

Essay

## Schemes of Funding Music Research in Italy: A Case Study in Comparison with other European Countries<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The awareness of the central government and other supportive agencies in Italy as to the need for research to be accomplished in music and music history in that country is determined by first stating what that support has been for such research in the 1990s, together with its accessibility to groups and/or individuals working in that field, and then reporting how such aid has been reduced in the more recent times of financial crises. In order to assess Italy's position not in isolation but more realistically by considering it within a broader geographical frame, the same investigation has been accomplished for a group of other culturally developed countries in Europe which offer sufficient areas of comparison: Spain, France, England, Germany. Sadly, Italy does not come off well. Perhaps surprisingly but still sadly this is shown not to be due to the present financial crises but to a long-standing absence of respect for the entire musical history of the country and for the need that it be known and understood thoroughly. In short, the government in Italy seems not to have been sufficiently aware of its responsibility to acknowledge and preserve its musical patrimony by adequately supporting research which aims at uncovering the country's rich past, understanding it, and thereby making it available to professional performing musicians and, through them, also to the people of Italy and the rest of the world.

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this essay was presented at the workshop *Funding policies and research values: strategies and needs, risks and prospects* (University of Trieste, 12 May 2014), under the title: "Humanities at Risk: Italy's Support of its Musical Heritage in Comparison with other European Countries".

**Keywords:** financing music research; Italy; Spain; France; England; Germany

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## 1. Introduction

In 2014 the Victoria and Albert Museum of London (V&A) organized an exhibit on “Style” and devoted it exclusively to Italian fashion from the post-Second World War period up to the mid-Twentieth Century. It seems not to have surprised anyone that the V&A apparently equated Style with Italy. It is highly possible that if one were to ask which country comes first to mind when speaking of “Music”, Italy would again be the most named. Reflecting further, one would realize that in any field of endeavor, aiming at excellence requires study, in this case not only to perfect the techniques associated with performing music, but also to acquire an understanding of what the art intended to convey in the course of history, what the literature and vocabulary of music was in each period from when it began to be written down, whether that early notation and those succeeding it through to the Twenty-first Century can be read with comprehension, whether earlier instruments and styles of singing can be heard again and how and why they have changed—to cite only a few subjects of enquiry which come to mind. In short, research in all areas of music would need to be accomplished so that performers could enable the art—actually the “arts”—of music to live today as it did before and continues to do so and, equally important, for it to be understood and appreciated in all its richness.

It is the aim of the present discussion to determine whether Italy understands the need for research in music and music history, and therefore fosters the accomplishment of such research. One might expect some difficulties today in sponsoring research due to the world-wide financial crises, but comparison with other culturally developed countries, those offering sufficient areas of comparison with Italy—such as Spain, France, England and Germany—could help in defining Italy’s position, at least with regard to these others. It would therefore be useful to state first what the relatively recent research possibilities were in Italy, and then proceed to notice how they have changed and are presently.

## 2. Music Research in Funding Italian Schemes: Universities, Conservatories and National Editions

In the 1990s the Ministero dell’Industria e dell’Università offered two different sources of funding for research to both the university and research agencies. They resulted from dividing the initial sum into local and national funds. The former was distributed through local university committees and individual members of each department could apply for research money directly to it. Since the entire sum was not very much, a bit of financial support was usually given to all who applied. The latter was, instead, decided upon nationally through assessment of applications of groups of researchers. Such groups were usually made up of people from different universities who were meant to work together on a given project. Because of needing to find a subject on which people and groups could be banded together, applications were more difficult to work out. The possibilities for those in music research were as available as they were to researchers of other fields, but music is an area where individuals most often work alone, and so even active researchers normally asked for and received only funding from the local source.

These two sources have basically remained the same in Italy up to the present day, even though called with different names, respectively: FRA (University Research Funds) and PRIN (Research Projects of National Interest). It must be made clear, however, that now, due to the world financial crises which hit Italy as elsewhere, there is much less money available in general and, although people try harder, fewer get funded. There is now a research commission in each university that distributes the local funds, but all are encouraged even here to group together, with the result that individuals are essentially excluded from any realistic funding.

As to the Research Projects of National Interest, it has been decided that now only groups of at least five university units may apply. Here, too, the money is less and decreasing, while the groups get larger. In short, the success rate is usually only one in 15 of those groups applying which get funding, and the money lasts for only 2–3 years. As far as individual researchers are concerned, they have opportunity to obtain financial support only from the European Union, which actually provides aid for selected senior researchers as well as offering special grants intended for young researchers. Clearly, many researchers are excluded due to their being in between these two groups: they are not yet senior, nor are they able to still be considered young.

