

## Garibaldi to Syncopation: Bruto Giannini and the Curious Case of Scott Joplin's *Magnetic Rag*

Marcello Piras

The richness and complexity of layered meanings hidden inside Scott Joplin's opera, *Treemonisha*<sup>1</sup> leaves one wondering. Is it an exception in his opus? Or did he weave a similarly thick web of symbols in other pieces as well?

It is known that *The Crush Collision March* and *Wall Street Rag* bear headings pointing to the specific events described—a deliberate train collision organized in September 1896 and the moods unleashed by the October 1907 stock market panic. Also, *The Cascades* makes reference to actual cascades built for the 1904 St. Louis World Exposition and shown on the original cover. Such facts suggest a consistent approach on Joplin's part. If so, more evidence might exist.

Actually, this writer detected descriptive elements in *Solace* and *Country Club*; their decipherment was delivered in a video-recorded presentation<sup>2</sup> but not yet committed to paper. The logical next step was, tackling the daunting task of systematically decoding all of Joplin's titles and covers to go beyond isolated cases and seek evidence of a recurring approach. This research yielded a rich harvest. Its crux, although cumbersome, will ultimately require a comprehensive exposition, as it calls for a unified discussion.

However, *Magnetic Rag* has a somewhat separate story, that calls for a separate treatment. Readers are thus invited to take this essay as a first morsel of a bigger—and hopefully tempting—musicological banquet.

### AN UNEXPLAINED TITLE EXPLAINED

*Magnetic Rag* stands in its own splendid isolation in Joplin's output. His last known piece, it is separated from its neighbor, *Scott Joplin's New Rag*, by a two-year hiatus, a lag that had never occurred after 1898. It was issued by the composer himself with inexpensive but dignified cover art, a close

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<sup>1</sup> Marcello Piras, "Treemonisha or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down," *Current Research in Jazz*, 4, 2012 (*Dan Morgenstern Festschrift*), <http://www.crj-online.org/v4/CRJ-Treemonisha.php>.

<sup>2</sup> Marcello Piras, *Il treno e il banjo, la caccia e la confessione: il teatro pianistico di Scott Joplin* ("Train and Banjo, Hunt and Confession: Scott Joplin's Keyboard Theater"). Rome, Casa del Jazz, March 10, 2009.

relative of *Treemonisha's* austere layout, and a far cry from the fancy, colored covers that Stark, Stern, or Seminary Music had provided him for years. It is notated in 4/4, while all other rags were written in 2/4. It bears Italian tempo markings (a feature shared with *New Rag* only) and, oddly, there are two of them, although the latter, *Tempo l'istesso*, merely confirming the former, *Allegretto ma non troppo*—a redundant advice for expert ragtimers, but perhaps not for concert pianists. All in all, its original edition looks very much like classical music, and hardly like popular song, dance, or entertainment.

Joplin's dream to be acknowledged as a composer beyond category is well known. After publishing an opera, he probably sensed that he had made it into the upper echelon of music. Now, each new piece had to conform to such an image. This makes things harder for us. Unlike Ellington, Joplin was not interviewed every other day, nor did he lead a band and indulge in spoken introductions. He was no John Lewis, living in the LP era, with plenty of room for liner notes. Nor did he write essays, like Anthony Braxton. His only medium was sheet music, that is, a title plus cover art. Here, the cover is silent—or almost so, as we shall see. The title is the primary hook we are left with.

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Today, the adjective “magnetic” basically belongs to the realm of physics. It refers to a vast array of phenomena explained by Maxwell's theory. We seldom experience them first-hand unless we toy with the lock of a bag, yet they underlie every electric gadget, from doorbells to space probes. We have grown accustomed to magnetism, as well as to our innocuous ignorance of it. The topic has lost its aura.

Not so a century ago. Electric devices, other than light bulbs, were rare in everyday life, and magnetism still had surprises in store. Newspapers had lengthy reports of missions bound to the Poles to chart the Earth's magnetic field.<sup>3</sup> The Earth as an immense magnet—what an arcane idea! Magnetism — that mystery force, dragging remote objects with no visible medium — lent itself to be conflated with anything irrational and scary, from witchcraft to occultism, from E.S.P. to demonic presences. “Magnetic” became a fashionable word—the mantra of the day, a bit like “atomic” in the 1950's, “electronic” in the 1960's, or “digital” in the 1980's. Its popularity can be measured from occurrences in movie titles. Our very incomplete list, showing a significant peak in 1913, has:

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<sup>3</sup> “Yacht *Carnegie* Again to Trace Earth's Magnetism,” *The Sun*, March 16, 1914, p. 4.

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|---|------|
| <i>The Dance of the Little Texas Magnet</i> | 1903 |
| <i>The Magnetic Eye</i>                     | 1908 |
| <i>Magnetic Vapor</i>                       | 1908 |
| <i>The Wonderful Electro-Magnet</i>         | 1909 |
| <i>The Magnet</i>                           | 1911 |
| <i>Belle-maman fait du magnétisme</i>       | 1911 |
| <i>A Magnetic Personality</i>               | 1912 |
| <i>The Magnetic Maid</i>                    | 1913 |
| <i>Magnétisme, les aimants</i>              | 1913 |
| <i>Personal Magnetism</i>                   | 1913 |

Nowadays, such colloquialisms as “a magnetic look” or “a magnetic personality” are usually taken for what they are—metaphors. Back then, the border between matter and metaphor—a copper wire reel and a charismatic leader—was blurred. *The Art and Science of Personal Magnetism*,<sup>4</sup> a book blithely mixing apples and oranges, came out in 1913—seemingly the Magnetic Year *par excellence*. As non-science cannot be disproved, it is still available from a dozen Web sites.

Cinema, the new art that could make the impossible possible, jumped on the fad and added to the confusion. *Belle-maman fait du magnétisme*, a comedy from the popular “Belle-maman” series (Pathé Frères studio), had the following plot:<sup>5</sup>

Belle-maman is plagued by her son-in-law, an inveterate womanizer. Facing her daughter’s tears, she resorts to extreme means. After a magnetism treatise initiated her into the mysteries of occultism, she exerts her new powers; her fluids, running along the picturesque way of telegraph wires, drive the unfaithful husband back to reason. He humbly pleads for forgiveness, which he is granted, for now Belle-maman knows how to keep him in line, willing or not.

Franz Anton Mesmer himself caused the confusion as he coined the term “animal magnetism” by or before 1774. His popular experiments, mixing reality and suggestion, originally included the actual placement of magnets on the patient’s body. The practice was then dropped, but the expression remained. Mesmer described his therapy as a fluid conveying energy to the patient. By 1841, in the assortment of phenomena lumped under the “animal magnetism” rubric, the Scottish physician, James Braid, singled out one and called it “neuro-hypnotism.” The word “hypnosis” was derived from it in the 1880’s. However, the old word, “magnetism,” remained tenaciously popular, compared to the clinical coldness of the new one. The

<sup>4</sup> Theron Q. Dumont, *The Art and Science of Personal Magnetism* (Chicago: Advanced Thought, 1913).

<sup>5</sup> Synopsis on <http://filmographie.fondation-jeromeseydoux-pathe.com/index.php?id=8638>. (Translation from French by this writer).

two tags ended up partly overlapping—all hypnosis was magnetism, not all magnetism was hypnosis.

Hypnosis soon became a subject for experiments conducted anywhere from universities to tent shows, meeting with wide success, and relaunching the general interest in magnetism. Newspapers hosted debates between the positivist view—human mind obeys physics laws, hence there is no such thing as soul—and the Church, dismissing both the shows and their implications. An echo can be perceived in Guy de Maupassant's short novel, *Magnétisme* (1882).

Now our movie list could be expanded to accommodate titles including “hypnosis,” e.g. *Alkali Ike and the Hypnotist*, dated—you guessed it—1913. The subject was supposed to promote success. A magnetism scene would usually show an ugly, bearded, thick-browed doctor inducing mesmeric sleep in a fragile female beauty for his (and the audience's) pleasure to see her obey every command, thus unleashing dominance/submission erotic fantasies—a variant of the damsel in distress tied to the railroad track, except with invisible ropes. Also, it would titillate mass hate of science by portraying the doctor as the villain.

An authoritative word from a specialist, dispelling the confusion, was overdue. *The Contemporary Science Series*, edited by Havelock Ellis, translated the fourth and enlarged edition of Dr. Albert Moll's classic book, *Hypnotism*.<sup>6</sup> It was a timely decision—it came out in 1913.

Also from 1913 was Adelaide Mack's book, *Magnetic Paris*.<sup>7</sup> Its title was a trivial pun. The gadget sold as a “magnetic Paris” was a metal plaque adhering to metal surfaces and reproducing the letters P-A-R-I-S in fancy fonts, so as to suggest a view of the city, the “A” shaped after the Eiffel Tower.<sup>8</sup> Ms. Mack's travel journal described the *Ville Lumière* as a magnet, attracting all sorts of people from the four corners of the earth. We shall forego a discussion of her literary merits to focus on the cover art. Again, reality and metaphor are conflated. A horseshoe magnet is surrounded by straight lines pointing to all directions, in an obvious depiction of a magnetic field. Joplin, then publisher of his own music, either followed such an example or came up with the same idea. Magnetic field lines depart from the capital M in similar fashion.

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<sup>6</sup> Albert Moll, *Hypnotism: Including a Study of the Chief Points of Psycho-Therapeutics and Occultism*. Translated from the Fourth Enlarged Edition by Arthur F. Hopkirk (London/New York: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., Ltd./Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913).

<sup>7</sup> Adelaide Mack, *Magnetic Paris*. With many illustrations especially drawn by Géo. Desains and Charlotte Schaller (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., [1913]).

<sup>8</sup> By generalization, any magnetic souvenir from Paris was thus called.

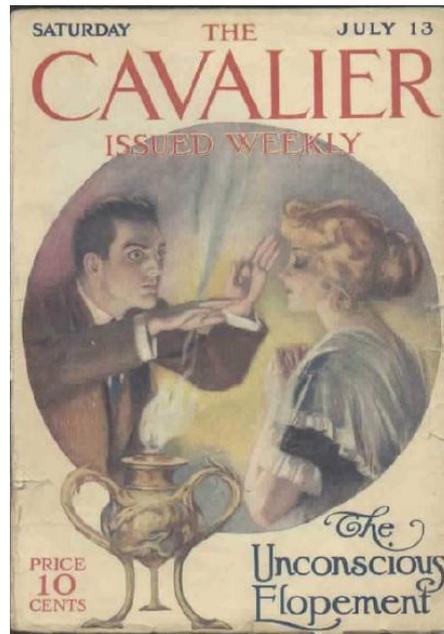


Fig. 1. Comparison between covers. Left, Adelaide Mack, *Magnetic Paris*, 1913. Right, Scott Joplin, *Magnetic Rag*, 1914.

What was he trying to say? There is no evidence of him stretching his already huge cultural interests to include Maxwell's theory. No rag is made of iron, after all. Rather, he seems to have hinted at mental magnetism at least once, namely, when he called Luddud ("loaded") *Treemonisha's* second conjuror, sheepishly following in Zozetrick's footsteps. When we warily suggested such a hypothesis,<sup>9</sup> it looked like an isolated case in Joplin's opus. It is no longer so. As a forthcoming essay will thoroughly document, there is no doubt that Joplin had in his hands by 1912 an issue of *The Cavalier*, a literary magazine. Its color cover displayed a hypnotist waving his hands before a sleepy girl. The related content was a novel entitled *The Unconscious Elopement*.<sup>10</sup> Apparently, Joplin wanted to have his say on this popular subject and looked for a suitable script. Magnetism loomed large in his thoughts in those years.

<sup>9</sup> Piras 2012, cit.

<sup>10</sup> Gilbert Riddell, *The Unconscious Elopement*, in *The Cavalier*, vol. XVII No. 4, July 13, 1912, p. 577-629.



However, that overly long and contemplative novel turned out uninspiring. Besides, it expressed a view of magnetism as a super-human power people can only surrender to. Joplin, on the contrary, saw it as a negative phenomenon—lack of rational thought, or the demise thereof—to be fought for the sake of rationality and intellectual progress.

Some time later, Joplin stumbled upon a better story. It is known in detail, for it was lavishly documented in the press. Before it is told, though, we need to get acquainted with a friend of his, so far a shadowy figure on the New York musical scene.

#### AN UNKNOWN TEACHER KNOWN

No James P. Johnson biography can dispense with citing this man, whom he named as his maestro.

Ernest Green's [*sic*] mother was studying then with a piano and singing teacher named Bruto Gianinni [*sic*]. She did house cleaning in return for lessons—several Negro singers got their training that way. Mrs. Green told me: "James, you have too much talent to remain ignorant of musical principles." She inspired me to study seriously. So I began to take lessons from Gianinni, but I got tired of the dull exercises. However, he taught me a lot of concert effects.

I was starting to develop a good technique. I was born with absolute pitch and could catch a key that a player was using and copy it, even Luckey's. I played rags very accurately and brilliantly—running chromatic octaves and glissandos up and down with both hands. It made a terrific effect. I did double glissandos straight and backhand, glissandos

in sixths and double tremolos. These would run other ticklers out of the place at cutting sessions. They wouldn't play after me ... I was playing a lot of piano then, traveling around and listening to every good player I could. I'd steal their breaks and style and practice them until I had them perfect.

From listening to classical piano records and concerts, from friends of Ernest Green such as Mme. Garret [*spelling?*], who was a fine classical pianist, I would learn concert effects and build them into blues and rags. Sometimes I would play basses a little lighter than the melody and change harmonies. When playing a heavy stomp, I'd soften it right down—then, I'd make an abrupt change like I heard Beethoven do in a sonata ... Once I used Liszt's *Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase* as an introduction to a stomp.<sup>11</sup>

Alas, the interviewer, Tom Davin, asked many questions but seemed uninterested in Johnson's teacher; he even had his name wrong. The revealing sentence is: "I began to take lessons from Gianinni, *but* I got tired of the dull exercises. *However*, he taught me a lot of concert effects" (italics mine). This really sounds like Davin's voice. That "but", although partly counterbalanced by "however", makes no sense and is at variance with the rest. If you grow tired of exercises, how can you learn difficult concert effects? Here Johnson is recalling his happiness and pride at acquiring clean classical technique and mastering virtuoso passages. For sure he did not "begin but grow tired", which implies giving up soon. In a 1949 interview he had recounted the same facts and added:

[Giannini used to] teach me my harmony and counterpoint for just a dollar a lesson. He taught me for four years. I had to throw away my fingering and learn to put the right finger on the right note. I was on Bach, and double thirds need good fingering.<sup>12</sup>

Did it take four years for him to get tired? Please. Johnson must have said something to the effect of:

... So I began to take lessons from Giannini. *At first*, I got tired of the dull exercises, *then* I started to develop a good technique. He taught me a lot of concert effects ...

a wording that is consistent with the rest.

Davin was blank on classical music. Two lines above, he had Johnson cite a *White Cavalry Overture* which is obviously Franz von Suppé's *Light Cavalry*. As the mix-up is phonetic, not orthographic, it can only be

<sup>11</sup> Tom Davin, "Conversations with James P. Johnson," part 2. *The Jazz Review*, July 1959, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, *They All Played Ragtime* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950. Fourth edition, New York: Oak, 1971), p. 203.

Davin's, not the typist's.<sup>13</sup> A common prejudice was likely involved here, regarding classical tuition as either irrelevant or dangerous to "real jazz"—besides being boring, of course. Perhaps, the old American "we-need-no-lessons-from-Europe" myth played a role as well. Davin had opened his article with a list of Johnson's stage and symphonic works, and had added:

This is quite a range of achievement for an informally taught, honky-tonk piano player. Who has topped it?<sup>14</sup>

He insisted that Johnson was "informally taught" even after getting the opposite from the horse's mouth. Such myth is a veritable religion; it accepts no debunking.

From 1959 to 2012, all info on Signor Giannini boiled down to James P.'s pithy reminiscences, half of which is filtered through Davin's dubious editing. Even Scott Brown's excellent book<sup>15</sup> provided no new data. Yet those words carry huge implications. A white man teaching to Negro students (more than one) in the 1910's? And did James P. really learn Liszt's *Rigoletto Paraphrase*? Did I read correctly? Did Giannini bring his pupil, as gifted as he was, to *that* level? This is not just another classical number, as laypeople may believe; it is one of the most intimidating piano pieces ever written—an acknowledged virtuoso benchmark. Johnson did not throw it in at random. He was boasting of his achievements, as if saying, "I climbed the Himalayas"—alas to deaf ears.

All this should have prompted research on such a fascinating figure. Yet there was none, or it was fruitless. "Perfessor" Bill Edwards, on his very accurate website, writes:

He ended up training with Bruto Giannini [the author was not able to definitively locate a teacher by this name, so it is considered approximate] ... Bruto instilled a great deal of musical discipline in the youth through the insistence that a regiment of scales and performance [of] certain classical pieces be followed. This also gave Johnson a further appreciation for classical themes that would surface in his later compositions.

To his great credit, Bruto did not discourage Jimmy's propensities to play ragtime and blues, but did make sure that his fingerings and technique were correct. The experience left Jimmy well versed in not only technique but harmony and theory, all necessary for good composition and arranging. His fingering technique dazzled all who watched, including many competitors who simply ceded to his quiet

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<sup>13</sup> Curiously, nobody at *The Jazz Review* fixed it.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Davin, "Conversations with James P. Johnson," part 1. *The Jazz Review*, June 1959, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Scott E. Brown, James Hilbert, *James P. Johnson. A Case of a Mistaken Identity* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press and the Institute of Jazz Studies, 1986).

dominance. Some of that was applied to his early compositions, reportedly originally conceived during his time with Bruto, including the stride piano template *Carolina Shout*, the bouncy *Mule Walk* based on a dance of the same name, and the dynamic show-off piece *Steeplechase Rag*.<sup>16</sup>

Here, orthography is correct, the author (an excellent pianist himself) shows respect for Giannini and is right on the mark in stressing his liberal views. Yet, despite his ability in unearthing data, he came up empty-handed.

An unexpected turn occurred by early 2012, when musicologist and Paragon Ragtime Orchestra leader Rick Benjamin had his new *Treemonisha* orchestration issued in a lush two-CD-*cum*-booklet case. Employing the quickly expanding resources of the Web, he discovered that Giannini had taught Joplin as well.

