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MODERATE MODERNISM AS THE *THIRD* WAY IN THE OPUS OF ALFREDO CASELLA¹

Abstract: The work of an artist is related to society, politics, and ideology, which are important aspects of the context in which the work of art is created. The multi-layered relationship between art/music and society/politics can especially be seen when we consider neoclassicism, which was for decades after the Second World War in literature defined as a stylistic movement in the service of the ruling (totalitarian) regimes. Consequently, authors of neoclassical works were criticised for returning to tradition and order, and their works for reducing expressive means. Among them, the name of Italian composer Alfredo Casella stands out, whose works were criticised because of their alleged coherence with the aesthetic requirements of the regime. Starting from the hypothesis that neoclassicism is a modernist movement, I will examine the third period of Casella's work in the context of moderate modernism, as a *third way* between the aesthetic requirements of the regime and modernistic expression that was characteristic of the composers' earlier period.

Keywords: Alfredo Casella, Neoclassicism, moderate modernism, instrumental music

The work of an artist is related to society, politics, and ideology, which are important aspects of the context in which a work of art is created. According to Miško Šuvaković, artistic music, implicitly, contains political connotations,

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¹ The initial research of the works of Alfredo Casella was done in my master's thesis *Casella's third way – Alfredo Casella between modernism and fascism* that was done under the mentorship of full-time professor, Vesna Mikić, PhD.

which, however, were not subsequently added to the musical work by discursive practice or conceptual representations, but were immanent to it, since it emerged as an artistic product and the result of social relations.² The multi-layered relationship between art/music and society/politics can be seen especially when considering neoclassicism, which in the decades after the Second World War was defined in the literature as a retrograde style that served the ruling (totalitarian) regimes.³

Composers in Italy were exposed to the mentioned criticism, where, in the period between the two world wars, there was a group of composers often called *La Generazione dell'Ottanta*, who created neoclassical compositions.⁴ Among the composers of the mentioned group, the name of Alfredo Casella stands out, whose work, as well as his engagement in the organisation of the cultural life of Italy, has long been disputed due to the alleged agreement with the aesthetic demands of the fascist regime. For example, in the article *La musica del fascismo*, published in 1982, Piero Santi states that 'neoclassicism in the work of composers in Italy is interpreted as a suitable artistic direction which expressed fascist ideas in the period between the two wars',⁵ highlighting the *Concerto Romano* and the opera *Il Deserto tentato* as two of Casella's works composed in complete harmony with the aesthetic demands of the fascist regime.⁶

² See: Miško Šuvaković, *Estetika muzike: modeli, metode i epistemologije o/u modernoj i savremenoj muzici i umetnostima*, Beograd, Orion Art, 2016, 348.

³ See: Ben Earle, *Luigi Dallapiccola and Musical Modernism in Fascist Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 66. These perceptions represent a consequence of the music criticism from the period of the Cold War in which the return to tradition and order between the two wars, and the abandonment of avant-garde ideas that existed before the First World War, were associated with the then dominant ideology and aesthetic demands of (retrograde) political regimes (such as Nazism and Fascism). In Italy, the authors of texts written in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s attacked the work of composers who created between the two world wars, and when it came to Casella, there was agreement that his music was closely related to political ideas that were dominant at the time they were created.

⁴ *La Generazione dell'Ottanta* is the term used for a group of Italian composers born in the late eighties and early nineties of the 19th century. According to Italian musicologists, the main composers of this group were Ottorino Respighi, Alfredo Casella, Franco Alfano, Ildebrando Pizzetti and Gian Francesco Malipiero. Composers of *La Generazione dell'Ottanta* composed in Italy between the two world wars, creating instrumental music within the neoclassical style.

⁵ Earle, *Luigi Dallapiccola and Musical Modernism ...*, op. cit., 66.

⁶ See: *ibid.*, 66.

However, in the recent literature, there has been a revision of neoclassicism and a re-examination of the criticism directed at composers who created within this stylistic direction, and thus, a revision of the work of Alfred Casella.⁷ The aim of this paper is to consider Casella's engagement and his third creative period⁸ from the perspective of moderate modernism, which in this paper is interpreted as the *third way* between the demands imposed by the fascist regime and the modernist musical expression that was present in earlier periods of his creative work.

'The third way' of neoclassicism and fascism

According to Arnold Whittall, neoclassicism has been interpreted as a 'style present in the works of individual composers who, especially in the period between the two world wars, revived a balanced form and clear thematic processes of earlier styles in order to replace, in their opinion, over-emphasised gestures and lack of the form of late romanticism'.⁹ Thus, the term neoclassicism denotes various artistic tendencies that appeared in the interwar period whose common idea was a return to order and tradition, which was in contrast to the modernist achievements in art that existed in the period before the First World War. In addition, the mentioned aesthetic principles of neoclassicism corresponded to the aesthetic requirements of totalitarian regimes in Europe, which considered 'modernist art anti-nationalist, unnatural, elitist, degenerate and foreign'.¹⁰

⁷ On the terminological discussion and the history of the reception of neoclassicism, more in: Scot Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music. From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic*, London, UMI Research Press, 1998; Vesna Mikić, *Lica srpske muzike: neoklasicizam*, Beograd, Fakultet muzičke umetnosti, Katedra za muzikologiju, 2009. More on the reception of neoclassicism and the relationship between neoclassicism and modernism in Italy, in: Earle, *Luigi Dallapiccola and Musical Modernism ...*, op. cit.

