

Alfredo Casella and “The *Montjoie!* Affair”

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Although John C. G. Waterhouse described him as “the most influentially innovative figure in Italian music between the two world wars,”¹ the composer Alfredo Casella (1883-1947) occupies a rather shadowy place in the history of twentieth-century music. Casella has fallen into oblivion for various reasons, but what lies behind most of these reasons is the fact that Italians still find it hard to deal detachedly with their Fascist past. In fact, during Mussolini’s dictatorship Casella

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¹ *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Casella, Alfredo.”

acted and was generally regarded as “the regime’s unofficial composer,”² a status that, at the end of World War II, could not go unnoticed and that prompted what the well-known pianist Aldo Ciccolini denounced as a campaign of “obliteration” against Casella.³

Leading this campaign were influential members of the post-World War II Italian avant-garde such as Luigi Nono, Giacomo Manzoni, and Armando Gentilucci, as well as Marxist musicologists such as Luigi Pestalozza and Piero Santi.⁴ Holding the view that modernism and the avant-garde are inherently anti-totalitarian, that is, against antidemocratic ideologies that aim to influence and control “all areas of public and even private life,”⁵ and consequently also antifascist, these intellectuals refused to grant Casella the avant-garde status on the grounds that “he was a racist Fascist.” According to Luigi Nono, “as a composer he is of no value... because one must exclude any possibility that he has ‘moral,’ ‘ethical’ [qualities].”⁶ This judgment was also supported by criticism of Casella’s aesthetic choices that stressed his sympathy with the Futurists’ nationalism between 1915 and 1920, thereby contributing to a cultural movement that paved the way for

² Goffredo Petrassi as quoted in Harvey Sachs, *Music in Fascist Italy* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1987), 145; see also Fiamma Nicolodi, *Musica e musicisti nel ventennio fascista* (Fiesole: Discanto, 1984), 235-71, 324-28; and Mila De Santis, “Casella nel ventennio fascista,” in Roberto Iliano, ed., *Italian Music during the Fascist Period* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 371-400.

³ Massimiliano Castellani, “Italia, il silenzio del Novecento,” *L’Avvenire*, 13 February 2002, 22.

⁴ Luigi Pestalozza, “Introduzione,” in Pestalozza, ed., *La rassegna musicale: Antologia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1966), lvii-lxii; Anonymous, “La polemica su *L’Unità* a proposito di Casella,” *Nuova rivista musicale italiana* 1 (1967): 238-40; Erasmo Valente, “Casella, il fascismo, gli intellettuali,” *L’Unità*, 5 April 1967, 8; Giacomo Manzoni, “Alfredo Casella,” in Manzoni, *Guida all’ascolto della musica sinfonica* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1967), 104-05; Armando Gentilucci, “Alfredo Casella,” in Gentilucci, *Guida all’ascolto della musica contemporanea*, 3rd ed. (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1973), 106, 108, 110; Piero Santi, “La musica del Fascismo,” *Musica/Realtà* 2 (1981), 100-03.

⁵ Richard Taruskin, “Music and Totalitarian Society,” in *The Oxford History of Western Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4:744.

⁶ Luigi Nono as quoted in Valente, “Casella,” 8; see also Luigi Pestalozza, “L’avanguardia e il suo rovescio,” *Rinascita*, 15 September 1978, 37.

Fascism.⁷ However, the main target for censure was Casella's embracing of "conservative" (i.e. traditionalist) compositional practices during the Fascist period. His post-1920 theorization of the neoclassical "returns" to tonality and pre-existing musical forms as expressions of nationalistic "Mediterranean," "Latin," and ultimately Fascist⁸ values and traditions was stigmatized by Pestalozza, Nono, and other post-1945 avant-gardists as the definitive realization and sublimation of Fascist violence.⁹

While the post-1945 avant-garde's view of Casella is still very influential nowadays,¹⁰ in recent years some musicologists have attempted to reevaluate his significance both as an avant-garde composer and as a forward-looking intellectual.¹¹ Perhaps not surprisingly, a notable feature of this recent literature is the significant attention paid to the period of Casella's life that is neither chronologically nor geographically connected to the settings in which Mussolini's Fascists operated: the years between 1896 and 1915 during which Casella studied in Paris. These investigations have shed considerable light on the avant-garde nature of Casella's so-called Parisian years, as well as on the "progressive" (i.e. innovative and harmonically daring) qualities of the

⁷ Luigi Pestalozza, "Futurismo e nazionalismo in Alfredo Casella," *Rinascita*, 16 June 1962, 26; Pestalozza, "Introduzione," xlix-lxii.

⁸ For a discussion of Casella's interpretation of neoclassicism as mirroring Fascism's nationalistic ("Mediterranean" and "Latin") values, see Taruskin, "Music and Totalitarian Society," 747.

⁹ Pestalozza, "Introduzione," lxxv; Waterhouse revealed that Pestalozza's influential "Introduzione" to an anthology of articles from the periodical *La rassegna musicale* was planned and drafted "in consultation with Nono." See John C. G. Waterhouse, *Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973): The Life, Times and Music of a Wayward Genius* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999), 76.

¹⁰ See Castellani, "Italia, il silenzio del Novecento," 22; and Stefano Bucci, "Ma non facciamo di tutta tutta quella musica un fascio," *Corriere della sera*, 15 February 2002, 39.

¹¹ Giovanni Morelli, ed., *Alfredo Casella negli anni di apprendistato a Parigi*, proceedings of the international conference, Venice, 13-15 May 1992 (Florence: Olschki, 1994); Roberto Calabretto, ed., *Alfredo Casella: Gli anni di Parigi. Dai documenti* (Florence: Olschki, 1997); Mila De Santis, ed., *Alfredo Casella e l'Europa*, proceedings of the international conference, Siena, 7-9 June 2001 (Florence: Olschki, 2003).

music he wrote in France. Yet they have overlooked the possible socio-political implications of Waterhouse's findings about a set of stylistic and aesthetic continuities that link Casella's French compositions to the politically tainted Futurist-inspired and neoclassical works he wrote after 1915.¹²

The discounting of possible parallels between the socio-political import of Casella's musical and intellectual activities in France and the proto-Fascist (Futurist-inspired) and Fascist-inspired (neoclassical) positions he embraced from the mid-1910s onwards appears to be an effort to save Casella's reputation by safeguarding the political (and moral) purity of his Parisian years.¹³ This is an effort that still conforms to an interpretation of the avant-garde's "progressive" (non-traditionalist, radical) agenda as antithetical to the kind of "conservative" (traditionalist, neoclassical) aesthetics favoured by proponents of Fascism.¹⁴ However, there are two particular aspects of Casella's French period that offer grounds for a dialectical interpretation

¹² John C. G. Waterhouse, "Continuità stilistica di Casella," in Fiamma Nicolodi, ed., *Musica italiana del primo Novecento: "La generazione dell'80,"* proceedings of the conference, Florence, 9-11 May 1980 (Florence: Olschki, 1981), 63-80; John C. G. Waterhouse, "Verso la 'seconda maniera': Casella e l'avanguardia internazionale del primo Novecento," in Morelli, ed., *Casella*, 175-86. The only scholar who has recognized the socio-political implications of Waterhouse's findings is Raffaele Pozzi. While he has suggested that Casella's French years were consequential for the development of his post-1915 political ideology, he has not developed his point (Raffaele Pozzi, "Jeunesse et indépendance: Alfredo Casella e la Société Musicale Indépendante," *Musica e storia* 4 [1996], 348).

