

Article received on August 29<sup>th</sup> 2024  
Article accepted on November 27<sup>th</sup> 2024

Original scientific paper

UDC 781.68

78(450)"1930/1989"

DOI: 10.5937/newso2464042M

**Julija Matejić\***

Independent researcher

Belgrade

**THE ART OF MUSICAL INTERPRETATION:  
NON-POSITIVIST APPROACHES IN ITALIAN  
MUSICOLOGICAL AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE  
(1930–1989)\*\***

**Abstract:** The subject of this paper is a discussion of distinguished Italian thinkers, musicologists and critics on the topic of musical interpretation, initiated in 1930 in the periodical *La Rassegna Musicale*. In the following years – contrary to the positivism that dominated in Italy at the end of the 19th century, and influenced by the Crocean idealism – numerous authors *breathed life* into the performer, recognizing their part in the creation of musical meaning. This summary of the most important arguments of the selected Italian authors from the 1930s to the 1980s provides an insight into that dynamic debate, which until now has not been present in the Serbian musicological literature. The importance of their departure from the dominant posi-

---

\* The author's contact details: [julijamatejic@gmail.com](mailto:julijamatejic@gmail.com).

\*\* This research was conducted at the University of Bologna (Dipartimento delle Arti; Dottorato in Arti Visive, Performative, Mediali), with valuable guidance from Prof. Dr. Carla Cuomo, and thanks to the Erasmus Mundus SUNBEAM scholarship. In a slightly different form and under the title "*Interpretazione musicale: layering and ambiguity of the term*", the research was included in the doctoral dissertation "Theory of performing practices in music: the performativity of pianism" which the author defended in 2024 at the University of Arts in Belgrade (mentor: Prof. Dr. Tijana Popović Mladenović, co-mentor: Prof. Dr. Miodrag Šuvaković).

tivist approach is emphasized by the fact that similar postulates in the Anglo-Saxon literature gained momentum significantly later – only at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Key words:** musical interpretation, musical text, notation insufficiency, Crocean idealism, *La Rassegna Musicale*

*“Pausing to observe reality in its process, and not only in its outcome, presumes a love for life in all its values.”<sup>1</sup>*

Fedele D’Amico<sup>2</sup>

Although we experience music through the sense of hearing – during the processes of performing and listening – traditional musicology is largely based on the (non-acoustic) score as the musical work (‘outcome’).<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, in the century behind us – when the roles of the composer and the performer were (‘completely’) separated, consequently, notation became more complex, and the work-concept was at its peak – the definition of the concept of musical interpretation has *haunted* theorists, aestheticians, philosophers, critics, and musicians worldwide. Simply put, while in literature and in the visual arts a particular poem, painting or sculpture represents an *entire* and *externalized* work of art, this is not the case with a musical text;<sup>4</sup> it requires an (certain) interpretation. Numerous discussions were initiated with the aim of philosophical interpretation of this phenomenon; for some authors – the interpreter is ‘a mere technician,’ for others – a ‘creative creator.’

---

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from the Italian language were translated by the author of the article, while the original texts are listed in the footnotes, to qualitatively contribute to the article.

“Sofferarsi a osservare la realtà nel suo processo e non soltanto nel suo esito suppone infatti un amore per la vita in tutti i suoi valori.”

<sup>2</sup> Fedele D’Amico, “Musica in piazza”, in: Fedele D’Amico (Ed.), *I casi della musica*, Milano, Il Saggiatore, [1960]1962, 353.

<sup>3</sup> The research of musical performance has gained a more significant place in the musicological discourse only in recent decades.

<sup>4</sup> Giorgio Graziosi, “Note sull’interpretazione”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, [1938]1966, 337.

Therefore, the subject of this paper is one of the most significant discussions of renown Italian intellectuals, musicologists and critics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the topic of musical interpretation, so far unknown in Serbian musicological literature. By systematizing their contributions, I provide a basis for a better understanding not only of the notion of *interpretazione musicale*, but also of the development of Italian non-positivist aesthetics, musicology and criticism on the given topic.

Opposing the widespread ‘dilettantism’ in Italian music criticism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought significant changes in terms of the development of musicology and significant increase in periodicals devoted to music.<sup>5</sup> *Rivista Musicale Italiana*<sup>6</sup> and *La Rassegna Musicale*<sup>7</sup> were the most influential journals, both founded in Turin. While the authors gathered around the journal *Rivista Musicale Italiana* advocated a positivist approach to thinking about music, the authors of *La Rassegna Musicale* dealt with contemporary tendencies in music, philosophy and aesthetics – mostly following the idealists.

The most thought-provoking discussion about musical interpretation in the Italian music criticism of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was initiated in the journal *La Rassegna Musicale* in 1930 with the article *Dell’interpretazione musicale* (On musical interpretation) by the distinguished music critic Guido Gatti.<sup>8</sup> In the following three years, the debate flared up, and numerous au-

---

<sup>5</sup> Maurizio Giani, “Music Criticism and Esthetics in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Italy: Between Croce, Phenomenology and Marxism”, *Sonus*, 29(1), 2008, 24.

<sup>6</sup> *La Rivista musicale italiana* was a quarterly musicological periodical edited by Giuseppe Bocca, founded in 1894. The journal was of a significant importance for the advancement of musicological studies in Italy. Among the contributors, there were: Romualdo Giani, Giovanni Tebaldini, Alberto Gentili, Arthur Pougin, Franz Xavier Haberer, Guido Adler, Julien Tiersot, Nicola D’Arienzo, Luigi Torri, Jules Combarieu, Adolf Sandberger, Dino Sincero, Carlo Perinello, Jacques-Gabriel Prod’homme, as well as Guido Pannain, Andrea Della Corte, Guido Gatti, Robert Aloys Mooser, Sebastiano Luciani, Benvenuto Disertori, Nino Pirrotta, Remo Giazotto, Claudio Sartori, etc.