At this time we learn something fascinating about Scott Joplin himself: he was once again taking music lessons. This glimpse comes to us through a short social interest item in *The New York Age*. On September 25, 1913, Mme. Alma Jupiter Greene hosted an intimate dinner party in her apartment for Prof. B.V. Giannini, his student Scott Joplin, and Henry Pleasant ... Greene was a noted soprano soloist in New York's black churches (later including Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church); Pleasant was a classical African-American tenor and future member of the famed Lafayette Players. Bruto Valerico [*sic; see later*] Giannini was a vocal coach, pianist, composer, and piano pedagogue. Since the mid-1890s Giannini had maintained a teaching studio at Carnegie Hall, and later on Broadway between West 65th and 66th Streets. The Professor specialized in "vocal culture," but he also taught piano; *The Etude* and other music magazines published his teaching pieces. Giannini also had a strong connection with New York's African-American community, and taught many of the serious singers and pianists of "Black Bohemia" and Harlem. The legendary stride pianist James P. Johnson (1894–1955) was another Giannini student, beginning in 1913 ... But when did Scott Joplin begin studying with B.V. Giannini? An April 1909 St. Louis newspaper article mentions that Joplin was studying in New York; he was still doing so in the fall of 1913. Was he honing his vocal talents? Or trying to improve (or regain) his modest keyboard skills? Perhaps he wanted to learn about the operas that the Professor had seen staged in Milan. Sadly, these questions will probably never be answered. But this episode adds two more "brush strokes" to the emerging portrait of the elusive Scott Joplin: it shows us a middle-aged professional musician who continued to be interested in artistic advancement. Further, we see that while hobnobbing with an Italian maestro and black church singers,

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<sup>16</sup> <http://ragpiano.com/comps/jjohnson.shtml>.

he was certainly not hanging out over at the Clef Club.<sup>17</sup>

Benjamin's findings awoke my interest. They give Giannini an eminent place in the ragtime-to-jazz transition—sitting between two giants, both opera composers. However, this sheds light on his activity, not his personality; and the author's speculation about Milan elicited a smile from me. It is hardly strange that a U.S. ragtime scholar thinks of Italian opera as being staged in a single city. Actually, by the late 19th century, opera houses in Italy numbered in the three digits. For the rest, Benjamin's work is so innovative and exciting, one cannot complain about such minutiae. I was reminded of the plumber sign, "We repair what your husband fixed", and stepped in.

The biography that follows is a preliminary sketch, nailing the basic facts, and integrated by some educated guessing. Much remains to be done.

#### AN UNSEIZABLE GANG SEIZED

The curtain raises on a man called Palemone Giannini, born around 1810 in a small town, Montone, Umbria,<sup>18</sup> then part of the Papal States. One of the eight entities into which Italy was divided, and a merciless totalitarian state, the Pope's kingdom was a relic of the Dark Ages. Catholic faith was spoonfed to people as an inescapable duty; rebellion could trigger excommunication, prison, or beheading, routinely performed as a popular form of open-air entertainment. Every aspect of private life was under scrutiny of Church authorities; science, art, and culture, once flourishing, had long declined.

By 1798-99 Napoleon swept across the sleepy kingdom, jailed Pope Pius VI (who died in prison), and founded a short-lived Roman Republic, giving its citizens, at last, a taste of freedom. After sundry conflicts, the Papal authority was restored in 1814, more or less inside the old borders; repression ensued, as ruthless as before.

No wonder that many people grew hostile to the Pope. They ended up identifying the struggle for freedom and democracy with the fight for science and knowledge against bigotry, superstition, and ignorance. Also, the fall of the Church power was seen as part of a larger struggle for a free and united Italy.

That grand dream would take a century to come true.

In this gloomy sunset of a rotten regime, resistance found oblique ways of expression. A Greek torso excavated in 1501 and gracing a Roman

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<sup>17</sup> Rick Benjamin, *Treemonisha*, liner notes to CD. New World Records 80720 (2012), p. [19].

<sup>18</sup> Cesare Pinzi, *Gli ospizi medioevali e l'Ospedale Grande di Viterbo* (Viterbo: Monarchi, 1893), p. 328.

square ever since, became a “talking statue” called Pasquino (from which “pasquinade” came). Unknown hands used to hang sheets on it, with spicy comments on political events or the clergy’s private vices. No pope ever managed to suppress this usage—and not for lack of effort.



Fig. 3. Political map of Italy 1815-1859.

Similarly, as each parish also served as a civil registry, and baptism was mandatory under threat of excommunication, the choice of giving babies weird names took on political overtones. Instead of Giovanni, Maria, or Antonio, the imposition of names drawn from foreign tongues, Germanic sagas, or pagan antiquity spread, in the hope that no such saints existed. As there are more saints than imagination allows for, this War of the Names

grew extreme over time, to the point of crystalizing into a revered tradition in some families. It is still very much alive in the Romagna area, where it achieved surrealist peaks, with innocent creatures christened anything from Lenin to Algebra.

The Gianninis pioneered the field. Napoleon was likely still around when Palemone got his name, possibly from a Roman slave who learned to read and became a noted grammarian—a story Joplin would have loved. (Alas, a namesake saint exists—an Egyptian anacorete monk.) Armed with his eccentric appellation, Palemone studied medicine in Rome and started a brilliant career as a *protomedico*, a now obsolete term for either a public health official or a hospital head physician. His prestige is widely attested. For instance, a medical review hosted an essay entitled, *On the believed decomposition of calomel by means of gooseberry. Research by Eugenio Cissoni, chemist in Pian di Meleto, who offers and dedicates it to the most distinguished professor Pallemone [sic] Giannini, protomedico in Macerata, as token of the highest esteem.*<sup>19</sup> Calomel (mercury chloride) was then commonly used in medicine; it has fallen into oblivion since. The dedicatee was an authority on calomel, on which he wrote a little book.<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Giannini often relocated up and down the Papal States. In the early 1840s he was in Genzano, up on the hills surrounding Rome. There he married Anna Monti,<sup>21</sup> a widow with a little son, Stanislao Alberici, born in 1840.<sup>22</sup> Palemone adopted him; the child was thus given double surnames and became Stanislao Alberici Giannini. In 1844 the couple had a male baby, Valfredo.<sup>23</sup> Some time later they moved to Ascoli, Marche, today Ascoli Piceno, where their last son, Bruto, was born on March 28, 1848.<sup>24</sup>

Again, the very unusual Germanic name, Valfredo, corresponds to an obscure saint—an 8th-century Lombard abbot, worshipped only in Pisa. Bruto, instead, is thoroughly pagan. If you try googling “Saint Brutus,” all you get is *Harry Potter*.

<sup>19</sup> Eugenio Cissoni, “Sulla creduta decomposizione del calomelano per mezzo del ribes. Studi di Eugenio Cissoni, farmacista in Pian di Meleto, che al chiarissimo dottor Pallemone [sic] Giannini protomedico di Macerata delle Marche a puro segnale di altissima stima O. e D.” *Bullettino delle scienze mediche*, 1852, p. 429 ff.

<sup>20</sup> Palemone Giannini, *Del calomelano sicuro e specifico medicamento* (Forlì: Tip. Soc. Democratica, 1872).

<sup>21</sup> Vincenzo Masi, *Forano tricolorata. Il contributo di un paese di Sabina all'Unità nazionale 1798-1870* (Rieti: Edizioni della Big, 2011), p. 52.

<sup>22</sup> Stanislao was born in Montefiore dell'Aso on April 13, 1840. A concise bio and a rich bibliography are in

[http://www.archiviobiograficomovimentooperaio.org/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=21409:alberici-giannini-stanislao&lang=it](http://www.archiviobiograficomovimentooperaio.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=21409:alberici-giannini-stanislao&lang=it).

<sup>23</sup> A.P., obituary, *La Plebe*, February 2, 1883, p. 23.

<sup>24</sup> Masi (2011), p. 52.

Bruto's middle name variously appears as "Valerio" or "Valerico." He used both, the rarer Valerico only in such formal statements as copyright deposits,<sup>25</sup> suggesting it was the spelling appearing in his birth certificate; the common Valerio elsewhere. To cut it short, he often signed Bruto V. Giannini.

As a given name, Bruto is rare today, but was not in 1848. It pointed to two Roman heroes, symmetrically placed at the birth and death of the Republic. Lucius Junius Brutus helped chase the Etruscan kings and found the Republic (510 BCE). Marcus Junius Brutus helped kill Julius Caesar to rid the Republic of a dictator (45 BCE). These were no mere school notions. Rome had been a democracy for 465 years and was a perennial model for regimes founded on the people's will. (No wonder that the USA pillaged its symbols, from the eagle to the Capitol). After Napoleon's defeat, with the old dynasties back in control, Bruto was a heavy name to bear—it meant rebellion to tyrants.

Stanislao, Valfredo, and Bruto were to form a dynamite trio, worthy of their liberal father. After all, they were born in tumultuous times. The 1848 revolutionary wave shook even the Papal States. By 1849 Pius IX, who had promised and then withdrawn reforms, was chased away. The new Roman Republic lasted five months, until France repressed it. Its importance was immense though, for its Constitution turned Rome, the capital of a dusty feudal kingdom, into a world vanguard of civil rights. Freedom of religion, the absence of a death penalty, and suffrage for men and women were among its futuristic principles. It raised great hopes; its fall unleashed equally great anger.

Meanwhile the Gianninis moved from Ascoli to Urbino (1850) and Macerata (1852).<sup>26</sup> When the *protomedico* position was opened at the Ospedal Grande, Viterbo, Palemone applied. He was appointed on August 16, 1858.<sup>27</sup>

The city of Viterbo had long harbored anti-papal feelings which, after the ill-fated 1849 Republic, another decade of church repression could only exacerbate.<sup>28</sup> The right time for revenge came in 1859. Piedmont, with French help, chased the Austrians from Lombardy. Lucca, Modena, Parma, and the Tuscany states soon joined it. Piedmont then invaded the Pope's kingdom, taking away three fourths of his land, while Garibaldi conquered the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. In sixteen frantic months,

<sup>25</sup> An example is his patented invention (see page 157).

<sup>26</sup> Pinzi (1893), p. 328, fn. 3, has places but no dates. That Giannini was in Urbino in 1850 is attested in Alessandro Checcucci (ed.), *Lettere scientifiche e familiari di Francesco Puccinotti* (Pisa: Le Monnier, 1877), p. 246. Date for Macerata from Cissoni (1852), cit.

<sup>27</sup> Pinzi (1893), p. 328.

<sup>28</sup> All data on Viterbo revolts come from <http://www.tusciaviterbese.it/storia/risorgim.html>.

Italy had been largely unified.

A few areas were left out of the new entity. One was Lazio, some 5,400 square miles including Rome, as well as Viterbo. Here, many young men volunteered to form a popular army; Viterbo was liberated from Papal rule on September 21, 1860. A Temporary City Commission of “seven eminent men” was proclaimed; Palemone Giannini was one.

Yet, the political situation was a conundrum. Piedmont was allied to France but had attacked the Pope, protected by France. Now, what would France do with the Viterbo rebels? Two Commission members, Giannini and Emanuele Martucci, were sent to negotiate with Napoleon III, who refused to meet them. On October 11, the French army entered Viterbo, re-establishing the Papal power. The effect was soon felt. Many young men climbed the scaffold. Palemone ran away with his family and was sentenced to death *in absentia*.<sup>29</sup>

His destination is not documented, but evidence points to Bologna. Now part of the new Kingdom of Italy, Bologna had been a major academic center for centuries. Palemone was known there and his teenage sons could study. Actually, Stanislao got his medical degree in Perugia (July 12, 1861), but his professional licence in Bologna (November 25, 1863),<sup>30</sup> where Valfredo, a talent in mathematics, took his degree at 20,<sup>31</sup> hence by 1864.

Despite such wanderings, Bruto received a high-class education. In later years, many witnessed his proficiency as a pianist, and he was to display a vast culture and a facility with foreign tongues that was, and still is, rare among Italians. Yet little is known about his studies. The Bologna Conservatory, then “Liceo Musicale,” has a huge archive, now partly closed after a nearby earthquake. The only accessible source is a manuscript notebook, covering about a century, compiled by a Federico Vellani, who worked there from 1868 to 1906. Vellani recorded “Giannini, Bruto; di Viterbo” as a counterpoint (actually, composition) student of the then famous Giuseppe Busi in 1864–68.<sup>32</sup> There is no evidence of piano classes. This is tantalizing. Giannini seems to have studied under a great teacher, one who was conversant with Liszt’s latest works—and there were not many in the land of opera.

However, the best one happened to be in town.

An early protégé of Rossini’s, Stefano Golinelli (1818–1891) was a composer of wide renown; Schumann praised him highly. He made extensive tours abroad and apparently met Gottschalk, to whom he

<sup>29</sup> Bruto Giannini, letter to the editor, *La Plebe*, April 4, 1883, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.archivistorico.unibo.it/Template/listStudenti.asp?IDFolder=143&start=true&LN=IT&nEPP=200&offset=200&filtro=no>.

<sup>31</sup> A.P., cit.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.bibliotecamusica.it/cmbm/scripts/vellani/schedn.asp?id=9337>.

dedicated a piano piece, *Le Carnaval de Bologne* (1851).<sup>33</sup> He taught at the Liceo from 1840 to 1871.<sup>34</sup> Multiple evidence suggests a Golinelli-Giannini connection, which remains speculation for now. Their families had much in common. A brother of Golinelli's, Enrico Golinelli, Sr., was a physician whose research was cut short by his untimely death; a nephew, Enrico Golinelli, Jr., was Bologna's first Socialist mayor.<sup>35</sup> As it seems, both families partook of that secular worldview in which scientific progress paves the way to social progress. They would have endorsed Saint-Saëns' aphorism: «*À mesure que la science avance, Dieu recule.*»

In 1863, Stanislao Alberici Giannini published a collection of poems<sup>36</sup> and began his career as a physician, mainly in the Ascoli area, where he was also politically active as a republican, that is, a follower of Giuseppe Mazzini's vision of a unified Italian republic with no church power. As such, in 1865 he co-authored an appeal to Southern Marche republicans.<sup>37</sup> As for Valfredo, he was drafted into the Military Engineer Corps of the Royal Italian Army, but ended up discriminated against for his progressive ideas and sent to infantry as a punishment.<sup>38</sup>

By 1866, the Kingdom of Italy, with Prussian help, liberated Venice. Garibaldi was there, heading his *Corpo Volontari Italiani*, in which Stanislao fought. Rome's turn was getting closer. The King hesitated, fearing war with France. Garibaldi wasted no time and launched the recruitment of a new army to fight the Pope. Stanislao, Valfredo, and Bruto grabbed the welcome chance to shoot at the very power that sought to hang their dad. Valfredo deserted the Royal Army for the Red Shirts, and was appointed captain.<sup>39</sup> Bruto left the conservatory and followed as a private.

The newborn army had little organization but lots of enthusiasm; lifetime friendships blossomed. Bruto's closest one was with Romolo Battistoni (1847-1939), a clarinet player.<sup>40</sup> As for flautist Luigi Canepa (1849-1914), who, like Bruto, had left the Naples conservatory to enlist, he and Bruto were to team years later, which suggests, but does not prove, that they had met there.

<sup>33</sup> Stefano Golinelli, *Le Carnaval de Bologne* op. 57 (Milan: Giovanni Ricordi, 1951, plate no. 23404).

<sup>34</sup> Raoul Meloncelli, "Golinelli, Stefano" in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 57 (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2002). [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/stefano-golinelli\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/stefano-golinelli_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

<sup>35</sup> Ignazio Masulli, "Golinelli, Enrico" in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 57 (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2002). [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/enrico-golinelli\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/enrico-golinelli_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

<sup>36</sup> *Alcune rime di Stanislao Alberici Giannini* (Bologna: Giuseppe Vitali, 1863).

<sup>37</sup> Enzo Santarelli, *Le Marche dall'Unità al fascismo* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1964), p. 34.

<sup>38</sup> A.P., cit.

<sup>39</sup> A.P., cit.

<sup>40</sup> Masi (2011), p. 52.

However, the whole enterprise was hastily planned and poorly funded. No registers survive of that improvised corps, amassing about eight thousand men. Their charismatic leader had gathered a bunch of patriots, some experienced but old, some young but inexperienced, with poor discipline, little food, bad equipment, outdated rifles, two cannons, and a miniature cavalry. They counted on a popular anti-Pope upheaval that was only in their dreams. Meanwhile, the trumpeted recruitment had long alerted Napoleon III, who sent in a real army.

The final battle took place in Mentana, fifteen miles north of Rome, on November 3, 1867. Some 5,000 men per side fought from 12:30 to 17:04, with cannons, rifles, and even bayonets, amidst the olive trees. The better organized and equipped Papal-French soldiers attacked the Red Shirts on their left side. They were routed; some fled northward to Monterotondo and scattered, Bruto among them. Others entrenched inside a nearby castle and surrendered the day after.

We don't know where Stanislao and Valfredo ended up. Some time later, the former returned to his profession and to active politics. As the gulf between statist Mazzini and anarchist Mikhail Bakunin widened, Stanislao drifted toward the latter and became an anarchist libertarian. In 1872, a group of Garibaldi veterans, with their hero's endorsement, founded an association of free thinkers in Bologna, the Fascio Operaio ("Workers' Cluster"), the earliest local nucleus of the First International. Stanislao was to bestow upon it a lasting contribution—as a poet. He penned the "Hymn of the International" (1874), to be sung to the air of "La Marseillaise." It is still remembered. Such lines as "*Pace, pace ai tuguri del povero! | Guerra, guerra ai palagi e alle chiese!*" (Peace, peace to poor people's slums | War, war to mansions and churches) leave little doubt as to his world view. Stanislao died in 1877,<sup>41</sup> survived by his widow and daughter.<sup>42</sup> He was 37.

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<sup>41</sup> Mariella Nejrotti, "Correnti anarchiche e socialiste a Torino (1870-1888)," in *Miscellaneous Pamphlets on the Paris Commune*, volume 1 (no publisher, 1961-1970), p. 215, quoting an obituary on *La Plebe*, November 18, 1877, has Stanislao die in Collina, Marche. The Archivio Biografico del Movimento Operaio (see fn. 22) has him die in Civita Lavinia, Lazio, on October 17, 1877.

<sup>42</sup> A.P., cit.



Fig. 4. Stanislao Alberici Giannini, portrait by unknown artist.

As for Valfredo, he had deserted the Royal Army to be defeated with Garibaldi's—twice a loser. He was never able to realize a career up to his talent and ended up teaching little boys for a poor salary. He married, had a daughter, and took Stanislao's one with him when the latter passed away. However, he did not survive his brother for long. He died in Tolentino, Marche, in 1883, at 39.

What we know about Valfredo largely comes from an obituary in the proto-Socialist periodical, *La Plebe*, and Bruto's subsequent letter, correcting some details.

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Dall'egregio signor maestro Bruto Valerico Giannini riceviamo la seguente:

*Sassari, 7 Marzo 1883.*

Nell'ultimo numero della vostra *Plebe* ho letto una corrispondenza da Tolentino, credo, che riguarda la morte del mio povero fratello Valfredo. Il corrispondente però è incorso in alcune inesattezze che mi affretto a rettificare, pregandovi di far pubblicare tale rettifica.

Il cognome « Alberici Giannini » apparteneva soltanto al nostro fratello maggiore il compianto Stanislao perché figlio del primogenito di nostra madre ed adottato da nostro padre Palemone Giannini, il quale fu distinto medico, è vero, ma non fu mai galeotto, bensì condannato a morte in contumacia dal Governo Pontificio nel 1860.

Ciò che poi più mi preme si sappia si è che sino a che sarò io vivo, le figlie dei miei amatissimi fratelli i quali assieme al padre mi hanno educato a forti e virtuosissimi principi, non solo non saranno abbandonate, ma riceveranno da me quelle cure e quell'educazione che avrebbero potuto avere dai loro stessi genitori. Non ho figli e lo prendo con me. La sventura ha troppo sovente visitato la nostra casa perché lo possa agire diversamente. Non sono che i felici, ed i soddisfatti che hanno il cuore duro.

Vi ringrazio e vi saluto cordialmente.

Tutto Vostro  
B. V. GIANNINI.

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Fig. 5. Bruto Giannini's letter issued on *La Plebe*. 1883.

