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## MUSIC EDUCATION IN ITALIAN SCHOOLS FROM THE UNIFICATION TO TODAY

This paper reviews the main stages in the history of Music Education in Italian schools from the country's unification to today, providing a critical, reasoned discussion of some of the key themes in ministerial programmes, from 1860 to today. This reconstruction does not make any claim to provide a definitive systematization of, or even only exhaust, such a vast subject in the limited space of an article. More realistically, it aims at showing how both the technically-oriented idea of teaching that was typical of programmes in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the lucid-evasive vision that emerged from the “protest” climate of the 1960s and 1970s, have impeded a serious, effective organization of the epistemological status of the discipline, an issue which remains unresolved as of today.

### 1. 1860 to 1923

The first set of rules produced in a united Italy was introduced by Legge Casati, passed by Royal Decree of the Kingdom of Sardinia on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1859 (no. 3725) and later extended to the Kingdom of Italy. The scope of school programmes is clearly defined by article 315, which lists first of all «religious teaching, reading, writing, basic arithmetic, the Italian language, and the rudiments of the metric system».<sup>1</sup>

There are no traces of music culture or music practice in the programmes: although they show a markedly cultural approach – less so in female schools, where teaching is reduced and simplified –, they reduce music education to its technical-performing aspects, thereby confining it exclusively to the academies, musical institutions and conservatories disseminated all over the territory. These had been founded in Italy as early as the 1800s, in many cases as a direct result of the French domination, from whose model of professionally-oriented education

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This article is the product of a collaboration between the two authors. However, for attribution purposes, Nicola Badolato is the author of the first paragraph, Anna Scalfaro of the second.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. T. TRAVAGLINO, *Raccolta dei principali testi normativi non commentati in materia di istruzione*, Rome, PROGED, 2004, p. 26. See also *Codice dell'istruzione secondaria, classica e tecnica e della primaria e normale. Raccolta delle Leggi, Regolamenti, Istruzioni ed altri provvedimenti emanati in base alla legge 13 novembre 1859 con note spiegative e raffronti con le leggi preesistenti. Approvato dal Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione*, Turin, Tipografia Scolastica di Sebastiano Franco e Figli, 1861.

they took the denomination ‘conservatorio’ (the Conservatoire National de Musique et de Déclamation arose in 1795 in Paris from the union of École Royale du Chant de l’Opéra and École de Musique de la Garde Nationale).<sup>2</sup>

Music does not appear in college programmes as of October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1867, despite the emphasis placed on the need to «train young people to seek in the classics the foundation and rules of art» and to «develop their sense of truth, honesty and beauty».<sup>3</sup> The pedagogic approaches of those year are accurately outlined in the reflections of Francesco De Sanctis, who became Education minister as early as 1861, and subsequently from 1878 to 1880; on April 24<sup>th</sup> 1865, in a column on the newspaper «L’Italia», the eminent academic advised minister Giuseppe Natoli not to burden students and professors with unnecessary subjects (such as dance and music), which do not produce «men of valor, but buffoons».<sup>4</sup>

The subsequent Legge Coppino (passed on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1877 by the Royal Decree no. 3961) moves along the same lines, recapitulating «instructions for elementary teaching» as «reading, writing, and calculating», and thus clearly underlining the aim of «reasonably simplifying subjects as they are described by old programmes». Again, the law does not mention music teaching in any form, although music does appear in the form of “singing exercises” on a subsequent circular, dated September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1885: the purpose of this instruction letter was to introduce manual work in Italian school, but the lawmaker also included gymnastics and singing, as long they are «introduced in such a way as not to steal from other subjects» and with the aim of «restoring the right balance among the child’s abilities».<sup>5</sup> Music is viewed not as an intellectual exercise, but as a practical

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<sup>2</sup> The first public school institution devoted specifically to music training and education was the Liceo Filarmonico of Bologna, established in 1804 (cf. P. MIOLI, *Il Liceo Musicale, poi Conservatorio “G. B. Martini” di Bologna*, in *Museo internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica di Bologna. Guida al percorso espositivo*, ed. by L. Bianconi and P. Isotta, Bologna, Comune di Bologna, 2004, pp. 47-51: 50). Among the earliest Italian conservatories we find those of Milan (1807), Naples (1826), Palermo and Florence (1861), Parma (1863), and Rome (1870). See O. MAIONE, “Cenni storici sui Conservatori di musica italiani dall’Ottocento in poi”, in his *I Conservatori di Musica durante il fascismo*, Turin, EDT, 2005, pp. 1-12.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Royal Decree, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1867 no. 1942 (*Istruzioni e programmi per l’insegnamento classico, tecnico, normale e magistrale delle pubbliche scuole del Regno*).

