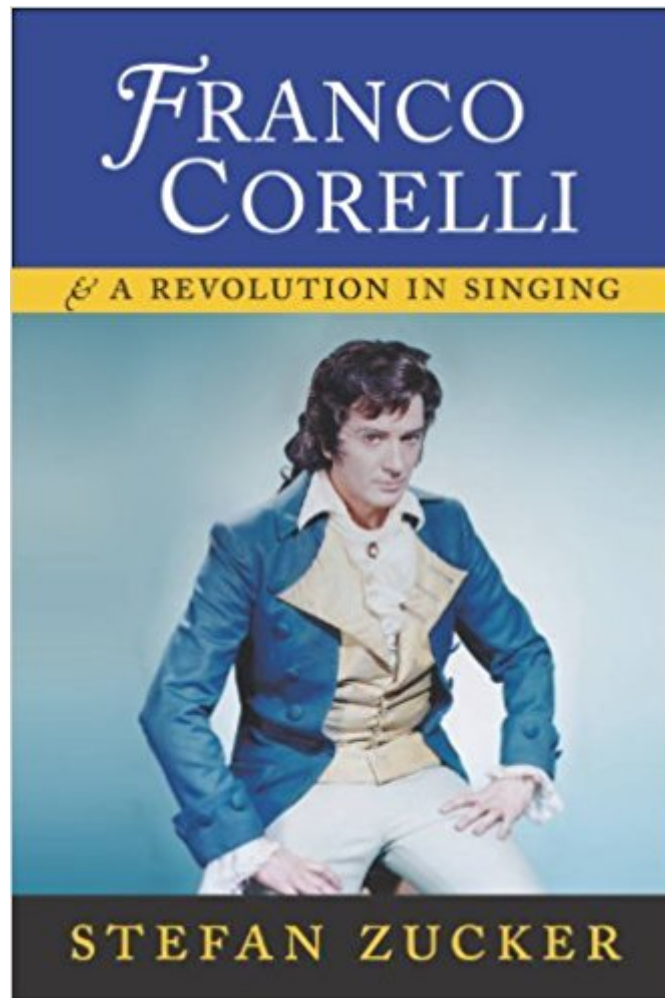




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Franco Corelli And A Revolution In Singing



Synopsis

Across the years more forceful, less subtle singing styles won out over sweeter and more nuanced interpretations. In the mid-twentieth century superstar tenors Mario Del Monaco and Franco Corelli came forward with a new technique that involved singing with the larynx lowered. They competed fiercely with each other but had a common objective: to sound more virile. They became the models for many others and ultimately changed the world's expectations of what tenors should sound like in Verdi and Puccini. Together they relegated sweet tenor singing to the junk heap of history. Corelli, with his more "masculine" approach, became opera's greatest sex symbol. The singer himself was consumed with sexual desire but believed that to sing well he had to suppress it. Over the years he engaged in a series of affairs, despite his eagle-eyed wife. The book includes extensive interviews with Corelli about singers and singing--as well as interviews with some of his women. Featured are more than one hundred photos, some of great rarity, some full of personality. Because of both its analyses and its revelations, the book will be of interest to opera lovers everywhere.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Not since *The Record of Singing* (1979) and *The Grand Tradition* (1974) has a book about opera singers received such laudatory reviews. *The Record Collector* calls it "fascinating reading." *Musica* says it's "stimulating." *Library Journal's* verdict is "A thought-provoking read."

STEFAN ZUCKER is a writer, star of nine films, radio talk-show host, tenor--and a former substitute lover for Franco Corelli.

