

the assumptions that structure the study of migration. A second volume, focusing on the culture of this postwar community, has just been published. The success of Volume 1 in achieving both of these ends makes it of exceptional value for students, scholars, and general readers.

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*Jazz Italian Style: From Its Origins in New Orleans to Fascist Italy and Sinatra.*

By Anna Harwell Celenza.

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255 pages.

An increasing body of research has been published in English in the past few years about the different facets of European jazz. Most of it deals with France and England, with some attention to Germany. For many other European countries, this literature exists only in the national languages. Musicians of Italian heritage are mentioned in all jazz history books, where the Italian presence at the music's birth in New Orleans has been widely discussed, but to my knowledge this is the first extended study in English of early Italian jazz.

A narrative about Italian jazz forms the body of the book, framed by a prologue and an epilogue, anchored by Frank Sinatra's early career, his first radio broadcast in 1935, the failed tour with the Hoboken Four, and his rediscovery by Harry James in 1939. Celenza's provocative thesis is that Sinatra in those four years developed his style based on inspiration from Italian swing singers (principal among them Natalino Otto [1912–1969]) he heard on recordings and on the radio while living in the Hoboken, New Jersey, Italian community. In a reversal of the usual one-way history of influences and inspirations, Celenza gives a full background story, rethreading back to the birth of jazz in New Orleans with its well-established Italian presence, then moving to the perception of jazz as “futurist” in the United States during the 1910s and 1920s and to the arrival of American jazz in Italy immediately after World War I.

From there, she traces the development of jazz in Italy until the end of World War II in 1945. Celenza offers a rich history of jazz in Italy during these decades. Jazz had been embraced by Italians as early as 1919 when *La lettura* magazine published what is possibly the first European reportage about the new music in New Orleans. In fact, in 1917 the young Italian guitarist Vittorio

Spina was already playing banjo with an American military band stationed in Italy during World War I. By the end of the 1920s most major cities had venues where the new dance music was played, attracting the interest of a new generation of young, urban listeners as well as artists, musicians, and writers. Initially embraced by the futurists, jazz was more and more under attack by the Fascist press after 1935, and the combination of anti-Jewish legislation after 1937 and a prohibition of American and English music (initially after the Italo-Ethiopian War and later with renewed ferocity after Italy's declaration of war in 1940) effectively banned jazz from the airwaves and from record distribution, even if the music's popularity compelled the regime to allow Italian bands to play syncopated dance music. Jazz pieces were masqueraded behind safer Italian titles and falsely attributed to jazz musicians like Nick LaRocca or Joe Venuti, whose Italian names would not raise suspicions.

During World War II, when Italy was cruelly divided, spreading the sounds of swing was part of the propaganda effort of American troops on the march to Rome, bringing with them V-Discs and big bands. At the same time, radio broadcasts from Italian Fascist and German stations also promoted swing from Milan to attract and keep listeners tuned to their own propaganda. That Fascism and Mussolini did not completely ban but in fact supported some expressions of Italian jazz for political reasons is not an argument unique to this book; other scholars, including the ethnomusicologist Roberto Leydi (1992, 301–315), have already treated this complicated topic in careful detail.

Celenza's writing is clear and well articulated, and she eschews the use of academic jargon. Her empathy with her subject, and the excitement in discovering uncharted musical territories during her stay in Italy for four years, help make the book eminently readable. Although she writes that "I am coming to this topic subject as an outsider" (5), Celenza has had a distinguished career as a musicologist, with interests straddling the divide between jazz and Western classical music. Her outsider quality comes from being an American; despite her Italian-sounding (married) name, she is neither an Italian American nor a native Italian speaker, even if her command of the language allows her to follow the latest research.

This point of view enables her to approach the subject with a critical distance, taking a refreshing look at a period that is too often summarily dealt with in Italy on the basis of conventional wisdom. She grounds her work on the solid scholarship of the history of Italian jazz edited by Adriano Mazzoletti with discographies and bibliographies by Marcello Piras, *Il Jazz in Italia* (Mazzoletti 2004), as well as on the companion photographic book *L'Italia del jazz* (Mazzoletti 2011).