⁸ Casella's work is divided into three periods. The first period is called the period of 'public education' and lasts from 1902 to 1914. The second period covers the years from 1914 to 1920, and it is considered a transitional, modernist stage, after which there is a crystallisation and selection of poetic means to be used in the third, neoclassical period. See: John C.G. Waterhouse, "Casella, Alfredo", in: Stanly Sadie (Ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, London, Macmillan Publishers, 2001.

⁹ Arnold Whittall, „Neo-Classicism“, in: Stanly Sadie (Ed.), *The New Grove ...*, op. cit.

¹⁰ Leon Botstein, „Modernism“, in: *ibid.*

Vesna Mikić states similarly, emphasising that the consideration of neoclassicism in music is further complicated by the fact that the cultural products of neoclassicism were viewed as products of various reception policies and ideologies.¹¹ Mikić says that the tendency towards the ‘return to order’ and ‘renewal of tradition’ appeared in various European environments and fields of activity – both in art and in politics – in the period between the two world wars.¹² With the thought that works of art should be viewed within the framework of the social and cultural context of the moment in which the artistic direction appears, V. Mikić believes that neoclassicism should be viewed as a ‘tool /polygon/ platform for the constitution and promotion of various ideological, and of course, cultural and political views’,¹³ and that we should interpret the neoclassical artist as ‘an artist *in society, in culture*, who often by “reconciling” with the established cultural canon and the mechanisms of its functioning, subjects that canon to modernist criticism on the one hand, and also often, on the other hand, acts as a “spokesman” and even a creator of the ruling ideology’.¹⁴

Mikić paid special attention to the consideration of neoclassicism in the context of modernism. Pointing out that in recent decades there has been a change in attitudes towards neoclassicism, she cites Šuvaković’s interpretation of French modernism where he stated that recent literature indicates that neoclassicism has been accepted as a label for ‘a number of different phenomena in the modernist art of the 20th century, which are based on the return to classical Greek, Roman or French tradition’¹⁵ and that the ‘20th century’s neoclassicisms present tradition and history as an open or arbitrary archive of knowledge, patterns, clichés, techniques, themes or compositional models for rethinking within developed modernism’.¹⁶ Accordingly, she explains that by entering the complex realm of modernism, we can interpret neoclassicism as a stylistic direction or tendency, and not as a style. Also, V. Mikić is of the opinion that neoclassicism does not represent a mere return to tradition or an ironic attitude towards the past, but that it is a matter of recanonisation

¹¹ Mikić, op. cit., 12.

¹² See: *ibid.*, 26–27.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19, according to: Miško Šuvaković, “Neoklasicizam francuski“, in: *Pojmovnik suvremene umjetnosti*, Zagreb, Horezky, 2005, 409.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19, according to: Miško Šuvaković, *ibid.*, 409.

and that 'neoclassicism (re)examines the boundaries of canonical construction in the changed cultural, social and market conditions of the period between the two world wars, by following, for example, Cocteau's middle/moderate way'.¹⁷ Bearing in mind Šuvaković's definition of moderate modernism, and his opinion that 'moderate modernism emerged during the 20th century by transforming the excessive and leading results of the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde into the moderate and consumerist culture of the bourgeoisie' and that 'moderate modernism meets the requirements of the autonomy of art, but also the need of the ruling political and party system to neutralise art in the aesthetic, artistic, cultural, social and political sense',¹⁸ Mikić believes that the phrase moderate modernism applied to neoclassicism solves all issues related to style, the attitude to the past and various manifestations of neoclassicism, while, on the other hand, it shows that the actions by which it was realised, as well as the statements of its actors and their works, do not present the same ideas as pre-war (radical) modernism.¹⁹

In accordance with the above mentioned, by following the line, it is possible to see the similarity of Cocteau's 'middle/moderate way' with Ruth Ben-Ghiat's theory which interprets fascist politics and aesthetics as the 'third way'.²⁰ Namely, Ben-Ghiat believes that the fascist doctrine can be seen as a response to the crisis that occurred in the West after the First World War and that it was developed by recontextualising the elements of liberalism and Marxism, in order to offer the idea of revolution that will lead to universal well-being and regeneration.²¹ Speaking about the fascistic attitude towards culture, she points out that the aesthetic and cultural demands of the regime included many different signifiers, among which *spirituality* and *italianità* were the most important ones: artists were encouraged to become acquainted with the latest European cultural achievements, which would then be assimilated into the national style in order to create modern Italian art.²² We can conclude that the fascist vision of modernity represented the creation of a 'local' version of modernity, which would follow the development of society, but, at the same time, would have its roots in Italian tradition and history.

¹⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹⁸ Miško Šuvaković, "Umjereni modernizam", in: *Pojmovnik ...*, op. cit., 644.

¹⁹ Mikić, op. cit., 23.

²⁰ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "Italian Fascism and the Aesthetics of the *Third Way*", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Special Issue: The Aesthetics of Fascism, 31/2, 1996, 293–316.

²¹ Ibid., 301.

²² Ibid., 302.

