



Pietro Mascagni and His Operas

By Alan Mallach

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Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945) was a dazzling and influential figure in Italian opera during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Just 26 when the electric premiere of his "Cavalleria Rusticana" at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome catapulted the impoverished musician into sudden fame and fortune, Mascagni went on to write 15 more operas, including "L'Amico Fritz", "Guglielmo Ratcliff", "Iris", "Parisina", and "Il Piccolo Marat". This in-depth biography of Mascagni charts the course of his intriguing life and career. With access to extensive primary sources, including Mascagni's 4200 letters to Anna Lolli, his mistress for more than three decades, Alan Mallach provides a portrait of a flamboyant, combative and emotional man who was passionately devoted to the Italian opera tradition and committed to innovation in musical language and dramatic form.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The first serious English-language biography of the influential Italian opera composer (1863-1945), Pietro Mascagni and His Operas traces the career of this flamboyant figure of fascist-era Italian culture. Author Alan Mallach, a pianist, composer and independent scholar, makes a case for the maestro's lesser-known operas, such as *L'Amico Fritz*, *Guglielmo Ratcliff*, *Iris*, *Parisina* and *Il Piccolo Marat*. He also documents Mascagni's talent for alienating everyone in his life, from his long-time mistress to *Il Duce* himself. The book includes a useful discography skewed toward recent recordings of Mascagni's works. While the book might be a little too insider for readers new to opera, enthusiasts will surely take notice.

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From Library Journal

Opera scholar Mallach fills a gap in the musical literature with this welcome discourse on Italian composer Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945), now chiefly remembered for his 1890 opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Drawing on the composer's correspondence as well as family reminiscences, contemporary reviews, European archives, and secondary sources, the author creates a vivid portrait of a creative artist. Within a chronological framework, he explores Mascagni's experiences as a student at the Milan conservatory and teacher at the Liceo Rossini in Pesaro, work as a traveling conductor, tours of the United States and Argentina, political affiliations ranging from Bolshevik to Fascist, struggles with bipolar disorder, and relationship with Anna Lolli under the gaze of his long-suffering wife, Lina. Mallach addresses each opera, providing historical context, synopses, character descriptions, and musical analysis accessible to the lay reader. The useful appendixes include a list of first performances and a selective discography. The only drawbacks are some inconsistencies and a tendency toward overstatement. Recommended where interest warrants and as a complement to Mascagni, an autobiography ably translated and edited by the late Metropolitan Opera chorus master David Stivender. Barry Zaslow, Miami Univ. Libs., Oxford, OH

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About the Author

ALAN MALLACH is a pianist, composer, and independent scholar. He has written numerous articles and commentaries on opera for such publications as *Opera Quarterly* and *Nuova Rivista Musical Italiana*. He lives in Roosevelt, New Jersey.

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