

The first song that I am choosing to dissect is a popular Italian song written by Toto Cotugno titled “L’italiano”. I am choosing this song to begin with because I grew up always hearing my family listening to it and it brings a very nostalgic feeling for me. “L’italiano” at its core, is a pop song dedicated to showing pride and joy for being an Italian.

“L’italiano” was written in the 1980s, and was classified within the genre of Pop. In the song, Cotugno writes about how he feels being what he refers to as “un italiano vero,” which means a “true italian.” Cotugno alludes to many Italian popular culture references throughout his song, which helped the song become popular among society as people sang along with his words. The song was very nostalgic and culturally appreciated for listeners. He uses many phrases and alludes to many events that people from his cultural background are all familiar with and love.

The chorus of the song goes as follows, *"Lasciatemi cantare con la chitarra in mano, Lasciatemi cantare una canzone piano piano, Lasciatemi cantare, perché ne sono fiero, Sono un Italiano, un Italiano vero."* This chorus was widely known as it was quite catchy. The chorus translates to english as, *"Let me sing with a guitar in my hand, let me sing a slow slow song, Let me sing, because I am proud of it, I am an italian, a true italian."* Toto Cotugno repeats the words “True Italian” throughout his song as a way to express how proud he is to consider himself an Italian.

As I mentioned before, Cotugno also alludes to many popular culture phrases and events throughout this song. An example of this would be, according to an article written in 2018 from *Musica Italiana di Carlo*, the line describing “la moviola la domenica in TV” is an allusion to

soccer highlights from earlier in the day that play on Sunday nights. “Un italiano vero” would understand watching the highlights on Sunday nights. Additionally, there is a mention of the FIAT 600, which symbolized Italian industry and production.”<sup>1</sup> It is phrases like this in his song that made it such an endearing tune for Italian listeners. While they listened to this catchy song, they remember their own spin on the events that he mentions through his words.

“L’Italiano” was published in the 1980s, and during this time, Italy was going through both social and economical challenges. In the 1980s, Italy was transitioning to a more “modern” country. In the decades prior to the 1980s, there had been much instability and fighting. Cotugno’s song, while obviously a small shed of light in this issue, allowed people to band together in a way and show their pride for the country in which they lived during which their lives had been changing.

While being over 40 years old, “L’Italiano” is still a widely loved song by Italians and even others. For Italians however, the song is an impactful one. With both a nostalgic and prideful feel to it, Cotugno captured how it feels for many people to be “A True Italian.”

The next song I want to talk about is the song “Bella Ciao.” “Bella Ciao” was originally an Italian folk song, created in the 1800s. The original version of the song was written by workers singing about their tough working conditions in the fields of northern Italy. The lyrics were later altered a bit in the 1940s to the version that people know today.

The lyrics of “Bella Ciao” are as follows: “And if I die as a partisan, then you must bury me / up in the mountain / under the shade of a beautiful flower / and all those who shall pass / will tell me ‘What a beautiful flower / this is the flower of the partisan / who died for freedom’”.

<sup>2</sup> During the second World War, the song was sung by the Italians as a way to commemorate

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<sup>1</sup> <https://musicaitalianadicarlo.wordpress.com/2018/11/04/litaliano-toto-cutugno/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wantedinrome.com/news/bella-ciao-a-brief-history-of-italys-resistance-anthem.html>

facing hardships. Rather than its original form of being a song about going through struggles, the song became an anthem of fighting those struggles. The song became very widely known, and it represented solidarity and bravery in hard times.

According to Wanted In Rome, “Every year on 25 April, Bella Ciao is sung across Italy on the Festa della Liberazione which marks the country’s liberation from German occupation and fascist rule at the end of world war two.”<sup>3</sup> The song has become such a popular anthem, and even during the CoronaVirus outbreak in Italy, “Bella Ciao” “could be heard constantly.”<sup>4</sup>(Giusti, 2021) This goes to show the impact that this song has on Italians, as well as the strong meaning behind the words.