The panorama of intricate relationships between Italian American musical culture and American popular music during these decades is painted in this

book with detail and clarity and is remarkably complete, even if the brief look at the 78 rpm production by and for Italian emigrants did not take into account works by, among others, Giuliana Fugazzotto (2010). However, Celenza's cursory treatment of the many African influences on Italian music can be confusing. She also appears to assume strong influences in Italy of North and West African music, while suggesting the influence of Eritrean music on Italian popular music due to the Italian colonization of Eritrea (which cannot be included in either of the mentioned African regions).

A key quotation, much used in the publisher's promotions of the book, remains unattributed: Where did Mussolini say, "Jazz is the voice of Italian youth"? While most scholars agree that there was no official prohibition of jazz by law, and there is evidence that Mussolini's family enjoyed listening at home to jazz, it is difficult to demonstrate that Italian jazz was supported by Mussolini. The Fascist press constantly attacked the music; fanatics even physically threatened Natalino Otto in Bergamo (as Celenza herself relates), and Mussolini publicly associated himself with Western classical music, opera, or regional folk, but never with jazz. The pictures of his sons with bandleader Gaetano "Milietto" Nervetti were kept private. And futurists abandoned their support of jazz and joined with the regime after the race laws to condemn "negroid" music. Composer Franco Casavola's famous defense of jazz was a break with futurism and a reaction to attacks from the Fascist press. How can one say that it was embraced by the Fascists? Most importantly, Otto himself was never allowed to sing on the radio, while the average radio fare included plenty of sentimental songs, including *canzone napoletana*, which remained hugely popular all over the country.

The stylistic links Celenza pursues between Otto and Sinatra also remain vague at best. Otto worked on transatlantic liners from 1932 to 1935, imbibing American styles during his many stops in New York. In the biography written by his daughter (Sandon, 2014), Otto's memoirs reveal the making of a private acetate record and a performance on the radio. In Celenza's book this brief encounter is stretched into a claim that Otto "secured work singing for an Italian American radio station, most likely WOV" (145). Sinatra, living in an Italian New Jersey community, "over its airwaves . . . no doubt encountered Natalino Otto" (145). Too many assumptions.

Celenza also argues that Sinatra brought to Harry James's orchestra the Italian song "Ciribiribin" as a signature tune (189). Composed by Alberto Pestalozza in 1898, the song had already become an American staple by 1911. It was recorded in Italy in the mid-1930s and was a hit in Gracie Moore's popular rendition in the American movie *One Night of Love* (1934). Celenza's suggestion that Sinatra brought the song straight from Italy in 1939 is not supported by the facts.

Otto did not start to record until 1939, when Sinatra's new style was already formed. Celenza would have been better served by identifying examples of performance styles shared by Otto and the early Sinatra. Sinatra, of course, downplayed his Sicilian heritage, for a number of public and private reasons. The atrocious manner in which Sinatra sings the word *ciribiribin* hardly reflects any serious study by Sinatra of Italian singers—in the way that, for example, his phrasing and inflection were so clearly inspired by Billie Holiday and Mabel Mercer. His command of the Italian language was nonexistent as well. And in Sinatra's final concert in Italy in Pompeii in 1991 he let go for a second, inserting a vulgar Southern Italian phrase to comment on the lady's attitude in the song "The Lady Is a Tramp" ("Sinatra dice le parolacce" 1991).

In a multilingual book such as this, misspellings are hard to avoid, and here are some examples: Giovanni (for Giovani) Bersaglieri (16), Ambulente Villaggio (for Ambulanti Villaggio (18), sorriso (for sorriso) (176), picchando (for picchiando) (177), and even Mazzoletti loses a "z" (204). Translating "I Quattro Buffoni" as "The Four Idiots" (18) is also questionable—there's *idiota* in Italian for that. The Italian newspaper in San Francisco is not *La voce del padrone* (which is the Italian version of the recording label trademark His Master's Voice) but rather *La voce del popolo* (22).

Jazz certainly enjoyed a degree of popularity in Fascist Italy and did so in a much more nuanced way than has been commonly perceived. That story is well presented in Celenza's solid narrative of early Italian jazz, and her book fills a gaping hole in the literature in English, despite the questionability of some of her conclusions. Celenza's extensive research on Italian original sources, clear narration, and exhaustive bibliography will be extremely useful and should stimulate further work.

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