

TRANSMISSION AND TRANSFORMATION

an ethno-musicological study of the
Italian-Canadian community of Toronto

Roberta De Piccoli - ICAMus



Abstract

- Two of the most relevant questions about the Italo-Canadian migration history are related to colonialism and diaspora awareness (for political, religious or economic reasons). The musical functions are connected with two different ways of understanding the process: the musical annexation of a new homeland and the reminiscence of the lost homeland.
- Toronto is one of the cities with the highest density of Italian ethnicity in the world. Theatres, music hall, and schools of music, which are part of an extended social ritual participation, were built in the XX century, with the aid of large Italian workforce and labour. The adjective, “Italian” includes people from different regions, with their own specific language and dialect, without a consistent integration in-between.
- An original video is presented as result of an experimental inquiry carried out in Toronto from October 2018 through May 2019. The interviews with individuals from three historical migration waves address the topics of how problematic it is to acknowledge the common Italian denominator(s) toward a definition of music identity; what is nostalgic and what is ‘real’; how, and to what extent it is possible to recognize such common element(s) as part of today’s culture, through a fluid perception of space/time and temporality.
- This research is carried out in collaboration with ICAMus, The International Center for American Music.



RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS – THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Francesco Balilla Pratella

(Lugo di Romagna, 1890 – Ravenna, 1955)

Futurism's co-founder (*Manifesto dei musicisti Futuristi*, 1911).

One of the principal pioneers of Italian ethno-musicological studies (since 1903: *ethnophonies*).

A founder member of the International Folk Music Council in 1947.

With Francesco Malipiero, Ildebrando Pizzetti and Francesco Casella:

- *Raccolta Nazionale delle Musiche Italiane* (1918-1921)
- *I Classici della Musica Italiana* (1919-1921)



Opera?

Francesco Balilla Pratella's work rejects Opera as obsolete art.

Ethno-musicological studies:

Diego Carpitella questioned whether it might be better to consider Opera as a form of serious or popular music (1950-1990).

Roberto Leydi highlights the widespread use of popular and folk music in Italian Opera, especially true in Romantic masterpieces from Rossini to Puccini (1988).

Musicological studies:

Giovanni Morelli demonstrated that Opera is an artificial form of Italian identity created to give a national culture to the new Nation.

Italo-Canadian migration history

colonialism

the annexation of a new homeland and the reminiscence of the lost homeland.

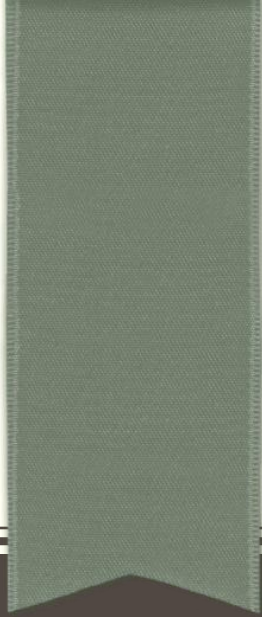
diaspora awareness

(for political, religious or economic reasons)

people from different regions, with their own specific language and dialect, original melodies, lyrics and ritual functions.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY
COMMON ITALIAN
DENOMINATORS WITH MUSIC
AMONG SO MANY DIFFERENCES?





RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

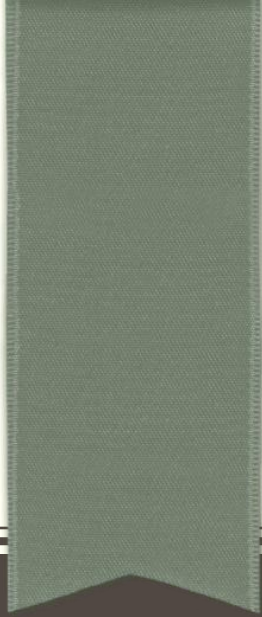
Research Objectives

- Pratella's research and his collection as a sort of musical *reportage* of Italy between the two World Wars.
- I will consider how the Italian community in Toronto has conserved and transmitted its distinct musical traditions in terms of folklore, popular and so-called serious music.
- I will further enquire into the interplay between this music and other musical cultures within the city.



