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Famous Singing-Teacher

Mathilde Marchesi

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The German mezzo-soprano and celebrated singing teacher Mathilde Marchesi (1821–1913) presents an illuminating account of her life in these memoirs. First published in 1897, the book reflects the significant role that Marchesi played in vocal education during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Having begun her career as a performer, from 1854 she devoted herself to teaching at the Vienna Conservatory and also in Paris and Cologne. She instructed many of the pre-eminent female singers of the age, including Nellie Melba, Mary Garden and Emma Calvé. Also renowned for bringing the Italian bel canto vocal technique into the twentieth century, Marchesi occupied a prominent position in musical history. Featuring musical excerpts and a number of other illustrations, these memoirs record her outstanding achievements and strong opinions. The work also includes a brief introduction by the French composer Jules Massenet.

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Marchesi and Music

*Passages from the Life
of a Famous Singing-Teacher*

MATHILDE MARCHESI



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MARCHESI AND MUSIC

PASSAGES FROM THE LIFE OF
A FAMOUS SINGING-TEACHER

By MATHILDE MARCHESI

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

By MASSENET

“Faith, Labor, and Perseverance”—this is my motto”

ILLUSTRATED



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TO
MY ONLY SURVIVING DAUGHTER
BLANCHE MARCHESI-CACCAMISI
THESE "MEMOIRS"
ARE MOST LOVINGLY
Dedicated

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P R E F A C E

THE following reminiscences were, when first written, solely intended for my family, and not for publication. By the desire, however, of numerous friends and pupils who wish to peruse the story of my life—which, for nearly fifty years, has been uninterruptedly devoted to the art of singing—I now place them before the public. I have been fortunate enough in the course of this long career to have made the acquaintance of many very distinguished men, especially of the most celebrated musicians of the century, and into these pages I have woven some experiences with and personal observations in regard to them. I venture, therefore, to hope this work may appeal to all who feel interested in vocal music and its development, and that it may arouse their sympathies for the many who are devoting their lives to the furtherance of this elegant and divine calling.

MATHILDE MARCHESI.

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INTRODUCTION

(TRANSLATION)

I HAVE been asked by the author of these “Memoirs” to present her and them to the great American public. Now, I can lay no claim to do this except because that same public has been good enough to testify in favor of certain compositions of mine—a friendliness for which I am, indeed, thankful. But surely Madame Marchesi has no cause to complain of the proud and free United States, for that country has heartily welcomed many illustrious artistes who were her pupils; hence she is sufficiently important to introduce herself without any one’s assistance.

But a gentleman, and especially a musical composer, should know how to lend himself to the pleasing insistence of a high and powerful dame, one who can throw graces on, or fulminate against, his modest works; therefore I beg to introduce Madame Marchesi to the American people; and I thoroughly believe I am telling them nothing new when I describe her to them as a professor of the highest rank who taught for twenty years at Vienna, and has taught almost as many in Paris, and who has formed here, as she did

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there, admirable pupils who are now the glory of the lyric stage everywhere.

For this reason one cannot do better than invite all the girls and ladies to read this book with the utmost carefulness ; for if the author has scattered here and there in its pages some of her best precepts on the art of the *bel canto*, it might result, madame or mademoiselle, that you may wake up some fine morning and find yourself one of those great singers who have the aureated glory of being crowned with dollars—which, in itself, is not at all a bad thing.

I may also add, whispering it softly in your ear, that Madame Marchesi is not only an incomparable teacher—she is, as we say in France, *une brave femme*, wholly composed of heart and devotedness.

And now up with the curtain !

PARIS, *January* 28, 1897.

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