

How Puccini Got His Start, Related by His Schoolmate Tirindelli

Details of Famous Italian's First Triumph Told by Distinguished Music Master—Latter Comes to New York After Twenty Years in Cincinnati—Tirindelli's Boyhood Composition Developed by Liszt—"The Bohemians" at Play

PIER ADOLFO TIRINDELLI has come to New York. For twenty years this Italian master, who was a pupil of Bazzini and Massart, has been connected with the Cincinnati Conservatory, and now New York is to have the privilege of his presence. Born in Venice, he was the director of the conservatory in that city, and also conducted opera and the Symphony Orchestra, in which latter position he was succeeded by Mancinelli, Martucci and Wolf-Ferrari. For five years he was concertmaster at Covent Garden and also conducted there. He played in all the large European cities both in recital and with orchestra. Through his compositions he has also been identified with all the most prominent composers and musicians. His operas "Athenaide" and "Blanc et Noir" were given with success in Italy and his latest work in this form, "Verso la Luce" is now ready for presentation. He has also written many songs which are on the programs of the foremost singers.

During the past season, Mr. Tirindelli's tone poem, "L'Intruse" was given by the Cincinnati Orchestra under the conductorship of Ysaye. Speaking of this, one of the leading papers of the city said: "If all American compositions were given the reception accorded the tone poem 'L'Intruse' of Tirindelli at the concert of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra yesterday afternoon, the case of the American composer would be a most encouraging one. Mr. Tirindelli's work was given a genuinely enthusiastic applause, the audience calling the composer to the stage and rising spontaneously to do him honor when he appeared. The composition itself, an immensely difficult one and superbly played by Mr. Ysaye and the orchestra, depicts the struggle between Life and Fate. It is intensely modern in color, treatment and dramatic feeling, the melody alternating with brilliant and imposing climaxes. In its subject matter the tone poem revealed the poet and the thinker, while its technical structure indubitably displayed the master of orchestral resource. The reception given this dignified and beautiful American work was one which reflected credit upon composer and audience alike."

Reading this, one is not surprised to learn that the composer was knighted by the late King Umberto of Italy, or that no less a person than Franz Liszt took such an interest in his work as to develop one of his early efforts into a lengthy number.

Encouraged by Liszt

"I was only a boy at the time," said Mr. Tirindelli to the interviewer, "and on one of my vacations I met the Baroness Helen Augusz of Buda-Pesth. She became interested in a little mazurka I had composed and sent it to Liszt. His letter to her about the composition is published in La Mara's Letters of Franz Liszt, and is as follows:

"To Baroness Helen Augusz, Sister of Mercy in Graz:
"Most Reverend Sister of St. Vincent de Paule,
"Pray always dispose of my feeble services. I am writing to the Baroness de Roner according to your instructions, and request that you will send her the enclosed lines.

"M. Tirindelli's abilities deserve attention, consideration and encouragement. This you have well understood and it will be a pleasure to me to second you.

"How can I be of use to him?
"By recommending him to some publisher in Germany?

"Does he intend to travel and give concerts? Your protégé, M. Tirindelli, may count upon my sincere readiness to oblige him. The only thing I ask is that he should write me distinctly in what way I can be of service to him. Yesterday I took the liberty of noting several alterations in his melody, "All'Ideale," his mazurka, and in the Adagio of the Trio,



No. 1—Eugen Ysaye from a Photograph Given by Him to Sig. Tirindelli in Venice in 1889. No. 2—Giacomo Puccini in 1887

which pleases you by its fine feeling. "By the way, the Adagio has been so badly copied that another less faulty one will have to be made before sending it to print. By this same post you will re-



Pier Adolfo Tirindelli, Noted Composer, Teacher, Violinist and Conductor

ceive the three works with my alterations.

"Your very respectful and devoted servant
F. LISZT.

"Rome, Sept. 1, 1880."

"The mazurka he enlarged from a short one of two pages to a long one of eight. And you may imagine how proud a boy I was, and how proud I still am, for that matter!

