

Forgotten Artists: An occasional series by Christopher Howell
26. Willy Ferrero (1906-1954)



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Child prodigy conductors

Never have the young had it so good. Some such banal phrase comes to mind during the not infrequent TV programmes involving cutthroat competition between miniscule musicians, popular and classical. In the case of not-yet-teen boy tenors and similarly diminutive girl soul singers, I pass to vocal experts who are better equipped than I am to assess the physical damage being done. Child prodigy instrumentalists, usually pianists or violinists, have speckled the pages of musical history. Psychologists will have different views on where the borderline falls between outrageous exploitation and allowing the child to express a natural gift, which obviously should not be repressed. A reasonable number of ex-prodigies do become professional musicians later on. A few become the great musicians of their age. But what about child conductors?



The TV contests seem to have spared us child conductors, but a spot of googling brings a few contemporary instances to light. A long way further back, the ferocious young man in the image above comes from a French postcard of 1904¹. If it is based on a real prodigy conductor, he might have been the youngest and the first. It could, however, be the artist's subtle take on the infantile tantrums of some mature maestros.

Looking over the twentieth century, the case everyone remembers is that of Lorin Maazel, who conducted the University of Idaho orchestra at the age of eight and the NBC Symphony Orchestra when he was eleven. Another subject of this Forgotten Artists series, Anatole Fistoulari, conducted the *Pathétique* symphony at the age of seven. Bruno Maderna, arguably one of the conducting greats, directed a small band called The Happy Grossato Company at the age of seven and conducted regularly in his teens. Musicians, at least, will know the names of Piero Gamba (debut aged 9) and Roberto Benzi (debut aged 11). Both made good careers without becoming household names. Across the Atlantic, Joseph Alfidi first conducted at the age of

¹ Visible here <http://temposenzatempo.blogspot.it/2011/09/young-french-maestro.html> with another three views of the maestro, captions and comment.

seven and appeared with the Symphony of the Air when he was eight. He achieved considerable success later as a pianist. Back in Europe, Milan-born Ferruccio Burco conducted at the age of eight and then appeared successfully in New York. The beginnings of a promising career as a mature conductor were cut short by his death in a road accident when he was only 26.



But what of Willy Ferrero? A Google search for “child prodigy conductors” produced 278 hits, but Ferrero’s name did not emerge – neither did all of those listed above. What the research did reveal is that a remarkable number of leading conductors, past and present, made child prodigy appearances on the piano or the violin. It also revealed a number of “youngest conductor ever” claims made by press, parents and teachers, on behalf of conductors older than most of the above. Any google search I can do, can be done by others, so people should spare a few minutes at the computer before making wild claims. As far as I can discover, Willy Ferrero’s record-breaking first conducting appearance in Paris at the age of four, attended by Jules Massenet, who afterwards kissed him repeatedly on the forehead, murmuring, “History will speak of you, my child”², may have remained unique until Jonathan Okseniuk’s debut – visible on YouTube – at about the same age.

I have to confess that, until fairly recently, I only knew Willy Ferrero as a name that cropped up as the conductor of several Italian film scores – most famously *Ladri di biciclette* [*Bicycle Thieves*]. Some accounts of his career imply that he had no great success as a mature conductor. This is emphatically not the message that comes across from the few recordings available – spanning from his mid-twenties to his last years. As so often with Italian artists, the fullest easily accessible single account of his career is that in the Treccani *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*³. If you can find it, the booklet to the 2-CD Musica Classica tribute⁴ contains a wealth of information. I have added to these whatever else I could find.

Acknowledgement

For many of the articles in this series I have limited myself to generalized acknowledgements of the various blogs and YouTube channels which have enabled me to hear out-of-print recordings or otherwise provided valuable information. In the case of Willy Ferrero, the present article contains, at the very least, double the information it would otherwise have thanks to the collaboration of the Australian-born, German-based conductor Alexander Negrin⁵. Negrin was himself a child prodigy conductor and made his debut at Sydney Opera House when he was nine. Some years ago he became interested in Willy Ferrero in whom he found, not just an “interesting case”, but a mature conductor whose very considerable gifts have been virtually forgotten even in Italy. He consequently undertook to amass all the material he could find, which he has now made available to me. This includes copies of documents from institutions such as the Vienna Academy and interviews with people who are no longer with us, or are no longer available for interview. It also includes simple memories of things people



² So Ferrero himself recalled in *Willy Ferrero ricorda la sua infanzia*, Il Mattino, Naples, 24 June 1930. According to the article by Michele Selvini in the booklet accompanying CD Classica MC 2005-6, a 2-CD tribute to Willy Ferrero, Massenet’s words were “My child, you begin where others leave off “.

³ Article by Letizia Lavagnini in Volume 47 (1997): [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/willy-ferrero_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/willy-ferrero_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

⁴ See note 2.

⁵ <https://www.hellostage.com/Alexander-Negrin/biography>

told him. As he explained to me in an e-mail, “I am no researcher and still less a writer, but I hoped to at least preserve what information I could find in the hope that it would not die with the people who knew him”. With this last consideration in mind, I have gratefully incorporated the documents and information he has provided. I realize that, by modern research standards, some of this material would not pass proper tests of verifiability. For that matter, much of the printed material that has emerged, from wherever, is of the “somebody-told-me” variety, and the simplest facts often exist in several versions. On the other hand, “somebody-told-me” facts, if not taken too literally, can have their own verity. The number of people who can tell us anything, even about Ferrero’s very last years, is substantially smaller now than it was when Alexander Negrin made his investigations, and is dwindling by the day. It would be a pity to exclude, and lose for ever, nuggets that, provided we look at them critically, can help flesh out the picture. I list my sources in every case, so readers can see for themselves what is verifiable fact, what has been said in print and what somebody has told somebody else. The Willy Ferrero story related below is as complete as I can make it. If anybody knows anything more, I should be glad to hear from them.

Willy Ferrero – child prodigy

Willy (William)⁶ Ferrero was born in Portland, Maine on 21 May 1906. Looking at old press cuttings later in his life, Ferrero was amused to find that his precocity had hit the news on his first day in the world – he had been born with two teeth⁷. His parents, Vittorio and Nerina (Gemma) (née Moretti) were from Turin. The father has been variously described as an acrobat, clown or musical juggler in a travelling circus⁸. One account says he was an orchestral musician⁹. Another says he “played various instruments”¹⁰. Maybe he had several strings to his bow. One of them is described by the conductor Massimo Freccia:

This gentleman appeared in a most successful act. After ten white ponies, ostrich feathers on their heads and a lady trainer in command, had jumped, walked on their hind legs and knelt to the audience, Signor Ferrero made his elegant appearance – black cape lined in white silk, top hat, white tie, tailcoat and monocle. He was about to conduct the Intermezzo of Cavalleria Rusticana with an orchestra formed by eighteen hens lined up in a pen, facing a revolving cylinder concealed by fake flowers. The starving chickens had their eyes glued to the revolving roller, so that they could peck up a grain of corn which corresponded to a musical note. The result was the performance of Mascagni’s Intermezzo¹¹.

This sounds like first-hand experience, yet it cannot be, or not entirely. Freccia makes the point that Ferrero senior began to exploit his seven-year-old son’s potential as a prodigy conductor after the novelty of his chicken band, and public acclaim for it, began to fade. Freccia was born in the same year as Willy Ferrero so, if he ever saw Vittorio’s circus act, he was only five or six himself. His description of the details and technicalities involved must have derived from some other written or oral account. This is not to suggest that the act was not as Freccia described it, only to point out that, like so much of the story, it has reached us at several removes.

Ferrero himself made much of his inherited musical gifts:

⁶ His full name according to Treccani. The Italian form of Guglielmo is occasionally seen. Professionally, his name was always given as Willy. I have seen his full name stated as William Victor Louis Ferrero. Unfortunately, this was part of a casual Google search made at a time when I was not seriously considering an article on Ferrero. More recent searches have failed to rediscover this source. Victor was, of course, an English-language version of his father’s name Vittorio.

⁷ Ferrero told this story in *Willy Ferrero ricorda*, *ibid*.

⁸ By using the plural, Treccani implies that his mother was also in the circus trade. According to Selvini (*ibid.*), she was a good pianist.

⁹ Radio Corriere 1931 no. 5, p. 17

¹⁰ *Willy Ferrero se ne è andato*, L’Europeo, March 1954.

¹¹ Massimo Freccia: *The Sounds of Memory*, University of California – M. Russell, 1991, pp. 42-3

My family is entirely made up of musicians. Music is like a hereditary disease among us: our grandparents handed it down to our parents; our parents handed it down to their children. Everybody plays in my family. The only thing missing was a conductor. So I came along to fill the gap¹².

Maybe Willy was painting a rosy picture – in line with the family group below¹³. Or maybe he was being disingenuous. Or maybe he was even planting false clues. For Vittorio Ferrero was not his biological father. His biological father was one Arnaldo Guerra, with whom Signora Ferrero had a relation while they were still in Turin. Much of the story is lost to us. Did Vittorio Ferrero take up an offer of work in America as a means of removing his wife from the evil clutches of Arnaldo Guerra, only to find that she was pregnant by him? Was she known to be pregnant when they left to take up work in America, thereby enabling her to give birth to the child in an environment where nobody need gossip about who the father might be? Or, just possibly, did Vittorio Ferrero never know that Willy was not his real son?



The answers to these questions cannot be known, but Arnaldo Guerra re-enters the story later on, at which point it will be seen that the source for this information is an unimpeachable one, and that Willy himself knew the facts not later than 1934. For the moment, let us resume the story of Ferrero's childhood, remembering only that his own references to his father may contain veiled hints as to a situation that he never publicly revealed. Somewhat frustratingly, given that the question of inherited gifts is strongly emphasized by Ferrero, we know little or nothing about Guerra's own profession¹⁴. This is a little surprising, considering that he later had a daughter who became at least as celebrated in her own field as Willy was in his.

All this is fuel to the debate as to whether inheritance or environment plays the greater role in a child's upbringing. A musical environment was certainly not lacking:

... listening to music became part of [Willy Ferrero's] daily life. At the age of two he began to show signs of talent. Listening to a piece attentively, he used to beat time and to show annoyance if the

¹² *Willy Ferrero ricorda*, *ibid.*

¹³ Photograph from Giberto Severi: *Fortune di un ragazzo prodigio*, *Oggi*, 31 August 1940, p.13. The caption merely says "Willy Ferrero with his family". The boy on the left is presumably his brother Teddy, of whom more later.

¹⁴ One French source describes him as a writer and journalist. In order to avoid a spoiler, I will save the reference for a later footnote.

time was not what he considered right. If he liked a piece he could remember it all after hearing it three or four times¹⁵.

A photograph once existed of Ferrero, aged six months, brandishing, not a rattle but a baton¹⁶. Willy himself recalled his earliest steps on more than one occasion.

I took hold of the spoon I should have been using to eat my soup and started to beat time precisely whenever my father or my mother went to the piano. Mine was an instinctive sense of rhythm that impelled me to watch continually the gestures of the orchestra conductor on my father's tours. By the time I was two, these tours had already visited 115 cities and I hadn't missed a single performance. I watched the gestures of that little coloured man who unleashed his arms before the thirty-or-so other coloured men making up the orchestra. All his gestures remained impressed on my mind, all the voices of the instruments were photographed in my brain¹⁷. My sole amusement was conducting, with a pencil or a spoon in my hand. I set out chairs and other objects in a semicircle and, imagining they were players, gave them cues with great satisfaction¹⁸.

In his mother's words:

I realized that Willy was a musical sponge: he absorbed and prodigiously repeated every piece of music he heard¹⁹.

There seems to be a certain amount of competition between Ferrero-commentators to discover his earliest approach to conducting. One has it that, at the age of two-and-a-half, he conducted French *chansons* at the Palais de Cristal of Marseilles²⁰. The following account allows him another eighteen months' grace:

... [4-year-old Willy Ferrero] asked during a pause, apparently as a joke, to conduct a 25-instrument wind band that was entertaining a local festivity. The musicians lent themselves happily to this unscheduled performance, but when Willy climbed onto the rostrum, took the real conductor's baton and "gave the beat" to the musicians, things started to look serious. With the air of an expert maestro, the child conducted impeccably the music the orchestra had played a moment before, leaving everyone dumbfounded, parents and conductor included, above all by his capacity to give cues to the various soloists and orchestral sections²¹.

Three almost identical articles appearing in the USA in 1919 clear up at least some of the chronology:

The father told the Associated Press correspondent that Willy carried an American passport but that his name thereon was William Ferrero, a name he had chosen for him while he had worked in Maine when the child was born. The father said that at the age of two, the lad was brought to Italy whither the parents were returning to take up their residence in their old home In Turin²².

¹⁵ Indiana Weekly, 1914

¹⁶ *Willy Ferrero se ne è andato*, *ibid.* According to this article, the photograph was among the many effects lost by his mother when her house in Viareggio was bombed during the war.

¹⁷ *Willy Ferrero ricorda*, *ibid.*

¹⁸ From an interview quoted in Selvini, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Quoted in Ferdinando Chiarelli: *Bimbo prodigio, musicista autentico*, *Domenica del Corriere*, April 1954.

²⁰ *Willy Ferrero se ne è andato*, *ibid.*

²¹ Sergio De Benedetti: *Willy, bambino prodigio delle note rovinato dagli studi all'Accademia*, *Libero*, 29 May 2015

²² *Virginia Chronicle*, 19 July 1919, *Brooklyn Eagle*, 28 July 1919, *Greencastle Herald*, Indianapolis, 14 August 1919. The article quoted is from the first of these.



Willy was brought back to Turin at the age of two, then. Within six months, though, the family was reportedly in Marseilles. At the age of four²³, hard on the heels of his alleged performance in the town square, he conducted during a benefit concert at the Trocadero of Paris, attended, as described above, by Jules Massenet. The photograph on the left²⁴ was taken in Paris in 1910. It seems fairly sure, therefore, that Turin was only a brief stopping place on the way to France. This explains the fact that Ferrero, when in London at the age of seven, could not speak to the orchestra in English, but addressed them in perfect French.

He conducted at least once more in Paris, in 1912, in a programme ranging from Sousa marches to Ponchielli's *Dance of the Hours* and Suppé's *Poet and Peasant Overture*²⁵.

Paris notwithstanding,

*... his real debut was at the "Costanzi" of Rome in the autumn of 1912*²⁶. It was then that Sgambati said to

*Mugnone, who had spoken enthusiastically of the boy, "I thought you were exaggerating. I have to admit that this fanciullo [little lad] is even more wonderful than you said"*²⁷.

The Costanzi programme consisted of:

Rossini: *Guglielmo Tell* – Overture
 Boccherini: *Minuet*
 Beethoven: *Egmont* – Overture
 Meyerbeer: *Le Prophète* – March
 Grieg: *Peer Gynt* – *Anitra's Dance*
 Wagner: *Tannhäuser* – Overture
 Verdi: *La Traviata* – Act III Prelude

It was not all plain sailing, Ferrero recalled:

*When the orchestra saw this tiny figure in a velvet suit they refused to rehearse. One old player with a big white beard was particularly obstinate: "We don't lend ourselves to comedy acts like this". Then the orchestra gave way and agreed to rehearse for twenty minutes, at the end of which they would leave the theatre. But ... when the rehearsal ended, the players not only did not go, they wanted to play the piece again. The bearded old player stood up with tears in his eyes and wanted to embrace me. I couldn't cry. I hadn't yet had the time to learn how to cry*²⁸.

Concerts followed in Naples, Perugia, Genoa, Turin, Milan and Terni. Some of Ferrero's memories, it must be said, have the air of good stories that have improved with the telling.

²³ Three years and eight months according to *Willy Ferrero se ne è andato*, *ibid*.

²⁴ From Severi, *ibid*.

²⁵ Severi, *ibid*.

²⁶ 4 November 1912 – cf. Treccani.

²⁷ Nino Alberti, *Radio Corriere* 1935 no. 4, p. 12

²⁸ *Willy Ferrero ricorda*, *ibid*.

In Naples, one evening, a group of orchestral musicians wanted to put my musical sensibility to the test and deliberately made a wrong entry in “The Mastersingers” Overture. I stopped the whole orchestra with an energetic rap of the baton and called out indignantly: “Please! Don’t act like children!” I was just seven at the time²⁹.

Sometimes, too, Willy allowed himself some disarming lapses into pure boyhood. At one of his 1912 concerts, he had just come on stage and was about to acknowledge the tumultuous applause when he spied a cat entering warily by a side door. He was off in a moment, chasing it up and down the aisles and along the rows of seats, brushing past gentlemen’s trousers and women’s long dresses. Only when the cat had been caught and duly stroked did he return to the rostrum for the evening’s serious business.

On another occasion, at the Augusteo of Rome, early arrivals for a gala performance were disconcerted to find every door handle bedaubed with a revolting, sticky black substance. Holding up their ruined gloves as evidence, they demanded explanations of the ushers, who, in their turn, made feverish enquiries among the musicians and other personnel. All to no avail until the true culprit owned up with a seraphic grin. It was the evening’s conductor, Willy Ferrero himself, who had been experimenting with glue and black ink³⁰.

The Italians were naturally proud and enthusiastic. This had its downsides. In Italy, the cult of the *bambino* [aka *bimbo*, *fanciullo*, *pargoletto* etc.] is a second religion and even today, *mamme* and especially *nonne* [grandmothers], can be reduced to slobbering imbecility by the sheer sight of that most normal of human products, a baby. The Italian novelist and critic Lucio D’Ambra takes up the tale.

The audience enjoyed the phenomenon and extended their arms to applaud that tiny conductor on the rostrum who acknowledged them seriously and correctly, yet who was nevertheless a child whose most fanatical admirers, and those seated most closely to the orchestra, held out their hands to smother him, not so much in applause as in kisses. But Willy, child-man, slipped from their grasp. Those exuberant spectators irritated him and he felt that, by caressing him like that in front of the members of the orchestra, they lessened his authority. He preferred, rather, ... the gelid protocol of the European courts where he was often called to conduct³¹.

Within a year, in fact, Ferrero was touring Russia. His visit coincided with prodigy appearances by the young Jascha Heifetz. Heifetz was notoriously reticent about his early years, but recent research by Galyna Kopytova³² has unearthed much information and, coincidentally, quite a bit about Ferrero’s Russian appearances as well.

Ferrero’s scheduled concerts in 1913 were on November 3, 8, 19 and 24 in St. Petersburg, followed by two concerts in Moscow and a second cycle of concerts in St. Petersburg, on December 6, 8, 12 and 15. They were preceded by an “improvisational concert” at the Italian Embassy, a rehearsal with Count Sheremetyev’s orchestra on October 31 and an open rehearsal on November 2. The programme for the first concert included Beethoven’s First Symphony, Berlioz’s Hungarian March, Grieg’s *Anitra’s Dance* and the overture to Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger*.

The leading critic Vyacheslav Karatygin had to admit that

... this whole entire concert atmosphere, saturated with an unhealthy thirst for sensation, is so unpleasant ... my principal prejudices against wunderkind concerts reached their peak right before the first wave of Ferrero’s baton.

²⁹ Willy Ferrero *ricorda*, *ibid*.

³⁰ These two stories are related in Chiarelli: *ibid*.

³¹ Lucio D’Ambra, *Radio Corriere* 1933 no. 10, p. 7

³² Galyna Kopytova (translated by D. Sarlo, A. Wiktovek): *Jascha Heifetz: Early Years in Russia*, Indiana University Press, 2013, pp. 231-234.

But then:

... after the first wave – what a miracle! All my musical and philanthropic foibles vanished ... the living imp ... overturned all my preconceptions ... by the remarkable expressiveness of all his gestures, by his impeccability, the iron exactness of his rhythm ... you see that this little artist truly leads the orchestra.

Nevertheless:

The concert finished, I am already on the street and my former indignation toward the phenomenon of “wunderkinder” captures me with new strength.

Still bemused, Karatygin posed a question:

Jascha Heifetz, like Willy Ferrero, is a wunderkind of wunderkinder. There are very few of them. But overall the number of wunderkinder has greatly increased in recent years. What does the future hold? ... What are we facing – a game of nature or a new trend in which the future will fill concert stages with children?³³



Ferrero caught a cold after his first St. Petersburg concert and had to cancel his appearance scheduled for November 8. Mature conductors sometimes catch colds too, but Ferrero’s provoked a storm. Alexander Siloti led:

I must appeal to the public ... Gentlemen! What are you doing? ... I did not want to participate in murder. I did not go and will not go to a single Ferrero concert, and Nikisch also³⁴ did not go this Sunday for the same reason³⁵.

³³ Quoted in Kopytova, *ibid*.

³⁴ According to another account, Nikisch considered Ferrero the eighth wonder of the world. *Wonder at Boy Genius*, New York Times, 3 May 1914.

³⁵ Open letter of November 7, quoted in Kopytova, *ibid*.

Siloti referred to the case where a tour of America by the 12-year-old Josef Hofmann had been stopped by a court order. Nikolai Tcherepnin agreed with Siloti:

*Ferrero's public performances are criminal acts by his parents, supported and encouraged by the crowd. He burns like a candle from both ends ...*³⁶

The St. Petersburg division of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children convened to investigate the case. Among those heard at the meeting were the musicians Siloti, Glazunov, Tcherepnin and Auer, as well as psychiatrists, doctors, teachers and jurists. The proceedings were confidential and all we actually know is that Ferrero's concerts were resumed, with a further two added. The society did obtain, however, that Ferrero's concerts should be given during the day, not in the evening.

Gifts included a canary in a cage, a train set from the conductor Khessin and a gold watch and chain decorated with the state crest from the Empress Maria Fyodovna. It was noted that it *"took some effort to tear the musician away from his toys and convince him to go onstage again"*³⁷.

Some of the "toys" were real. When a Russian prince asked Willy what he would like to receive, the young maestro replied without hesitation "A troika with three horses". And sure enough, the next morning a troika with three horses was awaiting his pleasure outside the Hotel Astoria³⁸.



Travelling in Russia could be a complicated business, even for those whose presence had been demanded by the Tsar himself. Ferrero himself relates:

I was about to leave St. Petersburg when I was stopped by a letter from Baron Stakelberg to my parents. The Emperor "wanted me" (this was the phrase) at his Palace. We left in the morning on a special train the Tsar had put at our service. This was a train that travelled along a private line, guarded to the hilt – there was a Cosack every ten metres. In those days, the life of the "little father" was still precious for his children! And this was not all. When we reached Tsarkeje-Tselo, we had to submit to a thorough inspection of our baggage.

"But our trunks contain nothing but music!" my impresario protested.

"It's true", came the answer. "But there might be bombs in there, too".

*It was evidently a custom in that country to carry bombs in your trunks and in your waistcoat pockets!*³⁹

³⁶ Quoted in Kopytova, *ibid.*

³⁷ Kopytova, *ibid.*

³⁸ Severi, *Fortune di un ragazzo prodigio*, *ibid.*

Long-distance sniping is easy game. One Canadian commentator would have no truck with the thing at all.

There ought surely to be a universal law to prevent the exploiting of musical prodigies. Here we have a report from St. Petersburg of "a command performance given by the Italian child conductor, Willy Ferrero ..." A child of seven and a half years "conducting" a body of trained musicians! The thing is preposterous — a positive insult to the orchestra. I read further that the Czar himself subsequently asked to hear a piece which Ferrero had not yet rehearsed with the band, and a Boccherini minuet was chosen. After the first few bars, the youthful conductor "stopped the orchestra and insisted on a greater contrast between the forte and pianissimo passages. He even sang it as he desired it to be played." Modesty is a merit, and a child of seven, who ought to be playing marbles, pretending to tell the Imperial Orchestra of St. Petersburg how to play a Boccherini minuet is altogether too ridiculous⁴⁰.

Whatever we think of Ferrero's parents' exploitation of their child, there can be no doubt that their ambitions reached an abominable climax when Willy attended a recital by Heifetz on November 22nd.

Willy Ferrero entered the hall at the very moment when his contemporary had finished the second movement of the Mendelssohn Concerto and should have begun the performance of the finale. The public noticed the little conductor and started to applaud. It turned into something like a triumphal procession throughout the entire hall. He sat together with his parents in the front row. In the light of the fact that the violinist could not continue because of the applause, a smaller part of the audience began to hiss at those applauding. Heifetz began to play, but the public still stared at Ferrero. Only with his brilliant playing did the violinist finally manage to distract the attention of the hall from the interesting guest⁴¹.

From Russia to London. On a full page advertisement in the Daily Mail⁴², the "first appearance in England of the Youngest Symphony Conductor in the World" was announced. Various enthusiastic press comments were reproduced, together with encomiums from the Czar and the Empress Maria Federovna. More significant, perhaps, were the quoted remarks of major musicians:

His way of conducting possesses the charm of genius. Why, he is performing miracles! I am, indeed, amazed to the very depth of my soul. Willy Ferrero is a wonder! – Alexander Glazunov.

If you can explain the sun or the moon, then you may be able to explain Willy Ferrero. He is as wonderful as he is inexplicable; he is a genius – Leopold Auer.

A few days later, Ferrero was the subject of a lengthy and considered, though unsigned, article in the Daily Telegraph⁴³. As in Russia, the excessive hype induced caution in more seasoned observers:

... Such was the reputation that he was given that the chief surprise ... was to find him living up to it.

The Daily Telegraph critic also addressed the question of the proliferation of child prodigies but, at least as far as child conductors was concerned, he reached somewhat different conclusions to



³⁹ *Willy Ferrero ricorda*, *ibid*.

⁴⁰ J.C. Hadden, *Musical Canada*, Toronto, May 1914

⁴¹ *Petersburgskaya gazeta*, quoted in Kopytova, *ibid*.

⁴² 25 April 1914

⁴³ *A Boy Conductor* – *Daily Telegraph*, 29 April 1914

Karatygin:

It is rather curious, perhaps, that in these days of prodigies we should never before have seen the spectacle of a child of very tender years directing the performances of a well-known orchestra. One would have thought it would have been far easier to teach a child to wave a baton sufficiently well to pilot experienced instrumentalists through music that they know almost by heart than to train his youthful fingers to play the pianoforte or the violin. If memory serves, however, only one boy conductor has appeared in London in recent years, and he was both older and less ambitious than the new arrival⁴⁴.

On the whole, the critic was impressed:

... he is a boy who is obviously very sensitive to music, who has a strong sense of beauty and of rhythm, and who has a real natural aptitude for the conductor's art. As he stood there yesterday, a tiny figure in a knickerbocker suit of plum-coloured velvet, with a shock of brown hair falling over a very musical forehead, directing the New Symphony Orchestra whose members had, for this occasion, their backs turned to the audience, so that their conductor might face it⁴⁵, he made it abundantly clear that he has great talent.