When speaking of neoclassicism and music in Italy in this period, Karin Maria di Bella states that specific requirements for a particular artistic style or direction were not established, but that musicians were expected to create works that promoted national unity and were based on a return to traditional values combined with selected achievements of contemporary music.²³ More precisely, *Italianess* (*italianità*) in music was based on the renewal of the instrumental music of the great Italian masters of the Renaissance and Baroque on the one hand, and on the adoption and assimilation of modernist achievements (in accordance with the composer's sensibility and ideas) on the other.²⁴ Commenting on the broad frame of the aesthetic requirements of the regime which enabled different individual compositional solutions, Ben Earle states that the cultural policy of fascism advocated for a pluralistic approach to art and creation in which all works that corresponded to these aesthetic principles were on the repertoire of cultural institutions and festivals which took place in Italy.²⁵

On the other hand, the mentioned aesthetic requirements were in accordance with the interests of composers who belonged to the *Generation of the eighties*, who, under the influence of Busoni, dedicated themselves and their work to the renewal of instrumental music.²⁶ They believed that opera was

²³ Karin Maria Di Bella, *Piano Music in Italy During the Fascist Era*, University of British Columbia, 2002, 10. When it comes to art and the work of artists, they did not have any defined supervising institutions, and thus, no regulations until 1933, when the Secretariat for Press and Propaganda was formed. In 1937, the Secretariat was transformed into the Ministry of Folk Culture. Until then, in art, and thus in music, it was important to respect the following principles: to write works based on the past of the country, to make them (sound) strong and beautiful, and that those works promoted national unity. Censorship did not have to be applied not only because there was no official policy on the basis of which it would function, but also because artists censored themselves (self-censorship), because they knew the consequences that awaited them if they opposed the regime.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁵ Ben Earle, *op. cit.*, 69.

²⁶ See: Karin Maria Di Bella, *op. cit.*, 8. Namely, Busoni belonged to a group of older composers (which included Giuseppe Martucci, Leone Sinigaglia and Giovanni Sgambati), who considered it necessary to renew the rich tradition of Italian instrumental music. Busoni was one of the first composers to teach his students about the Italian instrumental music of the past and the contemporary achievements of German instrumental music. Although the work of these composers (with the exception of Busoni) did not have much artistic significance, it allowed younger generations of composers to turn to the renewal of instrumental music.

one of the causes of the crisis in which Italian music fell at the beginning of the 20th century, and that it was necessary to pay attention to instrumental music, which could be more suitable to bring novelty that was characteristic of the European scene. At the same time, in order for modern music to carry the epithet of Italian, the works had to refer to the great Italian masters of the Renaissance and Baroque.²⁷ So, in addition to the fact that Italian musical neoclassicism was based on the instrumental tradition of that country, it also contained some of the features of the modern European musical language.

In order to consider neoclassicism in Casella's compositional work, it is necessary to keep in mind the theory of Leonard B. Meyer, who classified the procedures of quotation, paraphrase and simulation among three of the four primary methods for using the past in modern, neoclassical composition.²⁸ According to Meyer: a quote means material that is exactly integrated into a new work with minimal changes; paraphrase represents a relatively strict and consistent use of some of the characteristics of the material, with the composer's freedom to rearrange and change the downloaded material, while simulation, as perhaps the most important procedure in neoclassicism, involves simulating some but not all features of an epoch, author or school style.²⁹

Casella's stay in Paris – the first and second creative period

Unlike his contemporaries, Alfredo Casella worked in Italy during fascism with a different experience and knowledge. His stay in Paris, during which the composer formed his aesthetic and poetic attitudes, especially contributed to that.³⁰ Namely, Casella went to Paris in 1896 to study piano, and four years later he enrolled in composition studies in the class of Gabriel Fauré.³¹ In addition to this composer, Maurice Ravel played a major role in Casella's musical maturation, introducing him to leading French artists such as Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie and Igor Stravinsky. Entering Parisian cultural circles en-

²⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁸ See: Leonard B. Meyer, *Music, Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth Century Culture*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1994, 193–208.

²⁹ Ibid., 193–208.

³⁰ Roberto Calabretto, *Alfredo Casella: gli Anni di Parigi. Dai Documenti*, Firenze, Olschki editore, 1997, IX. During his life, Casella was active as a music critic and writer, and thus, from the beginning of his compositional work, he also published texts on the basis of which it is possible to read his aesthetic views on music.

³¹ Ibid., IX.

abled Casella to become acquainted with French culture, French modernism and, inevitably, French nationalism.

If he wanted to survive as a young, foreign, musician in Paris, Casella had to fight for his place on the Parisian stage: he dedicated himself to a piano career, worked as a piano teacher, harpsichordist and conductor, and in addition to all the above, he worked as a composer.³² In this regard, Roberto Calabretto points out that Casella's constant musical activity on the concert stage (and we would add 'around it') as a pianist, conductor, composer or critic, led to his name being ubiquitous in the Parisian press and music life, and that such an aspiration can be considered a kind of *tour de force* in this period of his life.³³ His engagement and experience gained in various musical institutions would enable Casella to establish himself as one of the leading composers upon his return to Rome, but also to actively participate in the organisation of musical life in Italy.

