

The migrant Opera.

Database of artistic circulation between Italy and Latin America (1880-1920)

The project

The IMLA-RIIA database currently consists of about 30,000 records and it is constantly updated. It collects the entire chronologies of the major Italian, European and Latin American theaters connected to the wide Atlantic network: the entrepreneurial route that, starting from the center of the Mediterranean, unfolded through Spain, Portugal, and the Canary Islands until the countries of Central and South America.

The historical relevance of this material lies in its heterogeneity: it is in fact characterized by a specific focus not only on repertoires performed on stage, but also, and above all, on the circulation of people of any kind related to the operatic world: musicians, singers, but also set designers, dancers, theater technicians and impresarios. Most of them had Italian origins but, in a period of great migrations, traveled along the aforementioned route, spreading the European operatic repertoire in the New Continent.

Methods and objectives

This enormous variety of information has been collected by many researchers and compilers over a long period of work and classified through new digital means of cataloguing which allow to cross-reference the various data collected and, therefore, reconstruct the details of the whole itinerary. Much attention has been paid both to the human and artistic aspects of the opera companies active between the two continents thus shedding an unprecedented light on the history of the reception of repertoires from an historical, cultural, and, also, social point of view. The database, in fact, is made up of different sections (tables), each one referring to the theatrical places, the operators and the titles that were presented and collected through chronologies of theaters, theater programs and posters of the individual performances represented. In this regard, the IMLA - RIIA study group became aware from the very first moment of the importance of homogeneous data: it therefore aimed to insert them in a single digital container that would allow the comparison between different fields.

In this way this tool avoids the mere descriptive tendency of phenomena and proves its academic relevance for researchers of different fields within the academic arena, involving not only musicians and musicologists, but also art historians, literary and theater and migration historians. This database addresses researchers both from an historical-artistic and the sociological perspective. The links between the different areas of the humanities are in fact evident also in relation to the Ibero-American context. To cite a few examples, there are many Latin American writers who had strong contacts with librettists: see, among others, José de Alencar, from whose work Gomez's *Guarany* was taken, and Ricardo Piglia, author of the novel and later of the libretto opera by *La Ciudad Ausente*. There are also many Latin American literary topics from which operas were drawn (see *Tabaré* by Juan Zorrilla de San Martín, or *Juan Moreira* by the Argentine writer Eduardo Gutiérrez, both subject to different interdisciplinary studies).

The importance of the tool is therefore based on its comparative and interdisciplinary nature, which fills a specific void in the world of Latin American studies, perfectly matching the research objectives established by the agreement in force between IMLA and the Ca' Foscari University. This collaboration is based on the mutual interest of the parties in carrying out and developing common

activities in the research area.

The IMLA-RIIA database, which is now published and hosted in the web environment by the Ca 'Foscari University of Venice, with the technical support of its IT services, is the result of the long and plural research described above. However, by its very nature, it is an unfinished object, a work in progress that is constantly updated. The curators of this project are firmly convinced that the best way to carry out this work in progress is to open it to the scientific community by inviting scholars not only to use it, but also reporting new data and any critical issues.

Warning

The database collects tens of thousands of entries from different geographical areas, repertoires, and nationalities: despite the efforts of the authors, it is possible that in some cases there are typos and transliterations. We will be grateful if you can report any corrections to imlastaff@gmail.com: you will help us to improve the information provided.

Partner

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- RIIA - Italo-Latin-American Relations (Study group of the International Musicological Society)
- Ca 'Foscari University of Venice
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