He then raised one of the most puzzling aspects of the whole episode:

There is no pretence whatever that the boy can read a score. On the contrary, it is admitted that a page of printed music at present conveys nothing to him whatever. ... He conducts purely from memory, and he seemed to know every note of the First Symphony of Beethoven, of the 'Meistersinger' Overture, and of the Good Friday Music from 'Parsifal'.

So far as is known, all the other prodigies listed at the beginning of this article could read music, since they were studying instruments as well. In terms of reading an orchestral score, they were mostly limited to following the principal melodic line. The critic's surprise was compounded by the fact that conducting from memory was generally unknown in 1914.

The Sydney Morning Herald extract below implies that the Daily Telegraph critic was commenting on a private hearing for the benefit of journalists. This would explain some procedures that, in a concert, would have been slightly odd:

Occasionally the players made mistakes; one could not but suspect that they did so on purpose, for the New Symphony Orchestra is not as a rule prone to blunder in a Beethoven symphony. But these mistakes did not remain uncorrected. A rap on the desk, a moment's pause, a stern rebuke in fluent French, and the players, one hopes duly chastened, repeated the passage correctly.

The critic wondered if a little gentle trickery was on display, but concluded that this was not so:

Of course, little effects like these might have been rehearsed, but it would seem that in his case such subterfuges would be quite unnecessary, for it is obvious that he has all the details of the score very clearly impressed upon his retentive memory. He would pick out the important leads of the different groups of instruments, or indicate a sforzando or a sudden pianissimo, with the certainty and assurance of an experienced conductor, with an open score before him. And there is in his gestures no element of the automatic or the mechanical. They are free, lithe and expressive, and they indicate the feeling of the music as the gestures of a good conductor should. They show that the music conveys a

⁴⁴ I have not been able to identify this other prodigy.

⁴⁵ It is reported that in Russia, too, Ferrero conducted facing the audience.

very definite meaning to him, and they show that he has the innate gift of conveying his own feelings to others.

Still, critics are there to criticise, and the Daily Telegraph's man had this to add:

He has, of course, decided limitations, and not the least of these would seem to be that his sense of perspective is undeveloped, with the result that he gives all he has in him to each successive climax, and has nothing bigger left in him when the great moment arrives.

As in Russia, there was some concern over the ethics of the situation. The Daily Mail's medical correspondent concluded that all was well:

There are none of the signs of neurotic precociousness or nervous instability about this prodigy. During the impromptu football game I witnessed in the flat of his friends in Welbeck Street, the only characteristic that marked him from the half-dozen children playing with him was his superabundance of animal spirits. In all other respects than in his innate appreciation of music, Willy Ferrero, as far as one can judge from a casual observation, is just pure boy⁴⁶.



Farrington Photo Co.
ON HIS VISIT TO QUEEN ALEXANDRA: LITTLE WILLY FERRERO,
THE WONDERFUL CHILD CONDUCTOR, BESIDE A SENTRY
AT MARLBOROUGH HOUSE.

While in London, Ferrero was taken to see Queen Alexandra. When the Queen asked him how he liked conducting, he replied that "he liked playing with toys just as well⁴⁷". The Queen also gave him a letter of introduction to her cousin, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. With the outbreak of war, however, the letter was never sent⁴⁸.

The question of whether Willy Ferrero might have been happier playing with his toys, and also of the tendency for his concerts to become open rehearsals, was also raised by Lucio D'Ambra:

But the morning after, in the hotel, beneath a portrait of that little blond boy who was himself, he read in the various European newspapers, "The Emperor of Germany receives Willy Ferrero ... the child prodigy at the court of the czar ... ". Then, getting out of his little bed, Willy left the papers and went to his toys. A child, just a child, and happy, till the time came for the orchestral rehearsal. And so, with a heavy heart, he had to get back to his enemies of the day, who were none other than his collaborators of the wind and brass, those accursed orchestral players with the scores in front of them and following the

pentagrams with one eye while the other, amid smirking and sniggering, followed him on the rostrum, with an air of not taking him seriously. They seemed to be saying to each other, "Yes, my fine little boy, my supposed phenomenon. You pretend to conduct. The people believe and applaud. But we, the orchestra, our orchestra, are making the music by ourselves, it's obvious ..."

Obvious? Not so fast. The child Willy decided to prove to the musicians that the instruments were not going under their own steam, according to the score, by any means, and that he, Willy, he the conductor, was not just there for show. So when an irreverent oboe or a presumptuous trumpet came in wrong, sure of getting away with it and raising a laugh from his colleagues, we saw a child's hand emerge from the frills to stop the great orchestra in full cry. We heard, in the amazed silence, a tiny

⁴⁶ Quoted in this blog: <http://temposenzatempo.blogspot.it/2011/09/young-french-maestro.html>, but no date is given

⁴⁷ *Wonder at Boy Genius*, New York Times, 3 May 1914.

⁴⁸ *Fortune di un ragazzo prodigio*, *ibid.*

irritated voice with the authority of a general say, having identified perfectly the single culprit from among a hundred players: "Back to the beginning. And be more careful, please. You didn't enter on time"⁴⁹.

The suspicion that the mistakes had been knowingly planted, probably by Ferrero's father, and their corrections discreetly rehearsed, remains. Massimo Freccia had no doubt about this:

His father, to glamourize further the miraculous gifts of his creation inserted false notes into the orchestra parts in order that the boy, warned in advance, would correct the mistakes at rehearsal, furthering the legend about his exceptional ear⁵⁰.

Oddly enough, another Italian writer, Alberto De Angelis, after complaining in 1915 that Ferrero's work was "generalized, monotone" in its colouring, concluded that

Ferrero is not a great conductor, but his mediocrity is the best proof that his conducting is genuine, that there is no trick behind it⁵¹.

The Ferrero phenomenon aroused curiosity as far afield as Australia.

The latest prodigy in the musical world (according to the London "Daily Telegraph") hails from Italy and is a conductor. For these two reasons Willy Ferrero stands apart from most of his kind. To Hungary and Russia we have come to look in recent years for a more or less regular supply of youthful musical geniuses, and they are usually either pianists or fiddlers. Willy Ferrero provides the exception in that he "wields the baton." This seven-year-old Italian boy has been giving a series of concerts in St. Petersburg and astonishing the Russian public, accustomed though they must be by this time to feats of the musical wunderkind. Little Ferrero was also commanded to direct a concert before the Tsar and an audience of Royal personages. There was an orchestra of eighty-five, and the St. Petersburg correspondent of "Le Temps" has furnished an interesting account of the proceedings. To his Imperial Majesty was left the choice of the programme, and the first piece he selected was the "Tannhäuser" overture. Afterwards came a Grieg dance, followed in turn by Boccherini's Minuet and a Farandole of Bizet. Twice the very precocious conductor called a halt in order to explain to the instrumentalists – in French – how he wished certain passages to be played. Little Ferrero, it is said, throws off all trace of boyishness as soon as he sets to work with his miniature baton. His expression becomes serious – even severe – and his eyes take on a strange look of concentration⁵².

A New Zealand paper, quoting the Daily Mail of May 1st 1914 as its source, added the further detail that Ferrero stood on a table to conduct. This article gives us a few closer glimpses of the mechanics of the operation.

Willy Ferrero knows no music. Pieces are played to him on the piano, then he hears them played by an orchestra, and then he conducts them. ... there is no possibility of doubt that he does really conduct in the very strictest and highest sense of the word. He has a firm and expressive beat, he knows all the leads, and never fails to give them at the right time ... If anything is not right, he stops the orchestra and repeats a passage till it goes to his satisfaction. Nothing escapes him. It was said that in the Beethoven Symphony one of the players made a mistake, just to see whether he was noticed, and he was. ... The sceptic will say this was all arranged beforehand, and he was following the band; but this cannot be. ... it is unthinkable that a body like the New Symphony orchestra should lend itself to

⁴⁹ Lucio D'Ambra, Radio Corriere, 1933 no. 10, p. 7

⁵⁰ Freccia, *ibid.*, p. 43.

⁵¹ Il Tirso, Rome, January 1915, quoted in the booklet to the Musica Classica CDs.

⁵² The West Australian (Perth), 28 March 1914

*systematic trickery. ... It is wonderful, but not without an element of pathos. What can the future have in store for such a boy?*⁵³

It is to an Australian paper that we owe the suggestion that perhaps things did not go so fizzingly after all.

*Willy Ferrero has come, but has not conquered. From the first I had my doubts, although I am bound to say Willy came to us franked by the recommendation of his Imperial Majesty the Czar, and that of famous Continental musicians. Also, and to my amazement, most of the London critics, having enjoyed afternoon tea with Willy, and heard him conduct privately the New Symphony Orchestra, paraded him to the London public as a heaven-born prodigy-genius, the like of which had never been heard before, a great conductor aged 7 years, and without a scrap of musical knowledge. But the public has been quite unresponsive, and Willy, his curly hair fluttering above the lighted platform on to which they hoisted him at the Albert Hall, has wielded his baton to empty benches. The boy has evidently some intuitive knowledge of rhythms and a feeling for music. But for my part I wonder how the orchestra could sit so solemnly, responding to his "leads." I wonder more at the ready enthusiasm of London's critics; but I would have wondered most of all if the affair had been the huge popular success it was evidently designed to be. But, after all, these things do "come off" sometimes. This one has failed to do so, and for little Willy's own sake I am glad of it*⁵⁴.

Punch, too, in a column entitled "Gleanings from Grub Street, by Our Special Parasite", allowed itself a sarcastic aside. The ostensible occasion was a visit to London by a Finnish novelist called Hjalmar Stormbarner. I suspect that no such an author really existed – doubtless the butt of Punch's wit was some Scandinavian figure who would have been readily recognized at the time.

*Professor Stormbarner is of course best known in this country as the author of the famous romances, Letters from Limbo, The Devil's Ducats, Narcotic Nelly and The Sarcophagus, but his versatility and accomplishments in other departments of mental activity will come as a surprise to his English admirers. He has penetrated the Arctic circle in a bath-chair drawn by reindeer; he plays with great skill on the balalaika, and he has translated most of the works of Mr. Edmund Gosse into Mæso-Gothic. At the present moment he is undoubtedly the first favourite for the Nobel Prize, though Willie [sic] Ferrero runs him close in virtue of the patronage of Mr. Andrew Carnegie and the Dowager-Empress of Russia*⁵⁵.

According to one account, Ferrero's child prodigy appearances continued until 1919⁵⁶. We know for certain that he conducted five concerts with the Orchestra Massima dell'Augusteo in Rome, two of them with a chorus as well, in April and May 1916. On 8 April 1917 he conducted part of a benefit concert at La Scala, Milan, organized by the Associazione Lombarda dei Giornalisti in aid of "bread for prisoners and for the children of soldiers"⁵⁷. The three American articles referred to above⁵⁸ tell us that in April 1915, Willy received a gold medal from the Italian Minister of Education after conducting a chorus and orchestra "aggregating 500 participants" in the Augusteo, and that he appeared before Pope Benedict XV in 1916. Nevertheless, you cannot remain a child prodigy for ever. By 1919, the time had come to learn his trade properly and, on the recommendation of Queen Margherita, assisted by some wealthy patrons and accompanied by his father, Ferrero went to study in Vienna.

⁵³ Grey River Argus, 26 June 1914

⁵⁴ Sydney Morning Herald, 20 June 1914

⁵⁵ Punch, May 13, 1914

⁵⁶ De Benedetti, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Selvini, *ibid.* The conducting was shared with Ettore Panizza.

⁵⁸ See note 22

In 1914, we are told, Ferrero, shown alongside at the age of nine⁵⁹, was unable to read music or play an instrument. Well before he left for Vienna, he seems to have become a fairly proficient pianist. The conductor Fernando Previtali, his junior by one year, recalls that during his early years in Turin he would go to Ferrero's house, where they played both games and music together. For their music making, Ferrero played the piano, while Previtali played the cello or joined Ferrero in piano duets. Previtali does not date this episode, but makes it clear that it was previous to Ferrero's departure for Vienna. Previtali was at this time studying at Turin Conservatoire. There is no suggestion that Ferrero made any formal studies before going to Vienna, but there would have been no point in a budding conservatoire student playing with him if he were not reasonably good. Previtali does say that Ferrero's mother would come in from time to time with advice, so we have to assume that Ferrero learnt piano from her. Previtali also testified that Ferrero "had music and rhythm in his blood"⁶⁰.



Before leaving Ferrero the child prodigy, perhaps we should try to assess what a child prodigy is, and what it meant in Willy Ferrero's case. This is a minefield in which doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists and philosophers have come to grief, and my intention is to pose questions more than to answer them.

In my mind, there is a distinction between the child prodigy, who is quite unbelievably doing something that, by all logic, he or she could not do, and the highly precocious child, who is doing something at a much earlier age than we would consider normal. In some ways, Willy Ferrero met the former criterion. At the age of four he could neither read music nor play an instrument, yet he stood in front of an orchestra and, we are assured, did not "conduct along" with them, which anyone can do if the orchestra will tolerate it, but actually directed the performance, giving cues, indicating expression and even identifying mistakes.

However, to define a child prodigy this way is to introduce a mystical element. It almost suggests a parallel with children who apparently remember detailed facts and episodes from a previous life⁶¹. This is a phenomenon for which much documentation has been assembled, but without so far convincing the scientific community that it is more than a pseudo-science. Not entirely surprisingly, the theosophist Annie Besant wondered if Ferrero had not two souls – his own and that of some deceased musician⁶². Without invoking reincarnation, the experienced conductor Landon Ronald nevertheless implied a mystical element.

I believe that Willy Ferrero possesses the most incomprehensible genius I have ever witnessed. He is the greatest of all mysteries for me, because he has given proof that he knows, at his age, more than men do who have spent their lives studying and conducting. I could understand it more easily if he were able to read music. As it is, he is simply a born conductor⁶³.

⁵⁹ Photo included in Chiarelli, *ibid*.

⁶⁰ Fernando Previtali: Article written in 1954 and reproduced in the *Musica Classica* booklet.

⁶¹ This line of thought has been developed by Amadeus Voldben, who mentions the case of Ferrero in *La Reincarnazione – verità antica e moderna*, Edizioni Mediterranee, Rome, 1991, p. 144

⁶² Referred to in Guglielmo Bilancioni, essay published in 1921 and reproduced in the *Musica Classica* booklet.

⁶³ De Benedetti, *ibid*. I have seen these words by Landon Ronald quoted in several places, but always in an Italian translation. The above is therefore a back-translation, and may not reproduce Ronald's words exactly.

A more scientific investigation was attempted by Professor Agostini⁶⁴. After making precise and complicated measurements of the boy's head, he pronounced him "a *tipo di geniale* who, if not unwisely exploited, might progress to become a real genius". The Italian word *geniale* describes a person with fervid imagination but short on discipline.

Some would argue, though, that a child prodigy in the sense intended by Besant or Ronald does not really exist. It all boils down to degrees of precociousness. What seems scarcely credible when a five-year-old does it, is still highly remarkable when a ten-year-old is doing it. It is remarkable in a rather more normal way when the prodigy is a fifteen-year-old. The same thing done by a twenty-year-old might even leave us dissatisfied, if nothing more than good technique and a healthy musical instinct are involved.

So was what Ferrero did logically impossible? He had been surrounded by music from birth and had been watching conductors ever since he could consciously watch anything. Previtali recalled another aspect:

*... he also had exceptional capacity as a mimic. With a gesture of his hand, with a change of physiognomy, as well as with words, he evoked and imitated people and things with the greatest of ease.*⁶⁵

Willy Ferrero therefore possessed a unique combination: a remarkable capacity to mimic a conductor's gestures, an innate feeling for music, and an exceptional ability to remember and absorb the music he heard. The former on its own would have provided no more than an entertaining party piece, rather on the lines of the unknown young conductor illustrated at the beginning of this article. The other two might have reached concrete application only after years of training. In combination, they enabled him to conduct an orchestra. So, amazing as young Willy's conducting was, it was not actually a logical impossibility.

Lorin Maazel, who certainly knew what it was like to be a child prodigy, was at pains to emphasize the natural, non-phenomenal aspects.

*Anyone with a fine musical gift can demonstrate it precociously. You can do the same if you have, say, a mathematical gift too, but with the musical one you get it exhibited. It's certainly not necessary and it can be detrimental*⁶⁶.

Ferrero himself, in the 1930 article quoted several times above, seemed to wish to keep the boy and the man well apart, concluding as follows:

*And now? Now I won't tell you anything more, because I have been asked for the memories of a child prodigy, not the hopes of a man*⁶⁷.

More unfathomable, really, is the question of why and how a person – at whatever age – has exceptional gifts denied to others. In the end, is it more remarkable to conduct like Ferrero at the age of ten, or like Giulini – a slow developer – at the age of thirty? Or, in Maazel's own case, was he more remarkable when he conducted at the age of eight, and just about managed it, or when, in the years of his finest maturity, he conducted as few others could? So our next question must be, did the child prodigy become a remarkable conductor in his maturity, or did he continue to conduct like a ten-year-old?

⁶⁴ Quoted in Severi, *ibid.* Presumably, this was Cesare Agostini (1862-1942), Director of Perugia Psychiatric Hospital from 1904 and author of a manual on psychiatry, for students and doctors, published in 1906.

⁶⁵ Previtali, *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Interview in *Gramophone*, March 1971, p. 1449.

⁶⁷ *Willy Ferrero ricorda*, *ibid.*

Studies in Vienna

Ferrero’s period of study at the Vienna Academy is normally dated 1921 to 1924⁶⁸. The teachers named are Max Springer and Ferdinand Löwe⁶⁹. Springer was a composer, particularly of church music, Löwe was a conductor. The registers of the Vienna Academy, however, show that Ferrero was enrolled only for the summer semester of 1922⁷⁰. He took four courses: Counterpoint I, with Max Springer, Piano I, with Friedrich Wührer (entered 2 January), General Musical Theory with Georg Valker (entered 14 January) and Civic Education. He was not graded in the latter because of “insufficient knowledge of German”. The somewhat sketchy entry is shown below.

Nevertheless, he was certainly in Vienna by May 1921, and was still enough of a wunderkind to conduct a couple of concerts in this guise with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. The programmes were⁷¹:

- 31 May 1921, UhrGroßer Saal
 - Beethoven: Symphony No. 5
 - Wagner: Tannhäuser Overture
 - Martucci: Notturmo
 - Scarlatti, D: Burlesca
 - Rossini: Guglielmo Tell – Overture
- 15 June 1921, UhrGroßer Saal
 - Beethoven: Egmont Overture
 - Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 6 “Pathétique”
 - Wagner: Die Meistersinger – Overture

He matriculated, the Vienna registrar tells us, on 25 June 1924 as a private student, with good results. Most sources presume this means a diploma in conducting, but in reality, conducting diplomas are a fairly recent innovation. Just possibly, since he certainly took piano lessons with Friedrich Wührer during his “official” semester, his diploma was in piano. More likely, though, it was in composition. This would have meant that, as a private student matriculating externally, residence in Vienna was no longer essential, if this was

⁶⁸ Cf. for example, Mario Zafred, *Immatura morte di Willy Ferrero*, L’Unità, 25 March 1954.
⁶⁹ Cf, Treccani, Selvini, *ibid*.
⁷⁰ A copy of the registry entry, with additional information from a present-day registrar of the Vienna Academy, has been provided by Alexander Negrin.
⁷¹ Sourced at <https://www.konzerthaus.at/datenbanksuche>

becoming burdensome. He could come and go, or even send his compositions by post from Italy. Certainly, a career as a composer was seriously considered at one stage, as Lucio D’Ambra relates:

... In Vienna he began again to study music from the basics upwards ... while the problem at the root of the musical vocation began to pose itself. Composer or performer? Compose his own music or continue to perform that of others? Uncertain for several years, Willy finally decided⁷².

According to one account, Ferrero “showed, from his earliest years, a strong desire to compose”⁷³. It is not clear when he made the decision to concentrate on conducting, though the few compositions listed in Treccani would seem to have been written before his thirtieth year⁷⁴. Previtali tells us that, on his return from Vienna,

... he let me hear some of his compositions, which seemed to me further proof of his extraordinary musicality⁷⁵.

Previtali, as we shall see later, was a master of the unspoken phrase. Technically fluent compositions may indeed be the expression of “extraordinary musicality”, but a minimum of originality is needed as well, and Previtali does not say Ferrero had this. Nor did he ever express any regret that Ferrero chose conducting over composition.

Conducting, then, was Willy’s choice. At which point we can speculate that, while Löwe was not among his teachers during the semester for which he was enrolled at the Academy, persistent mention of this name in Ferrero biographies may not be entirely wrong. Löwe was, after all, a prominent senior conductor in Vienna in those years, so why not seek a few lessons from him?

A young conductor in Italy

The die seems to have been cast in favour of conducting by 11 March 1923 when Ferrero, even before obtaining his diploma, directed a concert at the Teatro Costanzi of Rome “in aid of war orphans”. Nevertheless, now that he was a mature man, if still a very young one, engagements no longer fell at his feet. The intervention of Margherita, the Queen Mother, was needed to persuade the Augusteo to open its doors to him once more⁷⁶. On 8 February 1925, he conducted the orchestra of Santa Cecilia for the first time – the first of some eighty concerts he was to give with this orchestra during his career⁷⁷.



The appeal to Queen Margherita was probably made by Willy’s mother, for there had been changes in the Ferrero household. The exact date and circumstances of Vittorio’s death have not yet come to light. Previtali, remembering the days when he frequented the Ferrero home in Turin as a teenager, before Willy went to Vienna, remarked that “his father was still alive at that time”⁷⁸. Put that way, it sounds as if he did not remain alive for very long afterwards. We know that Vittorio accompanied Willy to Vienna and, since Willy was a minor, his enrolment documents for the 1922 semester name Vittorio as his guardian. Beginning from 1925, Willy’s mother wrote a series of letters to highly-placed

⁷² Lucio D’Ambra, *ibid*

⁷³ Radio Corriere 1931 no. 5. p. 17

⁷⁴ Treccani quotes as the source for its information about Ferrero’s compositions an article by A. Aniante, published in *Quadrivio*, 12 July 1936. With the sole exception of the fragmentary music for the film “La terra trema”, I have found no mention of any further compositions, or of any attempt by Ferrero to press his claims as a composer.

⁷⁵ Previtali, *ibid*.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Willy Ferrero se ne è andato*, *ibid*.

⁷⁷ See Appendix 4.

⁷⁸ Previtali, *ibid*.

people, politically and musically, asking them to help her son. Recipients, apart from the Queen Mother, included Queen Elena, the art historian Paolo D'Ancona (1878-1964), the writer and journalist Luigi Federzoni (1878-1967), who was also a Minister in Mussolini's government from 1923 to 1928 and later President of the Senate, Federzoni's wife, and the Secretary of the Fascist Party. It may be supposed that such letters, if necessary at all, would have been written by Vittorio had he been alive⁷⁹.

In 1929, the critic G.T. Barblan, hailing "one of the finest concerts we have heard at the Augusteo in recent years", referred to Ferrero's ongoing difficulties in re-establishing himself, and also revealed another of Willy's generous supporters.

A concert that will, we hope, open the eyes of those who wish to keep them obstinately closed, preventing this glorious affirmation of the genius of our [national] race from pursuing a splendid career, officially recognized by all the magnates and monopolizers of the musical art. We give our public thanks to Maestro Mario Rossi, the young, exuberant assistant conductor of the Augusteo, who, with a gesture of laudable solidarity, did his utmost to enable [Ferrero] to ascend the rostrum of the Augusteo⁸⁰.

Moral support, at least, also came from Mascagni who, then at the height of his fame, attended the third of Ferrero's 1929 concerts at the Augusteo and, at the end of the performance of the intermezzo from *I Rantzau*, directed the applause away from himself and towards the young Maestro⁸¹.

It has been suggested that the post-diploma Ferrero was a disappointment to his erstwhile admirers. No doubt some were already primed to hear it this way. While young Willy was garnering praise and presents at the end of a wunderkind appearance in Rome, Francesco Paolo Mulè heard a bird of ill omen at his shoulder:

What a shame! These child prodigies always run out of steam sooner or later.

And those around agreed⁸². De Benedetti entitled his article "Willy, the musical prodigy ruined by study at the Academy" and concluded

... during his years in Austria, something had changed. Rigour, precision and maximum respect for the score had made Ferrero a real professional, but had robbed him of the free-flowing spontaneity that had characterized him. He continued to conduct in the leading Italian theatres and frequently visited the USSR after the war to propagate Italian music, but he lacked that touch of genius that had made an extraordinary character of him⁸³.

Antonio Guarnieri, a great conductor little remembered because he left few recordings, sniped:

The child prodigy? Aha, the prodigy has gone, only the child remains⁸⁴.

Massimo Freccia turned the knife in the wound:

... when the legs became too hairy and the shadow of a beard too visible, he had to abandon his Lord Fauntleroy suit and his fame receded⁸⁵.

⁷⁹ Information from Alexander Negrin, who has examined these letters in the Santa Cecilia archives.

⁸⁰ Impero, 7 June 1929.

⁸¹ Cf. Tribuna, 14 June 1929, Giornale d'Italia, 14 June 1929, Corriere d'Italia, 14 June 1929.

⁸² F.P.M. [Francesco Paolo Mulè], Radio Corriere 1934 no. 50, p. 12

⁸³ De Benedetti, *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Quoted in Selvini, *ibid.*

⁸⁵ Freccia, *ibid.*, p. 43.

Francesco Paolo Mulè, writer, critic and librettist of an opera by his brother Giuseppe, did not agree with the bird of ill omen.

*But Willy Ferrero did not run out of steam. First he was guided by instinct. Later, when according to the omens, he should have run out of steam, instinct was overtaken by reason, the reason that comes from study. The child prodigy, advancing year by year, is today one of our finest conductors*⁸⁶.

If we are to believe De Angelis's estimate that Ferrero in 1915 was a real conductor, but a mediocre one, the conclusion has to be that, from 1925 onwards, he was much better than that, otherwise, why should the Santa Cecilia Orchestra invite him at all, let alone invite him back another 80-or-so times over the following 29 years? At La Scala concert season, too, he appeared regularly. In particular, from 1929 to 1931 he conducted works there such as Stravinsky's "Firebird" Suite, pieces from Prokofiev's "For the Love of three Oranges" and Honegger's "Chant de Nigamon". On 16 May 1942, again at La Scala, he accompanied the young Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli in Beethoven's "Emperor" concerto, while on 24 November 1945 he gave the Milanese première of Shostakovich's "Leningrad" Symphony. This, though, was his last appearance at La Scala. From the late 1920s until the war years, moreover, Ferrero's career was intimately bound up with the early history of broadcasting and recording in Italy. If nothing else, this is an easily traceable part of his career, thanks to RAI's splendid initiative in making available, in downloadable PDF form, the entire series of Radio Corriere issues, from its inception in 1925 to its demise in 1994⁸⁷. Before addressing this, however, we might seek a few glimpses of the man that was emerging.

