

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46781-0 - The Life of Bellini
John Rosselli
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The life of Bellini

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46781-0 - The Life of Bellini
John Rosselli
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Musical lives

The books in this series will each provide an account of the life of a major composer, considering both the private and the public figure. The main thread will be biographical and discussion of the music will be integral to the narrative. Each book thus presents an 'organic' view of the composer, the music, and the circumstances in which he or she lived and wrote.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46781-0 - The Life of Bellini
John Rosselli
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The life of Bellini

JOHN ROSSELLI



Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46781-0 - The Life of Bellini
John Rosselli
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1996

First published 1996

Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Rosselli, John.

The life of Bellini / John Rosselli.

p. cm. – (Musical lives)

Includes discography, bibliographical references, and index.

ISBN 0 521 46227 4 (hardback). ISBN 0 521 46781 0 (paperback)

1. Bellini, Vincenzo, 1801–1835. 2. Composers – Italy – Biography.

I. Title. II. Series.

ML410.B44R77 1996

782.1'092-dc20 95-39270 CIP MN

[B]

ISBN 0 521 46227 4 hardback

ISBN 0 521 46781 0 paperback

SE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46781-0 - The Life of Bellini
John Rosselli
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS

- List of illustrations vii
Preface ix
List of abbreviations x
Introduction: rediscovering Bellini 1
1 A young southerner 14
2 Storming La Scala 36
3 The champion 62
4 At the height of his powers 80
5 False steps 102
6 Paris and death 119
Appendix 151
A detective story: the rentier, the kept woman,
and the young man about town
Notes 160
Note on further reading and listening 175
Index 178

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-46781-0 - The Life of Bellini
 John Rosselli
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 Continuing fame: the head of Bellini on the Italian 5,000-lira note, current in 1995. 2
- 2 Marble bust of Bellini by Dantan Jeune (Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth). 5
- 3 Map: Italy in 1815. 16
- 4 La Scala and, in the background, the Contrada Santa Margherita where Bellini first lodged in Milan (Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan). 38
- 5 Scene from *Il pirata*: Gualtiero threatens to kill Imogene's son (Civica Raccolta Stampe, Milan). 48
- 6 Giuditta Pasta in a heroic role (Civica Raccolta Stampe, Milan). 51
- 7 Giuditta Turina. Pastel by Luigi Bianchi (Museo Belliniano, Catania). 52
- 8 Felice Romani (Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan). 58
- 9 The great baritone Antonio Tamburini as Valdeburgo in *La straniera* (Civica Raccolta Stampe, Milan). 61
- 10 Maria Malibran as Romeo in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan). 69
- 11 Giuditta Pasta and G. B. Rubini, the original leads in *La sonnambula* (Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan). 82
- 12 Norma threatens to kill her children (Civica Raccolta Stampe, Milan). 93
- 13 Alessandro Sanquirico's backcloth for the forest scene in the original production of *Norma*, 1831 (Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan). 95
- 14 The Bains Chinois, where Bellini lodged when he was in Paris between 1833 and 1835 (Photothèque des Musées de la Ville de Paris. © DACS 1996). 120
- 15 The Paris theatre district, from an 1830s map (Cambridge University Library). 125
- 16 One of Ferri's original sets for *I puritani* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris). 138

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46781-0 - The Life of Bellini
John Rosselli
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

viii *Illustrations*

- 17 Giulia Grisi as Elvira and Luigi Lablache as Giorgio in the original production of *I puritani* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris). 140
- 18 G. B. Rubini as Arturo in *I puritani* (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris). 141
- 19 A late portrait of Bellini, by Julien (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris). 144
- 20 Neapolitan print commemorating Bellini's death, 1835 (Civica Raccolta Stampe, Milan). 148

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46781-0 - The Life of Bellini
John Rosselli
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PREFACE

This book sets out to provide a short critical biography of Bellini, seen in his historical context. Most of it rests on a fresh examination of published sources. The one matter on which I have done a good deal of new archival research is the identity of three people Bellini associated with in Paris; so as not to clutter up the narrative, this is dealt with in the Appendix. I have also drawn on my earlier research into the Italian opera industry and the singing profession.

Such a book would not normally call for much if any annotation, apart from the Appendix, where new matter, potentially controversial, demands precise references. As the Introduction explains, however, the published evidence for Bellini's career is flawed and some is faked. This is the first book to challenge it radically – though only by applying the normal methods of historical criticism. Where I deny or cast doubt on the validity of supposed documents I need to give evidence and reasons. This has meant some (at times long) notes, which readers may choose to take in or not.

Quotations from Bellini's letters are generally followed by the date(s) of the letter(s) in brackets. This makes it possible to follow up the sources in the collections listed in the Note on further reading; nearly all are in Bellini's *Epistolario*, ed. L. Cambi, Milan, 1943.

I have been considerably and kindly helped with information and documentation by Lorenzo Bianconi, Peter Day, Salvatore Enrico Failla, Simon Maguire, Pierluigi Petrobelli, and Alessandro Roccatagliati. My thanks to all of them, and to the librarians of the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra, Paris, and the Library of Performing Arts, New York.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46781-0 - The Life of Bellini
John Rosselli
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

ABBREVIATIONS

- AN Paris Archives Nationales, Paris
BSLS F. Pastura, *Bellini secondo la storia*, Parma, 1959
E V. Bellini, *Epistolario*, ed. Luisa Cambi, Milan, 1943
Florimo, B F. Florimo, *Bellini. Memorie e lettere*, Florence, 1882
MB Museo Belliniano, Catania