Also, while working in French music institutions, he saw that French music in the second half of the 19th century faced a similar crisis that Italian music faced at the beginning of the 20th century: he noted that the crisis of musical creation, which in the 19th century fell under the great influence of German instrumental music and opera, was overcome with the help of the orchestral works of César Franck and Camille Saint-Saëns, who composed contemporary instrumental music based on the French tradition. This led him to conclude that young composers in Italy should do the same and turn to neglected instrumental music, while keeping pace with European trends – French modernism, German expressionism and the Russian new school – so that the music would not sound outdated.³⁴

In the works created in Casella's first period, there are certain elements of style that would crystallise in the third creative period, such as traditional forms, with the visibility of paraphrase and simulation procedures. This can be recognised in the composition *À la manière de...*, a collection of eight pieces based on paraphrases and simulations of the works or style of the composer in whose 'manner' he composed.³⁵ Corrina Salda states that elements

³² Ibid., VII.

³³ Ibid., VII.

³⁴ Alfredo Casella, *21+26*, Firenze, Olschki editore, 2012, 19.

³⁵ *À la manière de...* consists of two editions, of which the second was written in collaboration with Maurice Ravel. The first edition was published in 1911 and contains pieces written 'in the manner' of Richard Wagner, Gabriel Fore, Johannes Brahms, Claude

of *Italianess* were already present in some compositions created in this period thanks to quotations from Italian folk melodies (in the symphonic rhapsody *Italia*) and Italian dance forms and patterns (barcarole, siciliana).³⁶ Regarding the symphonic rhapsody *Italia*, the composer himself stated that he wanted to create a symphonic work that was ‘distinctly national and which is an unquestionable expression of his *Italianess*’.³⁷

Casella’s second creative period began at the end of his stay in Paris, when he adopted the compositional techniques of avant-garde composers. In his works written in this period, we can see a clear influence of the modernist works of Stravinsky and Schoenberg. Precisely because of the features of harmonic language, which had been brought to the extreme limits of tonality, some theorists consider it to be an avant-garde stage of Casella’s work, although, according to Richard Taruskin, his second creative period does not represent a complete break with tradition either, considering that Casella never accepted atonality.³⁸ However, bearing in mind the sharpened harmonic language, the use of polytonality, the fragmentary nature of the musical flow and the sharp sound of the compositions created in this period, it is possible to speak of Casella’s second creative period as an avant-garde period.³⁹

Ben Earle believes that the features of the new compositional language are clearly visible in the work that marks the beginning of the second creative period – *Nove pezzi*,⁴⁰ while their development can be traced in some of Casella’s most significant compositions created after his return to Italy, such as *Pagine di guerra*, *Sonatina* and *Elegia Eroica*. Especially interesting is the *Elegia Eroica*, dedicated to the Italian soldier who died in the war, which,

Debussy, Richard Strauss, and Gustav Mahler. The second edition was published in 1914 and contains works ‘in the manner’ of Ravel and Vincent d’Indy, as well as two of Ravel’s compositions ‘in the manner’ of Alexandre Borodine and Emmanuel Chabrier.

³⁶ Corinne M. Salda, *A Music Unquestionably a in Idiom: Nationalism as an Evolutionary Process in the Music of Alfredo Casella*, Master Theses, University of Massachusetts, February 2014, 13.

³⁷ Alfredo Casella, 21+26, op. cit., 20.

³⁸ Ben Earle, op. cit., 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁰ Composed in a similar way as *À la manière de...*, this work consists of nine short pieces written ‘in the manner’ of the works of avant-garde European composers. The pieces of which this edition consists are dedicated to Igor Stravinsky, Enrique van der Henst, Ildebrando Pizzetti, Yvonne Lumley, Florent Schmitt, Maurice Ravel, Tina Dreyfus, Yvonne Muller, and Francesco Malipiero.

according to Ben Earle, due to the distinctly chromatic language that was brought to the border towards atonality, can be really considered as the first Italian modernist composition.⁴¹

The third creative period and the tracing of the ‘third way’

However, faced with the fact that he would always be a foreigner in France, and that he could have a far greater influence in Italy, during his second period, Casella returned to Italy in 1915 to help, with his experience and education, the revival of Italian music which was in crisis at the time. According to Waterhouse, Casella’s return to Rome was the starting point for the development of Italian music and musical life in this country after 1915. He also stated that by returning to Italy, Casella became one of the leading figures in Italian music.⁴²

Immediately after his return, in order to put his ideas into action and to promote contemporary music Casella founded the *Italian Society of Modern Music* (*Società Italiana della Musica Moderna*) which operated from 1917 until 1919. In 1923, he founded another association: *The Association of New Music* (*Corporazione delle nuove musiche*). Both organisations aimed to promote contemporary music and young Italian and European authors. Also, during the 1930s, Casella participated in the founding and organisation of the music biennale in Venice – *The International Festival of Contemporary Music* (*Festival Internazionale di musica Contemporanea*) – whose goal was to organise world premieres of modernist compositions by Italian and foreign composers.⁴³

In order to fully understand Casella’s activity after 1920, when the third period of his work began, we will also take into consideration the texts he published in the period from 1918 to 1930, which were united and came out in his autobiography *21+26*⁴⁴, published in 1931. First of all, we will mention

⁴¹ Ibid., 16. The premiere of this composition in Italy caused a scandal equal to the one caused by the premieres of the futurist’s works or the scandal that arose after the performance of Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*.