<sup>7</sup> *La Rassegna Musicale* was founded in 1928 in Turin and was directed by Guido M. Gatti, as a continuation of *Il Pianoforte*, first as a monthly, and since 1930 as a bimonthly. The content of the first issue corresponded to that of *Il Pianoforte* and largely remained unchanged for thirty-two years, mostly comprised of articles and essays, comments, notes, discussions, news, reviews of music and books, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Guido Gatti was a music critic, founder and editor of the journal *Il Pianoforte*, founder and editor of *La Rassegna Musicale* and director of the Turin Theatre. He contributed to numerous Italian and foreign music encyclopedias.

thors contributed, trying to define the concept, nature and purpose of musical interpretation. Therefore, I first highlight the arguments of the most prominent participants in the aforementioned discussion, and then the arguments of the authors inspired by it in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition to Gatti, the main participants in the discussion were the historian and music critic Alfredo Parente<sup>9</sup>, the editor, writer, journalist and pedagogue Leone Ginzburg<sup>10</sup>, the musicologist Gastone Róssi-Dòria<sup>11</sup>, the philosopher Edmondo Cione<sup>12</sup>, the pianist and conductor Ferdinando Ballo<sup>13</sup>, the music critic Giorgio Graziosi<sup>14</sup>, as well as the composer, pianist and conductor Alfredo Casella<sup>15</sup> – (to a greater or lesser extent) all under the influ-

---

<sup>9</sup> Alfredo Parente was a historian and music critic. His reviews were very influential in musical circles, and he published in the following journals: *La Rassegna Musicale*, *La Scala*, *Opera Magazine*, *Il Mattino*, *Maggio Musicale Fiorentino*, etc. Parente was the founder of the journal *Rivista di studi crociani*, which played a key role in the decades-long promotion of the works of Benedetto Croce.

<sup>10</sup> Leone Ginzburg was a writer, journalist and pedagogue, a hero of the resistance movement – known for his (tragic) anti-fascist political involvement. He taught Slavic languages and Russian literature at the University of Turin and was an associate of the *Einaudi* publishing house.

<sup>11</sup> Gastone Rossi-Doria was a musicologist and a composer. As a student of Gian Francesco Malipiero, he composed symphonic and chamber music and graduated in philosophy. He was the editor of the musical part of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, as well as the *Dizionario enciclopedico italiano*.

<sup>12</sup> Edmondo Cone was a philosopher, politician and anti-fascist influenced by Benedetto Croce.

<sup>13</sup> Ferdinando Ballo was a pianist and conductor. Focused on contemporary music, he tried to bring unknown works closer to the public. He was a member of various avant-garde movements (*Libra* among others). As a music critic, Ballo has published numerous articles in journals, weeklies and dailies such as: *Leonardo*, *La Rassegna Musicale*, *Pan*, *L'Italia letteraria*, *Cronache latine*, *Letteratura*, *La Musica*, *Avanti!*, *Il Mondo*, *Mondo Europeo*, *Società nuova*, *Omnibus*, *Sipario* and others. He was the founder of the periodical on contemporary culture *Scuola libera*, the co-founder of the publishing house *Rosa e Ballo* (specialized in the translation of contemporary works unknown in Italy) and the founder of the orchestra *I Pomeriggi Musicali* which greatly contributed to the popularization of the 20<sup>th</sup> century music (banned during the fascist dictatorship).

<sup>14</sup> Giorgio Graziosi was a music critic. He graduated from the Conservatory in Pesaro. He contributed to numerous journals, including *La Fiera Letteraria*, *Ulisse* and *Emporium*, he wrote reviews for *Avanti!*, as well as articles for various encyclopedias. He was also an associate of the *Einaudi* publishing house.

<sup>15</sup> Alfredo Casella was born into a musical family. He studied piano with Louis Diémer and composition with Gabriel Fauré at the Conservatoire de Paris. During the First

ence of the historian, aesthetician and politician Benedetto Croce.<sup>16</sup> As the Italian musicologist and pianist Carla Cuomo emphasizes, given the ‘margin-ality’ of musicology in Italy at that time, Croce was a point of reference for many authors – ‘the maestro’ – who provided them with instruments for the development of autonomous aesthetics.<sup>17</sup> In that sense, Croce’s philosophy *per se* is not the subject of this paper; only its basic postulates are explained so that they are – like (in)visible connecting threads – more easily discernible in different non-positivist approaches to the concept of musical interpretation of the selected authors.

Croce’s idealism was a reaction to the dominant positivism in the late 19th century. In his most significant work, *Filosofia dello spirito*, Croce presented the thesis that there are two types of human cognition – ‘intuitive’ (via fantasy) and ‘logical’ (via intellect), which is the backbone of his philosophy.<sup>18</sup> The main difference between a scientific work (intellectual fact) and an artistic work (intuitive fact) is the effect intended by their authors. Advocating the idea that art is a vision or intuition and therefore cannot be a physical fact, he undermined the widespread belief that score is a musical work (object). For Croce, musical work is therefore a mental, intuitive experience in the composer’s mind:

And if it be asked why art cannot be a *physical fact*, we must reply, in the first place, that physical facts *do not possess reality*, and that art, to which so many

---

World War, he taught piano at the Conservatorio statale di musica Santa Cecilia in Rome. He was the principal conductor of the *Boston Pops Orchestra*, and one of the best-known Italian piano virtuosos of his generation. He formed the *Trio Italiano* with cellist Arturo Bonucci and violinist Alberto Poltronieri, with whom he performed throughout Europe and America. Casella was one of the biggest contributors to the revitalization of Antonio Vivaldi’s music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>16</sup> Benedetto Croce was a leading Italian intellectual of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – an idealist philosopher, historian, politician, aesthetician, literary critic and writer. Croce’s philosophy – inspired by social liberalism – had a significant influence on Italian intellectuals of the time. He was a lifelong member of the Italian Senate, Minister of Education and President of the Italian Liberal Party. Although he initially supported Mussolini’s government, Croce soon became aware of his political dictatorship and wrote the Manifesto of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals in 1925. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize for literature sixteen times.

