I

During the last months of the former axis alliance between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, Hans Engel, Professor of Musicology in Konigsberg, published a study of the musical-historical relationships between Germany and Italy.¹ Relying on racial theories as well as on common aesthetic stereotypes of the time, he argued that the ‘true’ history of European music essentially developed along a North-South axis. From this perspective, Germany and Italy embodied two opposite poles of musical ideals, which could be discerned as popular (Italian) and high (German) art. This is not to say that Italy did not have a proper ‘high’ art, but that this high art could be found predominantly in the northern part of the country, where a ‘Nordic’ quality – i.e. a biological influence deriving from the former presence of Germanic tribes – was more likely to be present.² The greatest musical talent in music history was to be found in the former Hapsburg territories in the Alpine region, where an ideal of artistic standard and popular ‘connectedness’ had been achieved, and which ultimately had to be considered ‘German’ (figure 1).
This table which, needless to say, would never hold water in the light of empirical evidence, is a characteristic example of the long German tradition of thinking about music as the ‘most German of the arts’ as opposed to an Italian (and French) counterpart. In early twentieth century Germany this tradition of thought was fused with contemporary racial theory which suggested a general superiority of the ‘Germanic race’. Therefore, if a composer was successful in the eyes of the Germans in the 1930s, it was due to his fair share of ‘Nordic’ qualities, as it was the ‘Nordic’ essence that ultimately guaranteed musical quality. In other words, ‘good’ music was not primarily a sign of musical genius, but of pure racial descent.

This also applied to foreign composers, as the German reception of the Italian composer Gian Francesco Malipiero shows. Based on archival sources from the Fondo Gian Francesco Malipiero at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, I wish to demonstrate how Malipiero fitted into German musical thought in the 1930s and 1940s.
For a foreign composer of modernist convictions, Malipiero certainly had a particular reputation in interwar Germany. Besides his regular appearances in concert programmes he was prominently featured during the festival seasons. He was the only Italian composer to be represented at the prestigious Festspiele Baden-Baden every year between 1936 and 1939, at the festivals of the Ständiger Rat für die internationale Zusammenarbeit der Komponisten [Permanent Council for International Cooperation of Composers] in Dresden in 1937 and Stuttgart in 1938, but it was his operas that were the most successful. Of all the composers of the so-called ‘generazione dell’80’, he had by far the largest number of world premieres of stage works in Germany between the 1920s and the 1940s; more than half of Malipiero’s eleven operas that were staged during this period premiered in German theatres.\(^6\)

Given the special occasion of the world premieres of these foreign works, the performances received great attention in the national and local media. Especially after Mussolini’s proclamation of the ‘Berlin – Rome Axis’ in November 1936, many newspapers emphasised the cultural-political importance of these representations.\(^7\) Besides reports on the works and their creator, the coverage made sure to mention all the numerous representatives and functionaries of government, party, foreign diplomacy and Wehrmacht who regularly attended these manifestations. To give the occasion a festive outlook, the theatres were decorated with national flags and symbols. Occasionally, as in the performance of Giulio Cesare at the Deutsch-Italienische Kunstwoche in Hamburg in 1941, local dignitaries were invited to official receptions at the premieres, where they seized the opportunity to hail the artistic productivity of both countries in times of common war efforts.\(^8\) All things considered, there was no doubt about the political dimension of the artistic events.

It is thus not appropriate to assess Malipiero’s standing in Nazi Germany as ‘nicht wohlgelitten [not well seen]’\(^9\) or his music as contrary to a howsoever defined ideal of Nazi music. It would also be misleading to refer solely to Goebbels’s harsh judgement, written in his diary after he attended a performance of Pause di silenzio in 1937, that Malipiero was one of the ‘modern bunglers, who surround themselves with all sorts of mystic fog to cover for their incapability’.\(^10\) Even the well-known scandal of the first performance of La favola del figlio cambiato at Darmstadt in March 1934 had no further consequences. After the opera had suddenly been prohibited by the Hessian minister of the Interior for its ‘atonal and kulturzersetzerische Merkmale und Tendenzen [atonal and culture-subverting characteristics and tendencies]’,\(^11\) it was immediately reinstated by Goebbels and performed again a few days later at Darmstadt and
Brunswick without any disturbances.\textsuperscript{12} Just one month earlier, Goebbels had issued a decree to prevent local officials from pursuing their own agenda in the arts sector, as the balance of power was still far from being established in this early phase of the German regime.\textsuperscript{13}

Differently from in Italy, where Mussolini personally forbade further performances of \textit{La favola} despite the composer’s revisions,\textsuperscript{14} none of Malipiero’s works was prohibited at any point during the Nazi era. Perhaps this was partly due to the fact that an official ban on a composer from an allied country might have had further negative consequences for Germany’s already damaged international reputation (and especially since German-Italian relationships at the time of \textit{La favola} were still tense). But it was rather his friendship with people of considerable artistic and political importance which contributed to Malipiero’s success in German art life.

