

Raffaella Carluccio

The critical spectator. Boito's *Nerone* to the test of the Italian music review

«We must not forget that it is written for the public»: with this statement the journalist Carlo Arner, collaborator of the «Gazzetta Musicale di Milano», is the spokesman of that change in the trend that - towards the end of the nineteenth century - see in the reader, and no longer in the author of the work of art, the main referent of critical exercise. In line with this change in perspective, the concept of criticism is transformed through new types of periodicals: alongside the information newspapers that look to a product of popular matrix, the birth of specialized magazines, intended for a learned public, promotes a purely musicological approach.

It is in particular with the birth of the «Rivista musicale italiana», founded in Turin in 1894, that besides the concept of subjectivism of the critics, mainly applied to reviews of opera performances, it advocates a methodological objectivity adopted in the study of the musical works of art of the past. This is not a fundamental contrast but a necessity to dilate the musical consciousness, through different methodological approaches, magazines such as «La critica musicale italiana» (founded by Luigi Parigi in 1918) and «La Rassegna musicale» (founded in 1928 by Guido Maggiorino Gatti) are the spokesman of the future identity of 20th century music critics. If Parigi promotes the urgency of preparing the reader for a general culture, Gatti in the same way wants to provide all music lovers with useful tools to increase a critical and conscious mentality.

After an analysis that explores the ways in which the concept of criticism has been approached by the cultural press since the unification of Italy - and that sees the protagonist of the singular consideration that the writer and journalist Antonio Ghislanzoni makes of the concept of criticism intended as a distorting element of the taste of the public - this contribution aims to offer an unprecedented analysis of the reviews of the first performance of *Nerone* by Arrigo Boito. The premiere of the opera, the result of a long gestation by the librettist who died before seeing its completion, appears on the stage of the Teatro alla Scala in Milan in 1924, recording a triumphant success. Through the pages of the main national newspapers of the period (from «Corriere della Sera», to «Il Resto del Carlino», to «La Nazione») and some of the most important music magazines of the era (from «Musica d'Oggi» to «Rassegna Musicale Italiana»), the intervention will shed light, through the study of a language based on the rhetoric of Italian, both on the role that, at the expense of critical function, the reaction of the public takes in the reviews of the show, both on the modalities through which the periodicals of general press refer to titles that for the occasion become of musicological interest. This is the case, for example, of «La lettura», the monthly magazine of «Corriere della Sera» which, assuming, starting from March 1924, a central role in the history of the critical reception of *Nerone*, moves away from the status of exclusively literary magazine.

Bio-biblio

Raffaella Carluccio is a Phd student in Literary Philological, Philosophical and Artistic History of the University of Parma where she has been a research fellow and since 2016 a student of the subject in History of Modern and Contemporary Music.

Since 2011 she has worked at the Cirpem (Centro Internazionale di Ricerca sui Periodici Musicali) in Parma, where she studies the critical reception of the synesthetic relationship between the arts in the national periodical press between the end of the 19th century and the second post-war period. Among the most important works on the subject are: *Le rapport entre musique et littérature dans la critique musicale en Italie et du premier au second après-guerre. Deux cas exemplaires: La Critica musicale et La Rassegna Musicale*, La

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