From the illustrious maestro, Signor Bruto Valerico Giannini, we received the following:

*Sassari, March 7, 1883.*

In the latest issue of your magazine, *La Plebe*, I read a correspondence from Tolentino, I guess, about the death of my poor brother, Valfredo. However, the writer stumbled upon some inaccuracies which I hasten to fix. I beg you to issue this erratum.

The family name, "Alberici Giannini", only belonged to our elder brother, the late Stanislao, as a son of our mother's first husband, then adopted by our father, Palemone Giannini. The latter was a distinguished doctor, true, but never a convict. Instead, he was sentenced to death in absentia by the Papal Government in 1860.

Also, what I most want to be known is, as long as I live, the daughters of my dearly beloved brothers (who, together with my father, instilled in me strong principles and virtues) will not be abandoned. Rather, they will receive from me the care and education they would have gotten from their fathers. I have no kids and take them with me. Too often did bad fortune visit our household, for me to act otherwise. It is only the happy and satisfied people who have a hardened heart.

Thanks and cordial greetings.

*All Yours*  
B.V. Giannini.

*La Plebe* had been founded in Lodi, Lombardy, in 1868 by Garibaldi's friend, Enrico Bignami. It voiced all views and currents of the Italian left, from Mazzini to Bakunin, but distanced itself from both over time and drifted toward Marx. It first published *Das Kapital* in Italian in a condensed edition. Friedrich Engels wrote that *La Plebe* had turned Lodi into "the first foothold of Marxism in Italy."<sup>43</sup> The obituary stresses that both Stanislao and Valfredo had to endure discrimination, injustice, and poverty because of their ideas. Valfredo "died as an atheist as he lived, and Tolentino rendered him solemn civil honors" (that is, a funeral with no mass).

The Giannini brothers are still remembered in Genzano, their names being etched in the town's Heroes Headstone.<sup>44</sup>

#### AN UNSUNG HERO SUNG

We can follow Bruto's moves in greater detail. Romolo Battistoni was from Forano, a small town only fifteen miles farther north of Monterotondo, on their escape route. He offered Bruto a welcome haven. One can figure out the Romantic *allure* of a nineteen-year-old Red Shirt, just back from a

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.melegnano.net/giornali03.htm>.

<sup>44</sup> A photo is at [http://rete.comuni-italiani.it/wiki/Immagine:Genzano\\_di\\_Roma\\_-\\_agli\\_Eroi.jpg](http://rete.comuni-italiani.it/wiki/Immagine:Genzano_di_Roma_-_agli_Eroi.jpg).

bloody battle, entering that house. Romolo's sister, Nazzarena, then seven, must have watched him in awe and reverence, like a hero fallen from Mars.



Fig. 6. Domenico Induno (1815-1878), *Il garibaldino*. Oil on canvas. 1871.

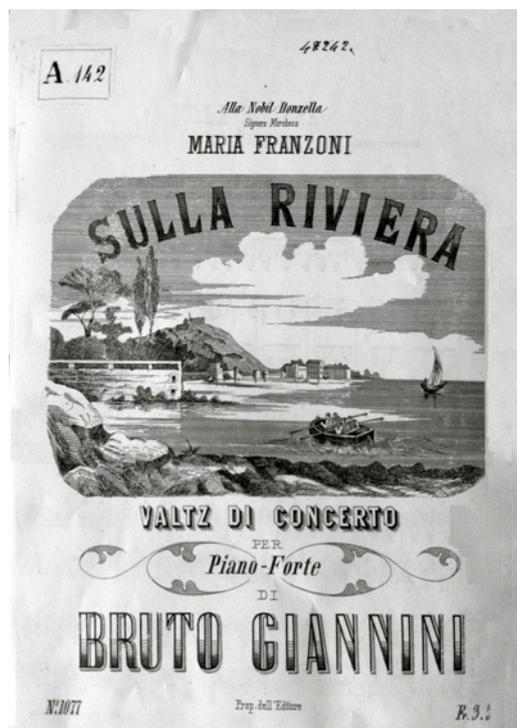
Forano—about 3,000 inhabitants today—had no concert band, unlike most Italian cities and towns. Bruto suggested that one be established, and Romolo endorsed the project.<sup>45</sup>

Bruto resumed his music studies in Bologna, graduating in 1868. Then, evidence places him in Florence. Here, his first known composition—a waltz for piano, *Sulla riviera*—was published by Oreste Morandi.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Masi (2011), p. 52. It is unclear whether the idea emerged in 1867 or later.

<sup>46</sup> Plate no. 1077. No catalog of Morandi editions exists. A 1870 date can be estimated out of interpolation from dated items.



Florence is not far from Bologna, although the Appennines are in the way. A likely connection was, again, Golinelli, a member of the Florentine “Società del Quartetto” (then a common name for chamber music clubs). If Bruto headed there, it was a good move. Florence was no longer the hotbed of art, science, literature, and philosophy of its heydays, when Giotto, Dante, Machiavelli, Michelangelo, Leonardo, and Galileo had been active, yet it had never ceased to host fertile minds. It was the cradle of opera and pianoforte; there the Granduke of Tuscany had abolished the death penalty and torture in 1786, in that same Enlightenment climate that led another Tuscan, Filippo Mazzei, to inspire Thomas Jefferson’s phrase, “All men are created equal.” But there was a more up-to-date reason as well. Italy’s unity originated from Turin, Piedmont, in the upper North-West corner; Rome was its natural capital, being right at the center. As an intermediate step, the capital was moved southward from Turin to Florence, where it remained from 1865 to 1870.

The arrival of the royal court took the city by storm. Its 150,000 inhabitants were enhanced by some 20,000 more people—bureaucrats, businessmen, soldiers, and their families. The urban plan was fully renovated; social and cultural life grew intense and frantic, as if subject to electric shock. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, who had visited Florence for two days in 1863, spent six more months there in 1868-69, completing *The Idiot*, and noticed the difference. In a letter to his friend, Nikolay Nikolayevich Strakhov, he reported:

Now Florence is significantly more noisy and colorful, the crowd in the streets is overwhelming. Many people converged to the capital; life is much more expensive.<sup>47</sup>

As elsewhere, opera was the main musical fare in Florence, however private music clubs heralded other genres, usually in salons hosted by intellectual women. Best known is Jessie Laussot, who was born in England, studied in Germany, married a Frenchman, and befriended Liszt and Wagner. Her Cherubini Choral Society closely resembled a German *Singverein*. She would personally oversee rehearsals and often conducted.<sup>48</sup> Leaning toward chamber music was Marquis Isabella Franzoni's salon. Born Princess Isabella Pio di Savoia into a family of ancient Spanish origins, she had studied piano in Bologna<sup>49</sup> and had married Marquis Domingo Franzoni, a Dante scholar.<sup>50</sup> Some of the best virtuosos around were her guests. The nature of Giannini's relationship to her is not known, nor is it clear whether he had a chance to listen to musicians then in town, such as violinist Antonio Bazzini, or pianist Hans von Bülow, who spent several months in Florence on and off during 1870,<sup>51</sup> or even Liszt, who appeared once, on April 3.<sup>52</sup> However, Bruto's waltz bears a caption: "*Alla gentile donzella nobil marchesa Maria Franzoni*" ("To the gentle maiden, noble Marquis M.F."). Maria was Isabella's daughter, then *donzella* (maiden). A timely dedication, for Maria married by November 1870. It was an event in the Florentine upper class, the bridegroom being the equally blue-blooded Simone Velluti-Zati, Duke of St. Clement. Books and sonnets celebrated the wedding,<sup>53</sup> and Giannini's waltz looks chronologically close to such gifts. Although danceable and melodically catchy, it boasts extended contours. It follows the waltz-chain format with a 37-bar introduction, then nine different strains can be detected, the first

<sup>47</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Complete Letters*, ed. David Allan Lowe (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1988), p. 118.

<sup>48</sup> Bianca Maria Antolini, "Jessie Laussot: musicista e organizzatrice di cultura nella Firenze del secondo Ottocento," in *Storia di una "novità": la direzione d'orchestra al femminile. Atti della Giornata internazionale di studi, Firenze, 19 giugno 2003* (Firenze: Consiglio regionale della Toscana, 2004), p. 141-161.

<sup>49</sup> Bianca Maria Antolini, "Corticelli, Gaetano," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 29 (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1983).  
[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gaetano-corticelli\\_\(Dizionario\\_Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gaetano-corticelli_(Dizionario_Biografico)/).

<sup>50</sup> Luigi Passerini, dedication to Domingo Franzoni, in Paolo Velluti, *Cronaca di sua casa scritta da Paolo Velluti in continuazione a quella di messer Donato Velluti; con notizie di detta famiglia dal 1560 sino a' di nostri pubblicate da Luigi Passerini* (Firenze: M. Cellini & C., 1870), no p. n.

<sup>51</sup> Sergio Martinotti, *La musica a Milano, in Lombardia e oltre* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1996), p. 263.

<sup>52</sup> "Notizie italiane," *Boccherini – Giornale musicale per la Società del Quartetto*, April 13, 1870, p. 52.

<sup>53</sup> Passerini (1870), cit. is a case in point.

one being repeated and varied throughout.

The word *riviera* means “seaside,” but it commonly refers to Liguria shores. The Franzonis’ family roots lay there; a Palazzo Franzoni exists in Lavagna, Liguria, now housing the town hall. The marine landscape on the cover is a view of the Lavagna coast, looking eastward to Sestri Levante.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps the Franzonis spent their summers there and gave the cover artist an image to copy.

Meanwhile, events were speeding up. On September 1 and 2, at Sedan, Germany exterminated the French army. Napoleon III was taken prisoner. His Empire fell two days later. Now nobody was protecting the Pope’s kingdom. The Italian Army soon attacked; Rome was liberated on September 20.

For the Gianninis, this meant freedom to return home. It is not known whether Bruto was drafted—at 22 he should have been, unless his Mentana veteran status or a war injury granted him an exemption. However, by November 1871 we find him in the former Papal States, now Kingdom of Italy, accepting a temporary job at Orte, near Viterbo.

Music in Orte had a strange history.<sup>55</sup> French rule (1810-14) had secularized it; it was no longer the bishop, but the *mairie* (town hall) that chose and paid the chapel master, who was also expected to lead the band. As the Papal power returned, the clergy partly regained its prerogatives, and the poor conductor ended up serving two masters. Citizens, too, were split into pro-Church and liberal factions, bandsmen being mostly on the latter side as Garibaldi fans. Many had fought for the 1849 Roman Republic.

One thing both parties agreed upon was that the maestro had to be local. By mid-1869 the position remained open and was not filled over the next year for dearth of native talents. The best one, Federico Novelli, was studying trombone at the Milan Conservatory and declined for the moment. Others were briefly tried, but the problem persisted until after the liberation (September 11, 1870 for Orte). Finally, Giannini was chosen as an interim conductor. How this appointment was made is unclear—the town hall and band archives show no trace of a regular competition. On the contrary, a later document<sup>56</sup> says in clear terms that Giannini was informally hired and could be fired with no notice. Probably, the fall of the regime had caused a power vacuum, thus the local *garibaldini* supported Bruto—evidence of a sort of tacit blood pact. (We shall come across further cases.)

<sup>54</sup> Information confirmed by Enrica Corsi, Lavagna.

<sup>55</sup> Information that follows conflates data from Armando Fiabane, *Banda Musicale Città di Orte – Storia*, [http://www.bandamusicale.cittadiorte.it/storia/storia\\_pg.htm](http://www.bandamusicale.cittadiorte.it/storia/storia_pg.htm), and Marco Collazzoni’s recorded interview to Fiabane (Orte, October 14, 2012).

<sup>56</sup> In Fiabane’s words; not verified by this writer.

One thing is sure—Giannini’s duties involved the band only, not the chapel. On November 1st, 1871 he wrote a letter<sup>57</sup> including a shopping list—clearly, he was in command and reorganizing the outfit. However, his tenure did not last long. He was supposed to leave on February 1st, 1872, with “no extension allowed”, as per contract. Yet Novelli, after negotiating his salary, had to stay in Milan and play at the European *première* of Verdi’s *Aida* (February 6). Thus, on March 7 Giannini was still in charge and wrote to the mayor again, asking for extra time and money to make duplicates of the twenty-eight scores he had written for the band. Today these are not in the archive; perhaps Giannini got no extra money and kept them.

At this point, we lose track of Bruto for about two years, except for a *Polka Carnevale* written in 1873 for an unknown outfit.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, in Forano, Romolo Battistoni and his friends had formed a circle of liberals who used to meet at the chemist’s, Domenico Francini, an amateur flautist. Early in 1874 the group founded a Società Filarmonica, which in turn founded a 34-piece Civico Concerto and placed it under Giannini’s lead. It still exists, as Banda Comunale di Forano. Its debut under Bruto’s baton took place in the summer; the Royal Army commanded it to perform for military drills in Campagnano Romano, a three-week job.<sup>59</sup>

As for little Nazzarena, she had grown into a teenager. She and Bruto married on October 23, 1875,<sup>60</sup> possibly after an advance honeymoon in Gualdo Tadino, Umbria, as suggested by *Ronda d’amore* (“Love Round Dance”), a mazurka scored in Bruto’s hand and dating from August. So far, only one other period manuscript resurfaced, *Sulle rive del Tevere* (“On the Tiber shores”).



Fig. 8. *Ronda d’Amore – Mazurka del Maestro B.V. Giannini – Gualdo Tadino – Agosto 1875*. Band score. Manuscript cover in composer’s hand. Courtesy Corfu Philharmonic Society.

<sup>57</sup> This document, and those subsequently cited, are in the Orte band archive.

<sup>58</sup> Now in the Φιλαρμονική Εταιρεία Κερκυρας (Corfu Philharmonic Society) Archive, as all the following band ms pieces.

<sup>59</sup> Vincenzo Masi, *Profilo storico della Banda Musicale Comunale di Forano* (Forano: Tip. Di Rocco, 1983), p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Masi (2011), 53.

Bruto conducted the Civico Concerto until 1877, when he moved to Bosa, Sardinia. He was 29 and had traveled a lot but, as it seems, never farther than Central Italy. Sardinia was then a sort of savage island most Italians had only heard about. Bosa is an ancient town on its West coast, facing Spain. Its economy, based on the Temo River port, enjoyed significant prosperity in the 19th century. It had about 6,500 inhabitants<sup>61</sup> and a well-planned renovation (1864-67) gave it an elegant look, in tune with the classy aspirations of its bourgeoisie. By 1872 a free music school was founded by the Società Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso (“Workers’ Mutual Aid Society”),<sup>62</sup> one of many like-named labor clubs, often connected to the First International—more on Mazzini’s side than on Bakunin’s. Recruiting a band was the natural next step. The designated conductor, Antonio Gariel (1817-1874),<sup>63</sup> died while holding the position.<sup>64</sup> After him came a Lucarini, who might be identified with Raffaele Lucarini, a maestro who had published some pieces and articles on band issues.<sup>65</sup> He, too, passed away while in charge; Giannini took his place.<sup>66</sup>

It was a career advance for Bruto, from a minuscule town to a medium-sized center, following leaders who had enjoyed longer careers and wider renown. Access to the Bosa archives is currently problematic; some documents were apparently stolen, and nothing has emerged on the hiring procedure. However, conjecture is possible. The city’s restyling was the work of architect Pietro Cadolini (1823-1895).<sup>67</sup> Both he and his younger brother, Giovanni, were born in Cremona, Lombardy, had fought with Garibaldi for the 1849 Roman Republic, and had endured prison and prosecution from the Austrian regime.<sup>68</sup> It is not known whether Cadolini and Giannini had previously met; being from different generations, they were not in the same battles. However, the Società Operaia was a left-wing organization, and a *garibaldino* championing another was quite natural, as we have seen. Also, the 1879 *Bollettino ufficiale del Ministero dell’educazione*

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<sup>61</sup> Tommaso Corbu, *Storia di Bosa*, <http://web.tiscali.it/CannealVento/CannealVento/storia.htm>.

<sup>62</sup> Cecilia Ferrai, “La Società Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso di Bosa dal 1867 al 1920,” in *Annali della Facoltà di Economia di Cagliari*, Vol. XV (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1999), p. 441.

<sup>63</sup> Ferrai (1999), p. 442.

<sup>64</sup> Marino Anesa, *Dizionario della musica italiana per banda*, Vol. 1 (Bergamo: Associazione Bergamasca Bande Musicali, 2004), p. 440.

<sup>65</sup> This writer’s guessing. Anesa (2004), p. 540, has an incomplete biographical entry that is compatible with it.

<sup>66</sup> Enrico Costa, *Sassari*, vol. III (Sassari: Tip. Azuni, 1885-1909), p. 1713.

<sup>67</sup> Corbu, cit.

<sup>68</sup> Giovanni Cadolini, *Memorie del Risorgimento dal 1848 al 1862* (Milano: L.F. Cogliati, 1911), *passim*.

*nazionale*<sup>69</sup> cites Valfredo as teaching in Bosa. (It is not known which brother came first.) When Piazza della Maddalena was re-opened after Cadolini's restyling, Bruto wrote a "Celebration Chant" for the ceremony.<sup>70</sup>

Few works are known from Giannini's three years in Bosa. Especially interesting is a band scoring of a polka by Giuseppe Blanchi, *La fera d' Gianduja* ("The Gianduja Fair"),<sup>71</sup> a title in Piedmontese dialect. Piedmont had dominated Sardinia for over a century, and stressing the folk tradition of the former in the latter's territory—an island, known for its reluctance to absorb foreign influences—had great symbolic power; it was almost a challenge.

The 19th century saw the rise of nations and their revolt against oppressive multi-national empires to affirm their political independence and cultural identity. Italian Risorgimento was part of it. But national identity may degenerate in nationalism, thus triggering further oppression, as in 20th-century right-wing regimes. On the other hand, internationalism, pronouncing national identities dead, simply ignored the problem rather than solving it. Garibaldi's stance was more consequential—all national identities are worthy of being affirmed. He not only preached but also practiced this idea, as he fought for Italy as well as for Uruguay.

In music, affirming a national identity meant composing works rooted in specific folk music, poetry, and dance traditions. Bruto was a *garibaldino*, hence his respect for all identities, whether national or local. Wherever he went, he explored the music of the lower classes, listened, learned, and tried to create art music rooted in those traditions, always seen as carrying some sort of people's basic truth. It could be called "Socialist realism", were it not several decades in advance. He would maintain such views for his entire life.

Giannini's lifelong love for teaching also seems related to his political stance. To him, as a liberal, progress meant the spread of knowledge. Here we can see to what extent he and Joplin were twin souls.

Bruto's other twin soul materialized by late 1879. Luigi Canepa was born in Sassari in 1849.<sup>72</sup> A child prodigy on the flute, at eleven he had played at a fundraising concert for Garibaldi. He then attended the Naples Conservatory, which he left to join the army, that was to be defeated at Mentana. There he was wounded and imprisoned. Some time later he resumed studies in Naples and then Milan, where, at twenty, he wrote his

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<sup>69</sup> Vol. 5, p. 1019.

<sup>70</sup> Mimma Fara, Luciana Fara, *Piazza Costituzione*.  
[http://web.tiscalinet.it/crea/citta/piazze/p.zza\\_constituzione.htm](http://web.tiscalinet.it/crea/citta/piazze/p.zza_constituzione.htm).

<sup>71</sup> Now at the Corfu Philharmonic Society Archive.