⁴² John C.G. Waterhouse, “Italy. 20th Century“, in: Stanly Sadie (Ed.), *The New Grove ...*, op. cit.

⁴³ Ben Earle, op. cit., 69. Despite the fact that both societies were successful, Casella was often criticised for performing and promoting modernist music.

⁴⁴ Alfredo Casella, *21+26*, op. cit.

that Casella emphasised in several different texts that the work of young Italian composers should be based on the instrumental tradition of Girolamo Frescobaldi, Claudio Monteverdi, Antonio Vivaldi and Domenico Scarlatti, but that, at the same time, it must contain elements of contemporary musical styles. Only in that way, according to Casella, would their work contribute to the creation of ‘modern Italian music in which the artistic cosmos is seen through the prism of the Italian tradition.’⁴⁵

In the text *Impressionism and Anti-medism* (*Impresionismo e anti-medismo*), written in 1918, the composer emphasised the need for young artists to reflect the fullness of sound with their works and to tirelessly search for innovation and new artistic expressions.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the composer refers to the opinion of the Italian music critic Fausto Torrefranca, who considered that national art is the result of coordinating mature foreign influences with the sensibilities of the country that ‘imports’ them.⁴⁷ In this regard, Casella points out that Impressionism is a style peculiar to France, and that Italian artists should not create works modeled on it.⁴⁸ On the other hand, he emphasises cubism and futurism – whose paintings are characterised by a clear line, dynamism and plasticity – as two universal artistic poetics that everyone should emulate. The counterpart to this in music, according to Casella, is the polytonal harmonic language, which is present in the works of composers from all over Europe: Stravinsky, Ravel, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Béla Bartók and Paul Hindemith.⁴⁹

The last text important for understanding Casella’s aesthetic attitudes is *What is art?*⁵⁰, published in 1922. In it the composer states that the work of art is the result of constant variation and advancement of tradition: it is created by the artist’s reliance on the heritage of his predecessors, which he promotes and passes on to future generations; such a work is the result of the artist’s vision and has no moral and social function – it is simple, beautiful

⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁴⁸ Casella believed that Italian landscapes were clear and crisp, not dark and foggy like the French, and that Impressionist painting would make no sense in Italy. Thus, music with impressionistic elements would not be in the ‘spirit’ of the true Italian music.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁵⁰ Alfredo Casella, “What is Art?” (trans. Otis Kincaid), *The Musical Quarterly*, 8/1, 1922, 1–6.

and serves art, because only pure and beautiful works are timeless.⁵¹ This attitude, that art is timeless, and that it serves only the beautiful, leads us to the conclusion that the composer in his aesthetic views advocated the greatest degree of autonomy of art.

When it comes to Casella's work, according to the periodisation of Waterhouse, the third period begins with the work *11 pezzi infantili* in which his compositional-technical style crystallises. The characteristics of the new style are also noticeable in works like *Scarlattiana. Divertimento su musiche di Domenico Scarlatti*, *Paganiniana*, *Partita for piano and orchestra*, *Triple sonata* and *Introduction, chorale and march*. These compositions, written in the neoclassical style, with names and certain compositional techniques referring to traditional baroque forms, while the treatment of materials, the use of polyrhythm, as well as, polytonal harmonic language, reveal a clear influence of modernist compositions and, above all, neoclassical works by Stravinsky. In this way, Casella met the aesthetic demands of the regime, referring in his works to the great masters of the Italian tradition, while, at the same time, he managed to retain the modernist language that characterised the second stage of his compositional work. However, his constant commitment to composing (and performing) contemporary music was the reason for constant criticism of his contemporaries – conservative theorists and composers.⁵²

To mitigate the attacks, Casella composed some 'politically correct' works that, according to some of the characteristics, can be interpreted as works that 'support' the fascist regime: *Concerto for string quartet and orchestra* (1923), *Concerto Romano* (1926),⁵³ and then the opera *Il Deserto tentato* (1937) in

⁵¹ Ibid., 4.

⁵² During the 1920s, various Italian music critics, including Giuseppe Botai, criticised Casella for his modernist tendencies. However, the culmination of conservative criticism came in December 1932, when the *Manifesto of Italian Musicians for the Tradition of Romantic Art of the 19th Century* (*Manifesto di musicisti Italiani per la tradizione dell'arte romantica dell'ottocento*) was published, in which the authors indirectly criticised Casella and Malipiero. The Manifest was published in all relevant Italian newspapers, and the author was the Italian composer and musicologist who wrote for the fascist newspaper *Popolo d'Italia*, Alceo Toni. The signatories of the Manifest were all the leading conservative artists of that period, including Respighi and Pizzetti. The Manifest demanded that music to be freed from all foreign and modern influences and that musicians return to composing in the Romantic style, which was dominant at a time when Italian music was at its peak.