Stefan Zucker's "Franco Corelli & a Revolution in Singing," Volume I, is a fascinating traversal of the history of the Italian School of tenors. The author is a controversial figure in the world of opera, but there is no question regarding his deep knowledge and comprehension of the art form. Mr Zucker here takes a unique approach as an author: He weaves his study of the breed with his extensive interviews with the tenor Franco Corelli, who was surprisingly insightful, even objective, on the subject. We are taken through the Nineteenth Century, and its various stylistic changes, and when we reach the dawn of recording, we really gain in momentum. The author takes a fresh view of the phenomenon of Enrico Caruso, and makes us realize that his immense influence was not entirely positive. We were led from grace and musicality to the stentorian, a trend which reached its apogee in Mario Del Monaco and Corelli. Today, all voices in Italian opera are judged almost solely in terms of size and force. If a new Giuseppe Anselmi or Jussi Björling arrived on the scene today, they would be regulated to the scores of Mozart and the lightest works of the ottocento, and would certainly not be seen in "Il trovatore" or "Pagliacci" (except as Beppe). The author's tour through the tenor ethos is fascinating, especially when dealing with Francesco Tamagno (a particular favorite of his) and Aureliano Pertile (a particular favorite of the present reviewer), and along the way we are treated to a variety of interesting, even scintillating details about the tenors. In writing of Caruso, he remarks that "The Met's indiscriminating audience and gigantic auditorium exercised a bad effect on Caruso," and one realizes how "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose." Later in the book, Mr Zucker reviews various recorded accounts of Radamès in "Aida." Here, the present reviewer's favorite tenor, Jon Vickers, does not come off as well as one could have hoped. The author complains, in short, of the great Canadian not being Italianate, and, indeed, he is in no wise Italianate. His greatness lay in other aspects, especially as singing-actor. But Zucker writes that, "He has more dynamic gradations than any other tenor since Pertile or maybe even [Fernando] De Lucia." This reviewer found only one mistake: José Carreras' famous 1977 performances of "Roberto Devereux" were not at Orange, but Aix-en-Provence. It was also a bit frustrating to often get referred to the not-yet-published Volumes II and III. Having said that, one does eagerly anticipate them. Also worth noting is Mr Zucker's upcoming "Hitler's Tenor: Beniamino Gigli." A word regarding the photographs: They are truly splendid (as is the glossy paper), well-chosen and marvelously reproduced. So many are rare, and pictures were found of certain rather homely men looking rather handsome. Certain of the Corelli and Del Monaco snap-shots are more than a bit startling, indeed! But that does bring one to the single greatest disappointment in this impressive work, since the most handsome of all tenors, Anselmi (pictured), is mentioned favorably, but, as he

represents the pre-Caruso School, one would have dearly liked to have his recordings examined. Perhaps in the subsequent volumes....

This is a book that warmly invited me into the 'inner' world of the highest levels of operatic performances and the knowledge, hard work, sacrifice and passion it takes to perform on the world stage. Mr. Zucker provides a balanced presentation of many of the most famous operatic singers in the world - especially the tenors. He also addresses some operatic sacred cows head on. Bravo.

Thank you very much for the excellent book. I've been a Bel Canto Society customer for 20-plus years and have bought more than 100 video tapes, CDs and DVDs. I am looking forward to buying the next two volumes of your remarkable books. Before reading this book my top ten tenors were: Caruso, Gigli, Pertile, Martinelli, Björling, Schmidt, Tauber, Schipa, Corelli and Di Stefano. This book helped me to rediscover the greatness of Corelli, who first combined the best qualities of different prominent singers and schools in his own unique way. Now I will also pay more respect to Tamagno and Lauri-Volpi. At the same time, I understood from the book that even some prominent singers had weaknesses (forte without nuances, pronounced vibrato, monochrome, out of pitch, etc.). As a Jewish immigrant from Kiev, Ukraine, where more than 100,000 Jews were executed by Nazis in Babi Yar in 1941, I was shocked by the scale of Beniamino Gigli's collaboration. I am waiting for Zucker's book about this subject. One small remark about Caruso's singing "to the ground." All photos of Caruso, Gigli, Björling and many others show them putting their heads a little back when taking high notes. The classic examples of putting heads forward down to the chest on high notes are Carreras and Hvorostovsky. Again, many thanks for the great job. Aleksandr Yufa, Boston, MA

Fascinating and compelling. My introduction to opera began on dad's knee in the mid-1950s, and I have been an avid, if "pedestrian" fan since then. I inherited a substantial collection of vinyl opera records from my father including many very old 78 RPM discs in fine condition and enjoy them very much. My appreciation of the performances recorded on them is much enhanced by all that is shared in this book. It is one thing to know what you like and entirely another to understand why it is so appealing. Many questions are answered here. May I say: I always found Tamagno's performances to be moving but never before understood what he was doing that produced the effect. I would also like to note that I enjoy listening to Juan Diego Flórez, but Mr. Zucker's comment on him verbalized what I felt--he sings beautifully but without much heart. The fact of Mr. Zucker's

being an artist himself obviously and acutely informs all that is offered in this book (vol. 1). I found it to be very difficult to set aside. Opera lovers and especially admirers of the great tenors are certain to enhance our appreciation of the performances we have always enjoyed. I'm looking forward to Volume 2. I have begun giving copies as gifts to friends who also love opera. My own copy came directly from Bel Canto Society.

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