In Italy grants are of one year for those given locally, and for 2–3 years for the PRIN money. European money is for 4–5 years, but the yearly monitoring is very complicated. Most funded groups need to hire a full-time secretary/administrator to follow the paper work, and here the Italian university cannot give any financial or personnel help. The result in Italy is that researchers spend a great deal of time doing the periodic administration required by the EU, with the obvious reduction of the time they have to spend on their research.

In this entire local, national and European scene, Italian university researchers in music and musicology are very rarely given any financial aid. Even serious projects where much thought has gone into outlining in detail each aspect of the work, indicating as well what is to be accomplished by those from other countries, are not regarded as applications worthy of serious consideration and reward. National and European money is too little and only science projects seem to be encouraged financially.

The situation in Italian conservatories is even more unfortunate. As one typical active researcher told me: “I have never gotten any money for my research, and I have had to pay all my research trips, copies of manuscripts, photocopies, publications, costs of research, participation at conferences and so forth—myself.”

Recently, National Law No. 508 was passed which conceded that, in addition to teaching, research and communication of its results could be accepted as conservatory activities. The allotment of time and financing, however, is decided by an internal elected board of teachers, which decides what is taught as well as what other activities may take place, such as research. It is then the administration of the conservatory which decides whether money may be allotted for it or not, and how much. Preference is given to research concerned with the teaching of some aspect of music (for example, techniques needed to play a particular instrument, or the interpretation of music of a specific period or composer, *etc.*) and to research wherein students are directly involved. Concerts are also obviously priority activities, for which ministerial funds and the fees paid by the students may be used, as well as external sources such as that coming from local governing bodies, banks and foundations. Conferences dedicated to local composers and the publication of such conference proceedings also need to be

funded by external sources, since conservatory funds are usually not sufficient to cover them. It should be made clear that single researchers have no access to conservatory funding, and European funding is apparently impossible for them to obtain.

It seems that the Italian government continues to consider conservatories only as lower level public schools, ignoring the possibility that a conservatory teacher of music history, for example, would be able or interested to do any original research or compile a catalogue of musical rarities in an Italian library (where the librarian for scores of years has not managed to do so) or provide editions of Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, *etc.*, music for performers who are students or teachers of conservatories, or that they would be able to enlighten other researchers as well as the Italian public on unique findings regarding the riches of Italian music and music history. That members of the Italian government seem to be unaware as to a possible wider role of conservatories with regard to music education and to their contribution to Italy's culture is unfortunate, to put it mildly.

The surprising and most welcomed illumination of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali some 15 years ago, causing it to sponsor research on literature and music which was considered able to produce National Critical Editions<sup>2</sup> of selected authors and composers, was completely interrupted after 10 years, in 2010, with no official reason given but privately was said to be due to a total lack of funds being allotted to this ministry for these particular cultural activities. This cancellation occurred at the time when many official committees were formed and huge projects financed and activated, designed to celebrate the founding of the 150th anniversary of the free Italian State. Moreover, the quiet interruption of National Editions occurred even before any official mention was made of a national crisis. In addition, the fact that mention is never made today that the collecting of an ever-increasing number of different taxes will result in contributions to research and its cultural results in the areas of the humanities including music is possibly further proof that National Editions will not be pursued in the near future<sup>3</sup>.

### 3. The Cases of Spain and France

#### 3.1. Spain

The situation in Spain is somewhat similar to that of present-day Italy, although the Spanish government had some years ago passed legislation which made clear its deeper understanding of the need to support music, music research and music researchers. One colleague noted that when he began his doctoral studies in Spain ten years ago, it was possible to obtain a four-year scholarship either from the local government or from the National Government. After obtaining a PhD, one was able to apply for a four-year post-doctoral scholarship granted by the National Government to carry on research in a Spanish center or abroad, depending on the subject of one's project. However, in 2012 the national

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<sup>2</sup> The National Editions were supported by the Ministry of Culture to guarantee the protection, enhancement and availability of the spiritual and cultural heritage represented by the works of the most important Italian authors and composers in accordance with rigorous scientific rules. Each national Edition was instituted through an official Ministerial decree.

<sup>3</sup> For a clear presentation of the short history of all projects dedicated to preparing critical editions of the works of government selected authors and composer, see [1], especially pp. 243–44.

government of Spain was forced to cut back about 15 percent of its financial support of pre-doctoral scholarships, and in 2013 it had to stop offering post-doctoral scholarships.