⁵³ When considering music in Italy in the first half of the 20th century, Waterhouse

which the composer explicitly expresses his support for the regime. Precisely because of these compositions, Casella was sharply condemned by anti-fascist critics after the Second World War.⁵⁴ For example, in the *Concerto for string quartet and orchestra*, the problem was the agogic mark which appears at the moment of the culmination of the work – *vittoriosamente*. *Concerto Romano* was criticised for its harmonic language: the polytonal introduction of the first movement was substituted with the clear sound of E flat major at the beginning of the exposition, which was seen as a gesture of renunciation of modernist language in favor of traditional language and form.⁵⁵ Having in mind Casella's negative views on opera, it is not surprising that the third and last opera, *Il Deserto tentato*, composed as a commission of the opera festival *Florentine Music May* and premiered in 1937, was one of the compositions for which he was perceived as a composer of the fascist regime. Namely, the opera was dedicated to 'the creator of the new Italian empire, Benito Mussolini',⁵⁶ the libretto of the opera is based on events from immediate Italian history, while all the musical means of expression (clear harmonic language, mass scenes, monumental unison choirs) are subordinated to sending a universal message of the need for the unity of the Italian people.⁵⁷ However, if we pay attention to the fact that he composed the first opera only in 1931,⁵⁸ the

states that the *Mussolinian* spirit was present in some of Casella's works, which represent a disappointing step backwards after the promising period of progress that was evident in the works created before them. As an example of a work in which the *Mussolinian* spirit can be clearly heard, Waterhouse marks *Concerto Romano*. See: John C.G. Waterhouse, „Italy. 20th Century“, op. cit.

⁵⁴ For more details about the discussions about Casella's compositions during his life, but also after his death see: Ben Earle, op. cit., 63–110; Francesco Parrino, op. cit.

⁵⁵ See: Esteban Buch, Igor Contreras Zubillaga and Manuel Deniz Silva (Eds.), *Composing for the State: Music in Twentieth-Century Dictatorships*, Oxford: Ashgate Publishing, 2016, 101. A detailed analysis of the composition revealed great similarities with Stravinsky's *Octet for Wind Instruments*.

⁵⁶ For more on the critical reception of Casella's works see: *ibid.*, 85.

⁵⁷ The one-act opera *Il Deserto tentato* is based on the libretto written by the fascist poet Corrado Pavolini. The plot of the opera is based on Mussolini's colonial wars that were fought at that time, and the opera is set in the desert in East Africa, which Italian aviators are trying to conquer. More about the opera in: Laura Basini, Alfredo Casella, and the rhetoric of colonialism in: *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 24, 2012, 127–157 and Esteban Buch, Igor Contreras Zubillaga and Manuel Deniz Silva (Eds.), op. cit.

⁵⁸ Casella composed two operas, *La Donna Serpente* (1931) and *La favola d'Orfeo* (1932). The librettos of the operas are based on Italian texts and stylistically they belong to neo-

fact that his opus includes three operas (it is a small number of operas written in relation to the 'average' that is characteristic of Italian composers), as well as the fact that the years of his operatic works coincide with the period when the attacks on Casella were intense (and his works were performed less),⁵⁹ this choice of genre, subject and means of expression can be interpreted as the composer's 'concession' to position himself on the side of critique and the regime, so he could continue to work and implement his artistic ideas.

A composition that serves as an example of Casella's third period is *Scarlattiana* written for piano and orchestra. It is structured as a five-movement work in which the composer used over eighty themes from different Scarlatti's sonatas. Talking about this composition, Casella stated that *Scarlattiana* is easy for understanding and clear, because he wanted to show how a composer can create a modern work whilst respecting tradition.⁶⁰ The five movements of the *Scarlattiana* clearly evoke the form of the baroque suite by their names: the first movement is called *Sinfonia*, the second is *Minuetto*, the third is *Capriccio*, the fourth is *Pastorale*, and the fifth is *Finale*, while the disposition of tempi is reminiscent of the classical sonata cycle by shifting fast and slow movements.⁶¹ The first and second movements are written in a sonata form, the third is structured as a sonata form with elements of a baroque concerto, while the fourth and fifth movements are written as ABA, that is, a rondo with a slow introduction. The influence of baroque is not only evident in the use of Scarlatti's themes, which consequently causes the occurrence of rhyth-

classicism, which finds its models in Renaissance and Baroque opera, while the harmonic language of the opera is predominantly polytonal.

⁵⁹ Esteban Buch, Igor Contreras Zubillaga and Manuel Deniz Silva (Eds.), op. cit., 87.

⁶⁰ See: Alfredo Casella, 21+26, op. cit., 11. In the twenties of the last century in Italy, it was popular to compose music that was based on the fragments of the compositions of a certain composer: almost all the composers of the *Generation of the Eighties* had at least one composition whose name ended with *-iana*, a suffix that was added to the name of the composer from whose compositions the fragments were taken. For example, Malipiero wrote *Cimariosiana* and Respighi wrote *Rossiniana*.

Since in the literature that was available to us during the research of this matter there were no mentions of which Scarlatti sonatas Casella used in his composition, we did a comparative analysis of Scarlatti's sonatas and *Scarlattiana*, and we were able to single out some of the sonatas that were used. For the purposes of this paper, we will present a few of them, in order to show the manner in which Casella treated the material.