¹³ See Guido Salvetti's introductory essay to the proceedings of the important conference on Casella's French years, held in Venice in 1992. Salvetti's paper draws a neat distinction between the progressive avant-garde character of Casella's French years and the conservatism of his neoclassical period, claiming that Casella's French years were not contaminated by nationalistic, "Mediterranean," and neoclassical ideologies (Guido Salvetti, "Premessa," in Morelli, ed., *Casella*, ix-x).

¹⁴ For a discussion of Italian neoclassicism as the musical style of Fascism, see Santi, "La musica del Fascismo," 102-03; examples of neoclassical works inspired by the Fascist call for a restoration of Ancient Rome's greatness (and sponsored by Mussolini's regime) are Casella's *Concerto romano*, op. 43 and *Il deserto tentato*, op. 60, Gian Francesco Malipiero's *Giulio Cesare*, and Ildebrando Pizzetti's *Scipione l'Africano*.

of the above-mentioned polarity: his involvement in the avant-garde journal *Montjoie!*, and his encounter with Igor Stravinsky and his music. Interestingly, these two sides of Casella's French years converge on the dubious episode that Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft have termed "the *Montjoie!* affair."¹⁵

This article explores the complex web of relationships that link Casella to Stravinsky as well as to *Montjoie!* and its editor Ricciotto Canudo (1877-1923). It is composed of two parts. In the first, I examine a number of primary sources that reveal that Casella, like Stravinsky, formed close associations with the right-wing intellectual Canudo and the circle of avant-garde artists around *Montjoie!* In the second, I show that Casella's aesthetic views—particularly his understanding of Stravinsky as the inheritor of "the great (Western) tradition"—overlapped with much of Canudo's thought. These mutually shared viewpoints not only emphasized an artistically conservative side to Stravinsky's music, and more generally to avant-garde art, but also put Stravinsky and the avant-garde into an antidemocratic, totalitarian perspective. This explains why Stravinsky felt the need after World War II to deny any connection with Canudo and *Montjoie!*, and to detach himself from Casella. Such connections raised questions about the moral implications of his music and could challenge reassuringly straightforward interpretations of the avant-garde composer's artistic progressivism as opposed to conservative aesthetic values and totalitarian politics.

One of the crucial events in Casella's Parisian years was his encounter with Stravinsky in the early 1910s.¹⁶ But the lifelong friendship that Casella formed with Stravinsky in Paris was one-sided;

¹⁵ Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, "The Montjoie! Affair," in Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 522-26.

¹⁶ Alfredo Casella, *Music in My Time: The Memoirs of Alfredo Casella*, trans. Spencer Norton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 93, 105-06, 108-11, 124-25.

while the former always displayed “unconditional admiration”¹⁷ for the latter, Stravinsky, to use Robert Craft’s words, “seems never to have had a good word for Casella.”¹⁸ And though Casella was instrumental in the popularization of Stravinsky’s music among the French and the Italian public,¹⁹ the few references to him that can be found in Stravinsky’s post-World War I correspondence and memoirs seem to justify Craft’s assertion.²⁰

The most condescending of Stravinsky’s comments came in 1961, when he claimed that his Polka from the *Three Easy Pieces* for Piano Duet, which he called a “piece of popcorn,” exerted a great influence on Casella. Stravinsky stated that for the Italian musician

¹⁷ Fiamma Nicolodi, “Casella e la musica di Stravinsky in Italia: contributo a un’indagine sul neoclassicismo,” *Chigiana* 29-30 (1975), 41.

¹⁸ Robert Craft, ed., *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 1:203 n. 234.

¹⁹ Casella championed Stravinsky both as a critic and as a performer/organizer. His major writings on Stravinsky are: “Le Sacre du printemps aux Concerts Monteux,” *L’Homme libre*, 6 April 1914, 2, in Calabretto, ed., *Casella*, 357-61; “Concerts Monteux. Musique d’Avant-Garde,” *La Critique musicale*, April 1914, in Calabretto, ed., *Casella*, 361-62; “Igor Strawinsky e la sua arte,” *La riforma musicale* 3 (1914), 1; *Igor Strawinski* (Rome: A. F. Formiggini, 1926); “La Sagra della Primavera di Igor Strawinski,” in François Lesure, ed., *Igor Stravinsky, Le Sacre du printemps: Dossier de Presse* (Geneva: Minkoff, 1980), 118-19; *Strawinski* (Brescia: La Scuola, 1947 and 1951). Citations of this last work are to the expanded 1951 edition. The list of Stravinsky’s works first performed in France and Italy by Casella is remarkable. In France he contributed, both as organizer and as pianist, to two of the major concert performances of Stravinsky’s music (*Petrushka* [1914], and *Three Japanese Lyrics* [1914]). In Italy he organized and/or gave the premieres of *Petrushka* (1915), *Eight Pieces* for piano four hands (1918), the *Octet* and *The Soldier’s Tale* (1924), *Three Japanese Lyrics* (1925), *Les Noces* (1927), and *Oedipus Rex* (1933). Casella also gave the Rome premiere of the Piano Sonata (1926), and the Milan premieres of *Petrushka* (1916) and the *Symphony of Psalms* (1932). See Casella, *Memoirs*, 197.

²⁰ See Craft, ed., *Correspondence*, 1:203; and Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), 38. For Stravinsky’s rather different (and very friendly) attitude to Casella in the mid-1910s, see the three letters he sent Casella between June 1914 and March 1915 in H. Colin Slim, ed., *Annotated Catalogue of the H. Colin Slim Stravinsky Collection* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Library, 2002), 39-50.

"a new path had been indicated...So-called neoclassicism of a sort was born in that moment."²¹ In commenting on Stravinsky's statement, Fiamma Nicolodi has rightly pointed out its "unclear" and "equivocal" nature,²² and Roman Vlad has implied that through this "rather malicious insinuation" one can detect his long-lasting uneasy attitude towards Casella, as if in some ways Casella's interpretation of neoclassicism disturbed him.²³

What in Casella might have been unpalatable to Stravinsky? The situation reminds one of Stravinsky's relationship with Boris Asaf'yev. Author of a penetrating study of Stravinsky's music published in the Soviet Union in 1929,²⁴ Asaf'yev was neglected in the West for over fifty years because the composer's harsh words about him negatively influenced publishers and scholars.²⁵ Since in his book Asaf'yev shows his esteem for Casella,²⁶ it seems appropriate to report Craft's justification for Stravinsky's attitude to Asaf'yev. In Craft's words, Stravinsky "would tolerate no interpreter he could not control" because "to be completely understood by anyone is threatening, and who, least of all Igor Stravinsky, wants an alter-ego?"²⁷

Stravinsky's fear of his "alter-ego" Asaf'yev is certainly determined by the constructivist and futurist perspective from which the critic approached the master's art. But there is another significant aspect of Asaf'yev's book that provoked unease in Stravinsky, namely

²¹ Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Dialogues and a Diary* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 40-41.