<sup>72</sup> Giuliana Scappini, "Canepa, Luigi," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 18 (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1975). [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luigi-canepa\\_\(Dizionario\\_Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luigi-canepa_(Dizionario_Biografico)/).

first opera, *David Rizio*, staged in 1872. It was an international success, and so were *I pezzenti* (“The Beggars”, 1874) and especially *Riccardo III* (1879). Here, Canepa’s sense of drama and daring instrumentation convinced even Giuseppe Verdi that he was *the* new talent of Italian opera. Alas, a nervous breakdown, associated to a cerebrovascular accident, left him temporarily paralyzed on the right side. He was forced to stop working, having his promising career truncated at thirty.



Fig. 9. Composer Luigi Canepa at 18, in *garibaldino* attire. 1867.

If Milan’s frantic life had stressed Canepa to the limit, his hometown, Sassari, looked like a motherly womb. A province chief town as well as Sardinia’s second largest city, it had long preserved a feudal society under Spanish rule. It was modernized by the Piedmont kings, who gave it a city plan modeled after Turin. Sassari’s growth in width and wealth gave rise to a rapidly expanding bourgeoisie, whose cultural level—and musical taste—was growing, if not as fast as its members’ bank accounts.

Soon after recovering, Canepa, the intrepid *garibaldino*, launched a campaign to lift the music instruction level in town. Besides conducting at the Teatro Civico, he conceived the project of a public school, called Civico Istituto Musicale, to provide musical training for everybody, free of charge for the poor. He called upon Giannini to join in multiple roles—concert pianist, vocal coach and choir master at the theater, and piano teacher at the Istituto, which opened on August 14, 1880.

The Canepa-Giannini team had a terrific impact on the city. The theatrical season rose to the status of the best in Italy outside the major

cities. Recent, advanced scores were offered in Canepa's profound renditions. Giannini trained the singers and conducted the choir. Canepa chose a daring opening, *Il Guarany*,<sup>73</sup> by the great Brazilian composer, Antônio Carlos Gomes, still something of a novelty (1870).<sup>74</sup> *Il Guarany* has a rather disturbing plot; it was to become an opera standard, but only after heavy censorship. It tells the interracial love story of a Spanish girl, Cecilia, and the "savage" native American, Pery, a man of noble feelings and a deep sense of justice, who must confront both the white Catholic world, drenched in prejudice and hypocrisy, and the Aimoré tribesmen who want to eat him. A prophetic choice, as we shall see.

After such a daring debut, Canepa staged more major works—*La Favorita*, *Martha*, *Nabucco*—and we can read in press reviews how the choir improved. Ricordi's authoritative *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* regularly hosted correspondence from Sassari. Its editor, the great novelist, Salvatore Farina, then regarded as a sort of Sardinian Charles Dickens, was himself from Sorso, a mere six miles north. In early May 1881, Farina was in town, visited the Istituto, and penned an elegant chronicle.

Here in Sassari, where music education was, one would say, yet unknown, a Civico Istituto Musicale has been in existence for one year, with excellent results. One must thank the gifted maestro, Luigi Canepa, composer of *I Pezzenti* and *Riccardo III*, a work well received, not long ago, at Teatro Carcano [*in Milan*]. Although plagued by a nervous disorder that halves, if not his creative gifts, certainly his energy and perseverance, this distinguished young man managed to lead the Sassari town hall into a new kind of temptation. He obtained a wide, comfortable building (the earlier municipality seat), electric light, and other comforts for the benefit of music.

At the Sassari music institute, the best city band instrumentalists serve as teachers. Singing, rudiments of composition, winds, piano, strings are taught, and taught well, and learned very well.

I chose to visit various courses during classes. I found pupils who, after few months, could play second parts in theater orchestras.

Who are they? Mostly students and workers—that is why classes are scheduled early in the evening. Also, the Sassarese are so fond of music, students are many, absences minimal.

Since its birth, the Istituto Musicale had not yet given a public display of its results. I had the pleasure of attending its first vocal-instrumental concert, given for the institute's own benefit, on Saturday 7.

Brave Canepa aims high and far: Schubert, Mendelssohn, Mozart,

<sup>73</sup> Information from the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* (various dates).

<sup>74</sup> Both Gomes and Canepa had studied composition under Lauro Rossi, then considered Italy's best teacher. Rossi had spent four years in Mexico and had worked in New Orleans and Cuba.

Beethoven!

I must confess that, as I read such names in the program, I was a bit worried, both about the performance and the audience, still uninitiated into classical music mysteries.

And once again I was gently taken away from my misconception. My first praise goes to the audience, which came in abundance, listened with religious attention, and seemed to understand at first hearing. The performance was good; it would be excellent, had fear not paralyzed some performers ... I wholeheartedly applauded Miss Casella, who played with taste and feeling Beethoven's *Appassionata*, and Miss Pieroni, who played Holstein's *Belliniana*,<sup>75</sup> an outdated piece as for style, but a most difficult one. Two students performed a cornet *Duettino* and were applauded. Miss Cordelia and Miss Rossi De Ruggero (both beautiful voices) sang a duet from *I Pezzenti* and several more pieces. The band played the prelude from *Faust* and the finale from *Aida*. The entertainment ended up with a "Hymn to Music", composed by maestro Giannini to lyrics of the fine poet, E. Costa, sung by the Institute student choir. Those pupils—mostly boys, some actually children—know what they are singing, sing in tune, and with expression. They were warmly applauded and deserved it. The hymn is simple and effective—it does honor to maestro Giannini.<sup>76</sup>

Farina's neat prose candidly displays the impressive results that two champions of popular education could quickly obtain in a depressed area. It parallels James P. Johnson's own reminiscences of Bruto—such as teaching Beethoven sonatas, then hardly a staple in Italy—and introduces another major character, writer Enrico Costa, a long-time fan and collaborator of Giannini's.

In September 1881 the Istituto began giving concerts every fortnight "with wonderful results," as per the *Gazzetta* reviewer—not Farina, now back in Milan.<sup>77</sup> Canepa became a city hero. By early February 1882 a concert was given in his honor. He turned over the income to the Istituto.<sup>78</sup>

On June 2, 1882, at 6:21 pm, on the nearby Caprera island, Sassari province, Giuseppe Garibaldi passed away. There he had spent his final years in his beloved White House, shaped after a Brazilian *fazenda*. As news spread, the *garibaldini* in town gathered, elected old Pietro Cadolini, the Bosa architect, as their president, and announced that they would form a honor guard. They were ten: Cadolini, Canepa, Giannini, Guglielmo Da

<sup>75</sup> Alphonse Holstein was a 19th-century composer whose piano music, including medleys and variations on operatic arias, was published in Italy by Giudici & Strada, Lucca, and Canti.

<sup>76</sup> Salvatore Farina, "Corrispondenze – Sassari, 9 maggio," *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, May 20, 1881, p. 190. (All translations from Italian by this writer).

<sup>77</sup> "Notizie italiane – Sassari," *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, September 25, 1881, p. 350.

<sup>78</sup> "Teatri – Sassari," *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, February 12, 1882, p. 64.

Pra, who had been at Mentana and issued a detailed chronicle of the battle, Luigi Kurner, a photographer, Pietro Ferrucci, Carlo Barni, Angelo Cuneo, Giovanni De Gasperi, and a Signor Brunati.<sup>79</sup> Canepa, who had virtually stopped composing, took up his pen again and wrote a *Largo funebre*, based on the “Inno di Garibaldi”, which thousands of young men had sung while facing death for Italy’s freedom. The service was held on June 8; Canepa’s *Largo* was played by three military bands, before Garibaldi’s embalmed body.

The June 1883 annual student display saw Bruto playing Hummel’s *Quintet* in E-flat minor op. 87 for piano and strings.<sup>80</sup> In September, the Canepa-Giannini duo achieved another incredible goal. Luigi Cherubini’s *Requiem in C Minor* was sung at St. Mary’s Church by their students—yes, those workers who took evening music classes.<sup>81</sup> The performance was partly repeated in November for a fundraising concert benefitting the victims of an earthquake.<sup>82</sup> The year ended with another Gomes work, *Salvator Rosa*, received with enormous success, that also extended to Giannini’s choir.<sup>83</sup>

At some time in 1884, Bruto briefly visited Forano, witness his band arrangement of Rossini’s *Semiramide* still preserved in the local archive.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, theatrical activity in Sassari had come to a halt as the Teatro Civico was being replaced by the larger Politeama. The new theater opened on December 8, 1884 with Canepa’s *Riccardo III*, followed by Meyerbeer’s *Robert le Diable*, Luigi Dall’Argine’s Indian ballet, *Brahma*, and then *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Fra Diavolo*, *La Gioconda*. The press announced Canepa and Giannini as conductors on equal footing.<sup>85</sup>

Such a grueling season probably sapped the energy of both men, especially the weaker Canepa, for the following student display at the Istituto came out both later and less good. In December 1885 the *Gazzetta Musicale* reporter, E.M.A. (E. Marchetti), wrote that the earlier lofty programmes had been replaced by a trivial parade of under-rehearsed operatic arias—evidence of the lack of time and effort on the part of

<sup>79</sup> Manlio Brigaglia, “I garibaldini sassaresi,” *La Nuova Sardegna*, on line edition, April 21, 2011. <http://lanuovasardegna.gelocal.it/regione/2011/04/21/news/i-garibaldini-sassaresi-1.3419716>.

<sup>80</sup> S[alvatore] F[arina], “Corrispondenze – Sassari, 10 giugno,” *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, June 17, 1883, p. 231.

<sup>81</sup> “Alla rinfusa,” *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, September 9, 1883, p. 327.

<sup>82</sup> “Alla rinfusa,” *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, November 11, 1883, p. 403.

<sup>83</sup> “Corrispondenze – Sassari, 30 dicembre – *Salvator Rosa* al Teatro Civico,” *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, January 2, 1884, p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> Masi (2011), p. 53.

<sup>85</sup> Information from the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* (various dates).

Canepa and Giannini.<sup>86</sup> The critic was soon attacked on a local newspaper and had to write again to the *Gazzetta*, to confirm his judgement.<sup>87</sup>

This incident would seem insignificant, had it not marked the beginning of the end of the short golden age of music in Sassari. By early 1886, news spread that a band master position had been opened in a Greek island, Corfu. Giannini applied.

On April 25, Bruto still took part in a chamber music concert, playing Mendelssohn's *Quartet in C Minor* op. 1 for piano and strings, plus works by Ponchielli and Alardi.<sup>88</sup> The opera season at the Politeama met with major hurdles; an impresario "failed to fulfill his duties towards the contracted artists," in the wary wording the *Gazzetta Musicale* chose, leaving us with the suspicion that he had run away with the money. On March 14, those same artists had to give a special concert for their own benefit. It was much applauded, however its climax was the performance of Giannini's tone poem, *In mare* ("At Sea"). E.M.A. wrote:

If I write about that, it is only because, on that night, we were given a chance to savor a high-value work, the descriptive symphony, *In mare*, by maestro B.V. Giannini—a piece of exquisite craftsmanship and enormous impact, which ensured its clever and unassuming composer some well deserved, enthusiastic applause, as well as repeated calls to the stage.<sup>89</sup>

So far, we had come across evidence of Giannini's pop fare—marches, dances, hymns. This is the first example of his concert music. The score is unlocated; it seems, though, that he composed some more. A credible, although not necessarily accurate, witness is Enrico Costa.

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<sup>86</sup> EMA [E. Marchetti], "Notizie italiane – Sassari, 9 dicembre," *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, December 13, 1885, p. 422.

<sup>87</sup> E. Marchetti, letter to the Editor, in "Notizie italiane – Sassari," *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, December 28, 1885, p. 434.

<sup>88</sup> "Arte e artisti," *La Sardegna*, April 25, 1886, no p.n. "Alardi" might be a typo for Giulio Alary (1814-1891), a chamber music composer.

<sup>89</sup> EMA [E. Marchetti], "Teatri – Sassari, 14 marzo," *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, March 21, 1886, p. 94.



Fig. 10. *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*. Page containing the review of Giannini's tone poem, *In mare* (right under the heading, "Teatri"). 1886.

Costa (1841-1909) was the greatest 19th-century Sardinian writer. A bank teller who had climbed the ladder to become Banca di Sassari treasurer, he was largely self-taught but was highly cultured and a prolific creator, who modeled his prose after Walter Scott. He wrote everything

from poetry to fictional novels, from historiography to opera librettos, his favorite subject being Sardinia. His main opus, *Sassari*, is an encyclopaedia of his city from its origins to his times. There is a chapter on Canepa, followed by a paragraph on Giannini.<sup>90</sup>

Bruto Valerio Giannini, a young and clever maestro of uncommon musical talent, born in the Marche region, came to Sardinia to lead the Bosa city band after Lucarini's death, and settled in Sassari by 1880. He composed several symphonies and art songs, among which is *L'oblio* ["Oblivion"], to Enrico Costa's lyrics, for large orchestra. He left Sassari about 1887 to settle in Greece and then in New York, where he now lives.

"Several symphonies?" This sounds mouthwatering but is unconfirmed. On the other hand, the existence of *L'oblio* is certain; it was sung in the USA in a chamber version (see later). Another art song obviously dating from the same period and issued in the USA with English lyrics is *A Sardinian Serenade*.<sup>91</sup>

Sardinia is a treasure trove of ancient, sometimes extremely ancient, musical styles. Its isolation in the middle of the sea between Spain, Italy, and Africa, as well as its culture, quite conservative and impervious to change, turned it into a veritable Stone-Age sound museum. *A Sardinian Serenade* draws from a genre of solo song with guitar ("*imitating guitar*" is specified on the piano part). Every Sardinian town has its own variant or sub-genre; the source of Bruto's work may be tentatively identified in a *cantu a sa nuoresa*, known in the Sassari area. The guitar is a "recent" (16th-century) feature, introduced by the Aragonese, its strumming having clearly been adapted to earlier melodies. These share a unique feature with other, thoroughly archaic, Sardinian genres: a combination of narrow-range melodies and astonishing modulations to distant keys. Bruto carefully wrote an art song around this peculiar trait, so as to place it into an elegant frame. One only needs to forget the silly English lyrics.

By the turn of the century, folk songs were being collected, arranged, and published in art-song format. Later ethnomusicologists were to reject such arrangements as forcing irregular rhythms and modal lines into academic symmetry and tonality. Giannini shows greater respect for the original—although, of course, not so much as a modern scholar would—and, instead, stretches academic harmony to fit the unexpected twists and turns of the Sardinian song in order to bring it almost intact, as it were, into the realm of art. The musical voice of humble folks is given full dignity.

<sup>90</sup> Costa (1885-1909), cit.

<sup>91</sup> Bruto V. Giannini, *A Sardinian Serenade* (New York: J.H. Schroeder, 1903), no plate number. Original title unknown.

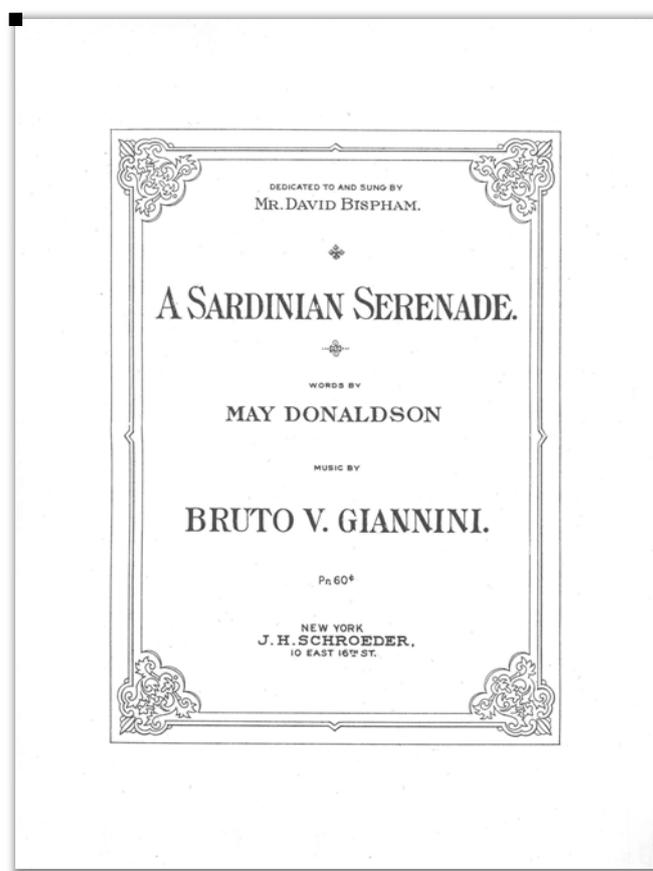


Fig. 11. Original cover of Giannini's *Sardinian Serenade*. 1903.

All in all, the Sassari years had been the best in Giannini's career. By 1886 he was thirty-eight, had gained stature as a conductor,<sup>92</sup> and had had his music performed. The choice to leave for Greece—where Western music was dawning—seems inexplicable. One gets the impression that Corfu was a random destination; he just grabbed a chance to escape.

Events were to prove him right. Canepa chose to stay and focused on conducting at the Politeama and heading the Istituto but, by the late 1880's, a financial crisis led to the dismantling of both the Istituto and the concert band. In 1891 he ran for a city council seat in a progressive alliance including the so-called Young Men, a radical group supported by, among others, lawyer Enrico Berlinguer, grandfather of the namesake Communist leader. Canepa was elected, and devoted much energy to his new role, trying to regain support. Yet, in the same year, a competitor Circolo

<sup>92</sup> His name is cited in Enrico Carozzi, *Annuario Teatrale Italiano per l'annata 1887* (Milano: Tipografia Nazionale, 1887), p. 549, in the "Maestri Concertatori e Direttori d'Orchestra" section.

Filarmonico appeared, promoted by a Signor Rosolino Siotto. In Costa's words, this guy, "with a tenacity and an insistence on the verge of harassment, went here and there to persuade and prompt" until he got credit from the city council. Clearly, a straw-man alternative was needed to deny Canepa funding—the natives were devouring the undesired innovator. He gradually became isolated. When the King and the Queen visited Sassari and attended *Lohengrin* at the Politeama (1899), Canepa was not even invited to conduct. Journalist Nino Alberti wrote that a more appropriate homage to Their Majesties would have been Canepa conducting his *Riccardo III* and added: "Such homage [*to the composer*] would come like a sun ray entering the room where he contemplates in loneliness the vanishing of his last visions. To him, it would mean justice, solace, and consolation."

Canepa's time never came again. He was relieved of his position as conductor and forgotten, except for a fleeting comeback when his operetta, *Amsicora*, was staged (1902). Forced to "walk up and down the stairs of private houses like the obscurest piano teacher", as his son wrote, he died in utter poverty on May 12, 1914.<sup>93</sup> His music is still largely unrecorded. Only the Sassari Conservatory, built on the foundations of Canepa's Istituto, carries his name.

Bruto had seen it right—his escape was timely.

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Corfu—Corfù or Còrcira in Italian, Kérkyra in modern Greek—is an elongated island facing Greece, Albania, and southeast Italy. It belongs to Greece but was part of the Venice Republic from 1204 to 1797. Its Venetian and Greek upper class spoke Italian and had its own lifestyle and favorite pastimes; Greek peasants retained their own tongue and traditions. The political authority was Venetian but the administration was largely shared. The labor class and the emerging middle class followed European trends. In the music field, as Western Europe developed notation, harmony, modern instruments and genres and the East stuck to Byzantine chant and folk aural traditions, Corfu became a frontier land. The Venetians built the Teatro San Giacomo in 1693 and introduced opera in 1733 for the exclusive pleasure of the upper class.