THE SUBJECT:
THE CITY OF TORONTO AND
ITALIAN-CANADIAN MUSIC



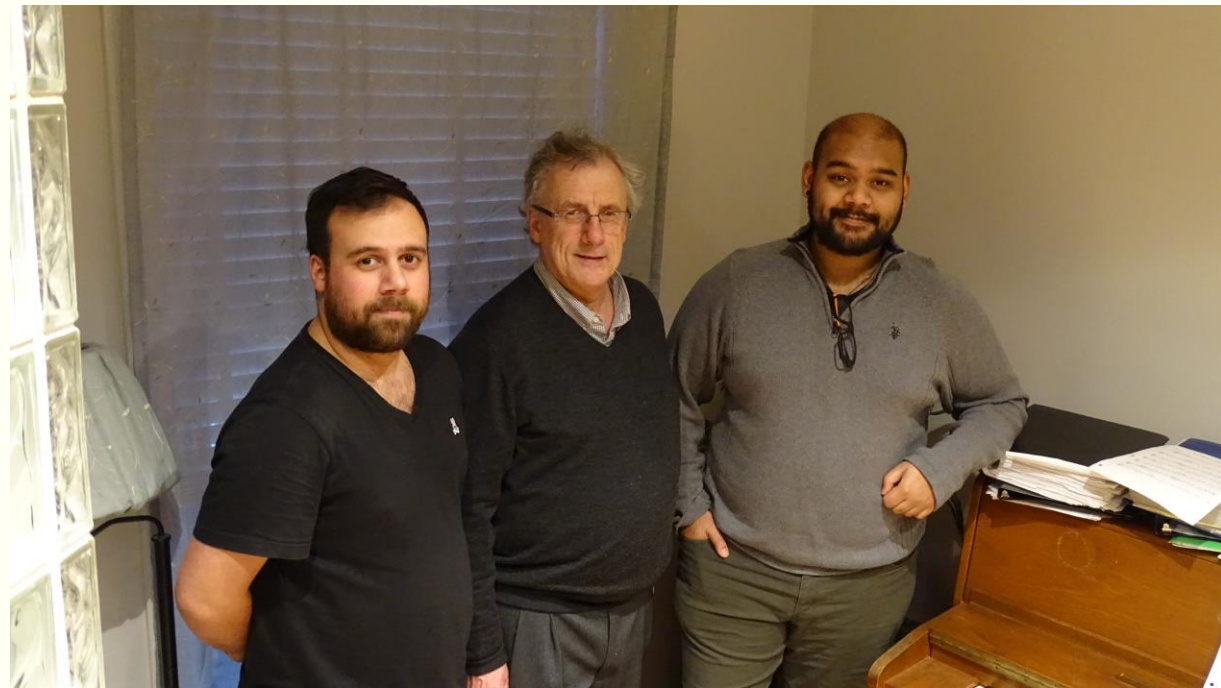
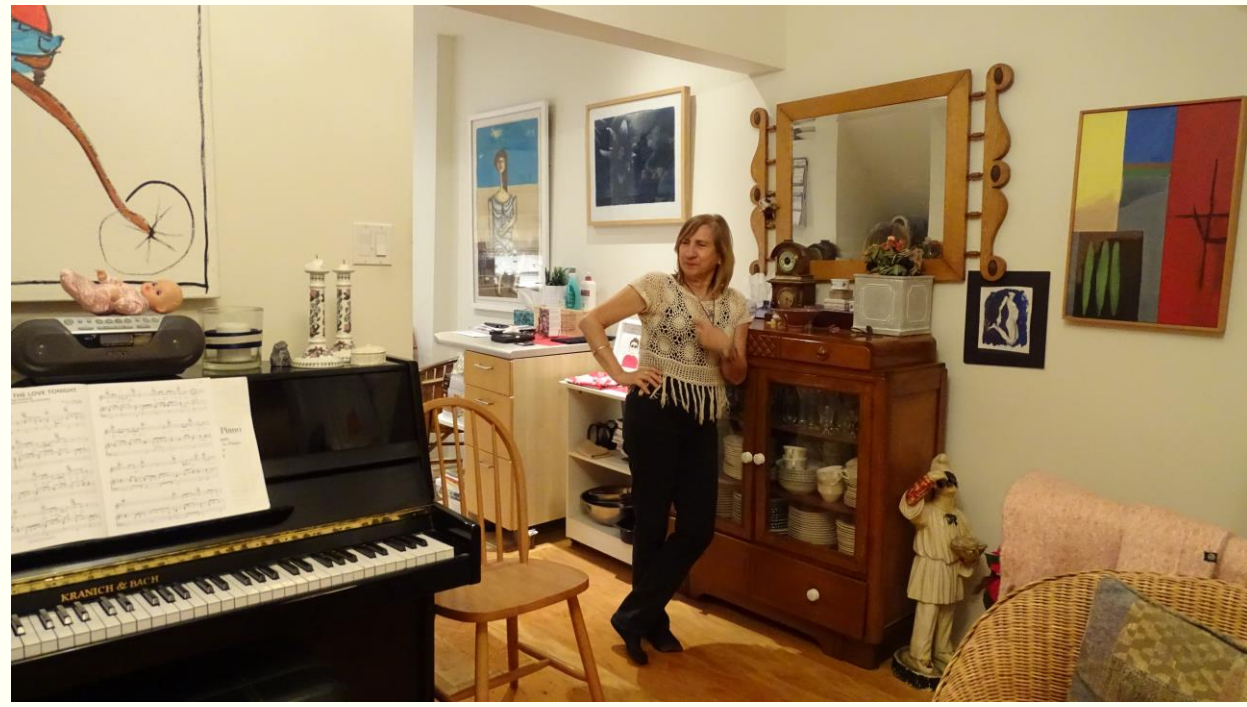