²² Nicolodi, "Casella e la musica di Stravinsky in Italia," 54.

²³ Roman Vlad, *Stravinsky*, trans. Frederick Fuller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 56.

²⁴ Boris Asaf'yev, *A Book about Stravinsky* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1982).

²⁵ Robert Craft, "Foreword: Asaf'yev and Stravinsky," in Asaf'yev, *Stravinsky*, vii.

²⁶ Apart from quoting from Casella's 1926 monograph on Stravinsky (Asaf'yev, *Stravinsky*, 5), Asaf'yev remarked that another book by Casella, *The Evolution of Music Throughout the History of the Perfect Cadence* (London: Chester, 1924), was a "good and valuable work" (Asaf'yev, *Stravinsky*, 195 n. 2). It is also worth noting that Asaf'yev was among the first Russian scholars interested in Casella; see Igor Glebov [Boris Asaf'yev], *Alfredo Casella* (Leningrad: Triton, 1927).

²⁷ Craft, "Foreword," viii.

the numerous passages from which one can infer the composer's interest in unorthodox types of spiritualism. That a Marxist and a materialist might point to Stravinsky's connection with such occult practices as the Egyptian mysteries, animism, and ancestor worship is surprising, especially considering that the other person to raise this issue was the right-wing, anti-materialist intellectual, Ricciotto Canudo.

Although nowadays Canudo is an almost completely forgotten figure,²⁸ he played an important role in the early twentieth-century Parisian scene.²⁹ An Italian writer who settled in Paris in 1901, Canudo's hectic intellectual and artistic activities put him into close contact with some of the most prominent figures of the Parisian avant-garde: Apollinaire, Marinetti, Rodin, as well as the musicians Satie, Ravel, Stravinsky, Casella, and Varèse. In addition to producing many books, Canudo developed an inclination for the kind of politically committed journalistic criticism to be found in many early twentieth-century French periodicals.³⁰ This second activity allowed him to acquire considerable visibility within Parisian culture, and culminated in his editorial direction of the avant-garde journal *Montjoie!* (1913-1914).

Founded by Canudo in 1913, *Montjoie!* perfectly mirrored its editor's aesthetic, philosophical, and political tendencies. The journal

²⁸ The few references to Canudo by Anglo-American musicologists can be found in: Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1988), 110, 180; Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician* (New York: Dover, 1991), 75; Joscelyn Godwin, *Music and the Occult: French Musical Philosophies 1750-1950* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 204-07; Jane F. Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics & Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 203-04, 218; Deborah Mawer, "Musical Objects and Machines," in Mawer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ravel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 52-53; Glenn Watkins, *Proof through the Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 386-90.

²⁹ For a chronology of Canudo's life, see Giovanni Dotoli, *Calendario canudiano (1734-1983)*, in Dotoli, ed., *Bibliografia critica di Ricciotto Canudo* (Fasano: Grafischena, 1983), 25-61.

³⁰ For the political undertones of much of the criticism in French periodicals between 1900 and 1915, see Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics*.

presented itself as "the organ of the French artistic imperialism" and supported the most advanced aesthetic trends. At the same time, it invited readers not to reject "tradition" and the "past, seeking to establish links between these and the avant-garde. As will be seen, behind this unusual alliance between the avant-garde, tradition, and nationalism lay Canudo's particular philosophical position, specifically his acquaintance with occultism and other esoteric doctrines. Among Canudo's contributors were many influential intellectuals, including Apollinaire, Rodin, Gleizes, Léger, D'Annunzio, and Gordon Craig. He paid greatest attention to the evolution of modern painting, for example, Cubism and simultaneism, as well as to modern theater and ballet. For Canudo, the fate of the visual and theatrical art forms was tightly linked to that of music; it was in the context of the debate on modernist theater and painting that he invited both Casella and Stravinsky to contribute to *Montjoie!*

Stravinsky's involvement with Canudo and his circle has been examined recently by both Richard Taruskin and Philippe Rodriguez.³¹ Here, it suffices to say that an essay signed by Stravinsky was published in *Montjoie!* on the day *The Rite of Spring* was premiered.³² This essay presented *The Rite* as a religious "work of faith" grounded in a pagan, pantheistic conception of the relationship between man and nature. Placing great emphasis on the ritual and magical aspects of *The Rite*, the essay also put forth the idea that Stravinsky's ultimate goal was to portray a mysterious universal energy represented by the occult "potentialities" of all animate and inanimate entities: "the thing in itself," which may increase and develop infinitely." From the mid-1930s on, however, Stravinsky strenuously disavowed this essay, denying any link with Canudo. Furthermore, in 1978 Vera Stravinsky and Craft

³¹ Richard Taruskin, "L'Affaire Montjoie!" in *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2:995-1006; and Philippe Rodriguez, *L'Affaire Montjoie! Canudo et Stravinsky* (Fasano: Schena-Didier Érudition, 2000).

³² Igor Stravinsky, "Ce que j'ai voulu exprimer dans Le Sacre du printemps," *Montjoie!* 1 (29 May 1913), 1-2; also reprinted in Lesure, ed., *Stravinsky*, 13-15. An English translation of this essay can be found in Peter Hill, *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 93-95.

supported the composer's position by publishing a selection of letters sent from Canudo to Stravinsky—letters that in their view proved that Stravinsky had been unwillingly embroiled in “the *Montjoie!* Affair.”³³ Nonetheless, both Taruskin and Rodriguez have shown not only that Vera Stravinsky and Craft “manipulated” the correspondence between the two artists to uphold Stravinsky's claim,³⁴ but also that the composer was indeed the author of the article and was so “faithful” to Canudo's circle as to be “closely identified with *Montjoie!* throughout the brief and tumultuous period of the journal's existence.”³⁵

Articles published by *Montjoie!*,³⁶ *L'Intransigent*,³⁷ and *Paris-Journal*³⁸ between June 1913 and June 1914 show that Casella was also close to Canudo's circle, and reveal that, both as a composer and as a performer, he actively contributed to the artistic and social events organized by Canudo and his collaborators. Canudo, for his part, showed his high regard for Casella by allowing his name, together with those of Ravel, Satie, Falla, Schmitt, and Stravinsky, to be included in *Montjoie!*'s lists of the “best young [musicians]”³⁹ and “the most interesting of today's innovative artists.”⁴⁰

It is likely that at some point between the late 1900s and the early 1910s, Casella became acquainted with Canudo through one of their mutual friends, perhaps within the context of one of the many concerts and lectures organized by the *École des Hautes Études Sociales*. The *École* was a Parisian institution at which Canudo had held the prestigious *lecturae Dantis* since 1907,⁴¹ and where Casella as well as

³³ Stravinsky and Craft, “The *Montjoie!* Affair,” 522-26.

³⁴ Rodriguez, *L'Affaire Montjoie!*, 21-23.

³⁵ Taruskin, *Stravinsky*, 999.

³⁶ Anonymous, Untitled, *Montjoie!* 1 (June 1913), 16; and Ricciotto Canudo [Le Juste, pseud.], Untitled, *Montjoie!* 2 (June 1914), 31.