<sup>4</sup> The text was republished in F. DE SANCTIS, *L’istruzione media. Omaggio alla casa editrice Laterza nel X Congresso della Federazione Nazionale fra gl’insegnanti delle Scuole Medie. Pisa, 26-28 aprile 1919*, Bari, Laterza, 1919, p. 12. For De Sanctis, pupils should acquire not so much «notions, but rather the habit of thinking well»: music and art in general, according to the academic, are unfit to fulfill this requirement. See A. CARRANNANTE, *Francesco De Sanctis educatore e ministro*, «Rassegna storica del Risorgimento», LXXX/1, 1993, pp. 15-34.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. V. WOLF BASSI, *Il lavoro educativo nelle applicazioni degli esercizi di Fröbel*, Padua, Stabilimento Tipografico Provinciale L. Penada, 1888, p. 41. The author, in her role as

type of training, whose aim is to delight the senses. The introduction of singing, as a “hygiene” exercise, in the list of school activities can be placed in the framework of the pedagogical debate that took place at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century about physical education.<sup>6</sup>

Music education (essentially in the form of Choir singing) is first mentioned in 1888, in the series of proposals, which Aristide Gabelli sent to minister Paolo Boselli: choir singing exercises, along with gymnastics, provide a «rest from mental exertion» and are useful in the development of «breathing organs».<sup>7</sup> The role of music in the education of young people is to be understood within the larger framework of Gabelli’s pedagogic reflections, which reveal the strong influence of positivism:<sup>8</sup> for education to «be of practical use, that is, to be individually and socially useful», it should adapt to the times, understand their spirit, second their trends and fulfil their needs.<sup>9</sup>

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the director of Scuola Normale Superiore femminile in Padua, delivered this speech on the occasion of the ninth Festa Scolastica [School Festival] of February 9th, 1888, providing her own interpretation of the ministry guidelines issued on 17/09/1885. The passage can be found in A. ZANCAN, *L’aspetto storico nella didattica della musica. Verifica sperimentale di un percorso nella Scuola Media*, Turin, EDT, 2009, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>The so-called “ginnastica educativa” [educational gymnastics], introduced in schools in 1862, was intended as a preparation for military service, and adhered to the theories of Swiss gymnast Rodolfo Obermann (*Manuale completo di ginnastica educativa ... ad uso delle scuole primarie, medie e superiori*, Turin, Paravia, 1882). The transition from “educational gymnastics” to a “physical education” aimed at character-building and body health occurs at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf. A. MOSSO, *L’educazione fisica della gioventù*, Milan, Treves, 1893). For a historical profile see T. DE JULIIS - M. PESCANTE, *L’educazione fisica e lo sport nella scuola italiana*, Florence, Le Monnier, 1990.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. A. GABELLI, *Sul riordinamento dell’Istruzione elementare. Relazione a S.E. il Ministro dell’Istruzione*, «Bollettino Ufficiale del Ministero dell’Istruzione Pubblica», XIV, February 1888, pp. 85-118.

<sup>8</sup>At the XI Pedagogic Congress in Rome (1880), Gabelli held a conference entitled *Delle abitudini intellettuali che derivano dal metodo intuitivo e dell’opportunità di adoperarlo nelle scuole italiane più largamente di quanto non siasi fatto fino ad ora* [Of the intellectual habits deriving from the intuitive method, and of the opportunity to employ it in Italian schools more extensively than has been done up to now]: rather than the place to teach reading, writing, and calculating, school was seen as a place of informed education in the scientific method. As a consequence, didactics should have introduced students to the observation of reality, the testing of correspondence between words and concepts, insisting on the «valore insostituibile dell’esperienza dell’educando, punto di partenza di qualsiasi azione costruttiva» [irreplaceable value of the pupil’s experience, as the starting point for any constructive action]. Cf. A. GABELLI, *L’istruzione classica in Italia* (1889), ed. by E. Codignola, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1950, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup>The passage is quoted in G. GENOVESI, *Introduzione to A. GABELLI, Il metodo d’insegnamento nelle scuole elementari d’Italia*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1992, p. 8, and appears in A. GABELLI, *Sulla corrispondenza della educazione colla civiltà moderna*, «Il

In 1894, the programmes written by minister Guido Baccelli still listed singing as an optional subject – just like gymnastics, it was regarded as a means «of hygiene, rest, recreation and discipline». Besides singing, drawing makes its first appearance, also as an optional subject. Meanwhile, criticism about the way schoolteachers taught music starts to crop up in the press and in teaching handbooks. On the one hand, according to educationalist Giovanni Soli, elementary school teachers neglect the teaching of singing («a powerful training of the ear, voice, and feeling»). On the other hand, the knowledge and skills imparted in regular schools as part of this subject are deemed «utterly inadequate».<sup>10</sup>