Malipiero’s fortune in 1930s Germany is, in fact, inseparably linked to Oskar Walleck (1890–1976). After the war, Walleck had started a promising career as impresario in Frankfurt, Nuremburg, and Dortmund, before becoming director of the Landestheater Coburg in 1931. One year later, Walleck joined both the NSDAP and the SS and played a crucial role in the \textit{Gleichschaltung} of German cultural life after the Nazis came to power.\textsuperscript{15} His activities seemed to pay off as, after a brief interval at the Landestheater Brunswick from 1933 to 1934, he was appointed General Intendant of the Bavarian State Theatres, becoming one of the most influential figures in the German theatrical landscape. After continuing differences with the music director Clemens Krauss, he left Munich after the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia to continue as Superintendent of the theatres in Prague.

During the 1930s, he developed a penchant for Malipiero’s works and became their most industrious promotor and even the composer’s personal friend, as their vast correspondence shows. Almost every premiere of Malipiero’s works in Germany was staged by Walleck, beginning with the world premieres of \textit{Il mistero di Venezia} in Coburg in 1932, \textit{La favola} in Brunswick in 1934, and followed by the national premiere of \textit{Antonio e Cleopatra} in Bremen in 1939. In 1938 \textit{Giulio Cesare} had its German premiere in Gera after Walleck’s warm recommendation.\textsuperscript{16}

Walleck also used his political contacts several times to advocate Malipiero, especially after the scandal of \textit{La favola} in Darmstadt. Since the composer was left in some doubt by the events – whether his works were banned in Germany or not – Walleck personally spoke in Malipiero’s favour in front of Goebbels and helped him writing an explanatory (and fairly submissive) letter to Goebbels, even procuring him a personal audience with the German propaganda minister during the 1936 Olympic Games – a meeting Malipiero described as ‘satisfying’.\textsuperscript{17}
This naturally raises the question of his attitude towards the regimes which, however controversially discussed, is not the topic of this essay.\textsuperscript{18} To say that Malipiero sympathised with National Socialist ideals is more than doubtful, notwithstanding his bold declaration to a German interviewer in 1934 that all the ‘Tartarennachrichten [Tartary reports]’ of the foreign press on Germany and Italy were merely expressions of ‘the people’s envy, who don’t have a Hitler or a Mussolini’.\textsuperscript{19} Also, when Walleck asked him ‘with the utmost discretion’ to provide information on the Arian descent of the composer Vittorio Giannini, whose opera \textit{Lucedia} was to be performed in Munich in late 1934, he obliged without a second thought.\textsuperscript{20} However, according to the composer himself, it was predominantly the artistic possibilities of the German theatres as well as the quality of the performers that made German representations of his works so desirable.\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, in his constant craving for artistic recognition, as Fiamma Nicolodi argued, ‘neither a pessimistic view of life, nor the \textit{tedium vitae}, nor a contentious agreement with reality, nor a poetics of the negative would suffice as a vaccine to resist the allure of power’ and, one could add, to reject a performance of one of his works, as long as the artistic conditions were favourable.\textsuperscript{22}

\section*{III}

Concerning the reception of his works, I wish to focus on some aspects and recurring motives in German music critique. As his meticulously compiled collections of press material reveal, Malipiero’s works won much positive acclaim, even if there were the usual (and predictable) objections from time to time.\textsuperscript{23} A wide majority held his works and his determination to develop a new form of opera in high regard, independently of the newspapers’ political and aesthetic directions and their circulation. Thus his music was equally praised for its ‘gesunder Sinn für die Melodie [healthy sense for lyricism]’ by the \textit{Hakenkreuzbanner}, the National Socialist bulletin for Mannheim and Baden, as well as being described by the liberal (but meanwhile \textit{gleichgeschaltet}) \textit{Kölner Volkszeitung} of the former catholic \textit{Zentrum} Party as ‘geistig hochstehend [intellectually outstanding]’\textsuperscript{24}. Almost every critic considered Malipiero wilful, headstrong and even idiosyncratic – having a ‘eigener Kopf [mind of his own]’, and being an ‘Ausnahmeerscheinung [exceptional appearance]’.\textsuperscript{25} However, he was far from being called a ‘cerebral’ or ‘intellectualistic’ composer, which at the time were the major invectives against more advanced forms of musical expression: none of his works showed any symptoms of ‘degeneration’ or ‘überspitzte Experimentiersucht [excessive addiction to experimentation]’.\textsuperscript{26} Known as the rediscoverer and editor of Claudio
Monteverdi’s *Opera Omnia*, he was considered an intelligent and ambitious artist, who showed ‘Heimatverbundenheit [connectedness to his own soil]’ by trying to revive an aesthetic ideal of Italy’s glorious musical past.\(^27\)