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<sup>93</sup> Above data from Canepa's biography on <http://www.conservatorio.sassari.it/biblioteca/schede-biografiche/>, freely drawing from Antonio Ligios, *Le opere teatrali di Luigi Canepa* (Nuoro: Ricerzare Musica, 2000), p. 13-16, 187-190.



Fig. 12. The island of Corfu.

By 1797 Napoleon conquered Venice and with it Corfu, which subsequently became French, Russian (a protectorate of sort), French again, and English in few decades. Only in 1864 did it finally join Greece.

Greece itself had recently regained its independence from the Turks and was catching up with modernity. This also implied adopting Western musical techniques while also trying to retain a local style—again the ubiquitous nationalist issue. The Neo-Hellenic music pioneers studied either in Italy or under Italians; Corfu spearheaded the trend. The first major Neo-Hellenic composer, Nikolaos Mantzaros (1795-1872), was himself a Corfiot.

At first, Corfu imported all singers and players from Italy. By the early 19th century, Italians began to train local talents who, in turn, would sit in the theater orchestra and teach. Yet most conductors, singers, and first parts were to remain Italian for years.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>94</sup> For a more detailed description of the whole process, see Ekaterini Romanou, “Italian Musicians in Greece during the Nineteenth Century,” *Музикологија* [Musicology], 3-2003, p. 43-55. Constantinos Kardamis, “*Nobile Teatro di San Giacomo di Corfù*: An Overview of Its Significance for the Greek Ottocento.” Società Italiana di Musicologia, XI Convegno annuale, Lecce, 22–24 October 2004, downloadable on <http://www.academia.edu>.

The Corfu Philharmonic Society was born in 1840 and soon formed some ensembles, including a concert band often conducted by Italian *maestri*.<sup>95</sup> One was Felice Coccorullo, former *capomusica* of the Italian Army 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment,<sup>96</sup> a bad-tempered man, relieved of his charge after declaring that he had “no musician to conduct.”<sup>97</sup> On March 8, 1886,<sup>98</sup> the Society diplomatically acknowledged that Coccorullo had “resigned.” The position was open for a conductor “from abroad,” by means of an *Avviso di Concorso*<sup>99</sup> written in Italian. A sentence in Greek made clear that the Society had an agent in Italy, Luigi Gallassi (a retired singer), whose *Gazzetta Artistico Sociale* would spread notice of the competition and keep in touch with applicants.

On March 29, Giannini’s application was received.<sup>100</sup> He boasted of a teaching position at the “Sassari Conservatory” (so he styled it), a degree from Bologna, and letters from the mayors of the cities where he had worked. He was warmly recommended to a board member by Countess ... (blank never filled). Two more applications came from Antonio Bernardoni and Ciro Cavalieri.<sup>101</sup> On May 25, Giannini was chosen.<sup>102</sup> The Board offered a six-month trial period, followed by a two-year contract with the same conditions as Coccorullo: 180 drachmas per month, then corresponding to 180 Italian lire, or 180 French francs, as per the Latin Monetary Union. When Bruto was informed by secretary Giovanni C. Zulla,<sup>103</sup> he wrote back asking if he could give piano classes and chamber concerts, and conduct at the theater; on June 10 he received assurances on all points but the last.

He was expected to start his duties on July 1st, which was impossible; the quickest sea route would imply quarantine. After further exchanges with Zulla,<sup>104</sup> Bruto sailed from Porto Torres, Sardinia, to Marseille–

<sup>95</sup> Romanou (2003), p. 48, lists its Italian conductors only. A complete list is in <http://www.fek.gr/history/diat-maestroi?lang=el> (in Greek; Italian names have altered double consonants, in accordance to Greek usages).

<sup>96</sup> Anesa (2004), p. 256. The 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment was hosted in Perugia, which may explain why Giannini, with his Umbrian family roots, had some inside info about his colleague (see page 143).

<sup>97</sup> Personal communication from Dr. Constantinos Kardamis, Corfu.

<sup>98</sup> Board proceedings No. 7. Dates in Julian calendar (add twelve for Gregorian dates).

<sup>99</sup> March 11, 1886. Ms in the Corfu Philharmonic Society archive.

<sup>100</sup> Board proceedings no. 10. (All translations from Greek by Dr. Kardamis).

<sup>101</sup> Antonio Bernardoni, from Milan; Board proceedings no. 12, April 19, 1886. No information available on him. Ciro Cavalieri, from Trieste, Board proceedings no. 13, April 26. Cavalieri was a globetrotter conductor who worked in the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Moluccas, and elsewhere. He wrote an opera, *Occhi azzurri*.

<sup>102</sup> Board proceedings no. 15.

<sup>103</sup> Zulla’s letter dated June 3.

<sup>104</sup> Zulla’s letters dated June 26 and 29, 1886.

Piraeus–Corfu, landing on August 6.<sup>105</sup> He soon set to work, only to find that the band was in a dismal state. Coccorullo was still in town, giving private lessons. The picture was clear: Corfu was even more conservative than Sassari, and there was no Canepa around. Teaching was the best business, the San Giacomo Theater had the best music, and the band was no competitor for either.

Bruto did not strive to impose sterner discipline on a nerve-wrecked personnel. He let things flow, gently attempting to achieve minor improvements.<sup>106</sup> Also, by February 1887, he had found an unspecified, well-paid extra job at the San Giacomo.<sup>107</sup> The Society was happy with him, and his contract was renewed on March 18.<sup>108</sup>

The worst was yet to come. The minutes of the Society Assembly and Board meetings are too polite to unveil the whole truth. However, when reading between the lines, one senses that Coccorullo was the villain. An unknown quantity, he had virtually no record as a composer<sup>109</sup> and apparently had elicited no respect from his men. Giannini was the kind of person who would trigger instant hate in a mediocrity. Young, brilliant, happily married to a much younger woman, a man of broad cultural horizons in science and the humanities, well versed in several languages, a war hero, a piano virtuoso, a published composer, an appreciated conductor and teacher—and, on top of all that, a radical liberal ... It was just too much to keep envy at bay.

There was an Italian Mutual Aid Society in town and Giannini had subscribed to it. Tensions arose between its chairman and Bruto, leading to the latter's reaction (it is not known to what) and exclusion.<sup>110</sup> Then, on July 12, while the band was playing on its stand in Corfu main square, the performance was heckled by unknown molesters. The Mutual Aid Society soon wrote to the Philharmonic Society<sup>111</sup> to distance itself from the incident while conceding the personal conflict. Giannini must have made up his mind that Coccorullo was behind it all. They had had a public argument the month before, and another followed; both times, Giannini accused Coccorullo of having been dishonorably discharged from the Italian Army for sodomy. In those times it was a terrible insult, worthy of a duel. Coccorullo sued Giannini and Francesco Giuseppe Sinibaldi-Errighi,

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<sup>105</sup> Board proceedings n. 21, August 7, 1886 (un-numbered from here on).

<sup>106</sup> General Assembly proceedings, Stilianos Dorias Prosalendis report, May 19 and 27, 1888.

<sup>107</sup> Board proceedings, February 5, 1887.

<sup>108</sup> General Assembly proceedings.

<sup>109</sup> Anesa (2004), a very comprehensive reference work, only lists one ms. item, *La sveglia al campo – Fantasia militare*.

<sup>110</sup> Board proceedings, July 15, 1887.

<sup>111</sup> Board proceedings, July 15, 1887.

a nobleman from Porto San Giorgio, Marche. The two did not show up in court and, on February 5, 1888, were sentenced to eight months plus a fine. They appealed—and showed up this time. On May 13 Bruto was sentenced to two months and jailed on the spot.<sup>112</sup>

The Philharmonic Society Assembly discussed the new situation. Vice band master, Nikolaos Vlahos, a Corfiot, was named interim leader and Bruto's salary was reduced for those two months. The band, as it turned out, suffered from lack of discipline and had many beginner players. Somebody asked for the termination of Giannini's contract; others countered that he was a capable leader and could not defend himself.<sup>113</sup> On December 31, 1888 the contract expired and was not renewed anyway, but Bruto and the Society gentlemen never broke. A decade later he was still mailing them his newly printed compositions from New York, and warm messages were being exchanged.<sup>114</sup>

In this writer's opinion, the Society Board knew, or understood, that Bruto was the victim of Coccorullo's sordid revenge. The whole story belongs in a classic pattern—mediocrities provoking brilliant colleagues to turn the law against them. Every Italian can tell a similar story or two. Also, the Board was aware that, after Nikolaos Mantzaros passed away, they needed another major leading figure. Giannini could be the man—alongside Domenikos Padovanis, then artistic director—but such a role was both ahead of its time and beyond the band's current standard. For the moment they needed a humble craftsman to drill the troops.

On September 1, 1887 Bruto's first daughter was born. In accordance with family tradition, she was called Còrcira,<sup>115</sup> Corfu's ancient Italian name—further proof of an ongoing love affair with the island.

The Philharmonic Society library houses many Giannini scores, some uncatalogued as of today.<sup>116</sup> A few bear dates and come from Forano, Orte, Bosa, and Corfu; others offer no clue. They confirm the recurring pattern of Giannini exploring the local musical scene. His band arrangement of a Mantzaros symphony may have proved too hard for the available personnel, but is revealing nonetheless, as is his 1889 arrangement of a waltz, *Un essai*, written by an amateur woman composer, Maria Seremetti, probably a relative of Aristoteles Seremettis and Athena N. Seremetti, both active

<sup>112</sup> Corfu State Archives, Court 509, folio 1569, n. 378, May 13, 1888.

<sup>113</sup> General Assembly proceedings, May 18, 1888.

<sup>114</sup> Letters dated November 14, 1893 and November 13, 1897, the latter signed by the President, G. Damascenos.

<sup>115</sup> U.S. Social Security Index master file, New York state, SSN 053-24-9760 (as Corcira Caroli).

<sup>116</sup> Ekaterini Romanou, Iona Zotou, Ariadne Anastasopoulou, Aristeide Kentrou, Nikou Poulake, Paolo Ventura, *Η μουσική βιβλιοθήκη της Φιλαρμονικής Εταιρείας Κέρκυρας* ("The Musical Library of the Corfu Philharmonic Society") (Athina: Κουλτούρα [Kouloura], 2004), p. 47-48, 62, 64, contains a partial list.

promoters of Western music in Greece. Such involvement in the struggle for modern Greek music could not end because of an expired contract. Bruto stayed in Corfu and remained active.

The most eminent musician in turn-of-the-century Greece was Spyridon Samaras (1861-1917), another Corfiot. After studies in Greece and then France under Jules Massenet, Léo Delibes, and others, in 1885 Samaras settled in Italy and emerged as a new significant opera composer, also thanks to publisher Edoardo Sonzogno's strong support. His first opera staged in Italy, *Flora Mirabilis* (1886), was an international success. Its libretto—by Ferdinando Fontana, who also wrote for Puccini—was an allegorical fairy tale located in snowy Sweden, thus devoid of Greek national content. However, as the first Greek opera of note, it played a major role in the country's musical renaissance. After the Italian triumphs, the domestic *première* of *Flora Mirabilis* took place in Corfu in February 1889, with Giannini as choirmaster. Two weeks later a concert honoring Samaras was held, organized, and conducted by Giannini.<sup>117</sup>

Bruto's next moves are unclear. Seemingly, there was a one-year vacancy in the band master position, for his successor, Ezio Sassoli, was contracted in 1890—perhaps with Bruto's help, as his name shows up in Vellani's Bologna notebook.<sup>118</sup> Yet, Giannini's collaboration with the Philharmonic Society went on. Perhaps the band drilling was left to Vlahos and Giannini acted as a consultant. He was still in Corfu in November 1889 when his second daughter was born. She was named Roma.<sup>119</sup> Now, such choice raises a question: Was Bruto commemorating his heroic youth and the liberation of Rome, or was he actually headed there?

In later years Giannini maintained a Rome address, via Volturmo 58,<sup>120</sup> a street well known to train travelers, right across the square from Termini Station. The 58 block is part of a neighborhood built soon after the fall of the Papal States, hence it was not among the earlier family possessions. Either old Palemone bought it at an advanced age (he died before 1883), or Bruto did when the neighborhood was new and inexpensive. Both scenarios

<sup>117</sup> Constantinos Kardamis (ed.), *Σπυρίδων-Φιλίσκος Σαμάρας. Επετειακός τόμος για τα 150 χρόνια από τη γέννησή του* [Spyridon-Philiskos Samaras. A Homage for His 150th Anniversary] (Kerkyra: Φιλαρμονική Εταιρεία Κερκύρας, Μουσείου Μουσική "Νικόλαος Χαλικιόπουλος Μάντζαρος" [Corfu Philharmonic Society, Nikolaos Kalikiopoulos Mantzaros Music Museum], 2011), p. 67, 94, quoting Athenian newspaper *Εφημερίς* [Efimeris], February 6 and 7, 1889.

<sup>118</sup> Greek sources variously give his name as Ezio or Eugenio. Vellani's catalogue definitely calls him Ezio; he was from Sant'Agata Bolognese and studied in the horn and trumpet class at the Liceo Musicale in 1873-74. See

<http://www.bibliotecamusica.it/cmbm/scripts/vellani/schedn.asp?id=9831>.

<sup>119</sup> U.S. Census 1900, Manhattan, New York, N.Y., roll 1102, page B, enumeration district 0459 (as Roma Gianonini).

<sup>120</sup> *Foglio di supplemento alla Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia*, 150, April 8, 1912, p. 28.

are speculation for now.

Be that as it may, there was a different fate in store for Bruto. Not Rome, but New York.

\* \* \* \* \*

Diego De Vivo (1822-1898) was a smart entrepreneur who had amassed a fortune in the publishing business. Then he developed a love for opera—as well as for Mazzini’s republican ideas. Arrested and jailed in Turin in 1854, and subsequently expelled, he headed to New York and became secretary to the famous tenor, Pasquale Brignoli, who introduced him in the world of touring Italian companies. De Vivo created his own in 1860, which lasted three decades.<sup>121</sup> An obituary called him “the most famous opera impresario of his day.”<sup>122</sup> A call from him meant success.

Giannini got that call. At forty-two, he was still adventurous enough to cross the ocean with his family, facing the thrilling prospect of living in what was, for many European liberals, the world’s most advanced society. Time would reveal to him the complexity of things. However, for the moment, the tourist’s point of view was just fine.

So far, no passenger list shows Bruto’s name for any of his trips. More research may be in order, as Ancestry.com calls him Gianni, Gianini, Gianinni, Gianninni, Giannino, Ginnina, Gianonini, Giavonini, and even Gramolini. (As for Nazzarena, on the original forms she is consistently listed as “Margarena”, which sounds like “margarine” in Italian. Perhaps she gave up fixing the misspelling.) It is also possible that Bruto, as a Garibaldi veteran, was hosted by Royal Italian Navy vessels, which did not submit a passenger list to U.S. authorities. He appears to have arrived by late summer, as his earliest known appearance is announced in *The New York Herald* of August 24, 1890:

The Alhaiza concerts, under the direction of Signor D. De Vivo, will begin in New York on October 9 and 11. The company is headed by Mme. Alina Alhaiza, in conjunction with Don Aurelio Ceruelos, the Spanish pianist and composer, who was knighted by the late Alfonso, King of Spain. Other artists in the company are Mme. Emilia Cosenza, contralto; Signor Massimo Massimi, tenor; Signor Francesco Sabatelli, high baritone, and Signor Bruto Valerio Giannini, musical director and composer.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Mauro Bucarelli, “De Vivo, Diego,” in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 39 ((Roma: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, 1991),

[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/diego-de-vivo\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/diego-de-vivo_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

<sup>122</sup> “Diego De Vivo Dead. The Most Famous Opera Impresario of His Day Passes Away at the Age of 76,” *The New York Times*, August 12, 1898, p. 7.

<sup>123</sup> “Musical News and Notes,” *The New York Herald*, August 24, 1890, p. 21.

Thus, October 9, 1890 may be Bruto's American debut. He started his New World career at the top, with the best impresario, in a leading role with an excellent company. Did he also teach? Yes, if he is the man in ads like this one:

PIANOFORTE AND SINGING INSTRUCTION; CLASS or private;  
Professor GIANNINI. UNION SQUARE CONSERVATORY, 8 Union  
square.<sup>124</sup>

or this one:

CIRCLE FORMING TO STUDY OPERATIC MUSIC under direction  
Professor Giannini. WARDE BINGLEY. 8 Union square.<sup>125</sup>

Mr. Bingley used to rent a hall for music rehearsals at that Union Square address, as per his many ads.

Bruto also started appearing elsewhere. On October 31, 1891 he was at the Tuxedo Park clubhouse, a distinctive New York dance resort, with several singers.<sup>126</sup> Apparently, classical music was not adrenalinic enough for its members, and a pigeon shooting match followed.

Perhaps De Vivo's contract was not exclusive. Or perhaps it was void. In fact, the great impresario's career had taken a downhill turn.

In his final years, D[e Vivo]'s endeavors proved financial disasters. He had grown old and foreign to newer impresario circles, was no longer given credit, and his ideas were regarded as senile utopias. He passed away in New York City on August 11, 1898 in utter poverty.<sup>127</sup>

Thus, Bruto had come to the USA on the basis of an enticing proposal and now had to fend for himself. He hardly lacked resources though. The 1892 New York directory listed him as "teacher, h[ome] 1755 Madison av[enue]."<sup>128</sup> Ah, those were the good old days when an immigrant family could drop their bags and find an apartment in Manhattan.

One thing is sure—he could afford the rent. As we learn from *The World*:

A concert will be given at Chickering Hall Wednesday evening, April 29, by the tenor Sig. Carlo M. Spigaroli, assisted by Mme. Ida Klein and Mrs. Grace Milton, sopranos; Mrs. Lena Luckstone-Myers, contralto; Miss Bertha Behrens, violinist; Herr Max Treumann, baritone; Sig. Sartori, basso; Cav. Don. Aurelio Ceruelos, pianist, and Sigs. Cav. Paolo

<sup>124</sup> *The New York Herald*, January 4, 1891, p. 30.

<sup>125</sup> *The New York Herald*, February 1, 1891, p. illegible, possibly 33 or 38.

<sup>126</sup> "Very Gay at Tuxedo," *The World*, October 31, 1891, p. 5. "Festivities at Tuxedo," *The New York Herald*, November 1, 1891, p. 18.

<sup>127</sup> Bucarelli, cit.

<sup>128</sup> *New York, N.Y. City Directory* (1912), p. 506.

Giorza and Bruto V. Giannini, accompanists.<sup>129</sup>

This does not look like a De Vivo company—too many non-Italians. Yet the formula is similar (two male and two female voices, at least one virtuoso instrumentalist, plus accompanists) and one name—Ceruelos—from the 1890 roster confirms that former De Vivo stars were now freelancing. The interesting figure here is Paolo Giorza (1832-1914), a sort of older Giannini. Born in Milan, Giorza had written a song in his youth, *La bela Gigògin*, to anti-Austrian *double-entendre* lyrics, that was soon prohibited; the day Milan was liberated, people sang it in the streets. Then he had turned his attention to the abolitionist cause, composing the music for three shows on U.S. slavery and race issues, which must have looked quite exotic in Italy. Later, he was one of the two European pioneers of concert music in Australia. Many of his manuscripts were lost in the San Francisco earthquake and fire; he passed away in Seattle.<sup>130</sup>

Nor did Bruto lose touch with the Italian community:

On Tuesday evening, May 3d, the Italians will have a concert at Willard Hall, under the direction of Prof. B.V. Giannini.<sup>131</sup>

He even helped expand it. On July 5, 1894, Nazzarena delivered their third daughter, who, after Corcira and Roma, had the good fortune *not* to be called New York. At any rate, family tradition was respected—she was named Ameriga.<sup>132</sup>

Meanwhile, the best gigs for Bruto came from high society. Here is one from 1895.