“Bella Ciao” is not just a catchy song, but rather an anthem to be sung proudly. Behind the words, it stands for strength and courage, and battling tough times with your head held high. The song is a powerful example of resilience and its popularity goes to show how appreciated it is by people. “Bella Ciao” has transformed from a folk song sung by Italian field workers, to a globally recognizable symbol of courage.

The next song I want to talk about is titled “Nel Blu Dipinto Nel Blu.” I chose this song because of my personal love for it and my fond memories of singing this song while sitting outside a cafe in Calabria with my family that I had just met for the first time. “Nel Blu Dipinto Nel Blu,” or otherwise sometimes known as “Volare” was originally debuted in 1958 by Domenico Modugno at “the third Eurovision song contest in Hilversum, Netherlands” (Tsinvits, 2020)<sup>5</sup> The song was so adamantly adored that it led Modugno to being one of the first Italian singers to go international.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wantedinrome.com/news/bella-ciao-a-brief-history-of-italys-resistance-anthem.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://ig.ft.com/life-of-a-song/bella-ciao.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.aussievision.net/post/the-story-and-legacy-of-nel-blu-dipinto-di-blu-volare>

According to the article, “The story and legacy of ‘Nel blu dipinto di blu (Volare)’” “The inspiration for the song came from Migliacci and his combined memories of two Marc Chagall paintings and himself painted blue with the ability to fly. As the story goes, Migliacci and Modugno had planned a trip to the beach together. While Migliacci was waiting for Modugno, Migliacci was drinking wine and then fell asleep. When he woke up he found himself staring at two reproductions of Marc Chagall paintings, one of which was ‘Le coq rouge’, pictured above. Suddenly the lyrics about a man who dreams of being blue while flying in the sky just came to him.”<sup>6</sup>

The most popular point of the song is the section that goes, “Volaré, oh-oh, Cantaré, oh-oh-oh-oh, Nel blu dipinto di blu, Felice di stare lassù” which translate to fly, sing, in the blue painted blue, happy to be up there. The famous oh-oh-oh-oh is widely recognizable and is sung loudly by people throughout the world. The song was so widely loved that in 1958, it was named Billboard’s song of the year, and to this day it is the only Eurovision song to ever receive a Grammy. Not only this, but he is the first winner of the Song of the Year and the Record of the Year, which gave his music even more recognition and allowed for this song to have even more significance.

“Nel Blu Dipinto Nel Blu” was such a adored song, that years later its legacy still stands. The song has been translated into multiple languages, and is known to be the most covered Eurovision song ever. A famous cover that I know of is the one by Dean Martin, where he mixes both English and Italian in his version of the song. Dean Martin titled his version “Volare” and this cover skyrocketed the success of both versions. Both Martin and Modugno were hitting the charts at the same time. Other artists that have covered the song famously are, Ella Fitzgerald, Dalida, Luciano Pavarotti, Louis Armstrong, David Bowie, Oscar Peterson, Gipsy Kings, Frank

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aussievision.net/post/the-story-and-legacy-of-nel-blu-dipinto-di-blu-volare>

Zappa, Il Volo, André Rieu & His Johann Strauss Orchestra, Frank Sinatra, Cliff Richard and Barry White.

More than 65 years after this song has been released, its fame still stands to this day. The countless covers and versions of the song have allowed for it to be widely recognized all over the world. The song made a lasting impact on not only Italian culture, but other cultures as well.

The next song I want to cover is “Caruso” by Lucio Dalla. “Caruso” was released in 1986, and it is an opera song with a very deep emotional power. The song is most widely known for its heartfelt lyrics about love and loss.

The lyrics of "Caruso" tell the story of the legendary Neapolitan tenor Enrico Caruso, who is said to have died in 1921. Dalla creates a narrative that combines historical elements with universal emotions. The song is a conversation between Caruso and a former lover, expressing regret, passion, and the bittersweet realization of love's fleeting nature. The imagery employed in the lyrics, such as the reference to the sea and the moon, adds a poetic layer that enhances the emotional resonance of the song.