³⁷ Craft, ed., *Correspondence*, 2:425; and the unsigned article published by *L'Intransigent* in May 1914, held by the Stravinsky Archive at the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

³⁸ Anonymous, “Un foyer d'art unique,” *Paris-Journal*, 28 May 1914, 3.

³⁹ Anonymous, Untitled, *Montjoie!* 1 (June 1913), 16.

⁴⁰ Anonymous, “Un foyer,” 3.

⁴¹ Anonymous, ed., *L'École des Hautes Études Sociales 1900-1910* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1911), 161.

his closest friends Alfred Cortot and Ravel, and his teachers Fauré and Louis Diémer, were invited to perform.⁴² Indeed, Ravel might well have played an important role in introducing Canudo to Casella. In 1905 Ravel formed a friendship with Canudo that lasted until the latter's death in 1923, and developed a strong interest in his ideas.⁴³ Given the close friendship between Ravel and Casella,⁴⁴ it would have been surprising if the former had not spoken about, and eventually introduced, Canudo to his colleague.

Casella's connections to the *École des Hautes Études Sociales* and his interest in Canudo's *lecturae Dantis* may explain why, in the context of a concert he gave in Rome in 1920, the composer allowed his name to be publicly associated with Canudo and his scholarly activity. Organized by the Gruppo Universitario Romano di Cultura Musicale, this event also included a lecture entitled "Dante and S. Francis," delivered by Canudo.⁴⁵ The press reaction to the occasion revealed admiration for Casella's performance, as well as for Canudo's description of the *Divina commedia* as the "Mediterranean Moral

⁴² Romain Rolland, "Musique," in Anonymous, ed., *L'École*, 76, 78; and Michel Calvocoressi to Igor Stravinsky, 16 January 1914, reproduced in Craft, ed., *Correspondence*, 2:102.

⁴³ Orenstein, *Ravel*, 75.

⁴⁴ Casella, *Memoirs*, 60-61.

⁴⁵ See the bill and program of the concert given by Casella and the singer Bianca Stagno Bellincioni on June 7, 1920 at the Quirino theatre in Rome to celebrate the sixth centenary of Dante's death (Dotoli, *Bibliografia*, 250, 592). It is worthy noticing that the Gruppo Universitario Romano di Cultura Musicale was an association that counted Casella as one of its closest collaborators. Casella also acted as an artistic consultant to the Gruppo Universitario, and his influence on the association was such that in 1921 he became its artistic director. In the Casella Archive of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, there is a letter dated 15 December 1922 in which the Gruppo Universitario Romano di Cultura Musicale officially thanks Casella for his services; Document XV.4.3177, in Anna Rita Colajanni, Francesca Romana Conti, Mila De Santis, and Luisa Mazzone, eds., *Catalogo critico del fondo Alfredo Casella* (Florence: Olschki, 1992) 1, no. 2: 452. See also Adelmo Damerini, "Lettera da Roma," *Il pianoforte* 2, no. 12 (December 1921), 367.

Gospel.”⁴⁶ But one commentator also pointed out, not without certain uneasiness, the esoteric and, from a Christian point of view, heretic nature of Canudo’s intellectual standpoint.⁴⁷

Canudo’s arcane ideas also strongly characterized his editorship of *Montjoie!*, and it is the last issue of this journal that provides the ultimate evidence of the close intellectual ties between the two Italian artists, evidence that also directly links Casella to Stravinsky and the so-called “*Montjoie!* affair.” In the June 1914 issue of *Montjoie!*, Canudo devoted a significant part of the journal to the Ballets Russes, and particularly to Stravinsky: an autograph page from *The Nightingale* is reproduced⁴⁸ and there is also a lengthy essay on Stravinsky’s art.⁴⁹

This issue allowed Canudo to reassess the cultural significance of Stravinsky’s theatrical music and also to articulate his own response to Stravinsky’s *Montjoie!* article. Canudo argued that Stravinsky’s art represented the key to understanding a whole generation of avant-garde artists who were concerned with Cubist practices such as synchronism and simultaneity, and he offered an esoteric interpretation of both *The Rite* and *The Nightingale*. However, Canudo felt the need to provide his readers with a more technical study of the practical consequences of simultaneity for avant-garde composers. This task was assigned to Casella, who gave Canudo an essay that explained how “harmonic simultaneity” (also defined by Casella as “harmonic counterpoint”

⁴⁶ Anonymous, “Dante e San Francesco: Un discorso di R. Canudo,” *Il giornale d’Italia*, 9 June 1920, 3; Anonymous, “Le Feste Centenarie di Dante,” *L’epoca*, 8 June 1920, 4; Anonymous, “Il preludio delle feste dantesche al Quirino,” *Il messaggero*, 8 June 1920, 3; Anonymous, “Il preludio delle feste dantesche al Quirino,” *La tribuna*, 8 June 1920, 3.

⁴⁷ “We do not like the new and yet old cliché of S. Francis as a heretic or...initiator of a kind of new Christian faith. For us—exactly like for Dante—a parallel between Jesus and S. Francis cannot be anything but a comparison between the divine Master and a servant of his. But Ricciotto Canudo did not show himself to think so in his elegant speech” (S[ilvio] d’A[mico], “Preludio al centenario Dantesco,” *L’idea nazionale*, 9 June 1920, 3).

⁴⁸ *Montjoie!* 2 (June 1914), 9.

⁴⁹ Ricciotto Canudo, “Notre Esthétique: A propos du ‘Rossignol,’” *Montjoie!* 2 (June 1914), 4-6.

or "polyharmony") consisted of "the possibility of superimposing from six to twelve different tones and grouping them in two or three distinct divisions, which, if necessary, might ask for [reclamer] different tonalities."⁵⁰

Casella also presented Canudo with an autograph page of the composition that marked a turning point in his creative development—the song "Notte di Maggio," op. 20.⁵¹ The composer considered "Notte di Maggio" as his artistic response to *The Rite*, and described some of the most daring harmonic and textural complexities of the song as openly indebted to Stravinsky's harmonic innovations.⁵² Examples include the passage in which the strings play a chord built of eleven superimposed perfect fourths, thus containing all the notes of the chromatic scale (Ex. 1), and the piece's final chord, a B minor-major triad enriched by the "added notes" G sharp, C sharp, E sharp, and G natural (Ex. 2). This evidence supports Waterhouse's suggestion that the sections of the work in which the instruments play octatonic scales and hint at polytonality by moving on several different planes at once were inspired by Stravinsky (Ex. 3).⁵³

Given the presence of Casella in Canudo's circle and his collaboration with *Montjoie!*, Stravinsky's attempt to detach *The Rite* from his *Montjoie!* article, and consequently to avoid any links with Canudo,⁵⁴ compels one to wonder whether "the *Montjoie!* affair" has anything to do with Stravinsky's bitter remarks on Casella and his neoclassicism. A passage from Casella's memoirs indicates that this

⁵⁰ Alfredo Casella, "Ce qu'est la musique polyharmonique," *Montjoie!* 2 (June 1914), 11; also reprinted in Calabretto, ed., *Casella*, 213-15.

⁵¹ *Montjoie!* 2 (June 1914), 21.

