

Pierluigi Forcella, Musica e musicisti a Bergamo dalle origini ai contemporanei, Edizioni Villadiseriane, Bergamo 1992, 384 pages, copiously illustrated, price Lire 90000.

Here is a book to recommend to all interested in Donizetti and the tradition which produced him and which followed him in Bergamo. Prof. Forcella has written a panoramic survey of musical life in the City and its province from the Middle Ages to the present. The most thorough section on the twentieth century is based not only on documentation but many interviews with descendants of musicians, the result is a fascinating account of music making. For example, as I was looking through this section, a friend stopped me at a page and drew my attention to a singer. I was informed that she was still alive and teaching, and was Prof. Valeriano Sacchiero's mother, the librarian and music historian of the Donizetti Conservatorio and a friend to all who have sought help and advice during their researches. My friend went on to show through photographs and text how most of the people I knew in Bergamo were related to long established family trees of musicians.

The earlier chapters deal with musical tradition in considerable detail, there are noteworthy sections on Mayr and Donizetti, as well as other composers like Legrenzi and Locatelli. The City's rich heritage is gradually built up for the reader to comprehend the twentieth century as resting on centuries of creativity. Prof. Forcella's big and heavy book is the only text available which deals with a subject which should fascinate all readers of this Newsletter, and it replaces Geddo's comparatively small and now rare book. The text has added sections which deal with various topics from now lost theatres, organ builders to concert activities. There are two detailed appendices, a bibliography and an essential index. It is impossible to open a page without the eye resting on something of interest, be it an illustration or a section on an aspect of an opera, a singer, or whatever. The author presents his reader with a mine of information as well as a tool for ready reference. I have only one criticism to make, and this is that the binding of my copy has suffered after much searching forwards and backwards among the pages for facts and notes of interest. This is a book to purchase now and certainly not to delay until it becomes a rarity.

Edizioni Villadiseriane also publishes Prof. Forcella's book on Matteo Salvi, Mayr's and Donizetti's student who worked on Il duca d'Alba. The author's next task will be another pupil of Mayr's, Alfredo Piatti, the famous cellist who settled in England for a number of years and who attracted many other Bergamask composers and musicians to follow his example and to seek their fortune in Britain. The British Library catalogue testifies to their successes. Here is yet another field of research which testifies to Bergamo's musical heritage and the genius of Mayr's teaching.

I am told that those who find it difficult to obtain Italian books of a specialized nature should contact:

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