



Overview of the Italian Music School System

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Historical introduction

Musical education has mostly taken place in conservatoires in Italy. The word comes from latin verb 'conservare' which means 'to save or to preserve'. In fact the most ancient institutions of this kind where founded in Naples by the end of the XVI century: they were charities which would welcome orphans or poor kids and give them an education, grooming them for a career.

When in the XVII century, the demand for artists in courts grew, a transformation began in these schools.

Initially, the main figures were the magister musicae and the magister lyrae. Conservatoires became increasingly important during this period, as to include new subjects such as music theory, composition, dramatic art and the teaching of various musical instruments.

The courses structure, as it is nowadays, can be dated back to 1918¹ with a set of laws which was successively integrated with minor regulations. This law claimed that musical training for pupils in conservatoires was to take place under the guidance of one teacher only.

Nowadays a reform which will gradually adapt old and tradi-

¹ D.Lgt. 5 maggio 1918, n. 1852



tional studies to more modern European teaching standards is taking place.

In the XIX century, also musical secondary schools were flourishing, while other kinds of schools which were not only linked to classical music were born in the second half of the XX century.

Types of schools

- **State schools, that is to say conservatoires;**
- **Educational institutions for music:**

They are those schools, such as musical secondary schools which sometimes are linked to city councils, provinces or regions, which can now be considered equals to state conservatoires, after going through a supervision process carried out by the Ministry. The study offer thus depends on the regulation mentioned above and all exams taking place in these institutions are recognised by the state;

- **City Councils' music schools:**

These schools depend directly on the City Council and mainly offer a range of studies in the classical field. However these courses are not regulated by the state, therefore students will also have to give exams in the conservatoires in order to have their path of studies properly recognised;

- **Private schools and academies:**

These schools can choose their own orientations: classical, modern or ethnic. They can count on renowned teachers and they're aiming for excellence. Some of them also offer a very wide range of courses, such as for example courses for kids, adults, listening guides, workshops and master classes. Some also give great importance to their students' specialization and early career. Tuition fees are much higher in these schools, in comparison to the state's;



- **Schools which are linked to cultural associations:**

Also these schools choose their own orientations: classical, modern (jazz, pop, rock), ethnic or folk. They are characterised by the strong ability to interact with the local community, thanks to the organisation of events, festivals and concerts. These schools aim to bring people together through music and dance. They frequently support ensemble projects. The Forlimpopoli School of Folk Music can be featured in this category.

The reform process of conservatoires

The reform process in conservatoires was born after the Bologna process in 1999, where 46 countries have signed an agreement aiming to create by 2010 a European space for higher education. It was a great convergence effort between different education systems, in order to guarantee a common structure of study paths, their transparency and clarity and the possibility to globally enhance the attractiveness of European-based higher education.

The need to modernize the organisation of musical studies in Italy had been felt for a long time, thus the law 508 in 1999 was considered the first step to take in order to do so. In the old system, education in conservatoires was based on the steady presence of one teacher only, who could be supported by secondary figures teaching complementary subjects, ensemble classes, choral and orchestral work and musical theory.

The law mentioned above set that conservatoires should be now considered as universities (under the Ministry for Education, University and Research) thus the study path has been divided into a three-year section followed by a two-year section for specialisation. 60 credits are awarded every year to those students who pass all exams and notes are now expressed in a scale of thirty.



There are many more theoretical subjects and the teaching of foreign languages, computer science, psychology and other topics was introduced.

Some conservatoires also offer a two-year specialisation path in jazz, ethnic music and ancient music, some other also have preparatory music classes designed for young kids, or important master classes with famous musicians who are not normally part of the teaching staff.

So far, the two systems, the old and the new one, have coexisted, but from next year (2011/12) Decreto Ministeriale n.124 of 30th Sept. 2009 will become effective: this means that students won't be able to sign up for the old path anymore and that basic music education will only be given in new music high schools, where music will be taught together with other classical subjects. Conservatoires will be open to those students only after attending those schools, like all other universities. Each region or territory will have one new music high school, like in the case with Emilia-Romagna.

Gioele Sindona (Italy)

Gioele Sindona graduated in violin in 2006 and recently at the Conservatory "B. Maderna" in Cesena. He has got a lot of experience in orchestral, symphonic and chamber music and since a number of years he is dealing with ethnic and traditional music. He is playing with the group Khorakhanè. Since 2007, he works as a teacher and assistant with Bardh Jakova in a laboratory ensemble, mostly playing traditional music of the Balkans.

