



The Portrait of Vitaliano VI Borromeo (1620-1690) and the 17th-century harpsichord preserved in the Music Room of Palazzo Borromeo on Isola Bella



## A Timeless Tradition

Euterpe, traditionally revered as the muse of music and lyrical poetry, has for centuries inspired the hearts and minds of those enchanted by the harmony of the Borromean Gulf. As early as the 17th century, the waters and shores of Lake Maggiore resounded with the notes of instruments celebrating the arrival of the distinguished guests of the Borromeo counts to Isola Bella. These were the same melodies that animated the “musical entertainments” which, under Vitaliano VI (1620-1690), became the highlights of lavish festivities: concerts, performances aboard boats (the so-called *pesche* in musica, or “musical fishing parties”), and above all, musical operas, staged in purpose-built theatres or within the gardens, and occasionally open to the *issolani* – the local islanders. This passion and excellence in the musical arts have endured through the centuries, now embodied in the Stresa Festival – *Settimane Musicali*, founded in 1962 by Italo Trentinaglia de Daverio. Today, the festival stands as an internationally acclaimed annual event, emblematic of Stresa's cultural prestige.

During the Belle Époque and the Liberty period, the lakeshores and hillsides of the Verbano – especially on the Piedmontese side – witnessed an increasing presence of composers, musicians, and conductors, who came here to rest, create, and find inspiration. Parallel to the region's economic and touristic growth, musical activity flourished, adapting to the tastes of an ever-expanding public and reflecting its evolving lifestyle. Music echoed not only in theatres and salons but also in private villas, in outdoor soirées, in grand hotels, cafés, and even aboard steamboats plying the lake's waters. Contemporary newspapers attest to a rich musical life where fairs, exhibitions, congresses, sporting events, inaugurations, civic celebrations, and religious feasts often featured performances by orchestras, choirs, and bands led by local maestros. Alongside arrangements of well-known works and variations on popular themes, the repertoire included original compositions of varying quality by both Italian and international composers. Titles frequently referenced Lake Maggiore, Isola Bella, or specific localities such as Stresa, or commemorated particular events. Among these were the Grand March of Inauguration for the Agricultural, Industrial and Artistic Exhibition of Pallanza in 1870, dedicated to the Duchess of Genoa – mother of Queen Margherita and a beloved summer resident of Stresa – and *Ricordo di Stresa*, a suite of twelve pieces composed by Giovanni Menozzi (Milan, 1813 – Pallanza, 1885), dedicated to Marquis Nicolò Rapallo, second husband of the Duchess.

The Commemoration of Maestro Giovanni Menozzi (1813-1885) as published in *La Voce* on 10 February 1885, and the musical score of the march composed by the maestro for the inauguration of the Agricultural, Industrial and Artistic Exhibition of Pallanza (1870), a work dedicated to Her Royal Highness Princess Maria Elisabetta, patroness of the event.

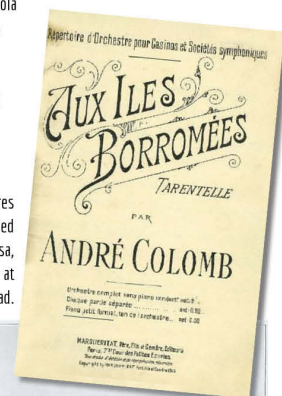


### Distinguished Musicians on the Lake

Clockwise from left: Ruggero Leoncavallo (Naples, 1857 – Montecatini Terme, 1919), resident in Brissago from 1903; Umberto Giordano (Foggia, 1867 – Milan, 1948), with his renowned Villa Fedora in Baveno; Giovanni Anfossi (Ancona, 1864 – Milan, 1946), at his villa in Alpino; Arturo Toscanini (Parma, 1867 – New York, 1957), a beloved summer guest, first in Alpino and later, from 1932, on the small Isolino di San Giovanni.



Toscanini strolling on Isola dei Pescatori, where his friend the musician Ugo Ara (Venice, 1876 – Lausanne, 1954) lived

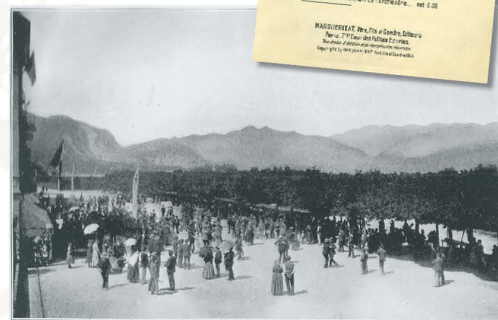


### Two Dance Music Scores

A Tarantella and a Waltz, accompanied by a scene of open-air dancing in Stresa, along what is now Corso Umberto I – at the time, a simple dirt road.



Marquis Nicolò Rapallo and the Duchess of Genoa Already the widow of the brother of King Victor Emmanuel II of Savoy, the Duchess of Genoa later became the wife of Marquis Nicolò Rapallo in a second marriage.



DANCING ON THE QUAY AT STRESA