#### THE SOCIAL WORLD

-Miss Monaghan's Musicales.--A musicale and recital will be given at the Hotel Waldorf by Miss Florence Forster Monaghan on the afternoon of April 21 at 3:30 o'clock. Miss Monaghan will be assisted by Mrs. Sidney Harris, Miss Emilia Anthon, Miss Clara Winters, harpist; Joseph Braune, mandolinist; B. V. Giannini, accompanist, and Everet Jansen Wendell. The list of patronesses includes Mrs. Robert Lenox Belknap, Mrs. Charles H. Berryman, Mrs. Herman H. Cammann, Mrs. John H. Cole, Mrs. Newbold Edgar, Mrs. Charles R. Henderson, Miss Julia H. Henry, Mrs. Hermann, Mrs. Louis J. Jones, Mrs. George Kidd, Mrs. Henry L. Morris, Mrs. Robert Olyphant, Mrs. Arthur J. Peabody, Miss Philipse, Miss Robbins, Mrs. F. Le Roy Satterlee, Mrs. Faneuil D.

<sup>129</sup> "Musical notes," *The World*, April 16, 1892, p. 4.

<sup>130</sup> Nadia Carnevale, "Giorza, Paolo," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2001), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/paolo-giorza\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/paolo-giorza_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

<sup>131</sup> "Local Items," *The Mount Vernon Daily Argus*, April 28, 1892, no p.n.

<sup>132</sup> Birth date as reported in Stempel family tree, <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/24355681/person/1511359485?src=>.

Weisse, and Mrs. John C. Wilmerding.<sup>133</sup>

The last-named lady, who had just married one owner of the Wilmerding, Morris, & Mitchell firm, dry goods commission merchants, was Mary Fatimah de Lex Allen, great-granddaughter of Commodore Vanderbilt.<sup>134</sup> And Mrs. Robert Olyphant had married the then President of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad.<sup>135</sup> Bruto knew how to behave in high society, yet we can imagine his amusement when comparing Isabella Franzoni's salon, where the old bloodline élite (who had befriended Liszt and deeply understood music) gathered, to Miss Monaghan's social events, where the new financial élite aped the old one's rituals.

However, one had to own a railroad to afford Giannini. An ad in *The New York Herald* states:

PROFESSOR GIANNINI, vocal teacher; specialty operatic training for advanced pupils. Carnegie Music Hall, 504, Wednesday, Saturday.<sup>136</sup>

Now Bruto was no longer receiving students at Warde Bingley's rented facility; he had at his disposal Suite 504 at Carnegie Hall, no less. His role there calls for further research, but surely his prestige had skyrocketed. Students wore his teaching imprimatur like a gold medal, and he launched many careers. *The Looker-On* praised young soprano Anna Lichter (1877-1942) in the following terms:

... all predict for her a brilliant career. The wonder is that her musical education has not been continental. Her studies have been confined to this country. Her only teacher has been Prof. B.V. Giannini of Carnegie Hall, New York.<sup>137</sup>

The writer obviously deemed irrelevant the fact that Giannini himself was "continental."

Even surrounded by well-padded wallets, Bruto never dropped his libertarian ideas:

"Cuba free" in song.

The Star Theatre was crowded [*last*] night in anticipation of hearing the new Cuban national song, "Cuba Libre," words by N.A. Jennings, music by Bruto V. Giannini, which was published in last Sunday's *World*. There were many Cubans in the audience, and the applause was tremendous when, between the second and third acts, Chevalier Bassini,

<sup>133</sup> "The Social World," *The New York Times*, April 13, 1895, p. 8.

<sup>134</sup> "Death Recalls Divorce," *The New York Times*, September 11, 1911, page no. omitted from the Web file.

<sup>135</sup> "Robert M. Olyphant Dies at 93 Years," *The New York Times*, May 4, 1918, p. 15.

<sup>136</sup> *The New York Herald*, September 8, 1895, p. 16.

<sup>137</sup> *The Looker-On: Musical, Dramatic, Literary*, Volume 2 (New York: Whittingham & Atherton, 1896), p. 569.

recently from Milan, sang the new piece ...<sup>138</sup>

A peak in Giannini's career and prestige took place in 1897:

Signorina Belinfante sang for the President and Mrs. McKinley.

She Possesses a Contralto of Remarkable Power | A Woman with a Romantic and Pathetic History.

Signorina Belinfante sang last night at the White House for President and Mrs. McKinley and a distinguished company of their friends. The musicale was given in the blue room, which has been so frequently the scene of similar events during the present administration. The charming Italian contralto, who is a brunette of bright, vivacious manners, rendered a program in which the airs most pleasing to her host and hostess were given with unusual success. She has a wonderful gift in her voice. Prof. Bruto Giannini was her accompanist. She sang an aria from "Faust," others from "Carmen" and, with exquisite pathos, a simple English ballad, "Daddy," in all of which her superb voice was heard to splendid advantage ...<sup>139</sup>

What Giannini could not imagine was that the "brunette of bright, vivacious manners", who had already lost her sight out of too much study and stress, would involve him in tragic events. An orphan of a Spanish father and Italian mother, Estrella Belinfante had been raised in a convent. She was endowed with an unusually low-pitched voice—Mascagni is said to have originally devised the gypsy man's role (Beppe) in *L'amico Fritz* for her<sup>140</sup>—but seems to have suffered from extreme bipolar disorder—extreme even for a diva. Five months later, she would attempt suicide by starvation after being abandoned by everybody but Bruto, Nazzarena, and another family. The entire story is told—and lavishly illuminated—on *The World*.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *The World*, April 7, 1896, p. no. illegible (5?).

<sup>139</sup> "A White House Musicale," *The Evening Star*, May 5, 1897, p. 11.

<sup>140</sup> Reported in the same article.

<sup>141</sup> "A Woman Chatterton," *The World*, October 26, 1897, p. 5.



student of Giannini's, backed by her teacher and the Keltenborn String Quartet in a challenging programme of art songs, including some by Giannini.<sup>143</sup>

**THE MUSICAL COURIER**

### Clara Dorris' Song Recital.

**W**HAT was undoubtedly one of the best arranged and most novel song recitals of the season was that given at the Waldorf-Astoria last Thursday afternoon by Miss Clara Dorris, dramatic soprano, assisted by the Kaltenborn String Quartet, with Miss Dorris' teacher, Maestro B. V. Giannini, at the piano.

A program of unhackneyed songs was presented, all of the modern school, in seven languages as follows:

Quartet, op. 76, No. 1.....Haydn  
Kaltenborn String Quartet.

**FRENCH—**  
Chanson.....Vanzo  
(Words by A. De Musset.)  
Serenade, from Les Pecheurs de Perles.....Bizet

**GERMAN—**  
Wenn's immer Doch Mondschein blieb.....Reichel  
(Words by Goethe.)  
Im wunder schonen Monat May.....Reichel  
(Words by Heine.)

**ENGLISH—**  
Two Days.....Giannini  
(Words by May Donaldson.)  
Love's Philosophy.....Giannini  
(Words by P. B. Shelly.)  
Miss Dorris.

**ENGLISH—**  
Andante Cantabile.....Tschaikowsky  
Second Minuet.....Boccherini  
The Butterfly.....Razek  
Kaltenborn String Quartet.

**HUNGARIAN—**  
Hungarian Folk Songs, transcribed by F. Korbay:  
Az alloldon halasz legeny vagyok en.  
(Where the Tisza's Torrents Through the Prairies Swell.)  
Nezzel csak a szembe.  
(Looking Into My Eye, Come Near!)

**SPANISH—**  
Lacome's transcription, El Esperar (Expectation) Habanera.  
Tu Cuerpo y tu Alma (Thy Body and Thy Soul).....Giannini  
(Words by L. Baralt.)  
Miss Dorris.  
Largo, Polka, Aus meinem leben (Quartet).....Smetana  
Kaltenborn String Quartet.

**LATIN—**  
Ave Maria.....Giannini  
'Cello obligato, Mr. Beyer-Hane.

**ITALIAN—**  
Oblio (Oblivion).....Giannini  
(Words by E. Costa.)  
Violin obligato, Mr. Kaltenborn.  
Miss Dorris.  
Maestro B. V. Giannini at the piano.

The enterprise of the young singer in getting up such a program is most commendable, when much one hears nowadays is wearily familiar. Because of the unusual songs sung we give space to the program in its entirety.

Miss Dorris has surely "the gift of tongues," for those languages familiar to the writer were sung in impeccable fashion. The German Umlauts, the English nasals, the Spanish, all were as that of a native; and there were besides French, Hungarian, Latin and Italian. It is said the singer speaks fluently three languages, and of all delightful English hers is most pure.

Born in Paris, having had the advantages of means to develop her talents, association with the higher classes is evident in every pose and idiom of the fair young singer. World travel, the Pacific Coast, Mexico, New York's best private schools, an expert guitarist, the lady is still a student, ambitious for better things.

pathy. Perhaps the song which created most remark was the second of the Spanish songs by Giannini, in which there was a most original "kissing effect," which quite startled the audience. After this group a beautiful big basket of roses was handed Miss Dorris, which she received with becoming modesty.

Allied with a soprano voice of extensive range the singer has the advantage of a most pleasing personality, and this goes a long way with all audiences. With further study and with her evident intelligence Miss Clara Dorris' name should become a shining one ere many months.

Undoubted dignity was lent the affair by the participation



**CLARA D. DORRIS.**

of the Kaltenborn Quartet, which played much to the evident satisfaction of the audience. The heavy draperies of their fashionable surroundings somewhat mitigated against pure acoustics, but the style and unity of ensemble were there, and the audience would fain have demanded encores. Mrs. Kaltenborn is to be congratulated also on choosing just the things apposite for the time and place.

Professor Giannini accompanied Miss Dorris, who has been exclusively his pupil, in most musicianly and sympathetic fashion, and a fashionably attired and appreciative lot of hearers lent their presence to the charmingly refined

Fig. 15. Review of Giannini's concert with Clara Dorris (portrayed in the photo). *The Musical Courier*, 1900.

<sup>143</sup> "Clara Dorris' Song Recital," *The Musical Courier*, April 25, 1900, p. 27.

What was undoubtedly one of the best arranged and most novel song recitals of the season was that given at the Waldorf-Astoria last Thursday afternoon by Miss Clara Dorris, dramatic soprano ... A program of unhackneyed songs was presented, all of the modern school, in seven languages ... The enterprise of the young singer in getting up such a program is most commendable, when much one hears nowadays is wearily familiar. Because of the unusual songs sung we give space to the program in its entirety ... Professor Giannini's own compositions were musicianly things all through, but beyond the technical reach of most accompanists. There is no sense in writing such complicated passage work, chromatics, passages which in less expert hands might have overwhelmed the singer. An exception was the "Ave Maria", with cello obligato [*sic*], a composition of religious fervor, simple piano part, and which deserves to be better known. Mr. Beyer-Hane played the obligato with sympathy. Perhaps the song which created most remark was the second of the Spanish songs by Giannini, in which there was a most original "kissing effect", which quite startled the audience ... Professor Giannini accompanied Miss Dorris, who has been exclusively his pupil, in most musicianly and sympathetic fashion ...

The anonymous review confirms that Giannini was a clever vocal coach. His songs were set to lyrics in English, Spanish, Latin, and Italian (one was *L'oblio*); Miss Dorris sang in French, German, and Hungarian too. Also, his ability to write intricate backgrounds and play them in an unintrusive way called for deep knowledge of the craft.

No evidence of Giannini in the USA is known between this concert and 1903. A return to Europe seems likely. A manuscript in a copyist's hand of the *Ave Maria* has resurfaced, of all places, in a Catalonian church, Sant Esperit de Terrassa, in Barcelona.

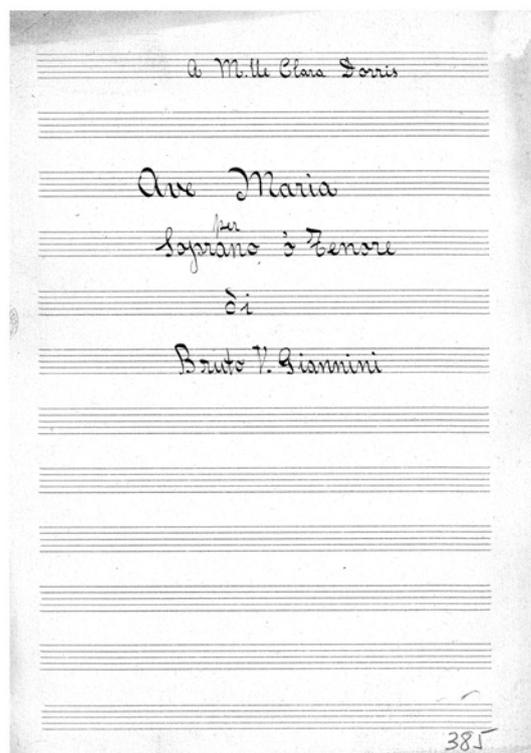


Fig. 16. Cover, in copyist's hand, of Giannini's *Ave Maria*. Ca. 1903. Courtesy Archivo de la Catedral de Sant Esperit de Terrassa, Barcelona.

Forano historian, Vincenzo Masi, has Giannini leaving for New York in 1903, while Nazzarena “remains in Forano where she dies in 1916” and has “no children.”<sup>144</sup> As details of their ménage, or the end thereof, are missing, our reasoning is: Nazzarena, born and bred as a country girl, never adapted to New York life, food, language, and high society manners, and left for home. Bruto escorted her but chose to live his life to the fullest and returned to New York. Corcira (then 15), Roma (13), and Ameriga (8) sided with him.

Bruto was back in the USA by spring 1903. His indomitable spirit exudes from a series of four letters written to *The New York Times*. This is from June 22:

#### THE HOUSE OF HAPSBURG.

*To the Editor of The New York Times:*

In an editorial in your paper I saw to-day mentioned the Emperor of Austria as the “venerable and beloved” Francis Joseph. In Italy we call him “the hanger,” for during his long rule thousands and thousands of patriots (Italians, Hungarians, Slavs, & C.) have been hanged or shot for the only crime of loving their own country. It is a shame to bestow

<sup>144</sup> Masi (2011), p. 53.

praises on the “accursed” House of the Hapsburgs.<sup>145</sup>

B. V. GIANNINI.  
New York, June 19, 1903.

Another reader’s pointed answer did not induce Bruto to retreat. On June 29 he replied:

#### THE REIGN OF FRANCIS JOSEPH

*To the Editor of The New York Times:*

Though the anonymous do not deserve consideration, yet, if you will allow, I shall answer the “Hungarian,” observing that if he is really one — which I doubt very much — he is no honor to the land of the great Kossuth, who died a few years ago in exile in Italy, his adopted country. Certainly he is not patterned after the brave Hungarians who fought under Garibaldi the battles of the Italian independence, and who formed in Italy in the year 1866 the famous Hungarian Legion in order to fight against the soldiers of the “venerable and beloved” Emperor of Austria.

Though he brands me as ignorant of history, he shows his own ignorance, not knowing that the assumption of Francis Joseph to the throne took place in the year 1848; and besides the massacres of that year, and the subsequent one, the hangman of Austria since then has been kept busy and the prisons filled with martyred patriots.

For the sake of brevity, I shall quote only a few cases, vis.: The hanging of many patriots at Mantua (Italy) in 1853; the slaughter of a whole family on the borders of Piedmont, which caused the famous war of 1859, when Austria lost Lombardy and the new kingdom of Italy was formed. Political persecution went on in Hungary until 1866, when this nation was granted autonomy. In 1869 there was an arising in Dalmatia, which was suffocated in blood and many leaders perished on the scaffold. Finally about twenty years ago the student Oberdan from Trieste, the only son of a widow, was hanged, notwithstanding that nothing could be proved against him but his love for his country, which with other Italian provinces are yet under the hateful yoke of Austria.

Bohemia, not long ago, and only last year Trieste, experienced the “paternal” hand of his Apostolic Majesty Francis Joseph of Hapsburg.

BRUTO V. GIANNINI  
A veteran of Garibaldi.  
New York, June 27, 1903.

On July 25:

#### TEMPORAL POWER OF THE POPE.

*To the Editor of The New York Times:*

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<sup>145</sup> Letters to *The New York Times* were then printed on p. 8.

The question of the temporal power of the Popes was settled thirty-three years ago by the will, not of the House of Savoy, but of the Italian people. Only a dreamer, unaware that we live in the twentieth century, or one thoroughly ignorant of the Italian history of the last half century, may assert the contrary.

B. V. GIANNINI.  
New York, July 23, 1903.

Bruto was also a keen observer of anti-Italian discrimination in his new homeland. On June 10, 1904 he wrote:

WHY THE ITALIAN SHOOTS.

Explanation of His Frequent Recourse to Gun and Knife.

*To the Editor of The New York Times:*

“What is the matter with the Italians in this country, anyway?” asks “An American” in THE TIMES of to-day. The Italians are the best workingmen in this country; they are sober, economical, honest, and very resisting to hard work. They are not be found among the burglars, the assaulters of women, the kidnapers, the poisoners, the highwaymen, and the worst species of criminals.

They usually mind their own business, but when American or Irish loafers insult them, hoot them, jeer them, assault them, stone them as these ruffians are wont to do, then they react and use any weapon is at their reach. Patience is a great virtue, but has its limits, and we Italians are men and not slaves.

What is remarkable is that they never are assaulted by equal numbers. Not one against one, but cowardly ten against one or a hundred against a few. That the police or Magistrates like Mr. Flammer side by the drunken loafers or the wicked ragamuffins is only to be explained by the hatred they bear to anything that is Italian.

BRUTO V. GIANNINI.  
New York, June 9, 1904.

The 1906 New York City directory lists Bruto among music teachers at a new address, 1947 Broadway R[oom] 322.<sup>146</sup> He likely left the Carnegie Hall suite—and its golden world—as he headed for Italy. His name no longer appears in society events.

There were changes in his private life too. On April 25, 1907 Corcira married and moved to New Jersey with her husband, Mario Caroli. They had two children, Clio and Homer,<sup>147</sup> and went to Italy several times into

<sup>146</sup> *New York, N.Y. City Directory* (1906), p. 1055.

<sup>147</sup> 1910 Census, Bronx Assembly District, New York, N.Y., roll T624\_1001, page 16B, enumeration district 1552 (as Corcera Caroli).

the 1950's. She passed away in 1974.<sup>148</sup>

On November 7, 1907 Bruto had an art song, *Tides*, copyrighted.<sup>149</sup> Then, again, there is no evidence of him in the USA for two or three years. He apparently lived in Rome during part of 1909. A supplement to the *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* No. 150, dated June 27, 1910, lists people and companies that copyrighted inventions in 1909. "Giannini Bruto Valerico, a New York" had patented on March 13 what is described (in French) as "*Perfectionnements aux ramasse-corps pour tramways*." This bit of trivia allows a glimpse on Bruto's multiple talents, and shows how little we know about him.

