

Hildburg Heider (15 anni)

Intervista a Ettore Bastianini a Siena, 17 agosto 1964, Hotel Excelsior

Domanda: Was your mother a singer?

Bastianini: No, only amateur.

Domanda: Do you have brothers or sisters?

Bastianini: No, no, no brother, no sister. I am the only one in the family.

Domanda: When did you begin to study bass?

Bastianini: Oh, I was seventeen.

Domanda: Did you want to become a singer always?

B: Yes, always, all the time. 00:00:25

Domanda: Where did you begin to study?

When I was 17 years old, I studied in Siena.

Domanda: At the Chigiana?

B: No, no, no Chigiana, never in Chigiana, only with private teacher. 00:00:57

Domanda: How long did you study bass?

B: Oh, I studied 4, 5 years. After I was in the army for the war. So I could'nt study. But after I began again in Florence. And I made my debut in november 1945.

Domanda: How old was you then? - B: 22

Domanda: How did your teacher remark that you are a baritone and not a bass?

B: This is a long story. I can't tell you now. Because it is very dufficult to explain. I decided to change from bass to baritone singing "La Forza del Destino". On the end of this lesson suddenly I sang the part of tenor. I sang very high notes. This was unusually for me to sing high notes, not only during this lesson. So that I decided the change.

Domanda: Which kind of baritone did you learn, dramatic or lyric?

B: No, dramatic, because my voice is dramatic baritone.

Domanda: When did you make your debut? 00:02:38

B: I made my debut, my first debut important one has been in Florence with "Pique Dame" of Tschaikowsky in november 1952.

Domanda: Did you fell well at once in this new voice baritone?

B: No trouble, no.

Domanda: Did you have difficulties in changing the voice?

B: Ja, but not very much, because I had a big experience about singing and stages. I have been 5-6 years on the stage. So I was already prepared. I knew, what means stage and opera.

Domanda: In which Italian opera house did you sing in your first year as baritone?

B: Yes, it has been La Scala in may 1954: Evgenij Onegin.

Domanda: In which opera houses in Italy did you sing?

B: All. In the first years as baritone Florence, Genova, Venezia, Milano (for Evgenij Onegin) Teatro San Carlo a Genova.

Domanda: When did you come to la Scala?

B: First time I sang at La Scala 1948 like bass. I sang "Oedipus Rex" by Strawinsky, ma this was not a very important role. But I made my debut, very important one has been in may 1945 with Evgenij Onegin.

Domanda: When did you come to the Meropolitan opera?

B: November 1953. - Domanda: In which role? -B: Traviata.

Domanda: In which theatres do you sing now?

B: Next year? Next season?. Now I can't tell you, becuase I am here for the Palio. Next season I will sing in Vienna, Metropolitan, Napoli, Tokyo.

Domanda: I heard, you was invited in Egypt and Spain. Which roles did you sing there?

B: Many roles: Barber of Sevilla in Sevilla, I Puritani, Rigoletto, Trovatore. All the big opera for baritone, sì?

Domanda:L When was that?

B: 4, 5 years ago I was there.

Domanda: Which role or roles do you like most to sing?

B: Baritone, all the baritone! When people ask: what role do you like to sing - I would say, I prefer Rigoletto. Sì? But I sang until now 45 different roles of baritone, and all of these roles have been very good. So I can't say, I can't say only one: I can say 10, 12: Barber of Sevilla, Rigoletto, André Chenier, Trovatore, Aida, Ballo in Maschera, Carmen. There are many, because with these roles I have really great success, always.

Domanda: But personally, what do you want?

B: Personally I can't say. I can't, because I like Rigoletto, I like Barber, I like Trovatore, I like - I like to sing! Sì? This is my nature, God gave me a good voice, so I don't make any difference. Sometimes I like Aida, a small role, but I like to sing Aida, I like to sing Carmen. I like to sing Don Carlo, every. When a singer feels alright with the voice, with everything, he is much happy to sing everything, because the people is waiting, wishes for his voice many roles. So he must be ready and give all his best to the audience. Sì? And I tried always to give my best. And if sometimes that happened - I sang so-so.

Domanda: Please tell me some anecdotes from your artist life!

B: Anecdotes? Oh, I can't tell you now, because I cannot remember in this moment. I have been almost 12 years always around the world by a plane. 4, 5 times from Italy, from Vienna to America, to Mexico, to South-America. And many happened to me. But now I can't remember, I can't tell you anecdotes.

Domanda: Do you have a good criticism from any newspaper about you?