In the programmes released by minister Vittorio Emanuele Orlando in 1905 (Royal Decree no. 43, January 29<sup>th</sup>), which followed a reform of elementary school in 1904,<sup>11</sup> drawing moves to the list of compulsory subjects, while singing remains optional. Although the legislator discusses this teaching at length, it relegates it to the role it had already been assigned by the previous approaches: a physical exercise for the «recreation of the spirit» – but adds a significant, albeit timid, hint at the «education of taste» and the «preservation of the admirable traditions of our people».<sup>12</sup>

A significant step towards the acknowledgement of the educational value of music was taken with the 1<sup>st</sup> Congresso Pedagogico Nazionale in Turin (1898) – when educationalists Rosa Agazzi and Pietro Pasquali emphatically voiced their ideas about the strong educational value of music, of singing in particular.<sup>13</sup> Agazzi acknowledged the essential role of Froebel's theories,

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Politecnico», ser. IV, vol. I/2, 1866, pp. 206-218: 209 (now in A. SALONI, *Educazione e scuola in Aristide Gabelli*, Rome, Armando, 1967, pp. 153-159: 154).

<sup>10</sup> The picture outlined by Soli is very precise: «Teaching moves with difficulty ... between singing by ear and systematic sight singing/solfeggio, without ever reaching a solid, sure mastery, which would enable a young teacher to pass it on to his pupils. Nobody ... gives this subject the importance it really has». See G. SOLI, *Didattica per le Scuole normali e pei maestri elementari*, Milan, Ulrico Hoepli, 1894, p. 6 (quoted in ZANCAN, *L'aspetto storico nella didattica della musica* cit., p. 5).

<sup>11</sup> The reform instituted a 4-year elementary course that was pre-eminently educational, followed by a “popular” course (fifth and sixth year) that prepared students for their future profession. Note that drawing first appeared in the list of subjects for elementary school 14 years later than music. Despite this, it became a compulsory subject as early as 1904, and acquired far more weight and influence in school institutions than music.

<sup>12</sup> E. CATARSI, *Storia dei programmi della scuola elementare (1860-1985)*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1990, p. 310.

<sup>13</sup> Agazzi's lecture can be read in the *Relazione sul tema “Ordinamento pedagogico dei giardini d'infanzia secondo il sistema Fröbel”*, Turin-Rome, Paravia, 1898: in kindergartens music, in the form of “educational singing”, is organized into «didactic paths», which Agazzi herself illustrates in her *Abbici del canto educativo ad uso delle scuole materne e delle*

which had recently been introduced in Italy, but complained that kindergartens, as they had been implemented, tended to numb children's sensitivity with «their abstract geometric idea of reality», introducing them too soon to reading and writing exercises. On the other hand, the educationalist stressed how important it is for children to spontaneously learn two simple activities – observing and doing. In accordance with these thoughts, in her *Abbici del canto educativo* Agazzi described a method for ear and voice training based on listening and children's imitation of what the teacher does. What is most important is that Agazzi regarded choir singing not just as a recreational and socializing activity, as was already widely acknowledged, but also as a powerful tool to develop the taste for beauty in children, and teach them restraint and composure. Singing thus turns out to be a «civilizing factor» that contributes to the education of the person-citizen.

It was also on the basis of Agazzi's reflections that music was given more importance in the ensuing “Programmi per gli Asili d'infanzia (Istruzioni, programmi e orari per gli Asili infantili e Giardini d'Infanzia)”, which appeared in the RD of January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1914 no. 27 following the well-known Legge Daneo-Credaro of 1911.<sup>14</sup> The programmes, mostly written by Pietro Pasquali, were inspired by the theories of Froebel and the Agazzi sisters.<sup>15</sup> Great emphasis is placed on the practice of singing, but there is more, as can be inferred from the following passages: «Vocal, and possibly instrumental, music, can never be practiced enough». Singing is no longer regarded as merely a physical hygiene exercise, or a recreational, entertaining activity, but also as a way to develop the aesthetic taste. The section entitled *Norme* contains a hint at the usefulness of singing «for the education and entertainment of children», based on

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*prime classi elementari* (Milan, La voce delle maestre d'asilo, 1908) as well as in *Bimbi, cantate!* (Brescia, La Scuola, 1911).

<sup>14</sup> Legge June 4<sup>th</sup> 1911, no. 487, which bears the names of ministers Edoardo Daneo e Luigi Credaro, in office between 1909 and 1914, affirms a commitment on the part of the liberals of the Giolitti era to solve a series of key issues in primary and popular education. The law first of all transfers most of elementary schooling to the State. The financial administration of elementary schools was transferred from city administrations to provincial school councils. The law also established compulsory school attendance until 12 years of age. The programmes of 1914, released by minister Credaro, are the first in Italian history to be designed for kindergarten. Credaro gave particular importance to issues that are specific to this age group, which he also discussed on «Rivista pedagogica», a journal he founded thanks to the contribution of educationalist Emilia Santamaria Formiggini. Cf. N. D'AMICO, *Storia e storie della scuola italiana. Dalle origini ai giorni nostri*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 2010, pp. 198-200.