How long did he dwell in via Volturmo 58? The earliest (dubious) evidence of his return to the USA is from January 1910:<sup>150</sup>

Church's first funeral.

The first funeral held in the Church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel since its dedication a year ago, was held yesterday afternoon at 1 o'clock when a service was held over the body of Nicholas Martino, the Italian who was killed Monday morning at [illegible]. The service was conducted by Father Leggieri. Prof. Giannini presided at the organ and one of the soloists of the Philharmonic society rendered a solo most effectively.

By September, newspapers ran his new ad:

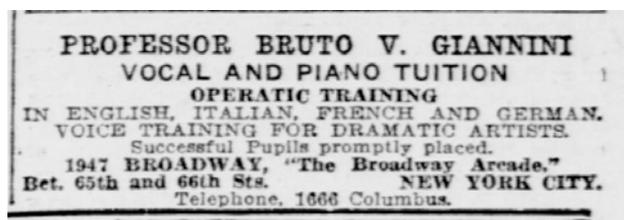


Fig. 17. Giannini's advertisement on New York City newspapers. 1910.

showing that this was also his studio, the one later visited by Joplin and Johnson.<sup>151</sup>

Roma, now 21, and Ameriga, 16, did not stay and wash dishes forever. On Christmas Eve 1912, Roma married<sup>152</sup> a Mr. Earl S. Augsburg. In the 1915 City Census<sup>153</sup> she had a one-year-old baby, Elaine (followed by

<sup>148</sup> U.S. Social Security Index master file, cit.

<sup>149</sup> *Tides*, for soprano and piano, words by Perley A. Child. New York: Luckhardt & Belder. © Perley A. Child, Morris Park, Long Island, N.Y., November 7, 1907. © Arnold Storud, Hoople, N.D., November 15, 1907.

<sup>150</sup> "Obituary," *The Evening Register*, January 20, 1910, p. no. not reproduced.

<sup>151</sup> *The New York Tribune*, September 20 and 24, 1910.

<sup>152</sup> <http://www.italianguen.org/NYCBridesRes2.asp>. Certificate no. 31123.

<sup>153</sup> State Census 1915, Election District 68, Assembly District 23, New York, N.Y. 25 (as Roma Gianni).

Yolanda in 1921), Ameriga was living with them in the same household, and there was also one Ernesta Giannini, 60 years old in 1915, a widow, still cited in 1925<sup>154</sup> but no longer in 1930 (Valfredo's spouse?).<sup>155</sup> Roma passed away in 1960 and is buried in Alexandria, N.Y.<sup>156</sup> As for Ameriga, she was to marry Mr. Max Stempel from Haiti and move to Panama City, where she died in 1978.<sup>157</sup>

In short, Bruto had been left alone.

Not surprisingly, in the 1915 City Census he defined himself as "single."<sup>158</sup> Actually, Nazzarena was still alive in Italy, a no-divorce country, yet the word fits his status. After the Christmas 1912 exodus, he urgently needed a maid, and that is when Alma Greene took the job and got singing lessons as payment. James P. Johnson biographies tell the rest of the story.

Rick Benjamin wrote:

But when did Scott Joplin begin studying with B.V. Giannini? An April 1909 St. Louis newspaper article mentions that Joplin was studying in New York; he was still doing so in the fall of 1913.<sup>159</sup>

Still or again? By March 1909 Bruto was in Europe, patenting his tramway device. If he had taught Joplin at an earlier date, then he started, stopped, and resumed after the trip. Or Joplin had another teacher and switched to Giannini in 1910 or later. By that date *Treemonisha* was almost done, and Bruto's help would be minimal. The question remains unanswered. We can take notice of one pertinent detail, however. The opening vamp from "We Will Trust You as Our Leader" is reminiscent of the one from Giannini's 1904 art song, *Hymn to the Virgin*.<sup>160</sup>

Giannini

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Adagio' and the dynamics are 'pp legato'. The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the right hand and a bass clef staff for the left hand. The right hand part begins with a series of chords, while the left hand has a more active melodic line with some triplets. The piece is identified as 'Giannini' and is a 63-measure piece.

<sup>154</sup> State Census 1925, Election District 73, Assembly District 05, New York, N.Y. 60 (as Roma Augsburg).

<sup>155</sup> 1930 Census, Hampstead, Nassau, N.Y., roll 1460, page 20<sup>a</sup>, enumeration district 115 (as Roma Augsburg).

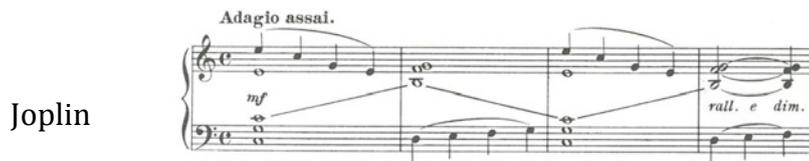
<sup>156</sup> <http://userdb.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cemeteries/cgi-bin/cemetery.cgi>.

<sup>157</sup> <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/24355681/family?cfpid=1511355491>.

<sup>158</sup> State Census 1915, Election District 02, Assembly District 15, New York, N.Y. 01 (as Bruto W. Gramolini).

<sup>159</sup> Benjamin (2012), p. [19].

<sup>160</sup> *Hymn to the Virgin (Christmas)*, for soprano or contralto and piano, words by Perley A. Child. New York: Luckhardt & Belder. © Perley A. Child, 1904.



One cannot help wondering whether this was a secret wink to Bruto—signifying Treemonisha’s chastity?

Bruto’s biography shows that he lived his life as an ongoing liberation struggle, in a Romantic, almost heroic perspective. As he saw Italians mistreated and, in general, learned the map of ethnic conflict in the USA, he viewed it through the good old pattern of oppressor empires vs. oppressed nations, and found a new nation to side with—blacks.

Of course, when he landed in New York City (1890) there was no black Harlem. Immigration to that area only became significant by 1905. Many newcomers sang and played for a living, hence a vast demand for musical literacy. Who would teach them? Down South, a black classical teacher would be the answer—with few exceptions, like Joplin. In New York, another immigration wave was bringing accomplished musicians from all over Europe. Some were not averse to accepting black students for they had no racist past—or had one on the victims’ side. Bruto seems to have been one of the very first.

So far, four black students of his are known: Joplin, Alma Greene, Ernest Greene, and James P. Johnson. There were more though.<sup>161</sup>



Fig. 18. Advertisement of Carlette Thomas’ concert on *The New York Age*. 1915.

This concert was reviewed on May 20.<sup>162</sup> We learn that the teenage talent, Carlette Thomas, studied organ under English virtuoso and composer, Reginald Barrett (1861-1940), as well as piano with Giannini, both present. The program included other people, but Carlette (who was to

<sup>161</sup> *The New York Age*, April 29 and May 5, 1915, no p.n.

<sup>162</sup> Medora Bolden, “A Promising Pianiste,” *The New York Age*, May 20, 1915, no p.n. From multiple occurrences on *The New York Age*, it emerges that Medora Bolden was a pianist herself. Also, her name is often associated to Richard Bolden’s, but nowhere is it specified whether they were relatives.

befriend H.T. Burleigh<sup>163</sup> and enjoy a long career in Harlem circles) had the lion's share: Chopin's *Third Ballade*, *Fantasia-Impromptu*, *Nocturne* op. 9 no. 1, *Polonaise* op. 53, and one *Valse Brillante*, Rakhmaninov's *Serenade* op. 3 no. 5, Martucci's *Prima Melodia* op. 16, Giannini's *Jota Aragonesa*, Liszt's *Second Rhapsody*, Sibelius' *Valse Triste*, and, as a finale, Wagner's *Ride of the Walkiries* in a piano duet with Bruto. Such a list is not only impressive, as a serious endeavor—it speaks volumes about Giannini's repertory as a piano instructor.

Teachers have preferences. Johnson studied Bach, Beethoven (at least a sonata), Liszt's *Rigoletto Paraphrase* and Chopin's *Revolutionary Etude*, which he arranged and played in the often-recounted contest pitting him and Waller against Tatum. Then, there is much Chopin in early Johnson—too much and too early to chase away the suspicion that Bruto had a hand in it. For instance, as this writer observed long ago, pieces like *The Harlem Strut* reveal audible ties to Chopin's *Études*.<sup>164</sup> Now Johnson's hints match Carlette's program. Seemingly, Giannini's method boiled down to four principles: (1) master the classics (Bach, Beethoven); (2) master the best virtuoso literature (Liszt, Chopin); (3) be contemporary (three living composers, himself included); (4) cherish national identities.

Clearly, Giannini saw Bach as the foundation. Again, this was anything but obvious in his times. Bach was *terra incognita* in Italy in the 1860s when operatic medleys and variations were the daily diet. But Bruto had taken a composition course officially called "counterpoint." Here we can see how Giuseppe Busi—a revered counterpoint authority—had left a mark on Giannini who, in turn, left it on Johnson, whose music displays a strong independence of horizontal lines, tightening and counterbalancing the vertical, harmonic conception of ragtime.

On this rock-solid basis, Giannini used to build a command of a selected virtuoso repertory. Here, mastering Liszt and Chopin suggests Golinelli's influence, which Bruto, again, might have passed on to Johnson. And finally, he kept an interest in contemporary literature, that the absence of Debussy does not disprove (we only have this program, after all). Such interest was tied to the one in folk music as a source for good composition, which Bruto probably preached and surely practiced.

Authorities like Bill Edwards have rightly been appreciative of Giannini's policy of imposing much-needed discipline upon Johnson, while not interfering with his rag and blues vein. Now the emerging picture goes a bit farther. Did Bruto limit himself to "not interfering?" Or did he actually *encourage* Johnson to build a personal style rooted in both the

<sup>163</sup> Anne Key Simpson, *Hard Trials: The Life and Music of Harry T. Burleigh*. Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1990, p. 110.

<sup>164</sup> Marcello Piras, "Bach and His Band," *Musica Jazz*, July 1985, p. 22.

classics and his own folks' musical traditions? Obviously, Giannini could not teach Johnson the blues. But he could express his approval. Did he ever tell him, for instance, "Do like old Liszt did?" As both Bruto and Johnson *did* like old Liszt did, assuming they never spoke about it would be a bit of a stretch.

Once again, the question remains unanswered but must be posed. Bruto taught James P. from 1913 to 1917. Johnson's early works were written toward the end of that period; actual composition obviously predates piano roll punching. The stylistic gulf between the brilliant but somewhat superficial, almost decorative early works like *Caprice Rag* and the gutsy, folksy experiment of *Carolina Shout* — with its technical hurdles that Johnson himself overcame only after some time — shows not only a new maturity, but perhaps a step forward in Giannini's teaching. In a nutshell: while absorbing the abstract, relentless dexterity of Chopin's *Études*, Johnson's style sounds driving but a bit academic, almost frigid. Then he suddenly plunges into a hotter, more emotional style, wholeheartedly resorting to folk cries, exciting call-and-response interaction, and rhythmic foot-patting. All this sounds like the jump from "Build your foundations" to "Use your folks' stuff."

As we try to assess the nature and extent of Giannini's influence, a major problem is that not much of his music has resurfaced: eleven scores, mostly art songs, and evidence of over eighty more, including arrangements. Where are the "symphonies" Enrico Costa cited? If Bruto's tone poem, *In mare*, contained Sardinian music strains, a parallel with *Harlem Symphony*, *Yamekrazw*, and *Drums* would be hard to deny.

And what about opera? Of that, we know even less. By 1898-99 Giannini's concert programs included excerpts from an elusive opera, *Narcisse*<sup>165</sup>—composer never cited and title so far untraceable to others. (It included a ballet, which rules out Massenet's *Narcisse*, an oratorio.) In 1911, shortly after his return, Bruto had a piano piece published that enjoyed some popularity—"Marionette's Wedding March", allegedly from *Les noces de Pierrot et Pierrette*.<sup>166</sup> A puppet opera on a French libretto? A couple of piano pieces seemingly related to it, "Minuetto veneziano" and "Pierrot e Pierrette", were issued in Rome, possibly during Bruto's 1909 stay. (Ironically, the publishers, Enrico and Emilio van den Eerenbeemt, were born in Rome—the sons of a Dutchman who volunteered to fight *for* the Pope.)

On the other hand, we know that Johnson's theatrical works outside the black revue realm showed strong political overtones. *De Organizer*

<sup>165</sup> "Evening of Studio Music," *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 26, 1899, p. 5.

<sup>166</sup> "Marionette's Wedding March," for piano. Theodore Presser Co., Philadelphia, Pa. © 26 June 1911.

championed the unity of the working class against exploitation, and was premièred at a trade union meeting. Another title, *Class Struggle in Swing* (a never-produced project with Langston Hughes for the Federal Theater Project) is self-explanatory. Again, assuming that Bruto and James P. never talked about politics but coincidentally developed similar views, is an opinion as respectable as it is bizarre.

The blossoming of a Harlem *intelligentsia*, obviously focused on the struggle for equality, was not just a matter of competing solitary utopias, but also, if not predominantly, the result of a closely woven network of social events. Carlette Thomas's debut shows Giannini's involvement in that network, if only for a day. The concert was hosted by a black church in a black neighborhood. The solo pieces of Bruto's *protégée* alternated with vocal and chamber numbers. A trio played, made up of "three young artists, Master Eugene Martin, cello, Master David Martin, Jr., violin, and Miss Lydia Mason, piano, composing the Martin-Mason Trio of the Martin-Smith Music School."<sup>167</sup> The same school, nine days before, had included Joplin's "Frolic of the Bears" and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Kubla Khan* in its year-end concert.<sup>168</sup>

The host, Rev. Richard M. Bolden, contributed to the proceedings by singing a few airs with his bass voice which was "well received."<sup>169</sup> Alongside songs like "The Ninety and Nine," he tackled a Dudley Buck hymn, "Judge Me, O God!" Not surprisingly, he was quite hostile to rent parties.<sup>170</sup> Also, he was a religious and civil leader of note, who "could combine his churchly duties with services on the New York Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly," as we learn from a study which goes on: "Organizations could also be regarded as expressions of the same spirit of the age manifested in the Bahá'í movement. Socialism, spiritualism, Theosophy, Christian Science, New Thought, and the movement for female emancipation were all seen in this light by sympathetic Bahá'ís."<sup>171</sup> And finally, Bolden was active in the YMCA. An article in *The New York Age*, November 16, 1935, places his name in a list of activists, alongside Luckeyth Roberts'.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Bolden, cit.

<sup>168</sup> "Recital by Martin's Pupils," *The New York Age*, April 29, 1915, no p.n.

<sup>169</sup> Bolden, cit.

<sup>170</sup> James F. Wilson, *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Chocolate Babies: Performance, Race, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), p. 26.

<sup>171</sup> Juan Ricardo Cole (ed.), Moojan Momen, *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History, Vol. 2, From Iran East and West* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1984), p. 139.

<sup>172</sup> "Two Hundred Workers On YMCA's Membership Drive," *The New York Age*, November 16, 1935, p. 3.



Fig. 19. Article citing Rev. Bolden and Luckeyeth Roberts as YMCA activists. *The New York Age*. 1935.

Other people who were in attendance at Miss Thomas' debut include Ernest Greene and "Mr. And Mrs. H. Adolph Howell."<sup>173</sup> Howard Adolph Howell passed away in 1927. His widow, Martha, had an obituary on *The New York Age*:

Mrs. Howell was reputed to have been one of Harlem's wealthiest citizens. She was the proprietor of the H. Adolph Howell Funeral Church, Inc., the largest and most beautiful funeral establishment conducted by Negroes in the city, and she was also owner of several pieces of real estate.<sup>174</sup>

The concert must have been an event in the rising Harlem bourgeoisie. Alma Greene's slightly later party with Joplin, Giannini, and Pleasant nicely fits the scene.

<sup>173</sup> Bolden, cit.

<sup>174</sup> "Mrs. Martha Howell, Wealthy Widow, Dies After Long Illness," *The New York Age*, March 16, 1929, p. 3.



Fig. 20. Bruto Giannini, date unknown.

The year 1917 marks a final turning point in Bruto's life. Joplin died in a dreadful way; Nazzarena had died some time earlier. Almost seventy, Bruto did not seem to follow contemporary music trends—not even those launched by his brilliant former student, Johnson. His family had dispersed, his interest in black culture probably declined due to a new wave of patriotic feelings. Italy had been fighting in World War I for two years, yet only a fraction of the Italian territories still in Austrian hands had been liberated, and at a terrible cost. But now the U.S. was jumping in, a development Bruto saluted with boyish enthusiasm in the hope that Trento and Trieste would be liberated and Italy's unification completed, as would come to pass. His war song, "Men of America",<sup>175</sup> reflects such period mood.

Giannini's last decade saw the publication of a few pieces. One is a vocal habanera, *Juanita*, set to uninspired erotic lyrics by John Leffingwell Hatch (1863-1930), a genito-urinary surgeon with a hobby for poetry, coupled to an Italian translation setting new standards in stupidity.<sup>176</sup> Among his known pieces, this one comes closest to reflecting black musical aesthetics, as shown by its Afro-Cuban ostinato and recurring ties across barlines, which give it an upbeat rhythmic feel. Like the later *Humoresque in Form of a Fugue*<sup>177</sup> and *Declaration of Love*,<sup>178</sup> it was published by Mauro V. Cardilli,

<sup>175</sup> Bruto V. Giannini, *Men of America*, for voice and piano. Words by Perley A. Child. New York: Messina Music Company, © March 4, 1918.

<sup>176</sup> Bruto V. Giannini, *Juanita – Habanera* for voice and piano. Words by John Leffingwell Hatch; Italian version by L. Bivagnini. New York: Mauro V. Cardilli, © December 27, 1920.

<sup>177</sup> Bruto V. Giannini, *Humoresque in Form of a Fugue* for piano. New York: Mauro V. Cardilli, © December 22, 1925.

the last of three New York Italians who printed his works and catered to the immigrant market. Such a choice was hardly a matter of affinity. Cardilli embodied the predatory spirit of capitalism; he jumped on every bandwagon. In 1916, after the liberation of Gorizia, he soon printed a military march, “Gorizia;”<sup>179</sup> in the 1920’s he was not above issuing Fascist songs to cash in on the moment.<sup>180</sup> But his office was conveniently located at 172 Bleeker Street, not too far from Giannini’s apartment. Another publisher of his music, Clemente De Macchi, was at 258 West 35th Street.<sup>181</sup> Good old Bruto, once a citizen of the world and a supporter of all new nations, ultimately saw his world shrink to few subway stops.

The main consolation in Bruto’s twilight was a woman. All we know about her comes from the 1925 City Census. There she called herself Elsie Giannini, singer, 32, wife of Bruto, music master [*sic*], 68.<sup>182</sup> Such scanty info contains at least one shameless lie—Bruto was 77. Marriage is unconfirmed; her maiden name is unknown.

Bruto Valerio Giannini passed away in New York City on September 25, 1931, age 83.<sup>183</sup> We could find only one obituary of this man who, for few years, had been wealthy, admired, and powerful. It appeared in an Italian-American magazine, *Il Carroccio*. It consists of eighteen words—and two mistakes.