"In the class with me at the conservatory in Milan were three men who are now very much before the public. They are Puccini, Mascagni and Buzzi-Peccia. We were almost like the characters in Murger's 'Vie de Bohème' which one of the four was to give to the world in operatic form a few years later. Puccini, you know, wrote his first opera, 'Le

Villi,' for a contest and it failed to win the prize. When the operas which obtained the first and second prizes were performed, Puccini went to hear them and his comment was: 'My God! Is it possible that I could have written anything less good than this?' So he took the score to Boito and played it for him and the composer of 'Mefistofele' was so impressed that he started a subscription to have the work given. The amount fell short of what was needed, so in order to reduce the expenses all of us who were friends of Puccini, played in the orchestra. The work had a tremendous success and the day after the performance Ricordi sent for Puccini. How well I remember that day! We all four went together and Puccini made Mascagni, Buzzi-Peccia and myself wait at the Caffè Biffi in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele while he saw the publisher. We were in a nervous fever, but presently out came Puccini, his face all smiles and, without a word, he laid a pile of notes on the table. It was 2000 francs which Ricordi had given him as advance royalty, and he also had in his hand a contract for a new work.

"So he decided to go to Monza to write his new opera, which, by the way, was 'Edgar.' The librettist, Fontana, who had written the book for 'Le Villi,' was the guest at the time of Ghislanzoni, who is best known as the author of the book of 'Aida,' and who was living in a villa on Lake Como. All four of us went and, when it was bedtime, Signor Ghislanzoni put us all in one big room with four beds. Mascagni was always up to some trick or other, so as soon as we were in bed and the light out, a shoe came flying through the air! Puccini, not to be outdone, threw two shoes, and Buzzi-Peccia followed suit with the candlestick, and I let fly pieces of the bedroom china until everything in the room, nearly, was in the air and the cry of all was 'Si salvi chi può!' We were not out of our teens, you see!"



A Mazurka by Mr. Tirindelli Enlarged by Liszt

Looking at the dignified Tirindelli of the present day it seems odd to connect him with any such high jinks!

Pranks of the Elect

"Campanari, whom you knew as a great baritone, was a 'cellist in those days, and a very fine one. We played in the orchestra at La Scala together, and Toscanini was another of the 'cellos. Even then Toscanini had a marvelous memory and after going over any opera once or twice he never needed to look at his music, and used to turn out the light over his desk. One of his jokes was to play the Garibaldi Hymn in counterpoint with the 'Marcia Reale' in one of the ballets. Campanari's pranks, however, were more elaborate. One day we got a lot of cabbage stalks and cut them up and put them into one of the violas. The player couldn't imagine why his instrument was so heavy and sounded so dull! It never occurred to him that it was breathing forth the odor of cabbage! Another day we unraveled a G string and tied one end of it to the fringe of the curtain and the other to the wig of one of the players. You can fancy what happened when the curtain rose! I don't know how we ever kept our positions in that orchestra! The very worst thing we did was to put a live rat into one of the bass fiddles. All went well until the fiddle began to play. Then, the vibration getting on the nerves of Signor Rat, he began looping the loop around the inside of the instrument and squealing like mad in utter disregard of key signature!"

"You really oughtn't to tell those things!" interrupted the Signora Tirindelli, "people will think you are not serious!"

The interviewer disagreed and, anyhow, he pointed out, it was not probable that Tirindelli's rat and cabbage days had persisted for thirty years.

Meeting with Ysaye

"It was when I lived in Venice that I was knighted," went on the maestro. "And one day a young violinist, almost entirely unknown, came to me. He played divinely and we became fast friends and have been ever since. His name is Eugen Ysaye!"

"Do you know Venice?" Tirindelli asked the interviewer.

The interviewer did.

"Ah, then you remember the Colleoni statue?" asked the Signora. "I lived in the Palazzo Dandolo on that square, just opposite the church of 'Zan'polo,' as the Venetian dialect has it. Whenever photographers wanted pictures of the statue they used to take them from the balcony outside our drawing room window. So, when you see a picture of Colleoni, you will know that he looks just the way I used to see him every time I looked out of the window!"

It was getting late and the interviewer felt that, although he could talk indefinitely to people who had known Liszt, Puccini, Mascagni and Colleoni, they might have other things to do, so he took his leave.

JOHN ALAN HAUGHTON

Marie Morrisey Begins Her Season

Marie Morrisey, contralto, began her season in Maine on Sept. 8, giving a concert in Machias on that date. This was followed by concerts in other Maine towns and in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Later Miss Morrisey will go to Canada for three weeks and then double back through New York and Pennsylvania, continuing south and ending up in Florida just before Christmas.

Emma Roberts to Sing with Stransky Forces in Cleveland

The Musical Arts Association of Cleveland, Ohio, through Mrs. Adella Prentiss Hughes, has engaged Emma Roberts as soloist with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, Joseph Stransky, conductor, on March 1st. Miss Roberts made her debut in Cleveland last March in a song recital at the Casino Club, making so good an impression that her re-engagement was a foregone conclusion.

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