More confusing for German critics was coping with the essentially ‘un-Italian’ character of Malipiero’s works. One reviewer characterised *Giulio Cesare* as an ‘Italian opera without arias, without pretty sensualism of sound, without lyricism to contrast with the austere and harsh world of the dramatic action’.\(^28\) Another author acknowledged that ‘he had the courage to break with everything the tradition of his home country had stood for over the previous two and a half centuries’.\(^29\)

Somehow the result of Malipiero’s exceptionality and artistic eccentricity was therefore the ‘difficulty in classifying’ his compositions.\(^30\) Most reviewers tried to identify Malipiero’s artistic affinities in order to describe the ‘phenotype’ of his works and to explain their particular appeal. Common references were Stravinsky’s ‘opera-oratorio forms’ (as exhibited exemplarily in *Oedipus Rex*) and his ‘bold and harsh musical language’, as well as Debussy’s ‘neo-French Impressionism’.\(^31\) Others compared his compositions to the works of Monteverdi, Puccini and, above all, to the German composers Handel (because of his *Giulio Cesare*),\(^32\) Gluck and Wagner (for their music dramatic concepts of a ‘folkish derived Gesamtkunstwerk’),\(^33\) as well as to Strauss and Pfitzner (for their orchestral technique).\(^34\) Over all, the German impact on Malipiero’s artistic affinities was regarded as substantial in the eyes of German commentators.

Some reviewers even mentioned Malipiero’s (in fact brief and hardly influential) studies with Max Bruch in Berlin in 1908, implying that traces of a musical ‘Germanness’ were already to be found in his early artistic formation.\(^35\) Nevertheless, it was obvious to the critics that his music comprised qualities usually associated with German music. As one writer mentioned, Malipiero’s works were ‘an outstanding example for spiritual chastity and clarity, dramatic veracity, artistic will to formal construction’.\(^36\) By stating the almost complete replacement of ‘harmonic function’ with ‘linear part-writing’ in his works,\(^37\) authors implied both distinction from the melody-based lyricism (recalling the ‘popular’ *bel canto*) and affinity to the polyphonic ‘profoundness’ of German ‘high’ art as ideally incorporated by Johann Sebastian Bach. In other words, as far as his musicality was concerned, Malipiero had to be located on the ‘Northern half’ of the dialectical relationship between Italy and Germany as symbolised by Engel’s table.

Statements on the ‘truthfulness’ of musical expression were deeply rooted in the above-mentioned tradition of thinking about German music as ‘pure’ and ‘true’ – in short ‘absolute music’ – as opposed to Italian and French operatic
forms, by then considered as superficial and ‘stagy’ products destined to satisfy the demands of the theatrical industry. Many authors thus compared Malipiero and Giuseppe Verdi in order to underline the difference between both (supposedly) opposed music traditions. In contrast to Verdi’s emotional settings of Shakespearean dramas, critics noted, Malipiero had chosen a more intellectual – hence Germanic – approach. ‘He turned his back on the bel canto that represents the essence of “Italianismo” from Scarlatti to Puccini, to achieve a new truthfulness of music-dramatic expression’.38

The term ‘music drama’, regularly used for Malipiero’s operas, clearly echoed Richard Wagner’s works. Especially in the adaptations of Shakespeare’s Giulio Cesare and Antonio e Cleopatra, Malipiero, according to the reviewers, had advanced to the ‘dramatic core’ of the plays by omitting all unnecessary scenes, and focusing instead on the psychological momentum of the action – an otherwise typical Wagnerian trait. ‘What he has in common with him [Wagner] is the leading idea on the one hand, and its condensation to the psychological core on the other’.39