Bruto Giannini, a violinist who enjoyed enormous popularity forty years ago, passed away in New York, age 84.<sup>184</sup>

Elsie likely inherited Bruto’s belongings. If those symphonies existed, she may have kept them, perhaps together with some Joplin or Johnson manuscripts. But, who knows?.

An assessment of Giannini’s stature as a creator is not yet possible. But talent can express itself in sundry guises. To borrow a sentence from my distinguished colleague, Andrew Homzy, some great teachers’ masterpieces are their best alumni. In this sense, we can think of James P. Johnson not only as a musical genius in his own right, but also as Bruto Valerio Giannini’s masterpiece.

<sup>178</sup> Bruto V. Giannini, *Declaration of Love (Dichiarazione d’amore)*. *Idyl*, for violin and piano. New York: Mauro V. Cardilli, © January 25, 1927.

<sup>179</sup> Advertising, *The Evening Telegram*, October 1, 1916, p. 9.

<sup>180</sup> Giuseppe Blanc, *Inno dei fascisti (Giovinazza)*, versi di M. Manni. Edizione Cardilli No. 359, by Casa Editrice Musicale Mauro V. Cardilli, 172 Bleeker Street, New York (no date).

<sup>181</sup> Advertising, *Il Carroccio. The Italian Review*, January 1921, p. XXXIII.

<sup>182</sup> State Census 1925, Election District 08, Assembly District 07, New York, N.Y. 25.

<sup>183</sup> Certificate No. 22946 (1931), Manhattan County, FHL roll number 2069350.

<sup>184</sup> *Il Carroccio. The Italian Review*, volume 33-34 (New York: Chariot Publishing Corporation, 1931), p. 67.

## AN UNTOLD STORY TOLD

Giannini and Joplin had much in common. Both were multi-talented men who saw music as a tool to achieve larger social goals. Both believed in progress through education and knowledge. Both loved teaching, both loved learning. Both loved their national and folk roots, without hating others. Both were skeptical toward institutional churches and religions, which did not necessarily rule out an intimate sense of the sacred. (Bruto wrote a few religious pieces, perhaps commissioned, perhaps out of a personal impulse.) Both had deep convictions leading them to postpone personal advantage to collective good. Both enjoyed periods of financial wealth but did not die rich. Both experienced hostility because of their ideas. Both had a basically Socialist orientation, although with personal twists. Both firmly believed in equality, admired the classics, and struggled to spread culture. Their conversations could encompass a huge range of topics. Imagine Bruto recalling his experience of parading the Bosa band up and down the streets for Carnival, when people blacken their faces.<sup>185</sup> Joplin had worked in minstrelsy. What would he think?

For sure, both men supported positive knowledge while being skeptical, if not outright ironic, about superstition. Magnetism was the talk of the day around 1913 and sooner or later it had to come out in conversation. When it did, Bruto had a surprise in store for his friend. He had taken part in a session.

The late 19th century saw the rise of Baron Alfred Édouard D'Hont (1840-1900), aka Donato, a Belgian *magnétiseur*. His public demonstrations of hypnotism in theaters and cabarets swept Europe from 1874 on, and raised interest among scientists, like Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), who began seeking a rational explanation for it. Donato came to Milan in 1886, but his shows were so hair-raising they were prohibited after the hearing of a scientific committee that included the great Cesare Lombroso.

A major Italian scientist who was interested was Giorgio Rattone (1857-1929). Today he is mostly remembered for his seminal 1884 study, co-authored with Antonio Carle, proving the infectious nature of tetanus.<sup>186</sup> Most of his long career took place at Parma University, which he also chaired for one year. He was known for his Socialist ideas and was elected to the Parliament from 1909 on.

Rattone was Associate Professor of General Pathology at the Sassari University in 1885-86. He began to organize public magnetism sessions by

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<sup>185</sup> Sardinia had known African slave trade under the Aragonese. Such tradition is still alive.

<sup>186</sup> Antonio Carle, Giorgio Rattone, "Studio sperimentale sull'eziologia del tetano," *Giornale della Regia Accademia medica di Torino*, 3, 1884, p. 174-180.

May 1886.<sup>187</sup> Some of his students, all in good health, volunteered. The first sessions took place at the University, then Rattone chose to test the effect of music on hypnotized subjects. For science's sake, he, his students, and a few observers went to Giannini's house. Bruto sat at the piano, following his instructions.



Fig. 21. Giorgio Rattone. Date unknown.

A Socialist periodical, *Il Capitan Fracassa*, issued a detailed chronicle of the event. It was reproduced verbatim by *La Civiltà cattolica*, a clerical periodical, in an essay trying to dismiss such experiments. We take the former text from the latter source.<sup>188</sup>

... As the worthy professor aimed at showing the effects of music in hypnotism, he held the session not at home, as usual, but at the distinguished maestro, Signor Bruto Giannini's, and got wondrous results. First off, he had ten young men—already made very sensitive by other hypnotic experiments, but thoroughly healthy and awake—sit in a semicircle around the piano. Then he asked the maestro to play some pathetic music. After the first sounds, seven of those young men were already hypnotized and stood in the weirdest and strangest postures. Some seemed as if deeply grieving, others in ecstatic rapture, still others taken by grim thoughts. In a second experiment, some happy music was played. The hypnotized men had feverish, convulsive movements and wriggled in their seats. One of them fell onto the floor out of excessive excitement. Prof. Rattone hastened to wake him up with his usual puff

<sup>187</sup> "Per Sassari – Ipnatismo," *La Sardegna*, May 16, 1886, p. 2: "Today, in one of the halls of the Royal University, Professor Giorgio Rattone made experiments of hypnotism on healthy people, before a number of colleagues, students, and other citizens." Also, *La Sardegna*, May 27, p. 2, has a lengthy general article on hypnotism citing Rattone's experiments toward the end.

<sup>188</sup> "L'ipnotismo tornato di moda," *La Civiltà Cattolica*, June 22, 1886, p. 5-18. The article is anonymous and cites no data except source (*Il Capitan Fracassa*) and author (Alfredo Menci). A search for the original has yielded no results so far.

on his face but hypnotic convulsions went on until the maestro stopped playing. We cannot describe the witnesses' awe at such astonishing effects of music on healthy and awake people, although, as I said, they had been made very sensitive by repeated hypnotic sessions.

For the third test, the maestro played the "Inno di Garibaldi." After hearing its first pitches, a possession scene began in the drawing room. All those young men were already deeply hypnotized by those war sounds. They furiously attacked each other, stretched their arms out like shooting rifles, affected raving despair, ground their teeth, rolled their eyes, dove and forcefully hit the floor with their heads and backs, and then quickly wallowed and kicked the legs of the observers, who got scared and ran to the nearby rooms. It was a veritable hell. Amidst that fury, Professor Rattone managed to grab a couple of the most bedeviled men and held them by their collars; then, he brought back order to that horribly disarranged field by way of puffs. As those poor pals woke up and saw themselves on the floor in the weirdest postures, all dusted up, they laughed out loud and mocked each other. Amidst their laughter and cheerful chats, professor Rattone warmly thanked maestro Giannini. The latter declared that he had had two unprecedented experiences that night—namely, he had literally driven his audience crazy, and had been kicked at home. After such a statement, the meeting disbanded.

The event resounded widely in the press: newspapers, political and music periodicals, among which the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*<sup>189</sup> and even *Le Ménestrel* in France,<sup>190</sup> reported it. Some second-hand reports were sarcastic, even insulting, prompting Rattone to respond.<sup>191</sup> Giannini enjoyed a month of international fame.

Apparently, this story sparked Joplin's imagination as *The Unconscious Elopement* had not, and he began to envision a composition describing the session. A *Magnetic Rag*, that is, a stage dance number with its sequence of events, a bit like *Wall Street Rag*. After all, the Sassari session *was* a ballet of sorts, although involuntary. The score would be built on the "Inno di Garibaldi" Bruto had played that day.

Here is why *Magnetic Rag* has its unique structure,<sup>192</sup> instead of following the rondo-like form Joplin had systematically resorted to in recent years. Such pieces as *Euphonic Sounds*, *Scott Joplin's New Rag*, and

<sup>189</sup> E.M.A., "Varietà – Ipnotismo musicale," *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, June 6, 1886, p. 181. The correspondence, dated June 1, reports the same information as *Il Capitan Fracassa*, plus some extra facts.

<sup>190</sup> "Nouvelles diverses – Musique et hypnotisme," *Le Ménestrel*, July 11, 1886, p. 258. It pithily reports information from *Fracassa*.

<sup>191</sup> Letter to *La Sardegna*, dated June 1, 1886, published on June 2.

<sup>192</sup> A widely circulated theory suggests Joplin's adoption of sonata form principles. Such theory is usually traced to Guy Waterman, "Ragtime," in John Edward Hasse (ed.), *Ragtime – Its History, Composers, and Music* (New York: Schirmer, 1985), p. 51. It is outright false.

*Silver Swan*<sup>193</sup> shared not only an ABACA pattern (with repeats), but a fixed dialectic principle. A is always a positive statement in major mode, exuding affirmative, joyous feelings. B and C introduce wandering modulations, minor-mode sadness, tonally teetering diminished sevenths, two-part contrapuntal excursions—all of Joplin’s *Sturm und Drang* paraphernalia conveying conflict, tension, and uncertainty, resolved at last by the triumphant return of A. On a larger scale, the same pattern shapes *Treemonisha*’s overture. The opening strain embodies, in Joplin’s words, “the happiness of the people when they feel free from the conjurers and their spells of superstition.” It then wrestles with contrasting episodes, to finally triumph over adversity. On an even larger scale, the whole opera is about the conflict between good and evil. Such a lofty conception is, so to say, telescoped in the three-minute ABACA rags.

*Magnetic Rag* shares the positive first strain, but nothing else. A is repeated at the end but not in the middle, and frames three contrasting ideas. The overall form is ABCDA, integrated by three smaller elements, namely, intro, coda, and a two-bar interlude between C and D, associated with an abrupt modulation from B flat major to minor—an *unicum* in Joplin’s opus, both in length and key center relationship. Such a form nicely fits the magnetism session, during which, as we know, Giannini had to play three strains in three different moods that all sources list in identical order:

- A. Rattone inducts magnetic hypnosis by means of repeated sentences;
- B. Giannini plays pathetic music—students are haunted by sad thoughts;
- C. Giannini plays happy music—students experience agitation;
- D. Giannini plays the “Inno di Garibaldi”—students fight;
- A. Rattone terminates hypnosis.

And then there is the “Inno di Garibaldi,” nailing *Magnetic Rag* to its inspirational source. Today, nobody remembers that old song, associated with a martial fury that is, in general, foreign to Italians. The melody is an undistinguished march; its popularity, which lasted about a century, was mostly due to Luigi Mercantini’s lyrics. To spur lazy, skeptical Italians to take their rifles and fight, the poet came up with an infectious idea, pithily expressed in four memorable lines:

*Si scopron le tombe,  
Si levano i morti:  
I martiri nostri  
Son tutti risorti!*

The graves open wide,  
The dead stand erect:  
All martyrs of ours  
Have now resurrected!

<sup>193</sup> The syncopated waltz, *Pleasant Moments*, would call for a separate discussion.

2

## INNO DI GARIBALDI

(All' Armi! All' Armi!)

Parole di  
LUIGI MERCANTINIMusica di  
Alessio Olivieri

Tempo di marcia

G. RICORDI & C. Editori-Stampatori, MILANO.  
Tutti i diritti della presente edizione sono riservati.  
Tous droits de la présente édition réservés. 128540

Fig. 22. Alessio Olivieri, "Inno di Garibaldi", lyrics by Luigi Mercantini. First page.

Bandmaster Alessio Olivieri composed it in 1858. A slightly revised English version, by Pasquale Rondinella, was published in Philadelphia in 1862 as "All Forward!" From then on, the hymn enjoyed uninterrupted popularity in the U.S., having been reprinted dozens of times, often in collections of favorite airs, and recorded by countless artists, from Sousa and Caruso down to Toscanini's V-Disc 31. The basic F-A-G-F cell of its first and most popular strain is found soon after the eight-bar intro:



Where is it in *Magnetic Rag*? Incredible as it may seem, the answer is: all over the place. Joplin's piece is *entirely* built on motifs generated from it.

Joplin was then interested in advanced composition. He had recently expressed his admiration for Beethoven,<sup>194</sup> an acknowledged master of the art of motivic construction. He wanted to write a symphony, and perhaps did write one.<sup>195</sup> He had been tightening his inner motivic connections for years; now he seemingly wanted to go beyond stringing distinct strains together, albeit effectively, and achieve the ability to develop an entire work out of a tiny cell. Perhaps this was one of his requests to Giannini.

If so, it was something Bruto could teach.

The fanfare-like quality of the hymn motif, with its pomp-and-circumstance dotted pattern, is obviously unsuited to ragtime. But a composer knows how to manipulate it. Giannini had an example at hand. When Canepa wrote his *Largo funebre* for Garibaldi, the hymn motif was turned from major to minor.<sup>196</sup>

<sup>194</sup> "Theatrical Comment," interview to Scott Joplin, *The New York Age*, April 3, 1913, no p.n.

<sup>195</sup> As announced in *The New York Age*, September 7, 1916, p. 6.

<sup>196</sup> Luigi Canepa, *Largo funebre – Eseguito a Caprera nelle esequie di Garibaldi l'8 giugno 1882*, for piano (Milano: Sonzogno, no date [1882?]).

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**LARGO FUNEBRE**  
 Seguito a Cipperra nelle esequie di Garibaldi  
 l' 8 giugno 1882

LUIGI CANEPA.

Largo funebre

Ia Musica Popolare. E. S. 250 ANNO I. — N.° 13.

Fig. 23. Luigi Canepa, *Largo funebre*. First page. Ca. 1888. Original from Luigi Canepa Conservatory Library, Sassari.

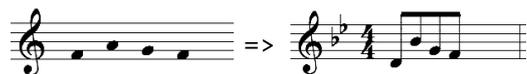
Joplin uses this technique as well as any other one; the motif is stretched and squeezed in values and intervals, transposed, added or taken a note, and inverted. Its original form is , its inversion . The *incipits* of strains A and B come from the original, those of C and D from the inversion, the Intro and Coda conflate the two. As a further element of symmetry, both forms appear first in major then in minor mode.

Here is how Joplin explores variety inside the *a priori* motivic unity. The

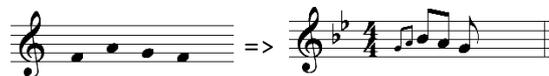
Intro comes from the motif minus its first pitch, in chromatic and then diatonic guise:



followed by an ascending pattern (inversion). A is based on the original, its first interval being stretched from a third to a sixth, the second one from a second to a third:



B is based on the original in minor and has an A-natural grace note added:



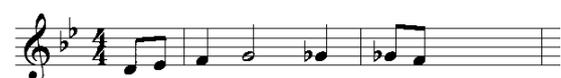
C introduces the inversion. Intervals are halved; the motif starts from the quarter-note D natural, after an upbeat embellishment:



D is based on the inversion in minor at its purest and most intense:



The Coda reverses the Intro, as it goes up (diatonic) and then down (chromatic).



A thorough analysis is beyond the scope of this essay. But an impressive number of details can be traced to either the original or its inversion—like this one, on a G-flat diminished chord (D strain, b. 3).



Notice that the six *incipits*—Intro, A, B, C, Interlude/D, and Coda—do not look that similar when directly compared. For instance, deducing A from C would be problematic. This perhaps explains why no satisfying analysis of *Magnetic Rag* has been offered so far. Relationships emerge only when each motif is compared to the “Inno di Garibaldi” four-note cell, that

external matrix generating the entire piece.

Descriptivism in music has limits; music syntax has rights. Not every note can fit the script. Joplin, in particular, had been using repeats since *The Crush Collision March* with utter indifference to whether they suited the plot or not. Yet many details fit the Sassari session. The Intro—which Joplin, on his piano roll version, played slower than the rest—is a sort of solemn “Gentlemen, be seated;” the students sat in a semicircle, matched by a four-bar U-shaped line. The A strain has Rattone inducing students into sleep through such repeated sentences as: “You feel sleepy ... you feel sleepy ...” Repeated motifs are found twice—in b. 3-4:



and, more extensively, in b. 9-12 and 13-16:



B expresses the students’ mood as Bruto plays some pathetic music. Joplin switches to G minor for one of his marvelous gypsy-like minor strains, deeply sad and haunting. C shows the reaction to the happy music—a fast, energetic military-band blues in a stiff, uneasy syncopation, *à la* W.C. Handy. The volunteers show signs of physical agitation in their seats; Joplin gives them jerking, almost epileptic movements, depicted by thirty-second-note glitches, a unique notational feature in his rags. (One can imagine Bruto mimicking the gestures.) Also, Joplin’s attention to detail carrying dramatic potential is apparent; there is even a volunteer falling off his chair and rolling on the floor (b. 5-6).



Then, clear as a trumpet call, Joplin introduces the minor-mode inversion of the “Inno di Garibaldi” cell, and turmoil is unleashed—once again, wandering progressions and diminished chords express conflict and tragedy. But then, good old Prof. Rattone brings back order. The students

wake up, find themselves in crazy postures, and laugh out loud. The tag-ending has been described as a “smiling little coda.”<sup>197</sup> It does much more than smiling. Joplin resorts to picking up a descending right-hand “laughter” from James Scott (unless, of course, both drew from an earlier common lick). Scott used four variants, one per strain:

in a 1910 piece, aptly called *Hilarity Rag*. The *Magnetic Rag* tag-ending has a similar pattern twice. Range contrast suggests an isolated little laughter (treble clef):

followed by a rambunctious collective outburst (stretched over four octaves).

*Treemonisha*'s pivotal scene, “The Wasp-Nest” (Act II), has a tragic climax suddenly turned into ridicule; the conjurers are victims of their own gullibility and Joplin rounds up the scene in a nose-thumbing. *Magnetic Rag*, too, has tragedy—an imaginary war—dissolving into laughters. In both cases, as illusion yields to reality, seriousness yields to humor. Here, Joplin’s theater comes surprisingly close to Calderón de la Barca’s.

Of course, the word “theater” is used loosely here. The scene has no dialogue and is suited as a ballet or pantomime that, if staged, anybody would have easily grasped at the zenith of the magnetic craze.

<sup>197</sup> David A. Jasen, Gene Jones, *Black Bottom Stomp: Eight Masters of Ragtime and Early Jazz* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 29.

\* \* \* \* \*

This decoding of *Magnetic Rag* will come to readers as a complete surprise. It did to me too, and I foresee skepticism. After all, it begs the question: what if this were just a hollow scholarly construct? Couldn't it be that Joplin simply wrote some abstract piano music?

Not quite. On *The New York Age* of July 16, 1914 one can read:

Scott Joplin's latest composition is the "Magnetic Rag." It is specially adapted to use on the stage and performers can secure a copy by writing Scott Joplin, 252 West 47th street. Send 25 cents in stamps.

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ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

MARCELLO PIRAS (Rome, 1957) is an Italian independent researcher and Black music historian living in Puebla, Mexico, where he is currently studying the African influence on Baroque colonial music. He has published a book on John Coltrane and many essays on sundry topics, ranging from ancient Greek music to the contemporary scene. He has taught at Columbia College Chicago, the University of Michigan, and many Italian conservatories and has lectured in the USA, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands. He is now writing a comprehensive world music history in an Afrocentric perspective.