

Italy in Australia's musical landscape, by Linda Barwick and Marcello Sorce Keller, Australia: Lyrebird Press, 2012, 254 pp., \$55.00 (hard cover), ISBN: 978-0-734037-75-6

'If you are an Italian living in Italy you do not need to make it obvious that you are Italian, and nothing pushes to reflect on what it is that makes you as such. But if you are an immigrant, you have to decide which elements of your original culture are essential to your sense of self. (p. 228)' these words, written by Marcello Sorce Keller and Linda Barwick, seem to epitomize not only the central themes of the different essays that make up this book, but also the main concerns that should involve any scholar dealing with music undergoing transplantation. Music that helps immigrants to rebuild their identity is, in fact, always the product of both a 'distance effect' (p. 228) (in time and space) and a process of selection, and Australia seems to be a nation where this is particularly evident. as the most numerous group of immigrants (behind those of British or Irish origin), Italians play a significant role in the cultural profile of that nation, and so their music, which boasts such worldwide popular genres as opera or Neapolitan songs, lends itself as a particularly forcible identity marker. the book that Barwick and Sorce Keller have edited deals with a wide range of subjects, covering almost a century of Italian music in Australia and giving ample insight into many different thematic areas.

In 'a Passionate Paradox', Kay Dreyfus and Kerry Murphy set the reception of Italian opera companies in the context of the first wave of immigration during the 1920s and within the racial tensions of the time, including the 'on-going conflict between workers (as represented by their unions) and entrepreneurs for control of the entertainment industry (p. 31)'. In 'Neapolitan Songs for all!', Sorce Keller himself explores how and why this repertoire, which once only belonged to Naples and to the Italian South, has become a distinctive symbol of Italian music for the whole nation and for its emigrants abroad, and to such an extent that one may look at it, '(paraphrasing Claus von Clausewitz and his famous definition of war) as the continuation of opera by other means (p. 92)'. Neapolitan songs were also part of the musical repertoire of itinerant 'Viggianesi' musicians, a very interesting example of cultural mutation and adaptability. Francis Thiele, drawing on the English historian Peter Burke's idea of 'cultural mediators', investigates how a generation of emigrant harp players from a small village of the Basilicata region, Viggiano, 'responded to new audiences by changing their repertoire thus blurring the lines between the folk music tradition of their ancestors and classic or other world music genres (p. 159)'. the 'Viggianesi' were also folk musicians, of course, and traditional or 'folk' has entered Italian music as a distinctive genre too. Here Professor Antonio Comin, interviewed by Linda Barwick, shows another side of the 'distance effect': as a cultural animator, in fact, Comin came into contact with folk music via the records and shows of the Italian folk revival and produced a series of events inspired by them. that is interesting, because every folk revival, when seriously practised, is in itself a stylization of a living culture adapted to the needs of modern entertainment, however engaged or alternative it may be. Comin's work, then, which 'disseminated a broader public awareness of Italian traditional culture in Adelaide (p. 56)', in Barwick's words, ends up being a mediator's work done on top of other mediators' work, in a hall of mirrors that, let's face it, is the real stylistic of our days. It is interesting, for example, that a ritual that could have possibly been imported to Australia, the *Maggio garfagnino*, a piece of folk theatre from Tuscany, was not taken up by immigrants and abandoned. Barwick, in 'Oltre l'Australia c'è la luna', suggests that this could have happened merely for practical reasons (Australian times and spaces would not be suitable for this kind of representation) or because the Garfagnini 'have access to it by return visits or recordings brought back (p. 197)'; maybe, though, the reasons they gave up on a ritual practice ought to be explained in more symbolic terms.

Italy is not only folk music, but also Neapolitan songs and opera, of course: the most popular Italian national song festival, the festival della canzone italiana di Sanremo, was held in Australia too a decade after it had started in Italy. It was obviously not the same event but the formula was much the same. Aline Scott-Maxwell, in her contribution, examines how reflections in Australia of the mass propagation of new songs in Italian (imposed by the established music industry of the north of the country) 'brought the Italian community together via the Italian language in a way that overrode regional distinctions and ties (p. 157)'. the national cohesion of Italian immigrants, which had always been encouraged by Italian-language broadcasting, remained a problem however. the 'distance effect', again, is the key to understanding how traditional music is performed once it is removed from its original context. Linda Barwick, in 'Italian traditional Music in Adelaide', remarks how the problem of deciding appropriate performance standards for foreigners often leads to emphasis and exaggeration, to meet what the audience expects, more than what the music really is. last but not least, John Whiteoak writes about accordionists and about the golden age of the accordion, an immensely popular instrument widely used for the 'ballo liscio' (mazurka, polka, walzer and the like), which lasted until its unavoidable decline when it was not able to keep up with the new pop-rock including, as he very acutely observes, "visual' needs. a number of short 'responses', in the second part of the book, provide further ideas for discussion.

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