<sup>15</sup> Along with her sister Rosa, Carolina Agazzi, too, gave a significant contribution to the development of the pedagogic theories described above. See R. MAZZETTI, *Pietro Pasquali, le sorelle Agazzi e la riforma del fröbelismo in Italia*, Rome, Armando, 1962; F. ALTEA, *Il metodo di Rosa e Carolina Agazzi: un valore educativo intatto nel tempo*, Rome, Armando, 2011.

«spontaneous chants that children everywhere in the world have repeated for centuries» rather than on «new, intricate songs filled with dissonances». What is emphasized is the importance of learning by imitation: «Teachers should start singing, and the children will follow, while the youngest will limit themselves to listening... The song list should be refreshed as often as possible. Today we have the most beautiful collections, not only the strictly Froebelian ones». Besides singing, sense organ exercises are also recommended (distinguishing between noise and sound, understanding parameters of duration, intensity, etc.).<sup>16</sup>

## 2. 1923 to today

Among Rosa Agazzi's greatest supporters was Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice, author of the Elementary school programmes in 1923, and esteemed collaborator of Minister Giovanni Gentile, who, as is well known, gave his name to one of the most radical school reforms ever introduced in Italy.<sup>17</sup>

The programmes of Lombardo-Radice were the start of a major stage in the history of music education in our country. For the first time music, under the label Canto, was granted the status of compulsory subject. Not only that – it was grouped under the category “Art subjects” along with “Spontaneous drawing” and “Good writing and acting”, which ranked highest in the hierarchy of subjects. This was in keeping with Lombardo Radice's aim to celebrate the “artistic nature” of the Italian people, as well as the spontaneous and “thoroughly imaginative” way of thinking of elementary school children. One of the purposes of these programmes was also to celebrate regional culture and artistic traditions. For this purpose, as far as Choir singing was concerned, prominence was given to those songs that belonged to regional traditions, as part of this revival of folk-popular culture.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> F. V. LOMBARDI, *I programmi della scuola per l'infanzia in Italia dal 1914 al 1969*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1970, pp. 20-27.

<sup>17</sup> The Gentile reform was launched in 1923 with the Royal Decrees of December 31<sup>st</sup> 1922 no. 1679, July 16<sup>th</sup> 1923 no. 1753, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1923 no. 1054, September 30<sup>th</sup> 1923 no. 2102 and October 1<sup>st</sup> 1923 no. 2185. See N. SERIO - G. BOSELLI, *Fondazioni culturali delle riforme scolastiche. A ottanta anni dalla riforma Gentile*, Rome, Armando, 2005, pp. 31-34; G. TOGNON, *La riforma scolastica del ministro Gentile (1922-1924)*, in *Giovanni Gentile: la pedagogia, la scuola. Atti del Convegno di pedagogia (Catania, 12-13-14 dicembre 1994) e altri studi*, ed by G. Spadafora, Rome, Armando, 1997, pp. 321-340.

<sup>18</sup> The programmes released with the Ordinanza Ministeriale [Ministerial Decree] of November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1923 pursuant to RD October 1<sup>st</sup> 1923 no. 2185 can be read in CATARSI, *Storia dei programmi della scuola elementare* cit., pp. 313-343. See also A. M. COLACI, *Gli anni della riforma: Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice e “L'educazione nazionale”*, Lecce, Pensa MultiMedia, 2000. About the educationalist's admiration of the Agazzi

On the pedagogical and cultural periodicals of the time, many articles praised the reform for the place of honour it granted to music. There were, however, as many dissenting voices, which criticized the fact that the discipline had only been introduced in some schools, calling it as “half a victory”.<sup>19</sup> Choir singing was made compulsory in elementary school, whereas in secondary school music was relegated to a few institutes.<sup>20</sup>

Under the label “Elementi di musica e canto corale”, music education only appeared in the programmes of Istituto Magistrale [Teacher’s Training School], and of Liceo femminile [Female college] – the latter conceived and advocated by Gentile himself for the purpose of providing young women of good family with basic cultural knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

In the Liceo classico [Liberal arts college] (the only school which, according to Gentile, was dedicated to the education of the Italian ruling class), in the recently born Liceo scientifico [Science college], and in commercial and technical institutes, music was all but absent, unlike the other artistic disciplines – including Drawing.