If Ferrero found it hard to shake off his child prodigy past, this was at least partly due to the purely visual effect that he remained a diminutive figure. Lucio D'Ambra tells us that the child

*... has now become a man but without succeeding in becoming an imposing figure. His person is still slender and tiny. Though a man, he seems to be a boy*⁸⁸.

We shall see that, by the end of his life, Ferrero, always a bachelor, had established a life-style that alternated hermit-like withdrawal with lively gregariousness. Back in Rome in the late 1920s, he frequented a group, referred to as the *Cenacolo*, which met for some six years in the *salon* of Angiolo Giuseppe ("Beppe") Rossellini⁸⁹. Prominent attendees were Beppe's nephews Roberto and Renzo. The former, post-war, became one of Italy's most significant film directors. Renzo established himself as a composer by the 1930s. Other musicians frequenting the circle were Mascagni, Zandonai, Alfano and Titta Ruffo. They were joined by artists, architects, entrepreneurs and politicians. A dominating figure was the writer Massimo Bontempelli. Common to all was a vaguely left-wing ideology that momentarily saw salvation in Mussolini. But, while Bontempelli, as a leading voice of the Novecento movement, became an outright exponent of Fascism until the racial laws brought him up against reality, Willy Ferrero was looked on with suspicion by Mussolini's secret police as early as 1927⁹⁰.



Another recipient of Willy's mother's appeals for help may have been Willy's biological father, Arnaldo Guerra. What is certain, is that in 1934, Ferrero stood godfather to Arnaldo's daughter Anna Maria Isabella

⁸⁶ Francesco Paolo Mulè, *ibid.*

⁸⁷ <http://www.radiocorriere.teche.rai.it/Default.aspx>

⁸⁸ Lucio D'Ambra, *ibid.*

⁸⁹ See Tag Gallagher, *The Adventures of Roberto Rossellini*, Da Capo, New York, 1998.

⁹⁰ See Mario José Cereghino, Giovanni Fasanella, *Le carte segrete del Duce*, Mondadori 2014.

Francesca Guerra⁹¹. The normal assumption has been that the Ferreros were family friends of the Guerras. In reality, Willy was Anna Maria's half-brother. This would explain why he took a closer interest in Anna Maria's upbringing than might normally be expected of a godfather. Among other things, he also encouraged her ambitions, opposed by her parents, to become an actor. In recognition of his help, she adopted the stage name of Anna Maria Ferrero, becoming one of Italy's leading actors in the post-war years, as well as the partner of Vittorio Gassman. This claustrophobic relationship collapsed after seven years and in 1962 she married the French actor Jean Sorel. She withdrew from acting shortly after her marriage. Some years ago, she and Sorel spoke to Alexander Negrin at considerable length about Willy Ferrero, confirming that he was in fact her half-brother. It was, they explained, a family secret, something that everybody in the family knew, but nobody talked about. They raised no objections to the matter being made public now. Indeed, Anna Maria's parents acted extremely well by Willy, particularly her mother, who showed a commendable broadmindedness. The above signed postcard shows Anna Maria Ferrero in 1952, when she was at the height of her fame and while Willy was still alive.

Chronology and motivations, regarding a period before Anna Maria Ferrero was born, will remain in the realm of hypothesis. We can only put together what we know. Arnaldo Guerra had married one Maria Palmieri not later than about 1923. In 1923 or 1924 they had a son, Carlo. He became a doctor.

The alternative to an approach to the Guerras by Willy's mother is that Ferrero himself, informed of the facts, decided on his own initiative to seek his real father. So when did Willy become aware of the facts? It is hardly the sort of thing you tell a little boy, even a little boy capable of conducting a symphony orchestra. Conversely, when he stood godfather to Anna Maria, it must surely have been agreed on all sides that this was a neat formula that would enable him to act as a family member without external gossips needing to suppose that he actually was so. Anna Maria Ferrero told Alexander Negrin that Willy was always made welcome in their home and treated as a member of the family. A welcome that does not seem to have been compromised when he encouraged Anna Maria to flout her parents' wishes, or by her decision to work professionally under his name rather than theirs. Arnaldo Guerra continued to help Willy over the years, acting as his agent in dealings with orchestral managements from the 1940s onwards. One remaining query is whether Willy Ferrero, when he wrote the autobiographical article in 1930⁹² stressing the fact that music ran in both sides of his family, was deliberately stepping around a truth that was not to be revealed, or whether he was informed of his true father some time between then and 1934.

This also seems the best place to relate what little is known of Willy Ferrero's brother, the violinist Teddy Ferrero. Presumably he was not a child prodigy. His name first appears in the *Radio Corriere* in 1930, when Professor Teddy Ferrero contributed brief solos during programmes by an unidentified "small orchestra". With his brother conducting, he played the Bach E major Concerto (1935), the second part in the Bach Double Concerto (1941, with Aldo Priano) and Angelo Francesco Lavagnino's *Allegro da Concerto* (twice in 1941). He played the Lalo *Symphonie espagnole* with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra on 25 April 1945, conducted by Roberto Caggiano. His last broadcast was in 1947, when he played the Franck Sonata and Ravel's *Tzigane* with Sandro Fuga. A correspondent tells me that Teddy was a homosexual⁹³ who also suffered from a nervous disorder which caused him to abandon his public career. Homosexuality should not have been an issue in Italy. It is, of course, outlawed by the prevailing Roman Catholic religion, but as far as civil laws are concerned, intercourse between consenting same-sex adults has been legal in Italy since 1887. The Fascist regime made some attempt to criminalize it in the public mind. A nervous problem that affected

⁹¹ I have seen her full name only in this French-language biography: <http://encinematheque.fr/oeil/Y035/index.php>. This site also provides the information that Arnaldo Guerra was a writer and journalist and that Anna Maria had an elder brother.

⁹² *Willy Ferrero ricorda*, *ibid.*

⁹³ There is a reference to Teddy in *Elegia n.14* by the homosexual poet Giancarlo Albisola Albertalli. The poem is dated 1973 and Teddy would seem to have been still alive at the time, though the poetic language may bear other interpretations. Cf. <http://www.club.it/autori/sostenitori/giancarlo.albisola/poesie.html>

Teddy's ability to give of his best in public, or to face the public at all, would obviously have been much more serious. It is highly unlikely that recordings exist of the broadcasts mentioned.

Spare a thought for Teddy, though. We see him only in the family group reproduced on page 4. At the centre, in his Lord Fauntleroy suit and bearing the confident grin of success, is Willy. Relegated to the left, looking rather less self-confident, is "our other son" Teddy, groomed for a normality that would be decorous in any other context but which, under these circumstances, must have seemed to him the most abject failure.

Ferrero, the EIAR and the RAI

Broadcasting began in Italy when the URI – Unione Radiofonica Italiana – was set up in 1924. The following year the Radio Corriere, to which we owe so much of the information in this article, made its appearance as a weekly magazine. The URI need not detain us since, by the time Ferrero first appears in the Radio Corriere pages, it had been replaced, in 1927, by the EIAR – Ente Italiano per Audizioni Radiofoniche. In 1931, the EIAR acquired the Teatro di Torino for use as an Auditorium and the Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR concert seasons began in that year.

Appendix 1 lists all Ferrero's known broadcasts, from 1928 to the last year of his life. The first of them, on 10 December 1928, was broadcast from Rome and the orchestra was described as the "Grande Orchestra Sinfonica". For other broadcasts prior to the institution of the EIAR orchestra, the orchestra is not named at all. Even after the formation of the Turin-based EIAR orchestra, many orchestral concerts were broadcast from various Italian cities, usually Rome or Milan, but sometimes as far south as Palermo. The practice of the Radio Corriere, when the orchestra was not that of EIAR, was generally not to name it at all. It will be seen that, for many of the broadcasts listed in Appendix 1, the orchestra is not named.

Coincident with this observation, it will be seen that broadcasting in Italy had a regional basis. This possibly reflected the difficulty of providing national coverage in a country that was narrow but very long. For whatever reason, it remained the case even after the EIAR was replaced by the RAI – Radio Audizioni Italiane – in 1944. Italy had three national programmes, along vaguely BBC lines, from 1951. So what were the orchestras used for broadcasting outside the EIAR seasons? On the assumption that the EIAR orchestra did not travel all round Italy, we must suppose that the unnamed orchestras were pick-up bands consisting largely of members of the principal orchestra of the city in question: La Scala in Milan, Santa Cecilia in Rome and so on. But this is only a guess.

We do not know, for example, what orchestra was used for an interesting and little remembered initiative that just predated the formation of the EIAR orchestra. This was the concert seasons of Radiomarelli. If you look for information about Radiomarelli, you will find that it was created in 1929 to produce and trade radio equipment. It enjoyed a monopoly position during the Fascist years and survived the war, but faltered and then disappeared in the 1970s due to an incapacity to adapt its products to new markets. What nobody seems to remember is that it ran a series of broadcast concerts, fully documented in the Radio Corriere, at the beginning of the 1930s. The venue was Milan Conservatoire and the artistic direction was undertaken by the major figure of Ildebrando Pizzetti. Ferrero conducted two of these.

The pre-war Radio Corriere also included synthetic lists of broadcasts from foreign radio stations. These show that Ferrero broadcast with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra on a yearly basis from 1934 to 1938 (see Appendix 2), and from Moscow in 1935 and 1936 (see Appendix 3). In this latter year, he also appeared in Leningrad and Kiev⁹⁴. He seems also to have conducted in Spain⁹⁵.

⁹⁴ Cf. <http://www.arcarussa.it/forum/willy-ferrero-vt6526.html>

⁹⁵ Cf. Mario Labroca, *Muscisti Italiani all'Estero*, Il Lavoro Fascista, 16 October 1935, referring to this forthcoming tour.

Some interesting details of Ferrero's 1936 Russian tour are given in the article already quoted by Giberto Severi⁹⁶. Ferrero gave a total of forty concerts. The repertoire was mainly Italian, ranging from Vivaldi, Scarlatti and Corelli to Respighi, Petrassi, Tocchi, Masetti, Zandonai, Pizzetti and Pick-Mangiagalli. It was during this tour that he met Khrennikov, whose First Symphony he later performed several times in Italy.

One rather pleasing feature that emerges about Willy Ferrero is his loyalty to past friends. After his arrival in the Soviet Union, one of his first acts was to ask after the impresario Riesnikov, the once-powerful figure who had masterminded his pre-Revolution tours of the country.

At first, those questioned replied evasively, they did not wish to tell him where [Riesnikov] was or what he was doing, let alone allow them to meet. After much insistence, they told him he was at the Radio, a clerk in a small office. Willy's heart missed a beat when he thought that Riesnikov had been one of the most influential men in the Russian theatre and the Petronius of St. Petersburg society. It missed a few more when Riesnikov appeared before him, accompanied by an agent of the GPU [forerunner of the KGB], a sad, white-haired figure who leaped into his arms, weeping without saying a word. Willy, distressed by the scene, asked Riesnikov if he could do anything for him. Riesnikov asked him a single favour: to give a concert in his native town, Rostov Don.

Willy kept his promise.

This was not Ferrero's only glimpse of Soviet democracy at work. According to a clause in his contract, the Radio would see to all the necessary visas so he did not worry unduly when his visa expired about half way through the tour, during a series of Beethoven concerts in Odessa. As soon as the concerts finished, he was confronted by two GPU agents and ordered to leave the country within 24 hours. Willy insisted that he could not do this because he still had about 20 concerts to conduct and his next stop was Kiev. Icily, the agents repeated their order that he was to leave within 24 hours. Willy took the train for Kiev nevertheless, but took the precaution of buying an extra rail ticket and giving it to a Russian friend, who was to keep a discreet eye on him and inform the Italian consul in Kiev immediately if he disappeared *en route*. Fortunately, nothing untoward happened and he was met in Kiev by the Italian consul who made due representations to the authorities, with the result that the visa was renewed and the tour completed. One might suppose that these incidents would have caused Ferrero to wonder whether Stalin's workers' paradise was any improvement on Mussolini's police state but, as we shall see, his communist faith survived the shock.

The 1940 article containing this information shows that the years were not treating Ferrero kindly – he was only 34, after all. It also gives us a glimpse of the disorderly lifestyle at which many others have hinted:

[Willy] is there before us with his slender body wrapped in a dark crimson dressing-gown and his face marked by several wrinkles. As he speaks, he runs his long, nervous hands through his uncombed hair and paces up and down the hotel room where he has received us, carefully avoiding the many obstacles strewn in his path; for Willy is considerably and candidly untidy⁹⁷.

Ferrero's programme planning followed a pattern throughout his mature career that may seem unusual to British listeners, but which, pre-war, was not confined either to him or to Italy. The "meat" came at the beginning – a classical symphony, usually by Beethoven – I have traced performances of all but the second and the ninth. Mozart was also fairly frequent, but limited to symphonies 34 and 35. Brahms was rare – usually the First or Third Symphony before the war, while the Fourth became a regular item post-war. Romantics such as Dvořák (the "New World"), Tchaikovsky (usually the Fourth, sometimes the "Pathétique") and Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade" appeared occasionally, and invariably opened the programme. After the interval would come a work by a living Italian composer – Ferrero's involvement with

⁹⁶ *Fortune di un ragazzo prodigio*, *ibid*.

⁹⁷ *Fortune di un ragazzo prodigio*, *ibid*.

a certain type of Italian contemporary music will be discussed shortly. Colourful showpieces, or noisy Wagner extracts, or an even harder-hitting Richard Strauss tone poem, rounded off the evening.

Another curious feature is the sheer repetition of repertoire involved. This, evidently, was not a problem for the pre-war EIAR which, in the days before tape recording, did not usually – if ever – preserve its broadcast concerts, so would have no preclusion against broadcasting the same piece again, under the same conductor.

Post-war, Ferrero's name appears less often in the Radio Corriere. He was still in demand in concert seasons elsewhere – in 1946 he took the Santa Cecilia Orchestra on tour throughout northern and central Italy, for example. There are several reasons why he may have become less useful to RAI than he was to EIAR. One of these regards his attachment to a type of Italian music which was disappearing from their programmes as they sought to catch up with Schoenberg, Bartók and the new Darmstadt School, and to give free rein to a new generation of Italian dodecaphonic composers. Ferrero's last Santa Cecilia concert⁹⁸ included one of his pre-war favourites, Pizzini's *Strapaese*. This implies that his commitment to this repertoire remained, though the piece was actually programmed at the request of the Santa Cecilia authorities themselves⁹⁹. Be that as it may, Pizzini's *Strapaese* was clearly no longer what a post-war radio station meant by modern music.

Another reason for Ferrero's diminished radio presence may have been his wish to repeat certain pieces again and again. By now, RAI was regularly taping its concerts, which were not necessarily broadcast live. Unlike, say, the BBC, it had full rights over its recordings so it could, and did, repeat them often. There was no longer any reason, therefore, to pay Ferrero and one its orchestras to perform *Boléro* or Falla dances yet again when it already had recordings of him doing them.

Ferrero, Homocord, Parlophone, Parlophon and Cetra

Records had been made in Italy since 1895, when a Neapolitan song was set down by International Zonophone. Various Italian companies followed, notably FONIT (Fonodisco Italiano Trevisan Milano), created in 1911. They dealt in popular repertoire, however. As far as more serious music was concerned, the Gramophone Company, later His Master's Voice, and Columbia were soon busy. A native Italian company with a substantial production of classical music, orchestral and instrumental as well as operatic, did not appear until the formation of CETRA in 1933. As a subsidiary of EIAR, it served as a shop window for the newly formed EIAR Symphony Orchestra, and also provided EIAR with a repertoire of "own recordings" useful for broadcasting purposes.

Cetra was nevertheless anticipated by a brief initiative based in Milan. Dischi Homocord were produced by Fonocastiglia, a manufacturer of recording equipment. The name is first found in an advertisement placed in the Radio Corriere by Fonocastiglia in 1929, but it was not until 1931 that a full-page impressive publicity spread¹⁰⁰ announced something like a real catalogue. Included in this first batch was a coupling of the

ISTITUZIONE DEI CONCERTI
DELL'ACCADEMIA NAZIONALE
DI
SANTA CECILIA
SOTTO L'EGIDA DELLO STATO E DEL COMUNE DI ROMA
TEATRO ARGENTINA

Mercoledì 20 Gennaio 1954 - ore 17.30
(XIX-3748 dalla fondazione dei Concerti)

DIRETTORE
WILLY FERRERO

PROGRAMMA

JOHANNES BRAHMS - Sinfonia n. 4 in mi minore
op. 98.
Allegro non troppo
Andante moderato
Allegro giocoso
Allegro energico e passionato

CARLO ALBERTO PIZZINI - *Strapaese*, impressioni dal vero.

CLAUDE ACHILLE DEBUSSY - Danza, trascrizione di Ravel.

MODESTO P. MUSSORGSKI - *Covacina*: Preludio atto IV

RICHARD WAGNER - I Maestri cantori: Preludio

⁹⁸ 20 January 1954

⁹⁹ Letter to Ferrero from Alessandro Bustini (1876-1970), President of Santa Cecilia from 1952 to 1964, dated 25 November 1953, conserved in the Santa Cecilia archives.

¹⁰⁰ Radio Corriere 1931 no. 8, p. 6

Intermezzo from Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* with the *Overture to Mascagni's I Rantzau* (P 12016). The orchestra, conducted by Willy Ferrero, was described on this advertisement as "the 100 professors of La Scala comprising the Orchestra Italiana Homocord". Elsewhere it has been called the Grande Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano. Later that same year¹⁰¹, an article discussed the new company, which had in the meantime issued, much more ambitiously, **Richard Strauss's Till Eulenspiegel**, on four sides, with Ferrero again in charge (F-12023/24). No further mention of Homocord is to be found in the Radio Corriere and Ferrero made no other recordings for it.

In the opening solo string section of the Puccini Intermezzo, the "professors" of La Scala are lavish with their portamento, but when the full strings enter, Ferrero has them play pretty cleanly. It is mostly very beautiful but, like many other conductors, Ferrero gets hysterical towards the climax, which is rushed to my ears. *Till Eulenspiegel* is given a vividly characterized, racy but not hectic account. Ferrero is fairly free but never lets the individual moments pull the music out of shape. There is some pretty good playing, too. I have not heard the Mascagni piece.

In 1933 Cetra advertised for the first time¹⁰². Cetra is the Italian name for the musical instrument known in English as the cithara, but it was also an acronym for *Compagnia per edizioni, teatro, registrazioni ed affini*. In this first advertisement it announced itself as "dealer and manufacturer for Italy of Parlophon Records" and presented "the new EIAR-Radiomarelli orchestral series". Parlophon remained autonomous in Italy even after the company had been taken over by Columbia in the UK and anglicized as Parlophone. Parlophone and Parlophon remained related and British Parlophone issued a substantial group of EIAR Symphony Orchestra recordings around 1938, six of them conducted by Ferrero.

RADIOCORRIERE

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EDIZIONI FONOCASTIGLIA

che saranno trasmessi dalle Stazioni Radiofoniche di Milano-Torino-Genova dal 23 Febbraio al 1. Marzo, alle ore 13 e alle ore 20 di ogni giorno.

Soprano
Margherita Carosio
Disco da 30 cm. - L. 30.—
F 12023 *SON. PASTORALE* (Duclos) «Due coristi di contralto - Se cantate in stile magico»
E *PERGAMO DI PERLE* (Duclos) «Soprano av. 40»

Disco da 25 cm. - L. 22.—
C *SON. LUDIA DI LAMMERMOOR* (Duclos) «Soprano nel costume»
E *LUDIA DI LAMMERMOOR* (Duclos) «Duetto sopra di voce»

Soprano
Cesarina Vastola
Disco da 30 cm. - L. 30.—
F 12024 *SOMMI* (Puccini) «Atto di scena 18» - «Sommis» (Puccini) «Duetto 4to att.»

Disco da 25 cm. - L. 22.—
C *SON. MANON LESCAUT* (Puccini) «1o atto 20» - «MANON LESCAUT (Puccini) «1o atto 20»



INCISIONE ELETTRICA SENZA FRUSCIO

Maestro
Willy Ferrero
«100 Professori del Teatro della Scala componenti l'Orchestra Italiana Homocord»
Disco da 30 cm. - L. 30.—
F 12025 *BARBARA* (Mascagni) «Finale»
MANON LESCAUT (Puccini) «Intermezzo Atto III»

Eduardo Bianco
«100»
Orchestra Argentina
Disco da 25 cm. - L. 18.—
A 1502 *EVGADIN* (T. Tchaik.) «Tango con ritmo sensuoso»
SEMPRE VEDI (G. Verdi) «Tango musical»

Superorchestra
"Lizzurel"
Disco da 25 cm. - L. 18.—
A 1503 *TANGO DELLA FIDELIA* (L. Leonelli) «Tango»
CAMPARE D'ORO (A. C. Campari) «Tango»

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* Signori radiomani che desiderano avere settimanalmente i programmi delle Radiotrasmissioni dei nostri Dischi sono invitati a volere fare richiesta alla nostra Sede Centrale la quale provvederà gratuitamente all'invio.

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<p>F 12021 - IL TOCAI SINE, CALABRONE di N. Rostok-Korshakoff - «Duetto» - Violoncello dell'EIAR diretto dal Maeastro Willy Ferrero.</p> <p>COVANKINA di M. P. Moscorok (InterPhonia Act. IV) - «Violoncello Solista» dell'EIAR diretto dal Maeastro Willy Ferrero.</p> <p>F 12022 - NOTTURNO di G. Mascagni - «Parte I» Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR diretta dal Maeastro Willy Ferrero.</p> <p>NOTTURNO di G. Mascagni - «Parte II» Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR diretta dal Maeastro Willy Ferrero.</p>	<p>F 12020 - IL PRINCEPE IGOR, 1^o ed. di A. Borodin - «Cortina» - «Parte I» Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR diretta dal Maeastro Willy Ferrero.</p> <p>IL PRINCEPE IGOR, 2^o ed. di A. Borodin - «Cortina» - «Parte II» Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR diretta dal Maeastro Willy Ferrero.</p> <p>IL VALZER TRISTE di G. Schubert - «Parte I» Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR diretta dal Maeastro Willy Ferrero.</p> <p>IL VALZER TRISTE di G. Schubert - «Parte II» Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR diretta dal Maeastro Willy Ferrero.</p>
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¹⁰¹ Radio Corriere 1931 no. 36, p. 6

¹⁰² Radio Corriere 1933 no. 33, p. 8

Recordings with the EIAR orchestra, attempted chronology

In the absence of exact recording dates – some but not all can be found in Gray's catalogue¹⁰³ – I have attempted to reconstruct a chronology by collating the Radio Corriere advertisements with the Gray entries. Recording dates are from Gray when given. Some recordings advertised are not listed in Gray, while Gray lists others that do not appear in the advertisements. In addition, two short pieces issued by British Parlophone around 1938 were not advertised by Cetra and are not listed in Gray. Where two numbers are given, the first is from the Radio Corriere advertisement, the second is from Gray. I have added a few remarks about the recordings I have been able to hear.

Advertised in Radio Corriere in 1933¹⁰⁴

P 56543	RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: The Flight of the Bumble-bee (2.6.1931)
	MUSSORGSKY: Khovanschina – Act IV Prelude (2.6.1931)
P 56544	MARTUCCI: Notturmo (2-3.6.1931)
B x 27820	SIBELIUS: Valse triste

The Rimsky-Korsakov presents a brilliantly articulated, angry swarm of hornets, showing that the EIAR orchestra was quite something in those days. The Mussorgsky is long-drawn, darkly passionate with the underlying bass motif well present. Interestingly, there is less swooning portamento than in some later versions. In the Martucci, Ferrero pulls out all the romantic stops in a performance more luscious and sultry than any I know. The Sibelius is quite extraordinary in its alternation of extreme dolefulness with manic, whirling intensity. Something of the kind – but not to such an extreme – was done by De Sabata in his 1946 LPO recording. Was De Sabata influenced by Ferrero? Or was Ferrero influenced by a younger De Sabata who went to greater extremes than in later life? Interestingly, while Ferrero is sparing of portamento, he uses one very evident portamento in exactly the same place as De Sabata.

Listed in Gray with dates, not advertised in Radio Corriere

T 17004	HANDEL: Solomon - Prelude in B flat (3.8.1938)
	SCARLATTI, D: Burlesca (3.8.1938) ¹⁰⁵
BB 25046	RESPIGHI: Feste romane - L'Ottobrata (23.8.1938)

The Handel, known in English-speaking countries as the Arrival of the Queen of Sheba, goes at an infectious dance tempo with gorgeously clucking oboes and some steep dynamic shading. There is marvellous verve here. The Musica Classica set included a performance of Respighi's "Ottobrata" which is claimed to be a live recording from 3 December 1937. While it is true that Ferrero conducted this piece in Turin on that date, the recording shows no evidence of an audience present and I suspect it is really the Cetra recording. More importantly, the first part of the piece is absolutely brilliant with almost Stravinskian rhythmic drive, while the serenade is finely expressive though still maintaining a tight profile.

Issued by British Parlophone c.1938¹⁰⁶

R 2689	SCHUBERT orch. ZANDONAI: Moment Musical op. 94/3
	SCHUMANN orch. ZANDONAI: Träumerei op.15/7
E 11398	BACH orch. PICK-MANGIAGALLI: Prelude in d from BWV 539
	BACH orch. PICK-MANGIAGALLI: Prelude in E from BWV 1006

¹⁰³ Viewable at The AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM)

<http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/index.html>

¹⁰⁴ See note 57

¹⁰⁵ A note to a broadcast of this piece in Radio Corriere 1939 no. 47, p. 5 does not provide full identification, but tells us that the title "Burlesca" derives from Hans von Bülow and that the transcription for strings and wind was by Camillo De Nardis.

¹⁰⁶ Parlophone also issued the Rimsky-Korsakov Flight of the Bumble-Bee and Mussorgsky Khovanschina Prelude from 1933. I have suggested a date of 1938 because the numbers are close to those of recordings by Eileen Joyce known to have been made in 1938.

The Schubert has wonderful delicacy and grace. It is caressed without disturbing the gently lolloping accompaniment. Not many performances on the piano are as good as this. I'm not sure if the *Träumerei* arrangement is so successful, perhaps because the music itself is less amenable to transportation. Schumann's inwardness is nevertheless conveyed with tender phrasing and no lugubrious exaggeration. String portamentos are incredibly few for the date. The first of the Bach transcriptions is gravely drawn, the second sizzingly vital with much dynamic shading. This latter was also used as a display piece by Boult and the BBC SO as a filler to their 1933 version of Bach's Third Suite. Boult is faster still, even pell-mell, and is impatient with the rhetoric at the end. I find more real Bach in Ferrero.

