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‘A Single Purpose: The Conquest of the Foreign Art Markets’: Theatre and Cultural Diplomacy in Mussolini’s Italy (1919-1927)

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This article explores the role of theatre in the strategies of cultural diplomacy that developed in Italy between the sunset of the liberal State (1919-1922) and the rise of Benito Mussolini. The study covers the period until 1927, when the establishment of the Istituti Italiani di Cultura (Italian Cultural Institute) and the approval of a new regulatory framework for migration marked a new era for fascist soft-power ambitions. The article draws upon unpublished sources of the Historical Diplomatic Archive of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and offers a new perspective on the use of theatre and the performing arts as a tool for cultural diplomacy through the testimony of flagship authors such as Luigi Pirandello, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Alfredo Casella, and Pietro Mascagni.

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Key terms: soft power, fascism, Pirandello, Mascagni, Marinetti, theatre networks, theatre infrastructures

Defined as one of the areas of international affairs ‘delegated by governments to agencies and cultural institutions’,[1] cultural diplomacy has been recently recognized as a useful and multifaceted tool for understanding the circulation and the development of the arts in a globalized world.[2] This article draws upon largely unpublished archival sources from the Historical Diplomatic Archive of

the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and offers a preliminary contribution to the understanding of the relationship between theatre and foreign policy in a crucial period in the history of Italy, that is, in the 1920s during which cultural diplomacy became a promising field of intervention for liberal and fascist governments. It also became a necessary tool for 'recovering the disadvantage in the international competition [and] relaunching an aware mission of Italy in the world'.[3]

Although works on fascist international relations and propaganda are numerous, the performing arts have generally been treated from a marginal angle[4]. This study thus focuses on the role of the theatre in the first actions of cultural diplomacy at the sunset of the Italian liberal era (1919-1922), Mussolini's role in such diplomacy after the March of Rome (1922), and the evolution of the phenomenon up to 1927, when the ambitions of fascist foreign policy led to a series of legislative and political actions. The latter were the reform of the regulatory framework for emigration, the establishment of the *Istituti Italiani di Cultura* (*Italian Cultural Institutes*), and the choice of focusing propagandistic effort on some selected export names such as Alfredo Casella and Luigi Pirandello, which consecrated the importance of the performing arts for constructing images of the 'new Italy' abroad.

The diplomatic documentation available opens unprecedented and sometimes surprising perspectives, imposing reflection on phenomena that, up to now, have been considered to have been established. Take, for instance, the classified embassy report to Mussolini asserting that Pirandello, Mascagni, and other flagship companies offered 'a very mediocre idea of the conditions of Italian theatre' during their propagandistic tours in Germany.[5] This point of view is highly problematical, considering that not only the propagandistic reviews, but also critical and historical reconstructions, generally refer to these tours as successful experiences.[6] The still-unexplored diplomatic sources force us to frame the conditions of Italian theatre abroad in the 1920 in a more complete perspective: if the view, dominated by a multifaceted constellation of minor companies, has long been described as an 'overall ruined picture' and a neglected 'place for improvised comedians',[7] the classified reports of the Farnesina offer a more nuanced and vigorous panorama. [8]

The Diplomatic archive preserves hundreds of folders of theatrical interest. Given the high number of unexplored archival materials, this article offers a first attempt at examining sections that seemed particularly significant or promising, focusing on Central Europe and Latin America. Subsequent research will certainly be able to frame the phenomenon in a more complex and comprehensive way, hopefully in less complicated periods for on-site consultation than now, during the Covid period. In this regard, I thank Drs Paola Busonero and Silvia Vallini, of the Historical Archive of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for making this research possible even in the face of the difficulties arising from the pandemic emergency.

Theatre and Cultural Diplomacy: The Performing Arts as a Tool for Soft Power

The use of culture as an instrument of power and its role in foreign policy have been interpreted in various ways over the last century starting from Gramsci's theories on 'cultural hegemony' and Max Weber's reflections on 'charismatic authority'.[9] Historiography and political science have alternately framed cultural diplomacy in the categories of 'cultural imperialism',[10] 'influence',[11] 'political propaganda',[12], and 'sociological propaganda'.[13] In the aftermath of the Cold War, the concept of 'soft power' asserted itself – not without criticism[14] – as a standard both in terms of interpretation and the practice of global powers.[15]. Opposed to the 'hard power' of armies and macroeconomic levers, 'soft power' […] 'co-opts people rather than coerces them' and allows a nation to realize its targets of foreign policy 'because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it'.[16] A large part of a nation's success lies, then, in its capacity for fascination determined by 'culture, values, legitimate policies, a positive domestic model, a successful economy, and a competent military.'[17] As it has been ironically noted, '*dolce potere* (the Italian equivalent for soft power) offers foreigners pleasant associations with *dolce vita*',[18] and so with positive ramifications as regards winning confidence and easing business opportunities and cultural communication.

Although the definition of soft power arises in the context of public diplomacy and refers to the post-Soviet Union scenario, the concept has also proved to be effective in other fields. Musicology has been one of the most receptive of them and it has used soft power as an interpretative tool for investigating the performing arts from the early modern age [19] to the nineteenth century's 'golden age of globalization',[20] when international relations and cosmopolitanism made cultural differences between nations crumble,[21] and the musical trade fostered the aspirations of rising nations.[22] In the field of the theatre, diplomacy is a well-established tool for investigating the historical connections between Europe and the United States;[23] or, for instance, Franco-British relations during the Crimean War, since 'soft power [and] its focus on the cultural and social aspects of persuasion is key to thinking about nineteenth-century French attempts to influence by other means than coercive diplomacy'.[24] Italian history also abounds with examples of the diplomatic use of the theatre. Thus during Napoleon's occupation (1796-1814), the Teatro alla Scala provided its usual display of power for State visits;[25] however, it also conveyed the ideas of the French revolution to Italy through a renewed repertoire that could be performed under the strict control of censorship.[26]

As Ellen R. Welch's work on international relations has outlined, connections between the performing arts and diplomacy are deep. If theatrical metaphors still abound in contemporary talk about diplomatic affairs ('diplomatic dance', 'misstep', 'concert of nations', and so on.), since the early modern era 'the emergent diplomatic culture depended on a set of theatrical practices that translated seamlessly from the scene of diplomacy (the court, the summit, the negotiating room) to the stage'.[27] This perspective moves from the importance of the *Rinascimento* for the reconfiguration of the modern diplomatic system and recognizes the early role of the Italian language, which, as a tool soft power, has been quickly forgotten. In fact, if 'there can be little doubt that late medieval and Renaissance Italy made major contributions to modernity', it is also true that, by the eighteenth century, 'Italy's fortunes had fallen so far that, having ceased to be in

the vanguard of the West, it was nearly bringing up the rear, its place taken by England, France, and Germany'.[28]

The above harsh judgement, which is certainly true for international relations, needs to be framed in a more nuanced perspective when the development of the theatre scene is at issue. When the primacy of diplomatic affairs was lost, opera 'took various forms and was most often thought of as Italian, although that did not always mean a work sung entirely in Italian or by Italian singers';[29] in the golden age of melodrama, it was internationally recognized as an 'entity which is aristocratic, exclusive and Italian'.[30] In the meantime, the myth of the 'grande attore' emerged abroad. Even though Italy did not exist as a State until 1861, the theorists of the *Risorgimento* capitalized on the prestige of Italian theatre and took advantage of the international renown of its protagonists: singing stars and grand actors publicly declared their patriotic commitment, and were called to perform on the stage of international affairs to sustain the cause of a united nation. Their fame became an asset for diplomatic activities.

In 1861, just one month after the proclamation of the Unification of Italy, the Prime Minister Cavour addressed the following message to the actress Adelaide Ristori:

> I congratulate the splendid success that you had on the French scene. This new triumph gives you irresistible authority over the Paris public, who must be very grateful for the service you render to the French art. Make use of this authority for the benefit of our homeland, and I will applaud in you not only the first artist in Europe, but the most effective co-operator of diplomatic negotiations.[31]

A few months earlier, when Ristori had debuted in St. Petersburg [Figure 1], Cavour had assigned to her the mission of going to the court of Tsar Alexander II,[32] recognising in the actress-marquise the 'seductive informality of an ambassador'.[33] In fact, in the passage from the Risorgimento to Unity, 'what the State asks the actor for is ultimately the work of support, even if it is no longer in the direct and immediate measure of the heroic times of armed battles but in the most subtle and

concealed manners of the diplomatic affairs.'[34] Proof of this is to be seen in the promotion and representation of Italy abroad through Ristori's ties with the emperor Dom Pedro II of Brazil[35], and in the international tours of Tommaso Salvini, Ernesto Rossi, Eleonora Duse, Ermete Novelli, and Ermete Zacconi, as also in the way great interpreters of Italian opera were hired out overseas, with increasing frequency by *fin de siècle* Italy [Figures 2 and 3].