⁶¹ Tempos of the movements: Lento, Grave/Allegro molto vivace – Allegretto ben moderato e grazioso – Allegro vivacissimo ed impetuoso – Adantino dolcemente mosso – Lento e molto grave/presto vivacissimo.

mic and melodic patterns that are characteristic of baroque, but, they are also present through the simulation of baroque formal patterns in two movements of the piece. In the first movement we can see a slow introduction that represents a simulation of the baroque passacaglia: string instruments are entrusted with an ostinato motif, intertwined with several different themes. In contrast, the third movement brings a simulation of a baroque concerto due to the specific orchestral motif that occurs at the beginning of the movement and before the recapitulation, and which has no further thematic development. As the orchestra and the piano participate together in the development of all the thematic materials, this motif can be interpreted as an ritornello by which the composer made a simulation of the form of a baroque concerto. In addition to the references to baroque practice and Scarlatti, Casella simulates Spanish and Portuguese folk tunes by using characteristic melodic patterns and instruments such as the drum or castanets. We should not neglect the paraphrase of the third movement of Mahler's First Symphony in the second movement of the *Scarlattiana*: the bassoon carries the entering motif of the popular tune *Frère Jacques* at the moment when one of the main motives of this movement is introduced.

The materials taken from Scarlatti's sonatas for *Scarlattiana* are treated in accordance with the modernist expression that was characteristic of his style. Casella cited or paraphrased themes or materials from the developing parts of Scarlatti's sonatas. He used them to construct themes or for developing parts of the movements of *Scarlattiana*. The attention that the composer paid to the selection of Scarlatti's themes is especially noticeable in the fourth movement, *Pastorale*, for which the composer used themes from Scarlatti's sonatas which have the word 'pastorale' in the name or next to the tempo mark. Stravinsky's influence is apparent in the use of polyrhythmic and polyometric patterns, which are particularly pronounced in the last movement. The harmonic language is characterised by a high degree of dissonance, which, at the culmination of the musical flow of the movements, reaches bitonality and polytonality.

The way in which Casella quoted Scarlatti can be seen in the example of the second movement, which is entirely based on quotations from his sonatas. Casella quoted the theme of Scarlatti's *Sonata K440*, which he used to construct the main orchestral thematic material of the first theme of the second movement. Only the melody is taken, while the tempo and accompaniment are changed (examples 1 and 1a). For the material of the second theme he took a theme from the second part of Scarlatti's *Sonata K380* and distrib-

uted it in *Scarlattiana* so that the first part of the theme was played by the orchestra, while the second part of the theme was introduced in the piano part (examples 2 and 2a). The quotation of the theme and its accompaniment is present in the transition of the second movement: Casella chose the material from the middle part of the musical flow of Scarlatti's *Sonata K259* and used it as a transition from the first to the second theme of the second movement. (examples 3 and 3a) We can conclude that the main thematic complexes of the second movement (first theme, transition and second theme) are taken as direct quotations of melodies, that is, of the melodies and their harmonic accompaniment which are, in Casella's composition placed in a modernist context and used as the main material for building and developing the musical flow.

Example 1: Alfredo Casella, *Scarlattiana*, second movement (b. 1–8)

Allegretto ben moderato e grazioso

mp dolce *cantabile*

Example 1a: Domenico Scarlatti, *Sonata K440*, B-flat major (b. 1–8)

Minuet

Example 2: Alfredo Casella, *Scarlattiana*, second movement (b. 47–54)

The musical score for Example 2 consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a tempo marking of 'a tempo' and a dynamic of 'p'. The second system includes a 'Flauti' part and a piano accompaniment with a dynamic of 'pp legg.' and a 'Cor.' (Coro) part. The third system features a violin part with a dynamic of 'mf espr.' and a trumpet part with a dynamic of 'p' and 'mp'. The score is written in G major and 2/4 time.

Example 2a: Domenico Scarlatti, *Sonata K380*, B major (b. 19–26)

The musical score for Example 2a shows two systems of staves for Domenico Scarlatti's Sonata K380. The first system starts at measure 19 and the second system starts at measure 23. The score is written in B major and 2/4 time. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The right hand melody includes trills and slurs.

Example 3: Alfredo Casella, *Scarlattiana*, second movement (b. 29–34)

Example 3a: Domenico Scarlatti, *Sonata K259*, D major (b. 23–27)

In addition to the quotation, the composer paraphrased Scarlatti's works very skillfully: the themes are often taken partly or even fully, but he made changes in tonality, tempo, and character. Such a procedure, with varying degrees of resemblance with the chosen model, is found in all five movements. The lightest form of paraphrase is found at the very beginning of the composition in the orchestra's introduction to the first movement, where Casella used the theme of Scarlatti's *Sonata K54*. He took the melody without harmonic accompaniment, making changes such as shortening of the note values, agogic modifications and the addition of a complex counterpoint, while also changing the tempo character from *Andante* to *Lento, Grave*. (examples 4 and 4a). On the other hand, in the fourth movement, the composer moves further away from the starting point by making bigger changes to the model.

Thus, to build the B theme of the fourth movement, he uses the motif from the beginning of the second part of *Sonata K202*. Although the melodic skeleton remained the same, the composer altered the agogics, added upbeats and pauses, and achieved an additional character transformation by changing the tempo from *Allegro* to *Andantino, grazioso* (examples 5 and 5a).

Example 4: Alfredo Casella, *Scarlattiana*, first movement (b. 2–6)

The musical score for Example 4 is for Piano II and consists of two systems. The first system is marked "Lento, grave (♩)" and "mf espr." with a "Con Fig." instruction. The second system is marked "mf molto espr." and "p". The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with upbeats and pauses, and a change in meter from 4/4 to 2/4 and back to 4/4.