Advertised in Radio Corriere in 1940¹⁰⁷

CC 2191/BB 25043	FALLA: La Vida breve – Interlude and Dance
CC 2195-6/BB 25080-1	RESPIGHI: Gli uccelli
CC 2064/BB 25042	BACH arr. PICK-MANGIAGALLI: 2 Preludes (issued by Parlophone c.1938, see above)

After a somewhat raucous beginning, the Falla Interlude turns into a very finely etched account, rich in latent, brooding passion. The Musica Classica set has what is claimed as a live performance of the Dance from 23 June 1952 by the Santa Cecilia Orchestra. It sounds like a pre-war studio recording on shellac to my ears and I have had confirmation that it is actually the Cetra recording listed here. It has plenty of the right verve.

Gli uccelli is quite wonderfully done. The opening strides in firmly without being pompous, the vivacious sections are fleet and airborne, while the slower movements are expressive without sentimental lushness. The EIAR orchestra proves once more that it was a very fine band in those days.

Advertised in Radio Corriere in 1941¹⁰⁸

CC 2246/BB 25023	FALLA: El Sombrero – Miller's Dance, Miller's Wife's Dance
CC 2247/BB 25024	TURINA: Oracion del Torero
CC 2248/BB 25085	MASETTI: Il gioco del cucù
	PIZZINI: Impressioni del vero – Strapaese
CC 2217-8/BB 25047-8	VIVALDI ¹⁰⁹ : Concerto in A RV 552 (transcribed by B. Molinari), with A. Gramegna, E. Giaccone (violins) (25.5.1940)
	VIVALDI: Concerto op. 8/4 "Winter" – 2nd movement), A. Gramegna (violin)
CC 2215/BB 25083	PIZZETTI: La Pisanella – Sul molo del porto di Famagosta, La danza sparviero
CC 2203	PANNAIN: Fontane d'oltre mare
	FALLA: La Vida Breve - Dance
BB 25030	LIADOV: Kikimora (25.5.1940)

The Liadov is another Musica Classica mystery. Their version is claimed as a live performance from 27 December 1937 and Ferrero conducted the work in a concert on that date. My ears tell me the same story as in the Respighi *Ottobrata* and the Falla *Vida Breve* dance, and I believe it is the Cetra recording. Ferrero shows himself again a vivid colourist and story-teller. He distils a suitably sinister atmosphere at the beginning and crackling – but still sinister – vitality from the final section. The Falla *Sombrero* pieces appear on the Musica Classica set in performances stated to be from a live broadcast of 25 November 1953. This time, their dating deserves the benefit of the doubt and I will discuss them under post-war recordings. Unfortunately, I have not heard anything else from this batch, which includes some interesting repertoire.

¹⁰⁷ Radio Corriere 1940 no. 27, p. 2 and no. 47, p. 17

¹⁰⁸ Radio Corriere 1941, no. 43, p. 7 and no. 44, p. 6

¹⁰⁹ Identification of the concerto, transcription and soloists from Gianluca Tarquinio, *La diffusione dell'opera di Antonio Vivaldi attraverso le fonti sonore: la discografia a 78 giri*:

http://old.cini.it/uploads/assets/ATTI_VIVALDI_marzo_2010/26-Tarquinio.pdf. Tarquinio gives the date as 1942.

Advertised in Radio Corriere in 1942

CB 2008-9/BB 25019-20	RAVEL: Bolero
CB 20004/BB 25016	FALLA: El Amor Brujo – Pantomime, Ritual Fire Dance
CB 20002/ BB 25014	DEBUSSY: Nocturnes – Fêtes (11.2.1942)
CB 20003	STRAUSS, J: Waltzes (arr. Ferrero)
BB 25095	MARTUCCI: Novelletta, op. 82 (25 & 28.5.1942) ¹¹⁰

As with the *Sombrero* excerpts, I will suppose the Musica Classica versions of the Falla to be from a 1954 broadcast, as claimed. Their Debussy, though, I think must be the Cetra recording, for all the same reasons as before. It is very fast, a brilliant, euphoric performance with coursing vitality. The ending is properly atmospheric.

Listed in Gray with dates, not advertised in Radio Corriere

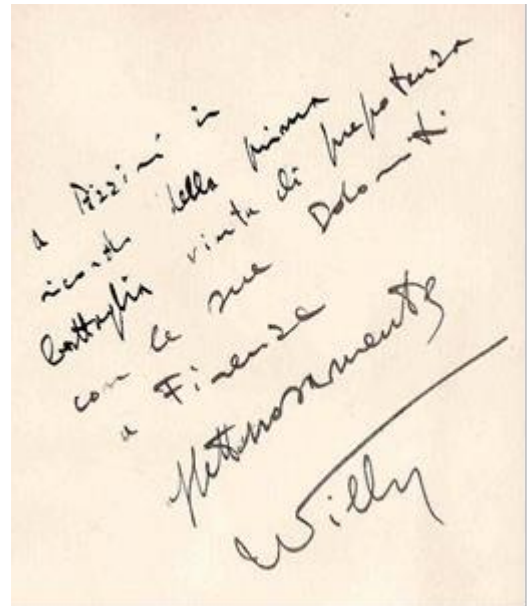
BB 25137-41	RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: Scheherazade (10, 11, 12 & 17.5.1943)
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This Scheherazade was set down in three days shortly after a performance the orchestra gave at the Teatro La Fenice of Venice. More than the postwar Brahms 4, it shows that Ferrero's approach at its freest could nevertheless keep in sight the overall shape of what is virtually a big romantic symphony. Some parts go faster than I have ever heard, some slower, yet Ferrero switches from one to another with complete ease. Only the love theme in the third movement is slow enough to risk stickiness, though the unanimously executed rubato keeps it afloat. The finale is unusually slow, but very clear and vital. The orchestra plays very well and the violin soloist, Armando Gramegna¹¹¹, is a fine player.

So, 1943 recording quality apart, one of the best *Scheherazades*? Unfortunately, it can only be taken as evidence that Ferrero could have given us one of the best *Scheherazades*. A timing of just over 38 minutes will set various alarm bells ringing – 43-45 is more normal. The first two movements are complete, but a substantial section is omitted from both the other two – enough to have required another full 78 side in each case. This is a work that properly required twelve sides but, as the record numbers above show, it was allowed only ten. We will charitably suppose that Ferrero did not chop the work down in concert¹¹² – evidently wartime conditions obliged Cetra to impose a limit of five discs.

Ferrero and contemporary composers

Ferrero conducted a wide range of music by contemporary composers – of a certain kind. From the broadcast concerts in Appendix 1, and from the Santa Cecilia concerts listed in Appendix 4, the names emerge in his pre-war concerts of Enrico Cagna (?-?), Pietro Calabrini (1897-?), Ezio Carabelli (1891-1964), Valentino Caracciolo (1908-1989), Riccardo Castagnone (1906-1983), Pietro Ferro (1903-1960), Orazio Fiume (1908-1976), Sandro Fuga (1906-1994), Alberto Gasco (1879-1938), Stefano Gibilaro (?-?¹¹³), Roberto Imperatori (?-



¹¹⁰ Gray lists another recording of this piece, also with the EIAR orchestra, on the Tono label, dated 10.12.1946 (X 25095). The EIAR had been transformed into the RAI in 1944, so the date or the orchestra must be mistaken.

Presumably this is a reissue of the 1942 recording.

¹¹¹ Identified in Radio Corriere 1945 no.3 pp. 2 and 18

¹¹² The listing for the live broadcast in the Radio Corriere (1943 no. 18) supports this. The concert began at 20.45. The first part consisted of a Vivaldi concerto and Scheherazade, with the interval to take place at approximately 21.45. This is compatible with an uncut Scheherazade.

¹¹³ Gibilaro was 23 when Ferrero performed his *Largo*, cf. Il Giornale d'Italia, 28 January 1930.

?¹¹⁴), Angelo Francesco Lavagnino (1909-1987), Achille Longo (1900-1954), Luigi Malatesta (?-?), Enzo Masetti (1893-1961), Giulio Pachetti (?-?), Mario Peragallo (1910-1996), Goffredo Petrassi (1904-2003), Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968), Carlo Alberto Pizzini (1905-1981), Renzo Rossellini (1908-1982), Giuseppe Savagnone (1902-1984), Giulio Cesare Sonzogno (1906-1976), Guido Spagnoli (1896-1963), Gianluca Tocchi (1901-1992), Vincenzo Tommasini (1878-1950), Antonio Veretti (1900-1978) and Riccardo Zandonai (1883-1944), After the war, he conducted a work by Casella and made a notable attempt to resuscitate the reputation of the tragically short-lived Donato Di Veroli – his Moscow performance of the *Tema e Variazioni* is discussed below. All these pre-war composers, with the obvious exceptions of Petrassi, Pizzetti and the older figures of Tommasini and Zandonai, have fallen into a black hole so deep that it is difficult even to know what sort of music they wrote. Comments scattered here and there in the Radio Corriere suggest they were mostly of a romantic or impressionist cast. Many of them were pupils of either Alfano or Respighi. Post-war, their music was held to be no longer relevant and only Pizzetti has remained with us, up to a point. This obviously says nothing about whether their music was good or not, of its kind. As discussed previously, Ferrero's last Santa Cecilia programme¹¹⁵ included Pizzini's *Strapaese*. The dedication above was placed on the concert programme of 14 January 1940, at which Ferrero had conducted Pizzini's *Poema dei Dolomiti*.

As we have seen, *Strapaese* was given in response to a letter from Alessandro Bustini, President of Santa Cecilia, but Pizzini himself may have been behind the request. He was, after all, a member of the Academy and, pre-war, had been prominent in their concert programmes, yet nothing of his had been played there since Jean Martinon conducted *Al Piemonte* in 1949. Pizzini could be forgiven if he felt a little peevish, though worse was to come. His name did not appear in a Santa Cecilia season again until 1962, when Massimo Freccia revived *Strapaese* – all five-and-three-quarter minutes of it. Pizzini maintained a tenuous presence over the following decade, but no work of his has been heard at a Santa Cecilia concert since 1972. As the dates above show, it was the fate of many of the modern Italian composers championed by Ferrero in the Thirties and early Forties to survive into the post-war epoch, often by several decades, only to see their work fall into total oblivion. The British are wont to lament the neglect of their native composers, but in truth, British composers appear almost privileged compared with all but a handful of Italian opera composers. There was no Italian equivalent to Richard Itter's Lyrita Recorded Edition and other initiatives in the LP era, nor has there been an Italian Music Society ready to proclaim the genius of whoever possessed the virtue of being thoroughly forgotten, or never performed at all. In a few cases, proud families may be clinging to their great-grandfathers' manuscripts against better days, a few even maintain websites¹¹⁶, but, for the most part, any conductor curious to investigate this music would quite likely find neither scores nor parts.

Petrassi is obviously a different case, since he became a leading post-war modernist. Fuga and Peragallo also embraced a more modern idiom later, but it is unlikely that the early pieces conducted by Ferrero would have caused much offence to conservative ears. Gianluca Tocchi's *Record*, though, was extreme enough to divide the public between applauders and hissers¹¹⁷. Further evidence that Ferrero was willing to embrace more extreme forms of contemporary music comes from his friendship, begun in the 1930s, with Giacinto Scelsi, whose *Rotativa* he gave in Naples in 1937. Scelsi himself recalled the occasion:

*Willy Ferrero performed my work in Naples ... Things of every kind happened during the rehearsals, and even during the performance! For example, the timpanist's stick slipped from his hand, bounced against the skin of the instrument, took splendid flight and ended up in the audience, amid great laughter*¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁴ "A young Milanese composer who died just after the armistice from a cruel disease contracted in the trenches" – S.M. in "Il Popolo di Roma", 6 June 1929. "Il Messaggero" of the same date tells us that he died aged 20.

¹¹⁵ 20 January 1954

¹¹⁶ In this, at least, Pizzini is fortunate: <http://www.carloalbertopizzini.it/>

¹¹⁷ Alberto Savinio, review reproduced in the booklet to the Musica Classica issue.

¹¹⁸ See <http://www.scelsi.it/dati/pub/41/doc/106.pdf>

Scelsi had a very high opinion of Ferrero as artist and conductor, as will be seen later.

Of the non-Italian composers, we should remember that Ravel was still a living composer in the first decade of Ferrero's mature career, Falla and Richard Strauss for a few years more, while Sibelius outlived him. Selvini insists on Ferrero's work for contemporary composers, citing Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Honegger. These names do not appear on Ferrero's broadcast programmes, and only sporadically in those of Santa Cecilia. In any case, a conductor wishing to be seen as a contemporary music specialist in the early 1930s would have needed to choose works by Stravinsky more recent, or more extreme, than the Firebird Suite or the First Suite for Orchestra, and something more ambitious by Prokofiev than the two pieces from *The Love of Three Oranges*. Rather, the picture emerges of a conductor who played Weiner but not Bartók or even Kodály, who played Veprik, Khrennikov¹¹⁹, Khachaturian and the more conservative Shostakovich of the Leningrad Symphony, but did not play any more extreme works by Stravinsky, Prokofiev or Shostakovich, who once ventured into Roussel and Schmitt, but not Les Six, and who played Gershwin and – at least once – Morton Gould, but did not play Ives or Copland. A possibly more audacious choice was the *Sinfonia Technica* by the Hungarian Eugène Zador (1894-1977), of which he played a single movement with the Santa Cecilia orchestra in 1938. One contemporary work he championed post-war was Jani Christou's *Phoenix Music*, which he gave at the Maggio Fiorentino in 1950 and repeated in Moscow¹²⁰.

It should be pointed out that Italian contemporaries of the kind favoured by Ferrero did not enjoy automatic critical approval even in their day. Here is a fairly vicious piece, chosen more or less at random:

*Guido Spagnoli's Due Intermezzi say nothing beautiful and nothing new: clumsy of construction, rhetorical in expression, the most typical bad bourgeois taste can be heard flowing through them. Nor does the grey, apathetic instrumentation and the general flatness of the rhythms add any merit to the composition*¹²¹.

Ferrero's very timid attempts to investigate a little English music met with notable vituperation. Elgar's orchestration of Bach's C minor Fantasia and Fugue perhaps hardly needed to cross the channel but, for the very fact that the likes of Respighi and Pick-Mangiagalli were prone to similar operations at home, it scarcely deserved this:

*We trust that the passing of years will refine Ferrero's artistic taste, enabling him to understand what stupid barbarianisms have been perpetrated by Maestro Elgar to the detriment of Giovanni Sebastiano [sic] Bach, barbarianisms, alas, which we would not wish to witness either today or tomorrow*¹²².

A particularly trenchant arbiter of public taste was one S. M. He, too, thought little of Spagnoli's *I due pastori*, which did not "deserve the trouble Ferrero took to make them shine and achieve for them a tepid and deferential success" and, along the way, he dismissed Sibelius's *Finlandia* as a "fatuous expression of puffed-up, vainglorious eloquence"¹²³. Having duly castigated the "repellent sonorous excesses" of Elgar's Bach transcription, he spoke of three movements, *Mars, Venus and Jupiter*, from Holst's *Planets* as if the composer had done him a personal injury:

¹¹⁹ Apart from the performances in Turin and Rome listed in Appendixes 1 and 4, Ferrero also conducted Khrennikov's First Symphony in Florence, cf. Il Bargello, 21 January 1940.

¹²⁰ Nicolas Slonimsky, *New Music in Greece*, The Musical Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 1. This work does not appear in the Moscow concert list provided by Alexander Negrin, however – see Appendix 6.

¹²¹ Lavoro Fascista, 11 June 1929.

¹²² G. Rossi-Doria, *L'Italia Letteraria*, 9 February 1920.

¹²³ S.M. Popoli di Roma, 9 June 1929

Holst ... is an impressionist in his own way. With a foot in every stirrup, he leaps onto the saddle of one horse after another without concern for the age of the ride. He passes from the worst Strauss to the worst Stravinsky and does not disdain, when necessary, even our own Puccini, foraging, naturally, among the less worthy things of the lamented maestro from Lucca, such as Tosca. .. I do not know and I cannot fathom why Ferrero chose to favour this pretentious, inconclusive music. He is one of the few conductors able to understand and interpret with real genial versatility the works of our own major composers of all times and of all schools and trends. He will do well to avoid certain sudden infatuations that cannot add minimally to his fame¹²⁴.

S.M. was not alone in his distaste for Holst but, in fairness, it should be said that other reports were more sympathetic¹²⁵, one of them noting that the music sounded more attractive under Ferrero than on its sole previous outing in Italy, when Albert Coates had conducted the same orchestra. Guido Spagnoli, too, could take comfort in reading the other papers, several of which noted that his music was warmly applauded.

The three broadcast programmes Ferrero conducted in 1942-3 of concert extracts from film scores, and his post-war interest in Gershwin, imply, not so much conservatism in the academic sense, as a musical philosophy that saw salvation from the audience-unfriendliness and disintegration of most contemporary schools in a fusion of “popular” and concert music that would recreate a public for contemporary composers. Given his strong attraction towards communism and the Soviet Union, this philosophy would be consistent with that of Khrennikov and those of his ilk. But, in the absence of specific pronouncements by Ferrero himself, or any knowledge of his own few concert works, this must remain speculation.

Ferrero, film music and Luchino Visconti

The three film music programmes mentioned above predated the release of the first film in which, according to standard sources of information, Ferrero had a hand. This was *Harlem* (1943), directed by Carmen Gallone. The music was described as “coordinated and directed by Willy Ferrero, with the collaboration of Enrico Cagna Cabiati”. It is not clear who composed the music, assuming that the soundtrack contains original music at all. The fact that Ferrero had included in a concert programme a *Valzer umoresca* by Enrico Cagna – whose name sometimes appears with Cabiati added, sometimes not – reinforces the impression that Ferrero was attracted to the idea of a cross-fertilization between “popular” and classical camps.

In reality, Ferrero may have been drawn into the world of film-making earlier than this. He conducted the music for Mario Costa’s *Fontane di Roma* (1938), for example. This film, as I understand it, is a straightforward visual interpretation of Respighi’s tone-poem and would therefore enable us to hear Ferrero conducting a work that he regularly performed, but did not record. It is not unlikely that Ferrero conducted quite a few more films, and even composed the music for them, for which the music is not credited.

Why do this? Why forgo the honour? The answer to the first question is, quite simply, money. Ever since Ferrero had returned from Vienna and set up as a professional conductor, money had been a pressing matter, and from the 1940s, it became even more so. What did he do with all the money he got for conducting leading orchestras, some people will be wondering? This brings us to a general misconception that continues to this day. People who see concert artists in their evening dress – maybe their only one, pressed and pressed again for as long as it will hold together – perceive a world of glamour. They assume a “them and us” situation and, even on very provincial circuits, they vaguely suppose that the artists are getting an almighty lot of money for what they are doing. This has been true in the past, as it is true in the present, only for a very select few. If you study the biographies of the conductors prominent on the Italian concert scene – with the EIAR, with the RAI, with the Santa Cecilia and so on – you will find that most of them also taught in a *conservatorio*. This was probably not highly paid either, but it was a stable income

¹²⁴ S.M. Il Popolo di Roma, 21 January 1931.

¹²⁵ Cf. Meridiano, 20 January 1930, Il Tevere, 20 January 1930.

they could supplement with their conducting engagements. Outside the RAI, there were not many posts as permanent conductor of a symphony orchestra. Inside or outside the RAI, none came Ferrero's way. Opera houses would have had more stable jobs to offer. As far as is known, Ferrero never conducted opera in his life¹²⁶. I have found no reference to him teaching either. One supposes he decided he was not that kind of person. The fact that he obtained his diploma in Vienna might, moreover, have been a prohibitive bureaucratic stumbling-block. Only quite recently was Italy compelled, under EU regulations, to accept other European degrees and diplomas as equivalent to its own. Ferrero would quite simply not have been qualified to take a stable post in an Italian *conservatorio*.

Another source of income was films. A list of Italian conductors who directed the music for films, and in some cases composed it, involves most of the prominent conducting names of the day. Ferrero's teenage friend Previtali has 45 credits as conductor and four as composer. How much honour they saw in it was another matter. I once had a conversation with the son of Alberto Paoletti, a once esteemed but now forgotten opera conductor who averaged a film a year over twenty years, and he assured me his father regarded the activity as a pure money-spinner, attaching no artistic importance to it. This does not prove that Ferrero saw it this way, but it provides a possible reason why the composer/conductor of a film score might be more happy than not to pocket the money and remain anonymous.

Further opportunities for uncredited film work came when, after the fall of Fascism, the Italian film industry got busy dubbing foreign films. I owe, again, to Paoletti's son the information that foreign movies, at any rate low budget ones, would arrive for dubbing with words and music on a single soundtrack, so once the foreign words had been removed for dubbing by Italian actors, the music had gone too. Rather than record the original score all over again, it was usually cheaper to get some low-paid local hack to provide a new score, or else just use bits and pieces by classical composers. I have actually seen an Italian release of *49th Parallel* with a wretched score that was certainly not by Vaughan Williams, and another film – I forget which – accompanied throughout by scraps of Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen*, which had not yet been written when the film was released in its original language. This does not prove that Ferrero conducted or composed any of these rehashed film scores, but in most cases we do not know who did, and it meant money for someone.

According to standard reference books, nonetheless, Ferrero has been credited with providing original music for just one film. This is *La terra trema*, directed by Luchino Visconti and issued in 1948. The full description at the beginning of the film is "Musical comment coordinated by L. Visconti and W. Ferrero, conducted by Willy Ferrero, assistant Maestro Micucci". The film itself is well known and has been widely commented, so I will limit myself to the musical aspect.

The most striking thing, in truth, is the extent to which Visconti has the action underpinned by no music at all. Various tolling church bells, snatches of presumably Sicilian popular song sung by the non-professional actors, a wheezy clarinet attempting Bellini, again played by one of the actors, and a mouth organ during the tavern scenes are presumably the parts coordinated by Visconti himself. After a brief opening orchestral flourish, we are more than fifty minutes into the film before some actual composed music is heard. It is a tiny fragment, over almost before it has begun. That is the pattern thereafter. There are long sequences with no music – often with visuals that, by stock Hollywood or Pinewood standards seemingly cry out for luscious musical accompaniment. Then another snippet, usually used to underpin the hero

¹²⁶ All sources but one agree that Ferrero never conducted opera. However, the conductor and composer Pier Luigi Urbini (1929-2003), speaking on the film *Io ricordo Willy Ferrero* by Paolo Isaia, recalls playing in an opera under Ferrero, he thought it was *La Traviata*, at an open-air theatre in Cagliari – "with excellent singers and he was *bravissimo*". Urbini performed as a solo violinist from 1949 until he took up conducting so was presumably gaining orchestra experience while still a student around 1946-9. The doubt remains that Urbini was confusing his memories with another conductor, but it is just possible that Ferrero decided to give opera a try, choosing a location where he would not be under close scrutiny. A snippet from Isaia's film can be seen on YouTube.

'Ntoni's developing states of mind. Only one musical sequence extends to a minute or so. Placed end to end, I doubt if there are five minutes of music in the entire film.

This, clearly, is how Visconti wanted it. For anyone hoping to get a glimpse of Ferrero as a composer, it is all the more frustrating in that what we hear is actually rather interesting. Ferrero proves a master of bittersweet, attenuated atmospheres, with sensitive use of solo instruments, attractive melodic lines underpinned by piquant countermelodies and almost Mahlerian harmonies. It would have been nice to add a section to this article on Ferrero the composer – his compositions include a symphonic poem *Il mistero dell'aurora*, a double fugue for large orchestra and chamber music. Since his fragmentary contribution to this film is all I have to go on, I can only say that the style sounds promising, but I have no idea of his ability to extend and develop it beyond a single paragraph.

As fully documented conductor of other composers' scores, Ferrero contributed to nine films from 1947 to 1951:

- *Natale al Campo 119* (1947), directed by Pietro Francisci, music by Angelo Francesco Lavagnino
- *Miracolo a San Gennaro* (1948), short documentary directed by Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras, music by Roman Vlad
- *Romantici a Venezia* (1948), short documentary directed by Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras, music by Roman Vlad
- *Isole nella laguna* (1948), short documentary directed by Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras, music by Roman Vlad
- *Ladri di biciclette* (1948), directed by Vittorio De Sica, music by Alessandro Cicognini
- *Fabiola* (1949), directed by Alessandro Blasetti, music by Enzo Masetti
- *Il cielo è rosso* (1950), directed by Claudio Gora, music by Valentino Bucchi
- *La strada buia* (1950), directed by Marino Girolami (English language version *Fugitive Lady* directed by Sydney Salkow), music by Victor Diamante
- *Othello* (1951), directed by Orson Welles, music by Angelo Francesco Lavagnino and Alberto Barberis¹²⁷

I have not attempted to follow all these up. *Ladri di biciclette* is, of course, a classic of Italian post-war film.

Ferrero also had a few theatrical adventures with Luchino Visconti. In June 1949, he conducted the music for a production of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* in the Giardini di Boboli in Florence. One hopes it was sufficiently successful to make amends for a debacle earlier that same year. On 9 April 1949, at the Teatro Quirino of Rome, the doors had opened on Vittorio Alfieri's *L'Oreste*, lavishly staged to celebrate the bicentenary of the dramatist's birth and also as a vehicle for Vittorio Gassman. It failed completely to attract the public. To the daily cost – for fifteen days – of 150,000 liras due to the company were added a further quarter of a million due to Willy Ferrero and the Santa Cecilia Orchestra, called upon to fill the "thousands of pauses" inserted in the play¹²⁸, and over two million to transform the stage. Costumes for the leading actors, replete with precious silks and gold, cost upwards of half a million each. By the second evening, takings were below 300,000 liras. By the fifth, the paying public was down to double figures. Visconti's loss was reckoned above 15 million liras¹²⁹, though it was partly offset by a state subvention of 12 million¹³⁰.

¹²⁷ Some reference books credit the conducting to Franco Ferrara. The closing credits clearly name Willy Ferrero. This film exists in two versions, however. The original, in which the music was conducted by Ferrero, was thought lost and a new soundtrack was recorded. To the chagrin of Livigno's widow, the music was reconstructed from a copy of the first version instead of using Livigno's own score, which she possessed and would have lent if she had been asked. Later, the original version came to light and was re-released.

¹²⁸ From another source we learn that the music was all adapted from Beethoven.

