Italian Opera in Global and Transnational Perspective

This volume of essays discusses the European and global expansion of Italian opera and the significance of this process for debates on opera at home in Italy. Covering different parts of Europe, the Americas and South East and East Asia, it investigates the impact of transnational musical exchanges on notions of national identity associated with the production and reception of Italian opera across the world. As a consequence of these exchanges between composers, impresarios, musicians and audiences, ideas of operatic Italianness (italianità) constantly changed and had to be reconfigured, reflecting the radically transformative experience of time and space that throughout the nineteenth century turned opera into a global aesthetic commodity. The book opens with a substantial introduction discussing key concepts in cross-disciplinary perspective and concludes with an epilogue relating its findings to different historiographical trends in transnational opera studies.

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Italian Opera in Global and Transnational Perspective

Reimagining Italianità in the Long Nineteenth Century

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From Heaven and Hell to the Grail Hall via Sant'Andrea della Valle: Religious Drama in the Long Nineteenth Century / Francesco Milella
Bartolomeo Merelli and Habsburg Cultural Policies in the Mid-1830s / Claudio Vellutini
Southern Exchanges: Italian Opera in New Orleans, 1836–42 / Charlotte Bentley
'For a moment, I felt like I was back in Italy': Early South American Experiences of Italian Opera Singers (1840–1860) / José Manuel Izquierdo König
Reimagining Rossini: Obituaries as Transnational Narratives of Italian Opera / Benjamin Walton.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This book examines the impact of musical exchanges on ideas of national identity associated with the production and reception of Italian opera in different parts of Europe, Latin America and Asia, with a few references to cultural exchanges with Africa and Australia. As a consequence of transnational connections between composers, impresarios, musicians and audiences, ideas of operatic italianità constantly changed and had to be reconfigured, reflecting the radically transformative experience of time and space that over the course of the nineteenth century turned opera into a global aesthetic commodity.

Following a cross-disciplinary approach, and involving debates in music, Italian studies and transnational and global history, our book brings together the output of an international research network which was financed over a period of three years by the Leverhulme Trust. Based at the Centre for Transnational History of University College London, we worked with partners at Brown University, the University of Cambridge and the University of Campinas in Brazil, as well as with several external collaborators in Italy and all over the world. Between 2016 and 2018, we organised three international conferences in Cambridge, Providence (RI) and Campinas, as well as numerous smaller workshops and reading groups. Our volume presents a selection from the research output that emerged from these meetings.

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If opera is able to speak across national and social boundaries, we hope our book does the same.

Axel Körner and Paulo M. Kühl