<sup>17</sup> Carla Cuomo, “Massimo Mila, The Prismatic Intellectual: An Archival Case Study”, *Fontes Artis Musicae*, 64/3, 2017, 289–290.

<sup>18</sup> Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*, transl. by Douglas Ainslie, New Brunswick – London, Transaction Publishers, [1909]1995, 1.

devote their whole lives and which fills all with a divine joy, is *supremely real*; thus it cannot be a physical fact, which is something unreal.<sup>19</sup>

Influenced by Croce, as well as triggered by Toscanini's *com'è scritto* concept and the observation that conductors often compete at all costs to distinguish from one another (so that it can be said "the *Pastoral* by X, the *Eroica* by Y, forgetting that the true author is Beethoven"<sup>20</sup>), Gatti initiated the discussion, warning about the general misunderstanding of the concept of musical interpretation. For Gatti, an extremely precise mechanical reproduction of the score is nothing without the spirit of a great musician whose interpretation "revives" the world of black signs, "communicates" it with us and "moves" us. During admirable performances – even if performers strictly follow the text – we witness the miracle of a real "recreation" of a work of art (ital. *ricreazione dell'opera d'arte*). Gatti thoughtfully came to the conclusion that music we hear is not an artistic "reality" created by the composer, but a "virtuality" recreated by the "artist-interpreter", which does not exist beyond the performance itself – that "unique artistic concreteness" that "speaks to our souls".<sup>21</sup> The musical work is embodied only in the performance carried out by the interpreter called to fill in the insufficiencies of the notation. Therefore, according to Gatti, the possibilities of interpretations are endless and differ from one interpreter to another (even the same interpreter over time), depending on their personal taste, sensibility, historical knowledge about the compositions performed, performing conditions, etc.

In his introduction to *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*,<sup>22</sup> a musicologist Luigi Pestalozza<sup>23</sup> emphasized the significance of such Gatti's pointing to the core of the problem, that is – the *notation insufficiency*.<sup>24</sup> Although numerous

---

<sup>19</sup> Benedetto Croce, *The Essence of Aesthetic*, transl. by Douglas Ainslie, London, William Heinemann, 1921, 8–9.

<sup>20</sup> Guido M Gatti, "Dell'interpretazione musicale", in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, [1930]1966, 485–487.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 488–489; Guido M Gatti, "Ancora dell'interpretazione musicale", in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, [1930a]1966, 497.

<sup>22</sup> This anthology – edited by Luigi Pestalozza – includes a selection of texts published in *La Rassegna Musicale* from 1928 to 1943, as well as the appendix comprised of essays published in *Il Pianoforte* from 1921 to 1926.

<sup>23</sup> Luigi Pestalozza was a musicologist, historian, political militant and the founder of the journals *Il diapason* and *Musica e Realtà*.

<sup>24</sup> Luigi Pestalozza, "Introduzione", in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, 1966, cxxxv.

critics immediately disagreed with Gatti's conclusions, others were inspired and motivated to explore and problematize this question further.

One of the most prominent Gatti's opponents inspired by the Crocean aesthetics was Alfredo Parente who believed that there was only one interpretation – contained in the composition, and that it should be reduced to a technical level of performance, as the most faithful reproduction of the composer's writing. In this way, Parente contrasted the "interpretative passivity" of a performer with the "artistic-creative activity" of a composer. According to him, the one who performs music is like someone who executes a command: "The page tells you, 'do it this way and that way and a miracle will happen.'"<sup>25</sup> According to Parente, the composer creates *ex nihilo*, unlike the performer who repeats, reads and performs something to the creation of which they did not contribute – the artistic intervention of the performer is superfluous – they need to perform the musical work mechanically and historically to obtain its meaning (like a photographer or a painter who reproduces a painting by Michelangelo or Titian).<sup>26</sup> However, severely criticized by colleagues for identifying performers with mere, passive 'copyists', Parente mitigated his standpoint slightly over time.<sup>27</sup> Although he remained convinced that a performer must follow a composer's instructions mechanically, Parente clarified that he had never intended to deny *the inner world* of a performer and their part in the work being performed – acknowledging that a performer is no less respectable than a composer.<sup>28</sup>

Giorgio Graziosi and Ferdinando de Ballo openly criticized Parente's point of view because, seen his way, an interpretation is a *mechanical* playing. According to them, with such a precise translation of music notes, an interpreter completely sacrifices their own subjectivity in order to restore the precious fragments of an incomplete manuscript – like a 'cold philologist' – and then hopefully reach a perfect interpretation.<sup>29</sup> Although Ballo did not fully

---

<sup>25</sup> Alfredo Parente, "Ancora dell'interpretazione musicale", in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale...*, op. cit., [1931]1966, 507.

"In realtà chi esegue una musica è come chi si ponga ad eseguire un comando; la pagina ti dice: 'fa in questo modo e in quell'altro, ed il miracolo avverrà.'"

<sup>26</sup> Alfredo Parente, "Attività artistica e passività interpretativa", in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale...*, op. cit., [1931]1966, 511.

<sup>27</sup> Guido M. Gatti, "Ancora dell'interpretazione musicale", op. cit., 499.

<sup>28</sup> Alfredo Parente, "Attività artistica e passività interpretativa", op. cit., 514.

<sup>29</sup> Giorgio Graziosi, „Note sull'interpretazione”, op. cit., 340; Ferdinando Ballo, "Interpretazione e trascrizione", in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale...*, op. cit., [1936]1966, 298.

perceive performers as the authors of a new artistic reality (like Gatti) – since a performer expresses their personality through a form already expressed by another person – Ballo concluded that all performances of a given interpreter have a specific and recognizable character, tone, coherence, and unity, which means that we can and must recognize that personality as well.<sup>30</sup>

Leone Ginzburg was, in a way, on the trail of both Gatti and Parente. Inspired by Gatti's belief that the interpretation consists not only of the sound actualisation of the notation, but also of the "inner representation" and "silent reading" of the score, he drew a parallel with the theatre: "Take, for example, *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* is a work of poetry: I read it to myself, silently or aloud, and I know that although there are so many ways to read it, there is only one method to read it well: to try to understand it historically."<sup>31</sup> For Ginzburg, it is exactly the same with a musical work – a performer (interpreter) should strive to understand it critically, that is, historically, in accordance with Parente's suggestion. Thus, there are two kinds of interpretation for Ginzburg – the "real" one, that is musical performance, and "silent reading" – a true critical work.