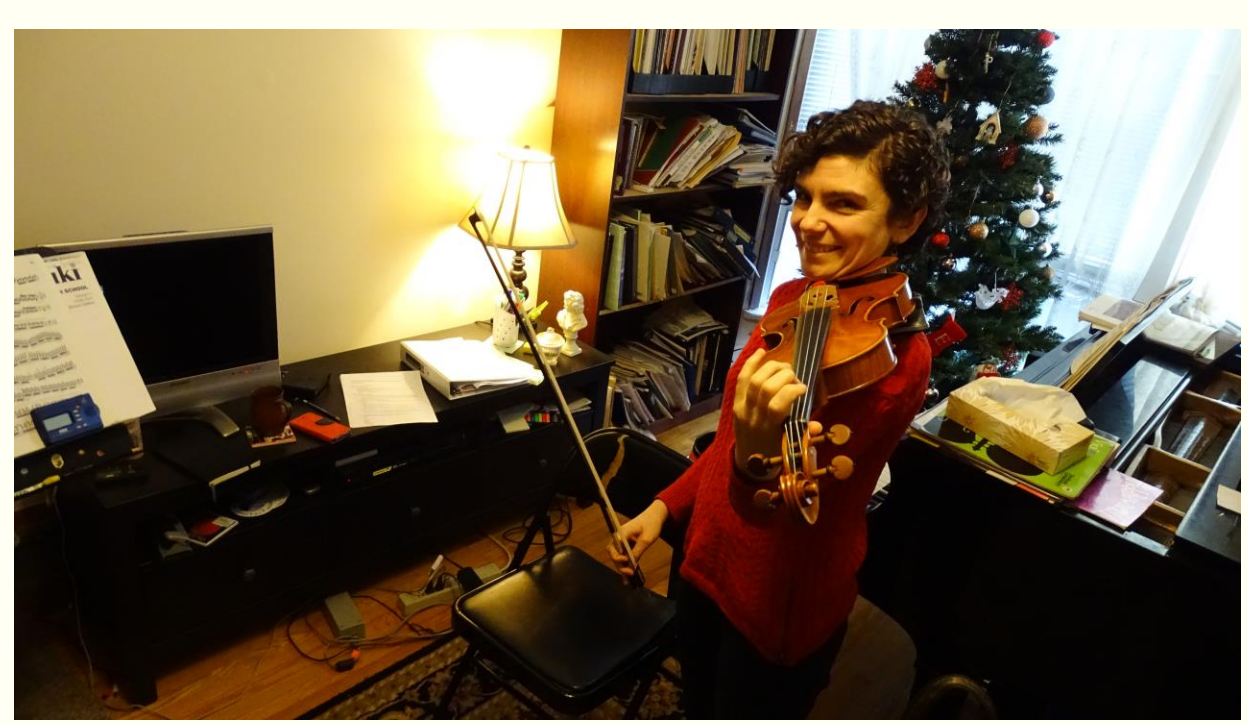
THE RESEARCH METHOD: AN ETHNO-MUSICOLOGICAL APPROACH

A fieldwork in the city of Toronto

- The interviews were held in Toronto over a 13-day period between the end of December 2018 and the beginning of January 2019.
- I met, in person, 19 individuals and a choir (in the following pictures: Elena Basile, Gianna Patriarca, Michael Occhipinti, Justine Jacoboni, Alberto Di Giovanni, Bruna Di Giuseppe-Bertoni, Daniela Nardi, Daniel e Michael Colla, Emanuele Lepri, Elena Spanu, Elizabeth Cinello, John Picchione, Marcel Danesi, Guillaume Bernardi, Mary-Grace Capobianco, Coro di Mississauga; and Adriana Monti).
- Other respondents, whom I was not able to meet, sent me personal information in writing, or we skyped.
- Others still offered their availability for a future detailed study (at present, most of the Italo-Canadians live outside of the city, in Woodbridge and Mississauga).









a questionnaire / 20 hours of recording

Specific subjects:

- ✓ brief autobiography;
- ✓ personal definition of music identity and identity per se;
- ✓ musical memories;
- ✓ repertoire connected with the idea of preservation and transformation.

A list of selected composers/titles of arias and choral works present in a textbook compiled by Achille Schinelli between the World Wars.



**FIRST RESULTS:
A SHORT DOCUMENTARY**

Transmission and Transformation: an original video



Music emerged **as** background, **as** human experience and expression, **as** subject, **as** time, **as** space, **as** a product of space-time, **as** a special context in which to offer an idea of both linear and vertical perception.

Music **is** an intersection at which perception/representation of life takes place.