⁵² See two unpublished letters that Casella sent Stravinsky on 19 August and 23 September 1913, which are held by the Stravinsky Archive of the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

⁵³ Waterhouse, "Verso la 'seconda maniera,'" 183-84.

⁵⁴ Stravinsky's attitude to Canudo and *Montjoie!* was mysterious enough to compel Philippe Rodriguez to remark in the concluding section of his study of the Canudo-Stravinsky correspondence held at the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel, that "we are incapable of explaining the strange behavior of the composer" (Rodriguez, *L'Affaire Montjoie!*, 24).

Andante molto grave e funebre

accel. ----- *rit.* -----

Example 1 is a musical score for a slow, funeral march. It features five staves: Voice, Vlns (Divisi), Violas (Divisi), Timp., and Vics. (Divisi) Bsns. The tempo is marked "Andante molto grave e funebre". The score includes dynamic markings of *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The voice part has the lyrics "ri- vi- di io po- po- lar la che- ta not- te". The instrumental parts are marked with *ppp* (pianissimo) and *mf*. The score is divided into two sections by a vertical line, with an *accel.* marking above the first section and an *rit.* marking above the second section.

Example 1.

Example 2 is a musical score for a slow, funeral march. It features five staves: Violins (harmonics), Flutes, Clarinets, Trumpets (con sord), and Strings. The tempo is marked "Andante molto grave e funebre". The score includes dynamic markings of *pp* (pianissimo). The score is divided into two sections by a vertical line, with an *accel.* marking above the first section and an *rit.* marking above the second section.

Example 2.

Andante tranquillo

Voice
p tre - mo - la - ca - no - ti - di - col - ver - de

6 solo Vlns
Woodwinds
Celesta
p

Vlns. Harps
(Harmonics)
pp

Violas (Divisi)
pizz

2 Cfts. (Unis.)
un poco predominante
mp

Hrs. (con sord)
Bsns. Timp
pp

Vlc.
pizz

Cb.
pizz
arco

Example 3.

might be the case. It claims that while in the post-World War I years Stravinsky was inexplicably “hard, indifferent, and disdainful” toward his “earlier friends,” in the early 1910s the friendship between him and Stravinsky was truly “happy.” Strikingly, Casella also gives a precise date for the “happy” phase: 1913, the year in which *The Rite* was premiered and “the *Montjoie!* affair” occurred.⁵⁵

Can Casella and Canudo be viewed in the way Craft described Boris Asaf’yev? In other words, is it possible that the two Italians acted as Stravinsky’s “alter egos” and consequently provoked his fear of being “completely understood”? The feasibility of this interpretation is supported by Rodriguez’s suggestion that, in their dealing with the *Montjoie!* legacy, Stravinsky, his wife, and Craft “carefully erased all that which might harm the image patiently constructed all along Stravinsky’s career and to which the composer gave, year after year, his own retouches.”⁵⁶ In the second part of this article I will try to summarize some of the aesthetic and philosophical points which connect Canudo and Casella, as well as suggest briefly that some of these shared ideas might have threatened Stravinsky’s official image.

In several of his writings, Casella placed Stravinsky and his art within the context of a profoundly spiritual sphere.⁵⁷ For Casella, Stravinsky’s music was a paradigm in the evolution of art (“one of the most perfect and accomplished artistic creations of our entire spiritual history”⁵⁸), which, in Casella’s view, had the status of a religion.⁵⁹ For Canudo, art in general—and music in particular—fulfilled a mystical office, and he explored the religious function of music in many of his

⁵⁵ Casella, *Memoirs*, 198.

⁵⁶ Rodriguez, *L’Affaire Montjoie!*, 23.

⁵⁷ Casella, *Strawinski* (1926), 45; Casella, “La Sagra,” 118-19; Casella, *Strawinski* (1951), 186.

⁵⁸ Casella, *Strawinski* (1926), 45.

⁵⁹ “[Stravinsky’s music] completely transcends the ‘momentary’ to aim at something more important and graver than an ephemeral question related to ‘today or tomorrow’: the universal and eternal life of our art, which is the only true religion of the artist” (Casella, *Strawinski* [1926], 15-16).

writings.⁶⁰ His religious conception of music, exactly like Casella's, was centered on the notion of art's detachment from contingent life.⁶¹ Within this independent aesthetic sphere, "pure (instrumental) music" played a crucial role, in that its non-referential character prevented any contamination with mimesis of reality, and therefore could be viewed as the conveyor of a mystical effort to transcend "all the vulgarities and hindrances of [this] contingent existence."⁶²

Canudo's call for "pure music" can immediately be related to Casella's definition of Stravinsky as a "pure musician,"⁶³ as well as to his interpretation of the master's art as "pure music in the most absolute sense of the word."⁶⁴ Both thinkers converge in finding the ultimate guarantee of the metaphysical purity of music in specifically technical aspects. Thus, while Casella argued that music is a "spiritual" activity insofar as "in itself, artistic perfection...combines and exhausts every moral and religious content,"⁶⁵ Canudo envisaged a spiritualism that is linked to the technical development of avant-garde music: "the leading artists of today reveal to us a mystic development that with the increasing subtlety of their technique is making itself more and more felt."⁶⁶

Casella's and Canudo's emphasis on the purity of music explains their interpretations of Stravinsky's ballets as "purely symphonic [works] in four movements" (Casella on *Petrushka*),⁶⁷ or as "purely and supremely instrumental music" (Canudo on *The Rite*).⁶⁸ But

⁶⁰ Ricciotto Canudo, *Le Livre de la Genèse: La IXe Symphonie de Beethoven* (Paris: Éditions de La Plume, 1905); Ricciotto Canudo, *L'Homme: Psychologie musicale des civilisations* (Paris: Bibliothèque internationale d'édition, 1907); Ricciotto Canudo, *Music as a Religion of the Future*, trans. Barnett D. Conlan (London: T. N. Foulis, 1913).

⁶¹ Canudo, *Music*, 17, 26, 28; Casella, *Strawinski* (1926), 44-45.

⁶² Canudo, *Music*, 30.

⁶³ Casella, *Strawinski* (1926), 29.

⁶⁴ Casella, *Strawinski* (1926), 30.

⁶⁵ Alfredo Casella, *21+26* (Florence: Olschki, 2001), 15.

⁶⁶ Canudo, *Music*, 9.

⁶⁷ Casella, *Strawinski* (1926), 13.