The Crocean philosopher Edmondo Cione referred back to the philosophical assumptions of Gatti, Parente and Ginzburg, noticing that none of them had really started from the absolute idealism – Gatti shifted away from relativism (each interpretation is a 're-creation'), Parente from intellectualism (what has been given is absolutely given, and cannot be changed in any way), and Ginzburg from Bacon's empiricism (the relativity of interpretation can be eliminated by direct reading of the score). However, for Cione, an artwork is only reproducible in perpetual unity of the human Spirit:

When I play *An den Frühling*, it is not that I intuit Grieg's pre-existing intuition, but I place myself in the state of mind of the musician [...] creating with him [...] in the absolute unity of the Universal Spirit, the *form*, the *intention*, which is unique and one, beyond the empirical diversity of individuals.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Leone Ginzburg, "Le due interpretazioni", in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale...*, op. cit., [1931]1966, 500.

"Prendiamo, ad esempio, l'*Amleto*. L'*Amleto* è un'opera di poesia: io me lo leggo, silenziosamente o ad alta voce, e so che, se ci sono tanti modi di leggerlo, c'è un solo metodo per leggerlo bene: cercare d'intenderlo storicamente".

<sup>32</sup> Edmondo Cione, "A proposito dell'interpretazione musicale", in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale...*, op. cit., [1932]1966, 533–534, Edmondo Cione, "Ancora a proposito dell'interpretazione musicale", in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale...*, op. cit., [1932]1966, 551.



Although such an approach to the co-creation seemingly gives a specific freedom to the performer, Ballo openly criticizes Chone's idea, since it implies that it is necessary for a performer to get into the state of mind of a composer, which makes it impossible to consider the interpreter as a personality in itself.<sup>33</sup>

As a composer, pianist and a conductor, Alfredo Casella had first-hand observations on the matter of composer–performer relationship, moreover, score–interpretation. From both perspectives, he pointed out the fact that music is an intuition that first must be expressed with purely arithmetic symbols (notes) in order to fix the fragments of the composer's intuition (admittedly, often not the best ones); in its final form – performance – the musical work results from a double process of 'sound organization': one performed by the composer and the other by the interpreter. Although a composer fixes his intuition by means of those arithmetic symbols, in front of the score he is 'just' an interpreter as any other, not necessarily the best one (it is not true that a composer is to know how to perform his own music). With this in mind, Casella concluded that musical interpretation does not arise in the composer along with the original lyrical impulse, but maintains a largely independent development; moreover – according to him – truly great interpreters, who reach the stylistic and technical perfection, are rare and perhaps more rare than the great composers.<sup>34</sup>

Casella thus directly opposed Parente, by abandoning his postulates as unthinkable – indeed, it is impossible to trace composer's intended interpretation in all its details. Although he further confirms (in a way obvious) Gatti's claim on the multiplicity of possible interpretations of the same work, Casella adds that the interpreter's autonomy does not arise from notation insufficiency, but from the fact that the process of interpreting is by its nature a completely distinct from composing.<sup>35</sup> As Casella noticed, people tend to

---

“Quando suono *An den Frühling*, non avviene già che io intuisca una preesistente intuizione di Grieg, bensì che io mi pongo nello stato d'animo (contenuto) del musicista e vengo, via via che suono, creando con lui (anzi, a dirla dantesca, in quanto *m'inluio*) nell'unità assoluta dello Spirito universale, la *forma*, l'*intenzione*, che è unica ed una, al di là della diversità empiristica degli individui.”

<sup>33</sup> Ferdinando Ballo, “Interpretazione e trascrizione”, op. cit., 298.

<sup>34</sup> Alfredo Casella, “Creazione ed interpretazione”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale...*, op. cit., [1931]1966, 518.

<sup>35</sup> Fedele D'Amico (Ed), *Tutte le cronache musicali: “L'Espresso” 1967–1989*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2000, 799.

diminish the work of an interpreter, by asserting that an interpreter would not exist if there was not for a creator-composer – that interpreter’s activity is nothing more than appropriation of something already accomplished by someone else’s intuition. Rather provoked by such setting, Casella daringly turned the idea the other way around – it would be easy to say that a composer would not exist without an interpreter.<sup>36</sup>

Musicologist Gastone Róssi-Dòria also emphasized the importance of interpretation. For him, a musical work is utterly different from other artworks (i.e. sculptures or paintings), because it requires a further determination process – performance. Interpretation is something always “new” in relation to the work interpreted, thus an interpreter is not merely a performer, but an “artist” who needs to “understand” composer’s discourse. As Róssi-Dòria suggested, art does not die on its way from a composer to a performer and the public – it is like a ‘spark’ that is transmitted from one element to another, always alive and reborn in each one.<sup>37</sup>

A writer and a musicologist Boris de Schloezer<sup>38</sup> approached the matter of musical interpretation through the question of understanding music. According to Schloezer, if a musical work has some content, its meaning is immanent. In other words, to understand a piece of music, we should not perceive it as a sign system – we must not look for the meaning beyond the sound itself. Otherwise, we would not listen to music anymore and the sounds would vanish, leaving us with nothing more. Consistently:

If a pianist who performed a Chopin’s ballad wonders what it means, all they can do is play it again. But it would be wrong to conclude that music ‘does not want

---

<sup>36</sup> Alfredo Casella, “Creazione ed interpretazione”, op. cit., 517.

Significantly later, Christopher Small came to a similar (extremely influential) conclusion – according to him, “performance does not exist in order to present musical works, but rather, musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform”. See: Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1998, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Gastone Róssi-Dòria, “Interpretazione musicale”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale...*, op. cit., [1931]1966, 531–532.