Recognition of some leading names sometimes worked as an effective tool for diplomatic strategies and often led to a rooted but generic admiration for the prestige of the Italian culture among foreign intellectual circles. However, until the 1920s, the conspicuous role of principal companies did not correspond to an organic governmental strategy. Moreover, there was a deep difference between the ephemeral appearance of Italian stars on the foreign market and the much more mundane but persistent activity of minor companies of debatable quality in the same countries.

Diplomatic and consular authorities, when reporting to Rome on the real conditions of Italian theatre abroad, often highlighted how perceptions of Italy came through the work of myriad marginal companies and small wandering interpreters, in which the Italian State showed interest only when consulates solicited payment for their repatriation costs. However, it is precisely because of this humble dimension of the theatre, which lay below the threshold of power interest, that the high, institutional narrative often clashed, in reality, with the actual reception by local cultures of Italian artistic fare.

From the 1890s, images of Italy were also fostered by the Società Dante Alighieri (Dante Alighieri Society), established in 1889 by a group of intellectuals led by the poet Giosuè Carducci. The Dante Alighieri Society was recognized by the King of Italy in 1893 with the statutory purpose of 'safeguarding and promoting Italian language and culture in the world, holding up wherever possible Italian sentiment, reviving the spiritual ties of compatriots abroad with the homeland, and instilling in foreigners a feeling of love for Italy and devotion to Italian civilization'.[36]

The Society started the policy of 'italophonia', that is,'a strategy that aims to create an international Italian-speaking community and build bridges between Italy and those beyond its borders who speak or want to speak Italian'.[37] With its 401 foreign committees in 80 countries, it is, still today, one of the main assets of Italian cultural diplomacy. At the end of the liberal age (1861-1922), while the democratic State was crumbling under the rise of fascism,[38] the subject of cultural diplomacy began to be considered in its complexity and of primary importance for political actions. It was here that the first organic strategy for soft power appeared at the government level, which included the performing arts as part of international affairs.

Repositioning at the End of the Liberal Age

The most obvious feature of cultural diplomacy is propaganda, and it is precisely under this name that specialised bodies and structures made their appearance in Italy during the First World War (1915-1918). However, propaganda offices did not survive the conflict.[39] Although interest in cultural diplomacy increased in the 1920s, the whole decade was characterized by a significant void of institutions with express competences in this regard. It was only in the 1930s that such institutions appeared: the fascist government (1922-1943) established specific structures – the Sottosegretariato di Stato per la stampa e la propaganda in 1934 and the Ministero della cultura popolare in 1937.

Meanwhile, in the 1920s governmental ambitions followed uneven paths and cultural diplomacy suffered sporadic grant endowment on shaky administrative grounds. Seen from this angle, it is surprising to observe how it was Luigi Facta's government, one of the weakest in Italian history, that initiated what appears to be Italy's first organic soft power strategy. In the summer of 1922, a few months before the march on Rome that brought Mussolini to power Giovanni Calò, the Undersecretary of State for Education, wrote to Carlo Schanzer, the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

His Excellency is aware that, In addition to the magnificent phalanxes of our workers, dramatic and lyrical companies of varied importance and with different programs leave [Italy] for foreign countries. They go abroad, especially to the two Americas, with the mission, very often aware and served with the fervent spirit of patriots, of spreading the nobility of our language and the glorious beauty of our musical art among foreign peoples. It happens very often that the smaller companies, whether due to a lack of means or a lack of organization and experience, must carry out their work amidst bitter difficulties. These difficulties can badly influence the quality of the offerings made and the dignity of conduct of actors and singers, and certainly they cannot but impair the serene effectiveness of artistic manifestations, thus damaging the good name of our art. Therefore, it would be highly appropriate – and I am sure that H.E. will agree with me with all his heart – that the Italian companies, dramatic or musical, important or of second rank (I would say, especially, if of a lower order) at the very moment of their arrival in those distant territories […] find, solicitously and lovingly, the help of the consular authorities obliged to provide support, advice, and funding, introducing them in the new lands with their experience, relationships, and knowledge of places and people. This defence activity should be coordinated by intelligent actions of vigilant protection for the character and dignity, even artistic, of the work that the companies carry out in the sense of directing them with prudent and better care towards the high aims of Italian propaganda to which I referred above. And every time that the purposes of pure speculation threaten to harm superior national interests rather than benefit them, the companies should be warned.[40]

The letter took on a revolutionary aspect by recognising the importance of minor companies for a cultural diplomacy strategy. Given their pervasive presence among the popular components of foreign markets, the State had to control the activities of minor companies and sustain their quality through the consular network in order to develop an effective soft power ('the mission […] of spreading the nobility of our language and the glorious beauty of our musical art among foreign peoples').

The relevance of the popular scene for the construction of an imagined homeland was especially important in South America where, in the 1890s, one of the most fortunate and celebrated cases of cultural permeation had taken place: the invention of 'Cocoliche' in the theatre world of Buenos Aires – a caricature of the Calabrian porter of José Podestá's company of 'circo criollo' (creole circus). This clumsy character spoke a language that mixed southern Italian and Castilian dialects and tried to appropriate the emphatic style of the 'drama gauchesco rioplatense', in which the heroism of the gaucho constituted the quintessential nostalgic symbol of a romantic but fictional creole past: the theatrical genre capitalized on the success of the epic poem *Martín Fierro*, by the Argentine writer José Hernández (1872), that emphasized the gauchos' contribution to the

independence from Spain and the development of Argentina as a national State. Cocoliche first appeared in Podestá's and Eduardo Gutiérrez's stage adaptation of *Juan Moreira*, one the most successful novels of the 'gauchesca' that had appeared in 1886 and would have been 'the generator of the Argentine theatrical system'[41].

While Podestá's Cocoliche had the simple but fundamental role of making the audience laugh, culturally speaking he offered 'a representation of the Italian immigrants that would later become the central figure of the Argentine *sainete*'[42], a comic piece which was played in vernacular and often portrayed scenes of low life that would become the most popular genre in the theatrical scene of Buenos Aires. Cocoliche was then reprised by popular actors such as Luis Arata and Florencio Parravicini taking on sociological connotations-as the term quickly began to define the language spoken by the Italian migrant communities in the Rio de Plata. The character, in fact, 'offered natives and newly arrived "tanos" (Italians) a way to negotiate their differences through ritual and symbolic confrontations onstage, in carnival activities, in print, and ultimately in everyday life'.[43] Cocoliche asserted itself by accident on the theatre world, working effectively as soft power, and achieving far better results in terms of recognition for the Italian community than many celebrated stars.

Artists on the fringes of the great Italian circuits had similar fate in South America. The most renowned case is that of Ettore Petrolini, who was contracted in 1907 in Argentina and, in the Plata, his continuous and successful presence left an important legacy for the development of 'an alternative model to the "serious" European actor', an autochthonous creation born of 'a mixture of the Nineteenth-century circus practices and artifices of the Italian folk actor'[44]. Upon returning home, Petrolini capitalized on his success on the international scene, obtaining a rapid (even critical) affirmation on Italian stages[45]. In the same way, as will be clear shortly, other Italian companies touring in South America such as those of Vittorio Podrecca, Dario Niccodemi, and

Mimì Aguglia proved to be fundamental for the work of underground cultural mediation that, in the early 1920s, prepared the South American success of ~~1927~~ Luigi Pirandello's 1927 tour.