It is interesting to note that there are departments of Musicology in universities, conservatories and research centers equivalent to the Italian National Research Centre (CNR). This is a rarity in Italy, where most often there is, and has been, only one course of any music subject (usually The History of Music) and it has been confined to Italian universities and conservatories. Each department in Spain had one or more Study Groups: besides the main local researcher, each Study Group involved researchers from different national and international institutions (*i.e.*, universities, conservatories, research centers). A good Study Group, where all members had an excellent CV and which presented an interesting research project, could apply for financial support from the government office of research and development and expect to be funded. But in 2013 financial support for these latter projects were cut by 13 percent. Adding this cut to a previous one of 2009, resulted in the funding situation of Spain returning to what it had been in 2006. Nevertheless, in 2014 the Spanish government, affirming its serious and continued concern to sponsor research, did manage to increase its financing by 2.7 percent. Of course, it is but a small improvement considering that since 2009 funds for research have been reduced overall by 3.7 percent<sup>4</sup>.

An additional lamentable change is that, beginning in July 2012, the government decided that only 10 percent of retired researchers and professors would be replaced by new staff members. This has obviously made doing research increasingly problematic.

Besides public funding, Spain has had other sources of research scholarships, such as those awarded by banks and private foundations. Moreover, in almost every region there is a Center of Musical Documentation that usually funds and co-funds publications dealing with regional music sources, their contents and their preservation. The national society of musicology also funds similar publications and projects. Equivalent to the Italian Edizione Nazionale of musical compositions is the Spanish series of Musical Monuments.

As a sad result of their crisis, Spain is not presently in any position to carry on the excellent funding of research in music which it had done for years and which was far in advance of anything any Italian government ever considered the possibility of doing. At the same time, it is clear that the government of Spain is aware of this loss and determined to return as quickly as possible to its previous productive investigation of the country's musical riches.

### 3.2. France

Fortunately for researchers of music in France, financial support is apparently continuing albeit with some reductions. The governmental funding agency, called ANR (Agence Nationale de la Recherche), awards grants in musicology to universities, conservatories, and libraries. These are of three years and are given only to groups of researchers, which are national or international and are headed by one or more directors, each of which would have been chosen from one of the countries involved in the project. Study grants to individual researchers are, therefore, not given by the French ANR, but may be obtained from another agency which is under the Ministry of higher education and research. Many

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<sup>4</sup> A clear outline of what has happened in Spain was presented by Alicia Rivera in her article for *El Pais* [2]. Its publication in a general newspaper attests to the widespread public interest in research and its funding in Spain.

foundations—such as Royaumont, Singer Polignac, Salabert, *etc.*—sponsor music projects especially conferences and concerts, but their grants are not given regularly or specifically for single-person research or study. The French National Edition of music is called “Musica Gallica”. Its financing comes in part from the Ministry of Culture and in part from the Fondation Salabert.

There is also a special Center for Baroque Music in Versailles which is funded directly by the government, with almost nothing coming from foundations and, for the moment, very little from industry. Each project is carried forward by at least 2 or 3 researchers. Groups are comprised of French researchers connected with the Baroque Center and non-French researchers who are chosen to collaborate on single projects. The subject of each project must be approved by the director of the Center, who must also approve the financing requested as well as for what it is intended. No project may begin without these approvals. Financing is for baroque-related research, concerts, and any experimentation of historical baroque performance practice. The Center recently sent off its request of funding for a series of projects, and although it was expected they would receive financial support as usual, there were notable reductions in the financing<sup>5</sup>.

A new project is presently being set up in France and it is concerned with the cultural heritage of the country, which includes various areas of investigation, such as: nature conservation, food production, archeology, textual corpora, music corpora, *etc.* Its aim is to evaluate archival material and its digitisation and to encourage that all information related to heritage be digitised. It is intended to begin by concentrating on the Loire Valley where they will create “support and easily maintained links with non-government-organizations, enterprises, territorial organizations and other stakeholders, often in the form of new institutions created to serve as interfaces” [3].

This is clearly an enormous and ambitious project and—no matter what comes out of it—it reveals France’s commendable pride in its cultural heritage and concern that they not ignore or lose this heritage.

#### 4. The Cases of England and Germany

##### 4.1. England

As stated earlier, I have also included England and Germany for consideration in this presentation. Both are countries which are in a better financial situation than Italy or Spain or even France. Every six years or so the English government conducts a census of research in all subjects in all UK universities. Each subject is evaluated by a committee of respected academics formed especially for the purpose: some subjects have their own committee, while others are grouped together; all are known as “units of assessment”. Each member of staff of each university is entitled to indicate four pieces of his/her published research for the relevant committee to assess; the publications might be books, articles, editions, or, in the case of music, compositions or performances (though special rules apply to performance). Every piece of work is submitted for assessment in electronic or “hard” form. The

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<sup>5</sup> One should keep in mind that all baroque music genres were created, were invented in Italy: opera, oratorio, cantata, sonata and even the earlier madrigal, which continued into the Baroque period. However, Italy has no equivalent Center for Baroque Music and no financing is allotted especially for these Italian genres that the French have copied, French-ified and highly valued.

subject committee produces an average “score” or “grade” for each member of staff and for the Department as a whole.