Only under the denomination of ‘Choir singing’ does music appear in vocational training schools. This reduction to ‘singing’, and the absence of any reference to theory (which would be inherent in the meaning of the word “Elementi”), suggests that greater importance might have been assigned to the socializing aspects of music, in particular order and discipline.<sup>22</sup>

The subordinate position of music with respect to other subjects was denounced and bemoaned especially on periodicals influenced by Positivism, such as the «Rivista pedagogica» of Luigi Credaro. In one article, a teacher of Choir singing, Luigi Neretti, after criticizing the Gentile reform for failing to introduce Music in schools of all levels, criticizes the inadequate musical competence of elementary teachers trained in the Istituti magistrali/Teacher’s

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method, see G. LOMBARDO-RADICE, *Il metodo Agazzi*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1952.

<sup>19</sup> See in particular the articles in the review «La nuova Scuola media» del 1929: T. CIAMPELLA *L’insegnamento della musica nell’educazione nazionale*, no. 16, p. 246, and *L’insegnamento della musica negli istituti magistrali*, nos. 17-18, p. 260; and N. VALLE, *Insegnare la musica agli studenti*, no. 20, p. 299.

<sup>20</sup> This critique is still relevant today, given that music, as far as secondary school is concerned, is confined to the Liceo musicale (see *infra*).

<sup>21</sup> Since it did not guarantee any professional outlet, the Liceo femminile turned out to be a total failure, and was closed five years after its founding, in 1928. See E. GUGLIELMAN, *Il Liceo femminile 1923-1928*, «Scuola e Città», LI, no. 10, October 2000, pp. 417-431.

<sup>22</sup> Choir singing programmes in Vocational training schools are reproduced and discussed in G. COLARIZI, *La musica non professionale nella legislazione scolastica italiana (II)*, «Educazione musicale», IV, no. 1, 1967, p. 1 f. For a history of this school system see A. AGAZZI, *La scuola di avviamento professionale*, Rome, UCIIM, 1954.

Training Schools, where the subject was taught by badly paid teachers, who ranked lowest in the scale established by the Government's tables ("ruolo C gruppo B"). His observations can certainly be shared. However, in stressing the importance of music, Neretti cannot find a better argument than the usual recreational and socializing qualities of music: «The singing activities should comply with the school timetable, so that they do not end up being a burdensome and annoying, instead of entertaining and rewarding. In lower grades, singing should take place between one lesson and the next, with the purpose of entertaining and teaching discipline».<sup>23</sup>

In the Teacher's Training school (lasting seven years, a four-year plus three-year period), music was treated both as a theoretical subject (mostly in the form of solfeggio) and as a vocal and instrumental practice (the optional teaching of an instrument). The programme included two hours of Music and Choir singing, and two (optional) Instrument hours a week. In the last two years of the triennium, the total number of hours fell to three, because Music and Choir singing were reduced to one hour.

The exam syllabus for the lower grades of Teacher's Training school, released by minister De Vecchi with the RD of May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1936 no. 762 place even greater emphasis on the theoretical, notional elements, mostly drawn from the solfeggio programmes of conservatories. They included vague hints at Music history, although «information regarding the greatest Italian musicians» seem to be limited to the narration of episodes from the life of these Italian composers, rather than including a socio-cultural contextualization of their works. And there is no reference whatsoever to art music listening.<sup>24</sup>

At the end of WWII, only one proposal was accepted of those contained in the "Carta della Scuola" (1939) by Giuseppe Bottai (a manifesto aimed at imposing the fascist model on the school world) namely the institution of an intermediate school section, which combined the junior grades of the Teacher's Training school and Technical institutes with the Liberal arts and Science colleges. The reduction of the Teacher's training period from seven to four years (due to the incorporation of the Junior Teacher's Training school into the new unified Junior High school) obviously meant that a number of specialized subjects were cancelled, among them music. In Bottai's new Junior High school, music was no longer compulsory. As a consequence, starting

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. L. NERETTI, *Il canto corale e la musica nelle scuole italiane*, «Rivista pedagogica», III, 1929, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> The programmes are reproduced and commented in G. COLARIZI, *La musica non professionale nella legislazione scolastica italiana (III)*, «Educazione musicale», IV, no. 2, 1967, pp. 37-39. Among the school handbooks in use, we find only dictionaries of music theory (*I principi elementari di musica* by Bonifazio Asioli, printed in an unlimited number of copies by Ricordi, from 1811 until the 1970s) or collections of popular, or purportedly popular, songs (*Canzoniere del popolo italiano* by Achille Schinelli, also first published by Ricordi in 1927).



from 1945, anyone who studied to become an elementary school teacher would have to learn music not for seven years, but only four years. This was a change for the worse that inevitably and severely affected the education of future elementary teachers.<sup>25</sup>