Caruso had a very hard life. He was said to have been born in Naples into a very poor family. Caruso had many issues with Italian Opera houses as well. It is also said that his wife left him for someone else, so he moved to the United States and gained fame and success. In the song it mentions his “nights in America.” Before he died, he met a young woman and fell in love with her. Dalla was inspired by his story so much so that he composed a song.

Dalla was inspired to write “Caruso” because he had the opportunity to stay in the hotel where Caruso had also frequented. The song was a way of romanticizing Caruso’s final moments, and the song narrates the “drama of Caruso’s last concert”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.chosic.com/caruso-luciano-pavarotti/>

The song skillfully embodies the narration translated as follows, “It was a hot night and he would not give up singing for her looking at him with admiration, so he brought the piano to the terrace overlooking the port and began to sing a passionate declaration of love and suffering. His voice was strong and the fishermen, hearing, returned to port and remained anchored on the terrace. The lights of the boats were so many that looked like stars ... Caruso did not lose the strength and continued singing sinking in the most beautiful green eyes of the girl leaning against the piano. That night his condition worsened. Two days later, on August 2, 1921, Caruso died in Naples. This song narrates the drama of that night, with lights and shadows of the past... with death and life... a sick man who looks in the eyes of the girl a future that no longer exists... a testament of love, a declaration of love... This was his last concert, and had the most exceptional public ... the sea, the stars in the sky, fishermen, the lights of the boats, and his beloved girl...”

"Caruso" has left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape, becoming one of Italy's most celebrated and internationally recognized songs. Its enduring popularity has led to numerous covers and renditions by artists from various musical genres, further solidifying its status as a classic. The song has been featured in films, television shows, and even adapted by artists around the world, attesting to its universal appeal and cultural significance. The lyrical ingenuity that is “Caruso” is probably why the song is as iconic as it is. The talent that it takes to be able to compose an opera that tells a story like the song “Caruso” does is commendable.

For my final song analysis, I want to talk about “Con Te Partirò” by Andrea Bocelli. “Con Te Partirò” was released in 1995 and captured the hearts of audiences around the world. The song topped charts over and over and quickly became a widely recognizable anthem. The song was so successful that Bocelli even went on to create alternative versions of the song in different languages.

"Con Te Partirò," translated as "Time to Say Goodbye," and the song is an ode to the celebration of love and its emotional journeys. The chorus is, "Con te partirò, Paesi che non ho mai, Veduto e vissuto con te, Adesso, sì, li vivrò, Con te partirò, Su navi per mari che, io lo so, No, no, non esistono più, Con te io li vivrò." The translated version is, "I will leave with you, Countries that I've never seen or shared with you, Yes, now I will experience them, I will leave with you, On ships overseas that I know, No no, they no longer exist, With you I shall experience them"

The song is a beautiful composition that conveys emotions and love in a great way. The mixture of Bocelli's voice, the music, and the lyrics created a song that warms the hearts of many. "Con Te Partirò" has achieved global recognition, moving from its Italian origins to a cross-cultural sensation. The song has been featured in many films, television shows, and commercials, further stretching its status as a universally recognized and appreciated piece of music. Its use in various contexts attests to the song's ability to evoke emotions and connect with people on a profound level.

All of the songs I have chosen to write about are special in their own way. Music is an art form that is appreciated by many. These songs are only just scratching the surface of all the other wonderful pieces that bring smiles to peoples faces. Each one of them has globally made an impact on people in big and small ways. Music is so much more than their definition. Music is not just words being sung and instruments being played. Music is memories. Music is dancing. Music is uniting people. Music is bravery and courage. Music is a way to get through hard times. These songs are a testament to this and Italians have successfully impacted the rest of the world with their music.