Published research is not the only evidence taken into account. The Research Excellence Framework (REF, formerly called the Research Assessment Exercise: RAE) also grades the quality (in each university and subject) of the coherence of the Department’s research “strategy”, the infrastructure for research (e.g., library holdings, facilities for research students, available staff), as well as the availability of funding to support research students, the numbers of research students and their dissertation completion rate. The overall score achieved by each university suggests the way in which the “cake” of government research funding is then cut up and distributed across the sector. Although different departments make different contributions to the result achieved by a university, the financial support received by the university does not have to be distributed internally in proportion to the departments’ various contributions: universities can use the funding they receive in the ways they deem most appropriate. The assessment process takes nearly a year—from submission of data to announcement of results—and is very expensive!

In addition to this basic funding, there are of course the various research councils, to which individuals and groups of individuals can apply for project funding. In music the most obvious of these are the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. In addition, there are independent (non-Government) trusts that award funds for research, such as the Leverhulme Trust, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Ludwig Family Trust, and many, many others (there is, in fact, a handbook that lists them and their selection criteria).

There are also programs whereby universities join forces: for example there is a Doctoral Training Partnership to which six English universities belong. They are: Birmingham City University, De Montfort University, Leicester University, Nottingham University, Nottingham Trent University and the University of Birmingham. They will be awarding 410 PhD studentships over a five-year period to excellent research students in the arts and humanities. (This suggests that each university will have opportunity to obtain at least 68 studentships in the course of only five years.) The program will provide research candidates with cross-institutional mentoring, expert supervision including cross-institutional supervision where appropriate, subject and generic training, and professional support in preparing for a career.

What is particularly interesting is that in England the conservatories are also considered for financing research on the same level of consideration as that of universities, since they have research programs as do universities and also participate in the REF. In the same part of the country as the universities just mentioned, Birmingham Conservatory, for example, invites student applications for an enormous number of areas in which to do research. Even only the titles reveal the wide variety of subjects offered, and therefore suggests that there must be a large faculty able to supervise research in all these areas. The subjects of research are the following:

- Performance studies
- Composition
- Practice-led research
- Jazz performance and composition
- Electronic music composition and performance

- Musician-centered interaction design
- Music and audio software development
- Experimental music
- Late medieval music and music theory
- Italian baroque music
- 17th- to 21st- century French music (notably Charpentier, Rameau, Ravel and Messiaen)
- Contemporary film and television music, theory and analysis
- 20th-century music theory and analysis
- Music critics and criticism
- Jazz/popular music practice and cultural theory<sup>6</sup>

The main national edition of England is *Musica Britannica*, founded in 1951, “to explore the vast heritage of material still largely untouched [by library publications], thus making available a representative survey of the British contribution to music in Europe”. Although its chief purpose is an accurate and scholarly presentation of the original texts, it is also intended to provide a basis for practical performance.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.2. Germany

Another country which has recognized the value of supporting research in musicology, is Germany. In fact, universities and Musik Hochschule still have money for diverse purposes. One fund can provide travel money to participate in international conferences held both locally and elsewhere. Another fund is for research in what is termed “historical culture” and serves to support local projects, conferences and publications, providing that one’s subject fits in with a so-called “core theme”. Often there are collaboration schemes with other universities, even of other countries, and travel costs to them can also be covered. All of this funding is available both to groups of researchers and to individuals. European Union programs, as one knows, require group projects involving more than one country in order to obtain support.

Several German foundations support the humanities, and music research is only one of the fields: these are the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, Gerda Henkel Stiftung, Volkswagen Stiftung, Max Weber Stiftung. Organizations which fund music research are the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, The German Historical Institute, in particular that based in Rome which has a section offering the best music and musicology library in Rome, the Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani, and the Villa Vigoni in Como which hosts Italian-German meetings. All of these can support single researchers, and in fact the ones in Rome and Venice finance only single young researchers.

There are several German series which publish composers’ complete works, although these often concern only composers from the particular region of that series.

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<sup>6</sup> It is quite possible that not even putting together all of the Italian universities and conservatories would this list be able to be taught in the country.