If we conceptualize narrative organization as being in constant space-time mutation, then it follows that the time frameworks which emerged spontaneously throughout the video might also be organized in terms of non-linear temporality.



Spatial/temporal factors

- Choirs and Churches;
- Church calendar and *repertoire*;
- The church altar provided at the same time a liturgical space and a stage suitable for choral performances, ensemble concerts and also for a form of entertainment characteristic of the Italian community in Toronto;
- Cabaret shows in “Itagliese.”

Coro San Marco - Toronto



Giovanni Aprea ---- Fotos for italiani.ca web magazine



Giovanni Aprea ---- Fotos for italiani.ca web magazine

Palestrina Chamber Chorus - Toronto

«Concerto di Natale»,
December 10th, 2000

Palestrina Chamber Chorus

Sabattino Yacek, Conductor
Mazy Ficere, Accompanist

The Palestrina Chamber Chorus was founded in September 1997 at the initiative of Alberto Di Giovanni, Director of Centro Scuola e Cultura Italiana/Columbus Centre. The mandate of the Palestrina Chamber Chorus is to provide young talented singers with the opportunity to perform extensively both in Canada and abroad. This new choir made its debut at the MacMillan Theatre at the University of Toronto in December 1997, as part of Centro Scuola's annual Christmas Concert. In April 1998 the Palestrina Chamber Chorus joined the Virtuosi di Toronto, conducted by Fabio Mastrangelo, in a memorable concert at the Ford Centre for the Performing Arts. The Chorus successfully made its mark in the international music arena while touring Italy in May 1998 and in the Summer of 1999. This young vocal ensemble is comprised of 33 gifted singers, many of whom are embarking on professional music careers. After a busy concert season, they once again prepare to tour Italy responding to the invitations of several international festivals.