The diplomatic network was generally aware of this subterranean effect and often emphasized the humbler daily practice of minor companies than the great ambitions of flagship names. The importance of this phenomenon was described with great effectiveness by Ruffillo Agnoli, Minister Plenipotentiary in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, who in the summer of 1922 replied to the aforementioned letter from the Undersecretary for Education describing the real conditions of Italian theatre abroad. In the diplomat's cutting prose, the companies operating in the interior areas of Latin America appear in their everyday struggles, far from ministerial rhetoric. The letter opens precisely with the clear distinction between primary and minor companies:

> In practice, the large opera and dramatic companies are provided, with very rare exceptions, with sufficient means to resist in the event of failure in one place and to move to another in search of better fortune; the smaller companies, the least suitable for 'spreading the nobility of our language and the glorious beauty of our musical art among foreign peoples' are exposed to frequent disasters. In these cases, which circumstances of various natures make frequent, the young female artists often manage to get out of trouble in their own way, while men and mature women can do nothing but appeal to the Consulates to ask for money and repatriation. [46]

The diplomat also warned the Ministry of the risks that indiscriminate support could cause to the consular network and its finances, since 'the people who dedicate themselves to the lyric and dramatic arts [...] from now on will leave [Italy] believing they are authorized to ask for grants'. Even the role played by immigrant communities in proving the validity of soft power strategy was traced back to the reality of the 'colonies' that were 'tired of the incessant contributions demanded of them recent years' and preferred 'to allocate their donations to solid and lasting local charitable, educational and Italian initiatives' rather than 'to support enterprises that, however praiseworthy, should generally seek and find other means of development'. According to the diplomat, the central issue was the difficulty of effectively entering the theatre arena, which seen from the outside, appeared to be a system governed by a tangle of relationships and traditions, essentially

impenetrable for those who attempted to work in a professional field without experience or adequate education:

> Advise a dramatic and lyrical company at the moment of its arrival, pave the ~~ground~~ way for it to thrive, support it with prudent caution towards the high aims of Italian propaganda: all this sounds very well, but it practically exceeds the limits of actions that can be effectively performed by the consuls in general – and especially by those of Italy, who do not always have time to breathe. The adaptation of a company, its needs, [and] relationships between artists and impresarios constitute a very complicated web of interests, intrigues, susceptibility, and traditions that only long habit and preparation allow one to probe and to govern. The consul who enters this labyrinth and gets involved in these matters, almost certainly to the detriment of his prestige, will not be easily listened to and, if he were, he would take on unjustified responsibilities, giving quick proof of his inexperience. Therefore, companies (large or small) will continue to be given the just and prudent assistance that has been given up to now; I doubt that more can be done practically […].[47]

If the diplomat's gaze focused on the morally questionable position of freeing himself from a burdensome commitment, the letter nonetheless highlighted the importance of introducing specialized subjects in to the cultural diplomacy strategy. The key role was identified in the infrastructure of Italian impresarios: these professionals were permanently active in the local market and were the backbone of theatrical circulation. According to the diplomatic network, their collaboration was a necessary compromise: 'After all', wrote the Santiago Legation pragmatically, '[the companies] arrive in Chile only when they are hired by the Italian impresarios Farren and Salvati: both have already been decorated for artistic merit and it would be easy to exert influence, at least, for fair treatment'.[48] As will be evident, fascist cultural diplomacy took action to tighten its bonds to the infrastructure of impresarios, subsequently moving towards a more decisive institutionalization of its soft power policies in the second half of the 1920s.

Fascism between Continuity and Institutionalization

The need to support Italian artistic activity abroad was immediately endorsed by fascism. The key figure in this regard was the Minister for Education Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944), the Hegelian-idealist philosopher who provided a decisive intellectual foundation for Italian fascism and later

contributed to Mussolini's *The Doctrine of Fascism* (1932).[49] In March 1923, Gentile reported to Mussolini the first steps taken so that 'the government could protect, at least with the moral and political means available, the activity of our artists abroad'.[50] The plan started right after the march on Rome (28 October 1928). On 26 November 1922, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, solicited by Gentile, highlighted in a circular letter 'the opportunity for the diplomatic and consular authorities to report in time the international artistic competitions in which Italian artists can participate'. On 6 March 1923, a meeting at the Undersecretariat of the State for Fine Arts had identified 'which ones [consular authorities] could be the concrete means to carry out the protection of Italian art abroad' effectively'. In his report, Gentile acknowledged the central role of the diplomatic network and invited the Prime Minister (and interim Foreign Minister) Mussolini to undertake 'a series of measures that could help, in relation to the conditions of foreign countries, the current crisis of our art'.

In perfect continuity with the initiatives of the Facta government, Gentile underlined 'the need for diplomatic and consular authorities to carry out the shrewd work of observation with regard to artistic movement, indicating at the appropriate time where and to what extent they could propose [to the foreign public] works of figurative art and performances of music and singing that might be requested by the local audience'.[51] According to Gentile, this kind of 'market survey' should have been carried out by the commercial offices of the diplomatic network, which must 'send useful reminders to the Central Government [and] could also be interested in supporting our artists every time they go on their own initiative to enhance their work abroad.' In the Minister's words, this cultural diplomacy should respond to a delay of Italian foreign policy:

> Our artistic production is not inferior in value to that of other nations, which have already been able to conquer, even in this regard, the rich foreign markets: it is therefore good that even our diplomatic and consular attachés become accustomed to considering the Italian art and our artists as a precious material for exchanges, fruitful of enrichment for our country.

Gentile also proposed that 'the wealthiest members of our colonies and Italian companies abroad were wisely encouraged' to support governmental initiatives through the establishment of a 'free and honorific office, which would be like a "Consulate of the art"'. Indeed, Italian societies and associations were an extensive and varied network, including elite clubs and circles, mutual aid societies, banks, chambers of commerce, anarchist forums, the Dante Alighieri Society, and amateur dramatics associations.

To this plurality were added the Italian 'Fasci' abroad in the early 1920s, their number difficult to identify although it certainly grew until the Great War. The whole was not a mere social and economic network of relationships but a real infrastructure – often alternative to the regime's vision– that guaranteed the consolidated circulation of the exponents of Italian culture abroad.[52] The importance of this network was particularly evident in Argentina where, already at the beginning of the century, there were not only the greatest number of Italian mutual societies abroad (302 out of 1159, according to the census compiled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1896), but also societies with the highest number of members in absolute terms (124,543 against 31,145 for the USA), as well as the largest share capital (9,500,000 lire against 2,400 .000)[53]. It is therefore not surprising that Gentile, when outlining the ambitions of fascist soft power, wrote that the effort for

> the broad and effective work of intellectual and artistic penetration [...] must be particularly curated in South America, where Italy is called by its precise destiny to carry out its great mission to populate those boundless territories and to make the future Western civilization of the peoples of the new continent germinate from the old stock of Latin civilization.[54]

Fascism's ambition collided with the political and social evolution of Latin America (and in particular Argentina): since the 1910s the economic development and the growth of nationalist movements meant that these countries enhanced immigration from Europe in mere terms of manpower, and 'immigrants were no longer expected to civilize the country. Quite the contrary, it was Argentina that 'had to "civilize" the immigrant'.[55]

The concept of 'Italianità' (*Italianness*) also became a complex theme. If generic references to the *Rinascimento* and the *Risorgimento* had long represented a shared ideological ground for immigrant communities, the new 'myths' elaborated by fascism were much more controversial. Italian cultural associations abroad experienced a progressive process of fascistization: some experiences proved to be effective (such as the Dante Alighieri Society),[56] but most cases were unsatisfactory and, in the 1930s, Mussolini had to revise his foreign policy.[57]

The place of the arts in this process was defined for the first time in a circular letter signed by Mussolini and sent to the diplomatic network in January 1924. In his words, Italian cultural diplomacy 'must aim at a single purpose: the conquest of foreign art markets'[58]. This first official act of fascist soft power had one great absence – the dramatic theatre. In fact, the text made exclusive reference to the 'work of our artists of the figurative arts, music, and singing'. Even the preparatory documents lacked explicit references to drama, although Gentile had wished for 'greater knowledge and dissemination abroad of contemporary Italian art' as a whole.[59] His proposal was not followed up.

If the exclusion of drama from the circular letter seems to have been a decisive step backwards, compared to the Facta government's reflections on the financing of dramatic companies (especially the minor ones), this does not mean that, at this moment in time, fascism did not care about drama. The Duce supported the activity of impresarios and companies close to the regime in a hidden form, while also progressively imposing control over the expatriation of artists. The support for drama was carried out through consulates and embassies, granting direct funding, depending on the position of the interlocutor and the mood of the interim Foreign Minister.

Here is one example from the Diplomatic Archive. In 1926, with a heartfelt appeal, Italo Balbo, the former General Commander of the Fascist militia and current Undersecretary for National Economy, recommended Yambo (stage name of Enrico Novelli) to Mussolini. Yambo was eager to receive funding for his tour to Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. Balbo presented Yambo's

Teatro dei Fantocci as an 'institution with highly educational purposes and an exquisitely Italian art [that] will constitute an affirmation of Italianness abroad'. Mussolini resolved the question in three words in blue pencil on the entire text: '"Moral" assistance. M'.[60] [Figure 4] It was sent to the Royal Legations with an appropriate translation into diplomatic language: 'I have no doubt that Mr. Novelli will be [...] kindly welcomed by the H.E. and will have all the tips and directions that may be useful to him'. [61] Thus no direct funding was provided.