<sup>7</sup> Contrary to what is stated in the aims of *Musica Britannica*, providing performing scores of the music one has researched is still not generally considered an aim of Italian music researchers. A statement of the aims of *Musica Britannica* is to be found in each of their volumes of music. It is cited, together with a history of the edition on their web site [4].



## 5. Conclusions

What is to be concluded from all this information? It would seem that at present a few countries are still in a position to finance culture-related fields. France and Germany seem able to continue their several different types of support of music research, with France studying a way to organize future on-line cataloguing of its entire national heritage, certainly a daunting although important task revealing the illuminated thinking of its conceivers of research programmes and decision makers. England, which also has funds, has been, for several years, bravely involved in carefully analyzing how most fairly to distribute public money to universities and university-level conservatories. What they are able to support is an enormous list of professional university and conservatory courses together with more than an adequate number of studentships to permit the training of young scholars.

Spain was early-on an enlightened country with regard to the support of research in music, which speaks in praise of its government leaders and academics; unfortunately it has not been able to maintain all of its previous support due to the financial crises the country presently finds itself in.

What is most discouraging is to realize that, so far, governments in Italy have not been sufficiently aware: (1) of Italy's rich and unique music history; (2) that governments have a duty to preserve the country's cultural heritage in all its manifestations; (3) that government must assume the responsibility of providing education of excellence in the training of musicians, of music historians, of music conservationists, of music librarians as well as in the formation of citizens who understand this enormous cultural heritage and learn to partake of it intelligently and endeavor to preserve it.

Why is it that Spain, a country so much like Italy, was aware of this years ago but Italy has been so rarely aware of it? Why does the Italian government not preserve its musical treasures? Why was it decided to sell the extraordinary music publishing firm Ricordi, which continued the history of this field begun so brilliantly in Italy in the XVth century? Why were so many good Italian orchestras closed and their instrumentalists forced to find jobs elsewhere? And why are the first-rate Italian conductors made to direct foreign orchestras in foreign countries? I don't have any of the answers. Perhaps the reasons are the same as those which have allowed Pompeii to begin to disintegrate; and which have encouraged the decision to abolish art history in some public schools<sup>8</sup>.

In Italy the question is not whether individuals or groups of individuals should be funded to do music research. It is more simply whether Italy considers research in music should be done at all. In fact, culture in general often seems not to be understood and is certainly undervalued, as one realizes from a remark made by Giulio Tremonti in 2010 when he was Finance Minister: "One does not live on culture, I cannot go to the nearby café and get a sandwich of culture and begin with the Divine Comedy" ["Di cultura non si vive, vado alla buvetta a farmi un panino alla cultura, e comincio dalla Divina Commedia".] He clearly did not realize that money could be made from culture, and is made throughout the world from culture, including music. The thought which comes to mind is that

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<sup>8</sup> There has already been a regrettable change with regard to the teaching of the history of art in Italy, due to what is known as a "reform" sponsored by the then minister Gelmini. As a result, the history of art has been abolished in certain secondary schools: that is, in professional institutes and technical institutes, as well as in the lyceums of human sciences and of languages. Luckily it remains in other secondary schools albeit with a reduction of the number of hours it is taught. As a result teachers of music education are fearful of a similar "reform" in their field.

politicians may not understand that they have an obligation—to be realized albeit in the future—to offer Italians the possibility of a life which is designed to enrich them.

One may hope that the new young and enthusiastic prime minister of Italy will be able to give greater attention to culture in all its humanistic manifestations and thereby also to music. However, according to a recent notice, the Italian Government proposes to cut 170-million euros from funds allotted to the running of the universities, as well as to cut 400-million euros from research done at research agencies as well as at universities [5]. This excludes hope not only for any imminent improvement in all sectors, humanities or otherwise, but indicates that whatever research projects had been attempted, in spite of little financing, will now have to be interrupted.

One must keep in mind that “food” for the soul as well as for the body does exist, but needs to be cultivated.

### Acknowledgments

Since it is not always possible to determine whether proposed government or private financing of projects, concerning music or other areas of culture, has been successfully implemented, I decided to enquire from colleagues in the countries I intended to investigate what the actual situation of financing music research was as they experienced it. It is therefore with sincere and heartfelt gratitude that I thank all of those named here for their prompt and precise answers to my many questions: Patrizia Radicchi, Conservatory of Piacenza; Paola Besutti, University of Teramo; Teresa Gialdroni, University of Rome “Tor Vergata”; Giuseppe Fiorentino, University of Cantabria; Barbara Nestola, Versailles Center of Baroque Music; Philippe Vendrix, University of Tour; Curtis Price, Royal Academy of Music as well as Oxford University; Colin Timms, University of Birmingham; Bertold Over, University of Mainz.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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