

**«Nimm mich mit ans himmelblaue Mittelmeer (wenn du Lire hast)»:
German *Schlagerfilme* as example of cultural exchange and diplomacy
in Italian-German relationships of the post-war period**

Abstract

The post-war period saw the emergence of a new film genre in West Germany, which portrayed Southern Europe, and Italy in particular, as idyllic, ideal, postcard-like settings. Music plays a central role in these comedies, which focus mainly on the songs and dances the actors perform as the plot unfolds. *Schlagerfilme*, as they became known in German, and especially their music, often revolved around the most trivial stereotypes about Italy, which is depicted as the country of sun, love, relax and happiness.

The history of these clichés can be traced back to a long tradition of travels around Italy, as described by writers and artists for centuries; in the post-war period, however, they acquired a new social dimension, as they ceased being confined to aristocratic and cultivated circles and were effectively incorporated into the imaginary of the middle class. Significantly, the same years also witnessed the growth of mass tourism, and its spreading throughout Western Europe. *Schlagerfilme* were tightly connected with this new trend in terms of their locations, but they also played on common dreams and desires of the time. In fact, by constantly featuring Italian beach resorts, monuments and tourist landmarks, they acted as *de facto* promoters of the *Bel Paese* as a holiday destination.

The aim of this research is to scratch beneath the surface of these light-hearted films, to observe the cultural impact and, first of all, the cultural premises which brought to the production of such films. The general interest for Italy could arise from a general fascination for the country as place for holidays, and be therefore a mechanical, passive response to the desires of the emerging middle class. Nonetheless, there could also have political reasons and agents behind the production of these films, which consequently could have played a more active role in directing the desires of German society towards a suitable object. In fact, *Schlagerfilme* could be embedded in the diplomatic strategies concerning the establishment of peaceful friendly relationships between Germany and Italy after WWII on one side, and the promotion of liberal Western values in contrast to those of the communist bloc on the other side.