¹²⁹ The zeros on the old Italian lira were confusing. After the Bretton Woods agreement of 21 September 1949, 1 US dollar equalled 625 liras. So Visconti's estimated loss amounted to 24,000 US dollars. At this same date – the pound

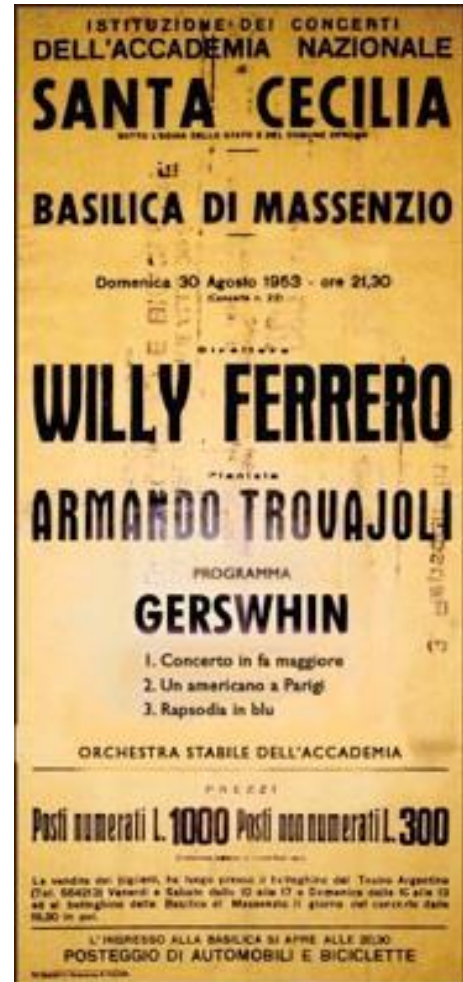
The post-war years

The conductor Massimo Pradella believed that Ferrero's conducting appearances had been interrupted during the war. He attributed this to Ferrero's double Italian-American citizenship¹³¹. Independently, Sorel also stated to Negrin his belief that this was so. Appendixes 3 and 4 show that there were no Santa Cecilia concerts in 1943 and no EIAR appearances in 1944, but hardly testify to a complete hiatus. It is not difficult to imagine the authorities taking a dim view of the American passport. In order to assess any impact it had on Ferrero's wartime career, though, it would be necessary to have more information on his appearances, if any, with other Italian orchestras in these years. It would also be necessary to measure his Santa Cecilia and EIAR engagements against the level of activity these bodies were maintaining during the difficult war years.

As has already been said, Ferrero's broadcast appearances certainly became less frequent after the war. His last appearance at La Scala was in 1945. His tour of northern and central Italy with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra in 1946 was described as "triumphal" by Augusto Frattani, though according to Selvini the press comments were disappointing. Nevertheless, he continued to conduct this orchestra and further engagements were already on the concert calendar at the time of his death on 23 March 1954.

While for Massimo Freccia, Ferrero's post-war public was merely a "nostalgic following"¹³², strong evidence that Ferrero was not a spent force comes from a **Gershwin** concert he gave with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra and the pianist **Armando Trovajoli** on 13 August 1953. This lucky survival, issued on CD in 2011 (RaiTrade RTP 0253), offers fair sound for the date. Trovajoli (1917-2013) was a major figure in Italian light music and a prolific composer of film scores. His second wife was the actress Anna Maria Pierangeli – "Pier Angeli" to English-speaking film goers and unforgettable in *The Angry Silence*. They had a son but their marriage failed after only a few years. Trovajoli proves to be a brilliant pianist, with a dry, slightly brittle but not hard touch and fabulous fingerwork. There is some notable trumpeting and the clarinet launches **Rhapsody in Blue** splendidly. The ease with which Ferrero and the orchestra swing Gershwin becomes more understandable when we remember that Ferrero conducted many film scores and the individual members of the orchestra doubtless frequently moonlighted in the Rome film studios. The conductor Massimo Pradella recalled that, after leaving the Santa Cecilia Orchestra, "I was part of an extraordinary orchestra made up entirely of soloists (some of them famous) which did work for films and a few special events"¹³³. Ferrero was among those who conducted this orchestra and, as will be related below, it was through this ensemble that Pradella came to know Ferrero and made his own first steps as a conductor.

The **Piano Concerto** has dash and passion without either overdoing it or trying to make it classical. The finale is whisked off with an insouciance that matches Gershwin's own truncated version – and is much



had been devalued on 19 September 1949 – this was equivalent to 8,571 pounds sterling. These figures would have been different in April 1949, but I have not found data with which to make a proper calculation.

¹³⁰ Reported in <https://alla-ricerca-di-luchino-visconti.com/oreste-di-vittorio-alfieri-1949/>

¹³¹ Letter from Massimo Pradella to Alexander Negrin.

¹³² Freccia, *ibid.*

¹³³ Pradella, *ibid.* Pradella was a violinist in the Santa Cecilia Orchestra from 1945 to 1950.

better pianistically. Funnily enough, the two best versions of this concerto might both be by Italian pianists – the other being Sergio Fiorentino, backed by the London Philharmonic under one-time jazz violinist Hugo Rignold. The slow movement opens with mournful passion under Ferrero. Under Rignold it swings more poetically, but swing it does – Catfish Row basking under the noontide sun.

On their own, Ferrero and the orchestra turn in a gorgeous **American in Paris** – hear them zip into the beginning. Yet there is something more Roman than Parisian about it, including the impatient taxi-horns. I seemed immediately to see Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn scooting around the Coliseum in *Roman Holidays*.

The Rhapsody is dashing fast at times – Trovajoli's and Ferrero's burnups make even Gershwin himself and Paul Whiteman sound like old fuddy-duddies. It left me a little breathless. Yet where else, except from Gershwin and Whiteman, will you hear the "big tune" forging ahead without a trace of sticky sentimentality? Taken as a whole, this is one of the great Gershwin records.



The Musica Classica CD set managed to include a few items from Ferrero's post-war work for the RAI, all with the Turin orchestra. I am not convinced, though, by their claims, doubtless made in good faith, that these are live performances. One, **Ravel's Bolero**, was issued officially on an Extended Play Cetra disc (EPO 0304) as a tribute to Ferrero after his death. The date given is 24 September 1953. Also from this same date, and included in the Musica Classica CDs, is the **Second Suite** from **Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloë"**. The Radio Corriere shows that these two pieces – just these, not a whole concert – were broadcast on 24 November 1953, with no pretence that they were live. There is, in fact no hint of an audience present during any of these performances and they all finish with natural reverberation and no applause.

The clarity of the dawn rustlings at the beginning of the Ravel *Daphnis* Suite is remarkable, as is also the sense of line, given the age of the recording and a less than first rate orchestra. However, Ferrero does not seem at his most inspired here and the great crescendo is a touch laboured in its build up. Nor does the *Pantomime* entirely take wing and the *Danse générale* again favours clarity over euphoric splurge – the secret of this music should surely be to obtain both.

These same characteristics are more suited to *Boléro*. At 16:03, this is virtually identical in pacing to Ravel's own controversially slow performance. Just occasionally, the orchestra tries to move him on – the harp does so near the beginning and so, collectively, does the whole orchestra towards the end, but Ferrero manages to hold steady to impressive effect.

Cetra issued one further tribute to Ferrero, this time an LP (LPU0035). It contained five Falla dances, Liadov's *Kikimora*, Debussy's *Fêtes* and Respighi's *L'Ottobrata*. All these are included on the Musica Classica set. I have already noted that the Dance from **Falla's La Vida Breve** is not, as they claim, a live performance by the Santa Cecilia Orchestra, but the pre-war EIAR version. I have also queried their dating of the Liadov, Debussy and Respighi pieces and have discussed the performances above. I wondered about their other **Falla** offerings – the **Miller's Dance** and the **Miller's Wife's Dance** from *El sombrero de tres picos* and the **Ritual Fire Dance** and **Pantomime** from *El amor brujo*, since Ferrero recorded all of these extracts pre-war with the EIAR orchestra. But I will give these the benefit of the doubt. The Radio Corriere certainly shows that, on 12 January 1954, a Falla programme was broadcast, consisting of these pieces and "Nights in the

Gardens of Spain”, in which the pianist was Ermelinda Magnetti. Musica Classica, however, give the date as 25 November 1953. The 1954 broadcast was given at 22.15, so it was clearly not live. It appears, then, RAI had Ferrero set down some repertoire in the studio on various dates for future broadcasting. He proves an ideal conductor of this repertoire, combining taut rhythm with pliant, flexible phrasing and a steep dynamic range suggesting suppressed violence. The Ritual Fire Dance makes its point without undue haste.

Also studio-made is the recording of **Beethoven’s First Symphony**, dated 25 September 1953, the day after the Ravel pieces. The Radio Corriere search function shows that no performance of this symphony conducted by Ferrero was broadcast post-war at all. Evidently, RAI recorded it, archived the tapes and then never got round to broadcasting it. It therefore remained unheard until issued in the Musica Classica CDs.

This is all the more odd when the performance is a very good one, steering an unerring path between Haydnesque buoyancy, Mozartian grace and Beethovenian drive. The second movement is slowish but poised, the last two fast but not excessively so. Repeats are given in the outer movements. On this showing, Ferrero was a vital and perceptive interpreter of the classical repertoire. The general transparency of the textures lays bare an occasional raggedness, especially in the first movement, though in general the orchestra plays finely.

If Ferrero was struggling to keep his head above water in the complicated Italian post-war musical scene, he had a renewed warm welcome in Poland and the Soviet Union.

His return to Poland was, in the first instance, an unscripted affair. The story is told by Giuliano Pajetta, a leading member of the Italian Communist Party and a Member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, during a parliamentary session commemorating Ferrero on 25 March 1954.

I wish to recall a gesture made by Willy Ferrero on the eve of the World Peace Council Congress, which was to have been held in England. He was doubtful and undecided as to whether to take part in an event of this kind. However, when he heard that the British government had forbidden the congress and that it would be held in Warsaw, he resolved to attend, thereby expressing his protest as a free man¹³⁴.

Ferrero’s presence made it possible for him to renew acquaintance with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, which he had conducted several times before the war, in a concert held on 23 November 1950. Or maybe a Warsaw Philharmonic date was dangled before him as an incentive to attend the Congress – who can say now? Either way, he was invited back for further concerts on 8, 9 and 10 June 1951.

A word should be said about the British government’s “ban” on the Congress of the World Peace Council, an organization whose laudable aims failed, at least in those years, to distinguish between peace and *Pax Sovietica*. The Congress was to have been held in Sheffield. Technically, it was not banned, but the British government of the day considered the movement, in the words of the Prime Minister, a “bogus forum of peace with the real aim of sabotaging national defence” and clipped their wings by imposing a “reasonable limit” on foreign delegates. Those not granted visas to attend included the President of the WPC, Frédéric Joliot-Curie and, among musicians, Dimitri Shostakovich. One wonders whether Ferrero would have been allowed to attend, but probably his American passport would have eased his entry. In total, the “reasonable limit” reduced prospective attendees from two thousand to a mere five hundred, about half of whom were British subjects anyway. Hence the move to a terrain more congenial to peace as the WPC conceived it.

It should be noted that the British Prime Minister in question was not the “warmonger” and rabid anti-Communist Churchill, but Clement Attlee. Attlee’s Labour government was by now teetering towards its

¹³⁴ Italian Parliamentary proceedings, 25 March 1954.

last gasp. It had just been re-elected with a wafer-thin majority that made new elections inevitable within the following year, so perhaps felt there was electoral advantage to be gained from a hard line.

Ferrero's Russian concerts, from which the photograph below derives, are listed in Appendixes 5 and 6. They were recorded and Melodiya later issued two LPs dedicated to "Willy Ferrero in Moscow":



D-010601

MUSSORGSKY: Khovanschina – Act IV Interlude (27 May 1951)

LIADOV: Kikimora (7 March 1952)

STRAUSS, R: Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils (24 May 1951)

MOZART: Symphony no. 34 – 1st movement (7 March 1952)

ROSSINI: Il signor Bruschino – Overture (24 May 1951)

STRAUSS, J: Valzer-Fantasia (24 May 1951)

D-031685

BEETHOVEN: Coriolan (5 February 1952)

SIBELIUS: Valse triste (27 May 1951)

VERDI: I Vespri Siciliani . Overture (24 April 1951)

DEBUSSY: Fêtes (19 April 1951)*

STRAUSS, R: Don Juan (24 April 1951)

As can be seen from the concert list in Appendix 6, orchestral honours were divided between the USSR Symphony Orchestra and the Large Symphony orchestra of the All-Union Committee of Radioinformation. The items contained on the second of these LPs can currently be heard on Emilio Pessina's YouTube channel. This channel, which also contains the entire content of the Musica Classica CDs, has made available the following live items with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra:

MARTUCCI: Novelletta (12 February 1952)

MUSSORGSKY: Khovanschina – Act IV Interlude (15 February 1952)

RAVEL: Boléro (17 May 1951)

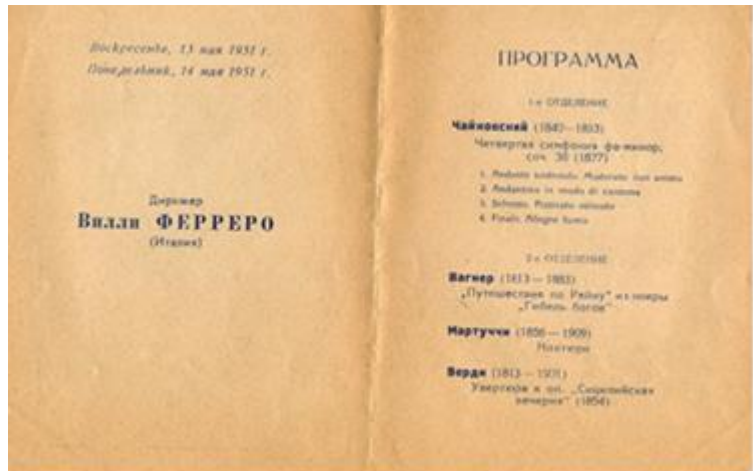
STRAUSS, R: Till Eulenspiegel (15 February 1952)

WAGNER: Götterdämmerung: Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey (13 May 1951)

Much more recently, in 2011, some further Moscow material was issued on SMCCD 0107. This is still available. The items are:

- BRAHMS: Symphony no. 4 (27 May 1951)
- MARTUCCI: Notturmo (29 April 1951)
- DI VEROLI, Donato: Tema e variazioni (27 April 1951)

The CD states that the USSR State Symphony Orchestra plays throughout, but the Martucci is actually played by the Large Symphony orchestra of the All-Union Committee of Radioinformation.



As can be seen from Appendixes 5 and 6, there were nine concerts in Leningrad (four programmes with replicas) and seven in Moscow (all different programmes). Even allowing for some repetition of repertoire, it looks as if other significant material could emerge, such as the Tchaikovsky Fourth Symphony from the programme above.



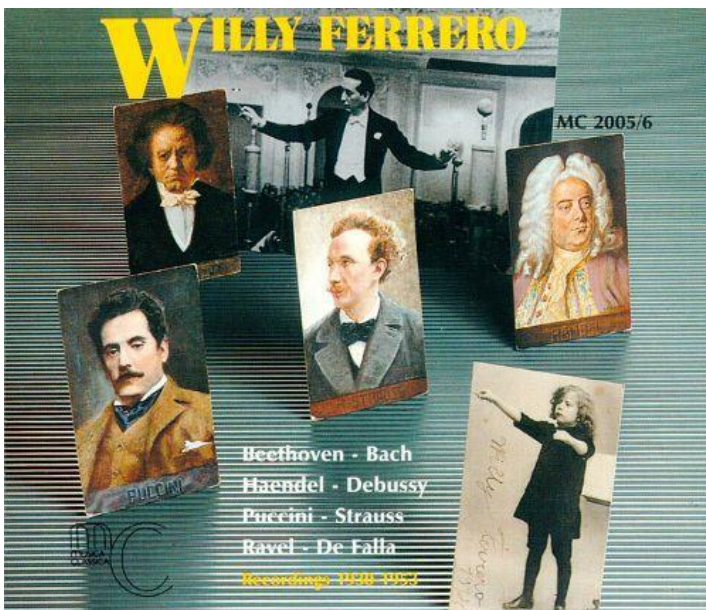
The first of the Melodiya discs opens with an intimate, delicately shaded version of the *Khovanschina* Interlude. There is a feeling of repressed tension, interrupted only by the harshly jangling bells.

In *Kikimora*, perhaps the very ease with which acres of Russian gloom could be extracted from the Moscow orchestra led Ferrero to over-egg the pudding in the first part. As the music gains momentum, he assays some wayward characterization similar to that of his Leningrad *Till* – see below. But Liadov hasn't the same weight and substance as Richard Strauss and the simple but vivid story-telling of the pre-war EIAR version seems preferable. If you want to hear the fairy tale with a dimension of psychological depth, you should hear Jonel Perlea's Vox version. This is followed by a suitably lurid *Dance of the Seven Veils*, culminating in violent passion.

What a pity the LP contained only the first movement of the Mozart symphony. Clear, transparent textures and elegant phrasing suggest at the outset that this will be pretty well ideal Mozart. Maybe it is – depending on what you expect or allow in Mozart. After the festively joyful opening, the tempo slackens and the second group goes at a considerably slower tempo. In itself, the phrasing is beautifully poised. Later, in minor episodes, the tempo slows yet further. Anyone hearing these single moments in isolation would surely find this beautifully expressed Mozart. Here we are in territory similar to that occupied by the Tibor Paul performances I have discussed in this series. Each theme has its own tempo and the structure is shaped dramatically rather than according to symphonic logic. As with the Paul performances, here is a rare example of how such an approach can be completely convincing. You are left wondering if our ideas about classical interpretation need overhauling.

After an uncertain beginning, *Il signor Bruschino* is turned with a Mozartian grace that does not preclude the necessary Rossinian cheekiness. The recording is good by the standards of these Russian retrievals.

More than a “Fantasy”, the Johann Strauss is a switch of favourite tunes. It is presumably the same selection as that recorded by Ferrero pre-war for Cetra and announced as the work of Ferrero himself. It will be a headache for those who, like me, remember the tunes and the titles but cannot remember which goes with which. Apart, obviously, from *The Blue Danube*, which begins and ends the selection, and *Die Fledermaus* which bounces in near the end. A sequence like this might have been an opportunity to pop in a few good tunes from the little-known waltzes, but I do not think there was anything here I did not know. Ferrero often obtains a remarkable lilting grace from his Russian players, but at other times he lays on the schmaltz and the gags with a trowel.



The second Melodiya LP opens with a tense and dramatic *Coriolan*, played with real conviction. The tempo is well judged to allow both fire and breadth. Just a few points suggest an interpreter who had learnt his trade between the wars. The second theme is introduced by a notable *rallentando*, though the tempo picks up when the theme enters. This second theme is, however, introduced at a slower tempo in the coda, which is given the character of an epilogue, further winding down in the last few bars.

Anyone who thought the pre-war EIAR *Valse triste* exaggerated might prepare themselves for it by listening to this, after which the EIAR version will sound quite reasonable. Extremes of dolefulness and extremes of whirling

intensity have transformed into extremes of tragedy and hysteria that the music can barely support.

The Verdi overture gets a tense, brilliant, passionate and brassy performance – the latter being the only negative aspect. It lacks, perhaps, the sense of generosity, of humanity, that can be released from Verdi’s melodies with a less uptight approach.

At 6:22 compared with 5:51, the Moscow *Fêtes* has notably more space than the EIAR version. It has a wonderful clarity as well as greater poetry and no lack of verve. The cutting edge of the Moscow trumpets only adds to the excitement.

Ferrero plunges into *Don Juan* like a man possessed – and carries the orchestra with him. This is a pretty free performance with wild extremes. The lovemaking is as erotic as you are likely to hear, while the Don is painted as a swashbuckling figure, aflame with fire and passion.

Turning to the Leningrad performances, in the Martucci *Novelletta* Ferrero again plumbs unusual emotional depths in this composer. After a saturated, decadent opening, he sets an unusually slow tempo, avoiding – deliberately I suppose – the easy lolloping grace of most other interpreters. His tempo creates some coordination problems with the oboe, who tries to move on to a more natural tempo – and indeed, Ferrero allows the tempo to increase a little. He nevertheless extracts a degree of Mahlerian anguish from the music that it does not normally appear to have – and the climax is capped by a trumpet such as only Leningrad or Moscow could have provided. The recording by Francesco Mander and the Milan Angelicum Orchestra presents the music as a string of painful yet interior, almost Proustian memories. Ultimately, I prefer this, but Ferrero gives an interesting demonstration of how much raw emotion can be drawn from Martucci.

The Leningrad performance of the *Khovanschina* Interlude is by no means a rerun of the Moscow one – or of the pre-war EIAR one for that matter. It is much more overtly passionate, with the Leningrad strings digging in strongly. There is more emotion but less atmosphere. In part, this is also because the recording is closer and the pitch is a little higher, but I think this only emphasizes something that is already there. My favourite of the three is the Moscow version, but it is interesting to have a demonstration of how Ferrero's interpretations of pieces he played often could take spontaneous wing in different directions.

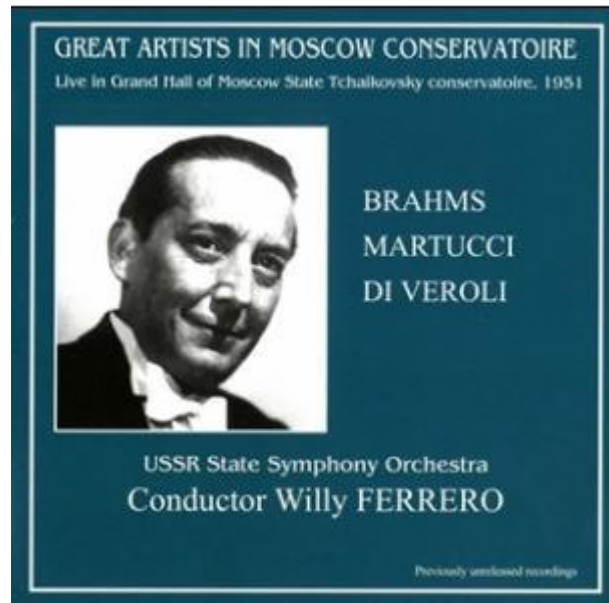
The timing of 16:04 for the Leningrad *Boléro* is virtually identical to the RAI version. Nobody in this orchestra tries to run away with the tempo – they maintain an implacable tread as if this were the advancing Nazi troops in the Leningrad Symphony. Some of the solo playing is surprisingly fallible – more so than in Turin. As explained below, the piece had previously been banned by the Soviet authorities, so it was a first time for the orchestra. There is a sheer blatancy about the later stages that rams home the message with a shocking brutality. The final mocking guffaw is among the most effective I have heard. Marginally, I prefer the Turin performance, but this has a bludgeoning, hypnotic effect all of its own.

If Ferrero's Russian performances did not always improve on his pre-war versions of the same piece, his Leningrad *Till Eulenspiegel* makes the earlier one sound like an embryo. This really is an extraordinary example of spontaneous – or so it seems – interpretative freedom that works. This *Till* truly has everything, from mercurial high spirits to deep tenderness and high drama when the miscreant is called to account. There are occasional ragged moments, but this is scarcely avoidable given the twists and turns Ferrero requires of the orchestra.

The first impression in the Wagner extracts is that I do not think I have ever heard such a barrage of unchecked, explosive coughing as greets the dark music preceding Wagner's Dawn. I am fairly tolerant of audience noise on live recordings but the suspicion here is that elements of the Leningrad public were deliberately sabotaging the performance. The second point is that, when the Dawn bursts out, the recording buckles totally under the onslaught and they really might as well be playing anything. Luckily, once Siegfried's journey gets under way, much of the music is loud enough to cover the tuberculars while not loud enough to defeat the engineers.

Having got all this out of the way, the performance is extraordinary. Not just for the tension it creates – there were other conductors around in 1951 who could create similar tension in Wagner – but for the freely changing tempi. Ferrero practically reinvents the music as we know it. How this would work over an entire opera I do not know – it was never put to the test. Taken in isolation, it is a quite remarkable example of re-creative interpretation. The orchestra is with him all the way.

The most recent CD tribute provides our only opportunity at present to hear Ferrero at work with a large-scale symphonic structure. His performance of the Brahms Fourth Symphony has many paragraphs of ideally Brahmsian warmth as well as a viscerally explosive scherzo. As with the Mozart movement, a comparison with Tibor Paul is instructive, but in this case it is not to Ferrero's advantage. In the first movement, Ferrero does not actually change his basic tempo all that much, but he has a way of rounding of paragraphs with a *ritardando*, suggesting that he sees the music as a series of mood pictures rather than a developing structure. Very oddly, the opening of the second movement is quite swift, almost a call to arms, after which the theme enters much more slowly. The second theme is slower still and, taken on their own, many entire passages are glorious. The third movement almost hurtles out of control at times – insofar as we can judge from a recording that cracks under the strain. In the finale, while Ferrero is not as monstrously invasive as Constantin Silvestri in his live Japanese performance, neither does he convince this listener, as Paul did, that he is relating all the episodes to the whole.



At first the Martucci *Notturmo* seems to stagnate – it is slightly slower than the EIAR version. As the piece proceeds, Ferrero manages to draw a rapt, almost Delian poetry from the orchestra which surpasses at least sometimes the earlier performance.

The little-known, tragically short-lived Donato De Veroli (1921-1943) needs further investigation. Apologists tell us that Mussolini's racial laws were a fairly anaemic sop intended to assuage his friend Hitler while remaining a dead letter on the domestic front. In obeisance to this comfortable view, little is said or known about those that suffered, and often died, under them. My travels through little known Italian musicians – so just in one limited field – have already come across two victims, the senior composer Leone Sinigaglia and the younger Aldo Finzi. Technically, Donato de Veroli was not a "victim", since he died by his own hand at the age of 22, but the causes of his tragic gesture, insofar as we know them, are enough to justify adding his name to the list.

De Veroli was born in Rome. A composition by the 8-year-old musician was praised by Mascagni and he entered Santa Cecilia Conservatoire at the age of 13. In 1939 he was compelled to leave – Santa Cecilia was off-limits for Jews – but was able to study at the Papal Institute for Sacred Music. He composed quite prolifically from the age of sixteen but, in the prevailing climate, achieved no public success. Ferrero befriended him, but was unable to perform anything till the political climate had changed. Too late for Di Veroli, whose death by suicide in 1943 was partly caused by his forced isolation. But it was exacerbated, it seems, by an impossible sentimental relation with the daughter of Giuseppe Mulè, head of the Conservatoire and also a fascist bigwig.

After the war, some attempt was made to investigate Di Veroli's work. Ferrero gave his piano concerto in Rome in 1947, as well as performances of the Theme and Variations, including that in Moscow. His opera *La Madre* was performed in Bergamo in 1951 and again by the RAI in 1960. So far, there has been little else.

I listened to the *Tema e Variazioni* for the first time with no knowledge of the above facts. It did not seem the work of an immature composer. Rather, it revealed a master of the orchestra. The extremely doleful character of the theme, emphasized by the typical Moscow woodwind, suggested to me a Russian composer, someone like Miaskovsky perhaps. The generally pungent post-romantic tone of most of the variations confirmed this impression – even the more Italianate penultimate variation is not allowed to

luxuriate too much. The theme is, so far as I can tell without a score in front of me, a twelve-note row, but the working out depends on shifting tonalities not on serial organization, giving an attractive modernist tweak to a basically post-romantic idiom. All this, from a composer aged around twenty, reveals remarkable confidence and mastery. It is a piece that should be regularly played in Italy, maybe elsewhere too. The performance is far from immaculate but in terms of pacing and atmosphere it can stand as a model for those that will hopefully come.

