

Memories of Concerts Given and Tours Planned in New York Half a Century Ago

Programs Made up Mainly of Italian Music Were Then in Vogue—Concert and Operatic Tours That Came to Unhappy Endings—Mme. Gazzaniga's "Grand Operatic Concert Company," Which Boasted a Sixteen-Year-Old Conductor—Concerts at Watering Places Poorly Attended Through Lack of Advertising

By EDUARDO MARZO

[Eduardo Marzo arrived in New York on April 14, 1867, when he was about fifteen years of age. As a pianist, accompanist, conductor, teacher, organist, lecturer and composer, Mr. Marzo has led an eventful and successful life, which

has received due recognition in this country and in Europe. He was made a Knight of the Crown of Italy in 1884, honorary member of the Academy of St. Cecilia, Rome, in 1893, and Knight of St. Sylvester by His Holiness Pope Benedict XV in 1915.

Eduardo Marzo is one of the founders of the Guild of Organists, governor of the Musicians' Club, member of the "Bohemians" and of St. Wilfrid Club. Although born in Italy, he is a thorough American and a citizen of the United States since he was twenty-one years of age. He has done all his writing in this country and is considered an American composer. All his works have been collected by the New York Public Library and bound in twenty volumes. — Editor, MUSICAL AMERICA.]



Eduardo Marzo

I HAD already been in New York two months playing the organ in a small church, when a friend of mine, in the summer of 1867, gave me a card of introduction to Signor Albano, an Italian harpist, who had just arrived from South America and was organizing some concerts to be given at the summer hotels at Staten Island. Signor Albano, who, by the way, was a countryman of mine (we both hailed from Naples), greeted me cordially and said: "You are just the man"—he should have said "boy," as I was only fifteen years old at the time—"that I need. I want an accompanist for myself and for the singers who are going to appear at the concerts which I am organizing." Of course, I was very glad to make my first appearance, as it gave me also the chance to appear as a pianist.

At that time the programs of concerts were not generally arranged for the sake of art, or of some special artist. The aim was simply to give variety both as to the artists and the character of the music, which was, however, almost all Italian, at least for the singers. A well conducted concert had to include a contralto, if the star was a soprano, or vice versa, and possibly a tenor, a baritone and one or two instrumentalists. Another invariable peculiarity of the programs was the concluding number, mostly always a vocal trio or quartet.

Favorite Numbers

The favorite numbers were the trios from "Trovatore," "Luisa Miller," "I Lombardi" and the quartets from "Martha" and the Prayer from "Moïse," by Rossini. (At that time they had not yet exploited the inevitable quartet from

"Rigoletto.") The Albano concerts were given in Staten Island at Peteler's Hotel, and Huguenot Hall, and both Mme. Parepa-Rosa and Mme. Gazzaniga appeared in them.

One of the most noted and successful singing teachers of the time was Signor Albites, who had a great knack of singing French comic songs. There was no private concert at which he did not con-

different success; in fact, the tour ended disastrously when we arrived at Buffalo. The plan was for the company to go to Hamilton the next day. Signor Maccaferri and myself decided to leave early and stop at Niagara Falls and then meet the rest of the company at the station so as to proceed together to Hamilton. But at the station we found a message awaiting us—we were to go back to Buffalo,



Luciano Albites



Giorgio Ronconi



Marietta Gazzaniga



Pasquale Brignoli

tribute some of his comic repertoire. That was the time also when Brignoli, the silver-throated tenor, was at the zenith of his career in this country and, if I am not mistaken, it was with Pasquale Brignoli that Albites had come a few years previously.

In October of that year Mme. Gazzaniga was arranging a concert tour to travel through New York State and Canada, and I was engaged as pianist and accompanist. Other members of the company were Signor Maccaferri, the eminent tenor, as they called him; Signor Fortuna, the favorite baritone; Herr Balck, the renowned violinist.

Tour Ends Disastrously

We visited several cities, always using the same program and meeting with in-

because the others had suddenly departed for New York, giving up the tour. We deemed it wise not to venture to Hamilton, where we might have met perhaps with a warm reception from the creditors of the company, although we were not in any way responsible for the financing of the company. We returned to Buffalo, where we expected to find further instructions and funds to return to New York. But there were neither instructions nor funds! Both Signor Maccaferri and myself were stranded, with the pleasant prospect of "footing" it to New York. After pawning Maccaferri's watch, we managed to pay the board bill at the hotel for twenty-four hours. I then found somebody in Buffalo to whom I appealed and succeeded in getting enough to pay our fares back to New York City. It goes without saying that we never got our salaries.

Nothing daunted, Mme. Gazzaniga, in conjunction with the baritone, Giorgio Ronconi, organized a "Grand Operatic Concert Company," and I was engaged as accompanist and conductor, at sixteen years of age! Ronconi had been one of the greatest singers of his time and was still in fairly good condition and able to sing several of his great rôles.

During that winter many concerts were given at Steinway Hall and I

played and accompanied at several of them. Signor Severini, a Norwegian tenor, made his first appearance in New York, at which Signor Fortuna, the baritone, sang. The accompanist was to be Señor Mora, a noted Cuban organist, and he disappointed at the last minute, so that I was asked to play in his place. In fact, I was in the hall as a spectator, when Signor Fortuna, for whom I had played, came out in the audience and persuaded me to take Señor Mora's place.

Signor Severini settled in New York and was for a long time one of the most noted singing teachers, and since that night was always one of my best friends.

One of the most important concerts (of the kind) was given at Steinway Hall on Feb. 21, 1868. From the program I see that Antonia Henne, the contralto; J. R. Thomas and George Simpson, the ballad singers, and Albano, the harpist, took part. At this concert G. W. Morgan, the organist, played also.

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