

Discourse on Music in 19th-century Travel Writings and the Italian national character

In recent times, the history of international relations has been affected by a transnational turn, which allows us to reconceptualise spaces and to question the validity of national categories of analysis. For many years historians have studied the role and meaning of the *Grand Tour* for the fashioning of a cosmopolitan aristocratic elite in countries such as Britain, France, and German lands. While its relevance to the cultural transfer is extensively discussed, we know far less about the role of music in the process of cultural transfer and in the emergence of an international canon of aesthetic appreciation, which was also posing a contrast between the internationalisation of cultural practices and the age of nationalism.

The analysis of numerous travel descriptions of Italy, during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, will allow us to reconstruct the stereotypes linked to the perception of different parts of the peninsula and its music, while at the same time adding a new interdisciplinary dimension to our understanding of the *Grand Tour*. While the cosmopolitan aristocracy travelled throughout Europe sharing ideals and values, their accounts (diaries, letters, treatises, etc.) are indeed linked to stereotypes which had a deep and durable impact, thus they shall be revealed as integral and substantive part of the main cultural paradigms for the self-awareness of Italians during the long Nineteenth century.

The analysis of descriptive models elaborated in these accounts, as well as of their reflection on some similar works by Italian authors, seeks to address fundamental issues regarding the construction of Italian musical identity and canon during the period preceding the political Unification. This canon will be later considered as an authentic mark of Italy as a whole, while we should consider how different cultural contexts reacted to demands and judgments from abroad.

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