<sup>38</sup> Boris Fyodorovich Schloezer (Schlözer) was a writer, musicologist and French translator of Russian origin, who emigrated to France after the October Revolution. He translated many Russian authors and wrote monographs on composers. Although Boris de Schloezer was not Italian, his contribution to the discussion is considered in this article as he was close to Italian intellectual circles (as evidenced by the published exchange with Guido Gatti, for example). Moreover, he frequently published in the periodical *La Rassegna Musicale*, thus influencing the Italian music criticism of the time.

to say anything<sup>39</sup> and that its content is vague. While remaining untranslatable, the musical sense of the work can be as precise as that of a scientific work.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, by taking as an example Beethoven's sonata op. 101, Schloezer proceeds that there are as many sonatas op. 101 as there are pianists in the world performing it, even more – since two performances of the same pianist are never identical:

The author of the op. 101 no longer exists, his thoughts, desires, images of which the work is the product have vanished. There is nothing more left than these black signs on the paper, a kind of scheme for the performer, who is perfectly free to do what he likes: one will extract from these pages the sublime, some the pleasant, others the grotesque.<sup>41</sup>

But how do we know that we have (well) understood a musical work? Schloezer concludes that understanding music is not the same as analysing it technically (in terms of harmony, form, counterpoint, etc.) – these are two completely distinctive processes; understanding music means recreating its personality in the way it was envisioned by its author. Music can only be understood in the process of its sounding – we perceive sound as a certain objective music reality, even though it disappears as soon as it is manifested. This reality does not go beyond the sounds – it constitutes immanent unity and gives a definite meaning. The diversity of interpretations of a musical work and listeners' reactions to it do not diminish this integrity because “what makes it an organism” and constitutes its formal unity will always remain – “it will tell everyone the same thing: what it is”.<sup>42</sup>

Analogous kind of synthesis between an interpreter and music is described by Giorgio Graziosi, who believed that the author is always there on

---

<sup>39</sup> In the sense that it has no meaning.

<sup>40</sup> Boris de Schloezer, “Comprendere la Musica”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale...*, op. cit., [1931]1966, 141–142.

“Se ad un pianista che ha eseguito una ballata di Chopin si chiede cosa essa significhi, tutto ciò che può fare è di eseguirla un'altra volta. Ma sarebbe falso concludere da ciò che la musica “non vuol dir niente” e che il suo contenuto è vago. Pur restando intraducibile, il senso musicale dell'opera può essere preciso quanto quello d'un'opera scientifica.”

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 145.

“L'autore dell'op. 101 non esiste più, i pensieri, i desideri, le immagini di cui l'opera è il prodotto sono svaniti. Non restano più che questi segni neri sulla carta, specie di schema per l'esecutore, il quale è perfettamente libero di fare ciò che gli piace: uno estrarrà da queste pagine il sublime, altri il piacevole, altri il grottesco.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 150–152.

the page, but it is up to the interpreter to find it, not create it.<sup>43</sup> Since the music page is incapable of meeting the needs of both the composer (who wants to fix his thoughts), and the interpreter (who wants to hear the music), it requires active participation of the performer. An interpreter is a 'technician' only when audibly transforms notational symbols into sounds. However, as a creator, every performer has a style of his own. What distinguishes performers one from another is taste, originality, personality, sensibility, cultural and historical context, etc. and this complex of characteristics is not summed up in what is called "genius", but rather in what we might call "artistry", "ingenuity".<sup>44</sup> As Graziosi implied, there are three different levels of interpretation: the first being mostly technical (reading and translating notes into sound), the second – qualitatively different, focusing on intelligent and amorous studying of musical page (dialectics between the interpreter and composer), and the third being a synthesis between an interpreter and a composer. That is the reason why Graziosi disapproves Parente's focus on exact performance of graphic signs and favours Gatti's concept of indefinite number of interpretations as re-creations of a musical text.<sup>45</sup>

\* \* \*

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the discussion on musical interpretation was mostly marked by Massimo Mila<sup>46a</sup> and Fedele D'Amico<sup>46b</sup>, who are

---

<sup>43</sup> Giorgio Graziosi, "Note sull'interpretazione", op. cit., 339.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 358–359.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 341–343.

<sup>46a</sup> Massimo Mila was a prominent historian, musicologist, critic and active antifascist. He studied with renown Augusto Monti at the prestigious *Massimo d'Azeglio* Lyceum in Turin, like numerous (later) celebrated intellectuals, including: Cesare Pavese, Leone Ginzburg, Norberto Bobbio, Guido Seborga, Giulio Einaudi, Vittorio Foa, Giulio Carlo Argan, Ludovico Geymonat, Franco Antonicelli and others. He graduated in 1931 at the University of Turin. Mila was also a writer, translator, founder of the publishing house *Einaudi* (together with Leone Ginzburg and Cesare Pavese), cultural organizer, political activist within the movement *Giustizia e Libertà* and a partisan in the Resistance movement, lecturer at the Conservatory and University in Turin. As a music critic, Mila published articles in *Maggio Musicale Fiorentino*, *La Cultura*, *Pegaso*, *Pan*, *L'Italia letteraria*, *Nuova Antologia*, *Scenario* and *La Rassegna Musicale*, *L'Unità*, *L'Espresso*, and *La Stampa*. For his antifascist activities, Mila was imprisoned twice – first in 1929, and for the second time in 1935, for the period of seven years, together with Einaudi, Foa, Ginzburg, Antonicelli, Bobbio, Pavese, Carlo Levi and Luigi Salvatorelli. He was a member of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia since 1956.

among the most influential Italian musicologists and music critics. We may say that the intellectual liberty, the need to participate in social life, passion for politics, culture, and militancy of their personalities, represent the core of their public activity, since both were very active in cultural and antifascist political struggles of the time.

