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## DEVELOPMENT OF VOCAL PERFORMANCE IN ITALIAN MUSICAL CULTURE OF THE XIX–XX CENTURIES

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### Abstract

This article examines the stages of development of Italian vocal art during the 19th–20th centuries, its national characteristics, and its evolution in the context of the socio-political environment of the time. The flourishing of Italian opera, the significance of the bel canto style, as well as the trends of Romanticism and Neoclassicism are explored. Special attention is given to technological transformations in vocal performance and the role of Italian tenors and sopranos on the global stage.

**Keywords:** *Italian music, academic vocal, opera school, madrigal, vocal pedagogy, Italian language, historical process, vocal technique*

The 19th century is considered the «Golden Age» of Italian vocal art. During this period, a new stage in the development of opera art was observed, and Italian vocal performance became famous throughout the world. The national characteristics of Italian musical culture in the 19th century were directly related to the events of the struggle for freedom that took place in the country. This historical period of Italy was filled with the spirit of the struggle for freedom and national independence.

“From the 16th century onwards, the Apennine peninsula fell under the rule of a series of foreign invaders – Spain, France and Austria. This political colonialism and the constant wars between the alliances led the country to economic decline, which in turn had a negative impact on the spiritual and cultural life of Italy” (Konon V. D., 1972).

In the 19th century, the focus of attention in Italian music was on the opera genre, and the attention of composers and the general public was concentrated precisely on this area. The flowering of national opera art during this period is directly related, first of all, to the activities of Gioacchino Rossini. He renewed national traditions in the opera buffa genre and enriched its dramatic directions. “The tendencies of romanticism found strong expression in the operas of Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti. In their works, human feelings, emotions and inner turmoil became the central theme of music. Works such as Bellini’s “Norma” and Donizetti’s “Lucia di Lammermoor” are considered high examples of Italian romantic opera” (Gozenpud A. A., 1965).

The musical culture of Italy during the 17th–19th centuries marked important

stages in the history of world music. The development of Baroque aesthetics in music, the creation of an active cultural environment through academies, the formation of the oratorio and cantata genres, and the rise of opera – all this points to Italy as a leading center of European musical development. In particular, the flowering of opera in the 19th century brought Italian musical culture to a leading position on the world stage.

Italy is recognized as one of the countries that has taken a leading place in the history of world civilization not only in art and architecture, but also in music. The musical genres and styles formed in this country served as the main methodological and aesthetic foundation not only for the Italian national culture, but also for the entire European musical tradition. In particular, Italian music is distinguished by the fact that during the Renaissance, Baroque and subsequent history it created mature examples of such forms as opera, cantata, oratorio, sonata, symphony and concerto.

“From the end of the 19th century, the traditional dominant position of opera in Italy began to weaken, and the development of instrumental music genres began to emerge as a priority. This process marked the beginning of a new stage in national musical culture and was in line with the general trends of modern European music” (Tyulin Yu. N. 1985).

The work of Ferruccio Busoni occupies a special place in the musical life of Italy at the beginning of the 20th century. He was known not only as a creative composer, but also as a major theorist in the field of musical thought. In his work, classical and baroque traditions were revived in a modern context, they were critically treated, and new images were created through them.

Based on the ideas put forward by Busoni, an aesthetic and compositional school called neoclassicism was formed in Italy. The leading composers of this direction were Ildebrando Pizzetti, Gian Francesco Malipiero and Alfredo Casella, who sought to reintroduce the traditions of Italian music, especially the forms and styles of the Baroque period. These composers focused on the following aspects in their work: Bel Canto style (Bel Canto) – a style based on a resonant, beautiful voice and perfect technical performance.

Through this style, vocal performance was raised to a high level.

Reviving the melodic features of Gregorian chant and applying them to contemporary instrumental or vocal works;

Effective use of polyphony and modal modes;

Introducing new harmonic and rhythmic structures while maintaining the deep emotional expression and structural clarity characteristic of the Italian Baroque.

In the 20th century, Italian vocal performance reached a new level. The development of phonograph, radio and television technologies popularized opera performance. Enrico Caruso (E. Caruso), Beniamino Gigli (B. Gigli), Mario del Monaco (M. Del Monaco), Franco Corelli (F. Corelli) – each of them became famous for his vocal technique and stage presence, Luciano Pavarotti is one of the most famous tenors of the second half of the 20th century. The open, bright voice and technique of his performance ensured world recognition. During this period:

Opera began to be performed in concert format and in public spaces;

Performance in traditional styles was preserved and developed through vocal training and conservatories;

The role of female vocalists (sopranos, mezzo-sopranos) – such as Maria Callas, Montserrat Caballé, Renata Tebaldi – increased.

In the first half of the 19th century, the people's movement for patriotism and freedom gained momentum. This movement found expression not only in the socio-political spheres, but also directly in culture and art. In particular, the direction of romanticism in literature (although it had some contradictory features) was formed as a generally progressive and democratic movement.

In music, however, the process of forming a national school was relatively slow. In comparison with literature, the connection between music and modern reality was initially not sufficiently clear. Nevertheless, it was during this period that a national school of music emerged in Italy. This school was to gain significant importance not only within the national but also within the framework of world culture.

The madrigal genre is of particular importance in the musical processes in Italy,

which was formed as a mature image in the vocal polyphony of the Renaissance and became one of the foundations of professional vocal art in subsequent centuries.

At the same time, the phonetic and melodic features of the Italian language are also seen as an important factor in the development of musical art. The phonological structure of the Italian language – open syllables, synharmonic harmony of sounds, ease of sound production – creates a favorable environment for singing in all vocal genres. Therefore, this language has formed as a priority language in world vocal performance.

In conclusion, it should be said that composers and vocalists brought Italian music to a new level in a harmonious combination of modernity and tradition. In music, however, the process of forming a national school was relatively slow. In comparison with literature, the connection with modern reality in musical art was initially not sufficiently clear. Nevertheless, it was during this period that

a national school of music emerged in Italy. This school was of great importance not only within the framework of national, but also within the framework of world culture. In general, Italian vocal performance developed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries as one of the leading schools not only in national, but also in world musical culture, making a huge contribution to the global musical heritage.

In the 20th century, Italian music began to combine its history and traditions with a modern worldview. After the traditional dominance of opera, instrumental genres began to develop. The idea of “new classicism” put forward by Busoni and its successors, composers of the neoclassical direction, brought Italian music to a new level in the world music environment. This process led not only to a formal, but also to an ideological and aesthetic renewal, the influence of which has survived into the 21st century and is still felt in contemporary Italian music.

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