A Multiple Perspective: Censorship, Impresarios, and Flagship Companies

Circular letter No. 18 of 4 March 1925 established the clearance from the Corporazione Nazionale del Teatro (National Theatre Corporation) for companies wishing to undertake foreign tours. The clearance was introduced for the purpose of 'protecting the good name of our art abroad', and 'found limited application due to the subsequent troubled events of the Corporation'.[62] Only in 1927 did the Directorate General of Public Security – in the context of a broader redefinition of competences in the migratory field – instruct the prefects to consult the fascist trade unions regarding the guarantees of the companies that had requested the permit before authorizing their expatriation.[63]

The change of optic is reflected in the organization of the documents of the Historical Diplomatic Archive. If until 1927 the theatre was treated as strictly commercial, in the following years it became an object of 'cultural propaganda' and was therefore placed among 'political affairs'. Despite the rigid evolution of the regulatory framework, communications between artists and diplomatic representations confirm the impression that, at least in this first phase of repositioning, companies continued to move outside the borders quite freely.[64] In the summer of 1927, the actor and impresario Armando Falconi organized a tour in South America in a few days, [65] and his company was granted 'diplomatic support' and 'all the facilities that will eventually be

necessary'[66] without any clearance. Before leaving for Buenos Aires, the actor addressed this profession of faith to Mussolini:

> I leave for South America on the 25th of the current month. A tour contracted in a few days! I will go, like my other colleagues, to bring some *Italianness* there, although I will do it much more modestly and with much less ability than they do! I board with a repertoire of twenty Italian and twenty foreign comedies! I would ask your Excellency for the financial support that would give me greater peace of mind and allow me to go there more serenely and decorously. Would I be asking too much? And if I asked for personal recommendations for the support of those embassies - would I be asking too much, Excellency? […] I turn to your Excellency because I do not know to whom I must ~~could have to,~~ because your Excellency protects me and because time is very short. I thought that there is only one who can say: Yes! No! – The Duce! I have spent thirty-five years in this Art, and I have been a company manager for twenty-seven! All my admiration and devotion now and forever![67]

The letter from the 'deeply moved' Falconi fulfilled the dual function of requesting patronage and implicit permission. The actor had already been appreciated in Argentina for some time – ever since he toured with the Tina Di Lorenzo company (1906) and showed what a 'masterful interpreter' he was in Gerolamo Rovetta's *Il Re Burlone* (The Joker King).[68]. However, years later and with an important change in the company (Paola Borboni instead of Di Lorenzo), the support of the foreign network proved to be invaluable in relaunching a South American tour that had 'not started too happily.'[69]. The Buenos Aires Committee of the Dante Alighieri Society took care of sponsoring the subscription,[70] but it was also thanks to the intervention in the audience of the President of the Argentine Republic, 'who showed all his sympathy for this interesting season with his significant frequent presence', that Falconi's fortune 'gradually recovered', making him obtain 'the most sensational revenge and the greatest satisfactions'.[71] The tour had consecrated the friendship between Italy and Argentina, but it also confirmed the importance of the South American network of Italian impresarii for the circulation Italian artists: Falconi was initially contracted by Mr. Alzati for the performances at the Odeón in Buenos Aires (the same theatre that had hosted Pirandello two months earlier), then the company moved to Rosario de Santa Fé – in agreement with Luigi

Carpentiero,[72] and the actor had to rely on other organizers to find space in Uruguay and Brazil with diplomatic support.

It is precisely in the organizational field that fascism applied its soft power strategies in a more reserved (and perhaps more effective) manner in the 1920s. In August 1924, in the troubled weeks following the assassination of Giacomo Matteotti, Mussolini himself took care of Pietro Mascagni's artistic tour in Germany, exerting pressure on the German government to oust Casa Ricordi from a deal that ran counter to the regime's strategy. When the Theatre Corporation reported the 'extraordinary success in terms of artistic result and political propaganda' achieved in Austria,[73] the Duce immediately wrote to the ambassador in Berlin:

> Following the success obtained by the performances of *Aida* directed by Mascagni in Vienna, the Theatre Corporation found a way to transport the same team there, including Mascagni. Since this option is in contrast to the fact that Ricordi sold its exclusive rights on *Aida* performances in Berlin to the Stadt Oper, I demand H.E. to examine the opportunity to take steps to secure that Director Schillings of the Stadt Oper, which according to our knowledge is a theatre subsidized by the German Government, does not oppose the extraordinary performances of *Aida* that have been planned. The same production can later be transported to Frankfurt and Budapest.[74]

The diplomatic pressure proved to be effective. A few days later, Mussolini informed the Corporation of Theatres that Ricordi had been ousted and Mascagni was free to conquer the main opera house in Germany.[75] Although the official reports described the event as a huge success, the Italian ambassador in Berlin later wrote that Mascagni's reception in Germany had been rather cold.

Similar strategies took place in South America. In the early 1920s Argentina and Brazil were central to Mussolini's 'subversive diplomacy' since it was precisely in these countries that the fascists 'anticipated today's globalized politics and far surpassed the improvisations and hesitations of the liberal period'.[76] From the point of view of the theatre, it meant that the regime obtained control of the main venues of the South American theatrical network by supporting some selected Italian impresarios who could guarantee the circulation of Italian companies and repertoires.

Already in the early 1920s the theatres of Santos, the Colón of Buenos Aires and the Municipal of Santiago de Chile had been the focus of diplomatic activity.[77] In 1925, Mussolini himself asked the Italian embassy in Rio de Janeiro to exert pressure on local politics so that the impresario Walter Mocchi could create 'a direct theatrical initiative to consolidate a new artistic organization that aims to assert Italian dominance in Brazil'[78].

Mocchi was a former exponent of revolutionary socialism and a consummate protagonist of the transatlantic theatre trade: and he had been linked to the governor of the State of São Paulo from the beginning of the 1920s.[79].The governor was Carlos de Campos, an amateur composer from whom Mocchi had obtained the concession of the Municipal theatre in exchange for the premiere of the operas *A bela adormecida* (Sleeping Beauty, 1924) and *Um case singular* (A Singular Case, 1926).

These were turbulent years in Brazil that had led to Getúlio Vargas's rise to power – a period in which the centre of gravity of Italian foreign policy shifted from Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Mocchi understood that only the support of fascism and proper diplomatic cover would guarantee his survival in the evolving context. Described by the local anti-fascist press (and rightly so) as a shady and unprejudiced 'former revolutionary who threw himself into Benito's arms, becoming a fierce and convinced fascist',[80] Mocchi managed to involve Mussolini personally in his theatrical endeavour, making the Prime Minister support the creation of an 'Italian-Brazilian Theatre Society' which would have permanently granted him the concession of the main theatres in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Mussolini accorded the lobbying work to Count Francesco Matarazzo, entrepreneur and naturalized Brazilian monopolist,[81] while diplomatic pressure was exerted on de Campos's government. Ambassador Giulio Cesare Montagna reported:

> Initiative responds to Italian interest. Therefore, as Walter Mocchi had been suggesting since November, I personally carried out an action with the President of the State of San Paolo for granting over half a million Italian lire, which the Paulist Parliament approved the day before yesterday. I exerted the same pressures in the Presidency of this Federal Senate, obtaining the guarantee that another major contribution would be voted within the

> next few days. I will inform Count Matarazzo at an opportune moment so that he can support Mocchi's financial plan. I am in constant contact with Mocchi and he is aware of the foregoing.[82]

From this moment on, Mocchi maintained his decisive influence on the Brazilian opera system until his death in Rio de Janeiro in 1955. In 1932, he established the Associação Brasileira de Artistas Líricos and his theatrical programming, mainly focused on Italian opera, proved to be such an effective tool of soft power that even today the impresario is judged by Brazilian historiography to be 'a limiting factor for the flowering of composers, artists and a national opera project' in that country.[83]

The intricate and opaque relationships between local politics, diplomatic activity and the transatlantic business was be confirmed by Pirandello's tour of 1927, of which two aspects are anticipated here: the decisive weight of the governor de Campos and that of the Italian impresarios active in the Brazilian market. The journalist Enrico Polese writes:

> The Pirandello company [...] should have landed in Brazil before Argentina, but it is likely that the itinerary will have to undergo changes and it is necessary even to go to Buenos Aires [...]. This is due to the fact that the President of the State of São Paulo died suddenly. Since this President is the great patron of the enterprise that signed the contract for Brazil with Pirandello, the company will have to make some shifts in its programme of shows.[84]

On a formal level, the impresarios Niccolino Viggiani and Ottavio Scotto organized Pirandello's tour, both central figures in the penetration of Italian theatre in Brazil during the 1920s.[85] Viggiani, less known than Mocchi (but portrayed together with him and Ambassador Montagna in the satirical pages of the Italian anti-fascist Paulist community), [86] managed numerous drama and variety theatres in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, hosting French, Italian, and Portuguese companies, until his death in 1948. According to Brazilian historiography, he was also perceived to be a limiting factor in the development of local culture, although some critics stressed that 'we should not forget this episode, which alone would be enough to ennoble his entrepreneurial career: it was Niccolino Viggiani who brought Pirandello to Brazil'. [87] In addition, it was Viggiani who organized the Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's South American tour of 1926.