The trail of Mila's critical thought on the matter of musical interpretation can be followed in his numerous articles and critic reviews,<sup>47</sup> as well as in his influential books *Ispirazione e tecnica interpretativa* and *L'esperienza musicale e l'estetica*. In the latter, Mila developed his concept of "unconscious expression" (*espressione inconsapevole*) which consists of the matching of the inner life of the (composer's) spirit with the musical form, through the common element of time.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the principle of individuality (Croceanly understood as the enactment of the Spirit), as well as understanding of cultural and historical context are seen as the guiding principles of his theory of musical

---

Influenced by three distinguished Italian intellectuals – liberal-socialist Piero Gobetti, idealist philosopher, historian and politician Benedetto Croce, and the liberal economist Luigi Einaudi, Massimo Mila advocated cultural action (*il gobettismo culturale*), as well as intellectual and political militancy as a direct resistance to every form of dictatorship and repression, with the aim of civil, political and economic reforms of the Italian society. Political activism within the movement *Giustizia e Libertà* had an important role in Mila's intellectual maturing, especially for the appropriation and development of Crocean aesthetics.

<sup>46b</sup> Fedele D'Amico graduated law and studied music with composers Mario Labroca and Alfredo Casella. He was active in the field of music criticism even before graduating – in a daily *Il Tevere*. D'Amico wrote reviews and articles for numerous journals, to name some of them: *Cultura e Realtà*, *Contemporaneo*, *Vie Nuove*, *Cultura e Realtà* and *Contemporaneo*, *Musical Quarterly*, *L'Italia domani*, *Il Paese*, *L'Espresso*, *Opera News*, *Musical America* and *Opera Welt*. He was the editor of *La Rassegna Musicale* as well as in charge of the of Music and Dance section of the *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, and the music section of the publishing house *Il Saggiatore*. He was also a professor of music history at the university *La Sapienza* in Rome. D'Amico was a member of the Management Committee of the *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana* from its foundation and he initiated the section entitled *I casi della musica*, reserved for reflections, opinions and comments of various authors. Openly declared as an antifascist, D'Amico actively participated in the political struggle of the time, as well as in the debate between communists and Catholics (within the movement *Cattolici Comunisti*).

<sup>47</sup> Massimo Mila (Ed.), *Cronache musicali 1955–1959*, Torino, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1959; Massimo Mila (Ed.), *Massimo Mila alla Scala: Scritti 1955–1988*, Milano, Rizzoli, 1989.

<sup>48</sup> Massimo Mila, *L'esperienza musicale e l'estetica*, Torino, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 1956, 145.

interpretation.<sup>49</sup> By joining the aforementioned discussion, Mila followed Gatti's principle of interpretation as a 're-creation', pointing out that in any execution (even amateur) there is a personal contribution of a performer. Interpretation is not added to reading – it is created in the act of reading music.<sup>50</sup>

In response to the question “how to listen to music?”, Mila favoured intuition over reason, contrary to Parente's view that the activity of an interpreter is 'non-artistic', which he believed offended the spirit of the Crocean aesthetic, by ignoring the inner experience of music performers, and making music interpretation a non-free activity. As Mila pointed out, such an approach is in full contrast to the experience of an interpreter, who exposes their own artistic personality – because, even in the most faithful respect of the musical text, the divine sense of freedom never leaves great interpretations.<sup>51</sup>

The subsequent central question in Mila's aesthetic reflections on the given topic was “how to understand music?”. Mila offered a very simple, yet extremely complex answer – in music, there is nothing else to understand than the music itself.<sup>52</sup> Understanding music is not a passive enjoyment; it implies the constant operation of the spirit and requires an active collaboration among a composer (through the process of creation), an interpreter (through the process of 're-creation') and a listener (through the process of active listening).<sup>53</sup> Musical meaning is created in the dialectical process and the synthesis of the pre-existing musical language and personalities of the composer, interpreter and listener, as well as the elements coming from their outside environments (historical, political and social conditions). Understanding music is, therefore, an active process.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, Mila posed a comprehensive ontological question: “where is the reality of music (musical artwork) physically?” For him, it certainly cannot

---

<sup>49</sup> Carla Cuomo, *Massimo Mila, la musica come pensiero: dalla formazione intellettuale e politica alla prima maturità (1928–1950)*, dottorato di ricerca, Bologna, Università di Bologna, 2004, 11–13.

<sup>50</sup> Massimo Mila, *L'esperienza musicale e l'estetica*, op. cit., 162, 172.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 44–45.

<sup>52</sup> Massimo Mila, *L'esperienza musicale e l'estetica*, op. cit., 50.

<sup>53</sup> Carla Cuomo, *Massimo Mila, la musica come pensiero...*, op. cit., 235.

<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, it is not necessary to know harmony in order to understand music (harmony is nothing more than an *a posteriori* codification of the spirit in the process of understanding music); on the contrary, it is necessary to understand music in order to know harmony. Massimo Mila, *L'esperienza musicale e l'estetica*, op. cit., 54, 59–60.

be found in the “black signs of the score”, because it was precisely the inability of the notation to convey all the composer’s intentions that caused the problem of musical interpretation. The performer has at their disposal hundreds, thousands of dynamic, agogic and articulatory solutions and finesse that determine the accuracy and success of the interpretation.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, Mila concludes that music exists only in the act of performance, with an interpreter acting as a mediator between the composer and the audience. The reality of musical work is, consequently, in the multitude of interpretations, with a certain freedom of the interpreter who must study musical work from a historical and aesthetical point of view.<sup>56</sup>

Fedele D’Amico also recognized the importance of stimulating cultural debates and promoting new tendencies in music. That is exactly why he chose musical criticism as the main medium for raising thought-provoking questions, opening discussions, as well as sharing his own thoughts. Two collections of his articles stand out – *I casi della musica*<sup>57</sup> and *Tutte le cronache musicali: “L’Espresso” 1967–1989*.

