It would be more appropriate if the percentage of Italians to be invited to the Festival were slightly reduced [...].

For the Biennale
Fenice” Theatre

Respectfully for the “La

M° Corti

M° Goffredo Petrassi⁵

The Ministry of Popular Culture was interested in having the broadest possible consensus and this meant both proposing attractive products for the people and promoting contemporary musical works. In theatres many works by contemporary authors were staged. These were performed for three evenings only and never produced again. In the absence of selection by merit, registration with the Fascist trade union was the only document required to enable the production of a play.

In this regard, it is interesting to read what Alfredo Casella wrote, during the Second World War, to Luigi Dallapiccola in a letter dated 5 July 1941:

From what I have heard in conversation with de Pirro himself, it is the intention of this ‘institution’ to perform works of a type to which up to now our theatres were virtually closed, and he has indeed said that there will be — if not this year, at least in the near future — even *Wozzeck*.⁶

As is well known, the first Italian version of *Wozzeck* was staged at the Real Teatro dell’Opera in Rome on 3 November 1942, conducted by Tullio Serafin, with Tito

⁵ ASTF, *Ministero Cultura Popolare 1937–1941*, B 393, fasc. 17, Prot. 4662.

⁶ Letter from Casella to Dallapiccola, 5 July 1941, Florence, Fondo Dallapiccola, Archivio ‘A. Bonsanti’, Gabinetto Scientifico Letterario G. P. Vieusseux.

Gobbi in the role of the protagonist and Gabriella Gatti in the role of Marie, while in Germany the same work had been banned by Nazism.

The need to produce music that would express the glories and the identity of the Italian people favoured without a doubt the creation of a style that coincided with the “liberation of Italian land and the exaltation of the national spirit” (Piccardi 2001), as Alfredo Casella said.

As already pointed out, the political sphere beyond the institutions was not particularly concerned with the aesthetic debate, but it sought to involve the guests of the musical world in order to assimilate them into the hierarchy.

As Fedele D’Amico has pointed out, fascism dealt with culture and art, but above all with intellectuals and artists, in order to “proved guarantees of openings to a social category thus predisposed towards its system of power” (Piccardi 2001: 118).

The rediscovery of traditional composers served to reinforce and glorify the illustrious cultural past of the Italian people, within an autarchic policy suited to the regime. At the same time it was necessary to please contemporary composers, in order to let them become players within a wider political project that transformed, more or less consciously, Italian musicians from independent artists into officials of the regime.

The composers included in the bureaucratic apparatus often found themselves not only having to choose the music to be performed, but also discussing issues of national and international politics. The following letter, from Petrassi to Mario Corti, shows that the ideological ground that the regime was cultivating had entered into the mindset of these ‘officials’ of the state:

Venice, 17 July 1939. xvii°

Dear Corti,

I reply briefly to your letter [...]

It is a shame that, if Bottai comes, he will not be able to attend an evening of Balletti [...] I have mentioned to Petrocchi my doubts concerning the possibility of an Italian Minister attending

semi-officially a Polish evening given the current political relationship with this nation [...].⁷

The intellectuals of the institutional apparatus, though not always agreeing with what was dictated by the rules of the regime, adapted themselves even when the international situation escalated, giving to the geopolitical landscape a clearer and more defined structure. The introduction of racial laws was the decisive test, and it is clear that, consciously or unconsciously, most of the men of culture (even those who today would appear unsuspecting antifascists), on account of their administrative functions, conformed with the directives of the regime.

Mussolini had no ideological prejudices against the Jews. He had many Jewish friends and collaborators: Margherita Sarfatti, for example, was co-director of *Gerarchia* and the author of the first official biography of the Duce, and Guido Jung was minister of finance in 1932.

Many Jews were also on the *Fasci di combattimento* list and participated in both the march on Rome and the Ethiopian war. Mussolini behaved as a true opportunist towards the Italian Jews. For the first time he tried to use his Jewish knowledge in order to stop the international sanctions against Italy; at the same time he began to have anti-Semitic articles published by some journals, such as *La Tribuna*, *Il Tevere* or *Quadrivio*, declaring at the same time that these articles expressed the personal opinions of the editors.

In the issue no. 14 (February 1938) of *Informazione Diplomatica* Mussolini denied for the last time that the Party wanted to establish anti-Jewish laws: his sudden change of position was derived solely from diplomatic strategies and policies.⁸

In July of the same year the 'Manifesto of racist scientists' on race was published and in September Bottai ordered the expulsion of the Jews (students, teachers and non-teaching staff) from all the schools in the kingdom. On 17 November 1938 the "Measures for the defence of the Italian race" were promulgated, according to which

⁷ Letter from Petrassi to Mario Corti, 17 July 1939 (ASFT, *Festival 1939*, Prot. N. 7788).