Marinetti and Pirandello: Flagship Artists of Mussolini's 'New Italy'

Marinetti's and Pirandello's transatlantic tours (1926 and 1927, respectively) offer a fascinating perspective on how the diplomatic network supported the fascist soft-power strategies in the mid-1920s. Both tours were immediately recognized by the Argentine and Brazilian intellectuals as crucial for the development of the debate between South American modernism and European influences on the arts, but they also acquired political significance for the relationship between these artists and the fascist regime. Initially conceived as commercial in nature (Marinetti recalled, 'I had the pleasure of doing a great tour in South America with an entrepreneur who paid me thus allowing me to make money'),[88] these tours were loaded with obvious propagandistic meanings and aimed for subtle soft-power consequences, although neither Marinetti nor Pirandello admitted this publicly.

Let us look at Marinetti's-reticence. When the futurist poet was welcomed with riots at the Cassino Antártica in São Paulo, he issued a declaration stating that 'there was nothing political in the tour, which was only artistic'.[89] On his return to Italy, Marinetti had, by contrast, only harsh words for fellow 'Italians who were transported away from their homeland to South America, where they live in the throes of spiritual convulsions because they no longer see the homeland as they would like to see it'.[90] Ambassador Montagna's report was more detailed, telling Mussolini about the intense propaganda work undertaken before Marinetti's arrival: 'innumerable and interesting articles appeared in the carioca press with a generally controversial tendency' so that Marinetti was made 'a sympathetically familiar figure'. [91]After the opening nights, the newspapers were encouraged to describe the 'huge audience that filled [...] the largest of the theatres in this capital'; and the ambassador pointed out Marinetti's ability to emphasize 'the moral connection between futurism and fascism' as he emphasized the 'innovative and regenerative spirit that predominates in Italy, pointing out that Brazil had all that was required to follow the same path. As

the diplomat had noted, the success of Marinetti's tour was so great that, on the occasion of the second lecture, an estimated four to five thousand people were in the theatre while an almost equivalent number of opponents was protesting outside. Marinetti, the performer,

> not only did not lose his calm, not for a moment, but he also showed energy, determination, and true courage when he quashed the numerous loud troublemakers as he expounded the essential characteristics of fascism and the work it had accomplished. He managed to dominate the audience by forcing them to listen to all his political utterances. There was no lack of hostile cries but, in conclusion, Marinetti ended up triumphant in the arduous battle, receiving frantic applause for his praise of the new Italy and the Head of the National Government.[92]

The embassy's effort to support Marinetti's tour had been great and, as the ambassador pointed out, the National Radio primarily hosted the poet 'in the presence of numerous guests, mainly Brazilians of the upper classes and intellectuals'. Marinetti then lectured at the local committee of the Dante Alighieri Society and concluded 'his national propaganda activity in Rio de Janeiro, arousing a great deal of lively interest in all social circles and in the press of every persuasion, which dedicated extensive publications to him every day.' Despite the protests, concluded Montagna, Marinetti 'has never given up the patriotic objective to contribute to spreading greater knowledge and stimulating a livelier appreciation of the regenerative spirit that informs the thought and action of Fascist Italy'.

In the following year 1927, Pirandello followed a similar direction during his South American tour. Although the playwright might have been considered heavy going for most audiences, Mussolini had early identified in the writer and his company the Teatro d'Arte had early identified in the writer some formidable propaganda tools tool and in the Autumn of 1924 the Duce financed the establishment of the playwright's company, the Teatro d'Arte. [93] Already in 1923, Pirandello's stay in New York had taken an 'an official character due to the interest of the Italian diplomatic authorities committed to propagating the new image of fascist Italy.'[94] On 29 March 1925, four days after the inauguration of the Teatro d'Arte his theatre in Rome, Pirandello wrote to Mussolini asking for financial aid in exchange for 'active work of national propaganda'.[95] A few months later, on the occasion of performances in London, Pirandello did not spare appreciative

words for the new Italy and its leader, thereby proving his soft-power usefulness for the regime. The relationship became more problematic in the years that followed and, when the Teatro d'Arte was not recognized as a State Theatre and the lack of continuative granting caused the project to fail in 1928 because of its debts, project failed in 1928 because of its debts, and the Master 'pushed himself into a kind of exile'.[96]

Documentation in the Historical Diplomatic Archive confirms these factors (generally known) and, in addition, provides new information on the actual reception of Pirandello's work in foreign markets and how it was consciously used as a soft-power weapon.[97]. The 1925 Germany tour of the Teatro d'Arte was key to this strategy.[98] The company performed a three-night run at the Staatstheater in Berlin featuring *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *Henry IV* and *The Pleasure of Honesty*. Ambassador Alessandro de Bosdari stated in a classified report to Mussolini: 'Where social life was concerned, Pirandello could not have been better received in Berlin', but the reception of his artistic work was much more problematic:

> I must not hide from your Excellency that the judgments were rather severe, indeed in some cases even hostile. In short, this dramatic company, no less than the opera that was conducted here last year by Pietro Mascagni, and the other that toured Germany for some time under the name of Company of the City of Milan, [99] trying to give the illusion that it belonged to the La Scala theatre, revealed to the Berlin public a certain lack of preparation and artistic seriousness that this audience, addicted to shows prepared with every care and with a high sense of art, is unwilling to tolerate. I believe it is my duty to say it franklybe cause, given the interest that the Government has taken in several of these Italian artistic tours in Germany, it would seem to me extremely appropriate that the Government, before encouraging these companies and giving them official protection, should ascertain their artistic quality. Otherwise, I fear that we will obtain effects that are the opposite of what I believe should be proposed: [with such performances] we would give the German public, and especially Berliners, a very mediocre idea of the current conditions of our theatre. Of course, all this concerns only the staging, because as regards Pirandello's work as a playwright, I believe that few countries have understood and appreciated it like Germany; and the proof of this is the fact that the performances of his plays in Germany are continuous and covered with every possible care and artistic respect.[100]

Although it should be noted that Ambassador de Bosdari used to take positions that were not aligned with the regime and would have soon been replaced, the report shows that reception in Germany of Pirandello's productions could not stand up to any comparison with the productions of

Max Reinhardt or his protégé Alexander Moissi. According to diplomatic papers, what happened in Berlin was not an isolated case. The short tour of the Teatro d'Arte in Central Europe in December 1926 had similar mitigated results[101]. In Austria, for instance: 'The two extraordinary performances of the Pirandello company may have greatly interested the critics, but they have left the Viennese public indifferent, which came in small numbers to the theatre'.[102]

Financial losses induced Pirandello to embark on a new tour – to South America in 1927, a trip he had contemplated making since 1924; and it was crucial both for the development of both Argentinian and Brazilian theatre and for the relationship between the playwright and the regime.[103] Thanks to this 1927 tour (and one in 1933), Pirandello affirmed his position as the most inspiring playwright of the twenties and the thirties in South America, an artist 'who initiated change in the Argentinian theatre system'.[104] The playwright was welcomed in Jorge Luis Borges's intellectual circle as the standard bearer of 'a titanic attack on the old world [which] opened up the roof of the old theatre to allow the vanguards to sweep away the dust and mould and build the stage of the future.'[105]

Pirandello's place in Argentina and Brazil was prepared by the wide activity of touring Italian companies (some minor) which had offered his repertoire from the early 1920s. In 1922, under the auspices of the Dante Alighieri Society, the Niccodemi-Vergani company staged the Argentinian premiere of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in Buenos Aires. This was followed by Maria Melato and Elvira Bertone who staged *Come prima, meglio di prima* in 1925 and by Fanny Brena's Compañía Argentina de Comedias which, in 1927, performed the Spanish version of *The Imbecile*, confirming increasing interest in Pirandello.