⁶⁸ Canudo, "Notre Esthétique," 6.

their emphasis on music's distinctiveness from artistic disciplines such as literature and painting does not seem to explain their conviction that the theatrical spectacles issue directly and miraculously from Stravinsky's music.⁶⁹ Casella was firmly persuaded that "from *Petrushka* on [Stravinsky's music] never describes or represents things, but rather, manifests them."⁷⁰ This view was shared by Canudo, who claimed that music written to accompany theatrical actions should not depend on or express the extra-musical (i.e. librettos, stage directions, scenery, etc.); rather, it should unfold "from within."⁷¹ In 1914, Canudo recognized Stravinsky's ballets as the practical application of his ideas: the composer created "neither to express nor to suggest, but to reveal."⁷² Casella's and Canudo's allusions to notions of "revelation" or "manifestation" testify to a shared confidence in the superhuman and supernatural power of music, and of Stravinsky's music in particular.⁷³

Casella's and Canudo's anti-realistic and mystical interpretations of music share other striking details. To begin with, both of them place early-twentieth-century avant-garde practices within an evolutionary historical continuum, linking these practices to the technical procedures of some of the great artists of the past. In Canudo's theosophical view, history unfolded like a spiral line where, with each new historical cycle the evolutionary process began again—from the same starting point but with a new, heightened sensibility and on a higher level of spiritual awareness.⁷⁴ Fascinatingly, Canudo depicted this perpetual process of renewal, linking past and present, as a *retour à l'antique*; this, together with his emphasis on the purity of music and the significance of what

⁶⁹ Casella, *Strawinski* (1926), 9, 13-14; Canudo, *Music*, 26, 28.

⁷⁰ Casella, *Strawinski* (1926), 14.

⁷¹ Canudo, *Music*, 28.

⁷² Canudo, "Notre Esthétique," 5.

⁷³ In 1926 Casella maintained that Stravinsky's creations should be regarded as one of the highest stages "in our entire spiritual history" because of their capacity for "arousing men's *love*. Not the love for the creator of art, but for art itself and for the purely artistic and, consequently, for the super-human that it contains" (Casella, *Strawinski* [1926], 45; see also Canudo, "Notre Esthétique," 6).

⁷⁴ Canudo, *L'Homme*, 309-10.

Stravinsky called the *techné*,⁷⁵ represents an acute anticipation of two main tenets of neoclassicism.⁷⁶

Canudo argued that the beginning of the twentieth century represented the dawn of a new spiritual age. He enthusiastically recognized Stravinsky as belonging to the lineage of the enlightened artistic figures "most sensible to the call of Evolution,"⁷⁷ and thereby capable of endowing humanity with an art that was renewed within an unbroken, evolutionary historical development.⁷⁸ Casella, for his part, took a kind of pre-neoclassical stance when in 1914 he described Stravinsky's *Rite* as "firmly linked to the great tradition and powerfully [prolonging] the hundred-year-old attempt at achieving musical liberation and simplification, which has been pursued without interruption since Johann Sebastian Bach."⁷⁹ And in his *Montjoie!* article he acknowledged that, after the harmonic explorations of Bach and Beethoven, it was with Stravinsky that the avant-garde procedures based on "harmonic simultaneity" became "distinctly and definitively conscious."⁸⁰

Casella's conception of musical evolution can also be related to Canudo's ideas by the emphasis both placed on the historical and technical progress from the purely vocal and melodic forms of primitive music to the harmonic complexities of modern instrumental compositions.⁸¹ For Canudo, this progress represented an evolution from the expression of the plainly human to an aesthetic-religious practice

⁷⁵ Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*, trans. Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 4.

⁷⁶ This interesting aspect of Canudo's thought is also pointed out by Fiorenza Leucci in "Satie, Canudo e Pédalan verso la modernità: dal simbolismo all' 'Esprit Nouveau,'" in Giovanni Dotoli, ed., *Verso la modernità: Canudo, Apollinaire, Picasso, Satie* (Fasano: Schena-Nizet, 1995), 247; see also Messing, *Neoclassicism*, 110, 180.

⁷⁷ Canudo, *Music*, 22.

⁷⁸ Canudo, "Notre Esthétique," 6.

⁷⁹ Casella, "Le Sacre," 360.

⁸⁰ Casella, "Ce qu'est la musique polyharmonique," 11.

⁸¹ Canudo, *Beethoven*, vi-vii; Canudo, *L'Homme*, 57; Canudo, "Notre Esthétique," 6; Alfredo Casella, *The Evolution of Music Throughout the History of the Perfect Cadence* (London: Chester, 1924), xx-xxi.

appropriate to the fulfillment of the modern desire for otherworldly transcendence, as well as the exposure of the occult presence of a super-sensible reality. He argued that Cubist and Cubist-influenced practices, in particular Stravinsky's "harmonic simultaneity," were the kind of art that could channel and unveil this supernatural presence.⁸² Canudo's obscure understanding of Cubist and simultaneist techniques can help to explain Casella's use of "harmonic simultaneity" in the context of his 1913 setting of Carducci's "mysterious" poem "Notte di Maggio."⁸³ As noted above, Casella conceived this piece as his artistic response to Stravinsky's *Rite*; interestingly, an autograph page of "Notte di Maggio" was published by *Montjoie!* in 1914.⁸⁴

⁸² "Igor Stravinsky will help us to understand many contemporary art forms. He partakes of our aesthetic, of Cubism, of synchronism, of the simultaneity of some and the nervous, matter of fact onrhythm of others...He explains through his music the Cubist position, and those of synchronism and simultaneity, of all the painters who, each one in his own way, *harmonize* forms and colours in a non-conventional manner...The entire evolution of Art throughout the centuries was uniquely governed by the evolution of sensibility...The relationships between all creatures increasingly become more complex and multiply, and in getting more complex they are *subtilized*. That is why the evolution of music lies in the increasing number of harmonic discoveries...There is no doubt that the most recent contributions to music made by Stravinsky will win all the spirits over, not to mention the advances [they] represent in the musical domain. He touches our sensibility with barbarian energy... He tries to achieve the greatest goal a musician has ever aimed at, the ultimate end of music: the revelation, through sounds, of the musical, that is harmonic, halo of man in his relationship with nature. He tries to manifest in sounds, that is, [through a physical phenomenon] perceptible by human beings, a kind of astral body of each thing that has been created or thought; the perceptible musical essence of all beings and all things...A new path has been opened up for musical activity. No more lyric psychology, no more evocative impressionism, no more suggestive atmospheres; rather, the musical construction of a being around his [physical] self, the *revelation*, and not the *expression*, of him [are] obtained through sounds...[Stravinsky] makes, through daring combinations of tones, that which is not manifest but which nonetheless exists, and which only the artist is able to perceive and divine as evident, sensual and tangible" (Canudo, "Notre Esthétique," 5-6).

⁸³ Nicolodi, *Musica*, 238.

⁸⁴ *Montjoie!* 2 (June 1914), 21.

The two Italians called for a "pure" music that is valuable "in itself" for its intrinsic musical qualities, and that would be consequently independent from contingent life and practical purpose including, paradoxically, any religious purpose. Canudo argued that, with the advent of post-French Revolution liberal and secular societies, the Christian faith had lost its all-encompassing (moral, aesthetic, and mystical) power and had become contaminated with a rationalistic, materialistic view of humanity.⁸⁵ In liberal societies, therefore, religious belief had been forced to become a formal social practice, a set of human conventions that had no link with the metaphysical quest characterizing true religious sentiment.⁸⁶ In opposition to "the form of the Christian religion," Canudo thus called for a "new religious conception" based on the purposelessness and abstractedness of art, and particularly music: "today our force of artistic abstraction has been so transformed that we can conceive of a Religion that has no definite precepts, nor any human standard, a Religion that possesses neither spiritual outline nor form."⁸⁷

On the other hand, Casella claimed on various occasions that "music is neither religion nor patriotism; neither revolution nor socialism; neither morality nor anything other than the attainment of sensations, chimeras, and dreams prompted by more or less pleasant combinations of sounds."⁸⁸ Exactly like Canudo, Casella provided a defense of music's independence from any practical social purpose: he was convinced that music "occurs outside of the human passions," as well as outside of "this poor earthly life."⁸⁹ Yet, as has already been pointed out, he also maintained that "in itself, artistic perfection...combines and exhausts every moral and religious content."⁹⁰ This stance, which is reminiscent of Stravinsky's seemingly politically-disengaged ideas on music, proves to be of meaningful socio-political significance when

⁸⁵ Canudo, *Music*, 14-15, 34.