Schola Cantorum

Franca Di Giovanni, Conductor
Antonio De Walle, Accompanist

Schola Cantorum is a children choir founded by Centro Scuola e Cultura Italiana/Columbus Centre to enhance its cultural activities and enrich music appreciation among young students. In eight years of activity Schola Cantorum has performed both in Canada and in Italy. The conductor is Franca Di Giovanni, who was one of the very first members of the choir since its inception in 1991.

Under the Auspices of the Consulate General of Italy

CENTRO SCUOLA E CULTURA ITALIANA
COLUMBUS CENTRE

and

ISTITUTO ITALIANO DI CULTURA

present

Concerto di Natale

Sunday, December 10th, 2000

St. Charles Borromeo

Programme

Schola Cantorum/Centro Scuola

Conductor, Franco Di Giovanni
Accompanist, Antonia Nickititu Mihaleche

Night of Silence/Silent Night D. Kantor/*F. Gruber*

Lullaby Noel/The First Noel Arr. G. L. O. Strid

White Christmas Irving Berlin

Tu scendi dalle stelle
Arr. Roy Ringwald
A. de' Liguori
Arr. L. Molfino

"Corale A. Dacini" (Arr. Italy)

Conductor, Carmine Leonzi

Dormi, amor mio Dommarco-Limarino
Arr. Concesio Leonzi

guitar soloist: Gino Maria Melchiorre Ricci

Oggi è nato il Salvatore Anonimo
Arr. Concesio Leonzi

Shalom Anonimo
Arr. Sebastian Korn

soloist: Carmine Leonzi, tenor

Ave Maria F. Biehl

soloists: Carlo Anagna, tenor

Concesio Leonzi, tenor
Carmine Leonzi, baritone



INTERMISSION

Programme

Palestrina Choir

Conductor, Sabatino Vacca
Accompanist, Mary Fitzcarr

Magnificat Domenico Scarlatti

O Holy Night! Adolphe Adam
soloist: Jason-Ray Papanicolas

Dans Angelicus César Franck
Arr. Howard Cable

He Shall Feed His Flock G. F. Handel
soloist: Sarah Maria Ciccarelli-Kramer

Excerpt from
"Lauda per la natività del Signore" Ottorino Respighi
soloists: Sarah Maria Ciccarelli-Kramer and Maddalena Parisi

Ave Verum W. A. Mozart
guest conductor: Fabio Mastropiero

The Christmas Song Irving Berlin
soloist: Nadine Colacetti-McHough

The Little Drummer Boy K. Davis, H. Onorati,
H. Simeone
Arr. Sabatino Vacca

Schola Cantorum Palestrina Choir Corale A. Dacini

Adeste Fideles J. F. Wade
Arr. D. Willcocks

Joy to the World G. F. Handel
Arr. D. Willcocks



Language Factors

- ✓ Latin;
- ✓ regional dialect;
- ✓ Italian;
- ✓ “Itagliese”;
- ✓ English;
- ✓ new languages

A new rite: December 21st, the Befana's night





Economical-Social Factors

Employment opportunities for Italian musicians were and still are: band leader; choirmaster; singer (opera-folk-traditional-pop); accordionist; professional player (especially of piano and violin); music teacher and Academic professor; music broadcaster; jazz player (both professional and non-professional).

For many musicians, evening engagements in public are considered a way of paying their University fees, but an absolutely new profession came into being – the coach for singers of Italian Baroque vocal music.

An extraordinary ‘new’ example is the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir (officially active since 1979 and in partnership with the UT Faculty of Music).