Beyond the musical level, German critique diagnosed a convergence of spiritual affinities, a fact increasingly incited as the ‘Berlin – Rome Axis’ gradually consolidated. Repeatedly, authors discovered similarities between the Italian composer and the most promising members of the younger German generation, namely Werner Egk and Carl Orff. The affinity to the latter had already resulted from the choice of a common subject: ‘Both arranged “Orfeo” and other stage works of the great early-Baroque madrigalist [Monteverdi] as a result of a common Zeitgeist, which seeks a new, symbol- and ethos-fusing expression […]’.40 With respect to Egk, one review mentioned four factors as common denominators, namely the refusal of a nineteenth century operatic ideal, the renunciation of merely sensual or inebriating sound effects, the importance of the dramatic idea and the spiritual function of music, and the wish to educate the audience ethically.41

Some writers went even further. As mentioned above, music quality, for the German critique, was a sign of ‘Nordic’ predisposition. Thus, if one critic noted that Malipiero represented the ‘type of the Nordic Italian’,42 he suggested more than just Malipiero’s birth region in the Northern part of Italy. Instead he designated the descent from an area where a ‘Nordic’ influence was supposedly still recognisable. The final ‘proof’ of Malipiero’s ‘Nordic’ descent was to be found in his physique. ‘At first glance, one wouldn’t expect him to be an Italian – he has low set grey eyes, sometimes shimmering with a blue glow, and his sharp-featured head with greying hair appears entirely German’.43 It was somehow the logical consequence for commentators, to tie the composer’s
‘Nordic’ appearance to his artistic output. In his review of *Antonio e Cleopatra*, Heinz Fuhrmann assessed that Antonio had been ‘idealised by the blue-eyed, grey-haired Italian Malipiero “Nordically”’ (leaving to interpretation, or rather imagination, what he intended with this claim).44 The fixation on the physical appearance and especially the eye colour of the composer bore a striking resemblance to the German reception of Giuseppe Verdi at around the same time, even if he was considered a typical representative of Italian music.45 In 1934, Herbert Gerigk, one of the most radical fanatics among the German musicologists under Hitler, wrote that with his ‘blue eyes and brown hair’ Verdi simply must have had a fair share of ‘Nordic blood’.46 He continued, ‘[c]onsidering the Italian nation, we always have to make a distinction between the small, racially valuable part and the refuse that this area, as the heart of the ancient world, has been forced to accept during thousands of years’.47 From a German perspective, Verdi and Malipiero both belonged to that ‘valuable’ part of Italians, precisely because they were not entirely Italian after all. This was the utmost degree of evaluating a composer, to which artistic output and even nationality became secondary to racial descent, foreshadowing all the by now well-known fatal consequences of racial policy.

IV

Malipiero owed his considerable success in 1930s and 1940s Germany to his influential friends and supporters and the general appreciation of his music by German audiences. His pronounced dissociation from the canonised Italian operatic tradition ranging from Rossini to Puccini, his innovative approaches to music-dramatic concepts and his advanced but not overly experimental language made his music attractive to a broad public. Particularly his operas, which defied common stereotypes of Italian music, left room for interpretation and (self-)identification – Malipiero’s music clearly struck a chord in 1930s Germany.

What should also have become clear by now is that writing about Malipiero’s works in Nazi Germany first and foremost meant writing about German music itself or, on a more basic level, about the Self and the Other in general. It is thus a phenomenon described by recent sociological research according to which ‘people tend to create a positive self-concept / self-image by means of a self-affirmative perspective on the world and others’.48 Naturally, this form of self-affirmation is neither limited to music nor to Nazi Germany nor to the 1930s and 1940s in general.49 What distinguished the 1930s and 1940s from preceding and especially subsequent decades is not the fact that foreign artistic
works could be claimed as part of the local culture but the degree to which this was possible.

The hegemonic implications of such claims have long since been revealed by the various cultural anthropological studies since the 1970s. Scholars have asserted that speaking or writing about another culture can be a form of exercising power as it often produces an asymmetrical relation between one’s own and the other culture.\textsuperscript{50} In terms of writing about music, German critics tried to grasp the value of a foreign composer’s oeuvre by applying categories usually associated with German music. Since German music was considered more ‘valuable’ than its Italian counterpart they generated the above-mentioned asymmetries. By accrediting the identifying characteristics of a foreign composer with characterisations of their own culture, they carried out what might be called cultural usurpation. Musical ‘Germanness’ could derive from either a biographical, aesthetical, spiritual or a biological/racial level – or, as in the case of Malipiero’s ‘Germanisation’, all of them at once.
Notes

1 Hans Engel, *Deutschland und Italien in ihren musikgeschichtlichen Beziehungen*, Regensburg: Bosse, 1944.


5 Most of the following sources are cited after Malipiero’s own vast collections of press material, preserved at Venezia, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Fondo Gian Francesco Malipiero (FGFM), subsequently referred to as ‘Albums’. I should like to thank Dr. Francisco Rocca, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, for his generous support of my research.