Ferrero was rapturously received by the Moscow and Leningrad audiences. Apart from his own qualities, he provided them with a breath of fresh air in the form of music they did not normally hear. I understand that he actually obtained special permission to perform *Boléro* and *Dance of the Seven Veils*, decadent offerings that were at that time banned in the Soviet Union. Ferrero's performances of *Boléro* resulted in a permanent lifting of the ban and Mravinsky recorded it in 1952. To judge from an English-language version of a Russian review¹³⁵, the experts found much to praise but also had doubts over Ferrero's handling of larger forms. The review is interesting in that it discusses two symphony performances which, though recordings may exist in the Russian archives, have so far not reached us. But first, the critic indulged in a few gentle polemics:

The progressive representatives of culture in all countries are anxious to come to the capital of our fatherland. The rulers of the capitalist countries fear to allow Shostakovich, Kabalevsky, Fadeyev, Ehrenburg, Neruda, Robeson¹³⁶ and other masters of the arts and literature to come to Washington, London, Paris or even little Brussels. But Moscow, which is dear to the hearts of workers from all over the world, receives with a warm welcome workers, poets, musicians and scientists who are the friends of peace and democracy.

Willy Ferrero's own credentials, readers were reassured, were impeccable.

The famous Italian conductor Willy Ferrero ... is an active participant in the Peace Partisans' movement and a member of the World Peace Council.

Having done his duty by the Party, the critic then got onto the musical side.

Conductor Ferrero has faultless control of his baton. He conducted the most subtle nuances of musical compositions with great artistry and skill and pleases by the temperament of his performances and his ability to create colourful, vivid images.

The various shorter pieces were briefly praised without reservation. When it came to Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, the critic showed that he was not blindly antagonistic to "new" interpretations.

The scherzo was the most interesting in a unique treatment of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. Contrary to established tradition, the conductor, by slightly retarding the tempo and skilfully stressing individual groups of stringed instruments, found many original and new moments.

The second and fourth movements were approved without detailed comment.

But the most controversial was the conductor's interpretation of the first movement, which ran counter to the composer's plan. Instead of emphasizing the great human tragedy, the groping of the human soul, Ferrero arbitrarily stressed the motifs of impotence and doom and brought out only the intimate and lyrical elements. Tchaikovsky's profoundly philosophical symphony, full of fierce

¹³⁵ Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. III, no. 15, p. 31, translating a review by Conductor Niazi, Stalin Prize Winner, Pravda, May 6, p.3.

¹³⁶ At least three of those named had been banned by the Attlee government from the proposed World Peace Council Congress in Sheffield.

struggle, dreams and joys, sounded sentimental in Ferrero's interpretation and was changed from a tremendous social canvas into a petty personal drama.

In Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, too, the critic found the scherzo "particularly successful" and generally praised the second and fourth movements. However:

The tendency to be carried away by individual, even though well executed episodes of the first movement, and the absence in the conductor's interpretation of a single, well-conceived line prevented Ferrero from conveying the composer's intentions.

Alberto Savinio had expressed, if less trenchantly, similar doubts about Ferrero's *Eroica* in the 1930s¹³⁷. We can only hope that recordings of these Moscow performances come to light. Whatever they reveal, the critic's final summing-up seems a little gratuitous:

All this is eloquent proof that our Western colleagues often get lost in musical details and are not always capable of revealing profoundly the idea of the work they are performing.

It is not entirely a coincidence, then, if Ferrero's post-war engagements outside Italy took him to the Soviet bloc rather than, say, France or Great Britain. He had already been sufficiently left-wing in the 1920s to arouse Fascist suspicions. After the war, like many western intellectuals, he embraced communism wholeheartedly. Following his attendance at the WPC Congress in Warsaw, in August 1951 he attended a communist rally in East Berlin, together with party representatives Enrico Berlinguer for Italy and Walter Ulbricht for East Germany, and such artists and intellectuals as Pablo Neruda and Raymond Diem. Overlooked on all sides by portraits of Stalin, as well as puppet images of Churchill, Eisenhower and Marshall, they spent a happy time chanting "Ami-go-home"¹³⁸. Originally, Ferrero had been expected to conduct a concert for the occasion, the orchestra being the virtuoso band described above by Massimo Pradella. Pradella himself tells the tale:

In 1951, the Youth Festival was held in East Berlin, an extraordinary event organized by the Communist Parties and extended to many protagonists of culture. The Maestro had received the high award of "Partisan of Peace" from the World Peace Organization and was engaged to organize the musical part of the Italian participation in the Festival. Those were the years of the cold war and McCarthyism ... The Maestro was to conduct a concert with us for the National Academy of Dance. One morning the Maestro's wife [sic¹³⁹] phoned me and implored me to conduct that day's long rehearsal because the Maestro was indisposed. It was a way to get the great instrumentalists of the ensemble to say what they thought of my qualities. So I went to Berlin to conduct my first concert, and when I came back they took away my passport for two years¹⁴⁰.

Communists, Italian and Soviet, were still rankling from the fact that a group of Soviet musicians, called "Florentine Music", had recently had a concert tour of Italy curtailed when the Italian authorities had rescinded their staying permits. This induced Ferrero to issue a statement.

I wish the Soviet people and Soviet musicians, whose love of Italy and whose appreciation of our culture I well know, to be informed through the columns of this newspaper that this scandalous veto is in complete contrast with the true feelings of respect and friendship that the Italians have for the Soviet peoples¹⁴¹.

¹³⁷ Savinio, *ibid*, in *Musica Classica* booklet.

¹³⁸ See Giuseppe Fiori, *Vita di Enrico Berlinguer*, Laterza 2004.

¹³⁹ Ferrero never married. Pradella is referring to the companion of his last years, Lucia Lategola. See below.

¹⁴⁰ Pradella, *ibid*.

¹⁴¹ *Berliner Zeitung*, 14 July 1951

Ferrero's one unsuccessful attempt to stand as councillor in municipal Roman elections, in 1952, was not in the ranks of the Partito Comunista Italiano, however, but in an independent left-wing list called Faro¹⁴².

In terms of personal life-style, Augusto Frattani draws a picture of Ferrero in his last years that suggests an eccentric but amiable – or *simpatico* as the Italians would say – bachelor existence.

Anyone who followed from close up the serene passage of his days at Ostia, where he created a safe haven for himself some years ago, would certainly agree that Willy Ferrero's life had its bizarre aspects. True; but bizarrerie is often congenial to the artist.

There, in fact, he was able to establish a particular rhythm of life where the impulses of his soul were not excessively tied to the common rules of living, in which spontaneity and independence were not unduly hamstrung by the confines of conventions. Whenever he could, he avoided going to Rome, remaining for long periods closed within his house, immersed in study and reading, until thrust out into the open by some basic and overpowering stimulus. He then went out alone, equipped for fishing and, looking out to the sea and sky he was able to enjoy to the full his daily need for nature, from which he drew new freshness and vitality. He was bound to no timetable: he often remained there for hours, forgetful of mealtimes, sitting on the sea wall with his legs hanging over the water, deep in thought. On other occasions, he held long conversations with other anglers.

He was able to converse with the Ostia fishermen in their local dialect¹⁴³. Other pastimes were cultivating flowers and breeding pigeons¹⁴⁴.

In the evening, jolly and welcoming, he entertained friends from Rome in his study. And inevitably, in the midst of conversations about art, he revived memories of his past years: recollections, anecdotes and episodes from his childhood humorously punctuated his conversation. And he relived, as he evoked it, the face of Massenet when the little Ferrero, aged scarcely more than four, gave his first concert at the "Trocadero" of Paris, along with the story of his concerts at the "Costanzi" and that solemn moment when Czar Nicholas, in St. Petersburg, conferred on the young conductor the decoration of Knight of the Order of St. Stanislav, adorned with enamel and gold. And then, all his memories of his travels around the world, observed with the immediacy of childlike sensibility and conserved with meticulous devotion in the heart, first of the adolescent, then of the man¹⁴⁵.

Previtali, though, found him increasingly "restless and tired" as the years passed.

He was sad, though he tried to hide his worries behind an ironic mask and could even reproduce that same smile with which, as a boy, he persuaded me to swap stamps from our collections, usually to my disadvantage¹⁴⁶.

Trovajoli added that

Willy had an extrovert character ... he always had a reserve of melancholy because he was in economic difficulty and never got any help from the Italian concert-giving world. He was serene only because he found warmth and success in Russia [Trovajoli's underlinings]¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Selvini, *ibid.* Faro means "beacon". History has little to tell us about this independent group. It appears to have stood only in Rome and only in that year, and failed to win a single councillor. See Wikipedia articles on administrative elections in Italy.

¹⁴³ Information from Alexander Negrin.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *Willy Ferrero se ne è andato*, L'Europeo, March 1954

¹⁴⁵ Augusto Frattani: Radio Corriere 1954, no. 13 pp. 12-13.

¹⁴⁶ Previtali, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Alexander Negrin visited Trovajoli, who later sent a letter, quoted here, in which he clarified certain points

Scelsi gave a still darker account:

Little by little, though, his extremely unruly lifestyle unfortunately took its toll on his performances as well as on his physique, which deteriorated continually, resulting in his untimely end¹⁴⁸.



The letter sent to Ferrero by Alessandro Bustini, President of Santa Cecilia Academy, in relation to what was to be the conductor's last concert, opens up vistas on Willy's final months that others have only hinted at.

Dear Willy,

I do not know if you are still ill and what stage your severe illness has reached. Assuming it allows you to think, see if, when you build your second programme, you could include one of the compositions by our member and friend Pizzini. I know that you were the first acclaimed interpreter of one of his best-known symphonic poems, "In Piedmont" or "Poem of the Dolomites". Returning to one of these pieces, you will take a step back in time and feel a few years younger, which can do no harm¹⁴⁹.

Most commentators have remarked upon Ferrero's increasing melancholy in his last years, and also his physical frailty. Nobody has suggested publicly that, already several months before his death, he might have been in such severe pain as to restrict his capacity to think clearly. Previtali, indeed, noted that it was "difficult to forget" Ferrero's last concert¹⁵⁰. Previtali, we noted above, was a master of the unspoken phrase. Coming at the climax of a paragraph in which encomiums were heaped upon Ferrero's performances of a range of works, Previtali certainly succeeded in giving the impression that Willy went out with a bang not a whimper. But there can be other reasons for not forgetting something. Armando Trovajoli, speaking privately to Alexander Negrin, also said he would never forget that last concert, for Willy was a mere shadow of himself, unable to do more than just go through the motions, something that he had never done in all his career. Signally, newspaper commentators limited themselves to generalized observations, plus a pat on the back for Pizzini's piece¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁸ Scelsi, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Bustini to Ferrero, 25 November 1953, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Previtali, *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Cf. *Il Messaggero*, 21 January 1954, *Il Giornale d'Italia*, 22 January 1954, *Paese Sera*, 22 January 1954.



Ever the generous friend, Previtali felt Ferrero might have been on the point of pulling through.

He was an artist whose career was on the upturn and his strenuous life, too, was gradually settling down, helped by the loving devotion of those close to him¹⁵².

“Those close to him” would have included his mother, who survived him by six or seven years and was eventually buried alongside him, and his half-sister Anna Maria. It would also have included a lady called Lucia Lategola, for this was not quite the bachelor establishment Frattani diplomatically depicted. In the early 1950s, live-in partners were not the uncontroversial norm they have since become, but there was no great secret of their liaison – Lucia is seen accompanying Ferrero to Moscow in the photo on the previous page¹⁵³. Her signature also appears on a postcard sent by Willy from Moscow to their friends back in Ostia (see above).

It is believed that the cottage actually belonged to Lucia, who willingly shared it with Willy and her cats. These latter doubtless took a close personal interest in Willy’s pigeon-breeding. The cottage has long since vanished from the townscape of Ostia, the seaside resort serving Rome and its environs. A search for its former whereabouts may start from the aerial view below, showing Ostia in the early post-war years.



¹⁵² Previtali, *ibid.*

¹⁵³ From *L’Unità*, 9 January 1952. Lucia is described as his *consorte*.

The article in *L'Unità* from which the photo of Willy and Lucia is taken describes the cottage as situated opposite the Kursaal. The address, however, was Viale Desiderata Pietri no. 13. This is not the road along the sea front but the parallel road further back, skirted by dunes and scrub to the landward side. If I have got my bearings correctly, Lucia's cottage would have been just beyond the top right of this photograph. If you go there today, you will find some sort of establishment at no. 11, the fence and number of which can be seen to the left of the street view below. There is no building at no. 13 and clearly has not been for many years. The line of trees, nevertheless, hardly seems of recent date. Probably, then, Lucia had some sort of former farmer's dwelling further back from the road.



Lucia remained unmarried for two decades after Willy's death but on 6 September 1975, in another seaside town further north, Monterosso al Mare in Liguria, she married a certain Angelo Alfieri Currarini¹⁵⁴.

A park near the seafront – “Parco Willy Ferrero” – recalls Ferrero's presence in the town. As an unwitting – presumably – tribute to Ferrero's American birth, its facilities include a baseball pitch. After long neglect, attempts have been made to restore the park in recent years – a voluntary operator can be seen at work in the photograph to the right. By a strange turn of events, given Ferrero's well-known political views, the voluntary work is being carried out by members of the neo-Fascist activist group CasaPound¹⁵⁵. Such are the contradictions of modern Italy.



An unsigned article gives an account of Ferrero's last days¹⁵⁶:

Willy Ferrero's death-agonies lasted twenty hours. Stricken by a violent haemoptysis at the beginning of last week, he was taken to a clinic in Ostia near his

¹⁵⁴ Information about Lucia Lategola provided by Alexander Negrin.

¹⁵⁵ Named after the American poet and Fascist sympathizer Ezra Pound, whose later years were spent in Italy.

¹⁵⁶ *Willy Ferrero se ne è andato*, *L'Europeo*, March 1954

cottage. With the worsening of his condition, and at the instance of Mr. Togliatti¹⁵⁷, he was moved to the Clinica Latina of Rome ... The diagnosis was immediately alarming: cirrhosis of the liver. Ferrero was optimistic nonetheless. He did not believe in this illness and joked with the nurses. On Sunday Mariella, a young guitarist, visited him and played him a few pieces. On Tuesday he was examined by Professor Frugoni who dismissed the idea of an operation in extremis. From that moment, Willy Ferrero's fate appeared to be sealed. Don Attilio, parish priest of the Chiesa della Natività, entered the room, pronouncing absolution to the dying man, anointing him with oil and imparting to him the Pope's blessing.

These last rites might seem surprising for an inveterate Communist, but Italian Communists had a way of being Roman Catholics on the side, as a sort of insurance policy. In spite of such precautions, and a death worthy of Lord Marchmain, Willy Ferrero very nearly failed to get through the heavenly gates.

Later, however, when the time came to organize the funeral, Don Attilio announced that the ecclesiastical authorities had prohibited admission into the church of the maestro's body. It is thought that this ban arose from the political ideas of which Ferrero had never made a secret. Visits and phone calls went back and forth for two days in an attempt to have this order reversed. Only at midnight on Thursday, following a personal intervention by Monsignor Montini¹⁵⁸ before the Pope, was permission granted for religious rites. After the funeral ceremony, the body was carried to the Basilica di Massenzio, where the public had so many times applauded the maestro. The coffin was placed on the rostrum, while the Academy of Santa Cecilia played Handel's Prelude, of which the maestro had made one of his finest recordings, before a public of three hundred people.

A brief video-clip of Ferrero's funeral cortège reaching the Basilica di Massenzio can be found on YouTube. Anna Maria Ferrero is clearly present. The commentator also refers to "family members", while the camera picks out an elderly woman, sitting in passive dignity, and a younger woman weeping. Probably these were his mother and Lucia. Diplomatic representatives attended from the Soviet Union, Hungary and Poland. The conductors Fernando Previtali and Vincenzo Bellezza were joined, from the wider arts world, by the film director Alessandro Blasetti and the painter Renato Guttuso. A telegram of sympathy arrived from the Soviet Composers' Union¹⁵⁹. Ferrero was buried in the cemetery of Ostia. The epitaph reads "A prodigy to the experts, a *fanciullo* to his friends".

A few final thoughts

Whatever the fascination attached to Ferrero's child prodigy career, the fact remains that we cannot actually hear any performance conducted by him before the early-mature age of about 25 – approximately the age when most conductors begin to get going. This is in line with the general pattern whereby child prodigy escapades tend to be early parentheses. Once they have run their course, there is usually a pause, after which the artist's (or mathematician's or whatever) career develops – if it does – on "normal" lines. It is therefore Willy Ferrero the "normal" conductor, whose career began in his early twenties, that concerns us now. I hope my discussion of the available recordings has made it clear that his work is of real interest, well worth seeking out. He became a highly individual artist with touches of greatness.

Yet it was not a "normal" career. For one thing, as a mature artist he seems to have been well aware of his limitations. As we have seen, he almost certainly never conducted an opera – and this in Italy! And, while there are stories of him conducting a 500-strong chorus in his prodigy years – including the *Inno al sole* from Mascagni's *Iris* at La Scala on 8 April 1917 – the only choral work he ever broadcast was Debussy's

¹⁵⁷ Palmiro Togliatti (1893-1964), Member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and Secretary of the Italian Communist Party.

¹⁵⁸ Giovanni Battista Montini, later Pope Paul VI, shortly to be canonized.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. L'Unità, 27 March 1954.

Sirènes. Indeed, the only other vocal works that show up are a Handel cantata for soprano and strings and three spirituals arranged for baritone and orchestra¹⁶⁰.

His repertoire was, moreover, remarkably narrow. Just two Mozart symphonies and none from the last three. No Schubert *Unfinished*. No Mendelssohn *Italian*. You might expect him to revel in Berlioz, but not even a *Roman Carnival*. Even within his favourites, he was picky. He repeated the *Ottobrata* movement from Respighi's *Feste Romane* again and again, but seems never to have conducted the complete work. He relentlessly plugged two dances from each of the Falla ballets but never conducted the complete scores, or even the full suites¹⁶¹. The suspicion is that, for all the ease with which the child had "learnt" scores just by listening to them a few times, the mature artist was a slow, laborious learner who tried to fill at least half of each concert with tried and trusted favourites. Moreover, he always conducted from memory. This was related to Alexander Negrin by Armando Trovajoli and is in any case borne out all photographs of Ferrero conducting in concert. We may wonder, though, if "always" really extended to concertos and isolated performances of pieces he did not expect to conduct again – in general, conductors who invariably perform their core repertoire from memory have the score in front of them in these cases. But in truth, we just do not know. As far as concertos are concerned, by his own preference he conducted precious few anyway¹⁶². The "no soloists" rule seems to have been broken mainly for his brother and for names that would have brought lustre to his own image, such as Backhaus, Vidusso, Michelangeli, Agosti, Rubinstein and De Vito.

A narrow, rigorously memorized repertoire had its plus-side where contemporary works were concerned. Modern composers, apart from a chosen few, generally have to be content to hear each new work decently sight-read once only by a radio orchestra and then shunted aside, maybe for ever. If Willy Ferrero took on a new work, he would cart it all over Italy and maybe take it to Poland or Russia as well.

Running counter to this interpretation, however, is the presence in his broadcast concerts of a number of one-offs that must have required considerable study on his part and some careful rehearsing: Roussel's Third Symphony and *Le festin de l'araignée* extracts, Schmitt's *La Tragédie de Salomé* and Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy* catch the eye. Perhaps, if we had a list of non-broadcast concerts, in addition to those with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra, we would find that he did indeed get some further mileage out of these works.

All this explains why, though he enjoyed a regular relationship with the EIAR orchestra, he could never have been considered a candidate for principal conductor. If we look at the programmes conducted in Turin by Armando La Rosa Parodi before the war and by Mario Rossi after it, these are the typical programmes of a radio conductor who is expected to make a decent job of practically anything. The fact that Ferrero could fire up an orchestra and bring an audience to its feet in *Boléro* or Falla dances in a way Parodi or Rossi could not, would not cut much ice with a broadcasting organization.

Perhaps Ferrero's big chance would have come somewhere in Europe if he had lived at least another two decades. Just possibly, too, he considered seeking it in the country of his birth. In an interview in a Portland newspaper during the 1930s he stated his intention to visit America, partly to see his birthplace and learn

¹⁶⁰ There is also some choral work in the soundtrack to *Othello*. The Santa Cecilia programme for 28 July 1944 lists a chorus, but the only work in which it could have sung is the second Daphnis suite, which is specifically stated as being for orchestra (and was so conducted by Ferrero on numerous occasions). Probably the choral listing is mistaken. In addition, Tima Club issued a private off-air recording, dated 25 January 1943, of Beethoven's *Ah, perfido*, in which Ines Alfani-Tellini was accompanied by the EIAR SO under Ferrero. The Radio Corriere for that date does not list such a broadcast, nor does a general search show any broadcast of *Ah, perfido* by Alfani-Tellini at all. There must be some doubt as to what this recording is and where it comes from.

¹⁶¹ Duty obliges me to report that the Santa Cecilia programme for 9 April 1941 lists a suite from *El Sombrero*, and that of 10 November 1948 lists a selection from the same work. On the grounds that the exception proves the rule, and in the absence of a programme leaflet stating exactly what was to be played, I suspect that he really conducted the usual two dances.

¹⁶² Alexander Negrin has had sight of a letter about forthcoming concerts from Ferrero to the Santa Cecilia authorities in which he stated that he would prefer not to have soloists.

the language, but also to hear live the great orchestras which he knew only through records. Surely the thought could not have been far from his head that the visit might produce engagements, even a permanent conductorship? However, given the political climate of the 1930s, it is likely that the visit never came off¹⁶³. He nevertheless retained American connections post-war, or at any rate traded on his American passport¹⁶⁴.

It is possible to imagine Ferrero at the head of a non-broadcasting symphony orchestra, building up with them a tailor-made repertoire and holding in thrall an admiring public ready to hear *Ottobrata* or Falla dances as often as he wished to play them. It is not so easy to imagine where, in opera-dominated Italy, such an orchestra might have existed. Or perhaps it is, for the Principal Conductor of the Santa Cecilia Orchestra, Franco Ferrara, had been dogged since 1940 by fainting fits on the rostrum, the exact cause of which has never been entirely explained. He withdrew definitively from public conducting in 1948 and his successor, Fernando Previtali, was appointed only in 1953. So why not Willy Ferrero, who had been conducting them regularly for so long? Might the 1946 tour of central and northern Italy have been intended as a testing bed for him?

At this point, it is no longer possible to evade an issue that readers will already have inferred from the manner and cause of Ferrero's death. By the end, and probably for many years before, his daily existence was governed by alcohol. Nereo Zampieri – see below – mentions that he would congregate with the musicians, drinking Campari. Trovajoli added:

He drank a lot. Campari in particular, whisky in the evening. Never drunk (Trovajoli's underlinings)¹⁶⁵.

Of the various recollections of Ferrero, in fact, written or oral, nobody has reported actual drunken behaviour. Unfortunately, as any doctor reading this will surely confirm, the sheer fact that so much heavy drinking did not induce drunken behaviour is the measure of his addiction. He needed his daily dose to function. This runs counter to the public image of the drunkard as someone who sings in the street, cannot get his key in the door and has to be picked out of the gutter several times a week. Drunkards in this sense are not necessarily alcoholics – yet – and alcoholics are not necessarily drunkards according to the popular image – as Ferrero was not. This does not mean, though, that the havoc wrought on their bodily system is any less. As we saw above, Previtali and others hoped he would pull through, but any plans for rehabilitation came too late – his liver had had enough. Be all this as it may, his alcoholism was clearly something that the orchestral management would not have ignored.

It can be pointed out that other conductors, from Leipzig to Glasgow and beyond, have lived under the thrall of alcohol, yet fulfilled principal conductorships and even run opera houses. These conductors evidently had orchestral building and opera house management in their blood streams. Instinctive spontaneity was Ferrero's winning card, and also his undoing. We can sympathize with the Santa Cecilia management if they felt he was best kept for guest appearances. Previtali, once appointed, made it clear that such invitations would not be lacking.

Ferrero's conducting technique has aroused some comment. The famed Soviet conducting teacher Ilya Musin recounted having seen the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony being done in the most outlandish ways.

¹⁶³ I read this article on the internet some time ago and did not conserve it, since I was not then considering an article on Ferrero. Unfortunately more recent attempts to trace it have drawn a blank. Ferrero also spoke, a little regretfully, of an American impresario who, in his child prodigy years, had proposed a contract for an American tour, with a fee of two thousand dollars per concert. All this came to nothing with the outbreak of the war. Cf. *Willy Ferrero ricorda*, *ibid*.

¹⁶⁴ Alexander Negrin has had sight of a letter from Santa Cecilia to Ferrero, thanking him for his intervention with the American authorities over the use of a concert hall. This would presumably have been in late 1944 or 1945 when, following the fall of Fascism, Rome was occupied by the allies.

¹⁶⁵ Trovajoli, letter to Alexander Negrin.

The most ingenuous, in his view, was that of the child prodigy conductor, Willy Ferrero, who got on the podium of the Leningrad Philharmonic, simply lowered his arm and the orchestra after a long moment of perplexity, noted that they didn't have to wait any longer and after looking at the leader, played in time and impeccably together¹⁶⁶.

Just possibly, Musin had been misled by a carefully prepared gag, on the lines of “I give you the tempo, you count four and start”¹⁶⁷. We have other evidence that Ferrero was not averse to the occasional gag.

Mariss Jansons recalls the Italian Willy Ferrero conducting Ravel's Boléro, starting with the baton tucked up his sleeve and slowly letting it emerge as the music got louder¹⁶⁸.

Rather more detailed and informative comment comes from Ferrero's colleague Previtali, who must have seen him conduct on many occasions. Previtali began by noting that, unlike most young Italians at that time, Ferrero did not model his technique on that of Toscanini.

He had a personal beat. Elegant, clear, without emphasis or exaggeration, without fashionable effect-making ... Ferrero had a highly sensitive ear and an innate sense of orchestral balance; his rhythm was strong without harshness. His performances were full of vivacity, yet at the same time had a gentleness¹⁶⁹.

Massimo Pradella's meeting with Ferrero in Berlin has already been discussed. On the technical-human side, Pradella had this to say:

In those days in Berlin I got to know the Maestro well, his generosity and his gentleness. I had already learnt a lot from him during his rehearsals, but in Berlin, towards midnight, when he was more lucid, he gave me precious advice about how to approach music, my gestures and the orchestra. He gave me one of his batons, which I conserve jealously. He was able, with a light gesture, to make the orchestra play with a freedom and ductility that are rare today even in a string quartet.