B: I must say, I was always conscious about my work in the stage, in the opera. Each singer, opera singer likes to have good critics. But it depends of the mind, of the feeling of the critics, too. When they write something - I sang well, and sometimes they wrote bad about me. Sì? One time I have been very hungry - angry, hungry no, I am sorry - angry because a critic wrote in the newspaper that I am a playboy. Because I like to go in a night club, I like to go with girls, I am a fairy young man, but what can I do? If I like to go in a night club after performance. Everybody goes in the night club. Sometimes when people doesn't have something to write about artists. I am sorry, my English is not well, but I hope you understand me. After all this special business for the Palio in this for I have been in Siena, my mind is tired, my reflex are not so good. I would like to speak Italian, it would be better.

Domanda: Please would you describe the kind of studying a new role

B: To study a role? It is necessary to try understand the story of the opera. This is very important, what means not only the role of baritone, all things. Because you can go in the opera, in the role - not easy thing!

Domanda: Which theatres you like most?

B: Which theatre? La Scala, Metropolitan, Vienna, Munich, Hamburg. I sang in Berlin 2 or 3 years ago. I sang Trovatore and gave a concert in the opera house in Berlin.

Domanda: Will you sing in Cologne, in our opera house?

B: I don't know. I think somebody invited me to go to sing in Köln - in italiano we say Colonia - to sing Ballo in Maschera. I couldn't because I was in Vienna. I hope to have the pleasure to come to Köln. You say Kohn? - Köln. B: Köln (lacht).

Domanda: Who are your favorite composers?

B: The italians? I can say verdi, Rossini, Bellini, Puccini, all.

Domanda: And the favorite conductors?

B: Conductors? All italian. I can't tell you now. It is very difficult to say, because there are so few good, si? I sang with many very good. They are all good, alright? (lacht)

Domanda: Which kind of music you like?

B: I like symphonic music, but I prefer classic ballet. Russian especially. I don't go to see performances in the opera, but when I am free around the world, if I know that there is any ballet company around, I go to see, because I like. It give me quiet, to my nervs.

Domanda: Which are the hobbies?

B: Sport cars, tennis a little. I am getting old. I cannot use very much my physic form. Make many sport no. I prefer sport car. And sometimes when I am free, tennis.

Domanda: Whre you go in the holidays?

B: I don't know, I don't make my plans. I decide in the moment without say "I like to go somewhre and somewhere". Because I don't know how many days I have free. Because sometimes they ask me to sing somewhere suddenly, so I must go and forget the vacation.

Domanda: Your next performance? B: Will be in Vienna in Aida september 23rd.

Domanda: Which records you will make? B: Schallplatten? Not this year. I will meake records in Tokyo. Next summer here in Italy we will make a record of aria solo, italian song, old italian songs, napolitan songs. I am waiting this because it is very important and very interesting. Only to hear Bastianini to sing something different of the opera.

Domanda: You like to sing on records?

B: I like. It is very difficult to sing records. You must give all your best really inside of records.

Domanda: How was the Palio for you?

B: You have been in Siena in these days, no? I hope you understand what means Palio. And the business of capitano della contrada - when our contrada is in the palio, the business is very difficult. We don't have time to sleep, to eat, because we must run around the city to take care of the horse, of the jockey. So we forget everything. For the Palio we forget all the thing the most important. I have in the room for the Palio forget my business. From now finished the Palio for one year we will be more quiet now. So I can take care very much to Mister Bastianini. Capitano della Pantera. Because I have 2 horses. I would like to see win my contrada all the time in Palio (lacht). Thats for a capitano of a contrada the best.

Domanda: You are angry now? B: Angry, no. I am quiet. Because I know, yesterday that my contrada could not win the Palio, because the horse was not very good. it was sick. So I am quiet, really. Last night I was so tired that I couldn't go to say my congratulations to the other capitano of la contrada della chiocciola, who won the Palio. So I went to sleep, because I was very tired.

Domanda: Which place you like in Siena?

B: Siena is not a big city. Every corner gives you a nice atmosphere. Everywhere in Siena you feel allright.

Domanda: Why don't you sing in Siena?

B: Siena doesn't have a big repertorio, since 1958 I made my debut - I sung always the same roles: Aida, Rigoletto, Ballo in Maschera, Trovatore, Don Carlos. They like Bastianini for these roles. Bastianini is good in these roles. I can tell you now because Bastianini is known very well. They loike to say to him, Bastianini sometimes is happy (lacht).

Domanda: Is there a biography about you?

B: I don't think so. I think there is one made in Germany. I don't remember the name. Somebody made me a present, gave to me in Vienna. That is very good. I don't remember the title of this book. But there are inside many singers, good singers, from the past, from the present.

Domanda: I would like to write a book about you.

B: I hope that somebody one day - I can't tell now, but in 10 years, 15 years, remember Bastianini and will try to write a book, something very good about me. Allright in 10 years you will write a book for Bastianini. I like to say to give my best to all the people, who will hear this interview, my best. Il mio migliore saluto ai cittadini di Colonia!