⁸⁶ Canudo, *Music*, 4.

⁸⁷ Canudo, *Music*, 15.

⁸⁸ Alfredo Casella, "Tutti uguali, meno..." *Ars nova* 2, no. 6 (May 1918), 2.

⁸⁹ Casella, "Tutti uguali," 3.

⁹⁰ Casella, 21+26, 15.

one considers that both Canudo and Casella had an interest in the Harmony-of-the-Spheres tradition and its occult implications.⁹¹

For Canudo, the endorsement of a modern version of the Pythagorean doctrine was a major aspect of his theosophical and philosophical rejection of post-French Revolution liberal societies and their religious and political institutions. He was an elitist who believed in a mystical “Moral of the Strongest,”⁹² and criticized the materialism, egalitarianism, and democratic rationalization of the three social spheres (the moral, the religious, and the aesthetic).⁹³ Furthermore, he theorized about the breaking of these separate spheres through a type of art that would be capable of encompassing the moral and the religious,⁹⁴ thereby establishing a societal system akin to the pre-French Revolution social hierarchy, but having a group of elite of musicians as its leaders. Canudo argued that these enlightened artists would be endowed with a spiritual energy that, in his view, made them “Saints”⁹⁵ and gave them the power to impose on society a religious, social, and cultural order that can be described as neo-pagan and totalitarian.⁹⁶

All this could be achieved through the employment of the ancient Pythagorean doctrine of the numerical and musical correspondences between the lower, physical bodies and the higher, cosmic ones to manipulate the astral (or subtle) body of people, and consequently of society. In his *Music as a Religion of the Future*, Canudo argued that “the multitudes...are but undefined wills...: new mystic forces that require to be regulated and to receive a name and a style...

⁹¹ For an analysis of the links between occultism and the Harmony-of-the Spheres tradition, as well as for a discussion of Canudo’s interest in these topics, see Godwin, *Music*, 204-07.

⁹² Canudo, *Music*, 5.

⁹³ Canudo, *Music*, 3-4, 9.

⁹⁴ Canudo, *Music*, 8.

⁹⁵ Canudo, *Music*, 22, 24, 34; Canudo, *Hélène, Faust et nous: Précis d’esthétique cérébriste* (Paris: E. Sansot, 1920), 13.

⁹⁶ For the neo-pagan traits of Canudo’s thought see Canudo, *Music*, 31-32, 42-44; and Canudo, *Hélène*, 3-13. With regard to the antidemocratic character of Canudo’s *Montjoie!*, see also Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics*, 204, 218-19.

It is possible that certain individuals of sufficient spiritual power and concentration can influence others even at a distance by radiating their thought.⁹⁷ Obviously, for Canudo those "individuals of sufficient spiritual power" were musicians. He recognized Stravinsky as an artist capable of employing music to reveal "[the] astral body of each thing that has been created or thought," and more importantly believed in his power to endow the world with "the collective, religious sentiment [of] the great [historical] epochs."⁹⁸ In light of these statements, it is not surprising that *Montjoie!* made a hero of Stravinsky and presented his music as a model for all artists pursuing the goal of both the journal and Canudo: the renaissance of a Latin, Mediterranean civilization aspiring imperialistically "to impose an essential type of culture on the world."⁹⁹

Casella, for his part, was always preoccupied with the question of a Latin cultural renaissance as well as of "Mediterranean-ness" in art.¹⁰⁰ According to him, these concerns led him to prefer Stravinsky to other possible models: "because of my Latin nature, I was... attracted to the powerful personality of Stravinsky, in which I found a greater similarity to my own aspirations."¹⁰¹ Casella was also aware of the Harmony-of-the-Spheres tradition; some indications of his interest in it can be found in *Ars nova*, the journal that he edited between 1917 and 1919. In fact, in 1918 Casella's periodical published Busoni's *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*, an essay in which the emphasis on the absolute "beyond Good and Evil," represented by "eternal Harmony," is informed by Busoni's fascination with the occult, and Casella also inserted some quotations devoted to this subject into the column "Pensieri, Aforismi, Paradossi." Here one need only quote a couple of passages that Casella extracted from Mazzini's *Philosophy of Music* and

⁹⁷ Canudo, *Music*, 37-38.

⁹⁸ Canudo, "Notre Esthétique," 6.

⁹⁹ Anonymous, "Salut," *Montjoie!* 1 (February 1913), 1.

¹⁰⁰ Guido Turchi, "I dilemmi del giovane Casella," in Morelli, ed., *Casella*, 1-5; Alfredo Casella, "L'avenir musical de l'Italie," *L'Homme libre*, September 8, 1913, in Calabretto, ed., *Casella*, 305-07.

¹⁰¹ Casella, *Memoirs*, 106.

Soffici's *Principles of a Futurist Aesthetic*. From the first, "Music is the scent of the universe, and, in order to treat it properly, it is necessary for the artist to become one with the thought of the universe by means of [his] love, faith, and study of the harmonies that flow [*nuotano*] on earth and in the skies."¹⁰² From the second:

Ultimately, everything can be reduced to a magic of numbers and every art could be defined as music. And as music is nothing other than an intuitive calculus, a pacing [*ritmazione*] of the reactive contacts between the subject and the world, so every art is a calculation of the genius that measures and determines with exactitude the secret harmonies between the things and the senses.¹⁰³

Another fascinating document linking Casella with occultism in art is Giorgio de Chirico's essay "Metaphysical Art and Occult Sciences," which the author dedicated to Casella.¹⁰⁴

Casella even seemed to echo Canudo's call for a syncretistic fusion of paganism and Christianity¹⁰⁵ when, in 1947, he explained "Stravinsky's enigma" by pointing out the Russian's "messianic spirit," which attempted to achieve a "magic harmony" between "pagan elements" and "Christianity."¹⁰⁶ He had such confidence in the supernatural power of music, and in the leading role to be played in society by an elite of musicians, that in 1918 he could state:

The artist does not present his work to the masses in order to ask for their "verdict"; he fulfils nothing other

¹⁰² Anonymous, "Pensieri, Aforismi, Paradossi, ecc. ecc." *Ars nova* 3, no. 1 (November, 1918), 11-12.

¹⁰³ Anonymous, "Pensieri, Aforismi, Paradossi, ecc. ecc." *Ars nova* 2, no. 1 (December, 1917), 6.

¹⁰⁴ Giorgio De Chirico, "Arte metafisica e scienze occulte," *Ars nova* 3, no. 3 (January, 1919), 3-4.