Pradella showed this baton to Alexander Negrin¹⁷⁰, pointing out that it was an ultra-light model, which Ferrero had specially made for him. Pradella's testimony is precious for another reason. It suggests that, if anyone had had the imagination to appoint Ferrero to teach conducting classes in a Conservatoire, he might have been a more helpful teacher than many, albeit an unorthodox and unsystematic one.

Scelsi had this to add:

As you must know, Willy Ferrero had been a child prodigy ... And he remained a prodigy all his life. He was instinctive. Under his baton, the orchestra came to life and he obtained astounding results. His

¹⁶⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.musinsociety.com/beethoven-how-do-you-conduct-the-start-of-the-fifth-symphony/>. Though Musin refers to Ferrero as a “child prodigy conductor”, he would have been only ten himself when Ferrero the prodigy conducted in Russia. Probably he witnessed this on one of Ferrero's later visits in the 1930s or 1950s.

¹⁶⁷ I believe I witnessed something of the kind when Hugo Rignold, after the fanfare introducing the final galop in the *Guglielmo Tell* overture, put down his baton and left the orchestra to start the galop perfectly without a sign from him. If the orchestra had known already he was going to do this, it was easy enough for them to count out the rests and start. If they had not known, they would have expected a gesture from the conductor and, not getting one, anything might have happened.

¹⁶⁸ Retrieved from <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/feature/the-art-of-the-conductor>. In the years of Ferrero's visits to Leningrad, Mariss Jansons was a child and living in Latvia. He must have had the story from his father Arvid, who was a violinist in the Leningrad Philharmonic. Perhaps the interviewer, unversed in the Ferrero story, had not appreciated that this was not a first-hand account.

¹⁶⁹ Previtali, *ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Pradella, *ibid.*

*performances were always – we might say – fiery, but they were fairly precise too, however much his magnetism and enthusiasm might sometimes prevail over rigour and depth*¹⁷¹.

So far as is known, not a scrap of film footage exists of Willy Ferrero's conducting. The image opposite was taken during a rehearsal at the Augusteo in 1936¹⁷². Blotchy as it is, it hints at a dynamic presence. It also seems to show that flared trousers were not an invention of the 1970s. As with many of the finest conductors, however, this dynamic presence was perceived more by the orchestra than the public. A British observer in 1945 described him as "undramatic and always superbly in control"¹⁷³.



Another precious testimony comes from Nereo Zampieri, an orchestral violinist who, at the beginning of his career, played in two of Ferrero's Santa Cecilia concerts, including the Gershwin programme, which left an indelible impression on him. When I spoke to him¹⁷⁴, he immediately declared that Ferrero was "a great and lovable conductor". How did he work at rehearsals? I asked. Was he very demanding?

The demands came from his gestures. He had a great technique without knowing it, because it was all natural. He did everything with a smile, not like certain beasts that massacre the orchestra [here followed a diatribe about a recently deceased French conductor].

Did Zampieri know him off the podium? I wondered.

Yes, he would go to the bar with the musicians. He always drank Campari, he said it soothed his stomach burns.

Instinctive ... fiery ... lovable ... above all natural. We are in the realm of the sort of interpreter who improvises his performances on the spot, who fires up the orchestra to order. The absolute opposite to the sort of conductor who arrives with a ready thought-out interpretation, prepares it painstakingly during rehearsals and, on the night, steers the orchestra through charted waters. This instinctive sort of interpreter runs risks, and sometimes comes to grief in larger structures. We have seen that Alberto Savinio, reviewing a performance of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony in the 1930s, noted that Ferrero had a tendency to slow down in places, whereas "Beethoven never stops"¹⁷⁵. Post-war, it was not only the Russians who raised doubts over Ferrero in the classical repertoire. Italo De Feo, shortly after Ferrero's death, commented:

We remember him in Rome, this summer, conducting a concert at the Basilica di Massenzio: he wanted to interpret classical music according to highly modern criteria, as if to graft the broken

¹⁷¹ Scelsi, *ibid.*

¹⁷² Radio Corriere 1976, no. 43, p. 131.

¹⁷³ Howard Clewes, *Italy and the Arts*, *The Spectator*, 24 May 1945.

¹⁷⁴ Telephone conversation with the author, 9 February 2018. Zampieri was instrumental in establishing the "Stagione Concertistica Willy Ferrero" of Ostia, now in its ninth season, as a means of remembering the maestro.

¹⁷⁵ Alberto Savinio, article reprinted in the *Musica Classica* booklet.

rhythms of jazz upon the melodic rhythm. The audience protested, little by little leaving the theatre. But in silence¹⁷⁶.

De Feo, though an acute observer of his times, was not a musical critic. Massimo Mila, a major Italian critic and musicologist, was more understanding.

Even if his Beethoven interpretations were not orthodox, the attack of the finale of the Seventh Symphony, as Ferrero did it, would have shaken even an iceman¹⁷⁷.

Without hearing Ferrero's performances of some of the larger Beethoven symphonies – it would seem that the archives of RAI and the Russian radio stations may contain some – it is difficult to know what to make of this. Just as, for many years, anybody who sang Violetta in Italy had to run the gauntlet of the "widows of Callas", so were Beethoven performances judged according to whether or not they deviated from the Toscaninian norm. Those who walked out of the Basilica di Massenzio may have included the gentleman who cried "buffoon" at Stokowski when he conducted Beethoven's Fifth in Turin two years later. Somewhat burdened by years, he and his likeminded friends may have turned up again in Turin to hiss Vladimir Delman's performance of this symphony in 1978. Such people would surely have had little time for the "historically informed" performances of the 1980s onwards. But, as of now, we cannot say whether Ferrero was anticipating later trends or simply providing an odd personal gloss on the music. As stated above, I found that Ferrero's tempo freedom worked admirably in *Scheherazade* but was more questionable in Brahms. It is worth quoting the words of Armando Trovajoli, master of Gershwin but an unprejudiced observer of all things musical:

I had the opportunity to hear and appreciate the interpretations of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky [and] Mozart that we had prepared for the future tour in Russia. His musical details were an unforgettable lesson for me¹⁷⁸.

What should give us pause for thought is Gennadi Rozhdestvensky's statement that the three conductors who most influenced him were Otto Klemperer, Nathan Rachlin and Willy Ferrero. Another Russian impressed by Ferrero was Vakhtang Jordania, who resolved to be a conductor at the age of nine after attending one of Ferrero's concerts in 1951¹⁷⁹. Ferrero live must have been quite something. As it is, the few documents we have are enough to show that his instinctive engagement with the music, his capacity to unfold a piece as though improvising it, and his ability to fire up an orchestra at a moment's notice, are qualities to which any young conductor might aspire.

A select number of Italian conductors have become legendary more on account of contemporary reports than through the very few



¹⁷⁶ Italo De Feo, obituary of Ferrero in *Resto del Carlino*, 1954, quoted in Selvini, *ibid*. De Feo (1912-1985) was a writer, journalist and literary critic. From the concerts listed in Appendix 4, it would seem that the incident occurred at that on 26 August 1953, at which Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was played.

¹⁷⁷ Massimo Mila (1910-1988), obituary of Ferrero, quoted in Selvini, *ibid*.

¹⁷⁸ Trovajoli, letter to Alexander Negrin, *ibid*.

¹⁷⁹ Obituary of Jordania by Adam Bernstein, *Washington Post*, 6 October 2005.

recordings we have of their work: Bernardino Molinari, Antonio Guarnieri and, for slightly different reasons, Franco Ferrara. Willy Ferrero can certainly take an honourable place in their company. Or, taking into account his lifestyle, we might remember him as a sort of Dylan Thomas among conductors – an irrepressible personality, a faithful friend and a brilliant, natural and often inspired artist.

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Appendix 1: Concerts by Willy Ferrero listed at the OSN site¹⁸⁰ and in Radio Corriere¹⁸¹

- 10.12.1928, broadcast from Rome, Grande Orchestra Sinfonica
 Beethoven: Egmont – Overture
 Spagnoli, G: 2 Intermezzi from the Poema Lirico “I due Pastori” (first performance in Rome)
 Sibelius: Finlandia
 Gasco: Buffalmacco, Preludio giocoso
 Debussy: Petite Suite – En bateau, Danse
 Wagner: Götterdämmerung: Siegfried’s Funeral March
 Mascagni: Le Maschere - Overture
 Plus piano solos by Elisa Scardoni and spoken word
- 14.03.1929, broadcast from Rome
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Sibelius: Valse triste
 Mendelssohn: Scherzo
 Mancinelli: Scene veneziane – La fuga degli amanti a Chioggia
 Puccini: Manon Lescaut – Intermezzo
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger – Overture
 Plus violin solos by Maria D’Alba and spoken word
- 01.08.1929, broadcast from Rome
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 1
 Respighi: Antiche arie e danze italiane – 3 pieces
 Mascagni: I Rantzau – Prelude
 Mussorgsky: Khovanschina – Act IV Prelude
 Wagner: Parsifal – Good Friday Music
 Wagner: Die Walküre – Ride of the Valkyries
 Plus cello solos by W. Sommer and spoken word
- 02.02.1931, Conservatorio di Milano 10th Concert offered by Radiomarelli, Milan, Turin, Genoa
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 1
 Masetti: Ora di Vespero (first performance)
 Mascagni: Le Maschere – Overture
- 09.02.1931, Conservatorio di Milano 11th Concert offered by Radiomarelli, Milan, Turin, Genoa
 Beethoven: Egmont – [Overture]
 Martucci: Notturmo
 Rossellini: Suite in 3 tempi
 Debussy: Petite Suite – En bateau, ballet¹⁸²
 Mussorgsky: Khovanschina – Interlude
 Wagner: Die Walküre – Ride of the Valkyries
- 10.03.1933, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell’EIAR¹⁸³
 Beethoven: Symphony 7
 Rossellini, Renzo: 2 preludi (first performance)

¹⁸⁰ The site of the Archivio Storico of the orchestra Nazionale della RAI - <http://www.osn.teche.rai.it/Search.aspx> - is an enormously useful resource which will one day list all concerts given by all RAI orchestras, with as much detail as is known and the programme leaflets as downloadable PDFs where an exemplar survives. At present, however, it is “work in progress”, limited to an incomplete list of concerts given in Turin.

¹⁸¹ As already described, the complete series of Radio Corriere issues from 1925 to 1994 are downloadable in PDF form at <http://www.radiocorriere.teche.rai.it/Default.aspx>. The site also has a search function based on text recognition. This is enormously helpful but, in view of the blotchy print of many of the earlier issues, it is not infallible.

¹⁸² So announced. According to the review on p.13 of Radio Corriere 1931 no. 7, these two pieces were replaced by Debussy’s “Fêtes”.

¹⁸³ The OSN site names the orchestra throughout as the “Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI”. Since the RAI was created on 26.10.1944 to replace the EIAR, so all performances by the Turin-based orchestra prior to that date should be described as by the “Orchestra Sinfonica dell’EIAR”.

- Debussy: Nocturnes - Fêtes
 Ravel: Boléro (first performance in Turin)
 Wagner: Die Walküre: Ride of the Valkyries
- 24.03.1934, Conservatorio di Napoli
 Vivaldi-Siloti: Concerto in D minor
 Mozart: Symphony no. 34
 Wagner: Siegfried's Rhine journey
- 05.04.1934, Rome, Naples, Bari
 Vivaldi-Molinari: Concerto in A minor
 Mozart: Symphony no. 35 "Haffner"
 Veretti: I galanti tiratori
 Petrassi: Partita – Giga
 Sonzogno, Giulio Cesare: Dai nevai dell'Ortler
- 18.07.1934, Basilica di Massenzio, Rome
 Beethoven: Egmont – Overture
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade
 Dukas: L'apprenti sorcier
 Strauss, R: Tod und Verklarung
- 13.12.1934, Rome, Naples, Bari
 Roussel: Symphony no, 3
 Ravel: Daphnis et Chloë – Suite no. 2
 Schmitt: La Tragédie de Salomé
 Dukas: L'Apprenti sorcier
- 25.01.1935, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR
 Beethoven: Symphony 6 "Pastoral"
 Tocchi, Gianluca: Record, impressioni sinfoniche dedicate al primato di Agnello (first performance in Turin)
 Albéniz: Iberia - Triana
 Falla: El amor brujo – Ritual Fire Dance
 Strauss, R: Don Juan
- 26.03.1935, Torino
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 8
 Veretti: Sinfonia italiana (Il popolo e il profeta)
 Masetti: Ora di Vespro, impression
 Martucci: Novelletta
 Rossini: La Scala di Seta - Overture
- 12.04.1935, Studio dell'EIAR
 Veretti; Sinfonia italiana
 Falla: Ritual Fire Dance
 Pick-Mangiagalli: Notturmo e Rondò fantastico
- 08.07.1935, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR
 Bach, J.S: Violin Concerto in E, BWV 1042 (soloist: Teddy Ferrero)
 Mozart: Symphony 34
- 14.02.1936, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR
 Mozart: Symphony 34
 Handel: Solomon – "Piccola Ouverture" for 2 oboes and strings (first performance in Turin)¹⁸⁴
 Bach, J.S – arr. Pick-Mangiagalli, Riccardo: 2 Preludes
 Ferro, Pietro: Premetamorfosi, Suite I from the ballet "Persefone" (first performance)
 Wagner: Parsifal – Good Friday Music
 Debussy, orch. Ravel: Danse (first performance in Turin)
 Strauss, R: Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils

¹⁸⁴ Probably "The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba", which Ferrero and the EIAR orchestra also recorded for Cetra.

- 23.02.1936, Augusteo, Rome
 Rossini: La Scala di Seta – Overture
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 6 “Pastoral”
 Ferro, Pietro: Premetamorfofi, from the ballet “Persefone”
 Tocchi: Record (first performance)
 Debussy, orch. Ravel: Danse
 Ravel: Daphnis et Chloë – Suite no. 2
- 01.11.1936, Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell’EIAR
 Bach-Sonzogno: Adagio and Fugue from Toccata in C
 Veprik, Alexander: Little Suite on Jewish Themes¹⁸⁵
 Ravel: Rhapsodie espagnole
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger - Overture
- 30.12.1936, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell’EIAR
 Beethoven: Piano Concerto 4 (soloist: Franz Osborn)
Beethoven: Rondò capriccioso, op. 129 “Rage over a lost penny”
Beethoven: Andante favori, WoO 57
Beethoven: Ecossaise in D, WoO 22
 (Piano solos by Franz Osborn)
 Rossellini, Renzo: Canti di marzo (first performance in Turin)
 Ravel: Rapsodie espagnole
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Russian Easter Festival¹⁸⁶
- 15.01.1937, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell’EIAR
 Beethoven: Symphony 3 “Eroica”
 Martucci: Notturmo, op. 70 no. 1¹⁸⁷
 Veretti, Antonio: Suite in C (from a fairy-tale by Andersen) (first performance in Turin)
 Ravel: Boléro
- 13.05.1937, Gruppo Roma
 Vivaldi-Molinari: Concerto in A
 Beethoven: Symphony 4
 Falla: Nights in the Gardens of Spain (soloist unnamed)
- 31.07.1937, Gruppo Roma
 Mozart: Symphony no. 35 “Haffner”
 Falla: El Sombrero – The Miller’s Dance, The Miller’s Wife’s Dance
 Respighi: Feste Romane – Ottobrata
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Russian Easter Festival
- 29.08.1937, Politeama Garibaldi, Palermo
 Vivaldi: Concerto grosso in D minor
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade
 Respighi: Feste Romane: Ottobrata
 Falla: El Amor brujo: Pantomime
 Zandonai: Giulietta e Romeo: Cavalcata
- 03.12.1937, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell’EIAR, Coro di Torino della Radio Italiana (chorus master: Achille Consoli)
 Brahms: Symphony 3
 Debussy: Nocturnes - Sirènes (first performance in Turin)
 Respighi: Feste romane - Ottobrata
 Strauss, R: Tod und Verklärung

¹⁸⁵ Described in Radio Corriere 1936 no. 45 p.11 as Five Little Pieces, “without either title or literary references”. Possibly the Jewish aspect had to be hastily concealed, or else the “Jewish” piece was replaced by one less likely to offend Fascist susceptibilities.

¹⁸⁶ According to the OSN site. According to the Radio Corriere, the concert ended with Dukas’s L’Apprenti sorcier.

¹⁸⁷ According to the OSN site. According to the Radio Corriere, the Martucci Notturmo was not on the programme.

- 27.12.1937, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR
 Liszt: Piano Concerto no. 1 (soloist: Carlo Vidusso)
 Masetti: Ora di Vespro
 Debussy: Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
 Liadov: Kikimora
 Wagner: Götterdämmerung: Funeral March
- 20.05.1938, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR
 Dvořák: Symphony 9 "From the New World"
 Sibelius: The Swan of Tuonela
 Zandonai: Giulietta e Romeo - Scena del torchio e cavalcata
- 09.10.1939, Milan – Turin – Genoa
 Handel: Agrippina – Overture
 Respighi: Gli uccelli
 Debussy: Saxophone Rhapsody (soloist: Sergio Quercioli)
 Falla: La Vida Breve: Introduction and Dance
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger - Overture
- 28.10.1939
 Savagnone, Giuseppe; Augusto, poema sinfonico
 Veretti: Sinfonia italiana (Il popolo e il profeta)
 Tocchi: Record: Impressioni sinfoniche
 Respighi: Pini di Roma
 (Concert in celebration of the March on Rome, 28.10.1922, "consisting entirely of music celebrating the highest ideals of Fascism and of *Romanità*").
- 22.11.1939, Stagione Sinfonica dell'EIAR
 Vivaldi: Concerto in A minor
 Scarlatti, D (transcribed by C. De Nardis): Burlesca
 Martucci: Noveletta op. 82
 Pizzetti: La Pisanella – Danza dello sparviero, Sul molo di Famagosta
 Petrassi: Partita – Gagliarda, Giga
 Zandonai: Giulietta e Romeo – Danza del torchio, Cavalcata
- 14.01.1940, Comunale di Firenze
 Handel: Agrippina – Overture
 Respighi: Gli uccelli
 Khrennikov: Symphony no. 1
 Pizzini: Il Poema delle Dolomiti
 Turina: L'Oracion del Torero
 Falla: La Vida breve – Interlude and dance
 Wagner: Ride of the Valkyries
- 19.01.1940, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade
 Peragallo, Mario: Concerto per orchestra (first performance)
 Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé, suite no. 2
- 09.09.1940, Sibelius 75th birthday concert
 Sibelius: Symphony no. 2
 The Swan of Tuonela
 Valse triste
 Finlandia
- 04.11.1940
 Vivaldi (transcribed by Pilati): L'estro armonico – Concerto no. 11 in D minor
 Martucci: Giga op.61 no. 3, Noveletta, op.76 no. 2¹⁸⁸
 Peragallo: Notturmo

¹⁸⁸ See note 189. If op. 76 is correct, it would in any case be no. 1

- Masetti: Ditirambo
 Respighi: Feste Romane . Ottobrata
 Verdi: I Vespri Siciliani: Prelude
- 06.01.1941, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR
 Vivaldi: L'estro armonico op.3 – Concerto no.11
 Khrennikov, Tikhon: Symphony no. 1
 Pizzini, Carlo Alberto: Strapaese, impressioni dal vero
 Turina: L'Oracion del Torero
 Martucci: Novelletta, op. 76 no. 1¹⁸⁹
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger: Overture
- 09.04.1941, Orchestra Stabile della R. Accademia di Santa Cecilia
 Bach, arr. Pick-Mangiagalli: 2 Preludes¹⁹⁰
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 1
- 13.04.1941, Orchestra Stabile della R. Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano, Rome
 Handel: Solomon – Overture
 Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto (soloist: Edoardo de Zathureczky)
 Strauss, R: Also sprach Zarathustra
 Verdi: I Vespri Siciliani - Overture
- 25.06.1941
 Respighi: Gli uccelli
 Bach: 2-Violin Concerto in D minor (soloists: Aldo Priano, Teddy Ferrero)
 Peragallo: Lo Stendardo di San Giorgio - Intermezzo
 Cagna, Enrico: Valzer umoresca
 Mussorgsky: Khovanschina: Avt IV Prelude
 Granados: Goyescas – Intermezzo
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Rhapsodie espagnole – Movements 3-5
- 20.10.1941
 Wolf-Ferrari: Il Segreto di Susanna – Overture
 Mozart: Symphony no. 35 "Haffner"
 Lavagnino, Angelo Francesco: Allegro da Concerto (soloist: Teddy Lavagnino) (first broadcast performance)
 Albeniz: Triana
- 05.11.1941
 Beethoven: Violin Concerto (soloist: Carlo Felice Cillario)
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger - Overture
- 20.11.1941, Stagione Sinfonica dell'EIAR
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 1
 Lavagnino: Allegro da Concerto (soloist: Teddy Ferrero)
 Falla: La Vida Breve – Intermezzo, Dance
 Wagner: Ride of the Valkyries
- 25.11.1941, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR
 Strauss, R: Also sprach Zarathustra
 Fuga, Sandro: Preghiere
 Mussorgsky: Khovanchina: Prelude to Act IV
 Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé, suite no. 2
- 26.02.1942, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR

¹⁸⁹ This op. no. is possible, insofar as Martucci's op.76 no.1 is a Novelletta for piano (Radio Corriere gives op.76 no. 2, as in note 8), but an orchestration of it is not known. It seems more likely that the Novelletta played was op.82 no. 2, of which Martucci made an orchestral version and which Ferrero conducted on several other occasions, as well as making a recording of it with the EIAR orchestra.

¹⁹⁰ According to Radio Corriere, these are two preludes from the "48", so not the two Preludes arr. Pick-Mangiagalli that Ferrero recorded with the EIAR orchestra and frequently performed.

Beethoven: Egmont, overture
 Beethoven: Piano Concerto 4 (soloist: Wilhelm Backhaus)
 Pachetti, Giulio: Concerto in tre tempi
 Debussy: Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
 Wagner: Tristan und Isolde: Prelude and Liebestod

29.05.1942, Teatro di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR

Vivaldi: L'estro armonico op.3 – Concerto no.11 (transcribed by Aleksandr Ziloti)
 Pachetti, Giulio: Concerto in tre tempi - Canzone
 Martucci: Novelletta, op. 82 no. 2
 Ravel - Boléro

28.10.1942

Corelli: Suite from op. 5 (Sarabande, Giga, Badinerie)
 Tommasini-Paganini: Il diavolo si diverte
 Martucci: Notturmo
 Respighi: Pini di Roma
 Verdi: La Forza del Destino – Overture

14.12.1942: Commenti Sinfonici da Film

Pizzetti: Scipione l'Africano (2 pieces)
 Pick-Mangiagalli: Scandalo per bene (2 symphonic miniatures)
 Masetti: Gelosia (symphonic synthesis)

28.12.1942: Commenti Sinfonici da Film

Rossellini: L'Uomo della croce (3 pieces)
 Fusco: Il cine delle meraviglie (Canzone del venditore di uccelli)
 Malipiero: Acciaio (sottosinfonia delle machine)
 Carabella: Pastor Angelicus (2 pieces)

11.01.1943, Commenti Sinfonici da Film, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR

Masetti: Nozze di Sangue (Preludio, danza e finale)
 Carabella: Vele ammainate (symphonic impressions)
 Cicognini: Una romantica avventura (Danza al castello)
 Veretti: Bengasi (symphonic synthesis)

This and the preceding two concert were organized for CINES and ENIC (Ente Nazionale Industria Cinematografiche)

21.04.1943

Vivaldi: L'estro armonico – Concerto in D minor
 Martucci: Notturmo
 Respighi: Pini di Roma
 Verdi: I Vespri siciliani - Overture

07.05.1943, Teatro La Fenice, Venice, Orchestra Sinfonica dell'EIAR

Vivaldi: Concerto in G minor RV 531 (transcribed by Molinari)
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade
 Respighi: Fontane di Roma
 Strauss, R: Salome – Dance of the 7 Veils
 Wagner: Die Walküre – Ride of the Valkyries

30.11.1945, Conservatorio "Giuseppe Verdi" di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI

Rossellini, Renzo: Canzone del ritorno
 Shostakovich: Symphony 7 "Leningrad" (first performance in Turin)

27.05.1949, Conservatorio "Giuseppe Verdi" di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI

Tchaikovsky: Symphony 4
 Donato Di Veroli: Tema e variazioni (first performance in Turin)
 Strauss, R: Till Eulenspiegel
 American traditional: G'wine to Hebb'n (orch. Richard Wolfe), Sometimes I feel like a motherless child (orch. Angelo Francesco Lavagnino and Leonardo Savina), The glory road (orch. Richard Wolfe)
 (Soloist: Michael Tor, baritone)

- 06.10.1950, Teatro Nuovo, Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI
 Scriabin: Poem of Ecstasy
 Respighi: Fontane di Roma
 Strauss, R: Tod und Verklärung
- 27.10.1950, Conservatorio "Giuseppe Verdi" di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI
 Casella: La giara, suite
 Roussel: Le festin de l'araignée, symphonic fragments
 Ravel: La valse
- 06.11.1950, Conservatorio "Giuseppe Verdi" di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI
 Smetana: Ma Vlast – Vltava, Vysehrad, Tabor
- 29.12.1950, Conservatorio "Giuseppe Verdi" di Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI
 Beethoven: Coriolan
 Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto (soloist: Gioconda De Vito)
 Respighi: Fontane di Roma
 Debussy: Nocturnes - Fêtes
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Spanish Caprice
- 07.08.1953, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI
 Weiner: Divertimento on Old Hungarian Dances, op. 20
 Khachaturian: Piano Concerto (soloist: Sergio Perticaroli)
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 4
- 24.11.1953, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI
 Ravel: Bolero
 Daphnis et Chloë – Suite no. 2
- 12.01.1954, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI
 Falla: Nights in the Gardens of Spain (soloist: Ermelinda Magnetti)
 El Sombrero: The Miller's Dance, The Miller's Wife's Dance
 El Amor Brujo: Pantomime, Ritual Fire Dance¹⁹¹

Appendix 2: Broadcasts from Poland¹⁹²

- 02.02.1934, Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra
 Bach-Mangiagalli: 2 Preludes
 Vivaldi-Siloti: Concerto grosso
 Handel: Motet – Silete, venti (soloist: Guglielmetti)
 Petrassi: Partita
 Zandonai: Episodio sinfonico
 Ravel: Bolero
- 26.04.1935, Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra
 Vivaldi: Concerto grosso in D minor
 Scarlatti, D: Burlesca
 Respighi: Gli uccelli
 Rossini: La Scala di Seta – Overture
 Masetti: Nenet e Rintin
 Rossellini: Danza delle torcie
 Petrassi: Toccata e giga
 Zandonai: Romeo e Giulietta – Episodio sinfonico
- 04.12.1936, Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra
 Beethoven: Egmont – Overture
 Brahms: Piano Concerto no. 1 (soloist: Rubinstein)

¹⁹¹ This concert, broadcast at 22.15, was obviously not live.

