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Foreword

In the past few decades Italian film historiography, more and more inclined to support an aesthetical and stylistical approach to film text with studies on context (film production, equipment, professionals, reception, consumption etc.), has been adopting a methodology based on comparison and concurrent use of both film and non-film resources, thus recognising the important historical role of the latter; hence, specialists have been committed to the field of restoration and promotion of the considerable documentary heritage, which, in spite of substantial and painful dispersions, is held in film libraries, museum collections, libraries and archives. The inevitable divergences, initially arisen from confrontation among experts, and the different views the scholars taking part in the research maintain have been gradually overcome, giving way to a dialogue essential to gain theoretical awareness.

This confrontation could not leave out the growing number of scholars on film music, authors and promoters of projects and research, leading in recent years to a considerable expansion and development in terms of scientific output. Maybe because of the peculiarities of music, however, the debate has been less pressing compared to what happened on other professional fronts, therefore we might come across renown surveys and editorial enterprises, which, though engaging in an overall speculation on cinema prone to relating film to non-film resources, still hold film scores in little consideration.

Strongly believing in the contribution widely known and accessible music resources may give to film historiography in defining a scientific methodology useful for a historical-critical analysis of the role film scores play and for a debate on soundtrack restoration, a group of music and cinema professors from the University of Turin has promoted in last years a research project entitled *Cabiria* for cataloguing manuscript and printed film scores held at Piedmontese institutions and soliciting studies and research to analyse them from different perspectives (musicological, aesthetical, ethnomusicological, bibliographical).

This volume collects studies conceived from and around the project, and – after an opening paper explaining the guidelines and results achieved by *Cabiria* Research Project at the University of Turin – it features an essay where Roberto Calabretto ponders upon the identity of film music in silent

and sound cinema and upon the consequences of the challenging nature and status of film music, affecting re-mediation, film revivals and soundtrack restorations.

The following group of essays is centred on some significant aspects and works of silent cinema. Franco Prono focuses on the genesis and history of *Cabiria* (1914) in light of the uneasy consideration of intellectual work in a rapidly transforming mass-media situation, where cinema industry soon made a bid for preferred “mass” culture producer. Pastrone’s masterpiece is again the focus of the essay by Emilio Sala, which analyses the score Manlio Mazza compiled, once the attempt to have an original one by Ildebrando Pizzetti went awry, solely composing the *Sinfonia del fuoco*: Sala’s examination, far from dismissing Mazza’s score as a historically regressive, recycled work compared to specially composed scores, emphasises the high degree of narrative integration it achieves, together with many compiled scores, and stresses the importance of its dramatic role.

Another three epic movies produced in Turin in the early 20th century (*Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, 1908, by Maggi; *Jone o Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, 1913, by Vidali and Del Colle; *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, 1913, by Rodolfi), taken from a novel by Edward Bulwer-Lytton which had inspired in the previous century opera composers and choreographers, gave Paolo Russo a chance to show in the following essay how much the aesthetics à *grand spectacle* of this film genre sank its roots in opera, dance and pantomime, from whose expressive codes and whose dramaturgy the directors of the three films drew in various ways and to a different extent.

The section devoted to the Silent Age closes with two papers by Marco Targa, who, in his turn dealing with the range of solutions practiced in early cinema for film musical accompaniment, takes into consideration in the former essay the so-called *musica per orchestrina* (a repertoire widely documented in published works taken from transcriptions of opera and instrumental pieces, dance music, popular songs and pieces especially composed by lesser known authors), whereas in the latter he concentrates on motion-picture adaptations of operas, focusing in particular on films based on the plot of an opera subject and on the problems faced when transforming libretti into screenplays.

Unlike what happened within the research on silent cinema, promoting single significant cases, survey on sound post-production processes is still missing in Italy a literature accounting for the multiple processes of reaction and adaptation, each time caused by the encounter between different technological standards and pre-existing practices and technical solutions: this

void is countered by Ilario Meandri, who in his essay illustrates the methodological assumptions of a field research carried out in Rome in contact with various experts to trace, through a survey on oral memories, a discourse on the technical evolution of sound and music post-production cycle.

That the study of audiovisual documents cannot disregard production processes, which have determined its creation from the aesthetical-compositional and the technical-technological point of view, is the assumption set forth in the study by Angelo Orcalli, who emphasises the need for a material philology of audiovisual documents of such a time, like ours, marked by the increasing – and often uncritical – change from analogue to digital domain; at the same time, he warns against the dangers a research potentially based on scientifically unreliable sources is exposed to and he deals with the different approaches of document re-mediation also in connection with the problems posed by the restitution of electronic music on magnetic tape and soundtracks.

All but exempt from the afore-mentioned problems is Italian industrial cinema, produced since the early 20th century and, in the 1950s-60s, one of the most effective media of company communication: an area marked by a high degree of audiovisual experimentation where the cinematic association between new technologies and the use of avant-garde electronic and instrumental music took over as one of the preferred options. Alessandro Cecchi deals with the role of sound and music in 1960s industrial film, and, guided by a semiotic perspective known in musicology as “topic theory”, he focuses his attention on audiovisual *topoi*, meant as recurring structures based on image-sound synchronisation, studying the correlation with the semantic fields defined by the moving image (especially the “technology paradigm” intended as a productive interaction of scientific research, technological innovation and industrial application).

Angelo Francesco Lavagnino belongs to those composers who, in the second half of the 20th century, took part in film productions of industrial companies. An author of film music among the most prolific in Italy, Lavagnino spent the last years of his life in Gavi (Alessandria), where, after assigning his film music in bailment to the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome, some manuscript and printed scores, magnetic tapes, correspondences etc. are still held at his daughters’ residences: unknown (and still inaccessible) resources Paola Glenda Salvadeo contributes to uncover.

Concluding this volume, there is a paper by Silvia Caratti and Flavia Ingresso on the aspects and problems of cataloguing manuscript and printed film scores, bibliographical “objects” even experts have up to now hardly

paid any attention to. Since they are the products of an industrial-commercial system characterised by a rapid pace of exploitation, their graphic and advertising side has often been favoured over the information essential to a correct and thorough bibliographic description: this does not come without consequences in giving access to catalogue records and resources details.

Conceived within a project based on the scores held in the institutions of an Italian region (however a region whose seat was one of the capitals of cinema in the early decades of the 20th century), we believe these studies finally offer – thanks to the different perspectives with which film music and its resources are analysed and to the new results most of the research conducted was able to yield – food for thought: a contribution we wish to be the occasion for a more fruitful interdisciplinary confrontation the overall debate on cinema would benefit from, soliciting new considerations and raising new questions.

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