

Jazz Italian Style

Jazz Italian Style explores a complex era in music history, when politics and popular culture collided with national identity and technology. When jazz arrived in Italy at the conclusion of World War I, it quickly became part of the local music culture. In Italy, thanks to the gramophone and radio, many listeners paid little attention to a performer's national and ethnic identity. Nick LaRocca (Italian American), Gorni Kramer (Italian), the Trio Lescano (Jewish Dutch) and Louis Armstrong (African American), to name a few, all found equal footing in the Italian soundscape. The book reveals how Italians made jazz their own, and how, by the mid-1930s, a genre of jazz distinguishable from American varieties and supported by Mussolini began to flourish in Northern Italy and in its turn influenced Italian American musicians. Most importantly, the book recovers a lost repertoire and an array of musicians whose stories and performances are compelling and well worth remembering.

Anna Harwell Celenza is the Thomas E. Caestecker Professor of Music at Georgetown University, where she teaches courses in music history, radio journalism and the music industry. She is the author or editor of several scholarly books, and has published numerous articles on composers and musicians, from Franz Liszt and Gustav Mahler to Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Louis Armstrong and Frank Sinatra.

Jazz Italian Style

From its Origins in New Orleans to
Fascist Italy and Sinatra

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To my loving husband, Chris.

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Acknowledgments

It was in the fall of 2010 when I got the idea to write this book. My husband, Christopher S. Celenza, had recently been appointed Director of the American Academy in Rome, an assignment that happened to coincide with my own year-long sabbatical leave from Georgetown University. My original plan for that research year had been to begin work on a book about Duke Ellington. But upon arriving in Rome, I became intrigued with the local jazz scene and quickly discovered a story about the links between American and Italian jazz that surprised me. I have often joked with friends and family that I should have titled this book: “What I Did for Four Years While My Husband Served as Director of the American Academy in Rome.” But all joking aside, working on this book was one of the most fulfilling experiences of my scholarly career, and not just because of the music I encountered, but even more so for the wonderful scholars and musicians I met in Italy and the new friendships that formed along the way.

As readers will discover, for this study, I am deeply indebted to the groundbreaking archival work of several Italian scholars, most notably Adriano Mazzeletti, Marcello Piras and Angelo Zaniol. Mazzeletti’s work is especially important, not only because of his meticulous documentation of performers, venues, recordings and reviews in his multivolume *Jazz in Italia*, but also for the invaluable contribution that he and his wife, Anna Maria Pivato, have made toward the preservation of this music through their record label, Riviera Jazz. Their thoughtful curation of historic recordings has insured that this music will remain accessible to listeners for generations to come. I will be forever indebted to Adriano, not only as a scholar, but also as a mentor and friend. He generously gave of his time, offering encouragement and critiques in equal measure. But even more importantly, he single-handedly constructed a scholarly foundation that I and countless other scholars have relied upon in our explorations of Italian jazz. Special thanks also go to Marcello Piras, who welcomed me into the realm of jazz studies and happily shared his in-depth knowledge of African American music. Marcello offered advice during the early stages of this project, often pointing me in directions that proved beneficial. As I completed the project, he read excerpts of the book and offered helpful advice. With regard

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