

## *Popular Music Studies in Italian Universities: a Petition*

**A**s scholars devoted to studying the role and functions of music in contemporary society, we see ourselves obliged to express grave concern about the state of popular music studies in Italian universities.

We recognise the important contributions made over the past thirty years by Italian colleagues to our field of studies but we also recognise — with bewilderment — the indifference and even open hostility of Italian academic institutions towards an area of study that is widely accepted elsewhere the world.

The refusal to accept, or even to just mention, popular music as a legitimate area of study has led to the exclusion of a whole generation of scholars from Italian universities. Moreover, the few that have been allowed to teach in universities (sometimes after turning down offers of employment abroad in order to do so) are relegated to lowly positions shamefully incompatible with their widely recognised competence and international reputation. It's in this way that a whole field of studies, of strategic importance to the understanding of key aspects in Italian society and media, has been marginalised. There has been effective denial of the essential contribution that popular music studies can make to the modernisation of university courses and to the development of programmes of education appropriate to today's culture and economy.

One case in need of particular attention is that of Franco Fabbri, one of the international pioneers of popular music studies. Although officially declared "Professor", Fabbri now faces the risk of that new status never being recognised, of having to retire on a teaching assistant's pension, and being blocked from continuing with his teaching and research work. Fabbri's paradoxical situation is at the same time scandalous and indicative of the subject area's exclusion from the academy. Here we need to underline that many other highly competent colleagues have not even had the satisfaction of acquiring any official academic status due to evaluation criteria based on quite different musicological specialisations.

University policies that marginalise innovative studies and that humiliate scholars of established international repute are, in our opinion, tantamount to suicide for Italy's public universities and for Italian society. We therefore ask the relevant authorities to urgently reconsider the effects of the conservative and, frankly, incomprehensible decisions that have been taken in this matter.