Minister Ermini's (DPR June 14<sup>th</sup> 1955 no. 503) were the first elementary school programmes of the Italian Republic. The main innovations in this document included a division into two stages: the first spanned the first two grades, and the second the last three grades. The purpose was to pay closer attention to the different phases in the development of the child. The introduction of such notions as 'cycles', 'stages of growth', or 'customized teaching' reveals the influence of American psychologist and paediatrician Arnold Gesell, and in particular of psychologist and educationalist Jean Piaget.<sup>26</sup>

In the instructions for Choir singing in the first two grades, theoretical elements relating to solfeggio play a less important role than in past years. The purpose of singing is «to contribute to the uplifting of the spirit and to sociality; to the education of the ear, voice, and pronunciation; to motor training». For the first time in the history of music in the Italian school system, the curriculum clearly mentions listening, and prescribes «the listening of music pieces suited to the age of the pupil». Concerning the last three years, the programme emphasizes that singing is not only useful for instilling feelings of sociability, but also for training the voice and ear. For listening, instead of

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<sup>25</sup> The three grades of Junior Teacher's Training School [Istituto magistrale inferiore] were incorporated into the Unified Junior High School and into the Vocational Training School. In the former, Latin was on the list of subjects, which meant that pupils could carry on with their studies after high school; the latter did not include Latin, and hence precluded further schooling. The Vocational School however, unlike the Unified Junior High, had one singing hour per week. See A. SANTONI RUGIU, *Ideologia e programmi nelle scuole elementari e magistrali dal 1859 al 1955*, Florence, Manzuoli, 1980.

<sup>26</sup> According to Gesell's 'maturation theory', which affirms the role of biology in determining the general patterns of development, the child's abilities develop independently of practice and exercise, because they are the product of a pre-determined genetic programme. 1950 saw the publication of *Il fanciullo dai cinque ai dieci anni* (Bompiani), which Gesell wrote in collaboration with Frances Lillian Ilg (or. ed. *The Child from Five to Ten*, New York - London, Harper & Brothers, 1946; French ed. *L'enfant de 5 a 10 ans*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1949). The father of genetic epistemology, Jean Piaget, claimed that the development of the child's cognitive abilities was mostly determined by individual causes: external factors could enhance it, but were not decisive. In Italy, the early 1950s saw the publication of *Il diritto all'educazione nel mondo attuale* (Milan, Edizioni di Comunità, 1951); *Psicologia dell'intelligenza* (Florence, Editrice Universitaria, 1952); *Il linguaggio e il pensiero del fanciullo* (Florence, Editrice Universitaria, 1955). On the influence of psychological theories on Italian programmes, see D'AMICO, *Storia e storie cit.*, p. 468.

«music pieces suited to the age of the pupil» we read «easy and artistic music pieces», to be introduced to pupils after a preparatory stage.<sup>27</sup>

In his examination of the presence-absence of music in government school programmes from 1860 onwards, educationalist Antonio Mura (see *Il fanciullo e la musica*) interprets the indifference of lawmakers towards this subject as «the reflection of the essentially practical and activist nature of the society»: in Italian schools, caught between the ideal of a humanistic education on the one hand, and the need to train a future generation of accountants, physicians, lawyers and technicians on the other, the practice of “music making” is reserved to the most “talented” children. For all the others, it is at best a moment of leisure.<sup>28</sup>

This situation, as pointed out by Mura, arose again in another key moment in the history of music teaching, and more in general of the Italian school system – the institution of the Unified Junior High School, with Law no. 1859/1962. During the school years 1959-60, 300 classes began experimenting with the unified junior high project – in which music first appeared as a compulsory subject in all three years, with one hour a week. In 1960, Turin’s Circolo “Toscanini” launched a National Congress on music teaching. The participants, among them eminent teachers of the discipline such as Riccardo Allorto, Giorgio Colarizi and Vera D’Agostino, as well as musicians, composers and, a fact worth mentioning, educationalists – demanded (1) that the teaching of music be introduced and implemented since elementary school, and (2) that the weekly music education hour be increased to two hours in Unified Junior High School. Such a heated debate did not, however, achieve particularly remarkable results. On the contrary, Law no. 1859 took a step backwards, as the only weekly music education hour became compulsory only for the first year (and optional for the remaining two). This meant that only students who turned out to be particularly gifted in music in the first year would go on to study it; those who, instead, showed no interest, or little talent, would stop studying music at the end of the school term. This confirms what Mura theorized: music in Italy is a privilege for the “gifted”. It was also desirable that the possible “gift” show up over a period of one year, during one single weekly hour at school, otherwise the occasion would be lost forever.

Fedele d’Amico discusses these issues very lucidly on the periodical «Riforma della scuola» in 1963:<sup>29</sup> music is taught in schools wherever it enjoys

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<sup>27</sup> The quotations from the programmes are drawn from G. COLARIZI, *La musica non professionale nella legislazione scolastica italiana*, «Educazione musicale», III, no. 12, 1966, p. 169 f.