It is worth noting that interest had by now turned into fashion, mocked by local farces. Thus: *Seis bataclanas en busca de un autor* (Six Showgirls in Search of an Author) by Alberto Ballestreros and Enrique Rando*, Tres personajes a la pesca de un autor* (Three Characters catching for of an Author) by Alejandro Berruti, and *Nada de Pirandello, por favor* by Enzo Aloisi (No

Pirandello, Please). [106] Also in Brazil, Maria Melato's staging of *Vestire gli ignudi* (To Clothe the Naked, 1923) was hailed as a 'real innovation […] and the most important contribution to theatre modernism';[107] and Vera Vergani's *Six Characters* (1923) was described as 'the product of a genius'.[108] In 1924, the first printed translation of *Così è (se vi pare)* (So It Is, If You Think So) appeared in production at the Municipal Theatre of São Paulo by the Companhia Brasileira de Comédias led by Jayme Costa[109]. The appropriation of the Pirandello repertoire by Costa's local company local traditional companies 'marked the meeting of a "pre-modern" with one of the icons of modern theatre'.[110] This kind of meeting would be seminal for the development of a local form of the grotesque.[111]

Translations, Cultural Institutes, and Renowned Names: Old Practices for New Ambitions too long? MS to come back

The endeavours of impresarios like Mocchi and Viggiani, as well as the tours of Marinetti and Pirandello but Falconi too, were part of a strategy of soft power on which the government began to work systematically in the mid-1920s. It was a double focus and included big cartel names and the translation of dramatic works into local languages to facilitate their dissemination to a public different from that of immigrant communities. This is the case, for example, of the strategy promoted by the ambassador in Washington, who in 1927, reported on the first timid results achieved thanks to the 'translation and adaptation of Italian dramatic works for the American theatre' carried out in collaboration with the local representatives of the Italian Society of Authors (SIA):

> I found this to be one of the most useful jobs that can be done in America for the knowledge of our modern literature, and I began to help Mrs. Cutti [a representative of the SIA] in her work. Recently, on the occasion of the performance in Washington of Mr Raffaele Calzini's *Penelope's Canvas*, I wanted to approach Mr Shubert, who is the greatest of the American theatre impresarios, and I strongly recommended that he deal with the Italian dramatic production which, in my opinion, is not well known nor appreciated enough in this country. Mr Shubert, whom I invited to lunch at the Embassy,

promised me his greatest interest and I will keep in contact with him to urge him to consider the performance of Italian works. Unfortunately, the works represented so far (recently *La tela di Penelope* (*Penelope's Canvas*) by Calzini and *Marionette, che passione!* (*Marionette, what a passion*!]) by Rosso di San Secondo were not successful, and this is discouraging for the American impresario. However, I calculate that, with tenacious work and with the improvement of the translation and adaptation system, it will be possible gradually to succeed in having our theatre production find a place here that is suitable for its importance and artistic interest.[112]

In the same years, other countries asked Italian consulates for translations and authorizations for performances of Italian works.[113]. However, it is above all contemporary music that catalysed government attention. Between the end of 1926 and 1927, Alfredo Casella carried out a carefully planned propaganda tour in Central Europe, the Baltic countries, and the United States. The tour was the result of coordinated work between legations and embassies; on the occasion of concerts in Moscow and Leningrad, the venture was hailed as 'the first reconnection of artistic relations between Italy and Russia'.[114] The soft-power effort regarding Italy's main contemporary composer soon included Pirandello: the debut of Casella's *La Giara* at the Metropolitan in New York aimed at 'introducing for the first time on the major North American scene one of the composers of the new Italy'[115] through a work taken from the famous short story by Italy's most famed playwright. The wording of the diplomatic report presents Casella's US tour as a 'first-time' experience when it was actually the composer's fourth tour to the United States. Perhaps, the diplomatic network attributed new role, by this endeavour, to fascism's soft-power strategy.

Another noteworthy case is the premiere in Hamburg of Ottorino Respighi's *La Campana sommersa* (*The Sunken Bell*, 1927) Composed on a libretto by Claudio Guastalla from the homonymous play by Gerhart Hauptmann, the work was a significant moment of rapprochement between Mussolini's Italy and the Weimar Republic.[116] This strategy was confirmed in the same year by the ambassador's activity in Berlin regarding the German Theatre Exhibition in Magdeburg[117] and the recovery from the Berlin archives of the only existing example of Spontini's *Agnese di Hohenstaufen.*[118] Regarding Respighi's new work, the Royal Consul General of Italy in Hamburg

promptly informed the undersecretary of State Dino Grandi about the production, highlighting the close link between cultural activity and diplomatic success:

> The Hamburg theatre, thanks to the special merit of the conductor Werner Wolff (who was awarded honourable membership of the Fascist Unions of Parma, where he has conducted Wagner operas fro a long time with great success long ago) is rehearsing Respighi's opera with great care, wanting to give the premiere the character of a great artistic event. The director of the theatre, Sachse, and the general manager, Egon Pollak, deal with the work with no less fervour than Wolff. The poet Gerhard Hauptmann will also attend the performance […]. I can honestly say that the rehearsals of the opera already make one think of fascist Italy and the Duce. The other day, the general manager Pollak asked: 'Do you think Mussolini knows that we want to make an Italian opera to victorious'? Other people also ask, as Maestro Respighi assures me: 'Does Mussolini know'? Yesterday, at the orchestra's first ensemble rehearsal, maestro Wolff, having reached the end of the second act, which is very melodic, exclaimed: 'this is fascist music', and before continuing to conduct he put on the badge of the Corporations of Fascists.[119]

These events testify to the progressive development of soft-power strategies as regards some major institutional propaganda efforts by institutions, as confirmed by the law of 19 December 1926, which established the rules for the creation of Italian cultural institutes abroad. According to the new law – communicated to the diplomatic network in January 1927 – new institutes were to become a phalanx of cultural diplomacy. These institutions, which still exist today, organized language courses and cycles of conferences, published studies and books concerning Italy, favoured the translation of Italian works, provided information, facilitated research and promoted intellectual exchange. But, above all, these cultural institutes had to support delegations in the task of disseminating 'Italian opera, drama and figurative art abroad'.[120]

The creation of these bodies inaugurated a phase of decisive institutionalization of Italian soft-power, now channelled through strategies that no longer considered emigrant communities as instruments of cultural penetration, but addressed foreign citizens directly so as to have works achieve international recognition for the regime together with economic reward for themselves.[121] This officially endorsed approach entailed progressive distancing from European models, and a way of dealing with the disaffection, now evident, of 'colonies' of expatriates towards their homeland. Raffaele Guariglia, the ambassador to Buenos Aires, recalled:

During the Ethiopian crisis, most of the Italians of Argentina remained indifferent and, in some sectors, even hostile […]. Some volunteers had enrolled, some sums and some goods had been collected during the period of the sanctions, but all this has been far less than could be expected from a country formed by a good half of Italians of recent [settlement] and those who have kept Italian citizenship.[122]

As a consequence, the strategies of the 1930s focused on soft-power actions that aimed to be quite consistent with the totalitarian developments of the fascist regime. If the weighty archival documents that still need to be explored can provide useful elements to assess accurately the actual results of these operations, they can also shed light on how the fascist cultural diplomacy of the 1920s in the theatre field dealt with a scene ruled by some big export names along with the 'dust' of minors ones, both of which constructed an image of Italy finally aware of the importance of the performing arts as tools of soft-power.