¹⁰⁵ Canudo, *Hélène*, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Casella, *Strawinski* (1951), 186.

than an elevated mission as educator. The true artist "moulds" the masses; [it is] never the latter [that shape] the artist. The obscure and anonymous masses must be related to the formless "liquid," whereas the creator [is akin] to the solid vessel, which imposes its own form on [its liquid] content.¹⁰⁷

Casella's involvement in *Montjoie!* and his connection with Canudo help to clarify the reasons behind Stravinsky's post-World War I coldness towards Casella, and to illuminate the socio-political import of the Italian composer's French years. In light of Casella's and Canudo's supposedly heretic religious beliefs, it is not surprising that after World War I Stravinsky detached himself from his "earlier friends"¹⁰⁸ of the *Montjoie!* circle, since his official image of the 1920s and 1930s presented Stravinsky as an orthodox Christian believer¹⁰⁹ who could not stand the "sacrilegious conception of art as religion."¹¹⁰ However, Stravinsky's well-known idea that "music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all"¹¹¹ apart from its ability to "express itself,"¹¹² can be linked to unorthodox religious beliefs.¹¹³ In

¹⁰⁷ Alfredo Casella [Il discolo, pseud.], "Amenità melanconiche," *Ars nova* 3 (November, 1918), 11. For Casella's authorship of the anonymous essays published in *Ars nova*, see Colajanni, Conti, De Santis, and Mazzone, eds., *Catalogo* 2:57-58 (Document XXIX.1.125); Alfredo Casella, "Il risveglio musicale italiano," *Il pianoforte* 2 (1921), 105; Casella, *Memoirs*, 145; and Alfredo Casella, *I segreti della giara* (Florence: Sansoni, 1941), 195. In the essay entitled "Critica e critici d'arte," one sentence is very much in Canudo's style: "the artist's truly sacerdotal mission is that of revealing nature's beauty to the other men, [thereby] acting as [a] mediator between God and humanity" (Alfredo Casella [Il dilettante, pseud.], "Critica e critici d'arte," *Ars nova* 2, no. 6 [May, 1918], 6).

¹⁰⁸ Casella, *Memoirs*, 198.

¹⁰⁹ Stephen Walsh, *Igor Stravinsky: A Creative Spring: Russia and France 1882-1934* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999), 431-34.

¹¹⁰ Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1975), 39.

¹¹¹ Stravinsky, *Autobiography*, 53.

¹¹² Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 101.

¹¹³ For an analysis of the esoteric, neo-pagan implications of Stravinsky's *Rite* see

particular, it shows a striking resemblance to Canudo's (and Casella's) assumption that art "no longer expresses thoughts or sentiments. But [expresses] *the thing in itself*."¹¹⁴

In conjunction with their conception of music as religion, Casella and Canudo embraced an evolutionary interpretation of history that underlined the links between past traditions and modern artistic practices. The clear "conservative" implications of this stance challenge the perception of the avant-garde as free from traditionalist concerns; it also questions claims that Casella's French years were untainted by neoclassical attitudes.¹¹⁵ In fact, when approached through Canudo's theories, Casella can be regarded as an avant-garde artist, insofar as he employed compositional techniques capable of mirroring the modern sensibility as well as of advancing a "progressive" artistic agenda. At the same time, he can also be viewed as neoclassical inasmuch as he did not reject the past and, indeed, grounded his (and Stravinsky's) harmonic procedures in the evolutionary progress of "the great tradition."

As well as shedding light on the artistically progressive-conservative character of Casella's Parisian years, the intellectual relationship between Casella and Canudo supports an interpretation of Casella's right-wing outlook as originating in Paris. In fact, Casella's collaboration with *Montjoie!*, in spite of the openly antidemocratic character of Canudo's enterprise, can be viewed as his adherence to a form of nationalistic "Latin" and "Mediterranean" imperialism, and to a totalitarian conception of social order based on a pyramidal hierarchy controlled by an elite group of artists that Mussolini knew and appreciated.¹¹⁶ Thus, Casella's lifelong concern with "Mediterranean-

Marilyn Meyer Hoogen, *Igor Stravinsky, Nikolai Roerich, and the Healing Power of Paganism* (PhD diss., Western Washington University, 1997).

¹¹⁴ Canudo, *Hélène*, 34; for a similar pronouncement by Casella see Casella, *Strawinski* (1926), 44-45.

¹¹⁵ See footnote 13.

¹¹⁶ When Canudo died in 1923, Mussolini sent his widow a telegram in which he stated that he "appreciated madly the great spiritual and human qualities of your late lamented husband" (Dotoli, *Bibliografia*, 373).

ness" in music, and his attempt to conceptualize the relationship between Europe and the leading artistic role Italy should play in it, seem a natural development of ideas he absorbed within the Parisian cultural milieu, and particularly within the *Montjoie!* group of artists.

Stravinsky was also attracted to these ideas, which explains why after World War II he again denied his involvement in *Montjoie!*¹¹⁷ Given Stravinsky's careful attempt at "erasing all that which might harm the image patiently constructed all along [his] career,"¹¹⁸ he might have felt an added reason for detaching himself from Canudo: the political implications of Canudo's ideas on music. For these very reasons, Stravinsky—who showed himself to be a supporter of Mussolini's Fascism in the 1920s and 1930s—might again have been encouraged to take a critical attitude towards Casella and his neoclassicism.¹¹⁹ The motivation was plain: Casella, like Canudo, could remind people not only of an unorthodox spiritualism inherent in his music but, after World War II, of a proto-Fascist and Fascist political dimension to the concept of "pure music."

Stravinsky's downplaying of his antidemocratic connections can be compared to the uneasy attitude of historians towards Casella's music and his political record. Both can be viewed as instances of what Taruskin described as the post-World War II attempt to "bracket [Fascism] off from life" in order to "neutralize" it.¹²⁰ Yet, sixty-two years have elapsed since the end of World War II—sufficient time to allow a detached, open-minded analysis of the dynamics linking a by no means minor cultural figure like Casella to totalitarian and fascist ideologies. Such an investigation might show that the avant-garde and Fascism were not necessarily antithetical, and could also reveal that "the culture of Fascism" was not a mere parenthesis in Italian history.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Taruskin, *Stravinsky*, 1:877.

¹¹⁸ Rodriguez, *L'Affaire Montjoie!*, 23.

¹¹⁹ Sachs, *Music*, 167-69; Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, "Stravinsky's Politics: Left, Right, Left," in Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky*, 551-52.

¹²⁰ Richard Taruskin, "The Dark Side of Modern Music," *The New Republic*, 5 September 1988, 34.

¹²¹ Jeremy Tambling, *Opera and the Culture of Fascism* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1996).

If Vlad was correct in claiming that Casella's legacy "constituted the indispensable cultural basis on which Petrassi's and Dallapiccola's generation was able to develop [*affermarsi*] and make the subsequent [i.e. post-World War II] flourishing of new Italian music possible,"¹²² this inquiry could expose ideological continuities between pre-World War I culture, the artistic policies during the Fascist regime, and some significant tendencies in post-World War II art.

¹²² Roman Vlad, "Ricordo di Casella maestro," *Nuova rivista musicale italiana* 11 (April-June 1977), 192.