<sup>28</sup> A. MURA, *Il fanciullo e la musica*, Bologna, Malipiero, 1957, quoted in A. M. GOBETTI, review of Mura’s book, «Riforma della scuola», IV, no. 4, 1958, p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. F. D’AMICO, *La musica nella scuola obbligatoria*, «Riforma della scuola», IX, no. 11, 1963, p. 6. On the reflections of D’Amico see G. LA FACE, *Implicazioni*

prestige in cultural institutions. Yet how could it possibly acquire (more) prestige if it is not introduced in schools as a compulsory subject? The high educational value of music, claims D'Amico, lies in its capacity to «structure an essential human need, that of organizing and expressing inner time». Therefore, teaching this subject in schools means training individuals to listen actively, which entails judging and discerning, rather than flattening out or trivializing everything.

In the early 1960s, Colarizi and Allorto founded the journal «Educazione musicale». The periodical was instrumental in spreading musical culture in schools: many articles stressed the importance of listening and the value of art music in shaping taste, and criticized the mass media's offer of almost exclusively commercial music; they also aimed at engaging in constructive dialogue with general Pedagogy.<sup>30</sup>

The movement for the spread of music in schools continued in the 1970s with the review «Musica Domani», but with a reversed logic. The house organ of SIEM, Società Italiana di Educazione Musicale, «Musica Domani», in the spirit of protest of the early 1970s (which had emerged out of the 1968 student movement) soon took a highly critical stance towards the teaching methods of the distant and recent past. It promoted a way of teaching that focused on the preferences of students, believing that, for a good didactics of music, what matters is not so much content, or the quality of the object to be communicated, but the modes of transmission, whatever the content.<sup>31</sup>

The SIEM entered into a dialogue with several institutions, and it was also thanks to this society that in 1977 (Law of June 16<sup>th</sup> 1977, no. 348) Music education became compulsory in all three years of Junior High School.<sup>32</sup> In the new programmes, released with the DM of February 9<sup>th</sup> 1979, instructions relating to music, which increased the number of hours to two a week, were characterized by (1) content tailored to the “demands” of pupils and (2) an interdisciplinary approach, which reflected the “deepest meaning” of music (but also implied the dangerous idea that music could *not* be regarded as an autonomous discipline).<sup>33</sup>

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*pedagogico-didattiche negli scritti di Fedele d'Amico, in I casi della musica. Fedele d'Amico vent'anni dopo*, Proceeding of the Rome congress (February 4-6 2011), currently in print.

<sup>30</sup> See the following articles published in «Educazione musicale»: G. GRAZIOSI, *L'ascolto delle musiche* (I, no. 2, 1964, pp. 41-46); C. G. GAMBA, *Pedagogia ed Educazione musicale* (II, no. 1, 1965, pp. 1-9); A. AGAZZI, *L'educazione musicale senza interruzioni nel piano educativo* (II, no. 3, 1965, pp. 68-70); R. ALLORTO, *Il divorzio fra la musica e la cultura in Italia e le conseguenze che ne sono derivate nelle scelte e nelle formulazioni didattiche* (III, no. 5, 1966, pp. 122-128); A. PICCIONE, *Un aspetto particolare della didattica dell'ascolto* (IV, no. 4, 1967, pp. 111-114).

<sup>31</sup> See the articles by Carlo Delfrati on «Musica Domani» in the years 1971-1974.

<sup>32</sup> This law finally eliminated Latin from Junior High School. Music became compulsory, no longer optional, along with Technical education.

<sup>33</sup> The music education programmes for Junior High School (DM February 9<sup>th</sup> 1979) can be read in TRAVAGLINO, *Raccolta dei principali testi normativi* cit., pp. 249-251.

An update of Elementary school programmes only came thirty years after the last reform, with the DPR of February 12<sup>th</sup> 1985, no. 104 (minister Franca Falcucci). In keeping with an essentially cognitivist approach,<sup>34</sup> the instructions for “Educazione al suono e alla musica” are extremely detailed and recommend many activities. For the very first time in the history of the subject, they pay attention to both aspects of sound, listening and production: «Education in sound and music takes as its general goal the training, through listening and production, of the perception and comprehension of acoustic reality and the appreciation of different sound languages».<sup>35</sup>

With the Moratti Reform of 2004, national instructions were released for kindergarten, primary and junior secondary school (Dlgs February 19<sup>th</sup> 2004, no. 59). In both compulsory schools the subject is now simply referred to as “Music”, thereby deleting the word ‘education’.<sup>36</sup> What is worth noting about the new formulation of learning goals is that, unlike the other subjects, music is sharply divided into the two sectors of “production” and “perception”.<sup>37</sup> The