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[29] Ruth Berenson, *The Operatic State: Cultural Policy and the Opera House* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2003), p. 71.
[30] Ibid., p. 73.
[31] Adelaide Ristori, *Ricordi e studi artistici* (Torino-Roma-Napoli: Roux & Co., 1888), p. 317. The letter was previously published in Paolo Mencacci, *Memorie documentate per la storia della rivoluzione italiana raccolte da Paolo Mencacci* (Roma: Mario Armanni, 1879), Vol. I, No. 1, p. 139.
[32] Ristori tried to 'convert' the Russian minister of Foreign Affairs, prince Gorčakov, who had recalled his ambassador in Turin after the Piedmont army had invaded the Reign of Naples (Mencacci, *Memorie documentate…*, p. 138). On the Ristori-Cavour relationship, see Mirella Cassisa and Liliana Naldini, *Adelaide Ristori: la marchesa del Grillo, un'attrice del Risorgimento* (Pinerolo: Alzani, 2000), p. 75-6.
[33] Claudio Meldolesi, 'Elementi introduttivi', in *L'attrice marchesa. Verso nuove visioni di Adelaide Ristori*, ed. Angela Felice (Venezia: Marsilio, 2006), p. 21.
[34] Eugenio Buonaccorsi, 'Tommaso Salvini e il Risorgimento', in *Tommaso Salvini. Un attore patriota nel teatro italiano*, ed. Buonaccorsi (Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2011), p. 39.
[35] Carlos Tasso de Saxe-Coburgo e Bragança, *O Imperador e a Atriz: Dom Pedro II e Adelaide Ristori* (Caxias do Sul: EDUCS, 2007); Alessandra Vannucci, *Uma amizade revelada: correspondência entre o Imperador dom Pedro II e Adelaide Ristori, a maior atriz de seu tempo* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Biblioteca nacional, 2004).
[36] Statute of the Dante Alighieri Society, https://ladante.it/chi-siamo/lo-statuto.html.
[37] Zonova, 'The Italian language: soft power or dolce potere?', p. 228.
[38] The liberal era conventionally starts with the unification of Italy (1861) and ends with the march on Rome (28 October 1922) and the appointment of Benito Mussolini as Prime Minister. The rise of fascism accelerated after World War I, whilst the Italian governments were trying to contain the intense social conflict that characterised the "Red Biennium" (1919-1921) and tolerated the violence of the fascist militia against the left-wing protesters. This turmoil has been recently framed as a "civil war" that caused at least 3.000 casualties (Fabio Fabbri, *Le origini della guerra civile. L'Italia dalla Grande Guerra al fascismo (1918-1921)* (Torino: Utet, 2009), p. 616-36). Eight different governments were formed during the crisis: one by Francesco Saverio Nitti (June 1919 – June 1920), two by Giovanni Giolitti (June 1920-July 1921), one by Ivanoe Bonomi (July 1921-February 1922), and two by Luigi Facta (February-October 1922). The collapse of the liberal State was accelerated by the rise of Mussolini, although "the crisis had structural and non-conjunctural characteristics, since it was characterized by the inability of the political class to express a steady leadership" (Roberto Martucci, *Storia costituzionale italiana. Dallo Statuto Albertino alla Repubblica (1848-2001)* (Roma: Carocci, 2002), p. 152).
[39] In 1916 it was established the Ministry for Propaganda, which was replaced by the Undersecretariat of State for Press and Propaganda in 1917. At the end of the war this institution was suppressed, and its powers passed to the Foreign Propaganda Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 1920, when it was also suppressed. Cfr. Italo Garzia and Luciano Tosi, 'Divergenze pericolose: Propaganda e politica estera in Italia durante la Grande Guerra', *Storia & Diplomazia. Rassegna dell'Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale*, No. 1-2 (January-December 2016), p. 13-40.
[40] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1919-1923*, Reparto generale, b. 25, "Compagnie drammatiche e liriche italiane all'estero", Letter of the Undersecretary of State for Education to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 23 June 1922.
[41] Laura Cilento-Martín Rodriguez, 'Configuración del campo teatral (1884-1930)', in *Historia del teatro argentino ed Buenos Aires. La emancipación cultural (1884-1930)*, ed. Osvaldo Pellettieri (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 2002), p. 81.
[42] Martín Rodríguez, 'El inmigrante italiano y la gauchesca', in *Inmigración italiana y teatro argentino*, ed. Osvaldo Pellettieri (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1999), p. 25.

[43] Ana Cara-Walker, 'Cocoliche: The Art of Assimilation and Dissimulation among Italians and Argentines', *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1987), p. 37. For a linguistic overview, see Juan Antonio Ennis, 'Italian-Spanish Contact in Early 20th Century Argentina', *Journal of Language Contact*, No. 8 (2015), p. 112-145.
[44] Osvaldo Pellettieri, 'En torno al actor nacional: el circo, el cómico italiano y el naturalismo', in *De Totò a Sandrini: del cómico italiano al "actor nacional"*, ed. Pellettieri (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 2001), p. 12.
[45] Donatella Orecchia, 'Ettore Petrolini e le sue tournées in America Latina', *Mosaico italiano*, No. 85 (January 2011), p. 13-6.
[46] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1919-1923*, Reparto generale, b. 25, "Compagnie drammatiche e liriche italiane all'estero", Letter of the Royal Delegation of Italy to Lima, 11 August 1922.
[47] Ibid.
[48] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1919-1923*, Reparto generale, b. 25, "Compagnie drammatiche e liriche italiane all'estero", Letter of the Royal Delegation to Santiago de Chile, 9 September 1922. On the theatrical enterpresises in South America: Matteo Paoletti, 'La red de empresarios europeos en Buenos Aires (1880-1925). Algunas consideraciones preliminares', *Revista Argentina de Musicología*, Vol. 21 (2020), p. 51-76.
[49] Mimmo Franzinelli, *Il filosofo in camicia nera: Giovanni Gentile e gli intellettuali di Mussolini* (Milan: Mondadori, 2021).
[50] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1919-1923*, Reparto generale, b. 25, "Arte italiana all'estero. Tutela", Note of the Minister for Education to Mussolini, 22 March 1923.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Alessandra Vannucci, 'A pátria no palco: mobilização política e construção de uma identidade nacional nos clubes recreativos italianos em São Paulo (1870-1920)', *Eixo Roda*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2019), p. 41-64; Petricioli, *Oltre il mito*, p. 260-277.
[53] In 1896, 85% of the associations were mutualistic. The Argentine associations will rise to 463 in the 1914 census. If the number seems large, 'certainly it was a figure lower than reality' (Fernando Devoto, *Storia degli italiani in Argentina* (Roma: Donzelli, 2007), p. 164-5).
[54] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1919-1923*, Reparto generale, b. 25, "Arte italiana all'estero. Tutela", Letter of Giovanni Gentile to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 December 1923.
[55] Devoto, *Storia degli italiani in Argentina*, p. 314.
[56] Cavarocchi, *Avanguardie dello spirito*, pp. 130-140.
[57] Emilio Gentile, 'Emigración italiana e italianidad en Argentina en los mitos de potencia del nacionalismo y del fascismo (1900-1930)', *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, No. 2 (1986), p. 143-180.
[58] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1919-1923*, Reparto generale, b. 25, "Arte italiana all'estero. Tutela", Circular letter n. 10, 23 January 1924.
[59] Ibid., Letter of Giovanni Gentile to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 December 1923.
[60] Ibid., *Archivio del Commercio 1924-1926*, Italia, b. 25, f. 30, Letter of Italo Balbo to Mussolini, 25 July 1926.
[61] Ibid., Note of 6 September 1926.
[62] Emanuela Scarpellini, *Organizzazione teatrale e politica del teatro nell'Italia fascista. Nuova edizione riveduta e aggiornata* (Milan: LED, 2004), p. 95.
[63] Maria Rosaria Ostuni, 'Leggi e politiche di governo nell'Italia liberale e fascista', in *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, eds. Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi and Emilio Franzina, Vol. 1 (Donzelli: Roma, 2000), p. 309-19.
[64] As an example, in March 1927 the little-known opera company of Ernesto Sebastiani toured in Algeria and Tunisia without any authorization and informed the minister Dino Grandi after their arrival in Africa. Grandi accepted the communication without comments and instructed the Consulates for support. The diplomatic papers suggest that other minor companies kept on