8 Hortensia Weiher-Waege, ‘Kühner Geist im jungen italienischen Opernschaffen’, *Hamburger Anzeiger*, 17 February 1941 (Album ‘Vol. 9’).


12 Letter from Oskar Walleck to Gian Francesco Malipiero, Brunswick, 13 April 1934 (FGFM, fasc. ‘La favola del figlio cambiato. (Branschweig, 1934’)).

13 [Without title], *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, LXI/6, 9 February 1934, p. 71.


Letter from Oskar Walleck to Erbprinz Reuß, Munich, 1 December 1937 (FGFM, fasc. ‘Giulio Cesare. Gera 1938’).

Letter from Walleck to Malipiero, Munich, 17 June 1936 (FGFM, fasc. ‘Walleck, Oskar’). The draft of the letter to Goebbels is in FGFM, fasc. ‘Walleck, Oskar’: letter from Malipiero to Walleck, Asolo (Treviso), 4 June 1934. After the war, Malipiero described the meeting as rather unpleasant, Gian Francesco Malipiero, Così va lo mondo, Milano: Il balcone, 1946, pp. 60–61.


‘[…] Neid der Leute, die keinen Hitler oder Mussolini haben’. Martin Koegel, ‘Malipiero über Deutschland und Italien’, Braunschweigische Landeszeitung, 13 January 1934 (Album ‘Vol. 7 – La favola del figlio cambiato’).

Letters from Walleck to Malipiero, 6 September 1934, 17 September 1934, and 27 September 1934 (FGFM, fasc. ‘Walleck, Oskar’). Walleck later thanked Malipiero for helping with his ‘investigation’, see letter from Walleck to Malipiero, Munich, 26 November 1934 (ibidem).


‘né una concezione pessimistica, né il tedium vitae, né un’intesa conflittuale con il reale, né la poetica del negativo, risultano antidoti sufficienti per resistere alle lusinghe del potere’. Nicolodi, Musica e musicisti, p. 200.


Georg Bonte, ‘Die Renaissance des frühbarocken Musikdramas’, Berliner Börsen-Zeitung, 8 December 1938 (Album ‘Vol. 8’).

Peter Funk, ‘Shakespeares Drama in der jungitalienischen Oper’, Hakenkreuzbanner, 28 January 1942 (Album ‘Vol. 9’).


‘[…] er [hatte] den Mut, mit allem zu brechen, was seit zweieinhalb Jahrhunderten die Tradition seiner Heimat ist’. Fred Hamel, ‘Oper nach Calderón’, Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, 21 June 1943 (Album ‘Vol. 6 – Mistero Venezia, Orfeide, La vita è sogno’).

‘Julius Cäsar’ auf jungitalienische Art, Hamburger Tageblatt, 17 February 1941 (Album ‘Vol. 8’).


Weiher-Waege, ‘Kühner Geist’; Wittke, ‘Malipieros Julius Cäsar’.

‘[…] ein überragendes Beispiel geistiger Zucht und Klarheit, dramatischer Wahrhaftigkeit, künstlerischen Formwillens’. Karl H. Ruppel, ‘”Julius Cäsar” als Musikdrama’, Kölnische Zeitung, 10 December 1938 (Album ‘Vol. 8’).

‘Die harmonische Funktion ist weitgehend abgelöst durch eine lineare Stimmführung […]’. [Without author], “Julius Cäsar” auf jungitalienische Art, Hamburger Tageblatt, 17 February 1941 (Album ‘Vol. 8’).

‘Er wandte sich ab vom Belcanto, der von Scarlatti bis Puccini der Inbegriff des “Italianismo” ist, um zu neuer Wahrheit musikdramatischen Ausdrucks zu gelangen’. Hamel, ‘Oper nach Calderón’.


Max Broesike-Schoen, ‘Malipieros “Antonius und Kleopatra”’, Hamburger Fremdenblatt, 27 February 1939 (Album ‘Vol. 9’).


Lajos Brons, ‘Othering, an Analysis’, *Transcience*, VI/1, 2015, pp. 69–90: 76.
