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**EXPLORATIONS INTO THE VISUAL AND PERFORMATIVE DIMENSION OF
PROGRESSIVE ROCK AND THE CASE OF ITALIAN PROG THEATRICALISATION**

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Abstract

As numerous studies have largely pointed out, popular music is not only a type of music to be heard, but also to be watched. Its products are not presented in exclusively musical terms, as they also relate to the scenic elements of the performance and the visual culture surrounding the music. Rock, in particular, has a deeply 'histrionic' nature. This does not only apply to costumes, theatrics and make-up, but to the singing style, the lighting technology employed and certain musical choices that are functional to the performers' dramatic representations as well.

Since the mid-1960s, the relationship between rock music and theatre has become increasingly close. In the context of the great musical revolutions that swept through popular music in the middle of the last century, flourishing links have emerged between music and visual, performing and body art avant-garde movements, culminating in the radical showmanship and the dramatisation typical of rock musicals and rock operas.

Progressive rock has been no exception in this process of spectacularisation of popular music, although other fundamental elements of its aesthetic are usually emphasised.

The present study intends to discuss both the relations between performing arts and the visual culture expressed by British performers such as Peter Gabriel, Ian Anderson and Keith Emerson and above all to focus on two Italian examples of particular interest. The case of Demetrio Stratos, leader of Area and pioneer of a theatricalisation of a non-conventional singing style and phonatory approach; and that of Osanna, a band that integrated a theatrical formulation borrowed from the Mediterranean tradition and the *commedia dell'arte* into a rock discourse.