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For music education, the newly acquired status of compulsory subject, and consequently the increase the number of weekly hours, is strictly related to the spread of music instrument teaching in schools, which began in 1975 with the experiment of SMIM, Scuole Medie ad Indirizzo Musicale [Junior High School specialising in Music]. The DM September 8<sup>th</sup> 1975 gave some schools the possibility to launch «experimental courses specialising in music». This translated into three hours of music education per week, and one hour of musical instrument in the afternoon (as an ideal continuation of the teaching of musical instruments as an optional subject in the 1930s under the Gentile reform, in the Teacher Training School). The school world had to wait 17 years (DM February 13<sup>th</sup> 1996) before the SMIM was finally regulated. For more information on the SMIM see F. EMER, *L'insegnamento dello strumento musicale nella scuola dell'obbligo*, in [http://www.saggiatoremusicale.it/saggem/ricerca/bibliografia/Emer\\_insegnamento\\_dello\\_strumento\\_musicale.pdf](http://www.saggiatoremusicale.it/saggem/ricerca/bibliografia/Emer_insegnamento_dello_strumento_musicale.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> We are referring in particular to the cognitivist approach of US psychologist Jerome Bruner, which combines the role of the biological-natural factors in learning of Piaget and the focus on the socio-cultural context of Lev Vygotsky. In the 1970s and 80s, Bruner's essays enjoyed wide circulation in Italy, thanks to a series of Italian editions, among them: *Prime fasi dello sviluppo cognitivo* (1966), Rome, Armando, 1971; *Psicologia della conoscenza* (1973), Rome, Armando, 1976; *Verso una teoria dell'istruzione* (1966), Rome, Armando, 1982. Cf. D'AMICO *Storia e storie* cit., p. 598 f.

<sup>35</sup> The music programmes can be read online on the website of SagGEM: <http://www.saggiatoremusicale.it/saggem/documenti/Programmi%20di%20Educazione%20al%20suono%20e%20alla%20musica%20nella%20scuola%20elementare.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> By the same token, “Educazione artistica” and “Educazione tecnica” were renamed respectively “Arte ed immagine” and “Tecnologia”, consistently with the other disciplines, “Italiano”, “Matematica” etc.

<sup>37</sup> The specific learning goals for Music in Junior High School are even further divided into four short paragraphs: “Pratica strumentale”, “Pratica vocale”, “Produzione musicale” and “Ascolto, interpretazione e analisi”. As for the other subjects, such as

goals relating to “production” are always listed first, and are thus given greater emphasis. Even in the ensuing instructions for kindergarten and the primary schooling period, as established by minister Fioroni (DM July 31<sup>st</sup> 2007, no. 68),<sup>38</sup> as well as in the more recent documents (2012) – which show few substantial changes –, we can see that although the rigid separation into two domains is softened, there is still a slight emphasis placed on “making”, that is, on production, rather than on “knowing”. The general pre-eminence given to practice over listening, which is evident in several passages of the most recent government documents, is directly related to what we regard as one of the most controversial aspects of the Gelmini reform: the establishment of the *Licei Musicali* [Music Colleges] (DM February 4<sup>th</sup> 2010). This institution was conceived as a specialized professional training school and, as a consequence, almost wiped out general musical culture, which has disappeared from all non-musical colleges, even from the first biennium of the Humanities College [*Liceo delle Scienze umane*], where it still survived. This choice reaffirms the absence of music from secondary schools, first sanctioned by the Gentile reform in 1923, reasserting, as Antonio Mura once put it, the idea of «an essentially practical, activist society».

In conclusion, we can observe how, in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Music struggled to find its own identity as a discipline, and to acquire the same prestige as other subjects for its ability to promote cognitive-cultural, linguistic-communicative, and aesthetic-critical skills. This happened also because it took a relatively long time for Music to identify its defining contents. The national opera tradition, and European art music in general, did not find, and still cannot find in some cases, a place in the Italian school system. In the 1970s, content was put in some perspective as a way to “meet” the needs of the younger generations, and the repeated emphasis on the interdisciplinary approach was everything but advantageous for the status of the discipline, which is still relatively vague and unstable. For Music to rise from its ancestral subordinate position, it would have been crucial to insist on the importance of the modes of transmission as well as the educational relevance of the “objects” to be transmitted. To gloss the words of Fedele d’Amico, a discipline does not acquire prestige unless the objects of its enquiry have already acquired it.

*(Translation by Elisabetta Zoni)*

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“Arte ed immagine” and “Tecnologia”, ‘making’ and ‘knowing’ are both included, although they are integrated into one single text, without any clear-cut distinction.

<sup>38</sup> The first educational period includes primary and junior secondary (formerly elementary and middle or junior high schools).