Although convinced that music is a way of ‘communication’ that reveals the inner life of a man, D’Amico slightly moved away from Croce’s aesthetics, by researching the relationships between musical work itself and all the external factors contributing to its forming. According to him, an artwork is not a material product, but a process – it is realized over and over again in a dialectics among all the factors that determine it, especially in music which requires the active approach of both interpreters and listeners. The interpreter is not a machine that transforms a composer’s signs into sounds, but a living mediator. Interpretation is realized *hic et nunc*, as part of a musical event (in a certain historical context), intended for certain listeners.<sup>58</sup> The context seen this way includes both the process of original creation and reception.

Thus, a musical work is not defined in itself, but in relation to the experience that it causes. This experience requires communication between the interpreter and the public, therefore, a work of art must stimulate spiritual activity. Consistently with his Communist Catholic beliefs, D’Amico was

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 173, 179.

<sup>57</sup> In the sense of a certain ‘problem’ as a case that needs to be ‘solved’.

<sup>58</sup> Fedele D’Amico, “Musica in piazza”, in: Fedele D’Amico (Ed.), op. cit., [1960]1962, 356.

convinced that people are social individuals, that without sociality there can be no culture. Music has a social nature because it is an expression of human relationship and musical interpretation is the most complex interactive communication and performer–public–environment relationship.<sup>59</sup>

As the musicologist Carla Cuomo articulates, D'Amico intended to combine tradition and modernity with the light of the present – he studied the past in function of the present and the future”.<sup>60</sup> The essence of D'Amico's criticism is perhaps the most evident in his article dedicated to the fiftieth birthday of Massimo Mila, which confirms that the author contrasted his views with idealism and Croce's aesthetics to some extent:

I believe that the object of aesthetics is almost all those issues that Croce has declared non-existent, prohibiting us to discuss them. I believe in the limits of the arts, in genres, trends, ideologies. I believe that great individualities are such precisely to the extent that they give voice to collective historical forces, which therefore should be thoroughly investigated. The so-called “technique” interests me extremely; I love virtuosity and, as far as interpreters are concerned, I find more musical nourishment and more cultural stimuli in Maria Callas' *vocalizi* than in Anton Bruckner's *opera omnia*. A thread of logic, therefore, Mila's criticism must be a phenomenon of which, of course, I could not deny the high level or positive results; but a phenomenon, in the end, somewhat distant, not to say foreign, a thing to be respected, and nothing else.<sup>61</sup>

We can leave this brief confrontation of the arguments of key Italian intellectuals, musicologists and critics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the topic of musical interpretation with the words of the musicologist Maurizio Giani – with the death of Mila and D'Amico an entire epoch of Italian music criticism has

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 357.

<sup>60</sup> Carla Cuomo, *Massimo Mila, la musica come pensiero...*, op. cit., 49, 60.

<sup>61</sup> Fedele D'Amico, “Massimo Mila ha cinquant'anni”, in: Fedele D'Amico (Ed.), op. cit., [1960]1962, 394.

“Io credo che oggetto dell'estetica siano quasi tutti quei problemi che Croce ha dichiarato inesistenti, vietandocene la discussione. Credo nei limiti delle arti, nei generi, nelle tendenze, nelle ideologie. Credo che le grandi individualità siano tali appunto nella misura in cui danno voce a forze storiche collettive, le quali pertanto vanno indagate a fondo. La cosiddetta 'tecnica' mi interessa in modo supremo; adoro il virtuosismo, e quanto agli interpreti, trovo più nutrimento musicale e maggiori stimoli culturali nei vocalizzi di Maria Callas che nell' *opera omnia* di Anton Bruckner. A fil di logica dunque, la critica di Mila dovrebbe essere un fenomeno del quale, certo, non potrei negare l'alto livello, né la copia di risultati positivi; ma un fenomeno, in fondo, alquanto distante, per non dire estraneo, una cosa da rispettare, e basta.”



come to an end, at least in the form it was practiced up to the 1980s.<sup>62</sup> As the discussion showed, the approaches to the concept of interpretation were numerous and different, referring not only to musical performance, but also to criticism and reception – often neglected segments in the process of musical interpretation.

As it seems – despite all the mentioned approaches – the phenomenon of the musical interpretation remained unfathomable. It seems to remain ‘elusive’ somewhere between the historically faithful reproduction of the score (Parente), re-creation (Gatti, Mila), the process completely distinct from composing (Casella), the score analysis and synthesis of interpreters and composers (Graciosi), the unity of the Universal Spirit different from the authorship (Cione), a critical, historical and aesthetical consideration (Ginzburg, Graziosi, Mila), something always original and new in relation to the work interpreted (Róssi-Dòria, D’Amico), extraction of meaning from the score and something that *disappears* as soon as it is manifested (Schloezer), and finally, the act of performance as the final form of a musical work and an objective musical reality that requires an active approach of both interpreters and listeners (Casella, Schloezer, Mila, and D’Amico).

However, what is obvious is that numerous aforementioned authors were ahead of their time. Rejecting the concept of *authentic* (historically informed) performance as dogmatic, utopian and unsustainable, moreover, redirecting the focus from a *product* to a *process* – from the score to the *music ‘as’ performance* – in Anglo-Saxon literature gained momentum only at the transition from the second to the third millennium.<sup>63</sup> This approach led to a veritable eruption of theoretical texts and scientific projects based on the idea that the meaning of music is not fixed in a (tangible) notation but is created again and again in the process of (ephemeral) musical performance and its reception by the listeners. It was only under the influence of performance

---

<sup>62</sup> Maurizio Giani, “Music Criticism and Esthetics in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Italy...”, op. cit., 56.

<sup>63</sup> See: Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance*, New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995; Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford – New York, Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1992; Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, op. cit.; Nicholas Cook; Mark Everist (Eds), *Rethinking Music*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999; Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000; Nicholas Cook, “Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance”, *Music Theory Online* 7, 2, 2001 etc.

studies that the concept of a musical work – the foundation of traditional musicology – was shaken. Noting that this is not the topic of this paper, I conclude that – even after the famous discussion of the prominent Italian musicologists and critics came to an end – the question of musical interpretation remains open for further ‘interpretations’.