circulating abroad without any specific permission. ASMAE, *Direzione Generale Affari Commerciali 1927*, b. 25, f. 52.
[65] The contract was signed by telegraph on 4th August. On 25th August the Company boarded for Buenos Aires, where it debuted on 9th September. The tour included Rosario, Tucumán, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro, and San Paolo, for a total of 88 performances in four months, returning to Italy for Christmas.
[66] ASMAE, *Direzione Generale Affari Commerciali 1927*, b. 3, f. 5, Note of Dino Grandi to Alessandro Chiavolini, 20 August 1927.
[67] Ibid., b. 3, f. 5, Letter of Falconi to Mussolini, 7 August 1927.
[68] José León Pagano, *Cómo estrenan los autores (crónicas de teatro)* (Buenos Aires: Granada, 1908), p. 112.
[69] *L'Arte Drammatica*, 19 November 1927.
[70] *L'Arte Drammatica*, 10 December 1927.
[71] *L'Arte Drammatica*, 19 November 1927.
[72] On Luigi Carpentiero's profile, see José Ignacio Weber, Lucía Martinovich, Pedro Camerata, 'Itinerari di compagnie liriche italiane attraverso le città del litorale fluviale argentino (1908-1910)', in eds. Aníbal Enrique Cetrangolo and Matteo Paoletti, *I fiumi che cantano. L'opera italiana nel bacino del Rio de La Plata,* Bologna, Dipartimento delle Arti e ALMADL, 2021, § 3.
[73] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1924-1926*, Germania, b. 25, f. 1, Telegram of Luigi Razza to Mussolini, 29 August 1924.
[74] Ibid., Telegram of Mussolini to the Embassy in Berlin, 30 August 1924.
[75] Ibid., Telegram of Mussolini to the prefect of Milan, 5 September 1924.
[76] João Fábio Bertonha, 'Emigrazione e politica estera: la «diplomazia sovversiva» di Mussolini e la questione degli italiani all'estero, 1922-1945', *Altreitalie*, No. 23 (July-December 2001), p. 39.
[77] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1919-1923*, Brasile, b. 25; Ivi, Argentina, b. 25; Ivi, Cile, b. 25.
[78] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1924-1926*, Brasile, b. 25, f. 5, Telegram of Mussolini to the Embassy of Rio de Janeiro, 22 December 1925.
[79] Matteo Paoletti, *«A Huge Revolution of Theatrical Commerce». Walter Mocchi and the Italian Musical Theatre Business in South America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[80] 'Le gesta dei fascisti in Brasile. Walter Mocchi, oratore del fascio di S. Paolo', *La Difesa*, 19 May 1927.
[81] Maria Carmela Schisani, 'Francesco Matarazzo', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, dir. Mario Caravale (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Vol. 72, 2008), *ad vocem*.
[82] ASMAE, Archivio del Commercio 1924-1926, Brasile, b. 25, f. 5, Telegram of the Embassy of Rio de Janeiro, 26 December 1925.
[83] Juliana Marília Coli, 'O negócio da arte: as influências da gestão e organização italiana na ópera lírica em São Paulo', *Opus*, No. 22 (2016), p. 173.
[84] *L'Arte Drammatica*, 7 May 1927.
[85] Matteo Paoletti, *Mascagni, Mocchi, Sonzogno. La Società Teatrale Internazionale (1908-1931) e i suoi protagonisti* (Bologna: Dipartimento delle Arti e ALMADL, 2015), p. 394-410.
[86] *Il Moscone,* 7 August 1926.
[87] João José, 'A morte de Niccolino Viggiani', *A Cena Muda*, 4 May 1948.
[88] The passage is taken from the speech given by Marinetti for the inauguration of the Casa del Fascio in Bologna, 20 January 1927, transcribed in Jeffrey T. Schnapp and João Cezar de Castro Rocha, 'Brazilian Velocities: On Marinetti's 1926 Trip to South America', *South Central Review*, XIII, No. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1996), p. 105-56. For an overview, see João Cezar de Castro Rocha, "*Marinetti Goes to South America": Confrontos E Dialogos Do Futurismo Na America Do Sul* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2002); Rosa Sarabia, 'Argentina', in *Handbook of International Futurism*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), p. 299-313. The commercial nature of the tour is a central theme in the contract, which provides for a fixed fee and a large percentage of

receipts, as described by João Cezar de Castro Rocha, '"Futures Past": On the Reception and Impact of Futurism in Brazil', in *International Futurism in Arts and Literature*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), p. 219-20.
[89] Rosemary Fritsch Brum, 'Entre presenças e escritos: reverberações da viagem de Marinetti em 1926 na América Latina', *Estudos Ibero-Americanos*, Vol. 38 (2012), p. 167.
[90] Jeffrey T. Schnapp and João Cezar de Castro Rocha, *Brazilian Velocities*, p. 105-56.
[91] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1924-1926*, Brasile, b. 10, f. 4, Letter of Giulio Cesare Montagna to Mussolini, 26 May 1926.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Alberto Cesare Alberti, *Il teatro nel fascismo. Pirandello e Bragaglia. Documenti inediti negli archivi italiani* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1974), p. 4.
[94] Alessandro d'Amico and Alessandro Tinterri, *Pirandello capocomico. La Compagnia del Teatro d'Arte di Roma: 1925-1928* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1987), p. 11.
[95] Ibid., pp. 130-2.
[96] Roberto Alonge, *Luigi Pirandello. Il teatro del XX secolo* (Bari-Roma: Laterza, 2006), p. 87.
[97] For a detailed analysis of Pirandello's reception, in regard to cultural diplomacy, see Matteo Paoletti, 'Una storia in chiaroscuro: Pirandello e il Teatro d'Arte come strumenti di *soft power*', *Teatro e Storia*, Vol. 42 (2021), pp. 315-335.
[98] Michele Cometa, *Il Teatro di Pirandello in Germania* (Palermo: Novecento, 1986).
[99] This is the well-known operetta company by Caramba (stage name for Luigi Sapelli), the "Compagnia Città di Milano". On that occasion the company was advertised as the "Milanese Opera Season". ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1924-1926*, Germania, b. 25, f. 7.
[100] ASMAE, *Archivio del Commercio 1924-1926*, Germania, b. 25, f. 14, Letter of Alessandro de Bosdari to Benito Mussolini, 17 October 1925.
[101] ASMAE, *Direzione Generale Affari Commerciali 1927*, b. 3, f. 1, Letter of the Royal Delegation to Prague, 20 December 1926.
[102] Ivi, Letter of the Royal Delegation to Vienna, 22 December 1926.
[103] Gabriel Cacho Millet, *Pirandello in Argentina* (Palermo: Novecento, 1987).
[104] Osvaldo Pellettieri, *Pirandello y el teatro argentino (1920-1990)* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1997), p. 13.
[105] Lamberti Sorrentino, 'Pirandello', *Martín Fierro*, No 42 (10 June-10 July 1927).
[106] James Troiano,' Life as Theater in Aloisi's *Nada de Pirandello, por favor*', *INTI, Revista de literatura hispánica*, No. 34-35 (Autumn 1991-Spring 1992), p. 159-168.
[107] *O Imparcial*, 24 June 1923.
[108] *O Jornal*, 8 July 1923.
[109] Sandra Dugo, 'Storia della translatio del corpus Pirandelliano in Brasile', *Revista De Italianística*, No. 34 (2017), p. 77-89.
[110] Rodrigo de Freitas Costa, 'Luigi Pirandello no Brasil: significados teatrais e sociais por meio do diálogo entre arte e sociedade', *Fênix – Revista de História e Estudos Culturais*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (July-December 2014), p. 11-2.
[111] Alessandra Vannucci, 'Ma quale finzione; è la realtà signori miei, la realtà. Fortuna di Pirandello in Brasile', *Ariel,* I (New Series), No. 1-2 (January-December 2019), p. 159-172.
[112] ASMAE, *Direzione Generale Affari Commerciali 1927*, b. 63, f. 8, Report of the Ambassador in Washington, 15 March 1927.
[113] Ibid., b. 65, f. 54.
[114] Ibid., b. 3, f. 2, Letter of the Royal Delegation to Moscow, 8 December 1926.
[115] Ibid., *Attività prossima di Alfredo Casella*, s.d.
[116] Federico Scarano, *Mussolini e la Repubblica di Weimar: le relazioni diplomatiche tra Italia e Germania dal 1927 al 1933* (Napoli: Giannini, 1996).
[117] ASMAE, *Direzione Generale Affari Commerciali 1927*, b. 28, f. 13.
[118] Ibid., b. 28, f. 51.

[119] Ibid., b. 28, f. 63, Letter of Attilio Tamaro to Dino Grandi, 25 October 1927.
[120] Ibid., b. 3, f. 42, *Norme per la creazione d'Istituti di cultura italiana all'estero.*
[121] In this period the regime reformed the structure of ENIT (the Italian Government Tourist Board) and invested in international tourism, since 'the foreign market must become a showcase in which to exhibit the work of the regime'. Annunziata Berrino, *Storia del turismo in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), p. 222-3.
[122] Raffaele Guariglia, *Ricordi (1922-1946)* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1950), p. 332-3.