Example 4a: Domenico Scarlatti, *Sonata K52*, D minor (b. 1–4)

The musical score for Example 4a is for Piano II and is marked "Andante moderato". It consists of two systems of music in D minor, 6/8 time, showing a simple harmonic and melodic structure.

Example 5: Alfredo Casella, *Scarlattiana*, fourth movement (b. 41–45)

I

41 *mp grazioso*

II

p (*pizz.*)

I

II

mp *mf*

Ob. Fg. VI. Ob.

Example 5a: Domenico Scarlatti, *Sonata K202*, F major (b. 48–52)

48 | 29

I

II

In order to indicate the means by which the composer treated the selected material, in this paper we listed only some of the processes noticed in *Scarlattiana*. Although he often took over the theme, its tonality and counterpoint, Casella often changed that environment in his *Scarlattiana*. What is meant here is that the development of a counterpoint of the chosen motif was in order to achieve a modernist sound of the musical flow. By using mod-

ernist means (such as polyrhythmic, polymetric, polytonality and unusual combinations of orchestral sound), as well as traditional harmonic solutions, patterns and materials, the composer showed in his work the aesthetic ideals he advocated – he composed a modern piece whose roots are deep in the tradition of Italian instrumental music.

Casella's moderate modernism as 'third way'

This balance between modernity and tradition, which is present in the entire work of Casella, enabled the composer to survive on the Italian scene in the years between the two wars. As stated, Casella largely formed his aesthetic and poetic attitudes during his schooling and stay in France, which is evident in his compositions and writings that originate from the first period of his work. More precisely, Casella's modernism has its roots in the knowledge and experience he gained during his stay in France, and the 'spiritual baggage' he took with him from Paris is reflected in: the formation of aesthetic attitudes that he would further develop upon his return to Rome; the adoption of the nationalist and anti-German views that were present at that time in Paris; the appropriation of the French model for the re-establishment of French instrumental music in the 19th century; acceptance of modernist compositional procedures, having in mind the work and compositional techniques of Stravinsky, but also, the works of other composers who were active in Paris at that time. Furthermore, his inclination towards neoclassicism is obvious in the works created during his stay in Paris – certain compositional techniques characteristic of this style are also noticeable in Casella's works written in the first and second creative period.

Also, neoclassicism in Casella's work can be interpreted as a kind of moderate modernism by which the composer established a balance between modernism and tradition. On the one hand, the composer, in accordance with his aesthetic ideas, which were to some extent in line with the requirements of fascist aesthetics, referred to tradition, while, at the same time selecting the most important authors from the Italian past. On the other hand, he placed the selected compositional procedures or materials of the work in a new harmonic, rhythmic and sound environment. In this way, the composer re-examined tradition and how traditional patterns can be used in contemporary music. This approach to modernism, in Casella's 'case', has its roots in the knowledge and attitudes he adopted in France that he never abandoned, which was evident in his constant aspiration to maintain ties with modernist composers and to promote contemporary music in Italy.

Precisely because of the commitment to establish a balance between the past and the future in his works, but also in the organisation of musical life, Casella's musical activity can be seen as the 'third way' – with a conscious reference to the (similarity with) Cocteau's 'middle way' based on balancing relationships between tradition and modernity and Mussolini's 'third way' established on the oscillation between the idealised past and modernity. In this context, it is a 'third way' as a form of moderate modernism, in which the composer, as a composer *in* society, in accordance with his aesthetic beliefs, found a way to put his modernist ideas into practice, while respecting the aesthetic principles of the then ruling regime.

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Summary

Starting from the stance that recognisable political layers are not subsequently added to the musical work by discursive work or conceptual representations, but that music is an artistic product, and, also the result of social relations, the paper considers the third (neoclassical) creative period of Alfred Casella from the perspective of moderate modernism, as a path of 'compromise' between the aesthetic demands of the then ruling fascist regime and the modernist ideas that were evident in the composer's earlier periods and aesthetic views. In that sense, this paper's starting point is Vesna Mikić's consideration, who interprets neoclassicism as a moderate modernist artistic direction in accordance with the ideas of Cocteau's 'middle way', as well as the interpretation of theorists who view the politics and aesthetic demands of fascism as a 'middle way' between modernist tendencies and a return to traditional values. Casella's musical activity is, therefore, viewed as a 'third way' – with a conscious reference to the (similarity) to the previously mentioned theoretical interpretations of neoclassicism and fascism.

In other words, through the analysis of Casella's third creative period and a review of the earlier stages of his work, neoclassicism in his oeuvre is explained as being a kind of moderate modernism by which the composer establishes a balance between modernism and tradition. On the one hand, the composer, in accordance with the requirements of fascist aesthetics, but also with his own aesthetic attitudes that he formed in France, referred to the great composers of Italian instrumental music. On the other hand, he 'placed' the selected compositional procedures or materials of the work in a new harmonic, rhythmic and musical environment. In this way, the composer re-examined tradition and the ways in which traditional patterns can be used in contemporary music. It has also been shown that this approach to modernism in Casella's 'case' has its roots in the knowledge and attitudes he adopted in France, which he never abandoned, which is noticeable not only in his texts, but also in his constant aspiration to maintain a relationship with modernist composers, and to promote their works in Italy.