

An interview with Mrs. Franchini about her book- Lake View Window for the high school newspaper where she teaches.

1. When did you first become interested in opera?
2. In particular how did Ettore Bastianini affect you with his opera talent?
3. Did you ever have the chance to hear the great Baritone perform live or were you too young to go to a performance?
4. We know almost everything about the singer Bastianini but we know very little about his private life. What do these letters reveal?



5. Opera has been part of our history, since Italy has some of the most famous opera houses in the world such as La Scala and the Arena in Verona. Tourists from all over the world come to attend opera performances here, but for young Italians 2018 was the year of RAP and TRAP music. Do you think that the future still has some room for opera?
6. How would you encourage a young person to approach the world of opera which is so distant from him?
7. Was writing something you always wanted to do since childhood or did you just develop this desire during the course of life?
8. Is there any episode tied to the creation or writing of the book that you recall with pleasure?
9. The work of an editor is very important in writing a book, in fact it is his job to help the author. How did you meet the writer Emanuela Bianchi Porro, and how did your relationship develop during the writing of the book?

*1. When did you first become interested in opera?*

Opera has always been part of my life. My grandfather, who lived with us, was an opera lover and he used to make me listen to opera when I was a little child. I started going to the opera during my university years: to the Regio in Torino where I was studying and sometimes to La Scala in Milan.

*2. In particular how did Ettore Bastianini affect you with his opera talent?*

Ettore Bastianini was gifted by mother nature with a very beautiful, soft, wide, passionate voice supported by a perfect technique. One of his colleagues, Giulietta Simionato, defined it as a voice of “bronze and velvet”. By singing Bastianini was able to interpret the primordial feelings of man: love, pain, passion, jealousy and the sense of death. Unfortunately his career was very brief but intense in the main opera houses in the world, in particular La Scala in Milan, which was his theatre but also the Staatsoper of Vienna and the Metropolitan in New York.

*3. Did you ever have the chance to hear the great Baritone perform live or were you too young to go to a performance?*

Unfortunately, I was not able to hear a live Bastianini performance because when he ended his career in December 1965, I was eleven years old. Fortunately he had made many recordings and

there are many interpretations available some recorded in studios others live in theatres. Personally, I prefer the latter.

*4. We know almost everything about the singer Bastianini but we know very little about his private life. What do those letters reveal?*

An opera magazine defined Ettore Bastianini as “the enigmatic baritone of the 20th Century”. A difficult childhood influenced his introvert personality which was extremely reserved. Friends and colleagues knew very little about his private life. Manuela was a ballerina of the Ballet Corp of La Scala. When they met she was 17 years old and he was 35. Five years later at the peak of his career when he was about to get married, he was diagnosed with a *linfoepitelioma of the pharynx*, which brought him to his death at the age of 44. These previously unreleased letters were written to the girl he loved during his travels, revealing a sensitive passionate man with sudden moments of melancholy and great fragility. He was, however, deeply noble in his feelings. I think of him as being a just man.

*5. Opera has been part of our history, since Italy has some of the most famous opera houses in the world such as La Scala and the Arena in Verona. Tourists from all over the world come to attend opera performances here, but for young Italians 2018 was the year of RAP and TRAP music. Do you think that the future still has some room for opera?*

Opera can seem like an artistic “niche” manifestation, but when I go to the opera I see many young people in the theatre. Probably, like in my case, the message that comes from the family is a determining factor.

*6. How would you encourage a young person to approach the world of opera which is so distant from him?*

I would ask him to come for a ride in my car and I would make him listen to my CDs which always accompany me. Then I would take him with me to the theatre. My daughter was very distant from that world and that type of music. Today she does not miss one performance.

*7. Was writing something you always wanted to do since childhood or did you just develop this desire during the course of life?*

Writing is the expressive means with which I feel most comfortable. I have always written a lot, even if this is the first time I have ever had the opportunity to publish a book.

*8. Is there any episode tied to the creation or writing of the book that you recall with pleasure?*

Manuela and I had no intention of writing a book. I merely responded to one her needs, and I advised her to collect together all these memories of Bastianini together so they would not get lost. A little bit at a time this material started to become chapters. I will never forget the night I told her, “I just wanted to warn you that a book is forming...” and how she answered me with a laugh. The incredible thing is that Manuela was narrating her story using Whatsapp. All of our communication was done through this app. Today I ask myself how we managed to do it...

9. *The work of an editor is very important in writing a book, in fact it is his job to help the author. How did you meet the writer Emanuela Bianchi Porro, and how did your relationship develop during the writing of the book?*

I met Manuela in Sirmione, at an event, organized by the association to which both of us belong, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of Bastianini. She confided in me her sadness of the idea that one day there would no longer be any trace of the man, not only of the baritone, and I offered to help her collect those memories together. 50 years after the death of Ettore, Manuela put at my disposal not only her own memories but also all of the letters, photographs and videos in her possession which constituted material which had never been seen before. Our relationship, right from the beginning was characterized by an instinctive bond with absolute trust. It would not have been possible otherwise to write this book. Today we are friends. After the publication of the book, the letters were donated to the Musical Library "Donizetti" in Bergamo where they will be conserved and put at the disposal of scholars and music lovers.

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