### Works cited

- Ballo, Ferdinando: “Interpretazione e trascrizione”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1936]1966, 297–309.
- Casella, Alfredo: “Creazione ed interpretazione”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1931]1966, 514–519.
- Cione, Edmondo: “Ancora a proposito dell’interpretazione musicale”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1932]1966, 549–551.
- Cione, Edmondo: “A proposito dell’interpretazione musicale”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1932]1966, 532–535.
- Cook, Nicholas: “Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance”, *Music Theory Online* 7, 2, 2001.
- Cook, Nicholas: *Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Cook, Nicholas; Mark Everist (Eds): *Rethinking Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Croce, Benedetto: *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*. Transl. by Douglas Ainslie. New Brunswick – London: Transaction Publishers, [1909]1995.
- Croce, Benedetto: *The Essence of Aesthetic*. Transl. by Douglas Ainslie. London: William Heinemann, 1921.
- Cuomo, Carla: *Massimo Mila, la musica come pensiero: dalla formazione intellettuale e politica alla prima maturità (1928–1950)*. Dottorato di ricerca in Musicologia e Beni Musicali. Bologna: Università di Bologna, 2004.
- Cuomo, Carla: “Massimo Mila, The Prismatic Intellectual: An Archival Case Study”, *Fontes Artis Musicae*, 64/3, 2017, 276–298.
- D’Amico, Fedele (Ed.): *I casi della musica*. Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1962, 354–358.
- D’Amico, Fedele: “La verità di Dallapiccola”, in: Fedele D’Amico (Ed.), *I casi della musica*. Milano: Il Saggiatore, [1957]1962, 152–155.
- D’Amico, Fedele: “Massimo Mila ha cinquant’anni”, in: Fedele D’Amico (Ed.), *I casi della musica*. Milano: Il Saggiatore, [1960]1962, 392–396.
- D’Amico, Fedele: “Musica in piazza”, in: Fedele D’Amico (Ed.), *I casi della musica*. Milano: Il Saggiatore, [1960]1962, 354–358.
- D’Amico, Fedele (Ed.): *Tutte le cronache musicali: “L’Espresso” 1967–1989*. Roma: Bulzoni, 2000.

- Gatti, Guido M: “Ancora dell’interpretazione musicale”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1930]1966, 496–499.
- Gatti, Guido M: “Dell’interpretazione musicale”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1930]1966, 485–491.
- Giani, Maurizio: “Music Criticism and Esthetics in 20th Century Italy: Between Croce, Phenomenology and Marxism”, *Sonus*, 29(1), 2008, 22–63.
- Ginzburg, Leone: “Le due interpretazioni”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1931]1966, 499–501.
- Goehr, Lydia: *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*. Oxford – New York: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Graziosi, Giorgio: “Note sull’interpretazione”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1938]1966, 337–359.
- Mila, Massimo (Ed.): *Cronache musicali 1955–1959*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1959.
- Mila, Massimo: *Lesperienza musicale e l’estetica*. Torino: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 1956.
- Mila, Massimo (Ed.): *Massimo Mila alla Scala: Scritti 1955–1988*. Milano: Rizzoli, 1989.
- Parente, Alfredo: “Ancora dell’interpretazione musicale”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1931]1966, 506–510.
- Parente, Alfredo: “Attività artistica e passività interpretativa”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1931]1966, 510–514.
- Pestalozza, Luigi: “Introduzione”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, 1966, i–clxxviii.
- Róssi-Dòria, Gastone: “Interpretazione musicale”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1931]1966, 530–532.
- Schloezer, Boris de: “Comprendere la Musica”, in: Luigi Pestalozza (Ed.), *La Rassegna Musicale: Antologia*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, [1931]1966, 141–152.
- Small, Christopher: *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1998.
- Taruskin, Richard: *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance*. Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

## Summary

The growing number of articles on the topic of musical interpretation in the last several decades was the impetus for researching a concrete case study – a very dynamic discussion of the distinguished Italian intellectuals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The subject of this research was not the positivist-formalist approach – dominant in Italy at the time, focusing exclusively on the score (traditionally perceived as the musical work) – but the somewhat different arguments of the authors giving the importance to the process of musical performance (interpretation). Gathered around the journal *La Rassegna Musicale* – and mainly under the influence of Benedetto Croce and his philosophy of the spirit – numerous musicologists, music critics and musicians stood out: Guido Gatti, Leone Ginzburg, Gastone Róssi-Dòria, Edmondo Cione, Ferdinando Ballo, Giorgio Graziosi, Boris de Schloezer, Alfredo Casella, Massimo Milla and Fedele D’Amico. Emphasizing that not all composers’ intentions can be penned down entirely and perfectly (including minute nuances and details), they defined musical text as a “mere starting point” (Parente) or an “imperfect communication of the composer’s thought” (Gatti), as quoted by Graziosi. So – despite the widespread positivism – in the period between the 1930s and 1980s, the aforementioned authors argued for attaching more importance to musical performance and interpretation, emphasizing the creative contribution of the interpreter in the creation of musical meaning. It is interesting to note that similar attitudes in Anglo-Saxon literature gained momentum only significantly later – at the transition between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Although the selected authors did not provide a unique definition of the phenomenon of the musical interpretation, we can say that its outlines enclose the historically faithful reproduction of the score (Parente), re-creation (Gatti, Milla), the process completely distinct from composing (Casella), the score analysis and synthesis of interpreters and composers (Graziosi), the unity of the Universal Spirit different from the authorship (Cione), a critical, historical and aesthetical consideration (Ginzburg, Graziosi, Milla), something always original and new in relation to the work interpreted (Róssi-Dòria, D’Amico), extraction of meaning from the score and something that disappears as soon as it is manifested (Schloezer) and, lastly, the act of performance as the final form of a musical work and an objective musical reality that requires an active approach of both interpreters and listeners (Casella, Schloezer, Milla, and D’Amico).

Finally, the aim of this paper was to provide an insight into the context of Italian non-positivist musicological and critical discourse on the topic of musical interpretation in the period from the 1930s to the 1980s – an insight undoubtedly unique in the Serbian musicological literature.