⁸ On this topic see Illiano R. and Sala M. (2007) "Italian Music and Racial Discourses during the Fascist Period", in J. Brown (ed.) *Western Music and Race*, Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press: 182–200.

many civil rights were denied to the Jews, and they were removed from all state jobs and fascist events.

Having decided to omit literature concerning the administration of the “Measures for the defence of the Italian race”), we wish to transcribe, by way of example, some excerpts from unpublished correspondence relating to the recruitment of singers and musicians and to the management of artistic programmes of the Biennale in Venice; from the study of these documents it is clear how the etiquette was followed even by composers such as Petrassi “with perfect compliance”:

Ministry of Popular Culture, Prot. 4853

Prot. N. 371 ris

Rome, 16 November 1938 Year XVII

To the President of the

‘La Fenice’ Theatre

VENICE

OBJECT: Employees of the Jewish race

As a result of the legislative measure by which Public Institutions are forbidden to employ persons of the Jewish race, I communicate to you, on the Orders of the Minister, of your responsibility to effect the immediate removal from service of employees of the above-mentioned race, who for any reason have until now escaped censure and the denunciation. I awaiting assurance from you on this point.

THE MINISTER

Prot. N. 4853

Venice, 24 November 1938.xvi

The Honourable Minister of Popular Culture

General Directorate for the Theatre

Via Boncompagni

Rome

Employees of the Jewish race_

With reference to document n. 371 ris., we assure the Honourable Minister that the provisions concerning this matter under discussion will be carefully observed by this institution.

Respectfully,

F.to Petrassi

Ministry of Popular Culture, Prot. N. 4955

Prot. N. 386 ris

To the Superintendent of the

“La Fenice” Theatre

VENICE

OBJECT: Dismissal of staff

Legislative provisions concerning Jews.

Following past correspondence and as a clarification of the note n. 280 ris. it is communicated that the provisions of art.13 del R.D.L. 17 November 1938/xvii n. 1728, concerning the exclusion of elements of the Jewish race from all public administrations and institutions specified therein, refers to all members of the aforesaid race, regardless of any employment or incidental or other work contracted between them and the institutions mentioned above.

It is consequently necessary to remove such staff, even if working only on a temporary basis, immediately.

THE GENERAL DIRECTOR

Prot. N. 5083

Venice, 9 December 1938. xvii°

Att. Orchestral Union

Ponte del Rimedio

Venice

In deference to the precise provisions issued by the Honourable Ministry of Popular Culture for the regulation of the Law on race, we inform you that the contract already concluded between us and Prof. Bruno Polacco is to be considered cancelled.

Fascist Greetings.

Signed Petrassi⁹

Even those composers who in any case were unaccustomed to sustaining the regime as supporters had to reconcile themselves to the situation, waiting to find a position that allowed them to move away from this responsibility and to return to more musical activities. This was the case with Goffredo Petrassi, who, by a decree of 5 October 1940, terminated his appointment as Superintendent of the La Fenice Theatre in Venice (obtained in 1937) and began to dedicate himself to the teaching of composition at the ‘Santa Cecilia’ Conservatory in Rome. His place was taken by Mario Corti. However, until that date, as an official of the Inspectorate of the Theatre, Petrassi signed many anti-Semitic provisions and corresponded with the Ministry on ‘uncomfortable’ political topics. In a letter of 9 April 1940, Petrassi wrote to his friend Luigi Dallapiccola:

You’re right: the Academy weighs on our musical life and pollutes it, when and where it can, with a layer of compromises one dirtier than the other — and I’m not only talking about their Excellencies! — For my part, I look forward to getting rid of these organizational ties to resume my freedom of action and ideas.¹⁰

⁹ ASTF, *Ministero Cultura Popolare 1937–1941*, B 386 fasc. 16.

¹⁰ Letter from Petrassi to Dallapiccola, 9 April 1940, Florence, Fondo Dallapiccola, Archivio ‘A. Bonsanti’, Gabinetto Scientifico Letterario G. P. Vieusseux.

Fascism had not only undermined the autonomy of artists, but was also able to affect their inner freedom. Fascism, in fact, controlled all artistic production by means of a few tacit rules which restricted the production of composers and led them to self-censorship. Indeed, it was well known that Mussolini made use of police informers planted in all circles, from universities to the cinema, from theatre to journalism; and in many cases he also tapped the telephones of intellectuals, listened in to their conversations and put spies onto them.

It was only in private spheres that many intellectuals found the courage to say how oppressive conditions were and how adversely this oppression could affect creativity. Yet Petrassi, in two letters to Dallapiccola, 19 June 1940 and 24 February 1945, admitted:

Dear Giggi,

As you will learn from the newspapers and the official letter that you will receive in a few days, the Festival has been suspended. It was the only solution to be taken at this time. Would it have been possible to put on an international event at the point where we are? True madness. [...]