M^o Dominique Capobianco

Letterio Ciriaco

Insegnante Titolare nel Conservatorio di Musica "S. CECILIA" in Roma

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I CORSO

II CORSO

III CORSO

IV CORSO

APPENDICE AL III CORSO
(15 LEZIONI SUGLI ABBELLIMENTI)

II COURS

IInd COURSE

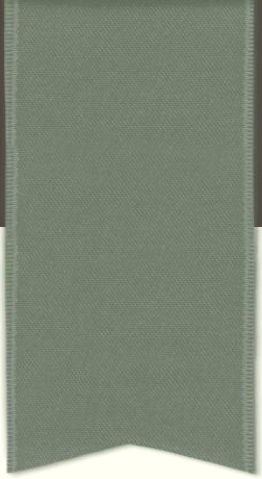
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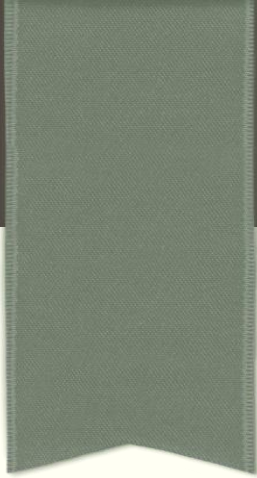
Italian Opera

Verdi, Puccini, Donizetti, Mascagni, Leoncavallo

“Va pensiero”

Arrangements of overtures and famous arias

LPs of celebrated tenors Caruso and Pavarotti



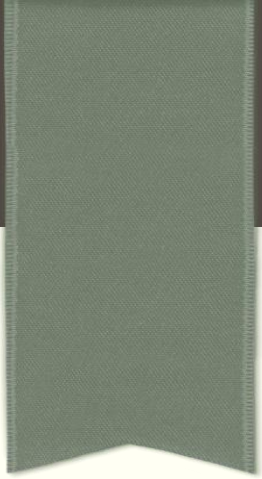
Radio

CHIN radio, founded by Jonny Lombardi (1966)

San Remo nel Mondo

Italian standards from the 1950s

hits from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s



Singers-songwriters

Italian singers-songwriters of the 1970s and 1980s (Paolo Conte, Francesco Guccini, Fabrizio De André, Francesco De Gregori).

Some texts were translated into English, set in new arrangements and performed by Daniela Nardi (*Espresso Manifesto project*).



https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=15&v=xiWituqf31s



Traditional music

Collections of Italian folk tunes are used as textbooks, resource material of words and music that help Italians discover their roots. This material is recycled in new arrangements, often in a jazz-swing style with echoes of klezmer.

For instance, in order to carry out his *Mourica* project, Michael Occhipinti studied the Sicilian ethno-musicological research by Sergio Bonanzinga.

Elizabeth Cinello's telling: she discovered her music heritage thanks to an old female immigrant from Friuli who sung to her a Ladin-Jewish tune.

Muorica

Michael Occhipinti & The Sicilian Project



<https://www.michaelocchipintimusic.com/the-sicilian-project>



CONCLUSIONS:

what did our research reveal and to what further areas should it be extended?

A partial review

First, Baroque music ,not Opera, develops as a direct result of the spread of Italian culture; this is part of a dominant Italian heritage, initially connected with social-religious factors, but is also connected with French, English and German music history; moreover, it often explores oriental-exotic worlds.

Second, in response to questions raised by Carpitella, Leydi and Morelli, outside of Italy Opera appears not so relevant in terms of ‘popular’ Italian music identity. However, it becomes more attractive when explicitly related to a program of language study, Academic or not.

Third, the accordion and the accordionist’s world demand further exploration, above all in terms of work opportunities, in music education and in social-ritual events.

Pratella's analysis

Pratella stressed the interconnections between “low” and “high” culture, and between masterpieces, past and present.

He considered traditional and popular music, oratorio, incidental music, and also Baroque music on the same line.

He sought to offer a wider vision of his contemporary Italian music, describing it as a manifold expression of human emotions, thoughts, language and life (for a theatrical expression of *stati dell'animo* in a way similar to the *affects theory*).

His quest for Italian music, in its multifarious meanderings, reflected the long historical quest for self-definition of Italy itself.

Music is part of a series of social rituals in evolution, as also Marcello Sorce Keller forcefully argues.

Pratella believed in the educational social power of music:

- He asserts that musical identity is possible only if the individual is in relation to the collectivity, as an active listener and performer.
- He embraced the idea that individuals should sacrifice themselves for the collectivity.

The choir is the most natural expression of this spirit, both in Pratella's thought and for the Toronto community.