¹⁹² Source: Radio Corriere: <http://www.radiocorriere.teche.rai.it/Default.aspx>

Strauss, R: Don Juan
 Respighi: Pini di Roma
 30.04.1937, Warsaw Philharmonic orchestra
 Programme to be defined
 29.04.1938
 Soloist: R. Casadesus, no other information

Appendix 3: Broadcasts from Moscow¹⁹³

24.10.1935
 No information
 20.05.1936
 Rossini: Overture (not specified)
 Beethoven: Symphony no, 7
 Debussy: 3 Nocturnes
 Falla: Ritual Fire Dance
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger - Overture
 21.05.1936
 No information
 23.05.1936
 No information

Appendix 4: Concerts with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra¹⁹⁴

08.02.1925, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 1
 Mascagni: Le maschere – Overture
 Martucci: Giga, op. 61/ n. 3, trascrizione per orchestra
 Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream – Scherzo
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg - Overture
 11.02.1925, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Mascagni: Le maschere - Overture
 Martucci: Notturmo op. 70/1
 Scarlatti, D: Sonata in g minor K.450, transcribed for orchestra
 Wagner: Die Walküre – Ride of the Valkyries
 05.06.1929, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Beethoven: Egmont – Overture
 Martucci: Novelletta op. 82/
 Debussy: Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
 Wagner: Götterdämmerung – Siegfried's Funeral March
 Imperatori: La tomba nel Busento, poema sinfonico
 Sibelius: Valse triste op. 44/1
 Masetti: Contrasti, per orchestra – no.2, Nenette e Rintintin
 Strauss: Don Juan
 08.06.1929, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 6 "Pathétique"
 Sibelius: Finlandia
 Spagnoli: Due intermezzi, per orchestra
 Debussy: Petite suite
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg - Overture

¹⁹³ Source: Radio Corriere: <http://www.radiocorriere.teche.rai.it/Default.aspx>

¹⁹⁴ Source: <http://bibliomediateca.santacecilia.it/bibliomediateca/cms.find>

- 12.06.1929, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Weber: Der Freischütz - Overture
 Martucci: Notturmo op. 70/1
 Gasco, Alberto: Buffalmacco, Preludio giocoso per orchestra
 Mascagni: I Rantzau – Preludio
 Sibelius: Finlandia
 Debussy: Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
 Mussorgsky: Khovanschina: Prelude Act IV
 Wagner: Tristan und Isolde – Prelude and Liebestod
- 19.01.1930, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Beethoven: Coriolan
 Vivaldi: Concerto in d minor RV 565, op. 3/11, transcription for strings and organ
 Bach, orch. Elgar: Fantasia and Fugue in c minore BWV 537
 Holst: The Planets – Mars, Venus, Jupiter
 Strauss: Till Eulenspiegel
- 22.01.1930, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Beethoven: Coriolan
 Vivaldi: Concerto in d minor RV 565, op. 3/11, transcription for strings and organ
 Bach, orch. Elgar: Fantasia and Fugue in c minore BWV 537
 Wagner: Parsifal – Good Friday Music
 Sibelius: Valse triste
 Strauss: Till Eulenspiegel
- 26.01.1930, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Wolf-Ferrari: Il segreto di Susanna - Overture
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 1
 Gibilaro: Largo, per orchestra
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Strauss: Tod und Verklärung
- 04.01.1931, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Spagnoli: Ouverture romantica
 Debussy: Rapsodie for saxophone and orchestra
 Rossellini: Suite in 3 tempi
 Stravinsky: Feu d'artifice op. 4
 Strauss: Ein Heldenleben
- 07.01.1931, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Mascagni: Le maschere – Overture
 Martucci: Novelletta op. 82/2
 Puccini: Manon Lescaut – Intermezzo
 Mancinelli: Cleopatra, incidental music – Overture
 Strauss: Ein Heldenleben
- 11.01.1931, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 7
 Ravel: Alborada del gracioso
 Prokofiev: The Love of Three Oranges – March and Scherzo
 Masetti: Il gioco del cucù, for piano and strings
 Strauss, R: Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils
- 15.01.1933, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Brahms: Symphony no. 1
 Honegger: Le chant de Nigamon
 Rossellini: Hoggar, suite for orchestra
 Liadov Kikimora
 Ravel: Boléro
- 18.01.1933, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo

- Bach: Brandenburg Concerto no. 3
 Weinberger: Passacaglia, for organ and orchestra
 Alfano: Due intermezzi, for strings
 Ljadov: 8 Popular Songs
 Rimsky-Korsakov: The Flight of the Bumble-Bee
 Ravel: Boléro
- 14.07.1934, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Zandonai: Danza del torchio e Cavalcata
 Albeniz: Iberia – Triana
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg Overture
- 18.07.1934, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Beethoven: Egmont – Overture
 Rimsky-Korsakov Scheherazade
 Dukas: L'apprenti sorcier
 Strauss, R: Tod und Verklärung
- 13.07.1935, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Brahms: Symphony no. 1
 Catalani: A sera, for strings
 Mancinelli: Scene veneziane – Fuga degli amanti a Chioggia
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Russian Easter Festival
 Ravel: Boléro
- 23.02.1936, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo
 Rossini: La scala di seta – Overture
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 6 “Pastoral”
 Ferro: Prometamorfofi
 Tocchi: Record
 Debussy orch. Ravel: Danse
 Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé, suite no. 2
- 26.02.1936, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Augusteo¹⁹⁵
 Bach orch. Pick-Mangiagalli: 2 Preludes
 Handel: Samson – Introduction Part III.
 Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé, suite no. 2
 Calabrini: Suite agreste
 Masetti: Sagra, poema sinfonico
 Debussy orch. Ravel: Danse
 Strauss, R: Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils
- 24.06.1936, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 4
 Strauss, R: Till Eulenspiegel
 Pick-Mangiagalli: Notturmo e rondò fantastico
 Sibelius: Valse triste
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg – Overture
- 27.06.1936, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 7
 Masetti: Sagra, poema sinfonico
 Strauss, R: Don Juan
 Rossini: Guglielmo Tell - Overture
- 26.06.1937, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Brahms: Symphony no. 3

¹⁹⁵ The Augusteo, much admired for its acoustics, was closed and demolished during 1937 as part of Mussolini's “urban improvement” plan.

- Stravinsky: The Firebird – Suite no. 2
 Puccini: Manon Lescaut - Intermezzo
 Wagner: Tannhäuser - Overture
- 16.01.1938, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano¹⁹⁶
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 3 “Eroica”
 Lavagnino: Tempo alto
 Ravel: La valse
 Wagner: Die Walküre – Ride of the Valkyries
- 19.01.1938, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Mozart: Symphony no. 35 “Haffner”
 Ravel: La valse
 Zador: Sinfonia Technica - La turbina
 Castagnone: Preludio giocoso
 Prokofiev: The Love of Three Oranges – March and Scherzo
 Dukas: L'apprenti sorcier
- 04.12.1938, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Dvořák: Symphony no. 9 “New World”
 Beethoven: Coriolan
 Malatesta: Scherzo-Danza
 Ravel: Rhapsodie espagnole
 Wagner: Götterdämmerung – Siegfried’s Funeral March
- 10.07.1939, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 6 “Pathétique”
 Respighi: Fontane di Roma
 Ravel: La valse
- 14.07.1939, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 7
 Respighi: Feste romane – Ottobrata
 Rimsky-Korsakov: The Flight of the Bumble-Bee
 Falla: La vida breve – Dance
 Wagner: Die Walküre – Ride of the Valkyries
- 24.03.1940, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Brahms: Symphony no. 4
 Peragallo: Concerto per orchestra
 Turina: Oración del torero
 Ravel: Boléro
- 27.03.1940, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Vivaldi: Concerto in a minor RV 522, op. 3/8
 Khrennikov: Symphony no. 1
 Pizzini: Strapaese, impressioni dal vero
 Strauss: Till Eulenspiegel
 Ravel: Boléro
- 12.07.1940, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 3 “Eroica”
 Tocchi: Record
 Strauss, R: Tod und Verklärung
- 15.07.1940, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade
 Pizzini: Strapaese, impressioni dal vero
 Sibelius: Valse triste

¹⁹⁶ The Teatro Adriano was adapted for use as a concert hall and hosted the Santa Cecilia Orchestra from 1936 to 1946. It is now a cinema.

- Strauss, R: Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils
 09.04.1941, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Bach, orch. Pick-Mangiagalli: 2 Preludes
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 1
 Masetti: Idillio e Ditirambo
 Falla: El sombrero de tres picos - Suite
 Wagner: Tristan und Isolde – Prelude and Liebestod
- 13.04.1941, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Handel: Samson – Introduction Part III
 Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto (soloist: Ede Zathureczky)
 Strauss: Also sprach Zarathustra
 Verdi: I vespri siciliani - Overture
- 04.07.1941, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Brahms: Symphony no. 4
 Sibelius: Valse triste
 Wolf-Ferrari: I quattro rusteghi – Intermezzo
 Strauss, R: Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Capriccio spagnolo
- 08.07.1941, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Sibelius: Symphony no. 2
 Peragallo: Lo stendardo di S. Giorgio – Prelude Act III
 Granados: Goyescas – Intermezzo
 Wagner: Tristan und Isolde – Prelude and Liebestod
- 18.01.1942, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 6 “Pastoral”
 Fiume: Introduzione ad una tragicommedia
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Ravel: Daphnis et Chloë – Suite no. 2
- 21.01.1942, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Vivaldi: Concerto in d minor RV 565, op. 3/11
 Scarlatti, D orch. De Nardis: Burlesca
 Bach: 2-Violin Concerto in d minor BWV 1043 (soloist: Aldo Priano, Teddy Ferrero)
 Cagna Cabiati: Valzer-umoresca
 Ravel: La valse
 Strauss, J [arr. Ferrero?]: Waltz Suite
- 30.06.1942, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Weber: Der Freischütz - Overture
 Respighi: Fontane di Roma
 Wagner: Götterdämmerung – Siegfried’s Funeral March
 Strauss, J [arr. Ferrero?]: Waltz Suite
 Rimsky-Korsakov: The Flight of the Bumble-Bee
 Zandonai: Danza del torchio e Cavalcata
- 03.07.1942, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 3 “Eroica”
 Paganini: Moto perpetuo
 Albéniz: Iberia – Triana
 Strauss, R: Till Eulenspiegel
- 22.11.1942, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Pachetti: Concerto per orchestra
 Debussy: Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Russian Easter Festival
- 25.11.1942, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano

- Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 6 “Pathétique”
 Debussy: Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune, per orchestra
 Strauss, R: Don Juan
 Verdi: La forza del destino – Overture
- 02.01.1944, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Sibelius: Symphony no. 2
 Respighi: Gli uccelli
 Wagner: Götterdämmerung – Siegfried's Rhine Journey
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Capriccio spagnolo
- 09.01.1944, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 7
 Ravel: Alborada del gracioso
 Catalani: A sera, for strings
 Mussorgsky: Khovanschina: Prelude Act IV
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg - Overture
- 05.03.1944, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Brahms: Symphony no. 1
 Brahms: Violin Concerto (soloist: Gioconda De Vito)
- 04.06.1944, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 3 “Eroica”
 Vivaldi: Concerto in d minor RV 565, op. 3/11 transcribed for wind and strings
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Wagner: Die Walküre – Ride of the Valkyries
- 18.06.1944, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 6 “Eroica”
 Vivaldi: Concerto in d minor RV 565, op. 3/11
 Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream – Scherzo
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Verdi: I vespri siciliani – Overture
- 20.06.1944, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 4
 Martucci: Novelletta, op. 82/2
 Mussorgsky: Khovanschina – Prelude Act IV
 Falla: La vida breve – Intermezzo and Dance
 Ravel: Boléro
- 28.07.1944, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Coro della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia
 (Chorus master: Bonaventura Somma), Teatro Adriano
 Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 4
 Ravel: Daphnis et Chloë – Suite no. 2 for orchestra
 Sibelius: Valse triste
 Zandonai: Danza del torchio e Cavalcata
- 30.07.1944, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 4
 Ravel: Piano Concerto in G (soloist: Guido Agosti)
 Martucci: Notturmo op. 70/1
 Strauss, R: Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils
- 17.12.1944, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Shostakovich: Symphony no. 7 “Leningrad”
 Tchaikovsky: 1812 Overture
- 20.12.1944, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Shostakovich: Symphony no. 7 “Leningrad”
 Ljadov: Kikimora
 Verdi: I vespri siciliani – Overture

- 10.01.1945, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Vivaldi: Concerto in d minor RV 565, op. 3/11, transcribed for strings and organ
 Ravel: Boléro
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg – Overture
 Wagner: Parsifal – Good Friday Music
 Wagner: Götterdämmerung – Siegfried's Funeral March
 Wagner: Die Walküre – Ride of the Valkyries
- 17.01.1945, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Beethoven: Coriolan
 Beethoven: Triple Concerto (soloists: Guido Agosti, Gioconda De Vito, Enrico Mainardi)
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
- 31.01.1945, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 3 "Eroica"
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
- 14.03.1945, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Beethoven: Coriolan
 Beethoven: Violin Concerto (soloist: Gioconda De Vito)
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 3 "Eroica"
- 19.03.1945, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Adriano
 Vivaldi: Concerto in a minor RV 522, op. 3/8
 Walton: Viola Concerto (soloist: Renzo Sabatini)
 Wagner: Götterdämmerung – Siegfried's Rhine Journey
 Wagner: Tristan und Isolde – Prelude and Liebestod
 Wagner: Tannhäuser – Overture
- 26.07.1946, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 4
 Peragallo: Lo stendardo di S. Giorgio – Prelude Act III.
 Pachetti: Concerto per orchestra – Canzone
 Strauss, R: Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils
 Zandonai: Danza del torchio e Cavalcata
- 29.07.1946, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade
 Respighi: Feste romane – Ottobrata
 Strauss, R: Don Juan
 Wagner: Die Walküre – Ride of the Vakyrries
- 12.08.1946, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Catalani: A sera, for strings
 Sibelius: Valse triste
 Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream – Scherzo
 Strauss, R: Till Eulenspiegel
- 30.10.1946, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Comunale Morlacchi, Perugia
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Respighi: Gli uccelli
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Falla: El amor brujo – Ritual Fire Dance
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg – Overture
- 04.11.1946, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Regio, Parma
 Beethoven. Symphony no. 5
 Respighi: Gli uccelli
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Falla: El amor brujo – Ritual Fire Dance
 Verdi: I vespri siciliani – Overture

- 05.11.1946, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Comunale, Modena
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Respighi: Gli uccelli
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Falla: El amor brujo – Ritual Fire Dance
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg – Overture
- 07.11.1946, Orchestra della Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Comunale, L'Aquila
 Rossini: La scala di seta - Overture
 Beethoven: Piano Concerto no. 5 "Emperer" (soloist: Ornella Puliti Santoliquido)
 Respighi: Gli uccelli
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Falla: El amor brujo – Ritual Fire Dance
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg – Overture.
- 22.12.1946, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Argentina¹⁹⁷
 Vivaldi: Concerto in a minor RV 522, op. 3/8
 Mozart: Symphony no. 34
 Alfano: 2 intermezzi for strings
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue
- 02.01.1947, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Argentina
 Rossini: La scala di seta – Overture
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 4
 Veretti: Il galante tiratore, suite from the ballet
 Falla: El amor brujo – Ritual Fire Dance
 Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue (soloist: Mario Carta)
- 01.06.1947, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Argentina
 Beethoven. Coriolan
 Sibelius: Symphony no. 2
 Strauss, R: Don Juan
 Respighi: Pini di Roma
- 04.06.1947, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Argentina
 Beethoven. Coriolan
 Sibelius: Symphony no. 2
 Strauss, R: Don Juan
 Zandonai: Danza del torchio e Cavalcata
- 10.09.1947, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Corelli/Pinelli: Suite dall'op. 5, transcribed for strings
 Brahms: Hungarian Dances
 Saint-Saëns: Danse macabre
 Borodin: Prince Igor – Polovtsian Dances
 Sibelius: Valse triste
 Sonzogno: Tango
 Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue
 Ravel: Boléro
- 26.11.1947, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Argentina
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 3 "Eroica"
 Di Veroli: Piano Concerto in a minor (soloist: Adriana Brugnolini)
 Prokofiev: The Love of Three Oranges – March and Scherzo
 Wagner: Tristan und Isolde – Prelude and Liebestod
- 14.03.1948, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Argentina

¹⁹⁷ The Teatro Argentina was intended as a temporary home while a new auditorium was constructed. This story stretches several decades beyond the scope of the present article.

- Gershwin: Piano Concerto (soloist: Adriana Brugnolini)
 Spirituals: G'wine to Hebb'n (arr. Wolfe), Sometimes I feel like a motherless child, De Glory Road (arr. Wolfe) (soloist: Michael Tor)
 Gould: Latin-American Symphonette
- 07.11.1948, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Argentina
 Brahms: Symphony no. 4
 Longo: Canto funebre e tema ostinato
 Debussy: Saxophone Rapsodie
 Strauss, R: Till Eulenspiegel
- 10.11.1948, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Argentina
 Vivaldi: Concerto in A RV 552
 Mozart: Symphony no. 34
 Caracciolo: Allegro
 Falla: El sombrero de tres picos – selection
 Dukas: L'apprenti sorcier
- 26.08.1951, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 2 in D op. 36¹⁹⁸
 Carabella: Variazioni sinfoniche
 Wagner: Tristan und Isolde – Prelude and Liebestod
- 29.08.1951, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Dvořák: Symphony no. 9 “From the New World”
 Gershwin: Cuban Overture
 Mussorgsky: Khovanschina – Prelude Act IV
 Ravel: Boléro
- 22.06.1952, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Strauss, R: Don Juan
 Falla: La vida breve – Dance
 Rossini: Guglielmo Tell – Overture
- 25.06.1952, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 6 “Pathétique”
 Respighi: Feste romane – Ottobrebrata
 Rimsky-Korsakov: The Flight of the Bumble-Bee
 Albeniz: Iberia – Triana
 Gershwin: Cuban Overture
- 26.08.1953, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Zandonai: Danza del torchio e Cavalcata
 Ravel: Boléro
- 28.08.1953, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Fonte Anticolana, Fiuggi
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Martucci: Notturmo op. 70/1
 Falla: El amor brujo – Ritual Fire Dance
 Zandonai: Danza del torchio e Cavalcata
- 30.08.1953, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Basilica di Massenzio
 Gershwin: Piano Concerto (soloist: Armando Trovajoli)
 Gershwin: An American in Paris

¹⁹⁸ Sic. Tchaikovsky's Second Symphony is in C minor op. 17. His Fourth Symphony, which Ferrero conducted often, is op. 36, though in F minor. An intriguing possibility is that this was Beethoven's Symphony no. 2 in D op. 36. Intriguing because Ferrero did not conduct this symphony on any other occasion, at least with the Santa Cecilia or EIAR orchestras. This would make a very short programme, though (unless the Carabella is very long). Probably he conducted Tchaikovsky's Fourth.

- Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue (soloist: Armando Trovajoli)
 31.08.1953, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Fonte Anticolana, Fiuggi
 Respighi: Fontane di Roma
 Gershwin: An american in Paris
 Catalani: A sera, for strings
 Sibelius: Valse triste
 Ravel: Boléro
- 13.12.1953, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Argentina
 Wolf-Ferrari: Il segreto di Susanna - Overture
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 4
 Weiner: Divertimento for strings on four old Hungarian dances
 Gershwin: Porgy and Bess – Symphonic Suite
- 20.01.1954, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Teatro Argentina
 Brahms: Symphony no. 4
 Pizzini: Strapaese, impressioni dal vero
 Debussy orch. Ravel: Danse
 Mussorgsky: Khovanschina – Prelude Act IV
 Wagner: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg – Overture

Appendix 5: Post-war concerts in Leningrad¹⁹⁹

13*-14 May 1951

- Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 4
 Wagner: Siegfried's Rhine journey
 Martucci: Notturmo
 Verdi: I Vespri Siciliani – Overture

16-17* May 1951

- Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Sibelius: Valse triste
 Ravel: Bolero

9-10-12* February 1952

- Vivaldi: Concerto Grosso in a minor
 Mozart: Symphony no. 34
 Martucci: Novelletta
 Strauss, R: Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils

14-15* February 1952

- Dvořák: Symphony no. 9 "From the New World"
 Respighi: Feste romane – Ottobrata
 Mussorgsky: Khovanchina – Prelude Act IV
 Strauss, R: Till Eulenspiegel

The concerts marked with an asterisk were recorded and the items available via Emilio Pessina's YouTube channel have been discussed above.

Appendix 6: Post-war concerts in Moscow²⁰⁰

27 April 1951, USSR State Symphony Orchestra, Great Hall of the Conservatoire

- Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 4
 Strauss, R: Don Juan
 Di Veroli: Theme and variations
 Verdi: I Vespri Siciliani – Overture

¹⁹⁹ Information provided by Alexander Negrin

²⁰⁰ Information provided by Alexander Negrin

- 29 April 1951, Large Symphony orchestra of the All-Union Committee of Radioinformation, Great Hall of Moscow Conservatoire
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 3 “Eroica”
 Debussy: Fêtes
 Martucci: Notturmo
 Wagner: The Ride of the Valkyries
- 24 May 1951, USSR State Symphony Orchestra, Great Hall of Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatoire
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5
 Rossini: Il Signor Bruschino . Overture
 Strauss, J: Waltz Potpourri
 Strauss, R: Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils
- 27 May 1951, USSR State Symphony Orchestra, Great Hall of the Conservatoire
 Brahms: Symphony no. 4
 Mussorgsky: Khovanchina – Prelude Act IV
 Ravel: Bolero
 Sibelius: "Valse Triste"
- 5 February 1952, USSR State Symphony Orchestra, Great Hall of Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatoire
 Beethoven: Coriolan
 Beethoven: Violin Concerto (soloist: Galina Barinova)
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 4
- 21 February 1952, Large Symphony orchestra of the All-Union Committee of Radioinformation, Tchaikovsky Concert Hall
 Dvořák: Symphony no. 9 “From the New World”
 Martucci: Noveletta
 Ravel: Daphnis et Chloë – Suite no. 2
- 7 March 1952, USSR State Symphony Orchestra, Great Hall of Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatoire
 Mozart: Symphony no. 34
 Rossini: Guglielmo Tell - Overture
 Liadov: Kikimora
 Strauss, R: Till Eulenspiegel

Soviet orchestras did not normally invite foreign guest conductors on an annual basis, but a further tour had been planned for 1954²⁰¹.

Appendix 7: Ferrero recordings preserved by RAI

- 8 August 1950, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI, studio
 Smetana: Vltava, broadcast 6 November 1950
 The OSN site (see Appendix 1) lists a (rather short) concert on 6 November 1950 at which Ferrero conducted three pieces from *Ma Vlast: Vysehrad, Vltava* and *Blanik*.
 The Radio Corriere for 6 November 1950 lists a broadcast by the Turin orchestra at 22.30, so clearly not live, with two pieces from *Ma Vlast: Vltava* conducted by Ferrero and *Tabor* conducted by Mario Fighera.
- 27 June 1952, Orchestra dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, live
 Beethoven: Symphony no. 5, not broadcast
 Strauss, R. Don Juan, not broadcast
 Falla: La Vida Breve – Dance, not broadcast
 Rossini: Guglielmo Tell – Overture, broadcast 27 June 1952
 The Santa Cecilia site gives 22 June 1952 as the date for this concert
 The Radio Corriere for 27 June 1952 does not list the Rossini broadcast
- 11 June 1953, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI, live?
 Weiner: Divertimento, broadcast 7 August 1953

²⁰¹ Related to Alexander Negrin by Armando Trovajoli.

Khachaturian: Piano Concerto (soloist: Sergio Perticaroli), 7 August 1953

The Radio Corriere for 7 August 1953 lists this as a live concert, including interval talk. By this date RAI was habitually recording their orchestral concerts and broadcasting them later.

The concert concluded with Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, which was re-broadcast four times during the 1960s but is now missing.

14 June 1953, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI, studio

Vivaldi-Silotti: Concerto in d minor op.3/11, broadcast 16 July 1953

Martucci: Notturmo, broadcast 16 July 1953

Debussy: Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune, broadcast 16 July 1953

Verdi: I Vespri Siciliani – Overture, broadcast 16 July 1953

Albeniz: Triana, not broadcast

The Radio Corriere for 16 July 1953 lists the four items as above.

Second versions, recorded on the same date and not broadcast, exist of the Debussy and Verdi items.

30 August 1953, Orchestra dell'Accademia di Santa Cecilia, live

Gershwin: Piano Concerto (pianist: Armando Trovajoli), not broadcast

Gershwin: An American in Paris, broadcast 10 September 1953

Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue (pianist: Armando Trovajoli), broadcast 10 September 1953

The Radio Corriere for 10 September 1953 lists the two items as above.

The entire concert is available on CD and is discussed above.

5 September 1953, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI, studio

Respighi: Gli uccelli, broadcast 25 October 1953

Pick-Mangiagalli: Notturmo e Rondò fantastic, broadcast 25 October 1953

The Radio Corriere for 25 October 1953 lists the two items as above.

In addition, the programme concluded with the *Danza del Torchio e Cavalcata* from Zandonai's *Giulietta e Romeo*. This recording is evidently missing.

24 September 1953, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI, studio

Ravel: Boléro, broadcast 24 November 1953

Ravel: Daphnis et Chloë – Suite no. 2, broadcast 24 November 1953

Ravel: Alborada del Gracioso, broadcast 25 March 1954

The Radio Corriere issues for 24 November and 25 March 1954 list the broadcasts as above.

Incidentally, *Alborada* was preceded by a performance of Chabrier's *Bourrée fantasque* in which the RAI Rome Orchestra was conducted by Jascha Horenstein, of all people.

The 24 September sessions included two further Ravel items which seem not to have been broadcast and are missing: *Pavane pour une infant défunte* and his orchestration of Debussy's *Danse*.

Boléro and *Daphnis* were included on the Musica Classica issue.

25 September 1953, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI

Beethoven: Symphony no. 1, not broadcast

Included in the Musica Classica issue.

25 November 1953, Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della RAI

Falla: Nights in the Gardens of Spain (soloist: Ermelinda Magnetti), not broadcast

Falla: El sombrero des tres picos: Miller's Dance and Miller's Wife's Dance, not broadcast

Falla: El Amor brujo: Pantomima and Ritual Fire Dance, not broadcast

According to the Radio Corriere for 12 January 1954, the entire programme was broadcast on that date.

The dances are included in the Musica Classica issue.