I envy you that you can continue to work. Only in work can we forget the things of the world — it is the only consolation. I can't. All I can complete is a page a day of the score of the *Magnificat*, but it is like pulling teeth and causes maximum discomfort. I spend my days without doing anything and without interest in anything. I'm very depressed [...].¹¹

If you fight with the most vile poverty, know that my situation is a most disturbing one. I am deeply depressed, the future is simply frightening, not even my job succeeds in giving me any consolation — I write very little and with difficulty [...].¹²

¹¹ Letter from Petrassi to Dallapiccola, 19 June 1940 (Florence, Fondo Dallapiccola).

¹² Letter from Petrassi to Dallapiccola, 24 February 1945 (Florence, Fondo Dallapiccola).

Composition, then, for many of these figures, offered a sanctuary from surrounding political events. In the same way Dallapiccola gave vent to his inner desire for freedom in writing music, not so much for an aesthetic tied to antifascism, but more as the only instrument of individual protest, as a means to rise spiritually beyond human sadness.

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ПОЛИТИКЕ СПЕКТАКЛА: ИТАЛИЈАНСКА МУЗИКА И ФАШИСТИЧКА ПРОПАГАНДА

(Резиме)

Пропаганда је играла значајну улогу у Италији за време фашизма. Врста пропаганде на коју се ослањао Мусолини, изграђујући тоталитарну државу, у великој је мери била заснована на развијању култа његове личности, то јест на миту о вођи. Дуче је, наиме, континуирано био слављен у штампи, на радију, у књигама и у школама. Догма о непогрешивости вође прерасла је у идолопоклонство, у тој мери да се њоме бавио и званични Ватикан. Интелектуалци су касно почели да схватају ефекат Мусолинијевог новог оружја – пропаганде, будући да она пре тога никада није тако систематично коришћена. Политика „консензуса“ имала је за циљ да инкорпорира све друштвене класе у

систем у коме исказивање неслагања или отпора не би било могуће, већ искључиво безусловно прихватање нове цивилизације. Појам „консензус“ није у потпуности адекватан, будући да је прихватање фашистичких идеала у највећој мери било резултат наметања путем пропагандних активности. Упркос слому Мусолинијевог режима, пропаганда је успела да га надживи. Стварање представа заправо је постало кључни сегмент механизма за постизање друштвеног консензуса, најављујући појаву политика спектала широм света пола века касније.

Italy's lower house of parliament approved on Tuesday a bill aimed at curbing fascist propaganda, more than 70 years after the death of wartime dictator Benito Mussolini. Given the political climate, the ruling PD was forced on Tuesday to delay its push to approve a contested law that would grant citizenship to the children of immigrants. Opposition parties said the law would encourage migrants to try to come to Italy and claimed victory when the PD announced it was dropping the bill from the Senate schedule this month. "To approve this bill we need a majority, but we don't have one right now in the Senate," said Luigi Zanda, head of the PD in the upper house of parliament. With fascism, the goal was to revolutionize the meaning of politics itself in order to construct a new Italy on the ruins of the old one. Here is where the idea of the politician as artist comes in. The artist politician destroys in order to create. The second element of fascism's aesthetic politics was the expressive means employed by Mussolini, as a result of his underpinning idea of a disciplined, organized harmonious "aesthetic" form that is supposed to define the whole of Italian society under fascism - to actualize his role as artist politician. It was not an issue of if or how. Changes in the Italians' gestures, rituals, ways of speaking, writing, etc. would necessarily bring about the change Mussolini was pursuing: a new Italian man would be born out of this artistic endeavour. During the first fifteen years of Italy's fascist regime, Italian Jews were left unmolested, with many enthusiastic supporters of Mussolini. By the mid-1930s, however, Mussolini had begun allying with Germany and adopted antisemitism in line with Nazi policies. The well-oiled fascist propaganda machine was put to work in order to accustom Italians to the twofold notion that Italians were Aryans and that Jews could not be either Italians or Aryans. The politics of spectacle aims to distract from corruption, wealth inequality and human rights violations in Putin's Russia as in Europe and the United States. Timothy Snyder, professor of history at Yale University explains how political developments in the East can influence values in the West. In the whole fascist tradition, there is an anxiety about masculinity. On the one hand, it is concerned about heterosexuality and says that the purpose of manhood is to produce children. While, on the other hand, there is a celebration of male beauty. The sexualised spectacle also diverts attention. A journalist of the Austrian public service broadcaster recently asked Putin in an interview why there are so many half-naked pictures of him.